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Celebrate Veterans Day with the story of two Daughters who have dedicated themselves to serving our soldiers.

By Lena Anthony

Class Act
A Better Battle Plan
Virginia instructor India Meissel raises the standards for her students and history teachers everywhere.

By Megan Pacella

National Treasures
Tea Time
Marvel at an elegant silver teapot crafted by America’s most famous silversmith—Paul Revere.

From the DAR Museum Collection

Spirited Adventures
Wide Open Spaces
Explore the riches of Arizona’s northern region, stretching from the Grand Canyon to the Verde Valley.

By Jamie Roberts and Summer Huggins

Crafts
A Playful History
A craft-minded couple carry on the tradition of handmade wooden toys in their Austin, Texas, workshop.

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President General’s Message
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From the President General

Christmastime is magical at Tryon Palace, the Georgian-style palace in historic New Bern, N.C., gracing this issue’s cover. Visitors who stroll through its ornate halls will find elaborate displays of holiday decor popular in the 18th century. Once regarded as the finest public building in the Colonies, the palace, which was built between 1767 and 1770 as the royal governor’s home and North Carolina’s first permanent capitol, hasn’t always been so radiant. It was reduced to ruins, until local preservationists launched a campaign to resurrect it. Thanks to their tenacity and the discovery of the original architect’s plans, the palace still enchants the public today, 50 years after its historic restoration.

The holidays are almost here, and no doubt many of you already have a stack of cards on your desk to mail to family and friends. Have you ever wondered how this tradition of exchanging holiday greetings got started? We trace the history of the Christmas card in America, from its beginnings as an artistic letter decorated by schoolchildren to its thriving modern-day incarnation. Families and friends have long exchanged warm notes during the holidays, but hand-delivered greeting cards made their debut in the early 1800s. These hand-tinted notes didn’t catch on in the United States until Christmas became a legal holiday in 1870. Thanks to artist Louis Prang, the father of the American Christmas card, these mementos grew more popular than ever and spurred the greeting card tradition that thrives today.

If you know your Colonial history well, you’ve probably heard of Dr. Benjamin Rush, Declaration of Independence signer and prominent physician, educator and author. His contributions are well-documented, but his only surviving home near Philadelphia, Cottage Farm, faces an uncertain future. Pennsylvania attorney Leslie B. Potter shares the story of preservationists’ efforts to save it.

Speaking of home, we also explore the legacy of French expatriates whose 1817 trek from Philadelphia to the Southwest Territory produced a settlement near Demopolis, Ala., known as the Vine and Olive Colony. Though these pioneers were diverse—some were exiled generals who had fought with Napoleon; others were families who had fled slave uprisings in the French Caribbean—their goal was the same: to find a fresh start on the frontier.

Our country’s western frontier is spotlighted in our Spirited Adventures feature. We venture to the northern region of Arizona to find an abundance of natural wonders as well as fascinating American Indian history and culture.

As Veterans Day approaches, don’t miss our story on two Daughters who have devoted their lives to serving our nation’s soldiers at home and abroad. We salute them, along with all of the brave men and women of our armed forces. Happy Holidays to all.

Linda Gist Calvin
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Grandma’s Pearls of Wisdom poem by Becky Netherland

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Today's Daughters

When Duty Calls

In celebration of Veterans Day, meet two Daughters who have served their country in the field and from afar. Discover the different ways they have cared for and honored our nation’s warriors.

By LENA ANTHONY

Commander Barbara Ellen Miller’s entrance into the U.S. Navy isn’t your typical military enlistment story. It was 1961, and she was finishing her master’s thesis in nursing at the University of Maryland in Baltimore. Walking near the university, she saw a poster that read, “Join the Navy and see the world.”

“Most people don’t walk along the street and make a life-changing decision like that, but I decided it was for me and a good way to get the chance to serve my country and travel,” Cmdr. Miller says.

Her first duty assignment in 1962 didn’t take her overseas but to the Naval Regional Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. Cmdr. Miller was assigned to the Sick Officers Quarters, where she took care of high-ranking officers such as Admiral Hyman Rickover, who is known as the father of the nuclear Navy, and Admiral Thomas Kinkaid, who commanded the U.S. Navy in the Pacific during World War II. She assisted doctors with annual physical exams for President John F. Kennedy, Sen. Ted Kennedy and Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and she also cared for then-Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson.

“I met some very nice dignitaries, and I learned a lot from them,” she says. “I had some very enlightening and eye-opening experiences there.”

Cmdr. Miller got her chance to travel in 1964, when she was assigned to the U.S. Naval Hospital in Yokosuka, Japan, where Marines wounded in Vietnam were being treated.

During her two-year assignment, Cmdr. Miller immersed herself in the culture by learning the language and religion, sampling the food and befriending locals. She even took road trips in the American car she brought with her from home. “I put about 8,000 miles on my car while I was there,” she says.

Most of the time while in Yokosuka, however, Cmdr. Miller was taking care of hundreds of wounded men. “I often wonder where they are,” she says. “I wish I could find my patients so I can know how they turned out. Unfortunately, I don’t remember their names. It was a long war, as it followed me to hospitals in San Diego and Philadelphia.”

One group of wounded servicemen she’ll never forget are the crew of 82 men who were held hostage for more than 11 months after their ship, the U.S.S. Pueblo, was captured by North Koreans in 1968. They were freed two days before Christmas, and Cmdr. Miller was one of three nurses selected to care for them at the Naval Hospital in San Diego.

“They arrived on Christmas Eve,” she recalls. “All of their family members were there, and it was decorated for Christmas. I don’t think they could believe they were home. It was a very emotional reunion for everyone.”

After retiring from the Navy in 1982, Cmdr. Miller continued to work in the nursing profession, finishing her career as an instructor at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital in New London, Conn. “I lost my voice because I was lecturing so much,” she says. “I was told I would never speak again if I didn’t stop lecturing, so I had to hang up my white coat. I had given my all to nursing and to the Navy, and it was always an honor to serve my profession and my country.”

To honor her lifetime of service, the state of Connecticut selected her to be inducted into the Connecticut Veterans’ Hall of Fame last year. Her fellow volunteers from the Retired Activities Office on the Naval Submarine Base in Groton nominated Cmdr. Miller, who is the first woman to be inducted into the hall of fame.

“I didn’t say anything,” she says. “I was completely overwhelmed and surprised.”

Congratulations came from her fellow DAR members as well. Cmdr. Miller, who is a member of the Melzingah Chapter, Beacon, N.Y., became a DAR member in 1952.
A Wartime Angel

Dorothy “Dottie” Busby Wainwright still recalls the moment she received a letter addressed to “Grandma Wainwright.” The letter wasn’t from a grandchild; it was from a 19-year-old soldier stationed in Iraq. She was a member of one of the many Army National Guard units that Mrs. Wainwright had “adopted” as Texas State Chairman of the DAR Project Patriot Committee and a member of Heritage Trails Chapter, Spring, Texas.

“It was so moving to get that letter,” she says. “She asked if I could bake her favorite cake—just for her. I did it, and it started a loving relationship.”

Mrs. Wainwright’s generosity has touched many others, including the boys and girls who have received the thousands of toys, school supplies, clothes and shoes she and her fellow DAR members have sent overseas the past three years. Dubbed Operation Wainwright, this DAR program provides supplies to Camp Bucca, Iraq, where they are distributed to local families. “It helps to build relationships and trust between our soldiers and the locals,” Mrs. Wainwright says. “After the first few shipments, the soldiers mentioned that rocket attacks had stopped, and there was no more loss of life in the area, which they attributed directly to the goodwill shown to these families. With these gifts, they know we care about them and that we Americans are humanitarians.”

In one instance, Operation Wainwright helped connect an Iraqi baby with a life-threatening heart defect with much-needed medical care. “I wrote and called many organizations in the United States, but got no good response,” Mrs. Wainwright explains. “Then, almost as a miracle, a message showed up in my e-mail, and a Jewish foundation in Tel Aviv wanted medical records and more information. Within 24 hours they replied that they had a pediatric cardiologist in Jordan who would take the baby’s case.”

Today, Operation Wainwright is still in full force and has expanded to Camp Taji, Iraq and Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. Many of the donations—and shipping costs—come directly from Mrs. Wainwright, but she says the reward is far greater than the cost. “I’ll never meet those children, but if I could, I would hug every one of them.”

While she’ll probably never come face-to-face with the children she has helped through Operation Wainwright, she has made lifelong friends out of the military men and women from around the country whom she has supported through DAR Project Patriot.

“Some of them have visited me here, and I continue to support them as they redeploy or re-enter their civilian lives,” says Mrs. Wainwright, who even funded a scholarship and helped with college book expenses for one of the returning soldiers. “As civilians, they still need TLC.”

Mrs. Wainwright encourages others to reach out to deployed soldiers and their families, even if it’s just to say thank you. “A simple thank you is little to do,” she says. “Also, if you know of a family of a service man or woman, try to see that their needs are also being met. Happiness in their families at home relates to happiness for the troops far away.”

For all of her generosity, Mrs. Wainwright was awarded the Medal and Certificate of Meritorious Public Service from the U.S. Department of the Navy, which is one of the department’s highest medals. “They told me this medal was rarely presented to a civilian,” she says. “I was so shocked and humbled. I do what I do because it comes from the heart. I expect no glory, nor do I expect medals and awards. The love I receive from the troops is more reward than any one person should receive. After all, those troops are the ones putting their lives on the line to preserve our freedoms.”

Middle photo: Lt. j.g. Kristen Wheeler delivering supplies to locals near Camp Bucca, Iraq. Bottom photo: Mrs. Wainwright, top left, and fellow DAR members of the Star of Destiny and Heritage Trails chapters pack boxes for DAR Project Patriot.
Murray’s Mississippi History

I was delighted to read the article on Judith Sargent Murray (“A New Era for Women,” September/October 2009), whose family was important in Natchez and Mississippi history. Judith’s brother, Winthrop Sargent, was appointed the first governor of the Mississippi Territory (1798–1801), whose capital was in Natchez. Gov. Sargent remained here to become one of the wealthiest cotton planters of the early 19th century. The stately home he purchased, enlarged and renamed “Gloster Place” is now known as “Gloucester.”

In 2003, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History erected a historical marker honoring Judith Sargent Murray as an early feminist writer, champion of women’s rights and fosterer of the Universalist Church in America. It stands at Natchez’s Co-Lin Community College, once the site of Oak Point Plantation (home of Julia Marie and her husband, the legendary Adam Louis Bingaman), where Murray lived for two years. Natchez National Historical Park has new displays at the Natchez Visitors Center recognizing Murray for her frequent literary focus on women and girls and as one of America’s first feminists.

Leslie Bruning, Regent
William Dunbar Chapter
Natchez, Miss.

A Descendant Questions a Francisco Novel

I am writing in reference to the half-page ad in the September/October 2009 issue of American Spirit for the book Hercules of the Revolution by Travis Bowman. As a great-great-granddaughter of Peter Francisco, a charter member and life member of the Society of the Descendants of Peter Francisco (SDPF), as well as a member of NSDAR for 38 years, I am heartsick that this ad states that the book is historically accurate. The love story is completely made up, and there is much more distortion present as well.

The ad states that this is “a novel based on the life of Peter Francisco,” so my first inclination would be to keep an open mind and allow the author some liberties based on the book’s classification as fiction. However, it is disingenuous to distort the historical record and then advertise the result as historically accurate.

The official purpose of the SDPF is “To compile and maintain the documented records of Peter Francisco and his descendants and give him his rightful place in history.” Certainly, I never expected that Travis Bowman, as a member, would distort the record by fantasizing the love story in a novel. He was offered encouragement and help by the SDPF, but declined in order to hasten publication of his novel.

I shall be glad to write to anyone who has a question about Peter Francisco.

Edith Francisco Buckley
Providence Chapter
Fairfax Station, Va.

Travis Bowman replies:

It has been an honor for me to be a member of the Society of the Descendants of Peter Francisco and to serve on the board of directors with Mrs. Buckley. I have learned so much about our great-great-grandfather from talking with her while retracing Peter’s steps at Guilford Courthouse National Military Park and the Virginia State Capitol, and I look forward to interviewing her for my upcoming History Channel special.

Just as the front of my book states, Hercules of the Revolution is a novel based on the life of Peter Francisco. I chose this genre because so much about Peter’s life is shrouded in mystery. Mrs. Buckley and I both agree that several of the books that have been written in the last 50 years about Peter contradict each other, but the facts from
the battlefields of the Revolution are virtually the same. My book stayed true to the historical facts that we know about Peter’s courage and strength on the battlefield.

I used several books for my research, including some writings from Peter Francisco himself, to develop my novel. Mrs. Buckley and I agree that the most accurate book about Peter’s life is called *The Portuguese Patriot* by William Arthur Moon. On page 19 of Moon’s book he states, “We do know that Peter stayed with the Andersons during the latter part of the war.” I took the literary license with my novel to develop a love story between Peter Francisco and Susannah Anderson during the Revolutionary War. My book does not mention if they wed, but records show that they did in fact marry in December 1784 after he received a formal education.

**A Mackinac Island Memory**

Seeing the cover of the July/August 2009 *American Spirit* brought a rush of fond childhood memories. As a six-year-old living in Chicago, in the 1950s, I remember my maternal grandparents taking me to Mackinac Island, Mich., for the most unforgettable vacation of my youth! I remember the ferry ride over to the island and how thrilled I was to ride all over in a surrey carriage drawn by horses whose names I can still recall. My grandfather chuckled as my eyes grew large as saucers to be so close to horses, and then we roamed through gift shops brimming with souvenirs. I’m sure he asked me what I wanted most to take home, and I told him it had to be something that included horses. Thus the horse-drawn regal carriage clock (see photo) came into the family and eventually passed to me.

Thanks for the history and photos that brought flashbacks of my beloved grandparents and an indelibly happy childhood memory!

Roberta E. Craig
California State Society Librarian
Mojave Chapter
Fullerton, Calif.

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**FamilyHistoryExperts**
Warm holiday cheer meets the allure of classic fairy tales at Blithewold Mansion’s “Fairy Tales and Fantasies” Christmas celebration. Blithewold, an early 20th-century English Country Manor-style mansion in Bristol, R.I., will incorporate themes from favorite childhood fairy tales such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Hansel and Gretel* and “‘Twas the Night Before Christmas.”

When guests enter the mansion, they will first encounter an 18-foot Christmas tree decorated to reflect the individual fairy tale themes used by decorators in each of the mansions’ rooms. Guests will find the dining room table set to represent the Mad Hatter’s Tea Party in *Alice and Wonderland*, the living room awash with colorful lights and nutcrackers of every size to represent “The Nutcracker,” and the billiard room complete with the gingerbread house that tempted Hansel and Gretel.

Upstairs, each bedroom is decorated, with the master bedroom honoring Dutch Christmas traditions like candle-lit trees, ice skating and traditional sweets. The celebration continues in Blithewold’s carriage house with the Gingerbread Wonderland exhibit. Sweets and treats from local restaurants will be on display.

The event lasts from November 12 through January 3, 2010. For more information, visit www.blithewold.org.

**Gifts That Matter**

Looking for unique gift ideas this holiday season? Your family members are sure to enjoy these meaningful gifts:

**Family heirlooms.** Chances are, the furniture, wall hangings, jewelry and other items passed on to you from loved ones will be priceless to the next generation. A diamond necklace that belonged to your grandmother will make a perfect keepsake for your granddaughter. Or your son-in-law might love the early 20th-century desk stashed away in your attic. With a little TLC, family heirlooms make the most treasured gifts.

**Trip planning.** Does your family need a getaway? Instead of buying each individual his or her own gift, plan a weekend retreat at a lake or an action-packed family vacation at the beach for everyone. Not only will you give them something to look forward to, the memories will last a lot longer than a tie or slippers.

**Scrapbooks and photo albums.** Instead of hoarding hundreds of photos in your closet, put them together in a photo album that the entire family can enjoy. All it takes is a photo-safe album that protects photographs, a photo-safe adhesive and a fine-point permanent marker. Simply organize the photos, secure them to the album pages, and write dates, places and experiences so you won’t forget the details.

**Handmade gifts.** Do you know how to sew, knit, paint or draw? Put your skills to good use by hand-making thoughtful gifts for your family. If you haven’t garnered those skills yet, try beginner projects like beading simple jewelry or knitting a scarf.
THE IMPORTANCE of revitalizing neighborhoods isn’t lost on participants in Adventures in Preservation, a program that provides training and support for building conservation projects. This summer, AiP helped a group of students from the University of Southern Illinois complete a two-week project to restore a 1900s shotgun-style house in Cairo, Ill. Teaming up with Cairo Vision 2020, volunteers learned wood conservation and carpentry skills to renovate the historic home.

The workshop also highlighted the importance of stimulating Cairo’s economy and creating affordable housing, a necessity for the town, which has deteriorated in the past 50 years.

Founded by the Cairo City and Canal Company in 1837, Cairo incorporated as a city in 1858. An important steamboat port in the 19th century, the town grew rapidly until 1907, when it reached its peak population of 20,000 residents. Its decline began with the deterioration of river trade in the mid-20th century and escalated when intense civil rights struggles caused the National Guard to enter Cairo and restore order in the 1960s. As of 2008, Cairo was home to fewer than 3,200.

Even in its decaying areas, many of Cairo’s buildings and homes are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Adventures in Preservation will return to Cairo to save another house June 13–26, 2010.

For more on those projects, visit www.heritageconservation.net. For ways you can help preserve historic Cairo and promote its economic growth, contact Cairo Vision 2020 at (618) 967–8270.

HERCULES OF THE REVOLUTION
a novel based on the life of Peter Francisco

Born into a wealthy family in the Azores Islands in 1760, Peter Francisco would one day change the course of history for the United States of America and the World. This true story will have you hanging on the edge of your seat as Peter is kidnapped by pirates at the age of five and raised as a slave on a plantation in Virginia. By the age of 16, Peter stood 6’6” – a foot taller than the average man - and weighed 260 pounds, but his skin color had him trapped at the bottom of society in the New World.

After falling in love with a girl from a wealthy family, Peter realizes that he will never marry the woman of his dreams unless he is free. Driven with passion for freedom he joined the Continental Army after hearing Patrick Henry’s famous words, “Give me liberty or give me death!” His owner, Judge Winston, releases him from slavery to fight for freedom, and he becomes famous throughout the colonies for his extraordinary strength, bravery, and courage on the battlefield.

At the climax of the fight for independence, George Washington has a 6’ broadsword made for Peter just in time for the most critical battles of the Revolution. But, the ruthless Colonel Tarleton from the British Army is determined to kill Peter and the woman that he loves. Ultimately, Peter’s fight for freedom becomes a fight to save the love of his life...

“This truly is the American Braveheart story!”
- Robert Whitlow, author & film producer

“Enjoyable to read and historically accurate…”
- David Appleby, former President General of SAR

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Travis Bowman is a 6th generation descendant of Peter Francisco, and he is of similar stature standing 6’6” tall just like Peter. As an actor he enjoys telling Peter’s story through dramatic impersonations with a 6’ replica broadsword similar to the one George Washington had made for Peter. Please contact him at the number above if your DAR chapter would like him to speak at your next event.

American Spirit • November/December 2009
FOR MANY KIDS, history can seem irrelevant, especially those events that happened more than 200 years ago. But two new releases put the fun, wonder and joy of discovery back into history.

Explore Colonial America: 25 Great Projects, Activities and Experiments (Nomad Press, 2009) uses stories, games, jokes and do-it-yourself projects to help readers imagine what it was like to be a settler in early America. From building a log cabin replica to making candles out of crayons, kids can get a glimpse at what it took to survive in the unfamiliar wilderness of the New World. They can learn to make wampum, plant an herb garden, create a cornhusk doll, and sample a smorgasbord of 17th-century treats. Author Verna Fisher draws on fun facts, quick glossaries and easy-to-digest information to help readers understand how the colonists formed our country.

Liberty Porter, First Daughter (Aladdin, 2009) offers a peek into Inauguration Day at the White House through the eyes of 8-year-old Liberty Porter, the nation’s newest first daughter. The chapter book follows Liberty and her dog, Franklin, as they explore the White House and try to elude their Secret Service agent, Sam. Like any new kid in town, this spunky first daughter has the typical adjustments to make—finding new friends and getting used to a different routine—but she must learn to share her home with dignitaries, the press and millions of tourists. Fortunately, Liberty is up to the challenge. She’s not about to let her dad down, even if her antics as his “secret assistant” get her in trouble with nosy chief of staff Miss Crum. Inspired by her 8-year-old son’s interest in the White House during the recent presidential election, author Julia Devillers weaves trivia about the White House and its pint-sized residents into a spirited story about family, friendship and patriotism.

—Emily McMackin
Georgetown, Colo., is a little-known mountain getaway town with an interesting history. Founded as a boomtown during the Pike’s Peak Gold Rush in 1859, Georgetown was also famous for the 1864 discovery of silver in the nearby mountains. In the years following the silver discovery, miners dug thousands of mines into the mountains near Georgetown, and it quickly became a center for trade and entertainment, as well as a top destination for prospectors and mine workers.

Georgetown today looks much like it did during its rapid growth period in the late 1800s. Historic structures like the Hamill House, a Gothic Revival-style building constructed by Joseph Watson in 1867 and enlarged by silver baron William A. Hamill in 1879, features handcrafted walnut woodwork and imported marble fireplaces, and gives visitors a glimpse of life for Georgetown residents during the silver boom. The Hamill House will hold its annual Christmas celebration December 12 and 19, complete with the lighting of a Victorian Christmas tree, caroling and other entertainment.

Take a short drive to Idaho Springs to brush up on your mining history at Historic Argo Gold Mine Mill, where you can tour the mine and learn how to pan for gold. Visit www.historicargotours.com for more information, or to make an appointment to tour the mine this winter.

To see the Colorado countryside by train, get on board the historic Royal Gorge train, which provides a scenic rail trip through the Royal Gorge. To purchase tickets, visit www.royalgorgeroute.com. For more information about Georgetown, visit www.historicgeorgetown.org.

Relive the Silver Boom in A Colorado Mining Town

This is better than Christmas! Oh, I hope I will be able to manage some time for my royal family too! I can hardly wait to share all I’ve learned with them.

Eva has a special secret. She has made friends with the magical Russian dolls given to her by her grandmother on her last birthday, and they have given her a very special task. She must solve riddles and answer questions about her heritage, and in the process she will discover the beauty and rich history of the Russia she is descended from. Follow Eva on her quest to find the truth behind the mystery of the Russian family hiding in her grandmother’s cupboard, from the imperial Tsar to the beautiful Olga, and in turn uncover the details of her own family history. Allow author Olivia Olson to unveil a tale of intrigue and history, and discover for yourself the beauty and mystery of Eva’s Gift.

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INTERESTED IN BUILDING A FAMILY TREE? These days, the Web is the best place to do it all. And with the following sites, you can do more than just map out your family history.

At [MyHeritage.com](http://www.myheritage.com), you can personalize a family Web page to create a family tree, keep in touch with relatives, celebrate birthdays, share photos and more. Once you create a Web page, the whole family can access it. Members who visit the site will see their family tree personalized according to their connection to the family. Plus, everyone can communicate through private message boards to make appointments, plan visits and share stories.

[Geni.com](http://www.geni.com) allows you to create a timeline, access statistics and find unknown family members once you make your family tree. Like other family tree Web sites, you can upload photos and videos and hold discussions about your ancestors' history. The new lists feature helps you access profiles similar to your own, create a map of where individuals live and compile an index of last names in your family. Plus, your family tree and profile are private, so only your family can access it.

At [FamilyBuilder.com](http://www.familybuilder.com) you can order a DNA test, send it back and view your results online for as little as $60. The results include a migration map for you and your ancestors, a breakdown of your genetic code, deep ancestral relations dating back thousands of years, and results you can share with your family.

The Name Game

JUST THREE YEARS after launching its online indexing program, FamilySearch, which gathers, preserves and shares genealogical records worldwide, is about to reach a major milestone: recording more than 325 million names from historical documents and cataloging them into an online searchable database. Specially designed digital cameras and cutting-edge software and scanning have helped the organization speed up its process of preserving records, allowing documents stored on microfilm to be easily converted to digital images. Volunteers, who used to copy down names by hand, can also index information digitally through CDs and Web-based applications, which enable them to download images of historical documents, copy names and compile them into the organization’s database. To find out how you can get involved, visit [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org).

The hot springs in Berkeley Springs, W.Va., are the namesake for Ye Towne of Bath Chapter. During the Revolutionary War, the springs became a center for ill and wounded soldiers. The first General Assembly of Virginia’s new statehood established Ye Towne of Bath at the site of the springs. The name was chosen in honor of the famed English Town of Bath first developed by the Romans and restored by Christopher Wren. George Washington wrote in his diaries of his visits to the town.

In the 1600s, the Quakers settled a group of villages in mid-Long Island, giving them biblical names: Babylon, Bethpage, Jericho and Jerusalem. The first three survived, but Jerusalem later became part of Levittown. Jerusalem Chapter, Wantagh, N.Y., chose its name to honor the first settlers who came from New England to the town of Hempstead in 1643 and then to Jerusalem in 1644. Captain John Seaman and Robert Jackson chose the site because of the vast grazing area of the Hempstead Plains on the northern boundary and the extensive meadowland and Great South Bay on the southern side.

The Mountain Rendezvous Chapter, Evergreen, Colo., is named for a system of procuring furs that was launched in 1822 after the War of 1812 disrupted the thriving fur trade. Mountain rendezvous were held at designated spots known to both trappers and traders. Traders would bring supplies and equipment needed by the trappers, and the business agreements would usually result in a general-purpose celebration and trade fair. In 1825, the first of 16 famous annual gatherings took place in the Rockies. The rendezvous became the most significant and picturesque feature of the mountain fur trade. The last rendezvous took place in 1840 near the Green River. To commemorate these events, Mountain Rendezvous Chapter holds a prospective members brunch at which everyone dresses up as if attending one of these 19th-century celebrations.

Does your chapter name have an unusual story behind it?

E-mail a description to americanspirit@dar.org.
St. Mary’s River History
The River of History Museum; Saint Sault Marie, Mich., ongoing
The River of History Museum highlights 8,000 years of St. Mary’s River history, from its glacial period to the Chippewa Indian settlement to the French fur trade to present-day river use. With collections on loan from the Chippewa County Historical Society, visitors can see river items from the 1700s to today, such as American Indian baskets, clothing and blankets, a replica of Fort Brady, tools used for fur trapping, and more. For more information, visit www.riverofhistory.org.

The Grand Illumination
Colonial Williamsburg; Williamsburg, Va.; December 6
In the 18th century, Americans sometimes held illuminations, similar to today’s fireworks shows, to commemorate the birth of the reigning sovereign. Today, Colonial Williamsburg kicks off the holiday season with a Grand Illumination of candles, fireworks and music. The fireworks are launched from three historical locations: The Governor’s Palace, magazine and Capitol. For more information, visit www.history.org or call 1-800-HISTORY.

Let Freedom Ring
National Liberty Museum; Philadelphia, ongoing
Living in a free society comes with its own rewards and responsibilities. This exhibit celebrates 20th-century Americans who lived up to their civic duties by making outstanding contributions to peace in America, including 19 American Nobel Peace Prize winners. Celebrate the lives of famous figures such as Theodore Roosevelt, Martin Luther King Jr., Henry Kissinger and more. Also, the First Amendment room allows visitors to explore their rights and responsibilities according to the Constitution. For more information, visit www.libertymuseum.org.

Paving The Way
The Historic Soldiers Relocation Project was implemented to find a final resting place for the remains of 70 cavalry and infantry soldiers from the 1860s through 1874 who were buried beneath what is now a parking lot in downtown Tucson, Ariz. As of this writing, 53 of these soldiers have been identified, but the work isn’t finished.

The project was created when Roger Anyon, project coordinator with the Pima County Administrators Office, Archeological Historic Preservation, contacted the Southern Arizona Veterans’ Memorial Cemetery to see if the state had an interest in moving the soldiers’ bodies to a more honorable resting place. The project’s goal is to establish a memorial cemetery inside the Southern Arizona Veterans’ Memorial Cemetery to honor the soldiers who fought for America’s freedom but haven’t been significantly recognized.

But uncovering and honoring these fallen soldiers’ histories comes at a price. To raise funds, the Historic Soldiers Relocation Project is selling commemorative pavers that will form the pathway to these soldiers’ final resting places. The money donated will be used to construct and maintain the cemetery for years to come. For more information, contact Joe Larson at (520) 458–7144.

This is a book that every American interested in the real story of the nation’s history should read.
— Thomas Fleming, American historian and author.

South Carolina 1775
A Crucible Year
Edmund Alexander Bator
With a Foreword by Thomas Fleming
South Carolina 1775 is a chronicle of ambition, honor, duty and integrity—the traits that formed the basis of the modern state of South Carolina.

(15)
From the time she was in grade school, India Meissel celebrated every birthday by spending a weekend at Colonial Williamsburg, Va.  
“My father would rent one of the houses there, and the whole family would go,” she says. “He gave me a bus pass and an entry ticket, and I would go all over Williamsburg by myself. I’d go into the powder magazine and the windmill and learn all sorts of things.”  
Those trips were one of the reasons Meissel, who teaches U.S. history at Lakeland High School in Suffolk, Va., developed a love for history early on. But Meissel took a detour when she reached college.  
“I started college as a biology/pre-med major. By the end of my freshman year, I knew I could do it, but it wasn’t my passion,” she says. “History is my passion, and I thought I could be good at it. Many of my students go on to work on political campaigns or study history in college. That’s an absolute thrill—that’s when I know I’m doing a good job.”  
India Meissel comes by her passion for American history naturally. Besides growing up in history-rich Virginia, her family tree touts Thomas Culpeper, who served as the Colonial governor of Virginia from 1680 to 1683. Her family line also extends to Lexington, Mass., where her great-uncle was in charge of refitting the U.S.S. Constitution, the world’s oldest commissioned naval vessel.  
Although teaching high school is her day job, Meissel is also a fixture at the local community college. She started teaching U.S. history and Western civilization as an adjunct professor in the evenings, and when the college said she could branch out, she jumped at the chance to develop a new curriculum.  
“I developed a class of Virginia Civil War history and general Virginia history, and those classes meet for lectures half the time and for field trips the rest of the time,” she says.  
Meissel takes her students to sites that most teachers never visit, like the Maggie Walker House in Richmond and the Virginia Historical Society. “And I like to support our local small museums,” she says. “The final all-day trip we take is to the naval base and the site of the Jamestown 1607 exposition, the U.S.S. Wisconsin Memorial and the MacArthur Memorial.”  
Thanks to Meissel’s involvement at the college, her high school students can enroll for college classes early and earn credit for taking her class. “It’s hard work, but as long as they get a C or higher, they’ll earn six college credit hours,” she says. “I want to put them ahead of the crowd so they’ll be better prepared for college coursework.”  
In addition to her work in the classroom, Meissel also worked with the National Council for Social Studies to rewrite the standards for the Praxis Series, the exams required for teachers seeking licensure. “We wrote the standards so the tests include questions that reflect what first-year teachers need to know,” she says. “Some standards overlapped; others needed to be tweaked or eliminated. That was incredible—to shape something that will result in making people better teachers.”  
Meissel’s diverse and busy schedule is reflective of her teaching style. She delivers a combination of art, music and cultural history while she talks to her students about important names and dates, and she knows how to illustrate the importance of her lessons dramatically.  
“I’m a desk climber,” she says. “When I talk about George Washington and Pennsylvania’s Fort Necessity, I scramble onto my desk to illustrate the fort’s position in the valley.” One year, Meissel’s desk went out from under her, and she crashed to the floor in the middle of her lesson. “I said, ‘See what happens when your battle plan goes wrong?’ I know they’ll never forget that.”
A Teapot to Revere

This silver teapot made around 1795–1800 reflects the restrained elegance of early neoclassicism. The deceptively simple construction features bright-cut engraving of the acorn and oak leaf bands and a pinecone finial.

The cypher “AMcK” identifies the owner, Agnes McKean (born in 1770), the daughter of William McKean, a wealthy Boston merchant. Perhaps her father purchased the teapot for her as a wedding gift when she married Henry Swift in May 1800.

The mark “REVERE” confirms the identification of the maker, America’s most famous silversmith—Paul Revere (1734–1818). Remembered best as a Revolutionary War Patriot, Revere was also a talented and prolific silversmith and engraver. An astute businessman, he owned a foundry and successful copper mills.
Digging Into American Meal Traditions

Mark Kurlansky’s new exploration of the history of American cuisine blends equal parts pre-World War II social commentary with recipes for dishes that were popular before the rise of processed foods.

The Food of a Younger Land (Riverhead, 2009) captures America and its diverse peoples at a cusp of history—the transition from the Great Depression to World War II and the complex and increasingly urban-industrial world of the second half of the 20th century.

This was a time, Kurlansky notes, of regional, seasonal and local foods, a time when frozen food was virtually unknown, there were no chain restaurants, and many people grew, caught or hunted much of their food. With the Depression easing, but still causing misery, people made do with what was at hand. Group meals were common and given not just for celebrations. For instance, enterprising individuals with a mess of, say, fish, might throw a fish fry to raise a few dollars.

Kurlansky drew from the essays, vignettes and recipes generated as part of an ambitious Federal Writers Project plan to record what and how America ate. Organized under the Works Progress Administration and divided into five geographical regions, the America Eats project included notable writers such as Richard Wright, John Cheever, Zora Neale Hurston, Eudora Welty, Nelson Algren, Conrad Aiken, Ralph Ellison and Studs Terkel, as well as hundreds of unemployed teachers, editors, reporters and even typists.

These observers were instructed to delve into their communities’ mealtime traditions, especially focusing on communal meals. They recorded not only what people ate and how they prepared it, but also how they ate—the social interactions, the reasons for communal meals, the conversations and the rivalries between different schools of thought on how to prepare a given dish.

America Eats was envisioned as a polished, edited version of these reports. Each region would have an essay, several sidebars and, of course, recipes. The project never jelled—after the December 7, 1941, Japanese Navy attack on Pearl Harbor, writers either went into military service or were transferred to defense projects such as writing training manuals. The materials gathered for the book were handed over to the Library of Congress.

OF NOTE:

ADELINE MOSES LOEB and Her Early American Jewish Ancestors (Syracuse University Press, 2009) offers a rare glimpse into early American Jewish life through accounts of the matriarch of an American Jewish financial dynasty.

Born in 1876 in Montgomery, Ala., Adeline Moses later moved to New York and married Carl M. Loeb, founder of the legendary Wall Street firm of Loeb, Rhoades. In compiling this work, the contributors—John L. Loeb Jr., Kathy L. Plotkin, Margaret Loeb Kempner and Judith E. Endelman—drew on family stories and detailed genealogical work to paint a portrait of her family back into the 17th century.

The stories bring to life the Jewish experience in the Colonies and, later, in both Southern and Northern states. The work is sprinkled with full-color early American portraits and reader-friendly family trees, which should be of interest to researchers.

A short article on the Moses-Loeb family appeared in the July/August 2003 issue of American Spirit. It noted that Adeline Moses Loeb was a direct descendant of a Patriot, and that her daughter, Margaret Loeb Kempner, now deceased, was a proud Daughter.

The book is dedicated to the memory of Patricia Walton Shelby, NSDAR President General, 1980–1983. —B.H.
In researching his book, Kurlansky opened those crates of papers and found not only essays and recipes, but also stories, poems and letters. Many were blurry carbons typed in manual typewriters onto flimsy, smearable onionskin paper.

The writing is sometimes politically incorrect, especially when writers took pains to try to capture dialect, especially African-American speech. This included the use of racially offensive terms and descriptions commonly used 60 and more years ago.

Kurlansky does not shy away from non-PC material, nor does he attempt to clean it up. He argues that it is a part of this time capsule, and as part of the project’s mission to capture the people as well as the provender, the language is valuable in itself.

He also notes that African-American writers such as Hurston were paid less and shunted aside from positions of authority—again, a reflection of the times.

Despite the uneven writing and cultural biases in its sources, The Food of a Younger Land serves up feasts ranging from New England clambakes to Southern chitterling dinners, Midwest lutefisk suppers, Far West smelt fries and Southwest menudo parties.

Mint julep and barbecue fans will find that their preferences and prejudices aren’t anything new. Regions and states have long differed sharply on such crucial matters as the correct way to prepare dishes such as clam chowder, baked beans and cornbread, and what actually is the one, true and inviolate recipe for Jonny cakes (which Kurlansky notes was spelled “Johnny” in some locales).

Some of the recipes would make a modern nutritionist cringe at the amount of saturated fats they employ, especially in the form of eggs, lard and butter. Nonaficionados will balk at regional delicacies such as prairie oysters, wondering how people could eat something like that.

The book will also make younger readers wonder how people ever had time to shop for and cook such meals without microwaves or even electric ranges and stoves, since this was also an era when electric lines had yet to reach many rural homeowners.

Still, some may be tempted to try their hand at making eggnog or fruitcake, or exploring the new “locavore” movement, which urges consumers to eat more locally produced foods.

With its multiple essays and articles, The Food of a Younger Land allows readers to sample, graze or devour as much at a sitting as they like. It’s a feast for the taste buds and the mind and spirit—a reminder that food once was an important bond for family and community, and perhaps should be so again.

— Bill Hudgins
Though Arizona has been a state only since 1912, the region has a rich and beautiful history spanning centuries. The written history of Arizona began when the Spaniards sent parties of exploration northward from Mexico. The first was a Franciscan priest named Marcos de Niza, who entered the territory in 1539.

Other Spanish missionaries followed and established missions in the hopes of bringing Christianity to the American Indians. Now a national monument, Tumacacori Mission, north of Nogales, was founded at the center of an American Indian settlement. Around the same time, foundations were laid for San Xavier del Bac Mission on the outskirts of modern-day Tucson. It is still used for regular services by the Tohono O’odham Nation, whose members live nearby.

Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1821 and eventually went to war with the United States. At that time the land north of the Gila River became United States territory. The rest of the land was acquired by the Gadsden Purchase in 1853. The intention of the Gadsden Purchase—encompassing the present-day Tucson, Sierra Vista and Yuma areas of Arizona—was to allow for the construction of a transcontinental railroad, and it was part of negotiations that finalized unresolved border issues from the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American war in 1848.

Native peoples, explorers from the south and prospectors from the east all had a huge impact on Arizona’s history—and its future. Shiny new cities began to rise up from the lands where illustrious deposits of gold, silver, copper and gemstones were being discovered.

This historical arch is seen clearly in the state’s northern region. First settled by native people like the Hopi, Navajo, Anasazi, Apache and Sinagua, northern Arizona’s mineral riches were discovered by white settlers in the mid-19th century. Today visitors can not only learn about the boomtown history of places like Prescott, Sedona and Jerome, but they can also explore vestiges of the region’s ancient cultures while observing the lives of American Indians who still live in these ancestral lands. The natural attractions are another dramatic lure: Millions are drawn to the Grand Canyon every year, but lesser-known gems like the stunning Canyon de Chelly and the desolate but beautiful Painted Desert attract curious travelers willing to venture a little further off the big canyon’s rim.

EXPLORING ANCIENT LANDS
No trip to Arizona is complete without an exploration of the Grand Canyon. Its dimensions are staggering—277 miles long, up to 18 miles wide and a mile deep—and humans have inhabited the area for thousands of years. It now attracts close to 5 million visitors annually, making it hard to believe
conservationists once had to fight to protect it. As Ken Burns’ recent series, “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea,” explains, disparate local groups disagreed over claims to the canyon before President Theodore Roosevelt intervened to help it achieve a national park designation in 1919.

While you’re in the area, check out these other must-see national parks, national monuments and other scenic natural gems.

- The 84,000-acre Canyon de Chelly National Monument, made up of heavily eroded sandstone walls rising more than 1,000 feet, is an underrated, though smaller, rival to the beauty of the Grand Canyon. The area is comprised entirely of Navajo Tribal Trust Land, and Window Rock is the seat of government and administrative center for the Navajo people, who refer to themselves as the Diné.
Just east of Flagstaff is Walnut Canyon National Monument, which protects about 300 ancient cliff dwellings of tribespeople who lived here from A.D. 1125 to 1250.

The moonlike landscape of Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument was caused by about 200 years of eruptions starting in A.D. 1064. From near Flagstaff, take the 36-mile Loop Drive for views of lava fields, the base of Sunset Crater and parts of the Painted Desert.

Near Sunset Crater Volcano, visit the three-story, nearly 100-room Wupatki Pueblo at Wupatki National Monument. The visitor center features displays on the tribespeople who lived here in the 12th century.

The northeastern part of Arizona is composed of the large Hopi and Navajo reservations. The rainbow-colored Painted Desert stretches more than 93,000 acres through the Navajo Nation, from the Grand Canyon National Park to the Petrified Forest National Park. The desert consists of sedimentary rocks eroded by water and wind, exposing stratified layers of bentonite clay and sandstone. Plan to drive part of the 18-mile Painted Desert Scenic Drive at sunset for the most dramatic views of the buttes' colored bands of red and pink, orange and yellow, and lavender and gray.

Next to the Painted Desert is Petrified Forest National Park, where remnants of a huge pine forest sparkle across the landscape. Visitors can explore displays of 200 million-year-old fossils and Puerco Pueblo and Agate House, monuments to the ancient American Indian tribes that once roamed the area.

VENTURING TO THE VERDE VALLEY

The Verde Valley, only 90 miles north of Phoenix and an hour from Flagstaff, was first settled by American Indian communities like the southern Sinagua people who lived in the area from about A.D. 1125 to 1400. The Hopi Indians guided Spanish explorer Antonio de Espejo here as early as 1583, but it wasn’t until the discovery of deposits of gold, silver and copper in the 19th century that European settlers came searching for riches.

To ensure that gold-rich northern Arizona would remain pro-Union (southern Arizona was pro-Confederacy), Prescott became the site for the capital of the new Arizona Territory in 1864. Today its New England-style architecture and Victorian buildings, distinctive from the Spanish style of other southwestern towns, appeal to visitors, as does the Sharlot Hall Museum, detailing local history. Save time for a sunset view from atop nearby Thumb Butte.

Farmers first settled Camp Verde in 1865 when they decided to grow crops along the Verde River and sell to Prescott’s miners. Fort Verde was built by the U.S. Army as protection against American Indian raids. Its four adobe buildings now make up a state historic park with displays about the area’s early territorial years. Nearby is Montezuma Castle National Monument, a five-story, 20-room cliff dwelling built by southern Sinagua Indians and one of the best-preserved prehistoric ruins in North America. (Archaeologists called the people Sinagua, Spanish for “without water,” because of their ability to live in desert lands.)

Surrounded by stunning red rock mountains and the Coconino National Forest lies Sedona, named in honor of the wife of one of the town founders, Theodore Schnelbly. After the town
was founded in 1876, it became known for its fruit, especially its apple orchards, and in the 1950s it became a haven for artists. Today it welcomes thousands of nature-loving visitors drawn to the high cliffs and lovely forests of Oak Creek Canyon, the natural waterslides of Slide Rock State Park, nature walks at Red Rock State Park and scenic trails like the West Fork Oak Creek Trailhead, an inspiration for Western novelist Zane Grey. Take Airport Road to reach Airport Mesa, which offers panoramas of striking red rock buttes like Coffeepot Rock. Near Sedona, the U.S. Forest Service has opened several cliff dwellings, including the Palatki Ruins and Honanki Ruins, left by ancient Pueblo people.

Cottonwood, founded in 1879 as a farming community, is named for the cottonwood trees that grow along the Verde River. Surrounded by mountains, the scenic area also boasts historical attractions like the Tuzigoot National Monument, an ancient pueblo built by the Sinagua tribe, and the Verde Canyon Railroad.

Once known as the “Billion Dollar Copper Camp,” the boomtown of Jerome was once the fourth-largest city in the Arizona Territory. After the copper mines closed in 1953, it turned into a ghost town. A 1967 designation as a National Historic District and its resurgence into an arts colony helped Jerome gain its present status as a tourist attraction, and today it’s home to dozens of art galleries and shops.

“The town’s slogan is a ‘mile-high town with a billion-dollar view,’ and that’s not an exaggeration,” says Tracy Patterson Kee, owner of Kee to Fine Art Gallery with her husband, Navajo artist Eric Kee.

“We sit on top of Cleopatra Hill and can look out over all of the Verde Valley and the mountains of the Mogollon Rim,” she continues. “On a clear day, we can see all the way to the red rocks of Sedona, about a 15-minute drive away. People are attracted to the galleries here because they have high-quality but reasonably priced local art—and, if you’re into ghosts, we have a few of those, too.”

VISITING TRIBAL LANDS

Arizona’s rich cultural history can be directly attributed to the American Indian people who inhabit the region. Twenty-two American Indian tribes make their homes in Arizona. Their reservations—which cover up to 30 percent of the state’s land—offer educational opportunities for visitors.

But be aware: Each reservation operates under its own set of rules for vacationers, and the rules and etiquette that apply at one don’t necessarily translate to another. Do your research before you visit so that you can observe all tribal laws and regulations while enjoying your time there, but there are a few general guidelines that are helpful to keep in mind:

- Although many reservations are open to visitors, homes on the reservations are private and should be entered only by invitation.
- Many communities, such as the Hopi, forbid photographic, audio and video recordings.
- Dances and other ceremonies are considered sacred. Observe them as you would any other religious activities by dressing and behaving appropriately.
- Amizade, a service-learning program that promotes community-driven service and intercultural immersion and exchange, features a weeklong program on the Navajo reservation in Tuba City, Ariz. Visit http://amizade.org for more information.

Visit www.arizonaguide.com for more tips on planning a respectful and enjoyable visit to tribal lands.

Christmas at Blithewold

Fairy Tales and Fantasies

November 27 - January 3
Sunday - Wednesday 10 am - 5 pm
Thursday - Saturday 1 pm
Musical Performances
Thursday - Saturday 6:30 pm
Afternoon Tea
Wednesday - Friday 2 & 3 pm
Gingerbread Wonderland
December 12 - 27
101 Ferry Rd
Bristol RI
401-253-2707
www.blithewold.org
Tryon Palace
A Resurrection in Historic New Bern
Tryon Palace sits behind her gilded gates, a grande dame of centuries ago and an icon in historic New Bern, the first capital of North Carolina. A young fife and drum corps practices down the street, while tourists trail period-dressed docents through the palace and gardens.

By Phyllis Speidell, Photos by John H. Sheally II
It’s late December, and the temperature is 70 degrees. Fountains are splashing, apricot trees are budding pink, and camellias, daffodils and pansies bloom among the Christmas lights. An open horse-drawn carriage clip-clops through the streets and an evergreen-decked trolley rolls by on guided tours.

It’s hard to imagine, especially during the Christmas holidays when the Georgian-style palace is dressed in peacock feather and shell topiaries, flowers, fruits and greens, that little more than 50 years ago the palace was nonexistent and its grounds were merely a downtown street lined with businesses and homes, many too new to be historic.

Thanks to the efforts of a few determined women working against seemingly impossible odds, the palace that played a significant, if brief, role in the state’s history rose again on its original site with a panache perhaps grander than the original.

The palace complex, with more than 20 historical buildings and 14 acres of heritage gardens, is New Bern’s main attraction and the heart of its tourism industry, according to Michael McMillan, who often lodges visitors at his Sail Inn Bed and Breakfast just half a block from the palace gates.

Alice Ruckart, an exhibits researcher at the palace, says “The palace really is an asset to the community, providing programming geared toward all facets of the community, from gardening to military appreciation days.” After living on the West Coast, in New England and in the Deep South, Ruckart and her husband, like many other retirees, call New Bern home.

“New Bern is a magnet for retirees who come for the golf and the water,” she says. “We came for the old houses and history.”

Laughing, she explains that her job at the palace is part-time and “temporary”—as it has been since 1996.

A SYMBOL OF EXCESS

To understand the affection Ruckart and other North Carolinians hold for the palace and the story of its $3.5 million resurrection, you must go back to 1764 when William Tryon, a Londoner with ambition and a wealthy wife, was appointed the royal governor of North Carolina.

The Colony was a backwater area then, with no established capital. The Colonial Assembly records were carried by wagon to wherever the assembly was meeting, often in New Bern. Eager to shine and advance his career, Tryon aimed to establish a permanent seat of government at New Bern, advantageously situated on the North Carolina coastline. He brought an English architect, John Hawks, along with him to design an English-style palace as a house of government as well as the official residence of the royal governor.

Construction started in 1767 on the expansive brick building with walls 2- and 3 -a-half to 3 feet thick. Laid out in true symmetrical Georgian style, the palace rose on the edge of a dense forest overlooking the Trent River. But backcountry North Carolinians, already rebelling against what they saw
The Man Behind the Governor’s Mansion

By Bill Hudgins

As governor of North Carolina and later of New York, and during the Revolution as a British officer, William Tryon earned a reputation for zealously carrying out both his instructions from England and his own sense of duty. His actions as a military leader during the Revolution actually earned some rebukes from the British high command for being too aggressive toward citizens.

Born in England, Tryon served 13 years in the British army before being appointed North Carolina lieutenant governor in 1764. When the governor died the next year, Tryon was elevated to the post.

Despite vehement opposition from the colonists, he supported the hated Stamp Act in 1765 and refused to allow the Colonial Assembly to meet while they were in effect, thus thwarting efforts to send delegates to the Stamp Act Congress. Preferring his personal opposition to the act, he nonetheless felt compelled to enforce it. To ameliorate the effects of the act, he offered to pay the duty on many of the stamped items.

Tryon founded a much-needed postal service for the growing colony. He also settled the long-debated matter of where to locate the Colonial capital. However, he incurred new wrath over the scale of the governor’s mansion, Tryon Palace. Much of the anger came from the western edge of North Carolina. As in other Colonies, settlers along the western frontiers often felt alienated and disenfranchised from the more populous seaboard settlements. These pioneers hated taxes, regulation and government officials in general; the group came to be known as the Regulators.

In 1768 and again in 1771, Tryon led the militia against Regulators in the western part of the state, winning a decisive victory on May 16, 1771, at Alamance Creek against a force of 2,000 protestors. He hanged seven of the leaders and pardoned most of the other Regulators.

ON THE BRINK OF RUIN

In spite of the protest, Tryon and his wife and young daughter moved into the palace, still under construction, in 1770 and hosted an elaborate housewarming and grand illumination in December.

Three months later, Tryon rode out of New Bern to head a military offensive against the rebellion. He returned in June to find he’d been ordered to New York to assume the royal governorship there—the more prestigious post he’d aspired to all along.

Tryon and his family lived in the palace only about a year, and his successor, the last royal governor, Josiah Martin, stayed less than four years, fleeing from the Revolution in May 1775.

Two months later, Tryon was appointed governor of New York, succeeding Lord Dunmore. There he turned his attention to improving New York City’s defenses and persuading the Colonial legislature to appropriate funds for a militia.

He also ran smack into another wrangle brought about by the British Parliament’s attempts to extract more revenue from the Colonies. The 1772 Tea Act enraged colonists, leading to the storied Boston Tea Party in December 1772. Tryon tried but failed to allow a cargo of tea to land in New York.

He left New York for an extended visit to England in April 1774; by the time he returned in June 1775, the Colonies had revolted. His loyalties lay solidly with the Crown, and the Continental Congress attempted to arrest Tryon, but General George Washington countermanded the order.

Tryon did not return the favor. After being driven out of the city and taking refuge on a British ship in the harbor, Tryon and the mayor of New York, David Mathews, hatched a scheme to kidnap Washington in 1776.

Before they could implement the scheme, Thomas Hickey, a conspirator in the plot, was arrested for passing counterfeit money. While in jail, he bragged about the plan to his cell mate, who informed the authorities. Hickey was court-martialed, convicted of mutiny and sedition, and executed.

After the arrival of Admiral William Howe’s fleet in 1776 put New York City back in British hands and Tryon was able to return to shore, he was given command of loyalist troops. He led a series of raids in Connecticut and, in 1778, was promoted to the rank of major general (in America only), and was given command of British troops on Long Island. Another series of violent raids along the Connecticut coast followed, which were so excessive that they earned a rebuke from General Henry Clinton. Tryon returned to England in 1780 and died there in 1788.

No longer the symbol of British rule, the palace became North Carolina’s capitol. But the turmoil of war and recovery took a toll on the structure, and by the time George Washington visited in 1791, he called the palace “a good brick building now hastening to ruins.”

Settlers pushed the North Carolina frontier westward, and the capital moved to Raleigh in 1794. A Masonic lodge rented the old palace as a meeting hall, and New Bern Academy held classes there until a mysterious midnight fire swept through four years later, devastating the structure.

Only the memories of the palace remained strong—along with stories of some of its residents. One story goes that when Martin, who built the dovecote at the palace, fled the capital, he left his belongings behind. The Patriots eagerly auctioned them off. And apparently the palace floors are all pine because Tryon admired the
“well-scrubbed look of bare pine,” Ruckart says. Another story goes that during the time of the Townshend tax acts, Tryon tried to win over a company of rebellious local militiamen with a barbecued ox and a few barrels of beer. The insulted soldiers threw the ox into the river and emptied the beer on the ground.

By the 19th century, the palace remains had vanished under George Street, a road with dozens of houses and businesses along each side and extending through the original palace property to the Trent River Bridge. According to Ruckart, one wing of the building—the stable—remained intact enough to later become a carriage maker’s facility and later a home, a chapel, a school and, finally, a stucco-covered apartment building during World War II. Reportedly the DAR tried, unsuccessfully, to purchase the stable to use as a museum in 1926.

In the early part of the 20th century, however, interest in local history surged through the state. Restoring the palace became a popular cause in the 1930s, spurred by local historian and newspaper editor Gertrude Carraway, who was later elected President General of the NSDAR in 1953.

Her push to rebuild Tryon Palace gained momentum with the discovery of Hawks’ original architectural plans and a 1944 trust fund established by wealthy New Bern native Maude Moore Latham. Seven years later Latham left her estate, valued at more than $1 million, to the restoration project if the state agreed to accept and maintain the completed Tryon Palace complex. The heiress also designated a large collection of furniture, art, silver and chandeliers to start furnishing the mansion.

The next year North Carolina created the Tryon Palace Commission that was, after Latham’s 1951 death, led by her daughter, May Gordon Latham Kellenberger, also a New Bern native and, at that time, an active DAR member. She faced the challenges of rerouting the Trent River Bridge and Route 70 that ran through the original palace site (archaeologists unearthed the original palace foundation directly under the highway) and buying up 50 parcels of private property to recreate the Palace Square.

It was an overwhelming task, but by 1959 the main structure of the palace and its kitchen wing were rebuilt, the stable restored to its 18th-century grandeur, and the palace gates opened to the public. Ironically, according to Ruckart, the sentry gates, while appropriate to the period, were not part of original plan.

Over the last half century, New Bern and North Carolina have benefited from Tryon Palace’s popularity as a tourist attraction that draws up to 100,000 visitors a year.

“Mrs. Kellenberger and her fellow DAR ladies were good stewards of the history of New Bern,” Ruckart says.
RECOVERING TRYON’S HISTORY

The long-buried original foundation and original footprint, along with Hawks’ plans (found in the New York Historical Society archive and later in London), facilitated a fairly accurate “new” palace.

“There wasn’t much guesswork,” Ruckart says.

But Tryon Palace continues to evolve as new research about its past surfaces, occasionally from unexpected sources.

William Tryon’s inventory of belongings listed the furnishings found in a well-to-do home of the 18th century. One of the reconstruction committees took a shopping trip to England armed with a 25-page wish list based on the inventories and sought out everything from marble mantels to trim molding. Even the door locks were made in England.

In 1783, a Venezuelan, Francisco de Miranda, visited the original palace and raved about its beauty. That same year Hawks wrote a letter to Miranda detailing the interior’s architectural trim and how the basement rooms were used as apartments for senior servants and storage.

After the letter was found in the Venezuelan National Archives in the early 1990s, some of the palace rooms were reworked to better match Hawks’ description, the parlor and dining rooms were switched, and the front and rear attic dormers removed since apparently they were not authentic to the original construction.

Tryon Palace will continue to evolve, according to Philippe Lafargue, deputy director of the historic site. A new 60,000-square-foot History Education Center is due to open in July on the Trent River shore, coinciding with New Bern’s 300th birthday. The facility will replace the current visitor center—housed in a recycled service station—and add a new classroom and gift shop, performance hall and a traveling exhibit space.

The new center will focus on regional history and the integral link between the region and its waters.

A new family-focused display area, sponsored by Pepsi, will include interactive, hands-on electronic exhibits including a time machine.

“It’s aimed for kids,” Lafargue says. “But I think once they’re there, the parents will enjoy it, too.”

Not only is the property constantly evolving, but its caretakers place a high value on enlivening history for visitors.

“Tryon Palace is not static,” Lafargue says. “It continues to move along, helping visitors learn more about the history they’re walking through.”

Phyllis Speidel and John Sheally’s story on St. Mary’s City, Md., appeared in the March/April 2009 issue.

Clockwise from top: An arch of apples and greenery is a typical 18th-century holiday decoration found throughout historic New Bern and the Tryon Palace complex. A hand-knit stocking hangs from the chimney in the George Dixon House. A tower of cream puffs draped with spun sugar offers a feast for the eyes in the Tryon Palace dining room.

Stand and Face the Morning tells the story of the Musick and Lewis families of Colonial Virginia, who followed the migration down the Great Wagon Road into the backcountry of the Carolinas. The narrative follows them through the trials of hewing homesteads from the wilderness, wrestling with the choices of allegiance at the onset of the Revolutionary War, and struggling for survival as they are caught up in the bitter civil war engulfing their homeland.

An avid student of history, Helen Owens has written a compelling story of life on the frontier. She has shared her passion for history and literature with her students on both secondary and college levels for more than 25 years.

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www.helenowens.com
IN the 1760s, geography teacher John Spilsbury was in a quandary. His students just didn’t seem to be grasping the lesson he was trying to teach. So, Spilsbury glued a map to a flat piece of wood and cut it into pieces. According to the American Jigsaw Puzzle Society, Spilsbury, a London engraver and mapmaker, cut around the borders of the countries on his map using a fine-bladed saw. The end product helped his students with their geography, and history recognizes it as the first jigsaw puzzle.

Today, more than 200 years later, Georgean and Paul Kyle are carrying on that history in their own toymaking shop, Rootin’ Ridge Toymakers, in Austin, Texas.

For the last 34 years, the Kyles have been designing and crafting wooden toys and puzzles.

“At the time—back in 1974—another recession was going on. Paul was a carpentry contractor; house building and remodeling were very slow,” Georgean says. “It came Christmastime, and he had some tools that he inherited from his father, who made toys as a hobby. Paul brought home scraps from a construction project, designed a few toys, and used the tools he inherited from his father to make Christmas presents. Everybody loved them and said ‘y’all should try doing this.’”

FOR THE KIDS

Just like Spilsbury more than 200 years ago, the Kyles do what they do for children’s enjoyment.

“Our greatest joy? Watching the children’s faces light up when they come through the door and start playing with the toys. You have to play with the toys!” Georgean says. “We’ve been in business so long, the kids who got our first toys and puzzles more than 30 years ago have grown up with us, and now they’re bringing their own children in.”

Each of their puzzles is individually traced, cut, painted and assembled by hand.

“Our toys are our own designs,” says Georgean. “Paul does the table saw, radial-arm saw and routing work, and I do the scroll-saw and band-saw work. Then we split the tasks of sanding and drilling the toys. We each have our specialty tools, and some areas in which we overlap to get the toys ready.”
THINKING LOCALLY

According to noahwebsterhouse.org, during Colonial times, children would play with yo-yos, wooden hoops and puzzles to learn skills they might need later. Such games and toys taught Colonial children how to solve problems, better use their hands and follow rules and instructions. Since there were no toy stores, the materials used to make these games and toys were found in nature or around the house.

Well before it was a trend to think locally and sustainably, the Kyles have been doing so.

“We get all of our materials locally; we support the local lumberyards and hardware stores,” Georgean says. “We use a lot of yellow and white pine. Pine is a durable, replenishable wood and very renewable.”

Using local and renewable resources allows the Kyles to keep costs down.

“When most folks think of handcrafted toys, they think hundreds of dollars,” Georgean says. “Most of our toy prices are quite reasonable.”

NO TIME TO RETIRE

The Kyles don’t plan on retiring anytime soon.

“It’s really a very enjoyable job,” Georgean says. “We get to be creative. We can pick a project we want to work on any day that we want to.”

Summer Huggins’ story on family photography tips appeared in the July/August 2009 issue.

Footsteps to Forever

Footsteps to Forever is a riveting World War II historical novel filled with suspense, romance, and danger. Please visit www.samuelbatybooks.com for reviews, TV interviews, and more.

Paul and Georgean Kyle of Rootin’ Ridge Toymakers each have different tools they specialize in using when crafting their wooden toys and puzzles. From old-fashioned number blocks to animal and creature puzzles, the couple fashions each toy in their Austin, Texas, workshop. Their wheeled animals come in all shapes and sizes. In true Texas style, the Kyles even make an armadillo.
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In the 17th century, believing that yuletide festivities were the devil’s work, the Puritans of Boston, Mass., banned Christmas. "More mischief is that time committed than in all the year besides ... What diceing and carding, what eating and drinking, what banqueting and feasting are then used ... to the great dishonor of God and the impoverishing of the realm," said Philip Stubbes, an English pamphleteer, criticizing the behavior and diversions of that time. His sentiments spoke for the Puritans: Christmas was an excuse for overindulgence and shocking conduct.
more sociable disagreed, and that disagreement gave birth to a jolly old man, Father Christmas. He arrived in the early 17th century wearing a fur hat and a thick-furred robe; a genial figure with bushy white eyebrows, a moustache and full beard who enjoyed the cheery spirits, feasting and wassailing shared by many during Christmastime. The law banning the celebrations was repealed in 1681, but Christmas did not become a legal holiday until 1870.

Friends and neighbors have long exchanged well-mannered and warm notes during the holiday season. Children at boarding schools, far away from loved ones, were assigned a “Christmas piece” to be written on quality paper in their best script. At first, the letters emphasized their scholastic accomplishments, but they soon were hand-tinted and embellished with religious images, wildlife and Christmas greetings. The Christmas letter dates to that time as a way to keep in touch and express every good wish for happiness and health during the coming year.

In the early 1800s, greeting cards from the privileged and well-to-do were hand-delivered to family, friends and acquaintances. Cards were costly and, until 1840 and the introduction of the postage stamp, delivery of mail was expensive in the United States and England; rates depended on the distance between sender and receiver, and each paid the price.

The Uniform Penny Post, introduced in England in 1840, offered uniform rates to all locations paid for by the sender; the idea soon spread to other countries, including the United States. After the Civil War, clerks sorted the mail aboard trains; by the 1870s, the trains moved more mail than stagecoaches and steamboats combined. Average Americans could now manage to pay for heartfelt Christmas wishes sent to folks who lived all across this vast land.

The First Christmas Cards

John Calcott Horseley introduced the world’s first popular Christmas card in 1843. Printed in lithography and hand-colored by a professional “colorer,” the card cost a shilling, and approximately 1,000 were sold. Horseley was commissioned by Sir Henry Cole, an industrial designer, art administrator and museum director who was associated with the Penny Post, perforated postage stamps, postcards and the Great Exhibition—the foundation of London’s Victoria and Albert Museum.

The outer panels of the three-paneled, 3x5-inch card showed charitable feeding and clothing of the destitute, while the center panel highlighted a family enjoying a cheery Christmas and raising their glasses in celebration. One of the celebrants, a child enjoying a taste of wine, shocked temperance workers who pronounced the card guilty of “fostering the moral corruption of children.” The temperance workers raised an outcry, but they were a minority; within 10 years, Christmas cards were sent and received all over England. In his memoir, Sir Henry noted, “It is a not unpleasant result of the extensive use of Christmas cards that the revenue of the country is considerably benefited by the custom thus indirectly reducing taxation.”

In America, however, Christmas cards were uncommon; only a few people sent business cards with a festive theme. In 1850, a card with a lithographed design of a family enjoying their presents (including toys sold by the store) was advertised by R.H. Pease’s Great Variety Store in the Temple of Fancy in Albany, N.Y. But the honor of becoming the father of the American Christmas card belongs to Louis Prang.

Prang began his career as an engraver in Philadelphia; during the Civil War, he produced maps that were copies of battle sites used to monitor troop movements. In the 1860s, he devised a printing process known as chromolithography. A less expensive technique than hand-coloring, it became the bedrock of today’s printing industry.

A decade later Prang, by then settled in Boston, achieved success reproducing Victorian art—oil paintings of angels, cuddly animals, cherubic children, flowers, fine-looking women and bucolic vistas. The press granted his facsimiles favorable reviews, and his copies of famous paintings became popular with the public.
Visiting an exhibition in Vienna in 1873, Prang won a medal for artistic excellence in chromolithography. His business cards featured flowers on a tinted or black background with a ribbon scroll where a name could be inscribed. An acquaintance suggested the scroll could be used for holiday greetings. Prang sent the cards to England, where the exchange of his fashionable Christmas greetings became part of a festive holiday tradition.

A Growing Tradition

By 1875, the brightly decorated keepsakes were successful in the United States. Embellishments such as silk fringe, satin, brocade, lace, embroidery, ribbons and flowers were often added to the cards. However, there were no images of garlanded trees, Santa Claus or nativity scenes. Prang’s artists became known for elegant designs on the back of each card. Almost a million cards a year—with prices ranging from 75 cents to $1.25 per card—were printed by 1881. Thanksgiving, Easter and Valentine’s Day joined Christmas as a time to send good wishes to cherished friends. Thousands of Americans were the joyful recipients of his heartwarming greetings; young ladies, confiding in their diaries, tallied the number of “Prangs” they had received during the year, along with other intimate secrets.

Prang engaged famous artists, including Elihu Vedder, who designed glassware, as well as mosaics and statuettes for Tiffany, murals that may be seen in the Reading Room of the Library of Congress, and work exhibited in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts; creations by Will H. Low, who painted the ceiling murals of New York’s Waldorf Astoria Hotel; and illustrations by Thomas Moran, who painted landscapes of the American West that inspired conservation of wilderness areas. Today their holiday portrayals are considered highly desired collectibles.

Ladies enjoyed cards with perfumed sachets during the 1860s and 1870s. The voguish little envelope-like cards were often made of satin, silk or gold paper lace. Pillowed with tissue paper or cotton, the greetings were perfumed with a few drops of fragrance, either orris root or lavender powder.

In the late 1800s, holiday cards designed by Kate Greenaway, the Victorian children’s writer and illustrator, became fashionable. They were highly crafted and held...
Louis Prang could hardly have imagined that his success in printing greeting cards would grow into a multibillion-dollar industry. Founded in 1941, the Greeting Card Association (GCA) named its annual industry awards the Louies in honor of Prang.

“Since the mid-1800s when greeting cards were introduced to the American public, our industry has helped people express a variety of shared emotions,” says Don French of Paper Magic Group Inc., and GCA president (2005–2007), at the organization’s Web site, www.greetingcard.org.

“What started out as cards just for Christmas and Valentine’s Day today has expanded into a broad range of traditional and humorous products for a variety of occasions—new holidays, birthdays, new babies, weddings, new homes, graduation, new friends and more,” French continues. “Despite all types of modern means of communicating, it’s paper cards that are treasured.”

Prang was influential in other ways as well. He also could arguably be called the father of American art education. He believed strongly that all children should learn about color, form and other elements that influence an awareness of beauty. While teaching his young daughter about art, Prang developed nontoxic watercolor paints, the first of many child-safe art materials. The Prang Educational Company published sketchbooks for schools beginning in 1882, and his watercolors were used in classrooms for many years.
**Tidings of Joy**

surprises like a fan, skaters twirling around a mirrored pond or a bell, bird or candle.

Long before Christian Christmas was celebrated, holly was considered lucky, and former enemies sealed their peace by kissing beneath a sprig of mistletoe. The greenery became a tradition during celebrations and often appeared on cards. Religious cards began to appear in the 1890s—angels, cherubs, Christmas trees, nativity scenes, mother and child, and religious subjects by old masters.

During that period, inexpensive Christmas postcards produced in Germany became a fad that lasted until World War I. Cheap and gimmicky cards, inferior copies of creative greetings produced by pioneers of American and European cards, flooded the card market. Manufactured in Europe with second-rate workmanship, they were of poor quality but much lower cost. Fine work and embellishments made in America were expensive, and those with high standards were forced to give up the greeting card business.

Many Christmas cards produced during WWI showed soldiers in a dugout raising a glass to honor missing friends. Cards sent to the front were decorated with stars and stripes or a space primed with a gummed surface, waiting for a kiss. The verse read:

“For Uncle Sam
you’re fighting
And it makes me love you so
That I send a kiss in
the space above
To take wherever you go!”

World War II introduced Defense Stamp Christmas Cards, along with V-mail greetings, to encourage the sale of war bonds; the Greeting Card Association supplied the Red Cross with millions of greeting cards to be mailed to wounded servicemen.

After the war, America’s modern holiday card industry grew. Added to paper greetings are musical cards and electronic cards. More than 7 billion greeting cards are purchased each year within the United States; the exchange of cards as expressions of affection and goodwill is one of the most widely accepted traditions in America. Christmas remains the premier card-selling holiday.

*Elise Warner has written travel stories for The Washington Post and Historic Traveler.*
If you journey into the southwestern reaches of Alabama, down into the Black Belt where chalky limestone bluffs covered in rich, black topsoil rise above the junction of two rivers—the Tombigbee and the Black Warrior—you’ll hear a story.

It’s a story of barges full of French exiles who once ventured down these waters in search of a home and found one on the banks of these white chalk bluffs they called Ecor Blanc. It’s the story of their struggle to build a new life on a foreign frontier by growing the crops they thought they knew best—grapes and olives—in a wilderness of thick forests and canebrake. It’s a story of the joie de vivre they brought to a rugged land with no roads, except for crude trails forged by American Indians, and none of the luxuries abundant in the cities from which they had come. It’s the legacy of the Vine and Olive Colony, a group of French immigrants who first settled in Philadelphia, then traveled to Alabama in 1817–1818 to establish a fleeting but ambitious settlement on territorial land given to them by the U.S. government.

These settlers were no ordinary pioneers. Some were accomplished generals and noted intellectuals who had fought alongside or were loyal to Napoleon.
Bonaparte and were forced to flee France after his devastating defeat at Waterloo in 1815. For them, the colony was a temporary home until they could return safely to France. Others were planters, plantation managers and families who had escaped the 1791 slave uprisings in the French colony of Saint-Domingue (now Haiti). For them, the Alabama settlement offered a permanent place to put down roots. Whatever their differences, these expatriates were bound by a common optimism: That the frontier was a place of endless possibility where they could find a fresh start.

Arriving on the Bluffs

“White Bluff is one of the finest situations I ever saw in my life, and the lands lying around it are of the finest quality,” wrote Colonel Nicholas Simon Parmentier, secretary for the colony, in a letter to a friend soon after the group’s arrival. “Nature here offers us everything. If we know how to profit by these advantages, we must be happy.”

The colonists didn’t realize at the time that the bluffs where they disembarked sat a few miles outside of the four contiguous townships the government had allotted them. The land was so new to the United States, which had just opened up acreage gained in treaties with the Creek Indians, it hadn’t even been surveyed yet. Encouraged to settle among the bluffs by a Choctaw Indian they met at Fort Tombecbee, a former French military outpost, and heartened by the vegetation thriving there, the immigrants began clearing land, plotting out lots and erecting cabins. They named their town Demopolis, Greek for “city of the people.”

It wasn’t long before more immigrants began arriving and a charter for governing the city was created. In a nod to their new French neighbors, the Alabama Territorial Legislature named the county encompassing the Vine and Olive lands “Marengo” to commemorate Napoleon’s victory over the Austrians at Marengo, Italy. The county seat was named “Linden” after Hohenlinden near Munich, Germany, where the French also defeated the Austrians in 1800. Ironically, though high-ranking generals of Napoleon’s regime came up with the idea for the colony, put up money for the land and used their clout to persuade the government to cut a deal for it, only a handful of them ever stepped foot in Alabama.

These men did, however, use their influence to gain the backing of prominent politicians like Thomas Jefferson, President James Monroe and Henry Clay, who in turn convinced Congress not only to reserve 92,000 acres in the Alabama Territory for the colony, but also to authorize the sale of the land at $2 per acre payable in 14 years without interest. Congress approved the act with two stipulations: No grantee

This illustration of French immigrants settling the Vine and Olive Colony was done by contemporary artist Nathan Glick, who based his interpretation on an 1820 French painting of the colony’s founding.
could claim more than 650 acres, and the townships had to be contiguous. Though plenty of Americans were outraged by the “gift,” historians speculate that those who favored it may have hoped that putting seasoned French fighters in the middle of the territory would deter the Spanish and British from launching an attack against the Gulf Coast, which was militarily vulnerable. But guarding the Gulf was the last thing on these veterans’ minds. In fact, a group of the most adventurous—and desperate—of these men used the profit they made off their land to launch an ill-conceived expedition to invade Spanish Texas.

“Many signed on to get free land, which they immediately turned around and sold,” said Rafe Blaufarb, author of *Bonapartists in the Borderlands: French Exiles and Refugees on the Gulf Coast, 1815–1835* (University of Alabama Press, 2006). “These were men who were used to commanding thousands of soldiers; they fought in the most glorious battles of the age, and the idea of going to Alabama and cutting down trees to build a home was the last thing they wanted to do. They still lived by the sword.”

One exception was General Count Charles Lefebvre Desnouettes, one of Napoleon’s most celebrated cavalry officers. Desnouettes invested in the colony, purchasing agricultural equipment and importing vine cuttings and olive seedlings from France, and was among the first colonists to arrive at Demopolis. Once in Alabama, though, the illustrious general led a rather inconspicuous life. While he occasionally petitioned the territorial and federal government on the colony’s behalf, he struggled as a farmer. A general store that he ran, selling items imported from Mobile, was unsuccessful. Within the colony, Desnouettes seemed to be remembered best for his hospitality—he was known to have asked friends in Philadelphia to send luxury items, so he could host the occasional dinner party—as well as his homesickness.

With his wife and daughter back in France, “almost from the minute he arrives all he talks about is getting back,” said Blaufarb, who has translated Desnouettes’ surviving letters to family. One of his cabins even featured a shrine to Napoleon, complete with a bronze bust of the general flanked by swords, flags and battle trinkets.
Hardships and Celebrations
While the Vine and Olive Colony’s Napoleonic roots may have brought credence to the endeavor, the Saint-Domingue refugees, who comprised the majority of the colony, proved to be its real backbone. Not only did they have every intention of staying in Alabama, they dreamed of re-establishing the kind of life they had known on the plantations where they had worked or lived near in the French West Indies. “Within 24 hours of landing in Mobile [on their way to Demopolis], they started buying slaves,” Blaufarb said. “[Once they arrived] they set them to work clearing the land. In spite of what they were supposed to be doing—planting grapes and olives—they started also planting corn and cotton, because they knew if they wanted to be successful, that’s what they had to do.”

Despite their optimism, colonists faced their share of hardships on the frontier. Large, dense patches of cane made clearing the land difficult and traveling more than a mile or two a day impossible. Though the rivers were navigable, getting anywhere required taking a boat upriver against the current. The heat and humidity were unforgiving, and malaria ran rampant. Within the first two years, nearly a quarter of the colonists died from disease, according to Blaufarb.

As backbreaking as the days could be, the colonists didn’t let it stop them from enjoying the finer moments of life. The colonists “had something to celebrate in spite of their misfortunes: They had escaped persecution and execution; they had found a new home,” wrote Winston Smith in his 1967 book Days of Exile: The Story of the Vine and Olive Colony in Alabama (University of Alabama Press). While they may not have all dressed in suits, silk gowns and satin slippers, as some local legends have suggested, they carried with them a spirit of gaiety that infused the rugged New World landscape with a touch of Old World elegance. Smith cites this recollection from a grandson of one of the settlers, who described how the colonists would gather for a night of drinking and dancing around an improvised ballroom: “... They used to assemble on the broken bluff near Bluff Hall, and dance to the music of a fiddler. The surface of the bluff had been smoothed to make a ballroom floor, and I have often thought how very romantic it must have been, out there on the bluff under the stars ...”

The settlers got along well with the American Indians and, though inexperienced farmers, even learned from local...
tribes how to clear and cultivate the land and plant vegetables. Most of the hostilities they encountered came from squatters who arrived during the height of “Alabama Fever,” an era when Anglo-Americans from neighboring states rushed in to claim large tracts of land in the territory. It wasn’t long before these groups began to take over. Of the 1,700 people listed in Marengo County in an 1818 census, fewer than 200 were French. When an official survey of the land was completed later that year, it revealed that the French colonists had strayed from the boundary of their original grant. This dealt the Vine and Olive colonists a devastating blow: They would have to abandon the town they had worked so hard to build.

The Settlement’s Decline

The group moved their settlement a mile and a half away, from the Tombigbee’s east bank to the Black Warrior’s south bank, where they built a new town called Aigleville, in honor of Napoleon’s ensign, the eagle. The land wasn’t as fertile as it was along the white bluffs, but they upheld their promise to the government to plant grapes and olives. But soon they discovered that the soil and climate were unsuitable for growing the crops, despite what they had been told by scouts. According to Smith, the vines imported from France often arrived dead or out of season, and the grapes that survived failed to produce suitable wine because the heat caused them to ripen too quickly.

To survive off the land, the colonists realized that they would have to abandon their town again and move their settlement closer to their farm allotments. This time they split up, forming small communities along the Black Warrior River, but drought and labor shortages in the area continued to sabotage their efforts. By now, most of the colonists with a Napoleonic connection had returned to France, with some even recovering their ranks and fortunes. Others left to settle in the French-dominated cities of Mobile and New Orleans. In 1821, Desnouettes received word of his long-awaited pardon from the Bourbon government and left for France, but sadly he never made it. He died in a shipwreck off the Irish coast on his voyage home.

The colony was declining by 1825, when a delegation dined with Lafayette during his visit to the region. His secretary described them as not being “in a state of great prosperity,” noting that “their European prejudices and their great inexperience in commerce and agriculture will prevent them from being formidable rivals of the Americans for a length of time.” Those who remained, many of whom included families from Saint-Domingue, ultimately gave up planting grapes and olives and focused on cotton and corn. Eventually they built the large plantations they had dreamed of and intermarried with Anglo-American families. By 1830, some of these settlers were the wealthiest landowners in the region, though the colony that brought them there had ceased to exist.

Today the land where the Vine and Olive Colony existed between Demopolis and Greensboro shows hardly a trace of the French who settled there. Most of the families who stayed adopted the language, culture and Protestant religion of the region, and few landmarks have survived from the settlement. But the names of these French pioneers are still spoken in this part of the country—and not just in the place names of towns, creeks or streets. Their story has lived on and become the subject of books and even inspired a screenplay titled “The Fighting Kentuckian,” which was shown in theaters in 1949.

Though the idea that the Vine and Olive Colony was populated by aristocratic Napoleonic officers who brought sophisticated Old World habits to Alabama may have been embellished through the years, Blaufarb said, the story is an integral part of the local lore. Some even believe that the French shaped the mores, traditions and temperament of those who live there today. Whatever the legacy of the colony, it’s one that the people of Demopolis still find worth remembering and celebrating, says resident Joe Turner.

“The white bluffs where the exiles landed are still here; the rivers they traveled—the Tombigbee and Black Warrior—still flow,” Turner says. “It’s a story that’s passed down through generations, and it shouldn’t just land in a scholarly tome stuck in a library somewhere. It should stay vibrant in the place where it happened.”

Emily McMackin’s story on El Camino Real in Texas appeared in the March/April 2009 issue.

Vine & Olive Colony

This log cabin in Marengo County was believed to be one of the only surviving landmarks of Alabama’s Vine and Olive Colony.
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Our most visionary Founding Father, Rush proclaimed the virtues of healthy country living and he practiced what he preached. So while courting Julia Stockton, a country girl from New Jersey, he promised to provide her with a bucolic country cottage in which they would live after their marriage. It took four years, but Rush made good on his promise and began purchasing real estate in Oxford Township, Philadelphia County, in 1780. They called their country retreat “Cottage Farm.”

The home Rush built for his wife was a fine house—a two-story, one-pile, five-bay, center-hall Federal stone house that had a kitchen wing extending from the rear facade at the northwestern end of the house. The kitchen wing had a shed roof, which sloped from the northwestern wall to the southeastern wall, instead of a gable roof that was more typical of farmhouses.

Rush built a well-appointed and comfortable “city house,” ideal for a prosperous professional man of that period, not a vernacular farmhouse like the one in which he had been born in Byberry Township, Philadelphia County.

A FINANCIAL REVERSAL

Unfortunately, Rush seems to have suffered a financial reversal late in 1792, possibly due to the stock market crash that year and the ensuing economic downturn. Needing to raise cash, he sold Cottage Farm on December 31, 1792. Apparently he did not expect the sale of Cottage Farm to generate sufficient cash to solve his financial problems, so in January 1793, he also sold real estate that his wife had inherited from her parents.

Apparently Rush was so distraught by his failure to retain the property and uphold his promise to Julia that he never spoke of either Cottage Farm or his financial crisis of 1792 again. From what appear to be ripped-out pages in the original manuscript of his day book during this period, which is part of the collection of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia,
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FINDING COTTAGE FARM

Ferreting out the facts surrounding Rush’s creation of Cottage Farm was a challenging task. The property evolved from six real estate transactions, starting in 1780 when Rush purchased three small adjoining parcels of land from Philip Moore. One of these parcels had a small house on it, while the other two parcels were raw land. In 1781, Rush bought an adjoining 76-acre farm from White Matlack, and in 1782 he purchased an additional contiguous parcel of raw land from William Busby.

From the deeds we know that Rush built his new house on the 43 acres of land that he owned on the south side of Adams Road. Then he subdivided the remaining 65 acres of the Matlack farm on the north side of Adams Road and sold it, with its buildings, to Dr. John Redman in the spring of 1784.

After Rush sold Cottage Farm, his adjoining neighbor, William Davidson, acquired the property. Davidson rented out Rush’s “mansion” and farmed the land. After Davidson’s death, the property was purchased by Robert and Eliza Solly, who remodeled and updated the house in the style favored in the 1830s. Solly resided at and farmed Cottage Farm until his death. In 1868, Eliza Solly sold Cottage Farm, and the Knights of Pythias Greenwood Cemetery Company adaptively reused Dr. Rush’s first country estate as a burial ground for Civil War veterans and their families.

COTTAGE FARM IMPERILED

Within the last year, Cancer Treatment Centers of America (CTCA) purchased the controlling interest in the Knights of Pythias Greenwood Cemetery Company with the stated intention of expanding its hospital facilities into the cemetery. Although CTCA has stated publicly that it will retain Rush’s house, it has not yet presented any specific plans for the restoration or adaptive reuse to the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

CTCA has stated unequivocally that it will not restore the Rush house to its 1783 appearance, citing the cost of doing so as being prohibitively expensive. CTCA has committed itself only to returning the Rush house to its 1959 appearance. When contacted for this article, an attorney for CTCA responded by saying “... neither CTCA nor any of its affiliates has the expertise to provide an opinion on the historical significance of ... any of the buildings on the cemetery grounds.”

The Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission (PHMC) ruled that the Rush house is ineligible for inclusion on the National Register because “[t]he property is not significant under Criterion B for association with Benjamin Rush. Even if Rush did build or occupy the house, that does not automatically make it eligible for the National Register ... Of all of the reasons Rush is important, what did he do at this property that contributes to his importance?”

PHMC’s question may be impossible to answer. However, it is worth noting that Rush, who published 286 literary works consisting of essays, articles and books, experienced his most prolific period during the 12 years when he occupied his country estate in Oxford Township. He published 121 items from 1780 through 1792. While he was the owner and occupant of Cottage Farm, he also published his most important works, A Plan for Establishing Public Schools in Pennsylvania, in 1786, and Medical Inquiries and Observations Upon the Diseases of the Mind, in 1789. The latter earned him the designation of the father of American psychiatry.

RUSH’S REAL ESTATE

After attending medical school in Europe, Rush resided in a house on Front Street that overlooked the Philadelphia wharfs from 1770 to 1780. All of the buildings on the east side of Front Street have been razed, and I-95 now occupies that land.

While residing at Cottage Farm, Rush also maintained residences and medical offices at the following locations in Philadelphia:

- From 1780 until April 1786, Rush rented a house at the corner of Second Street and Lodge Alley. The area now provides access to the United States Customs House.
- In 1785, Rush purchased two houses on Chestnut Street between Second and Third streets. The United States Customs House and Independence National Historical Park’s Living History Center now occupy the area.
- From 1787 to 1791, Rush had a home at No. 79 Walnut Street. From 1791 to 1794, he lived diagonally across the street at No. 83 Walnut Street. This site is now a garden within Independence National Historical Park. The National Park Service has erected a sign to mark the location of Rush’s house.
- From 1794 until his death in 1813, Rush lived at several residences along South Fourth Street, including No. 98. Formerly known as Dock Ward, the area is now called Society Hill.
- In 1797, Rush purchased a second country retreat called Sydenham in Northern Liberties Township. Sydenham was razed some time after Julia’s death in 1848.

there is evidence that Dr. Rush destroyed all correspondence and other records that mentioned Cottage Farm and his financial problems.
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