

APPALACHIAN FREE PRESS



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Director's Note

Hello and welcome to the third issue of the Appalachian Free press. Thank you for reading.

If the changing of the leaves should remind us of anything, it is the value of the temporary. Millions of years have taught the trees that giving up a part of themselves contributes to long-term growth. The saplings and fungi require the rich loam accumulated each year.

The beauty of fall is fleeting, and in this, we must give thanks. It is in times of want that we most appreciate things taken for granted at the moment.

So, as we consider the things we are thankful for, we should consider the trees since they have so much practice sharing themselves for their progeny to survive. We, too, thrive from the fruits of unknown labors. Our growth comes when we shed our misgivings and preconceived notions in favor of enlightenment and empathy.

In time, we drop our leaves, and too, our strongest timbers will rot. Our destruction is guaranteed, and thus we must be thankful for the moments that we do have. The saplings of our future will never know all of the small acts of kindness that decidedly and drastically shape their world.

So, now we give thanks to all things, and especially those which we know are fleeting.

Enjoy the rest of the issue!

Zeke Streetman

Jo Anne's Corner

By Jo Anne Bullard

Good morning. Welcome to Jo Ann's Virtual Cafe 2021. Come on in and help yourself to a breakfast beverage. Let's talk.

I was going to tell you about something that happened to me Wednesday. Since last week was Veterans Day, I decided to wait until today.

I was out on the porch, but I was working on my phone. Now, I live on the second floor of the apartment complex. I looked downstairs, and my cat was playing with a live snake. I put that mute button on and started yelling at my cat. She ignored me, and the battle was on. Here, I was by myself, still stuck on the telephone watching this battle between my cat and the snake with nobody else around.

I had read that now is the time for baby copperheads to be around. There was no way I was going anywhere around that snake. The battle between those two raged as I watched helplessly. The Lord must have heard my prayers. My next-door neighbor showed up. Luckily, he is a forestry guy and not afraid of snakes.

He got the snake away from the cat, got it on a broom, and released it two blocks away. I tell you, my nerves were worn out from the experience. The cat and snake are fine, but I still look for that snake before going out my door.

Let me introduce you to Bill. He's in town for the game and stopped in at the Cafe for the first time. I told him all about you. I told him how compassionate, kind and loving you are. I explained how we all respect and support each other. I even said to him that the preacher and our grandparents taught us that if you can't say something good about somebody, don't say nothing at all.

Now, I tell you Bill was really impressed by what I said about you. He said you sure do think a lot of the folks at the Cafe. I replied, "I sure do, but it's also World Kindness Day, and I wanted to get my kind words in early. Nobody's Perfect."

Having said that, let's share a breakfast beverage and a Native American Proverb.

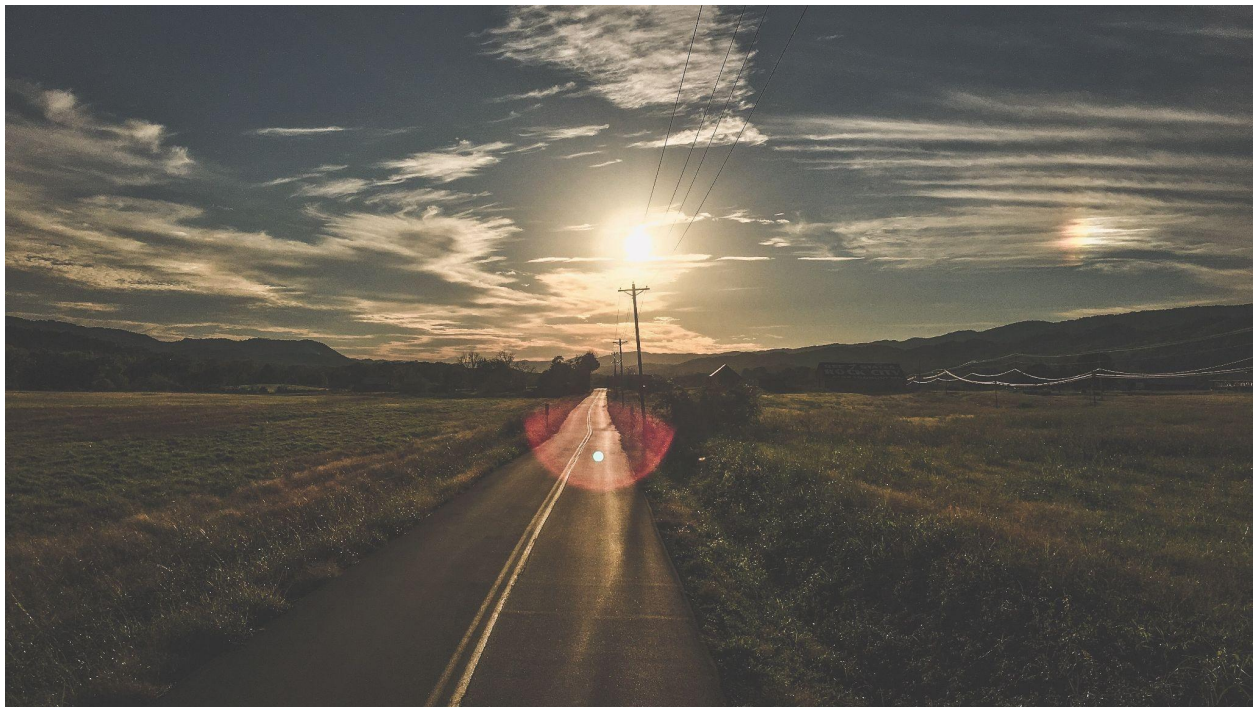
The proverbs of today go like this:

"If you are as fierce as a serpent, you can be as gentle as a dove."

"When you follow the Red Road and keep your joy, you take away their power."

'When someone is unkind to you, keep a smile on your face.'

Thanks for coming. Enjoy your gift of today. Have a great day!



Why Appalachia?

By Appalachian Woodworker and English Teacher, [Brian R. Melton](#)

You can't fault ignorance of the unlearned, so let me educate those who still think Appalachia needs an elegy. Let me discuss the full gospel with those who imagine every hill dweller is a Hatfield or McCoy. Let me offer a true photograph of the part of Appalachia that doesn't make it into B.B.C's articles.

Appalachia is home. The thick daytime darkness of the hemlock thickets by the Little Hurricane Creek where we hunt squirrels, camp, and take a summer swim. The train whistle of the Muddy Pond Sorghum Mill that cuts through the fog off the pond on a cold Saturday morning. The people who gather as a community for a benefit auction when a family member has unexpected medical bills or the offering plates that travel from classroom to classroom at public schools when a neighbor's house burns. The local food pantry that offers meals to the children of the destitute who are still tweaking from the last pill that went up their nose. The teachers that load you up in their truck and take you to work on their farm after school to help you buy your first pickup truck. The small group of boys that gather and fight as one unit on a sandlot baseball field that we lovingly call "our house." The 5' tall church choir singing English teacher who models the love of Christ by ripping an apple in half with her bare hands as she splits her entire lunch with a hungry classmate. The mother who says that an education is never a waste as she makes you copy lines out of a book of classic poetry when you were mean to your brother. The father who blesses the food before every family meal and gathers to read scripture and pray every evening before bed. The principal who is kind enough to paddle your tail and send you back to class when you deserve a suspension. The grocery store that blesses you with the first tax paying job, winter work. The community gatherings for a high school basketball game. The art teacher who laughs and talks you through the white canvas painted white hanging in a fine art museum. The elderly neighbor who takes you in and lets you warm your 13 year old self that gathers for every cousin's birthday. The preacher who takes the time to shepherd a flock with barely enough pay to merit the cost of his drive. The elderly veterans who fought in the hell of World War 2 who had to sit on a boat at the sea missing Christmas with their family because the coastal dock workers union went on strike. The cattle strewn hills that made the Scots-Irish feel at home. The multitudes of family members who fought to end slavery. The dirt poor grandfather who read every book in the high school library before graduating valedictorian. The calm, peaceful drive void of selfish individuals who use their 3,000 pound vehicle as a weapon of aggression and intimidation only to get one car length ahead just so they can sit beside you at the next red light, genius. The free breathing air that just hits different on the lungs. The calloused hands that serve as a badge of honor for kids in high school. The principal who fusses at you for not having a pocket knife he can borrow in a pinch. The rich language that speaks words preserved from generation to generation. The stars at night. The bluffs. The hills. The jungle of cucumber trees, mountain laurel, and elephant

ears. The people who continue to love and live. The unprecedented draw that keeps pulling you back home. And when you get there, the warm hugs from mom and dad that welcome you to a table dressed up with meatloaf and mashed potatoes.

So please allow me to suggest that the next time you paint a picture of my home, my people, my culture, please leave your elitist generalizations and biases at the door, and, instead, take a seat at our table as we invite you to take another helping of collard greens.



Antiquities In Appalachia: The Tennessee Medieval Faire in Harriman

An Interview With Barrie Paulson, VP/Director Darkhorse Entertainment, LLC

Photos by Trent Eades

The Harriman Medieval Faire, nestled in the hills of the scenic town of Harriman, TN brings entertainment, tourism, and historical jollity to Appalachian Tennessee. This week, in honor of their annual Medieval Faire, we spoke with Barrie to discuss their fantastic faire!

Q: Where Did Your Idea to Start a Tennessee Medieval Faire Originate?

Renaissance-type festivals have been popular since 1963 (see below).

Lars and I got started at the Ringling Medieval Fair in Sarasota, FL, in the early 1980s. Lars was going to Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota and was hired to build some sets for the Fair.



I was between college and graduate school in early 1983 when I auditioned for a community theatre play. One of the directors encouraged me to come with him and audition as a chess match fighter and street character.

I did, was hired, and fell in love with the whole thing. The shows have everything that Lars and I love – creative, growth, performance, and management opportunities; sports; martial arts; dance; music; crafts; food; beverages; all day family-fun, outdoors.

Both Lars and I worked our way up to senior management positions (Lars became General Manager of several big shows, and I toured and worked my way up as a professional comedy/stunt performer, choreographer, instructor, and tour director.

After working for other management companies, Lars' dream was to have his own festival and "build it right from the ground up." We later got married and had this as a goal someday. We moved (for me back) to TN in 2004 with the idea to start a Renaissance-type festival in east TN.

As historical backup:

In post-World War II America, there was a resurgence of interest in [medieval](#) and [Renaissance culture](#). In the 1950s, there was a powerful [early music revival](#), and out of that came folk musician and traditionalist [John Langstaff](#). In 1957, Langstaff held "A Christmas Masque of Traditional Revels" in New York City, and the following year another in [Washington, D.C.](#)

In 1963, Los Angeles schoolteacher Phyllis Patterson held a tiny Renaissance fair as a class activity in the backyard of her Laurel Canyon home in the Hollywood Hills. On May 11 and 12 of that year, Patterson and her husband, [Ron Patterson](#), presented the first "[Renaissance Pleasure Faire](#)" as a one-weekend fundraiser for radio station [KPFK](#) which drew some 8,000 people. The Living History Center designed the fair to resemble an actual spring market fair of the period.^[6]

Q: What Inspired the Medieval and Pirate themes?

Lars and I both worked at Medieval Fairs and Renaissance Festivals. They are basically the same thing, just different periods (Medieval 500-1500 and Renaissance 1500-1800).

Some festivals try to present a difference with different types of costumes (Medieval is earlier and costumes are simpler, while Renaissance is later with ornate costumes). And some try to pick well-known main characters from those periods (Robin Hood and King Arthur for Medieval and King Henry 8th and Queen Elizabeth I and Shakespeare for Renaissance).



However, some festivals don't worry about it.

As historical backup:

- The Middle Ages or [Medieval](#) period is from about 500-1500 (fall of Rome in 476 to the rebirth of the Renaissance in the early 14th century)
- [Renaissance](#) is the period from about 1500-1800 (14th to 17th century)
- [Pirate "Golden Age"](#) is roughly from 1650-1730

Our first festival in Harriman was in October 2014 as the East Tennessee Renaissance Festival.

This small town was looking for a "big idea" to bring in tourists, and the county selected this property as a good fit. We liked the meaning of Renaissance as "rebirth" and creating an economic engine based on special events. However, in early 2015, the Tennessee Renaissance Festival in Nashville had an issue with our festival name.

So, we complied instead of fighting it, and changed our name to the Tennessee Medieval Faire. With Lars and I both starting at the Ringling Medieval Faire, we liked it, and the costumes are easier and less expensive to make.

Lars wanted to try a Halloween show. So we tried a family-friendly (PG) evening event called Boo-Town in Oct 2015. However, there were competing events (G-rated with church and city truck-or-treat or PG13-R scary trails), and it was challenging to light that much acreage. So, it came to me afterward to focus on what we do well – daytime, regional, family-friendly, costumed-themed events.

Many Renaissance-type festivals have themed weekends, and the most popular is Pirate weekend. There aren't that many pirate festivals in East TN, and our property is on the water (although we haven't developed down to the water yet).

So, the idea came to me to have a stand-alone TN Pirate Festival as our other themed event. With skulls on pirate flags, we could hint at Halloween without having to compete with Halloween. So, this worked well for us.

Then with Covid in 2020, we ramped up twice only to have to cancel twice. So, I asked our Facebook fans what show they would like when. 77% said to have the Pirate Fest May because pirates go with water/boating and have lighter costumes. While Medieval seems more like fall with fires and heavy costumes. So, we switched the order in 2021, and it worked great.



Also, we've tried to find a "sweet spot" to play with so many other events in spring and fall.

For example, there is a Highland Games in Maryville in May. The Georgia Renaissance Festival is from April-June. The Tennessee Renaissance Festival is the month of May. The KY Ren Fest and W VA Ren Fest are in early June. Then

in the fall, because of Talk Like a Pirate Day on Sept 19, there are lots of Pirate Fests in coastal cities in Sept and Oct. So, even though some Renaissance festivals have a pirate-themed weekend, having our Pirate Fest in May and the Medieval Faire in October gives us a place to play.

Q: How Was This Year Different Than The Past 7?

Every show and year, we work to put on the best show we can. This past year, we switched the order of the shows (as I mentioned above), with the Pirate Fest the last two weekends in May, including Memorial Day, and the Medieval Faire the first three weekends in October.

This actually gave the Pirate Fest one more day and the Medieval Faire one less day because of Memorial Day. (Pirate Fest went from 2 weekends with four days to 2 weekends with five days, and our Medieval Faire went from 3 weekends with seven days to 3 weekends with six days). If Columbus or Indigenous Day were observed in TN, we would have a Monday festival day in October. But this day used to be on the Friday after Thanksgiving.

We also have new stage acts, street characters, games and activities, and vendors each year. Many are the same, but we also like to have something new. Also, sometimes people's schedules

change, and they can't be in a show. So I work with the concept that "loss is gain," meaning that a seeming loss means a gain for someone to have an opportunity.

So with the Pirate Fest in May 2021, we had the theme of historical pirate Captain Jean Lafitte in Barataria, south of New Orleans, at the end of the War of 1812. We also expanded our "Trail of Doom" with more actors and haunted displays with our Pirate Fest. We also presented a "Christmas Carol" theme of possible redemption for a mutinous pirate captain and a spoiled socialite. This went over really well.

Lars now writes our scripts, and we both enjoyed seeing happy patrons leaving the trail.

Based on years of exit surveys, patrons also asked for more activities. So, we decided to turn 2 of the 7 stage areas – where we were paying for entertainment – into activity areas – where patrons were paying for activities, which worked well. The activities were a fight-the knight game and mermaid photo ops for the pirate fest for the first time this year.

Then for the Medieval Faire, we had fairies for the first time doing hair-braiding and telling fairy tales, a new fencing game, and we added an escape room adventure based on Harry Potter's potions exam. We also added a knight with real armor and a dragon photo op at the front.



One of my favorite things is being a talent scout and developing talent. We audition and train our local street character each week for three months before our festival. We work on the scenario, characters, costumes, accents, dialect, stage combat, improv, patron interactions, etc. As we see talent, then we find a way to showcase it.

We have Pirate School (Pirate), so we added Sherwood School to this Medieval Faire. Because of Covid, an improv troupe from Knoxville had to bow out. So, we added an improv stage show

called “Throw Me a Line,” based on the TV show, “Whose Line is it Anyway,” which led to full belly laughs from the audience.

One great new thing that occurred this year was that our average daily attendance doubled from 2019! People came from at least 30 states and over half of the counties in Tennessee! People are ready to be outside and have fun. And, it’s taken building awareness over the past seven years of our family-friendly shows in Harriman to finally break through. It’s such a great feeling!

Q: What Part Of Medieval Life Resonates The Most With You Today?

We present a **theatrical** interpretation of history, focusing on entertainment. So, as a performer, the theatrical part is my favorite. But I also love the high-quality functional costume items from the Medieval period, such as leather doublets, pouches, boots, bracers, gloves; hooded capes of different lengths; wooden bowls; drinking vessels made from clay, horn, metal; metal weapons, shields, armor; cotton and linen costumes for spring, and wool costumes for cold and rainy weather.



We also present a **romanticized** interpretation of history, focusing on the “Age of Chivalry” with Robin Hood and King Arthur for the Medieval Faire and “Golden Age of Piracy” where there are “good” pirates and “bad” redcoats.

We also appreciate and present a group of people who enjoy working together and creating a sense of community for the common good. I have a sign over the door of our actor studio that says, “Enter as strangers, leave as friends.”

I like to exchange Friends for Family. All members have to audition, be cast, and choose to work together to create great shows. Lars and I don’t have

children, so we joke that we hire and fire our kids.

I also view what I do as undercover missionary work without using polarizing words and just live the principles of Light and Love, “against such there is no law.”

Q: Is This a Celebration of Your Heritage, and If so, Do These Festivals Help You Feel More in Tune with Your Heritage?

Most definitely! My mother’s heritage is Anderson, which is Scots-Irish, and many Scots-Irish moved to Appalachia. Their folk music became mountain music, and their dancing developed into styles such as clogging. I love to dance! Many of the songs we all enjoy are Scottish, such as “Over the Sea to Skye,” which is the theme song for the popular series, Outlander.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wF0ZYnvFXRk&list=OLAK5uy_nyOcOVG3ogCfcMXNITXuIkcgVHJOv_igy

Also, I researched my aunt’s memoirs (when our shows were canceled in 2020). I discovered a song from our family in Scotland called the “Loch Tay Boat Song.” It is about unrequited love and has site-specific lyrics. It’s very beautiful. These are the types of songs we have at our festival, although we focus on the upbeat ones.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGxG03VlazE>

Through my father, our Blankenship family are direct descendants of Tennessee’s first governor, General John Sevier (through his first wife and one of their daughters). I believe he’s my 9th generation grandfather. Also, Lars and I are said to be 1/16 Native (Lars is part Lakota Sioux, and I’m part Cherokee), so we enjoy being outdoors and communing with nature and animals.

My late father was a college instructor, minister for the armed services, and tomato plant manager. He encouraged education, spiritual growth, strong character, and hard work. My mom is an artist and encouraged creativity.

Their influence, plus my heritage, education, and experience, definitely the Appalachian tradition is an outgrowth of the Medieval and Renaissance culture. People from Europe, especially England, Scotland, and Ireland moved to America, and many moved to the Appalachian Mountains in the 18th century <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appalachia>

Lars was raised in the midwest, where there is a strong sense of hard work and humility. Lars' artistic ability and strong vision of creating a family-friendly environment, where people can come and escape, laugh, and feel uplifted, he doesn't focus on himself but always says, "The show is the boss."

Lars and I are all about building bridges that unite us, which makes me feel that I come by all my festival interests "honestly."

Q: Do You Feel Like Appalachian Tradition Has Been Informed Or Influenced By Medieval Culture?

Well, the Appalachian tradition is an outgrowth of the Medieval and Renaissance culture. People from Europe, especially England, Scotland, and Ireland moved to America, and many moved to the [Appalachian](#) Mountains.

European migration into Appalachia began in **the 18th century**. As lands in eastern Pennsylvania, the Tidewater region of Virginia, and the Carolinas filled up, immigrants began pushing further and further westward into the Appalachian Mountains.

A relatively large proportion of the early [backcountry](#) immigrants were [Ulster Scots](#)—later known as "[Scotch-Irish](#)," a group mainly originating from southern Scotland and northern England, many of whom had settled in Ulster Ireland before migrating to America^{[18][19][20][21]} — who were seeking cheaper land and freedom from [Quaker](#) leaders, many of whom considered the Scotch-Irish "savages."

Others included [Germans](#) from the [Palatinate](#) region and English settlers from the [Anglo-Scottish border](#) country. Between 1730 and 1763, immigrants trickled into [western Pennsylvania](#), the [Shenandoah Valley](#) area of Virginia, and [western Maryland](#).

[Thomas Walker's](#) discovery of the [Cumberland Gap](#) in 1750 and the end of the [French and Indian War](#) in 1763



lured settlers deeper into the mountains, namely to upper [east Tennessee](#), northwestern North Carolina, [upstate South Carolina](#), and central Kentucky.

The mountains are actually part of the same range, called the Central Pangean Mountains, which connected North America, Greenland, Iceland Scotland, Ireland, Norway, England, and northwestern Africa before the earth separated. I love that we really all are connected to each other and our past Medieval culture.

And we can choose to recreate it in an uplifting and engaging way to delight people of all ages and backgrounds. Lars and I are all about building bridges that unite us.

<https://vividmaps.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Central-Pangean-Mountains.jpg>

Appalachian Thanksgiving at the Ernest Fort House

By Manda Wallace~~Banjo~~

Did you know that the Earnest Fort house is one of the oldest houses in Tennessee?

The Earnest Fort house, located on the banks of the Nolichucky River in Greene County, Tennessee, was built in about 1782.

The house was built to be used as a fort since, during that time, Native American attacks were a harsh reality of everyday life here. The presence of so many white females on the Appalachian frontiers is probably the best evidence of how Native American violence was exaggerated.

From 1780 to 1800, white women were no less represented in the population in Cherokee frontiers than they were in the rest of the country. The women were usually home alone, tending to their children, garden, and livestock, as their husbands were hunting Game, Trapping, etc.

What work, then, did white settler women do on farms? The frequent biased comments of visitors and travelers provide powerful clues that white Appalachian women worked in the fields and at various outdoor tasks. Consider these early commentaries about women's farm work in western North Carolina.

One European visitor observed that "the ordinary women take care of cows, hogs, and other small cattle, make butter and cheese, spin cotton and flax, help to sow and reap corn. . . gather fruit, and look after the house."

A second European was shocked that the wives of poor and middling farmers were "ready to assist their husbands in any servile work, such as planting when the season of the year requires expedition."

When he saw so many white women and their children working in the fields in upper east Tennessee and in western North Carolina, another traveling elite commented that these settler

females had "become schquaws, very pretty ones, but schquaws notwithstanding." In other words, they were taking responsibility for what he considered to be men's agricultural tasks, just as Cherokee women did.

Moreover, many of these settler females lived "uncomen poor" in small log huts similar to the dwellings of indigenous Appalachians. In most frontier Appalachian households, "the women hoed the corn, cooked the dinner, or plied the loom, or even. . . took up the ax and cut wood with which to cook the dinner." Even in some middling, non-slaveholding households, women and girls assisted in the fields.

The log fort had to offer a deep sense of security.

If only walls could talk...



MENU OF AN 1800's APPALACHIAN THANKSGIVING

Appalachian women worked like a man most days. They were the center of the family and of their homes. They tended to many chores, including chopping wood, cooking, spinning wool, and making all the family's clothes. In addition, they managed the gardens and livestock, and they raised their children.

In other words, the first Appalachian women were a strong, hearty, and joyful bunch of women. They took no time for themselves. They endured many hardships and adversity, but somehow, they succeeded in carving out a life in the wilderness of the beautiful but harsh Appalachian Mountains.

I think that all Spring and Summer, an early Appalachian woman might have thought-- as she tended to her chores and harvested her crops-- to pick and choose what to save for her special Thanksgiving feast.

People had seasonal diets during these times. They ate many more fruits and vegetables in the spring and summer months than they did in the fall and winter. In the fall, a popular dish was squirrel & gravy.

The squirrel heads with brains intact were also eaten. They would cook them with the eyes, ears, and nose tip removed. In eating squirrel heads, you take the head in your fingers and hold it on the plate while you eat the facial muscles. Then, you remove the lower jaw and eat the tongue.

But the piece of resistance is the brain, which is removed by cracking the top of the skull with the handle of a butter knife. Then, you pick the bone fragments off and suck the brain out. It is rich, sweet, buttery-tasting, and cannot be equaled by most other foods.

Squirrel brain has only one drawback. It is too small. Brains from nearly any edible animal are wonderfully tasty food. Whether it is squirrel, cow, or hog, the brain is one of the best-tasting portions. I can remember my Papaw Gass eating Scrambled Brains.

If the weather was cold enough, it was also common to kill a hog during Thanksgiving week. Fresh pork, especially organ meats, are good, especially at a holiday dinner. They often sent the heart, lungs or "lights," liver, kidneys, spleen or "melt" to the house as soon as the hog was gutted, and that would be their supper.

There might be a large pot of fresh pork and potatoes at Thanksgiving dinner. They also flavored vegetables with small amounts of pork. The favorite for this use was smoked jowl, but salt pork was also often used.

In the days when refrigeration was not always available or electricity was unpredictable, salting was often the most effective way to preserve home-killed meats. Many households had what were called "smokehouses," where they smoked and stored their meat for preservation.

They had their leatherbritches too, or big pots of shucked beans. Other vegetables might include sweet potatoes and Irish potatoes, squash, beets, turnips, carrots, and various greens such as kale, collards, mustard, and turnip greens.

They might have also laid out fresh whole milk and home churned butter. After the butter was removed from the churn, warm fresh buttermilk had to be a treat!

Desserts were jams, jellies, and Pies.

You know, I find it funny that in all this writing, I have not mentioned Turkey. Yes, they did have wild turkey at their feasts, but more likely, they enjoyed Venison stews, steaks and roasts, chicken (with maybe some dumplings), fish, beef, and-- more than likely-- Pork.

And to end the celebration, they might have pulled out Pa's personal crock of corn likker and spread the spirit in giving thanks to all, including the children.

I can almost feel the love and warmth the families shared during their time of giving thanks. I can't say that I smell the aroma from the food, though. And guess what, the women were still

working and smiling and having a joyful time. You know what they say-- "a woman's work is never done."

I hope you enjoy reading, and as always, drop a comment or two!

I hope your Thanksgiving table is full of your favorite food and surrounded by your favorite people. Happy Thanksgiving!



Note From the Editor

Thank you for sharing your time and your passions with us! Your interest in our newspaper brings us so much hope for our future as Appalachians-- and as writers, reporters, and artists.

In this issue of the Appalachian Free Press, we have found connections to all sorts of people throughout space and time, which has helped us remember how hospitable and kind this land truly is. From small towns to urban areas, there is a pervasive sense of community and camaraderie here in Appalachia, and we hope to keep that spirit alive and thriving with every word we write.

As always, please get in touch with us at appalachianFP@yahoo.com if you or someone you know might be interested in contributing to our next issue.

We love to hear from you, and we want to publish your stories, essays, poems, photographs, art, and more! You keep our paper interesting, diverse, and representative of Appalachian people, so always feel free to reach out to us with any questions, contributions, or comments you want to make!

See Y'all Next Time, and Stay Safe Out There!