

THE APPALACHIAN FREE PRESS



SEPTEMBER 2023 - VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

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Cover Photo by Ezekiel Streetman

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Comin' Together: Family Reunions in Appalachia

By Banjo

The best things at any family reunion are the elderly family members and the young children. The food is good, too, but the fellowship and watching the bridge from one generation to the next is seen in many faces and felt in the heart. We Appalachians seem to love family reunions! With so much Scot-Irish DNA, it may be a clan thing.

This past year, my family held its annual reunion. It was the 100th anniversary of the Gray family reunion in Greene County, Tennessee. The story of how our family reunion got started is unique. The family story is told in a personal diary kept by John Gray.

According to his journal, on June 22, 1923, the aging John Gray of Greeneville, Tennessee, fell ill, and his health continued to decline. John had served in the Union Army during the Civil War. He was a very patriotic family man. His wife Ruey had passed away several years earlier. John and Ruey Rambo Gray had fourteen children!

On June 24th, 1923, several members of the Gray family, who had previously relocated to Indianapolis, Indiana, left their home there and traveled by automobile, reached Greeneville on June 27th. His local family members were also "called in" as well.

Many of John Gray's children, grandchildren, and other family members, friends, and neighbors gathered around his bedside. Caring for his every need, saying prayers, and being positive. The women cooked meals and served anyone who happened by the home place. What a show of family love! John started improving, and the family continued to stay around the old home place while he recovered.

It was then that family members decided to hold the first-ever John Gray Family Reunion in the home of John Gray on Sunday, July 8, 1923. John Gray passed away in 1932, but still today, in 2023, 100 years later, his family still gathers on the 2nd

Sunday in August to carry on his legacy and continue this tradition with love, pride, and honor.



King With a Heavy Crown

By A'sun

Old memories seem to shatter like broken mirrors in a
sea of black ink because
Routine days tend to ruin my dreams so I often back think
To bright days from hazy thoughts that said if you sleep
it'll be your last blink
Nostalgic feelings change the hue of your vision so you
reflect and see your past pink
Warm vibes from a liquid sunset makes you feel like you
and life had a mad sync
It all feels great when you sip your fears away because the
truth won't mask your drink
It's all connected through dreams but when awake you
cant find the last link Melancholy bliss nostalgic
quintessence
I don't know just trying to describe my essence
But I begin to lose myself whenever I look past to present
I guess deep thoughts are like shallow blessings
Have you drowning in your repressions just so you can
breathe from your confessions
If you will then each L will teach you a lesson
Like each word in the scripture of your mind is a message
From the ancestors telling you that you getting closer to
blessings I questioned everything
Until I forgot what it means
To feel anything
Being woke is not as fun as it seems
When you lost all your dreams
Because you're afraid to go to sleep these thoughts are a
little too deep I climbed a hill that was a little too steep
Now only if I could fall from these clouds I reminisce
about the time on the ground

Am I a mystic or a clown It's all relative so what the
difference between a smile or a frown
Why am I here and why am I now
There I go questioning again
Will this search ever come to an end
The closer I get the sooner I begin
I conquered my yang just to lose all my yin Life and death
are starting to look like some twins
So maybe I should sit back and flow with the spin Then
maybe after this After this I can transcend
But I have divided decisions that led to subtle collisions of
thoughts and feelings such emotional confictions caused
by mundane addictions overdosed off societal
prescriptions highs and lows of the input output system
has me experiencing sighs and woes of neglected wisdom
why do I sell my time for a dime that I cant even multiply
ten times was it a crime to have a mind that would color
outside the lines but im colorblind so black and white
bleed together to make grey skies societal thoughts are
pollution now acid rain falls into the eyes as hallucinogens
has us tripping over things in nature because we forgot
the color green unless its projected on a screen where
your ego is sunken into memes that capture your dreams
to fill you with nostalgia so you dont look behind the
screen brainwashed so clean you forgot how fun playing
in the mud seemed imagination is the essence of being
sober intoxicated under the world's influence makes the
soul colder a puppet at the will of the controller pulled by
the strings of good and evil but only when i got older i
realized the angels and devil stood on my shoulders

Jo Ann's Corner: Majesty of the Stove

By Jo Ann Bullard



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

Let's talk. There are several items that we need to use to have a Café. Probably the most important one is a good stove. Now Miss Josie loves her stove. I remember my Grandmother cooking on an old wood stove. Joe's Grandmother cooked on a wood stove.

It must have taken a lot of time to learn to bake and cook on a wooden stove before the modern ones were invented. Joe found out some facts about stoves. Here are a few of them:

- Cooking was performed over an open fire nearly two million years ago.

- During the Paleolithic era, approximately 200,000 to 40,000 years ago, primitive hearths were constructed, with stones arranged in a circle shape.
- Most open fires are 30% efficient on average, and heat is distributed positively, with no heat being lost into the body of a stove. An estimated three million people still cook their food today over open fires.
- The three-stone stove is still widely used around the world. In some areas, it developed into a U-shaped dried mud or brick enclosure with an opening in the front for fuel and air, sometimes with a second smaller hole at the rear. Native Americans in the Southwest used these types of stoves. Pizza and bread are still cooked in some restaurants even today instead of using modern stoves.
- The Ancient Egyptian, Jewish, and Roman people used stone and brick ovens fueled with wood in order to make bread and other culinary staples.
- The earliest recorded stove was created in Alsace, France, in 1490. It was entirely made out of brick and tile, including the flue pipe.
- In 1642, at Lynn, Massachusetts, the first cast-iron stove was constructed. This stove was little more than a cast-iron box with no grates.
- During Colonial America, beehive-shaped brick ovens were used to bake cakes and other pastries. Temperature control was closely managed by burning the appropriate quantity of wood to ash and then testing by inserting hands inside, adding additional wood, or opening the door to allow cooling.
- In 1735, the Castrol stove, or "stew stove," was developed by French designer Francois Cuvilliés. It was the earliest recorded wood-burning stove
- In 1740, the Franklin stove used a grate to burn wood and had sliding doors to control the draught, or flow of air, through it. Because of its compact size, the stove could be housed in a large fireplace or used free-standing in the middle of a room by connecting it to a chimney.
- In 1800, Isaac Orr of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, created the first circular cast-iron stoves with grates for cooking meals on them
- The potbellied stove traces its origins to the early 1800s, inspired by the Franklin stove.
- Jordan A. Mott designed the base-burning stove for burning anthracite coal in 1833. In 1834, Philo Stewart created the Oberlin Stove, a small wood-burning cast-iron stove. It was a compact metal kitchen stove that was

far more efficient than cooking in a fireplace due to its improved heating capacity.

- The earliest reported use of gas for cooking was in 1802. The switch to gas was prompted by concerns about air pollution caused in coal-burning fireplaces and stoves.
- The first commercially produced gas stove, invented by Englishman James Sharp, did not enter the market until the 1840s. By 1900, gas stoves became popular because they were easier to control and required less maintenance than wood or coal stoves.
- Electric stoves became popular not long after the advent of home electricity. One early model was created by Thomas Ahearn, the owner of a Canadian electric company, whose marketing included a demonstration meal prepared entirely with electricity at Ottawa's Windsor Hotel in 1892.
- The original meaning of the word 'stove' actually meant 'a heated room'.
- The biggest difference between gas and electric stove is that gas uses an open flame, and electric uses coils.
- There are basically ten types of stoves: Gas Stoves, Electric Stoves, Induction Stoves, Dual Fuel Stoves, Professional Stoves, Freestanding Stoves, Slide-In Stoves, Electric Coil Stoves, Electric Smooth Top Stoves, and Downdraft Stoves.

It's hard to imagine cooking on a Franklin stove that sits in a fireplace. Now that's an art. Nowadays, microwaves have made stoves somewhat obsolete. Many people prefer to use them than the stoves that we grew up with.

Now that's enough about stoves. We could go on and on and bore you. However, what type of stove did your parents or grandparents use, or what type of stove do you prefer?

Having said that, let's share a breakfast beverage and a Native American Proverb. The Proverb of today goes like this, "Everything comes from Mother Earth. Whatever you do to Mother Earth, you do to yourself and generations to come."

Thanks for coming! Enjoy your gift of today. Have a great day! We look forward to seeing you tomorrow.

Extant

By Jacob Wilkinson



I exist only in your thoughts, in your words,

As I am perceived so I am

My most pressing flaws as you list them;

My best qualities as you recognize

If I live and nobody notices, did I live at all?

What value has a thought left to oneself?

I know the places and world around me exist because

I sense them, I acknowledge them

How do you sense me?

Is my presence acknowledged?

Some Appalachian Folklore Regarding Winter Weather Prediction

By Banjo

Some have counted the foggy mornings in August, and some are looking at the color of the woolly worm caterpillars, but here are some folklore ways of predicting the upcoming winter weather that may be new to you. Digging deep into my collection.

Many of these are hundreds of years old and almost lost in time. Let me first say that with modern technology today, we do know a little about what winter could bring.

The expected El Niño has formed in the Pacific Ocean, and long-range forecasts by meteorologists predict the southern Appalachians to be a winter wonderland with numerous accumulating snowfalls this winter season.

But with that, I still like to double-check! Enjoy the following weather predictors of our Appalachian ancestors. These signs indicate a harsh winter:

A sign of a cold winter is the thickening of the fur on the 'possum's back. A sign of a cold winter is the thickening of the feathers on the rooster's legs. Wild geese flying high on their way south foretell a hard winter. If the breastbone of a game bird has a cloudy appearance, there will be a cold winter.



If the woolly worm's head is more black than colored, the coldest part of the winter will come in the first months of winter. If an autumnal caterpillar has a little yellow on the nose, is a sign of cold weather in the early part of the winter. If corn is hard to husk, expect a hard winter.

There will be a cold winter if corn silk is thick and abundant. If the bark is thick on the north side of the tree, look for a severe winter. A summer in which the foliage on trees is unusually dense, or exceptionally bright in color, is followed by a very cold winter. If the fruit trees bloom in the fall, the weather will be severe the following winter.

Expect a hard winter if there is a large crop of persimmons. If the berries are plentiful in the summer, the following winter will be severe. A lot of sarvis berries is a sign of a winter with heavy snow.

An unusually large crop of gum berries, wild grapes, etc., means that we will have a very severe winter. A large crop of wild nuts [such as hazel, walnut, or hickory] means a cold, wet winter. When beech acorns thrive well, and oak trees hang full, a hard winter will follow with much snow.

These signs foretell a mild winter. If the first snow falls on unfrozen ground, expect a mild winter. If ice is thick enough in November to bear up a duck, the winter will be mud and muck.

When the birds migrate toward the north, expect a mild winter. If snakes and toads are late disappearing, look for a mild winter. If the nut crop fails, the winter will be mild.

Weather Indicators

To tell whether the next year will be wet or dry and whether to rent bottom lands or uplands, take twelve shells or dry hulls from onions, place them sitting up as saucers in a row, out of doors Christmas Eve night, with a pinch of salt in each, naming each for a month. The months in which the salt will be melted and turned to water the next morning will be wet months. Those in which the salt is still salt will be dry. If April, May, and June are melted, don't rent bottom lands.

If it snows on Christmas Day, the grass will be green on Easter. On a stormy day, the weather between one and two o'clock is the weather for the remainder of the day. From eleven till two, Tell what the day will do. A great many women stirring around indicates bad weather.

If a cat washes herself in the usual fashion, the weather will be fair, but if she licks her hair the wrong way, or washes above her ears, or sits with her tail to the fire, the weather will be bad. When a cat jumps up suddenly and runs about, bad

weather is coming. If cattle keep their heads to leeward, it indicates bad weather. If you see a hog with a stick in his mouth, it is a sign of bad weather.

If hogs carry sticks or straws for bedding, stormy, bad weather will come. Whenever a horse stretches his neck and whiffs the air, bad weather is near. Crows flying in flocks presage bad weather. So, chop wood and preserve food for you and all the animals and wildlife. Winter will be here before we know it.

Expanding the Top: Housing Shortages in Urban Appalachia

by Ezekiel Streetman



Appalachia has been experiencing a large influx of unprecedented growth due to a number of causes, from the impacts of climate change in the south and west as well as a relatively low average cost of housing.

However, the benefits of said housing are being diminished by outside influences at an alarming rate. Trends indicate that, over the last five years, rental prices have doubled.

“The average rent in the Knoxville Metro FMR Area in February 2023 was \$1,606/month (~984 SqF) (source: rentcafe.com). For that rent to be affordable (30% of income), that means someone working for minimum wage must work 170.4 hours/week.” (City of Knoxville Housing and Development Dept May 2023)

As the median price of rentals continues to rise, the number of people who can't afford rent rises as well. Thus, this inflation of costs continues the process of pricing out tenants for the benefit of external companies.

The impetus for this article is the recent developments at the Tanglewood Apartments and the implications that caused external "investors" to take advantage of Tennessee's lax rental policies.

Leadership has an interest in raising these prices in order to increase taxable income. A perfect example of this is the new baseball stadium being built in the Knoxville Old City presently.

Despite our city's other requirements, entertainment and business are paramount.

As rural cities have dwindled, there's been an upsurge in people looking for affordable housing. This is especially true through Appalachia in Kentucky and West Virginia.

From a lack of builders to a rise in materials, the cost of building has gone up substantially. Housing has become a scarce commodity in Knoxville.

Interview with Erin Read, Executive Director, Knoxville-Knox County Office of Housing Stability

What are the current plans to expand housing opportunities in Knoxville?

There are over 3,200 rental units currently being constructed on the private market in the Knoxville metro area, which is much needed and will take some of the pressure off. But we still need more housing of all types in order to ease the crisis.

Our Public Housing Authority KCDC manages and rents more than 3,700 units and distributes 4,000 Section 8 vouchers, and they are seeking ways to expand access to housing for low-income individuals and families.

They just broke ground on Liberty Place, a supportive housing development for veterans. The Transforming Western initiative will add 283 new units of affordable and market-rate housing to the Western Heights site over the next five years.

Why are we reaching this point of unstable development?

The Knoxville metro area is seeing a severe housing shortage. Part of the reason is that new construction never really recovered from the 2008 global financial crisis. We've been underbuilding since that time. It's a perfect storm because higher mortgage rates are creating a lock-in effect where homeowners with low-interest loans are very wary of selling and taking on a higher-interest loan, and we also have an influx of migration from other places in the US with a very high cost of living.

These trends are being seen in other communities too, but Knoxville is more severely impacted than most.

See:

(<https://www.etnrealtors.com/state-of-housing-2023/>)

(<https://nlihc.org/oor>)

(<https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/tennessee>)

And is there a plan to protect indigent clients from the onslaught of extensive heat and cold fronts from climate change?

When temperatures are extreme (below 32° in winter and above 90° in summer), Knox Area Rescue Ministries, The Salvation Army, and Volunteer Ministry Center enact a White Flag policy. During White Flag conditions, these providers encourage all people experiencing homelessness to seek shelter indoors.

Programs relax rules to allow individuals to come inside for the day or night, even if these individuals might not be allowed in the program under other conditions. In addition, providers create overflow space to ensure that anyone who wants to come indoors can do so. However, even this policy does not create enough space for everyone who is homeless to be sheltered, and there are many reasons why some individuals would not be able to tolerate entering these established shelters.

During last winter's dangerous cold snap at Christmas, the governments of both the City of Knoxville and Knox County partnered to set up an ad-hoc warming tent near the Salvation Army on Broadway.

While this likely saved some lives, it wasn't ideal, so a group of service providers, including KARM, Volunteer Ministry Center, Community Action Committee, and the Salvation Army, are working with the Knoxville-Knox County Emergency Management Agency (KEMA) and the Office of Housing Stability on a plan for 24-hour warming centers distributed throughout the city and county, which would be activated in the event of extreme cold.

The community-wide hot weather emergency response plan is already largely able to accommodate people experiencing homelessness because extreme heat happens during the day, when existing public facilities are typically already open and can be made available to everyone who, regardless of housing status, needs to come inside where air conditioning is available during the heat of the day.

Emergency response plans are constantly being updated and improved, and KEMA is currently working with multiple partners to add a map of public water sources and other features to the hot weather emergency response plan.

Because extreme cold has greater implications regarding the need for overnight shelter when public buildings and facilities are typically closed, a separate plan is being developed for winter.

Solutions

While the most obvious solution might seem like building more housing, that compounds a weak infrastructure.

Construction and redevelopment of rural areas could alleviate the over-wrought housing market. Reintroducing public train infrastructure, as suggested [here](#), could also allow for a rural workforce to develop urban areas and improve local and urban economic outcomes.

Fortunately, there are communities actively trying to develop “middle” and affordable housing. Some are met with resentment. However, others are successfully completed with assistance from the city, such as the [Inskip Flats](#).

It might be possible with a Community land trust model, as Lindsey Jaramenko wrote about in her article [The Housing Crisis in Knoxville](#):

“The community land trust (CLT) is a non-profit which holds land in a trust, overseen by a Board of Directors, consisting of residents of the CLT, residents of the greater community where the CLT resides, and experts and other stakeholders. The CLT acquires land through various sources, like city-owned property, private donors, community foundations, and federal housing subsidies.”

However, Tennessee greatly limits the ability of anyone to maintain rent-controlled property.

It is possible that the state government repeal the 2021 Tennessee Code Title 66 - Property Chapter 35 prohibition on rent control and allow cities to help directly control the affordability of housing, such that new purchasers can't come in and double rental prices while promising improvements that current tenants don't ask for, such that they can make a higher profit.

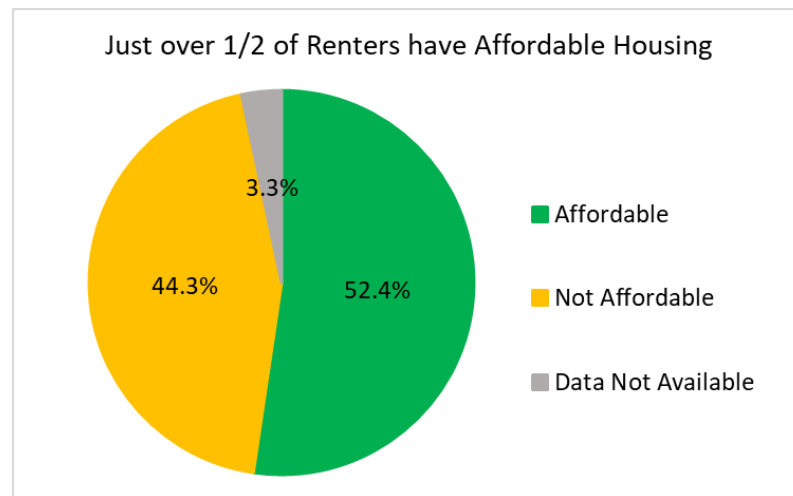
Or as the East Tennessee Economic Development Agency puts it: “DKA is putting more of its resources behind attracting downtown residents, which will lead to more retail options and more downtown employment, DKA marketing director Robin Thomas said.”

This is generally the line that any pro-high-end developer will give you: “Why focus on the development of the laborers' housing when you can artificially inflate the economy while market interest is alive?”

However, as we can see with other cities, this logic is taken to extremes, such as Los Angeles. The problems with housing expand exponentially. And that's not taking into account the population that already takes shelter under bridges and in hidden enclaves.

To most developers, it is an easy choice: a higher return on investment for labor and materials and a higher profit margin for investors.

There's still a very real human cost to top-heavy development. Places that might have once been marginally affordable become unrealistically expensive, and we're at the point where renting is untenable.



According to the City of Knoxville Housing and Development Department, we are about to reach that point. Currently, we have people working in Knoxville who are unable to afford an apartment. They live in cars or on the street. Meanwhile, Grade-A apartments dominate downtown, with 400 new units under construction. This is not a new development, as [housing prices have increased for both renters and homeowners](#).

If we rebuild rural structures of healthcare and education and invest in revitalizing rural areas, we might have opportunities where everyone has a place to live. It is, however, more likely that there will be further migrations to cities as already weak infrastructure breaks further.

So we should develop equitable housing in our urban areas while there is still space to build it.

Emerald

By Jacob Wilkinson



If only I could see life as you do my
Friend, born from the void of tangled hair,
You strut confidently into the room and announce
“I Have No Idea Where I’m Going” as your head
Collides with the wall in front of you.

You communicate your boundaries & desires,
Not with inhibition, but with a loud yell.

You embrace the world right outside the window as

Exciting & new with each opportunity to explore it.

You retreat to a space comforting & familiar

Unapologetically for hours and hours.

Tired, empty of myself, at my wit's end,

Why can't I see life like you do my friend?