

Strasburg Heritage Association



Strasburg, Virginia
www.strasburgvaheritage.org

SHA Annual Meeting *“ New Garden for an Old House ”*

Mark your calendar now for our June quarterly meeting – a garden tour! Join us at the home of members Michael Marcheterre and Craig Morris on Sunday, June 13 from 4-6 PM. Their home at 262 Sharpe St. was a popular stop on the 2008 Christmas Homes Tour. Since then they have done an amazing job of creating gardens and an orchard and have moved an old log building to the property. Along with neighbors, friends and Lynne Phillips & Scott Edmondson from Natural Art Garden Center, they’ve made an oasis, beautiful and productive.

In addition to learning about the garden’s creation, Joyce Rinker will be there to share stories about the property, her homeplace. And, we’d love to have you or someone you know come by and share stories of gardening in Strasburg back when most everyone in town grew flowers, vegetables and perhaps raised livestock. We’d particularly enjoy learning more about Victory Gardens during WWII.

We’re making this an ice cream social, so come enjoy fellowship, the gardens and refreshments. We’ll be there, rain or shine. Please enter from Sharpe St. Parking will be available at the Strasburg Christian Church parking lot on High Street.

SHA Board of Directors 2010

Barbara Adamson, President

Judy Troxell, Vice-President; Wendy Pieper, Secretary; Richard Seelbach, Treasurer
Bill Foster, Sue Foster, Dennis Hupp, Martha Jones, Kathy Kehoe, Dee Keister, Marie Spence,
Tim Taylor, Michael Whittle, Polly Wilson

President's Letter

Barbara Adamson

We were pleased to see so many of you attend our annual meeting in February to hear Cathy Baugh give a very informative and interesting program about Valley and Shenandoah County historian John W. Wayland. We also want to welcome Bill Foster and Polly Wilson as new SHA board members; we're delighted to have them with us.

Strasburg Town Council has been considering the future of the Brill property, now owned by the town. SHA has urged Council to adopt a plan that preserves and rehabilitates the two buildings involved. In addition, one proposed plan includes completely covering Town Run through town property in order to provide access from the current parking lot to the new site; SHA believes this would be a mistake and recommends the adoption of the plan that provides a bridge over Town Run to the Brill property but doesn't cover it. We see this as an opportunity to consider and plan for Strasburg's long-term future and the preservation of it's historic downtown core. We hope that citizens and the Town Council can agree that keeping our historic buildings, and using them, is the right thing to do.

Thank you to those who helped out at our Rt. 11 Litter Clean-Up on Saturday, May 8 including Ginger Aliotti, Sue Foster, Mary Ann Littrell, Mike Whittle and Barbara Adamson.

We recently printed another 1,000 copies of the ever-popular Historic Strasburg Walking Tour brochures. They're available at Strasburg Community Library, Strasburg Museum, Hotel Strasburg and Strasburg Chamber of Commerce. If anyone has a suggestion for another good place to distribute them, please let us know.

Plans for the 250 Celebration continue. We welcome anyone who would like to help out – call me at 465-5570.

SHA Annual Treasurer's Report

Our treasurer, Richard Seelbach, reports that as of April 30, 2010, our cash balance was \$2,085.60. Our other assets include a Certificate of Deposit that totals \$9,000.00.

The Humble Dandelion

By Marie Spence

In the 21st century most people, especially those who take great care and pride in their lawn, frown when they spot a yellow flowering dandelion amid the lush green grass. Far from being considered a nuisance during 18th, 19th and much of the 20th centuries, the presence of dandelions caused excitement for the picking and processing of a home-produced spirited beverage.

Even among Strasburg citizens who normally frowned upon the production and consumption of fermented spirits, homemade libations made from cherries, elderberries, peaches, apples, blackberries, raspberries and dandelions seemed far more acceptable.

The dandelion plant was plucked from its ground-hugging roots, or the entire plant-stem, leaves and root system—was dug up and carried home to be cleaned and utilized. The green leaves were used as a salad. The stems and washed roots were brewed into a pour-off broth that was believed in every community to enrich the blood and help skin diseases. The flowers were fermented into an often-brewed reportedly pleasant tasting wine.

Although various local households had slight variations on the process of fermenting wine from the dandelion weeds, the basic procedure historically seems fairly close to the following recipe:

Recipe for Dandelion Wine

- Collect and wash at least one quart of yellow dandelion blossoms. Add blossoms to one gallon of water, which is at a rolling boil. Add two lemons and two juicy oranges, which are cut into thinly sliced pieces. Stir well with long handled wooden spoon.**
- Shut off the heat and allow the entire mixture to stand unstirred or unmoved for 24 hours.**
- Strain out the solids. Add one fresh yeast cake and 1-1/2 pounds of white sugar. Stir until sugar is completely dissolved. Place in clean bottles, a stoneware crock, or blue glass jars. Cover containers. Store in a dimly lit area for ten days.**
- Strain contents of each container through a clean white cloth. Rebottle. Use corks or tight lids. Can be stored and enjoyed in moderation thereafter as desired.**

A local dandelion related story recounts an elderly Strasburg lady on the West End of town during the 1930's Depression years. This widow lady was known for her marvelous baking abilities and to certain customers, as a skillful homemade winemaker.

During the summer, children were paid 2 cents for an overflowing gallon size basketful of dandelion blossoms by this lady. Adults who figured out what these flowers were being used for must have either approved the legal activity or simply did not care. Many kitchen product customers also knew that when a red ribbon appeared in a front window of this good widow's home, a more "spirited product" was available. Sometimes clean but empty bottles appeared overnight by her back door.

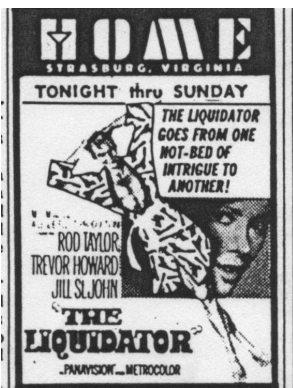
One sunny autumn afternoon, as the story goes, the good lady sat reading in her favorite parlor chair when a sharp popping sound startled her. When a second cracking noise followed, the alarmed lady quickly went next door to a neighbor who had a party-line telephone. A call of suspected gunshots was placed to the police officer on duty.

Upon the officer's arrival, no more "shots" had been heard. In searching in and around the house, the cause of the alarming incident was ultimately discovered. In the basement, some freshly corked bottles of potent dandelion wine had mistakenly been left near a window in direct sunlight. Two bottles had blown up and the cork of one had shattered a windowpane, thus explaining the startling sounds!

A Folk History on the Strasburg Home Theatre

"The movie wasn't so hot, it didn't have much of a plot."

--Wake Up Little Susie, The Everly Brothers, 1950's



No matter what the movie plot at the Home Theatre, there was only one movie playing, so you went to see it anyway. You could pick from the 7 o'clock or the 9 o'clock show, or which night you wanted to go, but those were your only choices. Next weekend would be a different movie and the previews would show you what a great movie it would be. It was really disappointing in those days if you couldn't get to the theatre to see the movie you were longing to see, because you didn't see that movie again until it came on TV. Then, hopefully you could sit in front of the TV and watch it from beginning to end without getting company. If the movie was in color, but you only had a black and white TV, then the one chance you had to see the movie in color was that night at the theatre.

Generations of Strasburg teens looked forward to movies and many townspeople worked there. Tina Davison Crabill sold tickets and sometimes I worked for Graham Conner taking up tickets when I was a teenager. Richard Wilson remembers Mrs. Carson Bowen sold tickets and Don Stickley took tickets after moviegoers got inside. The first thing you noticed when you walked into the Home Theatre was the round, red sofa seat in the middle of the lobby. You could watch people come in the front door if you were waiting for friends, or pick a spot with a view of the candy counter to watch the popcorn popping in the machine. There would be red and white striped boxes already filled with popped corn and the glass case held traditional movie theatre candy like Good n Plenty, Juji Fruits, or Dots.

The Home Theatre gave a treat to local children every Christmas. The children walked from the elementary school in a long line to the theatre to see the movie "White Christmas." Every year, it was the same movie. A familiar line from the movie was "How do you do?" with the answer, "Mutual I'm sure."

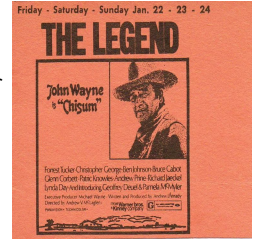
I was about ten watching "Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlotte" starring Bette Davis, a suspenseful murder mystery that gave me nightmares for years to come. A group of teenagers sitting across the aisle were making a lot of noise laughing loudly, which was really annoying as I was completely focused on the big screen and the dialogue. But I paid no attention until I realized that every time I covered my face with my hands the laughing got louder. When I looked over, they were pointing at me. I couldn't understand why these older kids were watching me instead of the movie, but the movie was much more interesting to me than they were, so I moved to the other side and continued to cover my eyes whenever the need arose, uninterrupted.

Only Crabill remembers going to the movies and seeing boys run behind the screen before the movie started, doing shadow boxing, once punching a hole in the screen. John Painter remembers "hard dry peas and pea-shoots used in the balcony to provoke those unfortunates in the lower seating area."

The film "Hard Days Night", starring The Beatles, came out in 1964. When it finally came to Strasburg, teenage girls packed the theatre. I was ten or eleven watching the Beatles run from screaming female fans. When The Beatles started to sing, all the teenage girls in the front row of the Home Theatre started to scream. I remember thinking for a minute, that I should put my feet up into my seat and look for "The Tinger." Then I realized the girls were mimicking the fans on the screen. The character William Castle said in the movie "The Tinger": "Remember, if you scream at just the right time, it might just save your life." After a while, girls of all ages in the theatre were screaming that night with love for the Beatles.

Richard Wilson describes the "most famous movie of all time." Richard was about 12 when he saw his favorite movie at the Home Theatre, "Shane" a western with Allan Ladd, and Van Heflin. Richard's father Mac Wilson, worked at the theatre selling tickets when it was run by Stanley Cooley in the 50's and 60's. Richard believes the Home Theatre was built around 1950 or 1951. The movie always started with a cartoon, then the news, then the previews. "We didn't have TV then" said Richard, so the movies were a big deal. The news would show parts of the ballgame which was a special treat as you could only listen on the radio to the ballgame in those days.

Many have personal memories of the Home Theatre. My first date with my future husband was at the Home Theatre in 1971. It was called "Chisum" starring John Wayne. One of John Wayne's characters famous quotes was "you round up everybody that can ride a horse or pull a trigger. Let's break out some Winchesters!" And the sheriff said "He's deader than a can of corned beef." Mary Campbell Redmon shares how "I remember that when I was old enough to go by myself, say 10 or so, it was still a quarter!!" That would have been around 1960. Shannon Wallace Miller remembers when "I was about 5 or 6, Mom took me to see Mary Poppins." In my senior year at SHS, the English teachers took us to the Home Theatre to see Romeo and Juliet when we were studying Shakespeare. "I remember seeing 'The Blob'" said John Painter, and thereafter being afraid to have my hand over the edge of the bed."



Doug Williams Sr. and his wife Emma told me in 1988 how they and their six children took up a whole row at the theatre, paying 5 cents each. Doug operated the family ice business and made a deal in the summer with the theatre manager. It took 600 pounds of ice for the air cooler that was used with a big fan to cool the theatre in summer. Their favorite movie was "Gone with the Wind." Doug also talked about his favorite "serial", fifteen minute segments of "Zorro" that showed every other night. Richard Wilson also remembers serials of "The Phantom" and "The Green Hornet", but believes he saw them at the Strand, a theatre open for many years before the Home Theater was built.

John Phillip Painter worked at the theatre as a teen. "I remember having a job running the projector. I had to splice the film and repair it, add leaders, focus, switch from projector #1 to # 2 and back on queue." And "I remember the candy impact mark on the white screen" (from pranksters in the audience) that he found very irritating because the screen was damaged.

The Home Theatre eventually closed, when more choices were offered in neighboring towns. It is now open for live music as the Strasburg Theatre.

The Home Theatre was a place where romance started and ended, first dates happened, hearts were broken, but always where our imaginations soared in front of the big screens. We were cowboys, or in love with a cowboy, we sang with Elvis, got ourselves out of dangerous situations as spies, learned to understand Shakespeare, got rescued by Lassie, sailed with the Vikings and screamed at the Beatles. Movies meant something different than they do today. It was our media connection, our gathering place, our source of local news, at a time when we could not imagine the instant communication we have today. It meant more than, I think. How many people would go back to those days? The words of the movie character "Shane" come to mind: "Do you mind putting down that gun? Then I'll leave." And Joe Starrett replies, "What difference does it make, you're leaving anyway?" To that, Shane says, "I'd like it to be my idea."

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Membership Application & Renewal

(Members 2010 dues are now due.)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email address: _____

MEMBERSHIP: _____ Cost is \$20.00

Additional Donation: _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: _____

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