

# Living History

A Quarterly Journal of Historical Preservation

Volume 4, Number 2

## Wallpaper on the Farm

by Robert M. Kelly

In the 1872 illustration from *American Agriculturist* (1), two women are seen "pasting and putting on wall-paper." Though not to be relied on for every detail, it does provide a good introduction to the topic of wallpaper on the farm. The ladies most likely went to town to buy the paper from a general store, pharmacist or undertaker. Although shears were still the usual choice for a trimming tool, the merchant may have removed the salvages from the paper with one of the new hand-operated trimming machines (2). Then the paper was wrapped up, carried home, and put up by the farm wife or a local handyman or housepainter, using a simple cooked wheat paste.

(continued on page 7)

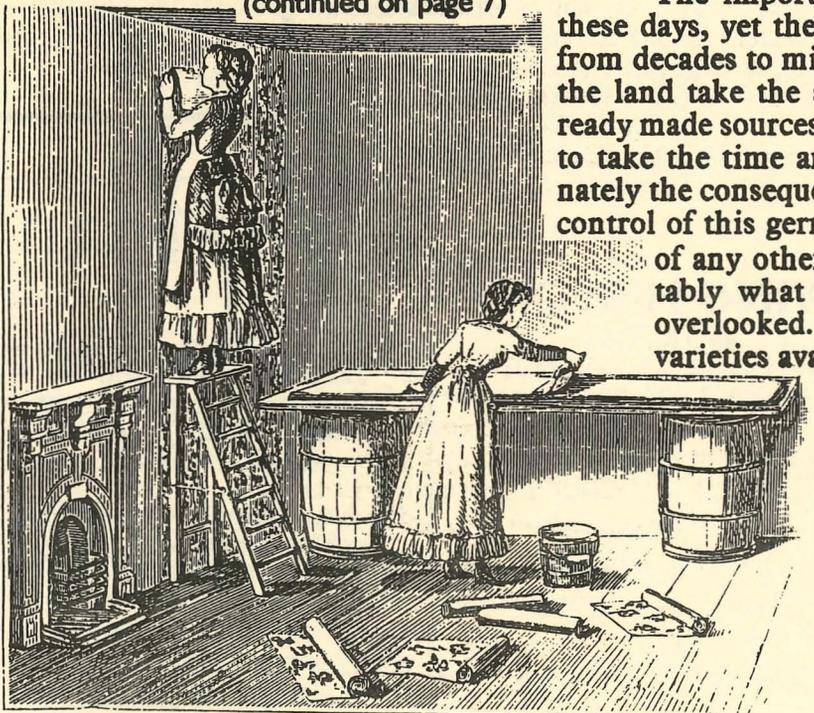


Fig. 3.—PASTING AND PUTTING ON WALL-PAPER.

## ON THE SEED TRAIL

by Lawrence Hollander

Doug and I had been waiting by the station wagon for what seemed to be an interminable length of time. Finally Steve waddled up the driveway, beaming, carrying something in his hand. He said, "Let's go," and jumped into the car. As we drove away, he handed me a small grape jelly jar filled with seeds given to him by a clan mother. It was as if we had struck gold. We had driven over 300 miles in search of seeds and now had discovered a treasure trove. As I peered into the jar I noticed white navy beans, brown and mottled beans, tan and mottled, red and white, and a very interesting small seed with black splotches.

Later that day we spread our treasure on a table, and the three of us carefully sorted the beans into little piles of what we perceived to be individual varieties. When we were done there were eight or nine distinct types, with as few as four seeds of some varieties. The red and white beans looked suspiciously like very aged yellow eyes, although I had seen Mostoller wild goose beans with similar coloration. While we were filled with enthusiasm for the possibilities of so many new varieties from one source, we had doubts as to what it would yield.

The importance of seeds is overlooked by most people these days, yet they provide a link with humanity dating back from decades to millennia. Many of us who derive a living from the land take the availability of seeds for granted, relying on ready made sources. Naturally most of us cannot and do not want to take the time and effort to produce our own seed. Unfortunately the consequences of allowing commercial interests to take control of this germplasm is like turning over the management of any other of our natural resources to business. Inevitably what may be best for humankind as a whole is overlooked. The number of heirloom and open-pollinated varieties available commercially has decreased 97 percent since 1900, and the trend continues today.

For example, only 54 percent of the red tomato varieties listed by Seed Saver's Exchange Garden Inventory in 1981 were still available in seed catalogs in 1991. Many other varieties were added during this time period, but 65 percent of the total available in 1991 were only carried by one or two sources, and generally not by major seed companies.

(continued on page 10)

## CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Peter,

Have you any data on the history, use, and maintenance of one-and two-man saws in America, such as a source of early catalogs and instruction literature?

As Ever, Chris Cobb  
Speculator, NY

Dear Chris,

Dan Preston, publisher of *The Harness Shop News*, put me on to an interesting company that sells a number of traditional tools, including one-and two-man crosscut saws, pit saws, and blades for left-and right-handed crooked knives. They offer a 24 page crosscut-saw manual for \$3, published by the U.S. Forest Service. Their catalog is \$.75. Contact the Crosscut Saw Company, Seneca Falls, NY 13148, (315) 568-5755.

Dear Living History,

Please send a sample copy of *Living History*. I saw your ad in the *Small Farm Journal* today. I am seeking to find a Christian interdenominational communal community to move to. Would you know of any in the United States? Thank you.

Peace, Daniel Dickens  
Chapin, Illinois

Dear Daniel,

I am enclosing a copy of the recent *Living History* and a summer 1992 issue with an article on the Christiansbrunn Brotherhood, which is a gay, historically oriented cloister.

This publication is aimed toward historic preservation, re-enactment, and cultural survival. I would suggest you contact Fellowship for Intentional Communities, University of Southern Indiana, 8600 University Boulevard, Evansville, Indiana 47712

Hi Peter,

I especially enjoyed my last issue. I do like animals better than barns. How about a cassette or booklet of Johannes's spinning and weaving and shearing songs? I have a linen song from Macedonia. If I can find it I'll send it on.

Maeve  
West Hurley, NY

Dear Peter,

Thank you for another excellent *Living History*. I always circulate the copy you send me. I am enclosing our 1994 Calendar of events. I wanted to call your attention to our Rare and Minor Breeds Show on May 21 and 22.

We have a very active animal program here. Currently, plans are underway to pick up a number of New Zealand goats that have inhabited an island off the coast for centuries. Their gene pool is threatened, and by crossing them with our own goats, we will all benefit.

Yours, Nancy Gedratiss,  
Supervisor of Volunteer Services  
Plimoth Plantation, Plymouth, Mass

Dear Peter,

Just a note to say that I hope you continue to enjoy the exchange subscription with *Windmillers' Gazette*, for I find each issue of *Living History* interesting reading. The *Gazette* is now in its thirteenth year and goes to approximately 1,000 paid subscribers worldwide. I have tried to stay with the steak and potatoes of the content in the *Gazette* with the exception of the classifieds, which some readers turn to first.

T. Lindsay Baker, Editor  
Windmillers' Gazette  
P.O. Box 507  
Rio Vista, Texas 76093

Dear Lindsay,

Thanks for your nice note. I enjoy your publication, its good illustrations, technical and human interest stories. You certainly cover the field well and I always recommend it.

Entering the fourth year of publication, *Living History* has over 250 paid subscribers from about 35 states and Canada. I mail out 1,000 copies of each issue. One benefit I find is the information and exchanges with other small publications in the history and preservation field.

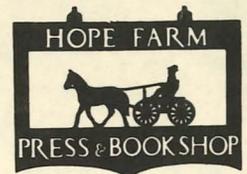
Sincerely,  
Peter Sinclair, Editor/Publisher  
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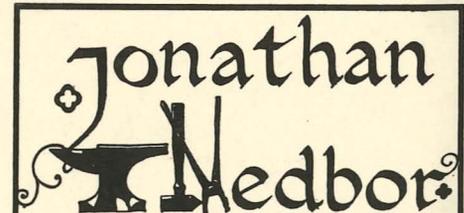
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# PUBLICATIONS

**The 1993 Flower and Herb Exchange; FHE, 3076 North Winn Road, Decorah, Iowa 52101; 136 pages, \$7 postage paid, softcover.**

The Flower and Herb exchange is a three-year-old non-profit organization working to make old-time flowers and herbs available to gardeners. What The Seed Savers Exchange has done to locate and preserve heirloom varieties of fruits and vegetables, FHE intends to do for heirloom flowers and herbs. About 240 members of the Exchange are listed with their offerings, other members are listed with information and plants they are trying to locate. There is also a good list of commercial seed sources specializing in heirloom varieties and plant societies concerned with the same.

1994 Steam and Gas Show Directory; Stengas Publishing Co., P.O. Box 328, Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17608; 208 pages, \$6 postage paid, softcover.

This 20th annual directory contains hundreds of local old time power gatherings, auctions, shows, and demonstrations held in all the states and provinces of North America. It is a bible for this active segment of the Living History movement which preserves, restores and studies the machinery of our historic agriculture. It is an enthusiastic group of people and their gatherings are always enjoyable and informative.

**The Harness Shop News; Rt. 1, Box 212, Sylva, NC 28779, annual subscriptions, \$18 third class US, \$23 first class US and Canada.**

This monthly publication covers all aspects of the leather trades including sources of tools and supplies, regional happenings and occasional historic articles. The February issue announces the formation of a new organization, *Saddle, Harness & Allied Trades Association* which it hopes will network the many scattered shops of harness makers, saddle makers and boot makers that make up the industry, establish ethical standards, promote craftsmanship to preserve and nurture the leather trades.

**Plain Communities Business Exchange; P.O. Box 27, Gordonville, PA 17529. Annual subscription \$15.**

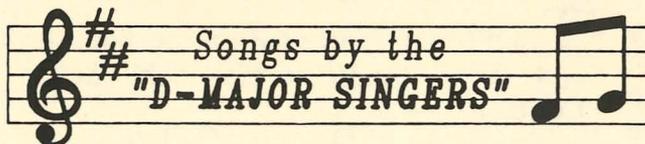
This monthly newspaper from Lancaster County is about the Amish and Mennonite communities in America. It contains excellent articles on historic and contemporary topics as well as practical information for the small shop owner.

Plain communities are a successful and growing group in America. They have proved the viability of historic preservation and we benefit from knowing and working with them.

*Peter Sinclair*

## Songs from Colonial America

Since 1983, the "D-Major Singers" in Poricy Park, Middletown, New Jersey, have been performing songs of America of the 1700s. We have searched through printed and recorded collections, made three trips to the British Isles, and also learned songs directly from traditional folk singers. We perform these songs at the annual "Murray Farmhouse Tavern Party," which is held in the restored 1767 home of a Revolutionary War patriot.



Although the songs are performed in a party setting, they are clearly recorded, and are sung in period style accompanied by fiddle, guitar, and harpsichord (and in some cases, unaccompanied). There are three tapes available, each one-hour long. On the tapes are 57 songs and ballads, including 17 from the collection of Francis James Child. Some of the titles are "Home Came the Old Man" (Child 274), "Bunch of Thyme," "The Two Sisters" (Child 10), "The Wanton Seed," "The Outlandish Knight" (Child 4), "Barbara Allen" (Child 84, in an unusual Irish version), "The Derby Ram," and many more. The tapes are enjoyable in their own right, and also serve as a good source for performance material.

The tapes are \$9.50 each mail-order (includes postage), or three (in any combination) for \$27. For a listing of the songs, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to "Tavern Party Tapes," Poricy Park, Box 36, Middletown NJ, 07748 (908-842-5966).

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# BARN PRESERVATION

## HISTORIC SYMPOSIUM

### Traditional Timberframers Research and Advisory Group

About 50 members of TTRAG met at the Hotel Bethlehem in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the week-end of January 21-23. Illustrated talks were given on many aspects of traditional timber framing as well as a wide variety of recent restoration projects that included barns, bridges, steeples, and mills. Ed Levin spoke on three projects underway in Georgia, North Carolina, and London, England, to build replicas of Shakespeare's Globe Theater, a large timber-frame building for which little evidence remains of its original design.

The TTRAG was formed within the Timber Framers Guild of North America (TFGNA) three years ago, to focus on the study of traditional wooden architecture, to exchange and discuss information, and to publish abstracts of talks given at its annual symposiums. The group includes a majority of timber frame carpenters who contribute their practical knowledge and regional orientation as well as architects and students of traditional architecture. Most are members of the guild but the group is open to non guild members who submit an acceptable documentation of one traditional timber frame (\*).

John MacNamara, of western Pennsylvania, spoke on Welsh three-story ramp barns of his region, which were constructed between 1870 and 1900, and of the local belief that beech wood was resistant to lightning. Most of the Welsh-American barns were built of hemlock but they often include one beech timber. He said that most of the barns are still in use and that most of their early features survive despite changes in agriculture.

Peter Haarmann spoke of his research into timber framing on Long Island, New York, in the Oyster Bay region. He has self published a 58 page book, Long Island: Where the Dutch and English Meet (\*\*), concerning his research. In addition to drawings, photographs and documentation of the few remaining 18th and early 19th-century barns with distinct regional Dutch-American character on Long Island, it includes early accounts and settlement patterns of the area dating to 1653.

Traditions of timber framing have survived in Germany and France where guilds continue to the present, but timber framing, which is very alive in America today, is in many ways a rebirth and rediscovery of its lost heritage, the development of American timber framing, which grew from the roots of Old World traditions.

The importance of understanding and appreciating historic methods of timber framing before we invent new ones was the subject of a recent article by Jack Sobon from Massachusetts, published in Timber Framing, Journal of the Timber Framers Guild (\*\*\*). Sobon Criticizes an illustrated article entitled "Joinery Decisions," published in the previous issue of the journal. In describing what he found weak and difficult to cut of the 15 nontraditional designs for joinery suggested in the article, he stressed the structural importance of long timbers, such as plates and sills which he felt were lacking in these contemporary designs.

While acknowledging that "...intuition can very often lead the timber framer astray when it comes to structural analysis," the author of the article, Charles Landau from the state of Washington replied, thanking Sobon for opening what he hopes will be a continuing dialogue. He was joined by Ed Levin from New Hampshire, who defends in detail some of the contemporary designs and the historic uses of iron in timber framing. "The best of the tradition must be preserved, not as a static museum collection, but as part of a living and growing body of work," he wrote.

(\*) TTRAG, P.O. Box 1046, Keene, NH 03431

(\*\*) Peter Haarmann, 805 Grand Blvd., Westbury, NY 11590

(\*\*\*) Timber Framing, P.O. Box 275, Newbury, VT 05051

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## TIMBER FRAME WORKSHOP September 21-25

Traditional Timber Framing with Jack Sobon and Dave Carlon at Hancock Shaker Village. Contact:

David L. Carlon  
318 Bates Rd.  
Windsor, MA 01270  
(413) 684-3612

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## BARN AGAIN! Farm Heritage Awards

The National Trust for Historic Preservation and Successful Farming magazine are now accepting nominations for 1995 Barn Again! Farm Heritage Awards which will be presented in two categories: (1) preservation of an historic farm or ranch, and (2) preservation and practical use of an older barn or other farm building. Incomplete nominations, or those without photographs cannot

be considered. Nominations for 1995 awards will be accepted through June 15, 1994. Awards will be announced in spring 1995. For more information contact;

National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Barn Again! Program  
910 16th St., Suite 1100  
Denver, Colorado 80202  
FAX (303) 623-1504

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## HISTORY & CONSERVATION OF BARNs

University of Vermont Workshop

Thomas D. Visser of the Historic Preservation Program in the department of history at the University of Vermont has been doing field work, studying the farms of the six New England states to identify the historic resources of farm complex buildings, including the barn. His work was funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. He is working to develop strategies for saving these threatened historic resources. The first step he suggests is to inventory and identify the history, significance and condition of the survivors. Visser has lectured to numerous preservation groups on saving and rehabilitating farm buildings and is currently finishing work on a book about New England barns.

In Vermont, the state historic preservation office has taken the lead with efforts to preserve historic agricultural buildings through staff research and workshops. They have developed type descriptions for historic farm buildings and have produced a series of videotapes on historic property types, making them available through local libraries and schools. Vermont has established one of the first large rural historic districts in Waitsfield, where income-producing farm complexes can take advantage of the federal investment tax credits available for rehabilitation projects. In 1993 the state provided \$75,000 in matching grants for preservation work on historic farm structures in the state.

The Preservation Trust of Vermont, a statewide nonprofit preservation organization, is working to save barns throughout the state with an innovative program of technical assistance grants for barn owners. Through an arrangement with several professional preservationists, basic architectural conservation assessments are conducted to help owners identify the needs and plan the preservation of their barns. The trust covers \$400 of the \$500 consulting fee. Vermont preservationists have developed model strategies to help save historic barns and farm complexes.

Visser is holding a workshop at the University of Vermont from July 25 to 29. Planners, policy makers, teachers, farmers, property owners, professional preservationists, historians, and students will be participating in this five day class of lectures and field trips. Academic credit is available. Vermont residents \$750.00, non-residents \$1,866.00. Contact:

Thomas Visser  
University of Vermont  
Department of History  
Historic Preservation Program  
Burlington, VT 05405  
(802) 656-3180

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## BARN ENTHUSIASTS of the Mid-Hudson Valley, NY

This small group was formed in 1993 and meets informally each month at a different historic house in the Mid-Hudson Valley to examine and document its barn as well as visit two other barns close by.

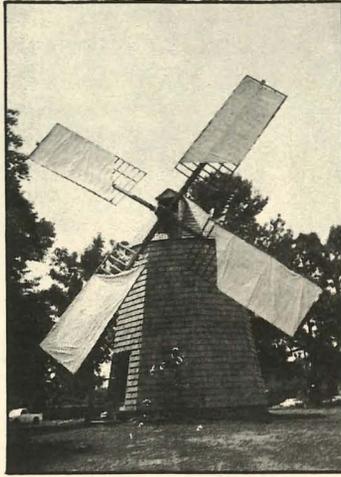
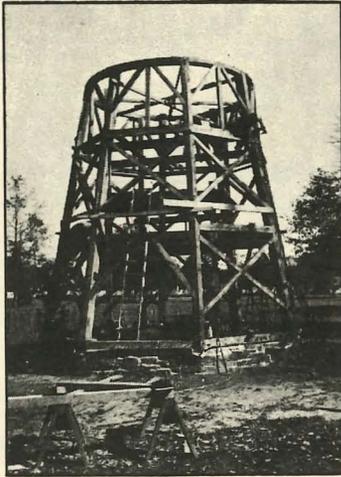
The group grew out of a dissatisfaction with Roberts Rules of Order and the lack of any organized effort to preserve barns in its area. The focus is on the Dutch-American barn that was characteristic of the Hudson Valley in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and persisted in the timber framing of the nineteenth. The group recently met at a home in Rochester, one of 20 townships in Ulster County. The owner is a member of a group doing an inventory of all structures over 50 years old in the township. It has located 70 barns, eight of which have been identified as Dutch. Three were lost to the heavy snow loads of this past winter. No estimate has been made of losses due to neglect.

The archaeology of traditional barns, which includes both oral and written history, is a study for which the evidence is rapidly vanishing. In preserving a few examples for the future we tend to save what is handy, unusual or beautiful. We prefer the biggest and the best, and we are missing the broader patterns we could understand only from searching for them all. Preserving barns is a neighborhood responsibility that involves doing the field work and beginning a dialogue.

The Barn Enthusiasts publish a monthly report. A sample copy as well as a short form and information on documenting Dutch barns is available for \$3. Write:

Living History  
Box 202  
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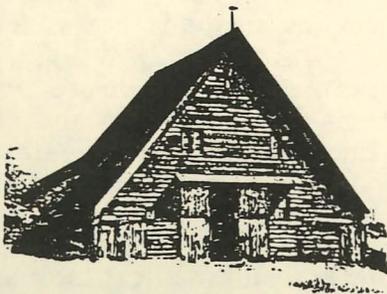


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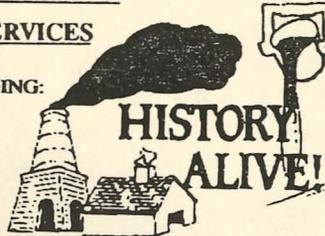
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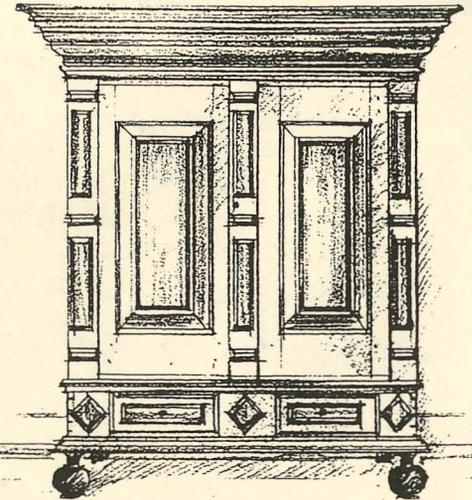
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(Wallpaper on the Farm, continued from page 1)

By the time this picture appeared in 1872, the wallpaper industry was almost completely mechanized and was on the verge of one of its most prolific periods. But the road to mechanization had been bumpy. Up to the Civil War the innovations of continuous paper and mechanical printing were applied piecemeal.

Though wallpaper had always traveled along with the westward expansion, there were several factors that accelerated the process after the Civil War. One was an increasingly effective distribution system; the other was lower prices.

The improving commercial climate led ultimately to the emergence of jobbers in Chicago who purchased large quantities of wallpaper from the mills in the east on a yearly basis and initiated a network of retail accounts throughout the Midwest and the Farwest. Soon Sears & Roebuck (1886) and Montgomery Ward (1872) were selling vast quantities through the mail.

The reduced costs were due, in part, to the substitution of mechanical groundwood pulp for rag. But there were drawbacks. In the text accompanying the illustration, farmers are advised that "...the cheap sorts of wall paper should be avoided if possible. They contain generally 25 to 40 percent of clay, and a very common material for the pulp is cow-dung; only a very small proportion consists of fiber of rope, matting, or other coarse material of any strength, and in putting it on a wall it will often fall to pieces in the hands."

Wallpaper has its own peculiar history. While the story of the nineteenth century is that of farmers moving to the city, wallpaper was continually moving from the city to the country. While furniture and clocks and other decorative artifacts could be made in the country and sold in the city, the reverse happened with wallpaper. This characteristic sets it apart from other decorative mediums like painting and stenciling, which could be done on the farm with handmade pigments and raw materials. In fact, many of the early American stencil patterns by itinerant artists were derived from wallpaper(3).

Earlier in the nineteenth century the wallpaper market was dominated by England and France. By 1872 the Eastern Seaboard dominated production. Commenting on the planned erection of a wallpaper factory in Pittsburgh in 1889, a trade magazine stated, "...there are about forty wall paper factories in the East, but, with the exception

of the one in Buffalo [Birge], there are none in the West. When we take into consideration that 75 percent of the wall paper manufactured is consumed west of New York the need of a Western factory is apparent."(4)

Wallpaper inspired both admiration and suspicion on the farm - admiration for its extravagant abundance of color, design and texture at progressively lower prices, suspicion because it represented the intrusion of pretense and worldly fashion into a simple environment. In some ways this ambivalence continues in historic representation of life on the farm; rarely does wallpaper get the same attention as other decorative features like paint, textiles or wood. Yet the

evidence shows that wallpaper was used pervasively on the farm, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

It may be that with the rise of woman's studies we will be hearing more about wallpaper on the farm. Wallpaper research has been seen as a woman's issue; because since the choice of wallpaper as considered part of the homemaker's role, its study has been automatically marginalized. Recent articles are beginning to turn this around - for example, those on the decorating advice for farmwives dispensed through the Extension Service (5).

The Living History Farm complex in Iowa has embarked on a research project to consider whether the pharmacy in a recreated 1875 village would have carried wallpaper. They have already located a trimming machine from a pharmacy, and are studying how much floor space would have been allotted to the wallpaper, and what sort of sample presentations would have been likely. It is efforts like these, along with the excellent standard reference book by Richard Nylander (6), that will ultimately win for wallpaper a place on the restored farm alongside more traditional crafts and artifacts.

For more on the paperhanging technique of this era, see Rosseau's House and Decorative Painting (1871). For more on the industry in general, see the Paper Hangings entry in The Great Industries of the United States (1873), although this needs to be taken with a large grain of salt.

XXX

**Robert M. Kelly** specializes in historic wallpaper consultation and installation for house museums; spec writing and research. He is founder of WRN Associates. Call or write for free information and a sample copy of their newsletter:

Wallpaper Reproduction News  
Box 187

Lee, Massachusetts 01238  
(413) 243-3489

#### NOTES

1. (Vol. 31, No. 4)
2. Patent #35,750 by D. Flower in 1862 seems to be the prototype for models that became popular in the 60s and 70s as a retail tool.
3. See Nina Fletcher Little, American Decorative Wall Painting 1700-1850, Dutton, NY, 1989, "wallpaper" in index.
4. The Painters Magazine and Wallpaper Trade Journal, Feb, 1889, pg. 144.
5. See Winterthur Portfolio, Vol. 27, No. 4, pg. 235-280 for research on decorating advice from home economists at Iowa State and Cornell.
6. Wallpaper For Historic Buildings, 1992, Preservation Press, (800) 766-6847.

# The Figure-4 Trap



**Three Generations of the Wolven Family, West Hurley, NY, 1896.** (From left to right: Nehemia, Catherine, Robert, Willis, and Martha with Fred on her lap.) Catherine and her daughter-in-law Martha have papered the family parlor in the latest fashion. A table on the left, which Nehemia built, holds the family bible with the names of their recent ancestors, whose framed photographs hang on the walls.

**N**ehemia Wolven (1831-1922) was born in Woodstock, New York, and established his small family farm in West Hurley, about 1850. Nehemia's great great grandfather, Gottfried Wulfen, Jr., was born in Germany and came to the Hudson Valley in 1710 with his brother Johann, their mother, Maria, and father, Gottfried de Woolfen (whose surname translates as "the female wolf"). They were among the 12,000 German Palatines who left the Rhine Valley in 1708-1709 to find new homes. Some 3,000 came to the Hudson Valley, the largest single immigration to America during the colonial period.

The English brought the Palatines to New York to use as cheap labor for producing tar and other stores for the British Navy. Gottfried Sr. played an important role in negotiating the contract and was instrumental in getting the English to provide them with a Dutch Reformed minister. Some of the Palatines remained Lutheran.

In 1710, the Wolven family and 500 Palatines settled in Ulster County at a place on the Hudson called West Camp, in what is today the township of Saugerties. After two years the Palatines of the Hudson Valley were in a state of rebellion and the naval stores project was declared a failure and closed. The English told the Palatines they were now on their own.

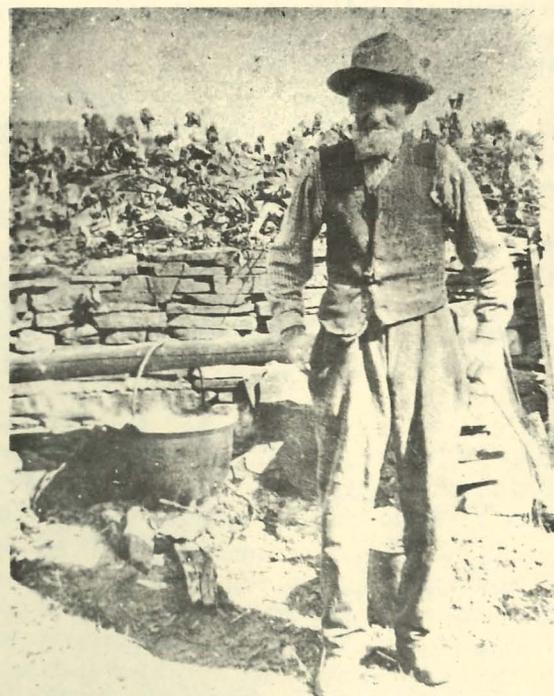
From the beginning of their migration, the Palatines had wanted only to own land and establish farms, but little land was available in the Hudson Valley at that time. Some was held in common but most was owned by the manor lords who had been

granted large patents in the seventeenth century. They would not sell their land, preferring to rent it to tenant farmers.

Within ten to fifteen years of the settlement of West camp, most of the Palatines had left to find land elsewhere, to the north in the Mohawk and Schoharie Valleys and south in Pennsylvania. In 1722 Gottfried was granted a 150 acre patent on the river near the mouth of the Esopus Creek, and gradually the dozen Palatine families who stayed in Ulster County acquired land and established farms. They would add some Germanic words to the local Dutch dialect and quickly adopt to the ways of the Dutch-Americans who had already established a sparsely populated but effective settlement in the area.

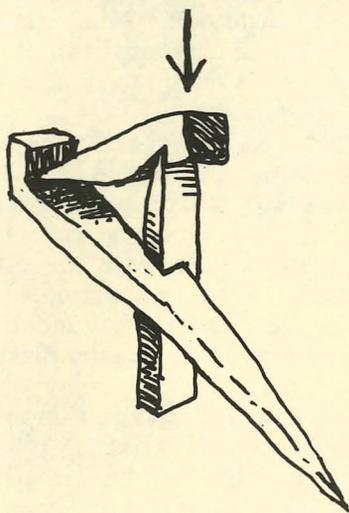
By 1820 there were 18 Wolven homesteads in Saugerties; in 1850 Nehemia was at the forefront of a southward expansion of the family, which established new farms as their numbers increased and land became available. Nehemia came to West Hurley, 15 miles south of West Camp, with some old ideas and time-tested methods of survival. They were maintained by his son, Willis, and his grandson Robert, who was the last to work Nehemia's farm.

When Robert Wolven died in the early 1980s, I had recently arrived in the



**Nehemia Wolven Cooking Scrap Meat, West Hurley 1916.** Hog butchering was a fall event where neighbor helped neighbor.

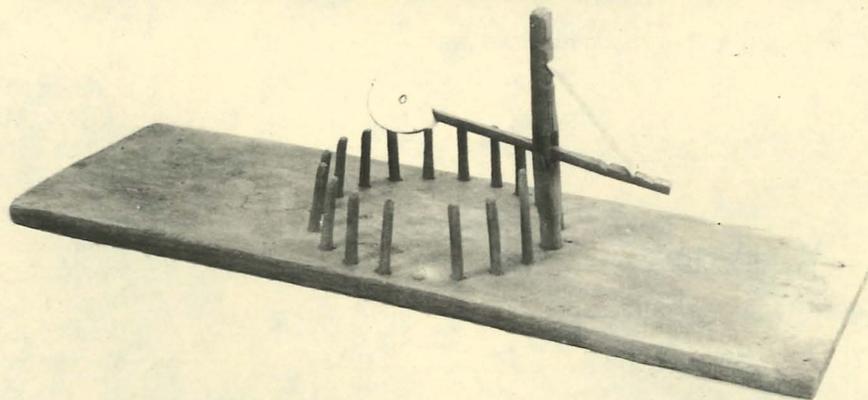
area and had met him only once or twice. The farm was sold and his daughter Lois allowed me to copy a family album of photographs. Later, at a yard sale, I bought some hardware from the farm, and Lois gave me a cigar box filled with odd pieces of carved wood. Neither of us knew what they were for. I brought them to a man who lived nearby at Bristol Hill - Tom Conlon, a third generation Irish stone cutter and carpenter who had trapped on the Preymaker Kill that flows out of Stony Hollow. Tom identified the sticks as figure-4s (\*), a simple kind of deadfall trap. When the three sticks are assembled, they form a ridged support for a heavy stone. A small rodent who nibbles on the bait attached to the horizontal stick upsets the figure-4 and is buried below the stone. Tom showed me how the sticks fit together and how, with a slightly different design, they could work under tension for the trigger of a snare trap. He made me models of three configurations.



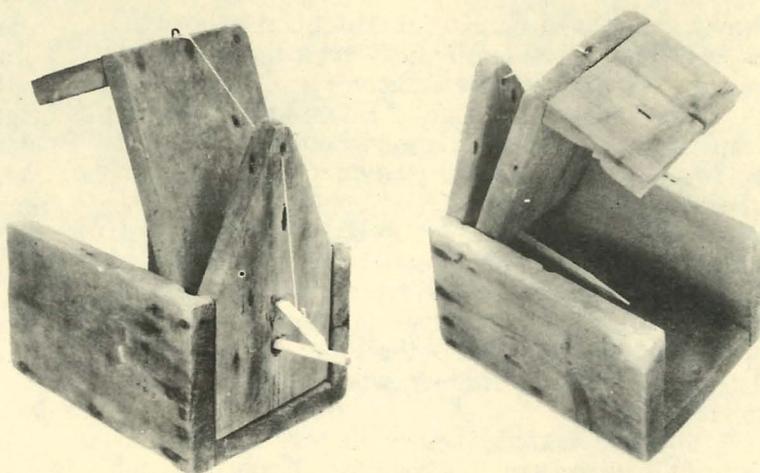
Drawing of a figure-4 Deadfall. The bait is placed on the pointed stick and a heavy stone rests on top.

Just recently I acquired two additional traps from the Wolven farm. The box trap was missing its bait stick, trip stick, and string, but once I replaced them, it was again ready to trap a rat or a curious squirrel. The snare trap, with its circle of wooden tines, had me baffled. I took it to Ed Cantine of Canary Hill, a member of a small community of closely related local families with American Indian, Black and White bloodlines. Orphaned at a young age, Ed was raised by his grandparents, Sahra and Niel

(continued on page 10)



Wolven Snare Board. The trap is baited with a slice of pear. The board measures 2 feet 2 1/2 inches long.

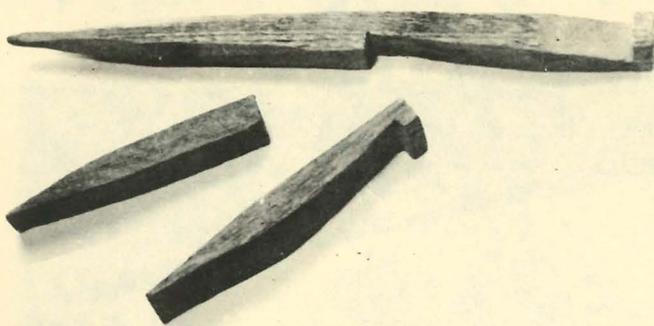


Wolven Box Trap. Two views. The back board of the box measures 11 inches high.



Edward Cornelius Cantine of Canary Hill. Ed keeps a dangerous black dog in his yard. (photo by P.Sinclair)

(The Figure-4 Trap continued from page 9)



**Wolven Figure-4 Deadfall.** The longest stick measures 11 1/2 inches.

Hasbrouk, who lived on Hurley Mountain at a place called Eagle Nest. Close family ties were maintained and many old ways were preserved there.

"That's meat on the table." Ed said when he saw my trap. "It's a snare board. My grandmother said to me once, 'You don't use this thing anymore,' and she had me chop one up for kindling."

Ed described how the trap board was weighted with stones and how the noose was kept open by the tines and tied to the trip stick, which was tied in turn to a bent sapling. The rabbit would be caught in the noose and pulled up and off the ground, away from predators, awaiting the trapper, who would check his snare each day.

"You trap a skunk, remove the perfume bag, and render off the grease which is good for a heavy cold and congestion." Ed told me, "You rub that on your chest or take half a teaspoonful. It works."

"You catch a skunk with a snare board?" I asked.

"No, in a box trap," he replied.

"Have you ever eaten skunk?" I asked.

Ed responded, "My grandmother, she would say, 'We're going to make skunk today and you won't have a cold all winter.'"

The use of animal grease for colds and congestion was widespread locally, as were herbal teas. Ed's grandmother made one of flag root, a swamp plant, and wintergreen to break a fever. She also made teas of black cherry bark and sassafras, which were good for the blood, and one of a little flower known as mouse ears, to check diarrhea.

Peter Sinclair

XXX

(\*) The figure-4 concept is of European, perhaps Dutch origin. See *Daily Life in Holland in the Year 1566*, by Rien Poortvleit; Harry N. Abrams, Inc., NY, 1992.

(On the Seed Trail, from page 1)

I am often asked why we should spend time and money saving seeds. Doesn't the government do that? And the answer is a qualified yes, they do some of that work, but without the efforts of gardeners, farmers, indigenous people, and more recently small seed companies and foundations, much of the germplasm that still exists would be lost.

The USDA has an extensive bean collection, but of the thousands of beans grown by the Seed Savers Exchange Network, less than 200 are conserved by the USDA. Many of the seeds collected by the government in the earlier part of this century, including dozens of Native American varieties, are no longer maintained and it seems many are now extinct. Present-day collections in USDA seed banks and others throughout the world do not necessarily represent the oldest or most important germplasm but only the most accessible to field collectors; they should not represent our only line of defense against extinction.

Seeds are like vast libraries of information. They may contain genes for greater adaptability, insect, disease, weather and climate resistance, and more. They can serve as sources for increased nutrition, medicine, and industrial compounds. An Iroquois white flower corn that the CRESS Heirloom Seed Project is growing has twice the protein and fat content of its hybridized form. It does seem that many open pollinated types are in fact nutritionally superior. The drawback is a negative correlation between protein content and yield. Therefore one must ask, are we concerned only with yield and appearance or are we going to consider nutrition, taste, and other qualities? As organic growers we point to the nutritional benefits of organic food. Are we possibly cheating our customers? Much research remains to be done on the medicinal qualities of food. By preserving each and every variety, we increase the chances of finding the answers.

As I drove home with my share of seed, all kinds of thoughts went through my head. I knew I was now responsible for some pretty rare plants, perhaps the only remaining seeds of some 700-year-old Native American varieties. I planted them with the utmost care when the soil warmed. And then I waited.

Plants grown in the same environment year after year exhibit greater adaptability, greater plasticity to the environment in which they are being grown. This is known as genetic drift and plays an important role in the creation of regional sub varieties. If a seed is confined to long term seed storage, even if it is viable when planted, it has not had the benefit of a continual plant-environment interaction. Consequently the plant may be unable to cope with increasing ground level ozone or ultraviolet radiation from atmospheric ozone depletion. So the creation and maintenance of regional living seed banks is significant for all of us.

Growing a New England bean in Washington (as is the case with USDA) or Iowa (Seed Savers Exchange) will preserve the germplasm, but it is not the same as preserving it in New England or the Northeast where there are enormous variations in topography, bedrock, soil, water, weather, growing season, and so forth, which may produce different sub varieties.

While there has been a proliferation of seed organizations and individuals conserving seed in the United States, there has not been a concentration of efforts in the Northeast. Now that picture is gradually changing with seed companies such as Johnny's, Fedco, Pinteree, Vermont Bean Seed, and others offering a

greater number of open pollinated and heirloom varieties grown within the region. Seed saving programs such as the Scatterseed project in Maine, CRESS in western Massachusetts, Sturbridge Village, Landis Valley in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and a number of other historical institutions are now providing a means of conserving seeds on a regional basis.

Sometimes conservation is too late. I didn't need to worry about seed rot for the weather was hot and unusually dry. A few days went by and none of the new beans germinated. Perhaps I was a bit impatient, but most of my other beans were popping up. Ten days passed and still no beans, but I noticed that some other varieties were just beginning to appear. If these beans were really old, I thought, they would germinate rather slowly, and finally two of the varieties germinated, four plants each, representing a germination rate of less than 20 percent of those planted. None of the other beans ever saw daylight again.

No one really knows how many uncollected varieties are still out there. It is probably not a high number but with diligence, more types will surface. More than once I have been too late. Most seeds were too old. The eight plants that did germinate grew normally, although they were not as robust as some of their neighbors. By late summer they had formed beans but they certainly were slow to mature. I do not know how many more viable seeds of the two varieties there will be this year but in time there will be enough so that the Senecas will eat these beans again and so may you and I. And hopefully these two varieties will not have to suffer the indignity of near extinction ever again.

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Lawrence Hollander is Director of CRESS, and is research associate at the Institute for American Indian Studies in Washington, Connecticut.

\*\*\*

Steve McComber is a traditional Mohawk artist, ardent seed collector, and conservationist who is largely responsible for preserving numerous Iroquois food plants.

\*\*\*

CRESS (Conservation and Regional Exchange by Seed Savers) is a relatively new organization based in the Berkshires of Massachusetts. Its mis-

sion is the conservation of heirloom food plants that are endemic

or adapted to the Northeast. They grow out several hundred varieties each year. Membership begins at \$10. Call or write for a brochure.

\*\*\*

The Eastern Native Seed Conservancy is a newly developing organization within the Institute for American Indian Studies, Washington, Connecticut. Its mission includes working with native people to preserve their plant resources and ethnobotanical knowledge, the promotion of traditionally based economies, and reintroduction of traditional foods.

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## MATERNAL MORTALITY; FACT OR FABRICATION

by Karen Mullian

How many times during historic demonstrations have you been approached by a visitor who, of course, knows all and admonishes you to "be careful your skirts don't catch on fire"? You sigh and thank the well-meaning person as you go about your business. Your guest, however, doesn't intend to let you off so easily. "Don't you know," he or she says, "that the second leading cause of death among women in the eighteenth century was fire?" As if you've never seen a fire before or worn long linen or woolen petticoats near one - you and the millions of women who have cooked over open fires or on a hearth over the last two or three millennia. And you know what's coming next: That smug look as Mr. or Ms. J.Q. Public adds, "Be glad you can have babies in the twentieth century. Most women died in childbirth back then, you know, and they died by the time they were 35, too."

And people were shorter then, and they slept sitting up, and they married young, and they all had 12 or 13 children, and so on and so on...

I am very uncomfortable with the perpetuation of such notions. Having been involved in genealogical research for almost 13 years, I wondered if I had gathered enough family information on my Quaker ancestors who lived in Chester County, Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century to form a basis for either the fire or childbirth suppositions. I have for the time being decided to delay a study on death by fire, as cause of death is not often listed in most Quaker records available for research, and I have not had sufficient opportunity to read enough of the extant journals of the period which sometimes do list causes of death. Quakers are famous, however, for their meticulous recording of births and deaths of members; and maternal mortality should be deducible from the last births of children and the dates of death of their mothers. From family records of more than 20 different Quaker families, I selected 100 women for whom I know the dates of birth, marriage, last delivery, and death, as well as the number of children. These women were born as early as 1642 and as late as 1799; though not all were born in North America, all lived in Pennsylvania during the colonial period. Table 1 shows averages for a number of findings:

Table 1. Average Age at Marriage, Last Birth, Death, and Average Number of Children

Average Age at Marriage	23.47 years
Average Age at Last Birth	37.40 years
Average Age at Death	64.04 years
Average Number of Children	6.20

Seven of these women lived less than a year following the delivery of their last children. Three died within three months (one within days), indicating the possibility of postpartum complications. Cause of death of the four remaining women in this group could have been related to childbirth; however, to include them among the women whose deaths are almost certainly attributed to obstetrical causes might inflate the percentage. Therefore, they are listed in the 1 month to 1 year category in Table 2.

Table 2. Mortality Rate Based on Last Birth

Years After Last Birth	%
1 month or less	3%
1 month to 1 year	4%
1 - 5 years	15%
6 - 10 years	3%
11 - 20 years	10%
21 - 30 years	20%
31 - 40 years	22%
41 - 50 years	20%
51 + years	5%

Burial records from Christ Church, Philadelphia for 1751 (\*) show the cause of death for 146 people buried there that year (Table 3). While the four deaths listed as "casualty" could include death by fire, there is no indication of either the sex or age of the victims. Even if they were all adult women, this category reflects only 6.26 percent of the 76 females buried in 1751 at Christ Church. There are 7 deaths caused by "childbed", or 9.2 percent. By adding up the totals for age groups between 20 and 60 (n=51) and multiplying by 52 percent (percentage of females in the total 1751 burial population), an estimated female population of childbearing age can be determined (n=27). This raises the rate of death by childbirth to 25.93 percent, significantly higher than the rate arrived at for the 100 Chester County Quaker women. However, other factors

should be considered - Philadelphia in 1751 was an urban area already considered by public, religious, and medical authorities as polluted by the many breweries, tanneries, and other waste-producing industries located amid the densely populated and narrow confines of the mid-eighteenth century city; and filth and its resultant disease were prevalent among all segments of society.

Table 3. Burials at Christ Church, Philadelphia, December 24, 1750 - December 24, 1781

Total Population	Total Female Population		Total Females of Childbearing Age			
	N = 146	N = 76	N = 27			
Cause of Death		%		%		
Smallpox	47	32.19	24	31.58	8	29.63
Consumption	26	17.81	14	18.42	5	18.52
Pleurisy	9	6.16	5	6.58	2	7.41
Fits	9	6.16	5	6.58	2	7.41
Childbed	7	4.79	7	9.21	7	25.93
Fever	7	4.79	4	5.26	1	3.70
Hooping Cough	6	4.11	0	0.00	0	0.00
Teeth	6	4.11	3	3.95	1	3.70
Aged	5	3.42	3	3.95	1	3.70
Flux	4	2.74	2	2.63	0	0.00
Quinsy	4	2.74	2	2.63	0	0.00
Casualty	4	2.74	2	2.63	0	0.00
Hives	2	1.37	1	1.32	0	0.00
Impostume	2	1.37	1	1.32	0	0.00
Mortification	2	1.37	1	1.32	0	0.00
Dropsy	2	1.37	1	1.32	0	0.00
Apoplexy	1	0.68	0	0.00	0	0.00
Cholick <i>[sic]</i>	1	0.68	0	0.00	0	0.00
Convulsion	1	0.68	0	0.00	0	0.00
Gravel	1	0.68	0	0.00	0	0.00
Surfeit	1	0.68	0	0.00	0	0.00
Totals	146	100.00	76	102.65	27	100.00

Martha Ballard, a Maine midwife who kept a journal of her practice (\*\*), lost only five mothers in 865 deliveries (women who died within a week of delivery). Family size in the neighborhood of Mrs. Ballard's practice averaged slightly more than six children, or approximately 133 mothers, for a maternal mortality rate of 3.76 percent, closely approximating that found among the 100 Quaker women of Chester County, Pennsylvania (see Table 2).

This subject deserves further analysis. However, two preliminary suppositions can be drawn from Martha Ballard's journal and my Chester County study: 1) Childbirth was a much less dangerous life event for rural women in the colonial and federal periods of America than for their urban sisters, and 2) the commonly held perception that childbirth was the overwhelming cause of death for the majority of eighteenth century women does not appear to be supported by the currently examined data.

Forty-two years later, during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, there were 398 burials at Christ Church. 170 (43 percent) of whom were women. Women of childbearing age accounted for approximately 96 of the women buried, or 56 percent. Three deaths were credited to childbirth, or 3.13 percent of all deaths among women of childbearing age. Of the deaths attributable to yellow fever (214 total; = 92 total females; = 52 females of childbearing age) are subtracted, deaths due to childbirth rise to almost 7 percent, considerably less than deaths recorded at Christ Church in 1751, but still higher than the Chester County and Martha Ballard (see below) rates.

This reduction could possibly be the result of an overall tendency toward a decrease in family size among the general population (see J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America*, New York, 1973); certainly it should not be attributed to any mistaken belief that by the late 18th century Philadelphia had cleaned up its pollution problems (see J. H. Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949 [reprinted 1993 in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia]).

I would be extremely interested to know if other, perhaps more scientific studies have been conducted with regard to maternal mortality.

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*Karen Mullian is a member of Past Masters in Early American Domestic Arts. She lives in Prospect Park, Pennsylvania.*

(\*) An account of the Births and Burials in Christ-Church Parish, in Philadelphia, from December 24, 1750, to December 24, 1751, by Caleb Cash, Clerk, and Samuel Kirke, Sexton. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

(\*\*) Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher, A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, based on Her Diary, 1783-1812. Knopf, NY 1990.

## COMING EVENTS

**May 17-21, 1994**

**Kalamazoo, Michigan**

**OXEN BASICS**, an intensive, hands-on workshop for training, harnessing, and working oxen. Selecting, teaming, and caring for oxen are introduced. Participants train calves, drive single animals, teams, and multiple teams under various loads. This is one of a year-long schedule of workshops given by Tillers International, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving nearly lost rural arts and crafts. Tillers has researched and shared these skills through 12 years of programs providing Americans and international guests with the experience of some of America's rural history while building skills for today's global rural living. Send for a full list of workshops:

Tillers International  
53239 South 24th Street  
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**May 18-20, 1994**

**Atlanta, Georgia**

Interpretive Exhibits in History Museums. This workshop at the Atlanta History Center is organized by The American Association of State and Local History (AASLH). It offers an intensive study of the exhibition process. Call:

AASLH  
(615) 255-2971

**May 19-22, 1994**

**Williamsburg, Virginia**

Annual meeting of EAIA (Early American Industries Association) is scheduled to coincide with Colonial Williamsburg's Symposium on 18th Century Hand Tools which will include lectures by an outstanding group of experts. There will be tool displays by members and tool sales. Call:

Collonial Williamsburg  
(800) 447-8679

**May 20, 1994**

**Charlottesville, Virginia**

Open House at Tufton Farm hosted by director Peggy Newcomb Call:

Thomas Jefferson Cent for Hist Plants  
Monticello  
(804) 295-8181

**May 28-30, 1994**

**Old Bethpage, New York**

1994 Horticultural Exhibition. Old Bethpage Restoration interprets a mid-nineteenth century Long Island horticulture show, promotes the growing of pre-1880 plant material and stimulates general recognition of plant origins. Contact:

Old Bethpage Village Restoration  
Rounf Swamp Road  
Old Bethpage, NY 11804  
(516) 572-8401

**June 4-5, 1994**

**Lancaster, Pennsylvania**

**LANDIS VALLEY FAIR** is a non-commercial old-fashioned event for children and adults who like living history: hands-on activities, animals, many craft demonstrations, hardy country food, excellent museum shop, military encampment, music, entertainment,

at a major Pennsylvania Dutch complex. \$7 adults, \$6 ages 60+, \$5 ages 6-17, ages 5 & under free. Contact:

Landis Valley Museum  
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**June 18-19, 1994**

**Leesburg, Virginia**

"Celtic Festival" Continuous live ethnic music provides a cultural backdrop to Scottish games, Irish dancers, Welsh choirs, storytellers, authentic foods, and a craft market of over 50 juried artisans displaying and demonstrating broommaking, weaving, blacksmithing, glassmaking, and more. Cost: \$6 per person per day, children under 12 free, no pets. Oatlands is an 1803 property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It is located south of Leesburg near Washington-Dulles International Airport and one hour's drive from Washington, DC.. Contact:

Melissa York  
(703) 777-3174

**June 19-23, 1994**

**Troy, New York**

The Annual meeting of the Association for Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM) will be held at Russell Sage College. It will explore the roles and interrelationships of work and community in both agrarian and industrial settings, as well as contemporary issues and concerns within the museum field. ALHFAM is seeking quality papers that explore these issues as well as architecture, ethnic customs, and technology. Write:

ALHFAM  
Conner Prairie  
13400 Allisonville Rd.  
Fishers, Indiana 46038

**June 21-24, 1994**

**Lancaster, Pennsylvania**

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Landis Valley Museum  
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**July 4, 1994**

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**July 23, 1994**

**Pittsfield, Massachusetts**

"North Family Explorations" an archaeological tour of the remains of the Shaker mills and water system. 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM.

Hancock Shaker Village  
P.O. Box 898  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

**August 4 to 6, 1994**

**Staunton, Virginia**

The Tenth Ulster-American Heritage Symposium. An international symposium held on alternating years and locations between an American institution and the University of Ulster. This year at The Museum of American Frontier Culture. Papers, session proposals and more information contact the Director: of Research and Collections:

Dr. Katharine L. Brown  
(703) 332-7850

**August 12-13, 1994**

**Greenville, Pennsylvania**

The annual Goschenhoppen Folk Festival is held in Montgomery County. More than 500 skilled and apprentice craftsmen, dressed in authentic costumes of the periods and using authentic tools, give live demonstrations of more than 150 crafts of the 18th and early 19th centuries. They include rye straw thatching, timber framing, coopering, gun smithing, butchering, and music.. Stage programs and lectures, both scholarly and entertaining; serious and humorous; in dialect and English are presented on both days. Write:

Goschenhoppen Historians  
Red Men's Hall  
Green Lane, PA 18054

**August 13, 1994**

**Pitman, Pennsylvania**

"Patience and Her Products: The Wonderful World of Milk" Fifth Annual Open House at Christiansbrunn Kloster 1 to 5 PM. Featuring Patience, a full blooded Austrian Pinzgauer cow, and hands-on butter-making demonstration for children. Well into this century, the processing of raw milk into butter, cheese, and other products was a source of extra income for the Pennsylvania Dutch farmers of the Mahatongo Valley, who sold these products in the nearby mining towns like Mt. Carmel, Shamokin and Shenandoah. The entire process will be demonstrated by noted Colonial era food experts, Clarissa Dillon and Susan Lucas. Bro. Johannes will be preparing breads, cakes and cookies in the outdoor bake oven. Write him at:

Christiansbrunn Kloster  
RD 1, Box 149  
Pitman, PA 17964

**September 10-12, 1994**

**East Meredith, New York**

Annual meeting of the Society for the Preservation of Old Mills (SPOOM) will be held at the hanford Mills Museum. Write:

SPOOM  
707 North Fork Lane  
Whitleyville, TN 38588-9702

**September 17, 1994**

**Blue Springs, Missouri**

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Blue Springs, Missouri 64015

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**Robert, Catherine and Nehemia Wolven with unidentified woman driver. West Hurley, NY about 1920.**  
The family enjoys a summer outing. Robert never did learn to drive a car and never travelled more than 50 miles from home. The Next Issue of Living History will visit the annual meeting of the Early American Industries Association at Colonial Williamsburg, May 18-22. We plan to take Nehemia's snare board trap to the EAIA "Whatsits" tool display and see if we can stump the experts who will be assembled there. If you have a story or picture that might stump the experts, send it to Living History.