



Unison Preservation Society

NEWSLETTER

Working to Protect and Preserve our Historic Countryside

Dara Bailey Photo.

ISSUE THREE • 2015

• FALL •

UNISON, VIRGINIA

Unison Heritage Day *Saturday, October 31 • 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.*

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

As the new President of the Unison Preservation Society, I am pleased to invite you and your family to the 2015 Unison Heritage Day on Saturday afternoon, October 31, from

1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Unison Community Center and Village Green.

Come celebrate village life, see your neighbors, bring the family and friends, and have some fun! Since the 31st is Halloween, we'll have a costume contest for children 12 and under.

You can listen to the Cobbler Mountain Grass Band, pet the Piedmont Foxhounds, let your kids play on the Village Green, bid on items in both the silent and live auctions, eat fresh Chesapeake Bay oysters and enjoy fine Virginia pork barbecue. There will be lots to do. But if you just want to spend a relaxing day sitting around talking with your family and neighbors, that's fine too!

Invite your city friends out for a day of fun in the country.

The silent auction, which will run from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., includes more than 150 gift items and contributions from local stores. (See list on

page 2 for some of these items.) You just never know what surprises you are going to find. At the silent auction last year, for example, a Unison resident bought three framed drawings of colorful dump trucks, which are now hanging in her two-year old grandson's bedroom. He loves them! Come and see for yourself what's at this year's auction.

The live auction will start at 3:00 p.m. Some of the featured items are a fly-fishing trip on blue ribbon trout steams in central Virginia, a Shenandoah River canoe trip, a balloon trip over the Virginia countryside, a chauffeured fall drive in a 1957 Rolls Royce with a picnic luncheon from the Hunter's Head, a gourmet dinner for twelve at the Unison Community Center, a fantastic trip to surprise destination and much more.



Dara Bailey Photo.



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Heritage Day Live & Silent Auction Preview of Items

- Tree consult and fertilization service
- Balloon trip across Virginia countryside
- Professional shotgun lessons
- Vintage Rolls Royce country drive with lunch and champagne
- Organic turkey for Thanksgiving
- Fly-fishing trip on blue ribbon trout streams
- Gourmet dinner for 12 served at historic Unison Store
- Gourmet wine and cheese baskets
- Hermes scarves & designer clothing
- Gift Certificates for variety of Middleburg shops
- Hunt Country Bed & Breakfast stay
- Pottery tiles by local artist
- Music performance at Your Home
- Window cleaning service
- Gift card for garden supplies
- Photo framing
- Personalized note cards
- Antique furniture restoration
- Restaurant gift cards
- Auto service
- Tree Top Zip Line Tour in Middleburg
- Canoe trip on Shenandoah River with picnic for 12
- Jewelry appraisal
- Tour of Virginia wineries
- Therapeutic massage
- Antique Persian rug
- Honey from Unison's own bees

Tickets are \$30 per person, \$25 in advance, children 12 and under free! Plenty of free parking is available. Advance tickets must be ordered by October 23; mail checks to the Unison Preservation Society, Box 606, Middleburg, Virginia 20118.

Proceeds from Heritage Day will go towards the restoration of the Unison Community Center as well as other UPS work in support of our neighborhood. This event is a very important source of funding for the organization. So, come have some fun and support a good cause at the same time!

*Steve Chase, President,
Unison Preservation Society*

PS: A big thank you to all the local merchants that have donated items for the live and silent auctions. Their support is vital and much appreciated. ■



Dara Bailey Photo.



Among the numerous items to bid on in this year's live and silent auctions will be: a canoe trip, including lunch for twelve people on the Shenandoah River; a Tree Top Zip Line Tour at the Salamander Inn & Resort; and a drive through the Virginia countryside in a vintage Rolls Royce with a gourmet luncheon at the Hunter's Head restaurant. Also at Heritage Day: the Piedmont Hounds will join the party; games for the kids; our famous Chesapeake Bay Oysters.



What Unison Did Over Summer Vacation



Battle of Unison Historic Virginia Sign Dedication

On Saturday, June 20th, about 40 friends and neighbors gathered at the Unison Store to dedicate the new roadside sign honoring the 1862



Battle of Unison. In that battle, which passed right through the center of our village, General JEB Stuart and about 1000 soldiers were able to hold up the advance of the giant Federal Army of the Potomac long enough to allow Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia to escape a trap set by President Abraham Lincoln.

In addition to the battlefield sign, a bronze plaque was unveiled honoring the generous donation of the old store by Dr. Betsee Parker to the Unison Preservation Society.

Pictured with the new battlefield sign (from the left) are Paul Hodge, Harry Bigley, Mitch Diamond, Department of Historic Resources official David Edwards, Dr. Betsee Parker, Delegate Randy Minchew and Kim Hart.



"Music on the Green" Concert Series

Friends and neighbors gathered on The Village Green to enjoy live music in the afternoon on June 21 for Sunday Jazz by Charles Groves and on August 30 to listen to Chamber Music by Jason Labrador. Thank you to all who came out to support these musicians and for your donations towards this Series. We look forward to next year's lineup!

Photos courtesy of Steve Chase.

Hangin' with the Masters

Second in our Unison Artist Feature Series By Tara Connell

"Eddy is proudly hanging between two Degas paintings."

That simple sentence is so wonderfully complex, it will take a whole story to explain, so buckle up. And rest assured, it has a Unison dateline:

The sentence was from a September 9 email to say all was well with the portrait of a young boy in a "Little Lord Fauntleroy" suit that had been donated to the National Gallery of Art.

The Eddy involved was Col. Edward Buchanan Cassatt, the grandfather of Unison's own Dody Thayer Vehr. How he came to be hanging between two Degas' at the National Gallery of Art is a story of some historical importance to the art world as well as plain and simple family history to Dody. Although there is nothing simple about Dody's interesting family.

Dody, it turns out, is the great-grand niece of famed American artist Mary Cassatt. The 1875 portrait of Eddy, looking slightly miserable at age 5—or "Grandpa" as Dody refers to the painting—has been hanging in her dining room at Fiddler's Green in Unison for years. It is an early Cassatt, from a period before she was influenced by the Impressionists, particularly Edgar Degas.

The decision by Dody and her daughter Julie Diehl (also of Fiddler's Green) to donate the work to the National Gallery was a relief to Dody, who told *The Washington Post* that she stayed awake nights worrying about what would happen if there was a fire. But the donation also provided an opportunity to remember her extraordinarily talented family, and to talk about her own art.

Yes, Dody has inherited the Cassatt art gene and is one of Unison's own local artists. In fact, one of her works will be auctioned at Unison Heritage Day on October 31. Her studio is the dining room where Grandpa used to hang in Unison and look out on the Fiddler's Green horse fields. (The National Gallery provided a photographic reproduction of the portrait to hang as a replacement.)

Did Great Aunt Mary inspire her?

"Mother was always talking about her," Dody says. So perhaps yes.

Dody was born two years after her famous great aunt died in 1926 but there were the intriguing family stories, she says. "Grandfather Eddy said the strangest people came to Aunt Mary's house there (in Paris). There's someone named Oscar Wilde."

The portrait of Eddy came about because Mary Cassatt "loved all her nieces and nephews," Dody said. She apparently painted or drew many of them and eventually became famous for her portraits of children. However, Cassatt "did not like my great grandmother," Dody says. That would be Eddy's mother and the wife of Alexander Johnson Cassatt, Mary's brother.

Why? Apparently the attitude of Mary Cassatt's sister-in-law summed up society's feelings at the time, often quoted in family lore: "Mary's going to Paris to study art. She fancies herself an artist, poor girl."

Alexander Cassatt (Just to keep things straight: Mary's brother, Eddy's father and Dody's great-grandfather) was once the powerful president of the Pennsylvania Railroad and much more famous than his sister in their time.

But it was the lure of art and family tales of Paris that drew Dody. She visited her great aunt's home in Paris, and believes her talent and love of art may



Dody Vehr looks out on Fiddler's Green from her dining room/studio. Behind her is her latest oil painting. Photo by Tara Connell.

be the reason she inherited the portrait from her mother even though Dody was the fifth of six children, she told *The Post*. "Eddy" had made its way to Dody's mother after Mary Cassatt died.

Oddly, though, it wasn't until the 1980s that Dody put oil to canvas. "I drew and doodled," she said of her early life, and took art classes in school but never did more. Then, on a trip to Africa with local friends and girls from The Foxcroft School, Dody found herself without a camera. She began sketching the monkeys and quickly turned to painting. Soon she had her first sale, an oil of her beloved pet "Ertha Kitty."

Two shows, and multiple sales later, Dody continues to study (in a class at the Unison Community Center) and paint under the watchful gaze of Aunt Mary's brush strokes and a tormented five-year-old subject, Grandpa Eddy—at least until he left town to hang out between the Degas. ■



Inset Photo: Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery of Art, discusses Mary Cassatt's "Eddy Cassatt" with Julie Diehl and Dody Vehr in the National Gallery of Art's painting conservation studio. Photo courtesy of National Gallery of Art. **Above:** "Grandpa" proudly hangs in his new home between two Degas paintings. Photo courtesy of National Gallery of Art.



Unison Preservation Society Newsletter

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How to Support the Unison Preservation Society (UPS):

UPS depends upon contributions from people living in our community who want to preserve our historic village and the countryside surrounding it. Since the UPS is a not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation registered in Virginia, all contributions are tax deductible. Contributions should be made to the Unison Preservation Society and sent to the post office box listed above.

Ideas for Newsletter Articles:

We are particularly interested in gathering material about Unison for future UPS newsletters. If you have ideas for newsletter stories, please e-mail us at

unisonpreservsoc@unisonva.org.



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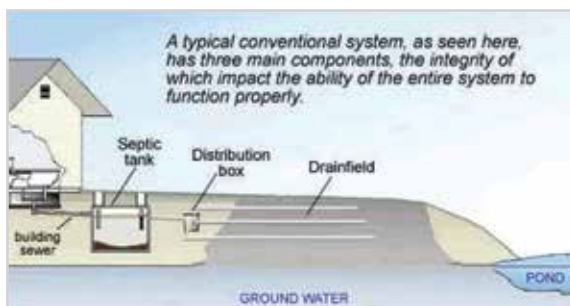
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Everything You Wanted to Know About Septic Systems but Were Afraid to Ask

In the Summer 2014, the UPS newsletter included an interview with officials from the Loudoun County Public Health Department on how to ensure your well was properly maintained and your drinking water was safe. Since then, people have urged us to do the same for septic systems. This then is the first of two articles on septs. We will publish Part Two in the Winter UPS newsletter. Since replacing septic systems run at least \$10,000, maintaining your current system isn't just a health but also a financial issue. Jerry Franklin, Environmental Health Supervisor at the Loudoun Health Department kindly provided answers to our question about how to keep your septic system in good shape:

Diagram of How a Septic System Works



1. Pump the septic tank as needed since solids entering the absorption area shorten system life. Under Loudoun County regulations, conventional systems must be pumped out or inspected every five years by a licensed cleaner. (The same must be done for non-conventional systems every year.)
2. Keep trees away from the system; especially water loving trees such as maple, willow and paulownia.
3. Divert rainwater away from the soil absorption area. This includes roof and paved surface drainage.
4. Keep heavy equipment off the system in order to avoid damaging components and compacting soil.
5. Fix leaking fixtures in the house promptly to avoid excess water entering the system.
6. Use bleach sparingly in order to preserve the microbial life in the septic tank.
7. Reduce water use inside the house to reduce load on the system.
8. Irrigation should not be installed over the absorption area.

9. Do not pave or fill over the area or place structures close to onsite sewage system components.

10. Avoid grading or trenching over the soil absorption area.

11. Keep the distribution box in balance and in good repair so flow is distributed equally.

12. Make sure inlet and outlet T's or filters are in place in order to keep solids inside the septic tank.

13. Ensure that the septic tank is not leaking groundwater in, adding to the system load, or seepage out, polluting groundwater.

14. Maintain a short grass cover over the absorption area. If trees are allowed to grow they can damage the system, and tall grass can have a mulching effect trapping moisture in the ground. Short grass helps transpire moisture and takes up nutrients that would otherwise enter groundwater.

15. Avoid flushing non-degradable items that can clog lines, and filters or damage pumps.

16. Keep pumps, controls and alarms in proper working order.

17. Prevent fats, oils, grease and paint from entering your system. ■

Friends and neighbors: For those of you who love this newsletter but hate the clutter that comes along it, we would like to offer the option of receiving it by e-mail. All we need is your e-mail address, and perhaps a little time to straighten out our mailing lists. If that option appeals to you, please e-mail that preference to: unisonpreservsoc@unisonva.org.



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