



Unison Preservation Society NEWSLETTER

Working to Protect and Preserve our Historic Countryside

Photo by Dara Bailey

ISSUE ONE • 2018

• WINTER •

UNISON, VIRGINIA

History Hidden: The Cabin Inside

By Tara Connell

For the 60-plus years Ted Zimmerman's family has owned Buttonwood, the farm's old tenant house off Newlin Mill Road has sheltered both the farm's workers and a well-kept secret.

Inside the old sheetrock, under the modern flooring and behind the aging stairs was a perfectly intact, wonderfully preserved, early American log cabin likely built between 1741—when the Unison area was first being settled—and 1820, although the dates are just a guess.

"My builder thinks the original structure was very early, perhaps mid-18th century," said Ted Zimmerman. Ted is the third generation of his family to live at Buttonwood. He's the reason the log cabin has finally come to light.

"I have lived my whole life believing the old farm house was where I would live despite its run-down, outward appearance," Ted said. So when he, his wife Lucy and their son Robert, 19 months, moved back to Buttonwood recently, the decision was made to renovate the house and make it their home.

Work began in May on the major overhaul. The jaw-dropping discovery came a short time later when they pulled down sheetrock in what was the old house's living room. "We discovered an almost entirely intact log cabin," Ted said.

"It looks like it began as a one-room log cabin with a loft/sleeping area," Ted said. For sure, it was built sometime before 1820,



Hidden for more than two centuries, this hearth in a complete log cabin was uncovered last year when Ted Zimmerman and his family at Buttonwood Farm began renovating an old tenant house (above right) on their property.

Hearth photo by Tara Connell. Tenant house photo courtesy of the Zimmerman family

the first date a house was recorded on the property in Loudoun County records.

But sometime on or before that 1820 date, a major addition encased the original cabin with a second story, a basement kitchen and two additional rooms. Ted's builder, Luke Cullinane, told him "it looks as though that addition was done with such care that the carpenter must of thought he was doing the work of God."

Efforts to cover up the cabin didn't stop there. Multiple iterations of the house followed.



By 1853, the house was covered in weatherboard and had more rooms and porches added on. It was listed in the Yardley Taylor map of Loudoun County, according to a Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission record in the family files. There also were several outbuildings, including the farm's saving grace: the spring house.

During the Civil War's Battle of Unison, "I've been told...the spring house had such sweet and plentiful water that the occupants shared freely without allegiance to either North or South," Ted said. Neither side burned the house or barns down.

But who built what and when? And who lived in the earliest versions of this Unison home?

The historic commission's document said a version of the house had been bought in 1831 by a William Chamblin from Thomas Russell and Amos Hibbs. Ted's dad, Tad Zimmerman (known in Unison and beyond as master of the Piedmont Foxhounds) researched ownership of the land and found that Amos Hibbs had bought the land from a Nathan Crawford in 1802. The cabin, renovated or not, was standing at that time.

Crawford had acquired the land from Thomas and Richard Blackburn, according to Zimmerman.

And here is where all the historic documents and research comes together. It seems the modest little one-room cabin was built on a corner of one of the original land grants for Loudoun County.

In 1741, Major Richard Blackburn received a grant of 2,628 acres from the 6th Lord Fairfax, whose vast estates in Virginia consisted of over 5.2 million acres. Blackburn's grant included what is now the whole Unison area and quite a bit beyond.

Richard Blackburn never set foot on it and left it to his son, Thomas, when he died. Thomas eventually left 150 acres to his daughter Sarah and her husband Nathaniel Crawford, according to historical records.

That's the Nathan Crawford in the Zimmerman/Buttonswood farm records.

Now it doesn't seem likely any of these wealthy landowners would have lived in the modest little cabin. But in the 1700s, the area around Unison was fairly teeming with Quakers who were farming land they owned and rented, according to *Ye Meetg Hous Small, A Short Account of Friends In Loudoun County, Virginia 1732-1980*. And research by the Unison Preservation Society found the Blackburns rented their land to Quakers in the 1700s.

So it's likely the cabin was built by Friends for Friends, but who they were



LEFT: The northwest corner of the original cabin showing its construction method and hand-yewn logs.



RIGHT: The chinking of the cabin. Photos by Tara Connell

and how long they stayed remains a mystery. None of the names listed as owners of the land through the mid 1800s show up in a check of the local Quaker archives.

Perhaps Amos Hibbs, the new owner of the land in 1802, took the cabin from a tenant and enlarged it using Quaker workmen who did "the work of God" for an employer. Or maybe an expanding Quaker family added rooms to their existing log home built on rented land.

All we know now is that much of the in-

terior of the original one-room cabin will be restored to full view under the revised plan for the Zimmerman's new home, Ted said. Once the work is done, one of the oldest buildings in Loudoun County will be his living room.

And some day, it might just give up all its secrets. ■

Anyone with any information about early log cabins in the area and can shed light on this building or its builders, feel free to contact the writer at tara@rstarmail.com.

Interview with Unison's Mary Reeves Bell

By Howard Lewis



*Several years ago, the Unison Preservation Society's newsletter began to run occasional stories on various artists living the Unison area—Joan Gardiner, whom we focused on in our fall newsletter, being one example. In this newsletter we focus not on a Unison artist but on a Unison author, Mary Reeves Bell, who since 2001 has lived right in the middle of the village with her husband, David, and has just published a new book, *The Parliament for Owls*. I sat down with her on a recent Saturday morning for a wide-ranging discussion about her new book and much else.*

Howard Lewis: Okay, without giving anything away, what's *The Parliament for Owls* about?

Mary Reeves Bell: It involves everything from international human trafficking to an American political scandal to black-mail and a mega-evangelical church. I actually began the book well before the 2016 U.S. elections, but some readers are undoubtedly going to see some parallels

to current events. I am not that prescient. But I have been dealing with the underlining issues in the book for years—namely, the role of the Christian church in combating injustice and prejudice, or in some cases turning a blind eye toward terrible things happening within a society. The rise of fascism in the 1920s and 1930s in Europe being a good example.

HL: How did you get interested in that complex subject?

MRB: Well, growing up on a cattle ranch

in Wyoming, I saw the prejudice against the Indians living in our midst. For example, there was a sign at the local swimming pool—No Dogs or Indians. Prejudice against Indians is the theme for my second young-adult book, *The Sagebrush Rebellion*. It is an historical fiction written for young adults.

HL: Your other two young adult books are about the Holocaust and neo-Nazism, right?

MRB: Yes. For six years, I lived and worked in Austria doing missionary work there

Continued on back page.

The Second-Chance Dogs of Unison

By Howard Lewis

There are many dogs living all around us in Unison who have been given a second chance. We thought it would be fun to publish photos of a few of these dogs in this issue of the UPS newsletter.* As you'll see below, the second-chance dogs of Unison have been adopted from a variety of shelters and rescues, and run the gambit from mutts to purebreds. If I may, I would like to put in a personal plea here for giving old dogs a second chance. In 2007, my

wife and I adopted a Great Pyrenees named Casper. From 2000 to 2007, for hours at a time, Casper was chained to a tree on Airmont Road just before Round Hill. He was seven when we rescued him—an older dog, especially for a Great Pyrenees. We thought he might be with us for a couple of years at the most. Casper was with us for another 7 years—a second lifetime for him and a truly great companion for us!



Casper, Christmas 2007. After loosing his home in 2007, he spent two weeks at the Loudoun County Shelter before coming to Lazy Dog Farm for another seven years.



Caroline and Jack Helmly found Artemis, Phoenix and Bentley at the Mid/Atlantic Italian Greyhound Rescue Society.



Carol Beckman and Jim Torrens found Fay and Finn at the Atlantic Region Central Border Collie Rescue.



Kim and Linda Hart found Tonks at the Aldie Friends of Homeless Animals.



Phillipa and Howard Lewis found Fred and Ginger at the Appalachian Great Pyrenees Rescue.



Sandy Wilson and Bob Pettit found Duff at the Middleburg Humane.



Julie and Paul Diehl found Dixie at Fairfax Animal Shelter and Harper through a vet in Front Royal.



Karen and Bob Rockwood found most of their pack at Middleburg Humane; however, Elmo (middle of picture) wandered into their farm one day and decided to stay.



Michael Zuckerman and Tara Connell found Reilly through PetConnectRescue.com.

*Yes, we'll do the second-chance cats of Unison in a future newsletter. Please send us photos of your second-chance cat(s) to unisonpreservsoc@unisonva.org.



Unison Preservation Society Newsletter

Published by

The Unison Preservation Society
P.O. Box 606
Middleburg, VA 20118
www.unisonva.org

Board of Directors

Steve Chase - *President*
Tom Hopkins - *Vice President*
Caroline Helmly - *Secretary*
Michael O'Donnell - *Treasurer*

Tim Bates
Andrea Brown
Tara Connell
Mitch Diamond
Julie Diehl
Sue Ferster
Hurst Groves
Douglas Kemmerer
Tobin McGregor
Gordon McKinley
Ryan Michels
Barbara Riggs
Alan Shaw
David Slosman
Jaime Steve

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.



Follow Us!

Newsletter Design:

Dara Bailey Design • Bluemont, VA
darabaileydesign@gmail.com

Unison Preservation Society

P. O. Box 606
Middleburg, VA
20118

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Mr. Print
Purcellville, VA
20132

and in Yugoslavia. Living in Austria sparked my interest in the Holocaust, particularly the role of the Christian church in what happened in Europe during the 1920s and 30s, which led to my studies of the Holocaust at the University of Vienna and eventually at Rutgers University when I came back to the U.S. Among other things, while living in Vienna, I decided to take a class in German to learn Hebrew, although my German wasn't all that good...

HL: Wait a minute. You tried to learn a language you didn't know at all by taking a class given in another language you weren't very good at?

MRB: But it worked out. My Hebrew professor introduced me to Simon Wiesenthal, the famed Nazi hunter. Living in Austria, as well as my studies there and at Rutgers, really focused my attention on anti-Semitism, which is the focus of my other two young adult books. I approach the subject from my own Christian faith, as a gentile, and try to use historical fiction to remind young adults growing up today about what occurred in the past, the importance of faith, mercy and justice in leading their own lives and standing up for what they believe in. Besides English, I am pleased that the books have been published in French and Norwegian.

HL: And your first book, *The Secret of the Mezuzah*, was honored by the Sorbonne?

MRB: Right. It was honored for remembering the Holocaust.

HL: Okay, Romania keeps popping up in our conversation. Explain.

MRB: Long story short, after moving back to the U.S., I was director of missionary work at our Presbyterian church in McLean, Virginia, which led to getting to know the famed Ameri-

can theologian, Carl F.H. Henry, and Congressman Frank Wolf, which led to an invitation to speak to Romanian churches, which in turn led to my visiting orphanages in Romania right after the fall of Communism. I was appalled at what I saw in these orphanages. Children living in filth, starving, abused, neglected, chained to beds. It was a horror show!

HL: That's when you started Romanian Christian Enterprises (RCE)?

MRB: Yes, our goal was, and still is, to get children out of the orphanages, adopted by Romanian families and into special education programs, which is important because kids that have been neglected and abused often "present" as mentally disabled when they aren't. They just need special help so they can return to being normal kids who can move on to getting jobs, which we also help with, and becoming productive members of their communities. We started RCE 25 years ago. I am still executive director but this is a Romanian operation. We are not an international adoption agency. Our Romanian staff does receive special training in the U.S. and some of our children visit this country every year. But RCE is about Romanians "doing good" in Romania.

HL: One last question. Where can people buy *The Parliament for Owls*?

MRB: Amazon, of course. But you can also buy it, as well as my three young adult books, at the Second Chapter Bookstore in Middleburg—support a Unison author and a local business at the same time. ■

Emails Wanted

Unison Preservation Society would like to keep you in the loop with news updates and events notices by email. If you would like to receive information by email, please let us know your address by, of all things, email to: unisonpreservsoc@unisonva.org.