

Colonial Garb, Homeschooling, Heritage Color Yellow Hill Farm

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BIGLERVILLE** (Adams Co.)—If you're looking for thornless blackberries, fall red and golden raspberries, a peaceful respite in a rural setting, and a major house restoration project interspersed with lively conversation from three young, homeschooled women, take a trip to Yellow Hill Farm near here.

The Bishop sisters—Meghan, 17; Laura, 12; and Cassie, 10, add sparkle to conversations about their experience with homeschooling and a 4-H project.

Originally from Connecticut, the family moved to Adams County when father, Craig Bishop, changed jobs. In addition to his full-time job, Bishop plants 28 acres of land. He has planted one-half acre in rows of raspberries and 400 feet of blackberries, watered with trickle irrigation. In season, the berries are served up to the public on a pick-your-own basis. Bishop is also restoring what the family calls "This Old House."

A major addition project, which has involved two-plus years, is evolving into a bigger kitchen, a bedroom for Meghan and two new bathrooms, one with a bathtub and the other in combo with a laundry. Other areas of the home have already been restored and convey Bishop's carpentry talents and creativity.

He has exposed the old logs in some areas of the home and in other areas used cured wood from pine trees on the property installing it as beautiful flooring and doors. In keeping with the theme of the exposed logs in the downstairs, he has installed logs from the property in the ceilings of Meghan's bedroom and a bathroom.

If this isn't enough, his full-time job involves engineering and design at Qualastat Electronics, in Gettysburg which manufactures wire harnesses and cable assemblies.

As for wife and mother Natalie Bishop, a former agricultural school teacher, has undertaken the task of teaching her own children at home. Homeschooling is a full-time job, although she finds time for volunteering in the community.

While Meghan has a few years of public school experience and Laura went to public school kindergarten, Cassie has never been in the public school system at all.

Ask Meghan how she, as a homeschooled teenager, socializes with youths her own age and you'll get a quick and firm response, that "you do it just like anyone else. You say 'hello, I'm so-and-so' and go from there."

And don't get her started on the benefits of being homeschooled. She wonders, with a demeanor of near shock, at why all students don't want to do the same thing when she considers the problems and fears facing youngsters in today's public schools.

Craig notes that "Homeschoolers tend to be more academic than sports oriented." His older daughter is an example of this for she has been accepted and starts in the fall at Florida College, a small Christian school in Temple Terrace, where she plans to earn a degree in history/english with a minor in music.

Natalie said she believes that homeschooled children "have a mature attitude because they've already been in the real world. Kids who've been raised in a school system have been nurtured in a closed environment and they don't know what the real world is like. They don't know what a deadline is like.

"They don't know what punctuality is like. They don't know what actually completing a paper and doing the research on your own is like. They've always had the teacher standing over them telling them the next step in the project. Not until many students get to college do they experience this. I think that is



The Bishop family, Meghan, Laura, Craig, Natalie and Cassie, gather for a picture. The girls are homeschooled at the couple's Yellow Hill Farm, where they operate a pick-your-own raspberry and blackberry business.

probably the biggest advantage to homeschoolers in high school.

"Their mom is there, but she's not saying you must do this next chapter. Meghan knows she must get through this math book in the course of the school year and if she dawdles on math because she's spending time on history, or she's doing a whole run of orchestra concerts—Meghan performs with three orchestras—and she doesn't get math, English, or history done, she's going to sweat it like crazy.

"She learns to pace herself. I think that's an advantage because that is the real world," Natalie concludes.

The girls have found a lot of fun and new experiences and learning in a recent sewing project.

They are members of the Biglerville Busy Beavers 4-H Club and last year, as seamstresses, completed dresses and undergarments from the 1860s.

Meghan said, "The dresses came about because we hated modeling for the 4-H Fashion Review." When their mother suggested it might be fun to have a big, graceful hoop skirt to sweep across the stage, the thought of modeling became more tolerable.

And, Laura adds, living in Gettysburg they knew they always enjoyed the Civil War-era dresses. A store nearby to buy their dress patterns was also handy.

Meghan said the girls did a lot of research looking in books and on the Internet so that the dresses would be authentic.

She explained, "The well-dressed lady wore eight layers and that was the minimum you had to wear or you were considered very immodest. First there was a chemise, then drawers, an underpetticoat—and if it was cold you might wear more than one under-petticoat."

At this point, she interjects with a laugh, that you learn very quickly to put your stockings and shoes on first or otherwise you won't be able to get them on. She admits she learned this the hard way.

Next come garments such as corsets, a hoop skirt, and an over-petticoat so that the bones

of the hoop skirt don't show through the dress.

Meghan and Laura get into their apparel, which takes a bit of time, after they have noted that all such dresses always open down the front and are closed with hooks and eyes or buttons and button holes.

Laura chuckles when she explains that she decided not to use hooks and eyes, "but then found that button holes weren't that easy either."

Meghan continues that the Civil War-era woman always wore collars and under sleeves "because back then the first part of any garment to wear out was the cuffs and collars and they didn't have much material. They had plenty of time, but no material. What they did instead was made undersleeves (a separate piece from the dress) which would have cuffs on it and when the cuff wore out they just made another undersleeve. The collar would be basted in and when it wore out, you made a new collar or turned it around.

Cassie is not to be left out of these sewing projects because

she made, not only a Sacajawea costume that she wore when she participated in the county level 4-H Fashion Revue. She has also made a youngster's dress from the 1860s, which she wears with great pride.

The three have worn their dresses and marched in several parades. Meghan advanced to 4-H State Days at Penn State with her dress, and Laura, who is a junior 4-H'er, was a rosette winner on the regional level with her dress.

In addition to these activities, Laura plays cello in two orchestras. She also writes and edits a monthly newspaper via Internet with a homeschool friend from the Pittsburgh area. She also enjoys writing serial stories and has started her own mystery series of chapter books.

Cassie was studying violin, but currently in looking for another teacher. She is a lover of animals—as a rescued sparrow in a box in the front room attests. She especially likes cats, bugs, nature, reading, and helping outside.



The Bishop Sisters, Meghan, 17, Cassie, 10, and Laura, 12, pose in Colonial dresses they each made. The girls, who are homeschooled, marched in several parades in their 1860's garb.



OMESTEAD NOTES



Mother Natalie Bishop adds a finishing touch to daughter Laura's bonnet. Laura made an 1860's dress with undergarments and as a junior 4-H'er was a rosette winner in the 4-H regional fashion revue.