

Lancaster Farming

Antiques Center

Whites Preserve Family Heirlooms In 1830 Stone Farmhouse



Janice White's grandfather wrote in a diary every day from 1893 to 1916. The 23 diaries offer personalized glimpses into the lives of relatives and community history.



Janice and Wilbur White have authentically restored an 1830 stone farmhouse. They found the original shutters with big strap hinges under a broken down back porch.



Janice White has managed to preserve her grandmother's antique clothing, including a hoop skirt, white lace Victorian Dress, and a beaded shawl.

GAIL STROCK
Mifflin Co. Correspondent
REEDSVILLE (Mifflin Co.) — If walls could talk and heirlooms could tell what they know, imagine how colorful and personal our view of our ancestors could be. While we know that objects can't speak, Janice White of Reedsville, Mifflin County, has found the next best thing — her grandfather's diaries dated 1893 to 1916.

"My grandfather William Mann Brisbin wrote in them every day until the day he died. I've read through all 23 diaries. I know what my father got for Christmas on his sixth birthday.

"Included also histories of Yeagertown and surrounding areas. He tells about the first day

the trolley went through Yeagertown, the Yeager Mill, and Ax Factory, and the accidents at Standard Steel. It really must have been a dangerous place to work. This was at a time when people were giving up farming and moving to town."

Following the death of her first husband William Whitehead Brisbin, William Mann's daughter married J.M. Yeager for whom Yeagertown is named. A small power plant at the mill site furnished power for all of Yeagertown and had extra to sell.

"I remember my mother saying that my great grandmother was a Mann before she married, and I could never figure out how getting married changed her

from a man to a woman," Janice said.

Janice found the diaries in an old box belonging to her grandfather. She also found a survey (on sheepskin) for a mid-1700 land grant for land near Fort Granville, Mifflin County.

"Fort Granville was burned in 1756 during the French and Indian War (1754-1760). The survey is signed by a Joseph Swift from Philadelphia and dated 1768. I tried to do research but didn't find anything more. There must have been very few people in our area then."

The box also contained a 1793 indentured servant contract from England that was signed with a spot of blood and an agreement for a female relative of Janice's grandfather's to borrow \$1,600.

"It's dated 1823. I thought it was unusual that a woman could borrow money on her own at that time."

Janice, an only child, inherited her family antiques at age 23 when her parents passed away. "Fortunately, I appreciated them. I've just always liked antiques.

"In 1903, my grandparents built a new house in Yeagertown, and people were going crazy during the turn of the century for oak furniture. So my grandparents sent to Philadelphia for oak furniture for their new house and put the out-of-date furniture in the attic.

"My mother and father married in 1930, and, because of the Depression, my father lost his job the day they married. They had no furniture. My mother found the furniture in the attic and had a Norwegian named Gus Swanson in Reedsville refurbish it and that's what they used to start up housekeeping. My favorite is a walnut Hepplewhite table my grandmother used to cut pies on."

In 1973, Janice and her husband, Wilbur, made two dreams come true when they purchased a farm with an 1830 stone farmhouse. Wilbur, now (Turn to Page B19)



A peel was once used to remove pies from an outside bake oven. Janice White reports that it's been said that people often could tell if the temperature was right by the heat on the cook's face.



Janice White found old contracts, dating back as far as the mid-1700s, in an old box belonging to her grandfather. Included is a 1793 indentured servant contract from England that was signed with a spot of blood.