

The Locke Family Newsletter

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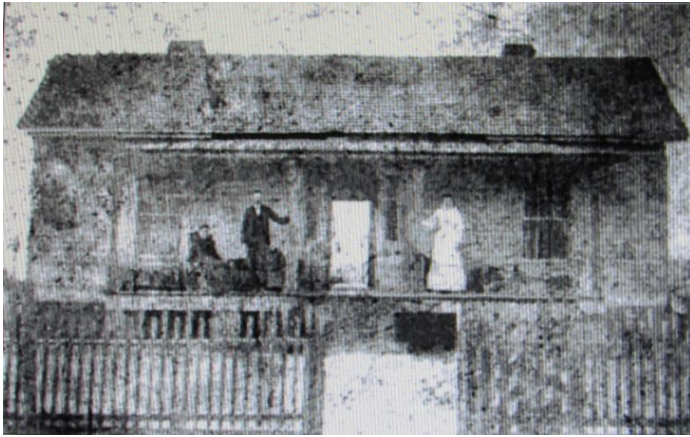
“Wash” Locke in South Carolina



“Suppertime” by Ronald Ragland

Washington Philemon Locke was the third of four sons born to Levi and Malinda Shurley Locke in York County, South Carolina. “Wash” as he was called, was born on May 22, 1857, on land that was originally part of the Catawba Indian Reservation just west of the Catawba River. The railroad between Charlotte and Columbia had built a small depot there, and the stop was named for the prominent Robert Lesslie family who had settled the area around 1770 after immigrating from Antrim in Northern Ireland, having previously lived in Aberdeen, Scotland. Wash’s parents had moved there in the 1850’s from Chester County, just a few miles to the south, when the Indian lands were put up for auction. He would marry Margaret Alice West Mellon around 1890, a widow who had somehow married into the prominent Mellon family of Pittsburgh. So far, efforts to confirm that connection have not proven productive. Wash and Alice would have only one child, Elizabeth Bea Locke, who was born September 25, 1894, in Lesslie.

Wash would build his house near the railroad tracks, and his farm stretched for many acres to the south. Below is the only surviving image of that house. It's rough, but it shows two front windows, a wide porch, and two chimneys. The painting on the front page of this newsletter depicts a Carolina farmhouse that closely resembles the house built by Wash.



Wash and Alice on the porch...



The same house today...



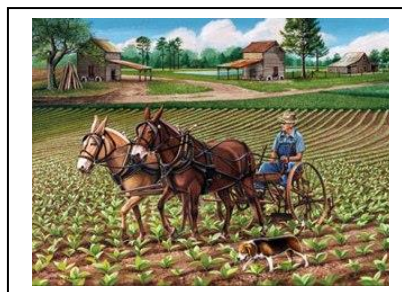
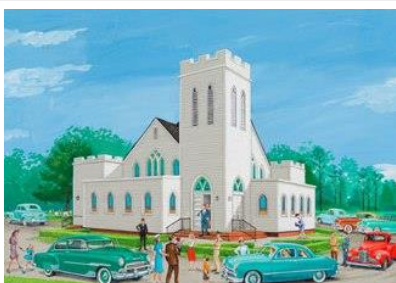
Bea Locke in 1889...



Bea with her children in 1977...

Bea would marry Earnest Jackson Ballard, and they would have five children. They were Earnest, Jr., William Locke, Margaret Irene, John Lynn, and Alice.

Wash was legally blind in his old age, but that never stopped him from driving his car. He could make out the center line, and would straddle it until he got where he was going. My Daddy told me that his Uncle Wash made the best homemade ice cream anywhere around. Wash passed away on June 16, 1946, and Alice followed him three years later.



Southern artist Ronald Ragland

Maydell Locke Thomas has Passed Away at 93

We are so saddened to learn of the passing on March 8th of **Maydell Locke Thomas** in Southern California. "It was a shock to all of us," said Patty Locke Pebley, the lone surviving sister of five girls born to Arthur Hayden Locke (1899-1967) and Mary Wyatt Locke (1901-1987). *"We had just celebrated her 93rd birthday with a card party on Wednesday, March 4. She was active, teasing, and having so much fun."*



Maydell Elaine Locke was born in Altus, Oklahoma, in 1927. Three of her sisters preceeded her in death. They were Verna Grace Childers, Nadine Gladys Watts, and Mary Alice Krider.



Front: Arthur, Mary Wyatt, Patty.

Back: Nadine, Verna , Mary, and Maydell.



Maydell married Sam Thomas, a Creek Indian, who was killed in an industrial accident at age 40.



At a Locke Reunion in North Carolina in 2010.



She loved to travel. At the Hoover Dam.



Maydell with her family at her 90th birthday in 2017.

In Maydell's own words:

"I was born March 4, 1927, third daughter of Mary Gladys Wyatt and Arthur Hayden Locke, in Altus, Oklahoma. Altus is in the western part of Oklahoma -- very pretty with lots of farmland and rolling hills."

Her sister, Patty Locke Pebley, had these thoughts:

Maydell Locke Thomas died of a massive stroke on March 8, 2020. She was 93 years young. Maydell was a vibrant woman who loved to travel, play cards and bingo, and be with her family. Maydell spent her early youth in the eastern part of Oklahoma. She married Samuel Thomas November 29, 1943. They started their married life as farmers and were successful in this endeavor; however, they decided to move to California in 1946. Through the years Sam and Maydell had five children, Houston, Norma, Sarah, Sammy, Danny.



Maydell with her son, Houston...

Maydell was a housewife, as was the custom in that time period, but when her husband was killed in an industrial accident she had to work outside the home. She had five children to provide for. Workers comp was nonexistent and social security paid little. She was a fighter and her creative talents led to work as a floral designer, and later, as a real estate agent. She provided for her children by working hard; she never asked for welfare because she did not want her children to be brought up on that type of income. Maydell was a proud woman. Her children were the light of her life.

We feel fortunate that a month prior to her death, her daughters, Norma and Sarah, and I, had an all-day outing exploring the Butterfield Stage Route in California. On her 93rd birthday, March 4, her family gathered at her house, where she still lived independently, for an all-day social of food and cards. She was animated, vibrant, and so enjoying life. Sadly, this woman who was loved by so many could only have ten people at her funeral due to the coronavirus. Her children plan to have a celebration of life event for everyone she loved when this virus has been controlled.

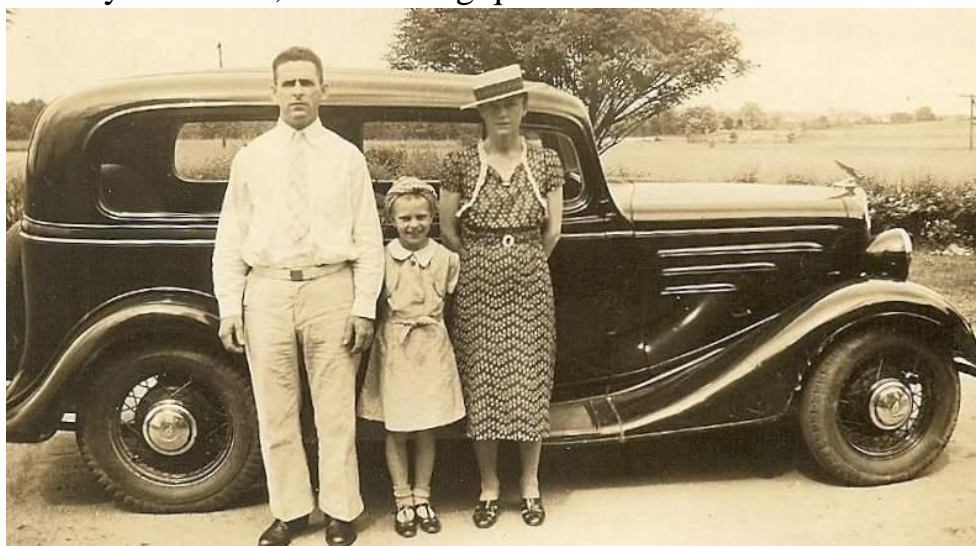
In February, we lost Mary Branham Ayers of Rock Hill



The oldest surviving granddaughter of Minnie Belle Locke Williams has passed away at the age of 87. Mary Belle Branham Ayers of Rock Hill, South Carolina, left us on February 2nd. She was a regular at the Locke Reunions, and is survived by her son, Charles M. “Mickey” Ayers of Rock Hill. She was a lifelong member of Neely’s Creek A.R.P. Church, and was a member of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

She married Charlie Ayers, and they had two children. Mickey, and his late sister, Karen Sue Ayers.

Her parents were Grover Ezell Branham, and Beulah Young Williams. Beulah was the granddaughter of John Calhoun Locke (1854-1917) and Nancy “Fanny” Ferguson (1854-1939). Her uncle, Harry Williams, celebrated his 94th birthday on April 23rd. Mary is survived by seven first cousins. Bruce and Leon are sons of Uncle Harry, Lewis Whisonant (1948), is the son of the late Garland and Faye Williams Whisonant, Vicky Thomas and Dale Williams are the daughter and son of the late Gene and Betty Williams, Cindy Barnier is the daughter of the late Dallas and Thelma Williams, and Larry Williams is the son of the late Fennell Williams, and Mary’s Aunt Bertie Parker Williams, who recently turned 91, and is doing quite well.



Grover and Beulah with Mary



Mary at five years

Richard Hugh “Butch” McAuley

I learned from my cousin, Susan McAuley Papangelo, in February, that her older brother, Butch, had passed away last October from cancer. He was 75 years old. When I was growing up in Charlotte in the 1950's, Butch was an important part of my life. Although he was four years older, I remember that he was a whiz at building model airplanes out of Balsa wood. His room, which was a converted sun porch, had airplanes of every description hanging from the ceiling. He even built one of those round “Flying Platforms” that he had seen in Popular Mechanics magazine. At the same time he became infatuated with Soap Box racing, and from 1954 until 1957, he raced in the annual Charlotte Soap Box Derby on a hill on Hawthorn Lane near Uptown. His dad, Hugh Alfred “Buck” McAuley, and my dad, Buddy Helms, spent countless hours building his cars every year. Those annual races are some of my best memories of my life in Charlotte.



With Margaret and Betty in 1946. Betty in 1948, Easter 1948, Derby. Butch was born on April 22, 1944, to Buck and Margaret Virginia Helms McAuley. He joined his sister, Elizabeth “Betty”, and they all lived in an upstairs apartment in Uptown Charlotte in our Grandma Helms’ rooming house on 11th Street. Grandma was Mattie Hope Locke Helms, eldest daughter of Absalom and Lizzie Campbell Locke of Lesslie, South Carolina, and Waxhaw, North Carolina. Sister Susan would follow in 1949, and the family would buy a two bedroom brick house in Oakhurst, in east Charlotte, in 1953.

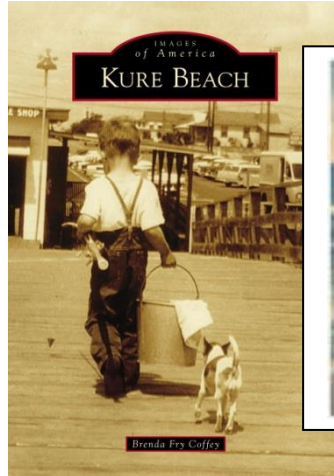
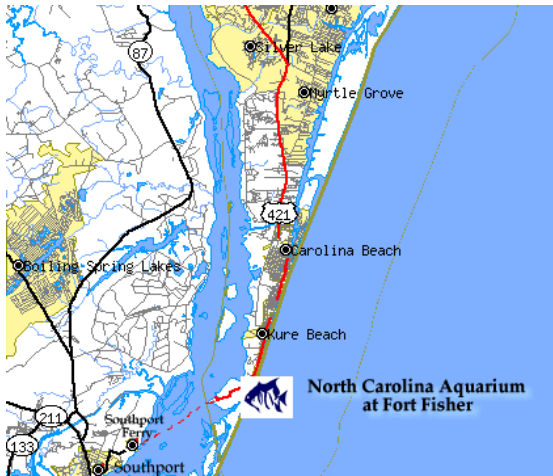


Grandma Helms in 1951



Margaret and Buck

Butch would graduate from East Mecklenburg High in 1962, the same year his brother Jeff was born, and would marry Judith “Judi” Jackson shortly thereafter. He started a business selling and servicing well pumps, and he and Judi would have two boys. Sadly, Judi passed away from cancer in her 20’s, and Butch was left with two sons to raise. He would marry his second wife, Carol, shortly afterward, sell his business, and build a house in Kure Beach, North Carolina, where he became a commercial fisherman. He loved that life, and lived there for thirty years.



In the 1990’s, Butch divorced Carol, and left the Beach, eventually settling in the Greenville-Spartanburg area. He cut ties with his family, and dropped out of society. At the end, he reportedly refused any treatment, and passed in obscurity. He is survived by his sister, Susie, of Largo, Florida, his brother Jeff, of Myrtle Beach, his two sons, and many cousins. He was quite a character to the very end.

Thanksgiving at the home of Wade and Vicki Helms



An annual affair, that’s their son David with wife Stephanie, daughter Penny, and son Eric to far left. Vicki’s parents Rene and Al Stein to far right. Son Matt in dark blue shirt. Wade and Vicki to his right. That’s me in black with the white hair. Vicki’s brother Ken in red shirt. They live west of Ft. Lauderdale.

The Garden Wedding of Matt Helms to Shayna Brock

Just in the nick of time before Covid-19 changed everything, Matthew Ryan Helms was married to Shayna Brock at a ceremony held in the Botanical Garden in Winter Park, just north of Orlando, Florida. The date was January 25th, and the weather could not have been more perfect. In addition to being my nephew, Matt is the great grandson of Lonnie and Mattie Locke Helms, grandson of Buddy and Virginia Ratcliffe Helms, and the younger son of Wade and Vicki Stein Helms.



Shayna and Matt met six years ago when they were students at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. Both were members of the school's Ultimate Frisbee teams, so it was a match made in heaven. The wedding party was comprised of just a few folks who played with them over the years. The flower girl was Matt's niece, Penny, and the ring bearer was Penny's brother, Eric. Kona, their Frisbee pooch, was one of the Groomsmen, and of course, he upstaged everyone. Brother David was Matt's Best Man, and David's wife Stephanie, second from right, was a Bridesmaid.



Proud parents Vicki & Wade



Grandparents Al and Rene



Eric and Penny Helms



Shayna's parents, Tim and Tracy



Matt's uncles Vann and Ken



"Mazel tov"



Matt's cousin Charlene Freedland & Michael

Happenings in the extended Locke Family



A reunion of descendants of Harold Wilson and Grace Caldwell Helms, combined the families of three sisters, Hazel Helms Brotherton, Noraetta Helms Turner, and Martha Helms Sisk Holcomb, and this photo doesn't include them all.

More of the Harold Helms Family...



1st cousins: Donna, Debra, Mike, Belinda, Terry, and Johnny.



Debra, Savannah, Raelyn, and Donna.



Newest addition, Shelby's son, Donna's grandson.



Mom Debra and daughter Erin



Tracy Fox Adams Family

Gladys Hucks Howell Family at Christmas

Gladys is the widow of Glenn Howell, who was the oldest grandchild of Mattie Locke Helms. Christmas dinner is a tradition in her house.

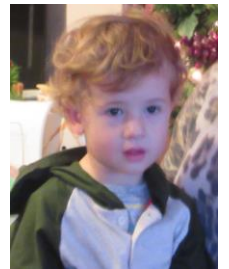


With her Grands and Greats..... Ethan, Orion, Heather, back: Hollie, Elizabeth, and Dustin.



Son Pat...

Son Rick...



Orion Howell, Rick's Grandson, Dustin and Tabitha's boy.

Jerry and Carolyn Locke Family



Matt and Shayna's Iceland Honeymoon



Eddie Helms' Granddaughters Mark and Sherrie Helms Kukulski



Daughter Charlene with Delaney, Madison, and her daughter, Ashley.



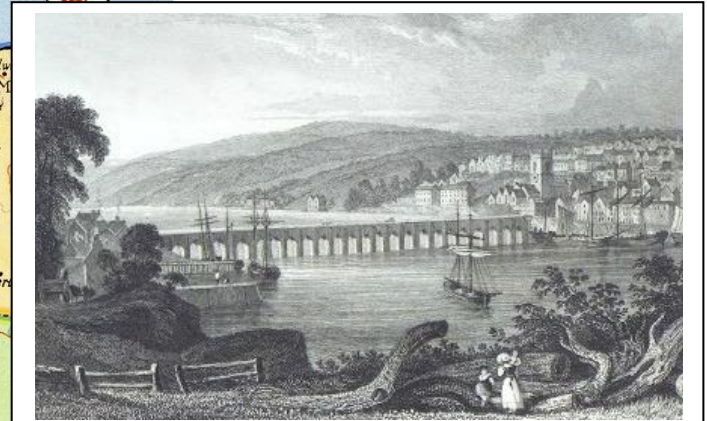
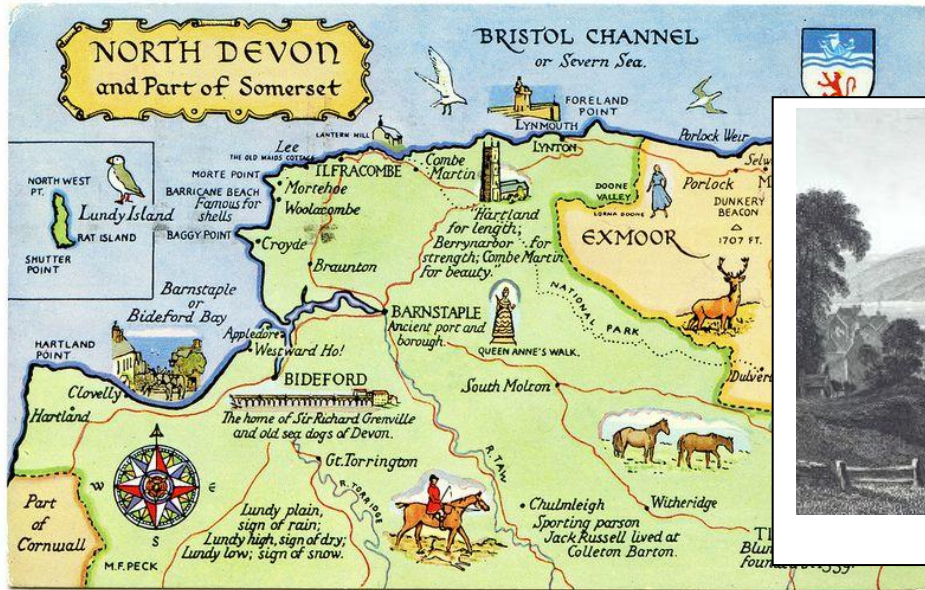
Sherrie and Mark with Delaney and Madison...



Judson Cleveland Locke 1891-1974

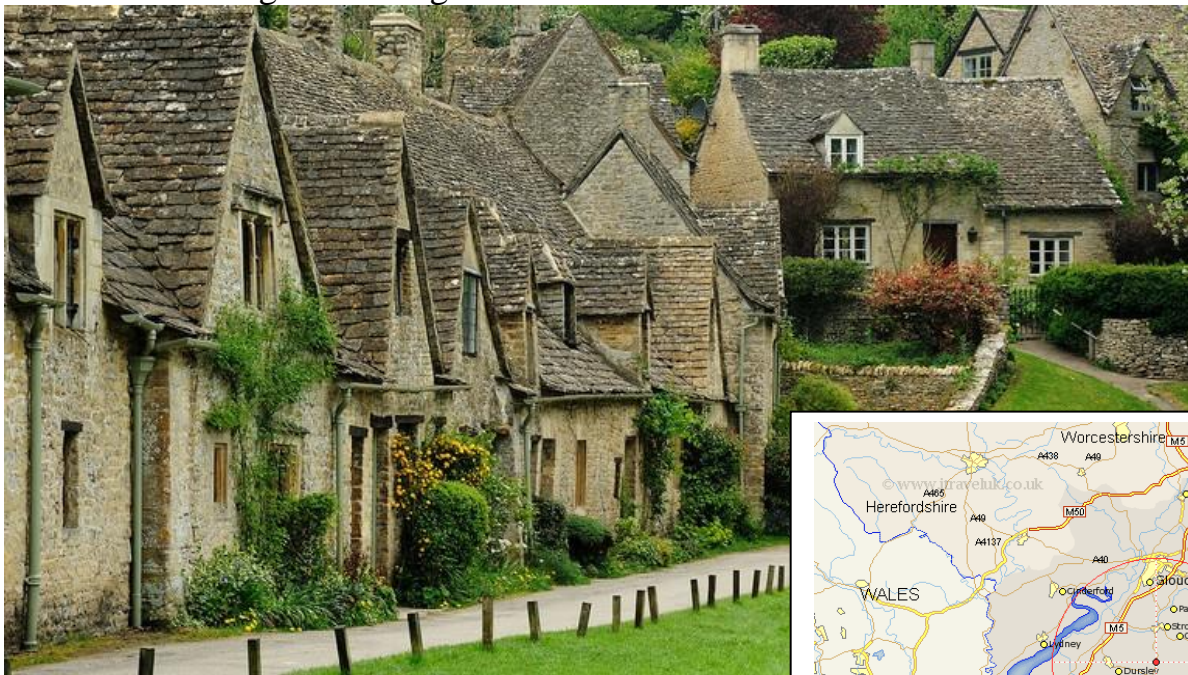
More Links to the Locke Ancestors in England

Over the past eight years, because of DNA matches with my dad's first cousin, Furman Locke, three strong areas in the southwest corner of England have revealed a direct connection to Furman, allowing the search for our English ancestors to narrow. The first connection was to William Locke of Vancouver, Oregon. The countryside around Bideford near the Bristol Channel in North Devon was home to some of William Locke's ancestors.

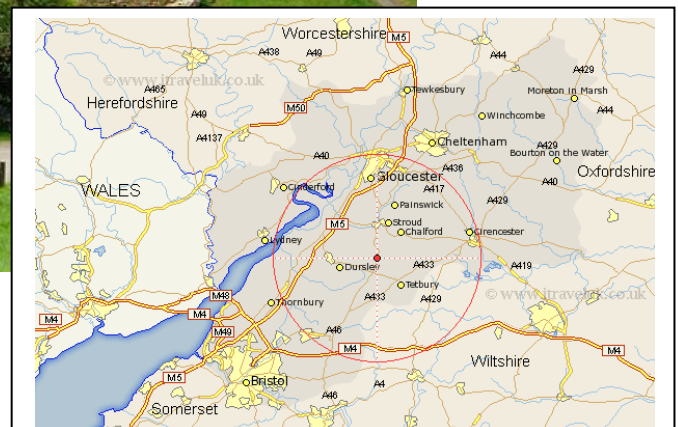


Bideford in the 19th century

Last year, Furman was linked to the county of Gloucestershire at the eastern end of the Bristol Channel. This match was to Nicholas Locke, who descended from the Lockes of Horsley, a small textile village at the edge of the fabled Cotswold district north of the town of Bath.



The idyllic stone cottages of The Cotswolds



Horsley is between Bristol and Gloucester

Our newest link is from a 69-marker match with the Raymont family. In my correspondence with Ann Raymont, I learned that her ancestors came from a small village in County Devon, a few hours bike ride from Bideford, and even closer to South Molton, also in Devon, where the Lockes in the 16th century were so numerous that I couldn't track them all. John Raymont, Ann's ancestor, lived in Lapford, Devon, but my research through the Mormon genealogical website could find no Lockes there in the 16th century. Somewhere along the way, a Locke male was raised in the Raymont family, and most likely took the Raymont surname. The genetic line, however, survived, and numerous matches between the Raymonts and the Lockes prove that.



Lapford is at the bottom right, above, and Bideford is in the upper left. South Molton is in the upper right center.

St. Thomas Becket Church in Lapford.



Church in North Molton, Devon



Cobb (mud and straw) Cottage near Lapford

As was true in Gloucestershire and the Cotswolds, the production of woolen textiles was the leading economic engine in Devon. The other major industry was the growing of apples, with distilled cider from that fruit being the real money maker for farmers. The warm waters of the Gulfstream made Devon and Cornwall the best places in England for these orchards.



Devon near Lapford



The climate in Devon is very similar to the valley east of Hendersonville, N.C., the fourth largest apple region in the United States.

In a manuscript published in 1899, the words to a song appeared, and songs like this were passed down through generations to instruct the farmers how to grow the best apples.

*"All in the month of May,
The trees are clothed in
bloom, sir,
As posies bright and gay,
Both morning, night and
noon, sir.
'Tis pleasant to the sight,
'Tis sweet unto the smell, sir,
And if there be no blight,
The fruit will set and swell,
sir.*

*O the jovial days when the
apple trees do bear,
We'll drink and be merry
all the gladsome year.*

From the 1899 manuscript:

"The young apple trees have a deadly enemy in the rabbit, which loves their sweet bark, and in a night will ruin half a nursery, peeling it off and devouring it all round. Young cattle will break over a hedge and do terrible mischief to an orchard of hopeful trees that promise to bear in another year or two. The bark cannot endure bruising and breaking—injury to it produces that terrible scourge the canker. Apple trees hate standing water, and like to be on a slope, whence the moisture rapidly drains away. As the song says, the orchard apples when ripe glow "gold and red," and the yellow and red apples make the best cider. The green apple is not approved by the old-fashioned cider-apple growers. Farmers are well aware that the quality of the cider depends largely on the goodness of the sort of apple grown. The picking of apples takes place on a fine windy or sunny day. The apples to be pounded (made into cider) are knocked down with a pole, but those for "hoarding" are carefully picked, as a bruise is fatal. After the fallen apples have been gathered by women and children they are heaped up under the trees and left to completely ripen and be touched with frost. It is thought that they make better cider when they have begun to turn brown. Whether this be actually the case, or the relic of a mistaken custom of the past, the writer cannot say."



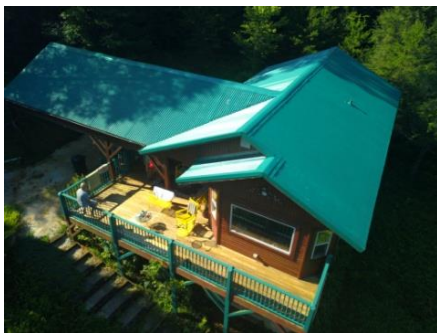
In England, Devon Sparkling Cider is called Champagne, but is much easier to drink.

My Photographs of the Blue Ridge Mountains

Fall, Winter, and Spring near my home north of Lake Lure, North Carolina, this past year.



Linn Cove Viaduct on the Blue Ridge Parkway at Grandfather Mountain...



My Home



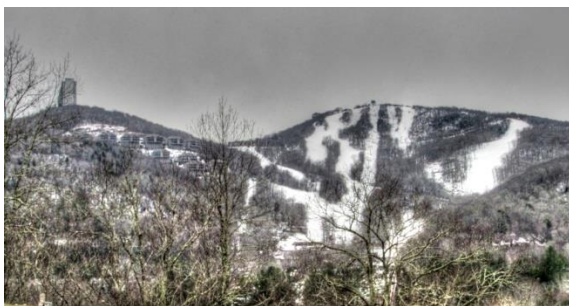
Chimney Rock



Renovated 1840 Log Cabin



Toward Hendersonville from the eastern mountains.



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