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NEWSLETTER FOR RESIDENTS AND FRIENDS OF THE LODGE AT OLD TRAIL

Resident's Son Farms Cows That Milk Themselves

Rising early every morning to milk cows is a thing of the past for dairyman Robert Whipple. His Rockbottom Farm in Rockbridge County is literally run by computers and robots, a recent trend that is spreading across North America. Robert represents the third generation in his dairy farming family and is the son of Lodge resident Fred Whipple.



The barn on left at Rockbottom Farm contains the robotic milking system.

Investment in the robotic equipment made by Dutch manufacturer Lely was not only very expensive but a bit of a gamble, says Robert, who was prepared to supplement the robotic milking by continuing the use of his more conventional milk parlor.

Impressive results were almost immediate. His herd of over 100 Holstein cows liked the new equipment and learned to navigate the automated milkers faster than Robert could learn the new software. Milk production nearly doubled, labor requirements plummeted, and the original milk parlor was converted to house dry and calving cows.

In operation 24 hours a day, the robots allow the cows to enter one of two milking stalls whenever they want, sometimes up to four or five times a day. The stalls are equipped with mechanical arms that wash a cow's underbelly and teats before attaching mechanical milking cups to the teats located by a scanner. The warm milk is routed to a refrigerated holding tank emptied every other day by a tractor trailer tanker truck destined to a processing plant in North Carolina.

All the while, computers are monitoring the production and quality of milk, the amount of feed consumed, and other data fed into a transponder carried around the neck of each individual cow that transmits the data to Robert's computers. He can examine each



A cow at the robotic milking machine.

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RESIDENT FOCUS

Some 60 years passed before Fred and Louise Whipple became hitched. They casually met when Fred was 16 years old and Louise was hardly a teenager at a picnic she attended with her aunt and he with his parents who were friends of her aunt. Fred and Louise's lives diverged, and each of them ultimately became divorcees. They did not meet again until Louise and her aunt attended the funeral for Fred's dad. "Had I not been on a break from teaching school, our meeting would not have occurred," says Louise, remembering the significance of the query he posed at that time to her: "If I call you, will you talk to me?" She consented—the couple wed in Fred's hometown of Brownsburg, Virginia in 2004.

Their pre-nuptial period is perhaps proof positive of the adage that absence makes the heart grow fonder. Fred was living on his cattle farm that he managed in Rockbridge County while Louise lived in Richmond where she worked as a teacher. Togetherness after marriage was pretty much limited to the weekends until she retired, but now togetherness is full time at The Lodge, where they moved in January.

Despite their work schedules, Fred and Louise arranged getaways to faraway destinations including Italy, Ireland, Canada, and Alaska.

Dairy farming appeared to be Fred's future. He was raised on a dairy farm near Brownsburg just outside Lexington in Virginia's

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Resident Focus (cont'd)

Rockbridge County. His father operated the farm and his mother was a school teacher. He graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in dairy science. In his first job as an insurance company claims adjuster, he appeared to be detouring from a career as an agriculturist. But his bond with agriculture persisted.

Determining the extent of insurance company liability lasted only three years. Fred bought a 400-acre farm in Rockbridge County in 1970 and, with his farming dad's help, established a dairy farm involving the management of a herd of over 100 milk cows.

Three years later, the Virginia Department of Agriculture, with whom he had a close association because dairy farmers were under their watchful eye, asked if he was happy with farming. Fred responded with an emphatic "No. I feel as close to being a slave as I ever want to be!" When the Ag Department offered him a job, he took it.

Fred was a dairy inspector for Virginia until his early retirement in 1995, visiting over a hundred dairy farms in Virginia from Harrisonburg to Roanoke, testing milk and checking equipment for cleanliness. When necessary, he would issue official notices of non-compliance, forcing the farms to clean up their act or to go out of business. All the while, Fred devoted early morning and late evening hours to arduously working his farm that he had converted from dairying to raising cattle.

Louise was born in Richmond. She spent part of her youth in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, where her father had been assigned as an employee of Coca Cola. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom.

Louise earned a degree in English from Mary Baldwin College in Staunton (now a university) and a masters degree in English from Manhattanville College in New York City. Having relocated to New York City with her first husband, she got a job as copywriter for the publisher Scribner, now a division of Simon and Schuster. If it were not for a seasoned writer who befriended her, Louise is not sure how long her inexperience would have been tolerated. Soon she was producing the text for the flaps of the dust covers of Scribner books.

After returning to Richmond, Louise was hired by Richmond city schools as a high school English teacher, concentrating on teaching English as a second language to Chinese, Vietnamese, and other foreign students. A staunch advocate of public schools, she helped form a core group that promoted public schools during a time when many parents were favoring private schools for their children.

Upon retirement from the Richmond schools, Louise was a part-time substitute teacher at Henrico County schools for five years.

Louise's son lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, with his wife and their two young children. Her daughter and husband live in Richmond with their young children. Louise has four grandchildren.

Fred's older son lives at Rockbridge Baths, Virginia, with his wife and two children. His other son and wife live with their young children on Fred's farm near Brownsburg, Virginia, where as a dairy farmer he runs a robotic milking system. Fred has four grandchildren.



Besides playing golf, another of Fred's favorites is the oil painting of a house that he kept eyeing in a gift shop in Brownsburg. The house was one he knew and admired on a street in Brownsburg and even though he longed to own the painting, he was unwilling to pay the asking price. One day he was devastated to find the painting had been sold. The shop owner would not tell him that Fred's wife was the purchaser.

Louise knew how much the painting meant to Fred. From her home in Richmond she told the shopkeeper by telephone that she would purchase the painting if he would sneak it into Fred's unlocked house to hide under a bed in the guest room, to which the shopkeeper obliged. Fred was never as ecstatic as he was at Christmas when presented with the treasured painting. It hangs prominently in their apartment at The Lodge.



Four-year old Louise and Fred and Louise in 2004.

Robotic Milking (cont'd)

cow's performance and receive the earliest possible indication of a health problem.

In front of the long line of feeding cows, another robot they call Reggie pushes the feed inward several times a day to assure that it stays in reach of the cows. An automated scraper in the alley behind the cows, a device low enough for cows to step over and leave them unfazed, slowly and periodically rakes the manure to a manure pit.

The system is essentially hands free, but Robert is not completely off the hook. Whether at home or out in a field, he is alerted if anything should go wrong in the barn, like a power or equipment failure at two in the morning.

Although relieved from the perpetual early waking to milk his cows, it is still doubtful that Robert ever sleeps in real late in the morning,



Reggie, the robotic feed pusher.

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Homes of Virginia-born Presidents Still Standing

Montpelier, the home of James Madison, underwent a multi-million dollar restoration.



Photos from Internet sites.

If you thought eight U.S. Presidents were born in Virginia, you would be correct. Only one other state comes close to the Virginia record—the state of Ohio has produced a total of seven American presidents while five presidents were from New York and four were from Massachusetts. The fact that four of the first five presidents were from Virginia gave rise to the term “Virginia dynasty.”

Just as remarkable is the continued presence of the homes where presidents from Virginia were either born or later lived. Except for privately owned Montebello in Orange County, the birthplace of 12th President Zachary Taylor, all homes are open for public viewing.

Mount Vernon

The 285 year old 21-room mansion in Fairfax County overlooking the Potomac River sits on a 500-acre estate that was first President George Washington’s home until his death in 1799. The original house was built by Washington’s father in 1734



and willed to George by his half-brother Lawrence who named the plantation after his commanding officer, Vice Admiral Edward Vernon of the British Royal Navy. George expanded the house, was born in Westmoreland County, and is buried at Mount Vernon in the family tomb. The original 8,000-acre estate was gradually sold off and the remainder was saved from complete ruination by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association in 1858. The philanthropic group restored the house and out buildings and continues to maintain the site to this day.

Mount Vernon is open every day of the year from 9 am to 4 pm during winter months and to 5 pm during the summer. Admission price for seniors is \$19. Specialty tours are extra. Wear comfortable shoes and expect to take up to three hours to tour because there is lots to see. Travel time from The Lodge to Mount Vernon is about three hours. Lunch and snacks, though pricey, are available. The address is 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Mount Vernon, VA 22121.

Monticello and Highland

Because third President Thomas Jefferson’s home at Monticello and fifth President James Monroe’s home at Highland are only three miles apart, they can both be visited on one trip.

Jefferson, born in Albemarle County, began designing and building his plantation home in 1768 when he was only 26 years old on the 5,000 acres of land he inherited from his father. Based on his observations and inventive skills, Monticello was reworked by Jefferson several times over. He died at Monticello and is buried on the grounds. The estate went through several ownerships, including confiscation by the Confederate government, and was sold in 1923 to the current owner, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.



James Monroe’s friend, Thomas Jefferson, persuaded Monroe to purchase 1,000 acres adjacent to Monticello. Monroe and his family resided there for 24 years until personal debt forced him to sell. The last



of several private owners willed the property in 1974 to Monroe’s alma mater, the College of William and Mary, which continues to maintain the property. The home, long believed to be a wing of the original mansion, was discovered to be the Monroe guest house. Archaeologists found the buried foundation of what was a much larger structure. Monroe, born in Westmoreland County, is buried in Richmond.

Day passes and tours of Monticello’s house and gardens cost \$29.95 most of the year. The site is open daily. Travel time is less than 30 minutes. The GPS address is 931 Thomas Jefferson Parkway, Charlottesville, VA 22902.

Guided tours of Highland are \$13 for Albemarle residents. The site is open daily from 9 am to 6 pm April to October, other times 11 am to 5 pm, and is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s days. The address is 2050 James Madison Parkway, Charlottesville, 22902.

Montpelier

Fourth President James Madison and his wife, Dolley, moved to and expanded the house his father had built at Montpelier in Orange County after serving two presidential terms. Born in King George County, he died in 1836 and is buried with Dolley at Montpelier. Dolley’s sale of the plantation was followed by several resales until 1901 when William duPont became the owner and doubled the size of the house. When a daughter Marion duPont Scott died in 1983, the

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Presidential Homes (cont'd)

estate was bequeathed to the National Trust for Historic Preservation which undertook a five-year, \$25 million restoration of the mansion, demolishing the duPont additions and reducing the home to its 22 original rooms. A visitor center wing is devoted to the duPonts.

The site is open daily except on Thanksgiving and Christmas between 9 am and 4:30 pm. The admission price of \$21 includes a guided tour of the mansion. Travel time is about one hour. The address is 11350 Constitution Highway, Montpelier Station, VA 22957.

Berkeley Plantation

The birthplace mansion of the ninth President William Henry Harrison, said to be the oldest three-story brick house in Virginia, was built by his grandfather in 1726 at Berkeley Plantation. Harrison lived there before attending Hampden-Sydney College, serving as Army general, and dying at 68 from pneumonia in 1841 after serving only 32 days as president. The bankrupt plantation was purchased and restored by an unrelated family that opened parts of the mansion and the extensive boxwood and formal gardens to the public. Harrison is interred in Ohio.

Berkeley Plantation is open daily except Thanksgiving and Christmas, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. Admission price of \$11 includes a house tour. Travel time is slightly more than two hours. The address is 12602 Harrison Landing Road, Charles City, 23030.



Sherwood Forest Plantation

As vice-president, John Tyler became the 10th president upon Harrison's death. Attracted by land three miles from where he was born, he purchased Walnut Grove in 1842, renamed it Sherwood Forest, and lived there for 20 years with his second wife and some of his 15 children after leaving the White House. A grandson and his wife restored the house, which holds the distinction of being as long as a football field, and still live there. A secessionist, Tyler was buried in Richmond in 1862, and is the only president whose casket was not draped with the American flag.

The plantation is open daily from 9 am to 5 pm. Self-guided tours of the grounds are \$10. House tours are by appointment; call 804-829-5377 for reservations. Travel time is two and a quarter hours. The address is 14501 John Tyler Memorial Hwy, Charles City, 23030.



Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum

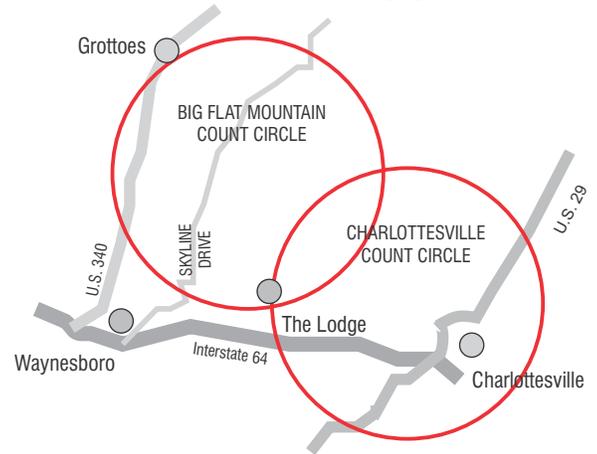
The nation's 28th President, Woodrow Wilson, was born in 1856 in The Manse of the Staunton First Presbyterian Church, the home of his minister father. Constructed in 1846, The Manse has 12 rooms and 12 fireplaces. The Wilsons left The Manse two years later, but Woodrow called Staunton his home. After he died in 1924, the president's widow and others established the foundation that restored the home and constructed a museum and library. Known for his many accomplishments, he is also criticized for his segregationist policies. He is the only president interred in Washington, D.C.

Tickets costing \$12 include a guided tour of The Manse and a self-guided tour of the museum which contains the president's 1919 Pierce-Arrow limousine. The library is open by appointment. Hours are Monday and Thursday thru Saturday 10 am to 4 pm and Sunday 12 pm to 4 pm. Travel time is about 30 minutes. The address is 20 N. Coalter Street, Staunton, VA 24401.

Finch Family Birds Top Local Bird Census

When thinking of a census, the decennial enumeration of the U.S. population comes to most people's minds. But the annual Christmas Bird Count is likely to be a contender among many conservationists. By no means as accurate as the human census, the Christmas Bird Count has, nevertheless, grown to be the longest running volunteer science survey in the world.

Begun in 1900 with 27 volunteers by an ornithologist and officer of the Audubon Society, the annual count now involves 76,000 volunteers who survey birds in over 2,000 count areas, mostly throughout the U.S., and in other western hemisphere countries as well. Participants document species and individual bird totals, never able to count every bird in an area, but always careful to avoid double counting. Counts are made on routes by both foot and auto as well as at backyard feeders. Nearly 50 million individual birds were counted in the 2018 census from December 14 to January 5. The counts are used to assess the health of the bird population.



Administered by the National Audubon Society, the pre-approved count areas are geographic circles 15 miles in diameter. The Lodge lies within the edge of two overlapping circles designated as the Charlottesville and Big Flat Mountain count areas.

Of the 25 species spotted in the Big Flat Mountain circle, the dark-eyed junco took the lead with the Carolina chickadee and golden crowned kinglet in second and third place. Juncos nest in Canada and migrate into much of the U.S. during the winter months.



The white-throated sparrow was the most prevalent of the 74 species recorded in the Charlottesville circle while starlings and the Canada goose were runners up. The sparrow is distinguished by its conspicuous white throat and, like the junco, is a member of the finch family.

Jennifer Gaden is the compiler of the Charlottesville count. She says the number of species documented this year is more or less average when considering the 67 to 83 species recorded over the last 33 years. The Charlottesville count was started in 1924, and attracted 52 volunteers for the last count, a growing number due to its beginner welcome policy. Three birders participated in the Big Flat Mountain count.