

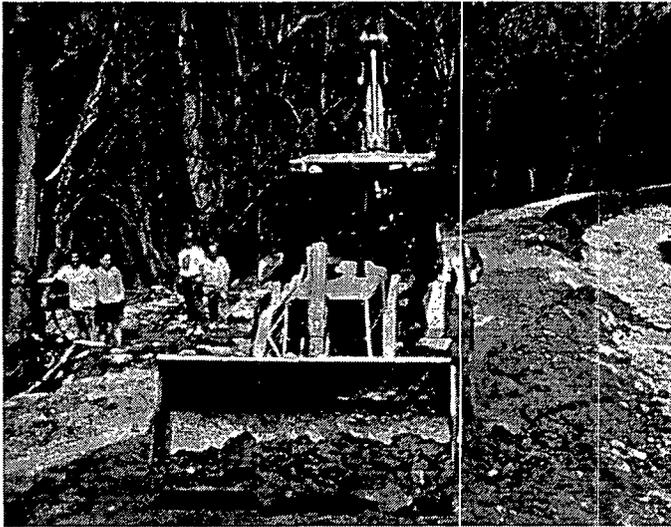
THE VILLAGE NEWS

Volume 29 No. 9

Serving the people of Cabin John and beyond

May 1996

Cabin John pitches in to Rebuild the C&O Canal



McDonnell Contracting's backhoe makes quick work of repairs at Lock 7.

There is good news about reconstruction of the tow path! Of the 185 miles of tow path, all but four miles are open to pedestrians and bikes. Before setting out on a long hike or bike trip, understand that "open" means, in many places, passable to a four wheel drive vehicle, but not much else. A tremendous amount of work has already been accomplished, but there is still lots to do!

Much of the tow path in our area is in good shape, due in large part to the tremendous volunteer effort of lots of area residents. In addition to people willing to haul dirt, repair bridges, carry stones, etc., several local businesses have generously given their time, equipment, and expertise which really expedited the reopening of the tow path in our area.

Pat Gilchrist, a Cabin John resident, and owner of McDonnell Contracting Company, provided a backhoe which was very ably operated by Ralph Morgal, another Cabin John native. In one day, Morgal completed major repairs along the tow path from Lock 6 to Lock 8 including repositioning the footbridge at Lock 8.

Billy Veirs, a Mohican Hills resident, and owner of A.B. Veirs & Son Paving Company, provided two

Continued on page 3

PLANTINGS ALONG MACARTHUR BLVD.

On Sunday, April 28, a crew of volunteer "Johnny Appleseeds" planted over 200 trees, shrubs, and flowers along MacArthur Blvd. from Union Arch Bridge to Tomlinson Avenue. Mark Willcher staked out the area with color-coded flags to mark locations for the Serviceberry, Norway Spruce, Washington Hawthorn, and Chinese Dogwood trees. Fifty Rem Red Honeysuckle seedlings that arrived earlier had already been planted along the east side of MacArthur beyond Tomlinson Ave.

Thanks to everyone who volunteered their services. To the Wild Bird Center for graciously agreeing to be the shipping location for all the plants, the central meeting place for Sunday's volunteers, and for providing coffee and bagels before the heavy work began. To Mark Willcher who twice took time to walk along MacArthur Blvd. offering advice on the types of plants and their locations. To Sunday's volunteers who gave their time, energy, and muscles to do the planting:

Don Mehlman, Tom and Linda Green, John Ryan, Tina Cissel, Susan and James Ingraham and their children, Werner and Elizabeth Schumann and their grandchild, and from First Union Bank a special thanks to Allison Wakenight and Ina Simons who work but do not live in Cabin John. To Andrew Bergen and Florence Lehr for digging up a huge forsythia bush in their backyard which was transplanted off MacArthur near the Parkway entrance. The forsythia's new home is beside a lovely lilac tree which was planted 20 years ago by Tina Cissel and her Cabin John neighbors. This lilac and another about thirty feet further south are the two stately survivors from an earlier community planting.

Citizens Association Officers Nominated

The Nominating Committee has selected the following persons for election as CJCA officers for the 1996-1997 fiscal year:

President - Harry Rieckelman (incumbent)

Vice President - Burton Gray

Secretary - Gary Barnhard (incumbent)

Treasurer - Elaine Tama (incumbent)

The election of officers will be held at the May 28th Citizens Association meeting.

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Cabin John Citizens Association Meeting
Tuesday, May 28 at 7:30 at the Clara Barton Community Center

Looking Backwards in Cabin John Chautauqua '76

Twenty years ago this month, Cabin John was gearing up for the biggest event in its history: Chautauqua '76, the community celebration of our country's bicentennial. The day was Saturday June 5, and the all-day program offered something for just about everybody, young and old, who lived in Cabin John.

Announced as an "occasion to honor our heritage, a festival to renew our fellowship, and a forum to bring our horizon in view," Chautauqua '76 started with a morning bicycle parade for kids. Dozens of decorated bikes were pedaled along MacArthur Boulevard from the firehouse at Seven Locks Road to the old Clara Barton School (now the Clara Barton Community Center). There both children and adults joined in a batting contest, followed at 12:30 by a softball contest pitting the Cabin John Volunteer Firemen against the Village News Volunteers.

Early in the afternoon began a series of historical and cultural presentations. There were two slide shows, one "A Walk on the Canal" by Margaret Farrell, the other "Historic Structures in Montgomery County" by Mayvis-Fitzsimmons. There were "mini-lectures" on the history of Cabin John by Morris Fradin and Edith Armstrong and on Indian relics in Cabin John by Joseph Bodino. There was an original children's play, "Hey-ey-ey, Lock," written by Betsey and Alex Bilanow, based on a book by Morris Fradin and acted by a dozen local children, as well as a puppet show, "Paul Bunyan Meets John Henry," produced by the Palisades Theater. And for the musically inclined, there was an old-time gospel sing led by an ensemble from the Riverside Assembly of God, and the Cabin John String Quartet playing music of the Revolutionary era, featuring Vera Dolezal, Louise Olson, Ellen Loeb, and Andrew Rice.

The Walt Whitman High School Band performed during the box supper which led into the biggest event of the day, Old Timers' Night. The honored guests were all the previous presidents of the Cabin John Citizens Association who were still around, including A.C. Wilkins who, at age 92, presented a song as a prelude to the talk by then Congressman Gilbert Gude. The evening wound up with a lively square dance led by Elizabeth Witt.

Throughout the day there were craft displays, a photo exhibit on "Cabin John - Yesterday and Today" and a special showing of silver and china from the famed Cabin John Bridge Hotel by Mrs. Harry Bobinger. Volleyball games and horseshoes were ongo-

ing attractions, and a variety of food was provided by the Cabin John United Methodist Church and the Gibson Grove AME Zion Church. And there was a raffle for a "Cap'n John's Treasure."

Although the name "Chautauqua '76" was puzzling to some, it was inspired by the "Chautauqua on the Potomac" held in neighboring Glen Echo in 1891, one of many such events particularly popular during the last quarter of the 19th century at which Americans could get a concentrated dose of "joy, instruction, inspiration" in the form of plays, sermons, lectures, concerts, puppet shows, etc. Today's Glen Echo Park originated with the Chautauqua of 1891, although, sad to say, its first year was also its last as it became a victim of a malaria epidemic in the following year.

Cabin John's Chautauqua sought, in the word of its principal organizer, Calvin Kytle, to offer something for everybody and thus to invigorate an entire community. And certainly people from all parts of Cabin John pitched in to make it a success.

Is it time to start thinking about another all-community event like Chautauqua '76? We don't have a bicentennial to observe, but surely we can find some date in Cabin John's history which is coming up for an anniversary. Celebration anyone?

- Thanks to Village News Archivist Andy Rice for contributing this feature. If you have photos or mementos of the good old days in Cabin John, the Village News would like to use them with this feature.

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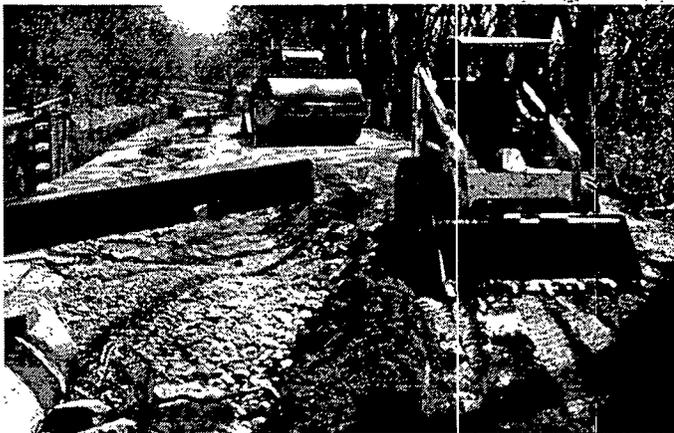
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A.B. Veirs & Son equipment and crew attack the damage between Locks 8 and 10.

trucks, two bobcats, a grader, and four workers. In one day, Veirs' crew, working on the Lock 8 to Lock 10 stretch, backed 50 truck loads of dirt down the steeply banked tow path restoring it to its original condition.

In addition, Ralph Osborne, owner of the Market on the Boulevard, has provided lunch to many volunteers working to repair the boardwalks and bridges on Olinstead Island at Great Falls.

Many thanks to all who have volunteered and to those who have contributed generously to the Potomac Conservancy's Canal Fund. To date, Cabin John residents have contributed \$1300, that combined with the \$1000 contributed by the Cabin John Citizens Association, brings our town total to \$2300.

Neighborhood Events

At The Clara Barton Center

Come to the Clara Barton Teen Center for a Family Fun Night on Friday June 14 from 7-10 PM. There will be food, drink, games and lots of fun!

Opening Date Set for Senior Program

The new seniors program described in last month's *Village News* begins Wednesday, September 18 at the Clara Barton Community Center. See the next *Village News* for details about this new weekly program.

To announce an event in The Village News send a written notice to: Editor, PO Box 164, Cabin John Md 20818. The next deadline and mailing date is published on the inside back page.

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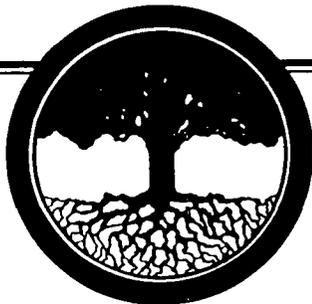
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Our Cabin John Neighbors

Reverend Mrs. Juanitta Williams

By Barbara Martin

Juanitta Williams' life would make a fascinating novel or film.

"I was born in Columbus, Ohio, in the heart of the city. I'm part Mohawk, part Cherokee. My mother was 14 when I was born and my grandmother was the one who raised me. We had hard winters in Columbus, snows so deep we had to dig our way out so we could go to school. When we got to school we were all soaked and the teacher would hang our coats on the radiator."

Her grandmother moved to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, taking Juanitta (pronounced Geneetta) with her. "My grandmother worked for many years in the Zездendorf Hotel. When I wasn't in school, I went along with her, and all the people in the hotel were so nice to me."

"My grandmother told me about her people. Her mother was a slave, a Cherokee who worked in the manor house; her father was the white overseer. She herself was born in slavery. My grandmother wanted me to be someone; she could read and write and she taught me what she knew."

When Juanitta was about 8, her grandmother put her on the train back to Columbus. By this time her mother was married to a Mr. Smith, and Juanitta had a sister and two brothers, and as the older sister she helped care for her siblings. "From my mother I learned to sew, crochet, and do beadwork. I could make just about anything. My mother was a wonderful seamstress. I have a photograph of her wearing a fur hat and coat that she made."

One of my favorite subjects in school was music. I loved to sing and I read music at an early age."

Juanitta's grandmother left Winston-Salem and came to live with Juanitta's aunt in Columbus. Juanitta lived with them, too. Her uncle was a cook on the railroad and he was transferred to Roanoke, Virginia. Juanitta moved with her aunt, uncle, and grandmother.

A travelling vaudeville show came to town and Juanitta, at the ripe old age of 13 ran away from home to join the show. "I told my grandmother what I was going to do and she told me I would go with God and be travelling on her prayers. I left on a Sunday morning when my aunt was in church."

The people in the vaudeville troupe had heard me sing and they wanted me in the show. I didn't tell them how old I was but they knew I was pretty young. In case there was any trouble leaving town, they hid me

in a piano box in the baggage car."

She loved the vaudeville life. The first song she performed as part of the troupe was "Alexander's Ragtime Band," accompanying herself on her ukelele. She travelled with that company for 2 years, then left to go with another group, a tent show. "I left because I was bug-eyed over a trumpet player in the other show. I was 15."

One of their stops was Winston-Salem. Juanita arranged to see her grandmother, but instead her aunt showed up with the police. "The troupe hid me and the police didn't find me. By now I was singing, playing the uke, and dancing in the chorus line. We went north and then south again, stopping at all the small towns; I call it migrating south. I knew the show was booked at a town in Florida around Christmas, so I sent my grandmother my address, and she mailed me a box and a letter. I was pretty homesick."

In all, she travelled with vaudeville shows about 15 years. When they came to Washington, she played at the Gayety Theater, the Mid-City Theater, the Howard Theater, and the Lincoln Theater.

"We stayed in Washington quite a while, maybe 2 or 3 months, before we moved north. In a piece we did, Uncle Tom's Cabin, I was playing Topsy; I had a wig with little plaits sticking out all over. In the south, when we would come into a town, they would drive trucks up and down the streets, with me dancing on top of the truck, to advertise the show." Her show business name was Baby.

And then one day when the troupe was in Tarber, North Carolina, just outside Rocky Mount, she left the show. "Just like that, I'd had enough. I didn't have the least idea what I was going to do. I had a friend in Rocky Mount and I went to her house. She set up a cot for me in her kitchen."

"That night, a Thursday night, I had a life-changing experience. I went to Hell. Now you may not believe me, but that's what happened. As I was falling down into the burning pit, I cried out to God to have mercy on my soul and save me. And when I did that, I turned around and was carried up toward the light, praising God with all my heart."

"I lay on the floor under the cot all night, crying and praising God. In the morning my friend found me there, and got me to stand up. There was a preacher who was working next door painting, and he told my friend 'She's found Jesus.' That was Good Friday. I

couldn't eat for rejoicing. All Saturday I slept and just drank water. I wondered if I was imagining all this and on Saturday night I asked God to let the sun blind me in the morning if it was true. The next morning was Easter; the sun shone in the window so bright I couldn't see. I shouted for joy and got dressed and went to church, the North End Baptist Church. That was in 1925."

"When I was with a child with my grandmother, I went to the ME Methodist Church. While I was with the shows, I didn't go to church, but I always prayed."

Juanitta moved back to Roanoke and started singing in the Baptist choir. The choir director was Professor Edward Anderson

Williams, a graduate of Morehouse College. They went together for 6 years and in 1933 were married. In the late 1930's the Williamses came to Washington, looking for better career opportunities. They joined the John Wesley National AME Zion Church at 14th and Corcoran Streets. Mr. Williams got a job in the Federal government and directed the choir at John Wesley.

When World War II came, Mr. Williams went into the service. They moved to Cabin John, buying the last house available on Carver Road. "Across Seven Locks Road by the water tower was a big cornfield; the white and the colored boys used to steal corn from there. There weren't all these expensive houses then." After the War, Mr. Williams went to work at the Pentagon as a civilian. In 1959, the family adopted a son, Charles.

"I knew I wanted to be a minister. I enrolled in Freeland Hyson AME Zion College in Washington and earned my ministerial certificate. I was the only woman in my class. While I was going field work—preaching on the streets and in prisons—I worked with a woman who was a Pentecostal minister. I worked with her in her church on New York Avenue, and I was ordained into the Pentecostal Holiness Church in 1958."

In 1961, without any warning, Mr. Williams passed away of a cerebral hemorrhage. "I had just come out of the hospital and was in bed recovering from surgery. In the morning he left for work, drove to the Pentagon, called me about 9 to check on me, and was dead by noon. I was alone when I got the phone call; I ran screaming into the yard and collapsed. Lily Gibbs who lived around the corner and my sister-in-law from across the street found me. I was devastated to lose my wonderful husband. We buried him in Arlington Cemetery."

Charles was just 12, a student at Gordon Junior High, when his father passed away and he had a very hard time with it. When he was 18, the Reverend Mrs. Williams drove him to the Army recruiting station

where he enlisted. He served in Korea and Vietnam; he passed away when he was 30.

Since then she has been alone. But not really alone. "I've been Ma to all the children in the Carver community. They all know me and know I won't stand for any bad language or bad behavior.

For 2 years, she served as a County nurse, making house calls all over the area. She helped with newborns, elderly and disabled people, and those who were recovering from surgery or illness.

When her husband passed away, Mrs. Williams took a job at the Kenwood County Club on River Road. She was their decorator and seamstress. After 4 years she changed to the City Tavern Club in Georgetown, arranging receptions and large parties. Lynda Bird Johnson's luncheon with her bridesmaids was given there, and also her wedding reception. "That Lynda Bird had her nose turned up so high she couldn't smell ham gravy. But President Johnson was so friendly; he shook hands with me and when he found out I was Indian he told me I was the real American."

An elderly woman of the community, Miss Lena, came to live in Mrs. Williams' house where she was lovingly cared for until she died at age 105.

In 1967, Reverend Williams had a terrible accident. Crossing the street in Georgetown, she tripped on a manhole cover and fell flat onto the street. She was taken to Washington Hospital Center and put in traction; her spine was crushed. "I was flat on my back for a year. I came home and had home nurses and physical therapists. Since that time I can't walk comfortably, but with God's help I keep on moving."

Mrs. Williams has been a strong force in the Cabin John community, coming to Citizens meetings and helping to organize the Crab Feast. She served with the Buchmanns on the Noise Abatement Committee, during Ed Winslow's term as Citizens Association president.

Mrs. Williams' two brothers are gone now; her sister still lives in Columbus. Mrs. Williams has had five strokes and uses a cane to walk. Her eyesight isn't so good, but her hearing is excellent and her mind is still working very well indeed. She loves Gibson Grove Church and attends services regularly. At one time, her husband directed the Gibson Grove choir. She is still an active minister, officiating at baptisms and funerals. At any church event she will get up and speak. "I say what's in my heart and they always want me to talk."

I asked what she prefers to be called. "Well, some call me Reverend, some Mrs. Williams, but most of them call me Ma. My neighbors are so good to me. They tell me they can't do enough for me because I've done for people all my life."

And what a life it has been.

May 6th Planning Meeting Kicks Off Cabin John's 1996 Crab and Chicken Feast

A dozen Cabin Johners joined Committee Chair, Lori Rieckelman, at a planning meeting for this year's Crab and Chicken Feast. The big event will take place on September 7th, the Saturday after Labor Day from 2:00 - 6:00 PM. The folks at the meeting agreed to handle many of the major organizing work necessary to get the Feast up and running. BUT — we do want and need your help.

To volunteer in Cabin John's only major fund raiser, please contact the following folks who are overseeing:

Advance Ticket Sales :

Barbara Martin (229-3482)

Diane Leatherman (229-7412)

Tables and Chairs Pick-up & Take-down:

Andy Rice (229-3503)

Chicken Cookers:

Stan Schaper and Jan Smith (320-3422)

Veggie Prep:

Helen Daniel (229-1521)

There are still several things that need a volunteer to step forward and take charge. If you are interested in taking responsibility for any of the following, please contact Lori Rieckelman at (320-6299) :

- Acting as "Major Domo" the afternoon of the Feast to keep everything running smoothly between the kitchen and serving lines
- Organizing clean-up during and after the Feast
- Taking charge of getting and selling beverages (beer and soft drinks)
- Organizing a children's "decorated bicycle" parade down MacArthur Blvd. right before the opening of the Crab and Chicken Feast
- Organizing games for young children at the Crab/Chicken Feast

This year will provide a special eating treat. All the vegetable dishes will be cooked by or prepared under the supervision of the recipes creators and some of the originators for Cabin John's annual Crab and Chicken Feast. Claude Clifton and Celeste Swedenburg will be making sure these dishes return to their original great flavor that so many of the community's long-time residents remember and justifiably praise.

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Wednesday Evening: 7:00 Prayer, Testimonies, Bible questions

Friday Morning: 10:00 Community prayer and Bible study

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The Village News
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The next deadline is 10 AM Saturday June 8 for the issue mailing June 20.

People who make the Village News possible:

Barbara and Ger Quinn, Jerry Rhodes, Barbara and Reed Martin
 Contributors: Barbara Martin, Andy Rice, Trudi Bick, Helen Daniel, Construction photos by Paul Rosa of The Potomac Conservancy

CLASSIFIED ADS

HOME(S) WANTED: Experienced house-sitter seeks local residences near area grandchildren during July & August. Will care for plants, pets, garden or assist as a mother's helper. Even-exchange. References, write Mirabel, 20E Stratford Hills, Chapel Hill, NC 27514 or call any time 919-933-3454.

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