

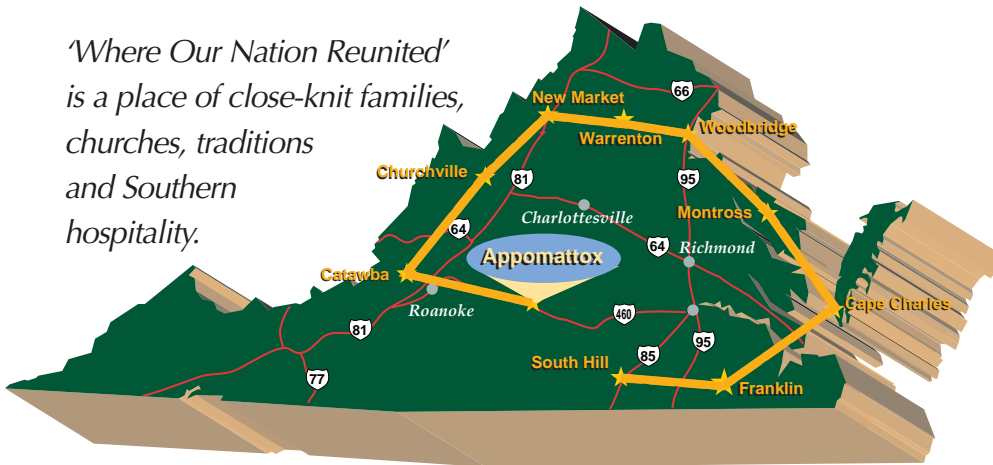
DOWN HOME SERIES

by Cheryl Adams Rychkova,
Contributing Writer

During the year 2001, we're making our way around Virginia, each issue visiting a small town and meeting some of the folks who make up the heart of electric co-op country. On this year's last stop, we'll be...

Down Home in Appomattox

*'Where Our Nation Reunited'
is a place of close-knit families,
churches, traditions
and Southern
hospitality.*



The welcome signs that greet visitors upon entrance to the county perhaps proclaim it best:

"Appomattox — Where Our Nation Reunited."

The statement is true, for it was in the

quiet village of Appomattox, on April 9, 1865, that Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to the victorious Union army, led by General Ulysses Grant.

Nestled in the heart of Virginia's

Piedmont Plateau, this internationally known town (population 1,700 and another 8,000 living in the county of Appomattox) remains to this day a quiet place. A bedroom community to the nearby city of Lynchburg, it is a place of close-knit families, churches, traditions and Southern hospitality.

Historians have oft-spoken of the stillness that seems to have remained long after the guns were silenced more than a century ago. In the old village, where the surrender actually took place, this is certainly true — visitors frequently take note of a certain solemn silence there; the hopelessness of a lost cause bravely fought, and the concilia-



CHERYL RYCHKOVA PHOTO



BILL SHERROD PHOTO



CHERYL RYCHKOVA PHOTO

Sheila Palamar and her husband Jerry (above) were seeking a lifestyle change when they found Appomattox and purchased The Babcock House Bed and Breakfast (left).



The Appomattox Visitor Information Center, located on Main Street in a restored railroad depot, is the first and best place to begin touring the town and county.

The old village, or “surrender grounds,” as it is known by the native population, was abandoned in 1892, when a fire destroyed the old courthouse. A new courthouse was promptly built four miles west of the old village, next to the new railroad line. The town quickly grew around it and it is in this “new” Appomattox that many guests begin their visit.

The Appomattox Visitor Information Center is the first and best place to begin touring the town and county. Located on Main

Street in the restored railroad depot, the center provides information and directions to the county’s numerous attractions.

Main Street itself is well worth a leisurely stroll. Totally remodeled to match the town’s turn-of-the-century architecture, visitors may stroll through quaint antique shops, gift shops and charming country-style restaurants.

Just around the corner and two short blocks north leads the visitor to the majestic, present-day Courthouse Square. One of the more picturesque structures within is the



CHERYL RYCHKOVA PHOTO

Main Street Appomattox (top) has been totally remodeled to match the town’s turn-of-the-century architecture (above).

tory tone of peace set by Grant himself.

The modern Town of Appomattox has a much livelier feel, however. Located just three miles to the west of the old village, residents still take pride in their historic heritage. Businesses with names featuring “Lee-Grant” and “Blue and Gray” dot the landscape. There is even a Confederate Boulevard and a Lee Street. Confederate and United States flags fly proudly together, emphasizing that it was here that our nation became one again.

This unique building, once used as the county jail, now houses the Appomattox County Historical Museum.



BILL SHERROD PHOTO



A visit to Appomattox Court House National Historical Park includes such highlights as Clover Hill Tavern (left) and the McLean House (below), where the actual Civil War surrender took place.

BILL SHERROD PHOTO



If You Go...

It's easy to find the Town of Appomattox, just take any marked exit off of U.S. 460, and you will quickly find the downtown area, as well as the historic area. Make your first stop at the Visitor's Center, located in the old train depot on Main Street. Appomattox offers a variety of accommodations, ranging from charming bed and breakfasts to budget-conscious motels, including a Super 8. For further information on accommodations and services, contact the visitor's center or visit the county Web site at www.appomattox.com.

Appomattox Visitor Information Center — **Main Street.** Hours: Monday-Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Contact: (434) 352-2621. Renovation of the center shows off the original brick, wrought iron, and wood of the old railroad depot. The center features displays of local attractions, brochures, and information on statewide and national travel destinations.

Appomattox County Historical Museum. Located in the Court House Square on Court Street. The Appomattox County Historical Museum was previously a jail started in 1895 and completed in 1897. It was the third jail to have been built in Appomattox County and was in continuous use until May 1981. The museum houses a turn-of-the-century

one-room school, a doctor's office, a jail cell, plus numerous artifacts and interesting memorabilia of the past. For hours of operation and admission policies, call (434) 352-2621.

Appomattox Court House National Historical Park. Summer hours, daily 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., winter hours, daily 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.; cost \$2 per person age 17 and older, 16 and under free; contact (434) 352-8987. Relive the drama of the closing days of the Civil War. Park personnel and slide presentations brief you on the background of the park at the visitor information center, located in the courthouse building. Your visit includes such highlights as the McLean House, where the actual surrender took place, the Clover Hill Tavern, where parole passes were printed, and the area where the stacking of arms occurred. Period re-enactors add an element of living history to your visit. You will feel the presence of Generals Lee and Grant as you walk the street of the restored village. Allow 1½ to 2 hours for your visit.

An Evening Stroll Through Old Appomattox. Step back in time with the former sheriff and county clerk of Appomattox Court House, George T. Peers, portrayed by Pat Schroeder. Experience a first-person, living history tour through the village of Appomattox Court House in the summer of

1867 with Mr. Peers. Mr. Peers was born and raised in the county, and because of his clerking duties, he knew perhaps more than anyone about the area. Join Mr. Peers at the Confederate Cemetery where the tour will begin. Tours are every Friday and Saturday evening at 7 p.m. from May 28-Sept. 3. (Tours also available on some holidays). Cost is \$6 per person.

Clover Hill Village. A living history village



Appomattox County Historical Museum. Once used as the county jail, this unique building now houses memorabilia in thematic displays, ranging from a one-room schoolhouse to an early 20th-century doctor's office.

Visitors wanting a closer look at the town's architecture will want to take the self-

guided tour, which includes 44 grand homes from the turn of the century. Starting on Main Street, the tour weaves by towering Victorian mansions, quaint cottages and even a massive English-Tudor-style home. Sweep yourself back to another age and take advantage of the horse-and-carriage tour that is offered.

Once they've toured the new town, most visitors head out to Appomattox Court House National Historical Park, where serious history awaits. Located just a few miles to the north on Virginia Route 24, visitors can walk the paths traveled by Civil War soldiers and stagecoaches, then peer into the little parlor where the future of the nation was decided.

The Pamplin Pipe Factory, whose history dates back to the Appomattocks Indians, houses the original clay kiln that once produced one million clay pipes per month.

located on Route 627, approximately 3.5 miles from town. Open April through October — grounds open daily 9 a.m. to dusk. Guided building tours Thursday through Sunday 1-4 p.m. Special hours and group tours by appointment. Contact Nancy Murray, (434) 352-0321.

Fred's Car Museum. More than 65 classic and antique automobiles made from 1906 to 1980 can be seen under one roof at the car museum. Everything from the classic 1957 Chevrolet to very rare and seldom-seen cars are right here in Fred's Car Museum. One of the rarest cars in the museum is a 1939 V-12 Lincoln Limousine, one of only four ever made! Come see a 1906 Schacht Mfg. Company horseless carriage, a 1914 Saxton, a 1920 Piano Box Buggy, and a 1936 Packard. There is even a 1962 Rolls Royce, a classic 1946 fire engine, and a Chevrolet truck that nobody can figure out the date of its manufacture. There is also a very well-stocked gift shop at the museum where you can purchase gifts and souvenirs, including T-shirts and a model of your favorite classic automobile. One of Appomattox's newest attractions, this museum is a must-see for all tourists visiting the area. \$5



per person admission fee. Open Mon.-Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sunday 1-5 p.m. Cruise-ins every second Saturday (May through September) 6-10 p.m. Call (434) 352-0606 for more information.

Lee's Retreat. A 20-stop driving tour between Petersburg and Appomattox. The route traces the more than 100-mile trek Lee and his army took while being pursued by Union troops. Historic markers, maps and interpretive radio broadcasts convey details of events leading to the surrender at Appomattox.

Historic Homes Walking Tour. Hours, daily 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Contact: (434) 352-2621.

Appomattox County boasts more turn-of-the-century homes than any other county seat in Virginia. The 44 homes on this self-guided walking tour are all within a half-mile of the Visitor's Center.

Holliday Lake State Park. Located off Route 24 (follow signs). Open year-round. Camping, \$15; swimming, \$3 for adults, \$2 for children. Contact: (434) 248-6308. The park provides a beautiful backdrop for a variety of outdoor recreational activities.

Swimming, camping, picnicking, boating and fishing are popular on this man-made lake. The park also offers miles of lake-front hiking. Camping and swimming are curtailed during winter months. Call for seasonal hours.

Joel Sweeney Display. Honoring Appomattox native Joel Sweeney, inventor of the five-string banjo. Contact: (434) 352-2621.

Pamplin Pipe Factory. Located in Pamplin City; open by appointment — free admission. Contact: (434) 248-5778, Raymond Dickerson. The Pamplin Pipe Factory is one of the two facilities in Appomattox County listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Its history dates back to the Appomattocks Indians and their cottage industry of clay pipes. The Pamplin Pipe Factory was built in 1880. It houses the original clay kiln that once produced one million clay pipes per month. The site also includes a museum which showcases Native American artworks.

Stonewall Vineyards. Hours: Monday through Sunday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Contact: (434) 993-2185. Stonewall Vineyards offers vineyard and winery tours, wine-tasting plus friendly and knowledgeable assistance in selecting your favorites. You will take home double treasures — superb wine and happy memories. Picnic arbor is also available. ■



Roy Varcoe and Nancy Murray (inset) have been leaders in the development and preservation of Clover Hill Village (left).

And, of course, experience the renowned "Silence at Appomattox."

The historic village offers numerous programs ranging from slide shows, museum displays and costumed reenactors — all designed to allow the visitor to become an intimate observer to the drama played out in the days just prior to — and immediately

following — the war's conclusion.

Tucked away around the corner from the national park is one of the best-kept secrets of Appomattox County. Over the past 10 years, members of the Appomattox County Historical Society have labored to recreate Clover Hill Village, a thriving community that existed at the time of the surrender.

Historical society members **Roy Varcoe** and **Nancy Murray** have been leaders in the development and preservation of the village. Over the course of a decade six prominent buildings have gone up in the village, including an 1827 chapel, an 1830s log cabin, a reconstructed 1860s general store and post office, an early 1900s blacksmith shop, a

“poor farm” cabin and a one-room school.

Varcoe and Murray, who originally hail from New Jersey, believe the heritage of Appomattox is worthy of preservation.

“We saw Clover Hill Village as an opportunity to preserve examples of the rural heritage of our country,” Varcoe said. “There are some wonderful folks in this area and they have a great heritage. I only hope that more folks will become involved to assure it isn’t lost for future generations.”

Murray agreed with Varcoe. “We believe the village provides a glimpse of the surrounding countryside — of the ‘real Appomattox,’” she said. “The grounds are always open for self-guided tours during daylight hours and we can open buildings on request.”

Though both Varcoe and Murray jokingly ask residents not to hold their “Yankee” background against them, the two are surely not alone in their status as new arrivals in Appomattox. The county has welcomed people from all corners of the earth for more than 100 years. Some of the conquering Union soldiers even decided they liked the place, stayed and raised their families here. Then, from the 1970s onward, there came an exodus of families from the great Northern cities, bringing with them new talent, ideas and culture. Testament to the love of their new home are the many old county homes that have been rescued and restored.

Another Northern transplant is **Sheila Palamar**, who originally hails from Syracuse, New York. She and her husband **Jerry** were seeking a lifestyle change when they found Appomattox and purchased The Babcock House Bed and Breakfast.

Escaping the Big City

“We had very stressful jobs and were tired of big-city living,” Sheila said. “After working in the restaurant business for 30 years and having little time together, we decided to fulfill our life’s dream of owning a bed and breakfast. But we definitely wanted to be in a small town.”

The Palamars said they visited Appomattox and immediately fell in love with the town.

“The people are just so warm and friendly,” Jerry said. “Everyone helps each other out and are very supportive.”

Other residents moved away for years but

returned to their roots. **Renee Coupe**, owner of Somewhere In Time Antiques on Main Street, said the tug to return home brought her back to Appomattox.

“I had lived in Michigan for 40 years, but always planned to return to the quiet of my hometown,” she said. “There’s just something about this place that makes people want to come back again and again.”

Even residents of nearby counties make

visitors will find Holiday Lake State Park. The 9,000-acre park consists of a large lake surrounded by wooded rolling hills. Popular in summer for swimming and other water sports, the park is open year-round for hiking, fishing and picnicking.

Further out, in the east end of the county, is the town of Pamplin. Once a thriving railroad center, Pamplin is now a quiet backwater of sorts; its abandoned, turn-of-the-century

store buildings standing as silent witness to the town’s prosperous past. Pamplin remains a busy community of active citizens, however. Perhaps chief among them is **Raymond Dickerson**, a lifelong Appomattox County resident, better known to locals as “The Pipe Man.”

A Pipe Dream Come True

Dickerson comes by his title by way of his one-man accomplishment of restoring one of Pamplin’s major claims to fame — the Pamplin Pipe Factory. The history of the factory dates back to the Appomattock Indians and their cottage industry of clay smoking pipes. The original kiln that once produced one million clay pipes per month still stands, next to a museum that showcases Native American artworks and Americana.

Over a period of 25 years Dickerson has single-handedly restored the kiln and researched the history of the pipe industry in Pamplin. He regales visitors with fascinating stories of times past in Pamplin and the goings-on in the factory. Guests can even observe how the pipes were manufactured and are presented with a completed pipe — in the shape of Robert E. Lee’s head, no less — at the end of the free tour.

Spending his entire life in Appomattox has given Dickerson the opportunity to become knowledgeable of the area’s past — and its people. He said he can understand why so many have either returned to their roots here or come to plant new ones.

“There is something so special and magical about Appomattox County,” he said. “Everything you need to live a good life is here, but none of what you don’t need. It’s easy to see why more people every year choose to make this place their home.

“But,” he continued, “there are plenty of us here who are glad to have been here all along.” ■

CHERYL RYCHKOVA PHOTO



Renee Coupe (above left), owner of Somewhere In Time Antiques, lived in Michigan for 40 years, but always planned to return to Appomattox. The good food and friendly service at Granny Bee’s restaurant (below) keeps regular customers coming back.



CHERYL RYCHKOVA PHOTO

Appomattox a regular stop. Charlotte County resident **Lennie Clark** said the warmth and good food at the Main Street restaurant, Granny Bee’s, makes her a regular visitor to Appomattox.

“The food is great and there is always good conversation to be found here,” she said. “And the local people are so friendly.” Fellow diner **Mamie Pugh**, also from Charlotte County, agreed. “The friendliness and the wonderful history here bring me back every week,” she said.

Down winding roads leading away from the National Park and deep into the forest