

West Carolina Tel

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2014

CONNECTED

MINE MADE UP

Preserving the history of
McCormick's gold rush

ALL ABOARD!

Scenic railways of the South
leave you loco for locomotives

PUDDING IN ITS PLACE

Festival champion reveals
banana pudding secrets





Protect Yourself Today:

Practical steps small businesses can take to protect against cyber security threats

BY MICHAEL RAMAGE

With the ever-growing number of cyber security threats, all businesses should take immediate steps to ensure that their operations, systems and networks are secure. In the July/August issue, we looked at some of the threats facing small businesses. Now, let's discuss steps that every small business should consider immediately.

Below are four inexpensive steps that will provide some immediate protection from cyber security threats for any business. These are four steps of many, but they provide a good starting point.

• **ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE** — An essential step that every business should consider is software to help keep its systems clean of viruses and malware. Having a clean computer is vital to a secure network. Several anti-virus software options are available, some even for free. Choose an option that provides real-time monitoring.

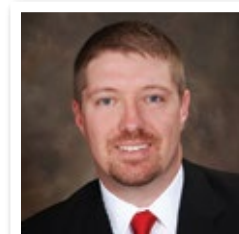
• **PASSWORD USAGE** — A basic requirement that is often overlooked by organizations is the use of passwords. First of all, use them. Every computer, no matter how insignificant, should require a password to log on. Complex passwords should be used if possible. The SANS Institute (www.sans.org) provides tips on security and password usage, such as not mixing personal and business passwords.

• **EMPLOYEE TRAINING** — Employees are the first line of defense in cyber security protection. Many security attacks could be prevented with proper security awareness training. This should include the do's and don'ts of Internet and cyber security. Examples would include proper password usage, what information can be shared over the phone and how to protect customer information.

• **REGULAR BACKUPS** — Data loss happens all the time. Sometimes it is due to human error, sometimes to natural

disasters. Other losses are due to malicious activity. Every business should create a regular backup schedule for its critical data and provide offsite storage. Ideally, a business should follow best practices. For example, if you back up to a system within the same building and your building burns down, then you lose your original data and your backup data.

These are just a few steps that small businesses should take immediately. In the November/December issue, we will discuss some longer-term measures small business should consider to protect their systems and information. ☎



Michael Ramage is the Associate Director of the Center for Telecommunications Systems Management at Murray State University.

GROWING MOBILE

SURVEY SAYS MORE CONSUMERS TURNING TO THE SMALL SCREEN

50%

use a tablet to read newspapers

80%

use their tablets after hours to research business products or services

40%

have replaced either their laptop or desktop with a tablet device

75%

have used a smartphone to watch online video

PUT THE POWER OF BROADBAND TO WORK ON YOUR MOBILE DEVICES

DID YOU KNOW that with broadband Internet service and a Wi-Fi network in your home, you can stream all this data over your wireless connection and avoid data charges from your cell phone provider? Call us today to learn more about setting up a Wi-Fi network in your home.

NTCA unveils ad campaign focusing on work of **rural broadband providers**

As your community-based telecommunications provider, we are committed to delivering the services our rural region needs to stay connected. In fact, no one is in a better position to serve you — and that is the message our national association is sending to Washington through a new advertising campaign.

NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association launched the print and digital ad series in July, sending a strong message to elected officials, regulators and their support staffs in the nation's capital. That message is twofold: 1) that for more than 60 years, rural telecommunications companies have successfully met the challenges of delivering quality, affordable services to the country's most rural and remote communities, and 2) that with the right support, these rural providers can continue to deliver real solutions as society becomes increasingly reliant on broadband connectivity.

The campaign is part of NTCA's work to ensure the story of rural telecommunications is heard at a time when policymakers in Washington look to update rules affecting the industry. These ads are appearing in print and digital publications that have a high level of readership among these policymakers.

NTCA represents nearly 900 independent, community-based telecommunications companies that are leading innovation in rural and small-town America. The

ad campaign is another example of how we work with other companies like us through our national organization to benefit our members and their communities.

Shirley Bloomfield is chief executive officer of NTCA. "As policymakers in Washington consider who to turn to as we continue to tackle the rural broadband challenge, we want to make sure they recognize that community-based telecommunications providers have been the solution for rural America all along," Bloomfield

says. "For decades, rural telcos have offered the most effective answer for rural communications problems by leveraging their own entrepreneurial spirit, their technical know-how, their commitment to community and federal partnerships that were effective in promoting investment. If they can continue to have access to the tools to do so, these community-based providers will remain the most effective answer to solve such problems in a broadband world." 📶



Rural Broadband Solutions-Oriented, Community-Based

For more than 60 years, community-based telecommunications providers have been moving rural America forward with advanced networks that today provide access to high-speed Internet, video and voice services—technologies that make rural markets vibrant places to live, work, raise a family and educate our children.

Finding solutions to remote and rural communities' technology needs is what America's rural broadband providers are all about. It's what inspires us to foster innovations in education, health care, public safety, civic engagement and commerce for the benefit of our nation as a whole.

No one does it better because no one is more committed.



Learn more about our trusted solution providers at www.NTCA.org



Facebook.com/NTCARuralTelecom

@NTCAconnect

YouTube.com/RuralTelecommunity

The first print ad in the NTCA campaign reminds policymakers that solutions to rural challenges — such as making technology available to students in our local classrooms — have long come from rural telecommunications providers.

What our job is really all about

You wouldn't believe the amount of news articles, policy briefs, mail (paper and electronic) and other documents that come my way each week. These items remind me just how complicated the telecommunications business has become.



As the leader of your cooperative, it is an important part of my job to stay on top of technology and industry changes. As I do so, it's easy to start thinking that my job is all about building a network, advocating for fair laws and policies, managing budgets and leading teams. But those are merely tasks. My real job — and, indeed, the real mission of this company — is all about growing communities and changing lives.

There have been a few times in the history of our country that we reached a turning point, a moment where we accomplished something so important as a society that life would never be the same after that. For example, when the rural electrification program lit up the countryside, it helped families automate labor-intensive chores in their homes and on their farms, enabled a healthier standard of living and empowered people to open small businesses that would provide goods and services to their growing communities.

With the interstate highway system, we opened up new parts of the country for development and created a means of moving products made by American workers to markets all over the continent.

And now, here we are in the early part of the 21st century, creating a new kind of system that will have the same level of impact on society as electricity and interstate highways have had for decades. I'm speaking, of course, about today's broadband network.

In our service area, and in regions like ours across the country, providers such as West Carolina Tel are building a network to provide homes and businesses with high-speed data connections — not in the "big city," but in the small towns and rural communities we call home. And like power and highways, broadband is changing lives. Consider these stories, which are playing out all across rural America:

- A fifth-grade boy sits at a home computer taking remedial classes over a broadband connection, helping him stay current with his class and improve his grades.
- A single mother visits a local campus at night to take broadband-enabled distance learning classes, helping her improve her skills in hopes of landing a better job.
- A clinic runs tests on an elderly woman, then sends the results over broadband to a radiologist at a regional healthcare center to determine if she has suffered a stroke.
- A couple opens a business in their town, filling a need in the community while creating jobs — and they use broadband to connect with suppliers and other resources.
- Emergency responders gather in their training room, using broadband to access new information without losing time and money traveling to numerous training events.

This is what my job is really all about. And I'm reminded every day that our mission here at West Carolina Tel is about more than providing today's most important infrastructure. Our mission really is about changing lives. ☎

JEFF WILSON

Chief Executive Officer

West Carolina Tel
YOUR TECHNOLOGY COOPERATIVE

is a member-owned cooperative dedicated to delivering advanced telecommunications technology to the people of Abbeville, Anderson and McCormick counties.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lee W. Logan, President
Due West, Area 4

Stanley H. Keaton, Vice-President
Antreville/Lowndesville, Area 5

Jane U. Stone, Secretary
Donalds, Area 3

Talmadge R. Bussey
South McCormick, Area 9

L. Ned McGill
Starr, Area 1

John Michael Thomas
Iva, Area 2

James T. Hester
Calhoun Falls, Area 6

William "Billy" Bauman
Abbeville, Area 7

Westley "Wes" McAllister
North McCormick, Area 8

West Carolina Tel

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On the Cover:



Dave Gray, park manager at Heritage Gold Mine, examines a portion of a mine tunnel in McCormick. See story Page 12.

Clark makes impact in new internship program

West Carolina Tel has partnered with the local nonprofit Operation Impact to create an internship program starting this summer. The first participant hired is John Clark, a senior at Phillip O. Berry Academy. Clark, who hopes to one day go to North Carolina State to study business, says he's gotten a lot out of seeing the different facets of the cooperative's daily operations. Clark observed, learned and worked many different jobs at West Carolina, including answering phones in customer service, making copies in administration and learning how to splice fiber in the plant. "It's been pretty great working at West Carolina," he says. "Most people my age don't get an opportunity like this. I certainly learned a lot more about the business world here than I would have at a more typical summer job for teenagers."

Operation Impact is a nonprofit group dedicated to solving the problem of underachieving youth in the Abbeville area.



Bowling wins West Carolina scholarship

The West Carolina Tel board of directors and staff are proud to award this year's scholarship to Christopher Bowling, a 2014 Crescent High School graduate. Christopher is attending Tri-County Technical College this year and hopes to then transfer to Clemson in pursuit of an engineering degree.

The West Carolina scholarship is awarded to a high school senior whose parent or guardian is a member of West Carolina

Tel, exhibits a motivational drive toward accomplishing his or her future educational goals and is seen as a positive influence in the community. The Foundation for Rural Service Committee in Washington, D.C., chooses the winner of this scholarship.



At recent board meetings, the West Carolina Tel Board of Directors:

- ✓ Approved the proposed changes to the cooperative's bylaws. A copy can be found at www.wctel.com.
- ✓ Approved a donation of \$15,000 to the Abbeville Campus of Piedmont Technical College.
- ✓ Authorized the retirement and distribution of \$1.8 million in capital credits that will be mailed out to members in September.
- ✓ Held a reception with the USDA and the Upper Savannah Council of Governments where the USDA awarded a \$740,000 loan to the USCOG.
- ✓ Participated in the ribbon cutting and dedication of the West Carolina Pavilion at the Blue Hole in Calhoun Falls.



2014 FRS Youth Tour

For the 20th year, West Carolina Tel sent a local youth to tour the nation's capital as part of the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) Youth Tour.

This year's participant was Crescent High School student Dylan Garren.

The FRS Youth Tour offers rural students an inside look at the telecommunications industry, educates students about the legislative and governmental process and gives students the opportunity to experience Washington, D.C. Each year, a rising senior is chosen from a different school in the West Carolina Tel service area.

MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD

Why rural telecommunications providers stay connected in D.C.



advocates on these and related issues:

- Broadband
- Call Completion
- Health Care
- Intercarrier Compensation
- Safety & Security
- Taxes & Corporate
- Universal Service
- Video & Cable
- VoIP (Voice Over IP)

The decisions made in Washington, D.C., have a direct affect on the affordability — and even the availability — of broadband and other telecommunications services in rural areas. To continue the progress rural telcos have made in bringing advanced technology to their communities, the U.S. Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) must understand the issues and challenges associated with serving America's more sparsely populated regions.

Rural telcos voice the concerns of their customers to policymakers through NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, which represents some 900 independent, community-based telecommunications providers. "It's a far more competitive world, in terms of policy development and advocacy, than it ever was before," says NTCA's Vice President of Advocacy Initiatives Tom Wacker. "If our rural telcos are not out visiting with policymakers and telling their stories, someone else is going to be getting their attention."

Below are some of the NTCA programs that bring providers together to ensure Washington gets the message: our industry is doing a good job keeping rural America connected, and we need federal policies in place to support our continued progress.



LEGISLATIVE & POLICY CONFERENCE

Held each spring, this conference brings hundreds of managers, board members and employees of rural telcos to Washington for three days of guest speakers and meetings with elected officials and regulatory agencies. Telco leaders in each state work with NTCA staff to assemble information on issues important to rural subscribers. This information is used in presentations aimed at keeping officials up to date on the rural telecom mission, as well as the progress telcos are making in keeping rural America connected through advanced technology.



FLY-INS

Throughout the year, NTCA coordinates numerous fly-ins. These events provide an opportunity for telco leaders to talk with members of Congress and regulators about policies that impact their rural service areas. While the fly-ins have a similar mission as the Legislative & Policy Conference, they focus on specific issues and feature much smaller groups, allowing more one-on-one time with officials.



TELECOM EXECUTIVE POLICY SUMMIT

This October conference is designed solely for general managers, chief executive officers and other upper-level management, allowing them to dive deeper into policy issues, exchange ideas and meet with members of Congress and the FCC.



COMMUNICATIONS

The communications division of NTCA shares the story of rural telcos and advocates for their interests through national media releases, ad campaigns, publications and social media projects such as the #ruraliscool campaign.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

ASK

candidates where they stand on issues important to the development of rural America.

EXPRESS

to candidates your belief that laws and regulations should support rural telecommunications companies as they continue to invest in broadband networks.

VOTE

for those candidates who will be a strong voice for rural America.

ELECTION DAY: Tuesday, November 4



HOW ADVOCACY WORKS



OVERVIEW

PROBLEM:

Rural residents and business owners are reporting that some long-distance and wireless callers are not able to get through to their landline telephone, and that some calls that do come through have poor call quality.

CAUSE:

Long-distance and wireless companies often use third-party companies known as “least-cost routers” to route their calls into rural areas. Substandard service from these providers appears to be the root of call completion problems.

CONSEQUENCES:

Rural residents have reported problems such as connecting with friends and family, reaching emergency personnel and receiving calls from their child’s school. Businesses have reported incidents of lost sales opportunities because of failed calls.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION



1 Residents take their concerns about call completion problems to their local telecommunications provider.



2 Providers work with fellow telcos through NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association to discover the extent of the problem and develop a plan to address it.



3 NTCA organizes meetings in Washington where telcos from all over the country come to discuss the issue with their elected officials and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).



4 Legislative and policy experts with NTCA use real-life customer stories to show the FCC and members of Congress the negative impact this problem is having in rural regions.



5 Managers, board members and other leaders at local telcos talk with their members of Congress during district visits and through other means to express the pressing need to address the call completion problem.



6 The FCC issues a declaratory ruling clarifying that “carrier practices that lead to call completion failure and poor call quality may violate the Communications Act’s prohibition on unjust and unreasonable practices...”



7 The FCC adopts new rules to help the agency “monitor providers’ delivery of long-distance calls to rural areas and to aid the prosecution of violations of the Communications Act.”



8 The FCC issues consent decrees that cost three national carriers millions of dollars for practices that may have contributed to rural call completion problems.



9 Members of Congress introduce legislation designed to end rural call completion problems.

ADVOCACY WORKS

Working together through our national organization, NTCA, we joined efforts with rural telecommunications providers across the country to make your voice heard in the halls of Congress and at the FCC. We are getting results, and will continue to make progress toward resolving the call completion problem for rural residents and business owners.

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT A COOPERATIVE?

You often hear us say that West Carolina Tel is a cooperative. But what does it mean? How are we different from any other telecommunications provider?

Simply put, a cooperative is a not-for-profit, democratically controlled, member-owned business. It is built by you, operated for you and controlled by you.

Cooperatives serve an important role in rural America. Providing broadband and phone service to rural areas like ours may not be profitable enough for a company trying to make big profits for its stockholders. But our focus is on serving you, and our mission is to bring the best in telecommunications to the people who live and work in the West Carolina Tel service area.

THE 7 COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

3 MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION



Members contribute to the capital of their cooperative. This capital is used to operate the cooperative, and it benefits the member in proportion to the amount of business they do with the cooperative.

6 COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, regional, national and international organizations.



1 VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP

A cooperative is a voluntary organization, open to all people who are able to use its services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership.



4 AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

No matter what agreements cooperatives may enter with other organizations, its members maintain control and the cooperative remains independent.



7 CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of communities through policies and programs accepted by the members.



2 DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

A cooperative is a democratic organization controlled by its members who are given opportunities to actively participate in setting policies and making decisions.



5 EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION

Cooperatives provide education and training for members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperative.



October is
NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH



LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP: Lee Logan

BY ANDY JOHNS

Having been on the West Carolina Tel board since 1985, it's no secret that Lee Logan works with the phone company.

So it's not unusual for members of his district to stop him at church, the grocery store or anywhere in Due West or Abbeville with questions or comments about the cooperative.

"I encourage that," he says. "Service is our No. 1 product."

Serving as president of the cooperative's board as well as mayor of Due West, Logan knows a lot about leadership. And he knows input from those he's serving is crucial for him to do a good job.

"Communication is a powerful tool," he says. "You're not expected to be an expert in everything; you are expected to represent the members. You're not designing the technology; you're trying to see how you can use that technology for the people."

Member input, whether casual comments at the store or more formal feedback, was a big factor in the board's decision to launch West Carolina Tel's fiber optic network, a project Logan calls "one of the greatest things I've been able to be a part of."

"Not every co-op has chosen to do a fiber buildout," Logan says. "I think we made the right decision at the right time."

COMING ABOARD

Logan retired from Erskine College in 2006 as the vice president for development. He worked 33 years at Erskine, his alma mater, after graduate school at the University of Georgia and a brief tenure at John de la Howe School.

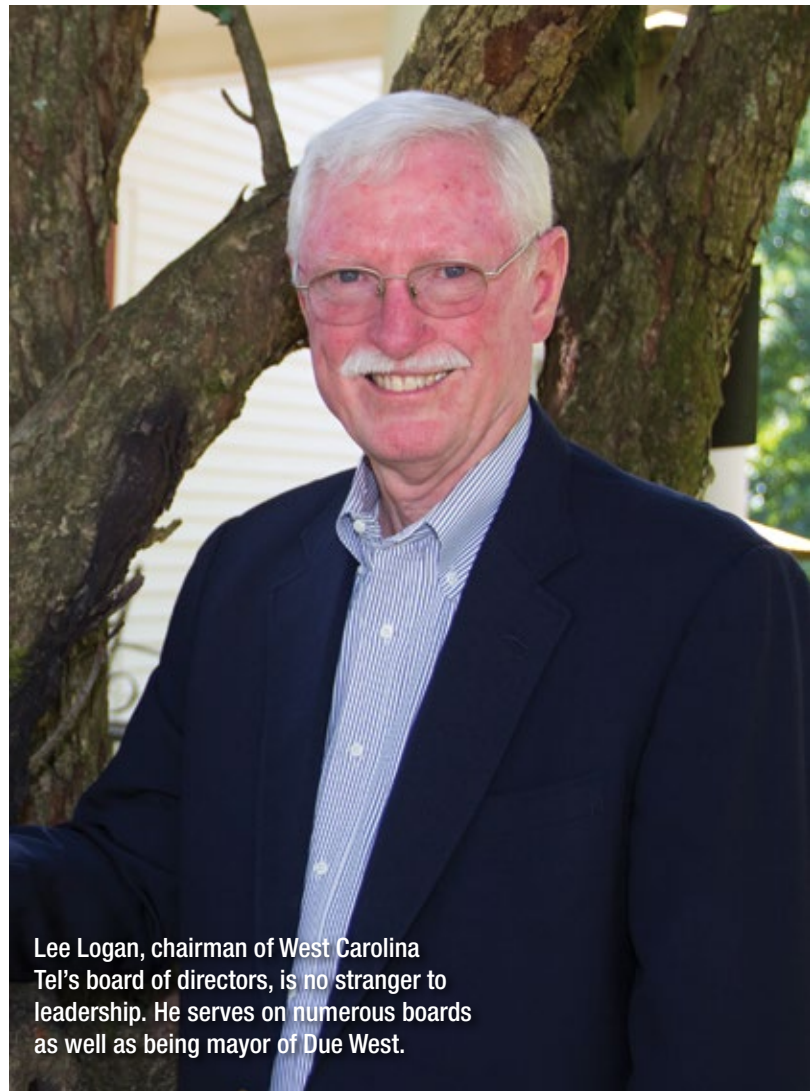
Logan joined the board in 1985, replacing original board member Dr. J.M. Plaxco. What that means is that in the 60-plus year history of West Carolina, Logan's district has had two representatives — an amazing example of continuity and experience.

When Logan joined the board in 1985, he knew very little about the cooperative other than it was a very good phone company. He says he was fortunate to have former board members John McAllister and Owen Mullinax mentoring him.

He praised the managers and employees for their hard work, but said his fellow board members have a lot to do with the way the cooperative has excelled. "It's a great pleasure to come to board meetings where there's great day-to-day management," he says.

INVOLVED IN INNOVATIONS

One of West Carolina's biggest assets, Logan says, is its reputation for superior and reliable service.



Lee Logan, chairman of West Carolina Tel's board of directors, is no stranger to leadership. He serves on numerous boards as well as being mayor of Due West.

"You can't buy that," he says. "It takes you a long time to build it up."

And that reputation is helpful when the cooperative launches a new service, whether it's dial-up Internet, DE Plus, high-speed Internet or more recently security.

With the recent rollout of security service, Logan is proud that West Carolina provides such an array of offerings and feels like it's a major convenience for members.

"You could have half a dozen companies based around the world providing the services, or you could have one company based in Abbeville, McCormick, Starr and Iva," he says.

It's improving those communities and Due West to which Logan and his wife Eleanor have devoted much of their lives.

In addition to West Carolina, Logan serves on the boards for the Dixie High School Foundation, the EC Foundation, and the Freshwater Coast Community Foundation. He's also an elder at Due West ARP Church, a past president of the Abbeville County Rotary Club and a member of the Due West Lions Club.

West Carolina alone, he says, is enough to keep him busy.

"We have a very active board," he says. "I think that's the way it needs to be." 📞



Make a diversion for a **SOUTHERN EXCURSION**

Big South Fork
Scenic Railway in
Stearns, Kentucky.

BY MATT LEDGER

The golden age of American rail travel may have peaked nearly a century ago, but the fascination with the legacy of locomotives is still alive and well.

From the syncopated clickity-clack of steel wheels on rails, to the unmistakable howl of a steam whistle, the sensory overload of 19th century travel rekindles a connection with the past and gives us a window into a mode of transportation that has been romanticized for nearly 200 years.

Thankfully, there are still a wide variety of scenic train rides in operation throughout our country. This list of train excursions might help you find a new destination at an old railway station.

TENNESSEE VALLEY RAILROAD (CHATTANOOGA)

423-894-8028

www.tvrail.com

All aboard for the first stop, a city with a name that is forever married to the railways that crisscross the South, in a foot-stomping big band song about a Tennessee train excursion: the “Chattanooga Choo Choo.”

However, nowadays Glen Miller would need to wander over to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum to catch the next departure, with a choice of leaving from either Chattanooga or Etowah. It was founded in 1961 and is the largest operating historic rail museum in the Southeast. With seven outings planned for September, nothing could be finer than the “Dinner on the Diner” journey, featuring first-class gourmet meal offerings while riding in the ornate 1924 Pullman dining car.

The month begins with the 4th annual “Railfest” celebration on Sept. 6-7 featuring unique exhibits, blacksmith demonstrations and special excursions. Each weekend the Copperhill Special rolls from Etowah through the Hiwassee River Gorge during a daylong 93-mile circuit. The Summerville Steam (the longest trip at 100 miles) and the Missionary Ridge Local explore the colorful fall splendor in October, in addition to the festive Halloween Eerie Express.



Tennessee Valley
Railroad in Chattanooga,
Tennessee.

BIG SOUTH FORK SCENIC RAILWAY (STEARNS, KY.)

1-800-462-5664

<http://bsfsry.com>

The Big South Fork Scenic Railway, in Stearns, Kentucky, has a three-hour hop through the Daniel Boone National Forest during a 14-mile round trip to the Blue Heron Coal Mining Camp. Visitors can also tour the McCreary County Museum. A ghoulish two-hour nighttime journey awaits those who board the Blue Heron Ghost Train on Sept. 6 or the Haunted Hollow Express in mid-October. A half-price fare is available for grandparents on Sept. 7 or for those who served in the military on Nov. 8.

HEART OF DIXIE RAILROAD (CALERA, ALA.)

205-668-3435

www.hodrrm.org

The Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum is located in central Alabama, south of Birmingham. The 10-mile rail line runs from Calera to the historic Shelby Iron Works, which was operational during the Civil War era. Several miles of track were added through the years, allowing for numerous themed trips. Youngsters will enjoy a cornstalk maze and hayride during the Pumpkin Patch Express on weekends in October. Adults have their own opportunity to test drive a train and shovel some coal during the "At The Throttle" trip. A certified engineer and brakeman give directions as you guide the train down the tracks for your personal 30-minute excursion.



The Texas State Railroad
in Rusk, Texas.

THE TEXAS STATE RAILROAD (RUSK)

903-683-2561

www.texasstaterr.com

As the train's durability quickly replaced the sporadic abilities of steamboats, America's railways expanded westward deep in the heart of Texas in 1921. The Texas State Railroad has become quite famous over the years, garnering several appearances in TV series like Chuck Norris' "Walker, Texas Ranger" and 16 films, including "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" and "Rough Riders." The TSR train depot, in Rusk, features campgrounds and numerous outdoor activities for the kids, ranging from a water playground

to horseshoes and shuffleboard. Parents will certainly enjoy the Moonlight Special Dinner Train on Oct. 10 or a Fall Foliage Brunch Train on Nov. 9, as the seasonally themed Maydelle trip includes a savory meal and non-alcoholic beverages.

SOUTH CAROLINA RAILROAD MUSEUM (COLUMBIA)

803-712-4135

www.scrm.org

The city that can lay claim to the nation's first steam passenger train is Charleston (SC), with a six-mile track and a six-horsepower engine, which was opened like a gift, on Christmas Day 1830. However, the South Carolina Railroad Museum is located near Columbia in Winnsboro and features the Blue Granite Express, which typically operates on Saturdays. Passengers can opt for first-class, coach, open air or caboose seating during chartered, seasonal or special events.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS RAILROAD (BRYSON CITY, NC)

1-800-872-4681

www.gsmr.com

Combining gorgeous mountain vistas and numerous child-oriented train trips, the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad might be the best whistle stop for the family. Tikes can join the PEANUTS gang while riding The Great Pumpkin Patch Express on weekends in October. An uncommon nighttime run on The Masquerade Train offers spooky scenery and a full buffet for those 21 and older on Oct. 31. The Tuckasegee Excursion will be free for current and prior military members from Nov. 7-9 in honor of Veterans Day.

KENTUCKY RAILWAY MUSEUM (NEW HAVEN)

1-800-272-0152

www.kyrail.org

Remain alert for clues while riding the Mystery Theatre train on Oct. 25 at the Kentucky Railway Museum. For those seeking 90-minute movie-like suspense, passengers can ride the rails for a good cause during the Train Robbery trip. Horse-mounted hooligans will hold up the train, with the loot benefiting the Crusade for Children charity for kids with special needs. On Oct. 11, the number of engines will vastly increase as the railway hosts their 3rd annual Vintage Car Show.

NORTH ALABAMA RAILROAD MUSEUM (HUNTSVILLE)

256-851-6276

www.northalabamarailroadmuseum.com

As summer begins to fade into fall, train enthusiasts can snap photos from an open-air baggage car during a short excursion from the North Alabama Railroad Museum in Huntsville. Others may choose to relax in the renovated dining car during the Sept. 20 trip on the "North Alabamian." Other trips include the Punkin' Pickin' Extravaganza on Oct. 11, Fall Color Specials on Oct 25 and Nov. 1, and Santa Trains on Dec. 6, 7 and 13. ☎

'Filthy rich very quickly'

Local gold strike remembered in festival

BY ANDY JOHNS

Billy Dorn had spent half of his life searching for gold. But after 25 years of panning and prospecting in Edgefield and Abbeville counties, the farmer had very little to show for his pursuits.

In 1850, fueled by news of the California Gold Rush, Dorn became convinced of a sizable deposit on his neighbor's property in what is now McCormick. He had optimistically worked out an agreement with his neighbor, Dr. John Wardlaw Hearst, to let him look for gold and give him an option to purchase the land if he found anything. It was a similar agreement to what he used on countless sites before.

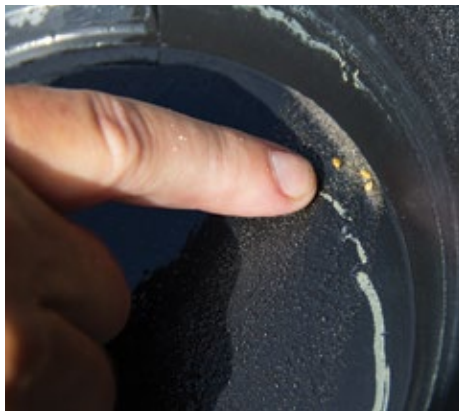
But this agreement was different because of what he found one day in February 1852.

Dorn found the deposit, exercised the purchase option and started mining a vein that would turn out to be the second most productive in South Carolina.

"He got filthy rich very quickly," says Dave Gray, park manager at Heritage Gold Mine.



Dave Gray, park manager at Heritage Gold Mine, demonstrates the panning process at the park.



Panning removes soil, sand and lighter weight rocks and minerals, leaving gold behind. The method is still used today by amateur prospectors and by guests at the Heritage Gold Mine trough. Gray stocks the trough with tiny flecks of gold for visitors to find.

(Right) Gray at the mouth of one of the mine's tunnels. He believes 4.5 miles of tunnels weave around below McCormick.



MINERAL MEMORIES

The type of gold found in the area is known as “pocket gold,” where rich deposits are concentrated in small areas. The pockets are caused by molten rock from deep inside the earth forcing its way up through fissures in the bedrock. The rock usually hardens back as quartz, but also brings gold with it.

The deposits in McCormick — part of a gold belt that runs through Virginia to Charlotte; Dahlonega, Georgia; and McCormick — sat in the ground for an untold number of years before Dorn found the vein.

But when it was discovered, it set off a flurry of activity that led to the creation of McCormick. The mine and its impact are still celebrated today, with Gold Rush Days coming up Sept. 20-21. Normally, the Heritage Gold Mine Park is open for visitors on the first and third Saturdays and the following Sundays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Gray says the park is an important part of the area's history and he enjoys telling the story. The site opened as a city-owned park in 2005.

“It's incredible the number of people in town who don't know about it,” Gray says.

Gray says some of his more memorable tours have included some of Dorn's descendants. “They're impressed with the history,” he says. “They're hearing things

they've never heard before.”

Dorn's story may seem like fantasy today, but Gray says it wasn't the only one of its kind. All of the gold deposits in the gold belt, in addition to strikes in California and Alaska, had to be discovered by someone. And usually that someone — like Dorn — found themselves suddenly very rich. “It wasn't as far-fetched as people might think,” Gray explains.

Gray is one of several gold panners in the area and a member of the Augusta Chapter of the Gold Prospectors Association of America. He first visited the Dorn site with a friend a few years into his prospecting career in the 1980s. While he does occasionally find a few flecks of gold, he's not expecting to find anything like Dorn's vein. He's more interested in the experience.

“We have fun,” he says.

PRESERVING THE MINE

For a 160-year-old mine, the terrain, pits and tunnels are in remarkably good shape.

In its heyday, the Dorn Mine was the second busiest in the Palmetto State, behind only the Hale Gold Mine near Columbia. The advantage for Gray and history buffs who study the mine is that it is in relatively good shape.

The Hale Mine was destroyed by Union General William Sherman's troops, while Dorn was mined until the gold was gone and then abandoned.

“They walked away and the brush grew up around it and people forgot about it,” Gray says.

The Dorn Gold Mine's heyday was from 1852 to 1859. Dorn used slave labor to mine his gold before the Civil War. After emancipation and the economic depression after the fall of the Confederacy, he struggled to keep the mine going. Eventually, he sold to a grain reaper named Cyrus McCormick.

The mine's legacy continues even outside the park.

To this day, Gray estimates there are more than 4.5 miles of tunnels beneath McCormick.

“Just about every house in McCormick has some kind of mining feature under it,” he says. ☎

Gold Rush Days

Sept. 20-21

Heritage Gold Mine Park
in McCormick

BANANA QUEEN

There's something nostalgic about banana pudding, says Stephanie Lutz. "It always makes you feel like a kid again when you eat it. And really, what's not to like about banana pudding? Vanilla pudding, vanilla wafers and soft, sweet bananas. It makes me smile just thinking about it."

And she kept smiling when she was crowned the 2012 cook-off winner at the National Banana Pudding Festival, which is held annually in Centerville, Tennessee. Her prize in addition to bragging rights? A check for \$2,000 and a beautiful gold-and-white sash. "The kind the beauty queens wear," Lutz says with a laugh. "I think my friends were more excited about the sash than the money."

Lutz heard about the cook-off by chance after picking up a flyer about it at the Tennessee Welcome Center on her move from Kentucky to her new home in Spring Hill, Tennessee, in 2011.

Lutz says she "looked to my husband and said, 'We have to go!'"

So the couple attended that year, and Lutz decided she would try her luck the following year by entering the banana pudding cook-off.

"I've been cooking for as long as I can remember," she says. "I guess it started with my parents. Some of my favorite childhood memories are of my dad teaching me to flip a pancake and my mother baking brownies from scratch."

But she created her winning recipe on her own, along with a good bit of encouragement from friends and family, plus a lot of research.

"Because it's a custard-based pudding, I wanted to make sure it stayed creamy, but had a light flavor," she says. "I probably worked on it for six weeks and must have made 20 batches before getting it right."

Stephanie Lutz can cook an appealing dessert, according to judges at the National Banana Pudding Festival and Cook-Off. They chose her dish as the winner in 2012.



IF YOU GO ... BANANAS

If a dessert could lay claim as the crowning finish to a Southern meal, banana pudding would be sitting on the throne. And in Centerville, Tennessee, banana pudding is put on a pedestal every fall during the National Banana Pudding Festival and Cook-Off.

This year's festival will be held Saturday and Sunday, October 4-5, with the cook-off set for Saturday. In addition to the cook-off, there will be two stages of free entertainment, from music and storytellers to puppets and dancers. In the craft area there will be demonstrations of blacksmithing, wood turning and pottery. Craft vendors will sell pottery, jewelry, forged iron, woodworking and art; and food vendors will offer everything from rib-eye steak sandwiches to bottomless root beer mugs with free refills.

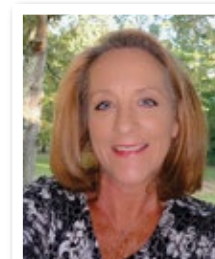
- **HOURS:** 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (October 4); 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. (October 5)
- **ADMISSION:** \$5 per day. Free parking.
- **LOCATION:** Centerville River Park, Centerville, Tenn.
- **ONLINE:** bananapuddingfest.org

No one complained. "I shared the batches with friends and family, and they were always happily received," she says.

There is a five-year waiting period between wins, so Lutz can't enter again until 2017. But her win has given her the confidence to try her culinary skills in other cooking contests when she has the time, she says. She recently graduated with a bachelor of business administration degree in marketing from Middle Tennessee State University.

This year's National Banana Pudding Festival will feature 10 finalists on-stage cooking their puddings, all a little

different from each other, but all equally delicious. More puddings can be found along the Puddin' Path where, for a \$5 donation, festivalgoers can sample banana pudding from 10 different nonprofit organizations and vote on their favorite. ☎



Food Editor Anne P. Braly is a native of Chattanooga, Tenn. Prior to pursuing a freelance career, she spent 21 years as food editor and feature writer at a regional newspaper.

TRY THESE AWARD-WINNING PUDDINGS



FOSTER'S BANANA PUDDING

- 1 box vanilla wafers (set aside 7 wafers for garnish)

BANANAS FOSTER:

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon banana extract or 1/4 cup banana liquor
- 1/2 cup dark rum, such as Appleton Jamaican rum
- 4 bananas, peeled, halved lengthwise and sliced 1/2-inch thick

VANILLA PUDDING:

- 1/4 cup cornstarch
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3 cups whole milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 4 egg yolks
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter

WHIPPED CREAM:

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup sugar

For Bananas Foster: In a heavy sauté pan over medium heat, melt the unsalted butter and add the brown sugar. Using a wire whisk, blend the butter and brown sugar. Once the mixture is well blended and begins to simmer, whisk in the cinna-

mon, vanilla extract, banana extract and rum. Bring the mixture back to a simmer and add the sliced bananas. Stir the mixture with a rubber spatula; simmer until bananas are soft, 6-7 minutes; remove pan from heat and set aside.

Vanilla Pudding: In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine cornstarch, sugar and salt; mix together with a wire whisk. In a separate bowl, combine milk and heavy cream. Slowly pour 3/4 of the milk mixture into the saucepan with cornstarch mixture, whisking thoroughly so the mixture is smooth. Place the saucepan on medium heat, stirring the pudding mixture constantly until mixture begins to thicken and comes to a soft boil. Continue to boil 1 minute; remove from heat. To the bowl of remaining milk and cream, add egg yolks, whisking until combined. Slowly stream in about 1/3 of hot pudding mixture into bowl of egg yolk mixture, whisking constantly until combined. Pour egg yolk and pudding mixture back into saucepan and return it to medium heat. Continue to whisk mixture and heat until it is thick and begins to bubble. Remove from heat. Add unsalted butter and vanilla extract; stir until combined.

Whipped cream: In a mixing bowl, add cream, sugar and vanilla. Using a hand-held mixer or stand mixer with whisk attachment, whisk mixture at medium-high speed until peaks form.

Assembly: In a 2-quart dish, layer half of the remaining vanilla wafers along the bottom so that they overlap one another. Using a serving spoon, spoon 1/2 of hot pudding mixture over wafers and Bananas Foster. Layer remaining wafers in the same manner as before; repeat Bananas Foster and vanilla pudding layer, reserving 2 tablespoons of Bananas Foster for garnish. Cover and place dish in refrigerator to cool, approximately 2 hours. Once pudding has cooled, pour off any accumulated condensation and spread whipped cream over pudding.

Top with 3 vanilla wafers in the center of the dish, add remaining Bananas Foster over wafers. Crush the remaining vanilla wafers and sprinkle over the dish.

—Stephanie Lutz, 2012 winner

BANANA BRICKLE PUDDING BRULEE

- 3 cups half-and-half
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup cornstarch
- 8 egg yolks, beaten
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup butter, softened
- Vanilla wafers
- 6 bananas

TOPPING:

- Vanilla wafers
- 1 pint heavy cream, whipped and sweetened with a little sugar

TO MAKE COOKIES:

- Vanilla wafers
- 1 cup butter
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

In 3-quart saucepan over low heat, heat half-and-half, sugar, salt and cornstarch, whisking constantly until it begins to thicken. Temper beaten eggs by whisking in separate bowl with some of the hot mixture. Add tempered egg mixture back into saucepan and continue cooking until thick. Remove from heat, add vanilla and softened butter. Let cool to room temperature. In large dish, layer vanilla wafers, sliced bananas and pudding. Repeat layers. Top with whipped cream and vanilla brickle cookies.

Prepare cookies: Place one vanilla wafer in each cup of a mini-muffin pan. In a saucepan, bring butter, brown sugar and pecans to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 3 minutes. Spoon over cookies and bake at 375° F for 10 minutes. Cool.

—Roger Tisdale, 2013 winner 📞

BACK TO SCHOOL

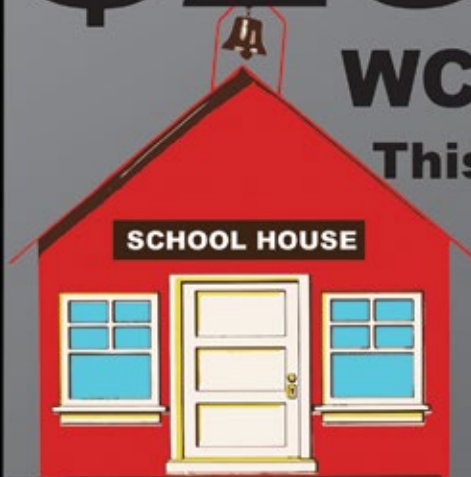
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