



Big Ivy . . .

. . . a Little Place with a Big Past

By Ken Richards

The
Preservation
Society &
of Asheville
Buncombe County

1



Mail



Menus



Save



Print



.COM





Big Ivy . . .

A Cabin and Determined Folk Birthed the Big Ivy Historical Society, Inc.

Big Ivy is located in the northern most corner of Buncombe County. It can be reached by taking 19-23 north to the Barnardsville exit. Drive to Barnardsville, and turn right on Dillingham Road. Within a mile or so, you will arrive at the Big Ivy Community Center and site of the Henry Stevens Carson Cabin. Further down the road is Dillingham, NC.

It was in October of 1980 that Betty Dillingham Lollar gathered a group around her to commit to preserving the heritage of the Big Ivy Community. This community is composed of the area following the Buncombe County School District map for the Barnardsville School. The community is centered in Dillingham, North Carolina.

The following were members of the organizing board who are now deceased: Betty Dillingham Lollar, president; Velna Dillingham, historian; Dexter Dillingham, membership chair.





Big Ivy . . .

Other persons came on board as the project gained momentum: Margaret Dillingham, Rupert Dillingham, Carolyn and Luther Anderson, and Margaret Haile, author of the prestigious genealogy, “The Dillinghams of Big Ivy.” All made their mark and left their heritage stamp on the community.

It was in 1980 that Betty Lollar became increasingly captivated by a childhood memory of going to Aunt Sallie’s for the night. As Betty told it, “We would sit by the great fire in Aunt Sallie’s kitchen room with snow on the ground and the wind roaring like a locomotive rushing through the pines. Aunt Sallie told how she sat in this cabin as a little girl listening to the lore of the mountain folks as told by her mother — and her mother told the lore as told by her mother.”

Betty remembered those charming days of spring up at Aunt Sallie’s and in Dillingham, North Carolina in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Aunt Sallie remembered her childhood in the 1880s. Her mother, Rebecca Isabel Riddle Dillingham, recalled her childhood from the 1850s.





Big Ivy . . .

The family roots of the people in this valley reach back to the 18th century when Absalom and Rebecca (Foster) Dillingham setup housekeeping in the wilderness that now bears their name of Dillingham, North Carolina. (The Visitors Center at Craggy Gardens has a directional describing the flora that rises from the village of Dillingham at around 2,000 feet to over 5,000 at Craggy.)

This history was shared around the fireplace built by Henry Stevens Carson, grandson of Absalom and Rebecca. It was this very cabin that Henry Stevens Carson built prior to entering service with the Confederacy during the War Between the States. On March 20, 1862, he and his brother, Hiram, bought Lot Number 4 for \$640.00.

The Big Ivy Historical Society organized and raised funds to purchase the cabin, and in concert with the North Carolina Department of Archives, inventoried the cabin and site. The cabin was then moved across Dillingham Road and relocated onto Buncombe County property which also hosts the Big Ivy/Barnardsville Community Center.





Big Ivy . . .

The original use of the current site was as one of the Civilian Conservation Corp's compounds. It was part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "New Deal," which put America back to work. The work of the CCC was to restore the forests of America as well as to build the Blue Ridge Parkway and the roads into the Great Smoky Mountain National Park.

Margaret Haile wrote this about the Henry Stevens Carson Cabin and the Big Ivy Historical Society, Inc. :“(Aunt) Sallie Carson died there, May 20, 1960. After Sallie Carson's death, a number of people lived in the cabin as tenants.

Then the house was empty and abandoned to time and the elements. In a few years this land mark pre-Civil War cabin would have been lost forever if the Big Ivy Historical Society had not launched its preservation project. The Henry Carson Cabin, through their efforts, will continue to be part of Big Ivy heritage while serving the community as the repository and museum for area antiqui-





Big Ivy . . .

ties.” 1984.

It was a glorious day on September 2, 1984 when folks gathered on the front lawn of the Henry Stevens Carson Cabin. Logs, planks, and rocks had been painstakingly inventoried and faithfully rebuilt in its present location. The Color Guard of the ROTC of North Buncombe High School presented the colors. Betty Lollar was joined on the steps by Dillingham cousin, Wylma Dykeman, who delivered the keynote address.

The ribbon cutting was done by NC State Representative, Gordon Greenwood and State Senator, Robert Swain. The District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church from North Wilkesboro, N.C. led the blessing on the cabin, and the doors were opened.

Other structures on the site are the original detached kitchen, the spring house and a replica of the 1890s one room school house. The repository for the archives of BIHS is Mars Hill College.





Big Ivy . . .

Since those early days of organization in 1980, the site has been visited by school children, community members, family members from around the world, tourist groups, and international travelers from the former Soviet Union, current day Russia, Saumur, France, China, Japan, and Korea.

“Christmas in the Mountains” has served as both a fund raiser and a means of sharing this site with the community. Wild game dinners have been organized by the society. “Artisans of the Community” have been featured in week end events. Ramp festivals have been held, and more recently, the Asheville Lyric Opera has performed aria concerts for the society at the Dillingham Presbyterian Church. The church was designed by Anthony Lord and built by the people of the community.

The road to preservation has not been easy. As each milestone was forecast, the society raised the funds to reach it. As founding members reached their point of no earthly return, there was often a lack of many to pick up the banner and move forward. For several years,





Big Ivy . . .

a handful of folks persevered.

But now there is a great revival ensuing in the Big Ivy Community. Denny Dillingham has returned home to the mountains from his many years pursuing business ventures elsewhere. He is current president of BIHS. George Stuart and his wife Melinda have relocated from Washington, D.C. to the Big Ivy Community. His work was with National Geographic where he still serves as consultant. His wife was a curator with the Smithsonian. They serve as co-vice presidents.

From the three who held BIHS together for many years, Judy Dillingham continues to serve on the board, Betty Sue Hensley continues as secretary treasure rand Ken Richards continues to serve as Executive Director.

And most recently a substantial endowment was received from the family of Elizabeth(Greenwood) Parham who was born and raised in





Big Ivy . . .

the Big Ivy Community. Thus, the Big Ivy Historical Society is moving forward with a renaissance of vim and vigor to preserve, and share, the past.

More succinctly, Big Ivy Historical Society Mission Statement: To preserve sites and properties of historic or architectural importance within the Big Ivy Community, and to promote knowledge of and appreciation for the history of the area and its people.

Ken Richards is a contributor to Pebbledash, the newsletter of the Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County, Inc. Kenneth L. Richards and Constance E. Richards are co-authors of Insiders' Guide: North Carolina's Mountains Including Asheville, Biltmore Estate and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Sixth Edition. Globe Pequot Press. Excerpted from, "A Family Named Dillingham," published in 1984 by Mountain Press.





Big Ivy . . .

. . . a Little Place with a Big Past

For membership information in The Preservation Society,
visit us at 13 Biltmore Ave., Asheville, NC 8801
write us at presociety@bellsouth.net
or P. O. Box 2806, Asheville, NC 28802,
call us at 828-254-2343, or
visit our website at www.psabc.org, to obtain a
printed membership form .

The
Preservation
Society &
of Asheville
Buncombe County

