

The Stonethrow Messenger

• The Quarterly Newsletter of Friends of Gillsville •

Volume 7

Spring 2008

Mission Statement of Friends of Gillsville:

To foster community spirit, aid the city in preserving historical heritage and help improve the community facilities and resources available to all citizens.

Hello, Neighbors...

This issue is dedicated to Darwin Frankum. His parents, Reo Frankum and Margaret House Frankum and family before them, lived and worked in Gillsville for generations. On January 17, 2008, Darwin died leaving cherished memories with his family and with those of us who volunteered beside him for the growth of our community in Friends of Gillsville. He was always willing to participate, even in those times his health was failing. Darwin will be greatly missed.

from, Jane

'THE OLD WOODEN BUILDING'

By Ron Whiting

Since this edition of the Stonethrow Messenger is dedicated to the memory of Darwin Frankum, I thought it would be appropriate to do my article on the Old Wooden Store building downtown. This building is known by almost everyone in the Gillsville as the Reo Frankum store. Reo was Darwin's dad (for those who didn't know) and he ran the store for quite a few years.

I can remember buying many things there in the early 70's, when I first came to Gillsville. I especially remember buying gas at Reo's. The pumps were located right on the side of the highway and the ringer for his bell was actually on the edge of the highway. You just pulled over slightly and he came out to pump your gas. It would be impossible to do that today with the traffic as it is now.

I remember Darwin telling many special stories about the store as it was being worked on and cleaned up a few years ago, I'm sure it held many special memories that he shared with his kids and grandkids.

The building itself has been estimated to have been constructed around 1870 to 1890. It is a rare and valuable example of a highly detailed wooden general store building that is scarcely found in Georgia anymore.

It has, as best we can determine, always been used for retail sales and most often a general store.

In the nomination for the National register in 1985 it was referred to as the Miller Store. It has also been documented that it was also known as the Meaders Store, Frankum Store, and last Sims Pottery (retail outlet).

Since the early 1980's the building has been un-occupied. A previous owner from whom the City purchased the buildings about 1996 used it for storage.



The inside of the store building is very unique. Upon entering, everyone who has never been inside the building before is blown away by the beauty and detailed woodworking that was used in constructing such a fine building from the late 1800's. The picture below shows some of the detail woodworking but does not do it justice; it is best viewed in person.

The florescent lighting has been removed and a more period type of lighting is currently in place from the 50's, the stored items have been removed as well.

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Friends of Gillsville

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OLD WOOD BUILDING Continued...

All that remains for this fine example of the "Old General Store" to be functional once again in the town of Gillsville is some restoration work and infrastructure items to be completed by the City. The City is currently working on completing these items. We all hope to have this wonderful building once again as a useful and functional part of our downtown area .



BEING NEIGHBORLY:

A Column Appearing in Each Issue About The Special People Who Are Our Neighbors

By Jane Jones

BENNY RAY HOLCOMB (BR)

I sit looking at the first edition of the annual yearbook from Gillsville High School. The 1950 "Arrow" shows the shining, young faces of the twelve graduates that year. One of them is Benny Ray Holcomb, known by his school buddies as "Pit." I borrowed his copy of the yearbook when I visited with Benny Ray in his home, only three doors from the white frame house where he was born and raised. Gillsville history is grounded in folk pottery and I learned from our visit that Benny Ray's family was one of the families that started it all!

While I was visiting, Benny Ray showed me Chapter 15 of "Brothers In Clay," a book well known by many in Gillsville. He talked with pride about the generations of his family who were (and are) potters. Although Holcombs were "jug manufacturers" in the 1800's, of note was Benny Ray's grandfather, William Cicero (Bunk) Holcomb, who established a shop in Gillsville in 1900 and was known as a "pottery turner." Bunk's son (and Benny Ray's father), Samuel Rayburn (Ray) Holcomb, took over the shop in 1925 and ran it for twenty years. When Benny Ray graduated from high school he worked a year with his father before his father's death in 1951. According to Benny Ray, his brother, L.G. Holcomb from Doraville, turned some pottery at the 2007 "Turning and Burning Festival," the first L.G. had made in 60 years! Since retiring in 1982, Benny Ray has worked at firing the kiln at Hewell's Pottery from time to time. Since having open heart surgery four years ago, Benny Ray spends his time enjoying his family, his church and community.

I asked him to talk about his immediate family and tell me some of his memories. Benny Ray and Barbara Moore of Maysville, were married just before Christmas in 1957. He said they read The Stonethrow Messenger "kiver to kiver." Benny Ray was born in Gillsville in 1933 and had two sisters and a brother. They were, as Benny Ray said, "raised around clay." I asked him if it was hard to get by during the Depression and he said his father would get only six cents for a gallon jug and thirty cents for a five gallon churn. His mother, May West Holcomb, and Pauline Thompson, my husband's aunt, made sure there were hot lunches at school for many years.

Benny Ray said his family was really close. In fact, his family raised Benny Ray's cousins after their mother's death. One of his favorite memories was walking to downtown Gillsville with three cents for a soda. As he grew, Benny Ray said there was lots of physical labor in general, but especially in pottery making. The pottery turned out churns, jugs and jars of all sizes. Benny Ray remembers making ten, twelve and fifteen gallon jars. Electricity came in 1936. Before electricity, it was necessary for his father and his workers to use a kick wheel (manual) to keep the clay turning as well as feed the kiln with lots of cordwood. It took ten hours to pre-heat the kiln in order to fire pots at 2300-2500 degrees. The brick kiln and jug shop was on the property in back of the house. The blackish-brown glaze for

the pottery was shipped in barrels and was called "Albany slip" because it was manufactured in Albany N.Y. The unglazed clay was almost white. I asked about the orange color of clay Jack-'O-Lanterns and Benny Ray said they are unglazed red clay. I asked him about "face" jugs and he said it was 1997 when he learned to make one from Chester Hewell (the Hewells are the one of the founding families of Gillsville folk pottery).

As we wrapped up our conversation I asked "BR" to share a few more of his memories of school in Gillsville since most of our readers would either remember the people involved or they have heard such memories from friends and family. Benny Ray said his favorite school subject was math, particularly algebra taught by Lois Bell Harper (Miss Lois). He was sure to remind me that another of my husband's aunts, Clara Casey, taught seventh grade. He pointed out the photo in the Arrow of Jeanette House, Miss 1950 and talked about how special it was for Governor Herman Talmadge to speak at graduation. Although Benny Ray was too modest to show me the graduation "Prophecy" page of the Arrow, I noticed when I browsed the yearbook later that Benny Ray Holcomb was the 1950 class prophet. The class of '50 had gotten together after ten years and, according to Benny Ray, "had a wonderful time...recalling many happy memories ofdear high school days." I hope all who have read this have enjoyed knowing more about one of our neighbors and his part in Gillsville's past.

TEE OFF FOR GOLF

by Gordon Jones

There's still time to sign up for Friends of Gillsville annual golf tournament. Tee time is 9am Saturday, April 26 at Hammer's Glen Golf Club in Homer. We still have space for 4 person teams who want a day of fun and good golf, all for a good cause. Entry fees are \$100 per person which includes green fees, 1/2 cart, practice range, awards and lunch.

The tournament, now in its 3rd year, is the only fund raiser held each year by Friends of Gillsville. Proceeds are used to fund 2 \$500 scholarships at local high schools.

Prizes will be awarded for 1st and 2nd place teams, longest drive and closest to the pin. Additional door prizes (a dozen golf balls, restaurant gift certificates, etc.) will also be awarded. For entry information, call Gordon Jones at 770-869-3679 or send your team information to Friends of Gillsville, Box 231, Gillsville, GA 30543

WHERE IN GILLSVILLE?



The first person to identify this locale and call Jane Jones at 770-869-3679 will win a plush, hunter green Gillsville, GA golf (or, work) hand towel with metal grommet. Members of Friends of Gillsville not eligible. So, where is this ???

Gillsville Historical Society Meeting to be Held April 20, 2008 by Paula Whiting

The GHS is ready for another busy year and we need you! If you enjoy writing and collecting information, please come and join us. Also, if you have artifacts of Gillsville history and its' people, bring what you have to be part of a collection to include memorabilia that pertains to our town. We are striving to have a great collection of the unique history of Gillsville.

Examples of memorabilia would be old letters, valentines, papers of interest, military information including photos, books, newspaper articles and family histories, just to mention a few. Your family bible would be a good start. Information is being compiled in notebooks for safekeeping in our library. We would love having your family history and old photos to copy and return to you. Every family is important! Help us make a great informational library. We hope to display items and information for public viewing in the future. However, we need to continue to collect and preserve our history NOW.

PLEASE NOTE: We are trying to locate our old school bell and an old school student desk. If you have a guess or information as to the whereabouts of the bell or a desk, please call Paula Garrison Whiting (770-869-3827) or Mary Alice Segars (770-869-3921).

TWO IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR:

Historical Society Meeting on April 20, 2008 at 2 PM at the Town Hall/Library. Please come! If you are unable to attend, let Paula or Mary Alice know what you have to contribute.

Open House at the Jarrett House located on Jarrett Lane off the Diamond Hill Road on Sunday, May 18 from 2 until 4 PM.

Show your pride in our history by being a part of the effort of build the Gillsville display. All, including our children, can see our past, learn and share!



**Jeannie's
Cafe and Deli**
6274 Hwy. 52

Cafe open 5:30 AM to 2:00 PM
Deli open 2:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Deli offers hot dogs, sandwiches, soups and salads only.

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*Church Events for
April/May/June/July*

Midway Methodist Church:
Vacation Bible School June 2-6, 2008
Stephens Sisters April 20 at 6:30 PM
The Master's Touch June 22 at 6 PM

Gillsville Baptist Church:
Sports Camp June 2-6 Mornings
Vacation Bible School July 6-11 Evenings

Pine Grove Baptist
Please call church for schedule.



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If you are in the Gillsville area and would like to take advantage of the homes covered by our newsletter, please call Jane Jones at 770-869-3679. (Please note that the placement of an ad in the newsletter is not an endorsement of a product or service by The Friends of Gillsville.)

SPRING MEETINGS

The Friends of Gillsville meets the first Thursday of each month at 7 PM at the Gillsville Community Center. Our spring meetings will be May 1 and June 5.

The Gillsville City Council meetings are at 7 PM on the first Tuesday of each month at the Gillsville Community Center. The spring schedule of meetings are May 6 and June 3.

STONETHROW MESSENGER STAFF

Editor and Committee Chair: *Jane Jones*

Committee Members: *Jackie Frankum
Assumpta Norrell
Mary Alice Segars
Paula Whiting*

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Friends of Gillsville

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