



ROXANNE DIETRICK PHOTOS



## Weekend in Williamsburg

by Rosemary Dietrick, Contributing Writer

Where can a bagpiper go to practice a tune without disturbing the neighbors?

A local piper approached Dr. William Lee, owner of War Hill Inn, who agreed to help. And so, one day, way down in the farthest corner of the inn's pasture, the unmistakable sound of bagpipes filled the air. Slowly, an enthralled herd of Aberdeen-Angus cows drifted en masse toward the music, encircling the piper. Lee recalls, "It was a sight to behold."

Innkeepers Bill and Shirley Lee and son, Will, can't promise the presence of a piper, but their working farm does offer B&B guests a bucolic hideaway, only a few miles from Colonial Williamsburg and the bustling outlet malls along Richmond Road. A country lane winds up past a field, a mini-vineyard, and a small orchard. On the crest of the hill, overlooking a sweeping expanse of pasture, War Hill Inn, elegant in Colonial style of rose brick and scalloped tile roof, is not your typical farmhouse, but rather a re-creation from the 18th century.

"The house is a composite," says Bill.

**Innkeepers Shirley, Will, and Bill Lee enjoy a rare free moment.**

*Cooperative Living/March-April 2002*







**Guests enjoy tea in the living room (above) with garden and pasture views. The staircase in the foyer (left) was found in Manheim, Pennsylvania.**

“Before we built it, we’d wander up and down the Duke of Gloucester Street in Williamsburg with a notebook, fancying a particular dormer or door; basically, it’s modeled on the James Anderson House near the Capitol.” An architect from Colonial Williamsburg supervised the construction, using salvaged materials like wide, heart-pine floors from an old school in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and bricks taken from Main Street in Norfolk.

War Hill provides a preview of the architectural style that awaits tourists who’ve come to explore the Colonial capital. The inn’s complex includes Washington and Jefferson Cottages, copies of the Bracken Kitchen and the Powell-Waller Office, both within Williamsburg’s historic district.

Yet before there were buildings, there were cows and horses. When Bill bought the land in 1961, his brother presented him with his first cow, a Holstein named Hilda, saying, “You can’t live out in the country on a farm without a cow.” Hilda was in residence for 20 years. In 1988, Bill retired from his large- and small-animal veterinary practice, but contin-

ued to raise prize-winning breeding stock.

For a family of five from Venezuela, the birth of a calf was the highlight of their stay. “Even if it happens in the middle of the night,” they said, “wake us up.” So Bill knocked on their door at 2 a.m. They were delighted.

Watching the calves toddle along with their mothers from pasture to barn is bonus entertainment at War Hill. And then there’s the fun of an over-the-fence encounter with the friendliest cow of them all. “Oh, you mean ‘Number 84,’” says Bill, “that’s ‘Virginia.’”

Accessories echo pastoral charm within the inn where Shirley Lee blends the classical ambience of the 18th century with her love of

folk art and country themes. The foyer, with its wallpapers and woodwork painted an authentic Colonial Williamsburg gold, showcases a colorful turkey print, a stately grandfather clock and, from the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, a farmscape by Quaker minister Edward Hicks. The handsome staircase, with railing and newel post of hand-turned black walnut, was discovered in Manheim, Pennsylvania.

In the formal living room, where tea is served, blue woodwork of sets white walls and highlights the fireplace with its surround and mantel of pine, the wood cut from trees on the farm. Window-framed are sweeping views of rolling pasture and the back garden.

On the first floor, the spacious Tyler

**The inn overlooks a sweeping expanse of pasture, dotted with Black Angus cows.**

*March-April 2002/www.co-opliving.com*







Guest quarters include Washington Cottage (above), Jefferson Cottage (left) and the Tyler Room (below).

Room offers a four-poster bed and a spool bed with matching matelassé bedspreads. A primitive painting of Noah's Ark shares wall space with Americana art featuring a country church, a town meeting, and the ritual of bringing in the cows.

Upstairs, guests lodged in the Monroe and Madison Rooms or the Wilson Suite pause in the hallway to admire prints by Shenandoah Valley artist, P. Buckley Moss. As you check out the titles in the bookcase, don't miss the imposing ceramic Brahman bull ensconced on the lowest shelf, a gift to the veterinarian from a patient's owner.

The Monroe Room has a queen-size bed and the Madison Room, a double bed. The Wilson Suite comprises two rooms, one with a queen-size bed; the second room boasts a double and a single bed. In these rooms, the color scheme is a standout in Raleigh Tavern Chinese red.

At breakfast, Will imparts some historical facts concerning War Hill that indicate during the Revolutionary



War the area was the site of a skirmish between the troops of the Marquis de Lafayette and General Cornwallis. On a dining room wall, war in another era is reflected in a print of General Robert E. Lee and General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. To the inevitable question regarding relationship to the Confederate leader, Bill says, "... cousins do figure in the Lee family tree."

Shirley's morning repast begins with cantaloupe and orange juice followed by quiche and sausage, accompanied by cranberry spice muffins and the "always-in-the-freezer" house specialty — applesauce — courtesy of the inn's

**The highlight of a War Hill breakfast is applesauce from the orchard.**

*Cooperative Living/March-April 2002*



orchard. On other days the menu might include cheese strata with Virginia ham or stuffed French toast.

The dining room's blue wainscoting and patterned wallpaper show off collectibles like a folk art Uncle Sam, a shelf of Noah's Ark figures, and a framed award from the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association commending Bill as "Veterinarian of the Year" in 1979.

Outside the window, a farm dinner bell catches the eye. "It was all that was left of my family's homestead after a fire," says Shirley, "now our grandchildren love to ring it." Both Shirley and Bill were raised on farms in Dinwiddie County.

A post-breakfast walk, with dachshund, Juliet, as escort takes you to the cottages, vineyard and orchard. Juliet comes by her name naturally, thanks to Shakespeare and the Lee grandchildren. Present at her birth, they had already named her immediate predecessor in the litter. Who else could follow Romeo?

Washington Cottage, built in 1990, offers a retreat, with two bedrooms and bath, for families after a day of touring or shopping. The master bedroom, with sitting area, boasts a fishnet-canopied four-poster. On the walls, rural scenes in prints by Valley artist Mary Vessey of Mint Spring contrast with the portrait-like presence of George Washington. Wedding-ring quilts and braided rugs create a cozy look in the adjoining bedroom; accommodations include a double and a single bed.

Trees at War Hill produced lumber of pine and poplar for the construction of Jefferson Cottage in 1998. The honey color of the poplar flooring of four different widths sets off soft green walls and a queen-size four-poster bed with matching burgundy floral shams and dust ruffle. "I noted the green walls at Monticello," says Bill, "and thought it most appropriate for a cottage named Jefferson."

In this room, Bill, who loves working with wood, can attribute several pieces of furniture to his craftsmanship: a drop-leaf table and nightstand of black walnut; a Shaker-style chest of poplar; and a hidden trundle bed. Other cottage amenities include a fireplace, a bath with double Jacuzzi and separate shower, and a mini-bar with refrigerator.

Close by the cottages, plum, peach, and apple trees put on seasonal shows. Just beyond the orchard is a diminutive vineyard of Concord and Niagara table grapes.

War Hill is not your ordinary B&B. Where else will you find an audience of Scottish cows with such a true appreciation of bagpipe music? ■

**War Hill Inn**, 4560 Longhill Road, Williamsburg, Virginia 23188. Rates range from \$80 to \$150 (double occupancy) and include a full breakfast. Additional charge for extra persons in Washington Cottage, Wilson Suite, and Tyler Room. Phone: (757) 565-0248 or (800) 743-0248. Fax: (757) 565-4550. Web site: [www.warhillinn.com](http://www.warhillinn.com).

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JAMESTOWN-YORKTOWN FOUNDATION PHOTO

The Jamestown Settlement's replica ships Susan Constant, Godspeed, and Discovery.

## TRIP TIPS

**V**irginia's Historic Triangle of Jamestown, Yorktown and Williamsburg offers historic sites and contemporary attractions. Begin at **Jamestown, The Original Site**, administered by the National Park Service. Inspect archaeological excavation of 1607 fort, remains of 1639 church tower, and a re-created 1608 glasshouse. Nearby at **Jamestown Settlement**, operated by the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, board the Discovery, Godspeed and Susan Constant, replicas of the settlers' ships. In re-creations of the colonists' fort, their ships, and a Powhatan village, historical interpreters depict life in the early 1600s. **Special Event:** "Military through the Ages" (March 17-18).

A 15-minute drive east from Jamestown takes visitors to **Colonial Williamsburg**. In 2001 the restored 18th-century capital celebrated its 75th anniversary. Visit the **Governor's Palace, Raleigh Tavern** and the **Capitol**. Museums include: **Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum; DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum; and Carter's Grove and Winthrop Rockefeller Archaeology Museum**.

Adjacent to Colonial Williamsburg is the **College of William and Mary**, second-oldest college in the United States. **The Wren Building** was designed by Sir Christopher Wren.

Only 11 miles away is Yorktown, site of the last major battle of the American Revolution. Tour the **Yorktown Battlefield**; National Park Service offers a film and museum. At **Yorktown Victory Center**, administered by the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, exhibits and film chronicle the Revolutionary era. Visit **Watermen's Museum** and stroll the Riverwalk along the York River.

Experience plantation life at **Berkeley, Sherwood Forest, Evelyn-ton, and Shirley**. Take the family to **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** and **Water Country USA**. Taste, tour, and lunch at **Williamsburg Winery**. Golf courses abound; PGA Michelob Classic is annual event at **Kingsmill Resort**.

### Further information:

**National Park Service**  
1-757-898-2410  
[www.nps.gov/colo](http://www.nps.gov/colo)

**Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation**  
1-888-593-4682  
[www.historyisfun.org](http://www.historyisfun.org)

**Colonial Williamsburg**  
1-800-HISTORY  
[www.colonialwilliamsburg.org](http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org)

**Williamsburg Area Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
1-800-368-6511;  
[www.VisitWilliamsburg.com](http://www.VisitWilliamsburg.com)