

Girls, boys, learn civic lessons
Teens throughout the county attend
Boys State, Girls State programs.
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Section B

Whitesbog has the blues

On Saturday, the annual festival will celebrate a native fruit.

By **MARK ZIMMARO**
STAFF WRITER

PEMBERTON TOWNSHIP — A century ago, plans to cultivate the first blueberry were being dreamed up on a quiet piece of land in the Pine Barrens called Whitesbog Village.

It was there, in 1911, that resident Elizabeth White and Dr. Frederick Coville of the U.S. Department of Agriculture began experimenting and cultivating the new fruit.

Five years later, New Jersey was the birthplace of the first cultivated high-bush blueberry.

On Saturday, thousands are expected to fill the historic village in the township for the 28th annual blueberry

festival. Located by Milepost 13 on Lakehurst Road (County Route 530), the village will be filled with activities celebrating the centennial of the blueberry.

From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., visitors can enjoy Pinelands folk and bluegrass music, arts and crafts, a native plant sale, food and beverages, and perhaps the biggest attraction — a children's pie-eating contest.

Several tours, including of Elizabeth White's home, Sunningive, the workers' cottages and the cranberry substation, will be offered by volunteers and members of the Whitesbog Preservation Trust. The village dates from 1857, but most of the buildings were constructed between 1890 and 1925.

At its peak around that time, about 600 workers inhabited Whitesbog as 90

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FILE PHOTO

Fresh blueberries will be for sale at the annual Whitesbog Blueberry Festival on Saturday afternoon in the historic Whitesbog Village in Pemberton Township.

Whitesbog

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acres of blueberries and 300 acres of cranberries were harvested and sold commercially.

"This area made a huge difference for Pemberton Township," said Rick Prickett, president of the Whitesbog Preservation Trust. "As the blueberry and cranberry business started, it enabled people to enjoy a higher standard of living."

Aside from sharing its rich history, this year's event is geared more toward children than in years past.

"We are really expanding our children's activities," said Sue Phillips, the trust's executive director. "There will be face-painting, poetry in the garden, and scavenger hunts to find the Jersey Devil."

Also on display will be the colorful artwork submitted by students from the J. Harold Van Zant Elementary School in Evesham.

Inside the General Store, visitors can buy blueberry and cranberry products, Pinelands-themed books, and authentic Whitesbog memorabilia.

Outside the store, fresh blueberries will be sold by the pint. Visitors also can take a wagon ride out to the fields to pick their own.

"It's part of the trust's income here," Prickett said of the blueberry sales. "Last year, we lost all our blueberries due to a freeze and had to send people to off-site farms. Hopefully, this year we will be able to sell a lot more blueberries."

Admission to the festival is \$8 per carload, \$3 if arriving by bus. Parking is off-site at an airstrip, a two-minute drive from the festival grounds. Shuttle buses will transport visitors throughout the day.

Mark Zimmaro: 609-871-8059; email: mzimmaro@phillyBurbs.com; Twitter: @mzimmaro

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