

# What's HAPPENING!

Friday, June 26, 1998

Burlington County Times

FEATURE STORY

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*A fun day in the*  
**Pine**lands

**Whitesbog celebrates annual Blueberry Festival**



BCT photo/ROSE SHIELDS

The blueberry, created in Whitesbog Village, is a major crop in South Jersey and is grown throughout the country.

By Lysbeth Bledsoe  
Special to the BCT

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# Pine

## Whitesbog celebrates a



**T**he 5,000 regional residents expected to attend this year's 15th annual Whitesbog Blueberry Festival, tomorrow at Historic Whitesbog Village, Pemberton Township, will discover some new attractions:

■ Whitesbog's original, 19th-century post office, open for the first time and, just for the day, selling stamped and hand-cancelled postcards depicting Elizabeth White, co-creator of the cultivated blueberry.

■ *Suningive*, the home of Elizabeth White, open for walk-in tours.

■ Authors Howard Boyd of Southampton and Robert Bateman, now a North Carolina resident but born in South Jersey, autographing copies of their latest, Pinelands-themed works, Boyd's "A Pine Barrens Odyssey" and Bateman's "Whitman's Tomb And Other Stories."

■ And an acoustic quartet called the Snake Brothers, from Vineland, joining other musical groups in a non-stop performance schedule of Pine Barrens, country and bluegrass tunes.

But, acknowledges festival coordinator Janet Robbins, new attractions alone don't bring the crowds out to Whitesbog at festival time.

"We have a lot of things going on, including displays, activities, and a wonderful crafts fair," the Mount Holly resident said, "but the big attractions will always be Whitesbog itself and fresh blueberries, because those two have an historic connection."

Indeed they do.

In the late 1800s, Whitesbog was one of New Jersey's most important cranberry plantations,

complete with a village to accommodate workers. Then, in 1910, Elizabeth White, daughter of

Whitesbog owner Joseph J. White, learned about experiments in blueberry culture undertaken by Frederick V. Coville, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Contacting the scientist, Elizabeth White offered Whitesbog's sandy soil as an open-air laboratory where his hybrid blueberries could be crossbred with local wild blueberry plants, also known as huckleberries.

Coville readily accepted White's proposal which, in the '20s, resulted in today's plump, juicy blueberries, Burlington County born and now grown throughout the U.S. and abundantly in South Jersey — although, ironically, no longer at Whitesbog.

To commemorate that achievement, the Whitesbog Blueberry Festival focuses on Whitesbog Village, with its many restored structures; Whitesbog's blueberry associations; and the cranberry crops that preceded



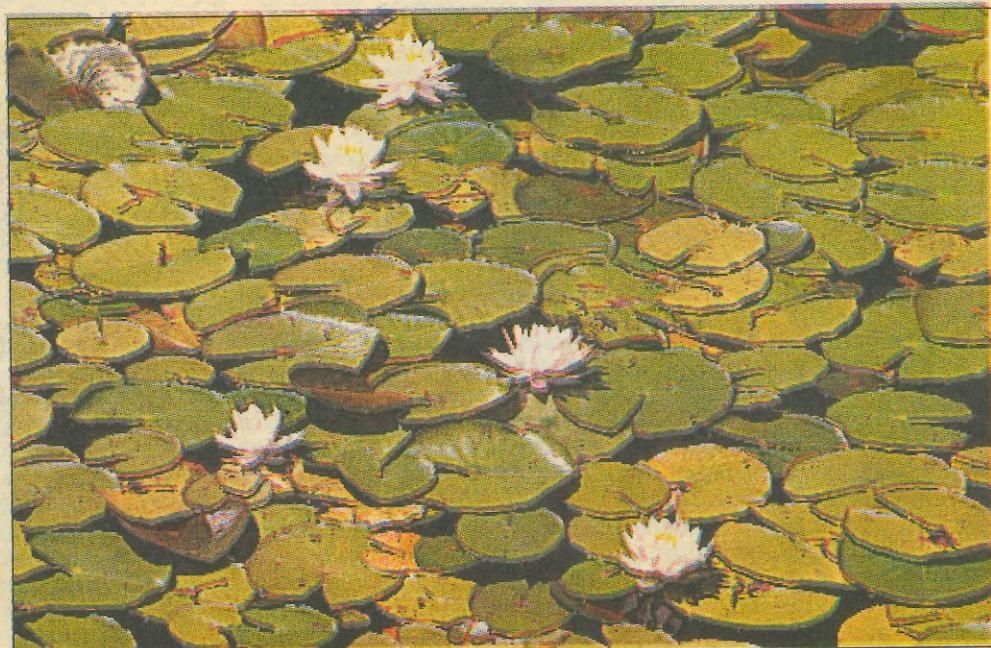
Five-year-old Derek Hopkinson of Toms River forms a one-man wagon train at last year's festival.



Tours of Whitesbog Village, the surrounding Pineland festivities.



A participant in last year's 10K Cross Country Run through the Pinelands crosses a small bridge in the cranberry bogs stretch of the run.



Water lilies, one of Mother Nature's works of art, are among the sights to see during a tour of Whitesbog.

# ay in the lands Annual Blueberry Festival



BCT photos/DENNIS McDONALD

the cranberry bogs and J. J. White's house will be part of tomorrow's

blueberries as the village's principal source of revenue and, in the end, outlasted them.

The following is a list of festival exhibits and activities:

■ **10K Cross Country Race and 2-Mile fun Run:** Both events will follow village streets and white sand roads crisscrossing the surrounding Pinelands. Registration is 8 a.m., with the Fun Run stepping off at 9 a.m., followed by the 10K race at 9:30 a.m.

Top male and female overall finishers in the 10K event will receive \$100 cash awards, while fresh blueberries will be presented to first-place male and female winners in each of nine age groups.

■ **Country Crafts Fair:** More than 40 crafters are set to show and sell along the main road of the village and in the spaces between workers' cottages.

■ **Antique Engines and Machinery Exhibit:** For the second year, South Jersey-based members of the Pinelands Antique Engines Association are displaying their collections plus helping Whitesbog Preservation Trust members with festival arrangements.

■ **Pinelands Art and Photography Exhibit:** This artistic display will be located inside the village's General Store, as well as outdoors, beneath a canopy erected near the first worker's cottage.

■ **Pinelands Landscape Shrubs and Plants Sale:** "We'll have 25 distinctive Pinelands plants available," Robbins said, "including sweet pepper bushes and sweet-bay magnolias, along with blueberry bushes and 40

Franklinias, which are bushes that can grow to be tree-size, and were once native to the Pinelands but are now extinct there."

■ **Tours:** Naturalists and local historians will guide bus, wagon and walking tours, departing from a well-marked Tour Table at \$4 for bus and wagon tours, and \$2 for walking tours.

Covered will be the village and the surrounding Pinelands; a half-dozen working cranberry bogs operated by the J.J. White Co., founded by Elizabeth White's father; one blueberry field, planted so festivalgoers can see the bushes up close; and White's home, containing blueberry and cranberry artifacts.

■ **Children's activities:** The festival's free, supervised program of children's games and crafts will include a make-and-take pinecone birdfeeder craft session at noon; nature and other games at 1 p.m.; wagon ride to the blueberry field and berry-picking, starting at 2 p.m.; Pinelands storytelling by Rev. Wayne Reynolds, of Atlantic County, in the village's Barrel Warehouse at 3 p.m.; and, at 4 p.m., a blueberry pie-eating contest.

■ **Entertainment:** Providing live music from a tent on the Village Commons, noon-5 p.m., will be eco-singer/songwriter Dave Orleans, of Somerdale, Camden County; the Bog Iron Boys, of Port Republic, Atlantic County, specializing in bluegrass and country music; folksinger Valerie Vaughn and the Decoys, of Tuckerton, Ocean County; folksinger Jim Albertson, of Millville; Home Cookin', of Little Egg Harbor, Atlantic County, blending bluegrass with acoustic country; plus the Snake Brothers of Vineland with their eclectic musical mix.

In addition, Burlington County College radio station WBZC-FM (88.9), will broadcast during the day, varying its regular programming with festival interviews and giveaways.

■ **Foods:** Fresh blueberries, provided by the Tru-Blu Cooperative Association of Pemberton Township will be sold by the pint or tray. Tru-Blu, by the way,

was organized by Elizabeth White in the '20s as a farmers' cooperative. Also available will be sandwiches provided by the Lions Club of Pemberton Township and Texas Barbecue, of Berlin, Camden County, along with blueberry baked goods, blueberry sundaes, cheesecake with blueberry sauce topping and the festival's beverage of choice, Piney Punch.

## IF YOU GO

### Whitesbog Blueberry Festival

**Where:** Historic Whitesbog Village, Mile Marker 13 on Route 530, off Route 70, in the Browns Mills section of Pemberton Township

**When:** Tomorrow, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Rain date is Sunday, however, the 10K Cross-Country Race and 2-Mile Fun Run will take place tomorrow, 8 a.m., rain or shine.

**Admission:** Festival only, \$5 per car; 10K Cross-Country Race and 2-Mile Fun Run, \$12 to pre-register today, \$15 onsite tomorrow, including free festival admission plus T-shirts to first 400 registrants.

**Information:** Call 893-4646