

## COMMUNITY NEWS



Inquirer Correspondent / CARL A. BREITINGER

In the early 1900s, Elizabeth White carved a niche in history for Whitesbog. Janet Robbins prunes at White's house during a spruce-up weekend.

## Book on Whitesbog seeks to purvey berry history

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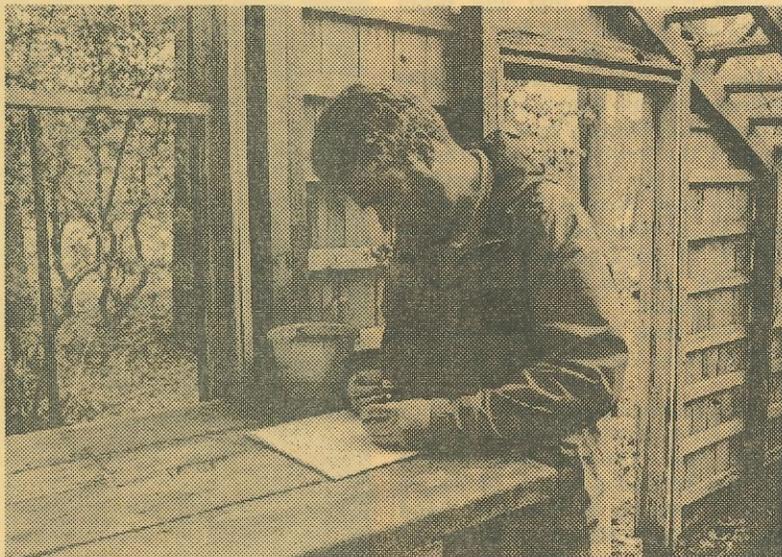
Unless you knew it was there, you probably would miss historic Whitesbog Village, off Route 530 near Browns Mills. Now, William Bolger wants to publish a book to serve as the village's signpost.

Bolger, an administrator with the National Park Service in Philadelphia and a member of the Whitesbog Preservation Trust, said the 135-year-old village is an important part of New Jersey's agricultural legacy that needs to be preserved.

"By examining the history [of Whitesbog], you get to a level of understanding about American history and culture you don't get on the big scale. It is much more personal," Bolger said.

In 1884, Joseph J. White started to cultivate cranberries in the area and eventually turned his land into a super-farm of its time, producing 10 percent of the state's cranberry crop.

White's daughter Elizabeth took an interest in her father's business, and she carved a niche for Whitesbog in agricultural history. In 1914,



William Bolger says Whitesbog allows "a level of understanding about American history . . . you don't get on the big scale."

she and ecologist Frederick Coville developed the commercially cultivated blueberry, and the rest is — well, you know.

About half of the 3,000-acre tract is now a historic district. The state bought parts of it in 1966 and 1968

through its Green Acres program and made it part of Lebanon State Forest. J.J. White Co. still leases parts of the land for cranberry and blueberry cultivation. Bolger said the berries are among the few national foods that are native to the

United States.

Michele Byers, assistant director of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation in Morristown, said the point of publishing a book about the village would be to pool all the information on Whitesbog and to provide a bibliography.

The biggest part of the work — writing — has been done. Bolger wrote a report about the village in 1982 for the Conservation Foundation to get the village onto the state and national historic registers. Whitesbog was included on the registers in 1988.

"Bill's report served as the catalyst for getting Whitesbog on the register," Byers said. "Without that work, the state would have bulldozed Whitesbog by now."

After the report was done in 1988, the Conservation Foundation suggested that a grassroots effort be made at preservation, and in 1984 the Whitesbog Preservation Trust was germinated.

Byers, who serves as the trust's treasurer, said trust members decided that Bolger's report was too valuable to just file away.

In 1985, the trust failed to secure grants to publish the book. Publishing was then put on the back burner until this year, because of time and financial constraints.

### The work about the 135-year-old village needs a publisher.

"There seems to be a renewed interest in Whitesbog. Gradually, more people are asking questions about it, and right now we have to [photocopy] information for people. It would be nice to have a succinct thing to give people," Byers said. The search for grants is being resumed, she said.

Bolger hopes to put out an 80-page book that will include maps and pictures along with the history of the village. He said 1,000 copies of the book could be published for under \$10,000. Although the book is too small for major publishing houses, Bolger said, "one way or the other, we have got to get it out."