

Whitesbog Preservation Trust

NEWSLETTER

3rd Quarter

2006

Birthplace of the Highbush Blueberry - Historic Center for Cranberry Innovation



The Whitesbog Cranberry Packing House Remembered : 1981-2006

by William Bolger, National Park Service Historian

Today the Whitesbog packing house is just a memory. The site it once occupied near the entrance to the village is now the main parking area. Beyond the parking lot is a fenced area with thick undergrowth that conceals the decaying remains of the western-most section of the once great landmark, now more soil than timber and beyond reclamation. The only surviving building of the packing house complex is the engine house now used as the museum for the Antique Engine Association. This brick building, which sat directly north and center of the packing house, contained the gasoline engines that powered the machinery inside the main building. At 25 by 25 feet, it is not a negligible structure as the volunteers who maintain it can testify. However, in the historic photographs that show the complex in its entirety, the engine house is barely noticeable, like a tug boat tethered to an air craft carrier. The Whitesbog packing house had once been the greatest of the cranberry packing houses and a monument of ingenuity and achievement.

My own involvement with Whitesbog began in 1981 when Ed Rutsch, an archeologist and the principal of the preservation firm Heritage Conservation and Interpretation (HCI), was hired by the New Jersey Conservation Foundation to conduct the cultural resources study of the state-owned Whitesbog farm (1).

Assisting him were architect Herb Githens and myself, the team historian. Known affectionately as Big Ed, Rutsch was a man of enormous physical as well as intellectual and personal stature. His expertise, the subject that he devoted his life to, was New Jersey industrial history and, someone might well have asked what he was doing examining a Pine Barrens cranberry farm, far from his home base in north Jersey.

The first time we entered the packing house Ed exhibited one of those looks that he was famous for, a combination of confounded awe and intense scrutiny as he considered the vast expanse of the remaining 200-foot-long structure. He sat down on a small rail car that was still seated on the tracks that ran down the middle of the building to contemplate the scene. I explained what I knew about the operation and how this was less than a third of the total structure that had evolved around 1900. For Rutsch, this structure, and the entire story of Whitesbog production, illustrated just how, by the early 20th century, agriculture had been as industrialized as any other industrial process we could name; that even though we still tended to think of agrarian life in opposition to industrial life, they had, during the past century, merged. The packing house was far more than just an empty old building. It demonstrated how agriculture in America, since the days of Thomas Jefferson, had become industrial. It also documented how its designer, builder, and owner, Joseph White, had managed to develop an unprecedented operation through innovation and self-reliance.

Herb and I covered every inch of the packing house over several days in the summer heat, measuring and
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“Visions of the Cranberry Packing House” Gallery Display

In keeping with the Cranberry Packing House theme in this issue, the Trust presents a display of Packing House photographs in the General Store Gallery. This compilation provides a graphic impression of the workings and grandeur of this nearly bygone building. ■

The Mission of the Trust is to restore, protect and enhance the land, sites and buildings at Whitesbog and to provide educational and interpretive programs and materials about the history, culture and natural environment of Whitesbog.

**This newsletter is
available in large print !**

**Contact the Whitesbog
Preservation Trust**

**120-34 Whitesbog Road
Browns Mills, NJ 08015**

Phone: 609 893 4646

Fax: 609 893 8297

E-mail: Whitesbog@hotmail.com

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY:

Storekeepers are needed for the General Store.

As little as 3 hours a month!

The Whitesbog General Store is open on weekends from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Training will be provided.

Please contact Esther Kubiczky at (609)-434- 0354 or ekubiczky@comcast.net

2006 - 2007 Board of Trustees Meetings

Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. (except as noted).

2006 - September 27, October 25, November 29. **2007** - January 24, February 28, March 28, April 22 (Sunday, 10:00 a.m.).

Holiday Party, Saturday, December 16, 4:30 p.m.

Annual Membership Meeting, Sunday, April 22, 12:00 Noon.

Board of Trustees

Mark Ehlenfeldt, Pres.	John Joyce, Vice Pres.
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Staff

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Esther Kubiczky, Bookkeeper/Assistant

Newsletter

Mark Ehlenfeldt & Theresa Jacks - Editors

Committee Information - 2006

Buildings Committee – John Joyce, chair – Meets quarterly – contact WPT office for schedule

Events Committee – Theresa E. Jacks, chair – contact WPT office for schedule – New members welcome

Finance Committee – John Kallelis, chair

Fund Development Committee – Mark Ehlenfeldt, chair – contact WPT office for schedule

General Store Committee – Esther Kubiczky, chair – contact WPT office for schedule

Interpretative Education/Archives Committee – Ted Gordon, chair – contact WPT office for schedule – New members welcome

Landscape and Garden Committee – Ellen Terry, chair - 2nd Wednesdays of Jan, Apr, July, Oct at 6:30 pm

Marketing/Public Relations/Newsletter Committee - Mark Ehlenfeldt, chair – contact WPT office for schedule - New members welcome

Membership/Nominating Committee – Stephanie Schrader, chair – contact WPT office for schedule - New members welcome

Personnel Committee – Mark Ehlenfeldt, chair



The Blueberry Festival weathers a stormy forecast!

When the rain finally came down on Saturday, June 24, 2006, it poured. But not until 3:35 p.m. – 25 minutes before the official end of the 2006 Blueberry Festival. Despite the dire weather predications, the 23rd annual festival offered historical tours, music, blueberries and fun!

The Blueberry Festival has been organized by the Whitesbog Preservation Trust for over 20 years. The festival offers a variety of entertainment and activities and serves as an important funding stream for the Trust.

The day began with the music, located in the center of the festival grounds and enjoyed by all visitors that braved the damp Saturday in June. Festival favorites Jim Albertson, Joe Wills & Bad Dogz, and the Sugar Sand Ramblers performed for the crowd. Year after year, many festival attendees come just hear these Pineland greats! This year also offered new musical acts, including the Conaghan Family's Celtic music, the Basement Musician's Johnny Cash inspired songs and Medford Station's piney bluegrass.

Prior to the festival, telephone calls and e-mails blanketed the office asking about the wagon and walking tours always offered at the fest. The programs did not

disappoint and included a variety of topics and speakers. Ted Gordon, Pinelands Naturalist and Historian, guided visitors through village history via Whitesbog's buildings and Elizabeth White's garden. Maria Peter, PINES Coordinator, considered "What the Jersey Devil Eats" with her group. History came alive when Jeff Macechak, Burlington County Society's Educational Director, introduced festival attendees to Elizabeth White (Stephanie Schrader) and Dr. Fredrick Coville (Macechak) during a tour entitled "I Just Met Elizabeth White (and Other Whitesbog Characters)". The Barrel Factory hosted free lectures and demonstrations, including Barbara Solem-Stull's "Pine Barrens Ghost Towns" and Tom Darlington's barrel making demonstration. Darlington recounted the lives of the itinerant coopers that spent time at Whitesbog making barrels for the cranberry industry.

One visitor commented that the tours are "the best part of the fest". However, not everyone would agree. Throughout the festival grounds, people enjoyed the delicious blueberry pastries and baked goods. They also packed their arms full of fresh blueberries and Whitesbog preserves. Some refreshed themselves with a cool blueberry ice cream sundae. Others went to the General Store and sent a post card from the Whitesbog Post Office. Children were treated to free kid's activities ranging from face painting to the science fun to the Garden State Discovery Museum's "Put Yourself in a Bubble"! Many agree it would not be a Blueberry Festival without touring the Interpretative Cottage, the Agricultural Museum, the Pinelands Antique Engine Association's display of historic engines, tractors and machinery, and of course, Elizabeth White's home, Suningive.

Visitors to Suningive had a special treat this year. Not only were many of them greeted by Elizabeth White (historical characterization), but they found many rooms have become home to some of Miss White's original furnishings. And finally, upstairs on the second floor in the living room, visitors found their own private Pinelands concert thanks to Bob and Sylvia Burt performing just for Suningive!

Although the crowd was not a record breaker in 2006, the hardy souls attending the festival did so in the spirit of that hardy blueberry entrepreneur, Elizabeth Coleman White, and the hardy Pinelands! ■

**See Festival pictures on the website
edition of this Newsletter !**

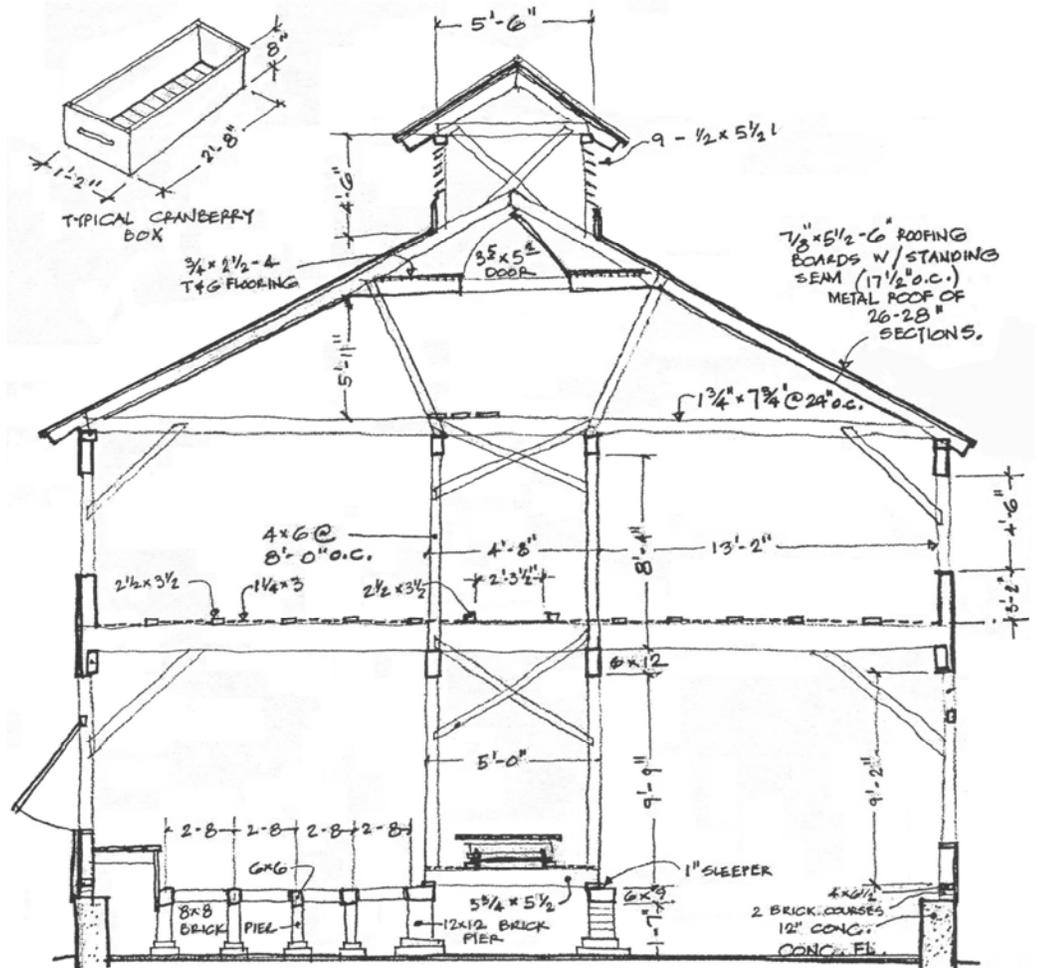
www.whitesbog.org

(from page 1)

analyzing the details of the structure and figuring out just how it operated. It was a building that reflected, in every feature, the particular functional operations of its intended use. The surviving section was actually a storage house, the portion of the operation where cranberries were stored between the fall harvest and the time when they would be prepared for shipment which stretched though the winter and into the early spring. In short, it was an enormous machine for storing cranberries. There were, according to my calculations, nearly one hundred thousand cubic feet of storage space in the surviving section, which was only the western end of a three part structure that stretched for approximately 600 feet along an east-west axis. The eastern third had also been a storage building of roughly equal size. The storage buildings had to be large, as Whitesbog was producing about 10% of the entire cranberry crop in New Jersey and growers needed to manage their storage and packing operations on their own.

The details of 'the western packing house' were ingeniously configured. The entire structure was designed not only to support boxes of berries packed solidly together but, at the same time, allow air to flow through the contents from the ground up to the monitor roof some thirty feet above in order to keep them cool and dry. Doors, hinged from above, stretched the entire length of the building on the ground level allowing air to enter the structure at the desired times. Inside, every level was slatted to allow for ventilation. The berries were stored in boxes with slatted bottoms. The boxes sat on open beams on the ground floor which were spaced at just the right intervals to receive them. The second floor was slatted so that workers could walk about but still allow air to continue its upward flow. Then above the storage area, there were trap doors in the third floor that could be opened or closed as needed. And finally, about thirty five feet above ground level, running down the center of the roof, was a slatted monitor roof that allowed the air to flow up and out of the massive structure.

Presumably, as temperatures and moisture fluctuated from early fall into the dead of winter, the



various doors could be opened or shut in order to maintain the most optimal conditions to prevent the crop from spoiling. The growers knew that the longer they could keep the fruit the higher the price would rise. From the 'Thanksgiving market' to the 'Christmas market' and eventually the 'Easter market' prices would increase but the remaining marketable fruit would decrease. It was this race between rising prices and spoilage that motivated J. J. White and others like him to invest in the most ingenious storage buildings they could devise.

The middle building, also destroyed by fire long before we conducted our study, had been the sorting and packing house, the place where the berries were brought to be cleaned and prepared for shipment. The storage boxes would be loaded onto the internal rail carts and sent from the storage buildings into the packing house. From there they were hauled up to the third level where they were dumped in the cleaning machines, the devices that removed vines and leaves as the first step in the processing. Then they dropped to the sorting machines that were lined up below on the second story. These were the highly sophisticated mechanisms that J. J. White himself developed and patented in 1903 for the purpose of removing rotted berries. From the sorters the good fruit dropped to the sorting tables below which

were lined up along the southern window wall where women performed a final sort by hand before the berries dropped into the shipping barrels. This is where the famous photograph of the Whitesbog berries stored in neatly labeled wooden barrels was taken while the cargo awaited shipment to the rail depot two miles away (see page 6).

In the three years following the 1981 study, the Whitesbog Preservation Trust was formed for the purpose of preserving the historic legacy of Whitesbog, both cranberry and blueberry agriculture and their associated buildings, structures and land forms that cover over two thousand acres. The surviving packing house section was one of our main concerns. But the preservation efforts, to the degree that they were attempted at all, proved futile, and the building slowly decayed. A series of storms in the early 1990s peeled off the metal roofing causing the timber frame to deteriorate rapidly. By the turn of this century the structure was beyond repair, leaving nothing to do but close off the site to prevent people from entering the unstable building. The final section remains partially standing. It is beyond economically feasible restoration, and despite its condition, as a historically listed building, it cannot be demolished. It has been surrendered to the devices of nature.

References cited:

1. Bolger, B., H. Githens, and E. Rutsch. 1982. Historic Architectural Survey and Preservation Planning Project for the Village of Whitesbog. Whitesbog archives.

(Editor's note: The picture at the head of this article shows the packing house in 1912 looking north from the Route 530 side. The oldest section is at the right; the section still extant is at the left. The warehouse was intact until 1961 when a fire destroyed the middle section, burning as far as the two brick firewalls. In 1966, when Whitesbog was purchased by the State, the two end sections were still standing. In 1970, a second fire destroyed the oldest section.) ■

**See more photos of
the Cranberry Packing House
and read Bolger, Githens, and Rutsch's
1981 Historical Survey description of the
Packing House on the website version of
this Newsletter !**

www.whitesbog.org

Whitesbog Calendar

Reservations can be left on the main voice mail (609) 893-4646 or whitesbog@hotmail.com. Call for details.

SEPTEMBER

9th - Moonlight Walk - 7:00 p.m. Harvest Moon.

OCTOBER

1st - Pinelands Discovery Festival - 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Celebrate the history, ecology and unique culture of the Pinelands! Sponsored by the Pinelands Preservation Alliance. Hosted by Whitesbog! Parking fee.

7th - Volunteer Work Day – 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Free, Lunch provided.

7th - Moonlight Walk - 7:00 p.m. Hunter Moon.

14th & 15th – Cranberry Harvest Car Caravan - 9 a.m. & 1 p.m. Reservations necessary. Learn all about the cranberry industry at Whitesbog. Lecture, hands-on activity & car caravan to modern bog. \$10 / person.

21st - Sunset Hayride - 5:30 p.m. Take a memorable hayride through the cranberry bogs and stay for Pinelands stories and songs with Jim Albertson! Campfire, marshmallows. Wagons leave at 5:30 p.m. sharp. Reservations necessary. \$12 / person.

NOVEMBER

4th – First Whitesbog Symposium – 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 - A day-long event featuring presentations on Whitesbog-related topics. Members \$20, Non-members \$30, lunch included (see page 6).

4th - Volunteer Work Day – 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Free, Lunch provided.

4th - Moonlight Walk - 7:00 p.m. Frost Moon. ■

**Membership drive kickoff !
Support our mission and
become a member !**

Partner	\$1000+	Sponsor	\$250
Benefactor	\$500	Patron	\$100

Supporter (family)	\$50
Contributor (individual)	\$25

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Return to: Whitesbog Preservat'n Trust
120-34 Whitesbog Road
Browns Mills, NJ 08015

See this Newsletter
WITH ADDED FEATURES
on the Internet!

The Whitesbog Preservation Trust Newsletter is now available on our website at www.whitesbog.org with additional pages of photos. Log on and check it out!

Cranberry Industry Tours to celebrate NJ's local agriculture, October 14 & 15

The weekend of October 14 & 15 marks the date of the Cranberry Industry tours at Whitesbog. Whitesbog (as you well know, hopefully) was an early center for development of the cranberry industry in New Jersey, and was a center for cranberry innovation in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Again this year, Whitesbog is conducting cranberry tour programs that cover the industry, both old and new. The tours combine a media presentation, hands-on demonstrations of cranberry plants, and the opportunity to car-caravan to see a working cranberry harvest operation. Tours will be held at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. both days, and cost \$10 per person. For reservations or more information call the Whitesbog Preservation Trust offices at 609-893-4646.

Would you like to write a feature article for the Newsletter?

Do you have a story to tell about Whitesbog ? the early years of the blueberry industry ? the cranberry industry ? Do you know someone who lived or worked at Whitesbog? If you do, we'd like to hear from you! The Newsletter is soliciting feature articles for the cover page. Articles should be 500 – 1500 words, and represent either first-hand original information or a researched summary of some aspect of the mentioned topics, preferably with citations of original documents. Like everything else, ... if you are interested, have information, or want more information, please contact Theresa Jacks at the Whitesbog Preservation Trust Office, 609-893-4646.

Pinelands Discovery Festival slated for October 1

The Pinelands Discovery Festival is a much anticipated annual event at Whitesbog. The summer heat has abated, life is more relaxed, and the Pinelands are moving into the fall season. Fall is a terrific time for exploring the Pinelands in all its facets, and the Discovery Festival is a great way to find out about the numerous events scheduled in October that celebrate and inform about the Pinelands. This event, presented by the Pinelands Preservation Alliance and hosted by Whitesbog has tours, music, photography, and information booths sponsored by many local organizations and agencies. Stop by and find out about the many events in the month of October. Put it on your calendar now. For more information, check out the Pinelands Preservation Alliance website at www.pinelandsalliance.org.

First Whitesbog Symposium to be held November 4

The first Whitesbog Symposium is slated for Saturday, November 4, 2006. This day-long event will feature a series of presentations on Whitesbog-related topics including: "Mechanization of Cranberries and Blueberries" by Thomas Darlington, "Rare Plants of Whitesbog" by Ted Gordon, and "Elizabeth White and the Development of the Cultivated Blueberry" by Dr. Mark Ehlenfeldt, "Snakes and Amphibians of Whitesbog" by John Joyce, and "The Gardens of the Blueberry Queen" by Ellen Terry. Cost is \$20 for current members, \$30 for non-members \$30; lunch and beverages are included. For further information or to register, call the Whitesbog Preservation Trust Office at 609-893-4646.



**WHITESBOG PRESERVATION TRUST
THANKS OUR VERY SPECIAL
2006 BLUEBERRY FESTIVAL SPONSORS:**

GOLD : Sun National Bank

SILVER : The Colby Restaurant Group, Comcast, Dr. Michael Kay,
Pine Island Cranberry Company, Inc., Gibbs, Gregory & Emmons, Attorneys at Law,
Hartman's Plant Company

BRONZE : Burlington County College, Clarke Insurance Agency,
Columbus Farm Market, Deborah Heart and Lung Center, The Kokes Foundation,
Minute Man Halprint Graphics, Dietz & Watson, Inc., The New Jersey Conservation Foundation,
Red Lion Diner, Fall Creek Farm and Nursery, Inc., Giordano's Construction

*Your sponsorship ensures the ongoing success of the Blueberry Festival
and the programs and restoration of an American Original – Historic Whitesbog Village.
In deepest gratitude and appreciation – thank you so very much.*

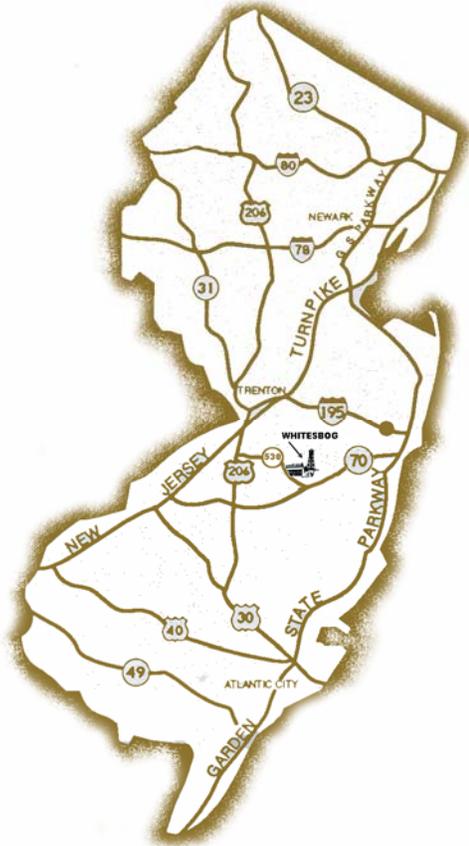
The Board of Trustees, Members & Volunteers, and Staff

**Whitesbog Preservation Trust also thanks the many organizations that:
help plan the Blueberry Festival, ... provide services at the Festival,
... donate goods & products, ... loan us equipment.**

Brendan T. Bryne State Forest
Pinelands Institute for Natural & Environmental Studies
Pinelands Antique Engine Association
Burlington County Historical Society
Burlington County College
Pinelands Preservation Alliance
Country Lakes Emergency Squad
Country Lakes Fire Company
The Colby Restaurant Group
Garden State Discovery Museum
DiMegilio Septic Services
White Dotte Dairy Bar
Creekside Glass & Mirror, Inc.
Pinelands Nursery
Pemberton Township

**Without the dedication of community organizations and leaders,
the unique history of Historic Whitesbog Village might be lost to the pages of history.
Many, many thanks for your ongoing support!**

Driving Directions:



From NJ Turnpike

Take Exit 7 to Rt. 206 South to intersection of Rt. 206, Rt. 38 and Rt. 530. (Landmarks - Vincentown Diner and White Dotte)
Turn East onto Rt. 530 and follow to mile marker 13. (Landmarks – You will go through the towns of Pemberton & Browns Mills, passing Burlington County College on the right.)

Turn left onto Whitesbog Road. Parking lot on the left.

From PA Turnpike

Travel to NJ Turnpike North and follow above instructions.

From 206 South

Travel North to circle intersection with Rt. 70.

Travel East on Rt. 70 to Rt. 530. (Rt. 530 is between mile markers 33 & 34.)

Travel West on Rt. 530 for one mile to mile marker 13.

Turn right onto Whitesbog Road. Parking lot is on the left.

From 206 North

Travel South to intersection of Rt. 206, Rt. 38 and Rt. 530.

Turn East onto Rt. 530 and follow to mile marker 13.

Turn left onto Whitesbog Road. Parking lot is on the left.

From Philadelphia

From Ben Franklin Bridge, take Rt. 38 East, crossing over Rt. 206 and onto Rt. 530 East.

Travel East onto Rt. 530 and follow to mile marker 13.

Turn left onto Whitesbog Road. Parking lot is on the left.

The General Store is across from parking lot. Trust Offices are approximately 1/8 of a mile down the crossroad to the right (at Suningive).

Internet Extras Start Here!

1. Cranberry Packing and Storage Building

This structure, of all those extant at Whitesbog, is the most representative physical entity directly involved in the process of handling cranberries after they had been picked. It survives as the westernmost of three buildings; the middle building housed the sorting operations, and both the western and eastern portions sheltered the packing and storage activities. The middle and eastern sections were destroyed by fire, and the surviving portion is testimony to the advantages of a firewall, which separated, and no doubt saved, the west end from the devastation. The ensemble was built in two phases: the eastern section c. 1890 and the other two sections c. 1900.

The packing and storage building is a two and one-half-story, heavy-timber-framed, shingle-clad structure elongated on an east-west axis. The gable roof, with its standing-seam metal cover, supports a continuous ventilator along its ridge. The east end wall is a stepped firewall of brick masonry. The west end has a *porte cochere* at the ground level, where the second floor is carried over to brick piers. Just southwest of the west facade is a ramped earthen berm extending to a large bay door on the second floor. This arrangement permitted direct access to both levels at the same end of the long linear spaces.

Down the middle of the packing and storage house through the various sections on both levels along the center axis ran a hand cart railway. The building is structured to accommodate this dynamic loading system by the design of its cross-section into A-B-A bays with spans of 13 feet 6 inches, 5 feet, and 13 feet 6 inches. The larger bays permit four cranberry boxes (8 inches high x 1 foot 2 inches wide x 2 feet 8 inches long) to be stacked lengthwise across the slat floor with a 2-foot access aisle along the outside wall. The boxes rest on 3 x 4-inch runners spaced 2 feet 8 inches apart, on the slatted (3 inches x 11 inches) floor on the second level and on 6 x 6 inch plates atop brick piers on the first level. These plates are spaced 2 feet 8 inches to carry the box span.

Over the second floor railway is a walkway which gives access to the continuous hatch doors opening up the ventilation system made by the continuous-louvered monitor above and the first-floor doors below. These doors are continuous along the north and south walls and are hung from pintle hinges, permitting ease in opening and closing, as needed for ventilation. The movement of air prevented the crop from rotting. Inasmuch as the company stored the entire harvest within its two storage houses, the monitoring of ventilation through the buildings was extremely important.

- Bolger, B., H. Githens, and E. Rutsch. 1982. Historic Architectural Survey and Preservation Planning Project for the Village of Whitesbog.

The Cranberry Packing House



A September 1896 photograph of a segment of the cranberry storage building. This building housed both storage and sorting facilities. Note porch and ramp for loading barrels. This building occupied the site of Whitesbog's current parking lot.



A photo taken from the same perspective as the 1896 photo. Note that a wing has now been added to the right, and the wagon loading area (the porch) has been enclosed. At this point, the majority of the original building had been given over to storage; the added wing was dedicated to sorting.

The Cranberry Packing House



An aerial photograph looking north at the complete cranberry storage warehouse (date unknown). The oldest section is at top. By about 1900 the second and third sections of approximately equal proportions were added to the warehouse. Sorting facilities then moved to the center section and the end sections were used for storage. The newest storage section had a raised linear vent.



A similar view, looking northeast, at ground level, 1912.

Scenes from the Blueberry Festival - 2006



Photos courtesy of Clarke Walker

