

Mount Vernon Signal

Second Section Thursday, September 21, 2000

Brush Arbor: Rockcastle's newest hidden treasure

By Lisa Cornwell
The Associated Press

Warm memories of carefree, childhood days spent in his grandparents' log cabin in Eastern Kentucky stirred a longing in Jerry Hayes for a return to simpler times. Soon that nostalgic yearning became the driving passion of his life.

"At first, I just wanted an old log cabin in the country, so I could get away from the hectic pace of city life -- even if it was only on weekends," said Hayes.

"But then I began to dream about creating something more -- a living museum of log structures that would honor not only my ancestors, but all the pioneers who endured hardships to settle this country."

In 1992, the self-employed life insurance agent from Hamilton, Ohio, found a 140-year-old log house just a few miles from the site of his grandparents' former log home in Jackson County. The small cabin was in need of repair, but Hayes bought it, putting it in storage until he could find the perfect setting.

Hayes finally found that setting in Hummel, near Renfro Valley, nestled amid the rocky Appalachian foothills at the edge of the Daniel Boone National Forest. Renfro Valley is nationally known for the country and folk music shows, but nevertheless has retained the peaceful, rural simplicity that Hayes sought by his pioneer memorial.

"I wanted a place where it would be easy to imagine myself back on Pa and Granny Clark's cabin where I spent such happy days," Hayes said.

He bought 28 acres in the area in 1995, and hired workers to begin restoring his log house the next year.

"It took me four years to work up the courage to tackle what I knew was going to be a very difficult and expensive job, but it's really become a labor of love," he said, looking around fondly at his Brush Arbor Appalachian Pioneer Homestead.

As more people heard about his original cabin, he said he was told about other log buildings. He eventually bought two more cabins, a blacksmith's shop, a barn, a church, a corncrib and a smokehouse.

Hayes, who has spent almost every weekend for the past four years at Brush Arbor, loves to show off highlights:

"A dirt floor trapper's cabin that has the date 1797 etched in its stone fireplace.

"An early 19th century log church where a volunteer preacher holds non-denominational services every Sunday.

"The first cabin he purchased, now furnished with antiques, many of them donated by visitors.

"Many times, someone will bring an heirloom or antique that belonged to their family, saying, 'this is where

it belongs,'" Hayes says. "We catalog all those things so that owners can have them back if they want them later and they can never be sold."

Hayes says many of the antiques were found in Indiana and Pennsylvania, while the mostly pre-Civil War log cabins and outbuildings were discovered in Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio.

"When we have to take the log structures apart, we number each log and make diagrams so that we can put everything back where it belongs," he says.

That attention to authenticity is important, says Kentucky Tourism Council president Marcheta Sparrow. "In a perfect world, you would keep the structures in their original settings, but saving the logs and reconstructing the structures, as authentically as possible, is certainly better than letting them fall into ruin or be torn down," she said.

Hayes has several volunteers who help give tours, run his nearby bed-and-breakfast and prepare country-style meals for visitors.

"This place just seems to make the past come alive," says volunteer Lucille Ball Pingleton, 65, of nearby Berea.

Cora Rutledge of Blue Mountain, Miss., was a recent visitor with her 73-year-old husband, Barn. They enjoyed the pioneer village so much that they pitched in and helped when a group of antique car club members stopped by for lunch and a tour.

"I love the whole experience," says Mrs. Rutledge, 52, while dishing out fried green tomatoes and cornbread. "It reminds us of the way things were years back when people

(Cont. to B8)

Brush Arbor Festival Oct. 6, 7, 8

An ancestors appreciation festival will be held on October 6, 7 and 8 at Brush Arbor, which is located at Hummel, a short distance from Renfro Valley. The festival will include a free concert on Friday and Saturday beginning each day at 1 p.m.

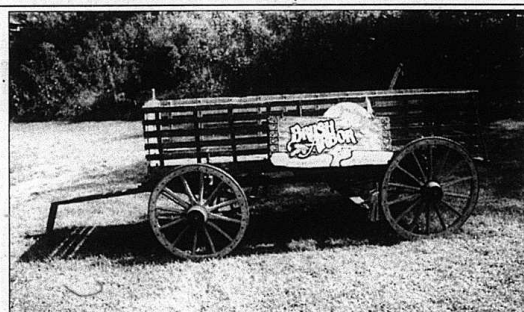
SHOW SCHEDULE

Friday October 6, 2000

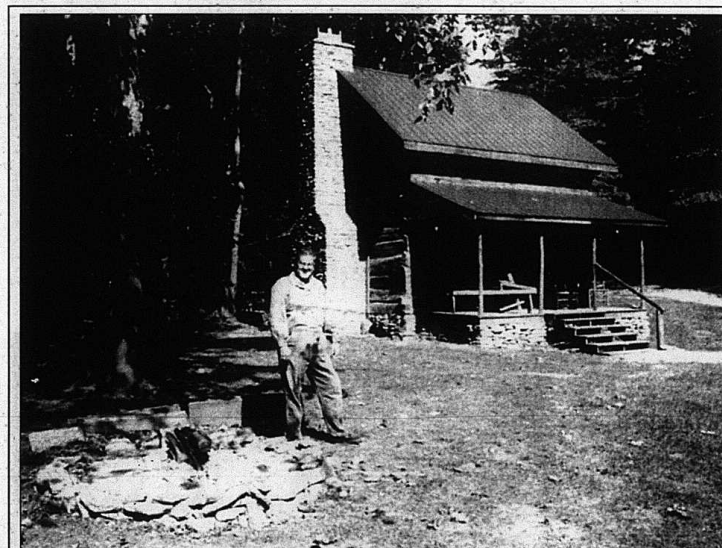
1:00 p.m.	Uncle Nathan and Aunt Nerva
	Comedy At It's Best
2:00 p.m.	Danny Wilson and Friends
	Back Porch Pickin'
2:30 p.m.	Greg Melvin
	Favorites
3:00 p.m.	Nancy and Gary Goff
	Traditional and Originals
4:00 p.m.	Mike McMillian
	Country Old and New
5:00 p.m.	Clayton Peden
	Chet Atkins Tribute
6:00 p.m.	Sara Lou and Curtis Wilson
	Husband and Wife Duet
7:00 p.m.	Doc Jones

Saturday, October 7, 2000

1:00 p.m.	Uncle Nathan and Aunt Nerva
	Comedy At It's Best
2:00 p.m.	Danny Wilson and Friends
	Back Porch Pickin'
2:30 p.m.	Greg Melvin
	Favorites
3:00 p.m.	Nancy and Gary Goff
	Traditional and Originals
4:00 p.m.	Mike McMillian
	Country Old and New
5:00 p.m.	Clayton Peden
	Chet Atkins Tribute
6:00 p.m.	Sara Lou and Curtis Wilson
	Husband and Wife Duet
7:30 p.m.	Anthony Dean
	Special Showcase



Brush Arbor is located on the Hummel Road just a short distance from Renfro Valley. Hamilton Ohio insurance agent Jerry Hayes has spent the past four years building a log cabin community in an effort to capture the simpler times of the past and honor his heritage. Brush Arbor will hold a festival on October 6, 7 and 8 and with a free concert on Friday and Saturday.



Above: Jerry Hayes stands in front of the first log cabin he restored at his Brush Arbor Appalachian Pioneer Village in Hummel. Hayes has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars building a log cabin community using original cabins.

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99 Chev. Lumina, 4 Dr., Auto, Air	\$11,500/232 Mo.
99 Olds Intrigue GL, Alloys, All Power	\$13,995/282 Mo.
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97 Nissan Pathfinder, 4x4, Auto, Loaded Burgundy	\$14,500/317 Mo.
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97 Nissan Pathfinder XE, 4x4, Auto, Loaded CD, 45K	\$15,500/312 Mo.
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