

West Carolina Tel

MARCH/APRIL 2014

CONNECTED

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Savannah Lakes touts high-speed access

FREE CLASSES

West Carolina teaches technology to seniors

ANCESTRY ANSWERS

Web opens doors for family researchers



Connected homes, connected bodies

Consumers are embracing home automation and mobile, wearable devices

By Stephen V. Smith, Editor

For decades, society has imagined what the future will look like through movies, television, comic books and novels. These images almost always portray people interacting with technology to communicate with one another and control everyday tasks.

In the past five years, that future has moved much closer to reality, thanks to the convergence of several factors:

- 1) Tech companies are creating devices that are more affordable and easier to use.
- 2) Consumer demand for such technology is increasing (*see infographic on right*).
- 3) Communications networks are delivering the bandwidth necessary to make these devices work.

Several recent news reports reveal just how fast we are moving toward a lifestyle similar to that of "The Jetsons." The global market research and consulting company MarketsandMarkets published a report in November stating that the value of the home automation and controls market is expected to reach \$48.02 billion by 2018. And in January, tech giant Google entered the home automation arena when it bought Nest Labs, the maker of advanced thermostats and smoke/carbon monoxide detectors.

The future was perhaps most evident at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), held in January in Las Vegas. Dominating the huge conference were new, wearable, connected devices that control, monitor, collect, communicate and share for a wide range of functions (*see www.cesweb.org for highlights*).

For any of this technology to work, however, consumers need access to a reliable broadband network. Whether the devices are connecting directly to the Internet, across a broadband-enabled Wi-Fi network in your home or via a cell tower, the network that our independent telecommunications providers are building is making all this functionality possible in rural America. 📶

The Ijee, a voice-activated assistant that controls home automated devices over your Wi-Fi network, was one of the many products that premiered at the Consumer Electronics Show in January.



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Accenture Digital Consumer Tech Survey 2014

New Accenture research finds digital consumers crave more devices:



One third of respondents (33%) plan to increase spending on devices in the next 12 months.

What consumers are interested in buying:

46%
Smart watch

42%
Wearable digital glasses

52%
Fitness monitor



51% of respondents expecting to buy a smartphone, plan to get a 'phablet'.



51%
Phablet



Tablet
Phone

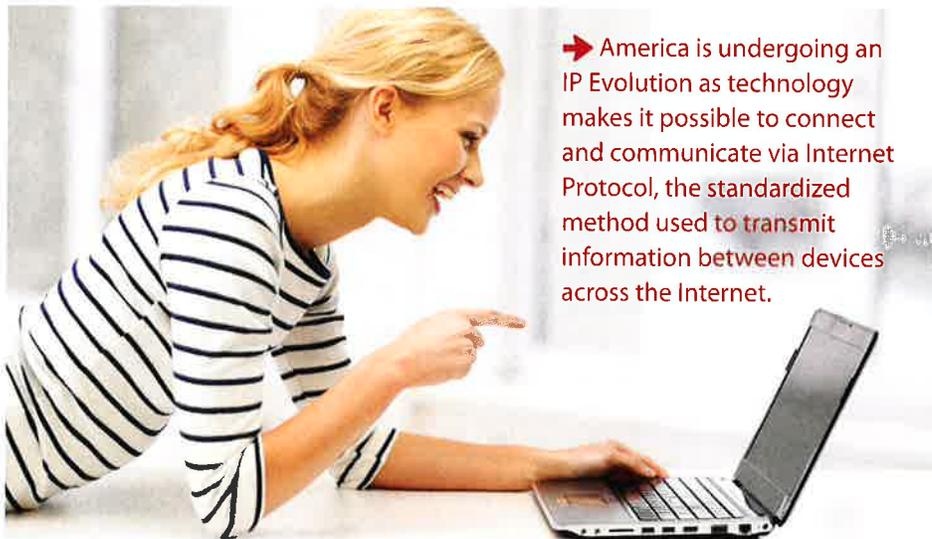
The online 2014 Accenture Digital Consumer Tech Survey was conducted in October and November 2013 among 3,024 consumers in 11 countries: Australia, Canada, India, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Respondents were equally split by gender and were at least 18 years old. This research is part of the January Accenture Days-Download, CMT's Global Digital Consumer Tech Survey involving more than 2,000 consumers in 23 countries.

Find out more: www.accenture.com/cravedevices

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The IP Evolution

Regulations need to change to support consumer demand for standalone broadband



➔ America is undergoing an IP Evolution as technology makes it possible to connect and communicate via Internet Protocol, the standardized method used to transmit information between devices across the Internet.

Basic telephone service provides a reliable connection with family members, emergency services and business opportunities. Many people today, however, use other methods for their daily conversations. Even in rural areas like ours, there is growing demand for standalone broadband Internet service that comes without the requirement of a landline phone.

While rural telecommunications companies across the nation understand and acknowledge this trend, their hands are tied when it comes to offering a true standalone broadband service. This is one of the areas telcos are addressing as a group through NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association.

NTCA has petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to consider changes to rules that punish consumers who would prefer standalone broadband. “The Universal Service system needs to be designed to accommodate those consumers who are looking for broadband but may not want telephone service,” says Mike Romano, senior vice president of policy for NTCA.

Currently, telcos such as ours receive Universal Service support based upon

whether a consumer chooses to take telephone service. Universal Service is a fee that is paid within the industry to ensure we achieve maximum value from the nation’s interconnected networks. Telecommunications companies pay into the fund, then draw from the fund based on the cost of serving consumers in their area.

“If a consumer only wants broadband, Universal Service support is lost for that consumer’s line — and their broadband rates skyrocket as a result,” explains Romano. “That is an unsustainable and, frankly, somewhat questionable public policy result of a system that is supposedly being repositioned to support broadband.

“We’ve urged the FCC to fix that,” Romano continues. “We have been in very productive conversations with them, but there are still many details to be ironed out.”

As your telecommunications provider, we will continue to work on this issue with our fellow companies through our national association. We will make sure rural consumers have a voice at the table as Washington develops regulations to guide us through the IP Evolution. ☎



Are you a cyberbully?

Childhood bullying has always been a concern. It is one of the unfortunate parts of growing up. I saw it as I grew up, my parents saw it and my kids see it today.

However, something has changed. The traditional bully has an even more evil twin — the cyberbully. Cyberbullies may never physically touch their victims, but through technology they can inflict much more damage on those they aim to hurt.

Today, a cyberbully can access their victims almost any time. They use multiple platforms to cause damage. From cell phones to social media to email, they stay connected to taunt their victims.

Some quick facts about cyberbullying:

- Girls are about twice as likely as boys to be victims — and perpetrators — of cyberbullying.
- Only 1 in 10 victims will inform a parent or trusted adult of their abuse.
- 1 in 6 parents know their child has been bullied online.

In the next “Digital Citizenship” article, I will provide tips and advice on how to identify and respond to cyberbullying.



To find more information about cyberbullying, along with some great resources for teachers, parents and teens, visit these sites:

- ▶ www.stopbullying.gov
- ▶ cyberbullying.us



Carissa Swenson is the owner and technology specialist of TechTECS, a technology training, education, consulting and support company.

Connecting you to the future

It has been almost 30 years since our imaginations were captured by the movie “Back to the Future.” One of the reasons it became the top-grossing film of 1985 is that we as humans are fascinated with the idea of seeing what the future holds.



Spend a few minutes online searching for news articles covering the recent Consumer Electronic Show (CES), and you will start to get a fairly clear picture of the future. The show is billed as “the world’s gathering place for all who thrive on the business of consumer technologies.” *(Be sure to read the article on Page 2 of this magazine for more on this topic).*

Josh Seidemann is director of policy for our national trade group, NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association. He attended CES and kept rural telcos informed about what he saw.

“You cannot leave CES without the growing sense that beginning now we are becoming increasingly connected to machines that measure, analyze and interpret our data,” wrote Seidemann at ntca.org/new-edge. “So, if I had to describe what impressed me the most, it would not be any particular product — rather, it is the proliferation of connected devices and how normal their use will become.”

Even if we’d had a time-traveling DeLorean, it would have been difficult to predict all this connectivity. In the early days of the Internet, even the tech leaders were short-sighted. Robert Metcalfe, founder of 3Com and inventor of Ethernet technology, wrote in a magazine column in 1995 that “I predict the Internet will soon go spectacularly supernova and in 1996 catastrophically collapse.”

I think it’s safe to say, 17 years later, that the Internet is here to stay.

When we first rolled out Internet service in this region, no one could have foreseen the level of connectedness we are seeing today. Already, many households have simple devices they can control with their smartphones or tablets, including security cameras and lighting controls. But change is coming fast. Think about some of these products displayed at CES, and how you might use them in your home:

- An infant sleep monitor that fits into a chest pocket of a baby’s clothing, tracking breathing, temperature and even how the baby is positioned, sending all this information to your mobile device
- A simple heart monitor you can wear comfortably that will send your electrocardiogram to your smartphone and to a physician to monitor your heart remotely
- A tiny device you can wear that will record information about your movement and activities, then display the information in an app

All this talk of the future emphasizes an important point. As your telecommunications company, we don’t know what’s coming — but through the network we are building, we are committed to equipping you to fully participate in all the future has to offer.

I think Seidemann said it best: “Sure, we could live without all the technology, but you could also hike down to the creek with a washboard to launder your old socks. Fact is, we expect electricity, we expect water, we expect broadband.” I couldn’t agree more. ☎

JEFF WILSON
Chief Executive Officer

is a member-owned cooperative dedicated to delivering advanced telecommunications technology to the people of Abbeville, Anderson and McCormick counties.

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On the Cover:



Savannah Lakes GM Kirk Smith says the community is growing and fiber connections are part of the reason. See story Page 8.

West Carolina going Google

SWITCH TO NEW APPS AND EMAIL WILL BEGIN APRIL 15



West Carolina Tel has long been known as an industry leader when it comes to new equipment and technology. So it only makes sense that the cooperative's members would have access to industry-leading email service and cloud-based apps.

Beginning April 15, member email will switch to the Google Apps suite, which includes additional premium services like calendar, instant messaging, drive/docs, personal website services and more. While Google does offer free email accounts and lower-tier versions of some of these products, West Carolina Tel members will receive premium versions of Google Apps designed specifically for Internet service providers. Advertising, contextual message screening and filtering are all turned

off, meaning Google bots are not "reading" your emails to better target advertisements.

Additionally, the email service comes with 10 GB of email storage, as well as spam and virus protection. Most importantly, the service delivers all of this cutting-edge technology with local tech support from West Carolina Tel.

But the new upgrades go way beyond email. The Google Apps include an enhanced calendar and Google Docs, which can be used to create text documents, spreadsheets and presentations.

While any change likely takes a little getting used to, we believe the upgrades will be well worth it. As always, if you have any questions please give us a call at 864-446-2111. ☎



KEY POINTS:

- ▶ Your email address will not change as a result of this upgrade.
- ▶ You will not lose any contacts, as West Carolina will copy those over to the upgraded accounts.
- ▶ Local tech support will be available at 864-446-2111.
- ▶ The upgrade will take place on April 15.

Young and Lewis win Pick-it-Bowl Challenge



Of the 300 West Carolina Tel members who participated in the cooperative's Pick-it Bowl Challenge, nobody picked them better than Chuck Young.

West Carolina Tel hosted its first ever Pick-It Bowl Challenge this season, pitting football-loving members against each other in a contest to see who could predict the winners of the most games.

While Young took the crown in the member category, West Carolina Tel's Dave Lewis had the top score in the employee class. Congratulations to our winners and we hope to see more football fans involved next year.



Dave Lewis



Chuck Young



FREE HBO and Cinemax Weekend for DE+

If you subscribe to the DE+ Bronze or Silver package, you are eligible to participate in a FREE preview of the HBO and Cinemax packages from April 4 to 7. All you need to do is call West Carolina Tel's customer service center at 864-446-2111 and ask for the FREE HBO/Cinemax preview before March 31.

Rural telcos and electric cooperatives host joint Emergency Preparedness Summit

Utility leaders come together to focus on preparing for disasters

When a region is struck by a natural disaster, quickly restoring power and lines of communication is a critical first step in rebuilding neighborhoods, communities and lives. Leaders among U.S. telecommunications companies and electric cooperatives recently gathered in the nation's capital to learn how to better prepare for potential disasters such as ice storms, hurricanes, tornadoes and floods.

The Emergency Preparedness Summit, held in November in Washington, D.C., was co-hosted by NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). The summit focused on emergency preparedness issues for rural utilities, covering such topics as emergency planning; federal, state and local policy issues; recovery after an event; best practices; mitigation and the mutual assistance network. Utilities also learned ways that social media is becoming an important tool for disseminating news to communities.



When disaster strikes, the quick restoration of telecommunications networks is vital to a community's recovery efforts.

Retired Army Lt. General Russel L. Honoré was the keynote speaker for the event. As Commander of Joint Task Force Katrina, he led the U.S. Department of Defense response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

“General Honoré had the crowd on its feet by the end of his talk,” says Shirley Bloomfield, chief executive officer of NTCA. “He preached the importance of ‘getting to the left side of disaster’ by being prepared.

“He also highlighted the incremental costs that will be spared,” she adds, “by working to prepare in advance, instead of cleaning up the aftermath of any disaster — natural, man-made or cyber.”

Utility leaders also heard from Tim Bryan, chief executive officer of the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative, who talked about plans for the nation's first interoperable, public-safety broadband network known as the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet). 📞

—From NTCA reports

SCAM ALERT

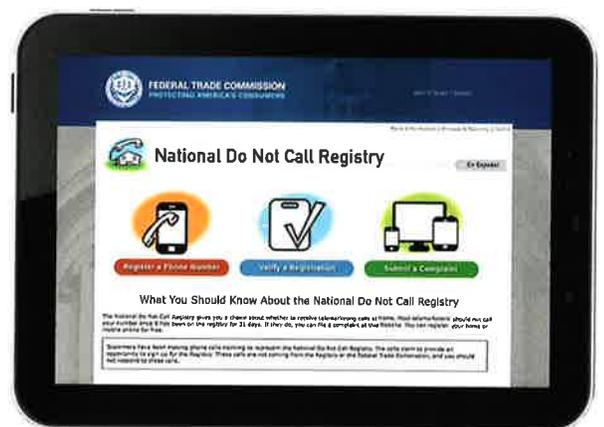
The National Do Not Call Registry will never call you

If you receive a phone call from someone claiming to represent the National Do Not Call Registry, hang up immediately.

The Federal Trade Commission has posted the following warning on the registry website:

“Scammers have been making phone calls claiming to represent the National Do Not Call Registry. The calls claim to provide an opportunity to sign up for the Registry. These calls are not coming from the Registry or the Federal Trade Commission, and you should not respond to these calls.”

The website, www.donotcall.gov, allows citizens to register their phone numbers, thereby limiting the telemarketing calls they receive. Telemarketers covered by the National Do Not Call Registry have up to 31 days from the date a phone number is registered to stop calling.



The National Do Not Call Registry website, found at www.donotcall.gov, allows visitors to register a phone number, verify a registration and submit a complaint against a telemarketer.

TIP

To protect themselves and their assets, citizens should never provide information to a caller asking for sensitive data such as date of birth, Social Security number and account numbers.

Looking for a good outdoor project this spring?

Plant a tree!

As spring arrives, homeowners start thinking about outdoor do-it-yourself projects that will add to the enjoyment of their homes while increasing its value.

One of the best investments a homeowner can make isn't a swimming pool or a deck. Planting trees, when done correctly, will deliver pleasure — and financial rewards — for years to come.

The secret to tree-planting success, however, is two-fold: planting the right tree in the right location.

THE RIGHT TREE

There are many factors to consider when selecting a tree to plant on your property:

- How tall will it grow?
- How fast will it grow?
- How much sun does it need?
- What shape will it be at maturity?
- What temperature extremes can it withstand?

Visit www.arborday.org/states and click on your state to learn what hardiness zone you live in and what trees grow well in your area.

THE RIGHT LOCATION

If you select the perfect tree but plant it in the wrong spot, you could cause problems for yourself, your neighbors and even utility workers in the future.

The illustration below shows what could be the most important tip in adding trees to your property. Never plant trees near a utility pole if those trees will grow more than 25 feet in height. Limbs growing into telecommunications or electricity lines can interrupt service for you and your neighbors, as well as cause additional work (sometimes dangerous work) for those who maintain the utility lines.

A pick and a shovel will be helpful, but the most important tool when planting trees is information. Your local nursery is often a great place to learn more about the varieties that grow well in your community. Every state has a forestry commission or department. And the Arbor Day Foundation (www.arborday.org) is one of the best-known resources to help homeowners make good tree-planting decisions. 🌳



WHY PLANT A TREE?

- ▶ Trees can add value to your home — as much as 15% by some estimates.
- ▶ Trees can lower your heating bills by 10-20%.
- ▶ Trees can lower your cooling bills by 15-35%.
- ▶ Trees can provide shelter and food for songbirds and other wildlife.

— Source: www.arborday.org



Tall trees, such as:
maple, oak, spruce,
and pine

Plant the right tree in the right place
Plant taller trees away from overhead utility lines

The diagram illustrates a house with a gabled roof and two windows. To the right of the house is a utility pole with two cross-arms. A dashed line indicates a 'Tree pruning zone' that extends from the utility pole to the left. A tree with a height of '40 feet height or less' is shown within this zone. A smaller tree with a height of '25 feet height or less' is shown to the right of the pruning zone. A person is standing next to a tree with a height of '20 ft'. A distance of '50 ft' is marked between the house and the utility pole.

Medium trees, such as:
washington hawthorn
and goldenrain tree

Small trees, such as:
redbud, dogwood,
and crabapple

STOP!
BEFORE YOU
PLANT A TREE:

LOOK UP to make sure the tree you are planting is far enough away from utility lines.

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG
Call "811" to have underground utilities located, to ensure you don't dig into lines. You could interrupt power, broadband, phone, gas or water for you and your neighbors!

Arbor Day Foundation™
arborday.org

Neighborhood network

Developer says fiber Internet is a major selling point

BY ANDY JOHNS

Kirk Smith, general manager of Savannah Lakes, says residents in the community want golf and tennis opportunities, but also want to stay connected.

In real estate, conventional thinking always goes back to “location, location, location.”

But as technology moves forward, some developers like Kirk Smith are adding one factor to that phrase: “location, location, location — and high-speed Internet.”

“In today’s industry, if you don’t have broadband, your community isn’t going to develop,” says Smith, general manager of Savannah Lakes Community. “It is amazing how many communities are in a death-spiral right now because they can’t get high-speed Internet access. I’ve seen fire sales from developers who couldn’t develop their sites because they didn’t have access.”

Savannah Lakes, located on and around the finger-like branches of land protruding into Lake Thurmond near the U.S. 378 bridge, already has 1,100 homes built with room for 3,900 more. The community boasts two challenging golf courses, tennis courts, a restaurant, clubhouses, lake access and phenomenal views.

And while the marketing materials Smith and others hand out to potential buyers make sure to mention those features, the brochures highlight access to South Carolina’s first large-scale fiber network — built by West Carolina Tel.

“This is the new interstate,” Smith says. “Now it’s just about leveraging the investment that’s been made in infrastructure.”

Smith says high-speed Internet access has become increasingly important to Baby Boomers, which comprise a large percentage of the owners in the community. Inside the community they use the Internet to schedule tee times or make dinner reservations. The Web also makes it possible for them to shop online or video chat with grandchildren who live far away.

“I think connecting with friends and family is number one,” Smith says. “I think the technology has encouraged our members of all ages to be more tech savvy.”

He knows of one couple that moved down from Chicago, in part because the



Fiber Internet connections are a major selling point for prospective buyers.

connection from West Carolina would allow them to run their home-based business from Savannah Lakes. He also knows of other families who say the dependable connection was a major factor in their decision to buy.

“It all comes down to what makes us unique,” Smith says. “Pairing our natural resources with technology makes us very unique.” 📞

TECH SCHOOL

West Carolina Tel partners to teach computer skills to area residents

School is in session. In partnership with Abbeville County Adult Education, West Carolina Tel is offering residents free CLICKS Classes (Customers Learning Internet, Computer and Keyboard Skills).

So far about 150 people have completed the six-hour program, which is split over two days.

“They’re really just wanting to learn,” says Lana Botts, who organizes many of the classes. “It’s very rewarding when you see something finally click.”

Harold Campbell, director of Abbeville Adult Education, says he’s excited about working with West Carolina. “It’s worked out for both of us,” he says.

The feedback he’s gotten from students has been very positive. “They’ve thoroughly enjoyed the classes,” Campbell says. “It whets their appetite. They all leave wanting to learn more.”

Chuck Nash, coordinator of the program, says he shares the students’ enthusiasm. “West Carolina Tel is the technology leader, so it only makes sense that members would come to us for training like this,” Nash says. “When the cooperative brought telephone service to the region, people had to be taught to use the phones. By offering these classes we are equipping our members with the skills they need to communicate in the digital world.”

START WITH THE BASICS

Botts says the classes are set up with an open, friendly atmosphere and the pace is just right for novice computer users. “They’re usually beginners,” Botts says. “We start out very basic. The main thing they want to be able to do is to get online

Fonda Taylor makes a point as she goes over Internet basics with a class.



and search.”

Classes are capped at 15 people, but most have included between eight and 10 students. This gives the instructors time to spend with each student. Getting to know the participants’ needs is a big part of making the class successful. Some want to talk about shopping online, while others need more help with email. “A lot of them will say that’s the only way that they can keep up with their grandkids,” Botts says.

But the class isn’t just for senior adults. Campbell says he has pointed others toward Nash and Botts, including some who have been laid off in plant closures and need technology skills. “If they’re going to apply for a job, they’re going to have to do it online,” he says.

Even the GED test, a major focus of Campbell’s department, has moved to the Web, and those who are not comfortable with a computer have a tougher time. “Our testing used to be paper and pencil — now it’s all online,” he says.

Nash says the class is open to anyone, and he, Campbell and Botts are looking at expanding with new courses or new locations. “There are plenty of people in our service area who can benefit from this class,” Nash says. “Technology is moving onward and upward and we want to be sure our members aren’t left behind.” ☎



Chuck Nash, left, Deborah Ayers and Harold Campbell say the partnership between West Carolina and Abbeville Adult Education benefits the community and the organizations.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Monday and Wednesday
9 a.m. to Noon
Abbeville Adult Education
Building

Tuesday and Thursday
4 to 7 p.m.
Abbeville Career Center

Registration required.
Call 864-446-2111.

ONE PIECE AT A TIME



Factory tours offer a glimpse of the hard work needed to create the products America loves

BY PATRICK SMITH

Headlines may say America's manufacturing base is slowly dwindling, but across the Southeast there are thousands of businesses creating the products that people drive, play, eat and otherwise use everyday. From the popularization of the assembly line by Henry Ford in the early 1900s to the thousands of robots that help to manufacture today's vehicles, factories can be one of the best examples of American ingenuity — and fascinating places to visit. Not all of the factories spread throughout the South offer tours, but here are a few that are built to please visitors.

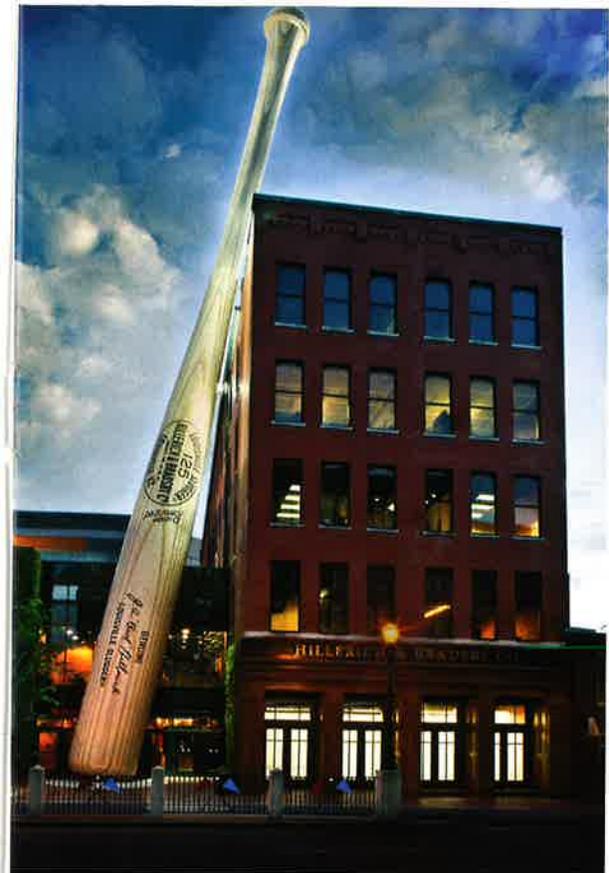


GIBSON GUITAR – Memphis, Tenn.

Long before a man named Les Paul revolutionized the sound of the electric guitar, Gibson was creating some of the world's best musical instruments. Today, Gibson's instruments are still shaping the world of music, including their signature solid-body Les Paul models. See the wood transform into a musical masterpiece as visitors to Gibson Beale Street Showcase in Memphis, Tenn., watch the skilled luthiers go through the intricate process of binding, neck-fitting, painting, buffing and tuning the classic instruments. If Memphis is too far away, Gibson's Nashville store in Opry Mills Mall showcases craftsmen building guitars throughout the week.

More information: www2.gibson.com/Gibson/Gibson-Tours.aspx





▶ **LOUISVILLE SLUGGER** – Louisville, Ky.

Celebrating America's pastime could be difficult without the creation of Bud Hillerich. Along with his partner Frank Bradsby, Hillerich popularized the baseball bat and by 1923 they were selling more bats than any of their competitors. For most familiar with the sport, their creation – known today as the Louisville Slugger – has become as synonymous with the game of baseball as the player's glove and a fan's hot dog. Patrons can take a guided tour through the entire process – visitors even receive a free miniature Louisville Slugger bat – at the Louisville Slugger Museum and Factory in Louisville, Ky.

More information: www.sluggermuseum.com

▶ **MAYFIELD DAIRY** – Athens, Tenn.

From their humble beginnings in 1910 with 45 Jersey cows, Mayfield has grown into one of America's treasured dairy brands — all while keeping the family-owned business based in small town Athens, Tenn. The educational, behind-the-scenes tour walks visitors through the history of the brand and the creation of their delicious milk, ice cream and many other products. Didn't get your fill of ice cream? Just 20 minutes away, travelers can visit Sweetwater Valley Farm and see how a modern dairy farm operates.

More information: www.mayfelddairy.com and www.sweetwatervalley.com/tours.html



▶ **CHARLESTON TEA PLANTATION** – Wadmalaw Island, S.C.

With the beautiful setting in the Lowcountry of South Carolina, enjoying a cup of tea is practically a bonus rather than the main attraction at the Charleston Tea Plantation in Wadmalaw Island, S.C. During a factory tour, visitors can not only see how American Classic Tea is made, but they can also take a trolley ride through more than 127 acres of farmland with breathtaking Camellia Sinensis tea plants as far as the eye can see.

More information: www.charlestonteaplantation.com/tours/factory-tours.aspx



▶ **TOYOTA** – Georgetown, Ky.

Outside of Japan, car enthusiasts can find Toyota's largest vehicle manufacturing plant in the Bluegrass state. Employing more than 7,000 workers and producing nearly 2,000 vehicles every day, Toyota's Georgetown, Ky., facility covers 7.5 million square feet of floor space — the equivalent of 156 football fields. Visitors can see the five different vehicles and three engine models being built during the roughly two-hour plant tour.

More information: www.toyotageorgetown.com/tour.asp

▶ **GOLDEN FLAKE** – Birmingham, Ala.

Once endorsed by legendary Alabama football coach Paul "Bear" Bryant, Golden Flake snack foods still hold true to their Southern roots at their operation in Birmingham, Ala. Would you believe that more than 1 million pounds of chipping potatoes are processed in a normal week at their factory? Guests can follow the process as potatoes and corn sweep through conveyor belts to create and fill up to 100 bags per minute of finished snack foods, which are then ready to be shipped to convenience stores throughout their 12-state market.

More information: www.goldenflake.com/walkingtour.html



Still want to see more? Each of these factories have tours available:

- Honda Manufacturing in Lincoln, AL
- Hyundai Manufacturing in Montgomery, AL
- Blue Bell Ice Cream in Sylacauga, AL
- George Dickel Tennessee Whisky in Normandy, TN
- Jack Daniel's Distillery in Lynchburg, TN
- Ale-8-1 soft drink in Winchester, KY
- Rebecca-Ruth Candies in Frankfort, KY
- General Motors Corvette Manufacturing in Bowling Green, KY
- Maker's Mark Distillery in Loretto, KY



FAMILY CONNECTION

Genealogists say research is more accessible than ever

BY ANDY JOHNS

In the time it takes to get from Abbeville to Myrtle Beach, Dr. Constance McNeill crossed an ocean and completed months' worth of research.

McNeill had traced her family line back to Ireland in 1850, but wanted to know more about her roots in the Mother Country. She looked up contact information online for a genealogical society in Ireland and emailed them a request for more information.

Without an Internet connection, it would have taken months and possibly a trip overseas to get the information. It's a different story with broadband. "Within four hours I had an answer," says McNeill, an Abbeville resident and past president of the South Carolina Genealogical Society.

The Internet has made family research more accessible than ever before and allows people to conduct a lifetime of study in a fraction of the time.

"Every day, more and more stuff is coming online," she says. "There's more out there than people realize. Way more than people realize."

PUTTING STORIES IN HISTORY

McNeill sees genealogy as less of an accounting of relatives and more of piecing together where a family has been and why they left.

"You've got to know the history of what's going on and why these people would want to leave their families and move," she says.

The older families in Abbeville County generally descend from German Palatines, French Huguenots, Scotch-Irish or Africans.

“It’s like doing a jigsaw puzzle — you have one piece here and one piece there, but eventually they all come together.”

— Dr. Constance McNeill

Many families from Abbeville headed west to settlements in Alabama, Mississippi and then Texas.

McNeill says genealogists notice patterns such as second, third and fourth sons moving away. It was also common for one child in a family to remain unmarried. Both such circumstances have explanations, McNeill says. Eldest sons got all of the land inheritance, which meant younger children often moved out to make their own fortunes.

As for the unmarried child, he or she usually remained unattached to take care of aging parents.

“It’s like doing a jigsaw puzzle — you have one piece here and one piece there, but eventually they all come together,” McNeill says.

Beyond the conventional documents like the census and birth, death and marriage certificates, McNeill says researchers should also consider Agricultural Censuses of 1850, 1860 and 1870, as well as the Slave Census of 1850 and 1860. They should also look at wills for inventories of possessions. “That in itself can give you an idea of what a person did,” she says.

McNeill, who has a doctorate in science and used to teach biology and chemistry, says one of the reasons she likes genealogy is the ability to further her education.

“I’ve learned more history doing this than I learned in school,” she says.



Dr. Constance McNeill says the Abbeville Library has many resources for those researching family histories, but an ever-increasing collection of key documents and records is available on the Internet.

FAMILY TREE MEETS TECHNOLOGY

McNeill says that these days, 80 percent of her research happens online, whether it’s combing databases, perusing documents or emailing other researchers.

It’s a far cry from when McNeill started

her research 50 years ago, in the days before photocopies. She had to hand-copy pages from historic documents at libraries or courthouses in the towns where her ancestors used to live.

“It cuts down a lot on travel,” McNeill says. “You used to have to go to the places where your ancestors lived if you even knew where.”

A number of databases, websites and organizations offer genealogical information, both free and paid and at varying levels of accuracy. When McNeill speaks to historical societies or genealogy groups around the state, she is quick to point out that, as with books or other information, researchers must evaluate the validity of the facts based on primary sources.

“It gives you a clue and then your task is to find something that verifies that,” McNeill says.

But despite all of the advances in technology, some of the best clues, McNeill says, will always come from older family members. “Find out who has the family Bible,” she suggests. “You never know what you’re going to find.” ☎

❖ START YOUR RESEARCH HERE:

- South Carolina Department of Archives and History - www.scdah.sc.gov
- South Carolina Library - library.sc.edu
- Ellis Island Archives - www.ellisland.org
- WorldGenWeb Project - www.worldgenweb.org
- Access Genealogy - www.accessgenealogy.com
- AfriGeneas - www.afriGeneas.com
- Ancestry.com - www.ancestry.com
- Find A Grave - www.findagrave.com
- Freeprf.com - www.freeprf.com
- Family Search - www.familysearch.org
- I Dream of Genealogy - www.idreamof.com
- National Archives and Records Administration - www.archives.gov

Coming around to sweet potatoes

I've had a love-hate relationship with sweet potatoes for 10 years. The 40 years before that, it was mostly the latter. I never cared for them. My parents once tried to convince me that a baked sweet potato was just as good as a baked Idaho potato. Never fell for that one. But that's my bad. It was about a decade ago, though, that sweet potato fries became trendy in restaurants. And chefs began using them in place of white potatoes when they served roasted vegetables. And of course, there are the bags of sweet potato chips that are hard to resist. Oh, and I can never tire of Ruth's Chris Steak House's sweet potato casserole as a side dish or dessert with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Sweet potatoes are one of the healthiest foods on the planet. They contain lots of fiber and vitamins B6, C and E. They have almost double the amount of potassium as a banana, and are loaded with beta carotene which our bodies convert into vitamin A. Those tubers appear to be health-boosting ninjas. So if you can eat one without all the fat added through frying or with all the fattening additives used in making a casserole, more power — and good health — to you.



Anne P. Braly
Food Editor

Sweet potatoes get their day in the sun

Sweet potatoes — they're not just for holiday meals anymore. With the popularity of sweet potato chips and fries, more farmers are growing them than ever before and more consumers are enjoying them year round.

Evelyn Rudd has lived her life in Benton, Ky., a town that has an affinity for the once-lowly spud. There was a time when farmers came in droves to sell their sweet potatoes on the town square. Soon, it grew into a huge community event. Now, 170 years later, the folks of Benton roll out the red carpet in honor of sweet potatoes.

"In the past, there was a huge focus on sweet potatoes and people selling them," Evelyn recalls. Now, she says, it draws vendors selling a variety of food and wares. It's a festival atmosphere that draws crowds from in town and out. "The whole town shuts down."

Evelyn grew up eating sweet potatoes. Her mother had a garden, and the family ate them year round. "I've always loved them," she says.

For decades, Americans mainly consumed sweet potatoes in casseroles flowing with butter and marshmallows on Thanksgiving and Christmas, resulting in dishes full of flavor, but also fat and calories. In recent years, however, this mainstay of southern agriculture has charted new territories — on restaurant menus, in healthy drinks and as frozen french fries and tater tots on grocery store aisles.

Sweet potatoes are loaded with nutrition.



Evelyn Rudd

Just one cup of mashed sweet potatoes gives you healthy doses of vitamin A, critical for eye health, and vitamin B6, needed for heart health. So eating them with as few additives as possible is the healthiest way to go.

"Most of the time I bake them like a regular baked potato, but I top them with butter and cinnamon or nutmeg," says Evelyn.

Just like any good cook, she has a library of cookbooks, their pages dog-eared and stained through years of use, the mark of any seasoned cook. And it's her sweet potato recipes that get the most use.

"There's just something about Kentucky soil that makes our sweet potatoes even sweeter," she says. ☎



TATER DAY

The Kiwanis Club of Benton, Ky., is gearing up for its biggest event of the year, the annual **Tater Day**, celebrating the town's beloved relationship with sweet potatoes. It's always held on the first Monday in April, which this year falls on April 7. Now in its 170th year, it continues to grow in popularity. Folks from near and far come for a day of old-fashioned fun. The town closes up and the festival opens with a big parade.

It all started when local farmers would bring their sweet potatoes and their potato slips to the court square to sell them. There are still a few vendors who sell sweet potatoes, but these days it's more about having fun and enjoying horse races, mule pulls and other contests, including the always-popular barbecue cook-off. It's a day for old-fashioned fun sponsored by the Benton Kiwanis Club. For more information or to see what's cooking for the 2014 Tater Day, log onto www.bentonkykiwanisclub.org.



SWEET POTATO PIE

- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 1 1/2 cups mashed sweet potatoes
- 3 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

Cream together butter and sugar. Add hot potatoes and eggs. Mix well. Mix in syrup, milk, salt, vanilla and cinnamon. Pour into a 9-inch unbaked pie crust. Bake 10 minutes at 425° F. Reduce heat to 325° F and bake until done.

Perfect pies, super soufflés

Caramel Sweet Potato Soufflé

Soufflé:

- 3 cups cooked and mashed sweet potatoes
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 2 eggs, beaten
- Pinch of nutmeg
- Pinch of salt
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

Caramel sauce:

- 1 1/2 cups white sugar, divided
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 tablespoon butter

For soufflé: Mix all soufflé ingredients, pour into soufflé dish or casserole and bake at 350° F for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and, while still warm, top with caramel sauce and serve.

To make caramel sauce: Caramelize 1/2 cup sugar by putting in skillet over medium heat; cook, stirring, until sugar is golden brown; set aside. In separate pan,

add 1 cup sugar to milk and cook slowly until bubbly; add butter and stir until melted and combined. Mix in caramelized sugar, stirring to combine. Pour over sweet potatoes.

Sweet Potato Bread

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 1/4 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons allspice
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup mashed sweet potatoes
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans

Mix together dry ingredients; add eggs, sweet potatoes, milk and olive oil; mix until thoroughly blended. Stir in nuts, then pour into a 9- by 5-inch loaf pan. Bake in preheated 350° F oven for 1 hour 15 minutes (if using a dark nonstick pan reduce oven heat to 325° F). Check

for doneness by inserting toothpick in center of loaf. Cool in pan for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack.

Sweet Potato Cobbler

- 2 cups thinly sliced sweet potatoes
- 4 cups water
- 1 1/2 cups sugar, divided
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup milk
- Nutmeg, to taste

Bring sweet potatoes and water to boil, cooking until tender; drain potatoes, then add 1 cup sugar and butter; set aside. In separate bowl, mix together oil, 1/2 cup sugar, flour and milk; pour into greased baking dish. Add hot sweet potatoes over batter. Sprinkle with nutmeg. Bake in 350° F oven for 20 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Crust will envelope sweet potatoes as cobbler cooks. 🍴

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