

# Old school to house nursery center

VIRGINIANA FILE

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*PWC - H. Stone 5/7/75*  
*Catharpin Sch. 1/1*  
THE old red school house in Catharpin will become a commercial Garden Center in March, owned by John Norman of Haymarket and operated by Charles Peccora of Aldie, former gardener for Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon of Upper-ville.

Peccora said the garden center will offer everything from seeds, transplants, hanging baskets, and fertilizer to pesticide, shrubs and trees. In addition to gardening supplies and equipment, customers can get professional help with landscaping, Peccora said.

The school house will be moved back on the lot several yards, to provide more room for parking and a new foundation with full basement. The building is in pretty good structural shape, Peccora said, but it will be painted and spruced up. Greenhouses and lath houses will be added. There's a good chance that owner John Norman may obtain the original bell to hang in the cupola, Peccora said.

Charles Peccora thinks the time is right to start a new garden center in western Prince William. "When times are not so good, people turn toward horticulture. They don't go away from home as much, so they spend more time with their own lawn and garden."



The old Catharpin School will become a "garden center" in March. Charles Peccora, former gardener for Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, will be in charge.

PECCORA has the professional expertise to operate a garden and landscape center. He was the chief gardener for the Paul Mellons for 18 years. When he left

the Mellons, in 1973, Mrs. Mellon wrote a letter of recommendation which reads: "Charles Peccora is among the best professional gardeners of our time. His know-

ledge of growing things and administration makes him capable of working in all horticultural fields."

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## Two former teachers recall school days

THE Catharpin School was one of the principal reasons the village of Catharpin developed, according to a recent article by Renn Conner in "Echoe of History." This spring, the Catharpin School building will become the focus of a commercial revival in this western Prince William village. (See the separate article.)

There was only one school in western Prince William's Gainesville District, at Haymarket, in the late nineteenth century. But impassable roads meant than children of families living on the old Chapman land were often unable to attend. That's why the junction of Sudley Road and Pageland Lane was selected in 1974 as the location for another public school in western Prince William. About the same time, George Sanders built a store on the opposite side of the same intersection and the village of Catharpin began. A larger school was soon needed, so a bigger one room school was built in 1890.

Two former teachers at the Catharpin school, Mrs. Eleanor Brower of Purcellville and Mrs. Charles Ristedt of Haymarket, were delighted to hear this week that the old school building, unused since the county polling place was changed in 1971, has been saved from further deterioration and will become a "garden center."

ELEANOR Cushing Wilkins started her teaching career at Catharpin in 1905. She was only 17, and some of her pupils were older. But discipline was never a problem, even with the boys she said.

"We had 72 children in eight grades in one room. Of course, sometimes the boys would take the long plaits of the girls sitting in front and dip them in the ink well on their desk. But there wasn't much badness. That was then; I wouldn't teach school now for all the tea in China."

Miss Wilkins remembers "really transforming things" when she told each of the children to bring his own cup. "Until then, they

all drank out the same cup from the same wooden bucket.

By 1913, Miss Wilkins had so many pupils the county allowed her to have an assistant. So Miss Wilkins took the older students, in grades 4-8, to house "up the road." The assistant taught the younger students. In 1913, the "west wing" was added and "we moved back to the big school."

SINCE children were of dif-

ferent ages and sizes, Miss Wilkins wanted adjustable seats for the desks, but she was told the county couldn't afford them. So she talked the county into

"matching" what she could raise and gave an oyster supper at the school house in order to raise her share. "Some of the girls

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Eleanor Wilkins Brower



Frances Dorsey Ristedt

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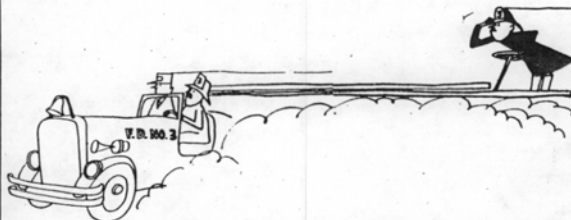
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At the Mellons, Peccora was in charge of a staff of 16 permanent gardeners and eight boys for summer help. He was responsible for "the growing greenhouses, a snow greenhouse, a formal English walled garden, extensive lawns, orchards, espalier hedges, vegetable and fruit gardens and cut flower gardens." He also helped Mrs. Mellon establish wildflowers in the woods on the estate.

With Mrs. Mellon, Charles Peccora worked on the White House Rose Garden, the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden and White House floral arrangements during the Kennedy and Johnson years.

Charles Peccora and his wife Kit, (whom he met while both of them were apprentices at the New York Botanical Gardens) have visited private gardens, Botanical

Gardens and parks in eight countries, while they were employed by the Mellons.

**AFTER** leaving Upperville, Peccora became grounds manager at Hillwood in Washington, D. C., the estate of the late Mrs. Majorie Merriweather Post which became a part of the Smithsonian Institution after her death. But Peccora's position was eliminated after funds for maintaining the estate were reduced. That's when he found out John Norman was looking for someone to operate a garden center in the old Catharpin School.

Norman already owned some gardening equipment and had a small staff. He developed Evergreen Country Club Estates and had started his limited gardening business to serve buyers in that subdivision who wanted to have

their lawns planted and landscaped. Norman has owned the old Catharpin School for sometime and decided that would be a good location for a garden center. There's quite a potential market with all the new houses in western Prince William, Peccora said.

Americans are paying more attention to gardening, Peccora said, but not as much as Europeans. He remembered visiting a pub,

during one of the trips he made to England while employed for the Mellons, and hearing several local pub customers having quite a discussion over who grew the finest roses, who had the earliest crop of peas or the neatest rows. That preoccupation with gardening is perhaps a way off in the future for this country, Charlie Peccora plans to do his part to direct things that way.—Pekay Pettus

## Two teachers

From Page 9

would fix up a basket dinner and the boys would bid to share that dinner with her. I remember the two girls who got the most bids—Mary Akers and Louise Ellison. Enough money was made to buy the seats.

Miss Wilkins' arranged for one of the students who needed money to come to school early each day to clean and start up the stove. "I paid her out of my own salary, which was \$35 a month."

Many students from the Catharpin School went off to fight in World War I, Miss Wilkins said. Her last year at the school was the year the War began, 1917. Emory Pugh, Willoughby Pugh, George Knight, Nallie Beaumont, Meredith Poland, Harry Poland and Currell Pattie were among those who became soldiers, she said.

FRANCES Dorsey of Clarke County, later to be Mrs. Holmes Robertson and now Mrs. Ernest

## Mr. Hall named

**AT THE** end of December Dr. Robert A. Meyer's term on the Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services (Chapter 10) Board expired. At their December meeting, Fauquier's Supervisors appointed the Rev. Wyman Hall of Marshall to fill the vacancy.

Dr. Meyer, a resident of Casanova and a psychologist for the Fauquier County School Board, leaves the regional Chapter 10 Board after having served two years as its Chairman. He is credited with having led the Board through the initial development of its programs.□

Ristedt of Gainesville, taught with Eleanor Wilkins, the last year Miss Wilkins taught at Catharpin.

"I'm sure she's told you everything I could," Mrs. Ristedt said. But she remembered that some of the older boys would take a curl of Eleanor Wilkins' twirl it around their fingers, saying "Now Miss Eleanor..."

Mrs. Brower taught a year at the Old Stone House at Manassas and later at Round Hill after leaving Catharpin. Mrs. Ristedt later taught at Paris and Rector-town.

## Harper

Wilmer B. Harper Jr., 50, of Middleburg, died Saturday, January 17, at Winchester Memorial Hospital following a fall from a horse on January 13.

Mr. Harper is survived by his wife, Helen; a daughter, Linda Lee, and a son, William B. Harper III, all of Middleburg. He is also survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wilmer B. Harper Sr.

Graveside services were held at Emmanuel Episcopal Cemetery, Middleburg at 1 p.m., January 19.□

## Retired senior citizens invited

Senior Citizens 60 years and older are invited to join the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). RSVP is an active group which does volunteer work with the Senior Nutrition Program, the Red Cross Senior Transportation Program, the Telephone Reassurance Program and the Home Demonstration program.

RSVP also helps out at the Loudoun Museum, the Loudoun Memorial Hospital, the Shawnee Nursing Home, the Manassas Manor nursing home, the Senior Center and the Mental Health Day Treatment Center. Volunteers also make friendly visits to elderly persons and help with the LARC program.

To join the RSVP, call Bea Lassiter or Brenda Milburn at 338-4123, or visit the Loudoun Valley Community in Purcell vill.



## CARD OF THANKS

I wish to express my appreciation to all the friends and neighbors who were so considerate and thoughtful following my late husband's accident and death.

Helen Harper and the children

# STATE LICENSES DUE

## STATE BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSES DUE BY JANUARY 31st.

All State Business and Professional Licenses must be gotten by January 31st to avoid the 10% penalty. Merchants selling tobacco must obtain a tobacco license.

Any person, firm, or corporation selling pistols must obtain a State license.

All coin-operated machines are licensed by the State and County.

These licenses may be gotten at the Commissioner of the Revenue's Office, Fauquier Court and Office Building.

ALICE JANE CHILDS  
Commissioner of the Revenue  
1-28

## FILING OF RETURNS FOR INDIVIDUALS, BUSINESSES & CORPORATIONS

A representative from the Commissioner of the Revenue's Office will be at the following places to assist taxpayers with the preparation of their personal property returns.

PLACE	LOCATION	DATE
Catlett	State Bank of Remington	February 3, 1976
Warrenton	Bank of Warrenton	February 4, 1976
Remington	State Bank of Remington	February 10, 1976
Warrenton	Peoples National Bank (Shopping Center)	February 11, 1976
Marshall	Marshall National Bank	February 17, 1976
Delaplane	Delaplane Store	February 19, 1976
The Plains	Fauquier National Bank	February 24, 1976
Bealeton	State Bank of Remington	February 26, 1976
Gainesville	Fauquier National Bank	March 2, 1976
Morrisville	Bank of Warrenton	March 4, 1976
Hume	Leeds Parish House	March 9, 1976
Markham	Old Post Office Building	March 11, 1976
Orlean	Orlean Firehouse	March 16, 1976
Goldvein	Monroe's Store	March 30, 1976
Upperville	Upperville Day Care Center	April 6, 1976

Returns will be accepted at the Fauquier Court and Office Building Monday through Friday 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. To avoid the ten percent penalty file BEFORE MAY 1.

ALICE JANE CHILDS  
Commissioner of the Revenue