

Potomac People



The 'Red School' now has greenhouses, lath house

Old bell rings again

One-room schoolhouse is now a nursery

"Is the schoolmaster there?" asked the caller. "This is he," replied Charles Peccora into the telephone.

Peccora chuckled about the recent call to the Red School Nursery and Garden Center, which he manages at Catharpin, minutes away from Manassas.

For the Red School is actually that. It was built around 1890 as a one-room schoolhouse for the tiny community of

Catharpin, since the farm children couldn't attend school in Haymarket because of impassable roads.

"We were pleased we were able to get the old school bell back," said owner John Norman of Normany Realty, Inc., who was responsible for restoring the schoolhouse and saving it from vandals.

Now, just like in days gone by, the school bell in the cupola rings at 12 noon sharp

to tell the farmers it's time to eat

And students, who once sat in and studied from the tablets and for the pot belly stove, corn managers Katharine and Charles and tell them they had gone there. Some of the teachers, returned to look and reminisce

During the restoration it was found the building was in pretty good shape and much of the original woodwork was saved. Over 100 another room was added to the building. The building was moved back highway to make room for park two greenhouses and a lath house been added as well as rest room

With Christmas nearing the Red School is bursting with holiday decorations live greens. One wreath is also around and was made at the nursery. Another unusual one is made of berries and trimmed in a red ribbon. Beside the traditional poinsettia, there are poinsettias (long-lasting) and pink.

The nursery will have cut 100 Christmas trees plus live trees to be planted outdoors after Christmas. Trees will include Blue Spruce, Spruce, Scotch Pine.

To preserve a cut Christmas tree Peccora advises adding sugar to for longer freshness and taking it so off the bottom of the tree so it in the sugar and water and spray with wilt-proofing.

Ornaments and Christmas decorations



Catharpin School before it's restoration

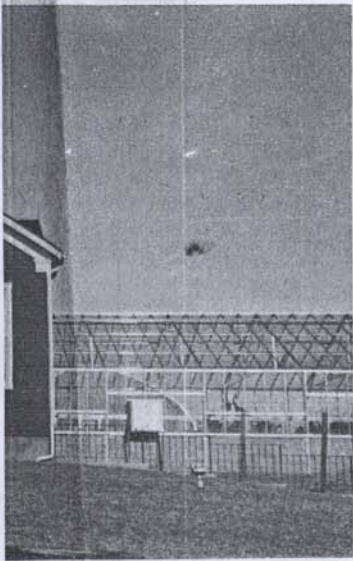


Potomac News

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Charles Peccora in front of giant cone wreath



gain a nursery

For the farmers it's time to eat. Students, who once sat in the school building, have moved to a new home. The pot belly stove, come up to see Mrs. Katharine and Charles Peccora. They had gone to school with some of the teachers, too. Have a look and reminisce.

During the restoration it was found that the building was in pretty good structural condition and much of the original wood and brick was saved. Over the years, a new room was added to the building. The building was moved back from the street to make room for parking. Now, there are greenhouses and a lath house have been added as well as rest rooms.

With Christmas nearing the Red School is being decorated with holiday decorations and plants. One wreath is about 4 feet high and was made at the nursery. An unusual one is made of cranberries and trimmed in a red-checked fabric. Beside the traditional red poinsettia, there are poinsettia in white (and pink).

The nursery will have cut Douglas Fir and Scotch Pine trees plus live trees which can be used outdoors after Christmas. Live trees include Blue Spruce, White Scotch Pine.

To preserve a cut Christmas tree, Peccora advises adding sugar to the water to keep it fresh and taking an inch or so from the bottom of the tree so it can take water and spray the tree with a preservative.

For Christmas decorations,

handcarved from Germany, are also available in the store, as well as cut holly, live materials, mistletoe and magnolia branches.

A newly-added dried flower room features things like French bouquets, German Statice, Alaska Fern, Leather Leaf fern, cattails, and bamboo.

Many of the wreaths and decorations were made by Mrs. Peccora and Joyce Finnegan of Manassas. For the more ambitious there are natural greens to make into kissing balls, straw wreaths to decorate, pine cones, pine ropes and other supplies.

Beginning Dec. 10, the Red School will be open until 8 p.m. in the evening for the holidays. The School House is open seven days a week and those desiring directions may call 754-7173.

Peccora met his wife when they were both apprentices at the New York Botanical Gardens. Peccora went on to work at the J. P. Morgan Estate and later came to Upperville, Va., where he was head gardener for the Paul Mellons. At the Mellons, he took charge of their gardens in Upperville as well as their homes in Washington, New York and in Antigua, where he also trained the native help in

gardening. He remained for 18 years with a staff of 16 gardeners and eight summer helpers under his direction.

Later he became grounds manager at Hillwood, the Washington, D. C. estate of the late Majorie Merriweather Post, which became a part of the Smithsonian, after her death. Then, the Peccoras came to the Red School, which opened in April.

New things are always being added at the school-nursery. Like bird feeders, Bonsai Trees (and kits) and soon Peccora, who keeps busy on landscaping jobs, hopes to be adding orchids in the new greenhouses along with other houseplants.

And on the school slates, written in chalk, there is usually a new gardening tip written by the "schoolmaster."

*Each day at noon
the bell rings
for the farmers*