

VIRGINIANA FILE JUN 6 1984
P.W.C. - Historic Bldgs (Rockledge)

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Potomac people



Colleen Ewart, manager of catering service, in front of Rockledge

By Mark Milligan — Potomac News

REFERENCE



Co-owner LaVerne Carson works in kitchen

Historic Rockledge site of wedding receptions

Rockledge, which has seen its share of unhappy times since it was built in 1758, will soon see happier times as the setting for wedding receptions.

Blasting from the nearby quarry in years gone by is said to have damaged the historic Occoquan house and more recently a devastating fire seemed to have doomed it for good.

But Rockledge — built by John Ballendine, a founder and early industrialist of Occoquan — will be taking on new life this spring as a small group of women launch a catering service which will use Rockledge as the site of wedding receptions in its restored downstairs rooms with its wide-board pine flooring and foot thick walls.

"It's a very interesting house," said LaVerne Carson, who is co-owner of Rockledge Catering with her partner, Pat Bowen. Colleen Ewart will be the catering manager. Rockledge Catering is a division of Country Kitchen, also in Occoquan, and run by the women.

"I'm looking forward to it," said LaVerne. "It should be a fun thing to do."

She said a wedding reception



has already been scheduled there for August. Inquiries are coming in frequently about possibly scheduling wedding receptions there since advertisements began running. The house is expected to be ready in time for late May or early June weddings.

Plans are already under way to have a formal "reception" there in the near future so members of the board of supervisors, town dignitaries and others can

have a preview.

The catering service is being started in cooperation with the couple who are restoring the home and living there — Joy and Ronald Houghton.

Receptions will be held in three rooms, the dining room, parlor and study, all of which are fairly large with handsome stone fireplaces which match the home's stone exterior.

Wedding guests will be able to move easily from room to room and may even have a look-see of the old kitchen with its brick floor and massive fireplace where cooking was actually done in days gone by. Furniture of the period will be in the rooms as well as paintings on the wall to add a "homey" feeling to the receptions.

The house overlooks the Occoquan River and from its upstairs windows Belmont Bay can be seen.

Although only one room wide, the house has an elegant charm of earlier days.

Wedding receptions of each season will have their own special attraction at Rockledge — late fall and Christmas weddings with magnolia leaves in the wide

sill windows and fires in the fireplaces; spring and summer weddings with use of the outdoor patio and terraces.

The women estimate about 125 wedding guests can be served at Rockledge. Table linens, silver punch bowls and candelabras as well as serving plates and silverware will be provided in the service as well as people to serve the food.

There will also be an area for dancing and a band if the couples desire. However, the band and wedding cakes are to be contracted by the individual parties.

Finger foods will be served with such things as hot and cold hors d'oeuvres (mini quiches, egg rolls, franks in the blanket, meatballs with Italian sauce, tea sandwiches and chicken salad puffs) as well as meat and vegetable platters, fruit assortments and beverages. Punches like champagne or brandy may also be served.

"We provide our own service personnel because we feel that the last person passing through the serving line should see it as nice as the first person going through," said LaVerne.