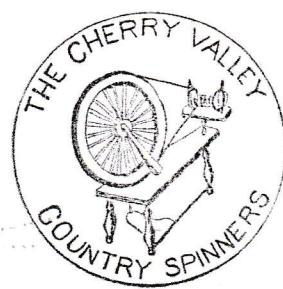


CHERRY VALLEY COUNTRY SPINNERS

A TEN YEAR HISTORY



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Our guild, THE CHERRY VALLEY COUNTRY SPINNERS began in Doloria Chapin's living room in September of 1974. The students she was teaching to spin were about to become its first officers; Jayne Ritz, President. Doloria Chapin, Vice-President, Jean Spencer Secretary, Peggy Berkinshaw, Treasure, and Jeanne Conover, Corresponding Secretary.

They wanted the group to be an informal one dedicated to teaching and learning and fun. They planned to meet on the first Thursday of each month. Their dues were \$2.00 a year and a business meeting would occur quarterly. There would be a Show and Tell at every meeting when members could exchange patterns, their own newly acquired skills, and show their handiwork.

Some of their first meetings were held in the Kennard Community Center, in Cazenovia, also known as the "Old Train Station" Those members recall how cold that room was, and they were warmer in the Cazenovia Library, and at the College. Jayne Ritz said in April of 1976, "We are just like the oldest established permanent floating crap game." The guild began with 20 members, and the Ashford wheel was popular. In the first year the membership doubled, some spinners driving a 100 miles round trip. Ashfords could be ordered directly from New Zealand at a cost of \$38.00 in 1974. In 1975 their cost was \$50.00.

Newsletters were few the first two years, but we know that the guild had a Rock Day (or St. Distaff Day) in January of 1975. The new officers were Peggy Berkinshaw, president; Jeanne Conover, Vice-President, Ann Valletta, Treasure.

In June of 1975, Jeanne Conover converted part of her barn into a shop called Windward Wools Farm, through which members could show and sell their hand made work. Guild dyes, yarns, fleeces and a Learn-to-Spin drop spindle kit, made by members, were all for sale to the general public. The shop remained opened for five successful years.

In 1976 Jeanne Conover became President, Carol Knoblock, Vice-President, Ann Valletta continued as Treasure, Doris Wolfe, Secretary, and Stacey Farrell, Corresponding Secretary.

In February of that Bicentennial year, Flah's Department Store invited us to demonstrate spinning in their store. Jeanne remembers the enthusiasm of the customers, one of whom rushed to her home for her own drop spindle and returned to work with the Cherry Valley girls. They were not paid, but enjoyed a splendid lunch, after three days as Flah's guests.

The nation's 200th birthday was the perfect occasion for our skills and products. No other groups could accurately depict the rich contributions made by women to our country's growth.

A Bicentennial banner was designed and made. We visited Cazenovia College for four days, spent five days in April at the Gothic Cottage, two days at the Cazenovia Country Fair in July. We sent spinners to Chittenango, Pulaski Bicentennial Fair, and Cazenovia Harvest Days. There were two more days of demonstration of our work on wheels at the Historical Madison County Fair, in Oneida.

In 1977 dues were still \$2.00 and a contribution of 4oz. of handspun was required. This yarn sold for \$1.50 an ounce to supplement the treasury. Ashford wheels were now \$70.00.

Lorenzo in Cazenovia had a Wool Day in May and we took part, and Fabius invited us to join in their Dairy Festival for two days in June.

In 1978-9 our new officers were: Sunny Bixby, President, Edith Cook, Vice-President, Shirley Dietz, Treasurer and Newsperson, with Marty Bartlett doing the news in late 1979.

The guild continued with their teaching demonstrations through the year, but we wanted to continue learning and refining our skills with workshops and seminars, and speakers at our meetings.

We did natural dying with onion skins and exchanged onion skin dye cards at Norma Burlington's. We did some natural fiber blending with dog hair, cat and human hair. Doloria Gave us a workshop called "How to do a Spinning Demonstration, and How to Grow, Prepare and Spin Flax".

We continued our Show and Tell and exchanged holiday ornaments and gift ideas, patterns of hats, scarves and sweaters. The Men's Garden Club of Cazenovia has a Christmas sale each year at the Linklean House and invited us to join them. We did and made some sales and introduced ourselves and our work to many Christmas shoppers.

In 1979, we designed and created a Cherry Valley Country Spinners banner with our logo worked onto hand-woven fabric by Ed and Dora Swart. Carol Knoblock designed the logo. Our banner won First Prize at the Thistledown Seminar that year.

In 1980-81, our officers were; Edith Cook President, Kathy Nash Vice-President, Shirley Dietz Treasurer, Susan Manes Newsperson, and Byrd Herrala Mailperson.

Our newsletters announced meeting times and places, advanced notice on programs, upcoming and current, occasional recipes, requests for help and responses, the progress of members and these were exchanged with other guilds.

In 1980, we began with a conspicuous event for us and for spinning itself. In February DeeAtkinson arranged and staged a Show and Tell for the Cable-Systems of Syracuse called "Hand-spinning Today". Our members enjoyed appearing in the film doing what they do best, and making it look fun. Dee still has this film but does anyone recall the song Dee composed as background for the taping?

More workshops and seminars came our way; Paula Simmons' "Production Spinning." Doloria Chapin's "Felting" and Marge Schaeffler's "Cardboard Weaving". Many of us traveled to the Waterbury Woolen Co. in Oriskany. At another meeting, Ed and Dora Swart showed us their consummate collection of spinning wheels, a wide variety from many periods. Expert Ed checked the flyed speed for the members who brought their wheels.

Our baby sister guild in Baldwinsville, The Golden Fleece was formed in July .

Membership reached 56 and Ashfors too leaped ahead to \$100. Four ounces of our yarn still sold at \$1.50 oz. We developed a wool source, reference books and a supply list for our convenience. In 1981 Susan Manes gave us a thorough history of the Angora Goat and mohair while we watched her own Angoras grazing out her windows.

We learned how to wash large quantities of fleeces in netting, with soap and a garden hose. At Highland Forest, Jean Warholic showed us two ways to make Indigo dye and members who brought yarns could try them both and do overdyeing, too.

Shirley Dietz and Marge Schaeffler made basket weaving look easy, showing us the various designs and materials at hand and promised many more possibilities.

In February when our sheep are lambing, veterinarian Fritz Koennecke spoke to us about what to expect and to prepare for the unexpected. This meeting was especially well attended and Fritz took away his new custom made handspun, handknit hat.

Ted Carson did a workshop for two days on color and blending. And Sunny had a marvelous Rainbow Day.

We attended more Sheep to Shawl contests. We sent a team to Herkimer House and a team to the Troy Fair and won the First Prize at both, with different team members.

We attended craft fairs at the Erie Canal Village, Rome, Rome Craft Days, Downtown Syracuse Days, Madison County Historical Days, Upstate Crafts at Ithaca and many more.

We took many prizes at the State Fair in the wool categories, and our sheep also. Our Christmas sale at the Linklean House was another success.

In 1983-84, officers are Kathy Nash President, Jane Allen Vice-President, Shirley Dietz Treasurer, Susan Manes, newsperson with Marge Schaeffler taking over the summer months, Byrd Herrala Mailing.

Our Rock Day was made special by Ruth Neville's slides taken in Scotland and our usual sumptuous buffet.

Carol Knoblock gave us a program on "Finishing on Knitting" and Sue Beevers taught us some of the lore of traditional weaving of coverlets, spreads, and towels and more. She told us about her dyes, some imported which can cause devastating disappointment when they run on a finished work. She showed us some of her special ordered coverlets with the owner's name and wedding date woven in.

The meeting at Edith Cook's gave members opportunities to try a multitude of wheels.

Sue and Doan Trevor took us by film to their wild island off' the Maine coast where they have a flock of sheep running free, tended only twice a year.

We demonstrated spinning at Burnet Park Zoo, Lorenzo Harvest Days and Oneida Craft Days among others.

1983 is our tenth year. We can look back on almost a decade of good fellowship and a rich exchange of skills through our many workshops. We've learned more and more about our animals, their care for health and lambing. We've become more efficient handling of our fleeces, spinning the yarns, combing, dyeing, and plying them in new ways.

We refined our skills at Sheep to Shawl and will help to host a contest at the New York State Fair in September. Members will also show their hand work and their best animals.

We number more than 70. Dues are now \$4.00 to cover mounting postage costs. Ashfords are still popular and now are readily available through dealers in the States. for \$150.00. Guild yarns sell at \$2.25 an ounce.

Our logo appears on our newsletters, aprons, totebags and will be imprinted on our new pewter C.V.C.S. pins.

We will celebrate this anniversary year at Highland Forest. All of our members over the ten years have been invited to share with us the generous buffet we always provide and we look forward to warm reunions, some games, stories and lots and lots of talk about wool, wool, wool.

Tisha Lock