

## “It Just Felt Right to George and Me”

Innkeepers George and Susan Mower have brought new life to the Colvin, Fant, Durham Farm Complex and to the fine old farm house built by Nicolas Colvin, Jr. in 1835 for his wife Nancy Stone Colvin and their nine children.

The house was carefully planned and built to stand the tests of time. Nicholas Colvin, Jr. a third generation Colvin to settle in Chester County was an excellent farmer who diversified crops and ran a self-sustaining farm. Before the War Between the States he owned slaves, raised horses, cattle, sheep and swine, planted cotton, corn and various food products for man and beast. He built the necessary outbuildings to sustain such a large operation including a cotton gin and a store. His descendants answered the call to arms of the Confederacy, the United States of America in World War I and World War II, Korea and Vietnam and many of them came home to settle in Chester County where they, in the year 2003, are outstanding citizens true to their heritage of serving God and Country.



Colvin Farm

Colvin married into the Fant and Durham families and until the 1960's descendants lived in the house that Nicholas built. Other family members built their own homes nearby forming a close-knit community in the Halsellville area of Chester County. Eva Fant Durham and her husband Abner Ross Durham were the last family members to operate the store and the gin. Abner died in 1944 and Eva survived him until 1961.

In 1983 the miniseries *Chiefs* was filmed in Chester County. Charlton Heston and Victoria Tennant starred in this production. The Nicholas Colvin home place was the house chosen for several scenes in the series and necessary cosmetic repairs were made, buying time for the old home place.

In 1990 Mr. and Mrs. Odell Steele, Jr. of Lancaster bought the house and the surrounding acres. They made extensive improvements and made it their home for a number of years. Mrs. Steele rescued the old flower gardens and began research that resulted in having the house and grounds placed on the National Register of Historic Places. During the years the Steeles resided in the Nicholas Colvin house both their daughter and son were married in the gardens their mother had restored.

When the Steeles built and moved into a new house in the vicinity Mrs. Helen Lee bought the old house and surrounding acres.

While the Nicholas Colvin house was changing ownership, change was also coming into the life of its next owners, George and Susan Mower, who at that time had never heard of the place and had no connection with South Carolina.



**Susan & George Mower**

On July 16, 1994, Susan and George Mower were married on Jekyll Island, Georgia at the Cherokee Cottage in the Historic Millionaires Village. Susan's father, William Thurman Sanders of Montgomery, Alabama came to Jekyll Island in 1969 as the Director of Food Services for the Jekyll Island Authority.

Susan had grown up in Montgomery where her father was a restaurant owner and caterer. He catered all of the parties given at the governor's mansion during George Wallace's term as Governor.

Susan graduated from the University of Alabama and, after working for a number of years in Montgomery, Alabama and Jacksonville, Florida, took the position of Vice President of Finance for Marine Port Terminals in Brunswick, Georgia. After a few years, the company moved her to their Norfolk, Virginia office where she stayed until the death of her mother Elizabeth Stuckey Sanders. Susan then came back to the office in Brunswick, so she could be close to her father. She bought a house on St. Simons Island and it was there she met George.

George is the son of Lester and Jean Mower. George grew up in Toledo, Ohio, where his father was in the restaurant business. George came to Brunswick, Georgia with the Navy. He was stationed at Glynco Naval Air Station. He liked the area so much that when he got out of the navy, he decided to make it his home. He went to work for Allied Chemical, a career that would last for 38 years until his retirement.

When George met Susan once again they both felt, "it was just right". They built a house and made St. Simons Island their home. When Susan's father became ill, he moved to St. Simons to their home until his death.

George retired in 1999 and then in 2000, the company Susan worked for was sold to a French Canadian company and her position was eliminated. Now all of a sudden Susan and George began to search for a career they could share. Since both of their fathers had been in the restaurant business, they had each grown up in the atmosphere of preparing and serving food for the public. Susan had a passion for cooking and for home-cooked meals as most of her childhood meals had been "eaten out" or "brought in" already prepared. Susan's mother was an extraordinary dancer and spent most of her younger years developing that talent. Cooking was a skill she never developed or had any interest in developing. She would have been happy with a house without a kitchen.

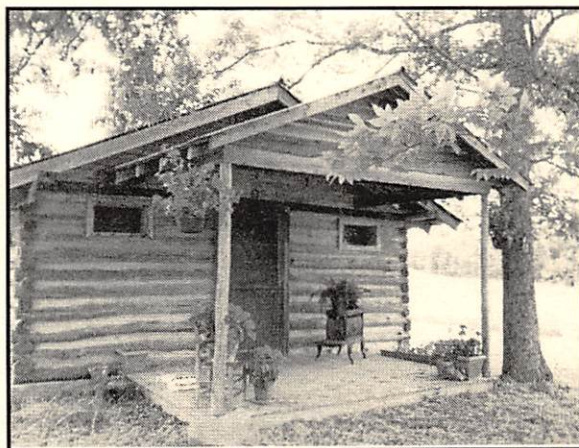
After a time of travel and engaging in outdoor sports, George and Susan agreed that they would like to own and operate a bed and breakfast inn. They began preparing for a new career very professionally. They went to Florida and completed seminar work in Country Inn and Bed & Breakfast Innkeeping. Then they sought out people with practical experience in the field. The next question was where would they locate? They agreed that they were ready to leave the low country because as beautiful as it is, the heat and insects were wearing. They consulted the Internet and

considered places north and south, but none of them, when they visited, felt “just right”. Next to the last place they found on the Internet was near a small town in South Carolina. Neither of them knew the Up Country of South Carolina but they remembered a visit to Charlotte, North Carolina where they had bought an antique chandelier in nearby Pineville. Pineville was also near Chester, so they decided to go to inspect the property in Chester County that was for sale.

On a perfect September day they found the fine old Colvin house resting empty in a cleared field that seemed to extend forever. No busy highway was in sight. Nothing moved but an ancient swing pushed by a gentle breeze that blew across the cleared field. No sound was heard except an occasional birdcall. They sat in the ancient swing and soaked up the sunshine and silence. They were undisturbed by gnat or mosquito. Reluctant to break the spell Susan spoke, “How do you feel about this place?” They agreed that they both felt good about it. It felt like a well-loved spot. They tore themselves away to get a key so they could enter the house. They inspected the yard buildings and they decided to make an offer to Mrs. Helen Lee who had bought it at auction but had never lived there. In the end Susan and George became the second family, who was not a descendent of Nicholas Colvin, Jr. to call his house home.

And so Susan and George who had entered Chester County free of responsibility left owning a historical property with buildings all in need of repair, far from the nearest grocery store, off from a major highway. Their friends asked, “how will you fix it up?” and “how will patrons find you?” and when and if they do, “what will you offer for entertainment?” and George and Susan answered, “it feels right”.

They went to work and things began to fall in place. They made friends in the Halsellville area, who were glad to see the old place restored. Being Presbyterians, they affiliated with Purity Presbyterian Church and they made friends in Chester. Halsellville and Chester began to think Susan and George were both just right for their communities. They were both well established before I met Susan. It was at a club meeting in my home. I had been out of circulation for a while due to a broken hip. When she came to my house I felt “I have a bond with that girl”, but I could find no family connection. Susan and I became friends and it continued to worry me that I couldn’t establish a former connection with her. For my 91st birthday a friend invited me to one of Susan’s fabulous afternoon teas. I asked her where she grew up and she said Montgomery, Alabama. In one last effort to connect our pasts, I said I had a great uncle who was a doctor in Montgomery for many years, knowing she was too young to have ever heard of him. And Susan said “he was my grandfather’s best friend!” There was the bond I felt. From the beginning I had felt “just right” about Susan. I met George when Susan began serving afternoon tea and I felt he was also “just right”.



**The log cabin at Colvin Farm B & B**

Their guests come and go, seeking what they have to offer, rest from the tensions of the business world, the quiet of a place on a country road, acres to explore, good food, and as much companionship as they seek or privacy that they need.

I asked Susan one more question, "this is such an old house, do you have a ghost?" She answered, "I don't really know," and then told me why she was uncertain. If you want to know the answer I can only advise you to ask Susan.

The Inn is going fine and people come for tea or for a night or two. They are generally repeat guests who heard from friends about the unique Bed & Breakfast Inn in the Halsellville section of Chester County. Susan and George Mower in the three years they have lived here have added a new dimension to Chester County life. "It feels just right" for them to live and work here.

*As told to Harriet Stringfellow by Susan Mower, Innkeeper, enthusiastic gardener, gourmet cook, and wife of George, co-owner of the Colvin Farm Bed and Breakfast Inn, Chester County, South Carolina.*