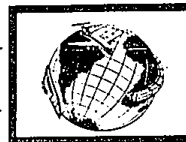


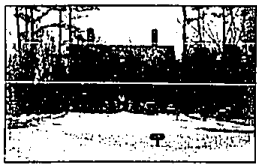
# Travel Scene



100\*\*

O&amp;E Thursday, May 3, 1990

## Plantations Preserve



## Nation's History

### BERKELEY CLAIMS THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

By Lorinda Helde  
special writer

The bright sunshine was almost blinding as my husband and I traveled along Route 5 toward Richmond, Va.

Although we were tired after a day of sightseeing in Jamestown, we had one more stop to make, the Berkeley Hundred Plantation. Berkeley is reportedly Virginia's most historic plantation and the site of America's first Thanksgiving.

We reached the entrance to Berkeley at 4:30 p.m., near closing time. The dirt driveway was lined on both sides by a dense growth of tall oak trees as we drove up to the three-story, red brick mansion.

Shrubs bordered the walk leading to the front door, which was surrounded on both sides by two windows. As I looked up, I counted eight more windows and two chimneys that stood like sentries upon the triangular, gray roof.

AN ELDERLY woman dressed in a long, floral costume dress greeted us at the door and introduced herself as Roberta Luce. She then directed us to the basement, where our tour began.

As we descended into the damp basement, it was obvious that it served as a museum. Large paintings depicting early life at Berkeley hung on the walls and on the right was a large display case containing bullets.

Close examination revealed that many of the bullets contained teeth marks. During the Civil War, Berkeley served as a Union hospital, Roberta said. Wounded soldiers were given bullets to bite because no pain medication was available.

Belt buckles and cannonballs were other Union relics found on Berkeley's soil.

BERKELEY BECAME home of the Harrisons, the family that included a signer of the Declaration of Independence and two U.S. presidents. It's said to be the oldest three-story brick house in Virginia and the first with a pediment roof.

It was built in 1726 by Benjamin Harrison IV and his wife, Ann. Their son, Col. Benjamin Harrison V, inherited Berkeley at the age of 19 when his father was struck by lightning while trying to close one of the upstairs windows during a storm.

As we proceeded into the North parlor, Roberta

pointed out an impressive looking portrait of Col. Harrison hanging above the fireplace. He was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and he also served three times as the governor of Virginia.

Apparently, Col. Harrison enjoyed entertaining and Berkeley was often visited by his close friend, George Washington. America's next nine presidents also enjoyed Berkeley's legendary hospitality in subsequent years.

As we passed through the rose-colored double arches leading from the north parlor to the south parlor, Roberta informed us that the arches, as well as the handsomely carved woodwork, were installed by Benjamin Harrison VI at the direction of Thomas Jefferson.

THE FLOOR in the south parlor is covered with a dark blue tapestry rug with a floral pattern.

The antique, pie-crust tea table in the center of the room is unusual in that it not only turns but also tilts for service, Roberta said. The table is set with a beautiful silver tea service.

Above the marble fireplace hangs the portrait of Elizabeth Berfoot, Thomas Jefferson's niece and great-great-grandmother of the current plantation owner, Grace Jamieson.

As Roberta concluded the history of the Harrisons, she said that William Henry Harrison, Col. Harrison's younger son, was elected the ninth president of the United States in 1840.

He was the first Harrison to become a president, and returned to Berkeley to write his inaugural address in the room where he was born.

His speech is the longest on record of any U.S. president (2 1/4 hours). Harrison also gained the unfortunate distinction of being the first U.S. president to die in office. His grandson, another Benjamin Harrison, became the 23rd president in 1888.

ORIGINALLY, THE land on which this home sits was part of a grant made by King James I in 1619 to the Berkeley Company. On Sept. 16, 1619, a small band of 35 men led by Capt. John Woodlief set sail from England for the New World aboard the Margaret.

On Dec. 4, nearly three months later, these men arrived on the sloping banks of the James River. Following the orders in their charter, they fell to their knees



IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Tour guides become Southern belles at the Oaklawn plantation in Franklin, La., where they gracefully stroll the halls of the historic home offering hospitality and charm.

Please turn to Page 11

## A taste of the Old South in B&B stays

By Iris Sanderson Jones  
contributing travel editor

I have a vivid mental picture of the Louisiana plantation country, and it has nothing to do with either the Mississippi or the Civil War.

It is a picture of a young guide in a beautiful antebellum dress, she was resting on a grand 19th century veranda, fanning herself in the summer heat. Her hooped skirt lifted just far enough off the wooden floorboards to reveal her footware, a pair of scuffed white athletic shoes and a pair of short white socks.

That's the way it is along the Mississippi River north and south of Baton Rouge. The great houses built before the Civil War are there in all their pillared grandeur, but if you peep beneath the surface you find the 20th century.

THE BEST example of this is found in the wonderful old plantation houses offering bed-and-breakfast accommodations on the stretch of Old Man River that runs from New Orleans north past Baton Rouge.

These antebellum mansions are old in all the expected ways, but they have the mattresses and modern facilities that you and I expect when we stay overnight in America.

If you read your history, you won't be surprised to learn that change is a natural part of the Old South. This remarkable collection of plantations, and the lush Southern life they represent, come out of a very short period in American history.

Mississippi plantations were built because of four 19th century changes. Innovators learned to cultivate sugar and to remove seeds from the cotton plant. Napoleon ceded the Louisiana Territory to the United States. And Fulton invented the engine that put steamboats on the Mississippi.

It was only 50 years between the first grand plantation house and the war that destroyed plantation life, but you should see what is left behind from that half century!

YOU CAN visit but not sleep in Rosedown,



MICKY JONES

The Rose Hill plantation in Frederick, Md., displays its pillared attractiveness.

Houmas House and other grand plantation houses open to tourists but not to overnighters.

There are bed-and-breakfast accommodations at Oak Alley, Madewood and Nottaway plantations between Baton Rouge and New Orleans; and at Cottage, Ashadel, Myrtles and Millbank in Feliciana Parish north of Baton Rouge.

Madewood Plantation, a large white pillared house on Bayou La Fourche, is straight out of "Gone With the Wind." Rates for two are \$100 a night. Oak Alley, where you walk through a tunnel of century-old live oaks to the Mississippi, ranges from \$80 to \$110. Nottaway, said to be the largest sugar plantation in the South, costs from \$120 to \$250.

All are on the old River Road between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

NORTH OF Baton Rouge, in the Feliciana Parish area around St. Francisville, rates are lower.

Cottage, Propinquity and Millbank plantations are all \$75 or less. Myrtles Plantation ranges from \$75 to \$130. The St. Francisville Inn, a historic house but not strictly speaking a plantation, is a charming stop for \$59 a night.

For more information, contact the Baton Rouge Convention and Visitors Bureau, Drawer 4149, Baton Rouge, La. 70821, or telephone toll-free (800) 327-6843.



IRIS SANDERSON JONES

The oak tree path leading up to Rosedown Plantation in Louisiana echoes with the sound of horse-drawn carriages from pre-Civil War days.



MICKY JONES

The Eden plantation house near Panama City, Fla., welcomes visitors with extended balconies and wide surrounding windows.



crossroads

Iris Sanderson Jones

## Yanks head south for yearly battle

In the North, we call it the Civil War. In the South, they call it either the "War Between the States," or the "War of Northern Aggression."

Whatever you call it, it brought the luxurious life of the Old South to a bloody end.

The plantation houses still stand in Virginia, along the Mississippi and in a few other parts of the Confederacy, but there were no men and no slaves to operate them when the Civil War was over.

That war has been refought year after year at historic sites around the United States. The war scenes are carefully re-enacted on old military battlefields, among the costumed soldiers who camp at places like Greenfield Village in Dearborn and at New Market Battlefield Park in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

THE BATTLE of Newmarket took place on May 15, 1864. It's remembered as the battle fought by teenagers. The annual commemoration is held on the weekend before May 15 every year. This year it will take place May 12 and 13.

I never really understood the Civil War until Jim Geary, now retired, took me through the battlefield park and museum at New Market. The first thing I saw at the entrance was a photograph of Thomas Garland Jefferson, who was a private in

Company B when he died in Bushnong Farmhouse two days after the Battle of New Market. He was 17 years old.

Picture the Shenandoah Valley, a lush green valley west of the Blue Ridge, with buildings that go back to Revolutionary days. The Virginia Military Institute was long established in the valley city of Lexington. Stonewall Jackson and his Confederate troops rode up and down the valley diverting and defeating Union troops intent on capturing the Confederate stronghold at Richmond.

FEDERAL troops had been sent to cut a rail line when confronted by the Southern troops under Major Gen. John C. Breckinridge. His soldiers were joined by a most unusual army: the cadet corps of VMI, boys too young to fit into their buttoned gray uniforms.

It was May 15, 1864, when the 257 cadets joined Breckinridge's seasoned troops in the Battle of New Market. Ten of the cadets died, 57 were wounded, and a stunned adult world pledged that they would never be forgotten.

The re-enactment usually begins with a volley of Union cannon fire from the top of Bushnong Hill, with Confederate cannon answering from their downhill position. This year, di-

Please turn to Page 11