



Penland Line

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Restore, Refinish, Reshingle *Saving What We Love*

"The third floor dormitory is very close to my heart, as I was one of the occupants of that big room in its earliest years. I recall good friends made among the numerous roommates; and I remember so happily the clear, cool night air drifting through the open windows and being lulled to sleep by a large chorus of whippoorwills." This note from **Frances Cargill** (a niece of Penland founder Miss Lucy Morgan) accompanied her check for the purchase of a new window for the third floor of the Craft House.

In making this donation, Frances was joining a long tradition of direct support for the wonderful old buildings that house Penland students and instructors—buildings which are a part of the tapestry we refer to as "the Penland experience." In fact, the construction of the Craft House and many

other Penland buildings was a direct result of people wishing to contribute personally to a place where so many lives had changed.

In 1934, the year the Craft House was proposed, all of the students who came to Penland and many of the school's neighbors each pledged \$2.50, enough to buy one log delivered to the site. "Some donated more than one, and members of the

community donated a number of poplar trees as well," wrote long-time Penland employee **Kat Conley** in her description of the project. "Two students donated a fireplace and chimney; another, the front door and entrance and yet another wired the building free of charge. The plans were developed through the winter of 1935 and by May the foundation had been laid and over one hundred fine poplar logs were at the building site." The basic structure was completed during a two-day neighborhood log raising.

Building the Craft House continued for many years and when it was finally complete, Miss Lucy found that she felt sorry for future students who wouldn't be able to participate in its construction. "Every person who had given a log, a window, a room, or even a batch of shingles had become an integral part of the school, had felt himself actually built into its physical plant," she wrote.

It may have been a while since Penland's neighbors got together for a log-raising, but the special feeling that people have for the buildings—especially the housing—continues to this day. Penland housing is spare at best; our publications often refer to the accommodations as "rustic." But the rooms and hallways and dormitories have an old-fashioned charm and eccentricity which reminds people unmistakably of where they are.

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Interim Director **Donna Jean Dreyer** feels that this quality is an important part of what the school means to people. "Coming to Penland lifts people out of where they are," she says, "It gives them an experience that is completely different from the rest of their lives. Many things contribute to that experience: the intense work in the studios is foremost, but it's also the beauty of the surroundings, the lack of phones and televisions, the carefully prepared food, and it's the feel of the housing—the warm tones of the paneling, the curtains flapping in the breeze, the early morning walks from Horner—all of this plays a part."

This connection is evident in the way Penland's temporary residents personalize their modest spaces. A windowsill at Radcliffe holds a display of tiny glass sculptures; the shelves in a Craft House room contain a careful arrangement of pictures, books, and pottery; the bed in a third-floor alcove at the Pines is covered with a handmade quilt.

A CHALLENGING RESOURCE

These same buildings, however, are part of the greatest challenge facing Penland: caring for an aging, rural facility. Considerable attention has gone into studio improvement and expansion in the past decade. This effort will continue, but many of the other buildings are in need of attention, and some will require major rehabilitation.

A recent restoration survey for the Craft House includes items such as replacing deteriorated logs, redoing rock chinking (using the original rock), restoring or replac-

ing windows, and replacing the porch decking. Morgan Hall, the seasonal home of Penland's Core students, needs a quarter of its shake siding replaced, new gutters, a new porch, and weatherization.

On a more mundane and immediate level, many of the bathrooms need an overhaul, worn-out furniture and mattresses need replacement, roofs need reshingling, and doors

need weatherstripping. With students, instructors, Residents, and staff housed in twenty separate structures, even these kind of routine upgrades can be a big job.

None of this work is particularly glamorous nor will it add new stops to the Penland tour, but it is essential if the school is to provide basic comfort and preserve its familiar surroundings. And it must be done without changing the character of the school. For example, the windows that Frances Cargill and other friends bought for the Craft House have insulated glass and built-in weatherstripping, but they match the size and look

of the windows they replaced. And each one will have a copper name plate, similar to the plaques that Miss Lucy put all over the building to acknowledge the many hands that built and furnished it.

"Our goal is not a modern campus," said Donna Jean, "what we want to do is preserve these old buildings while we fix the leaks, refinish the floors, and make sure that everyone can get a good shower at the end of a long day."

The major restoration projects will be incorporated into long-range planning for the facility and the school is seeking special funding to support this work. The more immediate improvements are part of the week-to-week planning by the maintenance and housekeeping staff. Individual donations along with in-kind contributions of materials and fixtures still play an important part in this less-visible but always necessary attention to the housing.

"A lot of the history of this school could be told through the old buildings which survive and are still in use," says Donna Jean. "We need to take care of them so that future generations will continue to be touched by their warmth and history."

Lexicographer's note: Infare is a colloquial term meaning "a feast or entertainment given on entering a new house." These were often held in honor of a newly married couple and in some regions it was traditional to bake an "infare cake" which was broken over the bride's head.

AN INFARE ON PENLAND MOUNTAIN TOP



LOG RAISING

for the
Edward F. Worst Craft House
May 3rd & 4th, 1935

WE'D BE MIGHTY PROUD TO HAVE YOU COME.



A second floor room at the Craft House.

Robin Dreyer