

Maryland Town Holds Annual "Blessing Of The Combines"

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

Tip: If you plan on having a parade of combines in a small town, you only need 8 or 9 of the big machines. They tend to fill up a street quickly.

Folks in Snow Hill, Md., know that because they've hosted a "Blessing of the Combines" for 15 years. It's an event that draws a big crowd and has become an annual tradition for locals and city folks from nearby states.

The idea came from a brainstorming session about how to bring people to the rural town located between Ocean City and the Chesapeake Bay. Snow Hill is in the midst of farmland in the Delmarva Peninsula where wheat, corn, soybeans and other crops are grown mostly as feed for large poultry-growing operations.

Huge combines are a common sight for the locals, but a curiosity to city visitors bound for ocean vacations. Each year on the first Saturday of August, Snow Hill volunteers vacate main street of cars, chalk out spaces for vendors, bring in animals for a petting barnyard, and invite local farmers to show off their combines and old tractors in a parade followed by the blessing.

Everyone takes the blessing part of the

event very seriously, says Kathy Fisher, who handles publicity.

"When the homily and blessing are given, people are quiet with many bowed heads," she says. Local pastors take turns each year to pray for safety, good weather and a successful harvest. Later, visitors get to talk to the farmers about their combines, climb aboard, and take photos of their kids with the farm machinery.

"It helps build good will for combines when in transit on the roads. And it helps to build a respect for the work these men and women do," Fisher notes. "It's neat to watch the interaction."

An older farmer leads off the parade with a horse-drawn combine to show the great contrast in eras. His is the only combine with a header. Modern headers are too big to fit down the narrow streets of the town, which was chartered in 1686.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Blessing of the Combines, 230 S. Washington St., Snow Hill, Md. 21863 (ph 410 632-1265; kfisher44@verizon.net; www.blessingofthecombines.org).



For years folks in Snow Hill, Md., have hosted a "Blessing of the Combines". The event draws a big crowd and has become an annual tradition for locals and city folks from nearby states.



Gloria Van Voorst used old electrical poles to build this log cabin. "It's our own little house on the prairie," she says.

Log Cabin Made From Power Poles

"Many years ago I saw a nice picture of a log cabin near a lake and I decided right then I'd have a cabin like that someday," says Gloria Van Voorst, Lakefield, Minn.

Not too many years later, she decided to use old electrical poles to build her log cabin. "None of us knew anything about building a log cabin," Gloria says, "but we looked at a lot of pictures and finally just started putting the house together." It took a full summer of working weekends and holidays, to finish.

"We used a chainsaw to cut the end joints and smooth the surface of the poles. We used concrete for chinking and the rafters and roof boards were made from used lumber. The two small windows and entry door were taken from an old chicken coop."

The cabin is 10 ft. wide by 14 ft. long and stands just over 7 ft. at the eaves and 14 ft. at the peak of the roof. Gloria says if she would've checked her history notes closer she would've built it 12 ft. square. That number is significant because then it would've been the same size as what early settlers were required to build to homestead a 160 acre parcel of land in the 1800's.

Gloria tells stories about her great grandfather, who homesteaded in North Dakota to her classroom kids when she brings them out to her cabin.

"Their eyes get really big when they look inside and see how small it is," says Gloria. "Early settlers would have had a dirt floor, but my cabin has concrete to keep the rodents away." Furnishings include a treadle sewing machine, a bed made out of wood branches, a horsehide blanket, two old chairs, a lantern and a little wood stove. There's a

small cupboard with a few kitchen utensils and a crude ladder that goes up to the loft, where other members of a family would've slept. Gloria says, "It's hard to believe that families of 4 to 6 people would've survived in something like this, but they were tough and didn't know of modern conveniences."

Gloria's cabin sits on a small plot of land near Lakefield, Minn., down a long lane and near a stand of cottonwood trees next to a small pond. That's a setting very much like the early pioneers.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Gloria Van Voorst, 43677 820th St., Lakefield, Minn. 56150 (ph 507 662-6665).

He Brought Back Case's "Eagle On A Globe"

We spotted Dave Haala at the Pioneer Power Swap meet near LeSeuer, Minn., driving a home-built tractor that was all set up to sell a 5-ft. tall fiberglass replica of a Case bald eagle.

"Back in the 1930's and 40's, Case dealers used to display cast iron eagles like this in front of their dealerships. They're quite rare now, so I make fiberglass models that look just like the real thing," says Haala.

In 2002, Haala went looking for an original Case eagle. It took a long time but he finally found one. He's the founder and owner of a metal fabrication business so he made a mold of the eagle, and now he manufactures exact reproductions.

"They're popular with Case tractor collectors and anyone who likes agricultural memorabilia," says Haala. "The reason the original Eagles are so rare is that during World War II Case had a campaign in which they asked their dealers to turn in the Eagles for scrap metal."

The eagle and globe bolt onto a heavy 3-legged metal base with holes for fastening down. It sells for \$1,600. "Original cast iron Case eagles normally sell for about \$14,000, but I heard of one that recently sold for \$20,000," says Haala.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dave



Dave Haala sells this 5-ft. tall fiberglass replica of a Case bald eagle.

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