

**Selections from
the Evergreen
Appalachian
Storybank Project**

Annie Ager



Annie Ager is a hardworking woman who lives on Hickory Nut Gap Farm. She lives in the Sherrill Inn, which was a way station for stagecoach travelers and cattle drivers on the Hickory Nut Turnpike throughout the majority of the 19th century. The farm is a 350-acre piece of land with sections protected by national conservation. Though meats and apples are the mainstay of Hickory Nut Gap Farm production, on the farm, Annie also runs a horseback-riding camp during the summer and offers riding lessons year round. She has lived in Appalachia all her life, and she loves it.

Annie provided a recipe for roasted chicken stuffed with apples and onions. This was a meal that her mother made for countless family dinners.

**By Naia, Jessica, Emma,
Jazlyn, and Gloria**

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Biography of Annie Ager

Written by Jazlyn

Edited by Jessica

Annie Ager was born and raised in the Western North Carolina Appalachian mountains. Her connection with the region started generations back when her grandparents traveled to what is now Hickory Nut Gap Farm in 1916 on their honeymoon. While on a camping trip, her grandfather fell in love with the area and the old inn on the property and bought the land. The Sherrill Inn has been the home of Annie's family for generations now. Annie grew up in the inn with seven siblings and was surrounded by a strong community. Her childhood was filled with adventure from running around the property, reading books and taking family trips to places like the Grand Canyon. Annie's father was a Presbyterian minister and was widely involved in the world of politics. He was apart of a farmer's federation and programs to improve farming in the area.

Today Annie Ager still lives and helps out around the farm while her children Amy and Jamie have taken over most of the farming. She runs the horse camp in the summer working with kids of all ages and teaching them good horsemanship. She also plays a part in the raising of the chickens on the farm and the gardens. Recently, her husband John Ager was elected for 2014 NC house. Annie says her philosophy is to do all that you can to commit yourself to bettering your community and helping it thrive.



Recipe: Roasted Chicken

Ingredients:

In any amount
that you would
prefer:

- Chicken
- Potatoes
- Apples
- Onions
- Salt
- Pepper
- Olive Oil
- Sage
- Rosemary
- Thyme



Instructions:

Pack bottom of roasting pan with potatoes and apples. Stuff chicken with sliced apples and onions and rub with olive oil, sage, rosemary, thyme. Roast slowly at 300°F for 2-3 hours.

Significance:

This recipe was important to the Hickory Nut Gap family because chickens are a big part of the farm. Since chickens were easily accessed, many family meals consisted of various chicken recipes. One simple and common one is this version of roasted chicken. The farm also features a massive orchard, so apples are everywhere. Gardens supply the spices. This recipe is delicious and perfect for the center of the table.

Cultural Connection - The Sherrill Inn

By Naia and Emma

The Sherrill Inn was a way-station on the "Hickory Nut Turnpike," where cattle drivers and stagecoach travelers would stop on their way through town. Bedford Sherrill had the Inn built between 1839 and 1850. Bedford was appointed a Commissioner, with



the purpose of building and keeping up with the Turnpike, which connected Rutherfordton and Asheville. State roads like the Hickory Nut Turnpike opened up commercial access to Western North Carolina and the outside world.



In 1916 Annie's grandparents came to Asheville on their honeymoon from Chicago. Her grandparents saw the house, and although it wasn't in the best shape, they negotiated a price from an 81 year old man who went by the name Judge Philips. When they had bought the house they spent 1 year fixing it up, in the

meantime they lived in the manner. Her grandparents had only planned on staying in the house for a couple years, but they ended up staying. Her grandparents' choice to stay in the the house created the connection between Annie's life and family to Appalachia.

Cultural Connection - Chickens



By Jessica

One of Hickory Nut Gap Farm's most notable products is their chicken and eggs. What makes their chicken tastier than others? Their chickens are 100% organic. Hormones and antibiotics aren't even a consideration. This season, they're raised in portable pasture houses that are moved every day to provide fresh grass and new roaming ground. Their food is a corn and soybean based grain that satiates their nutritional diets. The chickens are killed by farm workers. Annie Ager noted, "We would kill about a hundred chickens every year, we would kill them and pull the feathers out. It's just what we did. People have been killing chickens for centuries." This makes the meat healthier and flavorful.

The eggs are just as delicious. This is because the egg-laying hens are free-range as well. Every morning, farmers replenish the food supply, refresh the bedding, and collect the eggs. With about 600 hens, Hickory Nut Gap Farm produces approximately 15 dozen eggs a day. They ship these eggs to stores like Earth Fare and GreenLife.

Cultural Connection - Spring House

By Emma & Jazlyn

Spring houses are historically a huge part of Appalachian survival. A traditional spring house is a small building used to keep essentials like milk cold and kept from being spoiled. Meats, butter, and cheeses can also be placed in storage. Spring houses are set up by redirecting water from a small creek into the house. Most of these structures are made of stone based on the fact that stone keeps a space cooler than wood. The water will remain a constant temperature year round and provide a way to store perishables back when not everyone had a refrigerator. Many spring houses have been put out of use with the 20th century but the spring house at Hickory Nut Gap farm is still in use.

Cultural Connection – Horses

By Jazlyn
Edited By Jessica

Traditionally, some horse breeds were used to pull carts and plows to help with farm tasks. These types of horses are historically known as draft horses. While there are specific breeds used as draft horses, any horse can pull a plow as long as it is strong. In the 19th century, these horses were



in high demand and traded widely based on their helpful contributions to farmers. By the 20th century with mechanization draft horses use declined and so did the breeding. Today you can still find the occasional draft horse in use but they have taken a step back in prevalence.



The Ager family has had strong ties to horses from the beginning. Annie says her love of horses was passed down to her by her mother as a girl. Some of her fondest memories was of trail riding around the farm as a child. There are around 30

horses and ponies at Hickory Nut Gap Farm varying in type and breed. Annie Ager gives horseback riding lessons year round for people with all skill levels.

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Biography of Rachel Brownlee

Rachel Brownlee was born in Boulder, Colorado. Growing up, she and her family did not have a lot of money, but her family was caring and did what they needed to do to get through. Rachel's family includes her two older siblings, her mom, and her dad. Her father was a hunter and was in the ministry. Growing up, she ate a lot of geese, duck, and deer. The whole family lived off wild game that her father killed. Her mother prepared the food that her father brought home. Rachel's mother was an artist and a teacher; her mother influenced her love for food. All of her family would sit down together for meals and Rachel values and appreciates that to this day. Her love for food began at really young age; she was always in charge of making the biscuits for the whole family. Rachel has moved several different places since she was a child. Rachel has lived in Virginia and Pennsylvania and attended school in Vermont. Now she has settled down in Asheville, NC.



Rachel has lived in Asheville for about ten years now. She is married and has a daughter; her husband was born in Asheville and comes from a family of farmers. She now writes about food for the *Asheville Citizen Times* and a few other publications. She has a blog that is getting pretty popular called "Girl In An Apron." On her blog, she posts recipes and sometimes even writes poetry. In the future she hopes that she will one day write a book, and if Rachel continues on the path that she is on, writing a book is not far out reach.

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Cultural Connection

Rachel Brownlee's father was a hunter. Her family would eat wild game most nights for dinner. She told us a story about her father taking her on a hunting trip with him. They killed a wild goose together and really bonded in that moment. He trusted her to take the goose home to her own house and cook it up. She felt so honored and will always hold this memory close to her heart

In early Appalachia the way people got food was a lot different than it is nowadays. Back then you had to support your family by hunting and gardening. Almost all the food people had they either harvested or hunted themselves. In order for your family to eat meat you had to have the courage to kill and prepare the animal yourself.

To connect to both of those aspects, we were given the opportunity to experience the slaughtering of two chickens. We had some local farmers come and help us with the procedure. They did the actual killing of the chickens and we de-feathered them. Rachel Brownlee also came and got to be a part of the harvest with us. The chickens were used to make the recipe that we gathered from Rachel: Chicken and Dumplings.



This Experience's Effect on Our Group

“For me this experience was really beneficial with learning about how people used to always do things. If a family wanted meat they would have to harvest it themselves, simply going to a store to buy meat wasn't a very common option. Being a part of a chicken killing was really interesting because I have never been a part of anything like that before. I'm really glad I got to be a part of this experience because I know a lot more about something I eat often. I have now become more thankful for the food we eat and where it comes from.” - **Ili**

“I was affected by the experience because I witnessed something I never had before, and now I have a better understanding of where my food comes from.” - **Gavin**

“This project has left many different impressions on me, but the one that really sticks out the most is the element of reality that is added to what you're eating when you actually slaughtered it yourself. When you don't see or know the process it's easy to just see the chicken on your plate and think nothing about it. Now that I have experienced this I know how real the animal was and still is.” - **Rebecca**

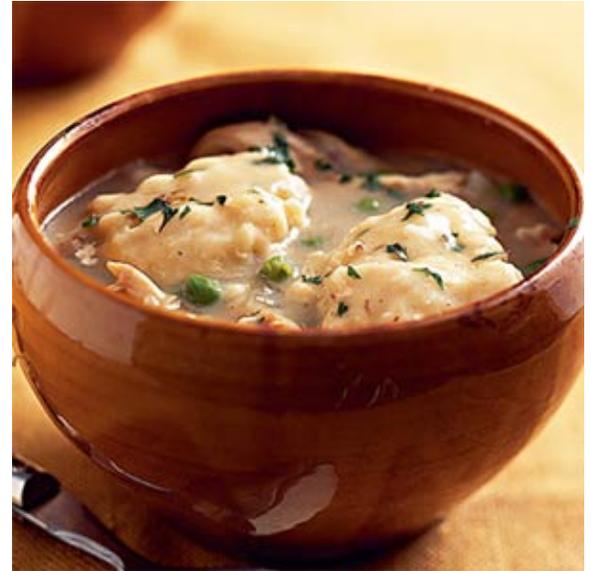
“I think the best part about the chicken slaughter was being able to do something that gets us closer to the source of where our recipe comes from. The whole thing was a really unique experience, and I'm grateful that I got to participate.” - **Drake**

Recipe for Chicken and Dumplings

as prepared in a cooking demonstration by Rachel Brownlee

Ingredients:

- A whole chicken(s)
- Carrots
- Celery
- Onions
- Garlic
- Flour
- Baking Powder
- Parsley
- Salt
- Buttermilk
- Chicken Broth (Broth that jiggles is preferred)
- Olive Oil
- Butter
- Peas



Procedure:

1. Boil chicken to create broth; create liquid or gelatinous broth.
2. Pull the chicken off of the bone and tear into shredded pieces.
3. Put olive oil in a pot and simmer on low for only a minute or two.
4. Then sauté carrots, onions, celery, and parsley in the olive oil.
5. Add the shredded chicken.
6. Then stir in the chicken broth slowly.
7. Let simmer for 15 minutes.

Dumplings:

1. Mix the flour, baking powder and salt thoroughly.
2. Cream the butter with the dry mixture.
3. Mix the buttermilk (watered down yogurt works just as well) with the other ingredients.
4. Add chopped parsley.
5. Shape the dough into fist sized balls.
6. Place them on the top of the soup covering the surface.
7. Pour peas on top of the dumplings and soup.
8. Once done cooking serve and enjoy.

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Biography of Mr. Anthony Cole

Mr. Anthony Cole was born in 1957 at the Haywood County Hospital. He grew up on the Cole farm with his mother, father and grandparents. His mother's side of the family came from German descent, while his father's side of the family came to Appalachia from Scotland and England area, giving the last name "Cole." He is the 5th generation on the Cole farm, and they grow everything from apples to corn to Christmas trees to potatoes and pumpkins. Most of the seeds were handed down generation to generation. They raise many kinds of animals including sheep, cows and many other animals. Many of the animals are used for wool and meat. There are many things to be seen on the Cole farm and much history to be told, since the early-mid 1800's the Coles have used the same traditions. The tools used on the Cole farm are like rifles for example, are passed down and they do not often buy new ones as the other ones got out dated. Anthony's father was born in 1925 in a log cabin near the Cole farm, and his family sometimes refers to him as "one of the last Abe Lincolns."

By: Kiah

Animal Husbandry

Mr. Anthony Cole has many things that he does around the farm, but one of the things that he does is raise sheep. Mr. Cole uses the sheep for their wool and for their meat. This is Animal Husbandry. Animal Husbandry is the management and care of farm animals for profit. Animal husbandry has been practiced for thousands of years, since the first domestication of animals. Farmers would often shear their sheep for wool to make into yarn. Mr. Cole also had hogs, he told us one story about his dad and the first time that his dad showed him how to kill, bleed, cut, boil, and skin a hog. Mr. Cole said that his dad was ten, and from then on it was his job. On the farm there is also chickens, horses, and a few other animals.



Mr. Anthony Cole uses his sheep for wool and meat. The meat he sells to the market, and he also sells most of the wool to the market. But his wife also knits, and she uses some of the wool to make blankets, scarves, sweaters, and many other things. Wool was the first thing that was traded around the world. In the early 1900's the majority of money made from sheep was from the sale of wool. Although today it is the other way around, the meat from the wool is currently the most profitable part. By: Mia

Stevens .22 Rifle



A common rifle that was used in Appalachia in the early to mid 1900's is a Stevens .22 LR. This would have been useful for killing varmints, hogs, and small game like rabbits and geese. It's long lifespan and it's rugged efficiency and versatility would have made it a desirable rifle to have around. Aside from all this, the ammo was cheap, and you could order the gun in the mail. The weight of this weapon made it easy to carry long distances, and it's wooden stock could break hog heads, if need be. You could drill a screw-eye into it to hang it on the wall.

It was not just a gun, it was also a tool. A gun, bludgeon, and hammer all in one. And when it broke for the last time, you could order another one through the Sear's catalog. These guns got passed down from father to son, father to son. Some of these guns are even considered family heirlooms today, and are still used on the farm. Mr. Cole's rifle had been around for so long, that

he had to replace the firing pin. He didn't buy one from the store, he made it from a nail. And when the stock broke, he took tape and wood glue to hold it together. In conclusion, the Stevens .22 was a strong versatile gun with a lot of history.

By:Angus

Crops

Mr. Anthony Cole's farm had many different types of crops, and all used for different purposes. He even grows Christmas trees and donates them to Evergreen to help fundraise for the school. Some of Anthony's crops even go all the way to China and India to sell and turn into product. Anthony has cared for his farm since the age of 7. He had done everything from helping his dad with slaughtering the animals to harvesting the crops. The farm had many different jobs and was always hard work.



Although a lot of Anthony's crops are shipped out and sold, he keeps some of them to help feed his family and his farm animals. The Cole family's land has been passed down from generation to generation; they have used this land for decades to grow all kinds of crops to harvest and sell to the market. Growing up, the Cole family learned to harvest and care for crops at young ages and carried that with them their whole life, and they are teaching the same thing to their children.

By: Banyan

Resources

In old Appalachia the resources were very limited, especially when it came to materials and foods. The only food you had to eat is what you grew on your farm, or what little you could occasionally afford from the store. When you build a house you also had very limited materials, you had little tools and materials to work with. But in Appalachia the houses they made were well built and lasted a lifetime. They knew all the ticks to building a great house, which direction to put the porches to get the best sunlight during certain times of the day. What type of wood to use for flooring or roofing, and many, many other uses. Food wise they always had the best tricks, what to plant in what seasons, how to preserve foods, proper ways to harvest, how to reuse seeds, etc.

By:Kiah

Recipe: Fried Apple Pies

Ingredients:

- 4 bags (6 oz) dried apples
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 4 heaping cups self-rising flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Crisco shortening
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ - 2 cups ice water
- Additional flour for mixing

dough

- 2 cups Crisco shortening

Instructions:

For apples:

1. Put apples in a large pot or Dutch oven and add enough water to almost cover.
2. Stir in two cups sugar.
3. Turn heat to medium-high and bring to a boil.
4. Turn heat down just a little so apples continue to simmer.
5. Break up apples with spoon as they cook.



6. Cook until apples are tender and juicy, stirring frequently. You may need to add more water as they cook. Do not allow the apples to get dry.
7. Remove apples from heat and allow to cool.

For dough:

1. Start with 4 heaping cups of self-rising flour and cut in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Crisco shortening with a fork or your fingers. Mix well until shortening is fully incorporated into the flour.
2. Add $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of ice water to flour, and add additional ice water as needed to get all the dry flour mixed in. Mix with a fork until dough is sticky.
3. Dip hands in flour and sprinkle additional flour on to dough so that you can knead it. Use additional flour as needed to be able to knead the dough until smooth and non-sticky.
4. Pinch off pieces of dough to make balls slightly smaller than ping pong balls.
5. Roll each ball out until thin.
6. Add a heaping spoonful or two of apples to one side of rolled dough. After the first couple, you will learn exactly how much apples to place on the dough. If you put too much, the dough will not cover without tearing.
7. Dip your finger in water and rub around the edges of the dough where the apples are.
8. Carefully fold the dough over and press the edges together lightly to seal.
9. Using a fork, crimp the edges to fully seal.
10. Once all the pies are ready, add about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Crisco shortening to a large skillet and heat on medium-high.
11. Once the grease is hot enough to sizzle from a drop of water, carefully lay two or three pies in the skillet.
12. Cook about a minute to a minute and half on each side until they are golden brown.
13. Lay pies on a large platter lined with paper towels and serve immediately.
14. Pies will keep for a few days but are best eaten within two days.