

[Subscriber Services](#)

**Charlotte.com**  
The Charlotte Observer

Charlotte, NC  
Intermittent clouds 96°F  
[Weather Alert](#)

Search  Charlotte.com  Archives  Web Search powered by **YAHOO!** SEARCH |

Go

Welcome **Guest**  
[Login](#) | [Register](#) | [Sign in to Classifieds](#)

**Jobs**  
**Cars**  
**Real Estate**  
**Apartments**  
**Shop Local**  
**All Classifieds**  
• Create an Ad  
• Find an Ad  
**Legal Notices**  
**ThatsRacin**  
**MomsCharlotte**

Posted on Sat, Jul. 05, 2008

[email](#) [print](#) [reprint or license](#)

[AIM](#) [del.icio.us](#) [Digg it](#)

MORE NEWS FROM **TOPIX.NET**

Asheville Metro  
Cleveland, NC  
US National Parks  
Kings Mountain National Military Park  
Maryland  
Gaffney, SC  
[Discuss Gaffney, SC](#)

**COMMENTARY****A heaping helping of history****Cleveland County B&B offers that and then some**

JOE DEPRIEST

Two patriots. Two journeys.

Threads of Americana I recently connected with in Grover – a small town in Cleveland County on the South Carolina line.

In a nearby cemetery is the grave of Lt. Col. Frederick Hambricht, a patriot commander at the Battle of Kings Mountain in the Revolutionary War.

In a two-story house built by Hambricht's great-great-grandson is a new business – the Inn of the Patriots Bed & Breakfast and Presidential Culinary Museum, which opened in April.

The proprietor, 21-year Navy veteran Martin Mongiello (pronounced Mon-jello), was executive chef at Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland, from 1993 to 1996.

When I found out about this guy him from a Cleveland County Tourism news release, I knew I had to meet him.

So I headed south on Interstate 85 to the former mill town named after President Grover Cleveland.

You might think the Inn of the Patriots is off the beaten track. But the way Mongiello sees it, he's in the middle of a vibrant region filled with interesting things to do.

He's offering a quiet, laid-back base of operations for exploring the greater area – from the nearby Kings Mountain National Military Park and Outlet Mall in Gaffney, S.C., to the Biltmore House in Asheville and Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden in Belmont.

American history is the B&B's theme, with a focus on Frederick Hambricht. Mongiello feels a strong connection with the colonel.

Hambricht was 11 when he left Germany and landed in Philadelphia. Later, he moved to North Carolina and farmed along the South Fork River in Lincoln County.

On Oct. 7, 1780, Hambricht fought the Loyalists at Kings Mountain, shouting commands to his Catawba Valley troops in a thick German accent.

Three musket balls whizzed through his hat. A fourth ball ripped into his leg. Hambricht was treated at a nearby farmhouse by a woman he later married. They spent the rest of their lives a few miles from present-day Grover.

The Inn of the Patriots is in a house built in 1879 by Dr. Alfred Hambricht, assistant surgeon to Confederate generals A.P. Hill and T.J. "Stonewall" Jackson.

The day I visited the inn, Mongiello was talking about an Independence Day program there – appearances by special "guest speakers" John Adams and Benjamin Franklin.

The 42-year-old Mongiello has more than a little showman in him.

As he told me the story about how he came to this corner of North Carolina, I thought of Col. Hambricht's journey. How he left Philadelphia looking for opportunity and found it.

**Bill Clinton's favorite food**

Mongiello grew up in Philadelphia in an Italian-German household. He described it as "spaghetti, meatballs, ravioli and people yelling at the tops of their lungs."

His mom was a great cook. He wanted to be a cook someday. At 14, he started working in restaurants – washing dishes, sweeping, doing odd jobs.

From the pancake grill to the meat grill, Mongiello worked his way up the culinary ladder.

Then he joined the Navy. His first assignment: cooking aboard a nuclear sub based out of Charleston.

Submariners take their food very seriously, he learned. When chow time rolls around, the cook had better deliver.



ROBERT LAHSER – rlahser@charlotteobserver.com  
Former Camp David executive chef Martin Mongiello has a new venture: running The Inn of the Patriots Bed & Breakfast.



**News**  
**Opinion**  
**Business**  
**Sports**  
**Entertainment**  
**Living**  
**Local News**  
Cabarrus  
Catawba/Gaston  
Lake Norman/Iredell  
Southern Meck  
The City  
Union  
UCity/Western Meck  
York/Lancaster  
**Data Center**  
**Mobile News**  
**Multimedia**  
**Blogs**

**ONLINE EXTRAS**

**Today's Paper**  
**Living Here**  
**Archives**  
**Weather**  
[charlottesgotalot.com](#)  
**Forums**  
**Traffic Reports**  
**Ads From Observer**  
**Advertising Sections**  
**Local Coupons**  
**Celebrations**  
**Yellow Pages**  
**Maps & Directions**

**SITE SERVICES**

**Site Index**  
**RSS**  
**Place an Ad**  
**Contact Us**  
**Contact Observer**  
**Feedback**  
**Report a Bad Link**

**E-Edition**  
**Staff Listing**

**Quick Job Search**

Enter Keyword(s):

Enter a City:

Select a State:

- All United States -

Select a Category:

- All Job Categories -

Search

- [Advanced Job Search](#)  
- [Search by Category](#)

Many of the crew members on that first sub were from down South. Mongiello had to learn how to satisfy their taste buds, from collards to homestyle "cathead" biscuits.

He branched out, buying gourmet cookbooks and experimenting with exotic dishes while at sea.

Mongiello told me he tested the gourmet fare with officers and as a result landed private catering jobs at their homes.

His reputation grew. And in 1993 he interviewed for a three-year tour of duty with the Camp David cooking staff. The interview process started during the presidential term of George Bush Sr. But by the time Mongiello's security clearance came through, Bill Clinton was in the White House.

Mongiello worked at Camp David but said he was often drafted to help at White House state dinners. His mentor and boss was White House executive chef Walter Scheib III.

First lady Hillary Clinton's expectations for heart healthy fare pushed Mongiello to try new things.

"The Clintons would say they wanted a birthday cake for that evening with no oil, fat, lard, butter, eggs or white flour," he said. "I was learning to cook all over again. I learned no-fat cooking."

According to Mongiello, Bill Clinton's favorite food was bananas; Hillary was crazy about mangoes.

Cooking at Camp David was "thrilling and mesmerizing," Mongiello said. Sometimes he felt like asking a fellow cook to hit him in the head with a cast iron pan "just to see if I was really awake. I couldn't believe all this was real."

#### **Asset to community**

In 2004, Mongiello left the Navy. He joined a New York-based marketing company as a traveling troubleshooter and consultant for hotels and resorts.

A job at a country club where a chef had resigned took him to Jackson, Tenn. Attending church there, he met Stormy LeAnn Neal, 36, of Kings Mountain. She was a Navy veteran who was working for an electrical contracting company.

Mongiello said he proposed to Neal on his knees, in front of her family, at Rodi Med-American Grill in Gastonia. They were married in April at the Inn of the Patriots.

Cleveland County Tourism Director Jackie Sibley said Mongiello's business is the fourth B&B in the county. All are in small towns.

"They're all so different," Sibley said. "He (Mongiello) is very much welcome and very much needed. He's a real asset to the community."

So there it is, tucked away on a shady residential street in Grover: the Inn of the Patriots, complete with a spa and salon and vegetable garden. The presidential culinary collection has mugs, cups and glasses and photos of Mongiello with Bill and Hillary Clinton, among other notables. (He gives free museum tours on Saturdays)

The innkeeper is tapping into his own past while mining local history and culture. And he's serving it up in new ways. Col. Frederick Hambright would be proud.

---

*Joe DePriest: 704-868-7745; [jdepriest@charlotteobserver.com](mailto:jdepriest@charlotteobserver.com)*

---

#### **Buy Stocks - \$4 Fee at ShareBuilder**

No account or investment minimums. No inactivity fees. Start today.  
[www.sharebuilder.com](http://www.sharebuilder.com)

#### **Refinance and Save \$1,000S**

\$150,000 Mortgage for \$483/month. Compare up to 4 free quotes.  
[www.pickamortgage.com](http://www.pickamortgage.com)

#### **See Today's Mortgage Rates**

Calculate Your New Mortgage Payment. See Rates- No Credit Check Req.  
[www.LowerMyBills.com](http://www.LowerMyBills.com)

Ads by Yahoo!

**REAL Cities**

Visit other Real Cities sites

[News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Living](#) | [Shop Local](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Homes](#)  
[About Charlotte.com](#) | [About the Real Cities Network](#) | [About the McClatchy Company](#)  
[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Copyright](#)