

Fall 2010 Newsletter

Greetings From the Farm

As you can see from the picture (if you open the attachment), we've finally opened our farm store and isn't it the cutest little building you've ever seen. It's a one room tenant house that Les and I moved to our farm's front gate from my late good friend Jo Mack Rast's land grant farm. Built during the late 1800s, it was located on the "row" among others and was birthplace and home to many of the farm's hands over the years. One of the more memorable families to have lived on the row was Ms. Hanah and her granddaughter, Nell and Nell's 12 children. Ms. Hanah was the farm's midwife and had helped birth countless babies over the years. Country doctor and storyteller Dr. Bob Holman relates in his book, "The Black Bag," a story about Hanah back in the 50's. He was called to Jo Mack's late on a crisp October evening to come see about Nell who had just given birth to #13. Up to the farm he went, black bag in tow and entered Hanah's modest 1 room home. Under a single light bulb suspended from the ceiling was Nell under a starched white sheet attended to by Ms. Hanah. "Evening Doc" was the salutation that went around the room. "Evening all, what have we got here?"

"Ah Doc, we got us a fine baby boy" returned Hanah. Dr. Holman retrieved his D cell flashlight from the bag and hoisted back the sheet. Shining on the wriggling therein, he asked Hanah again, "What did you say we have here?" Hanah leaned in for a cleaner look and exclaimed, "Oh Gaud, it ain't no boy baby, it's a gurl baby caus there's the little secret right there."

What that story has to do with a farm store opening I'm not sure but I've heard Dr. Holman tell it a dozen times, each better than my rendition by the way, and I thought you might enjoy it. This little building is the last survivor of the "row" and we're delighted to be able to preserve and use it.

Store Particulars

We will have for sale our 100% grass-fed beef of course along with "Chucktown Chickens" pastured poultry and free range eggs. Also on our menu will be fresh kiwi fruit from our orchard when in season (they're at their peak right now) as well as Luffa sponges, garden compost, hay and firewood. Nancy's Kiwi jam and local honey will also be available and by springtime we'll have some heirloom seeds and plants too. We would like to add additional products from other local farmers that mirror our standards of purity and we welcome any and all suggestions.

We're operating under our winter hours which are Fridays 2pm till dark, Saturdays all day 10am to dark, Sundays after church 2pm to dark. On most Sunday afternoons both Les and I will be around so there will be enough manpower to take folks on short tours of the farm, weather permitting of course. If a tour is a priority of your visit, you might want to confirm ahead with me or Les. Directions to the farm are I-26 West from Charleston or East from Columbia to I-95 North to exit 98 at Santee. Take a right (east)

on Hwy 6, go 7 miles and you'll see the River Run Farms sign and store on your left. It's a little over an hour from both cities.

Nancy Davis Beans

I planted my fall garden a few weeks back and along with all the usual suspects, cabbage, onions, broccoli, and rutabagas, I set aside two rows for my Nancy Davis Beans. These beans are a type of heirloom string bean that members of the Oliver family have been planting and handing down since before the Civil War. The story passed along to me as a tyke is this: Nancy Davis was my daddy's great grandmother on his Grandmother Oliver's side and she lived during that hellish invasion and occupation by the North in the 1860s. Near the end of that war (March 1865), she sat on the front porch of her modest home in the middle of a devastated and fatigued farm in Chesterfield county when up rode a gathering party of Sherman's troops. She was shelling beans for planting which she slipped beneath her frock at their approach. As a rather stout older lady, they didn't bother asking her to move as they plundered her home, smokehouse and root cellar "requisitioning" everything they could find. The same fate imposed on her neighbors left a desolate and beaten down community. She shared those beans with her neighbors who planted them for sustenance that spring and to this day Nancy Davis beans are a staple in many vegetable gardens around that county. These two rows will be allowed to mature and dry on the vine, then picked, shelled on my front porch and saved for seed. I'll be "a listening out" for rumbling hooves; you never know about those sneaky Yankees.

"This war differs from other wars in this particular. We are not fighting armies but a hostile people, and must make old and young, rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war."

-William Tecumseh Sherman.

The "hard hand of war," indeed he did.

Thanks for allowing us to be your grassfarmers and as my daddy always said to me at each parting, "Come when you can."

The Olivers of River Run Farms