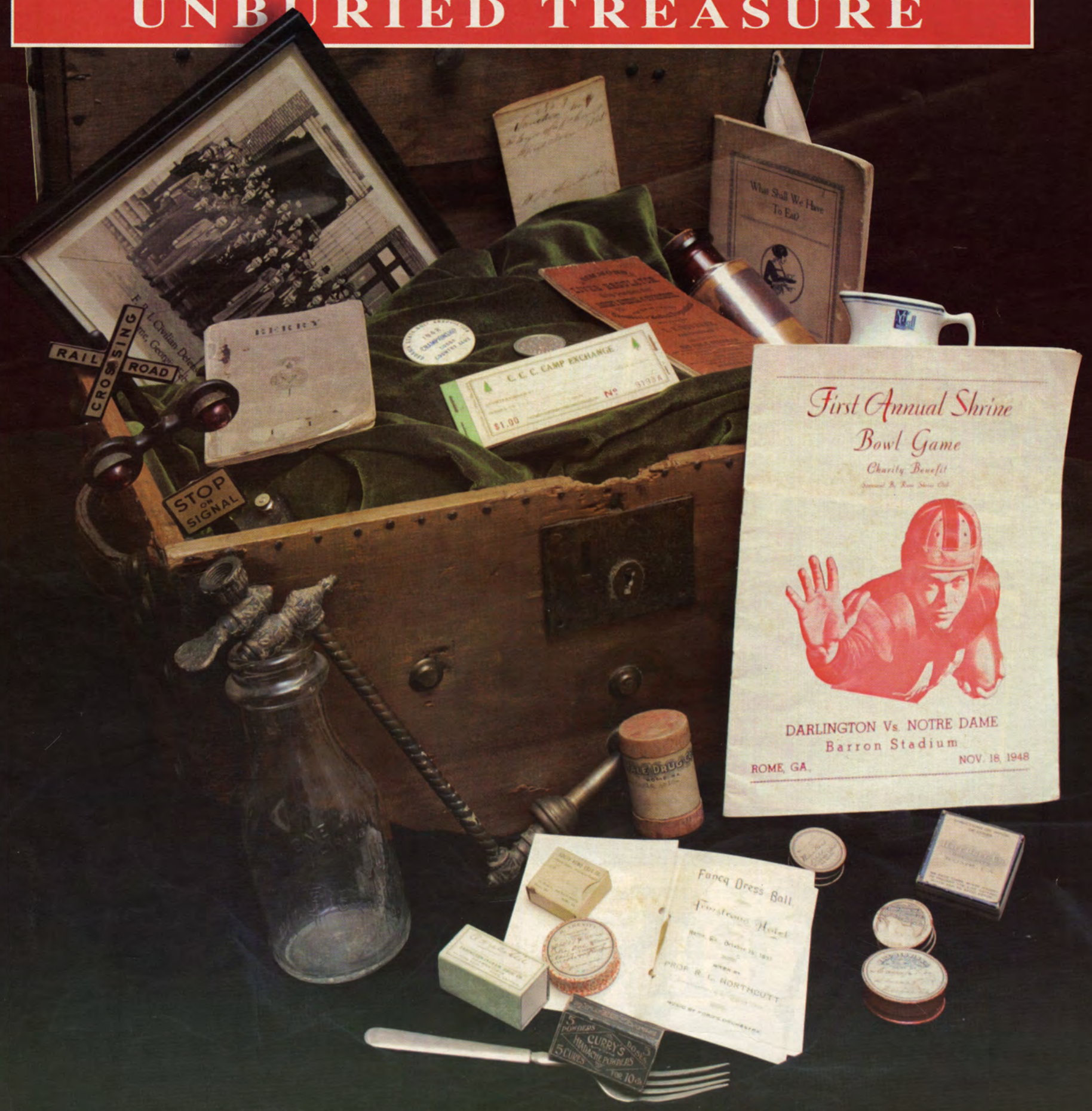


# PASTTIMES

UNBURIED TREASURE



# Adairsville author's home starts new chapter

The rustic home of renowned Georgia author Corra Harris, author of the novel "A Circuit Rider's Wife," near Adairsville is being reborn. It is also the oldest structure in Bartow County, having been built around 1820 by Chief Pine Log.

Since 1996, Jodie Hill, a Marietta resident, has been returning Mrs. Harris's Bartow County home and property to the way they were when she lived there.

Corra Harris (1869-1935) achieved much of her fame when her novel was adapted into the screenplay, "I'd Climb the Highest Mountain." She wrote about 20 other books and numerous articles for magazines and newspapers.

Her house originally consisted of a one-room cabin with a loft overhead built by the Cherokee chief, who was forced out of the area via the Trail of Tears in 1838. Mrs. Harris bought the house and christened it "In the Valley" in 1912, two years after her husband committed suicide.

Corra married Lundy Harris at 17 while he was a school teacher. During their marriage she had one daughter, who lived to be 31, and two sons who died in their first two years of life. Shortly after she married Lundy Harris he became a Methodist minister, working as a circuit rider and traveling to four or five different churches in the area. After a year, Lundy went back to teaching. Hill said that in 1910, partly due to a drug habit that Mrs. Harris helped him hide, Lundy took a sabbatical at a friend's farm near Pine Log and it was there that he committed suicide.

Two years later, Mrs. Harris visited the same family as she wanted to sleep in the



Section of Corra Harris' home built by Chief Pine Log, 1820

Past Times photo by Kevin Qualls

room where her husband had died, Hill said. It was then that she decided to buy the nearby house so that she could reside in the area.

"She wanted to live out the rest of her life near where he died," Hill said. "She never dated a boy before she married Lundy and she never dated a boy afterward."

After buying the one-room cabin, Mrs. Harris did extensive remodeling, building onto the cabin with timber cut from the land. Over the years, she added a coach house, smoke house, springhouse, barn, library, windmill and rock garden. She brought electricity to the buildings on her property through the construction of a power source, called a Delco house, at a

time when very few in the area had power, Hill said. She also had modern bathrooms installed rather than using an outhouse, as many in the region still did.

Mrs. Harris entertained many famous people at "In the Valley," most notably Georgians Margaret Mitchell, Martha Berry and Rebecca Felton. She wrote short stories for magazines such as The Saturday Evening Post and Ladies Home Journal, along with three columns per week in the Atlanta Journal.

Mrs. Harris died in 1935 of emphysema, due to the fact that she was a chain smoker, Hill said. Before her death, she had drawn up the plans for a chapel but work had never been started. Hill said Mrs. Harris' funeral was three minutes long and in the room of the original cabin, per her request. The chapel was built according to her plans over her grave site.

After her death, the estate was left in a trust to her nephews after the property was refused by a women's college and the Daughters of the American Revolution because of the upkeep required. The house was held by different people and fell into a state of disrepair over the years, Hill said. This was what prompted him to buy it.

"I've always been into local history and I've always known about this place. I saw the place going down and down. It was either me buy it or let it go to pot."

Viewing the property now, it is hard to believe that when Hill bought it there were walls rotted out, buildings hidden by vines and trees thrust through windows. Hill's

Continued on next page

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### Jodie Hill and friend

Jodie Hill, who decided to restore and save the old house poses by the chimney mantel holding a portrait of Bartow County author Corra Harris.

All of the rooms have been set up to how they looked when Mrs. Harris lived in the house, which sometimes meant undoing work others had done to modernize the house."

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crew has been able to restore almost all of the buildings on the property so far and is still working on the barn and a basement room.

While very few pieces of Mrs. Harris' furniture were still left at the house when Hill bought it, the whole house is outfitted with furniture and items from the time period when she lived. All of the rooms have been set up to how they looked when Mrs. Harris lived in the house, which sometimes meant undoing work others had done to modernize the house. For example, Hill found and reinstalled Mrs. Harris' old bathroom fixtures.

Hill said there are 300 panes of glass in the house, the old-time glass which he calls "wavy glass." There are eight chimneys and two porches, and Hill has

made a brick walkway in front of the house completely from brick recovered from a chimney when Harris' friend Rebecca Felton's house burned down.

The Corra Harris Garden Club, now headed by Marilee Henson, was started two years ago and has 260 members who help keep up the property.

Hill expects construction to be completed by the end of the year and hopes to hold weddings there and open up the property to tour groups on a reservation basis. (The phone number for the house is 770-386-5981).

"A lot of people think I'm nuts for doing this," said Hill because of all the time and money he has poured into the restoration. "This is one of Georgia's treasures. We are reviving her memory."

—Amy Smith,  
Staff writer



Past Times photo by Amy Smith

This chapel was built on top of Mrs. Harris' grave.

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