

Cottage curtains business booming at Dolly Varden

Ingenuity would be the word to describe the ambitions of an Acton district housewife who operates a booming enterprise from her 1834 stone home in Dolly Varden and enjoys every moment of its involvement. Susanne Appleford is the energetic lady who decided to make her findings of a need for ruffled cottage curtains into a home-based business. While living in her previous home in Oakville Mrs. Appleford discovered the purchase of quality ruffled curtains to be at a premium with the only ones procurable, with the look of genuine pioneer authenticity, through an American sales catalogue. "Which,"

said the ambitious lady, "are not very well made."

The Oakville home of the Applefords had been one of history, the original first Knox Presbyterian Church on William Street converted into a double house. It was while decorating the windows in the vintage home that Susanne discovered the difficulty of finding ruffled curtains.

"I couldn't find what I wanted in department stores," said Mrs. Appleford. "In trying to get someone or some store to have them made up I kept running into snags." Reportedly, drapery stores were not interested and it was only through investigation she was able to

get someone to make the curtains for her.

Costs of having the simple-type curtains custom made was too expensive considering the material used and its cost per yard and Mrs. Appleford was not happy. On someone's suggestion she ordered through a U.S. firm but found the duty disatisfactory as well as the finished merchandise.

Anniversary It was with her knowledge of the requirement of a manufacturer of the pioneer muslin curtains that Susanne Appleford moved with her family to her present Acton residence in June, 1972. She had decided she wanted some

kind of work which she could do from her own home and, meshing her recognition of a need for a cottage curtain industry in Canada with her own unlearned energies she conceived the idea of setting up a business working "with people as opposed to "for" someone else.

February of '74 marked the first anniversary of the enterprising business venture. According to Susanne Appleford, Cottage Curtains (the firm name) is the only business of its kind in Canada and offers custom-made curtains which are faithful reproductions of those used by our ancestors in colonial times.

A lady who could not sew, with little knowledge of the craft of being a seamstress, she applied her abilities to organizing. Through enquiry she found other ladies interested in home-work and able to sew with their own machines.

Ruffling was the major problem overcome by more of the local lady's ingenuity. Mrs. Appleford explains her search for a ruffer machine from as far away as New York but final contact with B and W Machine in Toronto was where she procured a junked Singer sewing machine in their warehouse, and it worked.

Today Mrs. Appleford has

four women working on the curtains in various stages of completion. Some have had previous industrial machine experience and apply their know-how to curtain assembling with ease. Cutting and ruffling are completed in Mrs. Appleford's home, and sent out to the women to be pieced together and sewn. Completed articles are returned to the Appleford home for mailing and distribution to customers.

The industrious business lady tells of original attempts to operate a catalogue-type agency but found that most people prefer the personal touch. Right now much of the business is projected from Toronto with such places as Niagara-on-the-Lake and St. Catharines, also interested in procuring the unique window dressings. Places where restorations are taking place are providing clientele for Mrs. Appleford who is delighted with the response her product has received.

"I had a difficult time finding bleached cotton which was an authentic reproduction of colonial times," she said, explaining her search through hundreds of yards of materials which had the same coloring and properties as the real thing. Even experimenting with pioneer recipes used by our ancestors to remove lettering from potato and flour bags before the material was made into curtains and clothes was attempted by the ingenious lady who can now boast that some of her materials are being used in the log cabin at the Halton County museum.

Booming An Ottawa University grad with a BA in philosophy, Susanne Appleford enjoys the challenge of home business. "I love" she says recently, "many small businesses are failing but this endeavour of mine is moving ahead very fast."

And she's right, business is increasing steadily with many customers coming in from Oakville and surrounding districts.

Her children, Michele 9, Amy 3, and Robert 7 are all interested but not too involved in their mother's business ambitions, they are too young. Their father, however, is keenly a vocal back-bone, encouraging and proud of his wife's achievements.

The head of the English department at Streetsville High School feels that his wife's accomplishment is no small item and proudly talks about how she applies herself and manages efficiently. Duncane Appleford is, at the present time, on a year-off study Sabbatical, working toward his M.Ed. Also ambitious, Duncane writes, sculpts, and has already published a text book on science fiction.

At their rural home the couple is interested in pine Canadian furniture. They refinish fine old pieces for sale, as well as for their own home.

At the present time Susanne is engaged in working out quilt problems, a newer aspect of her Cottage Curtains business. She says she is branching out into dust ruffles, pillow shams and various other items to be added to the list of saleable items. Other materials on the market are also now being used with gingham and patterned cottons being worked into the original curtain designs.

Priced less Cost of the curtains, according to Susanne, who encourages people to visit and see her establishment, are minimal as compared to attempting to make them oneself. She speculates that, by purchasing in quantity it is easier to provide lower prices than for individuals to buy materials in measured amounts.

Recently a move to Fergus has presented itself for the Appleford family. With the sale of quilts escalating and orders for all items increasing, the proprietor of Cottage Curtains sees the move as an opportunity to expand. "We won't be leaving for a few months," she says but explains the prospective home in Fergus will be an ideal arrangement for full-time business operation. Gourmet cooking products, and other exciting items will be part of the new Fergus arrangement which, although not completely settled, is in the offing.

Meantime operation Cottage Curtains continues at the present residence on Churchill Rd. S. and, until all moves are finalized Acton continues as the home base for the unique craft shop.



SALES OF BEAUTIFUL hand-made quilts are accelerating at the Cottage Curtains craft shop located at Dolly Varden. Amy Appleford, 3, happily watches her mother Susanne tuff one of the quilts in their 1834 stone home which lends itself as the place where authentic muslin ruffled curtains are created as faithful reproductions of those used by our ancestors in colonial times.

Need accommodation plowing match visitors

Halton the Hospitable—that's us this year. We're used to seeing swarms of Sunday drivers, picnickers, riders and walkers from other areas passing through our countryside throughout the more enjoyable summer months, but what would happen if they decided to stop and "set a spell"?

Where could we put them for a night or two or three? Just ask Spencer Wilson, R.R. No. 1, Norval. He has had six months to ponder the problem with another six months to sort it all out.

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The U.S. and Britain. Plowboys from Ireland are also expected this year.

Foremost in the list of events is, of course, the plowing competition involving 300 people, 275 tractors, and 25 horses. There will also be horseshoe pitching, tug-of-war, and the famous 100 acre Tent City, housing innumerable food booths, and display booths, not to mention the daily parade—"One of the best you'll see anywhere," according to the Plowmen.

All this will take place daily on the Craig Heid Farm, just south of Georgetown on 10 Sideroad.

But at the end of the day what do the 30 to 60 thousand visitors expected each day do? The majority will drive back home, but at least 1,000 will take up the invitation to enjoy Halton hospitality overnight.

Knowing this, Mr. Wilson who is in charge of billeting

is busy. The main problem is that Halton Hills itself has only one motel and the few hotels can only accommodate a limited number of people. Rooms have been booked at the Mohawk Raceway, and in Oakville and Burlington.

Mr. Wilson stated "We're going to have to depend mostly on homes. We need at least 150 homes that can accommodate an average of four people with overnight lodging for one night or one week, with maybe breakfast, too. The folks usually have supper at the grounds."

Fifty homes have already been lined up that can take between two and eight people, but there's still many more needed.

Mr. Wilson checked the figures again. Two hundred and fifty to three hundred thousand, then said rather sadly "And that's not even counting those with passes." There is a gentleman with a big job.



THE INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH to be held near Georgetown Sept. 24-28 was the main topic of discussion Thursday when plowing match enthusiasts from three counties met at Hornby to discuss last year's international and plan the 1974 and 1975 events. From left are host Mayor Tom Hill of Halton Hills, Halton IPM Local Committee chairman Ross Segsworth of Burlington, local chairman of last year's match Don Williams of Lambton County and vice-chairman of next year's event Russell Morrison of the Region of Durham (Ontario County).

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