

Bud Phillips & Pleasant Hill



DAVID CRIGGER/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Pleasant Hill, the former home of Bristol Historian V.N. “Bud” Phillips.

Late Bristol historian’s legacy part of city’s history

BY JOE TENNIS
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — Bud Phillips would have been proud.

A native of Johnson County, Arkansas, Phillips arrived in Bristol in 1953, not knowing a soul. He moved into his home at 214 Johnson St., Bristol, Virginia, on Dec. 15, 1982.

The late historian lived alone for three decades in the big, brick home on Johnson Street — a place he called “Pleasant Hill.”

Here, the friendly Phillips wrote books and newspaper columns, relying on typewriters instead of using a computer.

Truth be told, Phillips didn’t own a computer. Nor did he possess a television.

Fact is, Phillips knew little, if anything, about computers.

But, oh, how he loved newspapers and books, magazines and letters.

‘According to Bud’

Phillips spent his days writing letters and scribing newspaper columns.

He scanned documents and deeds.

And he told stories.

Phillips routinely knew enough about anything in Bristol to build a strong skeletal story. But he became beloved in both Bristols for how he put flesh and hair on those bones.

Plainly put, Phillips could capture the dry, dusty days of yesteryear and make anything seem like it had happened only yesterday.

Some fellow historians called this “Bristol history, according to Bud.”

But it was wildly popular for Phillips as the late 1990s became the early 2000s.

The clean-shaven Phillips wore a smile and suit. Walking from his home in Bristol’s Solar Hill neighborhood, Phillips often dressed like he was a century behind the times — and almost as if he was trying to match the construction year of his home: 1872.

Across town, too, from the Bristol Public Library to East Hill Cemetery, Phillips spun tales of prostitutes, psychics, ghosts and thieves.



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This typewriter and desk was used by Bristol Historian Bud Phillips, inset, to pen what some call “Bristol history according to Bud.”

‘Legacy of the house’

At his height of popularity, in the early 2000s, Phillips attracted lines of faithful readers wanting his next book, especially the local

best-seller “Pioneers in Paradise” — the author’s tell-all volume on Bristol’s founders and early residents.

Phillips had his own radio show. He wrote a newspaper column. And he had his own TV program — even though, ironically, he didn’t own a

television nor even want one at his home.

Today, that house called Pleasant Hill belongs to two women,

Denise Ballard and Florence Fracrossi, who bought it at auction in May 2017 — about four months after Phillips died on Jan. 9 at age 87. These women, currently traveling in France, have turned over the house to the care of the Bristol Historical Association.

“And this is considered one of our properties now,” said Tim Buchanan, a longtime association member. “They basically have the house loaned to us ... They were very generous. They’ve been working with the association for a while.”

Pleasant Hill will make a great asset to the association’s mission of protecting the past, said Sid Oakley, another longtime member of the Bristol Historical Association.

And it will remain a tribute to Phillips, Buchanan said.

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Want to help?

» You can donate to the Bristol Historical Association, purchase historical photographs or become a member. Emailing bristoltnva@aol.com. Visit www.bristolhistoricalassociation.com.



The inside of Pleasant Hill, the former home of Bristol Historian Bud Phillips, is as rich in history as the man himself.



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Bristol Historical Association sees bright future at Pleasant Hill

BY JOE TENNIS
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — At long last, Tim Buchanan is looking forward to a home for the Bristol Historical Association.

For years, Buchanan said, the association’s files had been strung across the Twin City, often stored in various members’ homes.

It’s hard to keep track of the minutes of this historical society, he said, when they were not all in the same place.

But now Buchanan has a new opportunity, since members of the Bristol Historical Association moved into Pleasant Hill, the former home of V.N. “Bud” Phillips, the late historian of Bristol.

The house on Solar Hill in

Bristol, Virginia, is on loan to the society by its owners, who bought it to save the property from being destroyed and turned into apartments, said Buchanan, a longtime member of the association.

“This is going to be used for a work office,” said Buchanan, 54. “I’m going to be spending the next six months working on files here.”

For the association, this home somewhat replaces the E.W. King House, which stands in Bristol, Tennessee, and was sold by the association on Dec. 15, 2016 — 34 years to the day that Phillips moved into Pleasant Hill in 1982.

The association stored some of its archives and property at the E.W. King House.

Buchanan, of Bristol, Vir-

ginia, has now placed some furniture inside Pleasant Hill — including a desk that once belonged to the late Bristol businessman H.P. King. “This came out of his personal office,” Buchanan said.

That large desk stands in a back room that Buchanan wants to use for committee meetings by members of the historical association.

“We have portraits and pictures,” Buchanan said. “But this is not going to be a storage house. This is not for us to stack up.”

This could, after all, serve as a showplace, Buchanan surmised, adding, “We’ll plan for an open house later.”

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Bristol Historical Society’s Tim Buchanan talks about the plans for Pleasant Hill, the former home of Bud Phillips.

Phillips

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“Bud was concerned about his legacy and the legacy of the house,” Buchanan said. “It didn’t turn out exactly the way he intended, but it ended up with the way he wanted it — with the association having the house.”

‘Bud’s desk is here’

Virtually all of the antique clocks, furniture and paintings that Phillips had acquired over many years were sold at auction, Buchanan said.

But some mementos remain — or have been returned.

“Bud’s desk is here,” said Buchanan, 54.

That desk, topped with a typewriter, is where Phillips wrote many of his books and newspaper columns.

But there are some changes.

“We already have a computer,” Buchanan said with a smile.

“And I do want a wall here, a wall of some of his history,” Buchanan said, speaking about Phillips. “He was big on his provenance. He was big on documenting his history — history of the house, history of what he did.”

‘Federal Revival’

Long before Phillips made his home here, contractor William H. Smith constructed Pleasant Hill for Captain James Harvey Wood in 1872, Buchanan said. “And they moved in in 1873.”

Architecturally, Buchanan said, the home is “reminiscent of the first homes and businesses built in Bristol 20 years earlier and before the Civil War.”

During 1873, Confederate President Jefferson Davis stayed overnight at Pleasant Hill. Davis also gave a speech — or address

— on a perch at what is now the home’s front porch, Buchanan said. “Bud called it ‘a speech.’ It was some kind of prepared remarks.”

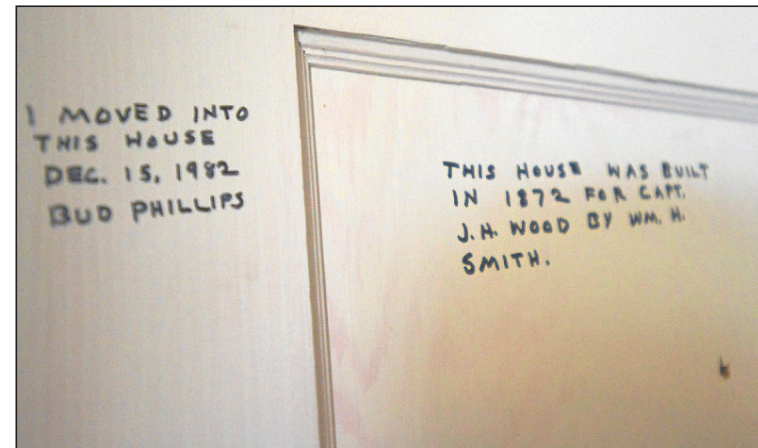
Many years later, the home was made into apartments before Phillips acquired the property from Edith Allen, Buchanan said.

“We are excited about the house because of Bud’s and the Wood legacy. But, even more, Pleasant Hill is one of the last of the Federal period — I call ‘Federal Revival’ house — left in Bristol,” Buchanan said.

“By the 1880s, most of them were gone. It was a different era, and Pleasant Hill is a reminder of that era. Ten years after Pleasant Hill was constructed, the Federal-style homes were outdated.”

‘It’s protected’

Inside, Phillips furnished Pleasant Hill with his collection of countless clocks.



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Notes written on one of the closet doors at Pleasant Hill by former Bristol Historian Bud Phillips.

Outside, Phillips loved to sit on the front porch and watch the waters of Beaver Creek and scan the landscape of what he lovingly called “beautiful Bristol.”

Buchanan now stands on that front porch.

“A lot of people are interested in this house to see what

happens to it,” Buchanan said. “Florence and Denise will protect the house. And the association will end up making sure it’s protected, too. It’s a partnership. They want to partner with us to make sure the house is saved.”

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