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Mountain Heritage Day Draws More Than 12,000/Mountain Heritage Day

Jane and Arvel Greene, descendants of pioneer Western North Carolina families, Saturday were named the recipients of the 1980 Western Carolina University Mountain Heritage Award.

The presentation of the award to Mr. and Mrs. Greene by WCU Chancellor H. F. Robinson highlighted the sixth annual Mountain Heritage Day celebration at Western Carolina University.

Despite cloudy skies and several showers, Heritage Day officials estimated that more than 12,000 persons gathered on the WCU campus during the day-long observation.

Crafts, old-timey contests, exhibits, cloggin', displays in the Mountain Heritage Center, singings and scores of other events took place over acres of campus transformed into midways and amphitheaters for the day.

Musicians filled three stages for more than seven hours of continuous entertainment.

In the making the 1980 award to the Greenes, Robinson said "the have kept pioneer crafts and skills, the pioneer way of independent living, and the old-fashioned homestead life."

The greenses for the past decade have become known to hundreds of thousands of travelers as the man and woman who demonstrate daily pioneer living at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park.

There, Greene carries on all the activities for daily sustenance that first settlers did. Fields are plowed, crops harvested. Pigs are raised. Hay is grown and stacked. A forge kept busy at the blacksmith shop, where Greene makes horseshoes, fireplace cranes, hoes, plow points, and what ever else is needed.

He demonstrates the riving of oak shingles for roofing and of pailings for fences. He builds plow stocks. At Mingus Mill nearby, he prepares the great grinding stone and helps to mill corn meal.

His wife, Jane, cares for the house and helps in the garden. She spins wool into yarn. Quilts on an old frame lowered from the ceiling when she works on the colorful covers. Milk is churned into butter. Vegetables are canned over a fireplace bed of coals.

In the late summer, they prepare hominy from corn. Using lye the have earlier prepared, they make there own soap.

Their fall events draw visitors from all over the nation. It is the that Jane and Arvel hitch mules to an old cane press, squeeze the juice from the stalks and then boil it outdoors until it is made into sorghum molasses.

But, said Robinson, it was not alone for their dedicated work in preserving and demonstrating these crafts and skills that the award was given to Jane and Arvel Greene.

"What makes Western Carolina University especially proud to honor Jane and Arvel," he said, "is that in all of these activities, they have preserved in their own selves such traits and characteristics as modesty, ability, self reliance and a reverence for life that marked the ancestry of Western North Carolina."

The Greens are natives of Swain County. She was born to Manuel and Sarah Parton at Luada near Bryson City. He is the son of Collins and Annie Greene, born on Conley's Creek. Both were raised in the communities where they were born.

In 1931, Greene likes to recall, his secondary school record as a student had been so good that the late H.T. Hunter, then the president of Western Carolina Teachers College, offered him "all the college could teach him" if he could raise \$45 to help defray the costs. But times were hard in the Great Depression, and he turned, instead, to work and carpentry.

He and Jane were married in 1934 and made their first home in the Alarka Creek section. Later, they moved to a home along the Little Tennessee River near Almond.

In the 1940's they moved to their present home on postal route 2 near Whittier, dwelling parts of which are more than 200 years old. It was there that they carried on tradition of pioneer living, and Mrs. Greene says, "Could get along very well without electricity," although they do have it. They raise four daughters and a son.

As their way of life drew attention, Arvel was asked by the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association to help with the establishment of the farmstead, and he was employed by the association to make all of the furniture in the home except a bedstead and loom (Now, he is making a loom for the homestead using black walnut wood.) Later, Greene joined the National Park Service to continue the work he had begun for the association. About eight years ago, Jane joined him on the farmstead and the place since has become one of the most popular stopping points for park visitors.

Western's Mountain Heritage Day drew more than 100 traditional craftsmen and exhibitors this year and several hundred entrants in the competitive events.