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July - August 2026

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The Northern Rockies & Great Plain's Guide to Specialty Shopping & Events • Volume 16 • Issue 4

Montana - Wyoming - North Dakota - South Dakota - Idaho

*America the
Beautiful!*



Celebrating America's 250th Birthday!

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Travel Guide
on your next adventure!

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& explore a new shop!



Editor's Notes Life, Liberty & The Pursuit of Happiness

The nation has been bustling in celebration of our 250th anniversary. And what a great thing to celebrate. 250 years of freedom, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It hasn't always been smooth. We've had our scars for sure. But, overall what a blessed place to call home. I, as an entrepreneur, am profoundly grateful to the people who created and built this country. It is because of their pioneering efforts (along with many others that followed them) that I am sitting here today writing this article in my paper and building my own business.

I think a lot of times we get to these milestones and we ask ourselves...What am I grateful for over the passed X number of years? And, one thing that pops directly to my mind is the freedom to create a life I dreamed up and the ability to obtain it. That is what it is all about right?

I grew up in the heart of the Oregon Trail, and it was never lost on me that those people would venture out and brave amazing trials and dangers just for that dream. That dream of creating something of your very own. That same spark and that same tenacity to build was how we became a country. I feel that dream today still, 250 years later. What a legacy that is!

To those of you in the later part of your lifetime still thinking about their dreams. Take the chance. "You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream." - C.S. Lewis.

To those generations below me. Set goals, dream, build tenacity for hard things. It is worth the ride and the destination. Keep planting seeds of pioneer mentality. Keep fueling that legacy from 1776 of grit and innovation.

God bless America and the next 250 years.

CountryRegisterNRGP@gmail.com
kelsey@moxiemarketingmw.com
Office: 605-568-0181

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Available across the U.S.A. & Canada

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The Country Register of the Northern
Rockies & Great Plains including North Dakota,
South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana & Idaho

Kelsey (Snyder) Ruzicka, Publisher
Produced by Moxie Marketing of the Midwest, LLC
PO BOX 2015 • Belle Fourche, SD 57717
605-568-0181 Office
www.countryregister.com/nrgp
www.moxiemarketingmw.com

Publisher's contact numbers across the USA & Canada for The Country Register
Send \$3 to any publisher below to obtain a paper from another area:
* Indicates these editions are available on-line at www.countryregister.com.

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 - *Iowa: Linda Glendy, P.O. Box 6, Tama, IA 52339, 641-751-2619
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The Country Register of the Northern Rockies & Great Plains

July/August • Volume 16 Issue 4

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Subscription price: 1 year, 6 issues, \$24.00. Single copies: \$4.00. This paper is furnished free at each advertiser, highway welcome centers, tourism centers, shows, events, and other selected locations throughout North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, and Northern Idaho.

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SEE OUR AD INDEX ON PAGE 14
Next Deadline: Ads and articles for the
September/October 2026 issue is August 7, 2026.

Spot the Difference

Can you spot the difference?

There are 5 changes to this countryside patriotic display.
Enjoy the seek and find game from your childhood. It is a fan favorite!



Spot the Difference Answers:

- 1. Barn Decoration
- 2. Lantern Color
- 3. Flower Arrangement
- 4. Milk Can Label
- 5. God Bless America Sign

BONUS: The flower container at the bottom left changes from a galvanized metal tub (left) to a wooden barrel planter (right).



Weeding the Summer Garden.

By Kerri Habben Bosman

I weeded our garden this summer morning before the swelter of the day snuck in. I worked beneath a nicely overcast sky, surrounded by a quiet breeze with the slightest hint of rain in it. I migrated from garden bed to garden bed, welcoming each arriving thought as I listened to the world breathe.

I talked to the tomatoes and smiled at the watermelon. I checked the cucumber plants, happy to see that more were growing after yesterday's harvest. I shook my head at the plethora of mint, swiping my hand across it to bring forth its aroma. I pondered the tiny purple flowers on the thyme. I transplanted seven pepper plants to a better spot, silently apologizing as I uprooted them. I secured them gently but firmly into their new place and watered them right away with a promise to come back soon.

My husband, Wayne, says it is an act of faith to plant a garden. Each winter as our seedlings sit in the front window, we eagerly await each new stage of their development. We plant dormant seeds with prayerful hopes, hoping that our care, their environment and uncontrolled circumstance will support their growth into the best plant they can be. We rejoice from the first tendrils to the last vegetable or flower when autumn is coming upon us. We clear out for the last months of the year and wait to start all over again.

Much of our summer garden began on a winter's day in January when I brought out all the seeds we'd saved from last year. Zinnias, marigolds, peppers and tomatoes. The beans, carrots, sugar snap peas we had to buy. And of course, I bought plants. Except for spoiling grandchildren, we are frugal. With Scottish and German backgrounds between us, we cannot escape it. However, putting me in a plant nursery in late April with a credit card is possibly more dangerous than sending a shopaholic to the mall. Thankfully, I have a lot of willpower, but often something beautiful and new to me simply jumps into my cart.

We bought our cucumber plants from our 16 year-old grandson, Hunter. He grew them in his high school horticulture class and then they had a plant sale. Cucumbers don't always grow well here at the coast. Because he planted the seeds and nurtured them, we especially wanted them to bear fruit. Even if it were just one cucumber, his efforts would be a success. We are grateful to be enjoying many a cucumber salad.

And, like I said at the beginning of this article, I plucked out the ever-tenacious "Pflanzeichwillnichtus." (This is my very own botanical name for a weed. It is a combination of German and Latin, meaning "plant that I do not want). Along the way, I made mental notes as to how the plants I do want are growing, deadheading as I go. I find a bit of irony in weeding, as I meticulously cull a concentrated area, I am also focusing on the entire garden. I feel the surrounding beauty and the grace of being alive. This creates a precious cohesion, an acceptance of all that is and all that is not.

Our garden of life these last few years has been partially fertilized by loss and sorrow. They churned up the soil of who we are and these emotions are still breaking down into nutrients that will somehow serve us. Yet, through it all, we resettled our roots, trusting the journey in this strange soil, and we were given enough water and enough light to grow into a new season.

Now, I must go to check the transplanted peppers, smile at the cucumber plants and pause gratefully at the tender, tiny flowers of thyme.

Kerri Habben Bosman is a writer living in Cape Carteret, NC.



American History Did you Know?

1. *First permanent settlement was in Jamestown in 1607*
2. *There once was an alligator loose in the White House*
3. *Shortest presidency was William Henry serving just 31 days after his inauguration*
4. *The Louisiana Purchase was in 1803*
5. *Jefferson kept bear cubs in the White House*
6. *The U.S. has no legally defined language*
7. *There is more than one Statue of Liberty*
8. *There is a London Bridge in Arizona*
9. *The U.S. has the longest land border*
10. *America once used a 10,000 dollar bill*

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GIRLFRIEND WISDOM



Summer is the time to see Nature in full bloom!

The sky is more blue, the green leaves are in their full glory!
The brightness lifts our spirits and gives us more energy.
Sunlight triggers the release of hormones in our brain.
Those hormones boost our mood and helps a person feel calm and focused.
Have you ever noticed that when you walk in nature you seem to notice the birds and other nature sounds more clearly? Slowing down to enjoy our neighbor's beautiful flowers is secretly lowering our blood pressure too.
Beauty is often only thought of as external, like a person, a landscape, a moment of grace, but it is clearly connected to the mind, heart, and spirit.

GIRLFRIEND WISDOM: True beauty goes beyond what we see because it shines through in our actions, and our kindness. Let that smile come into full expression the next time you "feel" a thing of Beauty!

Joy & Blessings, 

Girlfriend Wisdom is written and illustrated by Jody Houghton®.
Color files of this writing and artwork are available: www.JodyHoughtonDesigns.etsy.com

4th of July Mix

Ingredients

- Cheerios
- Rice Chex
- Wheat Chex
- Corn Chex
- Pretzen Sticks
- M&Ms
- White Chocolate

Directions

- In a large bowl combine the Cheerios, Chex, Pretzels and m&m's. Mix them up a bit, making sure that everything is evenly distributed.
- Meanwhile, over a double boiler, melt the white chocolate according to the directions on the package.
- Once the chocolate has melted and is a smooth consistency, drizzle the chocolate over the cereal mix and combine with a wooden spoon or hands. Make sure all the cereal is covered in chocolate. If you need to melt the extra white chocolate to cover all the mix then go right ahead!
- Once the entire batch has been combined, lay it out to dry on a large sheet of parchment or wax paper. Let dry for 1 hour so the chocolate is cooled and hard. Break it up into medium pieces and store in an airtight container in the fridge or freezer.



The Inner Critic

by Shelby Kottemann

When you have a creative spirit, that never goes away. It follows you everywhere you go. Creativity and art are expressed not just through quilting and sewing but through the way we dress, how we express our thoughts in words, in the way we live our lives.

Children express their creativity best. With no filter and no abandon, they create and share with the world. I remember in my little girl days, I used to sit and draw for hours. Time disappeared, and I got lost in the moment. I learned the piano with curiosity and openness.

Then, in my teen years, a not-so-friendly voice came along. Suddenly, my second time practicing a song should have been perfect and those drawings had glaring flaws. That voice robbed my joy for creating and replaced it with pressure.

Though I'm ashamed to admit it, I don't create as much these days. In a way, it's because I'm afraid of myself. Isn't that a funny concept? Well, I'm looking to change this, and it starts with a beginner's mind and the expectation that I will make mistakes. I'm practicing the act of telling myself, "I'm learning." or "I'm practicing." Along with it comes trusting myself that, if I can't fix a problem, I can turn any flaw into something even more beautiful. I'm creative after all.

Putting this all to practice, I recently made a needle book. I fell a half-inch short on my outer piece of fabric- no room for the seam! Well, I used pinking shears on that edge and hand stitched embroidery across the line where the seam would have been, turning a mistake into an opportunity for beauty and detail. My project turned out even better for it. I'm learning that, in all the pressure I was applying to myself over little things, I was missing out on so many opportunities to be the creative spirit that I am and allow my wings to soar. I'm doing much more of that now! If you've ever felt some of these same things, fly with me.

Shelby Kottemann is an author, teacher, and empathic reiki therapist. She created Loves Nature LLC to help others create heart-centered lives. You can reach her at contact@inlovesnature.com. Visit her website at www.inlovesnature.com.

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Facts about Americas Beginnings

- 1. Independence was established on July 2nd.
- 2. Two of the founders of America, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died on the same day, July 4th, just 50 years apart.
- 3. The constitution was inspired of the Iroquois confederacy.
- 4. The U.S. had young leaders, Thomas Jefferson was 33 when he wrote the declaration, and George Washington was 43 when he took command in the army.
- 5. The revolutionary war was a global war.
- 6. The liberty belle cracks.
- 7. Before Washington there were many people who acted as president to control the country.
- 8. There is a so-called curse of early presidents.
- 9. 10% of Americans are related to Native Americans.
- 10. Independence day was established in 1776.



Quotes from Presidents & First Ladies

- "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are"
-Theodore Roosevelt
- "Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."
- Barack Obama
- "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."
- Abraham Lincoln
- "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."
- Franklin D. Roosevelt
- "When angry, count 10 before you speak; if very angry, a hundred"
- Thomas Jefferson
- "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."
- Eleanor Roosevelt
- "When they go low, we go high."
- Michelle Obama
- "The greater part of our happiness or misery depends on our dispositions and not on our circumstances."
- Martha Washington
- "You have to have confidence in your ability, and then be tough enough to follow through."
- Rosalynn Carter
- "At the end of your life, you will never regret not having passed one more test... You will regret time not spent with a husband, a friend, a child, or a parent."
- Barbara Bush



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Stitched in Survival, Continued in Craft

By Anna Engen, Staff Writer

Walk into any local specialty shop today, and you're surrounded by vibrant fabrics, beautiful yarns, and the undeniable warmth of a creative community. In a world full of mass-produced items, our love for the handmade has become a way to slow down and express ourselves. But if you trace these traditions back to their very beginnings, you'll find a completely different story.

If you went back a century or two, a beautifully knit scarf or a hand-stitched quilt wasn't an artistic statement, it was the only thing keeping the winter chill out of a drafty home. Women didn't gather for a quilting bee just to socialize. While the community was a vital lifeline, they gathered because many hands made fast work of a winter essential. Clothing was mended, patched, and passed down until the fabric literally fell apart, only to be rescued one last time to become a square in a scrap quilt.

The same went for the kitchen. Baking a loaf of bread wasn't a trendy weekend project involving sourdough starters and digital scales. It was a daily, physically demanding chore. If you didn't bake, your family wouldn't eat. So, how did these daily chores transform into the beloved pastimes we cherish today?

As industrialization took over the decades, ready-made clothes became affordable, and sliced bread filled grocery store shelves. Suddenly, the intense pressure to produce out of our survival lifted, and, for a while, the world embraced the convenience of the modern age. But humans have a funny way of missing the things that anchor us. Once we no longer had to sew, knit, or bake to survive, we realized something profound:

we actually wanted to. Free from the burden of necessity, these tasks became an expression of joy, creativity, and love. We began choosing our colors for the beauty of the palette, not just because it was the only wool available. We started baking bread for the magic of the process and the unmatched taste of a home-cooked meal.

Today, when we pick up a pair of knitting needles, sit down at a sewing machine, or dust our counters with flour, we are doing something incredibly special. WE are reaching backward in time and keeping a flame alive. We are honoring the skill, resilience, and quiet dedication of the generations before us who did these exact same movements out of love and duty.

In a fast-paced, digital world, returning to these handmade necessities brings us back to earth. It connects us to our communities, supports our local specialty shops, and reminds us that the best things in life are still made by hand, one careful stitch and slow rise at a time.



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Robin's Nest DIY Blog

Noodle Watermelon

I think this project says, “Sumer is Here!”

YOU WILL NEED:

You will need a red and a green pool noodle, cable ties (extra-long-24inches), clear packing tape, a knife (retractable blade), white paint and brush, white cotton cord, scissors, green ribbon, straight pins, and glue.



STEP ONE

Bend the red noodle at about 8 inches and cut it straight across. Tape it to hold it with the clear packing tape. Take the rest of the noodle and wrap it around the first and cut it so they are all straight and tape them to hold together for now.



STEP TWO

Push the zip tie through the middle two noodles and tie it off, do this to the next red layer also. The last outside layer is the green noodle. Wrap it around and push the cable tie through all of the noodle layers. I had to tie two cable ties together for this layer. I then removed the clear tape.



STEP THREE

Cut two cords to fit between the green and red layer. You can glue these in place or use straight pins to tack them in (I had trouble getting the glue to stick). CAUTION- hot glue will melt the noodle.



STEP FOUR

I dry brushed some white acrylic paint on the red noodle along the white cord.



STEP FIVE

Next, I used double stick tape to put the green ribbon on the green noodle layer. I cut the strips at about 6.5 inches or just measure it around and cut.



STEP SIX

I used a paint pen to draw “seeds” on the red noodle and pinned on a green bow.



STEP SEVEN

Tie a ribbon on the back cable ties to hang your watermelon!

REALLY CUTE!



FINISHED!

Become Inspired

By Annice Bradley Rockwell



A Celebration of Strength

In 2026 with the approach of the height of the year, we have so much to be proud of. As our nation celebrates its 250th year, one of the best ways to proclaim our patriotic pride is through decorating. Our yards this time of year are naturally filled with the beauty of green lawns and gardens filled with color. The stands of red beebalm that attract the hardworking hummingbirds are in full bloom now. Our blue hydrangeas that are always lush and vibrant are all part of the backdrop of a spectacular and especially patriotic summer.

To decorate our porches, gorgeous primitive buntings of red, white and blue expand our décor and lend historic appeal. Small bicentennial flags lined along our fence let people know we are truly celebrating our nation's proud history.

To make our enthusiasm even more evident, we might even create historical decorative vignettes that are unique and have an even stronger colonial appeal. A huge copy of The Declaration of Independence paired with a Revolutionary cloak and tricorn hat can be placed next to an inkwell with a quill and American flag. It's a way to celebrate freedom and to honor history.

Participating in the Past

Taking part in our town's 250th celebrations will no doubt be a time to remember. Whether it is a tour of the local museum's bicentennial collection curated just for this year, or an historic home tour designed with 250 in mind, the activities for this very special summer abound. Summer favorites such as the July 4th parade or the quaint shoreline town's boat parade will be received with exceptional fanfare and enthusiasm this year because this historic milestone deserves it.

Spirit of 1776

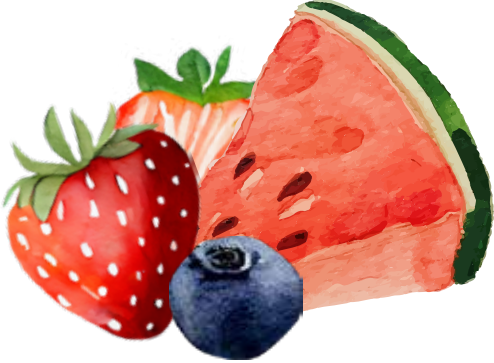
So as summer gets into full swing and festive events start to gain momentum, consider taking part and enjoying the "Spirit of 1776" fun. As people who are naturally passionate about history, colonial antiques and the legacy of our nation's past, this summer is a time to bring our absolute best.

--Annice Bradley Rockwell is an educator and owner of Pomfret Antiques. She is currently working on her book, New England Girl. NewEnglandGirl2012@hotmail.com

Watermelon Summer Berry Salad

Ingredients

- Watermelon
- Cherries
- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Lime Juice
- Lime Zest
- Honey
- Poppyseeds



Directions

Prepare the fruit. Cut your watermelon into 1 inch cubes and add it to a large bowl. Then cut your strawberries in half (or quarters) and pit and cut your cherries in half and add them to the bowl with your watermelon. Then add your blueberries and lime zest.

Make the "dressing." Next, whisk your dressing ingredients together until the honey dissolves.

Toss & serve! Pour your desired amount of dressing over the fruit and toss the salad until it's completely coated. Then serve immediately or let it chill in the fridge for 10-20 minutes before serving.

BEST US POP CULTURE

Iconic pop musicians like Beyonce & Taylor Swift

Hollywood Blockbusters and Cinema

The Barbie Doll created in 1959

Social Media and Digital Trends

Americanized cultural events such as Halloween & Black Friday

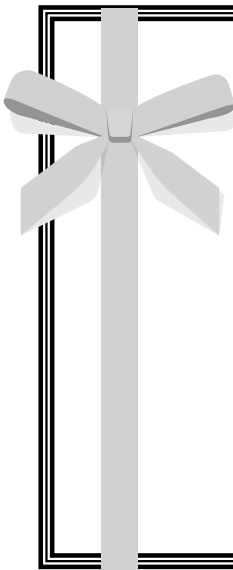


Travel the USA Bucket List

- Visit Niagara Falls
- Go to the Hamptons
- Go to Glacier National Park
- Visit the Everglades
- Yellowstone National Park
- Visit Moab, Utah
- Go snorkeling at Key west, Florida
- Go to Grand Canyon National Park
- Go to Highlands National Park in NC
- Take a trip to Cherokee National Forest, Tennessee

- Tour the White House
- Explore Lake Tahoe
- Take a trip to Yosemite National Park
- Travel to Zion National Park in Utah
- Visit Sedona, Arizona
- Explore Magnolia Springs, Alabama
- Go to the beach at Space Coast, Florida
- Travel to Maui, Hawaii
- Bike across the Golden Gate Bridge
- Drive the full length of Route 66

- Go to the stop of the Empire State Building
- Ride Staten Island Ferry to the Statue of Liberty
- See Mount Rushmore
- Walk across the Brooklyn Bridge
- Experience Mardi Gras in New Orleans
- Go to the Kentucky Derby
- Go to a music festival
- Watch Fireworks on the 4th of July in DC
- Do a BBQ roadtrip through Texas
- Hike a stretch of the Appalachian Trail or Pacific Crest Trail



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The Importance of Dreams

By Shelby Kotteman

Dreams are one of the longest standing mysteries in the universe. We can dream of things in our sleep or we can daydream of possibilities for our life. Whether night or day, I have come to believe that dreams hold a power in our lives beyond our realization. Here are two ideas why:



Some nighttime dreams are just an interesting conglomeration of things our minds are processing. However, I think we've all had a dream or two sometime that we just knew was more than a dream. One of mine came a few years ago. Whether you believe in Angels or not, I had a dream that something from Heaven told me to pray for my mother. When I asked why, I felt a reply of "Health" and it felt urgent. I asked my mother if she had been to the doctor lately. She showed me a spot where her dermatologist had frozen a mole off her arm with liquid nitrogen. I asked her to have it checked again. She knew I had dreams and feelings, so she went without question. The doctor who checked it scheduled emergency surgery to remove melanoma that had spread so deeply that it was within a hair's distance from her lymphatic system. I might still have my mom today because she and I trusted a dream.

As for daydreams, I have a theory that I would love for you to put to the test: When we daydream with a sense of appreciation and joy in our hearts, without any expectation, that dream goes out into the universe and it comes to us in extraordinary ways. Even small things apply. For instance, I thought to myself a couple of times, 'Wouldn't it be nice to have some soft pink peonies in my yard?' I even looked at them in the store, but with some big expenses that had come up, I just couldn't justify buying flowers. A week later, I was out for a walk and stumbled upon a large paper bag marked Free peonies. What are the chances of that? Peonies! I looked up and said, "Thank You."

Starting today, I invite you to trust your dreams: your sleeping dreams and your daydreams, big and small. Follow your instincts. Imagine the possibilities with gratefulness and joy. Allow your mind to wander and your heart to listen. You just might notice that your dreams aren't so fantastical after all. You might find that some dreams are truly whispers from your soul.

Shelby Kottemann is an author, teacher, and empathic reiki therapist. She created Loves Nature LLC to help others create heart-centered lives. You can reach her at contact@inlovesnature.com. Visit her website at www.inlovesnature.com.



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A Historian Takes Her Daughter To The Cemetery

By Kathy J. Sotak

Imagine being an eleven-year-old girl and are told enthusiastically, *"Get in the car, we are going to the cemetery!"*

That was my mother beginning a new detective's journey, with an invitation for me as her apprentice in training.

I knew by then my mother followed her curiosities. I watched her pick up (and lay down) several hobbies and projects throughout her life. Her primary role was homemaker and chief operating officer of the household. Of course, she did the expected things of the era like knitting, gardening and embroidering. She also followed her yellow brick road of peculiar interests, like learning tatting – a near-obsolete form of lace-making, restoring ruined photographs from the late 1800s and professionally valuing old silver coins.



I was the baby of the family. After three decades of child-rearing and that job near complete, her attention went elsewhere: she became a self-appointed historian, overnight. I believe she felt it was her duty to make sure legacies lived on. This included her ancestors, her husband's ancestors and our community.

Somehow, in the roles and responsibilities section of her historian job role, appeared cemetery investigator. My mother had a suspicion that there were more graves buried than headstones appeared. With this as our hypothesis, we started this journey at our county's courthouse on a beautiful summer day. I recall that I wished to be anywhere but there.

The clerk invited us back into a dark and musty corridor and I recall the creak of metal filing drawers – like the rusty tin man that hadn't moved in ages. Out popped the proper binder with names of those buried in our community's rural cemetery.

I moaned and groaned as my mother drove to our next stop: the cemetery. I became even more desperate to end my training by convincing my mother she could do it by herself. But she made it sound like a magical journey of meaning as we walked the rows of stones.

"There should be a headstone here. Baby [last name] was buried here, 1921-1921." We knelt down with garden tools in hand, which served as official archaeology instruments.

"Be careful," my mom said as we gently tapped the trowel into the soil an inch down, "we don't want to wreck the headstone."

I didn't believe we would find anything, but then I heard a distinct "clink" of the

trowel followed by an excited "gasp!" from my mother. Unbelievable to me, under two inches of topsoil and grass we found our first headstone. Slowly we pulled up soil and grass, exposing decades-old cement. We went back home to get paint brushes – I mean, more archaeological tools – to gently sweep away the dirt to see if we could read any of the imprints.

Sure enough, we soon read the inscription: "Baby [last name]. 1921-1921."

We repeated that exercise for every plot that indicated a grave but no headstone appeared. In several cases, we found small cement markers buried under topsoil like the example above. In most there was none. With love and responsibility in

her heart, my mother found the funding (perhaps from the county or from our church) to purchase small proper headstones that would remain for decades to come.

I didn't realize how much that experience would shape my life. My mother helped to restore the remembrance of every life in our community. Every single life made a difference. I'll never know the story of the family whose baby died after only a few months. I just know that that life made an impact – even now a century later through me and those who read these words.

Over time we visited more cemeteries, looking for family ancestors. My mom would point out the extra-beautiful headstones, making sure I learned to respect intricate details that most overlook. Sometimes we would find a special inscription that made my mom think about the legacy she wanted to leave. It made for a beautiful conversation as we walked through the rows of those that had passed before us.

Today when I visit a cemetery, it brings a pang of excitement. It sparks this memory that only my mother and I shared. I think about her legacy that lives in my heart. I think about the legacy I want to live.

I don't know what my kids will remember about me. It likely won't include cemeteries – but perhaps I'll find a detective journey of my own.

They will be my perfect apprentice.

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1. Hot Dogs & Buns

2. Hamburgers

3. Baby Back Ribs

4. Yellow corn

5. Potato Salad

6. Watermelon

7. Bratwurst & Sausages

8. Baked Beans

9. Chips and Dip

10. Coleslaw



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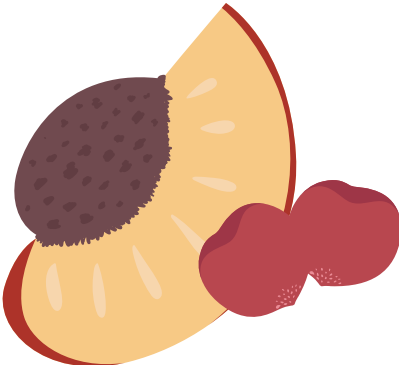
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Cherry and Peach Panzanella

Ingredients

- Burrata Cheese
- Nectarines
- Plums
- Peaches
- Cherries
- Maldon Sea Salt
- Freshly cracked black pepper
- Basil
- Ciabatta bread (day old!)
- Olive oil
- Garlic
- Champagne vinegar
- Lemon juice
- Honey



Directions

Croutons: Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Tear the ciabatta bread into bite sized pieces. Transfer to a baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil. Place the baking sheet into the oven and toast until the bread is crisp. Remove and use on the salad as needed.

Champagne Vinaigrette: Combine liquids & seasoning in a small bowl and whisk to combine. Adjust salt and pepper as needed.

Assemble: In a large bowl, arrange the fruit, torn croutons and pieces of burrata cheese. Season the Cherry and Peach Panzanella with salt and pepper and drizzle with the vinaigrette. Top with basil.

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