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# Bev York & Living History



(/uploads/original/20230324-172950-6-CHM Oct 2015 Riley and Bev.jpg)

**Bev holding her granddaughter Riley outside the Crosby House Museum, October 2015.**

PHOTO PROVIDED BY BEV YORK.



Posted Friday, March 24, 2023 5:40 pm

## **By Shirley Stirling**

Ever since she can remember, Beverly York has been interested in history and how her ancestors lived and thrived early in our nation's history.

Not sure what got a "bee in her bonnet" about the past. Maybe living on a farm at the end of a power line, where the electricity went out with regularity, gave her incentive to learn all she could. Or it may have also been the vintage needlework and quilt blocks from her great-grandmother and great-aunts that inspired her. Or the fact that she was raised in a family interested in their heritage and how it might fit in history.

Whatever the reason, she lives, loves and teaches about day-to-day life skills and style, whether it is the era of the early American colonies, Hudson's Bay Company, the Oregon Trail, Edwardian or Victorian times. She declares that many of the old-time skills are useful today too.

During our visits, I found that Bev has an amazing amount of facts on the tip of her tongue and is delighted to share them. Her skills are many and varied... agriculture, butter-making, apothecary medicine, carding, spinning, weaving, knitting,

cooking, gardening, and more. She is open to learning more and finding more ways to serve. She is yet another variety of dedicated and passionate volunteer.

### **To Sew or Not to Sew**

While in high school, she found that at 5'9", if she wanted stylish clothing she must learn to sew, and so, sew she did. That was the beginning which led her to historical clothing. Also, I previously mentioned her great-grandmother's quilt blocks. She took a particular interest in finishing them. Also, she started taking them to local historical events, to quilt them herself, and to share with others. They were a hit.

As a seamstress, she has created many dresses with historical accuracy, searching far and wide for the right fabric, the right pattern, and the right techniques. She has also made everything from bonnets, tie-on pockets to shawls. You will see several of her costumes in the photos accompanying this article.

One of her first historic dresses appears in the photo from the Pioneer Farm in Ohop Valley. She is wearing what was termed a 1700s-era "work dress" made from the historic Sturbridge Village print. Though period-authentic, fabric is expensive, and she was amazed to find this for a great price.

At the Northwest Colonial Fair one year, a professional historian stopped her to identify and comment on the fabric. “Thank you,” she said, “And I got it for \$2 per yard!”

In the July 2014 photo, you find Bev in her charcoal silk dress, a truly Victorian pattern and made from the techniques of the era.

On Cider Sunday, October 2014, Bev is pictured in a dress she made which was featured on the vintage pages of Godey's Lady's Book, an American women's magazine published 1830-1878. (It was the most widely circulated magazine before the Civil War.) Amazingly, the identical pattern is now sold as a McCall's pattern. Bev also made a brown dress trimmed with pink of the same design, with yellow roses and blue leaves, a mid-1860s era reproduction print.

## **Hands-On in Context**

She loves to help kids and adults have hands-on experience. She home-schooled her boys, Ryan and Paul, who are now in their 30s, and developed skills through that time period collaborating with other parents, learning approaches that led her to where she is today. She likes to share presentations in context and loves to use a book read by the students to give that context. A couple of books she has used include The

Witch on Blackbird Pond by Elizabeth George Speare and Eben Tyne, Powder Monkey by Patricia Beatty and Phillip Robbins.

## **Programs of many types and eras**

Here are some of the programs Bev has now or in the past served in. The items read like a to-do list of interesting adventures. Several links are provided for your review:

- Living History Historian at the **Fort Nisqually Museum**.  
<https://www.metroparkstacoma.org/place/fort-nisqually-living-history-museum/>
- Living history programs of **Laura Ingalls Wilder's Birthday gatherings** (2001 – 2008);
- One of the living history docents at the City of Tumwater's **Crosby House** for five years/six seasons, ending in 2015. This house was built by the grandparents of Bing Crosby and managed by the Daughter of the Pioneers of Washington State, of which Bev served as a friend to the society. Membership is restricted to those with ancestors here by 1870.  
<https://www.ci.tumwater.wa.us/about-tumwater/history/crosby-house>  
(<https://www.ci.tumwater.wa.us/about-tumwater/history/crosby-house>)
- **Washington Civil War Association** 2007-present.  
<https://www.wcwa.net/> (<https://www.wcwa.net/>)

- Living History Coordinator and board trustee, City of Centralia's **Historic Borst House Museum**. From 2016 to current, she has volunteered and helps create a 30-minute program each month. She also volunteered on the church-building committee, creating a replica pioneer church onsite. <https://explorewashingtonstate.com/borst-home-museum/>  
(<https://explorewashingtonstate.com/borst-home-museum/>)
- Since 2007, she has served as a trustee at the **Tumwater Historical Association**.  
<http://www.tumwaterhistoricalassociation.org/>  
(<http://www.tumwaterhistoricalassociation.org/>)
- She is currently **Community Classroom Co-Chair** through the Sacajawea Chapter as a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. They volunteer in public and private school classrooms to give kids hands-on experience in colonial life skills. She also works privately with teachers interested in other historical eras.  
<https://www.sacajaweadar.org/>  
(<https://www.sacajaweadar.org/>)
- Upcoming in August: Living History Re-Enactor at the **Northwest Colonial Festival**. She is one of more than 100, who share elements of the day-to-day life, and patriotic service during the American Revolution War.  
<https://www.colonialfestival.com/>  
(<https://www.colonialfestival.com/>)
- Upcoming in August: The Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution will, for the first time, conduct

demos in DuPont during their annual **Hudson's Bay Festival & BBQ Competition.**

<https://dupontwa.gov/533/to-DuPont-Hudsons-Bay-Festival-BBQ-Compe> (<https://dupontwa.gov/533/to-DuPont-Hudsons-Bay-Festival-BBQ-Compe>)

## **History at Home**

Though you can find Bev at many celebrations, fairs, parades, and programs throughout our geographic area, she loves her home and activities there, both indoor and outdoor. Outdoors, she and her husband Peter, enjoy heirloom gardening with an orchard, vineyard, and gardens of assorted berries, herbs, flowers and vegetables. She makes good use of her time both indoors and outdoors at home, learning and honing her old-timey skills.

Bev entreats us, “Let’s work to preserve our history and share it with the next generation.”

*Shirley Stirling, of Lacey, writes about good things people in Thurston County are doing. If you’d like to nominate someone to be profiled, contact her at [shirley@theJOLTnews.com](mailto:shirley@theJOLTnews.com) (<mailto:shirley@theJOLTnews.com>) or comment below.*

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I love working with Bev at Borst Home Museum. What a great article spotlighting one of our members. Bev is also the Patriotic Education Chair of the Tumwater Falls Chapter, Daughters of the American Colonists.

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 **griffithga**

Thank you Shirley for another great JOLT article recognizing those in our community who work to share our heritage with present and future generations. The more we learn and understand about the past, the better prepared we are to shape the future.

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 **ccjs55**

LOVED reading this.... Thanks for posting!

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