

Convention 2017—Atlanta Style!

By Jeff Siptak

Atlanta was home to the 32nd annual Willow Collectors Convention, July 6-9, with convention chairs, Judy Prophet, Jean Hull and Joyce LaFont, known in our convention circle as the Three J's, taking the lead. This year's theme was "Gone With the Willow."

An optional pre-convention event was a day antiquing with lunch on Wednesday. Around 50 people took part in a shopping trip to the Scott's Antique Market, followed by lunch at the Blue Willow Inn. Although there is willow to be seen displayed on the walls, they no longer serve on our favorite dishes! But, by all accounts the Southern-style cooking and fellowship were enjoyed by all.

Back at the hotel guests quickly registered and met old and new friends in the hospitality room, which was filled with willow items for the raffle as well as willow and Gone With the Wind puzzles. Dozens of items were donated for this year's raffle and lucky winning numbers were drawn throughout the weekend.

That evening guests were welcomed to a dinner reception by Jean Hull, who pointed out all the great things Atlanta was known for, including traffic, and started the introductions around the room. Guests talked about their first piece of willow and the items they brought for show & tell.



Off to Scott's Antique Market and lunch on Wednesday.



Robert Prophet, David Gehlhausen and Robin Hill enjoying lunch at the Blue Willow Inn.



Just a few of the Show & Tell table displays, showcasing everything from animals to a child's ABC plate.

Jean Hull, far right.





Jeff Siptak



James Cail

Friday morning started with a lecture by Jeff Siptak titled “What’s In A Name, Y’all.” He showcased examples of willow associated with names, from personalized plates, mugs and pitchers to place cards and other willow featuring people’s names and initials.

After a short break, attendees were treated to a humorous talk by James Cail. In “The Mind of a Collector” he shared stories about what makes collectors who they are and the characteristics we all recognize as



Don LaFont auctions off a teapot held by Kayla Escar.



sharing the same “addiction.”

Brenda Hoffer led a craft session creating a mixed media hanging ornament made from old aluminum jello molds with shards of willow, sea shell pearls, sea glass and other craft pieces.

A cold deli sandwich bar awaited attendees for lunch and then it was time to get ready for the night’s auction. The auction committee set the stage by arranging all the lots and registering numbers for bidding. With Don LaFont and Nancee Rogers serving as auctioneers, more than 230 lots were auctioned off, including two toby pitchers, several Doulton Lambeth pitchers and countless other items—old and new. Midway through the auction, attendees put their bidding paddles down and enjoyed a Southern-style fried chicken buffet.



The flea market opened Saturday morning with everyone shopping for items priced at \$30 or less. There were about 20 tables filled with willow and some good bargains were to be had.

Joyce LaFont followed the flea market with a talk on “Designing With Willow,” where she showed numerous photos of willow used in living and dining rooms, bathrooms, kitchens and other areas around the house. She also had examples of new willow fabric that is now available.

Lunch was then served and followed by the annual business meeting. During the meeting, Robin Hill, from Oklahoma City, proposed the 2020 convention be held there with her as chair.



Evelyn Stephens, set up and ready for the flea market.



Jennifer Cather shops the flea market tables of Sandra Bladen.

Stuart Lathrop (Judy Prophet's brother) followed lunch with a presentation on "Staying Safe Online." He explained the current trends on the internet and how we can be safe and secure with great tips on passwords and shopping. There were good questions from the audience, as this is something that affects almost everyone.

During the afternoon the place setting contest was held. It has become a convention favorite where attendees create place settings using willow. At this same time, dealers began setting up for the grand sale and by 3:30 the doors opened to about a dozen dealers selling their wares. Everyone had a chance to shop hundreds of pieces of willow and decide which items needed a new home in their collections. With bags filled and shopping done, it was time to get ready for dinner.

The day was capped off with a wonderful evening banquet and closing remarks by Jean Hull. Attendance pins were awarded to Charles Hollingsworth (25 years); Zeta Hollingsworth (25 years); Joyce LaFont (25 years); Scot Rogers (25 years); Daisy Eden (20 years); Cheryl Schattall (10 years); and Fred Schattall (10 years).

Jeff Siptak invited everyone to Nashville in 2018 where the theme will be "The Willow Pattern on Paper." Jeff then drew names for two people to receive a free registration for next year's convention. Daisy Eden and Mary Lou Piepergerdes were the lucky winners. Paul Kirves also invited attendees to Dayton in 2019 where the theme will be "Willow in Flight."

On Sunday morning, an optional church service was led by Tom and Daisy Eden, and attendees packed their cars and were ready to head home. It was a great convention enjoyed by everyone—hats off to the Three J's!



Carol Parson, Mary Lou Piepergerdes, Terry and Sandra Leonard, Evelyn Stephens, Rachel McCain, Tom Eden, Marianne Johnson and Daisy Eden. Aiden and Cayla Reece.



Winners of a free 2018 convention registration: Daisy Eden and Mary Lou Piepergerdes.

Judy Prophet, Connie Rogers and Nancee Rogers sign up for Friday night's auction.

A few more photos from Atlanta...

