



## **Woman's Exchange Historical Charm Shines in the Village of Pinehurst 90 Year-Old Cabin Stands the Test of Time**

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In the historic melting pot that is the Village of Pinehurst, it is quite remarkable that the iconic landmark ranking smallest in size has celebrated more anniversaries than its larger structural neighbors.

And really, who would blame the cozy cabin that is the Pinehurst Woman's Exchange for being proud of its decades of memories and milestones?

Instead of boasting, the little brown log building just continues doing what it's been successful at doing for 90 years: serving as an outlet for locally-made handcrafts and offering a small, but memorable, menu of delicious lunch items and desserts.

While the times and styles have changed around the "Cabin," tourists and locals share space from 11:30 am-2 pm in The Tea Room, the low-ceilinged, light-filled dining area that is overflowing with character and charm. Volunteers bustle around nine tables covered with red-checked tablecloths during lunch, greeting everyone with a smile and pleasant conversation.

Current Woman's Exchange Board President Karen Lehto says that the clientele reminds her of the 80s television show, "Cheers."

"Everybody knows your name," she shared recently. "Our cook sees some of our regular 'crowd' coming in through the door and starts their orders before they sit down."

That's because many of the dining room specialties, such as homemade soups, chicken salad, and egg salad, are well-known in the area, along with the bourbon pecan pie and lemon meringue pie. Generations of families have shared special memories over the years, while being served by a legion of long-time volunteers.

It was a true volunteer collaboration which launched the Woman's Exchange nine decades ago, with the mission to "help others help themselves." There was a strong effort among some New England ladies to guide local farm women make extra money by selling their hand-crafted items. The Tufts family, who founded Pinehurst at the turn of the century, offered the Cabin to the Exchange as their shop, and the business thrived.

Early pictures of the building show the structure under a large oak or pecan tree in a state of neglect. The cabin, built around 1810, was purchased after the Civil war by the McKenzie family and used as their kitchen. According to local history, James Tufts was so charmed by the cabin, that he offered to build the McKenzie family a new kitchen, and he had the old "kitchen" moved piece by piece to the present location across from the Village Chapel, in an area fondly called "Deer Park," because of the tame animals who lived there.

Each log was marked and reconstructed in its original alignment. There were two doors and one window, and the first fireplace was made of mud and sticks, later replaced with brick. The lock on the front door reportedly was from the first jail in Fayetteville, in neighboring Cumberland County, and the key to that door was described as being 12 inches long.

As with any new venture, the Exchange had its growing pains. It enjoyed enough early success that additional rooms were needed, thanks to generous benefactors. In addition to crafts, the members (who paid the \$2 membership) were instructed on the finer points of knitting, crocheting, sewing and some cooking and canning skills. Not all of the offerings were perfect at first. Often colors and fabrics weren't terrific, and stitches were dropped in the knitted garments. Some of the first baked goods, including cakes, were pronounced "awful" in the minutes of an Exchange meeting during the first year.

Fast-forward from those early years to 2013. There are no cake failures. There are no dropped stitches, and members are encouraged to keep their beautiful crafts and homemade items current

and timely, as if they are preparing goods for local arts and crafts fairs. The food and ambience has no historical equal. This cabin, its atmosphere and its offerings are truly one-of-a-kind.

Village Manager Andy Wilkison frequents the Exchange for his favorite lunch of egg salad and Key lime pie. He tells the story of a national senior mens' tennis group, who plays tournaments in Pinehurst at the adjacent courts. There is a Tea Room menu up on the wall at the Club, and the men, who have been coming to the Sandhills for over 15 years, never miss an opportunity to find their way to the Cabin for lunch.

“The Women’s Exchange is really important because it does show a real-time, existing example of what Pinehurst was like way back in the 20s and 30s,” said Wilkison. “Thankfully it is still here, like the sentimental things that were here from almost the beginning. This building is the kind of thing that was an ‘attraction’ back during that time and one of the things that people associate with Pinehurst.”

Lehto, who is serving her second term as President, says the Exchange filled a void in her life following the passing of her mother and is “part of my being.”

“I have volunteered for the last 25 years and found my way to the Exchange in 2007,” said the career military wife. “We have loyal volunteers and also customers who travel from Canada for our unique, handmade baby items.”

In addition to the baby items, the Exchange sells soaps, quilts, jewelry, kitchen linens, accessories and bird houses. Nearly 70 crafters share their goods for sale.

As the Woman’s Exchange begins its historically-important tenth decade, Wilkison says this is a part of Pinehurst history that you can see in person.

“This cabin is a part of our history that you don’t have to go to the Tufts Archives to see,” he explained. “The Woman’s Exchange was a mainstay 90 years ago, and thankfully it’s still here for everyone to continue to enjoy.”

Just like 90 years ago, the brown log cabin sits on Azalea Road behind a split-rail fence across from the Village Chapel. It is open seasonally, Tuesdays-Saturdays (closed in the summer and

winter months) beginning in September. For more information about the Exchange, its hours and directions, call 910-295-4677.