The Barnard Bulletin

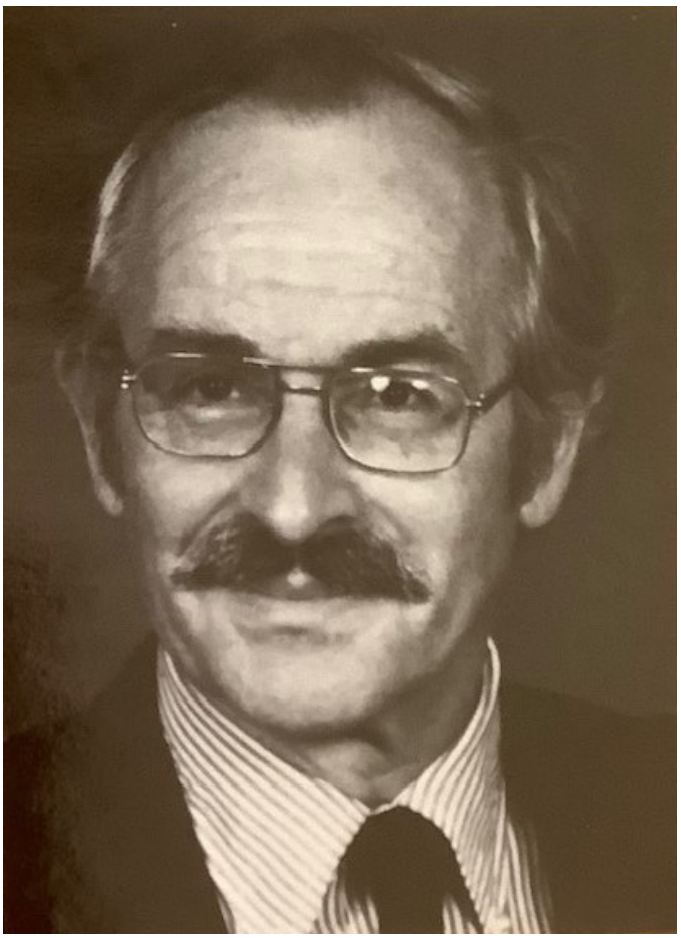
NOVEMBER 2024 — Happy Halloween — Vol. XXXIX No. 11

A VERMONT WRITER

BY MARGARET EDWARDS

This column is an offering of The Danforth Library in Barnard and a chance to introduce a Vermont writer who deserves wider renown.

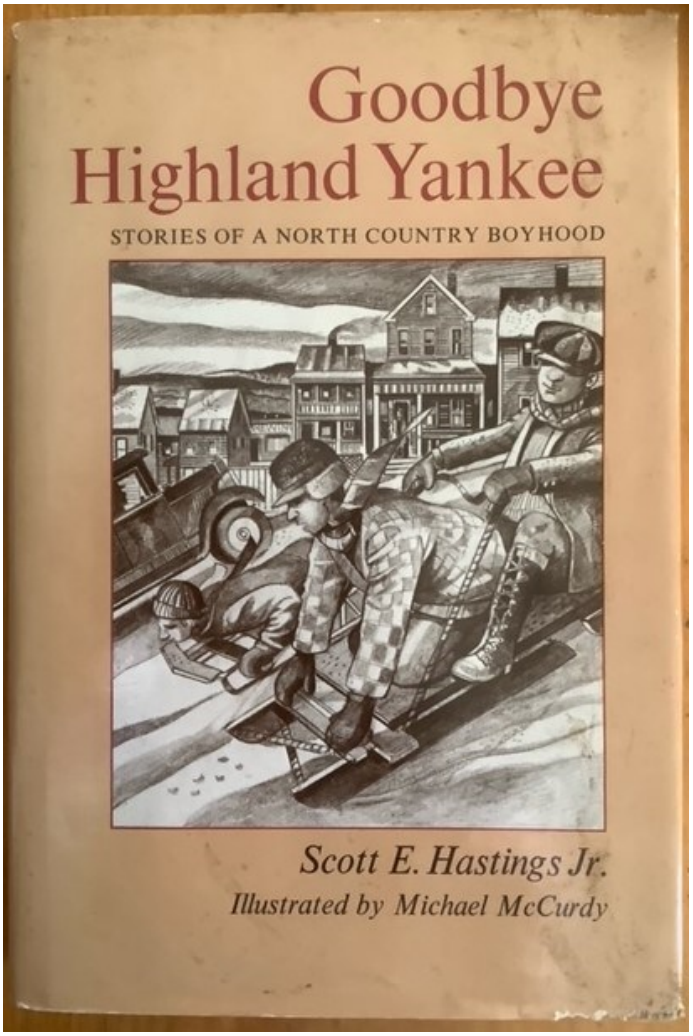
Scott E. Hastings, Jr. **1924 – 1999**



1988 Scott E. Hastings, Jr.

Billings Farm and Museum in Woodstock, Vermont, is a "must visit" destination for any grown-up accompanied by children who love animals and wish they were growing up on a farm. Each life-sized tableau of farm life, from the late 19th through the early 20th century, has a charm that makes anyone older than seven feel a pang. Young children, of course, think this way of life still exists: churning cream into butter by hand, harvesting ripened wheat with a scythe, hand-sawing ice for the "ice box" off a frozen pond, gathering maple sap tree-by-tree in steel buckets, hitching a horse team to pull the family wagon. None of this happens where they live or where their grandparents live; even so, that serene rural life is surely somewhere: so simple, so easily understood, and so *natural*. But the older-than-seven crowd know better.

Who was it who put together this remarkable collection of farm implements and the captivating museum displays that evoke such nostalgia? A Vermont native and, for seventeen years, a public school teacher, Scott E. Hastings, Jr., tired of what he was doing and decided, in 1965, to study anthropology. A Ford Foundation scholarship allowed him to take his wife and family from Taftsville (where they had moved in 1953) to go out west where he spent a year at the Research Center of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff. Quite soon it dawned on Hastings that, back east, he had been surrounded all his life by remarkable subject matter. He just hadn't recognized it for what it was. All of a sudden in Arizona, as he said, he recognized that his "real interests lay in the field of folklife"—back at home.



Published in 1988 by Chelsea Green Publishing Company of Chelsea, Vermont

In the foreword to his 1988 memoir entitled *Goodbye Highland Yankee*, Hastings makes clear the course his life took:

> *In 1971 I wrote Laurence S. Rockefeller proposing that he establish a museum of regional folklife in Woodstock, Vermont. I was hired in 1973 and worked until 1983 as director of the Vermont Folk-*

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> *life Research Project. The traditional regional folk-life associated with the antique farming tools and artifacts on display at the Billings Farm Museum persisted, in large part unchanged, straight through the 1930s and early 1940s.*

His book sets out to document a way of life, on New England's small hillside farms and in its villages, that would quickly and largely vanish by mid-century.

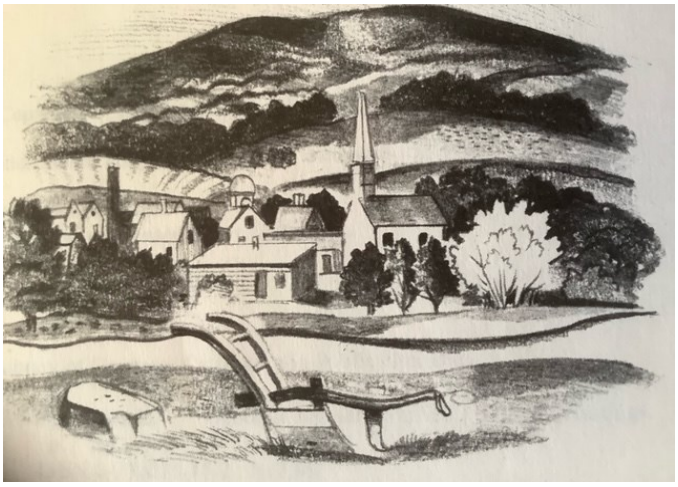

Illustration by Michael McCurdy for Goodbye Highland Yankee by Scott E. Hastings, Jr.

Hastings was born in 1924 in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, in McIndoe Falls where his father's parents had a farm. His mother's people, immigrants from Italy, were stone carvers who had settled in Barre. Most suffered from lung disease caused by stone dust and died young. His father's people were Yankees of old stock, mostly Scottish. With his parents, young Scott lived a town life but often visited his grandparents' farm. In both environments, "it was a world," he wrote, "still in the process of entering the age of electricity and the automobile." Draft animals—horses and oxen—were prevalent. Human muscle, falling water and steam were prime movers. Most of the work was "hard, sweaty work," and folk remedies were the usual medicine.

Hastings had been born into a vanishing past, and later in life, he felt the privilege of describing it and sharing it, as any good teacher would. Not only White River Junction, Vermont, but also its sister, West Lebanon, New Hampshire—right across the Connecticut River—are both "bustling railroad towns" and "river towns." These two seemed to Scott's boyhood self to meld into one. The iceman made his rounds, and sometimes vagrant Gypsies camped in a nearby field. For most people, it was life within a small compass. "Few traveled much except railroad men, drummers, and truck drivers, but their range was fixed." Only the Gypsies, the hoboes, and the rich "traveled afar." Life there was lived at a "human scale," as Scott describes It, with nearby stores supplying almost every want. Rarely did anyone need to travel more than twenty miles. A life in town was lived "on the streets," never empty, where, at all hours, adults walked and children ran. Everyone was familiar to everyone. Strangers stood out.

> *In the 1920s, a watchful eye might have noticed that the self-sufficient ways that sustained the towns and farms of eastern Vermont and the border country wavered slightly and faded just a little. Then they steadied to linger on through the thirties and forties, stuck in place, like a butterfly on a mounting board, by the needle of the Great Depression. For this brief span, regional life retained the incandescence of a well-burning coal fire just before its ashes are stirred with the poker, upon which the glowing mass of red will dull and begin to fall to pieces. For us, though we did not know it, the breakup was coming. After the war the old life, much of it rooted in medieval times, withered away along with the railroads.*

Hastings describes in great detail and with charming vignettes the well-remembered features of town life—its "glorious Fourth" celebrations with all manner of fire and fireworks; its grammar school high-jinx; its rituals of wine-making and feats of daredevil sledding and contests involving homemade airplanes. In a second section of the book, Hastings turns his full attention to farm life. Almost too vividly he depicts the pigeon shoots, preliminary to the making of delicious pigeon pies. He resurrects haymaking and target shooting and cutting ice and ironworking.

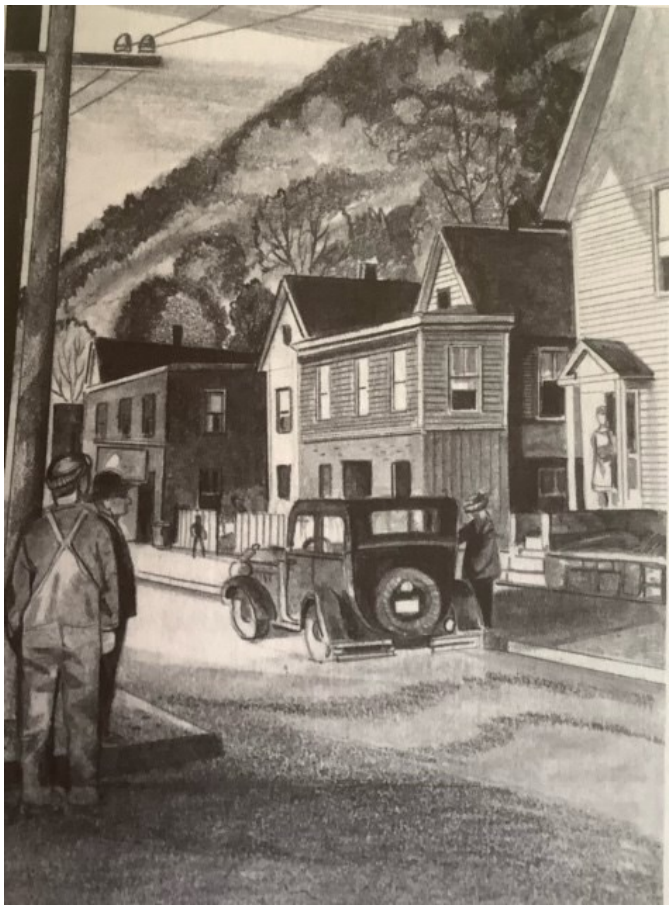

Illustration by Michael McCurdy for Goodbye Highland Yankee by Scott E. Hastings, Jr.

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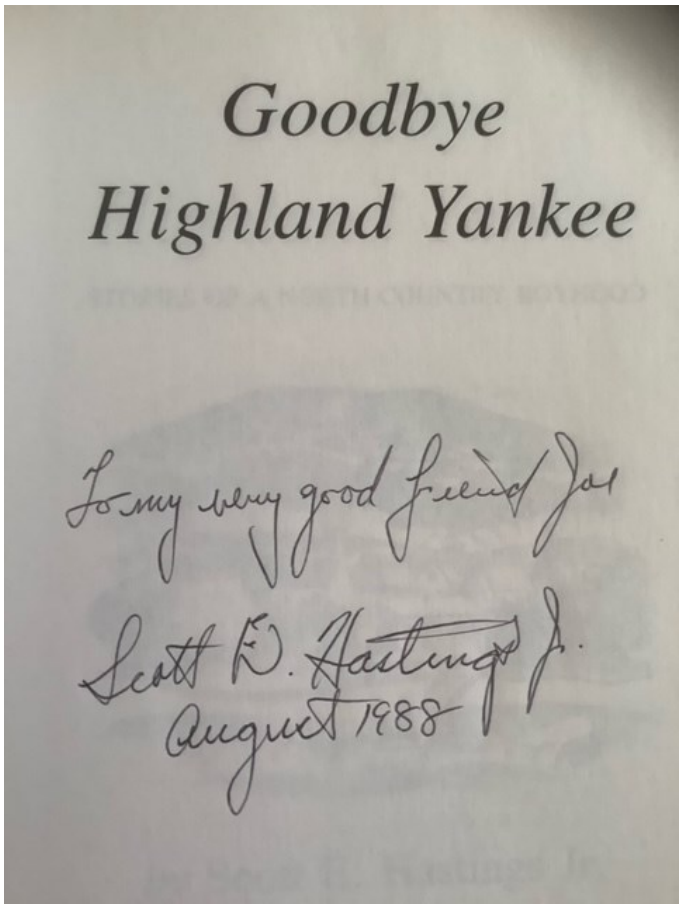
Hastings, for all his detailed accounts of what the men and boys were up to, also includes the work of women. Here is a sample:

> *We went in through the back porch to the kitchen, a long room of indeterminate color. On its outside wall by the windows, was a black cast-iron sink with a tap for spring water. There was no hot water tap; hot water was dipped from a reservoir in the stove as needed. There were curtained shelves underneath the sink and work counters at either end where Gram lined up the kerosene lamps while she trimmed the wicks and cleaned the chimneys with a twist of newspaper. Across the room was a black, cast-iron, wood-burning cookstove; on it a spatter-blue enamel coffeepot simmered from morning till night. Here, when all the family came home for a weekend, say during haying time, Gram and her daughters-in-law did the cooking. They always began breakfast by making stacks of toast. Out came one of the stovelids and a toasting rack was put over the glowing coals. When the bread had browned, a little crank at the top of the device swung the untoasted sides in to face the fire. With this rig a person could toast four slices of bread at a time, buttering them with brushfuls of melted butter from a pan on the back of the stove.*

After leaving Arizona—with his wife, Elsie (Richards), and their boys, Scott, Alec, and Duncan—to return to Taftsville, and before he wrote to Mr. Rockefeller, Hastings resumed teaching (he taught high school anthropology in Woodstock). And he also added social work to his already busy schedule. Social work sometimes required him to travel to meet his far-flung clients, and on these travels he discovered an even greater wealth of folk material. He poked about and added to his collection of old farm tools and cast-off pre-industrial machinery. He also began recording oral histories of the people he met. His outgoing manner and constant friendliness served him well.

Hastings loved to meet new people and relished his many friendships. By all accounts, he was remarkable in the breadth of his many activities. Whoever wrote his obituary, published in *The Burlington Free Press* of July 6, 1990, was deeply impressed by his accomplishments. He was adept at "playing the Highland and Uillean bagpipes, tin whistle and mountain dulcimer. He was a superb craftsman: silversmith, bagpipe and dulcimer maker, cabinet maker, carpenter, weaver, and Kentucky Rifle builder." Hastings loved to read and read widely. He was a co-founder of a local pipers' band along with the Scots Club of the Twin States. He was a member of many clubs and associations. No doubt, in a paroxysm of conviviality, he joined his wife in running a Scottish import business called Hastings Highland House.

Retirement allowed Hastings time to concentrate on writing. His first book was *Goodbye Highland Yankee,* the only book published while he was still alive. He died at his home in Taftsville, of cancer, on July 3, 1990. Both of his parents survived him, along with his wife, their three sons, and "five beautiful granddaughters." His manuscript for *The Last Yankees* had been completed before his death, and it came out later in 1990, published by the University Press of New England in Hanover, as was his third book, *Up in the Morning Early,* in 1992. This last book was a work his widow pulled together from interviews, notes and fragmentary writings that Hastings had left behind. She shares credit with him for its authorship.



Author's dated signature and book dedication to his "good friend Joe"

The Last Yankees: Folkways in Eastern Vermont and the Border Country is full of interviews with New England farmers and craftsmen born around 1900. It includes the photos Hastings took of these people at their work. There are interviews with elderly people who'd worked in the mills and at various trades. He was right at home talking with the water-tub maker, the ladder-round maker, the pump log maker, the sawmill hand, and the owner of a hand-cranked cider press.

A remarkable part of *Up in the Morning Early: Farm Families in the Thirties* are the photographs that were taken during the Depression years, gleaned from the collection of the federal Farm Security Administration. The book describes a typical farming year through the four

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seasons. It offers a section on farm women engaged in "off-farm work" and their involvement in community affairs.

What was the power behind such an avid collector and preserver of his home state's "folklife" and "folkways?" At the start of the first chapter of the first book Scott Hastings wrote, he chose and placed this poem by an English author:

Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.

"A Shropshire Lad"
A.E. Housman

LOCAL CRYPTOGRAM

A cryptogram is a code in which one letter is substituted for another. For example, the word "Church" could be written BWMSBW. The letter B would be the letter C and would be so throughout the entire message. In this message C = O. The solution is found by trial and error. The CRYPTOGRAM answer is on the last page.

"C Y P C M I K I W P E T A R E H X I V

E P H I B J E T G K R H X C J X C S B E T A

S E T V H G T V V K E D E T A K G E T G T V

T C D I L M I K G K K E D I V, Y C B V G H

J K C U I T E K C T, S E P X X G K V

J K C H P H I D I K Q L C K T E T A G T V

E Y Q V K G J P H P X G P M E P G P

I W N C H I V X G T V H G T V J G Y I H."

- F. Z. K C S B E T A, X G K K Q N C P P I K

G T V P X I C K V I K C J P X I N X C I T E W

Daylight Saving Time Ends November 3, 2024

Set your clocks back 1 hour that Sunday morning.

Upcoming National Hollidays

Veterans Day, Monday November 11, 2024
Thanksgiving, Thursday November 28,2024
Christmas Day, Decemberber 25, 2024

The Danforth Library of Barnard has been loaned a copy of *Goodbye Highland Yankee,* authored by Scott E. Hastings, Jr. This book is the source of all the quotations included in this essay. *Goodbye Highland Yankee* can be borrowed under the close supervision of a Library trustee. It is on loan for six months, until April 2025. Perhaps the Danforth will eventually acquire all three of the Scott Hastings books, in hardcover, for its Vermont Non-fiction shelf.

ELECTION DAY
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5TH

ALL LEGAL RESIDENTS IN BARNARD WERE SENT AN ABSENTEE BALLOT, IF YOU HAVE NOT VOTED THAT BALLOT BY ELECTION DAY, AND YOU WISH TO VOTE IN PERSON AT THE TOWN HALL, YOU WILL NEED TO BRING THAT BALLOT WITH YOU TO CAST YOUR VOTE.

Polls open at the Barnard Town Hall, 10:00AM-7:00PM

Please exercise your right to vote in November, in person at the Town Hall, or by Absentee Ballot.

CHARLES B. DANFORTH LIBRARY

This Fall at the Barnard Danforth Library

Sunday, November 3, 2024, 4 pm
The Vermont Movie
Director Nora Jacobson

If you haven't seen The Vermont Movie, a collaborative and ground-breaking 6-part series about the culture and history of the iconoclastic State of Vermont, made by several dozen award-winning Vermont filmmakers, now is your chance! Watch one of the segments and hear about how the film was made in a talk by lead director, Nora Jacobson.

Sunday, December 1, 2024, 4 pm
Danny Dover,
Vermont poet

Bethel's own Danny Dover will read from his third collection, "Flamingo Nation: New & Selected Poems". From Kathmandu to Ireland and back, all in a single afternoon….

Charles B. Danforth Library,
P.O. Box 204, Barnard, VT 05031
6208 VT Route 12 Phone: 802-234-9408
Email: charlesdanforthlibrary@gmail.com
Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/charlesdanforthlibrary/
Trustees: Berna Donlon, Margaret Edwards, Judy Maynes, Susan McNulty, and Susan Salter Reynolds

THE PLANNING COMMISSION meets on the Monday prior to the first Wednesday of every month at 7 PM in the Town Office.

BARNARD CONSERVATION COMMISSION meets the first Monday of the month, 7:00pm, Town Hall.

BEES MEETINGS are held at 6:30pm on the 2nd Thursday of each month in the library at the school.

DANFORTH LIBRARY HOURS: Mondays and Wednesdays 3:00 – 5:00 PM; Saturdays 10:00 AM to Noon. Phone: 802-234-9408. ECFiber Wi-Fi. Email: charlesdanforthlibrary@gmail.com.

SELECTBOARD meets the first and third Wednesday of the month at the Town offices at 7:00pm.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR, selectboard@barnardvt.us, 234-9211 x 2. By phone at any time, or by appointment. Office hours coming soon

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR, zoning@barnardvt.us, 234-9211 x 2. By phone at any time, or by appointment. Office hours coming soon.

TOWN CLERK office hours are Monday and Tuesday, 8:00am—3:30pm. Public access is restricted. Call 234-9211 for an appointment.

THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:00pm at the Barnard Town Hall as necessary.

THE BARNARD ENERGY COMMITTEE meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm at the Town Hall

BARNARD GENERAL STORE, Monday-Saturday: 7am-7pm, Sundays: 8am-6pm. https://www.facebook.com/barnardgeneralstore

BARNARD LISTSERV: to subscribe please send an email to: barnard-subscribe@lists.vitalcommunities.org

RECYCLING Click here for Hours and Regulations

THE BARNARD INN is running a "Feeding Neighbors & Sustaining Community" campaign. Purchase an e-Gift Card and in turn the chefs will feed neighbors. Whole chicken dinners (serves 4-6) and individual sized meals to help feed Vermonters in need. Thank you and please stay safe. E-Gift Cards are available at www.barnardinn.com.

ECFIBER Governing Board meets the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7pm via. Zoom. Contact the clerk of the District. secretary@ecfiber.net, for meeting information or visit https://www.ecfiber.net/virtual-meetings/

HISTORICAL SOCIETY Programs to be announced. Questions? Email: historicalbarnard1761@gmail.com

DELECTABLE MOUNTAIN QUILTERS (DMQ) meet the 1st Tuesday of every month at the Bethel Library from 1-3pm. Contact: Mary Croft 802-763-7074

BARNARD TRUNK OR TREAT

Hello Neighbors,

Just a reminder that the Trunk or Treat Halloween sign up sheet is now at the front register of the BGS for those of you planning on decorating your trunk for the event.

The event will be from 4-6pm on Thursday, Oct 31st.

You can park and start decorating your trunk as early as you would like.

Here are other ways you can help:

Think of something special you can offer for the kids:

In years past, we have had families bring a popcorn machine, a cotton candy machine, create a pumpkin painting station, and create other fun games and activities for the kids. Let me know what ideas you have and we will see if we can make it happen! We can use the space behind the BGS, the lakefront, or it can be part of your "trunk."

Donate prizes for contest winners:

Every year, the event includes a costume contest (and we also give a prize to best decorated Trunk as well). We ask you to consider donating an item or gift card from a local business that we can hand out to the contest winners (we put baskets together with several prizes in each basket).

Help with decorating:

We love to go all out with decorating for this event and it usually takes us several hours to decorate. If you would like to help, please show up at the BGS on Sunday October 27th at noon. I will post reminders on the listserve as the date gets closer. If you have any cool decorations you want to bring, that would b e awesome, too! You can take them down right after the event is over.

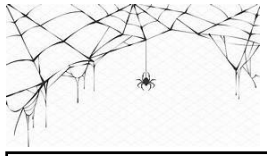
Help with clean up:

Anyone willing to help break down all the decorations can show up on Friday November 1st at noon.

If you have any questions or ideas, please feel free to email me off list!

Thanks so much,

Jillian at BGS



CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER

"October extinguished itself in a rush of howling winds and driving rain and November arrived, cold as frozen iron, with hard frosts every morning and icy drafts that bit at exposed hands and faces."

- J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix