

Mac & Dolly McKenney

The Quintessential Southern Couple

They were the quintessential Southern couple: a true country gentleman and a Steel Magnolia. Henry C. (Mac) McKenney was born and raised, with two older brothers, in Caroline County, Virginia by his mother; his father having died when Mac was four. He came to Augusta County to court Dorothy (Dolly) Driver Dudley after meeting her in Richmond where they both attended the Richmond Polytechnic Institute, now Virginia Commonwealth University. They married in 1941 and resided in Augusta County where Dolly was born and raised. Shortly thereafter, Mac went to England and France to serve his country during WWII. Dolly remained behind, living with her parents.

During Dolly's youth she had often accompanied her mother to auctions and antiques shops and it was during this time that she developed her intense, life-long interest in antiques. When Mac returned home, he became employed at the ordinance plant in Radford, Virginia and they rented a two-story home in nearby Christiansburg. It was here that Dolly opened her first antiques shop on the ground floor of their home. Weekends would find the two of them traveling the back roads, looking for old furniture and decorative accessories.



Mac and Dolly

(photo courtesy of Charlotte Williams)



Towards the end of the 1940s, they returned to Dolly's beloved Augusta County, renting a house on Middlebrook Road until they found just the property they were looking to buy. In 1950, they purchased the late 18th century log tavern in Mint Spring, south of Staunton. By this time, Mac had begun his own construction company and his many talents in this area were put to good use restoring the home they were to live in for the rest of their lives. Dolly opened a shop in the house, but soon moved it to a dependency on the property that Mac had restored and enlarged. Thus was the start of Mint Spring Antiques, a life-long passion for them both. Along with merchandise to sell in the shop, Dolly was always looking for local and Virginia decorative arts and Mac began an impressive collection of antique tools. Mac often used his antique tools when restoring furniture for Dolly's shop. To Mac, who had the uncanny ability to replicate minute details, every element was important, no matter how insignificant it seemed. Details were also important to Dolly, whether she was doing research or restoring something small – she insisted on using real horsehair to replace missing tails on horse pull toys.

Mac and Dolly both became well known and respected in their fields. His construction company specialized in historic restorations and Mac was instrumental in preserving many of the area's historic properties. He was an active member of the Early American Industries Association for many years, and of the Bethel Presbyterian Church. He always had time for his many friends, a good game of croquet and was known to make a great Whiskey Sour. Dolly became well established in the mid-Atlantic antiques community, buying and selling fine examples of 18th and early 19th century furniture, accessories and folk art. She wrote several articles for trade publications, bred and sold Persian cats, was an avid gardener and member of the Garden Club of Virginia, as well as a gourmet cook. Dolly enjoyed painting, horseback riding and squirrel hunting, the latter showcasing her expert marksmanship.

Mac retired in 1984, but remained active consulting and assisting with restoration projects, both in the community and for Dolly. In April 2004, after a fall from scaffolding while replacing windowpanes in Dolly's antiques shop, Mac passed away after a short hospital stay; Dolly closed the shop five months later. In May 2006, Dolly passed away after a year of failing health. Mac and Dolly are survived by a son, Joe, and two grandchildren, Alyssa and Zachary, as well as many friends who miss them greatly.

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