

# The Benevolent Order of Scurrilous Monks

## Abbot's Report

Winter Solstice, 2020

### Abbot Enumerates

Our Abbot spent the months of August and September working as an enumerator for the United States Census Bureau. The job consisted of visiting homes that had not responded to initial requests from the Census Bureau. Consequently, Brother Donald visited several abandoned houses and properties. He drove down many Ozarks dirt roads and he spoke with many people he had never met. The government paid him well but he was glad when the counting was done. Since then, he has been staying at home in the woods and has been mostly incommunicado.

### The Future's Not Ours to See

MMXX has been a difficult year. Airlines, casinos, hotels, theaters, churches, sports stadiums, cruise ships, retail stores, beauty parlors, restaurants, bars, convention halls, theme parks and even oil and gas corporations have reported major losses. Nationwide, more than a hundred thousand small businesses have gone belly up. State Fairs, County Fairs and Renaissance festivals have suffered along with all the rest. Last Spring, when attractive millionaire terrorists began promoting germophobia on their national television news programs, we were given the impression that the crony virus would peter out fairly quickly. We thought that when Summer arrived with warmer temperatures and plenty of sunshine, our festivals would all be back in business. It didn't work out that way. As the months passed by, more and more faires announced that they would not be opening in 2020. Mirth and merriment were squelched and gloom descended upon the world. A

one quarter to one third of those seen in past years, the brave, stout heart-ed enthusiasts still made their annual pilgrimages to Todd Mission. We had a report from Brother Dollface (Kandra Niagra) in her monthly *Wee Peeple Newsletter*: *While things could not be described as "optimal" and certainly not "normal" the Doll Shoppe has seen some strangely good times... in fact, on the 5th Weekend- on Halloween Day-the Dollmaker had her best single sales day EVER. (The Festival remained) open through all Nine Weekends.....the Corona Virus having been devilishly upstaged by completely unrelated calamities: Shoppe Fires, Murder, (seriously?! ) Break-ins, Theft, belligerent Drunks and the loss of several key Office Personnel during the run of the faire. (For the historical record, the murder occurred in the patron campground and involved no one we knew.) Although the future of festivals seems somewhat less awful than it had been, the first two major renaissance faires of next year have already canceled their 2021 seasons. Neither the Arizona Renaissance Festival nor the Florida Renaissance Festival will be opening this winter. As a possible sign of things to come, Brother Costello (David Roe) had a weenie roast in the City of New Orleans, far away from any renaissance faire.*

### Stuart and Arnold Retire!

Brother Arnold (Cris Arnold) worked for several years as the General Manager of the Armadillo Christmas Bazaar in Austin, Texas. This year, he finds himself making merry with his parents in New Jersey instead. The Armadillo, like most live entertainment venues, is closed due to fear of the crony virus. To further complicate matters, his trailer home in Austin was eaten by Texan ants and had to be abandoned. Cris started working with his grandfather at the tender age of



tiny ray of sunshine broke through the clouds when the Texas Renaissance Festival opened its gates in early October. Although attendance numbers were reported to be



seven as a puppeteer. When Cris' son Leif was seven years old, he started working with his Dad at renaissance faires.

The *Stuart and Arnold Knife Throwing Show* became a father and son fan favorite at many festivals for many years. Leif is now working in upstate New York as a security guard. Cris is rapidly approaching age 65 and is retiring from show business to live with and care for his aging parents in Fort Lee, New Jersey. As of this writing, The *Stuart and Arnold Knife Throwing Show* has become a part of Renaissance Festival history. Before retiring, Brother Arnold found a piece of property that he thought might be a nice place for a monastery. The five acre estate is a 15 minute drive from the New York Renaissance Faire



and it is bisected by the New York/ New Jersey border. The mansion is filled with expensive art and collectibles. The landscaped property includes an ornate greenhouse. Its owner, Robert Wohrle, wants to donate the estate to a nonprofit organization before he dies in order to keep it out of the hands of developers. They would like to bulldoze the place to build condominiums. He would like it to remain the way it is. Our Abbot is not currently interested in living in Upper Saddle River, NY/NJ but he has bookmarked an August 3 story on [northjersey.com](http://northjersey.com).

## Shopping Around

Our Abbot is still hoping to build monasteries at Renaissance Faires. Camping out at the faires was fun when we were younger but now we are old and we deserve a few creature comforts. We were interested to learn that



our friend Jeff Semmerling bought a church this year. The future of renaissance faires is uncertain. More than a few

will not survive the social distancing regimen. Our Abbot continues to keep an eye out for alternative properties. Although the ideal situation has yet to manifest, that is not to say that it never will. There are thousands of big, unoccupied buildings that have little appeal for most individuals. Non profit tax exempt organizations have big advantages in this market. We do not want to buy any of these properties but they are among the sort of places we are looking at.



Bannerman's Arsenal is on a 6.5 acre island in the middle of the Hudson River, about fifty miles north of New York City. It was built during the early 1900s and was abandoned sometime around 1960. It is now owned by the Bannerman Castle Trust and is not currently for sale.



The Old Taylor Distillery was built in Frankfort, Kentucky in 1887 and it was shut down in 1972.





This castle was built in the 1910s and was never completely finished. Its 36 rooms were never lived in. In 1949, it was purchased for less than 50 grand by a masonic order. Its location is undisclosed to deter additional vandalism.



The Westborough State Hospital in Massachusetts was opened in 1848 as a reform school for juvenile offenders. In 1884, it reopened as an insane asylum. It currently sits abandoned.



Although few of us are anxious to move there, Detroit is filled with abandoned buildings. The Metropolitan Building was built in 1924 to house various Detroit Jewelry companies. It is sometimes called The Jewelers' Building. The elegant 15 story edifice features white marble, grand staircases and beautiful ornamental bronze work. It was closed in 1977.

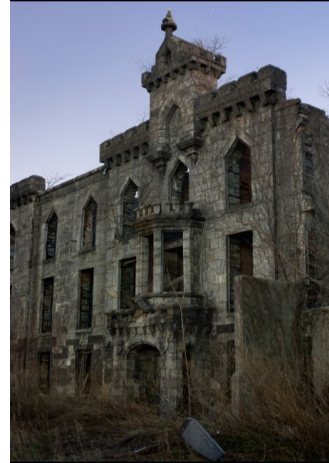
Roosevelt Island, aka Blackwell's Island, aka Welfare Island, is between Manhattan and Queens in New York.

Renwick Smallpox Hospital opened there in 1856. It was



mostly abandoned by the 1950s.

We found this French Monastery on an internet page entitled, "5 monasteries you and your friends can buy when you're ready to give up modern life". This former Benedictine



monastery includes a living room, lounge, dining room, utility room, two cellars, four bedrooms with fireplaces, two more small bedrooms, an attic, a chapel, a building that can be used as a shed or workshop, a clay tennis court, a fruit orchard, a caretaker's house, and one or more separate buildings with additional bedrooms. This estate in Seine-et-Marne, France seems like a bargain at 1.3 million dollars.

## Obituaries

The "Dead Wren Singing and Dancing Society" is a private Facebook group dedicated to renaissance festival participants who have passed away. We post obituaries, memories, stories and photos there. In the hidden recesses of the Facebook group, there is a data base listing our friends who are no longer occupying physical bodies. As of December 18, 2020, 697 dead people were on that list. After one joins the Facebook group, one can find the data base by clicking on "Announcements". Scroll down a little way to a pinned post that says, "Cindy Wexler shared a link". Then click on "Dead Wren Roles". Upon arriving at the data base, at the bottom of the page, to the right of the green text that says, "Virtual Memorial Park", are the dates 2020, 2019 and 2018. When one clicks on "2020", one can see the names of 60 rennies who passed away in 2020. Our Abbot was personally acquainted with 10 of the 60.



John Schroeder, sculptor and guitar maker, died on Feb. 4.





David Stickney died on February 27, 2020. His brother, Paul, had died on March 17, 2019.



Kenny Klein was a fiddler who fiddled about like Tommy's Uncle Ernie. He died in a Louisiana prison on July 11.



Spydr, a whip maker, died on March 7.



Richard Alvarez was a jousting and co-founder of the Hanlon Lees Action Theater. He died on November 12.



Jerome Smith, the Rogue of The RogueOafanFool Show, died on March 22.



Copper Billy MacRae burned copper for a living. He died on November 18.



Brother Ted the Head (Ted King), founder of the Northwood Renaissance Faire also died on March 22. His wife, Laura died soon after on May 4.



Dave Sheppard was an extraordinary artist. His work can be found all over the Texas Renaissance Festival and at many other festivals as well. He was married to Brother Chutzpah (Cindy Wexler).