

# A Trip to Fincastle, Virginia

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When I was 16 years old (1970), my father, John Francis Murphy, and my mother, Frances Virginia nee Tourjee, took me on a road trip to Fincastle, Virginia, where my grandmother, Jesse Neville



Hedrick, was from. In Fincastle we went to mom's cousin Carl Cromer Hedrick's house (circa 1835; 19 Murray Street), which was a unique structure that had been a chair factory and a dressmaker's shop where Confederate uniforms were made.

Cromer lived there with his wife, Dorothy, and their daughter. Cromer was quite a character and told great stories. He was very tall, and his wife was very short, but because he did most of the cooking, he had made the kitchen counters very high. He told about a local mountain trail where one could find magical, faceted crystal stones. He had found a really pretty one and had it made into a ring for his wife. He said to her, "Honey, go get that ring to show the folks." She said, "That old thing? I don't think I know where it is," which I thought was really sad. But she did find it and I remember thinking it was very pretty and so sweet of Cromer to have made.

He also told a funny story about getting stranded in Myrtle Beach trying to meet up with his family for a vacation. He was very short on money, but had his mandolin with him, so he went into a bar and told the bartender his sad luck story and the bartender said, "You play that thing?" And Cromer said, "Does a cow have udders?" and so a beer was traded for some music. Cromer played the rhythm bones as well.

We also met with mom's cousins, Juanita and Iris, who lived in Roanoke, but came over to Fincastle to go "visiting." I remember we went around to different people's houses, I believe with no prior arrangement to visit, but everyone was very happy to see us, welcome us in, give us food and drinks, and tell family stories.



**The House in Fincastle**