

Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Volume 12, Number 2

Summer 1986



From the Editor: Festival Time

The warm months are special in the Mountain State, a time to show our stuff for the benefit of fellow West Virginians and visitors alike. The best of the showing takes place at the many outdoor festivals all around us.

I started to call them summer festivals, but we really can't do that anymore. They start as soon as it's warm enough to venture outside and go on until it's too cold again. After all the planning for Vandalia Gathering each spring, I'm sometimes tempted to think that that event here at the Cultural Center kicks off the festival season. I know, however, that there are many warm weather events ahead of ours, the big April ramp feeds at Richwood and Clay among them. Vandalia also shares Memorial Day Weekend with other events, including the Woodchopping Festival at Webster Springs.

Whenever and wherever it starts, there is no doubt that we're into the festival season in a big way by this time of year. June brings the recent Rhododendron State Outdoor Arts and Crafts Fair, a sprawling event at the State Capitol grounds, as well as Charles Town's Mountain Heritage Festival on the 13th through the 15th. The Pioneer Days and Wheat Harvest at the State Farm Museum in Mason County follows a week later. The West Virginia State Folk Festival at Glenville, the granddaddy of the hard-core traditional music events, happens the weekend of June 19-22, as does the Princeton Town Fair down in Mercer County. West Virginia Day, June 20, will be celebrated that same weekend in many places, with a big birthday party at Fairmont, to mention one.

Then July rolls in with Independence Day celebrations too numerous to count. The first weekend also brings the Mountain State Art and Craft Fair, at Cedar Lakes near Ripley, one of the biggest and best. The annual Scottish Highland Games and Clan Gathering will share the grounds again this year, taking place Saturday the 5th at the Cedar Lakes Conference Center. If you've never seen kilt-clad men tossing around their telephone-pole-sized "cabers," you've missed something. Check that one out if you have the chance.

That same weekend, July 2-6, also brings the big Regatta, up the Ohio River at New Martinsville. The International Food and Arts Festival gets under way at Weirton on the Fourth, to showcase the rich ethnic traditions of the Northern Panhandle. Marlinton's Pioneer Days, another nice one, starts the next weekend, all the way across the state in Pocahontas County. I hope William Richmond and his buddy Dall Gill will be there again this year, clowning as a pioneer couple and showing off Richmond's fine matched oxen.

The Augusta Heritage Workshops at Elkins inaugurates the mid-summer season, with a wide variety of traditional arts courses from July 13 to August 15, capped off by the three-day Augusta Festival the following weekend. Director Buddy Griffin will be glad to see you at the big Appalachian Open Bluegrass Championship at Camp Washington-Carver on August 1-3. The Cherry River Festival begins the first Sunday in August at Richwood, and the

State Fair near Lewisburg runs from the 15th through the 23rd. The big craft show at the Raleigh County Armory happens August 22-24, if you can get from the fairgrounds over to Beckley in time for that.

And on and on and on. Labor Day Weekend is naturally a big one, with Charleston's Sternwheel Regatta, the giant Italian Heritage Festival in Clarksburg, and the Jubilee at Jackson's Mill, among other events. Labor Day officially winds up the peak season, but West Virginia festivals continue on through the fall. Elkins' Mountain State Forest Festival, one of the oldest and best, takes place in late September and early October, and there are all sorts of harvest festivals in both those autumn months.

Potatoes, molasses, buckwheat, black walnuts, pumpkins and apples are all celebrated, among events I know of, and probably other crops as well. West Virginia festival goers won't suffer hunger this fall, although they may wish they could bring some of the various specialties together on the same plate. Arnoldsburg's molasses and Kingwood's famous buckwheat cakes are produced on overlapping days, September 25-27, and would make a natural combination if you don't mind toting one or the other across a half-dozen counties in between. Better pick up the Calhoun County molasses first, for you'll never keep the wheat cakes warm for the trip. Or you might get your sweetening at Parkersburg's Honey Festival, September 27-28, if that's handier for you.

I see that my festival enthusiasm is running away with me, by naming too many of my current favorites and probably getting myself into trouble for the many I haven't taken note of. For those, I'll direct you to the annual GOLDENSEAL "Folklife, Fairs, Festivals" calendar, published inside the front and back covers of the recent spring issue. I'm sure we missed some, even there, but you will find well over 100 good festivals listed, complete with locations, dates and phone numbers for more information.

The purpose of that annual calendar is to call attention to the wide variety of folklife events taking place throughout West Virginia each year. Ideally, we could do a feature article on each festival every year. A lack of space prevents that and we have to take turns, instead, highlighting a few as we get the chance. We have done features on the Forest Festival, Augusta, Martinsburg's big Apple Harvest Festival, the Stonewall Jackson Jubilee and others in the past, and look forward to doing more. In the meantime, we will continue to publish the calendar each spring as a condensed guide to the year's events.

We hope you find it useful in planning your travels in West Virginia. Many of the festivals are funded in part with public money and are free to the public, since you've already bought your ticket as a taxpayer. The real investment in West Virginia festivals lies in the hard work of their organizers, however, community people who volunteer their time to provide a good time for the rest of us. Get out to a few of their festivals this summer, and see if you don't agree that it was all worth it.

—Ken Sullivan

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Goldenseal

Volume 12, Number 2

Summer 1986

COVER: Larry Shears of Wirt County works a fine mother-daughter team of Belgian mares. The 10-day-old filly is the latest addition to the family. Our story begins on page 9. Photo by Michael Keller.

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PHOTOS: Bollinger's Studio, Michael Holland, Michael Keller, Jeff Seager, Lola Smith, Andy Yale.

Letters from Readers

GOLDENSEAL welcomes letters of general interest from readers. Our address is Department of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305. Published letters may be edited for brevity or clarity.

Seedsaving

Hinton, WV
March 20, 1986

Editor:

I have just been reading "Letters from Readers" in Vol. 12, No. 1 of *GOLDENSEAL*. It brought back many memories of my early life, especially of seed saving, garden plants and sharing with neighbors.

I suppose it would be correct to call my mother an intensive gardener. We had a small garden spot, but it seemed more food came from that small plot than all the rest of the farm.

Of all the plants that bore seeds, she grew and saved them for the next season. Cucumbers, beans, parsnips, beets and tomatoes. One bunch of seeds I remember well: We were getting ready to plant peas, the type I don't remember, and these seed peas were crawling alive with small, black bugs. I insisted on burning them, but mother insisted they would grow despite the bugs. They were planted and grew, but I wouldn't guess at the percent of germination.

Each spring my father was forced to build Mom a hot bed with litter from the horse stalls. She used the sweet potatoes she had managed to save from last year's crop. She put soft, fine soil on top, cut the potato lengthwise into two pieces, placed the cut side down, placed them in order, covered the potatoes with a half-inch of fine soil, watered lightly, kept covered in cold or bad weather and uncovered on dry, warm days. These potatoes were prolific beyond belief. When she had set out all plants she wanted, she then divided with all who wanted them, and there were many.

Having seeds and plants was only half the story. Food, cultivation and caring for the crop is another story. Canning, drying, pickling, preserving and storing requires knowledge and skill. We made salt pickles, kraut, dried apples, molasses, apple butter, and buried apples, potatoes, turnips, rutabagas and cabbage.

I remember one little trick my mother had to combat cabbage worms, was to break off an old tough bottom leaf

and place it as a cap over the head, then turn it up early next morning, exposing Mr. Worm.

Our everyday living is a part of our history and includes occupation, food and clothing. Much of it is being gradually lost.

We were a hardy family, nine children whose ages are now 71-90, two deceased. A family the Lord has blessed. Ted Wills

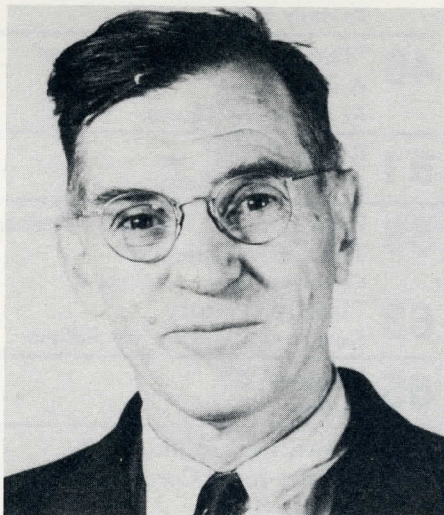
School Days

Scott Depot, WV
March 21, 1986

Editor:

The article, "Reading, Riding and 'Rithmetic: Monroe County School Life," by J. Z. Ellison, appearing in the 1986 spring edition of *GOLDENSEAL*, struck an empathetic memory chord. My own public school experiences ran an almost perfect parallel to those of Mr. Ellison.

The same Newton C. Bishop who was principal at the Greenville School came to Frankford, Greenbrier County, in 1932, and I entered there in the fall of 1933 and lived in terror of the man for the following four years.



I later became a schoolteacher, too, and through experience learned in retrospect what a fine man Mr. Bishop really was.

Very truly yours,
C. Keith Coffman

Ballard, WV

Editor:

I was recently shown a copy of *GOLDENSEAL*, Spring 1986. There was an article by J. Z. Ellison, "Reading, Riding, and 'Rithmetic: Monroe County School Life," in which my father Arch Belcher was mentioned.

This meant a lot to me. My father passed away in October 1985. He could have given you some great stories.

Thank you,
Mrs. John H. Long

Shikepokes and Hoop Snakes

Winfield, WV
December 30, 1985

Editor:

The "shikepoke" is easy. It's the term we oldtimers always used for the small heron—blue, green or speckled, it made no difference, it was a shikepoke in my area (in the Great Kanawha Valley). Once in a while, the term was "shitepoke," but the bowdlerized version was universal. That is, the bird was so named by U.S. British colonists, who had also applied the name to a similar native of the British Isles, because of its habit, when disturbed, of rising into the air and simultaneously emptying its large intestine.

If you knock the "e" off "shite," the meaning of the first part of the name is immediately clear. Our ancestors called a spade a spade, at least those of our ancestors belonging to what were called the "lower orders" by contemporaries who lived in comfort in England. As for "poke," it was the only name I knew for a small bag until I was 14 years old (or older). So the little heron was called what I will delicately refer to as a bag of excrement.

Sincerely,
Bill Blizzard

Point Pleasant, WV

Editor:

The following is my actual account of what I believe to have been an encounter with a hoop snake.

It was back in my girlhood days, camping with my parents on Green-

brier River. It was summer, a beautiful warm day. I was making my way down the bank to the river to go fishing. A noise at the top of the river bank caught my attention. Looking up, I saw a round black object whirling rapidly down the bank. It was slightly smaller than a bicycle wheel. I stood paralyzed as it sped toward me. I had never seen anything like this. I breathed a silent prayer as it whizzed by, missing me by only a few inches. Suddenly it disappeared into the weeds as fast as it had come. Dazed, I climbed back up the bank and inquired if anyone had thrown a round object down the bank—no one had. Later we searched through the grass on the river bank looking for something round. We found no trace of anything.

Had I seen the mythical hoop snake? If not, what was that strange circular shape that hurled itself down the Greenbrier River bank?

Sincerely,
Lee Lewis

Hopemont

Parkersburg, WV

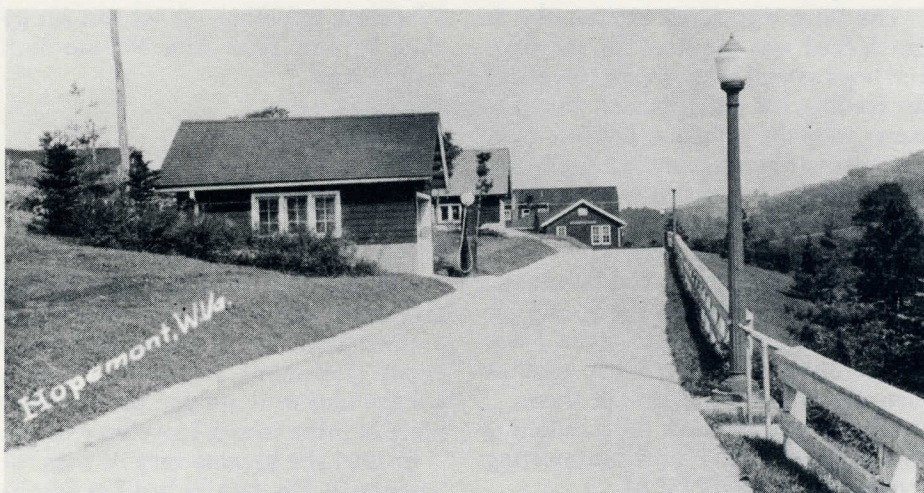
April 7, 1986

Editor:

What a pleasant surprise while reading the Spring issue of GOLDENSEAL to find the two articles and many pictures of Hopemont Sanitarium. I was there in the summer of 1929 and it was and looked just like you tell and illustrate. However, no picture or words could really tell of the natural beauty and charm of this place.

While I was there for diagnosis and treatment no tubercular germ was found. The lung obstruction I then had and now have was of other nature. Still, the place holds memories I cherish. I have today friends whose first acquaintance I made at Hopemont. Contrary to the usual conception, most patients were cheerful and enjoyed the companionship of others. Here I met my first girlfriend by means of notes passed at the dinner table, and managed an illicit date at nearby Terra Alta.

Incidentally, at that time patients did not eat at a cafeteria but were served at long tables in a dining hall. How we put away the well-prepared and tasty food! When one dish was empty it was returned to the end of the table where it immediately was refilled by the friendly waitress. One of these charm-



ing girls was the recipient of the note mentioned above. These girls were employed by the state from nearby towns, many of them college students working summer vacations. Of course, we who were fed here were ambulatory. The bedfast were fed wherever hospitalized—at Gore, Darst, Jones, Conley or one of the many cottages. The dining hall was also used for the patients' entertainment and for non-denominational church services Sunday evening.

Another feature in this area was the loud broadcast of the radio station WMMN from Fairmont. This must have been one of the first stations in West Virginia. The patients humorously called it "We Make More Noise."

The fish pond mentioned and pictured was really the forerunner of our fine state trout hatcheries, as these were dispersed in mountain streams when they reached the proper size. Near the pond was a recreation room where pool and billiards were played. I remember the many games of pinochle we played at the receiving cottage where I was kept all my stay.

What a good time we had! Occasionally, Jonesy, taxi driver and all about good guy, would bring us a pie or hot dogs from downtown, two miles away. Women and girls were at one end of the cottage and men and boys at the other. The space between was occupied by the hospital post office and admitting offices. The two sexes did meet, either here or on the lawn common for all in front of this building, where comfortable benches overlooked the surrounding mountain scenery. No hanky-panky was allowed.

Each patient had his bed in a long communal hall, but with some degree

of privacy in a small dressing room behind. This hall faced east with no barrier between patients and the outdoors. Fresh air was part of the treatment, as was lots of protein and milk in the heavy calorie diet.

The dairy you mentioned was across the state highway, where strict sanitation was observed in milking the Holstein cows. The swine herd could be seen in a separate part of the large farm from our vantage point in the receiving area. This herd was partly fed with scraps and waste from the hospital tables. Part of the treatment of ambulatory patients was walking. I made many trips to the dairy and hog barns as well as to the lake atop the mountain and behind the hospital complex. A barber was found at Terra Alta who would cut hair for 25 cents. Most barbers would not take patients from Hopemont for fear of infection from the dreaded "white plague."

The janitors employed were usually trustees from the state penitentiary. Many had been convicted of moonshining and as this was near the end of the Prohibition era, they were looked on as lesser criminals. The one we had at the receiving cottage was a genial and friendly man who spent more time telling tall tales to the patients than at work. We all loved the guy and would share our few goodies with him.

Four times daily the patient whose stay was the longest at the cottage would yell out, "Steam Time," and he would record the various temperatures of the other occupants who each had a thermometer. Those with infection would have a raised reading in the afternoons. Much jocular and horseplay occurred on this ward and none were strangers for long.

The farm was tilled extensively, as much feed was required for the cows and hogs as well as the vegetables raised for feeding the patients and staff. Potatoes were the principal summer crop. Corn was grown but subject to the late frosts. We even had one in early June. Of course, the elevation here is near 3,000 feet above sea level.

The medical staff was competent and friendly. Many advised the young patients as to their personal lives. I was one of these and it is with genuine pleasure of gratitude I recall them.

I thank you so much for publishing this and the many other interesting articles in GOLDENSEAL.

Earle R. Dee

Terra Alta, WV

April 10, 1986

Editor:

Thanks so much for GOLDENSEAL.

I really liked the write-up about Hopemont. Had we known Maureen Crockett was gathering information we sure could have helped her out.

My husband and I were both patients there from 1940 to 1946. We met there, married in 1945 and worked there. Then my husband went to

Wheeling to barber school and set up shop here in Terra Alta. We are both retired now.

Sincerely,

Katherine Evans

Jacksonville, Florida

March 24, 1986

Editor:

I just finished reading your spring magazine, and I was very much impressed with the pictures and story about Hopemont Sanitarium. I then got the idea to write you about a dear niece of mine whom I love very much.

In 1930 she became very ill with tuberculosis. Her family had her admitted to Hopemont Sanitarium for a couple of years. She was discharged from there in 1932 completely cured. She got employment in Beckley, then later she was married to a young man. Within a short time they decided to go west. They went to Hollywood, California, where she still resides.

She spent a few years in the army during World War II and lived in Hong Kong. After the war was over she came back and held down many good positions, has traveled through many foreign countries and has now retired

and in her late 70's is still a very busy lady. She helps senior citizens with their business affairs, belongs to a sorority where she's very much involved, and does a lot of good work for the Hollywood Church of Christ. She cares for her mother who is in her 90's, and she's still a very attractive lady. I'm mailing my magazine to her today.

I was born in Belva, West Virginia, in 1900, and know about things that happened many years ago. My father was a mine foreman at Standard on Paint Creek during the big coal strike in 1912 on Cabin Creek and Paint Creek. I also remember Mother Jones whom you wrote about. I'm now 86 years old and lived several years in Nitro, the city that was built during World War I. My late husband was inducted into the army within a few months after our marriage in 1917. We had a daughter born in 1918. Her birth certificate was burned in the Capitol fire.

I'm very proud to be a West Virginian. I think it's the most wonderful state, and I've traveled through many different states. Keep up the good work and good luck and God bless.

Sincerely,

Beulah Janey

Current Programs • Events • Publications

GOLDENSEAL announcements are published as a service, as space permits. They are not paid advertisements and items are screened according to the likely interests of our readers. We welcome events announcements and review copies of books and records, but cannot guarantee publication.

Second Spring Creek Festival

Music lovers can enjoy themselves and do a good deed at the same time by attending this summer's Spring Creek Festival in Greenbrier County. The Spring Creek Festival Committee, an all-volunteer service organization, will host the July 18-20 festival at Renick, with the cooperation of the Greenbrier Folk Music and Dance Association, the Renick Ruritan Club and the Spring Creek Presbyterian Church.

The annual festival is officially known as the Spring Creek Festival: A Benefit for the Hungry. Proceeds go to help the unfortunate at home and abroad. The 1985 festival invested \$4,200 in Ethiopian irrigation equipment, via Church World Services, and distributed another \$1,200 locally, through the Northern Greenbrier food pantry. This year's proceeds will be di-

vided between a global hunger relief project and West Virginia flood recovery programs.

Festival organizers promise "three days of bluegrass, folk, rock and gospel music, featuring some of West Virginia's finest performers." For further information write to the Spring Creek Festival, P.O. Box 1, Renick, WV 24996, or call (304) 497-2563.

"McNeill's Rangers"

During the Civil War, southern sympathizers in West Virginia found many ways to support their cause without formally entering the military. Some banded together to perform daring feats to aid the Confederacy. One such partisan group was the McNeill Rangers, formed by John Hanson McNeill, his son Jesse, and others. Their most fa-

mous raid occurred in Cumberland, Maryland, where they captured two Union generals without firing their guns.

The outdoor musical "McNeill's Rangers" recounts the adventures of McNeill and his cohorts. It is produced by the Apple Alley Players, a community group based in Keyser, and funded in part by a grant from the Arts and Humanities Division of the West Virginia Department of Culture and History. The drama is held in the Larenim Park Amphitheatre, near Burlington in Mineral County, with nearby restaurant and motel accommodations available.

"McNeill's Rangers" will be presented on: June 19-21, June 26-28, July 3-5 and July 10-12. Curtain time will be 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$6.50 for adults and \$3.50 for children, and group rates are available. For more information

contact the Keyser-Mineral County Chamber of Commerce at (304) 788-2513; or write to Apple Alley Players, Inc., McNeill's Rangers, Box 144, Keyser, WV 26276.

West Virginia Hillbilly Returns

West Virginians everywhere will be pleased to learn of the return of the original *West Virginia Hillbilly*. Founding editor Jim Comstock has resumed publication, restoring the journal to its old weekly newsprint format. The first issue of the revised tabloid appeared on February 25, Comstock's 75th birthday.

Jim Comstock gave up publication of the *Hillbilly* five years ago, selling it to new owners who were unsuccessful in transforming the paper into a magazine. The new-old editor intends to pick up where he left off. "As I was saying before I was interrupted by the change of ownership of this paper," he notes in the first issue, "what this state needs is a cheap, unsophisticated country weekly to buck it up, and say some kind words about it now and then, and wrap up its history and colorful lore, and spank it when it gets ugly."

Those who agree with the feisty Richwood editor may subscribe for \$30 a year. Six-week trial subscriptions are available for \$1, and newsstand copies are 50 cents each. Write to the *West Virginia Hillbilly*, Richwood, WV 26261.

Nicholas County History

A new history of Nicholas County has just been published by the Nicholas County Historical and Genealogical Society. The volume covers events in the county from early settlement until recent times, including histories of schools, churches, towns and post offices.

Nicholas County 1985 may be of particular interest to genealogists. The book contains a list of many county cemeteries, previously unpublished early land grants, marriage and death records, and the contents of an early Greenbrier County land book. Over 500 family histories are included, with stories and poetry from the past. An earlier county history, written in 1883 by Colonel Edward Campbell, is reprinted in its entirety.

The book is illustrated with photographs and sketches, with many of the photographs previously unpublished. Both a modern map and an 1820 map of early settlers, newly created from Campbell's history, are included.

Nicholas County 1985 is a 290-page hardback. To order send \$41, plus \$2.50 postage and handling, to Nicholas County Historical Society, Box 443, Summersville, WV 26651.

Appalachian Open Music Contests

The third annual Appalachian Open music championships will be held August 1-3 at Camp Washington-Carver in Fayette County. The contests stress bluegrass picking, with separate categories for banjo, guitar, mandolin, fiddle and bluegrass band.

"This is the one in the East to win," organizers say, noting that the Appalachian Open in past years has drawn competitors from a good part of the United States. No fees are charged and cash prizes are given in all categories, ranging up to a high of \$1,500 for the first-place bluegrass band. A special "Best of West Virginia" \$300 prize is awarded to the top West Virginian in each instrument category. Registration for each category begins two hours before the contest.

The 1986 Appalachian Open kicks off with the bluegrass banjo contest at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, August 1, and concludes with the big bluegrass band competition at noon Sunday. The public is welcome throughout the weekend. No admission fee is charged. A restaurant and concession booths are located on the grounds, with alcoholic beverages strictly forbidden. Camping and lodging are available nearby.

Camp Washington-Carver, West Virginia's rural cultural arts center, is adjacent to Babcock State Park, off U.S. Route 60 near Clifftop. For further information contact Bobby Taylor, c/o Camp Washington-Carver, Rt. 1, Box 5, Clifftop, WV 25831; phone (304) 438-6429.

State Midwives Newsletter

The Midwives' Alliance of West Virginia, an organization for licensed midwives, promotes the modern practice of midwifery in the state. The group produces a newsletter, *MAWV News*,

which may be of interest to maternity care providers and expectant parents.

The *MAWV News* is full of information, particularly on natural methods of health care. Recent examples include features on fertility, updates on vasectomies, and prenatal care. Women's health issues are examined in articles on breast cancer and toxic-shock syndrome, as are the risks of smoking, alcohol, drug abuse and caffeine during pregnancy.

While the newsletter gives ample attention to serious issues, it also looks at unusual ideas. For example, one recent issue has an article on the benefits of smiling; another tells how certain plants can purify the air in a house. Most issues include poetry on the joys as well as pitfalls of motherhood.

The *MAWV News* is published three times a year, in March, July and November. Subscription costs \$10 annually, which helps support the newsletter and the Midwives' Alliance. To order, write to MAWV, P.O. Box 266, Hillsboro, WV 24946.

History of Tennerton

The Upshur County community of Tennerton had its beginnings in 1903, when a group of Pennsylvanians purchased land near Buckhannon to establish a table glass factory. Their plans included an adjacent village for plant workers, and 150 lots were laid off for house sites. Tennerton sprang up on this land, taking its name from a misspelling of entrepreneur John Kinley Tener's surname.

Glass making never prospered at Tennerton. The original Steimer Glass Company failed in 1906 and its successor, the Belgrade Glass Company, was put out of business by fire in 1922. Fortunately, this little-known chapter of Buckhannon River Valley history has now been recovered in print, in a new book by Grace E. Clawson and associates. *Tennerton: A Village and Its Glass* was published earlier this year.

The new book takes an episodic approach to the story, with short sketches on major figures and organizations. This body of material is topped off with interview excerpts with former employees and research correspondence. The many illustrations include historic photographs, a drawing and floor plan of the factory, and an early plat

map of the village and plant site. Several photos and original catalog illustrations of items of glassware will be of interest to collectors, while the book's wealth of specific detail will endear it to local historians.

Tennerton: A Village and Its Glass is a staple-bound paperback of 48 pages. The book sells for \$4.50, plus 85 cents postage and handling if ordered by mail. Orders may be sent to Grace E. Clawson, 17 Lincoln Way, Buckhannon, WV 26201.

The Aracoma Story

"The Aracoma Story," an outdoor drama about Logan's first settlers and the Indians they encountered, will be performed again this summer. Aracoma, or Corn Blossom, was the daughter of Shawnee Chief Cornstalk, and wife of Boling Baker, a white renegade leader of a band of Indians. In 1780, a party of Virginians, led by William Madison and John Breckenridge, pursued Baker's Indians to their home on the present-day site of Logan. The ensuing battle ended with the destruction of the entire Indian band, including the legendary Princess Aracoma.

Meredith Willson's "Music Man," a drama about a con man who falls in love with the librarian of the town he tries to con, will also be presented.

Both plays will be performed by the Aracoma Story theater group, and will run from Wednesday August 6 to Sunday August 17. There will be at least one children's night for each drama, the dates of which will be announced later, when children 12 and under will be admitted for \$1. On these nights, children will be invited onstage after the show for balloons and to meet the cast.

Admission for "The Aracoma Story" is: adults, \$5; senior citizens and students, \$4.50; and children, \$2. Admission for "The Music Man" is: adults, \$7; senior citizens and students, \$4.50; and children, \$2. Group discounts are available at \$1 off per person for groups of 25-50 members, and \$1.25 off per person for groups of over 50 members.

The dramas will be held at Chief Logan State Park, north of the town of Logan, with lodging and dining facilities available nearby. In case of rain, the show will be postponed 30 minutes, with rainchecks or refunds given

for cancellations. For further information call (304) 752-6611.

Flood Photos

Last November, when the flood rains fell in Parsons and the rest of Tucker County, photographer John Warner was there. The result is a special collection of 100 photographs of the Flood of 1985's disastrous effect on the area, for sale by Otter Creek Photography of Hendricks.

Warner, Artist-in-Residence in Tucker County, is a skilled photographer, with 20 years experience in the U.S., Mexico and Central America before coming to the area in 1977. Mariwyn McClain Smith, editor of the *Parsons Advocate*, comments on Warner's flood work. "We think John Warner's photos are among the finest in the 29 counties where the flood occurred," she says. "They were taken with an eye sensitive to suffering and with great detail to design; and his darkroom work is exceptional."

While his photographs offer a wide variety of subject matter, Warner stresses simplicity as the common theme. "I believe that a photograph that succeeds in being meaningful is one which shows the essence of the thing being photographed," he says.

Many of the pictures in the collection have been previously printed in *The Flood*, published by McClain Printing, *Killing Waters*, from Cheat River Publications, and several newspapers. The individual black and white photos are now available in sizes of 8" x 10" and bigger, for \$6 and up. Most are offered mounted or unmounted.

You may write to Otter Creek Photography, Hendricks, WV 26271, for a brochure showing each of Warner's photographs, their sizes and prices.

Films of West Virginia and Appalachia

Each summer, Steve Fesenmeier, director of the West Virginia Library Commission's Film Services unit, provides us with a list of new West Virginia films. The Library Commission has the largest collection of state and regional films that we know of, and the ones here were all acquired since last summer.

These films, and the rest of the col-

lection of 100+ titles, were made in West Virginia or the larger Appalachian region, concern state or regional issues, or are by or about West Virginians. You may borrow them from your local public library.

Family Portrait

17 min.

1985

This company-sponsored film portrays over 100 years of interaction between the Norfolk and Western Railway and the people and industries of the Pocahontas Coalfield. The exploration and development of the rich area are shown, as well as life in the coalfields today and expectations for the future.

Sunny Side of Life

56 min.

1984

One of Appalachia's leading musical families is the subject of this documentary. The Carter Family of southwest Virginia has produced many celebrities. The film centers on Janette Carter's efforts to establish a music and dance hall in honor of her parents, A. P. and Sara, and her aunt, the famous "Mother Maybelle" Carter. Then it explores the roles of music, family and tradition in the lives of people in the mountains.

The Betrayal of Bhopal

60 min.

1985

Extensive coverage of Bhopal, the world's worst industrial accident, and discussion of the MIC plant in Kanawha County. Union Carbide is still trying to find an explanation for the deaths of over 2,000 people and serious injury to many thousands more. The differences between the Indian and West Virginia MIC plants are emphasized; various experts discuss the nature of safe plant design. Tape also includes BBC documentary on legal effects of the disaster.

No Promise for Tomorrow—Communities Respond to the Bhopal Tragedy

58 min.

(VHS)

1985

Community members, Union Carbide current and retired employees, and many others speak out about the tragedy of Bhopal and other chemical disasters. The film crew visited Institute; Woodbine, Georgia; Houston; and Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Network news footage is also used.

Chuck Yeager Air Force Official Biography

5 min.

(VHS)

1980

The official film used at the dedication of the Yeager Airport in Charleston. Clips from WWII, *Newsweek* cover, and experimental aircraft film footage all document the career of the famous former West Virginian.

Dead Ends and New Dreams

25 min.

1968

West Virginia poet Norman Jordan describes black America in Cleveland. Includes his poem "Nelly Reed."

Even the Heavens Weep

55 min.

1985

The story of the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain, the largest armed labor conflict in American history, is narrated by TV star Mike Connors. This award-winning West Virginia Public TV production was later broadcast nationally on PBS.



McDowell County coal miner Frank Divens was "the finest squirrel hunter I've known," according to his son, our author. Mr. Divens died in California in 1959. Family snapshot, 1958.

Hunting Squirrels and Leaving Home

A Story for Father's Day

By Douglas Clyde Divens

Some years ago in the coalfields of McDowell County, my father tried to teach me to hunt squirrels. It seemed important to him, for whatever reason, so I made a great effort. That is to say, I did my best. Dad was undoubtedly the finest squirrel hunter I've known, but not a very good teacher of squirrel hunters. On the other hand, to do him justice he did not have a very good pupil in me. I was quick and alert to things of the forest, but not to their significance. I romanticized hunting, the forest, and all that went with it. I

was the idealist. My father took a more serious involvement. He was the realist.

The rules were quite clear to me. "Pick out a hickory, beech or oak tree and sit. Make no movement whatever, just sit, wait, look and always listen. The squirrels will come." As a small boy, I remember falling asleep once while hunting with my dad and waking up to see squirrels on the ground all around us. They were everywhere, running across his lap and over his legs. He never moved once. He wanted

me to see. I thought it amazing that he got off three shots. He was pleased that I had the lesson, but disappointed that he had only gotten off three shots. We picked up three squirrels and went home.

Dad thought it important that he teach me something before I grew up and left home. He was determined to teach me to mine coal or at least to hunt squirrels. As I grew older it was evident that I would not do well at either of these vocations. However, during the summer just before going

off to college I made my best effort in mining coal and hunting squirrels. At first, Dad was not keen about me going to college, but he took me into the mines to earn money for that first year at West Virginia State.

As that long, hot summer wore on, I focused more on college. He gave his attention to the coming hunting season. On paydays when I had the money I bought things for school; a footlocker, a suit, trousers, shirts, underclothes, socks and shoes. Dad bought boxes of Remington Nitro Express shotgun shells, a hunting coat and boots. We talked, however. I told him more about college and about what I would be doing. He listened and softened a bit. Realizing just how determined I was about school, he had gotten me the job working with him on the night shift in Number One mine. It was hard work and very dangerous. Most of Dad's time was spent watching me.

Dad had worked all of his life in the mines or on the farm. He wasn't dead set against college, nor was he against my leaving home. He was just a bit apprehensive. Some college folks he trusted, others he did not. He had a particular dislike for bookkeepers and scrip writers, especially those who worked for the coal company. He liked the teachers, especially Mr. Carroll and Miss Washington. He did remind me that Claude Honaker's boy had gone to college for two years and still said "hain't." We both had to admit, however, that Claude's boy was a good miner and he could hunt squirrels. But "anyone who had gone to college for two years knows damn well the word is 'ain't' and not 'hain't.'" That's the way Dad figured it.

In the weeks that followed, I got myself together and went off to State College. Dad bought me a new 20-gauge Savage just a few days before. Was the gun a going-away present, something to get me to stay home, or was it for my birthday in September? Only time would eventually assure my thoughts on that matter. As it was, Dad became reconciled to the college idea and accepted my leaving. Maybe I could learn something just as important as what I could learn at home. I think he came to that conclusion during those last few days we worked together in the mines.

I had been away from home two

months and two weeks when the Thanksgiving holiday came up. I had four days at home to visit, relax and eat all I could hold. I took the opportunity to go squirrel hunting and at the same time to try the new 20-gauge that I had left behind in September. On Friday after Thanksgiving, when I should have been reading some assignments for Monday morning, I took a thermos of soup and my shotgun and headed for the hills. Dad had left long before I was out of bed. I had no idea of where he was.

I climbed high above Berwind and after a while the rise of coal smoke from chimneys gave the only indication that a mining community rested a few hundred yards below. The season was late autumn, but the leaves had not all left the trees. The colors in the hills, the odor of the forest, and the noise of woodland creatures delighted me. My surroundings were familiar. I had been here before.

I picked out an area thick with hickory, oak, beech and black gum. A fallen tree offered a place to recline. It was a massive beech that had fallen years before, more than a hundred feet long. There was a growth of brush which offered plenty of cover. I made myself comfortable.

Hunting squirrels can be one of the most relaxing kinds of outdoor activities. As Dad had said, "all you have to do is wait and listen." You can even sleep if you like. College had taught me to be patient. After all, it would be at least four years before that chapter in my life was completed. I was prepared to wait for squirrels.

From my thermos I poured a cup of tomato soup. The aroma attracted every kind of pest, the least of these being ground squirrels. I was tempted to shoot one. After all, I had not shot this new gun. However, before I could make up my mind to do so I was assailed with another fury. Ants by the hundreds were attacking my legs. After that there were gnats, bees, flies, mosquitos and other bugs. I lit my pipe, a habit I had picked up to impress college friends. It had rained the night before and was still damp. Lighting a match was not easy. When I did succeed, my pipe would not stay lit. I spent much time knocking the ashes out of the bowl and lighting up over and over.

Eventually I made peace with my surroundings and settled in for a long,

silent wait. As the brief November day drew to a slow twilight I became secure in myself as a hunter, as a student, as a man. I was doing it right. I relaxed. Squirrels chattered. They started to appear. I never moved. They came within range, but I never moved. Squirrels came down the trees and ran on the ground before me. They ran over my lap and across my legs. I could have touched one. I never shot my gun. They appeared and reappeared for such a long time. There were gray squirrels, large ones and small ones, and even a few red squirrels. They ran up the trees and out of sight. Occasionally, one would run back down to check me out. Finally, they all disappeared. I never shot my gun. I never intended to.

Evening came on. I would have to leave to get home before dark. Nightfall can descend so very fast in the hills during the fall of the year. Within minutes the whole country would be wrapped in obscurity. I tapped the ashes from my pipe and poured the remainder of the soup from my thermos. As I ejected the shells from my gun a strange feeling came over me, that I was not alone. Getting up from the log I started to retrieve my shells from the ground before me, and on doing so turned as if by instinct toward the end of that fallen tree on which I had been sitting for hours. Just beyond the thick cover of brush and leaves so rich in the colors of late autumn sat a hunter, the best I've ever known. Apparently he had taken station earlier in the day and been sitting there when I came up.

Dad got up and walked toward me. The expression on his face was strange, but satisfying in a peculiar sort of way. Underneath, a smile could be made out. As he stooped to pick up six Remington Nitro Express six-shot shells ejected from his own gun, he spoke without looking in my direction. "Boy, you must be doing pretty good in college. You've learned to sit and listen." Dropping the smile and taking on a more serious manner, he looked at me for a moment. "Hain't that what I've been trying to teach you all along?" Realizing that he already had his answer, he turned and headed down the hill to a village under the rising smoke from cookstoves where women cooked for men who among other things hunted squirrels, dug coal, and some of whom still said "hain't" instead of "ain't." ♣

"Back in 1939 when I got that first Belgian Review, I was fully convinced that if I ever got a dollar to do anything with I'd own me a pair of them," says George Smith as he proudly shows off his 2,100-pound champion Belgian and herd sire, Charlie. "He's a show specimen. There's no other animal in the state of West Virginia like him. We have the best bloodline here that there is in America today. There can't no better be found. Nowhere."

At the sound of his name Charlie responds. The huge horse holds his head high and stands patiently as I inspect his massive hind legs. George gives me a wink and says what I am thinking: "The only way he'd hurt you is if he'd step on you." I quickly move to the side.

As might be expected, George came by his passion for these big animals at a relatively young age. There were draft horses on his father's farm at the Jackson County community of Comet, right down the road from the farm George and wife Pauline call home today.

"We used to keep Percherons when I was a boy growing up," George notes, mentioning another popular draft breed. "Well, we had mules to start with and then we changed. But a couple of years before I went into World War Two, I saw an ad in the *Pennsylvania Farmer*—just a little old ad that said, 'The Belgian Review, Wabash, Indiana.' That was the headquarters of the Belgian Draft Horse Association of America. I just wrote them and they sent me a copy. It showed a picture of all the Belgian breeders and I became interested in the whole thing.

"Well, in the fall of 1942 I was over in Ripley and saw a man from northern Ohio who had parked along the road and had a yearling bull in the back of his truck," the horseman continues. "I was interested in that bull. We started to deal since I had one he wanted to see at the house. He came over to look at the bull I had. Then I asked him if there was any purebred Belgian horses up in his country and he said he was a breeder himself and he had them on his farm."

He pauses. "I was interested in two mare colts and the man said, 'I got 'em. You come home with me tonight.' So that's what I did. And I wound up buying two full sisters for \$125 apiece.



Horse farming is everyday business with Larry Shears of Wirt County. In this photo he moves firewood with his team of Belgians.

Gentle Giants

The Draft Horse Revival

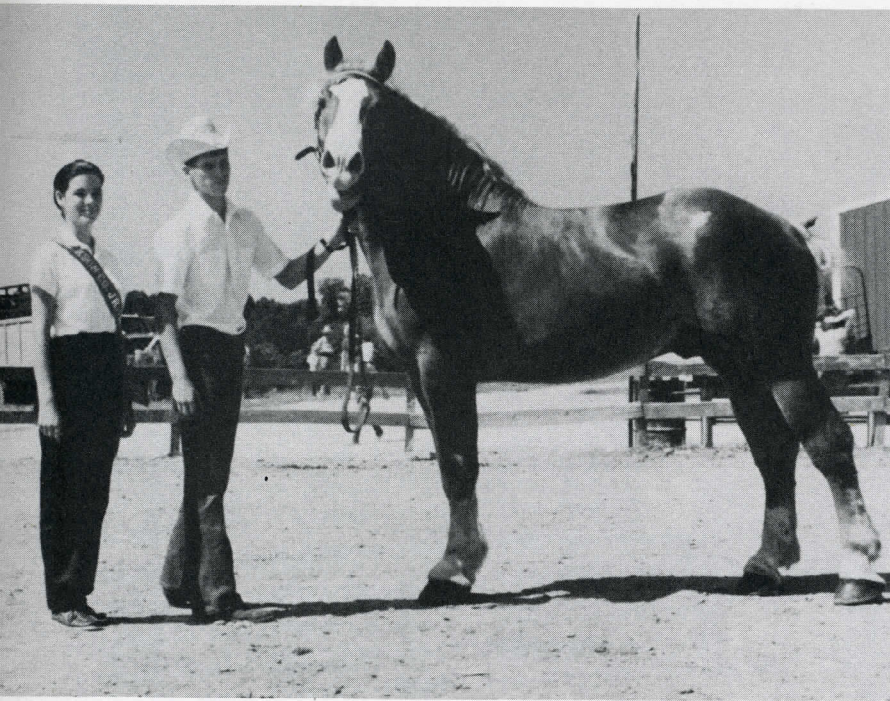
By Jacqueline G. Goodwin
Photographs by Michael Keller

My dad took care of them until I came back from the war in 1946. From that time on there has been some of that blood here on this farm."

Today, George Smith has given up farming full-time with Belgians in favor of raising them for sale and pleasure. Among his best customers are the Amish, who, like George, did not abandon their animals when modern agribusiness decreed that the draft horse had become a useless artifact.

"Back in the late '40's and early '50's it was a disgrace to own horses," George notes. "To have one around signaled

failure. We had one fellow over here on Parchment who had a loan with the Farmers Home Administration. He had a team of draft horses on his farm and the FHA supervisor went over to his farm and threatened him that if he didn't get rid of those horses he was going to foreclose his loan. And all the schools, WVU and other state colleges, got rid of their horse programs during that time. They thought horses were over the hill. Fortunately, our own finances wasn't such that they could get a-hold of us and say, 'Get rid of them.'"



Left: The Smith horses are perennial winners on the regional show circuit. This snapshot shows George Jr. with the stallion Charlie and junior pageant winner Sandy Flinn at the 1981 Jackson County fair. Photo by Lola Smith.



Right: George Smith's earlier interests included smaller riding stock. In 1942 he, his cousin Otis Coast (left) and father Roscoe (right) posed on a hilltop outing. Photographer unknown.

George describes himself as the oldest breeder of Belgians in West Virginia. "There's no one living in this state who has been in the business longer and weathered the storm," he proudly affirms. "Back through the '50's I stood my Belgians here on my farm

when there wasn't a horse like them between Chester and Kenova, West Virginia. They were the only ones. All the way up and down the Ohio River and both sides, too. They all went out of this country. The horse dealers gathered them up and sold them to the

Amish. At that time they didn't raise them. The Amish bought the horses from farmers like us. Yes, sir. The Amish started raising them when they got to see money in it. It's a big business. Now the Amish have big sales or auctions. In fact, they are having one this Friday in Mt. Hope, Ohio."

George's daughter, Lola, adds, "Last weekend my brother, cousin, and I went to a standardbred sale at Mt. Hope and a friend of ours, George Davisson of Murraysville, said, 'I've spent half my life gathering up these horses and taking them up here and the other half of my life bringing them back.'"

I look over the many photos which Lola has rounded up. According to her father, she is the "family photographer and publicist." Her picture of George with Flash, his second stallion, illustrated the style and size that the family favors in its animals. "Some people raise their horses too fast," George says. "Our experience is to let them grow up on the lean side and rough it. Charlie eats 10 pounds of grain a day and one 50-pound bale of hay. The bigger mares get one bale of hay a day and some of them eat grain and some don't. We have some fillies out on a ridge farm near Ripley that have been there all winter and don't get anything except hay when there is snow on the ground. This way,

Mr. Smith figures he has bred Belgians longer than anyone in West Virginia, acquiring his first stock in 1942. Here he and daughter Lola groom Molly.



it extends their life up to 20 years. Now look at Charlie, the way he's built. Now, that's a draft horse for you. He's got muscle, he's got bones—he's the Budweiser style, but he's a Belgian."

After I consume a delicious piece of pumpkin pie with whipped cream and a cup of coffee at the Smiths' kitchen table, I learn that George's other occupation has been driving a school bus for the past 35 years. "Back when I started I drove a bus for \$120 a month," he says. "Superintendent of Wood County Schools, William D. Staats, rode my bus when he was a boy attending Jackson County schools. But I'm giving it all up when I retire this April 25."

George dismisses motorized transportation to get back to the subject of horses. He explains the advantages and disadvantages of the breeding business. "That has always been a part of our farm program, income-wise. That's why we keep them. Besides liking them it's pretty nice to know that you own an animal that is worth eight, nine, maybe 10 thousand dollars. We have a brood mare here that raised a filly and it is worth \$2,500. It takes several cows to do that." He picks up another of Lola's photos. "This mare has paid for a farm. She's 11 years old. Never had a collar or worn a set of harnesses in her life. But her production has paid for a farm since she started raising colts for us. Her mother did the same thing, her grandsire did the same thing and her great-grandmother did the same thing.

"Now we've had our share of bad luck, too," the breeder continues. "We lost three filly mares before this one, due to different causes. So my son George Jr. and I thought we'd get rid of her. We'd about dealt her off. But we listened to Lola. And through her influence we have a fine yearling filly and the mare is due again this spring."

George himself doesn't farm with the big horses on a regular basis. He cites a lack of time as his main reason. "If a person is home all the time it is worth it," he figures. "Now, if you are a part-time farmer like me, then you can't do it. Not that I don't like farming with horses. I do. But we keep a lot of cattle here. I used to drive the bus and then feed 100 head of cattle between bus routes single-handedly. And those cattle were spread on different farms. I did it for years."

All of the Smiths enjoy showing their Belgians at various county fairs. "See those trophies right there?" George asks, pointing to the top of the television set. "Those are trophies this boy has won throughout his showing career." He points to George Jr. and adds, "It is a pleasure to get ready for the fairs." Daughter Lola agrees. "It takes all morning to get them ready for the fair. We shampoo them down and use hair conditioner and they become so soft. And when the sun shines, that red just glistens. There's no prettier sight."

I look around the Smiths' living room. Here is a family that truly loves what they are doing and actually likes working together. George begins to philosophize about his wife's role in the smooth operation. "Everything is centered around Pauline," he says gratefully. "When you have all this stuff and you go to the table and you don't have anything there, then the rest of it is a failure. Yes, sir. I keep the horses washed up and going, but she's the organizer. We are all in this business

together. Even my two daughters who are not here. When fair times comes around, they appear."

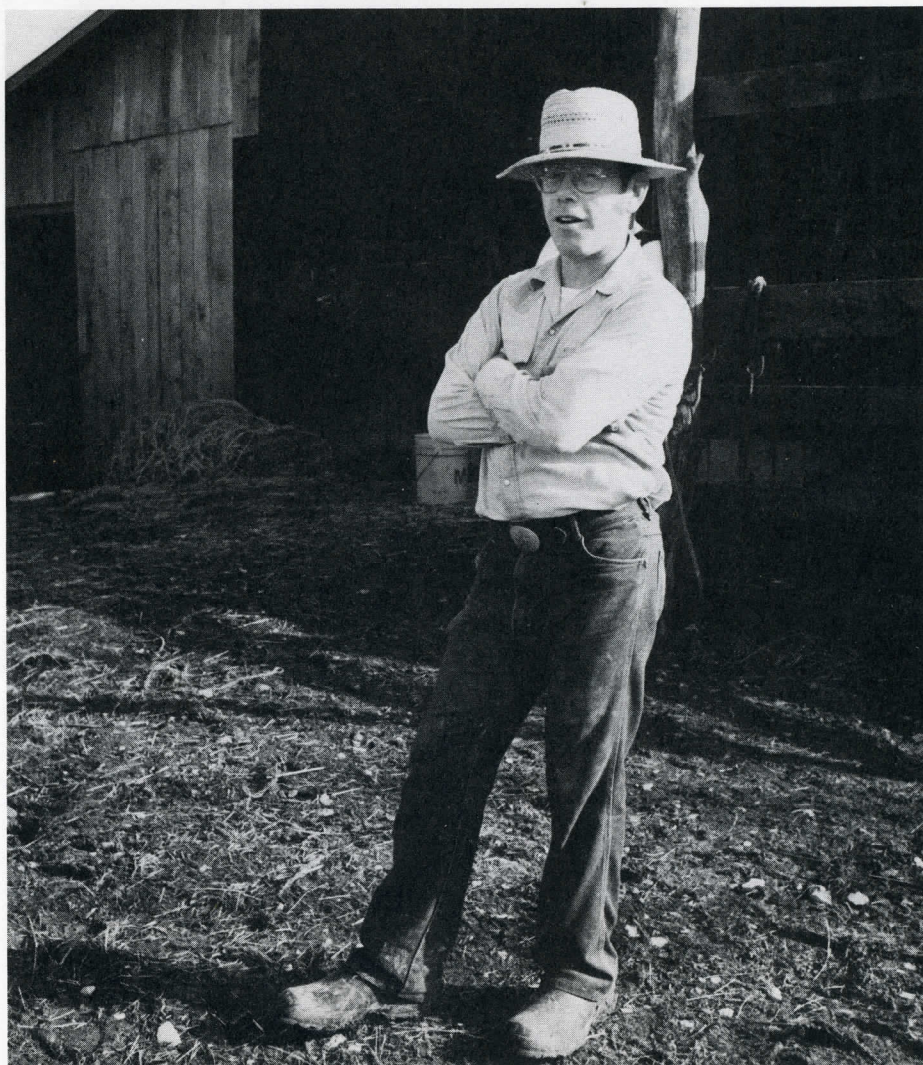
George Smith takes pride in his animals, and his world is one in which they play a large part. He sums it all up in one sentence: "We get a lot of enjoyment from them and they are here to stay."

There are other West Virginians who enjoy the big horses. Larry Shears of Elizabeth is one of them. As I arrive he is carefully hanging up his barbering coat, calling it quits after another day of cutting hair. The only barber in the Wirt County seat, right now Larry is talking about one of the things he enjoys most: Belgian horses.

He hasn't been in the business as long as George Smith, but like the older man, Larry is proud of his animals. He prefers Belgians to other draft breeds because they are more docile. "You can take a Belgian and do what you want to with it," Larry says. "They are very gentle."

"We changed from grade horses to registered about seven years ago," he

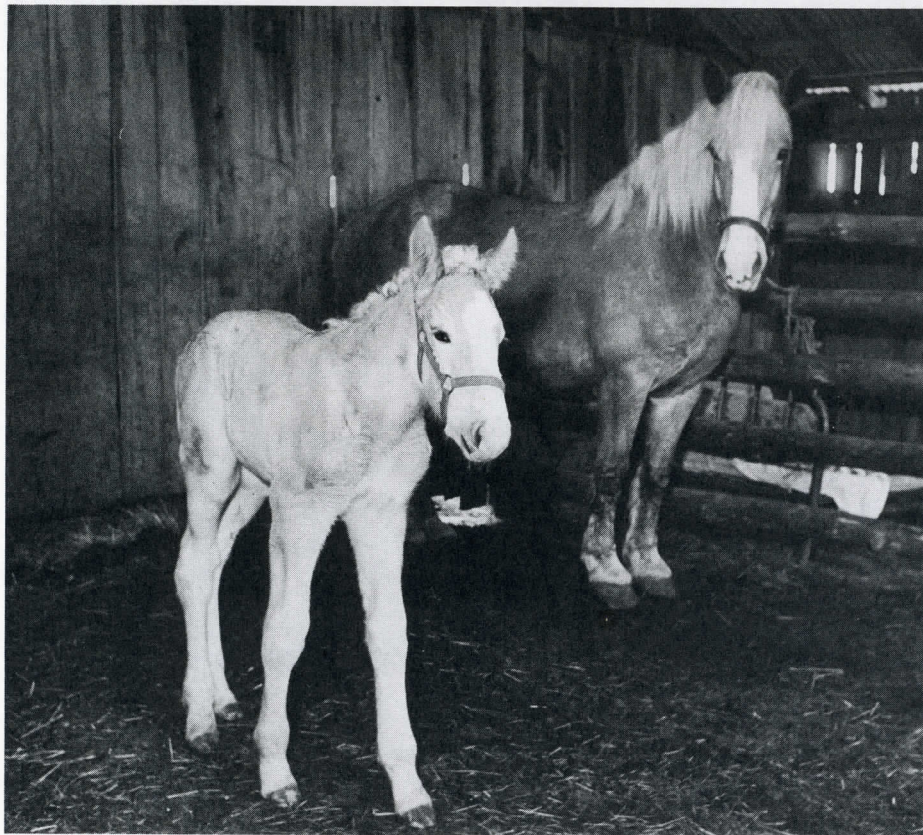
Barber Larry Shears finds it practical to farm more than 200 acres with Belgian horses. "The advantages far outweigh the disadvantages," he says.





Above: Spring plowing at the Shears farm is work for two men and two mares, with a young filly thrown in. Son Lance Shears mans the plow.

Below: J.R.D. Jackie with her latest registered offspring, 10-day-old Contriva. Shears' other work mare, Contrina, is also a daughter of Jackie.



continues. "See this photo of April. Well, this mare is special. Last year she beat out every other horse at the Jackson County Fair and won her class at Wirt County Fair. All of my kids have shown an interest in the horses. Even my daughter Lori—a couple of years ago she drove a horse and cart at the Wirt County Fair. Well, all the kids show at the fairs. It costs us some money, but the kids liked to participate so we felt it was worth it."

Larry Shears was born and raised in Elizabeth, and I learn that he has always been around work horses. He had no problem learning to handle a team of Belgians. "You see, I had the basic knowledge, since when I lived on the dairy farm all we had were horses. We never had a tractor. I learned by doing."

Unlike George Smith, Larry and son Lance regularly use their Belgians for plowing and disking, in addition to hauling timber on their 200-plus-acre farm. Presently the Shears family has eight Belgians. "We also use them in the wintertime to haul firewood and for feeding," Larry explains. "In the summer we use them to bring in our hay. In the winter we can't use a tractor because of the soft ground. That way, they have the advantage over tractors. We use the three-team hitch for the

heavy work, but most of the time we use two. In the garden we use one or two. It just depends on what we are doing."

Larry believes the draft horse revival has come and gone in West Virginia. "We've seen it," the farming barber says. "There was a time when I had the single team, the only one in Wirt County. Now there are perhaps a half-dozen teams scattered around. There has been a tremendous revival in the industry across the United States, too. I saw a team at a sale in Columbus that went for \$25,000."

That price suggests that not everyone is buying the animals for heavy work. Larry agrees. "Most people are not using the big horses for farming. In contrast, they are in the business to make money. Raising and selling these horses is a big business. People are particular. They want a certain horse, a certain breed. And if a man has a lot of money and wants a horse bad enough—well, he'll pay almost anything for it. Then he'll sell it again for big money. But lately the market has fallen a bit."

Larry says that most people look for contour and size when they are in the market to buy a Belgian. Coloring is also important. "The blond Belgian with a white mane and tail is what they usually want," he reports. "It's what the market calls 'chrome.' The guys with the big hitches want to buy the pretty horses, the showy ones."

I ask Larry if he intends to keep farming with his Belgians. "Yes, I'll continue using these horses," he replies. "The advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. They are cheaper in the long run, even though they are generally slower than tractors."

The Smith and Shears families are not the only ones that raise Belgians in the mid-Ohio Valley region. Bob Matheny, a lifetime resident of Mineralwells in Wood County, has 25 head of Belgians. Bob says, "I started raising them in the same year as Larry Shears. We went in at the same time."

He continues. "In '79 I went to a sale and the first ones I bought were foals. Bought the lighter-colored Belgians because I prefer them. But just like

everything else, some people like the darker-colored ones.

"I've been a farmer all my life," Bob says. "I've grown up with horses, but I really don't do a lot of actual farming with them. Just a little bit. I drag the pasture field and spread the cow droppings some when it begins to dry up, but that's about it."

Like his colleagues George and Larry, Bob has definite ideas about the draft horse breeding business. He has also noticed the price decline Larry mentioned. "The business isn't as good as it used to be," he reflects. "I've seen Belgians go as high as \$50,000, but now the prices are down. Since the prices are down, I think it would be more feasible to rely on a pair of Belgians for work stock. I'm too busy with other things to use them on a full-time basis. But with what the price of tractors and farm machinery is getting to be, I think it would be a good idea for a lot of these farmers to use them."

Bob carefully lays out his argument for horse farming. "For example, take a person who farms on a small scale,

let's say 100 acres. He could do what he has to do with a pair of Belgians. The price of a new tractor can run \$10,000 on up. Some people have tractors that have cost them a couple of hundred thousand dollars. Now, the lifetime of a tractor is about 15 years. A pair of horses will live to the low 20's, depending on how well they're taken care of. In other words, it's like this—these people have tractors on their farms that will never pay for themselves. In the long run, a farmer using horses would end up with a little more profit."

There is nonfarm work available for draft animals also, as Bob notes. "Back in '72 I used a pair of mules to string telephone wire along I-77. Unrolled wire for 80 miles that summer. Now I use my horses. Last year I worked steadily. The telephone company would call and want me in Ritchie County and then they'd want me in Wirt County. I did a lot of work for them."

The Matheny horses have pulled paying customers as well as reels of telephone wire. Wife Kathleen hands me a photo of her 67-year-old husband



Larry Shears has adapted some special equipment to work with the big horses. Here he fastens J.R.D. Jackie into a shoeing rig.



The Smiths' Charlie is a fine example of what a Belgian stallion should be. "We have the best bloodline here that there is in America today," owner George Smith, Sr., says. "There can't no better be found." Photo by Michael Keller.

Belgians and Other Draft Breeds

It's a rare soul who does not love a horse and even a rarer one who, after looking a big Belgian in the eye, does not appreciate the awesome beauty of this gentle giant.

The Belgian draft horse goes back a long time, originally to the small European country of Belgium. The antecedents of this massive draft animal were the Flemish horses, large black beasts which provided the foundations of all modern draft breeds. Even today, the Belgian retains some of the characteristics of the great war horses of the Middle Ages.

The Belgian is just one of the main draft breeds, which include Percheron, Shire, Clydesdale and Suffolk. Each has its own characteristics and enthusiastic followers. But what these animals have in common are their strength, size and stamina. Most stand more than 16 hands tall (a hand is four inches) and weigh over a ton, nearly twice the weight of most saddle horses. The Belgian is the heaviest and has more capacity through the middle. It averages about 17 hands, measured to the withers, or shoulder ridge, and usually weighs well over

2,000 pounds. The *Guinness Book of World Records* lists the heaviest draft horse as Brooklyn Supreme. A purebred Belgian stallion, he stood at 19.2 hands and weighed 3,200 pounds—more than some small pickup trucks.

Fashionable "blond" Belgians—tannish in color, with white manes and tails—are the norm, but sorrel, chestnut, roan, and bay are not uncommon colors of the breed in America. Even an occasional black or grey Belgian has been recorded.

Maurice Telleen, who along with his wife, Jeannine, edits the *Draft Horse Journal*, believes the Belgian to be "America's Draft Horse Supreme." Like West Virginia's George Smith, Bob Matheny and Larry Shears, Mr. Telleen has good reasons for his preference. He points out that "the animal's bone is clean, his hocks are clean and straight, and his hind legs are placed properly. He moves well at both the walk and trot. Yet, he still retains his depth of middle, heavy muscling, and easy keeping qualities."

Draft horses were always mainly farm animals, but in the past were also used to haul heavy loads over long distances. At one time, circuses were drawn from town to town by these massive animals. In a later age, it was not uncommon for the great railroad circuses to carry a hundred-plus draft horses, many of them Belgians, to load, unload and haul circus tents and equipment.

Today, draft horses have found their way into the advertising business. Breweries, which once relied on horses to haul heavy beer wagons, are especially partial to the big animals. Anheuser-Busch's spectacular Clydesdale hitch has become a national symbol, and Carlsberg Brewery maintains a traveling eight-horse Belgian hitch. The Jos. Schlitz Brewing Company fielded a 40-horse Belgian hitch, later taken over by O's Gold Seed Company.

The first importation of Belgian horses to the United States was made in 1866, and on February 25, 1887, an association was formed. The as-

sociation was re-incorporated as the Belgian Draft Horse Corporation of America in 1937. The breed's American studbook, the *National Register of Belgian Draft Horses*, is maintained at the organization's headquarters in Wabash, Indiana. During the first part of the 20th Century, registrations of both imported and American-bred Belgians increased, followed by temporary setbacks due to the two postwar depressions in agriculture. The all-time low came in 1953, when only 171 Belgian foals were registered. Registrations are now steadily increasing and are expected to exceed the 1937 high of 3,196.

In the early '50's, the work horse was said to be a vanishing phenomenon. Oldtimers like George Smith can remember when tractor companies encouraged farmers to trade in their horses for the new-fangled machines. Folks flocked to banks, hoping to get loans that would rid them of the stigma of horse farming. But many small farmers found out the hard way that tractors eventually rusted out, while payments for the once-shiny machines continued. Some of these same farmers have come back to draft horses, finding that it is still possible to farm profitably in the old way.

A growing number of West Virginians are returning to the practice of plowing and planting with draft horses, especially Belgians. For the most part, this group is made up of those who enjoy their animals and feel responsibility for carrying on a family tradition of horse breeding. Some even earn extra cash with their teams, hauling logs and telephone cable over mountainous terrain unsuitable for tractors and other large machinery.

After the work is done, when the last clump of soil is loosened and turned, these same animals compete in shows, the best taking honors and trophies for their efforts. It's a family business, with sons and daughters and mom and dad taking part, and all part of West Virginia's draft horse revival.

—Jacqueline Goodwin



Reliving a scene once common in West Virginia, Larry Shears heads in after work on the farm.

and his Belgians on historic Blennerhassett Island in the Ohio River near Parkersburg. In this picture Bob is driving a handsome two-horse hitch, pulling a wagon which he built himself. Kathleen also shows me a picture of their youngest daughter. "In 1984, Helen was West Virginia's first Draft Horse and Mule Association Queen," she proudly announces.

Bob reenters the conversation. "For the past two years we've been hauling tourists on Blennerhassett Island," he elaborates. "We pick my better broken Belgians to pull, but of course, we like to take the prettier ones. Tourists pay \$2 for the ride, which is about one and three-fourths miles long. We work from Wednesday to Sunday, all summer long. It's hard work, but at the same time it's fun." Bob didn't know if he will continue working on the island since

officials had not contacted him at the time of our interview. "It's a little early yet," he pointed out. "But I presume we are going to be back."

The day was fading fast as I finished talking to Bob Matheny and his family. On the way back home to Elizabeth I had time to think. It was definitely a pleasure to sense the satisfaction that these three men get from their Belgians, and easy to see that they repay the satisfaction they take. They are keepers of the equine flame, the ones who keep the draft horse business alive and well. The future of the massive animals lies in the hands of farmers like these West Virginians, who still recognize the beauty and practicality of draft stock in a tractor age. Prices and popularity may rise and fall but, as George Smith says, the horses and horsemen are "here to stay." 🌿



The old residents of the C&O Patch still contribute their vitality to the Huntington area. Here the Reverend Cecil Hill (left) makes a point in talking to Chester Hite, with the Chesapeake & Ohio shop complex behind.

The C&O Patch

Remembering a Huntington Neighborhood

By Linda Hepler
Photographs by Jeff Seager

The neighborhood known as the C&O Patch was a community hurriedly built on the hillside south of the railroad track where the Chesapeake & Ohio line stopped on its way west. Separated from the recently incorporated city of Huntington by miles of open field, the Patch was for many years a place where life revolved around

the nearby C&O work shops. According to Doris Miller in her book, *A Centennial History of Huntington, W.Va., 1871-1971*, the shops which opened in 1878 included "an engine house designed for 42 locomotives, a smith shop, four machine and car shops, a foundry, and a passenger house."

The 250 men who worked at these shops needed housing for themselves and their families. Some found homes in the row houses built in 1871 along 8th Avenue by the Central Land Company that James Casto refers to in his book, *Huntington: An Illustrated History*. Others bought lots on the hillside and along 8th Avenue where the shop gates opened at the intersection with 27th Street. Eventually, the C&O Patch extended east and west along 8th Avenue from 29th Street to 25th Street, and north and south from the railroad track to 9th Avenue along 27th and 28th streets.

The Reverend Cecil Hill, who now resides across the river in Proctorville, Ohio, began working in the shops when he was 15. "We worked six days a week, 10 hours a day," he recently said. "I made \$2.50 for 10 hours work. My dad was an attendant on the coal dock. He came to Huntington down the Guyan River on a log raft. That's the way they got the lumber down. They would moor at Guyandotte and then he'd ride a mule back to Logan. We lived on Collis Avenue for awhile. He started working in the shops after we moved to 27th Street."

Chester Hite grew up in the Patch. "When I was a boy, I would get a job in the shops at Christmastime. I would shovel snow off the walks for two weeks and draw a pay of about \$10. That would buy me a suit. Kibbler suits were \$9.99. You'd give them \$10, and they'd give you back a penny and the back of a mirror. You could buy some things in the Patch, but for clothing you had to go to 20th Street."

Chester later became a regular employee in the C&O shops. "When I started in the machine shop, everything in the shops had to be done manually," he recalls. "We didn't have a crane that would lift a locomotive. We had to jack up an engine and run the wheels under them. Took us all day to jack up an engine and the wheels were only four feet high. When the electric welder was first used, we didn't know you were supposed to cover your face with a colored glass. In a few minutes the men would rub their eyes and it felt like their eyes were full of sand. Their eyes were burned from the electric welder. They learned a lesson."

Sanitation was not a major concern in the early days of the shops. "We got water from a can that held about 100

gallons of water," continued Chester. "We'd dump 300 pounds of ice on the floor, break it into chunks so we could handle it, and throw it into the can. That's where you got your drinking water. Every week or so they'd hang up seven or eight tin cups. Tin rusts, you know. We just picked any cup. Didn't matter who had drunk out of it before. The toilets were long, open buildings with a long rail, built over running water. The water served as an open sewer. You just sat on the rail."

Paul Humphreys, who lived in the Patch until 1920, remembers the special trains that brought workers to the shops from other areas. "Every morning a shop train was run from 16th Street, where a community of black people lived, to the shops at 27th Street," he said. "It was pulled by a very small locomotive. It had only two cars with just seats, no lights of any kind, just seats. The men would climb in, sit down, ride to the shops and be brought back after work. Eventually, some of the people who lived in the Patch moved further west into what was called Central City. A shop train was run from 14th Street West. It would make a stop at the passenger depot, at 16th Street and another at 20th Street for the farmers that lived in that area. This train would bring the men in to the shops in the morning and back in the evening."

At precisely 12 o'clock the shop whistle would announce lunchtime. Often younger children and older girls would carry lunches to family members working in the shops. "We'd carry food in wicker baskets to my father, George Clark, and my brothers," recalls Inez Clark Hepler. "We'd have to hurry to get there by the time the whistle blew. One of my brothers didn't like potatoes. He wanted a bowl of beans in his basket."

Paul Humphreys remembers that some of the men bought their lunches from Mr. and Mrs. Wilkerson who cooked the food in their home, a log cabin at the corner of 8th Avenue and 29th Street. "They carried basket lunches to the shop gate in a horse-drawn wagon," Paul said. "When the fellows got done eating, they would give the baskets back. They would sit around on benches and loaf in the livery stable. The livery stable was owned by a man named Defee. Men who worked in the Patch but lived in what is now



Above: Patch residents from an earlier period. This is Schuyler Humphreys (center) and a Mr. Coons with visitor Charles Simpson (right), a state legislator. Photographer and date unknown.

Below: Paul Humphreys overlooks the old neighborhood from a walkway above the railroad.





Clarence Lake's Barber Shop was a major gathering place. "They put so much tonic on your hair, a dog could smell you for two blocks," Mr. Humphreys says. The building is now a residence. Photographer and date unknown.

known as the Walnut Hills section would ride horses to work and leave them at the livery stable until after work."

Nellie Humphreys Cottle's restaurant near the shop gate offered another choice for C&O workers. "On weekdays 20 cents would buy a lunch of corn bread, beans and soup. On Sundays you got chicken and dumplings. This restaurant also served people waiting at the gate for the Number 13 train."

Number 13 and another train, Number 14, ran daily between the Patch and Hinton. Paul Humphreys would wait with other Patch people at the 27th Street passenger station for Number 13, which made a stop in Huntington. "These trains were pulled by steam engines. All the trains had open windows, and the better trains had screens. After a ride on one of these trains, you came out covered with dust and cinders. You could eat your lunch on the train by the time you got to Huntington. News butches would come by and sell sandwiches, because it was a 45-minute trip. These slow trains only

traveled about 20 to 30 miles an hour and it was just as well, because in our area you had to watch out for cows on the track. It took planning to get to Huntington," Paul concluded.

Before the local streets were paved, 8th Avenue was a dirt road rutted by wagon wheels. According to Chester Hite, the ruts were about 15 inches deep. "You'd get your wagon in there and stay until you got to the end of the street," he said. "The horses didn't get in the ruts. They stayed on top."

Board sidewalks, four feet wide and open under the ends, lined the dirt streets. "Rats would hide under the boardwalks. We boys would get ferrets and put them under the boardwalk," laughed Paul Humphreys. "Then we would run to the other end with sticks and baseball bats. When the rats ran out, we would hit them. Sometimes we would get as much as a gunny sack full. We tried to get rid of the rats because everyone raised their own chickens and the rats would get in the chicken feed."

An ice cream parlor, Harlan's Drugstore, Fischer's Grocery, Humphreys'

store, Monsour's Restaurant, Sanford Robert's store and Clarence Lake's barber shop were among the businesses located in the Patch. "If you didn't trade in the Patch," recalls Paul, "you would have to go into the village of Guyandotte, which was about three miles away. The only way to get there was to walk the railroad tracks. If you wanted a haircut, you either got one at Lake's Barber Shop or in your kitchen. At the barber shop they put so much tonic on your hair, a dog could smell you for two blocks."

Chester Hite's grandfather opened a grocery store in a building which had been moved from 20th Street and 8th Avenue to 28th Street. "No one had running water," Chester remembers of the family operation. "We ran a store for 10 years with no running water. We had a 50-gallon barrel of kerosene with a pump on it. When you filled a can for someone, kerosene got on your hands. There was no place to wash, so you wiped your hands on your apron. The next person who comes in wants a plug of tobacco. Well, there's no wrapping on it. The same hands that

got the kerosene got the tobacco.

"Everything had to be measured or weighed," he continued. "Beans and sugar came in a barrel. You put five pounds of sugar in a sack, weigh it on a scale and sell it for a quarter. Crackers came in a box about three feet long. About 30 pounds, I think. Every morning, five or six little boys, and girls, too, would come in on their way to school for a nickel's worth of cheese and crackers for their lunch. A kid couldn't possibly eat all the cheese and crackers he got for a nickel.

"We had a walk-in refrigerator that held a ton of ice," Chester continued. "We could store 20 100-pound blocks in the top of the refrigerator. The ice wagon delivered the ice. It cost 15 cents a hundred pounds. At quitting time the men would stream out of the shops, up 28th Street like an army, all of them dirty. Some of them would stop for ice. They'd wrap a wire around the ice and carry it home. They had small ice boxes at home with enough space for cooling milk and butter. And they would have ice water for the rest of the day.

"You could see bologna, minced ham and bacon sides hanging in our walk-in, but not much beef. My dad would go to a slaughterhouse on 3rd Avenue to purchase beef. I remember seeing puddles of blood in the alley behind



Above: Inez Clark Hepler in front of the C&O line. Mrs. Hepler still lives in Huntington today. Photographer and date unknown.

Below: Delivery wagons made their way through the dirt streets of the Patch. Here the Sanford Roberts General Merchandise wagon pauses by Cottage Grove School on 8th Avenue. Photographer and date unknown.





Cottage Grove School is a residential duplex today. In 1910 Chester Hite watched as the street in front was paved with bricks.

the slaughterhouse," Chester concluded.

"Many people could do their own butchering. My dad could," reminisced Inez Hepler. "Gabe Robison was the butcher for the Patch. He didn't have a slaughterhouse, although there were slaughterhouses in the Patch. Gabe probably butchered behind the building on 8th Avenue and 27th Street where he lived. Dad would always stop in and leave his order when he heard Gabe was going to butcher. We didn't have refrigeration, so we had to use the beef right away.

"Patch people kept their milk cows in a place called King's Pasture off of Robey Road. There was a clover field there, and by the time the blackberries were ripe, the clover field was opened up for the cows. Cows always gave more milk after they were let into the clover field," Inez concluded.

"You know," laughed Chester Hite, "Inez and I each had a cow and one pair of shoes. Many a time we went to school smelling like cow manure."

As a boy, the Reverend Hill drove cows for Mrs. Radford for a dollar a month. "Dad always kept our hair cut close with clippers," he recalled. "One particular day I was taking the cow to

pasture when a hail storm came up. I'm telling you, it really plunked my head."

The property on 28th Street where Mr. and Mrs. George Clark raised their 12 children had a garden spot, a creek, a barn and a manure pile. "Everyone had a manure pile," Inez Clark Hepler remembers of her childhood here. "Some people had pigs. Dad raised a pig a year until the city ordinance put a stop to it. I was in my teens when indoor plumbing came to the Patch. After that we had to get rid of our livestock and do away with the outhouses. It was a happy day when you didn't see someone going out back with a newspaper under their arm."

George Clark built two stalls onto his cow barn to shelter a mare and colt purchased when the C&O held an auction at the shop gate. "The horses were right off of the western range and auctioned out of the cattle cars," according to Inez. "We never could break the mare. My oldest brother would sneak that horse out when Dad was at work, put a bridle and saddle on her and try to ride her. He'd go back on Reservoir Hill where there was a soft road and run the horse for dear life. The shop men just loved to tell on him—'George, I saw that boy of yours on the horse.'

If only they knew it, you couldn't hurt Nellie, but Nellie could hurt you. Roy's nose was broken twice and his arm once. He painted a skull and cross bones on the barn and put his initials on it."

Reservoir Hill was once the scene of a manhunt. Paul Humphreys relates the tragic story: "A man, either foreign or black, was riding the train without a ticket. The C&O detective pulled him off the train to take him to jail, and the man pulled a gun and shot him. The man ran up to Reservoir Hill. The Patch men formed a posse with guns and horses, found him and killed him. They tied his body behind a horse and dragged him from the top of the hill all the way down to the middle of 28th Street."

Smallpox and influenza often claimed lives. As a sanitation officer, Anna Humphreys Fischer's father had to transport anyone who contracted smallpox to the pest house for quarantine. "As soon as they found out you had smallpox, they moved you to the pest house because it was so contagious," Anna said. "The pest house is the log cabin in Ritter Park above the tennis courts. Once I went with my father to put a yellow flag on the door so people would not go there.

"Many people died during the flu epidemic in 1918," she continued. "Paul's mother died when she was only 24. She was the second person to be buried in Woodmere Cemetery and her first cousin was the first. I went to my Aunt Nellie's funeral in a wagon drawn by horses. The windows were covered by black curtains. Funerals had to be held later because so many people were dying." When a woman died, the women would dress the body, and when a man died the men would dress the body. Most people died at home.

"My mother went through the neighborhood looking after the sick," the Reverend Hill added. "None of us ever got the flu."

Over the years, several doctors served the Patch, Dr. Lusher, Dr. Steamberger, Dr. Cronin and Dr. I. W. Taylor among them. "Doc Cronin served both as a doctor and as a vet," chuckled Paul Humphreys. "If you had to be hospitalized, you went to the old Huntington Hospital located on 8th Street, where Dickenson's Furniture Store is now."

In 1910 Chester Hite watched from the Cottage Grove School yard at recess as 8th Avenue was paved with brick. "Every other row of bricks showed half-a-brick empty space," he recalls. "A man was going along filling in these spaces. He'd pick up a brick, hit it twice, turn it over, hit it once, and it would break right half in two, just the size he wanted. The principal, John Lambert, said not to look at that man because you might get a piece of brick in your eye and be blind for the rest of your life. I was back 200 feet and I couldn't resist looking. Well, I got a whipping for not minding." A section of Chester's old school still stands on 8th Avenue between 28th Street and 29th Street.

After 8th Avenue was paved, a streetcar line was run as far as 27th Street. "It was the 6th and 8th Avenue car," said Chester. "People would carry their shoes and walk over the hill in boots. They would leave their boots at a friend's or relative's in the Patch, put on their shoes and ride the streetcar to town or college. The streetcar could be engineered from either end. The morman would take his tools, carry them through the streetcar, and now the other end is the front."

Lincoln Elementary replaced Cottage Grove School when Inez Hepler

was in the sixth grade. "At the Cottage Grove School we marched in to the sound of a steel triangle, but in the new school we marched in to a piano," she remembers of the change. "This school had plumbing in the basement, but it didn't always work. The janitor was always busy mopping up. Water fountains were long troughs that had a pipe with fountains coming up. We all got in a row to get water. We went to Holderby School in the seventh and eighth grades.

"When I went to Huntington High School, it cost a nickel to ride the bus," Inez continued. "I remember us girls getting snowbound at the high school, and nobody in our end of town had a car. Finally, Mr. Coons persuaded Mr. Roberts, who operated a store in the Patch and owned a car, to come and get us. At that time cars were high up off the ground and he was able to get through."

The children from the few black families in the Patch did not attend Patch schools in those days of racial segregation. Instead, they walked to Douglass Elementary and Douglass High School on 8th Avenue and 16th Street, where a black community lived. "There was never any trouble between colored people and white people in the Patch," recalled Cecil Hill. "Us kids would fight one day and play the next, just like any kids anywhere.

"There were ponds up around 29th Street and back of the shops," the minister continued. "We fished in there. We'd take out skillets and our bread and our lard and fry the fish on the bank. In the winter we would go sled riding. 27th Street had two hills. We made our own sleds and put runners of some kind on them. One year Dad bought me a sled for Christmas that you could steer. I could make both hills, all the way to 8th Avenue. We'd have a fire on short 9th, between 26th and 27th streets. There wasn't anything to worry about because there weren't any cars, only wagons."

"I haven't thought of those days for years," the Reverend Hill concluded. Fortunately, the memories flood back abundantly, once aroused, for today the old neighborhood survives only in such recollections as he and other former residents have. The Patch no longer exists as a distinct community, with neighbors sharing a common employer and many common interests. It is now simply part of Huntington's east end, serving people with varied interests and concerns. Houses at the end of 8th Avenue are boarded up, the land purchased by the city for the purpose of widening the avenue where it enters Route 60. The old C&O Patch has become a place in time, preserved only in the minds of the people who experienced it. ♣

The Chesapeake & Ohio main line was the life's blood of the C&O Patch, as of many other southern West Virginia communities. The trains still rumble through today.



Starting From Scratch

Mack Roberts and the Charleston Broom Company

By Lori L. Henshey

Photographs by Michael Keller

Mack Roberts is a frequent visitor to the broom company he founded. Here he explains one of the fine points of the trade.



In this day of colleges and vocational schools, we must not forget that people once taught themselves trades and skills and then used them to make a substantial living. Mr. Mack Vernon Roberts is from that era.

He was born on a farm in Tornado, Kanawha County, in 1893. His father, Porse Roberts, had come to the area from Virginia to work in a big, new gristmill on Coal River. Porse married Fanny Thomas, and together they built a house and farm across from the mill. They had six children during their marriage, four boys and two girls. Mack was their second son.

The Roberts farm flourished in the early 1900's. They raised tobacco, peanuts, corn, cabbage and wheat. Peaches and apples were abundant in the orchard. The family kept hogs, chickens and cattle for their meat, eggs and milk. Except for flour and other staples, the farm produced all the food they needed.

Mack Roberts and his brothers did most of the farm work, planting and raising crops and tending to the livestock, because their father spent much of his time at the gristmill. This left little room for recreation, and entertainment was homemade and simple. "Throughout the week, we'd get out and possum hunt, catch mink, things like that," he says. "Get up on top of your big mountains, sing songs. People down in the valley could hear us. That's about all we had then."

Every Fourth of July a big picnic was held on Smith Creek, featuring food and square dancing. Another favorite pastime was playing baseball on Saturdays and Sundays.

Mack and his brothers and sisters attended a small one-room school about a half-mile from the farm. School ran six hours a day, five days a week. The children walked to school, and sometimes they dawdled along the way. Then they would have to rush to get there, take a seat and open their McGuffey Readers before studies began. "I can sometimes almost hear the bell ring," Mr. Roberts reminisces.

When his mother died young, Mack found it harder to divide his time between helping out at home and going to school. "I didn't get too much education," he explains, "and I'll tell you the reason why. I left at 11 o'clock to come home to take my daddy's dinner, 'bout half a mile, when he worked in

the mill. So I missed a whole lot of it. Then my mother went away, nobody to say, 'Boys, get up and go to school.' You didn't have to go to school unless you wanted to."

Mack Roberts' father soon remarried, and later two half-sisters and one half-brother came along. "We had a pretty good family," he says.

After he left school, Roberts worked on the railroad to earn extra money. He carried water for 75 cents a day, boarding in nearby farmhouses. "Three meals and a good bed to sleep in" cost him 25 cents. Many of his young friends were beginning careers, some of them leaving Tornado to find work in the growing city of Charleston. Mack Roberts, too, was about to begin a profession, one that would be lifelong.

In 1910, when Mack was 17 years old, a neighbor told his father that he should get his sons into the broom business. The boys could raise some broom corn, the neighbor said, and he would build them a broom machine. The Roberts brothers planted about 10 acres of broom corn that spring, harvesting it and curing it to use on the promised new machine. The neighbor fashioned a broom tier from wood and steel, and when their crop was ready the boys had the supplies and equipment to make the first of many brooms.

The broom tying machine was hardly state-of-the-art equipment. It literally ran on elbow power—you had to hook your arm into a spoked wheel to make it run. Wire from a nearby spool wrapped around a head of broom straw, binding it to a broomstick.

The machine was slow and cumbersome to work with, so the brothers made a new broom tier. They appropriately called it a "kicker." Built on the same principal as the old tier, except that it ran by foot power, the kicker had a wooden-spoked drum at the bottom of the machine. When the drum was kicked, the wire was activated, tying the straw to the handle. With the kicker, the brothers could make about six or seven dozen brooms a day.

Next, they bought a broom sewer, which also increased their production. The sewer had a large steel needle with an eye in the middle, which stitched the broom head one side at a time. It took nine minutes to sew each broom.

Within a year, the broom business had outgrown the farm, so the boys moved their equipment to a small



Above: All the Roberts brothers were present in this mid-1920's photograph at their new East End broom factory. Mack kneels second from left, Dennis kneels to far right with Carl kneeling at his side, and Harry (in suit) stands with his wife at rear. Photographer unknown.

Below: Like many of the machines of broom making, the comber is essentially a homemade contraption. The toothed drum combs seeds and trash from broom corn.

building in the Kanawha River town of St. Albans. That was the beginning of the Roberts Brothers Broom Company.

The company stayed in St. Albans until 1913. They sold to jobbers working for large wholesale distributors in Charleston; these middlemen then sold to retail merchants. Brooms made at the company in St. Albans were transferred, usually by wagon, up to Charleston. Brooms that now sell for at least \$35 a dozen were, in 1911, sold by Roberts Brothers for about 21 cents apiece.

Soon, the Roberts Brothers Company became well-known for its fine brooms, and their customers began to ask for more brooms than the brothers could make in their tiny factory. Also, the St. Albans location proved to be a problem because it was out of the way for their jobbers in Charleston. So they relocated in a big stone building on the south side of the Kanawha River, near Charleston's C&O Depot.

The Charleston that Mr. Roberts came to in 1913 was much different from the one that exists today. Chemical plants that line the Kanawha Valley today had yet to be built, and the Interstate highways that bisect the city were far off in the future. The East End neighborhood that now includes the Capitol was semi-rural at the time. Houses dotted the area, and cows were



often turned out to graze on the green, spacious grounds. Mr. Roberts remembers that mule-drawn streetcars, which held as many as 20 passengers, traveled up and down the streets. He recalls that many people used the mule cars, and later Ford jitneys, to get to and from work, and that for a nickel you could ride anywhere in town. Others, including Roberts, rode bicycles to work. He estimates that there were only about nine automobiles in the city when he came.

When Roberts Brothers moved to Charleston, they decided it was time for some new equipment. They got a catalog from Syracuse, New York, which featured all kinds of broom machinery. From there they ordered a new, expensive broom tier which enabled them to make 29 dozen brooms a day, several times what the old tier could turn out. They figured that the average West Virginia household used three brooms per year, and based their production on that demand.

They also ordered a broom stitcher

Below: Most Charleston businesses proudly exhibited the NRA blue eagle during the Depression, but the broom factory may be the only one still to have theirs on display.

Right: The Pan-O-Broom was a patented invention of the Charleston Broom Manufacturing Company. The self-storing dustpan fitted over the head of the broom when not in use. Photo by Bollinger's Studio, date unknown.



from New York, called a Lipe-Walrath. It cost \$600, quite a bit of money for the young brothers to invest, but what a difference it made! The new stitcher had two steel needles instead of one, and could sew a broom every minute.

Mr. Roberts remembers how they learned to operate the Lipe. "We didn't understand how to thread the machine," he says. "We tore up several brooms to find out how to first start it out. My brother worked till about 12 o'clock on Saturday night out in the shop with that thing. And he went to bed and dreamt how that was sewed in there, then he went out and fastened it just like he dreamt to do it." Soon, the company bought another broom stitcher, called a Baltimore, and with both machines running simultaneously, "there was two brooms dropping on the floor every minute."

While Mack Roberts and his brothers were industrious and already moderately successful, what they knew about broom making they had taught themselves. Looking back, Mr. Rob-

erts can see a better way to have learned the business. "Now, they had a big broom factory in Cincinnati," he says. "What me and my brothers should've done in the first place was went down there and learned how to make brooms. But we didn't do it, we just learned ourselves."

Because Roberts Brothers didn't have enough money to buy raw materials in railroad car lots, they ordered from Cincinnati on local shipment. The supplies were shipped on a steamboat that landed on what Mr. Roberts calls the "Charleston side," opposite the Depot. Then the materials were hauled from the levee to the Roberts building on drays, sideless carts pulled by horses or mules.

Not everything was business during that bustling time, however. In 1915, Mack Roberts met a pretty young lady on his way to a church service in Tornado. He has never forgotten that first meeting. "My friend had a girl, and we was going to church one evening. Pearl Mostellar was this feller's cou-



sin. She was walking along with them and my friend said, 'Pearl, why don't you get back there and walk with Mack?' So she did. We went to church and I brought her home with the rest of them, and I asked her about a date. I went the next Sunday and seen her. We kept on going like that for about a couple of years, and then we got married."

It was on September 1, 1917, that the young couple took a streetcar from St. Albans to Charleston and were married there by the Reverend C. J. Woodrum. Mr. Roberts says, "He went to the courthouse and he asked the clerk, 'I want you to issue to Mack Roberts and Pearl M. Mostellar a license that will never be broken.' Well, he said, 'I can issue a license, but I don't know about the broken.' It never was broken," Mr. Roberts confirms proudly. After the marriage, the newlyweds rented a house on Creel Avenue near the broom factory. They were together for 62 years, until Pearl's death at age 85.

The Charleston location proved to be well-suited for the business. It was easier to get supplies, and now the city jobbers could simply drop by the factory and pick up their loads.

A large distributor, Charleston Wholesale, was one of the Roberts Brothers jobbers at the time. Mr. Showalter, owner of the company, needed more brooms than Roberts Brothers could make with their limited resources. Meeting with Mack and his brothers, Showalter laid out a plan to up their production. Mr. Roberts recounts the conversation. "He come over to our place of business on one Saturday, and he said, 'Roberts, I'm going to need more brooms.' Well, I said, 'Mr. Showalter, now you see the situation here, we don't have finances to buy big quantities of broom corn and supplies.' So he said, 'You boys go to Cincinnati and you buy a whole carload of supplies, whatever you got to have, and I'll pay for it providing you'll give me the brooms.'"

So the Roberts brothers went to Cincinnati and got their supplies, brought them home and made brooms for Showalter. This was a turning point for their enterprise. "When we got that," Mr. Roberts says, "we made more brooms than he could use, so we went out and got other jobbers. And that give us a big lift, we went right on.



Mr. Roberts trained Jim Shaffer to take over as manager upon his retirement in 1967. Shaffer became an employee of the company in 1946.

And then, the war came along in 1918."

The United States had entered World War I in 1917, and early in 1918 Mack Roberts was drafted into the army medical corps. When he went into the service, his brothers moved the broom business back to the farm in Tornado. They built a small factory there, about 20 feet wide and 60 feet long. "What happened in that year of '18, I had 35 acres of broom corn out," he says. "I got people to raise it for me. Well, I put in for 60 days relief, but the army only gave me 30 days. Well, I come home, I got all the broom corn cut and put away, and I taken the flu. Now, back in 1918 they had flu everywhere. I was in the bed 14 days." Roberts says that all people had to combat the deadly virus was aspirin and bed rest.

Mr. Roberts had his St. Albans doctor send a written statement to the military to verify his illness. Soon afterwards, his unit wrote back, giving him 14 days after he got out of bed to return to camp.

The flu epidemic that hit the country in 1918 took thousands of lives. Mr. Roberts vividly remembers his return to service, and the advice of his lieutenant. "I stayed at Chattanooga, Tennessee. That big railroad station there, it's a block long, had trucks with coffins three high. I bet there was a thousand people to ship home," he says. "And I went back on and I told them I was sorry, that I just got over the flu and don't feel very good. My lieutenant told me, 'Now you just stay here in the barracks, no matter what hap-

pens.' Said, 'I don't want you to go up to the hospital, 'cause they're just a-dying up there by the hundreds. They're taking a lot of the patients down in the basement, still alive, to get room for somebody else.' That's how they was dying. He said, 'If you go up there, you may pass away.' If it hadn't been for that probably I wouldn't be here today." The Armistice was signed soon after, and Roberts returned home to his wife and business.

In 1919, the Roberts Brothers Broom Company joined forces with the Goshorn Hardware Company. With Goshorn as a financier, the brothers were able to build a new, red brick building at 1709 Railroad Avenue to house their business. A railroad siding brought supply cars right up to the factory doors. At this time the company name was changed to the Charleston Broom Manufacturing Company.

When old jobbers learned of the name change, they were puzzled. "'Now wait a minute,'" Mr. Roberts recalls them saying. "'We want the Roberts Brothers brooms, because they make the best brooms there is. We don't know a thing about this.' I told 'em it was the same thing, we just changed it from Roberts Brothers to the Charleston Broom Company."

It was in this era that the business really began to flourish. After the merger, the company was able to buy two or three carloads of broom corn and handles at a time. They advertised for employees in out-of-state newspapers in such places as Indiana, Il-

Broom Making

The Charleston Broom Manufacturing Company is not what it once was. The company, which in its heyday employed 20 workers and made 900 brooms per day, has dwindled to a mere three employees who turn out about 15 dozen brooms daily. However, brooms are still made at the company with the same machines, and in essentially the same manner as in earlier days. They are made in assembly-line fashion, beginning with bundles of broom straw and ending with the fine quality brooms that originally made the Roberts Brothers successful.

Although many broom manufacturers now use plastic, the Charleston Broom Manufacturing Company clings to the tradition of using good, old-fashioned broom corn.

Manager Jim Shaffer, trained by founder Mack Roberts, has worked for the company since 1946. He says that plastic brooms give consumers little satisfaction, and Mr. Roberts agrees with him.

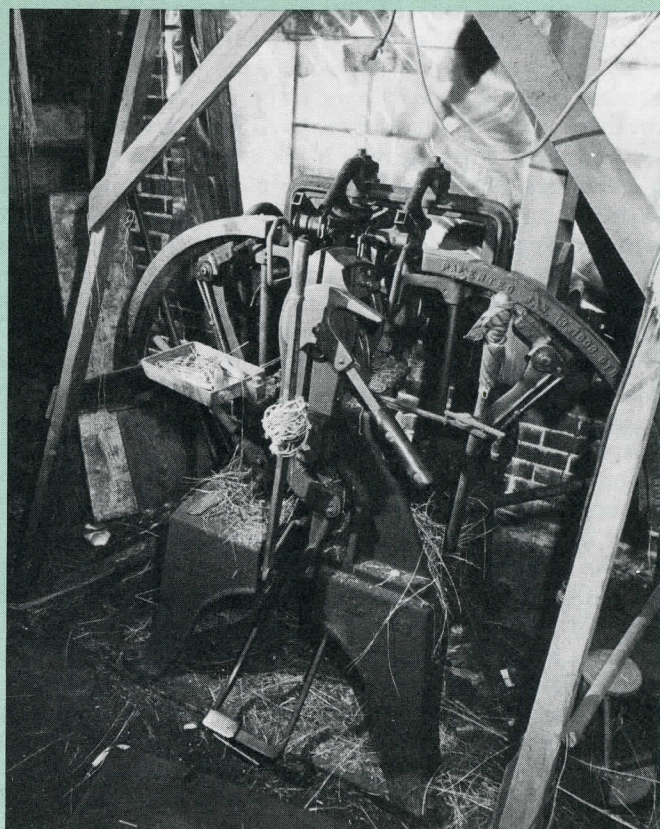
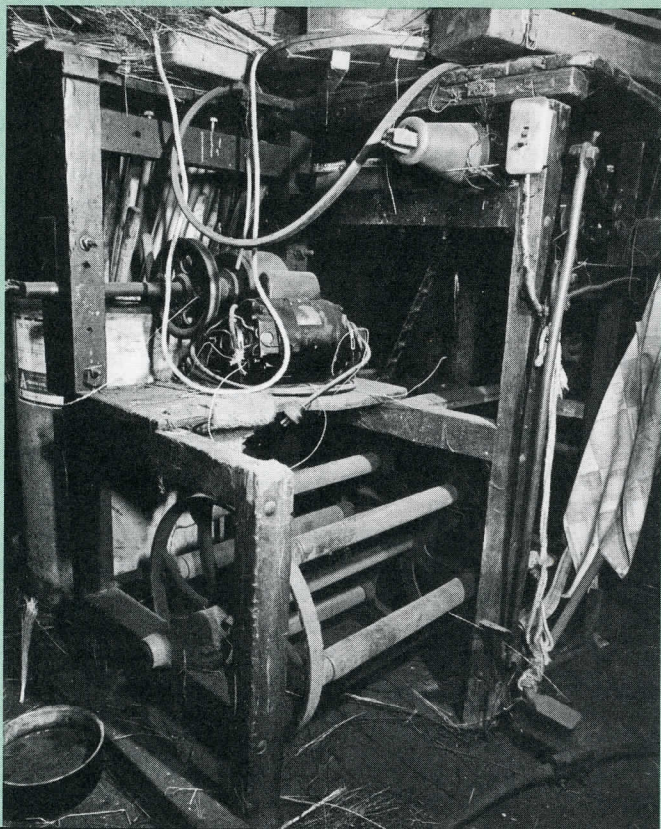
Broom corn is a variety of sorghum, technically called *Sorghum vulgare technicum*. It thrives best in dry climates, and is largely grown in Oklahoma, Kansas, the Texas Panhandle and the central Mississippi Valley. Broom corn can be grown in any soil that regular corn grows in, but broom corn soil must be harrowed several times before planting. Sowing is normally done in late May or early June, when the ground is warming with the oncoming summer. Broom corn is harvested early, usually at the end

of the blooming season, since a too-ripe crop will have brittle brush. It is cut when the stalk head is full and the seeds are green, and then hauled to a shed or barn and threshed to remove excess seeds and particles. It is then dried quickly to avoid bleaching, and bundled for shipment in bales of 300-400 pounds.

Broom corn used to be shipped to the Charleston Broom Company in railroad cars. Now, with declining production, Shaffer usually drives a truck to Greensboro, North Carolina, or Pittsburgh to pick up his broom straw. The bales are stacked in a corner of the old building, ready to begin the long, meticulous process of becoming brooms.

Sometimes, broom straw is placed in the factory's broom comber, a large wooden box with a metal-toothed cylinder in the middle. The comber is powered by a foot pedal. A bundle of broom straw is placed against the spinning cylinder, and

Straw broom making remains primarily a skilled handicraft, using simple machines which have changed little over time. The "kicker" (left) was a foot-powered broom tier improvised by the Roberts brothers. The broomstick fits in the chuck clamp at the top. The electric motor was added later. The Lipe broom sewer (right) was acquired new about 1913. Power comes from an overhead drive belt. Photos by Michael Keller.





Old hands on an old machine still do fine work. Here Mack Roberts demonstrates the Lipe sewing machine. Photo by Michael Keller.

the teeth comb out excess seeds and broken straw. Mr. Shaffer says that the comber is not regularly used nowadays, since the broom corn is of better quality.

Next comes dying, simply hand dipping the loose straw into a bucket of light green, red or black dye. Earlier dyes were not as good as are modern ones. When straw was dyed 40-or-so years ago, it was placed in a separate room overnight, with a small sulphur fire. The burning sulphur would set the dye, which, Mr. Shaffer says, would just get greener and greener without the treatment.

After the straw is dyed and still damp enough to be pliable, it is ready for the broom tier. If the straw is too wet, the broom will be ruined as the drying straw shrinks. The broom handle is placed securely in the tier, and a handful of straw held to the exposed end. By pumping a foot pedal, galvanized wire tightly wraps the straw onto the handle. The straw is layered several times, each new layer added after the previous one has been bound with wire. Finer, longer pieces of straw are saved for the outside layer.

When the full brush has been attached, a nail is driven through the handle to secure the wire. A sharp knife is used to snip off protruding

bits of straw, and a small strip of cloth completes the wire wrapping. This "cloth finish" serves to distinguish types and grades of brooms. Colors are not standard in the broom industry and while blue cloth means the best grade at the Charleston Broom Company, it may mean the worst grade elsewhere. Red is used for whisk brooms.

Next the straw brush is sewn into recognizable broom shape on the Baltimore sewer, left over from the Roberts Brothers era. The sewing machine is driven by a large rubber belt overhead. A metal clamp fastens the broom handle into the sewer, allowing the straw head to protrude between two opposing heavy steel needles. Plastic string is wrapped once around the broom and then threaded through the needles, which alternately sew the broom head in an over-and-under fashion. After one line is stitched, the broom automatically drops down a notch for another line of stitching. After four rows the sewing is complete, and the broom is removed from the clamp. The long, leftover strands of string are trimmed off.

After the broom is sewn, it is taken to the trimmer, which looks like a small ironing board with a yoke on top. The yoke acts as a measuring stick, something like the foot

sizers that shoe stores use. The yoke is adjusted to the standard length of a broom head, and a slicer like a paper cutter chops off the uneven ends of the broom straw.

After trimming comes the inspection stage, where loose string and seeds are combed out and an overall check of the broom is made. The handle is then painted by inserting it into a metal pipe filled with either paint or lacquer and immediately pulling it out. A rubber gasket at the mouth of the pipe strips off excess liquid, so the brooms dry to the touch within moments.

Labels are then attached to the painted handle, and the broom heads are covered with bags and the brooms bundled up in dozens ready to be shipped to buyers, mostly wholesale distributors.

Whisk brooms are made almost exactly like regular brooms, except that they have no handle, and are more difficult to work with because of their small size. Whisk brooms are given a "spiral finish" which spreads the wire binding far apart to make a small handgrip. The short broomstick is sawed off, and a shiny cap with a hook is snapped on top. The wood underneath is now completely hidden.

The company also makes mops, sized by the ounce, up to 32 ounces. They are made somewhat like brooms, long cotton yarn replacing straw on the broom tying machine. After the wire binding, a plastic cover is placed on the mop head and it is ready to be bundled.

That is the way brooms and mops are made at the Charleston Broom Manufacturing Company, but whether they will continue to be made there is unknown. The company is up for sale now, the employees' future uncertain. The demand for straw brooms is not as high as it once was. Today, a few skilled men working with turn-of-the-century machines, producing natural, sweet-smelling straw brooms is the exception, and automated factories turning out identical synthetic brooms the standard.

—Lori Henshey



Left: Jim Shaffer sews a broom on a Baltimore sewer, one of the factory's two sewing machines. The next step is to trim the end of the broom.

Right: Dewey Ferguson gathers straw for tying, the first step in broom making.

linois and Texas. Many responded to the ads, bringing their families with them.

"We learned a lot of fellers at our factory, but we never had enough men," Mr. Roberts says. "So we got men from out there to come in, and they worked with us anywhere from two to six, and eight and 10 years, and they'd go back home. At one time we got a man and his wife and his brother and his wife and his son, five of 'em, all come here at one time. They stayed about seven or eight years, but they went back home." Sometimes the Charleston Broom Company didn't have to advertise. "Back in them days," he says, "there was a lot of broom men that was going from city to city, going around hunting jobs. So we got a lot of men that way." Production reached 900 brooms a day, he adds.

Mrs. Roberts initially helped out in the business, making shipping bags and working in the factory. Roberts

praises her as a good worker. She stopped spending a lot of time there when other responsibilities kept her busy at home. "We had two fine boys," he says proudly. "I guess some of the best boys ever was raised. My youngest boy's a minister. My oldest boy sells stock for a company out of New York. He lives in Columbus, Ohio. My youngest son, he's now over in Greensboro, North Carolina."

The Charleston Broom Company regularly employed women in the factory for lighter jobs such as cutting string, labeling and bagging brooms, and bundling them in dozens for shipping. "We worked a lot of women," Mr. Roberts recalls. "We worked a couple of 'em all the time."

The broom factory ran precisely and efficiently. Raw material started out on one side of the room, passed through several work stations, and finished up at the opposite side as complete brooms. The first station was the broom com-

ber, where dead or broken brush and excess seeds were removed from the broom straw. Next, the straw was treated—dipped into boiling water to kill germs and soften the brush. Then it was dyed and left overnight in a closed room with a small sulphur fire to smoke out impurities in the straw and set the dye.

After the straw was combed and dyed, it was wrapped 'onto broomsticks in the broom tier and sewed on either the Baltimore or the Lipe. Brooms were then sent along to the broom cutter for trimming. After the handles were painted, the brooms went to women workers for the finishing touches. Then the brooms were ready to be picked up by jobbers. The business always operated this way, Mr. Roberts says, and the factory stayed neat and organized.

At this time, Mr. Roberts' company got a patent for a "Pan-O-Broom," a broom with a dustpan attached to the

handle. "We sold them to department stores in New York, all them big department stores," he says. "And we done real good."

Within West Virginia, there wasn't much commercial competition for the Charleston Broom Company. A big problem, however, was the State Penitentiary at Moundsville, where convicts were employed to make brooms at a rate too cheap for Roberts or any other private broom maker to match. Their solution was to lobby to stop broom making in the Penitentiary. "Moundsville made brooms at that time, and they could undersell us," Mr. Roberts remembers. "They hired them people in there and they only paid them 10 cents a dozen to make 'em, and we had to pay 40 or 50 cents a dozen to get them made at that time. 'Course, they sold brooms everywhere. We couldn't compete with them; on the outside, you couldn't do it. So we went together and got that knocked out, just had to, or we would've had to quit."

Mr. Roberts also remembers a few would-be competitors. "Now, there was a feller up at Rainelle," he says. "He bought a lot of machinery, and went into it and thought he could make out, but he couldn't do it. So we turned around and bought all his stuff. And we had a couple or three fellers at Madison come up here to get some information about making brooms. One went ahead and bought all the machines, and in about a year," Mr. Roberts says with a satisfied smile, "I bought from him."

Finally, after many struggles, Mr. Roberts and his brothers had made the Charleston Broom Company a well-known and respected business, and themselves skilled and experienced broom makers. Now they could relax and enjoy the satisfaction of accomplishment. "When we got to going pretty good," he says, "I didn't have very much to do except the sales end of it, and see that everything was all right."

Between 1936 and 1937, Mr. Roberts' oldest and youngest brothers died. Then in 1966, another brother died, leaving him to manage the company alone. "We all worked together," he says of his brothers. "We all got along good, shoulder to shoulder, but when the three went away, that left me holding the bag."

Mack Roberts himself quit working

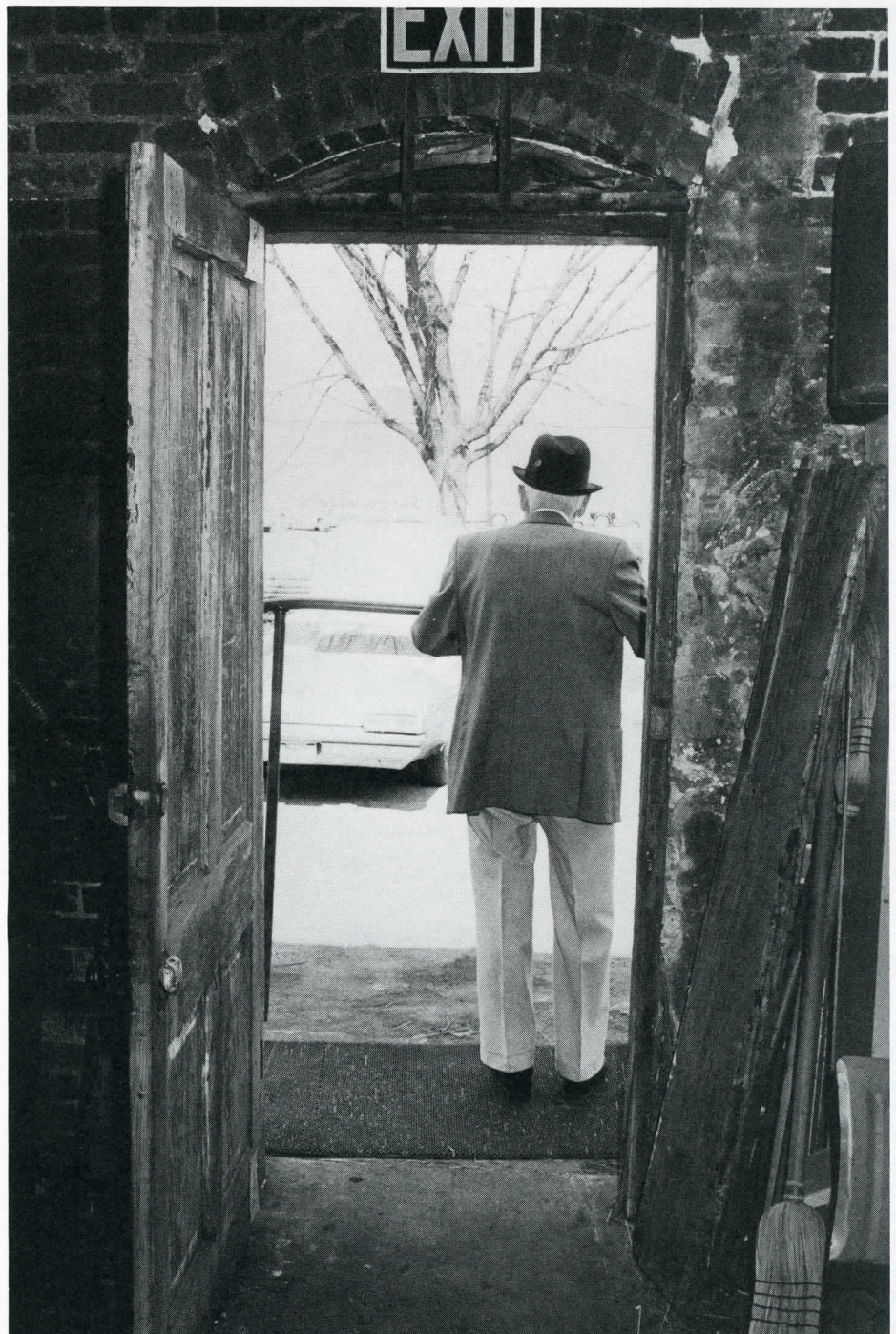
at the Charleston Broom Manufacturing Company in 1967, when he was 74. He trained longtime employee Jim Shaffer to take his place, and Mr. Shaffer is still manager there. After his retirement, Mr. Roberts made whisk brooms for the Hecks discount stores. "They bought thousands and thousands of dozens of them," he says.

At 93 years old, Roberts is still very active. He lives alone and cooks, cleans, does laundry, plants flowers and grows a garden behind his house. He still takes an active interest in the Charleston Broom Company, and makes shipping bags for them. He drives down

to the factory to deliver the bags and visit with the employees. Jim Shaffer affectionately calls him "Uncle Mack."

The broom factory has declined from its glory days, and it looks small, old and out-of-place next to Interstate 64 and modern Laidley Field. But when Mack Roberts goes there, he sees it as it once was: brimming with activity, singing with the hum of broom machines and the rumble of railroad cars bringing fresh supplies to four enterprising brothers who started a business with a homemade broom machine, a little broom corn and their own ingenuity. ♣

Mack Roberts has been in and out of the broom factory for more than 65 years. He still comes in weekly, to bring broom bags he makes at home.



Ernie Carpenter

Tales of the Elk River Country

Compiled by Gerald Milnes and Michael Kline

Photographs by Michael Keller

One of Ernie Carpenter's best-known tunes is "Shelvin' Rock," commemorating the birth of his great-grandfather, Sol Carpenter, under this remote cliff.



When you get to know Ernie Carpenter you learn a lot about the early history of Elk River. Ernie is descended from four generations of fiddle players on the upper Elk. His family home on the river was inundated after the construction of the Sutton Dam in 1955. Ernie "refugeed" to a small place just north of Sutton, the nearest piece of land he could buy to the old homeplace. He built a new house using lumber from the old, but has never gotten over his sense of loss. The old place near Sutton was his physical connection to his family's past.

Our early friendship with Ernie had to do with sharing the wonderful old fiddle tunes he knows. As we played music with him, we began to hear family stories associated with the tunes. At first it was hard to keep generations straight, since the tales took us back to Ernie's great-great-grandfather, Jeremiah Carpenter. Through the unfolding of the stories and tunes from Ernie's forebears, we have been treated to a rich musical lore from the early settlement along the waters of the Elk River. We began recording our conversations with Ernie in 1981, and the material presented here is edited from those tapes.

Sometimes the stories have seemed at odds with written history. In other cases family lore has amplified the established record. Historians have written about the Carpenter family in central West Virginia for seven decades or more, and the chronicles and the oral history have had that long to interplay with one another. Many versions of the stories have survived. It has been established that there were two Jeremiah Carpenters, contemporary cousins, who played strong roles in the early settlement of central West Virginia. The Jeremiah who dominates the following stories may be a composite of both.

If the precise history is not always clear, the lore provides a rich context for the Carpenter family music we have come to love. We think Ernie's tunes convey such a strong sense of earlier times that we are producing a recording of them as a companion to this article. It will be available later this year from Augusta Heritage Records at Davis and Elkins College in Elkins.

Ernie Carpenter: My grandfather is where I got the most of my informa-

tion from, what I know, what happened. He would set and talk to me by the hour and tell me those things. I was just a youngster, just a kid then. Because I would set and listen to that kind of stuff it made him interested in it, made him want to tell me all these things. The most of the kids at that age, you know, would be out doing something else. They wouldn't have the time to sit and listen to Grandpa talk, or Grandma. They'd have other things to do, something foolish or some play.

If you had seen the country around the mouth of Laurel Creek before they built the dam that changed the whole situation—if you had seen that country at the time my people came in there! Before I was big enough to remember anything about it, there was already a railroad and they were already timbering back in there and coal mining, and so forth. But there was a lot of it that hadn't been changed too awful much, especially the lay of the mountains. The big timber was gone off it and second growth timber was growing up, but as far as the mountains was concerned and the valley there, it was the same.

If you'd have ever saw that back years ago before the backwater was up there from the dam, you could have easily understood why they picked that spot when they come in there. That's as far as they went. They settled right there. There were fish, game, bear, deer, there were elk, and they didn't only have Elk River to fish in but they had Laurel Creek. It was a paradise for them at that time, because there was everything there that they needed to live. You got your living out of the woods and out of the river. If you didn't get it there, you didn't eat.

All they had to do was build a cabin with a roof on it to keep them dry. They didn't even have that for a while. They stayed under rocks until they could get something built. When they did build cabins they was log and the roof on them was old clapboards. They went out and cut down a tree and split out clapboards. My father learnt me how to make clapboards. He'd use his hand for a wedge to hold the board open when he'd split it. He'd follow up that froe with his hand, so he could push the froe on up as he split the board.

About the year 1760, Benjamin and

Jeremiah Carpenter were young boys growing up on the outer fringes of the frontier in Western Virginia. The Indians, by then pushed west of the Blue Ridge, were nervous about the advancing whites, and peace between the two peoples was unreliable and at times nonexistent. Ernie tells his family's story of how his great-great-grandfather, Jeremiah, and a neighbor boy adventured too far into the wildwoods one day and were jumped by an Indian hunting party.

The Indians captured him when he was 12 years old, and a boy friend of

with them. But they watched him every move that he made. And he said that they never, never let him get out of their sight or hardly out of their reach for six years that they had him. They had him until he was 18 years old. During that time he and this Indian girl had fallen in love and he told her that he was going to try to escape and get back to his people, but he would return and get her.

One day this one Indian took him out, and he figured he could run as fast, if not a little faster than that Indian could run. So he decided that he



Shelt Carpenter, Ernie's father, was descended from a long line of Elk River men. Photographer unknown, about 1932.

his. It was a Holcomb boy, but I never did know his first name. They took them to kill them. That's what they captured them for. They took them into the village. They had this Indian girl there that cried and went on and begged for them to spare their lives, not to kill them. They went ahead and killed the Holcomb boy anyway, and was going to kill Jeremiah. But she begged and cried and they told her they'd keep him for a few days. After they kept him for a few days they kind of took a liking to him—he was sort of Indian-minded himself. He liked to hunt and liked to do about all the things that they did, so they would take him out hunting

was going to give it a try that day. He kept working his way a step or two away from the Indian until he had a little lead. And he took off. And the Indian after him. They run quite a ways and he knew of this rock ledge and he thought he would run and jump over that rock ledge and maybe he could get a little better start of the Indian. When he got to the rock ledge, he discovered that a large tree had fell below this rock. Well, he knew he couldn't slow down and go around or the Indian would catch him. He thought his only chance was to jump the tree, so he jumped. He cleared the tree and didn't get hurt, and the Indian tried to



This knot maul and broadax go back to great-great-grandfather Jeremiah Carpenter's time. Jeremiah and brother Benjamin were Braxton County's first white settlers, in the late 1700's.

do the same thing and he didn't make it. He fell down in the branches of the tree and got tangled up, and while he was a-getting out Jeremiah escaped and went back to his people. Soon after that he went back and stole this Indian girl away and they were married.

The family stories say that two brothers, Benjamin and Jeremiah, and their families came from Old Virginia in the late 1700's, carrying their belongings on the backs of oxen. They followed creeks and valley paths through the wilderness until they reached what is now Centralia, near the Braxton-Webster county line. They thought it was the prettiest place they had ever seen, with clear rushing waters and tall trees. They became substantial landholders in this part of the Elk Valley and on nearby Holly River. "My

great-great-grandfather and his family once owned just about all of Holly River," Ernie relates. "He traded it off for a horse and saddle, a mountain rifle and bear dog."

First, however, the Carpenters had to build new homes and to establish their right to be where no white settlers had been before.

When they was out there cleaning up some ground, getting ready to raise a crop, there was some chips from their axes fell in the Elk River and floated down. Some Indians was a-crossing the river down next to Charleston somewhere and saw those chips floating in the river. And they said, there's white settlers upstream. So they took off up the river.

This big Indian—and I suppose the little Indian with him was a boy—con-

tinued the trip up the river, hunting for the white settlers. When they got up there to Centralia at the mouth of Laurel Creek and discovered Benjamin's cabin, he and his wife was out cleaning up ground. The Indians had learnt that the white man kept his rifle laying over his front door, where he could just reach up and get his gun. So the big Indian told the young Indian, said, "You shoot at him, and in case you miss I'll go around. You give me time to get to the cabin. I'll get his gun and hide back in the room. When he comes and reaches for his gun I'll shoot him." So that's exactly what they did. The young Indian shot and missed. Benjamin knew what it was. It was an Indian attack. So he run for his gun. When he opened the door and reached up to get his gun, the big Indian was hid back in the corner and shot him. And killed him. Then they went out and captured Benjamin's wife and scalped her.

When Jeremiah came home and found out what had happened, why, he took his wife—and she was expecting a baby then—because he figured they would come back that night. They went up Laurel Creek. They had to wade so the Indians couldn't track them. They had to wade the water after night. He had been there long enough that he knew that country so well he was able to do that. They waded the water up Laurel Creek about two mile to the mouth of Camp Run. It didn't have no name at the time. They went up Camp Run about another mile and there was this big rock there that just hung over, just a big ledge, you know, a shelf rock. They made camp under that rock, hid out until the Indians left out of the area. The next day my great-grandfather, Solly Carpenter, was born under that rock.

Jeremiah was on a hunting trip [on another occasion] and his wife was at home by herself. It come time to milk, get the cows in. She couldn't leave the kids and go hunt the cows because she was afraid the Indians might come along and stop in and maybe kill the kids. She didn't know what to do. The evening went on and she finally told the kids she was going to hide them in the house. She took up a piece of flooring in the cabin and hid them down under the house. She told them to stay there and not make a sound until she

returned. And she went on the hunt of the cows.

While she was hunting the cows—they was on the opposite side of Laurel Creek from the side that the cabin was on—there came a downpour of rain, just a cloudburst. She hid under a rock to shelter until the storm was over. By the time the storm was over the creek was out of its banks. All kind of trash and tree limbs floating down the creek. She knew there was no way she could cross that creek without drowning. She could swim, but not in that kind of water. So she ran the cows and the bull into the creek and made them swim across, and when they did she grabbed onto the bull by the tail and they swam the creek with her hanging onto his tail, and got across safe. She came home and the kids was all right and when Jeremiah came in she told him what all had happened.

They hunted and they fished. Jeremiah was out one morning and he run on to this elk track. It had apparently headed down Elk River and he went back to the house and told the family that he had found an awful large elk track out there and he was going to follow it. He didn't know whether he would catch up with it or not. If he did, he'd try to get it. If he was gone all night, not to worry about him.

So he went out and picked up the track and started down Elk River. Getting dark that evening, he found where the elk had gone in the river. He looked across to the point of a large island there on Elk River. He saw the bulk of him laying on the point of that island. Of course, he had an old mountain rifle and one shot and he knowed he had a good chance of missing because it was getting dark, but he tried it anyway. After he shot, it kicked around there and couldn't get up, so he knowed that he'd got him. He waded the river over to the island and stayed there till morning, because it was too dark to try to do anything with it.

He stayed there until it got daylight. He managed to get the elk rolled into the river and got him across to a little river bar there, and he got him out on that bar enough that he could skin it and cut it up. He knowed that's the only way he had of doing it. He couldn't handle the elk the way it was by himself, and he couldn't go back home to get help because there was a chance of wild animals eating it up while he was

gone. Maybe even Indians come along and steal it, or hide out and kill them when they came back to get the elk.

So he went out and cut hickory poles and split them so they would bend. He made a canoe-like frame with them bows and tied them with bark, and stretched the hide of that elk around that frame to make him a canoe-shaped boat. And he piled the meat of that elk there in that canoe. He waded and pulled that, because he didn't want to make no sign that the Indians could follow in case they happened to come along. He waded the water and took that canoe with that elk meat in it back to the mouth of Laurel Creek, which was about 20 miles from where he killed it. That's the way he got it home.

When my great-grandfather, Solly Carpenter, was a young boy, his father Jeremiah decided to have a Christmas tree for him. They knew about Christmas trees, but they had never had one in that village there where the Carpenters settled. They began to make preparations. They built this cross, put it together and put tallow on it, beef tallow, to make it burn fast and bigger. They took this cross to the top of a very huge pine tree that stood just down on the bank below the cabin, and tied it in the top of that pine tree. They got

all ready to light that cross that night. The families gathered in around, that lived there in the village.

Now, there was a bunch of Indians that had come across through the head of Elk River and they thought it was worth exploring. They'd go down that river a ways and see what it looked like. So they started down the river and they came to where Jeremiah's cabin was. When they discovered several cabins in that area they decided they'd hide out until night and attack and kill them all. Peace had been half-way made between the Indians and whites, but they still had some trouble. So they hid out until dark. When it got to be dark they began to move in, move up the hillside where they could rush in and attack before the people there knew anything about what was going on.

About dark, Jeremiah went out and clumb the pine tree and lit that cross. The cross just blazed up all of a sudden. The Indians didn't know where it come from. They didn't know what it was. But when it blazed up there so big and so bright and started to burn, they all got excited about it. Just in a little bit, it burnt down enough to burn the rawhide that they had the cross tied to the tree with, and let the cross

It takes a Jeep to get into parts of Ernie's ancestral country nowadays. Earlier travelers were more likely to go by canoe and foot trail, he says.



loose! It rolled down over the limbs of the pine tree and the tops of the smaller trees, right down the mountain toward where this band of Indians was hid out ready to attack. They thought it was something that had come from the sky. They all got scared and took off. Clear left the neighborhood, that part of the country.

A good many years after, after Solly Carpenter had got to be a man, he was a-hunting one day and heard some screaming. As far as he knowed there wasn't anyone in the woods there but him, but he run to this noise. When he got there, this Indian was a-laying there on the ground. He had killed a small deer, had shouldered it up and was carrying it in. A panther had smelt that blood and had jumped out of the brush and attacked him. It cut him all up with his claws. He was a-bleeding and in bad shape. Solly shot the panther as the panther run dragging the deer over in the brush. He shot the panther and killed it. He took the Indian, shouldered him up and carried him home to his own cabin. He started doctoring him up to see what he could do for him. The Indian got well enough to talk. He told Solly that he was one of the Indians that had planned to attack their cabin that night and kill them all. But the Indian never got well. He died. My great-grandfather, of course, took him out and buried him.

As far as the Indian people were concerned, they weren't all as bad as what the white man thought they were. No wonder the Indians fought. It was their country. It wasn't ours. We was the invaders, not the Indians. If any country would invade us today, we'd fight just like the Indians did. They was only fighting for their territory, their home.

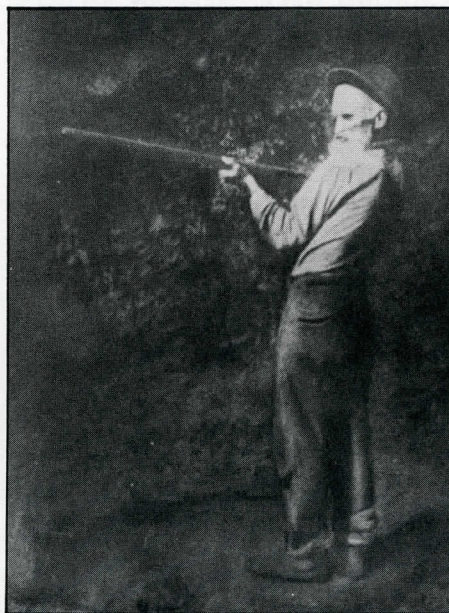
I've often been up in the area where my foreparents settled, Jeremiah and his wife and Benjamin and his wife. I've often just stood and looked north, south, east and west. It's the most beautifullest territory that you'll find anywhere on the face of the earth, that country right in there where they settled. No wonder the poor Indian fought so hard to keep what he had.

I have great respect for the Indian people. My people are kind of turned like the Indians. They like to live out where it's quiet, off to themselves where they got privacy. That was the nature of the Indian, you know. He wanted

to be out in the woods. If you just turned him loose in the woods and he lived under a rock, he was happy. That's a good bit the way my foreparents was. It's my idea of real living. That [fiddle tune] "Shelvin' Rock" come from the camp rock that my great-grandfather Solly was borned under.

Later on, when the country was more settled, Solly Carpenter once witnessed the death of a raftsman on Elk River.

They used to hew out what they called gunwales. They were gunwales for barges. They would hew them out of very large trees and they'd just hew two sides of them flat, you know, like hewing a cross tie. They would hew



Grandfather William "Squirrely Bill" Carpenter was a legendary Elk River hunter and fisherman. Photographer unknown, about 1915.

them things out 30, 40, 50, 60 feet long and would float them into Charleston. When they put a couple of them together, they made a good-sized raft. Usually two men would man them to Charleston. They sold them down there. They made barge gunwales out of them for freight barges.

There was a fellow by the name of Gibson had made a couple of those gunwales, and he was going to float them to Charleston. He was coming down the river, it was late one evening, and my great-grandfather was out on the riverbank when he came floating along. He was on these gunwales by himself.

My great-grandfather knew that it took two men to handle a set of those gunwales, a man to handle the front and rear both. They usually put a big oar on each end. My great-grandfather told him, "You ain't got enough manpower on them gunwales to handle them." He said, "I'd like to tell you a little something about this next shoal down here that you're going through." It was a short shoal, but it was very rough. The name of the shoal was Breechclout, and it was the next little shoal below Stony Creek. He said back to my great-grandfather, "I don't thank God Almighty for advice on this river, I know all about it." He said, "I'll eat my supper in Sutton, or in hell!" That's just the words he repeated to my great-grandfather.

Well, he didn't say nothing more. There was an enormous big rock that laid right out there in the middle of that shoal, and it was tricky to get around that rock without hitting it. He went down there and hit that rock, tore his gunwales apart, and threw him off in the river and he was drowned. Several days later, after the water went down, they found him on down the river. From that time on, they told all kind of spook stories about that place there.

I have heard spook stories all my life. Never believed in them, because sooner or later they prove to be something that you knowed about. But one thing in my life that I saw with my own eyes, that I never did know what it was. I was pretty small, but it's funny how some things will stand out in your memory, so real, so plain, just like the instant that it happened, for as long as you live, while other things will go away. This is one of the things in my life I've thought about so many times. I've studied about it a lot.

My grandfather and his brother, my great-uncle, went fishing, and they took me along with them. Mostly to catch bait. They went up there to the mouth of Stony Creek, where all them spook stories have been told about, to fish. My grandfather told my uncle and I, "You fellows go up the creek there and catch some crawcrabs and hellgrammites. I've got a few bait here and I'll be fishing while you fellows find some more."

We started up that creek and we got to where there were two very large rocks, laid a little piece apart, over on

the left-hand side of the creek. Up the creek, I'd say approximately 100 yards, was straight, and the bed of the creek was just like pavement. Just little puddles of water in it. It was summertime.

Just before we got up to those rocks, my uncle saw some bees, honey bees, watering there in a little puddle of water. He said, "There's a bee tree here somewhere close. We might just be able to find it." He had found hundreds of bee trees in his life. A bee will water and go in a winding shape up so high, and then he goes right level to where he's going. He knew all that stuff. He said, "Well, we'll walk up here a little ways and look."

We walked up almost to those rocks, maybe 150 feet from those rocks. Out of nowhere, like something magic, I saw a man and he looked like he had on long underwear. He was just moving like slow motion towards us, coming down that creek. My uncle was standing right there by me, looking up that creek, and he never did see that! He never saw that at all. I was afraid to say anything, because I thought he saw it and was scared, and if I didn't say anything it wouldn't scare me as bad, you know. Being with him I wasn't too much scared.

I kept trying to delay him, but he said, "Well, let's go and get back down to the boat and fish some." I delayed him by telling him this and that, until I doubt if that thing was 50 feet from us. There was nobody lived in there, and if it had been anybody, they would have said something and wouldn't have been looking like that. Finally, my uncle said, "Let's go," and took me and went on back towards the river. He never did see that thing.

We went on to the river and I was so worked up I didn't know what to do. I was afraid to say anything then, for fear he'd say I was seeing things. I knowed they wouldn't believe it. We fooled around there a little bit, and he told my grandfather about seeing the bee and where it was at. My grandfather said, "Well, we'll just walk back up there." That just tickled me to death. I thought sure we'd find out what that mysterious object was.

We went back up there to that same spot, and my grandfather or my uncle either one wouldn't go a step further. Ordinarily, they would have gone up that creek to the head of it, to find that bee tree. But neither one of them would

go a step beyond where my uncle was in the first place. Just looked around a little bit and said they'd come back some other time and look. But that thing was gone. I didn't see it any more. No sign.

Ernie recalls the time his uncle Jake "Squack" Carpenter got spooked into getting a dunking near this same place on the river.

It was a good fishing territory. My grandfather and my two uncles went up there late in the fall to hunt and fish a little bit. My one uncle said, "While you fellows go squirrel hunting, I'm going to go fishing." They said, "It's too cold to fish. Fish ain't going to bite in this kind of weather." "Oh,"



Ernie's father Shelt (left), Uncle Jake (right) and a Mr. Hall, on Elk fishing expedition. The hand-powered paddleboat design was unique to the Carpenter family. Photographer and date unknown.

he said, "it's a good time to catch pike." There was a ledge of rocks that ran along just a little above where that fellow had drowned. It was just smooth like concrete. It was about 100 feet long and there was a regular thicket along the back of it. You couldn't hardly crawl through it.

My uncle took his fishing tackle, and he went down there and caught a pike about a couple of feet long. Pretty good-sized pike. He just took the pike off his hook and put it down in the back of his hunting coat, and was fishing in that deep water. He was a-thinking

about all them spook stories he'd been told about that place, and all the things that had been saw there. Just now, he rubbed his coat a little agin that brush, and caused that pike to start flopping in his coat. When that fish started flopping he said the first thing he thought was a ghost had him, and he jumped as far as he could jump right out in that river there! He lost his fishing tackle, but of course he was a good swimmer and he swam to the other side of the river. He couldn't get up on the side he was on. Then he went to camp and got some dry clothes on as quick as he could. The ones he had on had ice in them when he got there. The pike stayed right there in his coat, it never got away.

Ernie's grandfather William "Squirrelly Bill" Carpenter and his exploits are legendary around Braxton County. Brady Randolph, octogenarian and longtime county newspaper editor, said of William, "Elk River and its surrounding streams, fields, and woods were his transportation, his livelihood, and his playground." Ernie's fondness for his grandfather is evident whenever his name comes up. He remembers that he never wore shoes, but stuck to moccasins in the style of the old settlers. Author William Byrne wrote in Tale of the Elk that, "Squirrelly was an all-around fisherman, a canoe builder and operator, flatboat builder, and steersman, raftsman and general waterdog and fisherman; he was the most inveterate, persistent and uncompromising fisherman ever known in the valley of Elk."

The canoes that William built were long dugouts, made from a single tree, Ernie recalls.

My grandfather made canoes and sold them. They got a dollar a foot. If it was a 30-foot canoe, they got \$30 for it. Fifty foot, \$50. Sixty foot, \$60. One time he had completed two canoes, and he had one old canoe, and they took all three canoes with them on this one trip to Charleston. They sold one new canoe and the one old one to two brothers, just up the river a little ways from Charleston. The brothers had a freight line of their own, and that's what they wanted them for. They paid \$50 for the new canoe and I think my grandfather said \$20 for the old one. The brothers got into an argument about which one was going to get the

new canoe, and finally got into a fight over them. A few days later, my grandfather came back up the river and saw the canoe setting there cut in two down the middle. He got to inquiring what happened, and found out those two boys had got into a fight and the one sawed it in two. There it was, not worth a cent to nobody.

Sutton was just a village, but there were two or three general stores there and they would give my grandfather

an order for what they wanted. Every time they wanted so many barrels of flour, and so many barrels of salt, and so many barrels of sugar, and coffee, my grandfather would take those orders and go down to Charleston. They would usually go down the river when there was a little extra water. It'd go faster. They would aim to catch a little extra water to go down. Elk River would come up quick, and it would go down quick.

Ernie makes music amid the apple blossoms of last spring. Mostly, he says, the 150-tree orchard is a workplace, keeping him busy much of the year.



By the time they got down there and got loaded up it would take a couple days, and in that time the river would go back down to almost normal stage. Then they would start up the river, three of them or sometimes four, because those big 60-foot-long canoes took a lot of manpower to push upstream with poles. They didn't have no motors; they had manpower, that's all. When they would come to those shoals, it took a lot of power. A couple of them would get out, or maybe all of them, and they would wade. Even in the wintertime, when the water was pretty cold, they would hit times they would have to get out.

They would be several days making the trip to Charleston and back to Sutton. In the summertime, they would camp along the river. In the wintertime, when it was real bad weather, they had certain houses where they had engaged rooms to stay and eat. They would finally make their way back to Sutton with their load of goods and unload them. There would be a few weeks in between times and they would go back and do the same thing over. They did that for years and years!

My grandfather was quite a character. He had an instinct. It just seemed like he knew nature, and he knew what nature was a-going to do. He was just that type of person. One time my father, Shelt Carpenter, Jehu Carpenter, my uncle, and Jake Carpenter, another uncle, and my grandfather went fishing. They always took along a special friend of theirs whose name was Bill Thomas. Bill was an extra good cook and they took Bill along to do the cooking for them, while they did the fishing and hunting. I was a very small boy. I don't know how come they did it, because they seldom ever took me out like that, but my father took me and one of my uncles had his boy. Seven of us in the party. We was supposed to meet at what was called Bee Run Bar. The dam has got it covered up now.

When we got there that evening, my grandfather and one of my uncles had come up to this bar earlier in the day and already had a nice string of bass caught. My grandfather said, "Well, Jehu and I'll fish a little longer. The rest of you fellows take the boat and go up the eddy." We was right at the end of a long eddy. We called them eddies and shoals—an eddy is the still

Thinking About Music

Music is a great gift, one of the greatest anybody can have, because it's something nobody can take away from you. No way can they touch it. They can't take a note away. It don't make no difference if you're a tramp or how low down you are, if you play music you can still keep it. That's about the only thing left that the politicians can't get in on! Money can't buy it. You can't even give it away yourself. You can learn somebody but you can't give it to them as a gift. It's a very precious thing, I think, very precious.

I think the old-fashioned music is the greatest music that's played. A lot of the stuff they're playing today is stuff that's come along in late years. It might suit the younger generation because they live different, they see things different, and of course they play different from the old style. But I think that the old tunes and the old style of playing them are still the best. Nothing will ever change me from that. I don't like bluegrass music. I think bluegrass is kind of artificial. It's not the real thing. Many young people you run onto who play bluegrass will tell you they wish they had learnt the oldtime music.

The oldtime musicians are getting fewer and fewer. If they don't start trying to teach it and learn it to younger people, the old style of music is going to be a thing of the past. We're not going to have it. It'll be gone. The old style of music is what was handed down to us by our foreparents. If it was good enough for them, it's good enough for me. That's the style they had, and that's the style I have and that's the way I'll continue to play.

There's some young people who are interested in the old tunes and would like to learn them. They're going back and digging up these old records of the old fiddle tunes, like Fiddlin' John Carson, Eldon Browning, Clark Kessinger and

French Carpenter. They're scraping for those old records to get those old tunes. Those real oldtimers back there like Jack McElwain, Edden Hammons, Tom Dillon, Bill Stutler, Reese Morris, Harry Scott, there's many a tune they played that when they died, they're forever gone. They didn't have no recording machines in that day and time. They didn't have the opportunity to record their music and pass it on to somebody else. There's more of the oldtime music being recorded now than ever before. That'll be a help to the younger musicians that's interested in it.

I think if we could get more of the younger generation playing the oldtime music it would bring it back. There would be more of it. When you go to a contest you hear very little of it. Most of the music played at these contests is bluegrass. Oh, I think the bluegrass is all right to a point, but when I sit down and want to hear real music, it's the oldtime music I want to hear.

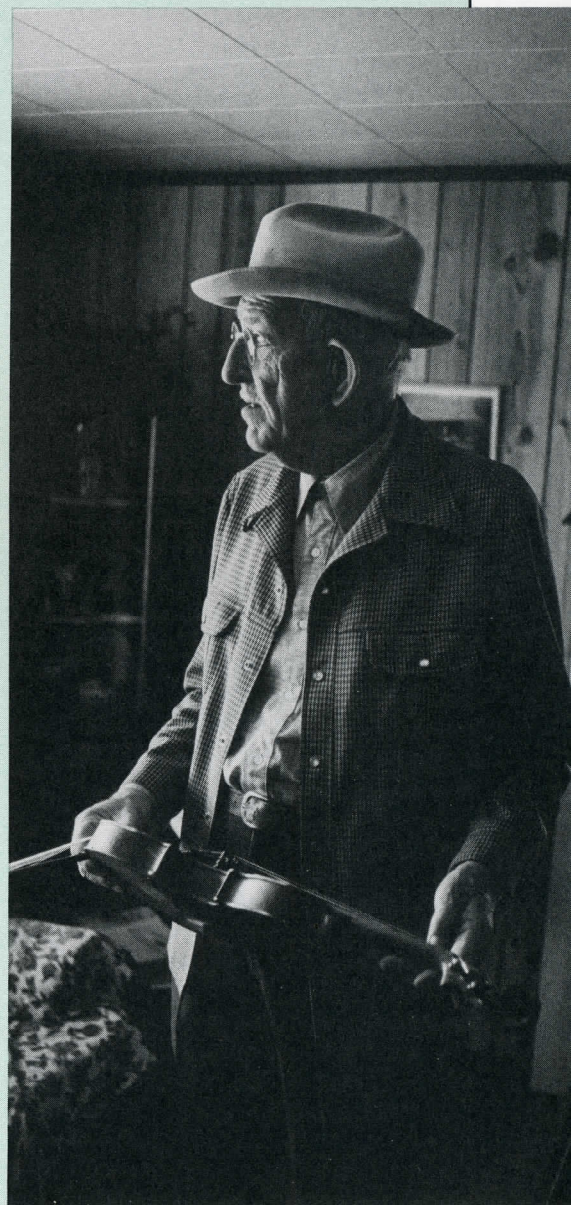
I love music. I'm a music lover. I'll stop and listen to anybody play music, if he's playing oldtime music. I've gotten an awful lot of enjoyment out of playing the fiddle. When my brother and sister and I were playing together, it meant a lot to me. I never was too particular about playing for dances, but I never was at a dance in my life that they had any trouble.

I like to play with other people. I don't care if they play good or bad, I can learn something from them. You can learn something from anybody. I've always been glad to show other people if it was any benefit to them. I really think I've learned a little something from every fiddler I've ever heard play.

It takes a long time to learn to play music. Some people take longer than others. Some people don't never learn to play very much but anybody can learn to play some, just like any trade.

I don't care about mixing anything else with oldtime music. I'll just play it as it is. If they call me old-fashioned, if they call me out of date, okay, that's all right. I'm out. But, I'll stick to it!

—Ernie Carpenter



"Music is a great gift," Ernie Carpenter says, and one he has reflected on a lot. A major concern now is to pass the old music to a younger generation. Photo by Michael Keller.



Ernie Carpenter is a man with a deep attachment to the past and misgivings about what has been lost to the faster pace of modern times. "It was a paradise," he says of early times on Elk River.

water between the shoals. We went about halfway up that eddy, and we found this nice level spot and we put our camp there. We'd unloaded all our stuff, built a fire, and we was ready to start frying fish when my grandfather and my uncle came.

Right at the back side of this nice level spot was a huge chestnut tree up on the bank. This chestnut tree was dead, still a lot of dead limbs on it. My grandfather went straight to that tree when he got out of the boat. He made a circle around that tree and he looked up the tree and he said, "Get this stuff loaded in the boats and get out of here. That tree's liable to fall any minute!"

"Aw," the boys said, "that tree's been here a lot longer than we have. There ain't no danger. That tree's perfectly sound." He said, "Get this stuff in the boat." They put up a little argument, but they usually did what my grandfather said. We loaded everything back in the boat and moved up the river a couple hundred yards and found another camping spot under a beech grove. Nice level ground.

Well, we unloaded all our stuff, and got a fire built up and some of them started cleaning fish. That's all we had, fish and bread, but that was a fine supper. We was sitting there eating, not more than two hours at the very most from the time we left that tree, when we heard the awfulest crash you ever heard. Somebody said, "My God, what in the world was that!"

My grandfather set there, just as calm

as a cucumber. He said, "That was that chestnut tree that I just got you out from under down there." "Aw," they said, "it couldn't be that." He said, "That's just what it was." Well, one of my uncles said, "I'll just check and see." He went down to the boat landing and went out in the end of the boat where he could see where the chestnut tree was. Sure enough, the water was a-floating thick with dead limbs, and the chestnut tree had fell right square down across where we had our camp fire built. If we'd stayed there, chances are everyone of us would have been killed.

We camped that night. My grandfather had a gallon bucket almost full of dirt and fish worms. Fish worms was a prize, boy, in them days. That was your bait. He had this gallon bucket all fixed up to keep them fish worms for four or five days that we was a-going to camp. In taking the stuff out of the boat, somebody got a-hold of that and brought it up and set it down with the camping stuff.

Well, we made coffee in an open bucket. You just dipped you up a bucket of water out of Elk River. It was a lot cleaner than the purest of city water is today. You set it on an open fire and put you whatever coffee you wanted in there, and you boiled it. The next morning, Bill Thomas got up to get breakfast, and in fumbling around with an old oil lantern he got hold of the fish worm bucket, put coffee in it, more water, and set it on the fire. When we

set down to breakfast somebody said, "Pour the coffee." Then somebody took a look at it and said, "What in the world's in this coffee?" My grandfather just raised up and said, "My God, you've got my fish worm bucket and boiled my fish worms!" Everybody was excited about it for a little bit, but it ended up with a big laugh. But, we lost all our fish worms!

My grandfather learned to play the fiddle very young. They'd send horses for miles, when they'd have one of these log rollings, and get him to play for that log rolling and dance. The boy that brought the horse would walk, and he would ride the horse. The next day they brought him back the same way. A man that played the music in that day and time was really something special.

That fiddle I have was my grandfather's. It went from one to another in the family. Uncles and cousins and so forth and so on, and finally my father got a-hold of it. He had the fiddle from that time on. He was a good old-time fiddler. He used to keep that fiddle in a large safe that we had. The safe was never locked. He kept that fiddle on the top shelf. Just kept it laying in there on a cloth, never had a case for it. Not a kid on the place ever touched that fiddle or ever even went close to it. I was the first one to take any interest in it when I got big enough. As soon as I hit my first note on the fiddle, he said, "The fiddle is yours. I'm through. I won't be a-playing no more. You're going to do the playing from now on." It's a very fine instrument. Who it will fall to when I'm gone, I don't know.

My father worked in the lumber woods about all his life. We farmed, too. We had horses, hogs, milk cows, just the usual stuff you would keep on a farm. I was borned on Elk River, about three miles above Sutton. My mother died when I was about 10 years old, something like that. My father always had his own timber job. He never owned his own sawmill, but he would buy a tract of timber and he had a fellow that did his sawing for him all the time. He hewed cross ties and he sold them to the B&O. At one time, he cut about all the poles in this area for Monongahela Power and Bell Telephone. They were chestnut only, and when the chestnut timber all died they could get no more poles in this part

of the country, so they started getting those creosoted pine poles. He also cut pulpwood and suchlike.

He took me in the woods when I was 10 years old. He would put me on the lower side of the log, so he could pull the saw back to him and it would almost go by itself downhill, you know. About all I had to do was keep it straight. When he cut the log down to where there was danger of it dropping off, he'd tell me to get on the upper side. Then he'd take the handle off my end of the saw and he would saw it the rest of the way off with one handle. The first time he put me on the lower side of a log I was scared to death, because I had watched them cut timber and I knew what the logs did when they were sawed off. They'd roll down the hill. Of course, he knew all that, too. When we'd get down to where it might break off, he'd tell me to get on the upper side.

We were going to log one day. We had a marker in the river that, if it was covered, there was too much water to ford the river with the horses. So this morning the water was just barely over that limb and he said that he just pretty well had to get a certain amount of work done, he was behind, and we'd try to ford it anyway. Where we had to ford, we had to go kind of slaunchways across, and we got about middleways and our horse, the one me and my brother was on, fell. My father was a-leading on the other horse, and he threw his axe as far as he could throw it beyond the horse. He always kept his axe razor sharp. Then he jumped off the horse and came to us.

When our horse fell, we floated off like a couple of light bulbs. I grabbed my brother. I was a little bit taller than he was and I could just touch the bottom with the tips of my toes, just enough to keep me from going under. I held him up, but I didn't have no power against the water to go anywhere. We was going down the river and there was a big swirl hole at the foot of the shoals, downstream. My father got to us. He was a tall man, over six foot, and he waded and got us to shore.

The horse that we was on was floating on downstream, and he would have gone in that swirl hole and drowned. My father thought maybe he might be tangled in the harness some way, and he called to him and the horse got up

on his feet and came out to the bank. The one that he was a-riding just stood there in the middle of the river and nickered and pawed the water. When he got us straightened out, he called to him and he came out to the bank. So nobody actually got hurt, but that evening when we quit work my father put me and my brother on the two horses, and he said, "You fellows go around by Sutton." That was about a five-mile trip down to Sutton and back up our side of the river. He didn't try to ford it any more when the water was at that stage.

Although Ernie had to give up his education at an early age to work with his father, he accepts the fact that it was necessary to help support the family after his mother's death. The six children cared for one another and stayed together as a family until they were old enough to get married and go on their own. After Ernie married Mabel in 1930, his father Shelt lived with them on the old homeplace until his death in 1937.

Ernie worked for the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company in Clarksburg for 38 years before retiring back in Braxton County in 1972. During his years in Clarksburg, he made regular weekend stays at the homeplace on Elk River. It was during this period that Ernie witnessed the planning and building of the Sutton Dam by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This flooding of

The family fiddle came down from Ernie's father and his father. "You're going to do the playing from now on," Shelt Carpenter said, as he passed the instrument on to Ernie.



his old home and boyhood surroundings was a bitter experience.

They started in '55 and they finished it in '60. They talked about it for quite some time. They had been doing some checking on it just about the time the Korean War broke out, and when the war broke out they dropped it. Everybody who was going to lose their places was in hopes, of course, that that would be the end of it. But it wasn't. Just as soon as the Korean War was over, they was right back there in full force. We got a group together, and we hired a lawyer and sent him to Washington to talk to that committee down there that rules on dam building. He went there and talked to them, and he came back and said, "Fellows, there's nothing that you can do about it. They're determined to build it. They've already got the promise of the money, and there's no way you can fight the government on something like that." We wasn't satisfied so we sent him back the second time, and he came back with the same story.

It wasn't very long after that till they started surveying, and it wasn't very long after that till they was taking people's property. They come down to my place and said, "We'll give you \$25 an acre for your ground." I had a good small orchard, apple orchard. And I had a barn, outbuildings and a frame house. The house wasn't anything fancy, but it was livable. We lived there. They didn't allow me nothing for that orchard. They didn't allow me a cent for my barn. They didn't allow me anything for the house. They just gave me \$25 an acre for my land. They allowed me \$2 an acre for my oil and gas. They allowed me \$10 an acre for my coal and they allowed me \$10 a thousand for my timber. You imagine! You can't buy stove wood for that kind of price. I told them they was robbing me, they was stealing me blind. No way would they give me a cent more, so I took it to court. I gained quite a little bit by taking it to court, but I had my lawyer fees to come out of that.

Well, they sent word that if I wasn't out by a certain time, they'd set me out. I said, "You tell them that the men that come up here to set me out won't be going back on their own. Somebody will have to come and get them." And I meant that. I got to the place that I was just hoping that they would start something and give me an ex-

cuse. Thank God, I got out of it without getting in trouble. You can drive a man so far and he's liable to do something bad, and I was to that point.

They'd already started building the dam, and I was still going down to my old homeplace. They cut the road off this side of the river. So, I would go down Bee Hill and up the river to the old homeplace. They found that out and they came up and cut that road off. So, I went over to Hyre then, over through Newville, and down the river. When they cut that off, I figured I could drive out to the top of the hill and walk down the hill through my own place. Everybody else was gone. I was the

last person out of there. I went ahead then and tore the old place down and brought it up here. Part of it's in this house.

Through the generations, music has always had an important place in the Carpenter family. As a teenager, Ernie played at home with his brother Carl and sister Goldie. As they became proficient, they started playing at dances and parties around their community, limited by the distance they could walk. Carl played the guitar, Goldie the banjo, and Ernie the fiddle. Ernie's fiddling was influenced by whoever he could hear. In the beginning that was his father, and grandfather William.

Their music is still cherished by Ernie, tunes such as "Betty Baker," "Yew Piney Mountain," "Old Sledge," "Shelvin' Rock" and one he calls "Camp Run."

Another contributor of these older, special tunes was "Uncle Jack" McElwain, who Ernie states "was the best fiddle player I ever heard." Wallace Pritchard, a neighbor and family friend, also taught Ernie tunes as a boy. The wood alcohol plant near Sutton drew people to the area to supply wood. Ernie remembers many Calhoun County musicians stopping by the house to play music, while working there. One old gentleman, George Hammons, would stay with the family and play the fiddle for a week or so in the spring and fall. Ernie recalls that he used to walk from Clay County, where he tended a cattle farm for someone in the winter, to the mountains at the headwaters of Elk River, staying with the Carpenter family coming and going. He carried all of his possessions with him, which included a fiddle.

There was a stretch of time, beginning when he went into the service and lasting for 20 years, when Ernie Carpenter hardly played music at all. He tells about what got him started again.

I'd come up home and they was having music down here at this little country store at Laurel Fork. Well, I'd stop there to hear them, and as soon as I went in, there'd be somebody in there that knowed that I used to play. They'd start hollering for me to come over and play. I wouldn't do it. Finally, they did get me to pick up the fiddle one night, and my goodness, I couldn't do nothing with it. It kind of worried me.

I had my fiddle up on a shelf in a clothes closet. One day, I went and got it and took it out of the case, and there was white mold all over it from one end to the other end. It scared me to death. I was just sure it would fall apart. I cleaned it up and checked it over and didn't see any places it was loose. Then I heard a Propst boy, a real good fiddler, stop in and play music for them people down there. He played "Golden Slippers" awful good and I was determined I was going to play it something like he did. So, I went to work on the doggone thing, and put in quite a bit of time on it and that's the way I got started back. ♣

Dog Lucky knows all about Ernie Carpenter's comings and goings. Here they share a moment in the yard after a recent musical foray.





Charlie Boyd is proud to be a country storekeeper.

"Very Few Strangers"

Charlie Boyd and the Green Sulphur Store

Interview and Photographs by Andy Yale

North of Sandstone, Route 20 from Hinton levels out and drops its switchbacks, running in a series of long looping curves into a broad valley. It bends away east from New River and its attendant ridges, entering gentler land, well suited to farming. The road follows Lick Creek for a ways, and across the wide fields a traveller can see huge tractors and earth movers rearranging the land into new configurations for the roadbed of Interstate 64.

Some six miles from Sandstone, a few buildings line the western edge of the road: a church, a frame house set among big trees, and a large old white building with a row of gas pumps out front. If by chance you stop, you'll see the sign above the front door—"U.S. Post Office, Green Sulphur Springs, W.Va." And when you climb the worn concrete steps to pay for your fuel and cross the threshold, a feeling of familiarity may overwhelm you, a sense of intimacy with the place you've en-

tered. The big Warm Morning stove in the center of the room, the old glass display cases, the post office cage in one corner—all are just where you somehow remember them being. The silver-haired man in immaculate work clothes who leaves his folding chair by the stove to ring up your purchases seems to wear the face of an old friend. The familiarity grows and as it grows becomes uncanny. Because although you've never entered this building before, the room seems to speak like a



Mr. Boyd's place has all the essentials of a general store—gas pumps out front, a storage room attached, a long front porch and the post office inside.

voice that's been forgotten, like something from your childhood or a vision or a dream.

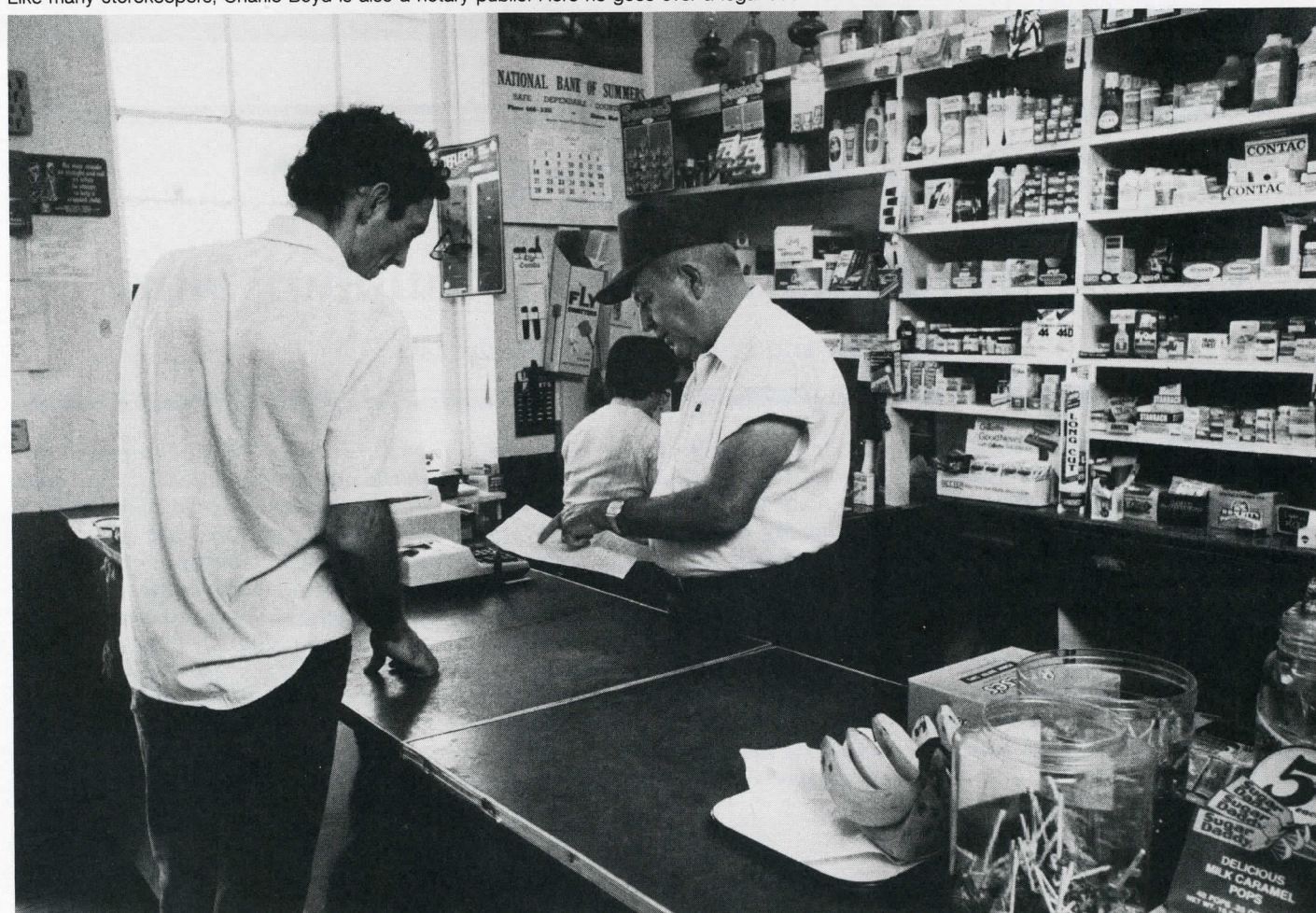
Green Sulphur Springs Store is a real place, made common by the simple commerce in humble goods it has hosted for so long. But it is also imbued with the quality of myth, for it touches on the image of the general store most Americans carry somewhere inside them. For many of us,

this image arose from firsthand experience, for stores of this kind were common in most rural areas of this country until 20 years ago. Others, city born and raised, have never entered a general store in their lives, but its portrayal in fiction, movies and art is so universal that even the most urban Americans carry some image in their mental baggage. Even as the reality of the general store is fast disappearing,

the vision of overalled men sitting around a roaring wood stove shrewdly discussing politics, crops and local doings still persists as a symbol of much that we hold most valuable in our heritage. It's no wonder then that Green Sulphur Store can raise such echoes, for it remains a pure example of an institution that once shaped the consciousness of this nation.

In Green Sulphur, the store still has

Like many storekeepers, Charlie Boyd is also a notary public. Here he goes over a legal document with a customer.

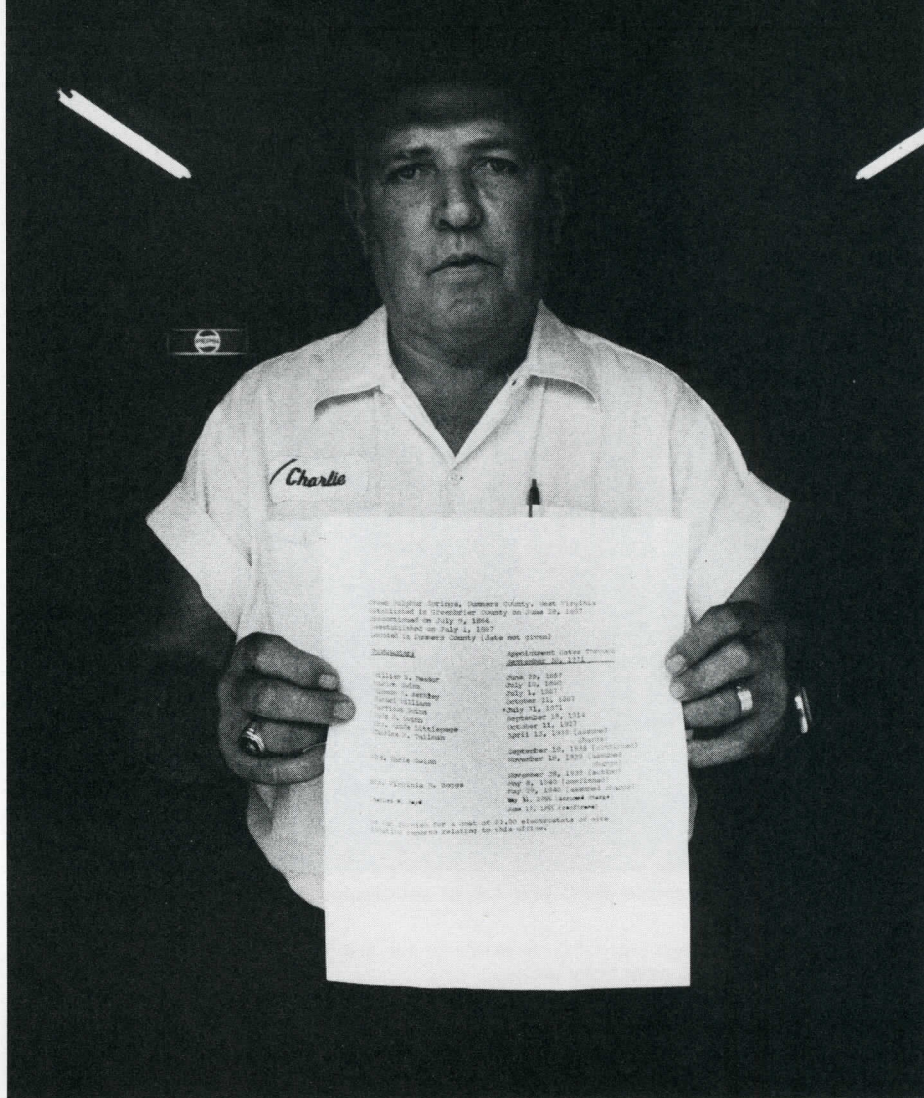


a central position in the order of things. It's a place for neighbors to meet and pass the time of day. Business deals and sales of land are concluded here. Deeds and legal documents are notarized, fence wire thrown in the pickup and sodas bought for the kids. The mail is picked up, money orders purchased and notes compared on fertilizer. And moving calmly amid the varied activity, seeing everyone gets what they need, is the silver-haired man in work clothes, who takes a seat by the stove when things get slow.

He is Charles William Boyd, but the name patch embroidered on his shirt says simply "Charlie." Most folks call him Charlie or CW and he calls them by name. After 30 years in Green Sulphur he has a friendly word for everyone who comes through the door. He also has a strong feeling for the old ways of life, a feeling which has led him to maintain the store building exactly the way he found it. Watching Charlie with his customers, it's clear that storekeeping means a lot more to him than just selling groceries. The respect with which he has maintained the store and the rows of antiques that grace its highest shelves—none for sale—suggest that Charlie is not just keeping store, but safeguarding a heritage. Here are some of his reflections about storekeeping, logging and life in Green Sulphur Springs, delivered in spare moments from that chair right next to the stove.

Charlie Boyd. I was born over in Hopevale, nine miles south of Princeton, and I moved to Princeton when I was 12 years old. After I finished high school, I went into the service. Then after I got out of the service I went to National Business College in Roanoke. I was working for Maidenform in Princeton and my father-in-law wanted us to move to Sandstone where they lived, because they only had the one child. So I moved down there and went in business with him, stayed there from 1948 until 1955.

Sandstone was a lot different then. At that time we had the train depot right there at the crossing and we had a garage and a feed store in that building right by the tracks. There were four groceries in Sandstone then—and all of them did a good business. And my father-in-law had the first franchise in the state to operate a taxi. At one time, Sandstone was a prosperous commu-



The Green Sulphur Store is the oldest in Summers County. Mr. Boyd takes the history of the place seriously and keeps a typed fact sheet on hand.

nity. They had a planing mill down there that kept a lot of men employed.

I ran a general store in Sandstone and a lumber business, running a sawmill. In '48, there was good timber in here. We looked over one boundary of timber in Clintonville and you could hold two four-foot log rules—butt 'em together—and there'd still be trees past that, better than eight feet through at the base. Twelve-hundred acres of it, and it laid in a basin that fed right down to a little hard road. At the time, it would have been a 100,000 dollar venture to buy the land, the timber and the type equipment you would need to operate it. But we had one holdout in California that wouldn't sign the deed, so we lost that tract.

In those days, there were a few small bulldozers and maybe a couple of skidders, but most logging was with horses. If you didn't have a bulldozer, you had to swamp the road in, just go on in and cut the small stuff away and make your path so you could get a

team of horses up and down the hill. Then you could log it around the hill, to the path and bring 'em along down that way.

When I came to Green Sulphur in '55, there were only three phones from Sandstone to Elton. One here and two up at Elton. I had an old telephone on a post in the store and an extension in the house. To call Hinton, I had to crank it up and call the operator. People used to come in here and make calls all hours of the day and night, to call the doctor or whatever. That was the only way they had of communicating with anyone elsewhere.

So the merchant and postmaster at Elton and myself got together and petitioned the telephone company and the Public Service Commission for phone service. They said if we could get 12 subscribers to sign up for a year, they would put us in a phone system. So we went from door to door, signing people up. And when they put in the phone system, it was one made in Ja-



Above: Legal transactions settled at the store can be complicated. This is the closing of a land deal.

Below: Mr. Boyd tries to keep everything necessary for a rural clientele. The stock room is the place for fertilizer, fence wire and other bulky goods.



pan. The boxes were right across the road over there. It didn't have to rain—it just had to get cloudy and our phones would go out of service. Mr. Ed Eckols was the repairman for this system and he was out there day and night. I used to hold the umbrella over him while he worked on it. Well, from that as a start, today there's over 80 phone bills a month come into this office, and I'd say there's 50 or 60 come into Elton post office. So we did accomplish that, we got telephones in.

This store is the oldest commercial building in Summers County. WVU did a research and found out that this is the oldest business building that's been in continuous operation in the county. It's 128 years old. I came here in April of '55 and been here ever since. Actually I've been in business here a lot longer than any one person other than Campbell Gwinn's grandfather. He had the store for quite a number of years. After that, it just changed hands every four or five years or so. I've been told by some of the oldtimers that a Mr. Bledsoe built the building for Harrison Gwinn. When he opened up in 1857, this was mostly a farming community.

I've tried to keep the old store building just as much the way it was when I came here as I could. I did install these fluorescent lights but that's about the only change that I made. I've increased the stock a whole lot over the years and your volume of business is up a lot. But I pretty much keep the same kind of merchandise I kept 30 years ago. Everything's pretty much the same.

We sell just about everything. Feed, hardware, groceries, meats, fence wire, fertilizer, cement, grass seed. It's just a general store.

On Thursday, I've got an old fellow 85 years old rides a tractor five and a half miles to get his groceries. I've been here 30 years and never seen him in anything but bib overalls. He goes to Detroit, buys him a new pair of overalls to wear on the bus. I just told someone the other day, Austin will be buried in a pair of bib overalls.

In the winter, we have more loafers than we have chairs. People come here to get their mail, buy a few things and loaf a while. There's very few strangers. I know most everybody that comes in the door.

As a postmaster, you have to do so many jobs and accommodations. No-

body knows what-all you have to be to be a postmaster till they are one. For one thing, pretty near all postmasters are notary publics. I had three people in here this morning with deeds and leases I had to stop and fix up for them. They come to you with family problems and they come to you with sickness and they come to you for loans of cash or to borrow your equipment,

the snow and all. Very poor engineering from start to finish. If they'd followed that route, they'd only have to build two bridges instead of four. That would have left our little schoolhouse down here. It would just have made a big difference in our whole way of life for us. None of us wanted to sell our land, but you sell it or they condemn it and take it.

Gwinn was discharged from the service, he went down in and took the tree out and put in terra-cotta tile and brought it up. Then he reduced it when he got it to the surface. I've timed it many a time myself with a gallon jug and the flow was exactly a gallon a minute. It was the same 30 years ago as it was up till when they destroyed it. They say they're going to try and



Courteous attention to purchases big and small is one thing that makes a store successful, Mr. Boyd has learned in his 30 years of business.

whatever you might have. But I enjoy it. I don't think I'd be satisfied to do anything else.

I've seen a lot of changes since '55. This interstate, for one thing. I-64 destroyed everything. The schoolhouse is gone, the Methodist church that sat over on the bank is gone and our sulphur well is gone. Construction of I-64 caused 14 families to have to relocate. We had a nice little valley here, peaceful and quiet—64 ruined it all.

All of us tried to fight it. For the simple reason that they could have started at Sandstone and kept it to the left of Rt. 20 all the way. There's a natural bench they could have followed. They only would have had to relocate three families and would have had the road on the south side of the hill where the sun will hit it quicker, and melt

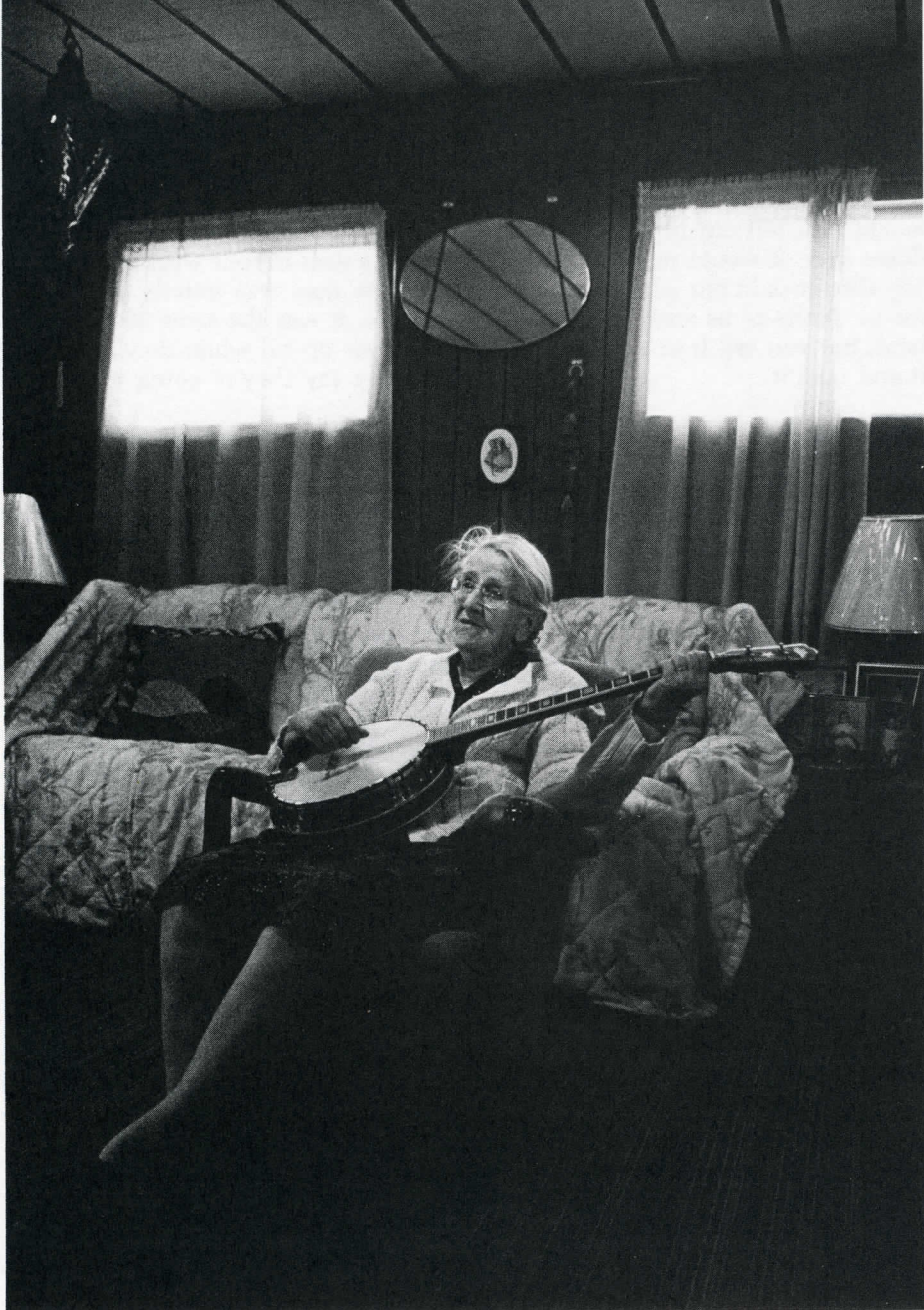
And we're afraid 64 is going to destroy our sulphur well. It was right around the curve here, right where you see that little wide place. And people came in here from Ohio, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Virginia and bring crates and jugs and any kind of containers to get this sulphur water because they think it's good for their health. These dark green bottles you see on the shelf there—the Gwinn family used to bottle this water and ship it by rail from Sandstone to all over the country. Then they quit bottling the water, but when they fenced the bottom they left a gate there, real small gate, so people could get in and get the water.

The old original spring was funneled up through a hollow sycamore tree. I'd say the spring was first developed in the 1700's. And when Mr.

preserve the well if they can and pipe it under the new Rt. 20 and put it back in the field there.

How I-64 will affect the store, that's something we've discussed a lot. We just don't know. It will do one of two things. It will either make it a gold mine or it will break it. It depends on how many people have to get off and get gas and when they're in here buy something else. We just don't know and won't know until it's completed.

I've enjoyed storekeeping. I don't regret making the move from Sandstone out here. It's been hectic and at times it's been a chore to keep it open. Sometimes you feel like locking the door and saying goodbye. But I enjoy it and I enjoy meeting people, working with people and being with people. This store just kept itself going. ♣



Irma Butcher has the only remaining "living" version of "The Lincoln County Crew," handed down through the folk tradition. She learned the ballad in 1910.

"The Lincoln County Crew"

A Feud Song

By Michael M. Meador
Photographs by Jeff Seager

The word "feud" for most West Virginians evokes thoughts of the famous war which raged for several years between the Hatfields and McCoys along the border with Kentucky. This bloody and much publicized vendetta was not the only feud to occur in West Virginia, however. In 1889, around the time the Hatfields and McCoys were killing each other along the Tug River, another less known family war was occurring, not too far away, in Lincoln County.

The details of the Lincoln feud are sketchy today, and would be all but forgotten had its events not been recorded in a ballad known as "The Lincoln County Crew." This song was performed in and around Lincoln County in the early years of this century. In 1923, the text of the ballad, attributed to George Ferrell, and a brief explanation were published in *The Llorrac*, a Lincoln County historical journal published by the students and faculty of Carroll High School in Hamlin.

A slightly different version of the song's text appeared in 1924 in John Harrington Cox's *Folk-Songs of the South*. Cox was a West Virginia University professor who, despite the title of his classic book, took almost all his ballads from the mountains of West Virginia. He received the words to the Lincoln feud song in 1916 from a Mr. T. M. Martin, who resided almost completely across the state in Pocahontas County. Martin claimed to have learned the song from Miss Pearl Carter, who received it from Mr. S. S. Workman of Seebert, also in Pocahontas County.

Professor Cox states in his book that the Lincoln County ballad is a rewording of a song from Rowan County, Kentucky, which details that state's famous Tolliver-Martin feud. Other than the first stanzas, however, the songs are completely different. The opening of the two texts, "Come all you . . .," was a fairly common beginning for ballads of the period. Cox may have been making a connection based upon similarities in the music of the two songs but, as he did not print the tunes, we cannot be sure.

The unfortunate omission of the tune of the Lincoln County feud song in its two published versions has caused the text of the ballad to lie virtually un-singable for 60 years. While other West Virginia ballads have been resurrected

and sung in recent years, "The Lincoln County Crew" has remained in obscurity, unsung and overlooked. Everywhere, that is, except in Lincoln County, where the bloody events recorded in the song took place.

On Bear Creek, near the Lincoln-Cabell border, Irma Butcher, a remarkable banjo playing great-grandmother, still sings the ballad just as she learned it in 1910. Then a young girl, she first heard "The Lincoln County Crew" performed by Keenan Hunter, a fiddler who played music with Irma's banjo picking father, Press Blankenship. Hunter and Blankenship performed for many years together at square dances, fairs and other gatherings in the Lincoln County area. Mrs. Butcher, who has lived her entire life in the county, says that Keenan Hunter was the only person she ever heard sing the feud song.

Irma Butcher herself has frequently sung the ballad since learning it as a girl. In 1978 she performed "The Lincoln County Crew" at Vandalia Gathering, the Department of Culture and History's statewide folklife festival in Charleston. Mrs. Butcher has sung the song for over 75 years but she knows little about the events or people which figure in the text. What follows is the story behind "The Lincoln County Crew," as can best be pieced together from the scanty information available.

Lincoln County, located in the southwestern part of our state, was the first county to be formed in the new state of West Virginia following its break with Virginia. The county was named for the recently assassinated Abraham Lincoln.

In the latter decades of the 19th Century, Lincoln County, like many rural counties in West Virginia, was poor and isolated because of bad roads and slow transportation. Law and order, such as it was, was confined primarily to the more settled areas around the county seat. People who lived in outlying areas had to defend and protect themselves as best they could. Fortunately, according to Irma Butcher, most Lincoln County people were decent, law-abiding citizens and there was little trouble.

There were exceptions, however. The community of Harts, isolated in southern Lincoln County near the Logan County line, was one of the places where citizens occasionally had to take

the law into their own hands. Harts, on the Guyandotte River about midway between Huntington and Logan, was a convenient stopping place for travelers journeying between the two towns. Also it played host to the teams of rough-and-tumble men who rafted logs down the river to ports on the Ohio. Because of its location and because whiskey was sold there, Harts attracted more than its share of troublemakers. Differences were often settled with a gun, and killings sometimes avenged by the family of the murdered person.

In Harts, in the latter decades of the 19th Century, lived a man by the name of Allen Brumfield. According to Irma Butcher, Brumfield lived in a large white house near the Guyandotte River bridge. *The Llorrac* relates that Brumfield operated a store near Harts and sold whiskey from a houseboat in the river.

Allen Brumfield, according to *The Llorrac*, was not the only whiskey merchant in Harts. At the mouth of Harts Creek, a man by the name of John Runyons operated a store and saloon. For some reason there were hard feelings between Runyons and Brumfield, and Runyons is reported to have hired Milt Haley and Green McCoy to

kill Brumfield. Payment for the two men is supposed to have been a barrel of flour, a side of bacon and \$25.

The day chosen by McCoy and Haley for their grim deed was a Sunday afternoon in mid-August of 1889. Allen Brumfield and his wife, Hollena, were returning on horseback from a visit to Mrs. Brumfield's father, Henderson Dingess, who lived on Harts Creek. Mrs. Brumfield was on the same horse, behind her husband. From ambush and without warning, McCoy and Haley fired at the couple as they rode down the creek.

Their aim was good but not fatal. Allen Brumfield received a bullet in his arm and his wife was shot in the face. Brumfield jumped from his horse and by running was able to make his escape. Mrs. Brumfield also survived the shooting, but was disfigured for life.

Haley and McCoy fled to Martin County, Kentucky, but in mid-October of that same year were captured and lodged in the Martin County jail. Their captors were no doubt attracted by the reward offered by the state of West Virginia and supplemented by Allen Brumfield.

The accused gunmen were returned to West Virginia by way of Logan

Mrs. Butcher learned the song from Keenan Hunter, a fiddler who performed with father Press Blankenship. Press and Sena Jeffrey Blankenship are shown here on their 50th wedding anniversary in 1952. Photographer unknown.



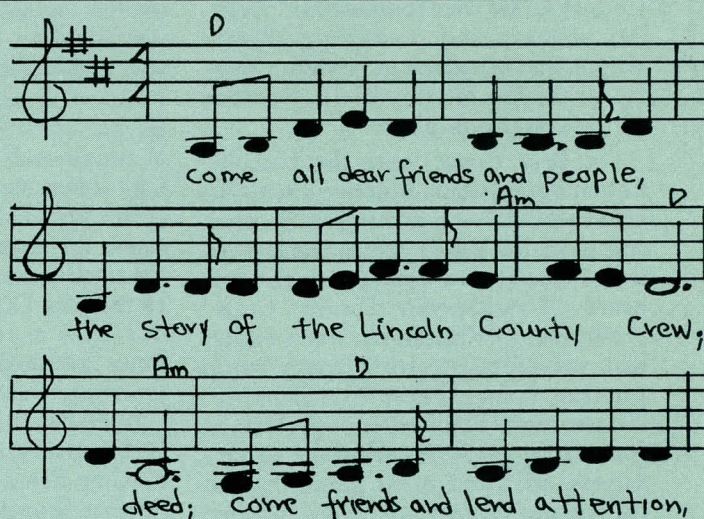
County, which was then a border county including what is now Mingo County. There they were turned over to a party of Lincoln County men headed by the aggrieved Brumfield himself. The group journeyed as far as Chapmanville by mid-afternoon and tried to find lodging for the night among the families there. No one would take them in, evidently because of a fear of mob violence.

Still looking for overnight shelter, the party continued down the Guyandotte River. For some reason, the guard split so that a portion crossed to the other side, leaving but an officer and three men in charge of the prisoners. A few miles below Chapmanville this small company entered into Lincoln County, soon finding lodging at the house of George Frye. (This name is also spelled Fry and Fries in different sources.) The Frye house was located near the mouth of Green Shoals at Ferrellsburg.

About eight o'clock that evening, according to the *Logan County Banner* of October 31, 1889, an armed mob estimated at 20 or more men surrounded Frye's house and demanded that the prisoners be turned over to them. Frye and his family were ordered into the kitchen and the guards allowed to leave the house. The mob then rushed in, firing their guns. McCoy and Haley were dragged out into the front yard and shot several times. The angry crowd then took rocks and smashed in the skulls of the two men. Their bloody work accomplished, the mob disappeared into the darkness, leaving the neighbors to take care of the bodies.

The news of the terrible killings spread rapidly through the area. The sensational events were not always correctly reported, however. The *Logan County Banner* of November 7, 1889, charged that a Huntington paper, *The Inquirer*, had run an inaccurate story about the killing of the two men in which a mob had entered into the Lincoln County jail in Hamlin, dragged McCoy and Haley out into the yard and hanged them from a tree. The Huntington paper also claimed that the murder of Milt Haley and Green McCoy was connected to the Hatfield-McCoy feud. This latter allegation the Logan paper vigorously denied.

The *Logan County Banner*, in re-



Versions of the Song

Irma Butcher still sings "The Lincoln County Crew." The ballad was handed down to her directly through the oral tradition, and we have taken this living version as our main text for the song. It is transcribed here as Mrs. Butcher sings it:

"The Lincoln County Crew"

As sung by Irma Butcher, Bear Creek, Lincoln County.

Come all dear friends and people, come fathers, mothers too;
I'll relate to you the story of the Lincoln County Crew;
Concerning bloody rowing and many a thieving deed;
Come friends and lend attention, remember how it reads.

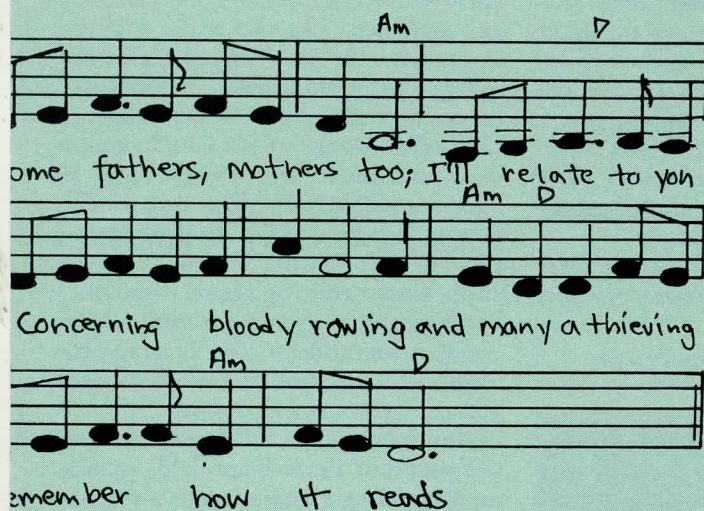
'Twas in the month of August, all on a very fine day,
Al Brumfield he was wounded, they say by Milt Haley;
The people did not believe it, nor hardly think it so,
They say it was McCoy that struck the fatal blow.

They shot and killed Boney Lucas, a sober and innocent man,
Who leaves a wife and children to do the best they can;
They wounded poor Oak Stowers, although his life was saved,
He meant to shun the drug shop, that stood so near his grave.

Allen Brumfield he recovered, in some months to come to pass,
And at the house of George Frye, those men they met at last;
Green McCoy and Milt Haley about the yard did walk,
They seemed to be uneasy and no one wished to talk.

They went into the house and sat down by the fire,
But little did they think, dear friends, they'd met their final hour;
The sting of death was near them when a mob rushed in at the door,
And a few words passed between them concerning the row before.

The people all got frightened and rushed clear out of the room,
When a ball from some man's pistol lay the prisoners in their tomb;
Their friends had gathered 'round them, their wives did weep and wail,
Tom Ferrell was arrested and soon confined in jail.



Confined in jail at Hamlin to stay there for awhile,
In the hands of Andrew Chapman to bravely stand his trial;
But many talked of lynching him, but that was just a fear,
For when the trial day came on, Tom Ferrell, he came out clear.

I suppose this is a warning, a warning to all men;
Your pistols will cause trouble, on this you can depend;
In the bottom of a whiskey glass, a lurking devil dwells;
And burns the breast of those who drink, and sends their souls to hell.

We have found two published versions of "The Lincoln County Crew," both from the mid-1920's. They are from The Llorrac, a 1923 Lincoln County high school publication, and from John Harrington Cox's 1924 Folk-Songs of the South. Both agree with Mrs. Butcher on most of the main points, although differing on many of the details. The Llorrac and Butcher versions seem most similar, perhaps because both are local, although The Llorrac adds an extra lamentation before the final warning verse:

The death of these few men have caused great trouble in our land;
Men to leave their wives and children to do the best they can.
Lincoln County's still at war, they never, never cease;
Oh, could I only, only see my land once more in peace.

The Llorrac text then concludes with the "lurking devil" verse.

The Cox version differs from the others in using the Boney Lucas stanza later in the text, following the murder of Haley and McCoy. This has the effect of associating the Lucas (spelled Lukes by Cox) killing with their lynching, rather than with the initial Allen Brumfield ambush, as The Llorrac and Mrs. Butcher have it. Professor Cox also gives a full verse to the killing of Paris Brumfield, mentioned only in passing in The Llorrac and omitted altogether by Irma Butcher. Cox leaves out the latter halves of Butcher's fifth and sixth stanzas, combining the remaining lines into one verse beginning with Haley and McCoy entering the Frye house and ending with the fatal gunfire there.

Whatever the finer points, the ballad texts concur in the overall sequence of events: That there was an initial, nonfatal ambush of Allen Brumfield, that this was later avenged by mob action, and that at least one man was tried and cleared for his unspecified role in the affair. With all their similarities, the three versions no doubt come down from the same original—the work of an unknown balladeer who was determined to extract a good song from some very bad business.

lating the story of the murder of Haley and McCoy, said that there had been no arrests in connection with the killings even though it was generally well known in the area who had been involved. The paper also gave the impression that most local people were in agreement in condoning the action of the lynch mob. The paper itself seemed to justify the unlawful treatment of McCoy and Haley on the grounds that they had shot an innocent woman. Here the historical thread of the story ends, except for what can be gathered from the various versions of the ballad.

According to the song, one man was arrested in connection with the McCoy-Haley murders. This was Tom Ferrell, whose part in the affair is unknown. He was confined in the Lincoln County jail at Hamlin to await trial and while there was under the care of jailer Andrew Chapman.

The ballad texts agree that there was talk of lynching Ferrell himself, but nothing came of it. Professor Cox's published version of the song even goes so far as to name "The Butchers" as the ones who were doing the talking. The *Llorrac* concurs, but spells the word "butchers," without the capital "B," leaving doubt whether a family name was intended.

According to the song, Tom Ferrell "bravely" stood trial and "came clear," possibly because of a lack of evidence. It may be presumed that due to the controversial nature of the trial it was difficult to find any witnesses willing to testify against Ferrell. We cannot be sure, however, because the official court records of the trial were destroyed when a disastrous fire gutted the Lincoln County courthouse in 1909.

Today, there are few people living who have even handed-down knowledge of these tragic events which occurred in Lincoln County in the fall of 1889. Irma Butcher, who knows little about the history behind the ballad, remembers as a young girl visiting in the home of Allen Brumfield's widow, Hollena, at Harts. Mrs. Butcher relates that widow Brumfield had a hole "the size of a quarter" in her nose, where she had been shot during the feud.

Irma Butcher also had personal knowledge of Andrew Chapman, the jailer in charge of Tom Ferrell. She remembers as a child hearing about him.

Today she knows of Chapman's descendants who still live in Lincoln County.

There are mysteries connected with the ballad which may never be solved. All three texts of the song relate that Haley and McCoy shot other men, presumably in connection with the Brumfield shooting. The names of their victims are uncertain, however. Irma Butcher's version relates that they killed

Boney Lucas and wounded Oak Stowers. Apparently referring to the same men, Cox's text gives the names as Boney Lukes and Ran Sawyers, and the version printed in *The Llorrac* gives them as Boney Lucas and Rufus Stowers. All versions of the ballad agree that Lucas, "a sober and innocent man," left a widow and children.

Whatever his exact name, all three texts agree that Mr. Stowers/Sawyers

survived attack by Haley and McCoy and that the close call made such an impression that he changed his way of living. The versions differ on what vice he avoided after his recovery, however. Cox's *Folk-Songs of the South* version says he avoided the "drugshops," as does Irma Butcher's. The text in *The Llorrac* says he avoided the grog shops. In all probability the original was grog shop, since drinking seems more likely than drug abuse. In the victim's defense, a footnote in *The Llorrac* provides the information that "Rufus Stowers was not a drunkard."

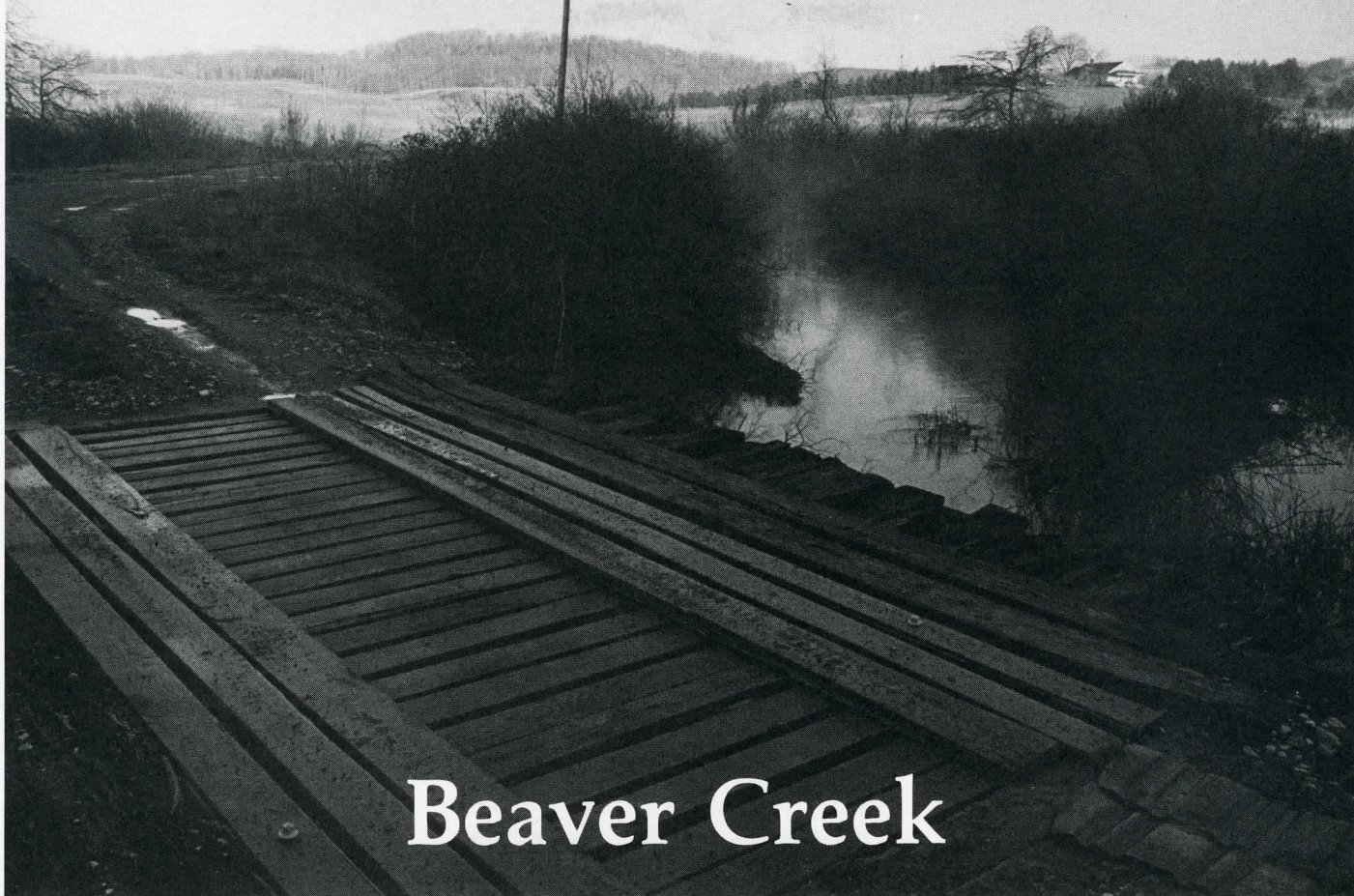
Another mystery concerns a man by the name of Paris Brumfield, who is mentioned in Professor Cox's version as being murdered by his own son. Cox alternatively spells the name as Perries and Parris Brumfield. The text in *The Llorrac* simply states that "Paris Brumfield, relation to the rest, He got three balls shot through him, they went straight through his breast." A story quoted in the November 7, 1889, edition of the *Logan County Banner*, says that Paris Brumfield was engaged in a shooting scrape with Green McCoy about a year before the attack on Allen Brumfield.

It is unfortunate that the story told in the various versions of "The Lincoln County Crew" is so sketchy. Probably the original author assumed that the public at that time already knew about the characters and events and needed only a brief reminder of what took place, with a heavy dose of moralizing thrown in. Such moralizing was common in ballads of the period in West Virginia. These songs serve two purposes, to relate events and to teach a lesson.

Lincoln County audiences of the early part of this century probably did know the sequence of events of the feud well. Today, however, the details of what transpired have been almost forgotten and we have only the barest bones of a very bloody and exciting story to whet our interest. "The Lincoln County Crew" survives as a reminder of a wilder time in our state's history. That the events took place in Lincoln County should be no reflection upon the law abiding citizens who resided there in 1890, or who live there now. Tales of dark deeds are recorded from many other times and places, wherever the arm of the law was short and guns and whiskey abundant. ♣

Her ballad records bloody deeds of the past but Mrs. Butcher herself prefers the gentle art of quilting. She has no trouble keeping busy at her Bear Creek home.





Beaver Creek

Early morning mist rises from the water of Big Beaver Creek. The gentle terrain is characteristic of upper stretches of the creek.

The story is told of a little boy who was fascinated by streams of flowing water. One day he decided to go to the end of a brook and see where it came from. After a while he came to the very end and, lo and behold, the little stream was flowing from a hole in a walnut. Upon seeing this, he plugged the hole and placed the walnut in his pocket. After that, whenever he wanted a stream he would take the walnut from his pocket, remove the plug, and water would start to flow.

The real dynamics of flowing water is a bit different from what happened in this fairy tale. Yet there is a mystery and fascination with streams, any stream, and for adults as well as small children. West Virginia has its full measure of beautiful waterways large and small, and of recent years they are getting more attention and long overdue care.

Beaver Creek in Nicholas County is one of my favorite West Virginia streams. It is large, as creeks go, and in drier regions of the world would probably have been called a river. It fits our definition of a creek well, however. Formerly the word meant a narrow inlet or bay that drained into the sea. Its present meaning came into use

By William D. Creasy
Photographs by Jeff Seager

as the mountains of Maryland and Virginia were being settled, including what is now West Virginia. The dictionaries variously describe the word creek as a long narrow stream, somewhat larger than a brook but smaller than a river.

Earlier, many natives of the Appalachian region, including at least most people living on Beaver Creek, called a creek a "crick." This word is fully as descriptive as creek. It apparently comes from the Norwegian word, *krykla*, which means twisted or to twist, as in "a crick in the neck." Some of the early settlers of the Beaver Creek area were originally from Norway, including the paternal side of my own family, and this word is possibly a carry-over from that language.

Smaller streams are called runs in this section of West Virginia. Big Beaver has at least eight runs, including two big runs. But by far the largest tributary is Little Beaver Creek, a substantial stream itself. The name for both creeks no doubt arose as a result of

beaver being found here in earlier times. Indeed, they have been occasionally active in this area in recent years. Who knows? With the renewed interest in conservation, perhaps beavers may once again become permanent residents on their namesake streams.

The Beaver Creek watershed lies mostly in Nicholas County, but some of the tributaries extend into Webster. Muddlety Creek, adjacent to and quite similar to Beaver, lies entirely within Nicholas. Together, these two drain a large portion of the acreage of the county. The entire Beaver Creek watershed takes in some 40 square miles.

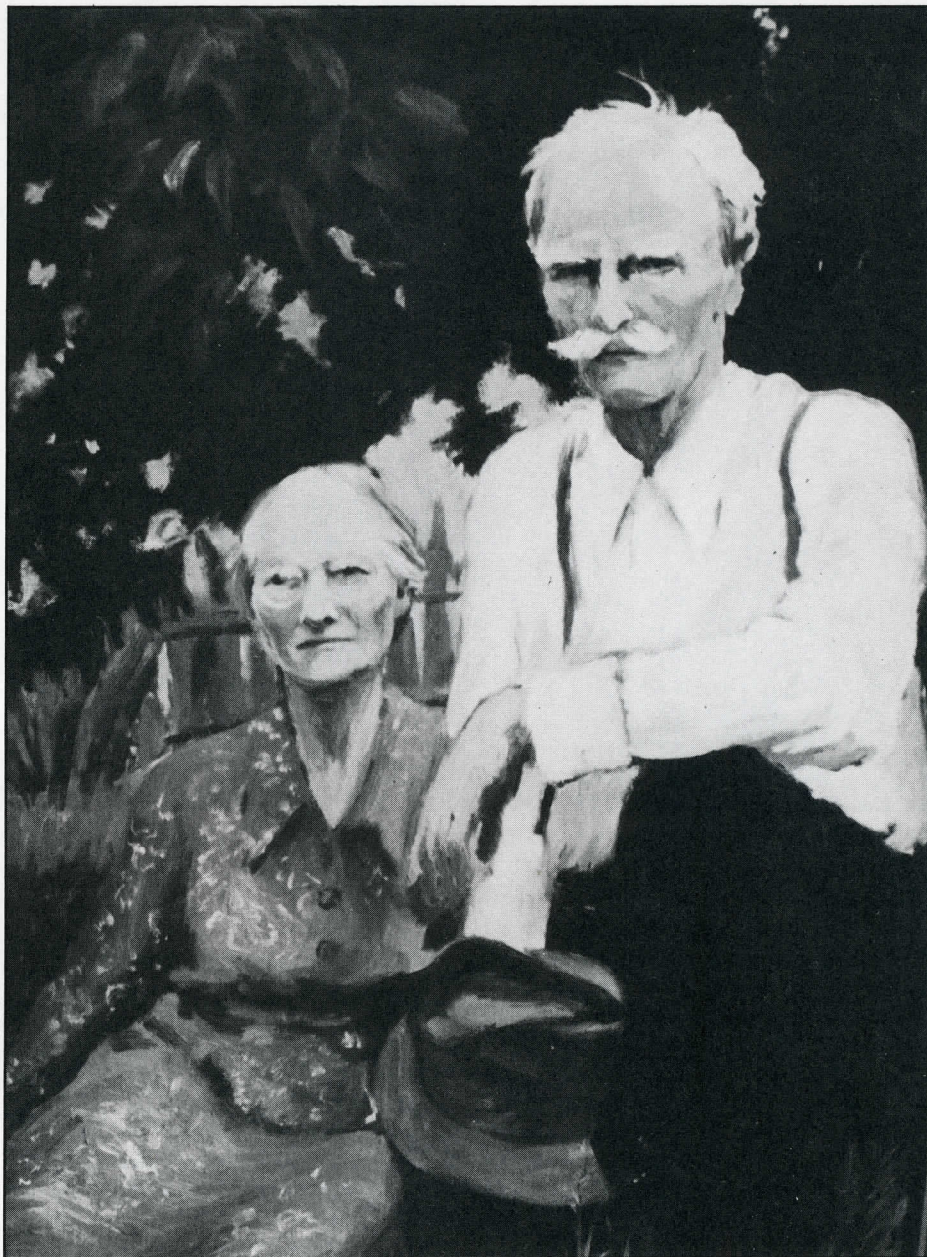
One of the most obvious features of Big Beaver Creek is the abrupt change in water flow at approximately its mid-section. Little Beaver Creek empties in just above the point at which this change takes place. From here up to the headwaters, much of the main stream of Big Beaver Creek and all of Little Beaver are sluggish and their flow is barely perceptible during dry spells. Below here, Big Beaver runs swiftly and at an earlier time furnished waterpower for two mills.

There are many foot logs across the stream on the upper half. These have been used by the natives more or less

since the region was settled. For years a story has been told of one fellow's experience with one of these foot logs. It seems that he sometimes drank too much, and when he drank he talked to himself. One day while drinking and talking he came to a foot log. He stopped at the end and said to himself, "Well, if you will walk that I'll give you a drink." He then staggered about halfway across and fell in. He waded to the far side in knee-deep water, turned around and said, "Well, you did the best you could. I'll give you a drink anyway."

Rainfall is high in this region, averaging some 50 inches annually. Flooding is common, particularly in the spring and early summer. Water may cover large sections of the flood plain for several days at the juncture of Little Beaver and Big Beaver, and elsewhere on the upper half of the system. Much of the flood plain was once used by farmers for growing hay. When high water came during spring or early summer, the hay crop was ruined for that year.

In 1919 John W. Creasy, my father, was working a team of horses with a wagon at a sawmill across Big Beaver Creek from our home. There was no bridge across in this area and the stream had to be forded. Heavy rains had fallen the night before and during the day the creek rose until it was flowing level with its banks. When he attempted to cross on his way home that evening, the rapidly flowing water shoved team, wagon, and all off the ford. Downstream some 20 yards the team and wagon piled up against an enormous tree that had been cut down for a foot log. The wagon was still upright in the water, some six feet deep at this point. My father left the wagon and swam to the heads of the plunging horses. He climbed onto one of the large limbs of the tree that lay almost parallel with the water. He got out his pocket knife and cut the hame traces of each horse. The horses were then able to clamber out through their bellybands and up the bank to safety. Dad climbed out the limb to the log and walked the log back to the bank. I was five years old at the time and can well remember him coming home leading the horses dripping wet and with nothing on but their bridles and collars. This sawmill blew up the next year, 1920, killing two men and injuring a third.



John W. and Rose Zanna Brown Creasy, the author's parents, were among the residents of Beaver Creek Valley in earlier days. The Creasys are of Norwegian descent. Painting by Shirley Levesque.

The flooding around the mouth of Little Beaver Creek is due to the "bottleneck" where the larger stream starts flowing rapidly, with the added water from Little Beaver contributing to the problem. The few houses nearby are all above high flood level but, even so, rising water slows down human activity. It has always been very difficult to follow the road that leads across Little Beaver Creek during high water. Beaver School was formerly located downstream from this area and it was necessary for some of the pupils to cross to get to school. The young people took pleasure in watching the water rise until

they would get a short vacation. It was possible to cross on horseback except in the very worst flooding.

The troublesome bottleneck on Beaver Creek originated eons ago. The old Teays River shaped our present geologic landscape, leaving the major drainage channel for the region at a level much lower than the surrounding plateau. Running water must drop to this channel, now occupied by the New-Kanawha River system, as it exits the area. Most major streams have cut deep, narrow canyons in their descent from the plateau, while their smaller tributaries are more apt to have

relatively broad flood plains. Beaver Creek has both valley types. It has the wide, U-shaped valley at the headwaters, and the narrow, V-shaped valley downstream toward Gauley River. Apparently, lower Big Beaver and other larger streams have eroded more rapidly, forming the deep, V-shaped channels. This type valley has not yet reached the headwaters of the smaller streams. Hence, the broader valleys on the upper reaches.

On the gentle upper half of Big Beaver Creek and on all of Little Beaver Creek there are sections where the stream twists and turns and abandoned oxbow bends are evident. Some of these are of recent origin and still hold water. Their stagnant pools harbor a rich variety of animal life, including many amphibians. Large portions of the flood plain on the upper half of the stream system may have been covered with sphagnum bogs during recent geologic times. Even now, peat moss, haircap moss and other mosses, accompanied by the usual bog plants, are abundant at numerous local points. Many small muskeg swamps are found here and were formerly a bane to farmers trying to mow their meadows. Drainage is very poor on much of the flood plain area.

Any stream represents an energy system, with all the energy coming ultimately from the sun. This energy appears as rain, snow, hail, dew, and fog, and becomes more obvious in the form of flowing water. When it rains, the water immediately starts to flow toward the center of the earth, obeying the laws of gravity. This energy is given off at a rate determined by the rate of drop as the water proceeds, and is not used up until it reaches sea level. A stream distributes its energy all along its course, and in the case of Beaver Creek the energy loss is much greater on the fast flowing lower half of the system.

In the past, the energy of lower Beaver was tapped by the settlers to grind corn and cut lumber with an up-and-down sawmill. This type of water-powered sawmill was common until after the Civil War period, when it was eventually replaced by the more efficient and more portable circular sawmill. The up-and-down mill could produce only some 500 feet of lumber per day. The one on Big Beaver Creek was owned by John H. and Lewis G.

Creasy and stood about a half-mile south of Route 55. John and Lewis, or Griffe as the latter was called, were colorful characters who came from Bedford County, Virginia, in 1873, along with other members of their family.

They and their brother, Tom, fought through the Civil War in the Confederate Army. All three were wounded and Griffe, my paternal grandfather, was wounded three times. Their mill was a social center and store of sorts. John sold twists of homegrown tobacco here for five cents. Some of the tobacco they grew was shipped back to Virginia where it was processed.

The Creasy mill was used primarily for the grinding of grain, but considerable lumber was cut here. When the water flow was strong, the operator would set a log on the carriage and start it through the sawmill. While a board was being sawed he might grind a turn of corn or wheat on the gristmill, that way running both operations at once. The power for this mill was captured by an underwater turbine, differing from the picturesque and more common overshot side-wheel. The Creasy mill was the only

water-powered sawmill that ever existed on Beaver Creek.

The creek's other gristmill still stands at the community of Beaver. It was built before the Civil War and another mill had stood on the site previous to this one. It is not in operation now but seems to be in good repair. It is owned by Henry Hutchinson at present and was operated for many years by Billy Woods.

Beaver, originally called Beaver Mills, was the only town on Beaver Creek, except Tioga on the divide between Beaver and Strouds Creek. Before the present east-west highway was built through this region, Beaver was a farming community. It consisted of four houses, a large general store owned and operated by Elmer McCarty, the gristmill, and Walter Perry's blacksmith shop. A second blacksmith shop was operated for some time by Dick Martin. The post office was located in the general store. The store burned in 1930, with the fire apparently caused by storing wool upstairs near the hot roof. The post office never reopened. There are no businesses at Beaver now, but an orderly residential community remains.

Ground pine (*Lycopodium*) is one of the small plants common to the Beaver watershed. This bunch nestles among white oak and other leaves, against a background of moss.





Above: The people of Beaver Creek gather near the Pettigrew house for a familiar streamside ritual. The Reverend James F. Brown baptizes a Mr. Amic. Photographer and date unknown.

Below: The original 1889 Alderson Church was a landmark in the Beaver watershed. This building was demolished about 1950, to be replaced by the present Alderson Church. Photographer and date unknown.



Lumber cut at the Creasy mill was planed by hand and used for the construction of the original Alderson Church. The Creasy brothers donated timber for the church and cut the lumber on their up-and-down mill. This church was built in 1889 and razed about 1950. It was a beautiful building in a beautiful setting, occupying the site of the present Alderson Church just west of the community of Beaver.

It was probably the finest of several similar such churches in the area and should have been preserved. The Reverend James F. Brown, my maternal grandfather, was the pastor of Alderson Church for many years. He was a well-known circuit rider in the area and served as pastor of a number of churches. His most famous saying was, "I would rather wear out than rust out." One time he broke a thin layer of ice on Big Beaver Creek to perform a baptismal service.

There seems to have been no permanent occupation of this stream by Indians, but evidence of their activities in the area is abundant. The flood plains themselves offered little or no shelter for early peoples and were generally too wet for suitable camp sites.

On more level areas along the flood plain on the upper half of the stream system, particularly near the central portion, large numbers of projectile points have been unearthed. Most were uncovered by farmers as they cultivated their crops. Perhaps the most significant site is just downstream from the mouth of Little Beaver, on both sides of Big Run.

There are several overhanging sandstone cliffs in this area of lower Big Beaver Creek. One such cliff with an accompanying shallow cave is to be found about a half-mile below the mouth of Little Beaver Creek. Otis Spencer and others removed two human skeletons from this cave. A number of bones of large animals, some projectile points and pot shards were also found there. One of the human skeletons was well preserved, its death apparently due to a blow to the head. It is unfortunate that no trained archaeologist was present at the time of the excavation. Nevertheless, it appears that no permanent villages were established along Beaver Creek, but that the area was used more or less regularly by nomadic hunters or gatherers as they passed through.

A branch of the Midland Trail, the Pocahontas Trail, was the Indians' highway through the Beaver Creek watershed. This portion of the trail in all probability ran east from Muddlety up McMillion Creek, and over to Little Beaver Creek. It apparently continued up Little Beaver to near its head, and crossed the low ridge to Big Beaver Creek at the mouth of Little Beaver. The stream is shallow and easy to ford at this point, as it passes over the rocky constriction and immediately starts to flow more rapidly. The Pocahontas Trail next led up the gentle slope to the plateau area of Craigsville. It then branched to go down Rock Camp Creek to the Gauley River and eventually over the mountains to the Greenbrier River, or proceeded in a southerly direction to the mouth of the Cherry River where it empties into the Gauley, up that stream and over to the Greenbrier.

There are two prehistoric mounds on Big Beaver Creek, a mile and a half below the constricted area. These mounds are on the plateau some distance from the stream's west bank. They have each been excavated, and as a boy I was told by Henry Martin that a brass plate was removed from one.

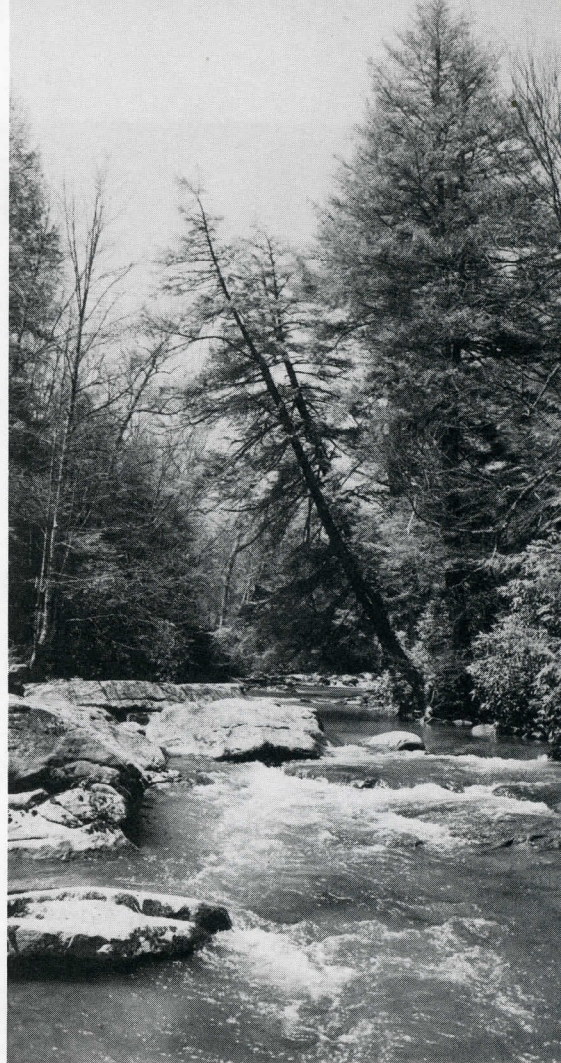
He said it was cut into two pieces and given to two different persons in order that, at least, all of it would not be lost. Nonetheless, it apparently has been lost. There are other versions of this story, but since Mr. Martin was present at the time of the excavation his account is probably accurate.

As indicated, the lower half of Big Beaver Creek has a rapid flow as it tumbles toward its confluence with Gauley River. The change at about the midsection involves the whole complex of things that make up the drainage area. There is almost no flood plain on the lower half and the topography differs, with steep hillsides along the banks. Also, the plants are noticeably different. The most obvious tree in the gorge of the lower stream is the hemlock. Hemlock gives way to the mixture of hardwoods on the ridges and plateaus above the stream.

The virgin forest is gone now, but within my memory many of the original trees remained. These old hemlocks often grew at the very edge of the stream, frequently leaning over to form a tunnel through which the water flowed. Occasional fallen trees served as foot logs. At the base of the big hemlocks micro-climates sustained a distinct grouping of plants, including liverworts, mosses and ferns. One of the most common mosses against the bases of the trees in this region is the beautiful rose moss.

Rhododendron is very plentiful roundabout, forming dense and extensive thickets. Mountain laurel is also abundant. The latter is poisonous and was formerly a problem to farmers who turned their sheep out to pasture early in the spring in areas where it grew. If a late snow covered the grass, the sheep would sometimes eat the laurel and die several days later after horrible suffering. The farmers learned to doctor these sheep with a heavy mixture of fine clay. The recovery was spectacular, apparently due to the aluminum of the clay counteracting the poison.

The shining club moss is plentiful in this area, often found on mounds of earth left where trees have uprooted and decayed. On the larger submerged or partly submerged rocks on the lower part of Big Beaver Creek, fountain moss once grew in great profusion. It was possible to twist a stick in this moss and remove a substantial clump. On occasion an immature hellbender



Big Beaver Creek becomes a rushing mountain stream below its midpoint. Hemlock and mixed hardwoods predominate in the surrounding forest.

salamander would be found in this moss. Adult hellbenders, growing to better than two feet long, were sometimes caught while fishing farther upstream. They were wrongly considered to be poisonous.

On the upper portions of the stream system the original vegetation was an oak-hickory mix with all the associated plants of this general region. Today's forest is different from the original, but all the components are to be found except the chestnut tree. On the lower ridges chestnut trees once formed almost pure stands at some points. Schools were sometimes dismissed for half a day in autumn so that the pupils might gather chestnuts for winter and have a pleasant outing at the same time. The chestnuts, kept in small barrels or kegs, represented an enjoyable as well as nutritious portion of the local diet. Hogs were permitted to run free by some of the residents to feed on chestnuts and other nuts. This practice of running unmarked swine, whose



Above: Lower Big Beaver tumbles rapidly on its way to Gauley River. The stream formerly supplied power to the 1888 Woods gristmill, seen here in the background.

Below: Humans have made use of the area since long before the time of white settlement. Two skeletons and prehistoric pottery were taken from this rock shelter on the east bank of Big Beaver Creek.



ownership was easily confused, is said to have triggered the infamous Hatfield-McCoy feud in another part of West Virginia. The large chestnut trees are all dead now, victims of the blight, but some of the great stumps can still be seen, standing where they were left after the timbering operations of the early part of this century.

Where forests still stand on the Beaver flood plains, oaks, maples, cherries and black gums predominate. The white oak is most abundant. Strangely, the sycamore is very scarce on this stream system. Of the shrubby plants found on the flood plains, the alders, dogwoods, virburnums, elderberries, and hazelnuts are most common at the present time. No doubt they grow in greater profusion now, with less competition than before the original forest was destroyed. The serviceberry frequently grows along the edge of the streams. It came by its name because it was used for floral arrangements for the religious services that took place at the time of the year when it was in bloom. In earlier days the roads were so difficult to negotiate that people did little traveling during the winter

months. Both funerals and marriages often had to wait until spring came. The berries from this tree were later gathered for pies and cobblers.

Where the forest is cleared away and the land not cared for, huckleberries grow abundantly. The berries of these plants were also used extensively in the past for making pies and jam. Another shrub, smooth arrowwood, was formerly used for tying fodder as the corn was husked. This plant grows long and thin and is very flexible, enabling the farmers to use it for this purpose. Many species of blackberries grow profusely back from the flood plains where there are openings in the forest or where cleared land is no longer cultivated.

The Beaver Creek watershed has suffered the ravages common to streams and their drainage basins as development takes place. The wholesale removal of the original forest was the first wave of destruction to hit this area. Many small sawmills dotted the drainage from time to time, moving on after an area was timbered out. Tramroads were built up many of the hollows to carry logs to the mill. The tramroad was similar to a miniature railroad, but both the ties and rails were made of wood. Two-by-fours were used for rails, usually doubled for extra strength. Since the sawmill was almost always located downhill from the source of the timber, a single mule or horse could pull a large load of logs down the tracks to the mill and on the way back have to pull only the empty truck. After the logging of an area was completed, the whole length of the tramroad was frequently abandoned. Falling leaves and debris soon covered long sections. Since they remained constantly soaked with water, decay was very slow and even today some of these tramroads are much as they were built decades ago.

Probably the largest tree ever cut in this region was taken from one of the tributaries of Little Beaver Creek. This was a yellow poplar felled by men working for E. L. Robertson. The tree was eight feet in diameter at stump height. My father, John W. Creasy, welded an extension to a ship auger at a blacksmith's forge so that the men might drill holes to the center of the butt log. Short pieces of dynamite were inserted into these holes and the log was burst to enable the horses to pull half at a time to the landing. The

teamster that did the skidding was Silmon Mullens. This tree stood on a small branch about a mile east of Calvin. E. L. Robertson did extensive logging of virgin timber on both Little and Big Beaver creeks during World War I.

There is coal on Beaver Creek, too, several seams of high-quality mineral. Deep mining has gone on for many years, and strip mining has taken place since World War II. But despite coal, timber and farmland, perhaps the most precious local resource is the water, the creek system itself. With burgeoning population growth over much of the

world, water shortages are already being felt and are sure to become more and more acute. The creeks and rivers of our well-watered region are a blessing.

Thus Beaver Creek and its watershed are a significant as well as beautiful part of West Virginia. Much of our history has taken place on small streams such as this. Our ancestors followed the valleys and hollows into the backcountry and, like the ancient Mound Builders before us, we have built a bottomlands culture here. West Virginia waterways represent the best of our past, and with care they hold the promise of our future as well. ♣

With proper care, Beaver Creek will continue to be a boon to the humans and animals along its course. Here a farm dog pauses for a drink from the upper creek.





Instruments enjoyed by the people of southern West Virginia are on display at the Cultural Center through early September. The magnificent annual quilt show adorns the walls during the same period.

Folklife at the Cultural Center: **The Costa Collection**

Comments by Jimmy Costa

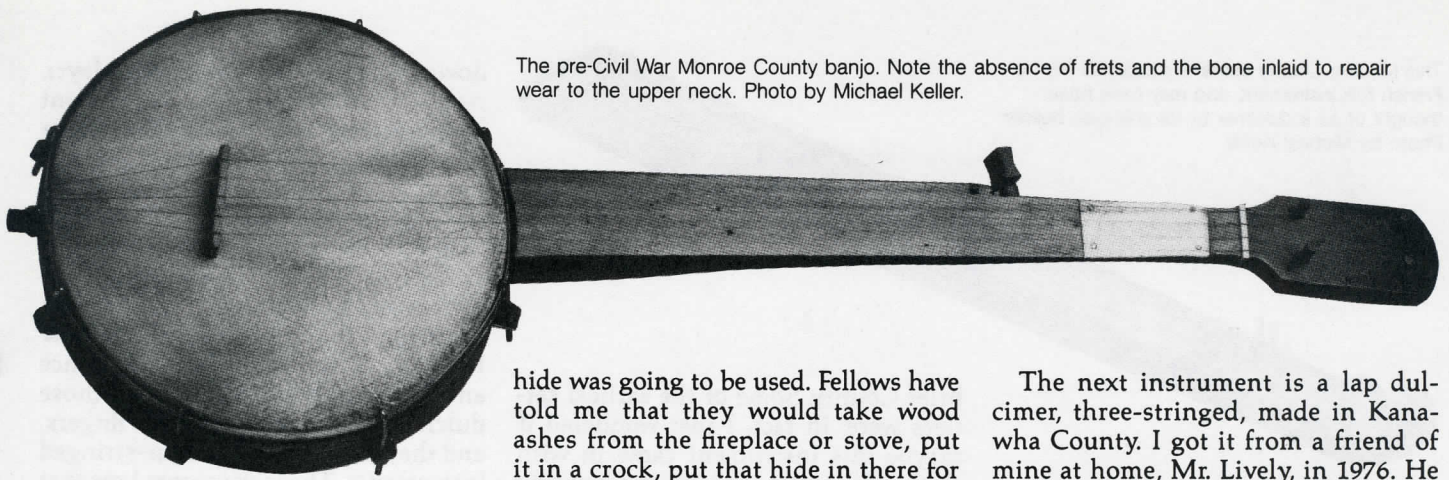
A fine exhibit of antique stringed instruments is on display at the Cultural Center in Charleston this summer, taken from the extensive personal collection of Jimmy Costa of Summers County. The exhibit includes the traditional instruments of mountain music—banjos, fiddles and dulcimers—as well as instrument parts,

tools and associated items. Altogether, the display of mostly homemade instruments is a powerful testimonial to the fact that, as Costa says, mountain people “wanted to make music and they would go to any means to do that.”

Jimmy Costa had a lot more to say, as well, tape-recording more than an hour’s worth of notes about the in-

struments on exhibit. We have excerpted some of his comments for publication here, along with photographs of representative instruments.

We hope you will be able to come see the entire collection, in the lobby and balcony galleries of the Cultural Center through the rest of the summer. —ed.



The pre-Civil War Monroe County banjo. Note the absence of frets and the bone inlaid to repair wear to the upper neck. Photo by Michael Keller.

Jimmy Costa. The banjo comes from Monroe County. It's fretless and it's homemade, and definitely a pre-Civil War instrument. It was found at the old Salt Sulphur Springs Hotel, which is yet standing. It was built in the 1820's, on Rt. 219 in Monroe County.

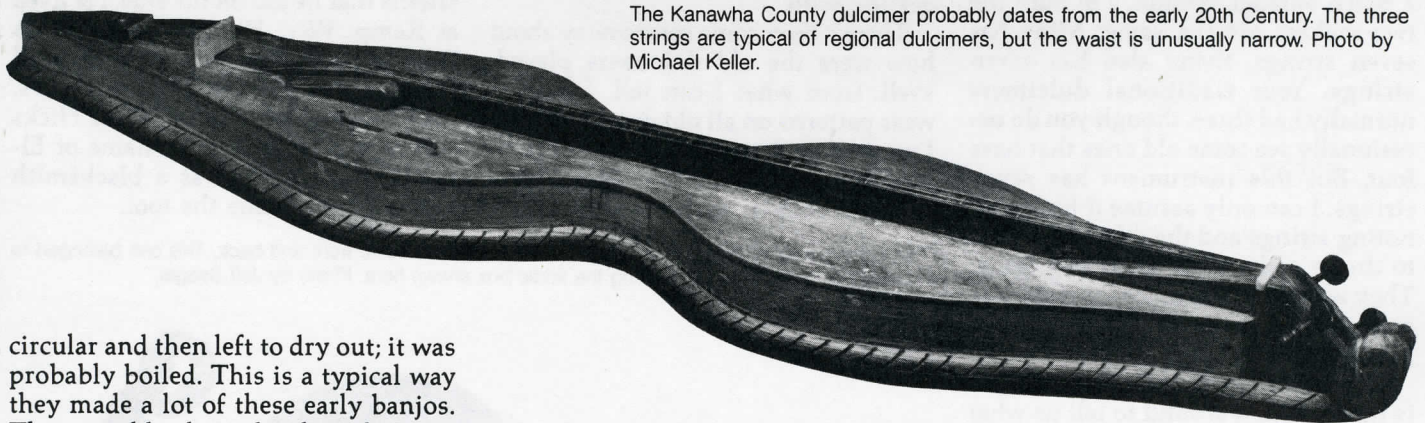
The story that I got behind it, the banjo was found in the early 1960's over there. There was an old ex-slave that had lived on the grounds of the old resort for many years, and he would play this when they would have a local dance.

The pot, or the bottom part where the skin head is, is red oak, and it's been bent around something that was

hide was going to be used. Fellows have told me that they would take wood ashes from the fireplace or stove, put it in a crock, put that hide in there for a few days until the hair loosened. Then they'd sharpen up the edge of a board and nail it onto the side of the porch or something. Take that hide while it was still wet from the ashes, wash all the hair and ash off it the best you could, and while the hide was still pliable, you'd run that thing back and forth over the edge of that board just like shining your shoes with a cloth. It would supple it up, break all the fibers. Of course, that thing's mounted while it's wet and then once it dries on the instrument it's very resilient. It will still give, but it dries out to a crispness and a hardness that will make that sound. They would use a ground-hog, but if they could get somebody's big house cat, that was preferable, be-

The next instrument is a lap dulcimer, three-stringed, made in Kanawha County. I got it from a friend of mine at home, Mr. Lively, in 1976. He had come down here to help when they were building Union Carbide and all these factories along the river, and he once boarded with some people up Cabin Creek. The story that he told me, he said, "I was boarding with these folks, and of course, I played music. Well, these people one day brought this instrument out and said, 'We're going to give you this.' Said, 'You're a musician, maybe you can do something with it.'"

My guess is that it was made somewhere in the first quarter of the 20th Century. It's not a very old dulcimer. It may have been patterned off of one that was. It's very unique in its shape. No one has ever seen one made like



The Kanawha County dulcimer probably dates from the early 20th Century. The three strings are typical of regional dulcimers, but the waist is unusually narrow. Photo by Michael Keller.

circular and then left to dry out; it was probably boiled. This is a typical way they made a lot of these early banjos. They would take red oak and rive it until it was thin. They would boil it normally, and then they would bend it and tie it up around something circular until it dried and cooled off. That would make their pot, as they're called, and they would stretch the skin over it.

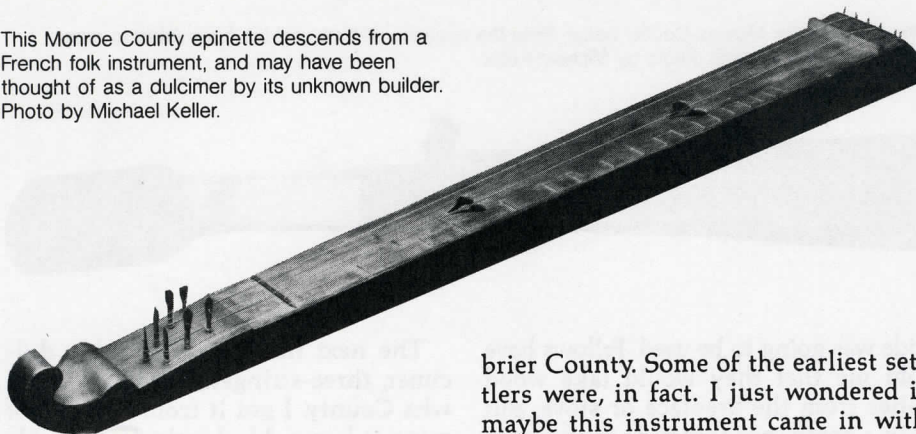
They put the animal skin in ashes. They would kill the animal, and not shoot it back in the area where the

cause it was thin and it had a nice sound to it, projected well.

An interesting feature about this banjo is the piece of bone. It was played so much that the fingering had worn the neck out. So they inlaid a piece of bone, and then it had been played so much after that that even the bone shows a lot of wear.

it; it's so radically waisted, the way the middle is made to the opposing ends. There is also an unusual mixture of woods. It's got a beech top, a black walnut back and white oak sides, and the peg box and the back end of the instrument are black walnut. It's the only instrument I ever saw with a beech top on it.

This Monroe County epinette descends from a French folk instrument, and may have been thought of as a dulcimer by its unknown builder. Photo by Michael Keller.



Next is kind of a unique instrument. It comes from Monroe County, from what I can find out about it. It would've been called a dulcimer but its closest relation is a French epinette. My understanding is that an epinette was a multi-stringed instrument, peculiar to the folk culture of a part of France.

I found the instrument in Monroe County. I've seen another one like it in a collection at the General Lewis Hotel at Lewisburg, and it's hung there since 1930. That was when their collection was put together of many artifacts of pioneer culture. Whoever made theirs made mine, because there's too much similarity. Though mine is a much smaller version, I'm sure the two makers are the same. Mine has seven strings, theirs also has seven strings. Your traditional dulcimers normally had three, though you do occasionally see some old ones that have four. But this instrument has seven strings. I can only assume it had three noting strings and the other four were to drone and not to be played upon. They were tuned in fifths, or whatever, so they would sound somewhat like the drones of a bagpipe.

A problem with older instruments is that no one's around to tell us what this instrument is. Now someone comes along like myself and we're curious—you know, a hundred years ago was this called a dulcimer? I assume that it was. But that's a real unique thing about it having seven strings, and I hope that during the exhibit someone sees this and can enlighten me a little more on it.

I've often wondered, there were French settlers that came into Green-

brier County. Some of the earliest settlers were, in fact. I just wondered if maybe this instrument came in with the early settlers. Not the specific instruments that I have seen and owned, but the idea. And as generations passed, its true name was lost and people just made them as people will make things. They're not concerned about the intent or what the instrument's all about, all they want to do is make music. I'm curious whether these two instruments that have survived, the only two I've ever seen with seven strings, have a French origin because of some of the French people that came into Greenbrier County.

So many of your earlier dulcimers are only half fretted. Say, if the fingerboard is an inch wide, only a half-inch of that board in its span will have a fret on it. Now, that means that only one string can be noted because there are only frets below that one particular string. There's a physical thing you're dealing with.

There's been some controversy about how were the old dulcimers played. Well, from what I can tell, from the wear patterns on all old dulcimers that I've seen in the area where I'm from, Monroe and Greenbrier, Pocahontas County, people used a noting stick

down the string closest to the player. As you're sitting with the instrument horizontally in your lap, that first string towards the player is the noting string, the other two strings are drones. And the proof of that being there's no frets that you could note those other two strings on. The old instruments I see were noted with a stick, and not with the fingers like a lot of people do now. In Galax, Virginia, and Independence and down in that area, a lot of those dulcimers were noted with the fingers, and they tend to be more four-stringed instruments. The instruments I see that are really of the locale of southern West Virginia, 60 years or older, were always three-string instruments.

Locally old folks called this tool, with the handle and a loop of metal at the end that was sharpened, an inshave. The purpose of that tool was to hollow out a violin back or top. The top and the back of a violin are actually sculptured. It's not bent in shape to make the curvature of a violin back or top. It was literally sculptured out, just like sculpting a statue out of a block of wood. This old inshave tool was used to sculpture out the fiddle, both the interior and the exterior of the back and the top.

An old man by the name of Hobe Hicks was a fiddle maker down in my region. He was really a farmer, but like so many people he had a lot of little talents that he did on the side. He lived at Ramp, West Virginia. The fiddles I've run into that he made were all somewhere in the 1920's, the early '20's. This inshave belonged to Hobe Hicks and an old fellow by the name of Elbert Duncan, who was a blacksmith at Sandstone, made the tool.

The inshave was a tool used to sculpt the contours of a fiddle front and back. This one belonged to Hobe Hicks, who used it in making the fiddle box shown here. Photo by Jeff Seager.



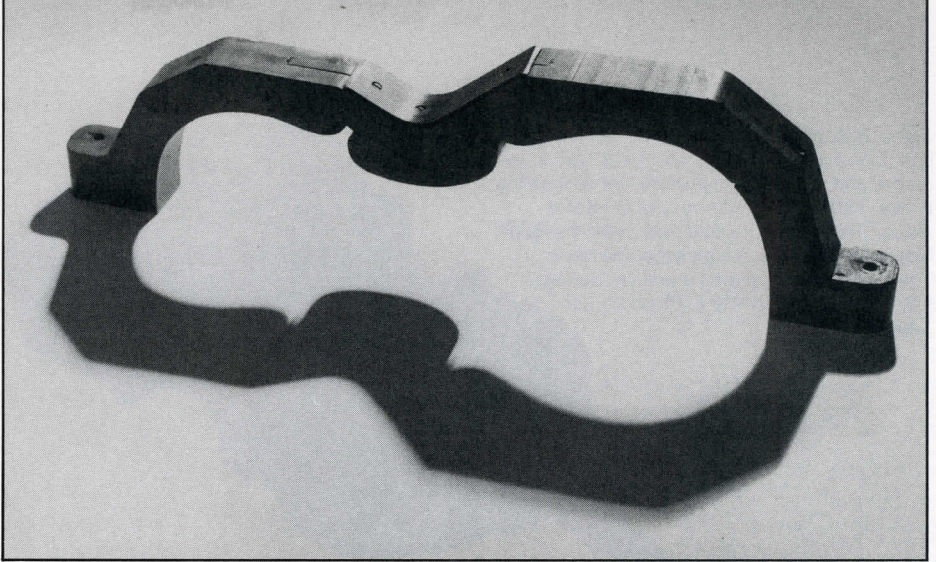
Next is a fiddle box, there's no neck there, it's just the box part, the body. It was made by Old Man Hobe Hicks who owned the inshave. This is a fiddle that he made with that very inshave.

Let me tell you a little bit about Hobe Hicks. He was a farmer. His son, Herbert, told me a specific story about that particular fiddle. I've showed that fiddle to people and asked, "Can you guess the wood that's on the top of it?" People'd look at it, and a lot of folks just couldn't identify it. The reason being, the top of that instrument is made out of elm, and elm isn't a very common wood. Herbert said that he and his dad had cut a big elm on the farm and they'd sawed it up into big blocks to split up for firewood. His dad had it out in the woodlot and they were splitting. Old Man Hobe looked at his son and he said, "Herb, you know, this would make a good fiddle top." You want good, straight green wood with no knots or flaws. So as they were splitting this wood, he felt that that elm had those attributes; it was splitting easy and good and straight.

Normally they use a soft wood in the top and a hard wood for the back and the sides. This is something that has been proven out with generations of building all types of instruments in that wooden instrument family. They always tend to choose soft woods for the top. Even these homemade fiddles, a lot of these old fellows that made them they at least had that awareness. They would want the neck and the sides and the back out of a hard wood, but for acoustics and volume, or tone quality, they normally would choose a soft wood for the top of the instrument.

Now I've seen this also done a little bit in dulcimers, but not very much. Most of your dulcimers, they would make out of just anything. That's a peculiar thing about a dulcimer. About all dulcimers that I've ever seen, it didn't matter what they were made out of, they all sounded good. Well, that's not true on fiddles. A fiddle is a more critical instrument. Most of the old fellows would choose something soft for the top, be it poplar or pine or cedar. Good spruce is the choice of all violin makers and of good fiddle makers.

The violin form is a tool. It's to bend the sides or the ribs of a violin. Every violin has left and right sides to it, and



The violin form was used to mold thin strips of wood into shape for the violin sides. This form belonged to preacher S. V. Elkins of Alderson. Photo by Jeff Seager.

each side has three ribs to make up that full side, be it left or right. They would take the thin maple strips, an eighth of an inch thick, inch and a half tall, and they would heat them or boil them until they were pliable and fit 'em in this form. That made those C-contours, the shape of the side of a violin.

So that is a bending form, to make the sides of a violin. It belonged to an old preacher by the name of S. V. Elkins. He was from Alderson, and he died in the early '60's, in his 90's. He made really nice old violins. I don't own one, but I've seen three or four that are in the family yet.

Next is a very interesting old violin. If you'll notice, that's the violin that's still in a lot of pieces. It was made by a William Groft and he made it in March of 1886, so it celebrated its 100th birthday this year. It was made in

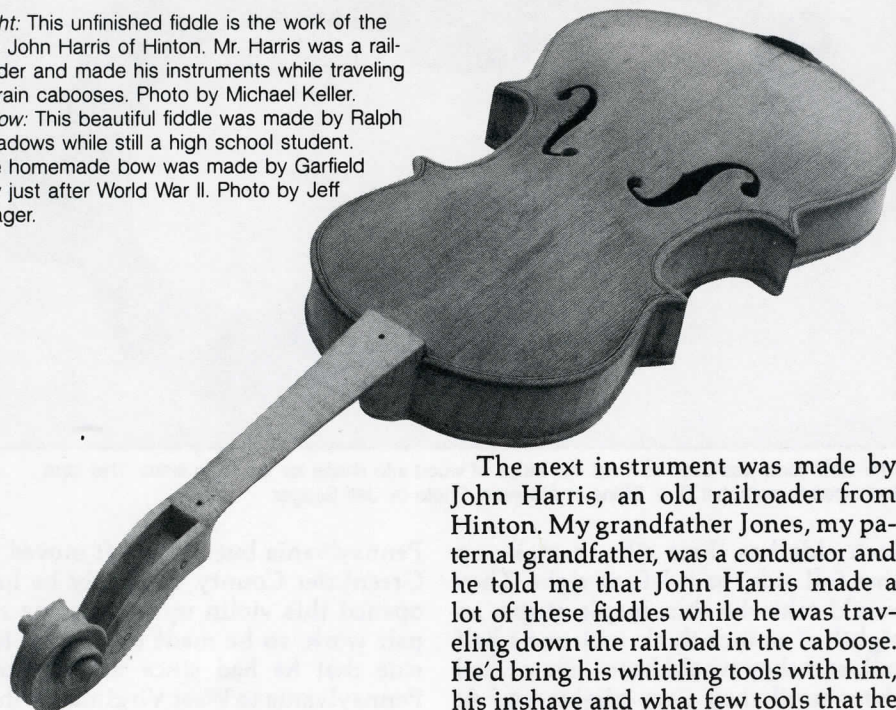
Pennsylvania but Mr. Groft moved to Greenbrier County. Evidently he had opened this violin up to do some repair work, so he made a notation inside that he had since moved from Pennsylvania to West Virginia. So this Mr. Groft had come from Pennsylvania, maybe to seek work or buy a farm.

The violin is in the most beautiful homemade case I've ever seen. I believe he spent more time making his fiddle case than he did the violin. That violin is made out of yellow poplar. It has a maple neck and the ribs and the back and the sides of the violin are poplar and it has a maple finger board. Everything's homemade, the tail piece is and the little pegs that are with it. All the hardware on the case, all the metal on the case is totally handmade. The locks have been made in the blacksmith's shop as have been the hinges and the handle.

With the William Groft violin currently in pieces, awaiting restoration, we can see its construction and repair history written inside. Mr. Groft made the instrument and elaborate case in Pennsylvania in 1886, later moving to Greenbrier County. Photo by Jeff Seager.



Right: This unfinished fiddle is the work of the late John Harris of Hinton. Mr. Harris was a railroader and made his instruments while traveling in train cabooses. Photo by Michael Keller.
Below: This beautiful fiddle was made by Ralph Meadows while still a high school student. The homemade bow was made by Garfield Lilly just after World War II. Photo by Jeff Seager.



The next instrument was made by John Harris, an old railroader from Hinton. My grandfather Jones, my paternal grandfather, was a conductor and he told me that John Harris made a lot of these fiddles while he was traveling down the railroad in the caboose. He'd bring his whittling tools with him, his inshave and what few tools that he needed, and his wood and as the train would travel he would whittle out these fiddles. Mr. Hobart Richmond told me the same thing. "Yeah," he said, "John Harris used to make those old fiddles when they would be traveling down the road in their caboose."

John never finished this violin; I guess that's up for me to do. It's still "in the white," as they would say. That means there's no finish. I got the fiddle secondhand. I think the old gentleman I got it from got it from Mr. Harris's widow.

That violin is kind of John's own pattern. It doesn't follow any of your established dimensions. A violin maker would say, well, a violin should be thus-and-so long and it should be thus-and-so thick. Violin builders adhere to strict acoustical principles and thicknesses. The instrument has to be so long, has to be so wide at a given point, or so narrow at a given point. Well, fiddle makers didn't do that. Someone said, "Well, I'm gonna make a fiddle." You know, it pretty much physically looked like a violin, but I don't think you can strictly term those violins because they're not made under the accepted rule of acoustics or dimensions that violins are made under.

So that's a John Harris fiddle. He made several, in fact. I've had two or three of them. This one seems to be one of his better attempts. I'll never know that, of course, until I string it up and have it playable.

That last fiddle was made by Ralph Meadows, who was a Hintonian. He was a conductor on the railroad for many years. I knew him very well, a good personal friend. The man was just a genius. This fiddle bears that fact very well because he made this in high school. It was the first attempt that he ever made at anything. His big thing, he loved to build miniature stage coaches. And he would build a steam engine right to scale, a working scale model. He was a fellow that was very patient and a perfectionist personified, when he did things.

It has a nice one-piece curly maple back. That's not seen too often in instruments. Lots of times an instrument builder can't find a piece of, say, curly maple that broad and long that will have the pretty curl to make a one-piece back. So normally a violin maker or fiddle maker will have to take two pieces of wood, half and half, to create the back because they can't find a nice piece of figured wood or fancy grained wood, that somewhere along the line doesn't also have a knot or a crack or a defect in it. So this is an example of a fiddle with a one-piece back. Happened to be that Mr. Meadows had a nice piece of maple that didn't have any defects in it.

The homemade fiddle bow with it belonged to an old gentleman by the name of Garfield Lilly, a railroader for many years in the Hinton area. He played the fiddle. This is an old bow that his son gave me that his dad made sometime around World War II. If you'll notice on the end of the bow, what's called the frog, where the adjustment is made to raise the tension of the hair on the fiddle bow. A .30-caliber army cartridge is what he's used for part of that bow. So that kind of bears out the time that it was made. He had some of these empty cartridges that had been brought over, .30-caliber army cartridges.

The stick is made out of hickory. Mr. Lilly told me, "This isn't much for handwork. It looks more like something you'd frail a mule with than play a fiddle with." And it does look pretty crude. But there again, people wanted to make music and they would go to any means to do that. If they had to make their own instruments or make the accessories, they would do it. They loved their music and they wanted to play. ♣





Jimmy Costa is a young Summers Countian who takes a serious interest in the old ways of his native area. Photo by Jeff Seager.

"Totally Country"

A Conversation With the Collector

From an Interview by Ken Sullivan

Jimmy Costa is known throughout southern West Virginia as a storyteller, musician and collector of all things country. While putting together this summer's folklife exhibit at the Cultural Center, we had the chance to record some background information as to how he came to be, in his words, "totally country."

Jimmy Costa. I grew up in Hinton, and my father and mother both grew up there. My grandparents on my father's side were Italian and came there about 1917. Mom's people were originally from the area.

Dad's father was an Italian immigrant. They were all from Calabria down there in southern Italy, and came back and forth several times from about 1899 up through the early 1900's. My grandfather Costa and Uncle Joe, my granddad's brother, had come with their father. My great-grandfather on the

Italian side was a blacksmith. He was following work in America. He had gone out west, from what I can find out, and worked on the Union Pacific. Went clear out west and worked himself back into West Virginia.

Ken Sullivan. Was there an Italian musical tradition on that side of your family?

JC To a degree, yes. My grandfather Costa played the accordion. Now, he played guitar in Italy but he had a hunting accident. He lost his little finger and the next one up on his left hand, had a shotgun blow up on him and cut these two fingers off. He'd played guitar before that time but that limited him, and he just continued from then on to play the accordion.

When I was a child I started getting interested in music, and there was no music in my family at the time. We knew that my granddad had played the accordion and we bought him one. Dad

said, "I'm going to buy him an accordion and see if he can play." So we bought him one in December '64 and Dad gave it to him and he learned to play again. And then I'll never forget, he gave it to me one day and he said, "You learn it to play." And I can play it. I can play a few Italian pieces that he taught me, just learned from ear, you know. And then he died. I was 16 years old when he died.

KS What about your mother's side? Was there a mountain music tradition?

JC There was a tradition of string music in the family, but it was removed actually back to her great-uncle. My grandfather Jones didn't play, nor did his dad. But his mother's people, the Gores, who were all from Mercer County, had played. In fact, one of them was a phenomenal banjo player. I've heard this from musicians who knew. He traveled around and played banjo.

KS How did you get into collecting and restoring musical instruments?

JC Well, as a child I liked the sound of music, and I can remember when I was 10 or 11 years old there was an old banjo player that didn't live very far from where I grew up. There was a family down there that were very country folk. When I was a child he was probably 80, 81 years old. And I can remember hearing him playing a banjo and that got me into a sound that I did not grow up with. I did not hear this oldtime music when I grew up in my family. It just wasn't there in the family circle. But I was exposed to it at an early age and I liked it, you know.

One thing led to another and the old gentleman gave me his old banjo. I said, "What about the old instrument? I can remember as a little kid you playing it." "Oh, well it's here." So he gives me this banjo and it was all to pieces, the head was burst, no strings. Not only did that banjo instigate me becoming a musician, but also a repairman. At age 15 I started becoming a repairman out of necessity. He said, "Now if you can get it fixed up, I'll show you what I remember." So that was it.

As far back as I can remember, I was always attracted to older people. I think maybe because both sets of grandparents were living, and they were really

neat people. I reflect back and they were all happy, open people and I enjoyed being around them as much as I did my own peers. So at an early age their interests became my interests. History to me was a live thing. When I'd read about Daniel Boone or something like that, I could see that. As I got a little older and was able to go out within my own community, I was literally seeing things that I was reading about—muzzle-loading firearms and all the accoutrements; it was just like being there. If you wanted to go out and find it, it was there. I found at an early age that people who weren't too far removed from that whole time and era were still around. People who could remember what it was like living in a log house, or people that did live in log houses.

And the philosophy, the way they thought and their mannerisms, that just interested me. It started when I was in my early teens. When everybody else was going towards sports and all that, I became somewhat of a loner. My interests were totally country. I liked country people, I liked their philosophies, I liked the way they lived, the order of their homes, things they had in their homes.

I grew up in a pretty affluent home and I can remember the first exposure that I had to what oldtime living was like, just as if it were yesterday. When I was six years old I went with my best friend to his grandfather's farm at Green Sulphur District. I had hardly ever been out of my own home or little community unless it was on a vacation with the family, always in the type surroundings that I had grown up in. I'd never seen anything distinctly different than what I had grown up with. And when I went down there, my gosh, it was a whole different world. It was hogs and cattle and wood stoves and oil lamps.

I'll never forget the old man, my best friend's grandfather. I was at an auction sale about eight years ago and the old fellow was there. I was with a good friend of mine, and I said, "I want to introduce you to someone special." I introduced my friend to him. And I will never forget, it was like a milestone in my life, the old gentleman looked at my friend and he said, "Yes sir," he said, "I'm the man that put the country in Jimmy."

He could've never been summed up

any better. It moved me to tears. He didn't realize how much that meant to me. He's the man that I tagged along with from age six years old, off and on. We'd spend the summers together, his grandson and I would go and stay down on his farm for two and three weeks at a time. This man was in his 70's then, and all his peers were in their 70's, and this exposure that I got myself immersed in was just what I wanted. Old people that lived in their ancestral homes and there was nothing in the home that was any newer than their parents, and some things even back to their great-grandparents. They were using them at that day and time just as their parents and their forefathers had.

KS What was this fellow's name?

JC Clarence Cales. He's living in Rainelle. He's 93 and his son is a well-known dentist over there.

KS Did you ever have any formal apprenticeship in instrument work?

JC No. No, I learned it totally out of necessity. There was no one else to fix anything, or I didn't know they were there. I was 14, 15 years old, I had no car, I had no way to get around. I always had a good knack, as they would say, with my hands and I would look at something like that banjo and say, "Well, there's four of these here, and there's four missing so I'm going to go try and find the other four." I didn't even know what a bracket was or a banjo head. Then eventually you do meet people that have that knowledge and they can tell you things, how you should do something or not do it, you know. And so eventually, yes, I learned from a few people some techniques, what to do.

KS What is the worth of all of this, your interest in country life?

JC That's hard to answer. I thought for quite a long time that I was one of the only people interested. And I find that's not so, and I'm glad that there are other people. I find even a lot of younger people interested, younger than I. I assumed that a lot of the younger people wouldn't be interested in traditional ways of doing things—the crafts and traditional history and community, that whole sense of community, but I find it's not so. So I want to share what I know. From starting out at an early age, I've got a lot of experience and knowledge that I'd be glad to share with anyone.

My interests started early. And it just covers the whole gamut of rural life, the philosophies, the physical aspects of it, why they chose to make furniture or something the way they chose to do it, what were the tools they used. I find myself there, and want to stay in that type of culture. I'm glad to share any knowledge that I have, be it the music or the knowledge of making things, or the procurement of tools. Log construction is something I've been actively involved in since I was 16 years old, for example. Old log buildings and the whole history, everything that goes with that, the changes through the period that log structures were the more prevalent type that people lived in and used for domestic animals.

The music came later. As a child I was interested in the sound of music. There was something that caught my ear when I would hear music play, any kind, piano or whatever. But history was my first interest. I think the first tangible items of history that I had was as a child finding arrowheads. People'd plow and you'd go out in their fields and find arrowheads, so at age six, seven, eight years old I was finding arrowheads. And then it went into old firearms. Older folks initiated me about mountain rifles and muzzle-loading guns, so when I was 13, 14 years old I owned about 40 muzzle-loading firearms. People would give them to me or I'd have a little money and I'd go out and buy them. I'd go to the hardware stores and trade with men that were 50, 60 years old, you know.

So it's much broader than music. It's the whole philosophy. I like continuity in a lot of things, and I see that in that type of society, you know. I marvel at the Amish and the Mennonites, that type of appreciation for things of the past, and passing the knowledge to other people. It's something that can be used in contemporary society. All these things go together as far as I'm concerned, the music and people that make things, the furniture. It's all part of what was a very close-knit community and I like that. I like that whole sense, that whole theory of communities and sharing, knowing everyone in your community, everyone's faults and better points. That's the way it was at one time, and it yet is in some places. ★

Hoopies

By Susan Weaver

Yes indeed, it is true. I am a Hoopie! Actually I am *proud* to be a Hoopie. Now, I am not certain just how many West Virginians know about Hoopies. If you aren't familiar with the expression you might be surprised to learn that many people consider you to be one. So it is probably best if I begin by defining the word.

Over the years the meaning has altered. Originally, a Hoopie was one who worked in the barrel-making trade and was employed to make the hoops for the barrels. Evidently, many of these "Hoopies" lived in West Virginia. According to this definition, I am not a Hoopie and more than likely neither are you.

Many years ago quite a few of these Hoopies traveled up the Northern Panhandle into Hancock County, and on across the state line into Ohio or Pennsylvania. Often they came here to work in the pottery industry which flourished in Chester and Newell, and over in East Liverpool, Ohio. A popular belief in this area is that many of the Hoopies stopped at Newell because they thought the letters "H L C" on the big smokestacks of the Homer Laughlin China Company stood for "Hoopies' Last Chance." In more recent years many Hoopie descendants have been employed in area steel mills or up the river at Shippingport, Pennsylvania, as construction workers. Therefore, today a Hoopie is just about anyone from this part of West Virginia. At least, that is how neighboring Ohioans and Pennsylvanians use the word.

And they don't use it any too kindly! To them, "Hoopie" implies a lack of cultural and intellectual upbringing. Up here, we are sick of hearing how Hoopies never wear shoes and how they have one leg shorter than the other from walking on the hillsides of West Virginia. To hear them tell it, a Hoopie with an eighth grade education is considered a scholar among his fellow Hoopies. Because of all this verbal

abuse, I grew up believing we were called Hoopies because we "whooped and hollered" like crude and unmannerly children. This was, of course, before I knew the true and pure definition of Hoopie mentioned above. Despite this knowledge, to this day I have an almost uncontrollable urge to precede the word with a "W."

These Ohioans and Pennsylvanians also like to tell Hoopie jokes. They simply take an ethnic joke and substitute the word "Hoopie" for whatever minority group the joke is poking fun at. We Hoopies are naturally good-natured and patronize them by laughing at their silly attempts at humor.



Sometimes we counterattack with a few choice jokes of our own. My personal favorite is this one: "What separates the Hoopies from the _____?" (You may fill in the blank with an unkind title of your own choosing.) The answer is "the Ohio River."

Now, the final definition of "Hoopie" is actually a misuse of the word that we Hoopies ourselves are guilty of propagating. We often refer to Hoopie as a place. We say we are going hunting "down in Hoopie" or "My parents are from Hoopie." Over the years I have surmised that Hoopie is anywhere south of Wheeling. There are some children in my Chester neigh-

borhood who tell me that their grandfather has a summer cabin down in Hoopie. One day I decided to discover the specific location of Hoopie by grilling the youngest of these children. I began with the question "Where is the cabin?"

"Down in Hoopie."

"Hoopie, is that a country?"

"No."

"Is it a state?"

"No."

"Is it a city?"

"No."

"Then what and where is Hoopie?"

"It's just Hoopie and it's in Hoopie, you dummy."

I learned two things from this conversation: (1) young Hoopies have little respect for nosy elders, and (2) never interrogate a five-year-old Hoopie.

I began this essay by saying, "I'm a Hoopie and proud of it." Perhaps you are thinking that you would prefer not to be labeled a Hoopie because of the often low Hoopie image. But I truly feel we have been misjudged, and what we need to do is unite and fight this anti-Hoopie sentiment. We could form a Hoopie Preservation League or a Hoopie Advancement Society.

Many of my Hoopie comrades here in Hancock County have already admitted their Hoopie ancestry and are promoting pride in our heritage. My brother, who worked as an electrician at a power plant in Shippingport, proudly wore a hard hat labeled "The Hoop" in bold black letters. Another fellow Hoopie, who works for a newspaper in East Liverpool, wrote an article that might have been titled "Hoopie Makes Good" when Mary Lou Retton became the darling of the 1984 Olympics. (See there, you folks from Fairmont are considered to be Hoopies, too!) So if anyone calls you a Hoopie, don't be offended. Just tell them what a wise old Hoopie once told me: "There are only two kinds of people in this world, Hoopies and SOB's." Which would you rather be? ♦



Clown makeup and the Shrine ring signify two important parts of the life of Jerry Conn of Huntington.

Clowning Around

Shriner Jerry Conn

By Michael Coe

Photographs by Michael Holland

From time to time, we like to publish examples of the fine student work coming out of West Virginia schools these days. In the past GOLD-ENSEAL has had freelance contributors as young as fifth graders, ranging on up through high school and college age. This issue, we are pleased to present the work of two ninth graders, Michael Coe and Michael Holland, of Beverly Hills Junior High in Huntington. Their story on clown Jerry Conn started as a journalism class assignment, but as the project developed teacher Peggy Massey encouraged them to seek a wider audience through publication. The result is what you see here.

"I interviewed Jerry Conn of Huntington in late October 1985," Michael Coe says of the research and writing. "Mr. Conn works for the C&O Railroad. But when he's not working you'll probably find him clowning around somewhere, earning money for the area's crippled children.

"As we talked about his unusual hobby, being a Shriner clown, I found him to be an ordinary man with an extraordinary second life. I began by asking him how he got started."

Jerry Conn. The main reason for being a clown is to entertain children from one to 80 years of age. I got started probably like all show families in the circus business—you follow suit. My parents did it, so did I. My father is the only person in our ancestry that joined clowning. He was sort of disinherited because he went into show business. I started out at about 12 years old with my dad, who was a professional for 45 years with Ringling Brothers. My mother was a bareback rider. I worked with my dad for about 12 years until I got married and decided I didn't make enough money. Of course, it isn't my livelihood any more at this stage of the game.

Michael Coe. I suppose clowning gives you the freedom behind the mask of paint.

JC Well, yeah. I think that's another important reason why many people go into it. They can hide behind the makeup, the clown mask, and do things they probably wouldn't do normally. Even though it is entertaining, they would be embarrassed to do it without the makeup.

MC Growing up in the circus life, how did you take care of your school work?

JC Well, there were four families that had five and six kids each, and they hired a teacher to travel with us. She taught us year-round and we did not get a summer vacation, like you guys do.

MC You mentioned that you worked with your dad for a considerable time. Tell us about him.

JC Dad was a clown and an acrobat for 45 years. He traveled with some of the biggest circuses in the country during the '20's and '30's. Most of them you young fellows have never even heard of, and a lot of older people haven't, either—like Heck and Beck and Wallace, Tom Mix Circus, Hundred and One Ranch. Dad traveled with both Barnum and Bailey and Ringling Brothers, before they combined. They didn't combine until 1919. Then he traveled with Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey. That was, of course, before my time, since I wasn't born until 1927.

MC In the years you spent clowning professionally, did you ever participate in any other type act?

JC I also worked in a flying act, a trapeze act, teeterboard and trampoline, and I clowning in between. I did comedy in both areas.

We once had a fellow performer fall, and die a week later. That was pretty upsetting. Everybody was in a quandary over that. I wasn't nervous so much about the clowning, but the trapeze work makes one aware of all of the dangers.

MC Were you ever injured yourself?

JC Yes, I fell one time. We went from indoor work to fair dates outside. It was on a windy day during the first show. It couldn't happen at any other time—it had to be the first show. Just as I left the pedestal board the wind caught me and I swung way out and the catcher caught me by the tips of my fingers. You normally catch hand-wrist, hand-wrist style. He couldn't hold me. When we got to the other side, the trapeze snapped, and I fell into the big apron that came up behind the catcher, that is what it is there for. That apron threw me out over into the big ridge rope that stretches the net out, and from there out into the stake line. I was in the hospital eight weeks for that one, and another six to get back in shape before I could work again.

MC Besides the risks involved, what



Out of costume, Mr. Conn looks like the ordinary citizen he is most days of the week. He admits enjoying the "freedom of the mask," however.

advantage does clowning have over high work?

JC If I was clowning, it would be for two or three minutes, between acts. Clown acts are spaced just long enough to take down parts for the last act and set up the next one. Trapeze acts, however, last about 10 or 11 minutes, and you must practice four or five hours every morning.

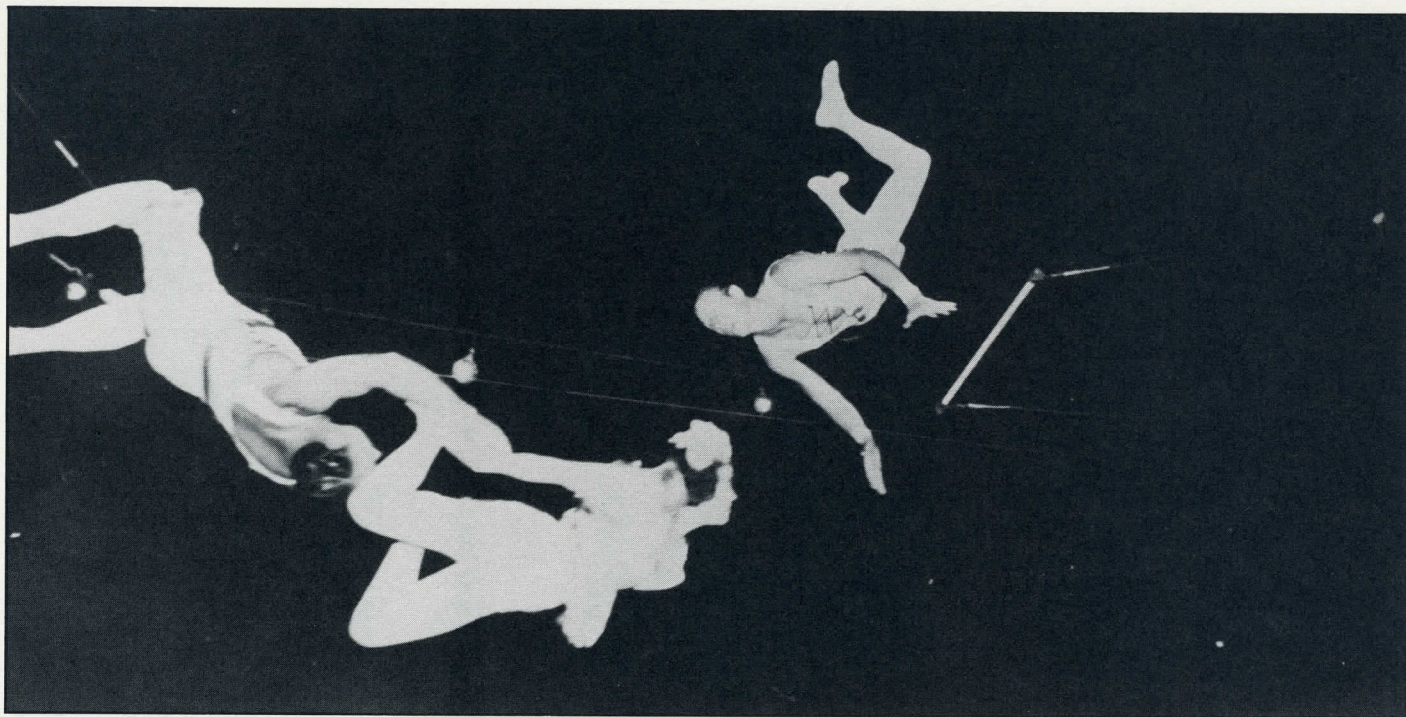
MC Other than performing, what else is involved in circus life?

JC The Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey went by train, but the

L.B. Kelley Circus traveled by truck. We traveled about 35 to 45 thousand miles a year.

It normally took about 10 hours to set up the circus tents and prepare everything for the first show. I think the record was six hours. By the time the working men had the tents set up, the performers had had more than enough time to prepare themselves.

You could do more than one job and they'd pay you to do it, but most performers steer away from hard physical labor like setting up tents, because of



Conn (right) is from a circus family and did trapeze work before settling down as a clown. He recalls one fall that put him in the hospital for eight weeks. Photographer and date unknown.

the danger of getting hurt. You can't expect to perform well in a trapeze act if you've jammed your hand up or cut yourself badly—you're out of business. Most circuses frown upon performers doing hard labor, especially the aerialists. They may let you set up rigging, but setting up tents is out of the question.

MC That is understandable. Have you ever worked in a clown-animal act?

JC Yeah, many years ago I worked in a mule act. I found out how stubborn mules really are and realized that they definitely live up to their reputation.

MC My favorite clown act is the one where a little car comes out into the ring and a multitude of clowns pile out.

JC Yes, it was made famous by Ringling Brothers. We used to get a Packard coupe every year. Years ago, we'd get 25 clowns in that Packard coupe. There is no trick to it. There are actually 25 clowns in that car. It's just like anything else, you had to practice. You have a place in that car and that place never changed. You stayed in the same place every time. Of course, there were some midgets and the car was completely stripped.

MC What is the difference between Shrine clowns and the other type?

JC A professional clown is a man who makes his living doing it. A Shrine

clown does it for the good of the crippled children hospitals. We have 21 hospitals that we support. It takes a tremendous amount of money every year to keep the hospitals open.

MC Why do you clown for the Shriners?

JC When I went into the Shrine they asked me what unit I wanted to move into. I said I'd probably go into the clowns. They asked me, "How come the clowns?" I said I had more experience there than playing a horn or riding a motorcycle. At the time, they didn't know about my previous experiences.

When I first went to a hospital, we had the doctor's dressing room for the clowns to make up in. There were 18 or 19 of us. We went down in a big motor home. We went in and set up. Of course, all I could put on was a white face, because you can put them on real fast. You don't have the detail. In 15 minutes I had all my makeup on and was sitting there waiting for the rest of them to finish so that I could put on my costume. It finally dawned on them after I'd set there for about five minutes and already had my face on. "Wait a minute, something is wrong here," they said. "We have an apprentice clown over here. He's already made-up and he looks better than we're going to look when we're made-up." They

wanted to know who showed me how to put makeup on.

MC How many years have you been a clown with the Shriners?

JC About 10 years, so it's been quite a while since I was in the circus. I quit about 1951. That'll give you some idea about how long it's been.

MC Do you miss the circus after being a Shrine clown?

JC Not really. When I quit, I quit. It's like when you quit smoking one day and never touch them again. That's the next thing I've got to do, quit smoking.

MC In all of your professional clowning, is there any memorable incident you would like to share with us?

JC The most memorable happening in my years of clowning is rather sad because it deals with the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus fire in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1944.

We were standing in the dressing tent entrance when a young prop man ran out of the big top hollering, "FIRE! FIRE!" I looked up and saw smoke rising above the main entrance and at the same time heard a deafening roar from the audience which drowned out the circus band.

Dad, my two brothers, and I ran to help. Realizing that the fire was spreading fast, Dad said to stop and cut the

sidewall ropes in order to drop as much of it as possible so the people could escape that way. On dropping a large section of sidewall we discovered that mass hysteria had taken hold of the entire audience and none of our hollering would get their attention. I spotted a Marine sergeant on the top row of seats and I grabbed his pant leg. He bent down to listen. I told him to go down three or four rows and get all the chairs off the plank and fold the hinged plank forward onto the next row of seats. The people could then get to the ground where we would direct them safely away from the big top. Through our actions, I believe we helped to save three to four hundred lives by ourselves. Dad, my brothers, and I were each awarded the National Firemen's Association Life Saving Award.

If there had been some way to stop the mass hysteria there probably would have been no deaths and very few injuries. I say this because the Walinda high wire act was performing when the fire started and the five of them hurriedly came down and left. The audience, seeing this, tried to get out the same way they came in, which was to-

ward the fire itself at the front entrance. Another problem was that the wild animal act followed after the high wire act and the animal chutes were in place, blocking the audience from the main entrance exit. Several circus men tried to dismantle the animal chutes so the people could get by, but the crushing weight of people trying to escape made that impossible. Unfortunately, we also had a full house that afternoon.

About 500 people died altogether. The only consolation was the fact that 7,500 people didn't die. I'd rather not go into any more details concerning the fire because it is heart sickening even though it only lasted eight minutes.

In those days tents were waterproofed with a solution of paraffin and petroleum; today they use a fireproof chemical so we don't have the problem of flames spreading as quickly.

MC Is there anything in particular that stands out in your mind as you clowning for the Shriners?

JC Yes, that first outing at the Crippled Children's Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. We went down for the ceremony and the parade. After the parade, it was normal for all the clowns

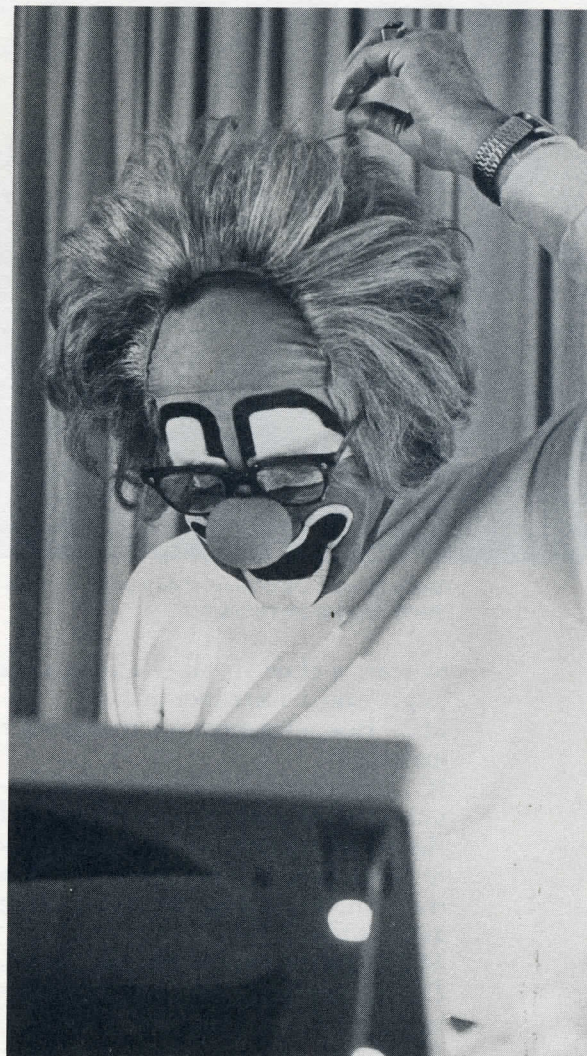
to go in and entertain the children in the wards. I walked into this big, open ward and had to turn around and go to the men's room because I had tears running down my cheeks. I certainly couldn't go back in there in that condition. Talking about psyching oneself up! I had to really screw my head on straight for that one. Sometimes it is hard to keep an "up" spirit, especially when working around retarded or crippled children.

We have a "Precious Cargo Train" that was built by Chessie to haul children around for picnics and celebrations. They had it for about a year and a half and they gave it to the Shrine clowns in Huntington. We take that to town parades and celebrations. We usually get a \$200 donation for the crippled children hospitals.

MC What is the worst thing that could happen to a clown?

JC It bothers clowns when children get scared of them. No clown wants

Makeup is meticulous work, demanding a steady hand and full concentration. Relying on his circus experience, Mr. Conn now conducts makeup training sessions for other Shrine clowns.





Ready to work, Jerry Conn shows up for a Heart Association fund raiser. His clowning now is all for charity and his own enjoyment.

to scare a child. It takes a long time to get over a scare like that.

MC How often must you change your material?

JC The Shrine clown acts don't require a lot of change, but professional clowns always have new skills and gags to do every year. They always change them and try to keep them as current as possible.

MC I notice you are wearing glasses. Do you use them when you are made-up?

JC Yes, I have to. I went to a com-

petition in Florida, the international Shriner clown convention, and had my glasses on. A judge told me that I could have done a good job if I hadn't been wearing glasses. I told him that I couldn't be here if I wasn't wearing my glasses.

MC Does your wife go with you to clowning conventions?

JC She does now, but she didn't for a long time because she wasn't interested. She travels to conventions and stays with us now. One time the other guys talked her into going to Atlanta

to the Imperial Council session and she had such a good time that she hasn't quit yet.

MC How did you make the change from being a clown to working for the railroad?

JC It wasn't hard. I had worked for an electrical contractor during the off season for extra money. D. J. Forton, the contractor, wanted me to work on an apprenticeship anyway. I told him that when the show goes on the road in the spring I'll be on it. He said, "Son, we'll put you in anyway, even though it may take you 10 years."

MC How did you end up in Huntington?

JC Michigan is originally my home, but I had traveled in West Virginia many years with the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus, and setting up shows in Charleston and Huntington. This particular time, however, my family and I were traveling with the Pollock Brothers Circus. It was here in Huntington in 1950 that I met my wife during a show sponsored by the Huntington Fraternal Order of Police. We were introduced by a mutual friend, Mr. Fred Cattlet. He owned and operated a four-man barber shop in the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

Mr. Cattlet and his wife, my mother and father, and I were to have dinner together at Fred's invitation. I said, "You married people go ahead, I'll go with Carl." Carl was one of the guys in our trampoline act. Fred said, "No, I'll get a dinner partner for you, Jerry, but you must be a perfect gentleman because she is a very nice lady and she comes from a highly respected family. I'm telling you for two reasons, so that you can go with us and that you will enjoy this lady's company."

We had dinner together Tuesday evening and I had such a good time that I invited her to the circus the next day. After that we spent every spare moment together. On Saturday I met her mother for lunch and told her that we wanted to get married. After church on Sunday I had dinner at her parents' house. On the following Wednesday, we were married. We have been married 36 years last February. We have a son, John Hilton Conn, and a daughter, Jo Ann Copley.

I gave up the circus profession six months after getting married because

my expenses exceeded my income. I then went back to school and finished my apprenticeship as a master electrician. I worked in construction for some time and then opened my own electrical and electronic company in Cleveland, Ohio, for about eight years. I finally had to close my shop for health reasons. My doctor told me to do one of three things: I could either get out of the rat race, buy a pine box, or find another doctor.

I worked for NASA for a year or so until my wife's mother became gravely ill. That required my wife and children to come back to Huntington so Emma could care for her mother. After a month of weekend commuting, I decided to give up this very good-paying job so I could work closer to my wife. I got a job in Huntington at Delta Electric Company for about a fourth of my original income. I worked about eight months and then was laid off because of a trucker strike. I drew two unemployment checks before I got a job and went to work for the city as a traffic light electrician and I remained with that job until the early part of 1977. I then went to work for the C&O Railroad and have been with them since at the locomotive shops here in Huntington.

MC You have been around Huntington for quite some time. Could you tell me about your Shrine clowning in this area?

JC I have been a Shrine clown with the Beni Kedem Shrine Temple since 1978. I also had the honor of being elected president of the Huntington Shrine clowns this year. I am also the Beni Kedem Clown Unit treasurer and the producing clown since 1982 of this area's clown unit.

We have approximately 115 clowns in our Temple unit. The Temple unit is made up of four clown alleys. There is a clown alley in Huntington, Charleston, Greenbrier and Welch. Each clown alley is a member of the Beni Kedem Temple Shrine Clown Unit.

Of course, all Shriners are involved in the philanthropy of the crippled children hospitals. There are 18 of these hospitals throughout the U.S., plus four burns hospitals. We have to raise a minimum of \$152,000,000 annually to keep them operating. These hospitals handle about 106,000 patients every year.

MC Is your clown face an original

or did you model it after someone?

JC Well, partially. The mouth area is probably fashioned after Lou Jacobs, a famous old clown who worked with my dad and I in the Ringling Brothers Circus.

MC I notice there is quite a variety of clown face patterns. What type is yours?

JC I'm doing an August makeup right now. It's probably the hardest makeup for a clown to do because there is so much detail involved. The main reason that it's my favorite now is because it covers up the wrinkles much better than the others.

MC How many types of faces have you used?

JC Well, there is the August that I'm doing now and a white face, but that would be hard to answer because I put on a lot of makeup seminars with men in clown alleys. I design faces for them, so I wouldn't be limited in what I wanted to do in makeup.

MC What kind of makeup do you use on your clown faces?

JC I'm using Stines grease paint, most professionals use it. You can get makeup in tubes or small containers. I have two tins of makeup that are about 40 years old that I got while working for Ringling Brothers. It's still usable. The red isn't made anymore because the dyes are so strong that the government made Stines take it off the market. It is bright red. My dad never bought Stines. We made our own white. In fact, Dad would make it and sell it in one-pound tins.

MC I see that you finished your makeup. How are you going to attach your nose?

JC With spirit gum.

MC What is spirit gum?

JC Chewing gum for ghosts!

MC No, really. What is it?

JC It's a gum specially made for holding fake noses into place.

MC That holds your nose on, but what's keeping the clowning profession together? Do you think that clowning is a dying profession?

JC Well, I was thinking that for a number of years, but I look now and see 143 circuses traveling the continental United States, so I can't say it's dying out.

MC Have you ever considered retiring from clowning yourself?

JC No, I'll probably die before I retire. ♣

Your first look at GOLDENSEAL?

Glad to have you with us. If you're like most new readers, chances are you heard about GOLDENSEAL from a friend or relative. Maybe that person was kind enough to put in a good word for us, and sent you home with a loaner copy.

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We operate GOLDENSEAL on what we call a "voluntary subscription" system. That is, while there is no regular subscription charge, we do ask for an annual contribution of \$10 from all who can afford to help. That allows us to pay the bills and continue to bring the best of West Virginia to your mailbox each season.

What do you get for your money? You've got it in your hands now. Four times a year, GOLDENSEAL gives the same sort of coverage to the traditional culture, popular history, and folk ways of West Virginia that you'll find in this issue. We blanket the entire state, from the southern coalfields to both panhandles. We don't get to every place in each issue, but over the last 10 years we've been about everywhere in the Mountain State at least once and you can bet we'll be back again. We generally take our raw material directly from the living recollections of West Virginians, and you can't get any closer to the source than that.

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Reader Survey

We have tallied the results of last year's GOLDENSEAL reader survey, with 134 readers replying. That low response leaves us unable to make any conclusive assumptions about our readership as a whole. However, we gained much good general information and a wealth of individual ideas, which we're glad to share with you here.

The questionnaire in the Summer 1985 GOLDENSEAL asked several questions about the use of the magazine, personal information, and for suggestions and comments. The average respondent was female, 57 years old, retired or a homemaker, with a high school education. She has been reading the magazine 20 issues, or for the equivalent of five years.

Of the respondents, most pass their GOLDENSEAL along to friends and family members. An average of three people read each issue. The majority of respondents reported reading the entire magazine—"Cover to cover and then the covers," one reader said.

Overwhelmingly, responding readers originally learned of GOLDENSEAL by word of mouth. Others found a mention in books or newspapers, copies in public places such as libraries, or heard of us through organizations. But GOLDENSEAL travels in its own ways, as well. One lady said she "found two or three copies in the trash can."

Most respondents were native West Virginians still living in the state, although a significant number were West Virginia born but now living elsewhere. Many of the out-of-staters reported in from neighboring Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. We also heard from many retired West Virginians now living in Florida.

We received many encouraging comments from readers. One non-native wrote, "Whenever I tell people what a progressive state West Virginia is, I cite *West Virginia History* and your GOLDENSEAL as examples which to my knowledge are unmatched by any other state for enlightened cultural service." Another wrote that GOLDENSEAL is "a very unique magazine which interests everyone from out-of-

state who wants to be a 'hillbilly' at heart." Still another said, "This publication gets to the grass roots and shows the real West Virginia heritage. Stay away from the resorts and keep on the back roads."

Several responses show that the magazine reinforces treasured memories for older readers. One lady wrote, "GOLDENSEAL is a freshly printed book that shows the youngsters that the stories that I tell them really happened. Also, I enjoy reliving some of them in print." An 81-year-old West Virginia native said, "The pictures have helped me and others to get in touch with friends with whom I lost contact years ago."

There was also some criticism. One fellow said, "I like GOLDENSEAL very much, but it upsets me no end when names are spelled incorrectly." "Summer issue received too late to go to festival June 21," an Illinois gentleman wrote. A young lady complained of "repeated problems with your subscription department."

Others commented on content. "Articles on log camps and coal mines too long, boring and numerous," one reader wrote. "Too much of magazine concentrated on Charleston area and folk festival coverage. Why not some articles on the Eastern Panhandle and the old towns there?" Several others mentioned that area, one putting it rather humorously. "Would be nice to see more articles on the Eastern Panhandle," he said. "People down your way don't know we are up here."

All in all, the responses were intelligent, funny and full of ideas. We appreciate them, and your suggestions will be acted upon whenever possible. We have, for example, published five feature articles on the Eastern Panhandle over the last year, and will continue to improve coverage of that area. We also have hired a college student to help keep subscriptions and the mailing list straight. We feel we must continue to write of "log camps and coal mines," among many other things, if we are to portray the full variety of life in West Virginia. That's all part of keeping to "the back roads," as the other reader advised us to do.

In This Issue

MICHAEL COE is a ninth grade student at Beverly Hills Junior High School in Huntington, with an interest in art and literature. Although Michael likes writing, he plans to attend college and earn his M.B.A. in business. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

WILLIAM D. CREASY says one of his biggest concerns is the preservation of the natural environment. A native of Nicholas County, he attended West Virginia Institute of Technology, where he received a B.S. in industrial arts. After serving in the navy, he went on to earn his master's and Ph.D. in botany from WVU and Iowa State, respectively. He taught botany until his retirement. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

DOUGLAS CLYDE DIVENS grew up in McDowell County. He attended West Virginia State College, and spent summer vacations working in the mines. Later, he moved to California, where he earned a Master's degree in education; he has taught social studies and literature there since 1956. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

JACQUELINE G. GOODWIN was born and raised in New Jersey, but earned her undergraduate and Master's degrees at West Virginia University. She teaches, freelances, and is currently finishing her first novel. She is a regular contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

LINDA HEPLER was born in Huntington. She attended Marshall University where she earned a degree in education. She is now an English teacher for Philip-Barbour High School in Barbour County. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MICHAEL HOLLAND is a ninth grade student at Beverly Hills Junior High School in Huntington. He is the photographer for his school newspaper and yearbook. Michael became interested in photography several years ago and plans to pursue a career in the field. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MICHAEL KELLER is the chief of photographic services for the Department of Culture and History.

MICHAEL KLINE is a Washington, D.C., native who spent childhood summers in Hampshire County. After receiving his B.A. in anthropology from George Washington University in 1964, he moved to Appalachia full-time, working in various poverty programs in Kentucky and West Virginia. Michael served as assistant to the editor of GOLDENSEAL in 1978, and now lives in Elkins where he is associated with the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop. He is a regular contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

MICHAEL M. MEADOR was born in Hinton and grew up in Princeton. He attended Concord College and Marshall University, graduating with a degree in sociology. His long-time association with the West Virginia 4-H program combined with a long-standing interest in history to produce his recent book, "A Walking Tour of Historic Jackson's Mill." Michael M. Meador, who has written several previous articles for GOLDENSEAL, is not to be confused with photographer Michael Meador.

JEFF SEAGER is a photographer for the Department of Culture and History.

SUSAN WEAVER, a lifelong resident of Hancock County, earned her A.A. in library science from Marshall University in 1982. She served as a children's librarian in Chester for five years, and is now interpreter for the Museum of Ceramics in nearby East Liverpool, Ohio. Her most recent contribution, "Rock Springs Park: A Panhandle Playground," appeared in the Winter 1985 issue of GOLDENSEAL.

ANDY YALE is a New York writer and photographer, with a special interest in southeast West Virginia and folklife subjects generally. He has published articles and photos in *The Village Voice*, *Memphis* magazine and other publications. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL was the Leland Feamster article in the Spring 1985 issue.

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