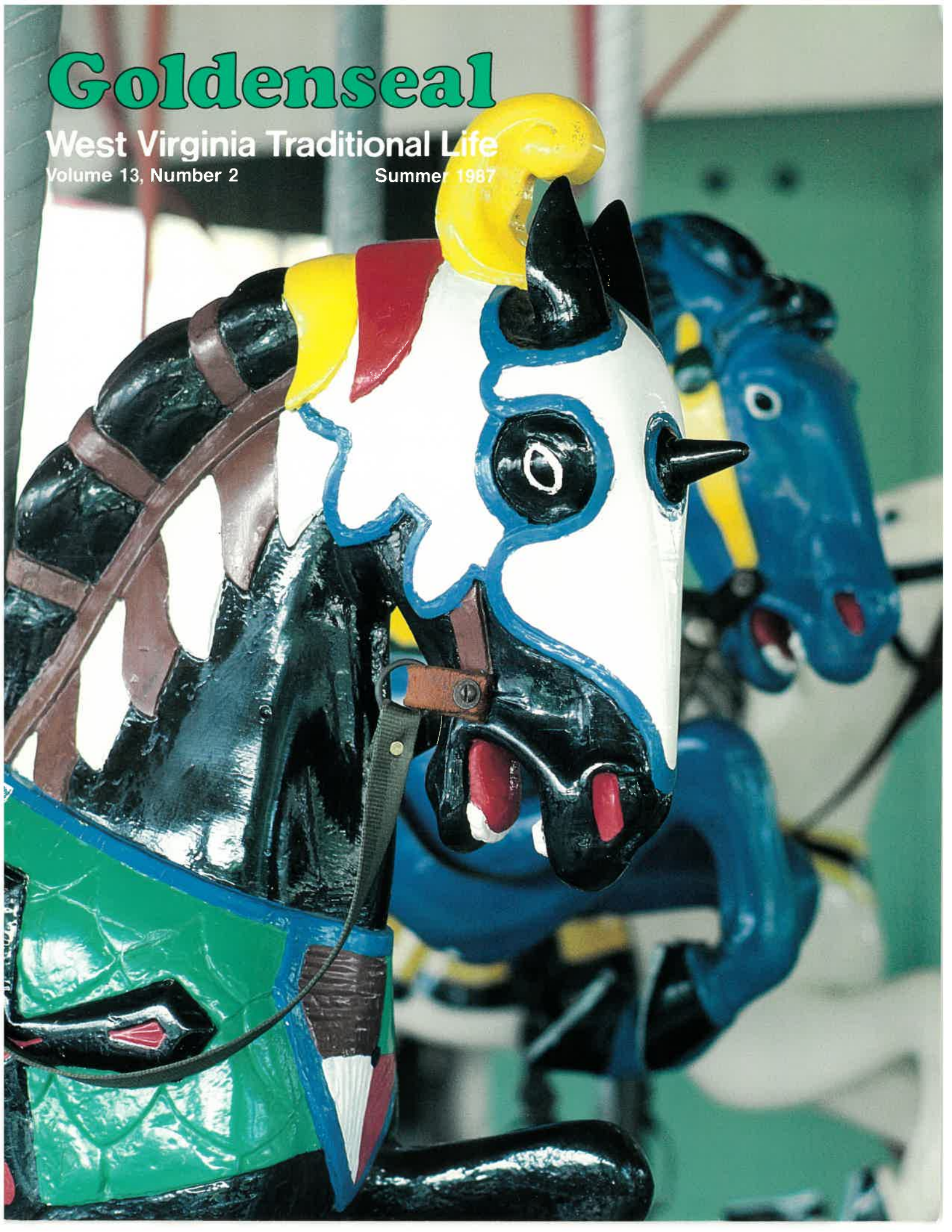
Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Volume 13, Number 2 Summer 1987



This design, adapted from the quilt pattern sometimes called the "Aunt Eliza Star," is the mark of excellent West Virginia craftwork. It is the official logo of the crafts marketing program of the Department of Culture and History and may be seen wherever crafts offered through the program are sold. That includes the gift shops at several state parks, the New York International Gift Fair and other annual wholesale markets, and of course The Shop at the Cultural Center in Charleston. Follow the star for the finest American craftsmanship.

Quilts 1987. The annual summer quilt exhibition at the Cultural Center officially opened on Memorial Day Weekend. Prizes were given in the traditional applique, traditional pieced and contemporary design categories at the Vandalia awards concert. The 41 quilts will be on display through September 7.

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COVER: Who could resist such steeds? Not the generations of children who have ridden the Camden Park carousel since 1907. "The Sign of the Happy Clown" begins on page 9. Photo by Michael Keller.

PHOTOS: Gary Farlow, Carl E. Feather, Vernon O. Giffin, Michael Keller, Gerald Milnes, Gerald S. Ratliff, Red Ribble, Gary Simmons.

The author's grandfather, Russell Feather, pauses in his Preston County barn after last June's first cutting of hay. Photo copyright Carl E. Feather, 1986.

First Cutting
A Story for June

By Carl E. Feather

A few miles south of the intersection of State Routes 24 and 50 in eastern Preston County, just barely this side of the state line, the hamlet of Eglon lies cradled between sharply rising hillsides. Viewed from the highway, the village presents a peaceful and bucolic scene. The "business district" consists of a feed mill and post office and the rest is devoted to barns and houses. The only signs of technology here are the high-tension power lines which cross the crest of the hills and the satellite TV dishes in two backyards.

A look at the names on the mailboxes tells much about local history: Gnagy, Judy, Harsh, Feather — strong German names which suggest tradition and a devotion to the land and family. The genealogy of many of the residents can be traced to Revolutionary times, when Hessian forefathers settled in what was then Monongalia County following the war. These Germans brought farming skills and traditions learned in their homeland, traditions which live on in those who continue to make their living from this land.

My grandfather, Russell A. Feather ("Fedder" in the native tongue), is one of them. At 81, he still does some farming on the rugged hillsides of his Eglon homestead. Born on his father's farm at a place he calls Accident ("just over the hill" from Eglon), his life has been tied to the land and the seasons since childhood. He learned at an early age the value of hard work and diligence. "Make hay while the sun shines," his father used to tell him, and mountain farmers took that saying literally. Now, seven decades later, the skills and wisdom learned from his father continue to regulate Russell's life.

This was clearly demonstrated to me last June while visiting my grandparents. It was a delightful day in early summer. The sky was a crystal blue and the meadows around Eglon had burst forth with an abundant crop of tall, green grass. All week we had heard the roar of diesel tractor engines laboring on the hillsides, harvesting the first cutting of hay. A neighbor had already cut the grass on my grandfather's meadow, and was now beginning to bale it. By noon, the fields were dotted with both the massive, modern rolls of hay and the familiar tight, rectangular bales.

Throughout the week, Grandfather had been dropping hints about making hay. Grandmother and I tried to discourage him. Haying on the steep hillsides which rise sharply toward Route 24 is hard, dangerous work for a young person, let alone a man of 81 years. A wrong approach to the hill with the tractor or uneven loading of the wagon could easily flip the machinery over. Added to that was the stress of hard physical labor, of which there is plenty in making hay.

Danger and hard work aside, there was no need for the hay. Grandfather's weathered, wormy chestnut barn retained half a loft of hay from the previous year. There was no livestock on his farm to eat the hay, and the dairy farmer who had cut and baled the hay had already offered to purchase the first cutting from him.

But Russell Feather's mind was made up. He was going to gather the first cutting. It was a part of his very being; tradition dictated that he set aside the first fruits of the summer as the initial deposit to the account marked "winter." It was a tradition which he had learned from his father and was by now a part of his biological calendar: "late June — make first cutting."

There had been many first cuttings in his lifetime. "I've made hay since I was born," he told me, a statement which was probably not all that far from the truth. Raised on a farm, he had learned the basically simple task at an early age.

In his younger days, hay was made by horse and human power. As a lad, Russell's job was to drive the teams of draft horses which pulled the mower and then the hay wagon. When he was not driving the horses, he was raking hay or tossing it onto the wagon. There was little time for play on the farm in June, or any other month for that matter. The 164 acres of hilly farmland kept him, his father and his brothers busy throughout the year.

In 1930, five years after marrying Maude Judy, Russell Feather purchased an acre of land in Eglon and built a house for his family. In the years which followed, he added to his property by purchasing the meadows behind his place, gradually acquiring 30-some acres of pasture and woods. Russell worked full-time in a sawmill and later on a coal tipple, but the small farm helped supply his family of five with milk, eggs and meat during the lean Depression years and the 1940's.

As his children grew up, they learned to work on the farm just as he had. Making hay in the '30's and '40's was very much a family affair. Russell's four children and their mother often followed behind the tractor with hand rakes, gathering any hay missed by the whirring mechanical rake. The hay was then pitched onto the wagon and taken to the barn for storage in the loft, or stacked to dry in the field.

Undoubtedly, these memories were in Grandfather's mind that afternoon as he headed toward the barn for the tractor. Grandmother, resigned to the fact he was going to make hay, phoned my uncle and asked him to come up to the farm and help. Within an hour the three of us were ready to head to the upper pasture where the bales cut by the neighbor lay drying in the June sun.

As grandfather climbed onto the thinly-padded seat of the blue Ford tractor, the aches and pains of his hard years seemed to disappear. The vibration of the motor and the fresh smell of cut grass acted as analgesics for the lifetime accumulation of broken bones and torn muscles of a coal miner. The view of the green field below was tonic to his mind and the roar of the tractor a sweet song of summer to his ears.

After an exhilarating but bumpy ride on the bed of the hay wagon, Grandfather brought us to the upper meadow. Rows of bales stretched across the rolling landscape. My uncle and I began loading the bales onto the wagon while Grandfather drove at a quick pace, perhaps to see "what we were made of."

Lugging the heavy green bales of hay, we slowly cleared the stubbled meadow of its crop. The sharp, prickly hay bit at our arms and wrists, while the baling twine gnawed at our fingers as we tugged and tossed. We wrestled with the bales all afternoon, wondering all the while, "What's the use?" There was already hay in the barn and no livestock to consume our harvest.

Occasionally, Grandfather would stop the tractor and hop off to help us. He pitched the cumbersome bales about as if they were empty boxes, putting me to shame as I struggled with the bulky masses. After tossing a dozen or so bales upon the wagon, he would climb up and rearrange the load so it wouldn't shift during the treacherous ride to the barn. It was a long, hot afternoon of work, and the rows seemed endless. Finally, we headed toward the barn with our load of fresh-cut summertime.

As he maneuvered the tractor along the steep hillside, Grandfather must have recalled the narrow escape he had here 20 cuttings before. That June, while cutting hay on the hill, his tractor began to slide backwards. Jumping at the last second, he escaped having the tractor roll over on him as it and the mowing machine tumbled down the hill. Mountain land can be both a giver and taker of life, as he well knew.

At last we reached the still, dusty barn and began the hot task of stuffing more hay into the already well-stocked loft. Toss and stuff, toss and stuff, we packed the hay into the loft until it seemed the old chestnut timbers would burst with the mass of life stored in those fresh bales. But the timbers held, and finally the first cutting was in.

The blue tractor and wagon were returned to their sheds, and the dust in the barn began to settle. Grandmother's voice cried from the front porch of the farmhouse, "Come on you guys, dinner's ready down here."

As we opened the small side door of the barn, a shaft of late afternoon sunlight fell across the hay. Grandfather paused for a minute, admiring the day's work now spotlighted by the sun which had nurtured the crop. He savored the familiar, sweet aroma of the bales now safely tucked away in the loft. Pulling a piece of the hay from one of the bundles, he rolled the thick stem of grass between his fingers, recalling the 50-some first cuttings he had seen come and go through the doors of the barn.

Those cuttings were as good as money in the bank, a provision for the winter which was certain to come; a guarantee from the land that life would continue, come what may. And while he didn't need this year's hay from a practical standpoint, he did from a spiritual. By harvesting the first cutting, Russell Feather was fulfilling a tradition. He was posthumously satisfying the wishes and teachings of his forefathers.

As we exited from the barn, Grandfather glanced back at the stacks of hay. "Right nice first cutting," he said, pushing the door of the old barn shut and heading for the farmhouse.

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.

Mud River Baptist Book

This year marks 180 years of existence for the Mud River Baptist Church, located in Ona, Cabell County. The church was organized by the side of the historic James River Turnpike in 1807 and, except for the war years 1861-66, has served continuously since then. *The Church at Blue Sulphur Springs, Mud River Baptist* is a new book documenting that long history, dedicated to the many pastors who have served the church.

Written by Mary L. McKernon and published by the Mud River Baptist Ladies Mission Society, the book contains church and local history and the names of pastors, officers, missionaries and ordained men of the church. There is a comprehensive listing of church members compiled from record books of 1807 to 1900 and from grave markers in the old church cemetery. Much of the book's material was obtained from various newspaper articles, genealogies, and the Guyandotte, Greenbrier and Teay's Valley Baptist Association records.

The Church at Blue Sulphur Springs is a 231-page paperback book, illustrated with 20 pages of photographs of early church families and pastors. Those interested may order the book by sending $7.00 to the Mud River Baptist Church Historical and Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 26, Ona, West Virginia 25545.

More Hardy County History

In the Spring 1987 issue, GOLDENSEAL published an announcement of a book commemorating the 1986 bicentennial of Hardy County. We have since learned of another book on the subject, *Hardy County Then and Now, 1786-1986,* sponsored by the Hardy County Extension Homemakers Council.

The book contains over 900 previously unpublished black-and-white photographs of the people, events and scenery of Hardy County. These photographs are grouped in 24 categories, including agriculture, arts and crafts, business, government, education and schools, industry, churches and transportation. The new Hardy County history was edited by Ella Bergdoll of Moorefield, and compiled by the Homemakers Bicentennial pictorial committee.

Hardy County Then and Now, 1786-1986, is a 120-page book selling for $15.00 plus $2.00 for postage and handling. It may be ordered from the Hardy County Extension Homemakers Office, 204 Washington Street, Moorefield, West Virginia 26836.

Greenbrier Ghost Story

Zona Heaster Shue may be West Virginia's most famous ghost. She rests in peace now, as far as anyone knows, but in the days following her 1897 death Zona was very active. Her appearances confirmed her mother's suspicions of foul play, and the trial and conviction of her widower, Trout Shue, eventually followed. Today the Greenbrier County mystery rates a highway marker, crediting the affair as the "only known case in which testimony from a ghost helped convict a murderer."

Zona's death and later exhumation and autopsy, and her husband's subsequent trial, conviction and imprisonment, are all matters of historical record. Trout Shue's guilt and of course the role of the supernatural in the proceedings are a little more iffy. The latest person to take a hand in figuring out the tangled business is Katie Letcher Lyle, previously the author of the popular train wreck book, *Scalded to Death by the Steam.*

Lyle's Greenbrier Ghost book is *The Man Who Wanted Seven Wives,* the title coming from a supposed remark by Trout Shue to the effect that he intended to bury seven wives. (Zona was the third.) The book is a patchwork, mixing interviews of descendants, court records, news reports and a good deal of informed speculation. The result, despite minor errors of detail, is an entertaining story which produces its own solution to the mystery.

The Man Who Wanted Seven Wives is a 191-page hardback. It may be purchased for $14.95 in bookstores, or ordered from Algonquin Books, P.O. Box 2225, Chapel Hill, NC 27515. *Scalded to Death by the Steam* sells for $22.50.

Appalachian Studies at WVU

West Virginia University has announced a revivified Appalachian Studies curriculum. The program is designed to provide students a basic education in Appalachian history and culture, especially emphasizing Central Appalachia. Courses are available for both undergraduate and graduate students.

Appalachian Studies is organized as a multi-disciplinary subject at WVU, with classes available from many fields of study. Undergraduate students may select regional studies courses in history, literature, sociology, geography, music, and other fields, for example. Faculty from those departments share teaching and advisory responsibilities, under the general leadership of historian Ronald L. Lewis.

Undergraduate students may select a major or minor in Appalachian Studies. Graduate students may take a M.A. or Ph.D. degree in Appalachian history and culture. Candidates for WVU's Public History M.A. may specialize in Appalachian Studies, while fulfilling other Public History requirements as well.

Those desiring further information on the regional studies program should contact Professor Ronald L. Lewis, Appalachian Studies Advisory Committee, Department of History, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia 26506; phone (304)293-2421.

Winning Writers Collection

West Virginia Writers, Inc., has published a new book in celebration of its 10th anniversary. *And Now the Magpie* is a special collection of winning entries from the group's Annual Awards Competitions of 1983 through 1986. West Virginia Writers is an organization for the promotion and encouragement of writers in West Virginia.

Issued by the Mountain State Press of Charleston, the collection is filled with short stories, poems, essays, reports, inspirational sketches and monologues. At the end of the book is a list of all winners and winning entries from the awards competitions of the past four years.

Several authors represented in *And Now the Magpie* are known to readers of GOLDENSEAL. Among the winning writers who also have been published in this magazine are Joseph Platania, Barbara Smith, Joyce Stover and Shirley Young Campbell. Occasional contributor Helen Carper edited the book. The stories are largely about West Virginians in West Virginia settings.

And Now the Magpie is a 184-page paperback which sells for $7.95. Mountain State Press offers other West Virginia Writers books as well. *Catching the Crow*, including winning entries from West Virginia Writers' first contest, is available for $5.95. Barbara Smith's *Six Miles Out*, a novel about a West Virginia retirement community, may now be bought at the clearance price of $2.50. Add $1.50 postage and handling for the first book and 50 cents for each additional book; West Virginians should add 5% sales tax. Send your order to Mountain State Press, University of Charleston, 2300 MacCorkle Avenue, Charleston, West Virginia 25304.

North Branch History

The North Branch of the Potomac River is the northwestern border for West Virginians living in Grant and Mineral counties, rippling between them and the Marylanders on the other side. The story of the sharing of the beautiful stream by the citizens of the two states is told in *Where The Potomac Begins: A History of the North Branch Valley*. The new book is by former Maryland Congressman Gilbert Gude. In 1975 Gude hiked the 385-mile length of the Potomac River, "from its first spring in the West Virginia mountains to its confluence with the Chesapeake Bay," and his book grew out of that trek. There is a foreword by former West Virginia Senator Jennings Randolph.

The book begins with a geological and aboriginal history of the North Branch Valley. There is a chapter on early white explorers in the area which tells how, when North America was still a British holding, the Maryland and Virginia borders were marked. The "first spring" of the Potomac River was designated as the juncture of Maryland's southern and western borders, and the Fairfax Stone was placed at that point in 1736.

During his travels, Gude visited the coal towns of Kempton, Maryland, and Elk Garden, West Virginia, taking time to talk with area residents. There is a history of each place, and a striking 1939 photographic portfolio of Kempton residents by John Vachon, taken from the U. S. Farm Security Administration collection. The North Branch Valley is mining country, and Congressman Gude pays particular attention to labor and industrial history. His book ends with a discussion of the area's present environmental problems.

Where the Potomac Begins is a handsome, well designed 185-page hardback, with chapter notes, bibliography and index, and black and white photos. The book is available in bookstores for $18.95, or may be ordered from the publisher. Mail orders may be sent to Seven Locks Press, P. O. Box 72, Cabin John, MD 20818.

Coal History Archives

The Eastern Regional Coal Archives opened at the Craft Memorial Library in Bluefield in September 1986. The new archives houses an extensive collection of documents and other materials pertaining to the history of the bituminous coal industry of the region, according to archivist C. Stuart McGehee.

The heart of the regional archives is the Pocahontas Operators Association collection of files and photographs. The association included coal operators from throughout the Pocahontas Coalfield, covering Mercer and surrounding coal counties in West Virginia and Virginia. McGehee, who serves also as a Bluefield College history professor, notes that the Pocahontas collection includes nearly 5,000 black and white photographs. The pictures cover the 1880-1950 period, with by far the most coming from the 1930's. Records in the collection cover the financial affairs of the operators association, particularly for the 1940's and '50's.

The archives includes miscellaneous other materials from a very wide variety of sources. There are company store accounts, land company records, maps, payroll records and the personal papers of local historian Charles F. Brooks and coal operator L. E. Tierney. Published materials include industry directories, coalfield newspapers and United Mine Workers *Journals*. There are oral histories of miners, operators and others.

The Eastern Regional Coal Archives is a research collection, open to scholars and others with an interest in the industrial past of the southern coalfields. The archives, located on the second floor of Craft Memorial Library, is open weekday afternoons and by appointment. Readers may call 325-2943 for further information.

Films of West Virginia and Appalachia

The West Virginia Library Commission has a large and growing collection of West Virginia and regional films. Each year, Steve Fesenmaier, director of the Commission's Film Services unit, provides GOLDENSEAL with a list of recently acquired films and videotapes.

The Library Commission's collection consists of well over a hundred films, including the new ones listed below. All were made in West Virginia or the larger Appalachian region, concern state or regional issues, or are by or about West Virginians. The films are available from your local library.

Old Dry Frye 1985
30 min.
A favorite Appalachian folktale, filmed in the Georgia mountains. A traveling preacher called Old Dry Frye loves free home-cooked meals, especially chicken. While enjoying himself at the table of a poor farm couple, he chokes on a wishbone. A comedy of errors results as each family in the community comes to believe they have caused the death of Preacher Frye.

Wild, Wonderful West Virginia 1980
25 min.
Official travelogue, made by the State. West Virginia's educational institutions, scenic beauty, diverse natural resources, recreation areas and social and economic climate.

The Electric Valley 1983
90 min.
Franklin Roosevelt's Tennessee Valley Authority was the largest social experiment ever undertaken in a democratic country. In 1933 it was designed to pull much of the South from the Depression and traditional poverty. After more than 50 years, the TVA remains powerful and controversial.

Illiteracy in West Virginia 1985
25 min.
One of America's leading problems, as it pertains to the Mountain State. Interviews with men and women around the state demonstrate the calamity of not being able to read.

Story of English:
The Guid Scots Tongue 1986
55 min.
Since World War II, the accent of country music has become world-famous. Originally it comes from Scotland, by way of Appalachia. The Scots-Irish spread their language and their ways worldwide.

Thunder Road 1954
76 min.
The Library Commission had this print specially made for the movie's fans in West Virginia, with the cooperation of Films, Inc. Robert Mitchum stars as a Korean War vet who must prove that he's as good at driving moonshine from Harlan County to Memphis as he was before the war. Great black and white images, jazz singers and hillbillies. Son Jim Mitchum stars as Robert's brother. The model for many similar films, but this is the original!

Aurora Bicentennial

The story of the Preston County community of Aurora goes back to 1787, when pioneers led by John Stough settled the area. On their way from western Maryland, Stough saw the other man in his party swept away by a dangerous river. "Thus I was alone with the women in the wagon to behold the solemn scene," he later recalled, "with the judgment of God resting on us."

Divine providence proved favorable, as it turned out, and the people of Aurora will gather this June to celebrate the 200th anniversary of their town. The congregation of Saint Paul's Lutheran Church will take a leading role in marking the bicentennial, and plan a church homecoming service for Sunday, June 21. A square dance and craft fair are among other activities scheduled for the weekend.

Aurorans are eager to share their 200-year history with visitors, and bicentennial organizers stress that the celebration is open to everyone. Activities are planned for Saturday, June 20, and Sunday, June 21. For further information, contact Elizabeth Loughrie, Route 1, Box 95, Aurora, West Virginia 26705; phone (304)735-6691.

Mountain State Art & Craft Fair

Jackson County's Cedar Lakes is once again the site of the annual Mountain State Art & Craft Fair, now in its 25th year. A five-day celebration of Appalachian craftsmanship, the fair includes contests, demonstrations, plenty of food and down-home entertainment.

Music lovers will find a mixture of oldtime melodies highlighting the dulcimer, banjo and fiddle. Those with a hearty appetite will enjoy barbecued chicken, corn-on-the-cob, beef barbeque, country ham, homemade ice cream and other mouthwatering treats.

This year's crafts include pottery, woodworking, furniture making, patchwork, basketry, weaving and more. Photography, painting and jewelry making are among the other offerings. Visitors to Cedar Lakes will be able to observe demonstrations of each by expert craftspeople.

The Art & Craft Fair runs from Wednesday, July 1, through Sunday, July 5. Admission is $4.00 for adults and $1.00 for children ages six to 12, with those under six admitted free. Special rates are available for senior citizens and groups of 20 or more. Located off I-77 near Ripley, the Cedar Lakes Conference Center hosts the Art & Craft Fair and other attractions throughout the year. Call (304)232-5424 for further information.

Ohio River Odyssey

The Huntington Museum of Arts, formerly the Huntington Galleries, will open a new exhibition entitled "Ohio River Odyssey" this summer. Funded largely by the Humanities Foundation of West Virginia, the exhibit will include paintings, prints, historical photographs and artifacts portraying the history of the Ohio River.

The exhibition is organized as a journey down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati, highlighting the river towns along the way. Some of the paintings and artifacts will be borrowed from such institutions as the Smithsonian, the Corcoran, the Mariner's Museum and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. The "Ohio River Odyssey" will run from July 17 through December 31, 1987.

Marshall University's Geography Department is sponsoring an Ohio River Odyssey Symposium in conjunction with the Ohio River Odyssey. The symposium will include papers, special sessions and media presentations from history, geography, folklore, economics and other fields. Abstracts of papers and pro-

posals for special sessions should be submitted no later than June 19, 1987 to Dr. Mack H. Gillenwater, Department of Geography, Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia 25701; (304)696-3170.

Bound GOLDENSEAL Volumes

Each year, a limited number of special hardbound volumes of GOLDENSEAL are offered for sale from The Cultural Center Shop. Volume 12, which includes the 1986 GOLDENSEAL spring, summer, fall and winter issues, is now available for $25. The winter issue contains an index of all GOLDENSEAL articles published in 1986, making the volume a fine West Virginia folklife reference.

Some earlier volumes are still available. All of the annual volumes are designed to match as a set. Each is bound in light golden buckram fabric with the title, volume number and year imprinted in carmine red on the spine. The library-quality binding was done by the Mount Pleasant Book Bindery of Hampshire County.

To order by mail, write to The Shop, The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25305. Prepayment of $25 per volume, plus $2.00 postage and handling and $1.25 sales tax for West Virginia residents, should accompany all mail orders. Checks or money orders should be made out to The Shop.

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.

Oak Grove, Oregon
January 25, 1987
Dear GOLDENSEAL:
Enclosed please find a check for $12.50 for a subscription to GOLDENSEAL.

My original subscription, many years ago, was arranged by an aged miner from Summersville, with whom I had corresponded from my senior year in high school, in Washington, D.C., in 1962, through until I stopped hearing from him about seven years ago. He had seen a poem I wrote that was published in the *UMWA Journal*, and contacted me through that publication. I thoroughly enjoyed my correspondence with him, and have enjoyed receiving your magazine.

When I was very small, about five years old, my family lived in Morgantown, West Virginia, for about two years. We lived in an old Victorian house called Wyles Castle, which sat up at the top of a hill above Grand Avenue, looking out over the river. As a child, it was heaven — lots of lion's teeth in the fireplace, "hidden hiddyholes" in the attic, and a perfectly round room on the third floor that looked out at the rabbits playing in the morning.

Since then, I have lived many, many places. Oregon is my home, but the home of my childhood is definitely Morgantown. I am sending several copies of GOLDENSEAL to our new governor, for whom I worked when he was mayor of Portland, in hopes that he might see fit to launch a similar magazine here in Oregon.
Sincerely,
Susan B. Kerr

Ona, West Virginia
April 22, 1987
Dear Sir:
Thanks for sending me the spring issue of GOLDENSEAL. I do so much enjoy reading it, from cover to cover.

Last year, when I was still working, someone had been xeroxing a page and happened to leave it on the glass. I was the next one to use the machine and immediately I began to read the article. I became interested and then found out the address and started getting the magazine myself.

I grew up on a farm in Cabell County, 263 acres, and lots of your stories are typical of farm families. I hope sometime to get some notes together and give you a story from Cabell County.
Yours truly,
Mrs. M.H. Grimes, Jr.

Beekeeping

Macedon, New York
January 19, 1987
Dear Editor:
How very interesting it was to read the articles on beekeeping in the winter 1986 issue. I was born in West Virginia in Greenbrier County and started working with bees before World War II.

Then I started commercial beekeeping here in New York state and was an apiary inspector for the Department of Agriculture and markets for 29 years.

Having retired in 1980, I still keep around 300 hives of bees. We get some fine honey here in New York near Rochester.
Sincerely,
Benson E. Gabbert

Mine Wars

Gahanna, Ohio
April 7, 1987
Editor:
Your review of the book *Thunder in the Mountains* sure brought lots of

memories to me. We lived in a small town about three miles below Matewan called Sprigg, West Virginia. We lived beside the railroad tracks. Harry Staton was killed and was buried in the lot where he lived just below us. I had three brothers. Two worked in the mines. Dave was a barber, the one they tried for the shooting of Harry. He lived across from the mines on the Kentucky side, called Burnwell.

They shot into my brother's house, into the closet through a coat and into the davenport. Our mom would take us four girls up on the hill behind my brother's house, to an old coal bank. We went into the coal bank, stayed all night. Other people were there too. Some people lived in tents. My brother was cleared of the killing, but a man named McCoy went to the pen.

I just wonder if there could be anybody else living that could remember about all that. Soldiers were there. There were just two persons allowed to be talking together. If there was more than that they would be arrested. Our names was Phillips. We lived in Mingo County. It was called Bloody Mingo. They say the Indians fought there, too.
Sincerely,
Mrs. Etta Greene

Grafton

Orlando, West Virginia
April 11, 1987
Dear Editor:
My many thanks to Mary Ellen Mahaffey for the write-up about Grafton.

I was born in Grafton and lived there until I was 13 when my father, Eldon Nye, was transferred to Clarksburg and later to Weston. I guess it will always be my favorite place on earth and I go back every year at Memorial Day or close to then to decorate the cemeteries there. I remember riding the train from Grafton to Clarksburg to visit an aunt.

When Mahaffey talked about the Opera House it brought back so clearly a family recollection about my oldest brother who, although still wearing the pinafores standard for little boys in those days, was a habitual runaway. On this particular evening he came up missing and in spite of all the help of neighbors, police and others who searched railroad stations, ice cream parlors and the Opera House he could not be found. Finally about 11 that night my father in desperation suggested that they look at the Opera House again as it was one of Bud's favorite places. There they finally found him, sound asleep in one of the boxes.

Many years after we had left Grafton, we continued to return as often as we possibly could, to attend the St. Paul's Lutheran Church, to visit our step-grandfather and grandmother, Frank and Minnie Gough, two of the dearest people on earth, and for the Memorial Day parade.

I am now 69 years old and have been gone from Grafton for a long time as time is measured, but not in memories. I guess I could write a book on all the wonderful summer evening my father took us swimming in the Tygart River on the South Side.

I enjoy reading the magazine so much and would not like to be without it.
Sincerely,
Mrs. Hetty Nye Finster

Lula and Adam Adkins

Leet, West Virginia
April, 1987
Dear Sir:
In your Spring 1987 issue of GOLDENSEAL magazine you had an article on a couple who are neighbors of mine. Their names are Lula and Ad Adkins. Lula let me read her copy and I must say I really enjoyed it. These are truly wonderful people. There is never an idle minute in their day, they're the hardest working couple I've ever seen, especially for their ages. Surely that is what has made them so young.
Donna Sutherland

Dulcimer Playing

Fredericksburg, Virginia
February 2, 1987
Editor:
I was recently introduced to GOLDENSEAL by a friend who gets it from a friend, so you see your magazine gets around. I had never heard of GOLDENSEAL until a couple of weeks ago but by now I have read the better part of four issues spread out from 1984 to 1986. I was particularly interested in the story about the Dulcimer Man, Russell Fluharty.

I lived just over the hill from Mannington at Fairview for most of my childhood and young adulthood. Being an amateur musician I had occasion to play with an old dulcimer player named Simon Myers, from over on Days Run between Daybrook and Pentress. That was about 1958 and I don't imagine that Simon is still around, but I'm curious as to what happened to his old hammered dulcimer. If I visit back there this summer I intend to go down on Days Run, see if it might be possible to track it down. If I'm successful, I may pay a visit to Russell, for some instruction.

In the meantime here's my check for $12.50. Hope I'm in time for the spring 1987 issue.
Denzil R. Kitzmiller

"The Sign of the Happy Clown"

Looking Back at Camden Park

By Joseph Platania
Photographs by Michael Keller

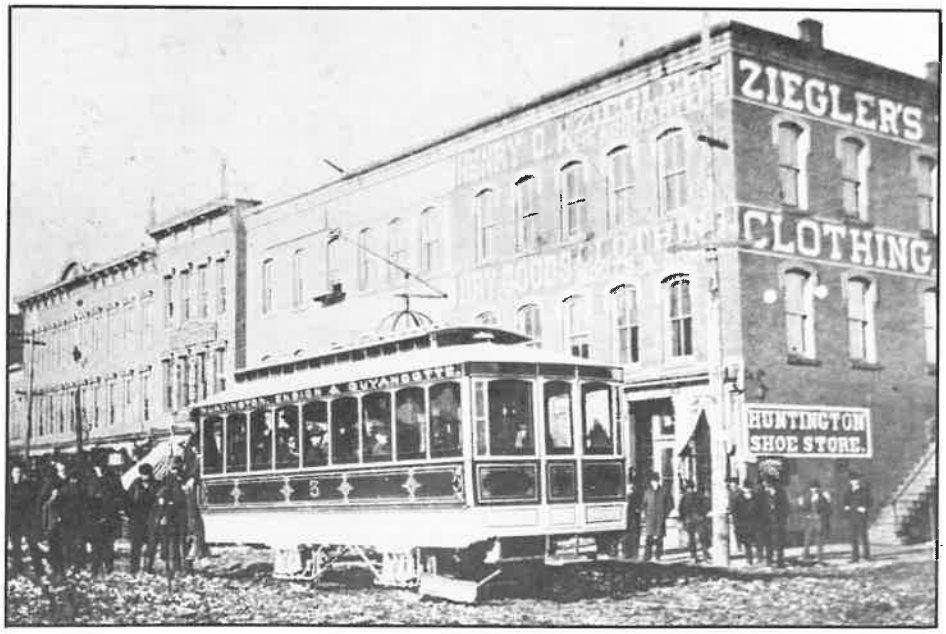
Even before you park your car on the blacktopped lot you catch the rhythm of Camden Park. There is the beat of calliope music from the carousel, the rumble and clickety-clack of the roller coaster mingled with the screams of its riders, and the shouts of the Dodgem car drivers. Peals of laughter come from young children and there is the noise of the crowd milling along the tree-shaded midway.

The carnival atmosphere is quite different from the days when a Sunday afternoon saw a celluloid-collared gent escort his sweetheart aboard the streetcar to Camden for a picnic. The Wayne County park has its roots in the bygone age when the streetcar line was the royal road of travel in urban areas. For a nickel or so one could ride downtown, across town, out into the suburbs, or even to a nearby city. These marvels of technology were powered by the electrical energy in overhead wires. By the 1890's almost every large and medium-sized city in America had electric "trolleys" rolling on slender rails down the center of its streets.

Outlying amusement parks and picnic areas were started on the streetcar lines. West Virginia had Luna Park and Edgewood in Charleston and Rock Springs Park in Hancock County, all beginning as streetcar parks. Camden Park was developed as a picnic area by the Camden Interstate Railway, to boost weekend and holiday passenger traffic. Unlike most streetcar parks of that era, Camden has survived into the 1980's as a thriving amusement park.

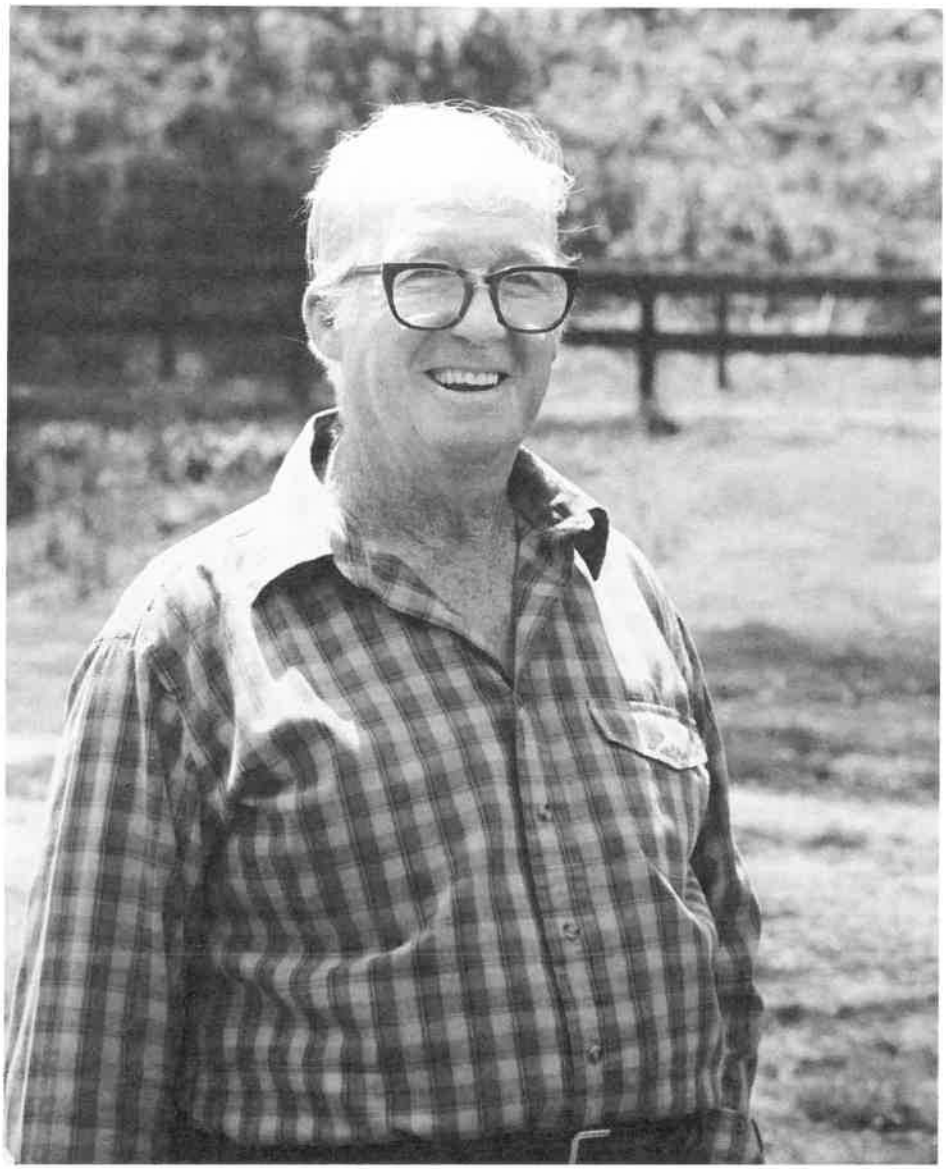
When Camden Park first opened, Teddy Roosevelt was president and the ragtime of Scott Joplin and the marching music of John Phillip Sousa emanated from local bandstands. In succeeding decades the amusement park just west of Huntington would be the setting for the first local baseball games, thousands of picnics, fairs, marathon dancing, roller derbies, flagpole sitting, a swimming pool, a zoo, scores of different rides, and many other attractions. A West

It's white-knuckle time as the Camden Park roller coaster heads over the top for its first plunge downward. The "Big Dipper," a classic coaster, is the park's main attraction.



Above: Huntington's streetcar age began in 1888, with the first electric car, shown here, appearing the following year. Camden Park was built by the streetcar company to boost passenger demand on weekends and holidays. Photographer unknown.

Below: Harry Nudd looks like a man who knows how to create fun. He managed the park during the come-back period beginning in the late 1940's.



Virginia landmark, Camden Park has been in operation each summer since 1903.

From annual visits between 1908 and 1918, Doris C. Miller, a former Huntington newspaperwoman and city historian, recalled Camden's early years. "Always there was a roller coaster and a lake with boats I never rode in," Miller wrote. "But many trips were made in the little train, on its tracks around the lake. In the evenings, music drifted down from the bandstand on top of the Indian Mound, played by fine Huntington musicians directed by Joseph Gallick. And for a nickel or a dime, one could purchase a stick topped with childhood's favorite confection, cotton candy."

Camden Park is on property originally owned by Samuel Sperry Vinson. At one time, Vinson owned 10,000 acres on or near the Ohio and Big Sandy rivers. His oldest son, Zachary Taylor Vinson, was a prominent Huntington attorney for nearly 45 years. Z. T. Vinson took a great interest in local railroading, including electric street railways. In 1899, he began gathering the rail lines which were combined as the Camden Interstate Railway in 1903. The company was named for its principal owner, Senator Johnson Newlon Camden of Parkersburg.

Senator Camden was a big-league capitalist. Born in Lewis County in 1828, he is described in historian John Alexander Williams's *West Virginia and the Captains of Industry* as "a founder of West Virginia's oil industry, associate of John D. Rockefeller and the Standard Oil Company, and a developer of railroad, coal, and timber enterprises in the northern and central parts of the state." In 1892 and again in 1902, Camden was one of only five West Virginia millionaires included in several authoritative lists. He was twice nominated as a Democrat for governor and elected by the state legislature as a U.S. Senator in 1880. By 1900 Camden was one of the most powerful men in the state.

In 1881-82 Camden began the construction of the Ohio River Railroad from Wheeling to Huntington, heading a syndicate of Standard Oil and Senatorial colleagues, Philadelphia bankers, and coal magnates. In 1890

Camden's attorney, Z. T. Vinson, obtained from the city of Huntington franchises to continue the line between Guyandotte, just east of Huntington, and Kenova as part of the Ohio River Railroad.

Miller states in her *Centennial History of Huntington, 1871-1971,* that "electric lights first shone on Huntington's streets on November 12, 1888." According to Huntington's weekly newspaper: "The night was dark and wet and pedestrians who were picking their way over crossings . . . hailed with joy the sudden flash of 15 globes of electric light." The illumination was provided by the Huntington Electric Light and Street Railway Company, which had been chartered to furnish the city with electric lights and transportation.

The company's streetcars began rolling just over a month later, on December 15. Horse-drawn cars made several trips daily on tracks laid up Third Avenue. Electric cars began operating when the line was completed to Guyandotte in 1889. Horses and mules powered the city's second street railway, the Huntington Belt Line, from 1890 until 1892, when the two lines merged as the Consolidated Light and Power Company. "All streetcars were run by electricity thereafter," states Miller.

Electric street railways made little further progress until Z. T. Vinson persuaded investors of the need for interurban service. He envisioned a consolidated regional company and interested Senator Camden in the idea. It was on Camden's behalf that Vinson in 1899 acquired the streetcar companies and subsidiary operations serving Catlettsburg and Ashland and Ironton, Ohio. By the end of the year Vinson had incorporated the Ohio Valley Electric Company and arranged to buy Huntington's electric railway company. A connecting line and bridge were built across the Big Sandy River and service between Huntington and Ashland, Kentucky, begun in July 1903.

According to historian Festus P. Summers, the new streetcar line began at Guyandotte, two miles east of Huntington, and extended through Huntington and along the southern shore of the Ohio to Kenova. Here the tracks crossed the Big Sandy into Kentucky and proceeded through Catlettsburg and along the Ohio River to Ashland. At Ashland a steam ferry carried passengers to Coal Grove on the Ohio side where they boarded cars for Ironton. The entire line covered 27 miles and served a growing industrial area. In order to avoid any inter-city conflict over the name and since Johnson Camden owned 90 percent of the bonds, the line was christened the Camden Interstate Railway.

The "Magic Rainbow" is a popular ride at Camden Park. Centrifugal force holds riders to the outer rim as the big bowl spins.

The Camden Interstate line's exchange point between Huntington and Ashland fell near the confluence of Twelvepole Creek and the Ohio River in northern Wayne County. A 27-acre tract of level farmland, part of old Sam Vinson's holdings, lay nearby. A natural, tree-shaded site for picnicking, it was dubbed "Camden Park" and opened to the public.

Doris Miller recalled that with power drawn from the streetcar cable, Camden Park was one of the first places in that part of Wayne County

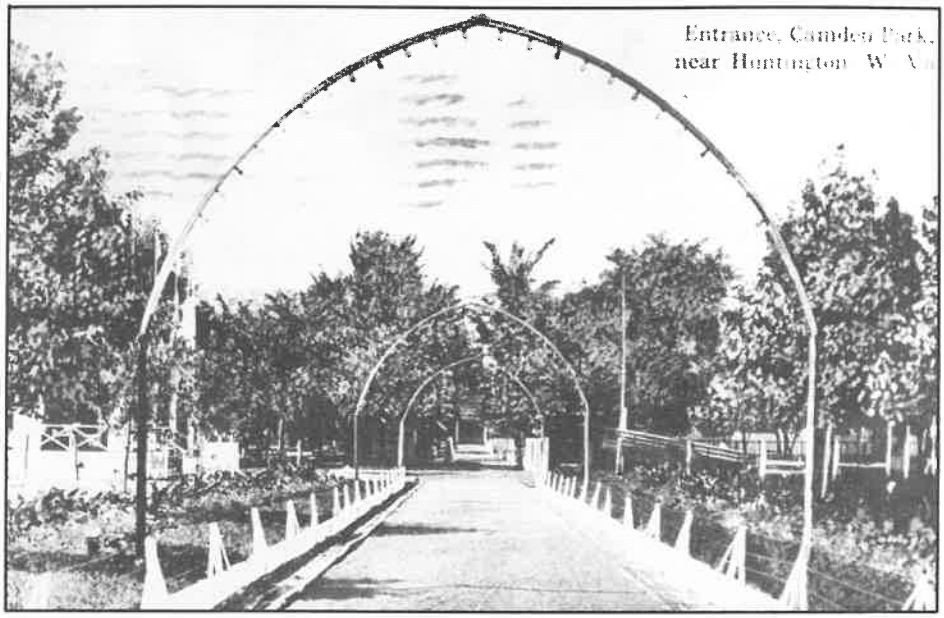
to have electric lights. In 1903 a pavilion was built for picnics, square dancing, and family reunions. A few rides were installed in 1907, including the present merry-go-round. By 1920 there were about six rides, including a small steam locomotive and a roller coaster. Camden's prehistoric Indian mound was used as a bandstand site during the early years.

Around 1910 Camden Park, with seven rides and a swimming pool, hired Colonel E. G. Via as manager. According to one account, Via had been in the restaurant business in Virginia. In 1916, he bought Camden Park from the streetcar company. He ran the place until his death in 1946.

Camden bustled during the three decades of Via ownership. The local musicians union sponsored concerts by the Huntington Citizens Band, which also played for summer dances at the park. There was a large pool with a diving board and slide, one of the first open to the public. "The park had its own well and pump and the water in the pool was generally ice cold," local historian Byron Morris remembers of the 1920's.

Below: Early postcard view of the park entrance. The arches had dozens of light bulbs, lit by power tapped from the streetcar line. Photographer and date unknown.

Bottom: Women's swimwear was more modest in the old days. This view of the Camden pool is from 1910. Photographer unknown.



Morris recalled prizefights at the park grounds. West Virginian Bob Martin, the heavyweight champion of the World War I American Expeditionary Force, fought there. The park was also the setting for "clandestine and illegal cockfights," according to Morris. Those engaged in this activity could slip into the park from the nearby Ohio River. Police raids made it a precarious sport.

On some holidays there were hot-air balloon ascensions from the park, Morris says of these years. One big balloon merely drifted over the streetcar line and the B&O tracks and landed on a hill just across from the park. Morris recalls the lake that covered from six to 10 acres behind the swimming pool. There was a dock where skiffs could be rented.

The Depression made Camden Park "a real white elephant," according to Morris. "Someone then could have bought the park for a song," he figures. A faltering economy was just one of many changes affecting the park. With the passage of time, the streetcar gave way to new streets and eventually a modern concrete highway went past Camden Park's gates. Cars and buses now brought park visitors by way of U.S. Route 60. There was the big 1937 Ohio River flood that covered the park, and then World War II. By 1946, patronage had reached a low point. That year the heirs of Colonel Via sold Camden to James P. Boylin, a Huntington furniture dealer.

Boylin needed partners to operate the park. He thought of Harry Nudd of Chicago, whom he had known since 1930. Nudd looked the place over and evidently liked what he saw. A corporation was formed with Boylin, Nudd and H. J. Malloy as partners. Several years later Malloy was replaced with R. M. "Bob" Burley.

"I hadn't been in a park like this three times in my life before I came here," Nudd recently recalled. "But my father was a contractor and I helped him with construction. Then I

worked for the automotive branch of Kraft Foods Company. That job had to do with machinery. Construction and machinery, that's all the background I needed."

The new partners found Camden Park run-down and dirty. Everything needed a coat of paint. Most of the buildings had been badly damaged by the 1937 flood. Nudd and his crew went to work to clean, repair, and rebuild. "Back then it was just cinders and sawdust, outdoor toilets, and a few wooden shacks," Nudd remembers. "Believe me, it took a lot of hard work. We also had to put back most of the profits to make the place what it is today.

"Beer was a major source of income when I came here," he continued, speaking of the partners' desire to make Camden into a family park. "The restaurant used to be a beer garden. But when you have beer, you're asking for trouble. So we did away with it back in '51. For awhile people used to sneak it in in their coolers, but they know better than to try that now. Not having beer around has made the place a lot nicer."

Nudd recalled that the first ride bought under the new management was called the "Caterpillar." It came from the old Coney Island amusement park in Cincinnati and has long since been replaced, as has the original Ferris wheel. Camden Park developed a good relationship with Coney Island, according to Nudd. "Coney Island kept rides three or four years before selling them and I had the first choice on their rides and other amusement park equipment," he said.

The old roller coaster came down in 1957, to make way for the current "Big Dipper." "I was afraid of that old roller coaster, which had the old-fashioned wooden tracks and single cars," Nudd once said. "So I finally tore it down at the end of the season and built a new one with a set of plans I got for $3500 from a Dayton, Ohio, amusement company."

"It ran on a wooden track in a trough with wood side track and wood floor track," Nudd recalled of the earlier roller coaster. "Its length was 1800 feet, the same as the present coaster, but it was only 30 feet high and was in a figure-8." It was called the "New Sensation." Nudd

Above: The "Big Dipper" is an old-fashioned, wooden-frame roller coaster. It was built from plans by Harry Nudd in 1957.

Below: The zoo is gone, but animals of the inflated variety abound at Camden Park. Souvenir sales are important to the park's success.

The Camden Carousel

The "merry-go-round with its prancing horses, bright-colored with gilt trim," stood out in historian Doris C. Miller's memory from childhood visits to Camden Park. Those visits began in 1908, but the merry-go-round is still there, one of a hundred or so carved wooden carousels left in operation in the United States. Many were lost to fires and storms, and many more dismantled so that individual figures could be sold for private or commercial display.

There are 36 wooden horses and two chariots in the Camden Park carousel, which is considered to be a medium-sized one. The hand-carved horses are an endangered species. "We can't replace them," says a park official. "You can't order them. The German carvers who made them aren't around anymore."

The horses that remain are coveted antiques. Bob Burley, who was the park's assistant manager from 1949 until his death in 1981, said in a 1980 newspaper interview that the park's collection might be worth over $100,000. Collectors will pay $5000 for a single horse.

Burley came down hard on the trade in wooden horses. "On one side are the antique dealers," he told the reporter. "What they care about is how much a horse will bring at auction. On the other side are the carousel lovers. They want the carousels preserved. They are making every effort to see that none is dismantled to decorate somebody's basement."

The Camden Park carousel horses are one-of-a-kind wood carvings, and irreplaceable today. Photo by Mike Keller.

Modern carousel horses are manufactured of aluminum or fiberglass, according to Burley. "They use molds from some of the old original wooden horses, but they aren't the same. Some of the old horses were really elaborate. They had glass eyes and jewel-encrusted harnesses and natural hair tails and manes. Every carver had a style that identified his horses from all others. . . .People who know carousels can look at a horse and say 'That's a Harry Illions horse.'"

Camden's merry-go-round was installed in 1907 and is the only original ride left at the park. It was made by the Herschell-Spillman Company of North Tonowanda, New York. "Spillman was the largest manufacturer of amusement park rides in the country" for years, said Burley.

Even after countless repairs, the glossy, expressive horses maintain their vintage charm. But the once gleaming brass poles have been plated in chrome, the delicately hand-painted scenery has disappeared, and taped calliope music has replaced the double organ with its drums, cymbals and ornate mirrored facade.

"We used to keep that brass polished to a fare-thee-well," said Burley. "That was the first big job each morning, to polish the brass on the merry-go-round. But it got to be too much."

Repairs on carousel horses are made almost daily during the regular season. Herb Blevins is Camden Park's maintenance supervisor. Before the 1987 season opened there were four horses off their poles and lying on their sides on his repair bench. Blevins said that they had been sanded and readied

for the artist's spray gun. Four other horses had already been painted and were fixed upright in a different part of the shop.

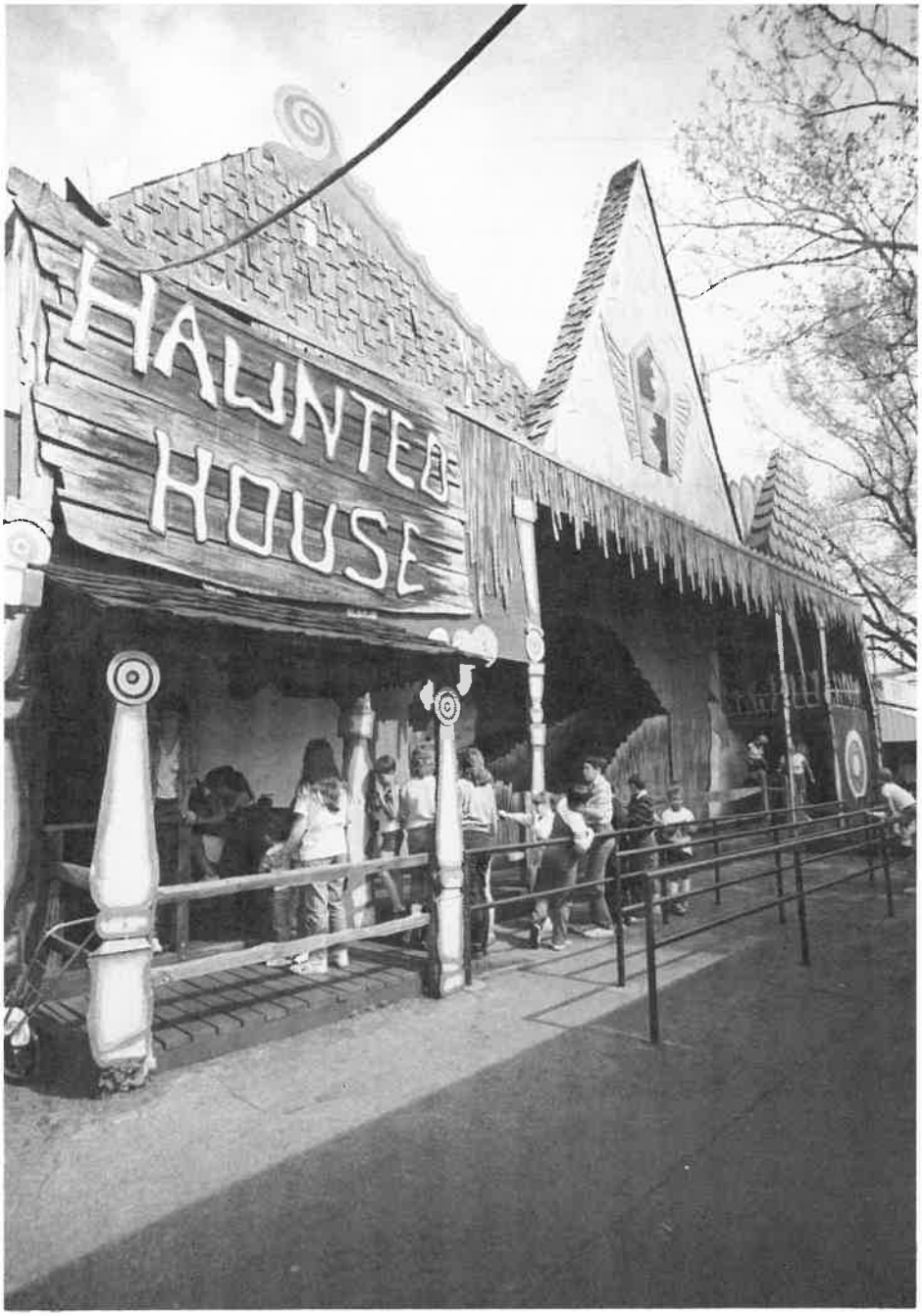
Blevins explained that there are three sizes of horses on the Camden Park carousel: The largest horses with the most elaborately trimmed saddles, bridles and stirrups ride on the outside, the next row are the medium-size horses, and the smallest and least decorated ride the inside track. There are two wooden chariots with benches for parents to watch small children on the horses. Each man-made steed is in a different position, nostrils flaring, manes tossing and legs prancing as they ride up and down in a counterclockwise whirl.

The maintenance boss pointed out the small metal horseshoes on the wooden hooves that demonstrate the long-ago craftsmen's attention to detail. He showed how the horses now on his repair bench were originally assembled in sections. The carved pieces were carefully fitted together, with the legs in several sections and the horse's body in two halves and hollow inside. This makes repairs easier, especially for the lower legs and hooves, which take the most punishment.

Blevins hoped to have a dozen horses repainted in time for the park's late April opening. Fortunately, he has not had a lot of trouble with the carousel's machinery this year. Several years ago he had to replace a worn bearing which bore a 1916 date.

Expert craftsmanship is a trademark of the hand-carved animals on carousels like the one at Camden Park. The park's workers have continued this tradition by carefully restoring their horses with the glistening, vibrant colors of their heyday. Because of their work, parents and grandparents of today can watch their youngsters pull themselves into the same saddles which they themselves once occupied for a magic ride of the imagination.

— Joseph Platania



The "Haunted House" is a popular midaway attraction. Games of skill are among the other offerings of this part of the park.

believes it was the last of its kind in the United States.

Nudd built the "Big Dipper" in seven weeks. He bought the cars and trains ready-made and purchased the lumber from a Huntington lumberyard. The 45-foot-high coaster opened in 1958.

The "Big Dipper" provides the sights and sounds that purists love. The immense criss-cross wooden superstructure ensures the squeaks as well as the ear-pounding roar and rough-and-tumble feel that are lost in the stark, low-riding, and silent steel coasters now popular in large theme parks. Nudd himself has ridden big roller coasters like the one at Kings Island. "I was the only gray-haired person in line," he jokes. Afterwards he was glad to come home to the "Big Dipper." "The Camden Park coaster gives a smoother ride, although it is not as high as the big ones," he says.

Bob Burley was in charge of the business end of the operation. Nudd handled the rides and personnel and Burley did the rest, including public relations. In an interview before his 1981 death, Burley credited Nudd as the guiding force behind Camden's rebirth as a family amusement park.

For years Camden Park had the only permanent zoo within 150 miles. That was phased out in 1971, after it had become "more and more

of a problem." During its heyday the zoo had a menagerie consisting of an elephant, deer, llamas, a variety of monkeys, lions, prairie dogs, bears, fowl, and other animals. George the sea lion gained national attention when he escaped into the Ohio River and swam more than 200 miles downstream before being captured and returned. Erma Lowe, now the office manager, said that the zoo was a children's zoo.

Mrs. Lowe has been with the park since 1963 and has memories going back much earlier. She recalled that in the early '40's Camden had the Cabaret Club with dance bands and live entertainment. Down through the years the roller coaster has remained the most popular ride and the Dodgem cars second, she said. Park managers used to weigh tickets collected for individual rides and could judge popularity that way. With a single admission now good for all rides all day, it is harder to gauge a ride's success, she noted.

The park has had a new ride every four or five years and tries to have a new attraction every other year, according to Lowe. The newest rides are a log flume called the "West Virginia Logging Company" and a kiddie roller coaster. There are now 26 rides at Camden Park.

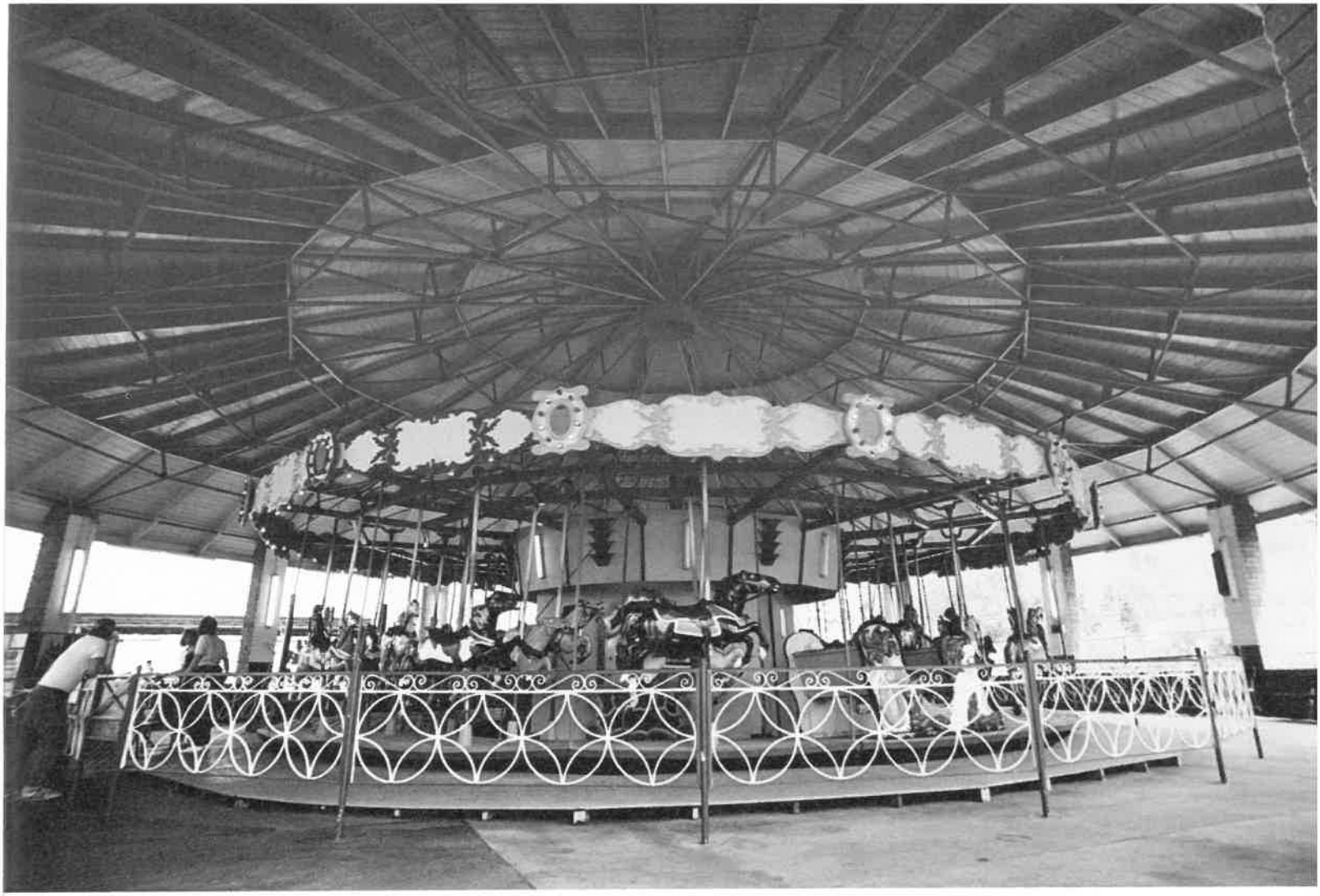
Mrs. Lowe said that the Ferris wheel has been gone for 12 to 15 years. "We couldn't find a qualified operator for the ride, one who knew how to balance the cars on the wheel." A flying scooter ride took its place, she said. There also was a midway attraction for many years called "Laff in the Dark," replaced by the present "Haunted House."

A roller rink has been a Camden fixture for more than 50 years. An earlier rink burned down but was replaced with the present one which is open all year. The rink has been used for roller derbies and regional skating contests.

Camden Park got its start as a picnic ground and the tradition remains alive today. Each year almost 1100 groups have picnics there. Practically every Saturday or Sunday is reserved by some organization. Groups of at least 3000 people occasionally rent the entire park. Meals for more than 5000 have been catered by the park's kitchen facilities, known for its fried chicken dinners.

In 1978, the sternwheeler "Camden Queen" was added to the park's attractions. It gives a 45-minute ride on the Ohio River, leaving from the park's boat landing on Twelvepole Creek. The two-deck boat is 77 feet long and carries 60 passengers. The "Queen" is a small reproduction of an 1886 packet boat of the type which traveled the Ohio. The boat is the property of Captain Gene Lister, a riverman since he was 16.

The Dodgem cars are traditionally Camden's second most popular ride, after the "Big Dipper" roller coaster.



The carousel is the park's oldest ride, dating back to 1907. The wooden horses are being restored to their original condition.

Harry Nudd recalled that when he first came to Camden Park there was a building called the "Hillbilly Barn" where the roller rink is now. It featured country musicians from the tri-state area. The Hillbilly Barn was torn down in 1946 or '47, Nudd remembered. The park has added big-name country acts since then, especially for Memorial Day, the 4th of July, and Labor Day.

At the time of the park's sale to J. P. Boylin, all the rides, concession stands, and other attractions had been leased out to independent operators, according to Nudd. In 1946 there were about "nine rickety old rides." Even the antique merry-go-round was leased out. The carousel was housed in a wooden shed and the horses were all painted black, many had no tails, and legs and hooves were broken off. Nudd built the present building for the carousel, now restored and considered priceless.

Nudd recalled that the lake was drained in 1959. The small rowboats that rented for 25 cents an hour got to be too much trouble, since kids would leave them at the far side of the lake. The nearby swimming pool had been closed in 1949. It had no filtration system and by then it couldn't compete with the much larger Dreamland Pool a mile away. The pool was later used for the sea lions at the park's zoo.

"One mistake I made," according to Nudd, was to do away with the old steam locomotive that pulled the little train that Doris Miller recalled. He replaced it with a more modern-looking gasoline locomotive and train in the 1950's. "Many people remembered the steam locomotive and missed it when they came to the park and wanted to know why I changed it," he admits.

The late Bob Burley, Nudd's assistant manager, was just out of Marshall College when he first worked for J. P. Boylin as a furniture salesman. In 1949 he went to work at Camden Park. "During the park's season Burley and I would be at the park every day, seven days a week," Nudd says. "I would open it up and then lock it up at night. The rest of the year I would check on the park every day.

"We tried the handstamp single-admission system after Coney Island started using it for their slowest day," Nudd continues. "We extended it to two days and then went to it entirely. Now for $6.75 you can ride all the rides, all day. This compares with a large park where, between the cost for parking and all-day admission, it could run $20 a person."

During the 1980's about 500,000 visitors, most of them from nearby areas of Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia, annually pass through Camden Park's turnstiles. In spring and summer, crowds are very common, especially July 4th, when 15,000 or more come for the star entertainers and the fireworks display. Between 165 and 180 employees work there full-time at the height of the season. Only 15 are employed year-round.

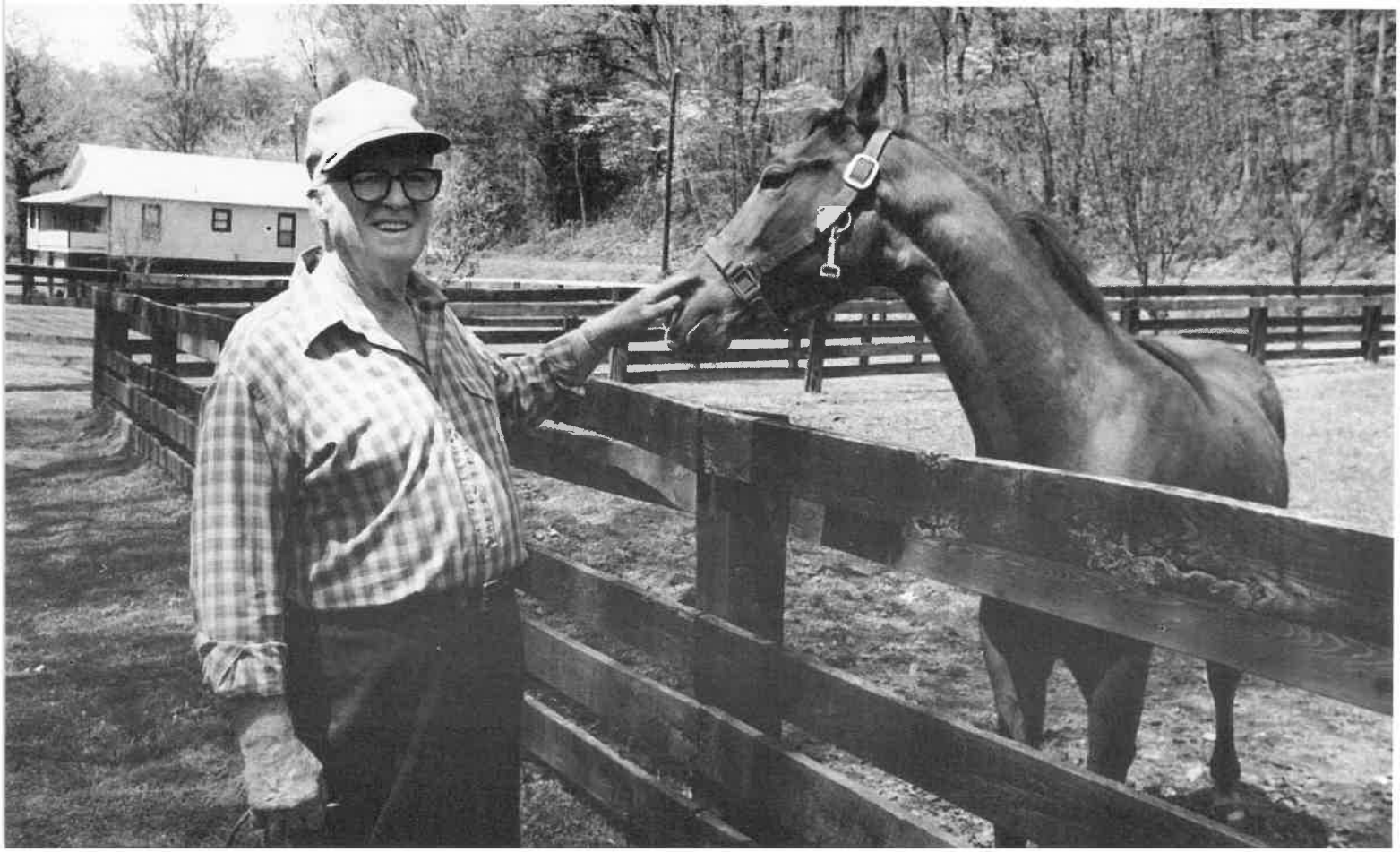
Nudd has ideas why Camden has survived competition from the much larger theme parks in neighboring states. "For one thing, it is the only amusement park in this part of the country," he reflects. "Then, too, it has been well maintained. It is a real safe place. Parents can drop their kids off here and go shopping, knowing the kids will be OK."

After Nudd's retirement in 1980, Camden Park was sold to investors from Virginia. B. R. Roberts, one of the owners, is now general manager of the park.

Surviving both the decades and competition, the 27-acre fun park has served more than three generations of tri-state residents. It's not Disney World, but people enjoy the small, friendly park. Maybe it's the convenient location, the venerable tradition, or the cozy size itself. Whatever the formula, it works. Camden Park, still young at heart at 84 years old, holds its own against the giants and keeps visitors coming back to "The Sign of the Happy Clown."

Left: Camden Park's happy clown keeps bringing them in. The amusement park turns 85 next year.

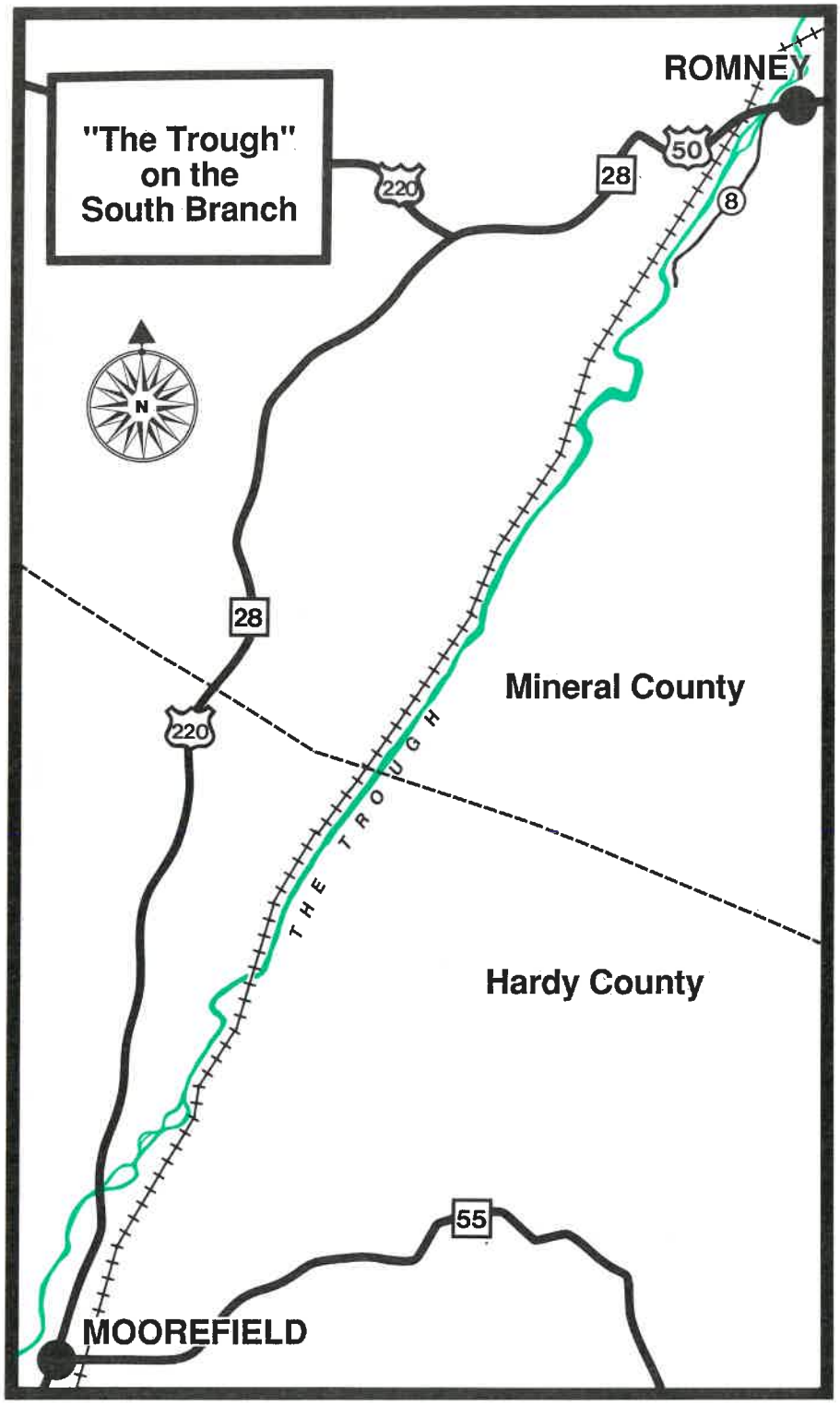
Below: Harry Nudd has traded his wooden carousel horses for the real flesh-and-blood item. He lives in retirement in Wayne County.



train crossed the bridge.

The mountains seemed to come together in a high V as we approached the canyon. Along the riverbanks stood giant oak, poplar, and sycamore trees with scars 20 feet above the water, denoting the ice jams that sometimes take place during spring break-up. I could not see how there would be room for a river in this narrow valley, let alone a river and a railroad.

A short distance into the gorge, Don said this was where we wanted to fish. The conductor pulled the cord and the train came to a stop. We went to our boxcar, unloaded our equipment, and piled it along the tracks. Soon the train was on its way toward Romney, 15 miles away. We took our baggage down to a spot a few feet above the water and just above a big flat rock that must have weighed tons. We made camp, then put the boat in the water, hooked up its electric motor, and set our trotline for catfish about 30 yards above camp.



When we came back and stepped out of the boat onto the big rock, we got the first surprise of the trip. While we had been putting out the trotline, the raccoons had been busy at our camp. Our bread was scattered clear up to the railroad tracks. We were able to save about two loaves out of the six we started with.

About dusk the Trough took on a different character. Somewhere high on the mountain behind camp a lone hoot owl began to call. A camper on a bend in the river above us answered. That camper and the owl must have talked for 30 minutes. Soon the mountain across the river began to light up with fireflies. There must have been millions of them, maybe holding a convention. I have never seen anything like that, before or since. A slight breeze started to blow up the Trough and a whippoorwill could be heard now and then somewhere down the river.

About 11:30, Don suggested we run the trotline to check for fish. We started at the end nearest camp. When we finished on the other side of the river, we had taken a fish from every hook but two. That meant 52 catfish, some of them bullheads and some channel cats. We came back to the big rock and put the fish on two stringers. One we tied to the back of the boat, the other to a tree on the bank so it could drift under the boulder. It was time for a cup of coffee and a little sleep.

I awoke just before daylight and turned my spotlight on the boat to see if all was as it should be. I saw six pairs of little, bright, shining eyes. I called Don and headed for the boat. There sat six raccoons, eating something they shouldn't have been. They jumped up on the rock and on into the bushes. Those coons had pulled that stringer out of the water and onto the back seat of the boat. All that was left of that whole string of fish were the heads.

"At least they were kind enough to leave us the heads," laughed Don.

Traveling the Trough

Camping and Fishing the South Branch

By Vernon O. Giffin
Photographs by Michael Keller

The South Branch of the Potomac is a bountiful stream of water. From its headwaters in Pendleton County to its entrance into the main stem of the Potomac River on the Maryland border of Hampshire, the South Branch offers deep holes which the bass, channel catfish, bluegills, eels, carp, and red eye call home. In the shallows and the rapids live the bait fish and smallmouth bass. As day begins to fade into night, deer, raccoons, minks, and sometimes a bear, slip down to drink and feed along the banks.

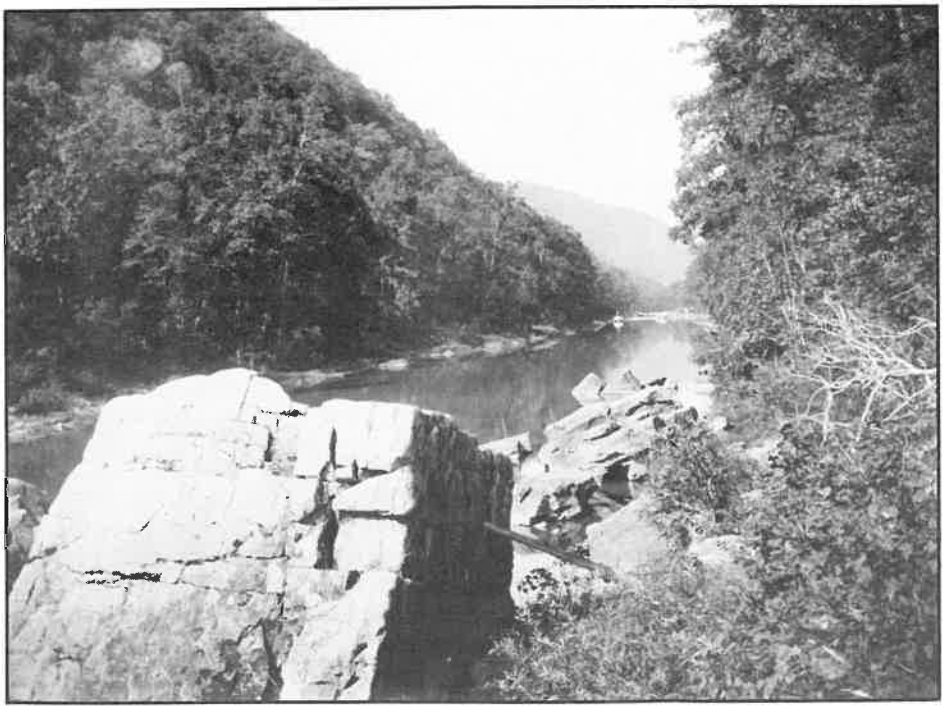
Almost from the first day I came into this part of the country, fishermen had told me of one particular section of the South Branch, the gorge known as the "Trough." The river had spent countless years cutting its way through the great mountain there. I dreamed of fishing this legendary stretch of water, but never seemed to find the time before moving away from the area.

The major human intrusion in the Trough was the railroad, a trunk line from Romney to Petersburg. Laid when railroads were at the height of their power, these rails opened up the prosperous South Branch Valley. Solid rock on both sides, lined with trees that had somehow found a hold in the cracks and crevices, stared the railroad builders in the face when their track reached the Trough. For a distance of four or five miles, it was drill, blast, and shovel; drill, blast, and shovel. Finally a roadbed was finished, resting on rock on the average of 20 feet above low water. Huge boulders blasted from the mountain rolled down into the bed of the stream, making ideal hiding places for the fish.

Don Ravenscroft, my brother-in-law, was stationmaster for the railroad in the early 1970's, working in Petersburg. I always managed to come back to the mountains at least once each summer and when Don asked if I would like to fish the Trough a couple of days, plans began to form. We would take a boat, supplies, tent, and other equipment to Petersburg in a station wagon. Here we would load the gear into an empty boxcar and the train would let us off at a desirable spot on its run to Romney. The next day the train would return to Petersburg. Then the following day it would pick us up on its way back to Romney and bring us out of the Trough to where the station wagon would wait to take us home. This would give us both night and day fishing, day for bass and night for catfish.

The appointed morning saw Don, his 11-year-old son, Chris, and me in the caboose of a four-car train pulling out of Petersburg, headed downriver. Because of the condition of the tracks, five miles an hour was the speed limit. After inching past farm lands and grazing cattle, we passed the town of Moorefield. We came to a big curve in the railroad a half hour later. The conductor told us we would be in the Trough as soon as the

Many a fisherman has disappeared down the Trough of the South Branch, to emerge at the other end a day or so later. This historic view from the upstream end was made about the turn of the century, before the railroad was built. Photographer unknown.



"How about the other stringer? They get it too?"

When we pulled that stringer of catfish out, all were alive and well. We had saved at least part of our catch. The next night we ran the trotline again. We caught fish, but nothing like the night before.

About 9:30 the second night, we decided to go down and do some fishing from the big rock. We had fished for perhaps an hour when Don asked Chris to go to the campfire and get the coffee pot and some sugar. Chris forgot the cups, so he had to go back and get them before we could have our coffee. We sat there drinking coffee, not really caring whether the fish bit or not, when Chris spoke up. "Dad, I think there is something right back of us," he said.

Now that is rattlesnake country, and one does not move around in a hurry. Slowly we turned and there sat a raccoon, about half grown, with his paw in the sugar bucket. This coon was not more than five feet from us. Needless to say, we got rid of him in a hurry. About midnight, we decided to take up the trotline so we would not have to worry with it in the morning. We were not sure when the train would be by to pick us up. We must have our gear beside the railroad ready for loading when it arrived.

By this time the boat's electric motor was not working too well. Most of the power was gone from the battery. We headed for the opposite shore to release that end first, then use the trotline to pull us back across to our camp in case the motor failed completely. We had tied the line to a root about a foot above the water so we could find it in the dark. Don was holding the boat against the bank as best he could with the motor, while I reached to untie the line from the root. Just as I touched it something in the leaves above my hand took off along the river bank. The shock was so sudden that I gave the boat a shove out into the stream.

Above: This snapshot shows Don Ravenscroft on the first trip through the Trough. He shows the empty stringer of catfish, after the raccoon raid. Photo by Vernon O. Giffin.

Below: The Old Fields bridge in Hardy County is a convenient put-in point for boat trips through the Trough. The author's second trip began here.

Writer Vernon Giffin on his float trip through the Trough. This is at the head of the last rock-filled hole. "Thank God for that little motor," a note on the back of the snapshot says. Photo by Gary Farlow.

"What in the hell did you do that for?" yelled Don. "Don't you know we are low on power? Now don't do that again! That was only a deer and it's not going to hurt you."

"Yes, I know," I replied. "But that deer damn near scared me to death before I had time to think! The first thing that flashed through my mind was a rattlesnake. Put me up there again and I'll do it right this time."

In all the years Don Ravenscroft and I worked, fished, and hunted together, those are the only cross words that I can remember. That must be a record of some kind.

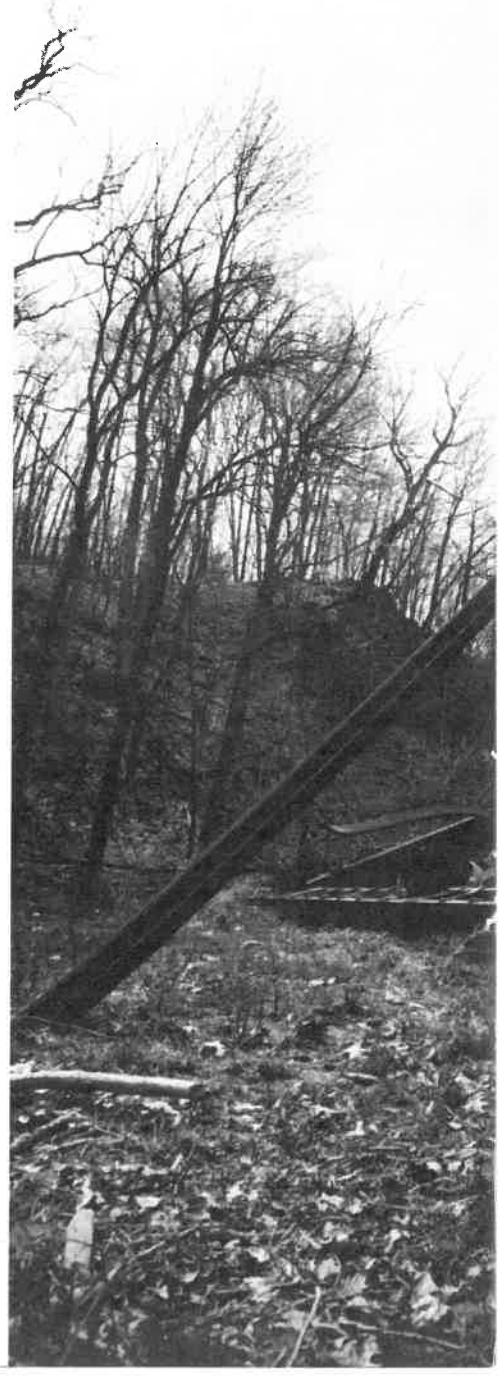
About 12:30 the next afternoon the train found Don, Chris, and me sitting on our equipment beside the track. We had maybe 10 pounds of fish. As the train slowly made its way out of the Trough I vowed that someday I would return to go down the South Branch in a boat. That was not to be for several years.

A decade passed. At the age of 70, I decided if I were ever going to go through the Trough by water it would have to be soon. Many changes had taken place. Don had died and I would have to find someone else to go with me. Young Chris, our errand boy from the first trip, was now married and the father of children of his own. The year before, he had almost drowned when his boat was upset in the rapids of the Trough. At the time, he swore he would not go through that place again. The state had taken over the railroad from Petersburg to Romney and ran sightseeing trips through every so often. Some of the boys running the Trough now said it was nothing like it used to be. I determined to find out for myself.

I called my son-in-law Gary Farlow, of Tennessee, and asked if he would like to make the trip. A mere suggestion and he was ready. Gary had had some experience in fast water in the mountains of Tennessee, so I figured he would be just the one for the trip.

Early July found us camped at my sister-in-law's near Keyser. Chris agreed to take me around as I planned the expedition. A float trip from the Trough to Romney bridge was too long, so other plans were made. We went up the river road, to the right just after crossing the Romney bridge. We followed this road to where it turns left at the mouth of the Trough and goes over the mountain. The first house on the left belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Harmnson. Here one car would be left, to be picked up after coming through. Another car would take the boat and fishing party to the Old Fields bridge over in Hardy County, where the boat would be put in and the float begun. From this bridge it is about three miles before entering the upper end of the Trough and some six miles through the Trough itself.

On a Sunday afternoon, my wife, daughters Ruth and Sandra, and grandson Bryan came along to launch Gary and me on the great adventure. We left my car at the Harmnson house and drove Gary's car to the Old Fields bridge. Here we pumped up a four-man life raft, fas-



tened on a 1.2 horsepower, air-cooled motor and packed in our supplies. We put a seven-day cooler in the front, on which Gary was to sit. The food was in an army flight bag in the middle. The sleeping bags, all wrapped in plastic, were in the rear. Here I was to sit. The tent and cooking gear went on top of the food bag. After trying the motor at the bridge, Gary and I waved good-bye to the well-wishers and started down the South Branch.

The water level was extremely low. This was to cause us trouble all the way. The second rapids were so shallow we had to walk and let the boat down with a rope. So it went from one hole of water to another.

At last we came to the bridge that marked the beginning of the Trough proper. Here were supposed to be the most dangerous rapids in the whole trip. We had been warned to keep to the right. We surely did. The water was so low that was the only place there was any. At normal flow I could see how a boat could get swamped if it tried to go to the left.

We proceeded on down the river. I planned to camp where Don and I had stayed 10 years earlier. To my surprise and disappointment, there stood a cottage where we had camped and cussed the coons. With that spot gone, we went on downstream. About six o'clock we came to a high bank on the right shore that had been used as a stopover by others before us. We set up camp, got a bite to eat and turned in for the night. This hole was so shallow we knew there would be no use to try for catfish. Gary's air mattress turned out to be the kind for playing in a pool, not sleeping on the hard ground. I had an extra, so he used that. We had just settled in when the rain started. No

The power of the 1985 flood is attested by the twisted steel rails shown in the photo at left. The central span of the railroad bridge into the Trough was lost, as shown above.

storm, but the rain just poured down.

By morning, we had slept very little and the tent was beginning to leak. My mattress had lost its air and I was on the floor of the tent. The water had begun to soak up through the bottom and the thousand-legged worms were everywhere. Some got into the tent — how is still a mystery. About 9:00 a.m. four canoes came by with two fellows in each, and it still pouring rain down. They had rain suits; we didn't. We asked one of them if he had heard any weather report. "Rain off and on all day." Oh boy. We just sat in the tent and looked out over the water.

About 11 o'clock the rain stopped. How far had we come? How far was it to where the car was parked? If we left now, could we be there by dark? If not, could we find another camping place for the night? The mountains were straight up on both sides. Gary started to pack up. I think he was as disappointed as I. While Gary packed I fixed lunch and by 12:30 we were on the water again.

All the rain had not raised the water level a fraction of an inch, but we began to encounter some deep holes at this end of the Trough. One could not see the bottom, although great boulders came up to within a couple of inches of the surface. That made it dangerous to use the motor, so we paddled. We passed rocks that had yellow, green, red, and blue paint on top, where they had been hit by other boats before us.

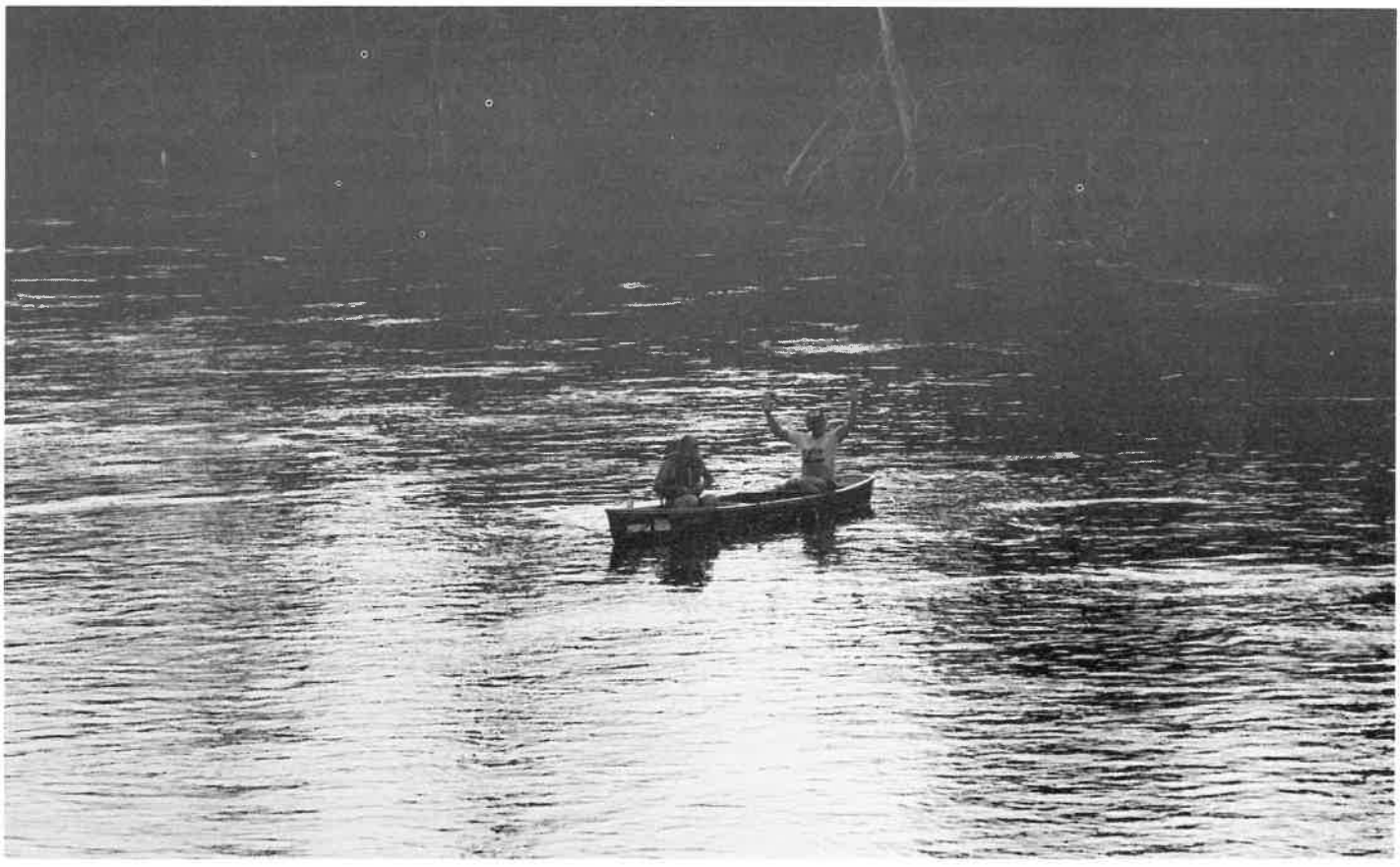
Finally we came to a deep blue hole of water that I later learned was the aptly-named "Blue Hole" itself. It was near the mouth of the Trough. Here there seemed to be absolutely no current whatever. The wind was blowing upstream, against us. This eddy is a mile and a half long and to paddle would have just wasted energy. We decided to try the motor. But how was I to handle the motor from the rear, facing backward, with all those rocks just under the surface of the water? Gary figured it out. I was to watch his paddle and steer in the direction he pointed. The motor started. I eyed the paddle in Gary's hand, looking sideways. After what seemed an hour to me, we again heard the sound of rapids. We were at last approaching the end of the Blue Hole. I knew I would have a stiff neck the rest of my life from craning to see that paddle.

A couple more shallow rapids and we were out. I saw the road where I was to get out and pick up the car. I drove on to the boat take-out just down the river. Gary took the boat down and was waiting when I got there. We deflated the raft, stashed everything in the trunk and headed for my trailer at Hazel's. Although we never wet a line the whole trip, we saw carp that must have been four feet long. We saw largemouth bass as well as smallmouth.

Gary swore he was going to bring his canoe and go through again sometime. Chris Ravenscroft was feeling better about the Trough and said he was going to get a big flat-bottom boat and take me through some year. We'll see, I figured. For the moment, I was content to be off the South Branch. That evening, it looked like they had two terrible storms there in the Trough. I was glad to be safe and dry in Keyser.

That was summer 1985. In November, the terrible flood roared down the South Branch. At the head of the Trough the water backed up to a depth of 90 feet and whipped through the gorge at 40 miles per hour. I understand all cottages above and below are gone. The railroad was ripped up, too. I went back on the river road in 1986 and saw steel rails twisted like corkscrews. Nature seems to strike back once in a while and the Trough may yet become a wilder spot than Don and I knew years ago.

With the South Branch Valley Railroad closed by the flood, small boats are again the only transportation through the Trough. These fisherman were photographed last spring.



Running a lumber company has never been a desk job for the Spencer family. Here Lloyd Spencer looks up as son Gale (left) scales the log held by the steam loader. Photographer unknown, about 1945.

Working the Hardwood Country

Glenn Spencer and the Lumber Business

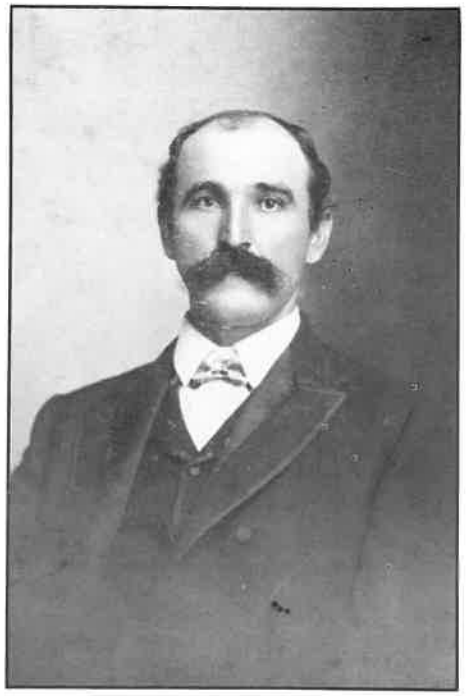
By Jim Bloemker

Many West Virginia places carry the names of early settlers. Fenwick, a community near Richwood in Nicholas County, was named for the man who established a sawmill there. Nearby is Spencer Mountain, as it is locally known. Here in the 19th Century the James Spencer family homesteaded on a farm that came to encompass 1,000 acres. To the west of Spencer Mountain is Geho Run. The Joseph Wiley Geho family settled there. The two neighboring families joined by marriage and it is through a joint descendant, Glenn Spencer, that the following story of logging and lumbering is told.

Mr. Spencer began by recalling his mother's roots. Donna Geho's father was an Ohio River boatman whose home port was in Marshall County in the Northern Panhandle. He met his wife, Molly Smith, in the river town of Point Pleasant. It so happened that Molly's maternal grandfather, J. B. King, had acquired 100 acres of land across the state in Nicholas County. The newlyweds purchased this property, sight unseen, and went east to start a new life.

When Grandfather Joseph Wiley Geho reached his new home he was not impressed with what he saw. There wasn't much flat land on which to farm, compared to the broad river bottoms of his native Ohio Valley. But he and Molly accepted the challenge. In the spirit of earlier West Virginia pioneers, the Gehoes set out to tame their plot of wilderness and start housekeeping.

The first year in the woods was difficult for Grandfather and Grandmother. They weren't able to raise much, except pumpkins from seeds that Grandmother had brought. When the pumpkins were harvested



Left: Glenn Spencer is a rich source of family logging lore. Photo by Mike Keller.

Right: Joseph Wiley Geho founded the Geho line in Nicholas County. He is the maternal grandfather of the Spencer brothers. Photographer unknown, about 1870.

she made pumpkin butter, dried a few, put some away, and canned the rest. That first year they existed on pumpkin and whatever venison they could kill. Years after this, whenever Grandfather was offered pumpkin pie or anything connected with pumpkin, he would decline. "No thank you, I've had my share of punkin," Glenn quotes him as saying. "For one year I ate punkin for breakfast, punkin for dinner, and punkin for supper, and that's enough punkin in any man's lifetime." Despite the initial hardship the investment proved to be worthwhile. Through hard work and diligence Grandfather and Grandmother Geho built a farm equal to any for miles around.

Glenn Spencer's recollection of his ancestry on the paternal side is even more vivid. Most Spencers in Nicholas County can trace their origins to Gerard Spencer, who came to Virginia from New England. He settled in the Greenbrier Valley in the mid-18th Century. James Spencer, Glenn's great-great-great-grandfather, in 1841 crossed the mountains into Nicholas County, where he settled and started farming. Family lore has it that James was a principled man seeking an upcountry haven from the troubling issue of slavery.

James's son, Smith "Smithy" Spencer, was known for his bad temper. As Glenn relates, "Smithy was a deeply religious man, but you daresn't tread on him. If he thought you done him wrong he'd fight a band saw at both ends." In lumberman's jargon that meant Smithy was prepared to defend his rights at all costs. To this day, whenever a Spencer's temper is aroused, relatives refer to it as having a "Smithy."

The Spencer tradition of living close to the soil continued with Hanson and Simeon, Glenn's great-grandfather and grandfather. Farming remained their primary means of support. Mountain farmers needed a smattering of knowledge in a variety of trades, including veterinary medicine, blacksmithing, and carpentry. They were even coal miners of sorts. Most farms had a "punch hole" in a coal bank from which small quantities of fuel were taken for home heating and firing blacksmith forges.

As with most families living off the land, the Spencers were not wealthy in the goods available to city people. In fact, some of the less well-to-do were said to be "as poor as Job's turkey." Glenn Spencer himself remembers living in a "Jenny Lynn" cabin and shaking from his bed covers the snow that had snuck in with the wind overnight. Although poor, mountain folk kept their dignity. Mr. Spencer illustrates with a family anecdote. "Mother was not able to buy new clothes as often as she liked, so old pants and shirts were frequently patched," he recalls. "But no matter how many patches it took to keep a pair of britches going, she refused to sew them on the seat because wear there was considered to be a sign of laziness. When this area was worn enough to require a patch, a new pair was bought."

Glenn was unable to go to school beyond the eighth grade. High schools charged tuition and were located in large communities. This meant that rural kids faced room and board expenses as well as the tuition itself. Mr. Spencer remembers himself as a curious lad who wanted to go on to high school, but says it was not practical or affordable. He did not go beyond the local free school at Thorny Knob.

Lacking further book learning, Glenn schooled himself in the ways of the woods and how to make a living as his kinfolk before him had. He helped his father, Lloyd, and grandfather however he could, but admits that he sometimes hindered more

than he helped. He is quick to add that his dad at the same age had been an equal nuisance when helping Grandfather Simeon run the family mill on Taylor Run, east of Spencer Mountain. It was all part of the age-old process of handing down knowledge from father to son.

Simeon had built the Taylor Run mill to serve his family and neighbors. He added an up-and-down sawmill to the basic waterpowered grist mill in the late 19th Century. By then a number of sawmills were operating in the mountains. One belonged to Gus Vencill, a Kentucky native, who established his business next to the railroad line at Camden-on-Gauley. Occasionally Simeon and son Lloyd would take lumber by horse and wagon to Vencill's mill.

One such trip was particularly memorable to Lloyd, according to Glenn. Devil Anse and Cap Hatfield were hiding out with friends in Nicholas County at the time and happened to meet the Spencers at Vencill's mill. The mill trip was long for both parties, requiring an overnight stay at a time when beds were in short supply. Lloyd spoke proudly ever after of sleeping in the same bed with Cap Hatfield. As the story goes, Cap brought two big navy revolvers to his place of repose — one which he kept under his pillow and the other in a holster hung on a bedside chair. The Logan County feudist told tales until young Lloyd went to sleep.

For Lloyd Spencer, the trips to Vencill's and the times he helped out at his father's mill were the beginning of a lifelong fascination with sawmills and the lumber business. Times were changing in Nicholas County as timbering challenged agriculture in the local economy. When he was just 13, Lloyd went to work for the Fenwick Lumber Company. He started as a buck swamper, clearing underbrush. He later worked for other outfits, including the Cass operation, gaining experience in the business.

About the time of the chestnut blight, Lloyd bought a portable sawmill which he set up on the Spencer farm near the remnants of Simeon's old waterpowered mill. Neighbors brought their timber to him. During the late 1930's, Lloyd also provided logs for sawing by bigger firms, namely the Ely and Thomas and Cherry River Boom and Lumber companies. They agreed to let Lloyd use their trains to haul his logs if he sold them so many at a special price. Most of the work, however, came from a contract he received from the New-Gauley Land and Coal Company, a subsidiary of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. They had 30,000 acres of dead chestnut to be harvested. Later, other species were cut from the tract for a stumpage fee.

The original New-Gauley contract was a product of the chestnut blight, which Glenn Spencer describes as devastating for the forested area. He recalls that the blight was initially a mystery to the people of Nicholas County. Some said that it was the fulfillment of a Biblical prophecy. Few recognized the real culprit of the disease, a fungus originating in New York City in 1904. This fact was established by experimental research stations, but by then the blight had done its damage. Between 1926, when the blight was first recognized

Grandfather Simeon Spencer on the bluffs of Gauley River. Teamstering was a vital skill until the introduction of caterpillar tractors. Photographer and date unknown.

Above: Lloyd Spencer heads out of Richwood with a load of hay, bound for the logging camps. The harnesses carry the name of A. H. Hickman, a Spencer partner. Photographer unknown, about 1908.

Below: Lloyd Spencer and Hickman owned this steam-powered portable sawmill. This set-up was typical of the early years of the century. Photographer and date unknown.

A Spencer logging crew, about 1940. Father Lloyd stands at front, second from right, with son Grant standing by his side. Glenn holds third team from left, while Gale sits in second row, with dark hat and log rule. Photographer unknown.

in Nicholas County, and 1936, when its destruction was complete, the magnificent chestnut trees were completely wiped out. The long-lasting wood was harvested and cut into lumber for years after the trees died.

Apart from the large corporate contracts, the market for Spencer lumber was primarily local. Many house and barn patterns were sawed at the family mill. The lumber in the Macedonia Church was cut by Spencers. When the local mining business prospered, so did lumbering. Tipples and other structures were once made of wood, and mine timbers, crib blocks, headers and half-headers were required underground in the days before roof bolting. Railroad ties were also a major product. There was plenty of business for the mill, at least until recently.

According to Glenn, the Fenwick area was hardwood country. Hardwoods are the deciduous trees, locally including sugar maple, cherry, red and white oak, birch and ash. As Glenn remembers, there wasn't much walnut in the hills. The wood from these trees is considered to be high-grade material and was generally shipped out of the state to furniture factories. The exception was oak, which stayed to be used as mine timbers. Softwoods from evergeen trees, primarily hemlock and spruce, and lower grade deciduous trees such as beech, gum and chestnut oak, were used locally in the building trade.

The Spencer mill that now sits just off State Route 39 was Lloyd's last sawmill. It has a long history. Its machinery was built by the Hart Brothers Machinery Company of Clarksburg in 1897. Like Lloyd's first mill, it is a portable circular saw, one which can be dismantled and transported to a new job location. Lou Wells brought it to Webster County along the Gauley River in 1898 to help the Pardee and Curtin Lumber Company set up their much larger band saw operation.

The mill's next owner was the Nicholas Lumber Company. Bill Thomas of Richwood was a principal stockholder. They set up to work a few thousand acres on Panther Creek, a tributary of the Gauley. A Climax steam locomotive moved the lumber across the mountain to Saxman and the nearest commercial railroad. When the Panther Creek timber was completely harvested around 1926, the mill was sold to Wilburn Russell. He used it to cut lumber along the Cranberry River until 1948. The sawmill then came into the hands of Lloyd Spencer.

A portable Frick steam engine, much like one Glenn Spencer has restored, originally powered the mill. Fricks were manufactured in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, and distributed through regional dealers in Charleston and other places. According to Glenn, Frick engines were the primary power plants for portable sawmills, and the most dependable. When Lloyd acquired the mill, boiler inspectors from the West Virginia Department of Labor condemned the old Frick as unsafe. A new General Motors 75-horsepower diesel engine

Whistle Toot

Each fall since 1974 nostalgic tones have shrieked from a chorus line of whistling steam engines on Spencer Mountain in Nicholas County. The Spencer brothers are once again planning to hold the Spencer Mountain Echoes and Steam Whistle Toot Reunion on the third weekend in September. This family get-together is open to the public with free admission and free parking.

In addition to tooting and the exhibit of antique steam engines there will be mountain music, arts and crafts, and blacksmithing demonstrations. Refreshments will be available and camping spots are free.

The Toot will be held September 18-20, on the family farm on Spencer Mountain. That is located between Fenwick and Nettie, one-half mile off of State Route 39 on Airport Road. Signs will point the way for first-timers.

was ordered and remains in use today.

The smooth operation of such a mill required a crew of at least seven men. The skidway man kept the logs coming from the decking area where they were stored. A log was placed on a rail carriage, which advanced it to the saw to be cut. The big saw itself was stationary. The carriage man secured the log to the carriage with dogs, steel teeth which held the log firmly in place. He rode the carriage and adjusted the dogs each time a cut was made. The sawyer handled the lever which controlled the action of the carriage as a log came to the saw. The sawyer was the most skilled of the crew and had the most responsibility. On smaller operations, like the Spencer Lumber Company, he kept the saw filed when the mill was shut down.

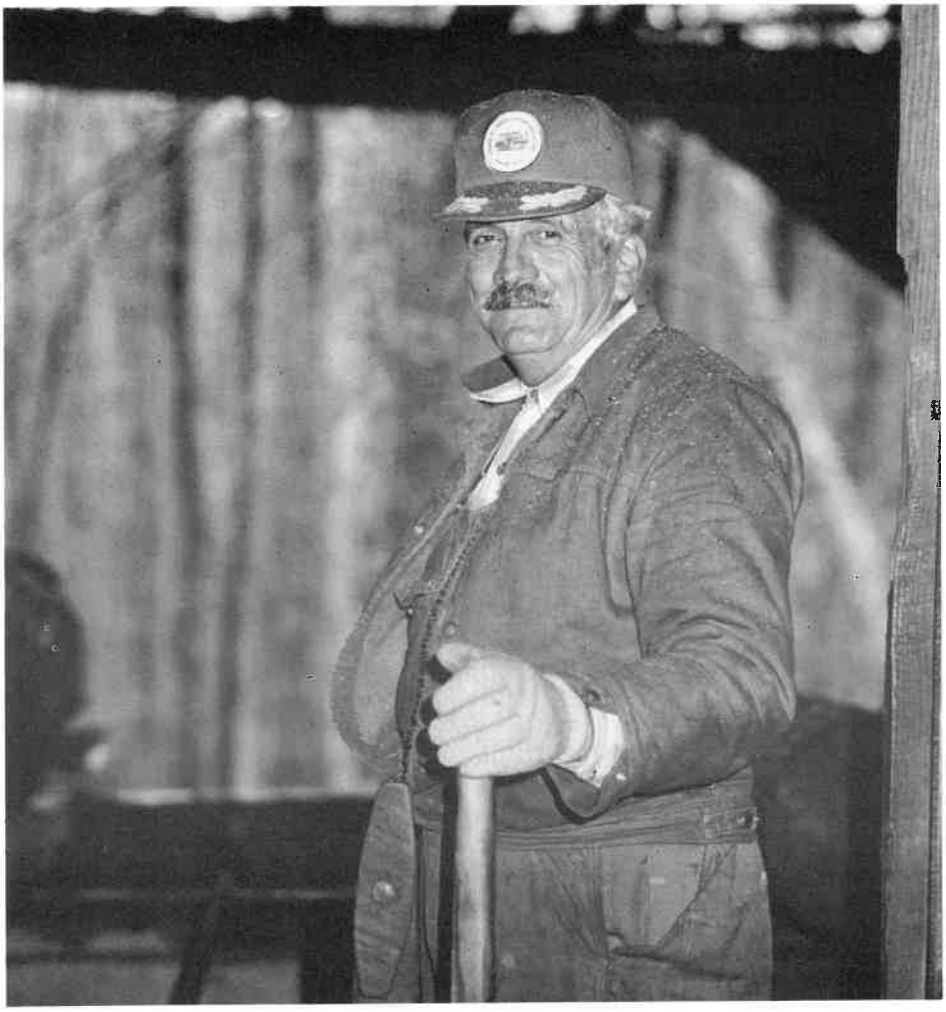
The off-bearer received boards from the saw, sending them down a track of steel rollers to the cutoff man. He trimmed the uneven board ends with a smaller saw perpendicular to the main saw. An edger operator squared the sides of the board on an edger saw. This saw had two blades which could be adjusted to the desired board width. From here the rough lumber went to a planer, which the Spencers no longer have, where it was finished into dressed lumber. Another worker sorted the lumber by species and stacked it on the dock. He also made sure that the chain which carried away the sawdust was running properly. The fireman kept fuel in the boiler. At peak efficiency, a sawmill crew like this could produce 12,000 to 15,000 board feet of lumber a day.

When not sawing lumber the mill crew helped with the logging. The standard procedure for the Spencer Lumber Company was to run the mill for a day or two or even a week, then cut more timber. Logging was slower than milling and required more workers. At one time the Spencers had 40 men working in the woods.

A logging operation consisted of several different crews. The cutting crew had to have at least two men, sometimes called a pony crew, but worked best with four. The axe man, or fitter, first notched the tree to govern which way it fell, then two sawyers cut it down with a crosscut saw. A knot bumper trimmed the tree of its limbs. The tree was then "bucked," or sawed into log lengths.

The skidding crew maneuvered the logs, teamsters dragging them to the landing area. Proper handling of the horses was crucial to the operation, and the Spencers would not tolerate inhumane treatment of their animals. Once they had as many as seven teams operating. The road monkey maintained roads used by the skidders. Another man had charge of the landing, where logs awaited transportation to the mill. Small outfits might share landings, where their logs could be picked up by a larger company's train. Glenn remembers seeing a million board feet stored at such a landing. Finally, the buck swamper blazed roads to get the timber out of the woods.

West Virginia loggers were known as wood hicks, not lumberjacks. Very often they spent weeks and even months in the woods. Logging camps were built to accommodate the men. Bunkhouses and mess halls were constructed of logs for lengthy stays away from home. Lighter frame structures were shipped by train from job site to job site. Each camp had its own cook, with a helper called "cookee" by the men, and a



Above: Sam Spencer leads the family business today. Here he pauses in his work as sawyer at the mill. Photo by Mike Keller.

housekeeper or "lobbyhog." The latter took his title from the lobby, a lounge which the men shared in common. Sometimes the housekeeping was shared by a husband and wife team.

Mr. Spencer has colorful memories of camp cooks. Since an outfit's best drawing card for good, dependable loggers was its food, a topnotch cook was essential. The cook generally commanded the highest wages in camp. Usually a man, as rugged and rowdy as the characters he served, held the job. Many loggers felt a man could outcook a woman any day. Some would not set their caulk shoes in a camp fed by an "open bottomed" cook, one with a dress on. One old hick took only a couple of meals from a woman cook before hitting the trail to other parts. At breakfast, he made a remark which the lady took as an insult. In a sudden flare of temper she said, "Mister, I'll have you know I can cook food that you don't even know what it is." To which he retorted, "My good woman, you have already done so. Neither God nor man knows!"

Living and working together over long periods produced a special camaraderie among the men. Everyone was judged by an unwritten lumberman's code. Word quickly spread about deadbeats or troublemakers. The men looked after one another. This was particularly noticeable when a new recruit was hired. He began his training by working with older, more experienced hicks. Logging was a dangerous occupation and in this way safety could be seen to by the men themselves.

Through the years Glenn Spencer held most of the jobs there are in the lumber business, except cook and lobbyhog. He worked as a teamster for $1.50 a day plus board, cut timber, held every position at the sawmill, and served as log scaler, both in the woods and at the mill. In all of that time, he proudly notes, the only person he worked for besides himself was his father. His very first job was carrying his dad's tools. From there Glenn earned his way up in the Spencer Lumber Company to foreman and co-boss with his two brothers, Sam and Gale, the latter of whom recently died. Brothers Grant and Saul were also active in the business. Now at the age of 70 Glenn is in semi-retirement, while younger brother Sammy runs the family business.

The milling contracts that the Spencers got from the railroad no longer come their way. Through a merger the B&O became a part of the CSX Corporation and a new policy concerning timber holdings was adopted. CSX saws its own lumber. Sam and his sons still get contracts to log CSX timber, but for the most part the family sawmill sits idle these days. Once in a while a neighbor will call for some lumber to be cut for a building, but this amounts to only occasional work. Like Glenn himself, the Spencer mill no longer operates with the vigor it once had.

Right: Times have changed since the Spencers first started logging and lumbering, but things stay pretty much the same at the essential point of production, where screaming metal meets raw wood. Photo by Mike Keller.

Sawing Logs

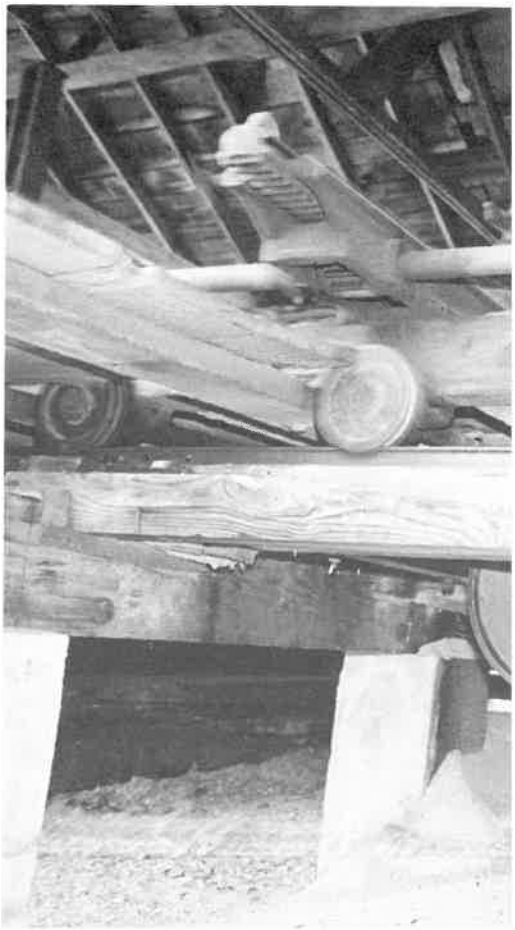
Photoessay by Michael Keller

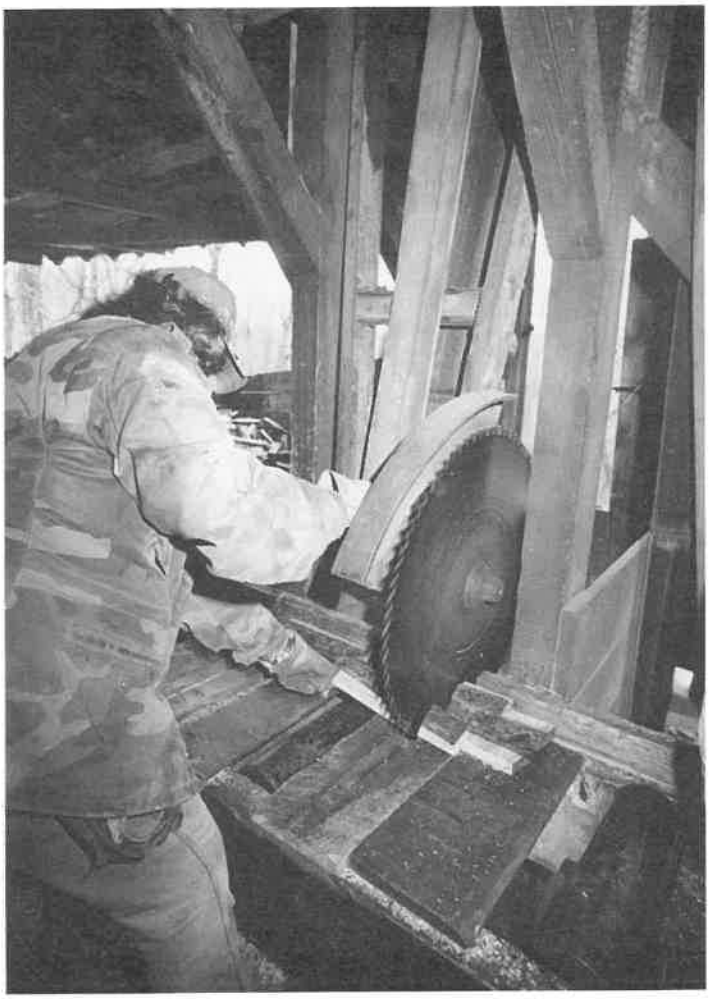
Above: A log begins its trip through the Spencer sawmill by being rolled in on the skidway. The crane loader in the background lifts logs onto the skids.

Below: Glenn Spencer hoses down the log before sawing. Washing logs is essential in sawmills of every size, since dirt dulls the high-speed saw blade.

Above: Greg Spencer adjusts the steel "dog" holding the log to the carriage. This log has been "slabbed," or sawed square, on two sides and is now ready for a third pass through the saw.

Below: Side view of the saw at work: The log is brought past the saw on a carriage operating on steel rails, shown here approaching from the left. The steel drum under the rails drives the carriage by winding and unwinding a cable. Sawdust falls below, to be carried outside by the dust chain.

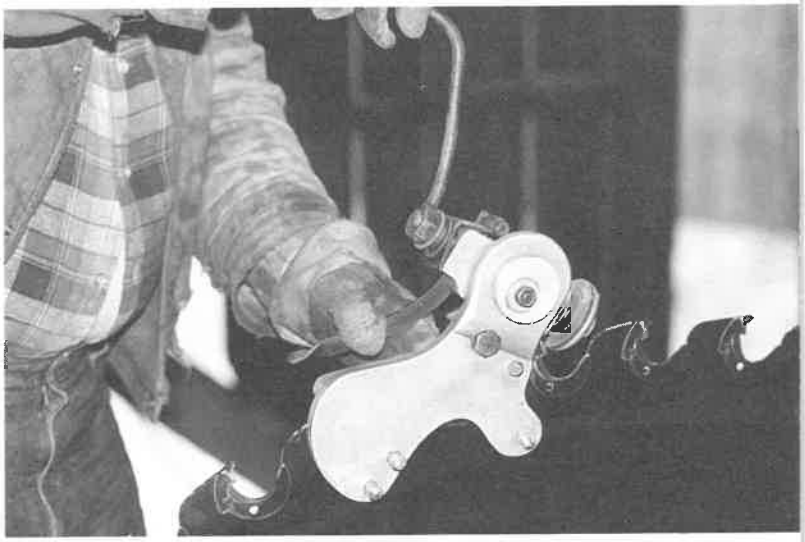


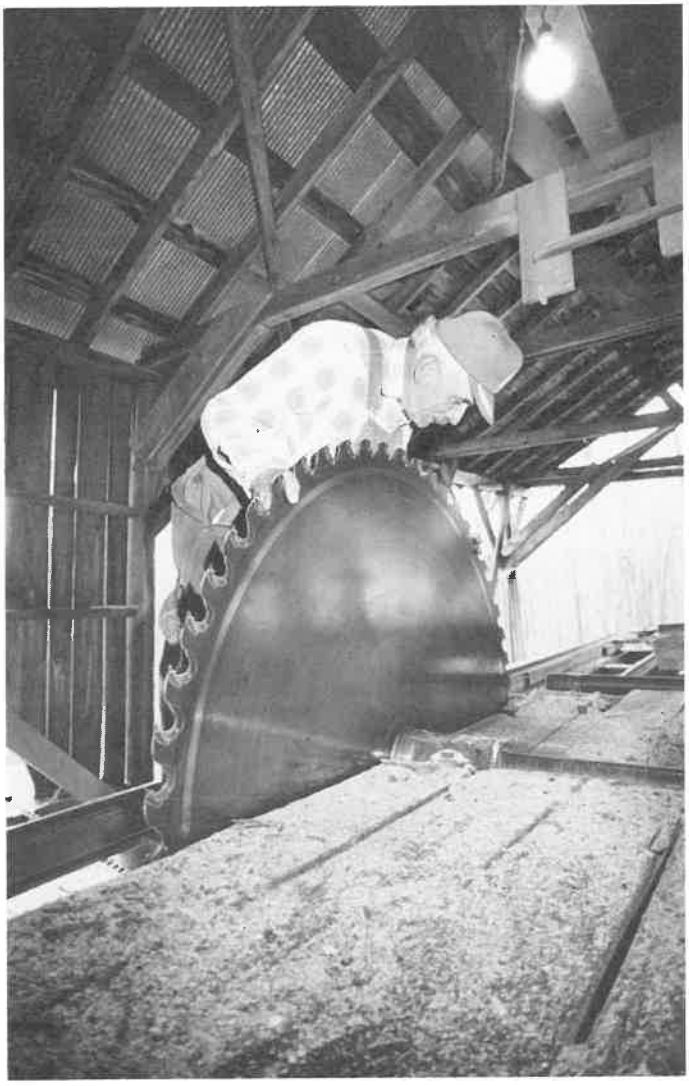


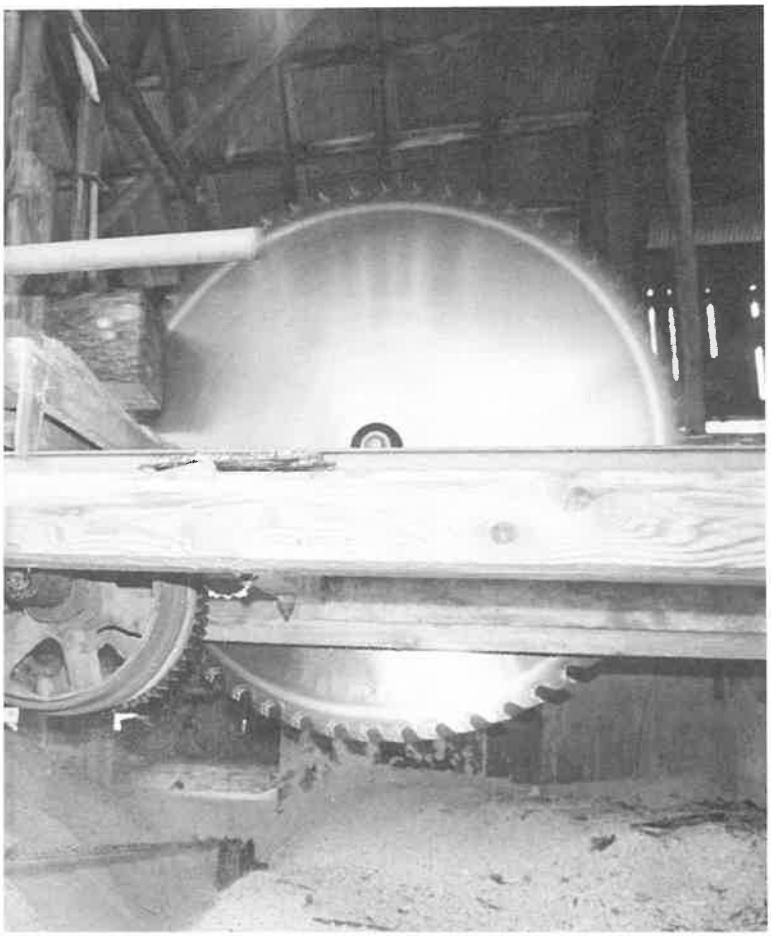
Left: Mike Spencer demonstrates the use of the cutoff blade. New boards from the big saw pass by here, to be cut to the proper length.

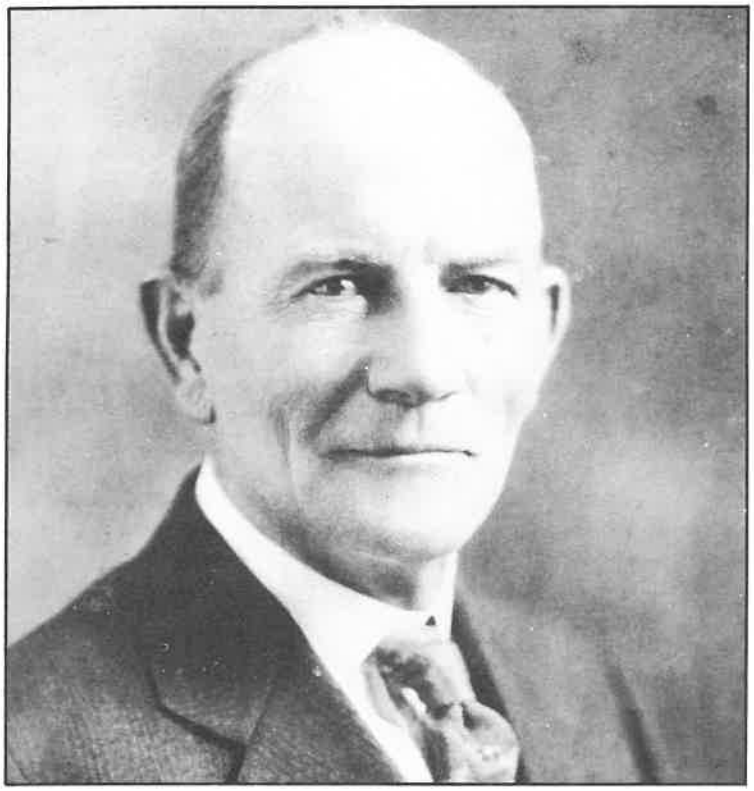
Below: A sharp saw is important. This device sharpens each tooth in place, without having to dismantle the saw.

Bottom: Sam Spencer checks his saw blade. The position of sawyer is the most skilled in the mill, often held by the senior man on the job.









J. W. "Billy" Kimmell was our author's father and the timber contractor at Braucher early in this century. Photographer and date unknown.

Over The Mountain

Timbering at Braucher

By Edith Kimmell Starkey

My father J. W. "Billy" Kimmell was an experienced timber man. By the early part of this century, he had spent several years in the timber business around Davis, Blackwater Falls, and other parts of West Virginia. In the spring of 1907, he heard about a 300-acre tract of virgin timber to be cut, located on Burner Mountain at Braucher, Pocahontas County, five miles north of Durbin. He investigated and was given the contract for the job. It was to take more than three years to complete the work, three exciting, formative years of my young life.

Even though my father had many timber contracts he always maintained a farm in western Maryland. This new job meant a temporary move for our family from Oakland, Maryland, to the Pocahontas County woods. We found that Braucher consisted of a general store, which combined a grocery store, post office, and a telegraph system. There were perhaps eight or 10 houses, with three fortunately vacant. My own family, my uncle Lee Browning and his family, and my uncle George McRobie and family moved into those three houses.

We lived at Braucher proper from the early spring through summer of 1907. The Western Maryland Railway ran through, parallel to the Greenbrier River. The river was very shallow where we lived and I could wade in the water, stepping from stone to stone. I remember how I enjoyed the feel of that cold water rippling over my feet. Up a ways, high on a bluff about 50 feet straight up, we could see some horses and were told there was a small farm there.

While we lived that summer on the Braucher side of the mountain, Dad and his crews were busy setting up camps and equipment on the timber side. The timber lay on the eastern side of Burner Mountain, which also included the Burner settlement. There was only one way to get into this timber country. You had to go from Braucher down the Greenbrier to Olive, a distance of three miles, then come up Mountain Lick valley. The timber land was first known as the Sweet and Lilly tract, but when my father began the job it was owned by a Mr. McMullen. Later, Mr. McMullen sold out to the Newell Brothers Lumber Company of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

With Dad in charge, the development work went smoothly. Mountain Lick Creek was dammed up for a log pond and a sawmill was erected by the dam. Camps for the loggers and for the sawmill workers were built. A narrow-gauge "dinkey" railroad was put in to transport logs and lumber.

Once timbering started, logs were pulled by teamsters to a ravine, then skidded down the mountain via this ravine to the skidway. Here they were loaded onto long flat cars to be transferred to the sawmill. They were spilled into the log pond there, and then snaked up into the mill to be sawed into lumber for shipment.

Since the timber and mill lay on the eastern side of Burner Mountain and the main Western Maryland Railway line was on the west, the lumber first was loaded in boxcars at the mill. It was taken by the narrow-gauge

dinkey engine down to Olive, unloaded there, and then loaded onto standard-gauge cars from their siding. That cost us big money.

One day, a first cousin of Dad's, Andy Kimmell from Green Bank, came into the camp. After looking things over, Andy said, "You know, Billy, there could be an incline put over this mountain. Then, you could take the lumber out over your own territory." Mr. Newell, the owner of the timber, happened to be there, so Andy and Dad told him about the possibility of an inclined railway. Mr. Newell felt it couldn't be done. Andy said he could take him to where it was being done and let him see for himself.

Mr. Newell then asked Andy if he could supervise the job and Andy agreed he could. There were a number of Italian men in there looking for work. Dad hired them to do the track work of putting the incline across the mountain.

When finished, steep tracks ran up one side of Burner Mountain and down the other. A coal-operated steam engine with a huge drum was placed at the top of the incline. As the lumber-carrying rail cars, or "trucks," were pulled up the incline, a cable, about one inch thick, wound around this drum. When the lumber truck reached the top, it was reversed and let down the other side. A long loading dock had been built at the bottom. Here the lumber was stacked and later transferred to the boxcars of the Western Maryland Railway.

The incline was completed in the fall of 1907. It was then that our families moved over to the timber side of the mountain, where the action was. We were taken over the incline on empty trucks. On the eastern side were the sawmill, the logger and sawmill camps, eight houses and a blacksmith shop.

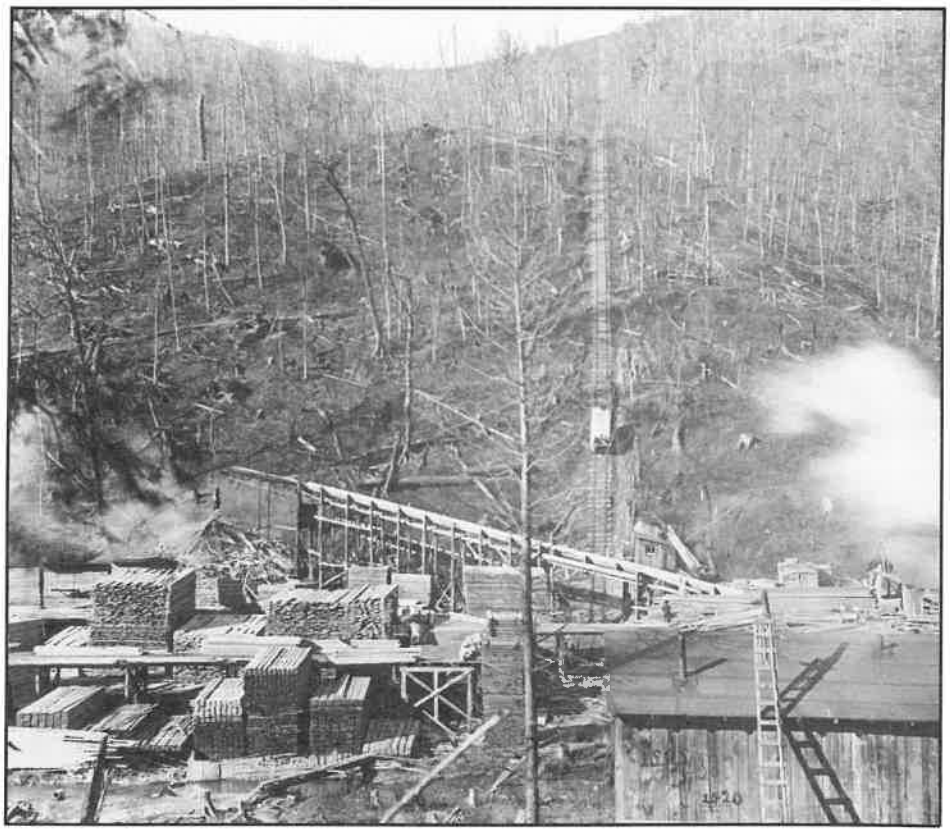
The camps were already populated with "wood hicks," the special breed dedicated to getting timber out of the mountains. In those days news traveled by word of mouth when there was a new timber job opening up. When word got around about this timber job, several young men had walked across from Monterey, Virginia, a distance of 25 miles or more. Among them were Isaac, Charlie, Davey and Pinky Samples — fine men. Isaac was our blacksmith. His brothers were Charlie and Davey. Pinky was a first cousin. They were loggers and teamsters. The Samples men were representative of the best we found on the action side of the mountain.

A small house was built where the incline went over. Someone was needed to work the engine and for a year at a time a man and his family lived there at the top. First was my uncle Lee Browning, his wife Katherine, and their son John. The next year my uncle Solomon Hogue, his wife Minnie, and two little girls, Mabel and Edna, lived there. The remainder of the time my uncle George McRobie, his wife Jenny, and their son Teddy stayed on top. One man always accompanied the truck of lumber going up and over. Uncle George rode it some. There were always loaded trucks at the mill ready to go and empties to return.

The incline was a half mile up and a half mile down, on a mountain so steep you had to take a horse in sideways. Right where the incline left the mill, for quite a way, the tracks rose at a 45-degree angle. Cables did break, throwing lumber all over. I remember as many as two loads being taken out at one time. If a family had to go out, they rode an empty.

I had one unforgettable experience, a steep climb up that incline just before it was completed. One Sunday afternoon, my friend Delphia Wilson and I decided to walk up the unfinished incline. We were almost to the top when we realized it was getting very late. We hurried back down the mountain, using the rail ties to run on. I became overheated. That night I became very ill. Dr. Hull was called on the telegraph and he came by railroad handcar immediately, up from Durbin. He said I had pleurisy and put a poultice or jacket of antiphlogistine around my chest and back. I had

Mr. Kimmell, at left, with members of his crew. His son Solly, the boy in coveralls with canthook, did a man's work as a teenager, our writer says. Photographer and date unknown.



The rail incline at Braucher was an over-the-mountain affair. The photograph above shows the sawmill side in Mountain Lick Valley, with a load of lumber heading uphill. The other picture shows the other side, where loads came down to the Western Maryland Railway tracks. Just visible at the top is an installation consisting of an engine house and operator's residence. Photographer unknown, about 1909; courtesy Mrs. G. E. Hevener and Pocahontas County Historical Society.

to be propped up in bed in order to breathe. I could feel a terrific drawing from the poultice. Dr. Hull said except for that I might have died.

Dr. Hull was a mountaineer doctor. He traveled over those mountains by horseback, handcar and foot — wore spurs on his boots. No matter what hour of the night he was called, he went. Durbin was small but blessed with good doctors in Dr. Hull, Dr. Arbogast, and Dr. Burner. Burner was a prominent name in that part of West Virginia. Our 300 acres of timber was cut from Burner Mountain. Dr. Arbogast's wife was a Burner.

We had left a farm to go up into this timber area, where there wasn't a fresh vegetable or a cow to give milk. We did discover that a mile or two up Mountain Lick valley, toward Burner, leading to the right a little, was a truck farm. Young as I was, I often walked up to buy vegetables, butter, and maybe a little milk. Blackberries, big as a man's thumb, grew up the valley and on the mountain where the timber lay. My mother canned berries to take back to the farm and we enjoyed many a blackberry pie. With six little children needing milk, Dad had a young cousin, Ray Kimmell, lead one of the cows from our Maryland farm to Braucher, a distance of about 120 miles.

There were several children at the camps and the need for a school became clear. My father talked to Mr. Newell about the possibility of a school. Mr. Newell told him to find someone to build a schoolhouse and the state of West Virginia would furnish a teacher. My grandfather, the elder Solomon Hogue from Oakland, was a finish carpenter, so he came to build the schoolhouse. The state sent us a very fine teacher, Mr. Roy Smith from Weston. He taught for two years, 1908 and 1909.

Mr. Smith roomed and boarded with the McClellans — Howard, Anna and Mary, a brother and two sisters from Wallace. The McClellans had a Thomas Edison gramophone with the record cylinders, the miracle of the time. The popular songs were "Snow Deer," "Lilly of the Prairie," and "Rainbow." After everyone had gone their separate ways, I received a card from Roy Smith saying it made him lonely to hear "Lilly of the Prairie."

Three loggers pose with jug and dog on a load of slabs or bark, on the railroad side of the mountain. The building at rear was the Braucher store and post office. Photographer unknown, 1909; courtesy Mrs. G. E. Hevener and Pocahontas County Historical Society.

In the summer of 1908, my father sent his brother-in-law, Henry Myers, and our family back to the farm to harvest the hay. I had a big crush on Charlie Samples, the handsome young logger from Virginia. How I wished that he might have come also! One day I was standing on the farmhouse porch when who should I see coming down the road but Charlie. He was still far off but I said to my mother, "Mommy, here comes Charlie Samples." My mother poohed the idea that I could possibly recognize him from such a distance but I proved to be right. Charlie never knew of my great love but forever he has held a special place in my heart.

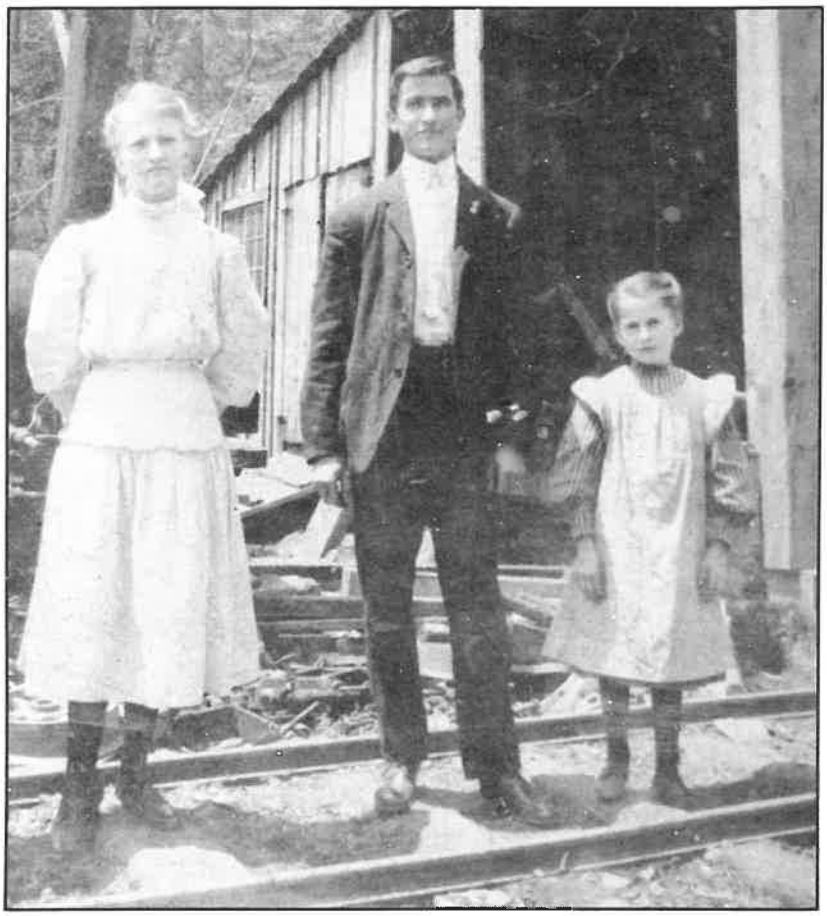
After the harvest was over we all returned to Braucher by train. Five of us children, all underage, rode the train for no fare. As the conductor was taking up the tickets, he said to my dad, "Here, you're taking up too many seats. You should be paying more fare." Dad jokingly replied, "If I'd brought my whole family it would have filled your car." The conductor shook his head with a smile and asked for nothing more.

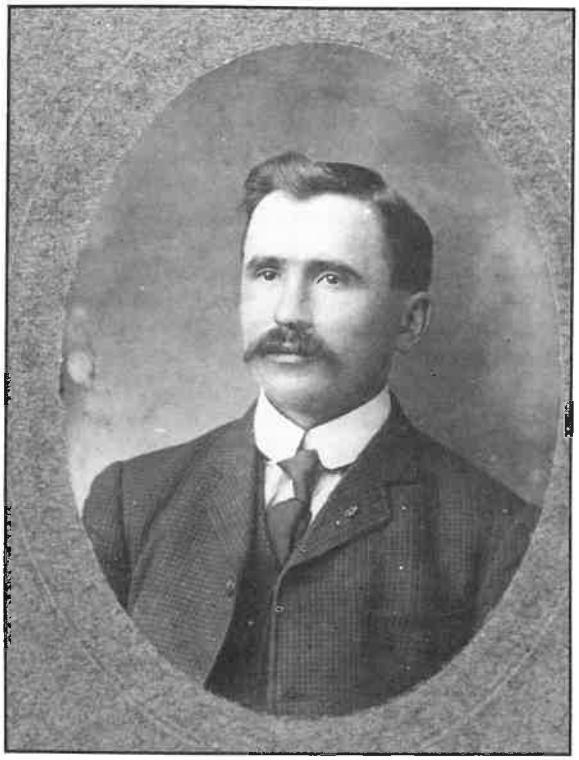
Braucher had two Western Maryland "accommodation" trains, locals that stopped frequently for passengers and freight. One ran in the morning and one in the afternoon. My mother discovered that I was a pretty good shopper for dry goods, so she let me go to Durbin on the train at least once a week. The Durbin Mercantile Store, owned by Mr. Wilson, had beautiful yard goods — calico and ginghams at 10 cents a yard, also fine muslins and lawn cloth, laces and embroidery. Eventually, Mother had all she could handle, so I wasn't getting to go to Durbin. After several weeks went by with no chance to go, I decided I had a toothache. I told my dad and he said I should go down to see Dr. Hull about it. I got on the train, delighted.

In Durbin I had to go up outside stairs to get to Dr. Hull's very small office. He asked what my problem was. I pointed to a little tooth, which could have been a stomach tooth. He had me sit down in his chair, a very crude seat made of iron. It was just the same as sitting down in an electric chair. Without asking me any more questions, he reached for his forceps and got hold of that tooth — and it didn't want to let loose. There was no pain killer, nothing! Again he got hold, put his big bony knee right into my little tummy to hold me down, and naturally the tooth came out. The fact of the matter was, there never was anything wrong with it. Until Dr. Hull pulled that tooth I had never had a toothache in my life. It was just an excuse to go to Durbin.

About 1933, during a return visit to Durbin, I went into the Mercantile Store, still being operated by Mr. Wilson. I asked about Dr. Hull. They said he was still around and just about that time the good doctor walked in. I introduced myself and told him the story of my tooth. He got a great laugh and said, "Well, that's what imagination can do for us."

We had good sawmill cooks on the timber job. First were Mr. and Mrs. Farley, there for about a year. Mrs. Wilson, her daughter Beulah, and son Eddy were at the mill the rest of the time. Up at the Mountain Lick loggers' camp, they had two or three cooks during that time. One in particular was Katy Rodehaver. Mrs. Rodehaver was a fine cook. My dad had





Our writer Edith's crush on logger Charlie was hopeless, as their respective ages make clear. She stands at right in the 1908 photograph, with him beside her. Beulah Wilson is at left, with the blacksmith shop behind. Charlie's brother, Isaac, in the 1907 portrait above, was the company blacksmith. Photographers unknown.

had her and her son John come from Maryland to cook for the logging camp. She also brought along her granddaughter Rosie.

The logging camp had not been in there too long when some wood hick came in and brought body lice. Soon the whole camp was infested. There must have been 40 or 50 bunk beds at the camp and lice spread to all of them. Katy Rodehaver was a very clean person and not about to tolerate such a situation. One by one she stripped those bunkbeds and boiled the bedding and made the men boil and disinfect their own clothes. She boiled and disinfected until she got every louse out of that camp.

Other cooks at the loggers' camp were Ed Smith and his wife. Mrs. Smith's father was a Dunkard preacher, Brother Calhoun, who lived near Olive. Brother Calhoun and his granddaughter Vesta would walk up to the camp on Saturday afternoon and stay over the weekend with Mrs. Smith. He would preach two sermons, one on Saturday night and one on Sunday.

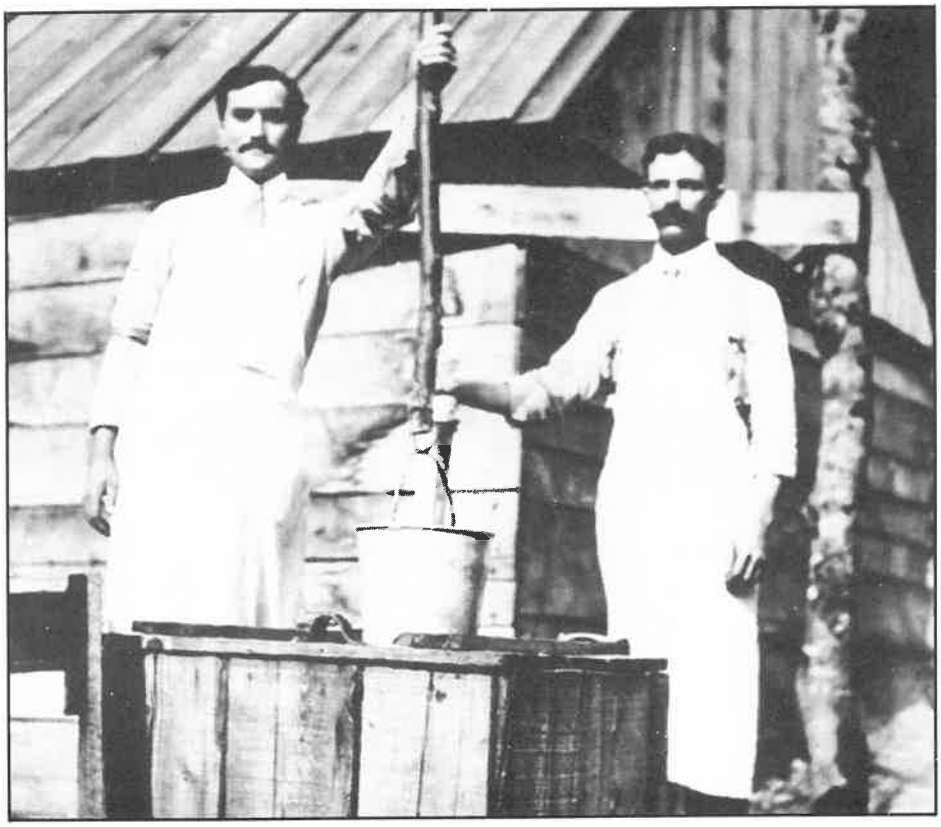
My little brother, Clair, and a first cousin, John Browning, decided to play a prank on the preacher. We had a few chickens and one Sunday they put a big Rhode Island Red rooster under the rostrum and closed the door. During the sermon, Brother Calhoun hit the rostrum hard with every amen. About the third amen, the rooster began to crow; every time Brother Calhoun hit the stand, that rooster would crow. Everybody had to snicker a little, even my straight-faced mother, but the minister's daughter never cracked a smile and Brother Calhoun never let on like he heard it. Needless to say, the culprits were caught and never known to do such a shameful trick again.

One Sunday I went home with Vesta and stayed all night. The next day we went berry picking. As we picked, we came upon a knob, a rounded peak 50 feet or more high. We followed what seemed to be a trail, worked our way to the top and found what looked like a baby's grave. I've often thought about that little grave.

In the summer of 1909 my mother and we children again returned to the farm for a few weeks. Shortly after, my brother Solly, who was 16 years old, led our cow back to the farm from Pocahontas County. He had nothing but a trail to follow across those mountains. My father knew a family who lived some distance from Braucher, and he felt Solly could make it to their house by nightfall and all would be well. That first day was the hardest, but he did make it. It took my brother three or four days to get the cow home to Maryland.

Young boys, in that day, were often called on to perform a man's job. When my brother was only 15 he worked as a teamster, bringing logs down the mountain. One day the big boss, Mr. Newell, came in from Pittsburgh to look over the payroll. He said to my father, "I see you've got your son down here, 15 years old, and you're paying him a man's wages." Dad replied, "Well, he's doing a man's job." Mr. Newell agreed that a man's job should bring a man's pay.

In May 1910, a group of us walked about a quarter of a mile up the in-



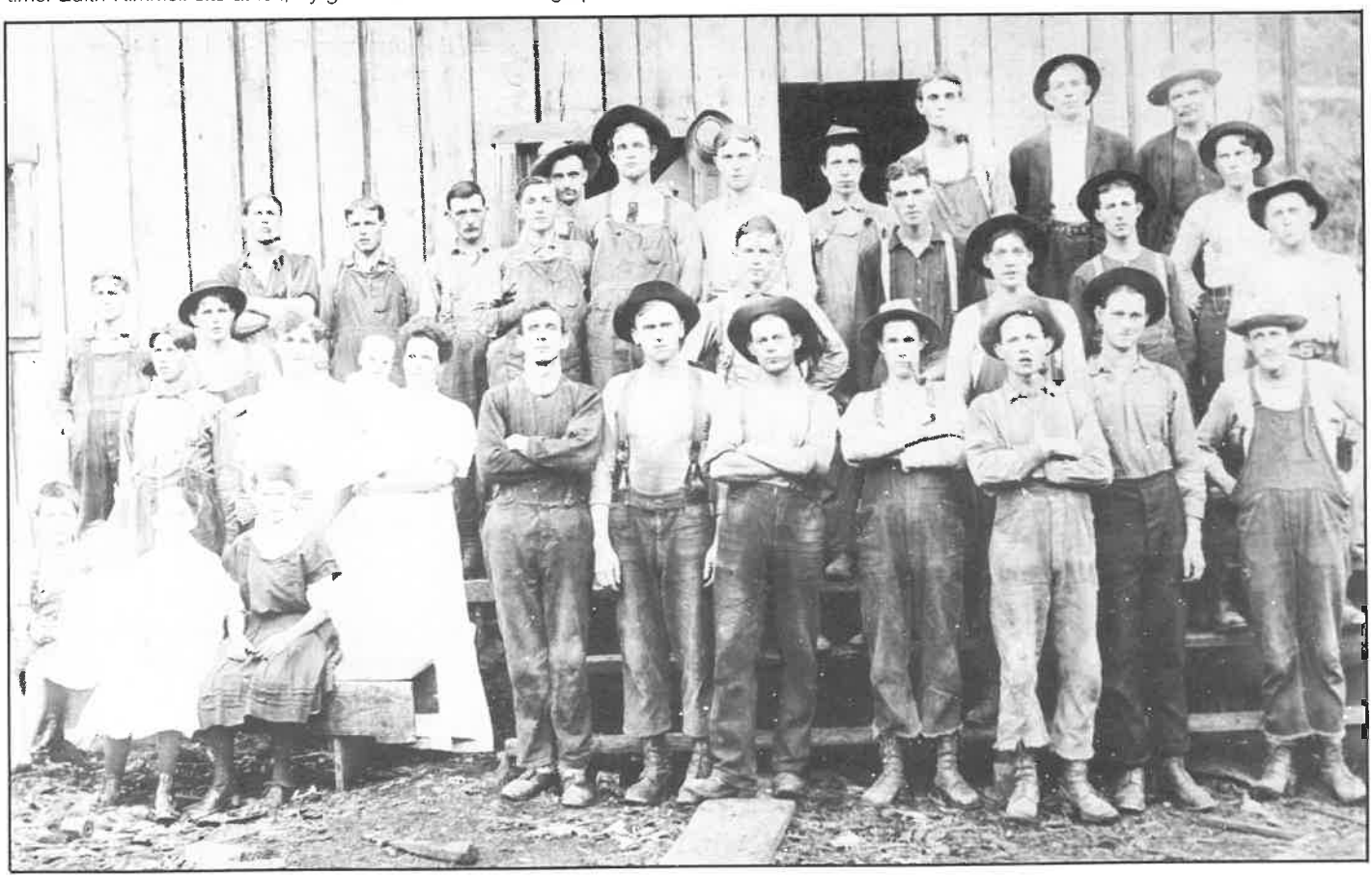
Above: An unidentified cook and assistant cook Isaac Aronholt draw a pail of water. Photographer and date unknown.

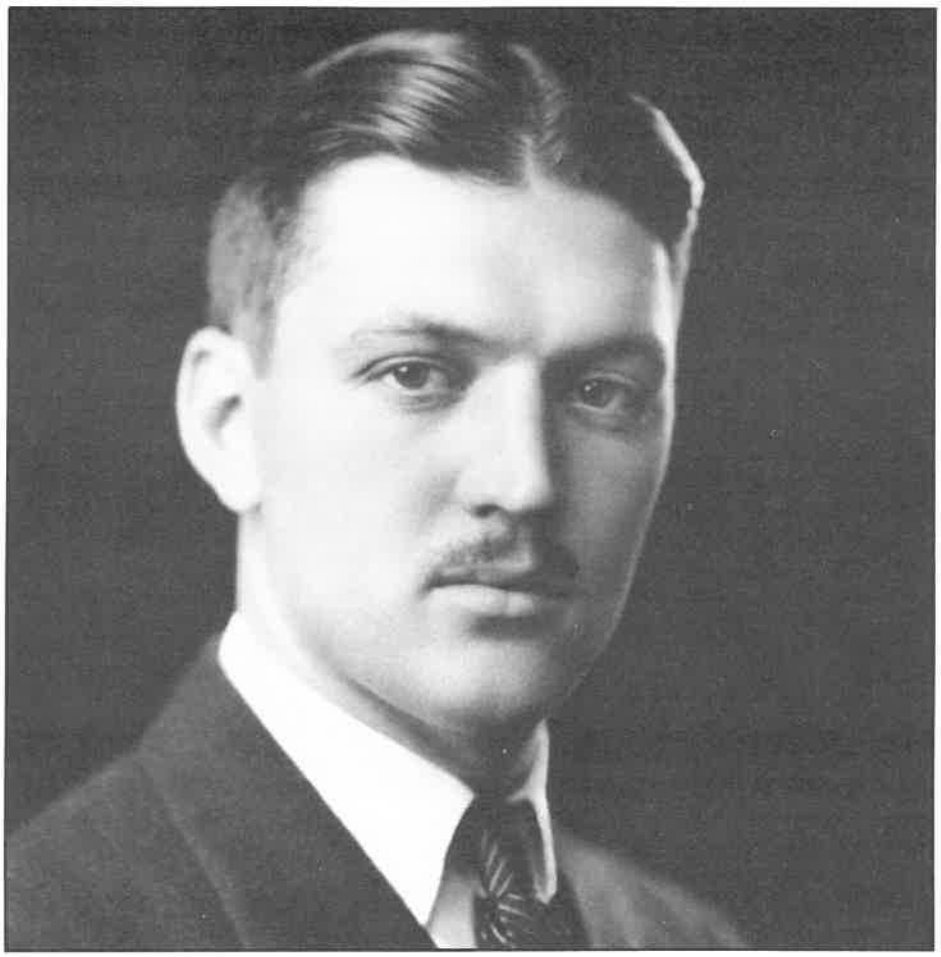
cline at 2:00 in the morning to view Halley's Comet. It was breathtaking, a white oblong object with a long trailing tail. It seemed to hang there in the sky. We stayed for about an hour, then walked home in silence, still under the spell of the comet. I recall the belief that if the comet's tail touched the Earth, the world would be destroyed.

We spent that last summer at Braucher, then moved into Durbin that fall as my father did not wish to return to the farm until spring. We returned to Maryland in the spring of 1911. Memories of Braucher fill my thoughts with yesterdays. I have a longing, not yet fulfilled, to see once more the other side of the mountain, where the action was.

The author plans to make that trip back to Pocahontas County this year. She thanks Gilbert DeHaven, Virginia Arbogast, Jake Thompson of the U.S. Forest Service, Paul Slazin, and Clovis Shiflett for their helpfulness and information. Daughter Velma O'Neill helped compile this account, and archeologist Jan Brashler of the Forest Service helped to bring it into print.

Below: Loggers pose with Mr. and Mrs. Ed Smith (with infant), who shared cooking duties at the time. Edith Kimmell sits at left, by girl in dark dress. Photographer and date unknown.





Louis Reed as a handsome young Cornell student. Photographer unknown, 1923.

Louis Reed

Remembering a West Virginia Writer

By Gordon Lloyd Swartz III

Louis Eckert Reed's life reads like a fairy tale in places, complete with a rich benefactor and oversized doses of both good and bad luck. It all began ordinarily enough. The future lawyer and author was born in the Little Kanawha River town of Elizabeth, the Wirt County seat, on October 1, 1899. He was the first of five children of George William Reed and Emma Belle Black Reed.

Louis began his education in 1905 at a one-room school in Wirt County. From 1906 to 1908 he continued his schooling in East Liverpool, Ohio, where his family had moved. In 1908 the Reeds moved back to Wirt County, where Louis attended schools at Center Hill and Oak Hill until 1912. The family made another move, to Ashford, Boone County, in 1912. Louis attended Lick Creek School there until 1915.

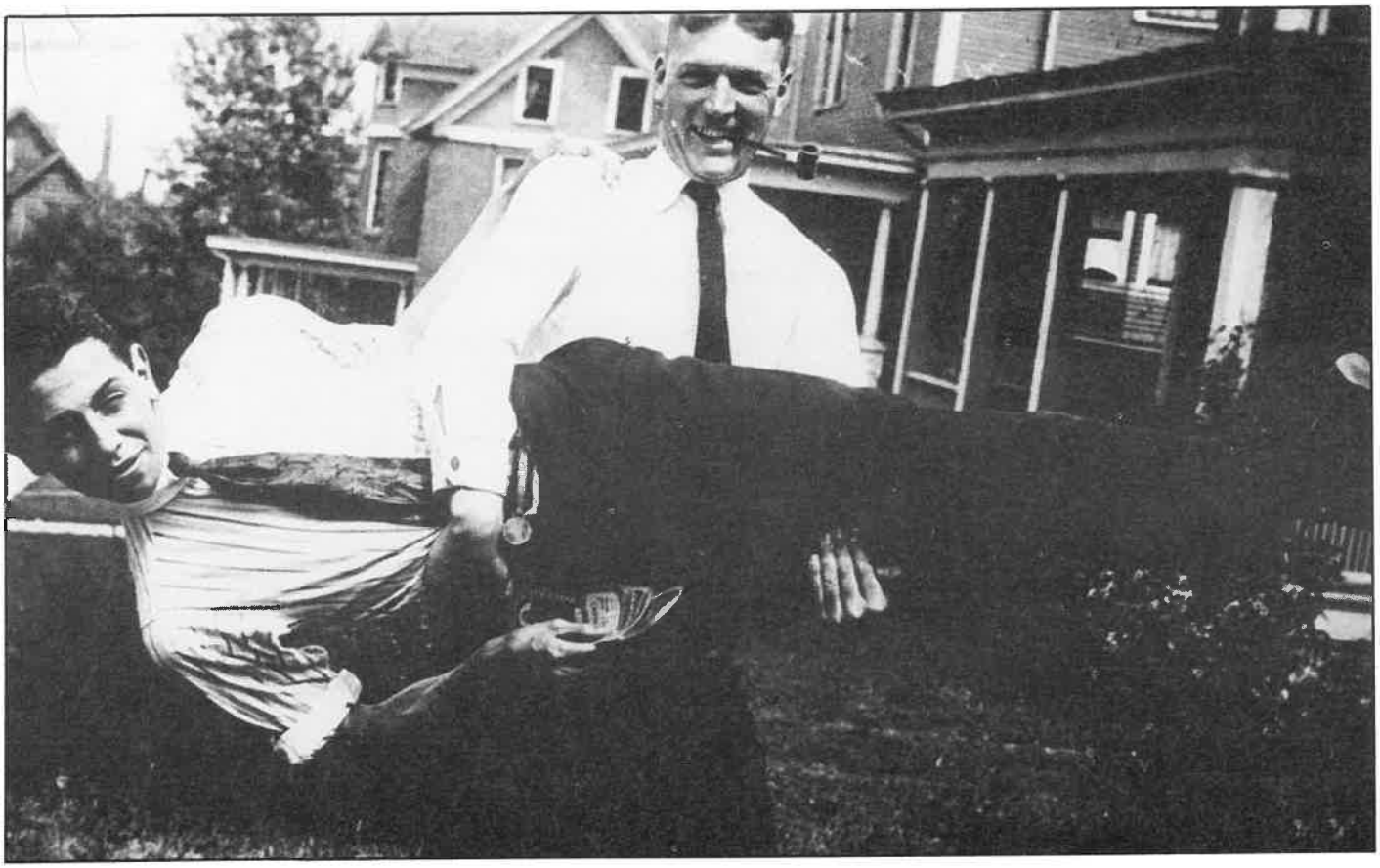
By that time, life had brought a first dramatic change for the Reeds. In June of 1914, George William Reed deserted his family, leaving them in dire straits. Louis went to work soon afterwards. In 1915, at the age of 15, he passed the state teachers examination and was assigned a school at Bull Creek in Boone County. Many of his students were older than he was.

Events soon took another turn. It happened that Colonel Henry A. DuPont, the millionaire industrialist and philanthropist, was a very distant cousin to Louis's mother and a seventh cousin, eight times removed, to Louis. Using the genealogical formula to trace relationships and lineage, such a kinship is difficult for the layman to comprehend. Suffice it to say that to all normal intents and purposes there was no relationship.

However, Colonel DuPont kept track of his distant cousins. He heard of the plight of the Reed family with its five young children and decided to help them, as he had helped other families in need. He arranged for all of the Reed children to go to boarding schools. The two girls were sent to Dana Hall in Massachusetts, one of the finest finishing schools in the country. The two younger boys were sent to the Greenbrier Military Academy. Louis went to Davis and Elkins Academy in Elkins, where he completed the four-year high school course in two and a half years, graduating in June 1917. DuPont's generosity eventually provided college educations for all three of the Reed boys.

After graduation from Davis and Elkins, Louis spent the next year in a variety of jobs which took him from Ronceverte to Marlinton to Chester, all in West Virginia. He enlisted in the United States Army on May 28, 1918. Arriving in Europe as a sergeant on October 28, 1918, he fought in the final Muese-Argonne offensive. Louis remained at the front until the signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918. He was in the Army of Occupation and made the famous March to the Rhine. He was discharged at Camp Meade, Maryland, on June 5, 1919.

Colonel DuPont was very pleased with Louis and began to treat him almost as a son. Louis was often a visitor at the Colonel's Delaware estate, Winterthur, now a major decorative



College years were a fun time for Reed, supported by abundant DuPont money. Here he holds a Cornell buddy. Photographer unknown, 1921-22.

arts museum. After the World War, the Colonel sent him to Cornell University. The young West Virginian lived in luxury. He drove a fancy car, had a speedboat, and enjoyed an unlimited expense account which he submitted a year in advance. Louis received a B.A. from Cornell in June 1923.

Colonel DuPont next arranged for his protege to work for the General Motors Corporation in Kansas City, Missouri. Before leaving for this job, Louis married Ruth Catherine Baldwin of Norwich, New York. They spent less than a year in Kansas City before Louis was transferred to New York City, where son William Baldwin Reed was born.

Louis left New York to return to West Virginia in August 1924. He worked as a high school teacher and a football coach at Pullman High School in Ritchie County. High school coaching was a different proposition in 1924 than it is today. Non-students were often used to ensure victory. Louis wanted to be a winner, so he recruited two of his cousins who were college men. One of the two was Donald F. Black, for many years a judge of the circuit court of Wirt and Wood counties, and the other Amos Hale Black, later a professor of mathematics.

The team went to play a game at Cairo, across the county. The college players on the Cairo team recognized the college players on the Pullman team. The fracas which followed turned into a full-scale riot. The entire Pullman team, including Coach Reed, was incarcerated in the local hoosegow. This was done mostly for their own protection, since the Cairo fans were ready to lynch them.

One year of teaching and coaching was evidently enough for Louis. He enrolled in law school at Cornell in 1925. Colonel DuPont was again his benefactor. He wanted Louis to continue his education as far as he cared to go. When DuPont died in 1926, Louis was able to continue law school through provisions in the old man's will.

Louis transferred to West Virginia University in 1926 and earned his law degree there in 1928. He then opened a law office in Winfield, Putnam County, with Oliver Beckett as his partner.

Nineteen twenty-nine was a rough year for Louis Reed. Fate, so beneficent for more than a decade, now struck back at the young lawyer. Louis lost nearly everything he had in the stock market crash, his law office burned, his wife contracted tuberculosis, and he was hospitalized with a kidney infection. Things were so bad that he contemplated suicide. He left the hospital contrary to the advice of his physicians, because he had been offered a large legal fee which he badly needed. His wife had been institutionalized while he was in the hospital, and his son sent to stay with her parents. With his family gone, Louis boarded with the sheriff of Putnam County in quarters above the Winfield jail.

It is said that artists must suffer. Perhaps it was this period of pain which induced Louis Reed to write. He gathered material for a short story which was published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, then as now one of America's leading literary journals. In 1930 his wife was released from the TB

One year of high school coaching was enough for Reed. This is his 1924 Pullman football team, with him at left. Photographer unknown.

sanitarium and the reunited family moved up the Kanawha River to Saint Albans, near Charleston, with Louis retaining his law practice in Winfield. He continued writing and eventually sold 13 stories to the *Atlantic Monthly*.

Many of these short stories were about his Winfield criminal cases. They give a vivid account of life in rural West Virginia. The *Atlantic Monthly* stories brought much acclaim to the young writer-lawyer. One of them, "Episode at the Paw Paws," appeared in Edward J. O'Brien's *The Best Short Stories of 1933*. Louis was cited as an outstanding West Virginia author in textbooks of the period.

By this time, Ruth Reed was again in need of hospitalization. The family moved to central New York near her parents, so the separation would not be so great. Louis continued writing and became the editor-in-chief of *The Conservator*, a newspaper that was published for the 22 Civilian Conservation Corps camps in central New York.

In 1932 the U.S. Congress voted to give pensions to veterans of the Spanish-American War. His runaway father had ridden with Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders, so Louis began to watch the pension rolls to see if he would apply. Sure enough, George William Reed did, and Louis got his address. Louis wrote to him where he was living in Arkansas and convinced him to return to West Virginia. George William had been gone from his family for 20 years, but now was reunited with his wife Emma. They lived together until his death in 1957.

In 1935 Louis Reed mysteriously stopped writing. He opened a law office in Harrisville, the Ritchie County seat. One month later he was offered a partnership with State Senator Albert G. Matthews of Grantsville. He spent seven and a half years in that firm. During that time he served on the Grantsville town council, was Calhoun County chief of civil defense, and a member of the county draft board.

In 1942 Louis tried to enlist in each of the branches of the service, but was unable to pass the physicals. He then became chief investigator for the federal Office of Price Administration for the state of West Virginia. Louis moved to Washington in July 1944 as the administrative assistant to U. S. Senator Chapman Revercomb. His four-year stint as a Congressional aide was one of the proudest and happiest periods of his life, although it was marred by the fact that Ruth finally succumbed to tuberculosis in 1945.

On Capitol Hill an assistant to a senator is a person of considerable, though anonymous, importance. Louis Reed learned the social and political intricacies of Washington.

The year 1929 brought the beginning of hard times for Reed, marked by family illness and financial problems. His best writing followed. Photographer unknown.

When Chapman Revercomb was defeated in the 1948 election, Louis used his knowledge and political contacts to enter into a partnership called Clovis, Edwards, and Reed. This firm used its connections to further the interests of various businesses.

From the time of his early success with the *Atlantic Monthly* until his involvement with the Washington lobbying firm, Louis published very little. During the last three months of 1949, at the age of 50, he wrote a novel entitled *Rendezvous at Fifty.*

Rendezvous at Fifty offers some clues to the long silence from print. It is the story of a Washington public relations firm called Fonda, Durstine, and Hall. John Hall, the main character, is a lawyer who started a promising career as an author, but left it. When asked, point-blank, why he did not continue the writing which had begun so auspiciously, he answers, "Well, there was more than one reason, to tell the truth. One was that I began to doubt if I had what it took. Another was responsibility for earning the daily bread of a sick wife and child."

In 1950 Louis returned to Elizabeth, the town of his birth, "retir[ing] to a farm in the hinterland," according to the jacket notes on *Rendezvous at Fifty.* Actually, his return to West Virginia was anything but a retirement. He opened a very successful law office. In 1953 he was elected clerk of the county court and in 1956 became prosecuting attorney for Wirt County. He served in that capacity until 1960, when he ran unsuccessfully for the State Senate.

On April 29, 1961, Louis Reed married Mildred Bryant Johnston. They had been engaged in 1918, before he met his first wife, Ruth Baldwin. Mildred had never married. She happened to be working in Washington during the time that Louis was there. She and Louis renewed their old acquaintance, and the relationship gradually blossomed. It was 11 years after he left Washington that the couple married.

In 1964 Louis ran as a Republican for the office of secretary of state for West Virginia. He was defeated, as was most of the Republican ticket in that year of the Lyndon Johnson triumph nationwide.

In 1967 Louis published a study of Wirt County entitled *Warning in Appalachia.* Louis's natural love for his home county, coupled with his curiosity and writing ability, makes *Warning in Appalachia* an interesting, informative book. It was used as a textbook in several college courses.

Reed enjoyed working as aide to U.S. Senator Chapman Revercomb of West Virginia. Here Reed (left) talks with a colleague in Washington. Photographer unknown, 1940's.

Louis Reed was my great uncle and my personal knowledge of him began in these later years of his life. I remember my mother telling of Uncle Louis taking her and her fiance, my father, for a ride in his motorcar to give them his advice for a happy life. She said that Louis was a great speaker and always held her interest. She looked forward to his visits, even as a small child.

On that occasion, Louis recited a ribald poem entitled "The Ladies," by Rudyard Kipling. The poem begins "I've taken my fun where I've found it; I've rogued and I've ranged in my time." It goes on to tell of four escapades the narrator had with women. Each stanza ends with the line "I learned about women from 'er!"

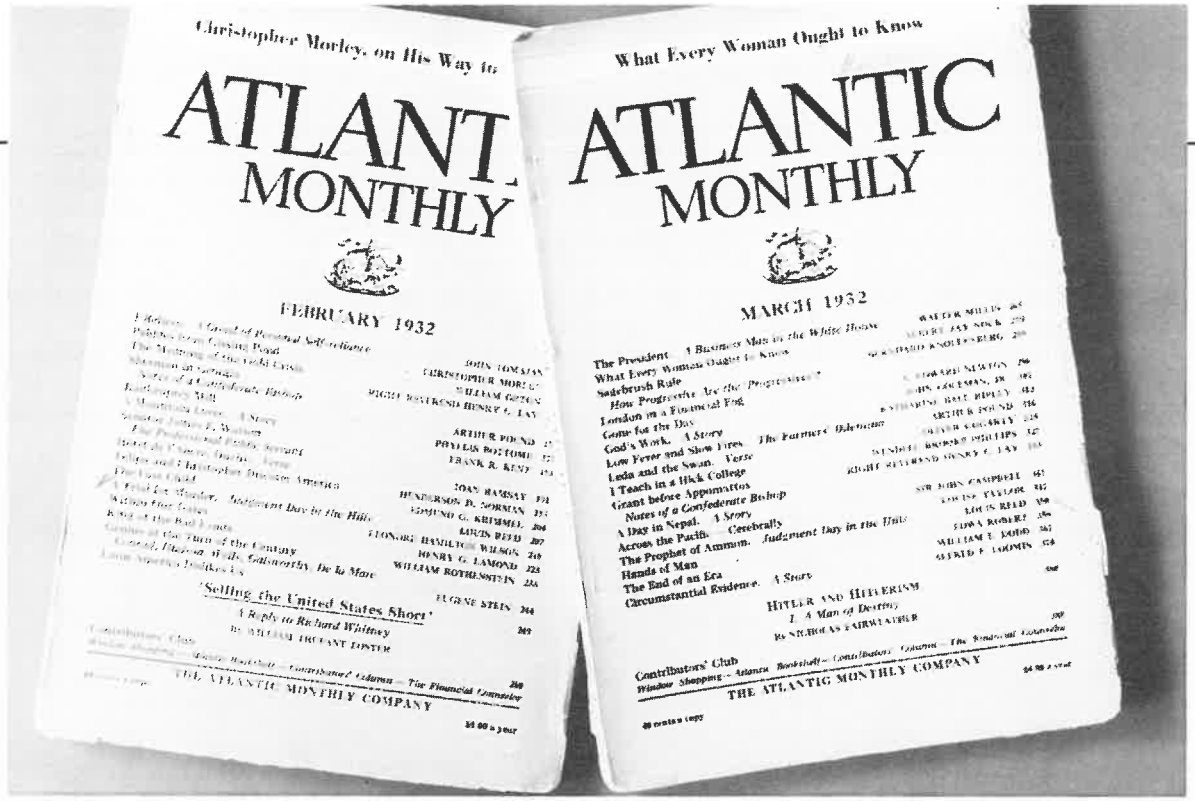
The last stanza may have been directed to my mother's suitor:

> I've taken my fun where I've found it
> An' now I must pay for my fun,
> For the more you 'ave known of the others
> The less you will settle for one;
> An' the end of it's sittin' and thinkin';
> An' dreamin' Hell-fires to see;
> So be warned by my lot (which I know you will not),
> An' learn about women from me.

Although Kipling wrote "The Ladies" in 1895, it was considered — at least by my mother — to be very risque in 1947.

I remember visiting Uncle Louis at his home in Elizabeth in the early '70's. He related anecdotes from his life, stories which probably would have filled a book if I had had a tape recorder or taken notes. I was especially interested in his talk of the boom towns of Boone County and the surrounding coalfields, the cheapness of life in such places, the poker games that lasted for years, the distrust of strangers.

He also recounted several episodes which I later recognized in his *Atlantic Monthly* stories. In "Judgment Day in the Hills," published in 1932, Louis writes of a widow who loses her farm because she followed the advice of a young lawyer. The lawyer is poor himself, or he would at least provide food for the starving woman and her children. He does manage to raise enough money to send her to her brother's home in another state. He ends the account with this bittersweet reflection:



"Judgment Day in the Hills" was serialized in the *Atlantic Monthly* in early 1932. These are the Reed family copies of the February and March issues.

Putnam County Homebrew Troubles

From "Judgment Day In The Hills"

by Louis Reed

A large-size map of West Virginia shows that Winfield is on the Great Kanawha River about twenty-five miles north and west of the capital city of Charleston. The Alleghenies at this point dwindle to foothills; yet Putnam County, of which Winfield is the county seat, is properly a part of the region known as the Southern Mountains, because the people who inhabit it are typical mountaineers. As the crow flies, it is about fifty miles to Logan, the scene of the historic Hatfield-McCoy feud.

The village has a population of three hundred souls, many of whom are county officials. Because it is the county seat, there are three law offices, and there was, prior to its failure some months ago, a bank. I was unfortunately attorney for the bank, and lost money when it failed. The District High School is here, employing two buses and two bus drivers to bring in students from the surrounding farm country.

The village lies sprawled over the wide river bottoms, but the two most important and imposing buildings — the courthouse and the jail — are situated at the top of a low ridge overlooking the village, a ridge that in the dim geologic past must have been one of the banks of the Kanawha. The courthouse lawn, covered with maples and elm trees, slopes rather precipitately down to the highway below. At the west end of the lawn, about twenty paces from the front steps of the jail, is a two-room, cabin-style frame building, housing the law offices of Beckett and Reed. Beckett lives on a farm some eight miles distant, but my present home is the jail. I board with the jailer because the jail is the one building in Winfield with modern plumbing. As I write this I can hear the jailbirds downstairs singing.

The big day both for a lawyer and for a layman in this community is the opening day of the Circuit Court. Without betraying confidences reposed in me as an attorney, I shall attempt to describe, in these pages, as truthfully as I can, exactly what happens on a typical first day, and shall begin with a brief description of the court itself.

The Circuit Court of Putnam County convenes on the first Mon-

day in March, the fourth Monday in June, and the third Monday in October of each year. Each term lasts six to ten days. Aside from informal courts presided over by justices of the peace and the anomalous proceedings of the misnamed County Court, there are no other courts in this county. The Circuit Judge lives in the City of Huntington. He has jurisdiction in this county over all felonies and misdemeanors, all actions at law, and all suits in chancery. The Circuit Court is also an appeal court from decisions of justices of the peace.

Because there are but three short terms of court each year, the Winfield lawyer at court time works under terrific pressure. It is no small task to appear in thirty-odd different cases within ten days, including six trials before a jury. As the total amount of legal work to be had here is necessarily limited, there was a term when I appeared, on one side or the other, in every case on the docket but four. That docket included everything from selling moonshine liquor to issues out of chancery.

For two weeks prior to the opening of any term of court my partner and I work night and day getting ready. We prepare instructions to juries, notices of motion for judgment, orders in cases at law, pleas, answers, decrees, arguments, and briefs. We do all this before court starts, because, if we are lucky enough to have a little time to ourselves while court is in session, we shall have no opportunity to use it in preparing cases.

On the first day of court we are at our desks at 5 a.m. making a hurried final examination of the documents. If there is not something to be added at the last moment, we are fortunate indeed. Even at this early hour people are beginning to arrive for court. Time was, not so long ago, when they arrived on horseback or in buggies, but nowadays most of them use automobiles. They park their cars on the highway below, and collect in little groups about the front steps of the courthouse and the war memorial.

These are plain folks from the hills, and, although each is distinctly different in appearance from all the others, there is nevertheless a marked resemblance between them. Nearly all the men are tall, lean, and slightly stooped. They say little, and that unsmilingly and watchfully. The women — except the young girls, who are often beautiful — are weather-burned, stringy of hair, shabby, and as silent as the men.

All of these people are potential clients because of a strange custom that survives here. At one time there were no resident lawyers in Winfield. To supply the needs of this county, lawyers out of Charleston and Huntington rode the circuit with the judge. In those days a man had to wait until court time to secure the advice and services of a lawyer, and, although the circuit riders have long since disappeared, the custom of waiting until court convenes to consult an attorney largely persists.

At 6:40 I see a man disengage himself from the group on the courthouse steps and approach our office. Beckett goes to the other room, which is also the waiting room, where he has a desk in one corner. This particular client, however, is mine. He is an aging man of sixty or thereabouts, dressed in blue overalls, hunting cap, and a sweater. One side of his face is swathed in bandages. His name is John Stimpson.

Mr. Stimpson, it develops, has had trouble with a neighbor by the name of Sim Matthews. During the preceding afternoon, which was Sunday, Matthews invited Stimpson to help him partake of a generous quantity of homebrew, freshly bottled. Matthews got drunk, and remembered a most unfavorable horse trade he had made with Stimpson some twenty years before. He began to talk about it. The more he talked the more eloquent he became, until his pronouncements took on the appearance of a diatribe against the whole generation of horse-trading, skin flinting Stimpsons. Finally, he worked himself up to such a pitch of righteous indignation that, when Stimpson started to expostulate, Matthews crashed a homebrew bottle over Stimpson's skull and 'sent him windin'.'

Stimpson wants the vengeance of the law. What can be done about it?

There are several things, I point out to him, that could be done about it, but it is questionable whether anything ought to be done about it. According to his own statement, both men were drinking. Drinking happens to be a crime in this country, and, in spite of rather extensive illicit moonshine operations throughout the county, Putnam County juries have a way of declaring themselves bone-dry. I know, and no doubt Sim Matthews knows, that Stimpson himself owns and operates a small still, which would provide an opening for serious retaliatory measures on the part of Matthews. While the law gives each of its citizens certain rights, it is not always expedient to exercise them.

Stimpson is no fool, but he is full of wrath on account of the beer bottle. It looks as if he ought to have some satisfaction. I think I can arrange this. Sim Matthews is also a client of mine. I will advise him to pay Stimpson's doctor bill and also a small amount to cover Stimpson's loss by reason of not being able to work for a few days. My advice to both of them is to forget this incident and not to drink homebrew in the future — at least not together.

If not satisfied, Stimpson is resigned to the inevitable.

'I ain't got no money,' he says, 'but I have got a quart of aged liquor. It's yours if you want it.'

'Not to-day,' say I. 'I'm too busy. Maybe I'll need you for something sometime.'

Originally published in The Atlantic Monthly, *January 1932.*

Louis Reed at the time of his 1964 campaign to become West Virginia's Secretary of State. This is a common later portrait, used in the 1979 edition of *Burning Springs*. Photographer unknown.

Burning Springs Book

Burning Springs, Louis Reed's Civil War novel, was recently published by University Editions/ Aegina Press of Huntington. The book was written a few years before Reed's death in 1979.

Burning Springs is the story of the spectacular rise and fall of the Wirt County town of that name. Burning Springs was a petroleum boom town that had the misfortune of reaching its peak in the midst of the Civil War. It became a minor military target and was burned to the ground by Confederate raiders in 1863. Reed tells the story from the perspective of one of the drillers of the original oil well, a fictitious young man who was at Burning Springs from first to last.

The 275-page paperback sells for $9.95. Mail orders, including $1.00 per copy shipping and handling and 5% sales tax from West Virginians, may be sent to University Editions/Aegina Press, 4937 Humphrey Road, Huntington, WV 25704. Information about other Aegina Press books may be obtained from the same address.

> "As the woman leaves me she says something I shall never forget. It is 'May God bless you.' What a strange thing is Christianity, I think. If she had cursed me, I should at least have understood her bitterness. Her blessing touched my heart and left me feeling hollow and ashamed."

The story was written as fiction for *Atlantic Monthly* but Louis assured me that he was that young lawyer and the tale was true. I suspect that most of his *Atlantic Monthly* short stories were. In 1972 Louis was again elected prosecuting attorney for Wirt County but was forced to resign in 1974 because of a debilitating stroke. His wife died in 1977. Two years later, on January 29, 1979, Louis died. He is buried in the Beulah Hill Cemetery.

Upon his death, Louis Reed's son William Baldwin Reed of Apache Junction, Arizona, came into possession of Louis's papers and manuscripts. He has made significant progress in the posthumous publication of his father's work.

With William's help, *The Wicks and the Wacks* was published by Aegina Press of Huntington. *The Wicks and the Wacks* was promoted as a wonderful children's book, and it is. But there is a deeper message as well, making it thoroughly enjoyable for the adult. The book is very short. I do not know when Louis wrote it. It is hard to place into a period of his career, since it does not resemble any of his other writings.

Burning Springs is the latest of Louis Reed's books printed by Aegina Press. Most critics agree that this is his best work. It is an historical novel set in Burning Springs, Wirt County, during the Civil War period. It is a thoroughly entertaining, well-researched novel about the building and burning of the petroleum boom town. There is an exciting fictional plot woven into the factual background of the story.

Burning Springs is one of the least autobiographical of Louis Reed's works, but it is about a subject and a mystery which had intrigued him since 1935. As Louis states in his preface to *Burning Springs*, written in 1974, "One advantage in writing fiction is that the author is able to solve his mysteries." Looking back, he may have felt less able to wrap up his own life so neatly.

The future mine superintendent sits third from left in this picture of Gauley Mountain Coal Company workers. Garland Skaggs was about 22 at the time. This excerpt is from a Red Ribble panoramic photo, about 1922; courtesy West Virginia Archives and History Division.

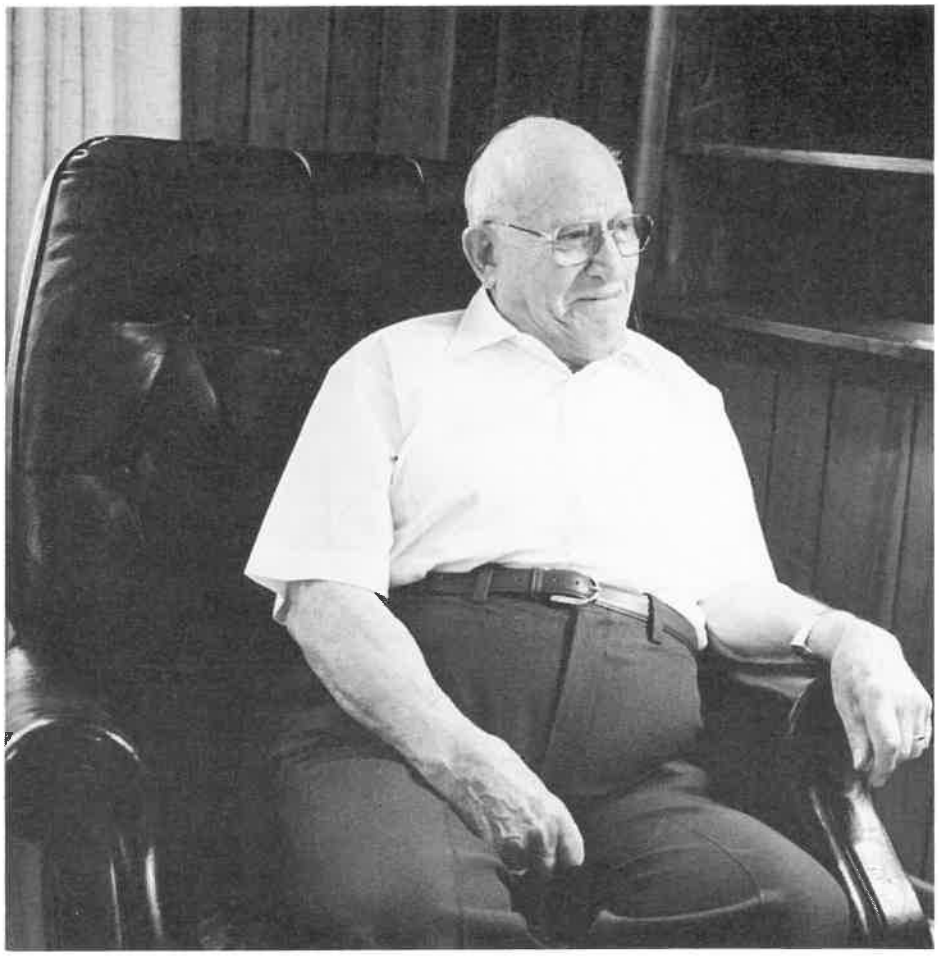
Mining Coal and Minding Cows

Garland Skaggs of Ansted

Interview by Lou Athey

A friend introduced Garland Skaggs to me as one who "knows more than most in these parts" about the coal and coking operations of the Gauley Mountain Coal Company. That October evening in 1981 when I arrived at his Fayette County home, Garland put aside his pipe wrench to greet me. He had almost completed the installation of a new stove, a second source of heat for his home should the electric power ever fail. A man seldom without a home improvement project underway, even in his ninth decade, Garland nonetheless always found time to talk, intertwining humor and insight about the boom days in his town of Ansted.

Garland Skaggs worked for the Gauley



Mountain Coal Company for over 40 years. The company historically was the major employer for the town of Ansted. The noted London geologist David Ansted had in 1873 analyzed the coal seams of Gauley Mountain for English investors. Gauley Mountain Coal Company was established on October 11, 1889, after earlier attempts by English owners to mine coal and produce coke at Ansted had failed. William Nelson Page, who had come to West Virginia on a survey team with the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway, became part-owner and superintendent of the new company, since he had persuaded Abram S. Hewitt, a leading New York politician and financier, to invest in Gauley Mountain coal.

Under Page's leadership, Gauley Mountain Coal Company rapidly became a leading producer in Fayette County as new technology was adapted to extract coal. Page introduced mine electrification shortly after Garland began his career with the company. The new energy provided a lifetime opportunity for the young man, who found electrical work a convenient stepping-stone in his rise from

Above: Today, Mr. Skaggs is retired and living comfortably in Ansted. He had a major home-expansion project under way when our photographer visited in April. Photo by Mike Keller.

Below: Mine mechanization first revolutionized transportation in the mine, replacing mules with electric locomotives or "motors." This is Gauley Mountain Coal Company motor no. 29648, with "Clate" Walters, center, and unidentified fellow oilers. Postcard view, date unknown; courtesy Gladys Skaggs Brown.

greaseboy to mine superintendent and town mayor.

Garland Skaggs. I was born on June 22, 1900, in Romont on Rich Creek, about six miles from Ansted on the other side of Gauley Mountain. We moved to Ansted when I was 10 years old. My dad was John Delano Skaggs, and my mother was Mary Susan Skaggs. Now, they were both Skaggs but no relation. Mother was born in Marvel on Sugar Creek and Dad on Rich Creek. He worked for Gauley Mountain Coal Company, and when we moved to Ansted in 1910 he became foreman on the coke ovens.

We lived in an old company house about 75 feet away from the coke ovens. Our house had three bedrooms, a living room, dining room and kitchen. These old company houses were just weather-stripped over the wider boards and they would dry out and warp and open up cracks, since they were made with green lumber. The wind would just whistle through. We heated them with the open hearth fireplace. You had to do like the Indians and sit close to keep warm.

I started to school in a one-room schoolhouse in Romont. When school started, everybody was about the same age, a bunch of kids from maybe eight years to 10 or 11. You'd have to stand up before your class for daily recitations. If you wanted to ask a question, you had to ask the teacher. If you whispered, you got thumped on the head with a pencil right in class. I continued school in Ansted until the eighth grade and that was as far as I went.

In 1912, when I was 12 years old, I started working on the tipple. I worked weekends, holidays and vacations until I was out of school. I worked as a checkboy and a greaseboy. We worked on the cars at the tipple. Some of us had to check the cars to make sure that the miners got credit for them. As the coal cars came into the tipple we took the checks off the cars and handed them across to the check foreman.* That was one of my jobs.

*During the hand-loading era a miner attached a numbered metal tag or "check" to each coal car he loaded, to ensure that the tonnage was credited to him when weighed at the tipple. — ed.

Mine electrification, introduced at Gauley Mountain soon after Garland Skaggs began work there, offered a lifelong career opportunity for working with the new technology. These mine motors draw power from the trolley wires overhead. Postcard view, date unknown; courtesy Gladys Skaggs Brown.

We boys greased the cars when they came into the tipple. The old mine cars had a straight-bore wheel and an axle. It was just a plain cast-iron wheel and an axle. There was no way of lubricating it, except by pouring oil down on the shaft and letting it run in the best that it could. All day long I'd go along and grease the wheels with this squirt gun full of oil. It had to be disconnected, and so on. Later they used wheels with a compartment in the spokes. The compartments were full of hemp and you would pour oil all over the hemp. That hemp would last two or three days, holding the oil and gradually feeding it to the axle.

When I was 14 I didn't want to go to school anymore, so I told my dad and he helped me get a job in the machine shop as an apprentice. I went into the machine shop in 1914 and worked nine hours for 60 cents a day. After four years I got $2.25 per day for eight hours, before I graduated up to mechanic or machinist. The machine shop was located up on Gauley Mountain to the left of the coke ovens. Back in those days the company bought their steel in stock and you had to machine the stock steel down to make car axles and so on. I learned the lathe and the milling machine just by making the things needed for the operation of the plant. It saved scads of money because we could do it so much cheaper here, rather than sending away for it. Machinists started on the lathe doing rough work and then, when you were more skilled, you'd work the finished product, the finer work.

When I first started in the mines in 1912, it was pick and shovel mining and mules pulled the cars. It was 1918 when Gauley Mountain Coal Company put power in the mine and brought in some Goodman mining machines. They were the first ones. They had a cutter bar about seven feet long, and they cut the coal about six feet back with about a foot of the bar left out from the face of the coal. The coal broke off not in a square face but in a kind of sloping face.

The Goodman was run by electricity and we used them for years and years. As an electrician, I worked on plenty of those machines, mostly on the controls. The machine would pull around 150 to 200 amperes and, of

course, the contacts were real heavy. The operator would maybe open up on the third point and the machine would stall and still draw 200 amps. If it wasn't shut off, the contacts would burn off. If you shut it off under a heavy load of coal, sometimes that would burn the whole control box up. Finally, the Jeffrey Company built machines, too. They had improvements over the Goodmans, but not much. Later on, they started these darned continuous miners which replaced all the hand-operated machines.

Around 1920, we started to use electrical locomotives in the mines and the armatures would burn out from short circuits and different things. They asked me if I would like to learn the armature winding and I told them I would, so I started in on that. I got a set of electrical books and learned the wiring for the automatic starters. I worked on armatures, I expect, for 15 years. I was left-handed, you see, and it was just right for a left-handed person because a right-handed guy felt awkward doing the job. You'd have the armature up on the rack on the left and your commutator on the other end. Then you had all these wires that had to be brought down and attached in the bars of the armature and wound. It was just easier to do left-handed.

The more electricity we used, the more I had to go to the mines to work. I've worked with electricity from six volts to 2,300 volts. You had to be very careful, though. I worked in 2,300 volts when we were building a circuit in Ansted for street lighting. Gauley Mountain Coal Company then owned the franchise to furnish power to the whole town. We were rebuilding the lighting circuit in town because the wires were just too light to carry the load and they would short out. There was this 2,300-volt line that went down to power the water pump on Mill Creek for the town water supply. We were renewing those wires when a fellow cut the hot wire off the pole on the hill above me. I was pulling one wire down through an insulator, and the wire I was pulling flopped over onto the 2,300-volt live wire. Of course, it knocked me out. When I fell I was lucky enough to pull the line I was holding away from the hot wire. When I was revived, I took the rest of the day off and celebrated my luck!

When World War I started, we worked for $4.89 a day for eight hours. And during that peak in demand for coal, due to the war effort and all, we got our wages up to $7.50. After that was all over, naturally, the bottom fell out of the coal business and it started back down. The company went back to paying $4.89 a day, so we had a strike for more wages. That's the worst strike I ever experienced. I was married in December 1921. On the first of December 1921 we had this big strike, and we didn't work anymore until the following September, 1922. I worked one day in that whole time. The

Posey Hall strikes a jaunty pose in a Westinghouse motor at Gauley Mountain Coal, while unidentified operator fingers the controls. Postcard view, date unknown; courtesy Gladys Skaggs Brown.

sump pump went bad so they called me to come and fix it. That's the one day I worked in nine months.

Lou Athey. How did you and your wife survive?

GS What did we live on? I had bought a $1,000 liberty bond. I had paid $750 for it during World War I. When I got married the banker took over that bond and gave me $700 for it. We lived on that from December to the following September, when I went back to work.

LA Did you work for Gauley Mountain Coal Company until you retired?

GS Well, I was an electrician and mechanic all my life. I followed that trade right through. In 1940 I left Gauley Mountain Coal Company to work for Koppers Coal Company and Warner Collieries for three years but I came back and stayed with Gauley Mountain until 1956, when they closed their operation. I was superintendent of the mines for 13 years, from 1943 to 1956. During the war years in the early '40's, the top number of men I had working under me was 575. Then, of course, business started dropping off. The coal business went down and down and down. In 1956 when I left we were only producing 1,200 tons a day, but we had been up to 2,500 tons a day. They lost over half their business from market conditions.

Gauley Mountain was an independent mining operation and the people who owned it lived in New York. Erskine Hewitt was down here from New York pretty often. He was always dressed in a full suit, but when he'd come to the mine and go inside he'd put a pair of coveralls on. He was very familiar with the mining methods and the way the coal beds laid and all that.

He visited one day and we went through our Gauley Mountain tunnel to visit our Jodie mine. In those days we had man cars. Twelve men could ride up in one trip on this track. There was a mine on either side and the tracks connected down at the bottom. The cars were pulled by cable up the two sides. Somebody said, "I wonder what would happen if the rope would break?" I said, "Well, we'd go down here, then up the other side of the mountain, then back again. It might stop in a week." Mr. Hewitt said, "I can think of a lot better ways to spend a week." Of course, the rope didn't break.

I was elected mayor of Ansted in 1936 and only one reason made me decide to run. Everybody had a cow or two cows, and they ran all over town. They'd stick their heads in the drugstore door and walk down the sidewalk. Well, one time I was downtown and there was a car stopped at the curb that had New York license plates. There this cow was standing with its head stuck in the drugstore door and these people were taking pictures of it. Of course, I didn't know what to do, but I thought I could stop that. So I ran for mayor to put the cows out.

There was a lot of opposition to that. One old gentleman came to me and said, "Garland, why should I have to build a fence to keep my cows in?" I said, "Why should I have to build a fence to keep your cows out of my garden?" I was elected. Once they'd seen what a difference it made to have the cows penned up, everybody was for it.

The WPA came into being while I was mayor and I worked with them, too. We built sidewalks all over town. Every street had sidewalks built. I got money to build a fire station and the mayor's office and the municipal building. I also got money for the first fire truck we ever owned. Somebody must have not liked what I was doing, though, because when the election came up, I got beat. I wasn't elected again until 1946.

Everybody in public office worked for nothing because we didn't have very much revenue in the 1930's. It was voluntary all the way through. We had a five-member council and a recording secretary. We had regular monthly meetings. If a problem came up, we would discuss it. You needed three members to decide it.

The mayor was also police judge. When drunks were brought in, the mayor would have to fine them. There was a small jail but it wasn't

Garland and Parma Skaggs were married in 1983. The couple live on an Ansted hill today, looking after a good-sized yard and garden.

At 87, Garland Skaggs looks to the present and future. "I don't worry about the past," he told our writer. "That is for you historians." Photo by Mike Keller.

used much. When someone was brought in for public drunkenness or disorderly conduct, I'd have to fine them. That didn't set too well, and they let me know it when I worked with them the next day. Once I had a lady come to my house at 6:00 a.m. on Sunday morning to get her husband released from jail. So, I went down and released him and fined him $10 plus $2.50 court costs. The same thing happened again, but the third time I fined him $25. They never came back. Still, that is the only thing I didn't like about the job.

When I was mayor in 1946, Mill Creek dried up from a terrible drought. I got the Coastal Tank Lines to furnish us with a couple of tankers to haul water. We had to pay $9,000 to haul water for about three months. The drought was so bad that the Army Corps of Engineers came here and installed an eight-inch pipeline right up to our water plant. We got that thing built and started the pumps and just then it started to rain. We used that pipe system for one day! We spent about $20,000 to move the pipes and all from Pittsburgh down here and to lay out a three-mile line, then they took it right back up. It was just for the emergency. Of course, I got criticized for spending $9,000 for water that year, but the people in town had water.

Gauley Mountain Coal Company did pretty well right up until the 1940's. A lot of people lived in Ansted then and worked in the mines. The town stayed about the same for several years. The population just got so large, then that was it. Of course, when the coal business got bad the town started going downhill. People had to go to other places for work. It may be the same population now, 2,000 or 2,200, about what it was back in the boom days, but it's different.

Eyes glinting merrily, Garland leaned back in his chair and added, "Of course, I don't worry too much about the past. That is for you historians to do. There is just too much life to live every day!" And he sure was right about his life. The next time we met was in 1983 at his wedding, when Garland at age 83 claimed a new bride. Since then, we have met many times, and I always learn something new about the boom days at Gauley Mountain Coal Company or about past and present times in Ansted. ♣

After mechanization of the sort witnessd by Mr. Skaggs, coal mining would never again be a business for two men and a boy, with a jug to go around. Photographer and date unknown.

Coal Towns

By
Shirley Young Campbell

We had fun in the coal camps. My father was a mine electrician, so the pleasure we found can't be attributed to the fact that we lived in "one of the big houses on the hill," because we didn't. But we had good times.

My family lived in three separate mining communities during the '20's and '30's, the time I was growing up. Recreational opportunities varied greatly, yet my brother and I and our friends enjoyed ourselves at each place. All three were located on Cabin Creek in Kanawha County.

One of the three, Decota, had a YMCA with an energetic, jovial director, J. A. Page. My earliest recollections of Mr. Page include his leading the singing in the large YMCA auditorium, greeting me at the soda fountain, or driving a car full of young people to a church function in one of the neighboring towns.

The Y was important to Decota. Bazaars and dinners were held in the auditorium. Bowling matches and billiard games were played in the building, as was basketball. A barbershop occupied part of the first floor. Movies were shown, with someone playing the piano during the silent films, and I vividly recall a costumed gathering one Halloween. Baseball games were played at the Y, with the visiting teams coming from many places. There was a swimming pool. Tennis courts were available for people who owned rackets and cared to play. That didn't include my family, but I felt no great loss because of it. The Y also had a library, with books to lend.

Our church in that first community had an Easter egg hunt, I remember, and on one memorable day church people journeyed all the way to Charleston to visit the Union Mission. We had a picnic somewhere along the way.

Eskdale, the second place we lived, had fewer opportunities. I do remember a birthday party there, and I have a very pleasant memory of a holiday when friends came to visit. We lived at Eskdale for only a short period when I was eight years old, but we came back to shop. Mr. Shibley, the Alessios and Harry Nehman are storekeepers I recall. My father introduced me to the pleasure of eating a pineapple sundae at Mr. Nehman's store.

After Eskdale we moved back to Decota, and then to Acme on the other fork of Cabin Creek. Here there was no swimming pool, no theater, no restaurant. I recall bake sales or box suppers at the school, plays in the church, and seeing my father perform in a play sponsored by the PTA.

There was a theater in Kayford, a short distance above Acme, and sometimes we saw movies there. On one memorable occasion, my girl friend and I convinced our parents that we were old enough to go by train to Kayford to see a movie. We dressed carefully and felt very important as we waited near the company store for the evening train, the second passenger train of the day. It passed us as we stood waiting. We didn't know that the train had to be flagged to get it to stop at Acme in the evening.

We found ways to have fun in the summer. Even at Decota, my brother and I invented games we could play at home. One of the houses we lived in was near a creek, surrounded by sandstone and sandy soil. We played in the sand, making castles, pretending we were at the seashore. At Acme, I remember looking for "crawdabs," as we called them. With some friends we put on a circus one year, with a captured crawfish serving as a dragon.

Occasionally we played miniature golf at Leewood, which had a course for a short while, and my brother and I made our own miniature golf course on the hill behind our house. A real circus came to Eskdale one year, and carnivals came often. At least once, Chautauqua people presented plays in a tent.

Making candy was a favorite pastime when friends came to visit — fudge, taffy or divinity. Tricks enlivened the candy making, with someone "stealing" candy placed on a window sill or even putting salt instead of sugar in a batch of fudge.

Spending a night at someone's house was popular, and as we grew older we invited friends in to dance to radio music. My parents were very cooperative, moving the dining room table and rolling up the rug, but the time came when we were told to call a halt to the evening's fun.

As I think back, particularly of the hours Sybil Eads and I spent in a playhouse converted from a pony stable, it seems to me that it was probably easier for girls to find entertainment in coal communities. This may explain why the boys sometimes resorted to instigating dog fights, for example. There was no place suitable for skating and little opportunity for bike riding. However, boys enjoyed marbles, horseshoes and a game played by knocking tin cans about.

In warm weather, we played games in front of our house. We chose teams to play "Pretty Girls' Station" or "Red Rover," as I recall. Sometimes we played baseball on a pint-sized diamond. I remember once playing Indians on a hill near an old coal mine, but we were not allowed to play in dangerous locations and I doubt that our parents knew our hike had taken us to such a spot.

As a family, we sometimes played Rook or setback, and gathered around the radio for "Amos and Andy," Lowell Thomas and the news, or the Lucky Strike orchestra. Reading was important, and I recall reading some books as many as seven times.

During the years when we were lucky enough to have a car, and when my father had a few hours free from his job of repairing mine machinery, we might drive to Charleston to shop or to see a movie or a vaudeville show. Such trips were enjoyable, even when the road took us through the creek several times, but even when we stayed at home we found ways to entertain ourselves. Life in a coal town was not always drab or gloomy, as some people may think.

Margaret Allen shows her art in Moorefield's historic Old Stone Tavern. The painting between her and Tavern proprietor Steve Wilson is of the Tavern itself.

Living and Learning

Margaret Allen of Moorefield

By Arthur C. Prichard
Photographs by Michael Keller

Margaret Allen of Moorefield still goes to school at age 87. No, she isn't a slow learner, nor did she drop out of school in her youth. It is just that she has a strong desire to continue developing her skill as an artist, so she goes on studying. After the death of her husband, Carl B. Allen, in 1971, Mrs. Allen decided to take up painting. It was natural, she says, for she came from an artistic family.

"My mother had actually studied art at the University of Pennsylvania, something unusual for a girl to do in those days," Mrs. Allen explains. "We all drew pictures, but I didn't think I could earn my living as an artist. I knew I could as a reporter. After my husband's death, I had a sort of mental block about writing. I didn't want to write again, as we had always shared the other's writing and criticized each other's work. I decided to go back to drawing and painting as a pleasant hobby. I got hooked on it.

"I found that I didn't want to do as most women do, just paint pretty pictures," she continues. "I really wanted to study art. So I studied with someone in Virginia for a while.

Then through a friend in Washington I located a teacher of portrait painting, Elizabeth Boyd. I went to Washington every week to attend her class. After some five years I found the commuting was getting a little strenuous and also found it didn't give me time to work by myself, so I asked her if she thought I had gotten far enough along for her to take me as a private pupil once a month. I still go monthly."

Last February, Mrs. Allen traveled to Arizona to study three weeks at the Scottsdale Artists' School. She also attended the school for one week in 1985 and 1986. She has gone to numerous art workshops in recent years. In the summer of 1986, she attended a portrait seminar in Maine conducted by Raymond Kingstler, one of America's best-known portrait painters. Several years ago she traveled to Spain with a landscape painting class. "It was an interesting, profitable learning experience," she says. The results of Mrs. Allen's learning may be seen at Moorefield's Old Stone Tavern restaurant, which offers her paintings for sale.

Margaret Allen is not a native West Virginian. She was born in New York State and grew up in Massachusetts. Her father was a research chemist and her mother a daughter of a professor of chemistry at Amherst College. Much of her childhood, which she remembers as a happy one, was spent in Wellesley, a city near Boston. After attending Wellesley public schools, she enrolled at Dana Hall, a private girls' school in the same city.Following that she entered Vassar College, where she majored in English. After graduation, Margaret worked as a reporter for the *Boston Traveler* newspaper. From there she moved on to the big time in the newspaper world, joining the staff of the old *New York World* as a general reporter.

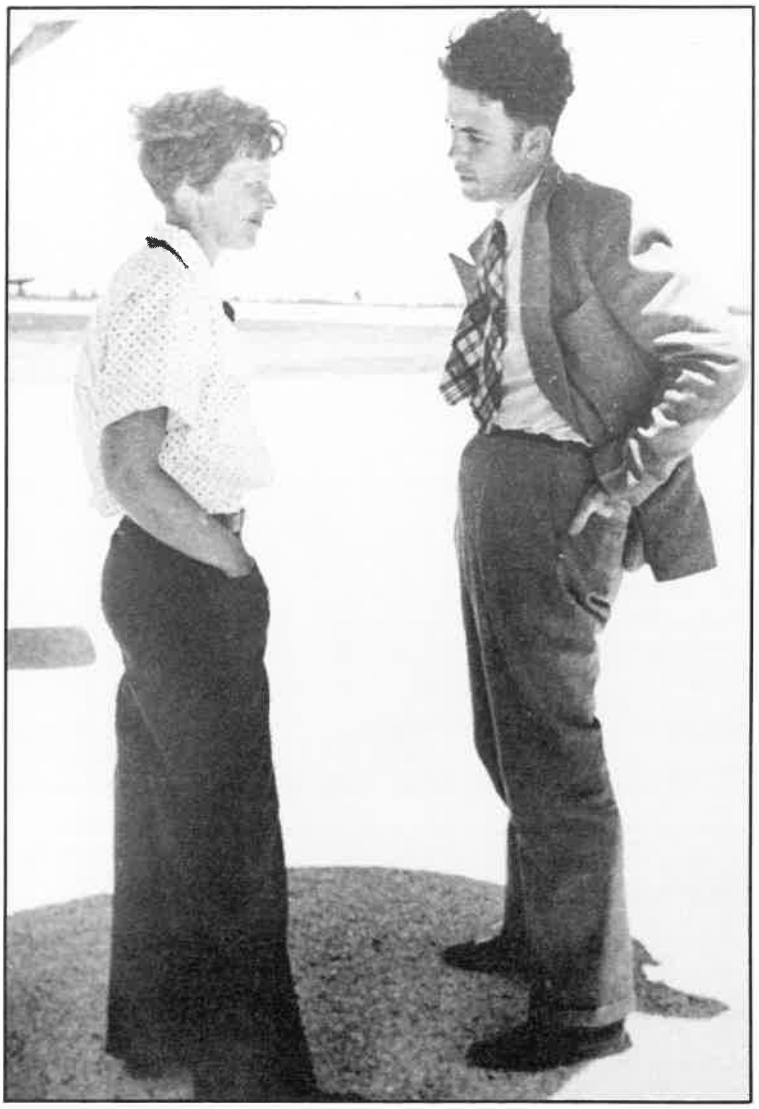
She still appreciates having had the chance to practice daily journalism during the golden age of newspapering. "In a day when women mostly did 'women's stuff,' I was fortunate enough to be assigned to covering news," she says.

This painting of Ruth Wilson is an example of Mrs. Allen's portraiture work. It hangs in the McMechen House in Moorefield.

While working for the *World* she met Carl Beaty Allen, another reporter for that paper. Allen was a West Virginia boy. He had grown up in Moorefield but gone to high school in Mineral County at Keyser Prep, later Potomac State College. Moorefield, like many other Mountain State towns in the early 1900's, didn't have a high school of its own. After studying in Keyser, Carl — or "C. B.," as he was called — enrolled at West Virginia University. In 1917, about midway through his university course, he left school to enlist in the U. S. Air Corps. When the World War ended, C. B. began his career as a newspaper man. Following a job on a Cincinnati paper, he moved to the staff of the *New York World.*

After C. B. and Margaret's marriage, he continued reporting for the *World* until its sale and consequential disappearance, whereupon he moved to the *New York Tribune.* He specialized as an aviation writer. C. B. Allen covered the historical aviation events of his day, including Lindbergh's flight, the Hindenberg dirigible disaster and Amelia Earhart's preparations for her ill-fated flight. He knew the people making flight history. One of Mrs. Allen's prized photographs is of Earhart and C. B., taken by Amelia's husband, George Palmer Putnam. "C. B. was telling Amelia she was leaving behind navigation equipment which she ought to take, the Morse code transmitter, which would enable ships at sea to get a fix on her position," Mrs. Allen recalls. "The original of the photo is in the Smithsonian."

When World War II exploded, C. B. Allen was called back to active duty in the Air Corps. He was discharged a full colonel after serving for the duration. Mrs. Allen taught school in New Jersey for the four years her husband was in the service. Returning to the *New York Tribune,* C. B. settled down with the expectation of a lengthy stay. However, he was lured away by the Glenn L. Martin Company, then being reorganized by business people who knew little



Above: C. B. Allen, a Moorefield native who built a successful big-city career, returned home in mature middle life. Photographer and date unknown.

Left: Mr. Allen was an aviation journalist and executive. He is shown here with Amelia Earhart. Photo by George Palmer Putnam, date unknown.

about flying, to be assistant to the president of that trailblazing firm.

After the war, the Allens bought the Hardy County estate known as The Willows, where C. B.'s family had once lived and where he spent a happy country childhood. For a while they divided their time between Hardy County and Washington. The Willows, a few miles from Moorefield, was to be theirs for more than 20 years. Then Ingleside, the old Allen place that had been built largely by C. B.'s grandfather, Judge James F. W. Allen of Civil War fame, came on the market. The property had been sold out of the family many years before and allowed to run down. C. B. and Margaret disliked seeing his grandfather's house, around which a host of historical family recollections clustered, in such a shambles. They decided to buy the place, restore the house and then sell the property.

Ingleside was in worse condition than the Allens had first thought, and restoration took longer than planned. The passing of time led to a reconsideration of their living arrangements. The advantages of living nearer town without the work and responsibilities of a farm became more apparent as months rolled by. They decided to sell The Willows and live in Ingleside on the outskirts of Moorefield. Ingleside remained the Allen home until recent years, when Mrs. Allen moved to a cottage built to her specifications. The combination living room-studio has two admirable skylights, which provide good daylight for painting, and a large connecting closet for her art equipment.

Living part-time in Hardy County after World War II, and then full-time, Mrs. Allen busied herself in local activities, especially the operation of the county public library in Moorefield. "Coming from New England where every little town had a library, I was somewhat appalled to find that wasn't always the case in West Virginia," she recently explained. "I thought Moorefield was fortunate, as the Woman's Club had started a library. It seemed there was an opportunity here for library expansion, and it proved to be that way. People wanted what libraries had to offer."

The experience has given Margaret Allen an accumulation of library stories. She recalls the term paper writer wanting to know "all about Ernest Hemingway but not more than a page or two," and the many, many people seeking genealogical information. She remembers farmers stopping by to pick up books on their way

Ingleside, an old Allen family estate, was restored by C. B. and Margaret Allen. It was their home for many years.

home from stock sales, with truck loads of animals left bawling on the street outside.

Some of the stories go straight to the heart. "One winter a barefoot four-year-old spent quiet mornings with us," Mrs. Allen remembers. "She never spoke but turned the pages of picture books, humming softly. 'Her mother goes to work and locks her out,' we heard. 'The welfare is trying to place her.' In the meantime, the child knew warmth and peace."

When Mrs. Allen first became interested in the library, it was located in a room over the movie theater and open only a few hours a week. The meager budget came mainly from a monthly donation from the Woman's Club, and from teas and solicitations. When it was learned that one of the two women who had helped start the library a quarter of a century earlier was leaving $3,000 for a library building, Mrs. Allen was among those who worked to help get it built and dedicated in 1952. The committee planned for room to hold 6,000 books easily, thinking they might never need a larger building. Within a few years they were trying to crowd 9,000 to 10,000 volumes into that space.

The 1952 building cost $12,000 and left the library supporters in debt. Among various money-raising endeavors they tried was a local House and Garden Tour in 1954. As they and other West Virginians knew, Hardy County is deep in history. Young George Washington, in surveying Lord Fairfax's land, spent considerable time in the area which became Hardy County. Both Tories and American patriots were present during the Revolution. Negro slaves, on their way to freedom, found shelter in local underground railroad stations.

During the Civil War, Yankee and Confederate forces swept back and forth across the area. Major Harry Gilmore, a Southern guerrilla leader, was captured at The Willows, and the McNeill Rangers operated from their home base near Moorefield. I well remember the occasion, some 25 years ago, on which I revealed my ignorance about the Rebel Rangers. Visiting Moorefield during a Poultry Festival I was introduced to a McNeill. After exchanging pleasantries, I asked, "Could you, by any chance, be a descendent of one of the McNeills of the McNeill Raiders?"

Immediately I sensed a noticeable cooling of the atmosphere on that hot, midsummer day. "Sir, they were the McNeill RANGERS!"

Capitalizing upon the historic properties of the area, the 1954 House and Garden Tour and those which followed were successful. Visitors in increasing numbers came to see heavy timbered doors, retained from buildings constructed at a time when protection against Indians was wise; secret hiding places; trap doors in floors; lovely staircases; intriguing antiques; and beautiful houses, gardens and lawns. Another attraction was Hardy's warm hospitality. The tours paid off the library debt in six years. After that, the library board turned the management of the tours over to others. With some additions, including music, arts and crafts, the program grew to become the present Hardy County Heritage Weekend, with the income now helping finance the county library and local historical projects.

Their base in Moorefield assured, library supporters worked to expand service throughout the county. A used bookmobile, bought for $100 and piloted by volunteer drivers, began laboriously climbing up and down the hilly terrain with its load of culture, education and entertainment. After many months of this, Mrs. Allen and associates decided to establish deposit stations in schools, country stores and other centers

throughout Hardy County. The old bookmobile was replaced by a secondhand station wagon, and the deposit program started. Then a temporary library was set up in Baker, a crossroads community across the county from Moorefield. A year or so later, the State Library Commission arranged for the county to receive a prefabricated building for Baker. It was said to be the first "outpost" library in the nation, the forerunner of a system of instant rural libraries pioneered in the Mountain State.

Over the years, Margaret Allen worked as librarian, served on the building committee, chaired the board of directors during various reorganizations, and served as president of the county library commission from 1974 to 1980. Of course, she was always an enthusiastic member of the Friends of the Library auxiliary. The hometown work brought widespread notice and honors. Mrs. Allen was named to the West Virginia Library Commission. In 1966 the Hardy County Library was selected as one of six outstanding small, rural libraries in the United States and given the annual Book-Of-The-Month Club Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award. Mrs. Allen was among the Hardy Countians who contributed to winning this honor.

The State Library Association selected her to receive its Dora Ruth Parks Award in 1981. The certificate reads: "The West Virginia Library Association, in recognition and appreciation of 31 years of outstanding service to libraries and librarianship in West Virginia, hereby presents the 11th annual Dora Ruth Parks Award to Margaret P. Allen."

Within a quarter-century, the 1952 library was bursting at its seams. The Hardy County Library Commission bought the Hawkes Market property on Main Street, Moorefield, and in 1978 converted the building into a library capable of holding 25,000 to 30,000 books. The following year the new library won a Virginia architecture award for designer Juris Janson.

Margaret Allen's newspaper instinct remained strong and she made

Hardy County Heritage Weekend

The House and Garden Tour that Margaret Allen and others began in 1954 to raise funds for the local library has since grown into a hear ty two-day celebration. The Hardy County Heritage Weekend, sponsored by the Hardy County Tour and Craft Association, is held each September with festival headquarters at the public library.

This year's Heritage Weekend will be celebrated September 26 and 27. As in past years, the 1987 Weekend will feature the House and Garden Tour. Hardy County's history is reflected in the pre-Civil War houses, many of which are on the National Register of Historic Places. The privately-owned houses are open to the public only at this time. Weekend tour tickets cost $6 for children and adults.

Traditional crafts, mostly by West Virginia craftspeople, will be exhibited and offered for sale, and an art show and sale will be held at the library. There will be competitions, including a muzzle-loading shoot, an antique car show and even a jousting tournament. Live bands will play country and bluegrass music throughout the weekend, and food will be plentiful. Sandwiches and other snacks will be sold, and area churches will sponsor sit-down meals with the best of home-cooked foods.

The Hardy County Heritage Weekend promises to be full of fun, good eating and plenty of entertainment. For more information, contact Marjorie Zirk at the Hardy County Public Library; (304) 538-6560.

Jousting is a part of Heritage Weekend. This member of the Knights of the South Branch rides for a target ring, not a live opponent. Photo by Gerald S. Ratliff.

Public libraries have been an abiding interest with Margaret Allen, who believes reading is essential to a free country. She is shown here with Hardy County librarian Marjorie Zirk.

sure the Hardy County Public Library got "good press." Looking back, it is easy to see the important part publicity has played. "Whenever our circulation rose or the bookmobile added another stop or someone gave a memorial book, it was worth a story," she says. "We have always had splendid cooperation from our local paper. We've not only reported meetings and such, but planned events with definite publicity value — an award to the outstanding 'reading family of the year,' book talks before local clubs, and so forth."

Mrs. Allen tells of many little jobs she was called upon to do over the years. One favorite story is of a time the library had entered a float in the Poultry Festival parade. "On a flat farm wagon, pulled by tractor, we did a replica of one of our country store deposit stations, complete with stove, mail boxes, two women chatting, and shelves with canned goods and books," she relates. "It was accurate enough, amusing, and won a prize. But when the parade started, the wagon had to make a left turn off a side street onto Main. At that point, most of the cans and books fell off the shaky shelves. One block ahead was the judges' stand. I ran alongside, tossing up cans and books and the women hurried them in place before the float passed by to enthusiastic applause."

A recent public service project of the Friends of the Library was the production of a video documentary of the 1985 flood in Hardy County. When relief agencies and government representatives went to the library in November 1985 to get information about the tragic 1949 flood, they found nothing except a few newspaper clippings. Members of the Friends, including Mrs. Allen, decided it was most important to have the 1985 flood well documented, so they engaged a professional crew from Morgantown to carry out the project. The resulting videotape was shown on the three public television stations in West Virginia in November 1986, a year after the flood occurred.

Mrs. Allen's consuming interest in libraries comes from her belief in their supreme importance among a democratic people. She quotes journalist Harrison Salisbury's saying, "Free libraries mean free men." She adds her own interpretation, "Libraries free us from tyrannies."

Those bookish beliefs fit well with Margaret Allen's personal philosophy of lifelong learning. "I think it is important to be learning something. The older you get, the more you ought to be learning," she avers. "Truly, there isn't much to life if you are not learning."

The gate to Will Bruner's Ohio County garden. Weekend country life was a refuge for the busy city engineer. Photographer and date unknown.

Hard Ground and Weeds

Will Bruner's Gardening Memoir

Compiled by Jim Bruner

These days, the part-time farmer who uses his country place as a release from the demands of city work is a fairly common figure. But many years before weekend farming gained popularity, Will Bruner was commuting every other week from his home in Pittsburgh to work with his mother and sisters on the family farm near Wheeling. He was a mechanical engineer in his weekday job, designing all kinds of machinery for industry and the railroads. It was work he considered worthwhile and to which he gave his best. However, it was on the farm that Will found a sense of place, of connectedness, of home. The land functioned for him as his magnetic pole, to orient himself by. He was never happier than when pruning his grape vines, poling lima beans, erecting his custom-designed tomato trellis, or field-testing some new idea or invention.

So when the Great Depression hit and he found himself 60 years old and unable for the first time in his life to get paying work, Will sat down and composed his mind by writing of the farm in West Virginia. He wrote of his boyhood there and also of the period of his travels back and forth as a weekend farmer. The excerpt that follows is taken from the latter part of his memoirs, dealing with the late 1920's and early '30's. In this section, Will starts with the fine details of gardening and works around to an overall philosophical statement of the value of such labor.

Weeds are the pests of our lives. It is necessary to get the jump on them and keep it up through the season, or else we will have no garden. The small handplow takes care of the weeds very satisfactorily, and only a prolonged wet spell can defeat us. Our soil is a dark loam underlaid with clay. It becomes hard in dry weather, so it must be kept as loose as possible and not worked wet.

From my observations, different folks and different soils require their own spacing. Suffice it to say I plant onions and radishes 16 inches apart, and beets and carrots 18 inches, and peas 26 inches, with 28 inches between each pair of rows; bantam corn 36 inches both ways; evergreen corn in 42-inch rows and 26 inches between the hills in a row; and beans in 24-inch rows and drilled.

We cannot grow bush limas. We have plenty of bush and no limas, and so raise the pole limas instead, two stakes to a hill and spaced 42

inches both ways. They bear very well, especially if the season is fairly moist.

We have a scheme for poling them that has done well. In my early days we went down into the woods and cut poles for this purpose. It was quite a task to cut and lug home 60 bean poles and this had to be done every two years. About nine years ago, I went to the planing mill to see what they could furnish and ended up by purchasing some nine-foot hemlock pieces. These were ripped off standard two-inch planking. I was not much impressed with the hemlock as my experience with it in building work was not favorable, but I accepted this as the best they could supply me. Well, these are still in use and most of them good for eight or nine years more. We put them in the barn as soon as frost kills the beans.

I was much discouraged because the beans were very reluctant to entwine themselves about these poles. At first I attributed this to their large size and sharp corners. This may have a little to do with it, but I well remember Dad fussing with his limas in past years, even with nice round poles with the bark on them — just seemingly ideal for a bean to climb — so I just considered they must be given some assistance in starting up and then all is well. The sharp corners can easily be knocked off with a plane and I would do that were we getting any more.

We put these poles up tepee fashion, four poles coming together at a point about six feet above the ground. In using these square fellows it is best to lay them together in the same direction, then use a piece of #11 or #12 wire and pliers to bind the tops. Pull the wire up and twist it and you have a job that will stand against any wind, and the poles do not have to be put into the ground as deep and firm as would otherwise be necessary. We tried baler twine at first for tying the tops, but the string soon became loose from alternate drying and wetting, and was very unsatisfactory. The wire is excellent.

The tomatoes are run up on a trellis which at first seems expensive and too much labor, but which in the long run is really neither. The tomatoes are planted in two rows 42 inches apart and the plants are set 27 inches apart in the row.

The women folks were left to run the farm after the death of Will's father. Here Will poses with Grace and his mother, Emma. Photographer unknown, 1939.

The trellis is made of one-by-three stakes, seven feet long, and one-by-four boards and galvanized clothesline wire. The stakes are driven in line with each row and spaced four and a half feet, which makes them come between every other pair of plants. No measuring required, as the spacing of plants determines spacing of stakes. Every third stake is driven crosswise instead of flat with the row. This gives strength to resist side wind, which is a problem when the plants cover the entire trellis. The one-by-four boards are used as a horizontal stringer spaced four feet from the ground. Then use two lines of wire below the board and if necessary one line above.

Our trellis is about 90 feet long to accommodate 80 plants. It can be gotten out of the barn and put in place by one man and a boy in three hours. If a garden is weedy the place can be kept clean by running the handplow during practically the entire season. It would be fine if one could afford paper around the plants to preserve moisture and obviate cultivation, but the farm garden does not allow for frills. We have used this same trellis for eight years and most of it is usable for some years more. I am aware that in some seasons tomatoes grow much ranker and a trellis of this kind would hardly accommodate them, but it fits the average soil very nicely.

By the spring of '26, I think it was, we had gotten into fairly good running shape after the gap made by Dad's passing away. There is a row of grape vines running through the garden and I concluded I would trim them. February 20 was my chosen afternoon and I wondered whether the weather would be favorable or maybe blizzardly as one might expect then. Well, the afternoon and evening were very nice — some snow but mild and not unpleasant considering the time of year. I remarked about how lucky it was and hoped I might have a good afternoon in two weeks to finish up. They had not been trimmed for several years and were pretty bad. The next trip was fine and I finished the pruning and did some other things and remarked again how lucky I was.

From then on I took account of the weather as it affected my working on the one afternoon and evening every two weeks. During the following five years I missed not more than three

times in carrying out the planting, cultivating, etc., that I was in line for. My trips were every two weeks during about nine months, or 18 trips per year and 90 times in all. One cannot believe that the law of averages would permit working in the garden more than two-thirds at best. The season from April 1st to July 15 is the time when weather counts most, which represented eight or nine trips or 40 to 45 in five years, and it is unbelievable that so many could be suitable for garden operations.

There is this, however, to be taken into consideration: Where there is a will, as the old saying goes, there is much that can be done that otherwise would not be accomplished. I have buried cabbage in the evening and after dark because an early snow came unexpectedly and it looked like the cold would continue. I once gathered and buried about 20 bushels of mangels* in the evening and early night. They had been pulled and topped by the folks, but they couldn't bury them. I have set out cabbage and tomatoes by the light of my large gasoline lantern in the busy afternight when there were many things to be done. I have planted early stuff when it was rather doubtful and a casual inspection reported the ground too wet. But real investigation showed it just dry enough and I got by and had two weeks advantage over what might have been.

My going to the farm became quite a subject of conversation at the office on Saturday mornings. Someone would say, "Is Bruner going to the farm today?" If the answer was yes, the comment would be, "O.K., we'll have a good afternoon." Of course that didn't always work out, because the weather at my home city and 60 miles away on the farm might be vastly different. Even less distance than that makes quite a difference.

Our people do not work on Sunday, except to do those things that are necessary in connection with stock. I performed no garden operations on Sunday other than to get a basket of stuff to take to my own home — perhaps some corn, beans, peas or tomatoes. Sunday is our day of rest and we hope never to have to use it otherwise, though as is true of anyone I have had some emergencies where work was required. I usually did enough on Saturday evening to require a good rest the next day, and then my work in engineering demanded a fresh body and mind on Monday. It would have been unfair to my job to be in anything but good working condition as far as I could govern circumstances. I have seen some men come in Monday morning, and girls too, who had abused their rest day and were injured rather than benefited by their day off. We have usually had a nice flock of chickens, and the day after church was spent in feeding and watching them and doing the regular chores.

*Mangels are a type of beet. Like the cabbages, they were buried to preserve them from freezing during the winter. - ed.

Recalling Will Bruner

My grandfather William Jacob Bruner was a remarkable man in many ways. Although he voted Republican, at heart he was a "small-d" democrat. He never lost his sense of wonder that in this country a man could succeed according to his talents and energy, without having to turn his back on his origins.

He was born in 1873 on the Bruner farm six miles from Wheeling, the eldest in his family. Sheep raising was big business in the Northern Panhandle then, and his father and uncle together farmed around 450 acres of pasture and hayland. The sheep industry was dealt a severe blow when tariffs were lowered under President Cleveland and Australian wool flooded the domestic market.

Will Bruner was headed in another direction by then, away from the farm. He had shown an aptitude for mathematics early, picking up arithmetic while listening to older children recite their lessons at the local one-room school. He discovered his mechanical skills by helping manufacture the corn planters which his father had designed and patented.

As he grew older, Will did many sorts of work to earn money. He broke rocks for the road. He purchased and operated a threshing rig. He learned to play the fiddle and organized a dance band. Less laudable exploits, particularly breaking up dances for which his band was not hired to play and a habit of fighting yellowjackets with a piece of shingle, earned him the nickname "Beelzebub."

Will continued his schooling at nearby West Liberty Normal School, now West Liberty State College. He graduated there in June 1891, one-tenth of the entire senior class. Two years of schoolteaching followed. For a time Will was unsure of what career to pursue, and considered becoming a dentist. By chance somebody suggested he would make a good engineer. This led him to enter West Virginia University. While there he quarterbacked the 1894 football team, and suffered a case of typhoid fever which nearly cost him his life. He graduated in 1898.

During the following years Will worked around, mostly as a surveyor in western Pennsylvania, finally settling in Pittsburgh with the engineering firm of Heyl and Patterson. During this time he installed several major improvements on the Ohio County family farm, such as running water, gravity-fed to the house from a cistern, and tile pipe to drain a wet field.

In 1907 Will Bruner married Mary Mortland of Pittsburgh. He also changed jobs and moved to Cleveland. While living there he met a young widow and her son, Lloyd Palmer. Will generously took a father's interest in Lloyd that continued into the younger man's adult life. After a year or two in Cleveland, Will and Mary moved to Columbus, Ohio, where three of their four children were born.

Will liked Columbus, and afterwards wrote wistfully of Ohio's fine gardening soil. The lure of a

Will Bruner, with new wife Mary Mortland by his side, and Lillian Mortland and Alice Fox standing in front. The occasion was New Year's Eve, 1907, in Cleveland, according to a note on the picture. Photographer unknown.

better job and being closer to both families eventually led him in 1917 to return to Heyl and Patterson in Pittsburgh, however. He remained with the firm for the rest of his life. His fourth child was born in Pittsburgh.

The 1920's were good years for America's middle class, the Bruners included. It was a busy time, too. Will's father died in 1920, leaving a vacuum in the operation of the West Virginia farm. The regular visits described in Will's memoirs commenced about this time. He came to assist his mother and two sisters, who were farming with hired help, and for the recreation he needed so badly. To a man whose heart never left the country, the smoky city of Pittsburgh must have been a constant trial.

Then the Depression hit. Will Bruner was out of work for the first time in his life. Unable to afford train fare, he was cut off from the farm. At times he was close to despair. But rather than surrender, he filled reams of paper with the many things he could think of about the farm — his recollection of his father's return from the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, the elder Bruner's invention of a corn planter, and how farming was done in his boyhood days. Eventually the good times returned and Will's visits to the country resumed. But it is out of the evil time that we have the good legacy of his written memories.

Will did not have much to do with the field work on the farm. Corn, hay, the cows and sheep were pretty much his sisters' and the hired man's province. What he loved were the vegetable patches, the grape vines and fruit trees, and the chickens. Although traditional in certain respects, he kept up with advances in horticulture. A particular delight of his was the garden tractor acquired after the time of these memoirs. At last he had a true ally in his lifelong battle with clods and weeds!

In 1949 Mary Mortland Bruner died, and the next year Will suffered a near-fatal auto accident. In the aftermath of tragedy he sold his house in Pittsburgh and spent a year on the farm. It was a wonderful vacation for him, the first opportunity in 60 years to be there all the time. In those months he caught up on a lifetime's worth of projects. Then he returned to his engineering, putting in full weeks at the office and spending his weekends on the farm.

Even though by then he was past 80, Will Bruner hardly slowed down. His son Bob, my father, was now operating the Ohio County farm. Will helped with the farming in general, even riding a wagon to stack bales of hay. He could saw trees and swing a sledge as well as a man half his age. His death in April 1955 came unexpectedly, and illness claimed him for only a few days. He died a young man's death, his mind still full of the plans he intended to carry out.

— Jim Bruner

For the present, "Old Man Depression" has bungled up our program and I cannot make these trips as I did, though the garden continues in a fashion and the farm still goes on as best it can.

An analysis of the foregoing leads me to a conclusion which is by no means new or original. If there is a predisposition to do something — so strong that one enters into the work enthusiastically — there is no limit to what can be accomplished. Men who are putting on sales drives dwell upon this point emphatically when instructing prospective salesmen. But enthusiasm is not from the outside. It rises like a bubbling spring from inner desires and hopes. Happy indeed is the man who can put into his daily work this something which makes hard work a pleasure and finds ways and means that do not appear to the man not so endowed.

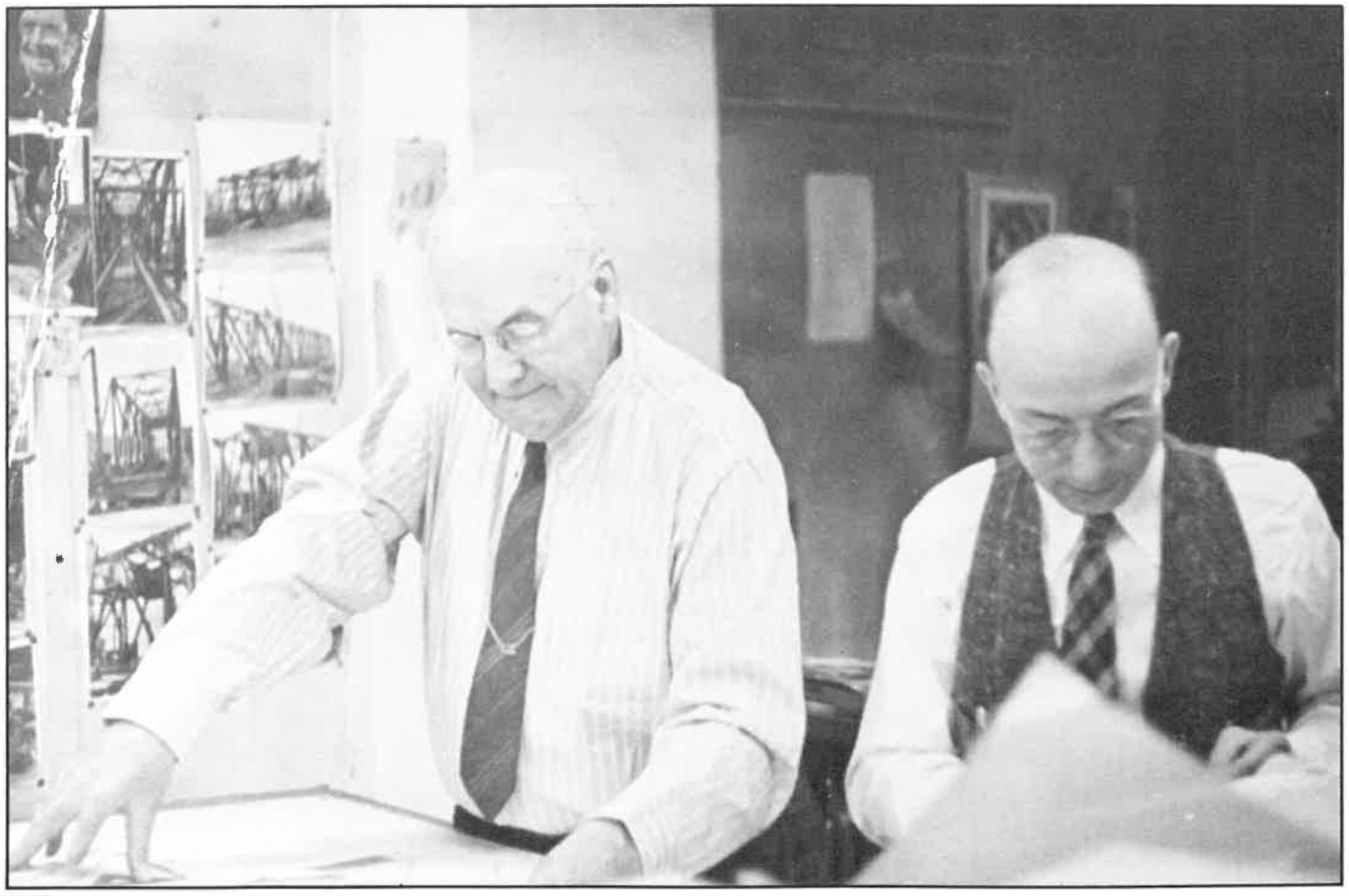
It was the pleasure of the writer to play quarterback on the West Virginia University team where Fielding H. Yost began his football career. He was enthusiasm personified when it came to playing and discussing football. If I

Above: This is the WVU 1894 football team Mr. Bruner writes of. He stands to the right, in quilted pants, by the man in the suit. Photographer unknown.

had been asked to define enthusiasm in those days I would have said, "Take a look at Yost on the football field." He was what some might say a "crazy fool" on the subject. He could see everything transpiring in the game and when it was finished he played it over and over again. In his demonstrations of how it was done he was very apt to seize the nearest fellow and give a demonstration, which might even land the subject on the ground or give him an awful twist.

Well, that enthusiasm plus a good mind and body have carried him far and brought fame and honor. Something akin to this has brought me many hours of pleasure digging hard ground and fighting weeds. Moreover, I have been able to be with "blood of my blood" as the final shadows gathered about them and rendered and received mutual help from those loved ones remaining. The satisfaction is beyond expressing.

Below: Will Bruner (left) at work in his engineering office. He says colleagues predicted the weather by his trips to the farm. Photographer and date unknown.



Uncle Sol and Devil Anse

By Lorna Chamberlain

I think the mother who points out the good or outstanding feat some ancestor has accomplished is wise. It does to a family what knowing the history of our heroes does to a nation.

If you have an uncle who rescued someone from a burning building, or an aunt who went through college after she was 40, or someone who went off to Viet Nam, make a hero out of them. Children long to feel proud of their ancestry.

It has been said that those who brag about their ancestors are like potatoes; their best part is underground. But my mother didn't go along with that theory. She used to make us believe that our uncles and aunts and great-uncles and great-aunts were heroes of the same caliber as Washington and Lincoln. They were bold, daring and fearless, she told us, and we ought to grow up and become that way, too.

For instance, we used to go to grade school bragging, "My great-uncle was the first man ever to arrest Devil Anse Hatfield."

Our schoolmates would say back to us, "You're just making that up. Devil Anse Hatfield was never arrested by anyone. He'd shoot anybody who came near."

"But Great-uncle Sol did arrest him," we'd retort. "The U. S. Government ordered him to. And he did it. Ask Mother. She'll tell you it's true."

Now, I've since been told that the 1889 incident was more in the nature of a court summons than an arrest. Judge John J. Jackson, the "Iron Judge," had ordered Hatfield to Charleston to answer a moonshining charge technically unrelated to the feud with the McCoys. That didn't alter the fact that our relative had been told to bring Devil Anse in to do something that the old gunman would probably just as soon not do. It was close enough to an arrest for us.

Mother had told us that H. S. "Sol" White, her uncle and our great-uncle, had been ordered to do the job while serving as U. S. Marshal during the administration of President Benjamin Harrison. She had assured us that Devil Anse was an awesome, daring lawbreaker. At one time he had served as bushwhacker with the Rebel Army in the Civil War. Only those with expert aim could be bushwhackers.

Besides, Mother told us, Devil Anse had taught his many sons to be rifle-toting, expert marksmen. To go near the Hatfield home would be like walking into a hornet's nest.

Later, when I was older, I corresponded and visited with my cousin, Great-uncle Sol's son, a successful attorney in Clarksburg. "How in the world did your father ever arrest Devil Anse Hatfield?" I asked.

My cousin discussed it with me. He said that everything was on record in Charleston. He said it was the kind of thing his father dreaded having to do. He said Sol had given much forethought as to how best to go about it, knowing all too well what to expect once someone tried to arrest Devil Anse Hatfield.

Finally, he said, his father decided that the best thing to do was to enlist the aid of a stalwart cousin, William James White, who knew the Hatfields and was on friendly terms with them.

William James White was to go to the Hatfield home with a message that Uncle Sol wanted to befriend them. Somehow, by reasoning and persuasion he was to make Devil Anse understand that if he didn't give himself up, many U. S. Marshals were ready to go in and take him by force. William James must make him see that it would be wiser to make a willing surrender of himself. He was to try to make Devil Anse understand that Marshal Sol White was acting as a friend, by warning him in advance.

William James White rode in on horseback, 80 miles to the Hatfield stronghold on Main Island Creek in Logan County, taking with him the message from Uncle Sol. He told Devil Anse he'd better heed the warning. He must have done a good job of it, for the old patriarch chose to surrender himself peaceably. Cousin William James brought him back to Charleston where Great-uncle Sol was waiting for him.

After hearing the story I realized that the real hero was William James White, but I loved Uncle Sol and was content for him to have the credit. I had always felt very proud of him. For four years he had been a soldier during the Civil War, on the other side from Devil Anse Hatfield. He was wounded in action. Throughout his long lifetime he had served our state, holding important offices. At one time he was a state senator.

My family lived on a 200-acre farm in Ohio County in the Northern Panhandle, across the state from our relatives' adventures with the warlike Hatfields of southern West Virginia. My father was a practicing veterinarian as well as a farmer. Uncle Sol came often to the farm to visit and would stay for days at a time, something his brother, the famous oil-and-gas geologist I. C. White, never did. Uncle I. C. was probably too busy to visit, but every time a new book of his was published he would send Mother a copy. She'd proudly display it in our falling-down bookcase, which we had to keep propped up with a brick.

Hearing about relatives like the brave lawman and the book-writing scientist, and the under-credited William James White, worked for the good in our family of three sets of children, nine altogether. Scripture admonishes that a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. From Dad we inherited a good name, and from Mother we got a good sense of what a fine and colorful ancestry was worth. We didn't have much else to bolster our egos when we were growing up, and certainly money did seem to be in scarce supply. But Mother always made us feel that ours was a priceless heritage.

Oldtime Fiddle Tunes

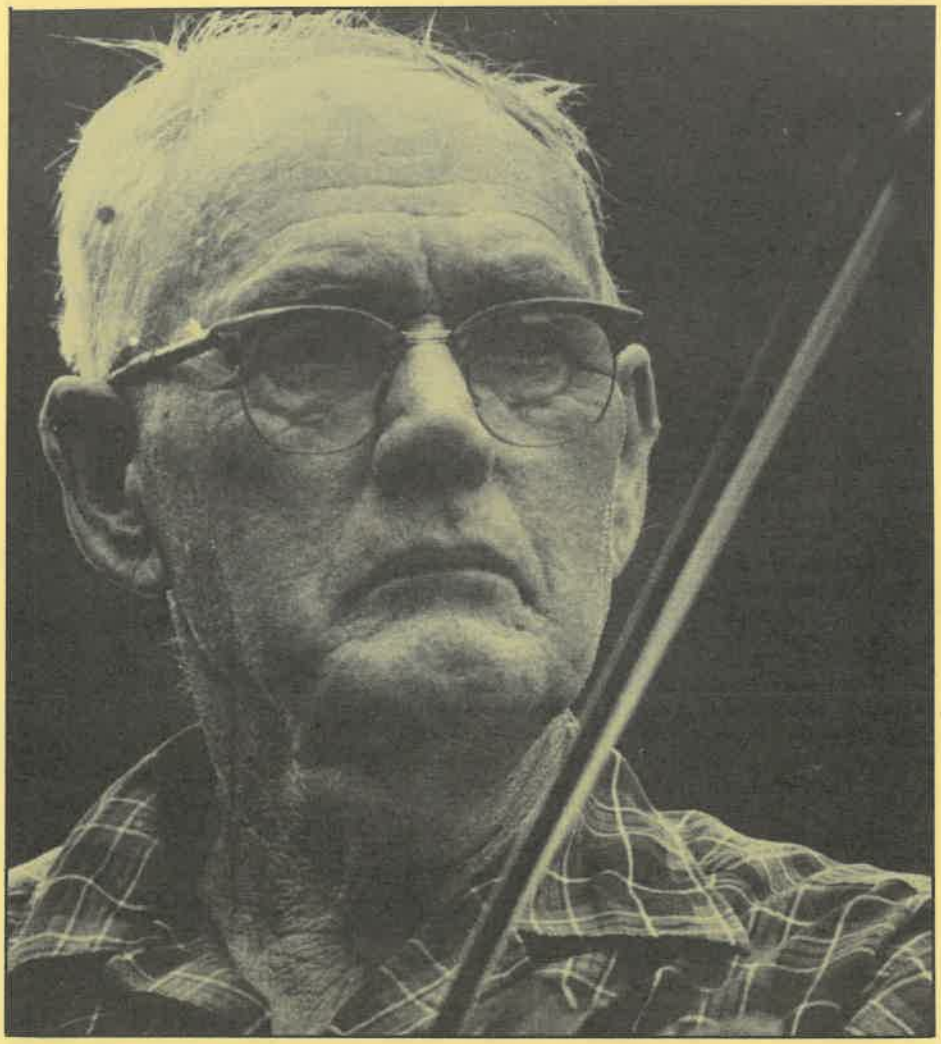
By Gerald Milnes

Webster County's Uncle Jack McElwain is a legendary fiddler from times past. McElwain won the fiddle contest at the 1893 World's Fair and was seldom beat elsewhere. Photographer and date unknown.

West Virginia can lay claim to some of the very best oldtime fiddle tunes. Our fiddling tradition seems to have a nationwide, if not worldwide, following. North Carolinian Tommy Jarrell, perhaps the most respected oldtime fiddler in this country until his death two years ago, said, "I never heard a West Virginia tune I didn't like." Mountain State fiddle tunes, with their regional sound, unusual tunings, and the feelings they evoke, hold their own among the favorites of fiddlers everywhere.

Folk songs have always provided a view of history from the standpoint of plain folks, ordinary people who have made and sung ballads through the years. The words to these songs express their views. Wordless tunes, especially fiddle tunes, often serve the same purpose. There are countless tunes in West Virginia that commemorate an event, celebrate a place, or recall a pastime. These tunes are usually accompanied by a story, an explanation or even a legend, describing a murder, battle, birth, or some such event related to the tune name. Chances are, if a tune of this type doesn't currently have a known story, a little effort to find an early source will turn up an explanation.

Wilson Douglas, one of a long line of Clay County fiddlers, always takes great pains to get the facts straight in the stories connected to the tunes he plays, and then to pass the informa-



The late "General" Nicholas performed at the former Morris family festival at Ivydale, Clay County. This portrait was taken at Ivydale in 1972. Photo by Gerald Milnes.

tion along "as I heard it." Two of his tunes are accompanied by stories that show the effect the Civil War had on one West Virginia family. Wilson learned a large part of his repertoire from French Carpenter, who lived near him in Clay County before his death in 1965. French taught Wilson the tune "Little Rose." He passed along the story of how one of his ancestors, Harmon Carpenter, had planned to marry a woman named Rose when he returned from the war. During the time he was gone, however, a band of guerilla "jayhawkers" plundered the area of Webster County where he lived, killing Rose. After returning home and learning the news, Harmon, being a fiddler, poured his anguish into creating "Little Rose," sometimes also called "Little Rose Is Gone." It cries out with agony and grief.

The other tune, played by Wilson Douglas and Ernie Carpenter of Braxton County and even as far away as Pocahontas County by Burl Hammons, is "Camp Chase." French Carpenter related that his grandfather Sol Carpenter, sometimes nicknamed Devil Sol, won his freedom from Camp Chase, the Union prison camp in Ohio, by playing this tune at a fiddlers' contest organized by the officer in charge.

In this case, the historic event seems to have given an old tune a new name, at least in central West Virginia. Frank George, a renowned fiddler now of Roane County, grew up in southern West Virginia and learned a large part of his music there and in neighboring southwestern Virginia. He plays a tune called "George Booker" that appears to be closely related to "Camp Chase." The tune has been traced back to 18th Century Scotland, under the title "Marquis of Huntly's Farewell." The records show that a Solomon Carpenter, in the right time period to have been the man who fiddled his way out of Camp Chase, lived out the last years of his life on Camp Run in Webster County near the "Shelvin' Rock." This is the name of another tune connected to Carpenter family history, the rock being the birthplace of an earlier Solomon Carpenter, the first white child born in the area. [See "Tales of the Elk River Country," *Goldenseal* Vol. 12, No. 2.]

In these tunes, the original event inspired the piece or, in the case of "Camp Chase," brought about the renaming of an earlier tune. The tune then serves as a reminder, evoking memories that help recall details of the event. It's very possible that these happenings in the lives of common people wouldn't be remembered at all if there weren't such fiddle tunes around, still actively being played, to carry on the memory. In this way history is recalled through tunes as well as through songs. It seems that the more exciting tunes are — and the tunes mentioned above are all powerful ones — the more they are played. This improves their chances of keeping history alive. Undoubtedly, their accompanying stories have undergone changes in being handed down through the generations. But even in the case of "Camp Chase," the story of which is widely scattered among the older people of central West Virginia, the details for the most part remain consistent from one telling to the next.

Other tunes entrenched in the West Virginia fiddling tradition bear the names of fiddlers. They serve to keep the past alive by reminding us of a person who played the tune. Henry Reed, who lived around the Virginia line in Mercer County, played "Quincy Dillon's High-D Tune." It was named for a unique high-D note in the second part of a tune played by Quincy Dillon, a fiddler, fifer and early settler in the region. Ernie Carpenter recently remembered a piece his grandfather used to play. Not being able to recall the title, he simply renamed it "Grandad's Favorite," suggesting many tunes of this type had different original titles.

The late Emory Bailey, an influen-

tial fiddler from Calhoun County, played a piece called "Solly Carpenter's Little Favorite." It is not only a great tune, as would be expected of a favorite of Sol Carpenter of Camp Chase fame, but is played in an unusual tuning and with an odd number of parts of different lengths. These are additional traits of West Virginia fiddle tunes. Playing in tunings other than the standard or "natural" GDAE is common among our old fiddlers.

The "Solly's Favorite" tune is played in what is known as "Old Sledge" tuning. "Old Sledge" is usually associated with Uncle Jack McElwain, probably the most revered of all central West Virginia fiddlers. Many say that Uncle Jack was unbeatable in a fiddle contest, and the tune he usually played was "Old Sledge." Although he died in 1937, talk of his musical prowess lives on. He surely was the pride of Webster County when he traveled to Chicago and won first place in the fiddling contest at the 1893 World's Fair.

Both Melvin Wine and Ernie Carpenter, two of West Virginia's finest oldtime fiddlers, tell of making pilgrimages as youngsters to McElwain's home. These trips left deep impressions of the old man's ability on the two boys. Dewey Hamrick of Princeton, now way up in years but a very able fiddler in his younger days in Webster and Randolph counties, says that his father would travel 50 miles to learn tunes from McElwain, then come home and whistle them for Dewey to learn on the fiddle.

Another whole body of fiddle tunes recalls nostalgic times in general, rather than specific events. Such things as seasonal harvesting, hunting trips, or other rituals of an older rural life produced memories to be preserved through music. In these cases, no one event seems to trigger the tune, but rather just a general

Listen for Yourself

A surprising amount of West Virginia's oldtime music has been recorded in recent years, by Augusta Heritage Records, Elderberry Records, Rounder and other labels. Most of the fiddle tunes cited in this article may be found on one record or another, and sometimes on several. All of the albums listed below are still in print and available for purchase.

Wilson Douglas's privately recorded album, "The Right Hand Fork of Rush's Creek," includes "Little Rose," Harmon Carpenter's Civil War lament. Harvey Sampson's new Augusta Heritage record, "Flatfoot in the Ashes," (AHR 004) has "Camp Chase," commemorating Sol Carpenter's exit from the Union prison.

"Shelvin' Rock" is another Carpenter family tune, and may be found on Ernie Carpenter's "Elk River Blues" by Augusta Heritage Records (AHR 003). "Old Sledge" may likewise be found on "Elk River Blues," and also on Melvin Wine's "Cold Frosty Morning" (Poplar Records LP 1) and by Burl Hammons on "The Hammons Family" (Library of Congress).

The Hammonses contributed tunes to a variety of records. The Library of Congress album mentioned above includes "Fine Times at Our House," as does West Virginia University Press's "Edden Hammons Collection" (Sound Archive 001). The Rounder Records album "Shaking Down the Acorns," (Rounder 0018) featuring Burl, Sherman, and Lee Hammons, and Maggie Hammons Parker, includes the title tune. Mose Coffman does the humorous "Who's Been Here Since I've Been Gone?" on the same record.

The legendary Edden Hammons is represented only on the WVU record, which includes an informative documentary booklet. Hammons performs "Digging Potatoes," "Washington's March," and "Falls of Richmond," among other tunes on the album.

"Old Christmas Morning" may be found on Wilson Douglas's "Right Hand Fork," and another version (as "Christmas Morning") on Melvin Wine's "Cold Frosty Morning." The Douglas record also has "Elzick's [Elswick's] Farewell," "Camp Chase," and "Shelvin' Rock."

John Johnson's "Fiddlin' John," Augusta's first record (AHR 001), is a treasury of the old music, recorded in a stark, unaccompanied style. It includes "Bonaparte's Retreat" and "Forked Deer," among tunes mentioned in this article. Sampson's "Flatfoot" album, Augusta's latest, includes "Abe's Retreat," another military piece, as well as the modal tunes, "Sally Comin' Through the Rye" and "Green Corn."

The late Clark Kessinger may be heard on at least one in-print record, "The Legend of Clark Kessinger" by County Records (County 733). The influential Frank George plays on the early Kanawha Records album, "Traditional Music for Banjo, Fiddle and Bagpipes" (Kanawha 307) and on "Swope's Knobs," the big double album by the Anachronistic Recording Company (Anachronistic 001). George also is a cornerstone of the Big Possum Band, Harvey Sampson's band on "Flatfoot in the Ashes."

The above records may generally be found in The Shop at the Cultural Center, Capitol Complex, Charleston, West Virginia 25305. Augusta Heritage Records may be written to at Davis and Elkins College, Elkins, West Virginia 26241, and Rounder Records at 186 Willow Avenue, Somerville, Massachusetts 02144.

feeling of happiness (or sadness) connected with an annual ritual or life-sustaining task.

The Hammons family of Pocahontas County play numerous tunes of this type. Sherman Hammons's "Fine Times at Our House" and "Old Christmas Morning" come to mind. (At least three different tunes survive in West Virginia that celebrate Old Christmas, the centuries-old practice of observing Christmas on January 5.) Sherman's brother, Burl Hammons, plays such tunes as "Come Back Boys, Let's Feed the Horses" and "The Forked Deer," the latter accompanied by a humorous story of a family deer hunt. Although "The Forked Deer" is widely known, Burl and other family members insist that Old Uncle Pete Hammons authored both the tune and the hunt story. Burl also plays a tune called "Shakin' Down the Acorns," which I have heard played in Clay County by the late "General" Nicholas and "Doc" White. Delbert Hughs, a southern West Virginia fiddler, played a related version called "Rattle Down the Acorns." Burl's uncle Edden Hammons played a remarkable piece called "Digging Potatoes." In this tune as well as others of this type, the melody and rhythm play an important part in recreating the event.

There are many tunes commemorating military affairs. Most of the Old World tunes either have been forgotten or have taken on new names, as with "Camp Chase." "Bonaparte's Retreat" is a notable exception. Some renditions of this piece go so far as to represent cannon fire in the phrasing of the tune. The older West Virginia fiddlers typically retune to play this one. Clay County fiddler John Johnson plays a strong version that ends with a low droning bass part that signifies the actual retreat of the battered French Army from Waterloo. A completely separate tune with a whole different feeling is "Napoleon's Charge."

Oldtime fiddlers play many tunes from the American military experience. "Washington's March" is one that is still current. Ernie Carpenter attributes it to Jack McElwain, and Burl Hammons learned it from his uncle, Edden. Most fiddlers play the "Eighth of January," a tune commemorating the date in 1814 when the Battle of New Orleans took place.

Harvey Sampson and his brother Homer of Braxton County play a Civil War tune called "Abe's Retreat," also known as "The Battle of Bull Run." Ernie Carpenter has one called "The Downfall of Richmond," but there is some question as to its origin since it is known by other West Virginia fiddlers as "The Falls of Richmond." Both are plausible, although Ernie's title would make it a Civil War piece while the other refers to the falls on the James River at Richmond. Mose Coffman of Pocahontas and Greenbrier counties and the late Tom Dillon of Webster County played versions of a tune called "Who's Been Here Since I've Been Gone," complete with a comic story about a soldier returning home from the Civil War. The bewildered veteran composed the tune after finding his wife in possession of a too-young baby, hence the title.

Our author joins other West Virginia fiddlers at the Roane County farm of Jim and Mary O'Dell in 1984. The fiddlers, left to right, are Gerald Milnes, the late Loa Martin, Wilson Douglas and Ernie Carpenter. Photo by Gary Simmons.

Above: The late Lee Triplett of Clay County, another regular at the Ivydale festival. Photo by Gerald Milnes, 1972.

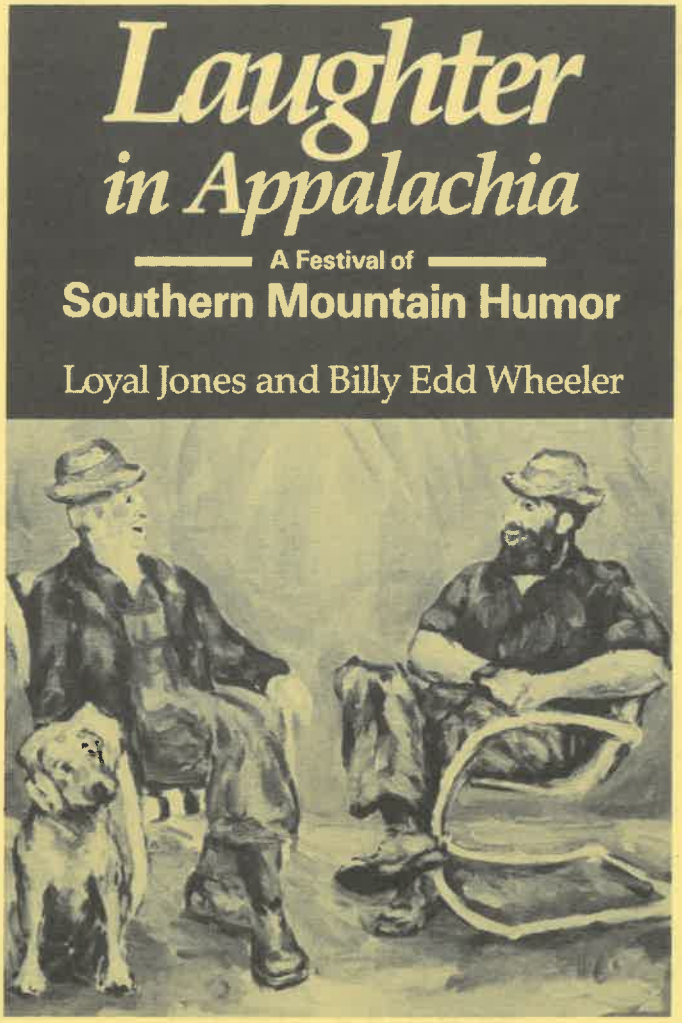
Left: Fiddlers Harvey Sampson and Frank George at Sampson's home in Braxton County. Photo by Mike Keller.

Many fans of oldtime music are attracted to yet another kind of tune prevalent among our mountain fiddlers. These are the strange, mysterious, even scary-sounding tunes that are played in what is known as the "modal" key. For those of us with no formal musical training, which is the case with virtually all oldtime fiddlers, suffice it to say that there are six musical modes used in Anglo-American music. Most of our music, including fiddle tunes, is played in the Ionian mode or what are called the major scales, and generally promotes a happy feeling. The different modes were designated in ancient times, and Appalachian music has held on to these ageless sounds. In our mountains tunes and songs can be heard in the Dorian, Aeolian and Mixolydian modes, as well as the Ionian. The West Virginia modal tunes often have a spooky feeling to them. They even feel strange to people who have played them all their lives, as Melvin Wine recently pointed out to a group of young fiddle enthusiasts before playing his father's tune, "Hannah at the Springhouse."

Harvey Sampson's unique style is a perfect complement to the haunting modal tunes, "Sally Comin' Through the Rye" and "Green Corn," that he plays so well. Henry Reed and Oscar Wright, another very capable southern West Virginia fiddler, were known to have several modal pieces in their huge bag of tunes. Some, like "Cold Frosty Morning," are now played far and wide.

These modal tunes may also be connected to an event or story, as is the case with "Elswick's Farewell." This was first played in 1889, in Kanawha County, by a Harvey Elswick for his mother on her deathbed. The moving tune is now eloquently played by Clay Countians Wilson Douglas and John Morris. Frank George plays a wonderful modal tune called "The 28th of January." It almost certainly has an historical context, but so far the meaning has eluded him.

The association of events and tunes is very common in the oldtime music. In simpler times before filing cabinets, microfilm, and computer memory banks, when knowledge had to be kept handy in human memory, such music was one way of reminding people of their past. Events inspired tunes and then the tunes recalled the events. The process was as simple and enjoyable as whistling or fiddling. In our time, when young people interested in playing the old tunes in the old style have dwindled to a frightful number, and an overwhelming tide of homogenized commercial music greets us on every side, it is important to treat the old tunes with respect. We should honor the old fiddlers for the human treasures they are, and be thankful for places like West Virginia, where good fiddle tunes abound.



Book Review

I must admit to a certain prejudice in favor of *Laughter in Appalachia*, since the new book reprints several tall tales from past issues of GOLDENSEAL. There is also a nice plug for the annual Vandalia Liars Contest, my favorite high-brow cultural event.

Nevertheless, I think *Laughter* will stand on its own merits, without benefit of any special treatment from this direction. The book is edited by Professor Loyal Jones and playwright-songwriter Billy Edd Wheeler. Both are notorious jokesters and certified mountaineers, Jones from Kentucky and Wheeler a West Virginian now living in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. The editors are well qualified for the task, in other words, and much of the humor they unleash comes from their own fertile minds.

The best of the collection reflects a wry, understated humor of the sort that characterizes much mountain storytelling. One tale concerns the recipient of his county's laziest man award, for example. When the committee came out to present the prize, his response was, "Well, I don't really deserve it, but if you want me to have it, just turn me over and put it in my hip pocket."

Another tells of the man who went south on doctor's orders to rest up, but instead got sick and died there. Friends commented on his nice tan at the funeral, one saying to another, "Those two weeks in Florida sure did Sam a world of good."

Laughter in Appalachia goes through hundreds of such tales, ranging from short jokes to stories several pages long. The book grew out of an Appalachian Humor Festival held at Berea College in 1983. Much of the material was taped then, but the book in-

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cludes a good deal more, as well. West Virginians are well represented, including Bonnie Collins, Jim Comstock, Bill Jeffries, Aunt Jennie Wilson, Nat Reese, and the late, legendary Riley Wilson. "Reach Me the Tin" and "Hell in the Holler," Wilson's best-known tales, are transcribed from Sam Chilton tapes supplied by George Daugherty of Charleston.

The stories are organized according to the favorite subjects of mountain storytellers, working through politics, farming, drinking, and dogs, among other topics. Doctors and lawyers come in for a good flailing, but religion claims more space than any other category. Surprisingly, there is no one section devoted specifically to the battle between the sexes, although the changeable relations of men and women figure into dozens of stories throughout.

The editors throw in a couple of scholarly essays, since the original festival was sponsored by Berea and they wanted a product "befitting a college." Serious analysis is not allowed to stand in the way of fun, however, although there is the definite sense that the fun itself is properly considered serious business. "A good laugh is better than a dose of salts," as Loyal Jones quotes Granny Morgan as saying, and no right-minded mountaineer is likely to disagree.

—Ken Sullivan

Laughter in Appalachia: A Festival of Southern Mountain Humor *is a 159-page trade paperback, published by August House. The book may be ordered for $8.95, plus $1.80 delivery fee, from August House Publishers, P.O. Box 3223, Little Rock, Arkansas 72203.*

A Second Festival of Appalachian Humor will be held at Berea College on July 17-18, 1987. Billy Edd Wheeler and Jim Comstock are among those scheduled to participate. Contact the Berea College Appalachian Center, College Box 2336, Berea, Kentucky 40404 for further information; phone (606)986-9341.

Bonnie's Dream

I was brought up in a very strict religious home. In fact, when they had what we called protracted meetings, the preacher would bring all five or six of his kids — he'd usually have five or six — and he'd stay at our house for two weeks. They'd stay until the vittles ran out or the meeting closed, whichever came first.

One time I remember we were running low on wood, and my mother wanted to be polite, so she kept saying to me, "Stand back and let the preacher up to the fire," Well, I stood back until I froze. So, finally, I went to bed. And after I got warmed up real good I went to sleep and had a nightmare.

When morning came I came in through the kitchen and there's that preacher eating hotcakes like someone taking pills. . .you know, *gluck, gluck, gluck!* He said, "How are you this morning, young lady?" And I said, "I'm fine, but I had this horrible dream last night. I dreamed I was in this hot place and there was an old man with a pitchfork chasing me around."

He said, "Why, you know what that was? That was hell." (I said to myself, *it sure was!*) "Well, tell me, what was it like down there?"

I said, "Just like West Virginia. They just kept saying, 'Stand back and let the preacher up to the fire!'"

— Bonnie Collins
from *Laughter in Appalachia*

In This Issue

LOU ATHEY is a native of southern Illinois who now teaches history at Franklin and Marshall College in Pennsylvania. He has a B.A. from Trenton State College and a Ph.D. from the University of Delaware. He has had a research interest in Fayette County since first visiting Ansted in 1964. His book on Kaymoor appeared in 1986, and the second of two articles on William Nelson Page is forthcoming in *West Virginia History.*

JIM BLOEMKER is an archeologist for the Historic Preservation Unit of the Department of Culture and History.

JIM BRUNER owns and operates the Wheeling farm that Will Bruner writes about in his memoirs. He is a graduate of West Virginia University and has had a lifelong fascination with horticulture. He now produces a variety of vegetables and fruits for market and plans soon to expand into sheep raising.

SHIRLEY YOUNG CAMPBELL grew up in small mining communities on Cabin Creek, but has lived in Charleston since 1947. A graduate of Marshall University, she has taught school, worked for state government and as a freelance writer. She has served on the boards of West Virginia Writers and Mountain State Press and as editor of *Hill and Valley* magazine. She is the author of the book, *Coal and People.* She is an occasional contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

LORNA CHAMBERLAIN was born near St. Cloud, Wetzel County. She studied English at the College of Steubenville after graduating from Warwood High School near Wheeling. She is a freelance writer whose articles have been used in many publications. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

CARL E. FEATHER is a native of Ohio with roots in Preston and Tucker counties. He is a newspaper writer and photographer who specializes in preserving grass-roots American life in words and photos. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

VERNON O. GIFFIN, a native of Harrison County, is a graduate of Potomac State College and WVU. Mr. Giffin is a World War II Navy veteran and a retired school teacher, now living on Maryland's Eastern Shore. He is a collector of rural folklore and the author of three books on that subject. This is his second contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MICHAEL KELLER is the chief of photographic services for the Department of Culture and History.

GERALD MILNES was born in Pennsylvania and now lives in the western edge of Webster County. He is a farmer, fiddler, and staff member at Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in the Summer 1986 issue.

JOSEPH PLATANIA is a Huntington native who earned his B.A. and M.A. at Marshall University. He has worked for the West Virginia Department of Welfare and as a claims examiner with the Veterans Administration, and also as part-time instructor in political science at Marshall. A freelance writer for the past several years, he contributes occasionally to GOLDENSEAL.

ARTHUR C. PRICHARD, born and reared in Mannington, graduated from West Virginia University and McCormick Theological Seminary of Chicago. Mr. Prichard served as pastor of churches in Ohio and Pennsylvania, and in Wheeling and Mannington before retiring in 1970. He was a moderator of Wheeling Presbytery and the Presbyterian Synod of West Virginia, and in 1950 received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Davis and Elkins College. Author of *An Appalachian Legacy: Mannington Life and Spirit,* he writes occasionally for GOLDENSEAL.

EDITH KIMMELL STARKEY was born in Garrett County, Maryland, to J. W. and Sarah Agnes Hogue Kimmell. She grew up in western Maryland and West Virginia, and now lives in Florida. She was a cosmetologist, operating her own shop until retirement. "Over the Mountain" is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

GORDON LLOYD SWARTZ III, a native West Virginian, is a WVU graduate and a Marine Corps veteran. He is a coal miner at Consolidation Coal's Shoemaker Mine in Marshall County. His most recent contribution, "Walter Seacrist: A Songwriting Miner Remembers the Mine Wars," appeared in the summer 1985 GOLDENSEAL.

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