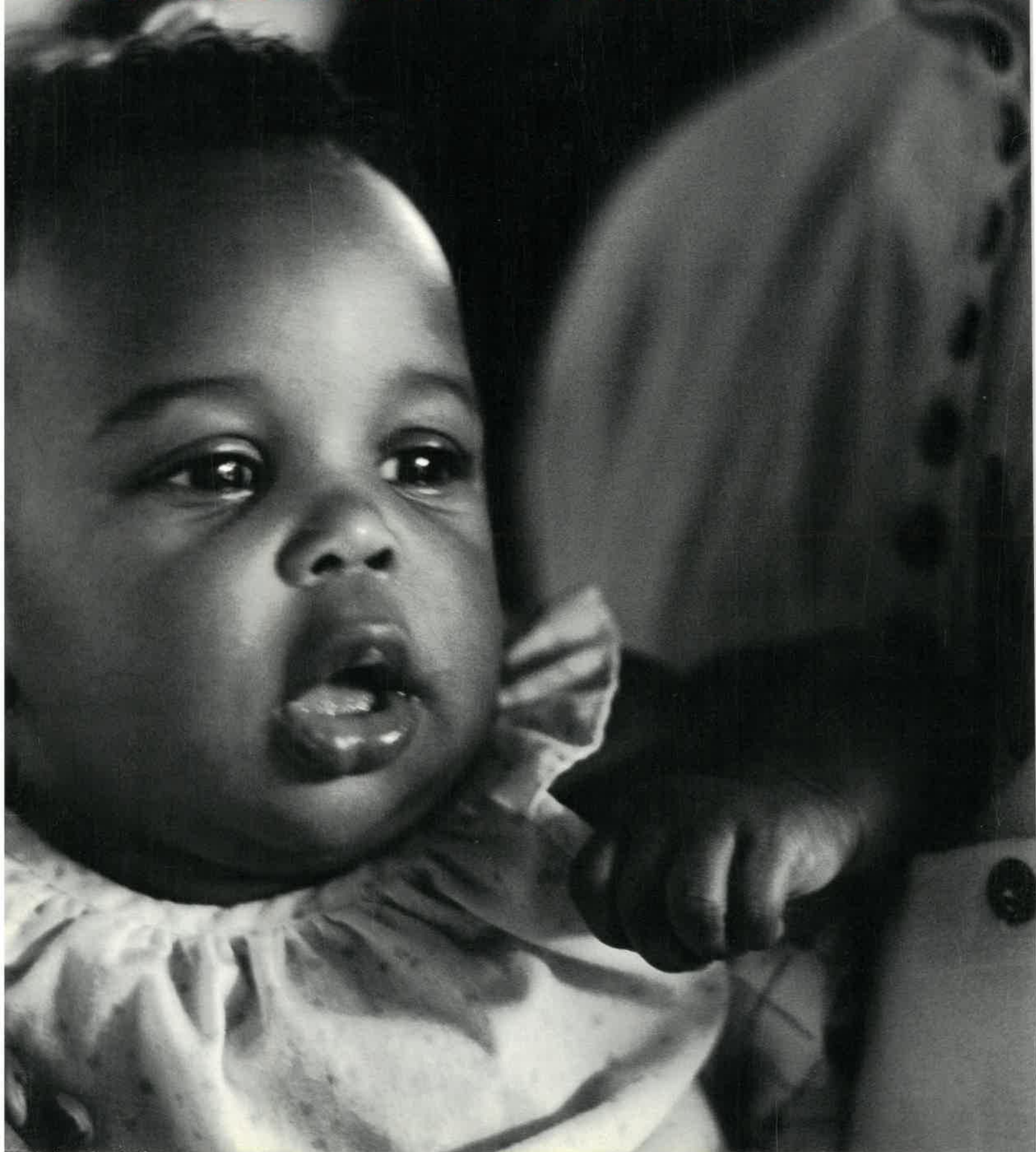


Vol. 15, No. 4 • WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL LIFE • Winter 1989 • \$3.50

Goldenseal



From the Editor: Thank You

I'm writing this to thank all those who sent their voluntary subscription payment in response to our fall fundraising campaign. We heard from most of you in reply to my September subscription renewal letter, which went out just after the fall GOLDENSEAL.

Those who didn't reply to that had a surprise this year, in the form of a second notice that went out around Thanksgiving. We don't like to send reminders and certainly don't intend to get into the habit of repeatedly dunning people for payment. Nagging is not our policy — and furthermore, it's prohibitively expensive, anytime the U.S. Mail is involved.

We did think one reminder was justified, however. We urgently need the extra money to make ends meet at a time when we can no longer depend on state government to make up any losses we incur in producing your magazine.

The GOLDENSEAL subscription system remains voluntary, and we want to keep it that way. It is a simple, inexpensive system for us to operate, and it allows us to serve those who may be unable to contribute. But we must have the support of all those who can help. I think that's fair, and it was in that spirit that the reminder letter was sent.

My thanks, then, to everyone who replied to either of this fall's letters. I'm glad to report that the financial response to the first letter ran a little ahead of last year. It's too early to judge the success of the second appeal, but I hope and expect it will bring in the extra money needed.

We're especially grateful to those who sent in more than \$12.50. Individual contributions ran as high as \$50 and \$100 this year, and there were many for \$25. Twelve-fifty is a fair price for GOLDENSEAL, based on current costs. That's all we expect from readers, but we thankfully accept more from those who can afford it. The extra money adds up, and it helps cover the subscriptions of those who cannot contribute at present. That's the neighborly, West Virginia way of taking care of each other, and we're proud to be a part of it.

Finally, a big, big thanks to volunteers Chuck and Esther Heitzman, back again this year to help process your checks and coupons. The Heitzmans are our dynamic duo, cheerfully keeping on top of the job even on days when a thousand or more reply envelopes were received. Chuck and Esther wouldn't accept even soft drink money for their trouble, but I think they know their work is appreciated. That's them with Editorial Assistant Cornelia Alexander (in stripes) in the photograph on this page.

That's enough thankfulness, I believe, even for this time of year when we're all counting blessings. Let me take the rest of my space to bring you up to date on doings around here.

The big news at the Cultural Center is our new boss, Culture and History Commissioner Bill Drennen. Bill is supportive of our work, while giving us the elbow room to get the job done on the resources available. He has made it clear that we need to put GOLDENSEAL magazine on a self-supporting basis, but that's a reasonable challenge and certainly not news. We've been given a fighting

chance, in short, and with your support we'll do fine.

We sent the old boss, former Commissioner Norman Fagan, off with a big staff barbecue in June. Norm was enthusiastically behind GOLDENSEAL from the very first, back when founding editor Tom Screven was striving to establish the magazine, and we appreciate his backing over the years. Norm has retired to his Putnam County farm, and we wish him well.

We are deep into the spring 1990 GOLDENSEAL here at the office right now, as you can imagine, with lots of good material scheduled for that. We've got another nice Eastern Panhandle story by our Shepherdstown team, writer Malcolm Ater and photographer P. Corbit Brown. Then there is another coalfields feature, as well as a Wirt County fiddler and the winning tales from the last state liars' contest — always a favorite of mine — among several other stories.



Later issues are harder to predict, since we try to hold scheduling open as late as possible. I can tell you that the manuscript pile is about the highest it's ever been, however, so there is plenty of good raw material on hand. More is coming in all the time, and you can be sure we will pick the best of it for future issues.

In personal news, it's been a quiet year for the GOLDENSEAL family. The big exception is at Mike Keller's house, where another prospective photographer entered the world last spring, but there are no new mouths to feed at the Alexander, Jackson or Sullivan households. Junior photographer Greg Clark — the man behind most of the old photos in GOLDENSEAL — got himself a new pickup truck a while back, and we expect him to tie the knot sometime in the new year. That last is strictly unofficial, at least until you read it here.

All in all, 1989 has been a good year in most of the ways that count. I hope it's been the same at your house. We wish you the best for the holidays, and for the year to come.

— Ken Sullivan

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Goldenseal

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Winter 1989

COVER: Courtney Michelle Lucas won the prize for youngest relative at the 60th Smoot Reunion. Our story on the big Boone County event begins on page 9. Photograph by Michael Keller.

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PHOTOS: P. Corbit Brown, Greg Clark, Davis Photo, Carl Fleischhauer, J.J.W. Gawthrop Studio, Michael Keller, Chuck Mapes, Palace Studio, Photo Crafters, W.O. Trevey, Andy Yale.

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Letters from Readers

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

Bonneau, South Carolina

September 29, 1989

Editor:

I received my fall issue of GOLDENSEAL just a few days after Hurricane Hugo hit Charleston, South Carolina. I live 30 miles from Charleston in Berkeley County. I was born and raised in Wheeling and moved here four and a half years ago.

We were one of the hardest hit. My family and I survived. We live in a mobile home which had damage but we stayed next door in my mother-in-law's house. Her house has a tree on it. We were very lucky, none of us were hurt.

GOLDENSEAL couldn't have come at a better time. I sat by candlelight reading it from front to back. And today I hear on the radio we have people from Charleston, West Virginia, who have come down here to help. I knew you all would do that.

This is almost the ninth day after Hugo and we still don't have electricity. I just want to thank you for calming me down after Hugo. Hope you can read this — I'm writing by three candles.

Linda Smith Jackson

Wheeling State Fair

Dawmont, West Virginia

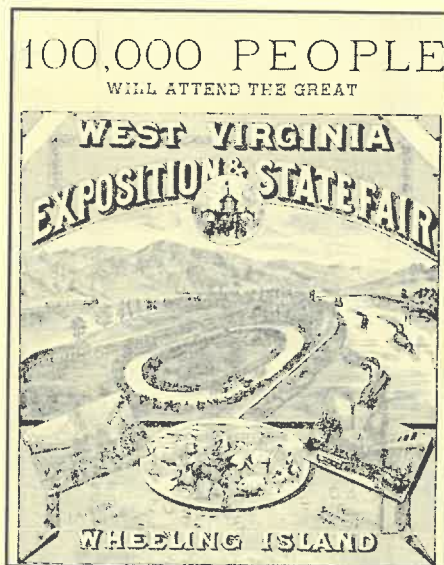
September 27, 1989

Editor:

I am writing in regard to Bill Mueller's letter in your fall issue concerning the location of the original West Virginia State Fair.

According to information I received years ago from our former Harrison County extension agent, John M. Pierpoint, the State Fair started in Wheeling and continued there up until the start of World War II. Incidentally, Mr. Pierpoint passed away recently. As you will recall, he furnished information on the Harrison Rural Electrification Association in your summer issue.

I have enclosed a copy of my original poster pertaining to the 1888 West



Virginia State Fair held on Wheeling Island. I maintain several albums of early history pertaining to West Virginia.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Fred G. Layman

The Coal Men

Tampa, Florida

September 22, 1989

Editor:

A member of my congregation brought me a copy of your winter 1988 issue of GOLDENSEAL and asked me if I recognized the man on the cover. I told him he looked very familiar, but not exactly. When he showed me the name, Thomas G. McKell, I knew [that he was from the "lost" branch of my family.]

My family left Scotland and went to Ireland for a generation during the religious persecution of the 18th century. Then they raised enough money to send two of the children to America. They were to wait for the others to arrive in North Carolina. After many years of waiting, they finally decided that something must have happened to the others, so they moved on to Mississippi to settle. We

have had little or no contact with the other side of the family since. We knew something about them, but not extensively. I am glad to read an article that fills in some of the gaps. Thank you.

Enclosed please find a check for four copies of the winter 1988 issue. All of the McKells in Florida, Mississippi, and Tennessee will greatly appreciate seeing these.

In Christ,

Rev. John J. McKell



Charleston, West Virginia

October 4, 1989

Editor:

I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed the fall issue on "A Busy Time in McDowell History — Looking Back with John J. Lincoln."

I was born and raised in Elkhorn. I remember "Colonel Lincoln" very well. He was a lovely person and always had a smile and hello for everyone, including children.

I remember as a child, picking big black cherries from the beautiful trees that surrounded his home. We listened to the Elkhorn High School orchestra that performed on the lawn in the summer. This goes back many years

ago. I remember the Crozer Store and buying a bag of candy for a scrip penny.

Thank you for a beautiful write-up of my hometown that holds many sweet memories.

Ann Semonco Chandler

Union, West Virginia

September 19, 1989

Editor:

In the recent fall issue of GOLDENSEAL, the article about Captain Thurmond quotes him as saying, "The man who, perhaps, is most responsible for the location of the railroad was Mr. H. E. Caperton of Monroe County..."

In his 80's at the time, Captain Thurmond was a bit mistaken, or perhaps the interviewer misunderstood him in his reference to Mr. Caperton. Perhaps Captain Thurmond said Mr. A. T. Caperton rather than H. E. Caperton.

Allen Taylor Caperton was one of the few Senators who had the distinction of serving in both the Senate of the Confederate States of America and the United States of America. His brother-in-law was General John Echols who helped to build the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad and was later vice-president of the railroad. As I understand it, General Echols and his friend, Jed Hotchkiss, General Stonewall Jackson's chief engineer, convinced Mr. Huntington on the route the railroad should take.

Captain Thurmond was a friend of G. H. Caperton who operated Fire Creek Coal and Coke Company about two miles below the town of Thurmond, and later mines at Rush Run, Brooklyn, Scotia, Caperton and others. Allen T. Caperton was G. H. Caperton's uncle.

Incidentally, the associated article concerning Mr. John J. Lincoln relates closely to Colonel Jed Hotchkiss, who did much of the engineering work to open the Pocahontas Coalfields also. Very truly yours,
James W. Banks, M.D.

Charleston, West Virginia

October 9, 1989

Editor:

For some time I've been trying to persuade my son to do a book on my father, Walter Rippetoe Thurmond,

who was an endless source of information on the Thurmonds, the West Virginia coal industry and West Virginia politics. He wrote the book, *The Logan Coal Field of West Virginia*. His father was speaker of the house under Governor Cornwell.

Needless to say, the fall issue of GOLDENSEAL was a feast for me. I had never seen this photograph of [my great-grandfather] William Dabney Thurmond and it was very exciting. I looked in my records and found out this horse was named Jeb for Jeb Stuart. For many years before Jeb, he had ridden Traveler, named, of course, for General Lee's Traveler.

Other articles in the issue were very interesting also. I had grown up in Logan and knew Don Chafin as a friend of my father's and his children were my schoolmates. I knew Mr. and Mrs. Foglesong from early childhood and had seen much of them through the years. They were close to my parents.

"Capitol Cover-Up" by my young friend, Topper Sherwood, was very interesting, as were the comments by Paul Marshall. When I moved to Charleston in 1937, I remember Mrs. Holt saying her children amused themselves by picking up bits of gold leaf from the Capitol grounds.

Congratulations to GOLDENSEAL for recording the history and traditions of West Virginia.

Very sincerely,

Elizabeth Thurmond Witschey

Bird's-Eye Maps

Richmond, Virginia

September 20, 1989

Editor:

I read Ed Zahniser's article on "The Panoramic Maps of Thaddeus Mortimer Fowler" with great interest.

Being born and raised in Clarksburg, I wrote to the Library of Congress inquiring if my home town was one of the West Virginia cities mapped. It was, and I ordered the print and have hung it proudly in my office.

Thank you for the article, giving me the opportunity to obtain this treasure and learn about the historic preservation of West Virginia.

Best Wishes,

Sheryl (Pinnell) Vaughan

Sylvia

West Union, West Virginia

September 17, 1989

Editor:

You know, you're taking my appetite! I can't eat until I read GOLDENSEAL through.

Thanks for the lovely article about Sylvia O'Brien. I've been to her home and visited for a few days right after [her brother] Jenes died. She's a great lady and I enjoyed the hospitality of her generous heart. My son fell in love with her at the last Vandalia Gathering.

The picture of the well house is so beautiful, and a symbol of life. Her home is an oasis in a chaotic world.

Thank you,

Bonnie Collins



A Correction

Dunmore, West Virginia

September 15, 1989

Editor:

In my article on quilter Ada Grimes in the fall GOLDENSEAL, I said that Ada washed and helped dress the dead body for the undertaker. It should have been for burial. I don't think we had an undertaker like today, or he would have taken the body. I have seen the bodies laid out with pennies on their eyes.

Thank you,

Lolla Gray Hiner

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.

Quilt Poster

Each year from Memorial Day weekend until the first days of September, the Great Hall of the Cultural Center is filled floor to ceiling with colorful quilts. The unusual display of works by West Virginia quilters kicks off Vandalia Gathering, the statewide folklife festival sponsored by the Division of Culture and History.

For the first time, the Cultural Center is offering a special edition poster to commemorate the annual

quilt show. The poster measures 17 by 27 inches and shows a full color photograph of a flower garden quilt in a country home setting. The quilt was made by the late Wilma Bird, a traditional quilter who lived in St. Albans and made more than 100 quilts in her lifetime.

The poster was created, designed and printed by West Virginians. It may be purchased for \$7.50 in The Shop at the Cultural Center from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on

weekends. Mail orders may be placed by calling The Shop at (304) 348-0690 or by calling 1-800-CALL WVA. Orders must include \$2.50 for postage and handling and \$.45 sales tax for West Virginia residents. Proceeds from the sale of the West Virginia Quilts poster support marketing programs for West Virginia artists and craftspeople.

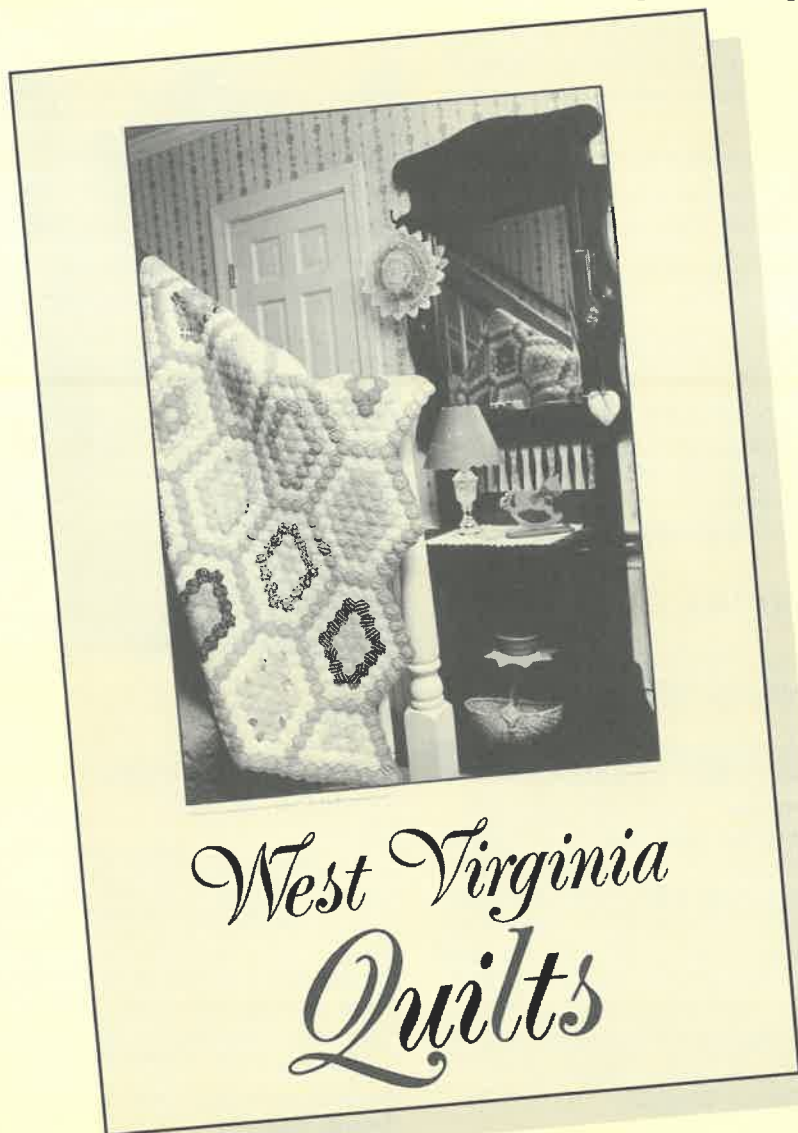
WVU Women's Centenary Calendar

West Virginia University in Morgantown is celebrating the Women's Centenary, 100 years of women's education at the state university.

For 22 years after WVU's founding in 1867, public debate on admitting women to the school went on in the legislature, the press and on campus. By the 1880's coeducation was standard practice at teachers' colleges, or normal schools as they were called, and coed opponents felt that teacher education should be enough to satisfy female ambition. Falling enrollment at WVU in the late 1880's helped tip the balance in women's favor, and in June of 1889 the board of regents voted to admit women to WVU starting the following September.

The Women's Centenary special edition calendar is for academic year 1989-90. The 13-month spiral-bound appointment calendar includes historical photographs and news clips that pertain to the history of women at WVU. Proceeds from the sale of the calendars will go towards scholarships at the university.

The calendar, titled "WVU Women: The First Century," costs \$7, plus \$2.50 postage and handling. West Virginia residents add 6% sales tax. Checks or money orders, made payable to WVU Book Stores, should be sent to West Virginia University Book Stores, 130 Tower Lane (WO), Morgantown, WV 26505; or phone (304) 293-2711.



Fayette County Memories

The Glen Jean Historical Society recently published *Dunloop Days: Glen Jean to Thurmond* for the 1989 Glen Jean reunion. Society president George Bragg says the book is an attempt to record local history, and to relate memories of present and former residents from the seven-mile stretch of coal towns between Glen Jean and Thurmond.



Glen Jean peace keepers, about 1905. Photo by W.O. Trevey, from *Dunloop Days*.

Glen Jean, now the headquarters for the New River Gorge National River, was an important center in the New River Coalfield. The area boomed from the late 1800's to the Great Depression. This summer's reunion, the town's first, was organized by the Historical Society. It attracted about 500 people, including former residents from across the country. They enjoyed dinner, arts and crafts, local memorabilia and the historic photography of Red Ribble and W. O. Trevey.

Dunloop Days, subtitled "Exciting Times and Precious Memories," is a collection of historical articles, per-

sonal memories, and coal company information, as well as newspaper stories from the 1900 to 1939 editions of the *Fayette Journal*, *Fayette Tribune*, and *Beckley Post-Herald*. The 116-page softbound book has 25 historical photographs. It sells for \$5, plus \$.90 postage and handling. To order write to Glen Jean Historical Society, P.O. Box 345, Glen Jean, WV 25846.

Strip Mining Slide Show

The National Council for Geographic Education is offering a slide show titled "Surface Mine Reclamation in Appalachia: The West Virginia Example," written by Dr. Thomas E. Ross. Professor Ross is chairman of the Department of Geography at Pembroke State University in North Carolina.

The presentation shows what has been done in various areas of the state to erase scars caused by surface coal mining. It includes shots taken by Ross in the early 1970's, and some slides from the state Department of Natural Resources. The slide set is accompanied by a script-like commentary.

The geography association has produced other educational slide shows as well. Subjects range from a photographic journey through Washington, D.C., to a study of religion in the cultural landscape. There are shows on the Utah floods of 1982-83, Ecuador, and Seoul, South Korea. The slide shows have from 20 to 80 slides per set, and are priced according to size.

"Surface Mine Reclamation in Appalachia: The West Virginia Example" may be ordered for \$25 from GPN, P.O. Box 80669, Lincoln, NE 68501. For more information on the educational programs, you may call toll free 1-800-228-4630.

A Hard Look at Coal History

This fall Paragon House Publishers released *Where The Sun Never Shines: A History of America's Bloody Coal Industry*. The book was written by Priscilla Long and has been touted for its intensive research and highly readable style.

Where The Sun Never Shines tells the history of coal mining in America from early times until 1920, emphasizing

the violent side of the story. It is divided into two parts. The first looks at coal mining in the United States as a whole, while the second section takes the reader to the Rocky Mountain West. It tells of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Strike of 1913-14 when the state militia killed two women and 11 children at a strikers' tent colony in the Ludlow Massacre. A ten-day coalfield war followed.

Using personal stories along with analysis, Long's book explores social history, labor union history and the working-class communities and cultures of the coalfields. It also presents work methods and technology in the coal mines, traces the development of management, and includes women who played a strong role in coalfield struggles.

The 400-page, hardbound book has a bibliography and index and is illustrated with photographs and maps. *Where The Sun Never Shines* is available from bookstores and may be ordered for \$24.95 from Paragon House Publishers, 90 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011, or by calling 1-800-727-2466.

Folk Tale Collection Reprinted

Ruth Ann Musick began gathering West Virginia folk tales in the 1940's. The Fairmont State College professor published two collections of Appalachian ghost tales and a book on West Virginia ballads and folk songs in the 1960's and '70's. In 1970 she also published *Green Hills of Magic*, a collection of Old World tales told by immigrant families who had come to work in the mines.

Judy P. Byers, also a professor at Fairmont State and Musick's literary executor, recently announced a second printing of the *Green Hills of Magic*. The 79 tales represent "a segment of the Appalachian culture that has not yet been fully analyzed," according to Byers.

Many of the tales came to Dr. Musick from students who commuted from coal mining communities in central West Virginia. The students, descendants of immigrants, introduced Musick to their ethnic communities and often helped her with translation of the tales into English. The stories speak of little people, magical beings, werewolves and vampires, and supernatural happenings. They are told by



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if you give the gift —
a subscription to

Goldenseal

See coupon on page 72.

people who came from places such as Poland, Sicily, Italy, Austria, Turkey and Hungary.

Green Hills of Magic is a 312-page paperback, with notes, indexes, and bibliography. The book may be ordered from McClain Printing Company, 212 Main Street, Parsons, WV 26287 for \$9.95, plus \$1.50 postage and handling. West Virginia residents add \$.60 sales tax.

Campbell's Creek History

Todd Hanson, a sixth-generation native of Campbell's Creek, is the author of *Campbell's Creek: A Portrait of a Coal Mining Community*. The new book, published by Pictorial Histories Publishing Company of Charleston, explores the history and development of the creek, a northern tributary to the Kanawha River located in central Kanawha County. It has long been an important industrial center, with salt works and timber and coal mining operations.

Hanson believes that "much of West Virginia's heritage can be traced to the history of this community." He talks of a time when Campbell's Creek was a bustling community and of the stories the region's elders tell — handed-down tales of Indian lore and pioneering settlers, and more recent accounts of bloody mine wars and coalfields life in general.

The book gives a thorough visual treatment of the community's past, with supplementary text. Chapters include Campbell's Creek coal companies, river industry, Indians and legends, Campbell's Creek railroad-ing, and three old-time murder stories.

The 184-page large-format paperback is richly illustrated with hundreds of photographs, maps, and reproductions of old documents and newspaper clippings. It sells for \$12.95 and is available in area bookstores or by contacting Todd Hanson, P.O. Box 336, Tad, WV 25201. Include \$2 postage and handling for each book. West Virginia residents add 6% sales tax.



Love your lore?
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See coupon on page 72.

Losing Maggie and Sherman

By Gerald Milnes

In 1987, Maggie Hammons Parker made a calm, unheralded departure from this earth and was buried on a quiet hillside overlooking the Pocahontas County mountains where she lived. She was joined in 1988 by her brother, Sherman Hammons, with whom she had resided near the head of Williams River during her last years.

Maggie's 88-plus years had seen more than the average lifetime's worth of changes. A child of the 19th century, the 20th had passed her by. Having been overtaken by time, Maggie and Sherman chose a less erratic course and held on to the venerable old-time ways of their people, the Hammons family.

Amidst the folkways and folk wisdom Maggie and Sherman carried with them and generously shared with others throughout their lives, was Maggie's capacity to remember and sing the old songs, the timeless ballads. And sing them she did. Not often at festivals or public gatherings, but for babies and children, to neighbors and friends, and to highly-educated people among the many travelers from throughout the country who found their way to her humble dwelling. All were transported through the imagery in her lyrics.

Sherman, on the other hand, was known as a banjo player, fiddler, and rounder. He never lost the twinkle in his eye nor missed a chance to have a good time. He also knew many old songs, but was quick to point out that Maggie was the unequalled singer in the family. His last few years were spent close to his backcountry home. In good

weather he would usually be seated in a chair near the road, where most all of the infrequent cars slowed and at least spoke with Sherman before passing by. Many stopped to ask about a good place to fish for trout, or where they might find some ginseng, or just to hear a good tale.

Originally identified by traditional musician Dwight Diller, a Pocahontas Countian himself, Maggie, Sherman, and their brother Burl Hammons were the subjects of a Library of Congress documentary production entitled *The Hammons Family: A Study of a West Virginia Family's Traditions*. This was published in 1973 and was edited by Carl Fleischhauer and Alan Jabour, both now of the American Folklife Center. Highly acclaimed, the work provides oral history accounts of family traditions, family history, and genealogy, and includes recordings of family songs, tunes and stories, with extensive notes.

Maggie's singing is powerful on these recordings, as it was in life. She never seemed at a loss for lyrics, and sang songs about rich men and poor men, lords and ladies, gamblers and cowboys, orphans and babies, slaves and merchants, railroaders, woodhicks, sailors, soldiers, and of hunting, tragedies and triumphs, murder and love. Her singing was captivating, even when as an old woman she complained that, "I can't raise my voice anymore."

Many have been astounded by Maggie's repertoire of songs. This was the case with the late Patrick Gainer, the noted folklorist from



Sherman Hammons. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer.

West Virginia University, who "collected" and published two of her songs in his book, *Folk Songs From the West Virginia Hills*, in 1975. Dr. Gainer and others were especially taken with Maggie's singing of "In Scotland Town Where I Was Born," a particularly rare piece. Never impressed by literary works, I think Maggie and Sherman themselves felt that songs were for sing-

ing and music was for playing and enjoying. However, they seemed to appreciate the respect they were given in their later years, and graciously accommodated the many who visited with tape recorders.

Maggie and Sherman had a special demeanor about them. They embodied the old music and the old songs in their very persons. When

they sang, they seemed connected to the song. They'd been there, or knew someone who had been, or someone had told them "now, hit's the truth." Maggie carefully detailed where the events of a song took place, how she learned it, or who sang it. Some chronicled historical events or told classic tales, and all were made special by the old-time feeling in Maggie's singing.

Younger musicians would regularly stop at the Hammons's house to visit and play music. "That's the best music ever I've heard in a long time," Maggie would encouragingly remark at the end of a tune. Sherman's face would light up. Although in his 80's and past his prime as a fiddler and banjoist, he knew exactly how the tunes should sound and how the instruments should be tuned. He took great pains to pass that wisdom on to his younger friends.

Although poor people by the standards of most, Maggie and Sherman were deep and rich in life. Theirs was a special richness that is too infrequently encountered in today's fast world. Closely connected to their environment and the forces of nature around them, they seemed to enjoy close ties to their ancestors and share the resourcefulness of their predecessors. Maggie could predict the weather by how the flue on her wood cookstove drew. Sherman once accurately forecast when the grasshoppers would disappear from my garden, which was in the next county over. Their singing, music, and storytelling were the natural ancient rituals of their people. Through these rituals, Maggie and Sherman celebrated their existence and acknowledged the cultural fertility of their kinsmen.

Just a few admirers and family attended the wakes and funerals. A single glass Mason jar over Maggie's casket held a small bunch of wild flowers. The occasions were plain and essential. Both Maggie and Sherman are dearly missed, and will long be remembered. ♣

New State and Regional Books

Country life is the background to *A Little Excitement*, a colorful new children's book by Marc Harshman of Marshall County. The narrator is a young boy who finds winter in the country woefully uneventful, until he is involved in a close call at his home — a nighttime fire.

Harshman's text and Ted Rand's bright illustrations help push the climax, the community's vigorous response to the emergency blaze in the family's chimney. Household and neighbors pull through and, as a result, the narrator wins a better understanding of rural life and of his own family.

Harshman is a Northern Panhandle elementary school teacher and storyteller. His poems have been published widely, and he has read his poetry at the Manhattan Theater Club and elsewhere. Among other things, he has distinguished himself as a judge for the West Virginia state liar's contest, held during the annual Vandalia Festival at the Cultural Center in Charleston.

Ted Rand has illustrated a number of other children's books. His work also has been featured in *Life*, *Field and Stream*, and the *New York Times*. *A Little Excitement* is offered for \$12.95 by E. P. Dutton.

Another new children's book, *No Star Nights* by Clarksburg librarian Anna Egan Smucker, is a reminiscence of life in an Ohio Valley steel town. The book is rich with child's-eye images of the mill's influence — glowing furnace fires against the evening sky, baseball games (both professional and sandlot), July Fourth parades, fathers with their tin lunch boxes, and afternoons at play within whirlwinds of industrial smoke.

The accompanying oil paintings by Steve Johnson are warm, alluring, and illustrate the text very well. Nearly all of Johnson's pictures have some reminder of the ever present steel industry. Smucker's text also makes it clear, without being heavy-handed, that the steel mill's furnace is the sun

around which her community revolves. She does not hesitate to deal with the industry's current decline, doing so with a deft and sensitive hand.

The author was born in Steubenville, Ohio, and grew up in Weirton, her model for the steel town in *No Star Nights*. She is currently a children's librarian. *No Star Nights* is a lead offering by Alfred A. Knopf and costs \$12.95.



Arnout Hyde's *A Portrait of West Virginia* features some of the most striking photographic images available of the Mountain State. Hyde, the former editor of *Wonderful West Virginia* magazine, is the dean of West Virginia scenic photographers. An easy-going traveler, he says he discovers his best subjects simply by roaming the back roads "with no intended destination."

"Over the years as a photographer for the state," Hyde writes in his introduction. "I've observed changes, some good and some disappointing. However, I've always tried to show the positive side of West Virginia in my pictures."

The "positive side" shows up well in this colorful coffee-table book, published by Canon Graphics. Hyde's

earlier book, *West Virginia*, was divided into seasons of the year and included more nature shots. This new book is divided into regions of the state and shows more of our cultural heritage.

The cost of *A Portrait of West Virginia* is \$29.95.

Another photo volume, *Images of Appalachian Coalfields*, represents Builder Levy's work during 14 years of visiting the region from his home in New York City. Levy, a Manhattan school teacher, drove his '66 Volkswagen to the mining communities of Logan, Mingo, Kanawha and Raleigh counties. He also visited Kentucky's Harlan and Pike counties and, in Pennsylvania, Cokeburg, Ellsworth, and Marianna. In towns across the region, the photographer was welcomed into people's homes, into pool halls, and into the mines. The book, published by Temple University Press, sells for \$24.95.

Finally comes a new collection of Davis Grubb's short stories, *You Never Believe Me*. Grubb, born in Moundsville and best remembered for *Night of the Hunter* and *Fools' Parade*, both made into movies, based most of his writing in the Northern Panhandle.

The stories here include several dark, eerie ones, for which Grubb is known. The title story — which, like many others, was dramatized for TV — is an example. So is "The Last Indian Chief." There are other, more light-hearted offerings, such as "Fifty of the Blue" and "Picayune Pete and the Ninety-Proof Cow."

Grubb (1919-1980) and his work are remembered by his brother, Louis Grubb, in a foreword to the book. *You Never Believe Me* was published by St. Martin's Press for \$16.95.

The above titles are available from bookstores throughout West Virginia. Stores with especially strong state and regional selections include Trans Allegheny Books at its Charleston and Parkersburg locations, The Shop at the Cultural Center, and the Open Book in Lewisburg.

— Topper Sherwood



Reunion means fun for young and old, and the Smoot affair is no exception. Here Boyd Smoot exchanges pleasantries with Warren Price.

Reunion

The Smoots Gather for the 60th Time

By Topper Sherwood
Photographs by Michael Keller

Uncle Boyd leans heavily on his cane as he opens the screen door and steps out onto the porch. A half-dozen family members have been calling him. They say Boyd Smoot can answer all my questions about the first reunion.

"Uncle Boyd can tell you that," one nephew promises me. "He knows all that stuff."

Uncle Boyd lumbers out to the edge of the porch and shakes my hand. Although 74 years old, he is still a burly-looking man. Huge black letters

on his white T-shirt spell "HEY MOM," an incongruous message for someone who otherwise resembles a large bear just aroused from his nap.

The prospect of answering intrusive questions about his family doesn't seem to appeal to him, but Uncle Boyd is tolerant. He scratches his chin and responds slowly, looking away — down Route 85 toward Workmans Branch where his grandparents, Milton and Sarah Smoot, ended their long trek across the southern mountains. They settled there in 1871 and,

sometime later, bought the Boone County property on which we stand.

I mention Joe, the couple's oldest son, and Uncle Boyd's interest picks up.

"That was my daddy," he says, raising an eyebrow. Gradually, he warms to the task of educating me about the first Smoots, his ancestors. Then, suddenly, he backs off, retreating toward the screen door and into his house, his den.

"I can't tell you about it now," he says. "I'll have to talk to you later."



A few people present at the first reunion in 1929 were also there in 1989. Doches White stands at the extreme left here, with Vada McGowan the third person over from her. Boyd Smoot stands two heads directly behind the front row boy in suspenders. Photographer unknown.

His behavior is worrisome, until he explains the situation. He's thinking about the time.

"I have to get dressed," says Boyd. "I have to get ready for the reunion. I'll tell you all you want, later."

This year's reunion is why we're all here on what is now Uncle Boyd's homestead. If history repeats itself, 300 to 500 members of the Smoot clan will start showing up within the hour. It is August 13, 1989, and this is the 60th annual gathering of the descendants of Milton and Sarah Smoot, the two hard-working black Appalachian travelers who raised their family here more than a century ago.

What we know of Milton and Sarah is tantalizing; a lot, but not enough. They were married in 1863, in the middle of the Civil War, in Tazewell, Virginia. Some months earlier, President Lincoln had declared all slaves in the rebel states to be free. That included Virginia, but whether Milton and Sarah knew they'd been freed by Lincoln isn't known. It wasn't until 1871,

six years after the war, that they came to Boone County in the new state of West Virginia. Milton was 28 years old. Sarah was 22. They had two sons at the time, five-year-old Joe and two-year-old Isaac.

Once in the Mountain State, Milton went to work. He sold timber, operated a sawmill and bought land. Eventually he was able to purchase 119 acres around Sulphur Spring Branch at Price Hill, near the present town of Madison. He and Sarah eventually raised nine children there.

It was the Smoot sons, those who hadn't moved away, who decided to organize the first reunion in 1929, five years after Milton died. That fall, his children gathered for a picnic on the property. They sang and socialized. It was a good time.

The families returned the following year, and the year after that. Each and every fall since then — through the Great Depression, World War II, the rise of rock 'n' roll, moon shots, and Civil Rights — wandering Smoots

have come back to their Boone County homeland, making the annual gathering one of the longest-running black family reunions in the country.

Doches White, Boyd's older sister, is sitting in the pavilion, a permanent cinder-block shelter raised especially for the annual family event. Doches is seated at one of five tables that span almost the entire length of the open-air structure. Her table is directly in front of the podium, right under the red-glitter "WELCOME" banner. This is the seniors table, reserved for the oldest of the clan.

Doches is wearing a silky blue-striped dress. She sports a pair of stylish sunglasses and smokes generic menthol cigarettes. At age 77, she knows how to make sure that everybody knows what's on her mind.

"You write this in your story!" she tells me. "Milton came here from North Carolina, where his name was Little! He had moved to Tazewell, Virginia, and he took the name



The above photograph shows one of the earliest reunions. Cyril, now the oldest Smoot at 92, is shown below at the 1989 reunion and as the young man standing by the boy at left in the old photo.



'Smoot,' which was the slave master's name."

Somewhat slowed by age, but exulting in the accompanying rise in status, Doches nods and points to my legal pad. I follow orders.

It's 11:35 a.m. and Smoot descendants are arriving by the carload for today's picnic and ceremony. I'd been invited to last night's get-together for younger members of the family, but I am more interested in the "old folks." Doches and a handful of other senior Smoots have been to all 60 reunions. They remember how things were when Milton was still around. Unfortunately, memories of Sarah are not forthcoming. She died sometime before 1912.

Milton and Sarah's house was located about where we're sitting now. The house is remembered by the surviving grandchildren, now grandparents themselves, and through a few fragile, aging photographs kept on permanent display, like icons, in a glass case near the pavilion entrance.

One of the pictures shows the participants of the 1929 reunion, all nine children and their families. There's a cornfield in the background, behind the house. This year's corn, planted in the same spot, is almost chest high.

"It was in September," Doches remembers. "I don't recall the exact day, but it was a Sunday, around Labor Day. My sister, Eva, died in January and my father said 'Well, we should all get together.'"

It was Joe and his neighboring brothers who sent the word out. Together they called in family members who had strayed as far as Charleston and Beckley. Everyone made it. New members of the family were introduced. Smoots, Slaters, Cabells, Prices, Allens, and friends and neighbors shared news, sang songs and watched the children play. They ate a home-grown, home-cooked dinner.

Doches remembers. "They had the tables out there — one there and one there — out in the yard," she says.

IN MEMORIAM MILTON & SARAH SMOOT THE SMOOT'S REUNION

RELATIVES 1929 FRIENDS

FOUNDERS

JW&NORA SMOOT

AJ&JULIA SMOOT

IE&FANNIE SMOOT

TR&LULA SMOOT

HM&ROSA S

BF&DELPHIA PRICE

JR&LAURA S

WE&ELLA SMOOT

HH&D

HF&FRANCES SLATER

HOWARD SMOOT

BRAZIL&LINNIE ALLEN

CECILIA SMOOT

ROBERT&NORA PRICE

AD&OSCOE SMOOT

DENNIE&MYRTLE SMOOT

MERYL SMOOT

ALFRED&LETTYEGOOD

LEE MILLER

HENRY&KATHERINE SMOOT

JOE WILLIAMS

REV&MRS GL BENNETT

OSCOE SMOOT

W W & FRANCIS LAWSON

ELVIN SMOOT

OATHER&MARY CORNUTE

TER CORNUTE

FRENCH&RUTH SHANNON

RAH GARNES

PHILLIP&NANNIE NAPPER

E D SMOOT

W J & GRACE SMOOT

N K SMOOT

VIRGIL SMOOT

JOY PRICE

REAF SMOOT

JOHN JOHNSON

E J & NELLIE PRICE

CORNUTE

ARTHUR&PEARL MULLER

TH SMOOT

GARNETTE PRICE

SMOOT

LEONARD SMOOT

WILLIAMS

IVENE CORNUTE

RY

THELMA PLEASANT

ANDREW SMOOT JR

ANDREW CORNUTE

AND AGNES MILLS

HOWARD&ROSETTACH

NEST COLES

GRiffin

SMITH

ELYN EVELYN SMOOT

UDON SMOOT

SMOOT

PHARR

THURMA

SMOOT

ROE&LILLIAN STRAIGHT

MULLIS

ROE&LILLIAN STRAIGHT

AVERO

ROE&LILLIAN STRAIGHT

Permanent exhibits at the reunion pavilion keep track of the Smoot family tree. This is Caleb White of Logan.

business Milton had started. Three of his brothers — Eb, Matt, and Thomas — became hill farmers and lumbermen. They lived with their families in homes along Sulphur Spring Branch, across the creek from where the pavilion is today.

The Smoots who share the seniors table remember a whole neighborhood across the creek. The houses of Milton's sons were linked by a road up the hollow. Two generations later, Smoots still own the land but the houses are long gone. A single foundation is the only remaining evidence of the neighborhood, and it's practically swallowed up by the briars and weeds. Even the road has been reclaimed by the mountain. You can't see where it was, not from where we sit. Just the creek, running high, cutting around the thick-forested hillside.

Doches smokes another cigarette while I count the number of Caucasian faces in the crowd. I ask her about "all the neighbors" that showed up and she laughs.

"Honey, there's plenty of white Smoots too!" she says. She eagerly tells me about the time when a Logan County friend, a white man, made the same mistake. He asked her why there were so many non-blacks in her family.

"I told him, 'It's because your great-great granddaddy didn't stay outta my great-great grandmamma's back yard!'"

Vada McGowan, one of Thomas's granddaughters, overhears the story from down the table a ways. She laughs with her cousin. "If he'd have stayed on his side of the fence," Vada calls, "we'd all be the same color!"

When the joking dies down, Vada points out that one of Milton or Sarah's parents was an Indian.

"What'd I tell you?" says Doches with a mischievous wink. "Honey, we're all mixed up."

A small knot of people approaches the pavilion. Sitting in the eye of this whirlwind is an old man whose wheelchair is being navigated toward the entrance. Doches looks up, recognizes the man and jumps up to greet him.

Cyril Smoot, 92, accepts a hug and kiss from his cousin. As if inspired by

The menu sounds like it could have fed all of Boone County. Returning to the present, she bemoans the fact that today's reunion is being catered. In the early days the women cooked everything, she grumbles. "I kind of agree with her," admits a North Carolina relative. "But people aren't willing or able to come up here so many days in advance to do all that

work and make all that food. It isn't like the old days."

Children were valued for their labor in those days, and Milton and Sarah had quite a crew. Seven sons and two daughters are remembered: Joe, Isaac E., John Reece, Andrew Jefferson (Jeff), Henry (Matt), W. Elbert (Eb), Thomas, Frances, and Dora. First son Joe took over the grist mill and lumber

her spryness, he pulls himself out of the chair and starts a slow walk toward the seniors table. After a few steps, though, he decides against it and is helped back into the chair by one or two members of his entourage. The chair is wheeled up and positioned across the table from me.

Cyril — Vada's older brother — is hard of hearing, but his mind is apparently as clear as ever. Leaning over the table, I shout questions to him, and, yes, he remembers the first reunion in 1929. He recalls playing games. He remembers singing "The West Virginia Hills" and "Amazing Grace." He recites the words to "Amazing Grace" for my benefit.

I shout more questions and Cyril willingly talks about food and work in the old days. He spent his youth doing chores for Milton, plowing the old man's fields and hoeing his corn.

"They grew a lot of food — corn, apples, beans, grapes," says Cyril. "They made apple butter." There was wine making, Cyril says, using fruit from the farm.

"Remember the dandelion wine, Cyril?" shouts Vada. "Do you remember that dandelion wine?"

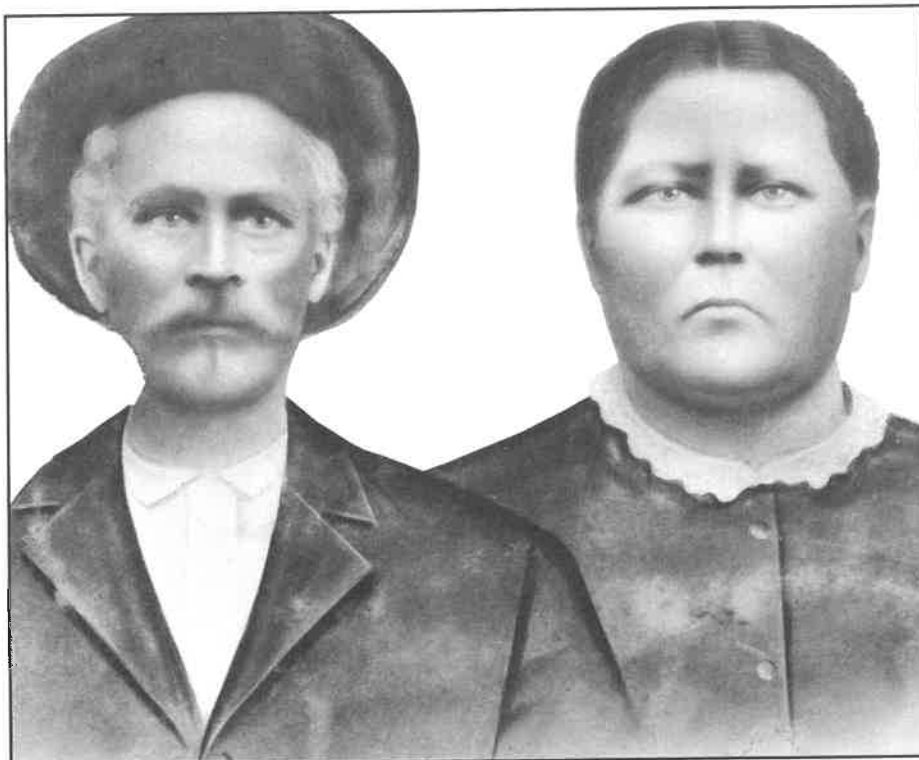
"Those old people could cook anything," he nods.

Cyril's sister, who is 79, remembers the work and the family discipline that maintained it. Grandpa Milton had a stern side to his pioneer character.

"Milton would have tanned your hide if you looked at him cross-eyed," she confides. "In those days, children spoke when spoken to, you know what I mean? When the adults came around for a visit, all they had to do was look at you and you knew it was time to get out of the house."

In those days, says Vada, a lot of marriages occurred between cousins. She remembers the arrival of the first "outsiders," new black families in the area. Many of these came early in this century, when the nation's factories and power plants were hungry for southern West Virginia coal.

At that time, the demand for miners was high. Southern family ties helped blacks to engineer their way into the Appalachian labor force. Assisted by successful kin already in the coalfields, they flocked into the region, many of them leaving farms in the deep South. In 1900, there were only 4,620 African-Americans working in the West Vir-



Milton and Sarah Smoot founded the big Boone County family, moving to the area just after Emancipation. Photographer and date unknown.

Doches White, granddaughter of Milton and Sarah, is among the family elders. She was at the first reunion in 1929 and every one since then.





These participants in the 1989 reunion are among the more than 100 descendants of Matt, son of patriarch Milton Smoot.

ginia coal industry; by 1920 the number of black miners had climbed to almost 17,800.

Cyril, the oldest person at the reunion, first entered the mines at Ivy Branch, in Logan County. The year was 1911 and he was 15. He was in Logan County during the Battle of Blair Mountain, the 1921 gunfight between thousands of union miners and the county's anti-union authorities. Cyril was a soldier for the union, albeit a reluctant one.

"Some of 'em wanted to show how tough they were and carried their pistols out in the open," he says. "But I hid mine here."

He points down to his left side.

"I favored the union, but I didn't like all that radical stuff. I always figured another man's life was just as precious to him as yours is to you."

Cyril was near the Jeffrey battlefield that September when 2,000 U.S. Army troops were sent into the area by President Warren Harding. Cyril remembers the soldiers. They dispersed the miners and ordered the Logan County leadership to pull its men from the

ridgetops, where they'd been trading rifle fire with the unionists for about a week.

I'm still talking with Cyril and his 87-year-old cousin Charlie when Uncle Boyd comes up to the seniors table. I almost don't recognize him. He has traded his T-shirt for a crisp white button-down with black tie, new gray slacks and matching suspenders. Unfortunately, it's too late for me to take him up on his promise for storytelling. The ceremony is about to begin. I'll have to catch him later. I get up, telling Doches I'd like to meet with her later, but she orders me to sit down.

"I should leave," I say. "This table is for the family."

"No, you just set right down there!" she scolds, patting my hand. "You're my guest."

I stick.

What follows is the traditional series of Bible readings, speeches, and awards to the newest and oldest family members. The award to the Smoot descendant who traveled the farthest is delayed while we figure which city

is farther, Sacramento or Los Angeles. Sacramento takes it.

The youngest generation of Smoots is wandering about, bound for the '90's and dressed that way. They sport stylish keystone-shaped haircuts, earrings on the boys, colorful "Hobie" and Disney T-shirts. They act as children often do, talking and clunking around. Doches tries to control the rumble, disciplining children and parents alike.

"Keep those kids quiet!" she whispers.

Speeches are made, more scripture read. Then the subject turns to the scholarships. The family awards a \$200 scholarship to any Smoot child heading for college or graduate school. The money is small by some standards but, as one awardee says, "It paid for books." The symbolic value isn't lost on the students, either. There's a big family behind that 200 bucks.

One by one, the great-great and great-great-great grandchildren of Milton and Sarah Smoot stand up to tell what they've done with their scholarships. Their academic areas are



Cyril and Sherman Smoot debate family history. The men are cousins, the sons of Joe and Matt, respectively.

diverse: dental surgery, real estate, business administration, finance, engineering, music, accounting. This year's scholarships are going to a psych major at Ohio State, an accounting major at the University of Rochester, a marketing and journalism student at Perdue, and a sociology major at Wilberforce.

As the ceremony winds down, the smell of ham and fried chicken wafts through the pavilion. The caterers have been quietly placing food on the side tables and lifting the covers. Ernest Oden, who married Boyd's niece, delivers the benediction before offering an admonition: "Get what you want! But eat what you get!"

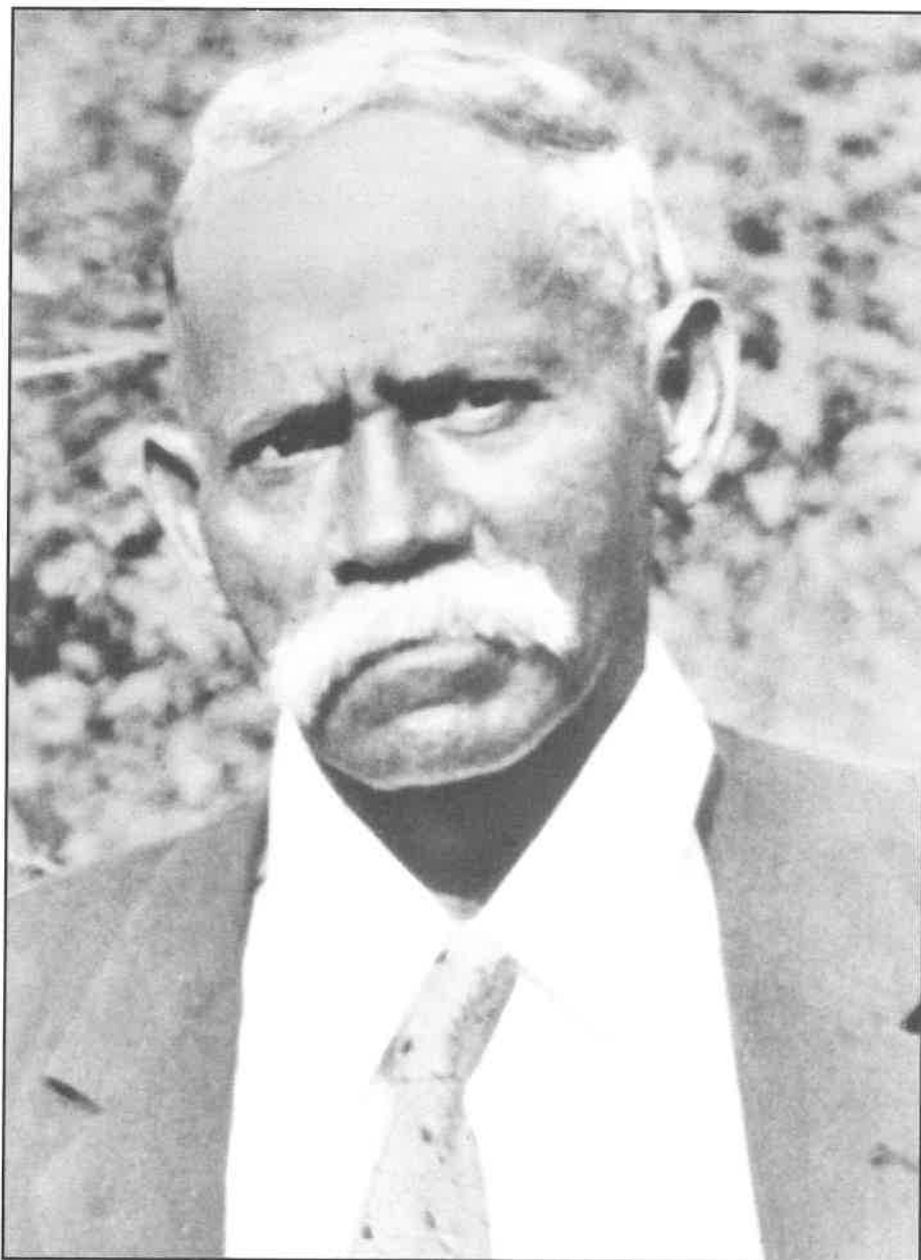
During the meal, I spot Uncle Boyd, talking to one of his nephews. He sees me coming.

"Don't worry, I'll give you your story!" he grins. "Catch me later and I'll tell you more than you want to hear!"

He hustles off around the side of the building.

I rejoin Cyril, in his chair just outside the pavilion, fresh from a TV in-





Joe Smoot was the man who called the original reunion in 1929. "We should all get together," daughter Dochess recalls him saying. Photographer and date unknown.

interview. He tells me more about his youth and is still talking when he's distracted by a large figure crossing before us.

"Hey, Sherm!" he calls.

Sherman Smoot, one of Matt's sons, turns and greets his oldest cousin. Sherman walks with the aid of a shiny metallic cane. He is a contractor in Columbus. His work on the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum in Washington has become part of family legend.

"He's the Smoot who's made it," whispers one of the younger cousins. "He's a millionaire."

Sherman and Cyril trade news about old friends and family members before the subject turns to Milton and Sarah. It becomes obvious that Sherman has done some historical research on his own. Milton, he says, had a brother in North Carolina who went farther south when Milton came to West Virginia.

Sherman confirms that it was Grandma Sarah who was half Indian — Cherokee.

What did Milton say about his past? "They didn't talk about it much," Sherman answers. "They said, 'Son, do your chores!'"

Laughing, he remembers the days when his Uncle Eb pulled him out of school to help put up food for the aging Milton. Together, Sherman and Eb came up to Sulphur Spring Branch and slaughtered pigs.

"You know, that was a real big day when I got out of school to come kill pigs for Grandpa!" he grins.

Before too long, Sherman gets up to go. He and Cyril exchange good-byes.

Cyril keeps his place in the shade of the pavilion while his relatives come up to offer greetings. In between hugs, kisses and handshakes, he tells me what he knows about the darker side of Milton's life, the time before 1863. Cyril relates the whispered family stories about the treatment of field and house slaves. He remembers Milton talking about abuses of what he calls the "house niggers," but Cyril doesn't like to repeat it.

He is interrupted by a well-wisher. More hugs and kisses. The show of affection relieves the old man from the burden of recalling any of the more painful truths in his family history. I'm relieved of the burden of hearing, for it's a shameful part of our national history as well.

It's getting late. Over by the driveway, several well-dressed Smoots are seeing people off. Like ushers at a church, they wave to the departing cars.

Boyd is among this group. I catch up with him and he says he's now ready to tell me what he knows. But, he warns, he knows most about his own father, Joe. We stroll toward Boyd's house and he takes a seat before the garage door.

Joe worked hard. Like his mountaineering father Milton, he rafted logs to St. Albans, ran the sawmill and grist mill and put down 50 cents a day to pay for land. He cleared what is now Coal Street in Madison and was a drayman, horse-carting hardware from here to Marmet. He put shoes on cattle, still used as beasts of burden then.

"Buddy, let me tell you," says Boyd. "That man worked!"

Of Milton, Boyd remembers little beyond his painful death in mid-June 1924. I am warned that the story "isn't very nice," but is the unfortunate truth.

Milton, then 81, had been out labor-



Boyd Smoot knows of the good times and the hard times in family history since slavery days. He lives by the reunion grounds near Madison.

Black Coal Miners in Appalachia

In the adjoining story, Vada Smoot remembers when the first black "outsiders" came to Boone County in the early 1900's. The Smoots were already there, but the new black families were part of a larger labor migration into the Appalachian coalfields.

Noted Appalachian scholar Ronald L. Lewis, chairman of the West Virginia University history department, examines this phenomenon in his recent book, *Black Coal Miners in America: Race, Class, and Community Conflict 1780-1980*. The book is one of a few that address black miners as a substantial labor group in the southern coalfields.

The new book is divided into sections that take the reader through racist systems in the north and south, finding a relative equality between. Lewis thinks that blacks received the best deal in southern West Virginia and neighboring areas. It was there that black miners earned equal pay for equal work, and enjoyed the most social freedom and the greatest political clout. He believes this golden age closed with the coming of mechanization in the mines, allowing discrimination against blacks in the assignment of newly specialized jobs.

Black Coal Miners in America, published by the University Press of Kentucky, is available through bookstores and in libraries.

ing with young Boyd. When they were done, they came to the sulphur spring for which the area is named.

"Milton let me have the first drink," Boyd remembers. "Then, he let the horse drink. Then, he took a drink himself. He drank a water dog — you know, a spring lizard. He got sick and died a few days later. I was eight years old."

Boyd opens the garage door. There, on an unfinished wall, he displays an old portrait of Milton and Sarah. They stare at us, American Gothic-style, from a framed and faded brown photo.

Milton's on the left. His features are incredibly delicate, almost feminine. His skin is fair, his cheeks sallow. He has a small, lean nose and eyes that could almost be blue. His hair emerges in fine, white curls from under the brim of his broad planter's hat.

I try to imagine Milton Smoot as a West Virginia frontiersman, but it isn't easy. It's hard to see this frail-looking man crossing the mountains, cutting a home from the forest, and disciplining his grandchildren. Then I remember Cyril describing his grandfather as being a very tall man. The picture emerges of a lean, refined backwoods farmer.

On the right, Sarah is as stout as Milton is not. She looks sturdy enough to take on the mountains by herself. She's a thick, vigorous-looking woman, hair pulled severely back from her broad face. She wears a lace collar, incongruous around her thick neck and beneath her stern frown. Her sharp, close-set eyes, cutting into and beyond the camera, suggest her Cherokee heritage.

Boyd watches me while I scrutinize this remarkable picture. I suggest that he might want to get copies — of this one and of the others down in the pavilion's display case. He'll give it some thought.

Photographer Mike Keller and I prepare to leave. Uncle Boyd says I can come back anytime.

After more good-byes, Mike and I join the line of cars heading out the driveway. I leave the window down. I intend to wave to the ushers until I see they've split ranks. They're scattered about, having rejoined the many cousins who remain, unready — for the time being — to leave the family homeplace. ✱

Shipshape in Philippi

The House that Lair D. Morrall Built

By Barbara Smith
Photographs by Michael Keller

The house is old and one of a kind, a total surprise around the fifth tight curve past the Myers Clinic in Philippi. It is a shipshaped, double-decked building set back into the mouth of a hollow. Small but abrupt hills shorten the sideyard and backyard. Steep concrete stairs lead up to the first deck, which rises some ten feet above the handhewn stones form-

ing the foundation. The decks or porches on both stories are deep enough to accommodate chairs that offer a view of the flats that lead to the Tygart River. Black railings add further similarity to a ship.

The flats are busy at the moment with bulldozers and dump trucks, for reclamation is in process. A slag heap dating back to the origins of the local

coal mines is being spread out to fill in swampy areas. Fifty-foot stripes of tan soil and black slag swirl like the batter of marble cake. Seeding will come later.

This is Morrall's Bottom, and the house is the architectural wonder of the area called the Morrall community. The builder was Lair D. Morrall, a man who defies description. Born in

Lair Morrall's steamboat-shaped house sits firmly grounded in Philippi, with a gangway of concrete steps and decks above and below.



1814, he was the son of Samuel and Elizabeth Davis Morrall. In 1843 he married Elizabeth Harper, who was from Burnt Bridge, a community above Beverly. Lair's parents had migrated from eastern Virginia, where documents indicate that the first Morrall noted in the United States, Samuel, married in 1757 and sired 11 children, one of whom (still another Samuel) was Lair's grandfather.

It was also in 1843 that Barbour County was formed from parts of Randolph, Harrison, and Lewis counties. Justices of the peace were appointed by the governor of Virginia, of which Barbour County was then a part, and the justices in turn elected the county clerk to serve for a term of seven years. Lair Morrall won that post over two other candidates and, after "giving bond in the sum of \$3,000," began his duties immediately. He was also named as one of the superintendents of the

first courthouse, which also hosted the jail and the first tavern.

Records in Barbour County indicate that in 1878, the year the ship house was built, Lair and Elizabeth Morrall owned 500 acres of land in and around Philippi. Some of those acres surround the present home, the design for which was based on a Lair Morrall dream. In 1886 the sections of land closest to the river were sold to the Grafton & Greenbrier Railroad, and some of that land became the Masonic Fraternal Cemetery, visible from the hill to the west of the house.

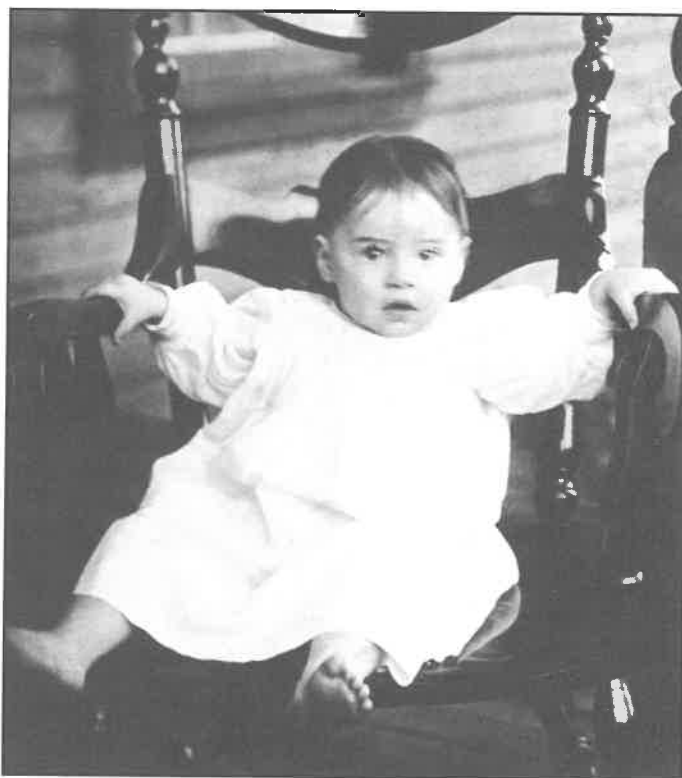
Lair Morrall willed the remaining land to his son, Samuel H. Morrall, who in turn willed it to his sons, S. Henry and Briscoe, who later divided the property. Briscoe moved to Portland, Oregon, but Henry stayed in Barbour County. He slept for much of his life in the very room, the very house, probably the very bed, in which he was born.

It is Henry's daughter, Marie Morrall Gall, who now lives in the old house. She points out the beautiful handmade walnut staircase which graces the entryway. "I've thought many times of painting all the woodwork in here white, especially the staircase, but my family always outvotes me. I'm not sure I would do it anyway — this really is lovely."

The house is filled to overflowing with oak and walnut furniture that dates back more than 100 years — a sleigh bed in one room, a handmade day bed and a newel-post bed in another, a drop-leaf walnut table in the kitchen, enormous walnut cupboards in both the dining room and the kitchen. In the octagonal living room at the front of the "ship" are a beautifully upholstered sofa and chair set, an antique upright piano, and several lovely tables. On the coffee table are a volume of Thoreau's writings, a copy of The Living Bible,

The unusual house is filled with vintage woodwork, antique furniture and family heirlooms. Morralls have brought their treasures home to this place since 1878. The tea set shown at right belonged to Marie Gall's mother.





Above: Marie was one of generations of children to occupy the boat-shaped house. Here she is as an infant, early 1900's. Photographer unknown.

Left: Samuel H. (left) and S. Henry Morrall were the second and third generations to own the house. S. Henry was the father of current owner Marie Gall. Photo by J.J.W. Gawthrop Studio, Belington, date unknown.

and a kerosene lamp. Marie Gall's daughter, Ricki Skidmore, reports that the yarn reeler standing against the wall was discovered in the junk room.

Ricki, whose real first name is Rachel after her grandmother Morrall, and whose middle name is Hart after her Gall grandmother, comes from Ohio to visit whenever she can. "Mother and I are working on the junk room these days," she says. "The reeler is just one of the treasures we've found." On the kitchen wall hangs another — a lady's ivory-handled riding crop. "We never know what will turn up next," Ricki comments. "I love it!"

Other treasures which decorate the fascinating house include pieces of antique glass, portraits in hand-carved frames, even a collection of hand-painted cream pitchers and sugar bowls collected over the years by Rachel Morrall, Ricki's grandmother. Since Ricki is now a grandmother herself, the house gives direct evidence of seven generations.

Most of the house is still the structure of 1878. Some of the woodwork

has been refinished, however, and two of the side porches have been enclosed to form sun rooms and to conserve energy. The house was originally heated by eight coal-burning fireplaces, but a furnace was later added, and most of the fireplaces have been shut off. The handcarved mantles remain.

Marie Gall claims little interest in the antiques which surround her. "I've spent all of my life with old things. I'm tired of them," she says. "Somehow, though, this old house has suited me just fine."

Ricki takes obvious pride in each family heirloom and says, "I'd love to move back, to live here again. That's my dream." It was she who wrote the family story for the Barbour County history titled *Another Look*.

Coal mining was the primary business of the Morrall family, and as coal went, so went the house. One portal to the largest of the Morrall mines lay directly behind the house. Tracks which carried the loaded coal cars from the mine to the tipple down Meridan Road ran right through the

sideyard. Coal was only one of Lair Morrall's interests, however. Records indicate that between 1843 and 1883 he held a wide variety of public offices, sometimes several at the same time. After becoming Barbour's first county clerk in 1843, at an annual salary of \$100, he became commissioner of education in 1846, serving also as county superintendent of schools from that date until the mid-1860's. He was also county clerk, circuit clerk, justice of the peace, and Barbour County's first notary public. He became president of the Bank of Philippi in 1855 and wound up a long career with a variety of Philippi city offices in the 1870's and 1880's.

One of the prized possessions of Lair's descendants is a document signed by state officials and handsomely framed. It reads, "Extracts from the Laws of Virginia, February 1844 — An act to establish the town of Philippi as the seat of justice for the county of Barbour." Lair Morrall is named as one of the original trustees. The Morralls built a home in Philippi sometime between 1844 and 1850 and were one of



Mrs. Gall recalls that relatives and friends often shared the family home. Uncle Henry Kelley — "the best waltzer in Barbour County" — lived there during her early years. Photo by Palace Studio, Grafton, date unknown.

27 families living there by the latter year. In 1850, the town reported "222 free negroes and 113 slaves." Philippi was incorporated in 1871, and the first ordinance passed "ordered that all hogs and horses running loose should be arrested."

Elizabeth, Lair's wife, was reportedly the only Presbyterian in Barbour County for some ten years. She apparently converted her husband, for both of them are credited with founding the first Presbyterian church in Barbour County — in Belington — and in 1867 the Presbyterian church in Philippi. Lair supervised the construction of the Philippi church building between 1873 and 1876. He was elected a ruling elder, and Elizabeth used their home as the organizing site of the Ladies' Home and Foreign Missionary Society. The windows in the present Philippi church display dedications to the first members of the congregation, including the Morralls.

These were the times of the Morrall mines, when company houses occupied the open space which now stretches down to the river. Six other company houses were located in the hollow behind the Morrall home.

Two other businesses thrived in Morrall's Bottom. One corner of the property held a brick-making yard. In

1913, according to the records, this was owned and operated by the Holt family. Bricks were hauled by horse and wagon from the yard to building sites, including Old Main Hall on the Alderson-Broadus College campus. The third industry was smaller but critical to the whole Philippi area — the cutting, storing, and hauling of ice.

The steamboat house has not always been inhabited by Morralls. After Samuel, Lair's son and heir, was killed by lightning on the hill outside the house in 1892, Samuel's son Henry tried unsuccessfully to be a dairy farmer. Then he decided to become a railroader. He leased the house and mineral rights and moved his family to Grafton, the B&O capital of the area. Henry retired after 40 years as fireman and conductor but in the meantime had moved back to North Philippi and then back out to the family home.

His wife, Rachel Kelley, was a descendant of Colonel Benjamin F. Kelley, commander of the regiment of Union soldiers who marched from Grafton to Philippi to surprise the Confederate troops in the first land battle of the Civil War. She died in 1936. Henry was 82 when he died in 1966, killed when a tractor turned over on him.

Marie Morrall Gall recalls that the big house was home not only to her and her father, Henry, but also to her uncle Henry Kelley, "the best waltzer in Barbour County and also the best meat cutter," plus at various times, Mrs. Charles Wilson and her son, J. M. and Carrie (Kelley) Bennett, Gertrude Stemple and her children, and others who traded house or yard work for a place to stay.

"Usually these people were relatives or someone close to the family. There was always someone extra." She notes that the problem of homelessness is a recent phenomenon. "Back then, people simply took in other people, those who needed shelter and food. It was just expected — a common practice. Now people are too busy and don't have the space. But that's one custom we ought to go back to, taking care of kin and neighbors and friends. I was an only child, but I always lived with a lot of people, a lot of family. I was never lonely."

Marie Austin Kittle remembers the

house from the period when the Morralls lived elsewhere. It was her father who leased the mineral rights from Henry Morrall. While Henry was railroading on the B&O and his family living in Grafton and North Philippi, the Austins spent ten years in the shipshaped house on Meridan Road.

"I remember," Mrs. Kittle laughs, "having to scrub those big old porches. My room was the eight-sided one above the parlor, and it was cold up there. That's what the transoms were supposed to be for, to let the heat circulate. They didn't help much, though. These are ten-foot ceilings, and the windows are eight feet. I remember making the drapes for my room — four or five yards for every single panel. That was a lot of hemming!"

She looks at the dark oak woodwork in the living room. "I painted all the walls and wood in my room gray — covering that beautiful, beautiful wood with a color that my father just hated. And, of course, that wood has been covered with paint ever since."

"Yes," Marie Morrall Gall agrees, "this house is a cold one. It takes 23 storm windows. When we converted to furnace heat, we had to have a commercial size, and when that wore out, we couldn't replace it. That's when we changed to fuel oil, with bottled gas for the kitchen."

She gestures as she leads her visitors through the house. "There were no closets, or just a couple of tiny ones, so we had to have armoires built. They couldn't be brought up the winding stairway, so they were lifted by ropes onto the upper porch. You still have to wonder where we could have stored things, but of course we didn't have as much. Things accumulate.

"The only square rooms," she continues, "are in the back of the house, the kitchen and the dining room. All the others had to take the shape of the front of the ship. It's always been hard to place furniture. Everywhere you look there's a door or a window or a fireplace."

"In the dining room ceiling," adds Marie Kittle, "there was a big hole like a register. That was another way to get heat to the upstairs. Nothing really helped much, though. Back then almost all houses were cold like this one in the winter."

As the two women reminisce, com-



Mrs. Gall at the prow. "This old house has suited me just fine," she says.

pany arrives, a woman explaining that she had been wandering around the cemetery when someone told her that there were Galls living in this house. "I was a Gall," the woman explains. As the connections are established, Ricki Gall Skidmore realizes that she and the visitor went to school together

in Philippi. "You were in the band," she suggests. "We sat right next to each other."

This kind of tie, these interlocking family relationships, are graphically illustrated in the cemetery. Still receiving deceased members of the Morrall community and other Masonic fami-

lies of Barbour County, the graveyard dates back to the early 19th century and holds much local history. Here are buried all of the Morralls — Lair, Elizabeth, Martila, Albina, Samuel, Rachel, Addie, Briscoe (spelled with an "e" on his side of the headstone but without the "e" on his wife's side) plus numerous infants and small children. Here also are Kittles — George, Charity, Cyrus, and others. The last name of one family appears as a first name in another. Morrall and Kittle graves are interspersed with those of the Gall and Woods and Holt families.

Mixed in burial as they were in life, the Morrall community was populated by whole clans, all of the men employed in the mines or the brickyard or the ice plant. Down in the corner of the cemetery closest to the river, however, is a poignant reminder of the outsiders upon whom these families depended — a small cluster of modest gravestones with inscriptions in foreign languages, with names like Rozsika, Fodor, Daku, Vass, Gizella, and Bago. One stone is headed with the word "Russian." The approximated birth date on this stone is 1895. This man, one of whose names was apparently Anmitpin, died on October 31, 1918, undoubtedly a miner and a stranger in a tightly-related community.

Many of the facts of the Morrall Community are gone, fading away like the writing on the sandstone grave markers. No records give the details of Lair Morrall's dream which inspired the building of his odd house. Nor are there any written records concerning its construction. But in this land-bound steamboat, memories persist. There is the family Bible which Ricki Skidmore refers to often and with love. There are the family portraits decorating the walls and the tables. There are the furniture and the glassware and the dishes and the tools. There are the treasures still buried in the junk room. There are Marie Morrall Gall's grandchildren and great-grandchild asking to visit the farm. Most of all, there is the awesome but inviting presence of the steamboat house, the house that Lair D. Morrall built. ♣



Bill and Kitty Snyder Coffman are proud to continue German ethnic traditions of the Eastern Panhandle. Good ham is a part of that.

“What America Is Made Of” Country Ham in the German Tradition

**By Clara Castelar Bjorlie
Photographs by P. Corbit Brown**

Martinsburg resident Kitty Snyder Coffman learned the ins and outs of country ham at her father's knee. Some of her earliest memories include listening to the late Martin Snyder tell her how he started Snyder's Hams, the family business she and her husband Bill Coffman now

juggle with their other jobs as assistant high school principal and computer operator, respectively. "I grew up stuffing hog bladders, making sausage, pressing the lard to make cracklings, and helping trim hams," she says.

For Kitty, making preservative-free

country ham is a way of maintaining a tradition handed down through generations of local German farmers. The first of her ancestors came to the Eastern Panhandle in the early 19th century. "The Snyders were all farmers," she says. "They came from Germany to Pennsylvania, then settled at



Above: Kitty's father Martin Snyder was the man with the ham. He founded Snyder's Hams a half century ago. Photographer unknown, 1947.

Right: Martin Snyder's original curing house still stands today. It has been renovated for the use of the federal inspector.



the Antietam battlefield area, in Maryland. In fact, the family farm is still there, right off Bloody Lane." Eventually the Snyder ancestors ended up across the Potomac in West Virginia.

Kitty's father was the third of four brothers. In 1930, when he was in his mid-30's, he came into his portion of his father's farm. Martin's 57 acres of verdant land lay on Eagle School House Road, previously known as Snyder's Crossroads, on West Virginia Route 45 in Berkeley County. There, he established himself as a farmer and grocer. His father had done the same, according to Kitty.

"My grandfather had a grocery store," she says. "He would peddle meat, vegetables, ice cream, anything that a grocery store would sell. At the time, limestone was big around here. Lots of immigrants came to work at the Blairton quarry. There was a large Italian community, an Irish community, and a Yugoslavian community as well."

Kitty's grandfather, who opened his grocery store at Snyder's Crossroads at the turn of the century, would get up at six, load an open wagon with meat, chickens, and ice cream, among much other merchandise, and drive to nearby Blairton, where immigrants and local people alike lined up to buy his wares. Martin Snyder grew up helping with the family business.

"My father would help my grandfather before going to school in the morning," Kitty says. "I remember he told me that the customers would bring their own plates and bags, and that a paper plate filled with scoops of ice cream cost a nickel then. That's something he remembered."

With the business acumen he would later pass on to his daughter, Martin Snyder eventually decided to branch out as an independent grocer. "He was close to 40 years old when he started his own business," Kitty says of her father. "He farmed and sold plants, and sold meat to friends. I think he started out with two hams, and as the demand became larger, he just started adding to his small cure house. At first, he had a tiny cure house that was no more than a ten-by-twelve space, and he did everything there."

At that time, the Martinsburg area was mostly farmland, she says. There

was considerable distance between houses, but neighbors drove miles for one of Martin Snyder's hams. "I think that's because the high quality of the food has always been important to the Snyders," Kitty comments. "That idea has been handed down as a family tradition. You freeze and can fruit and vegetables, and there is a high priority put on freshness without preservatives."

Freshness is taken so seriously that traditionally the Snyders have even avoided serving leftovers at home. "The one thing that every one of the older members of the family, uncles, all the brothers, all the sisters, have in common, is that they can't feed you enough when you visit them," Kitty reports. "They don't have the usual breakfast and lunch. You have full-course meals, but no leftovers. All leftovers get tossed out or given away. They still do this today."

Kitty believes that neighborliness and generosity have played a large part in the way Snyder's Hams have gone from the two hams with which her father began business to the present annual output of 45,000 pounds.

"The thing about the Snyders is that they are big givers," Kitty says. "You buy five pounds of vegetables from them, and you end up with ten pounds of everything else." In keeping with that tradition, Martin Snyder would escort new customers to his own kitchen and treat them to generous slices of the cooked ham he kept in the refrigerator just for that purpose. Today, the Snyder's Hams clerks insist on adding fresh fruit of the season, when available, to ham orders.

Perhaps the spirit of sharing has been part of ham making from the beginning, when butchering pigs and preparing the meat for curing was a communal affair. "From Thanksgiving on, we would start butchering," Kitty remembers. "That's why Thanksgiving usually ended up being a bigger celebration than Christmas. We would have ten, 15 families over, and we would all work together. Then we'd have a big butchering dinner, and the 30 to 40 people who had been helping would eat in shifts."

Kitty, her mother, and the wives of local farmers started cooking in enormous kettles at 5:00 a.m. The menu



Getting Yours

If you're looking for something special for a holiday dinner or for gift-giving, you may want to look into Snyder's hams. A Snyder's ham is an air-cured product, different from the hams available at most grocery stores. The meat is saltier and spicier, lacking the preservatives commonly pumped in by fast-cure processors. It lacks the added water as well, providing more meat per pound, as Kitty Snyder Coffman says.

The Greenbrier resort, several foreign embassies, and Ronald Reagan have bought Snyder's hams. You may get yours by visiting the family business, located on Route 45 in Berkeley County between Martinsburg and Shepherdstown. The store is open from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday.

Uncooked hanging hams cost \$2.25 per pound, while cooked, sliced ham ranges from \$5.50 to \$6. Ham steaks have become a recent popular choice of the store's patrons. Ground ham costs \$4 per pound. For more information call (304) 267-7755.

for the butchering dinner invariably included country ham, succotash, mashed potatoes, applesauce, dressing, oysters fresh from the shore, biscuits and fruit pies. "They would nibble all day on cracklings and pot meat," she says, "but at 2:00 p.m. we would have a huge, and I mean *huge*, dinner."

Hard drinks were frowned upon, but there was always a good supply of homemade grape and plum wine, and homemade root beer, as well as applejack. "We had cider from the time the apples came in, and the women drank the sweet cider, as it was fresh. The men always had a jug of applejack that my father had let ferment, hidden in the bottom of a closet. I remember that on butchering day, all the men would gather in the kitchen, and we'd go and get the applejack and wine that had been there for a couple of years, and they'd sip on that," she says. "I don't remember anyone getting drunk, ever. If you drank too much you were really low-life."

The Snyder-Coffmans no longer slaughter their own pigs, preferring the convenience of having fresh hams trucked in. But Kitty remembers the details of butchering, as well as the fellowship it entailed. "After you killed the pig, you'd put it in a scalding tank, and then you'd take a hair cuff, which is an instrument that looks like a flat dumbbell, and you'd scrape the hair off the pig," she explains. "The next step was to singe the pig and chop it up."

Part of the meat, such as the fresh hams, was reserved for curing, and the remainder went into butchering kettles. "We made pudding, which is ground-up, greasy meat. We took the broth, added flour and cornmeal, and kept stirring it until it was thick. At that point, we'd pour that mixture into pans, to jell. That's ponhaus," Kitty says, using the traditional German term for scrapple.

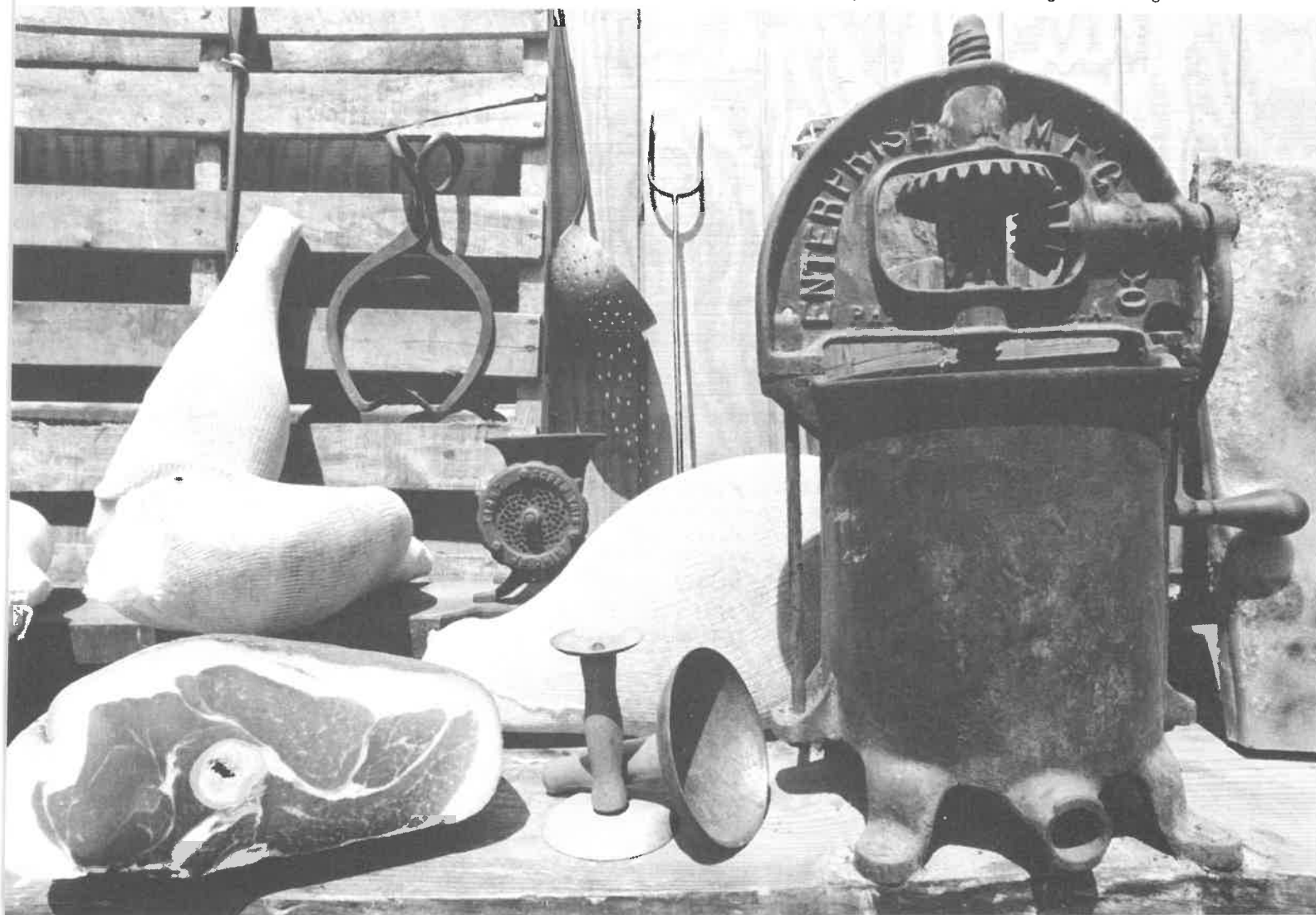
With the exception of the tail and chitterlings, the entire hog was cook-

ed, cured, pickled, or made into sausage. The blood was collected by local Filipinos, who used it to make sausage; the feet and ears pickled in brine; the bladder scrubbed with a brush, stuffed with sausage meat, tied, and hung to dry. The maws — the pig's clean stomach — was stuffed with sausage and potatoes, celery and onions, and baked. "There were people who'd eat the pig's brains, and we always used the head meat to make pudding, which would be steamed and eaten with pancakes," Kitty recalls.

Now that home butchering is on the wane, some of these traditional foods are difficult to find. Kitty, who gets the old-fashioned pig's bladder sausage from a local farmer, would like to go back to producing it commercially, as it was done in her father's day. After all, she says, dishes such as these are still popular in the Panhandle.

Schnitz and knapp is another traditional dish the Snyders plan to rescue from culinary oblivion. "In our fami-

The Coffmans collect tools and equipment from the early days of the family business. This grinder made meat cuttings into sausage.



ly, schnitz and knapp were served every year at Halloween," Kitty says. "That used to be a big day, All Saint's Day, and we always had a big pancake dinner then. Now, I do that for my own children, 12-year-old Kija and four-year-old Kiya."

Kitty explains that schnitz and knapp is an apple-and-sausage dish. "You take sausage, fry it, and put dried apples in with it," she elaborates. "Then you put brown sugar on top of it, cook it all together, and serve it with buckwheat pancakes."

Kitty credits her culinary preferences and her commitment to family values to the influence of her father's German-American ancestors. "My mother, Virginia Elizabeth Milady, came from an Irish family, but I didn't even know that the Irish existed until I was in high school," she says. "That's probably because the Irish just fell in with what the German part of the family wanted to do. In fact, my father's help through the years was mostly my mother's nephews, who weren't even farmers."

Husband Bill Coffman also comes from a German family, and he understood from the beginning that he was expected to help Kitty succeed her parents in the ham business. "If you came to my house, you were a farmer," Kitty says. "There was never even a second thought about Bill and our daughters helping with the ham business. One of my stepdaughters is married to Bill Ripkin, the Baltimore Orioles baseball player, and he is expected to help at cure time as everyone else in the family does."

But Kitty herself was not always sure that the ham business was her goal in life. Her training in biology, chemistry, and medical technology would have made it possible for her to find a job almost anywhere in the country, and for a while, she tried to resist the pull of West Virginia and the family business. "But then my mother passed away and my father was alone, so I had to help him," she says.

That was in 1982. Since then, both Kitty and Bill have worked hard to maintain Martin Snyder's high standards while keeping up with the growing demand for their product at the same time. These days, instead of butchering hogs on Thanksgiving, the Coffmans and a temporary crew of 14



Hams hang for months for a slow, controlled cure. No water or artificial preservatives are added.

helpers begin preparing for the arrival of refrigerated meat trucks from St. Louis the week before Christmas.

They follow a timetable Bill devised, first preparing a special curing mixture of coarse salt, brown sugar, white sugar, and black and white pepper. This mixture is poured into cure boxes. Each fresh ham is placed into a cure box, and hand rubbed with the spice mix. Once each ham is thoroughly coated, it is transferred to plastic-lined oak shelves, where it will stay for a total of four weeks.

At the end of four weeks, each ham is again immersed in the spice mix, and re-stacked on the shelves. After

another four weeks on the shelves, the cured ham is stuffed into a cotton stockinette, and placed on a hook dangling from the ceiling of the hanging house.

For the following nine months, Bill Coffman checks the hanging hams, making sure that the ventilation in the hanging house is adequate, and that the hams are not touching one another. Close contact and insufficient air flow could cause excessive mold to develop, and that, in turn, would affect the flavor of the ham. Once a week for the next nine months, Bill will push each ham into the position most likely to promote the right exposure to air cur-

rents generated by the large fans he has installed in the hanging house.

"My father designed a T-shaped tool for knocking the hams, and that's still in use," Kitty says. "Today, most of the tools that were used in his day have fallen into disuse. I have a room full of old butchering tools that are like museum pieces, and I'm just now starting to clean them, to exhibit at the shop."

Following in her mother's footsteps, daughter Kija Coffman contributed the idea of marketing the small pieces of cooked ham closest to the bone under the name of breakfast bites. "We used the small pieces ourselves," Kitty says, "but then we found out that people liked to add them to omelets, scrambled eggs, and other breakfast dishes." Ham bones are another item Kitty and Bill began selling after they realized many local people like to use them for soups, broths, and bean dishes.

For all their willingness to incorporate new items into their stock, Kitty and Bill have no intention of changing the manner in which their product has been prepared since Martin Snyder acquired the cure mix recipe from his father, who got it himself from Joseph Snyder, Kitty's great-grandfather. "I think of our traditional way of making ham as uniquely American, in that it blends the European and American Indian methods of food preparation," says Kitty. "I think that these traditions transcend state lines, and become part of America itself."

But the family work ethic, Kitty believes, is mostly German. "For us, work is play," she says. "My uncle Nelson Snyder, who is in his 60's, still has three farms of his own, plus one he rents. He has greenhouses, and he sells vegetable plants, and to this day he still truck farms. He put in 30 acres of cantaloupe, just this year."

Kitty plans to keep Snyder's Hams going until her own daughters can take over. She hopes they in turn will value the business, not just for its financial benefits but for its role in family history. "My father did it because it was part of his life," she reflects. "He enjoyed it. He brought this work ethic with him, that you start with the sun, and you just work, work. Bill and I don't look at this as what we're going to make out of it,



A certain amount of mold is a natural part of curing country ham. Bill Coffman scrubs it away with a brush and water.

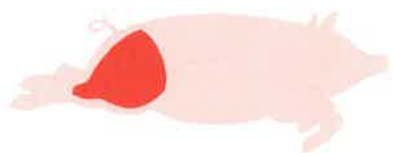
financially, although growth in the metropolitan area has increased the demand for our hams, and we are being asked to produce more and more."

Kitty Snyder Coffman's primary goal is to keep the family tradition

unbroken. "That's what America is made of, these traditions. In the case of the Snyders, our focus has always been the family. As long as family loyalty is alive, tradition remains alive. That's something I believe in with my heart and soul." ❁



Service is an important part of the family tradition, according to Kitty, store manager Sandy Miller, and Bill.



Ham Recipes

Traditionalist though she is, Kitty Snyder Coffman likes to experiment with different ways of serving ham. Someday she hopes to make her impressive collection of recipes into a cookbook. In the meantime, she offers these two recipes as personal favorites.

Snyder's Country Ham-and-Bean Soup

1 lb. Great Northern beans
1 large onion, chopped
1 clove of garlic, minced
1 bay leaf
3 cups ham, cubed
2 large raw carrots, cubed
1/2 cup chopped celery leaves
Salt and pepper to taste
Enough water to cover all ingredients

After sorting and washing beans, place all ingredients in a Crockpot and allow to simmer for eight hours. Serves eight.

Baked Ham and Eggs

2 medium slices of country ham, shredded
4 tbsp. parsley, minced
4 tbsp. Swiss cheese, shredded
9 eggs
4 tbsp. butter, melted
Black pepper, to taste

Combine ham, parsley, cheese, and pepper, and place in a greased baking dish. Gently break eggs on top of ham mix, top with melted butter, and cover with tin foil. Bake at 350 degrees until eggs have reached the desired degree of doneness. Serves four.



Flip's hot licks on the banjo leave guitarist Cap unimpressed. Andy, third member of the popular radio trio, is the fiddler. Photo by Photo Crafters, Wheeling, date unknown.

Cap, Andy and Flip Mountain State Radio Trio

By Ivan M. Tribe

The early years of country music saw a slow transition toward the commercial professionalism we know today. Most musicians combined day work in the factories or coal mines with now-and-then forays into recording or touring, but one country trio achieved near-legendary status in West Virginia and adjacent areas of the Upper Ohio Valley. Folks who heard them on the radio or attended their personal appearances knew them as Cap, Andy and Flip. More dedicated fans also knew their real names: Warren Caplinger, Andrew Patterson and William Strickland.

The Cap, Andy and Flip story begins about ten miles from Parkersburg, near Kanawha Station in Wood County, on June 16, 1889, with the

birth of Samuel Warren Pritchard. Of his childhood, he later wrote, "I lived on a farm with my father, mother, four sisters, and four brothers, until I was sixteen years of age. I then went to the coal mines, worked in the mines, and lived among the miners for several years. I was always a great lover of music, both vocal and instrumental, and when only a small boy, learned to play on the guitar, and sing the old time sacred songs."

Like many other Appalachian farm families trying to subsist on marginal land, the Pritchards found the promise of a cash (or company scrip) income attractive. Mine work took them across the state to Elk Garden in Mineral County, where after a few years Warren's father and oldest

brother died in an industrial accident. Somewhat later, the widow Pritchard married a man named Caplinger, and thereafter Warren generally used his stepfather's surname. He continued to work around the mines and became known locally as a square dance caller. He also wandered the country a bit, working as an itinerant laborer.

In 1920, Warren Caplinger's roaming took him to East Tennessee. There he met the man who would become his closest friend and lifelong business partner. Andrew J. Patterson had been born in Petros, Tennessee, on August 29, 1893. "Andy's father was a Baptist minister, who was well-known and loved by all the people of that country," Cap later wrote. "Andy being brought up in the church, was a great help to his father in revival meetings, by leading the choir, and singing the old gospel songs that touched the heart of the people."

According to Andy's son Milton Patterson, at the time his father met Cap the elder Patterson worked as a guard at Brushy Mountain Prison. The circumstances of their meeting are unclear, but there can be no doubt of their musical compatibility or genuine lasting friendship. "I visited Andy quite often and would sing with him whenever possible," Cap later wrote, "and in a few weeks we organized a group of singers."

While Cap and Andy were getting to know each other, the active commercialization of what was then called hillbilly music had begun. Radio signals from such places as Atlanta, Chicago and Nashville broadcast homespun music into homes where eager listeners awaited their turns at the headsets. Weekly barn dance shows like the "Grand Ole Opry" reached much of the country, and local stations broadcast their own Saturday night programs as well as early morning and noon country shows.

By the beginning of 1928, dozens of country musicians had entered recording studios. In the Mountain State, the Tweedy Brothers, Frank Hutchison, and David Miller had already made discs. That February, officials of the Brunswick-Balke Collender Company, manufacturers of Brunswick and Vocalion Records, held record sessions at Ashland, Kentucky. Experience had shown that new talent could

be discovered through such field trips, and Victor executives had discovered both Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family in just this way in Bristol, Tennessee, the preceding August. Hitherto unrecorded persons to appear at the Ashland sessions included West Virginia fiddler Clark Kessinger — and a group known as Warren Caplinger's Cumberland Mountain Entertainers.

In addition to Warren Caplinger and Andy Patterson, the members of this ensemble were fiddler George Rainey and his sons Albert, who sang and played guitar, and Willie, who picked the banjo. Rainey's son Marvin also played with the band as did a second fiddler named Luther Luallen, but they may not have been present on the record session. Patterson probably played guitar, and if Caplinger played any instrument it too was likely the guitar. Perhaps he only led the group and contributed to the singing.

Brunswick released four sides by the group from the Ashland sessions, while another five appeared on the Vocalion label. "Just Over Jordan" and "When the Redeemed Are Gathering In" were sacred songs, while "Jerusalem Mourn" was more of a satire on religious denominations. The other six offerings consisted of fiddle or string band arrangements with vocalizing much like Gid Tanner's Skillet Lickers. Musically, the Rainey's are more prominent than either Caplinger or Patterson on these recordings.

Not long after the Ashland trip, Warren Caplinger left Tennessee and moved to Akron. Domestic difficulties may have been a factor in his relocation. Shortly after coming to Tennessee, he had married a cousin of Andy's named Louvada West. They had three sons before Cap's move to Ohio. Cap apparently left Louvada and the three boys in Tennessee, although they later came to Akron.

In 1928, Akron was nearing the end of a 15-year boom that had made it the rubber capital of the world. Thousands of Southerners, and West Virginians especially, had flocked there to find work in the "gum shops." Cap's brother Everett was there already and it seems likely that Cap himself had toiled there briefly during World War I. At any rate, Warren Caplinger now went to work for the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. He also managed to stay active in music.



Mail promotions were important to the success of the live country radio shows. Here Cap, Andy and Flip show off three months of mail from a Coco Wheats promotion. Photographer and date unknown.

Andy Patterson remained temporarily in Tennessee. Columbia Records held field sessions in Johnson City in October. Andy participated as part of a group known as the McCartt Brothers and Patterson, playing guitar behind a fine regional fiddler named Luther McCartt. "Green Valley Waltz" and "Over the Sea Waltz" were the two numbers they recorded. The disc enjoyed modest sales of more than 3,000 copies. By the time of its release, Andy had joined Cap in Akron.

The displaced rural and mountain folk who had flocked to the Rubber City created a ready-made audience for the music of Warren Caplinger and Andy Patterson. They organized a group called the Dixie Harmonizers and began to play on local stations in Akron and in Cleveland, a larger and more cosmopolitan city 35 miles away. They also traveled to Richmond, Indiana, where they did three sessions for the Gennett Record division of the Starr Piano Company. At various times the Dixie Harmonizers included Everett Caplinger, David West (no kin to Louvada), Charlie Boland, a banjo picker named George Coleman, and somewhat later Marshall (later known

as Grandpa) Jones and harmonica player Joe Troyan.

Although the Caplinger-Patterson group cut some 23 masters in three trips to Indiana, only eight of them actually got released, and most of these are scarce today. The four released from the May 1929 visit included recuts of the previously recorded "Gonna Raise a Ruckus Tonight" and "Green Valley Waltz," this time with Andy doing the fiddling. A parody of "Roving Gambler" entitled "The Music Man" told a story of humorous romantic involvement that may have described some of Cap's adventures when he first came to Ohio. "My Wife's Gone to the Country" was the other release.

Two unreleased topical ballads recorded at that time included a contemporary song entitled "The Cleveland Hospital Disaster" and the traditional East Tennessee murder tale, "Roane County Prison Song." Cap and Andy recorded "Roane County" twice. Neither version was ever released, but they seem to have had a pivotal role in the transmission of this popular ballad.

The second journey to Indiana yielded only two released sides, including



THE BOY SCOUTS of Troop 23

Presents

The Pine Ridge Band featuring

"CAP", "ANDY" and "FLIP"

NBC and WWVA RADIO STARS

PROCEEDS TO HELP BUY CAMPING EQUIPMENT

City Hall Auditorium, Chester, W. Va.

Tuesday, April 24 • • at 8 P. M.

Adults 24c; Tax 1c; - 25c

The trio made their big move to WWVA in 1930. This ticket promotes a live Hancock County show soon afterward.

Left: Song books provided extra income. The performers were soon writing most of their own material.

Below: After Flip left the trio in 1940, the group performed as Cap, Andy and Milt, with Andy's son Milton Patterson. Cap stands at left in this WCHS shot, while Andy and Milt stand on either side of the microphone. Photographer unknown, about 1945.



one of Cap and Andy's first efforts at composition, a sentimental number called "By the Banks of That Silvery Stream." The third visit to the Genett studio saw only two releases out of eight masters cut. Issued on the rare Superior label under the pseudonym Dickson and Carroll, "Advice to Wife Seekers," backed with "Advice to Husband Seekers," mixed humor and down-home philosophy.

All during this time, the Dixie Harmonizers continued their radio work in the Akron-Cleveland area. They played on several stations through the region, "polluting the airwaves with their infernal hillbilly music," as one angry Akronite wrote in a letter to a newspaper.

Sometime in late 1930, the third key figure entered the professional lives of Warren Caplinger and Andy Patterson. William Austin Strickland had been born in Blount County, Alabama, on November 28, 1908. He mastered a variety of stringed instruments at an early age. In his late teens he began playing on Birmingham radio stations, usually with a group known as the Four Maniacs. His family believes that he went to Atlanta to record during this period, but they are uncertain about the details and whether the material was ever released. About 1929, Strickland drifted northward and played for several months on both WLW in Cincinnati and WCAU in Philadelphia. In the latter city, he worked with Zeke Clements and Texas Ruby Owens, one of the first cowgirl singers.

From childhood, Strickland had been known as Flipper or Flip because of his youthful mispronunciation of the word "slippers." Cap explained how he and Andy met Flip in the studios of radio station WADC. "Flip was visiting relatives in Akron in the year 1930 when we met him one morning at the studio and had him play a number on our program," Cap recalled. "We were so well pleased with his work that we decided to take him on as a partner, provided he could sing. He proved to be able to sing just as well as he could play instrumental music, so we organized the trio of Cap, Andy and Flip."

Not long afterward, the new act returned to Cap's home state of West Virginia to perform regularly at WWVA in Wheeling. WWVA had

gone on the air in late 1926 and after 1933 its live "Jamboree" made it one of the centers of country music.

For a time, they continued to work on Akron and Cleveland stations as well. In Cleveland they had a moderately lucrative agreement with the bucolic comedy-drama team of Lum and Abner, who broadcast their popular program through a national network of 44 stations. Cap, Andy, and three or four other local musicians, including Grandpa Jones, performed a song or two on each program as the Pine Ridge String Band, for which each man received \$10 per broadcast. This also gave them an opportunity to play personal appearances with Lum and Abner, mostly in Ohio and Pennsylvania. This arrangement ended sometime in 1934 when Lum and Abner transferred the live broadcasts of their show to Chicago.

Silver Yodeling Bill Jones, a performer from the early days at WWVA, remembers that Cap, Andy and Flip created quite a stir when they first came to Wheeling radio. Compared to himself and others at the station, they seemed thoroughly professional, Jones says. They had learned some booking tricks from their Lum and Abner days. A surviving ticket from a 1934 show bills the trio as "NBC and WWVA Radio Stars" and indicates that the performance was sponsored by a Boy Scout troop in Chester, Hancock County. The price of admission was 25 cents.

Also in 1934, the trio published the first of five songbooks, *Old Time Songs and Mountain Ballads as Featured by Cap, Andy and Flip*. It contained lyrics to 52 of their more popular numbers and is probably representative of their repertoire at that time. Sentimental and humorous songs dominated the pages, there being 18 and 15 of each respective type. Nine sacred titles and eight love songs ranked as next most numerous, while a single topical ballad and a patriotic song rounded out the collection. Only a few songs were credited to Warren Caplinger, Louvada Caplinger or Andrew Patterson. By contrast, their later songbooks were almost totally composed of their own material.

By 1936, Cap, Andy and Flip had shifted their base of operation to WMMN in Fairmont. Like WWVA this station belonged to the Storer

Broadcasting Corporation and was another major outlet for live hillbilly music. At times, WMMN showcased more than five hours of studio-produced country music per day, plus its Saturday night "Sagebrush Round-up." With the exception of short stints at WCMI in Ashland and WHKC in Columbus the group would spend most of their remaining years in either Fairmont or at WCHS in Charleston. Some of their Charleston programs also could be heard over the West Virginia Network, which owned WSAZ Huntington, WPAR Parkersburg, and WBLK Clarksburg.

Early in 1936, a second Cap, Andy and Flip songbook appeared under the title *Fireside Melodies*. It featured a bright red cover and a lithographed sketch showing a husband and wife seated on a sofa while a child played near an open fireplace, all listening to a large cabinet model radio. The entire scene was very middle class. The book included 26 original songs, words by Warren Caplinger and music by Andy Patterson. Sentimental lyrics still predominated, with love songs ranking a distant second. Later that year *Fireside Melodies #1* appeared with the same cover picture but green in color. It held only 16 songs, nine of which could be classified as sentimental. Comedy had vanished from their songbooks never to reappear.

By other accounts, sacred songs began to dominate Cap, Andy and Flip performances during this time. "While they were at Wheeling, they started singing gospel songs and got to where they specialized in them; they would perform at area churches and all day singings, and later on they played at what we used to call hillbilly parks," their friend Grandpa Jones later wrote.

Frank Leach of Wellston, Ohio, recalls that the trio played about once a year from 1936 onward at the Washington Township school and that they always did more hymns than anything else. He says that Andy generally did a fiddle tune or two and that Flip did a little comedy, perhaps in the manner now done by Little Roy Lewis. Andy, he recollects, was an old-fashioned "chest fiddler," playing the instrument braced against his chest rather than tucked under his chin.

Flip had a great deal of stage presence and Cap was friendly

enough, but Leach recalls Andy as the one that fans "waited to see." Andy did the lead vocals in the trios, while Flip sang tenor. Cap sang the third part, whether baritone or bass. Cap always played the big all-metal National guitar that he favored in most photographs and did most of the announcing on radio, which seemed to make up for musical skills which were somewhat less than the others.

Although earlier pictures of Flip generally showed him with a tenor banjo, Frank Leach cannot recall seeing him playing anything other than mandolin in the four or five times he saw the act in person.

By 1938, when *Fireside Melodies* #2 appeared with the same picture and a brown cover, the move to sacred lyrics was clear, with ten of the 15 songs being of that type. Topical

ballads made something of a comeback with recent Ohio River floods, the New London, Texas, school disaster, and the MacBeth, West Virginia, mine explosion providing the subject matter. One sentimental ballad — "With Dollies in Heaven," a dying child song — rounded out the collection. The trio now shared equally in the composer credits, and three anonymous tribute poems to Cap,

Singing the Sad Songs

There's a town in West Virginia,
And the name it is MacBeth,
Where eighteen miners went to work,
And there they met their death.
They kissed their wives and babies,
With smiling faces bright,
Not knowing Death was waiting,
In the mines for them that night.

Far down the slope they traveled,
Six hundred feet below,
Two miles back in the coal mine,
Some knew they had to go,
They reached their places safely,
Thought everything was well,
Then such a flash, a terrible blast,
No human tongue can tell.

The mine was pitched in darkness,
The miners were entombed,
Behind the tons of coal and rock,
Where fate had sealed their doom,
The rescue squads were brave indeed,
He-ro-ic efforts made,
And brought out victims, one by one,
In hopes a life to save.

The news was spread, it quickly went,
To those of aching hearts,
How sad, their loved ones had to go
For-ever they must part,
The parting will not be for long,
If they trust Him and pray,
And live the lives on earth they should
They'll meet again some day.

From "MacBeth Mine Disaster." Copyright 1938 by Cap, Andy and Flip

Tragedy and disaster have always been staples of country music, competing with lost love, broken hearts, and hard times. This was especially true in the early years when Cap, Andy and Flip made their career, and the West Virginia trio produced their share of the sad songs. Such ballads as the "MacBeth Mine Disaster" gave audiences a means of expressing grief and sympathy and delivered a guaranteed response to the performers.

The disaster songs often followed a loose formula. Those sung by Cap, Andy and Flip usually recounted a few basic facts of some spectacular case recently in the news, fleshed out with generalities true of any disaster. "The Ohio Valley Flood of 1936" and the "Flood of 1937" both tell of the death and suffering brought on by the "Old Ohio," giving a few details of each catastrophe. "Texas School

Disaster" consoles the mothers of 400 children who perished in a school-house explosion. In "Ohio Prison Disaster" the trio tells the sad story of 300 men who died trapped in their cells during a fire.

The "MacBeth Mine Disaster" commemorates the tragic explosion at a Logan County coal mine in March 1937. As the song says, 18 miners died. The ballad evokes a sad image of men who had "kissed their wives and babies with smiling faces bright, not knowing Death was waiting in the mines for them that night." According to Lacy A. Dillon's history of West Virginia mine disasters, *They Died in the Darkness*, the deadly explosion hit only one section of MacBeth Mine, and "several men came out unhurt, some by walking up the slopes."

Although the song makes no mention of it, the 1937 explosion was the

second at the mine. The first, six months earlier, took ten lives. The second blast was much worse than the first, according to the men involved in the rescue. Dillon's book says timbers were blown out and slate fell in the main haulageways as methane exploded with a terrific force. It was, in the words of the song, "such a flash, a terrible blast, no human tongue can tell."

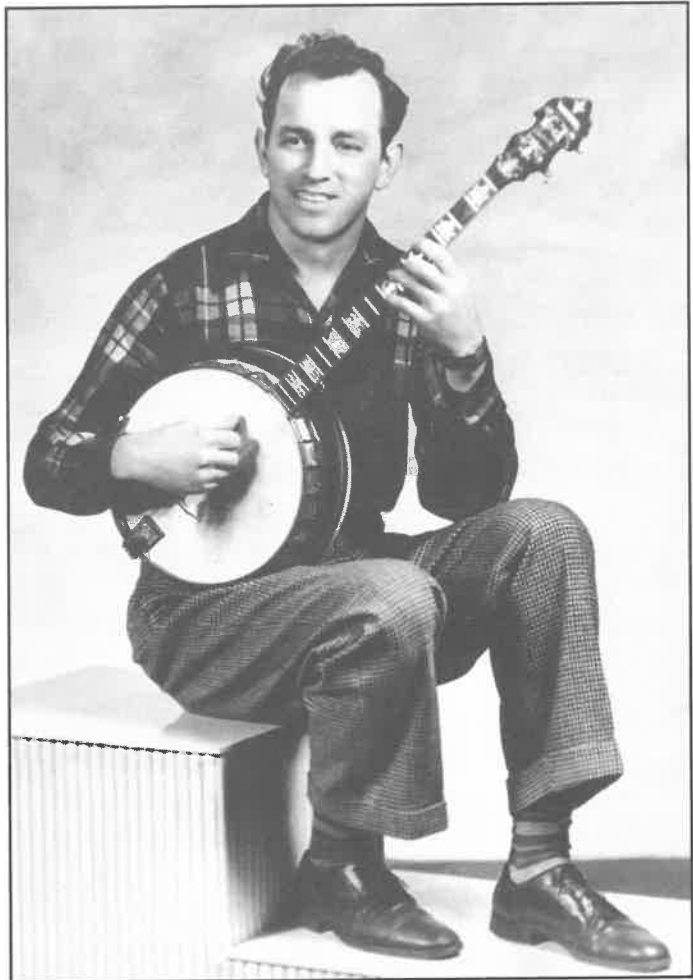
As disaster ballads often did, "MacBeth Mine Disaster" offers comfort to those who mourn by reassuring the grieving families that "the parting will not be for long." While Cap, Andy and Flip sing of the miners "entombed, behind the tons of coal and rock, where fate had sealed their doom," their sad song ends with the promise that "those of aching hearts" will meet their loved ones again some day.

— The editors



Above: Gospel music was the major ingredient in the success of both versions of the trio. Here Cap, Andy and Milt perform at an outdoor singing convention, probably in Fayette County. Photographer unknown, 1940's.

Right: Flip continued performing part-time after leaving Cap and Andy. This publicity shot is from 1946. Photo by Davis Photo, Roanoke, Virginia.



Andy and Flip presumably came from radio fans.

Their last songbook, *Fireside Melodies* #3, came off the presses sometime in the latter part of 1940. It too contained 15 songs, of which 12 could be classed as sacred and three as sentimental. A portrait of the trio adorned the front cover with 19 snapshot photos both old and new inside, as well as a studio portrait made of Cap and Andy when they first came to Akron.

By the time this songbook was published, the trio also had phonograph records available. At some point they had cut at least one disc for Universal Sound and Recording of Fairmont. Other records had been custom pressed for their own *Fireside Melodies* label. According to a Gennett discography, the first six of these masters had been made in Charleston on November 9, 1939. The others seem to have been done sometime later.

The material was released as 11 different songs on six discs, one appearing twice. One song, a sad prison

ballad entitled "My Dear Baby Girl," featured a solo by Andy, but the rest spotlighted the entire trio with generous portions of Flip's mandolin picking. They did one topical ballad, "MacBeth Mine Explosion," but the remainder consisted of their main fare, sacred and sentimental songs or a mixture of the two. "Nobody Answered Me" came from the pen of Albert Brumley and "I'll Be Listening" came from V. O. Stamps, but the others seem to have been their own.

One song carried the intriguing title of "Television in the Sky." This seems to be the first song to mention television and is in the vein of Albert Brumley's "Turn Your Radio On" and the Carter Family's "Heaven's Radio." It illustrates the songwriter's knack for using examples from modern technology to teach the lesson of the need for salvation, a recurring theme in country gospel. It also shows that songs could predate actual technical developments, just as a few years later songs like "God's Rocket Ship" foreshadowed actual space travel.

Through the decade of the '30's, the trio held fan loyalty to a high degree as they moved increasingly to gospel songs. Cap, Andy and Flip appear to have been the top country act heard over WCHS and the West Virginia Network. They had two shows daily in addition to their Friday night appearances on the "Old Farm Hour," held in the WCHS auditorium before a live audience of 2,000. They were among the most popular acts at the annual West Virginia picnic in Akron, an event which attracted Mountain State migrants in crowds estimated at 30,000. In the spring of 1940, the trio held their first outdoor singing convention.

Things looked good. When Flip visited his relatives in rural Alabama, he had a new auto with a new trailer behind it and a hired chauffeur to drive. Flip himself rode down on a new motorcycle. He probably showed off a bit for his kinfolk down South, and to them West Virginia must have seemed a land of milk and honey.

But at the end of 1940 the trio of

Cap, Andy and Flip came to a sudden end. Flip took leave from the music business. During one of the stints in Fairmont, he had met, courted and married a young Ritchie County school teacher named Pauline Cantwell. After the birth of son Johnnie on March 17, 1939, Pauline and her family urged Flip to quit show business and go into chicken farming with them. It took some persuading, but he finally

agreed to give it a try. They began business near the Cantwell home at Cairo. Wilbert Buskirk of the Buskirk Family remembered visiting the farm and recalled it as a sizable investment.

But after a year or so, things began to go wrong. Most of the chickens took sick and died. The in-laws reportedly began dragging their feet concerning some of their commitments, and the Strickland marriage

began to fall apart. Flip went to Akron and worked at Firestone until war-time restrictions began to relax somewhat. He then went to Nashville and worked in the band of Curly Fox and Texas Ruby, touring on the tent show circuit with the Fox Hunters and also Uncle Dave Macon. After March 1946 Flip worked briefly at a radio station in Keene, New Hampshire, and then for a few months with Mel Steele

The Miles Meant Nothing for WMMN

Cap, Andy and Flip and scores of other country music performers were part of radio's golden age in West Virginia. Stations large and small programmed live music as fast as the hillbilly musicians came to town. Many of the performers of the 1930's and '40's traveled from station to station, building radio audiences as they built a name for themselves.

One station that contributed to many careers was WMMN in Fairmont. The Marion County station went on the air in December 1928 when a local company, the Holt-Rowe Novelty Company, purchased equipment from a Chicago radio station and set up a studio in the mezzanine of the Fairmont Hotel. Two 90-foot towers were installed on the hotel's roof.

In 1935 an Ohio firm bought the station and the Federal Communications Commission approved an increase in WMMN's broadcasting power. The station went from 500 watts in the daytime and 250 watts at night to 1,000 watts for daytime and 500 watts at night. WMMN went to 5,000 watts day and night in 1938, with three 280-foot towers for transmission. Originally named for Fairmont resident and U.S. Senator Matthew M. Neeley, the more powerful station began to promote its call letters as

meaning "Where Miles Mean Nothing."

There was plenty of competition during the early days of WMMN. West Virginia radio stations fought it out in their programming, including live country shows. WWVA's "Wheeling Jamboree" went on the air in 1933 and is still going strong today. WCHS in Charleston had the "Old Farm Hour." Other stations programmed live country musicians as well, with WMMN attracting its share. As early as 1929, Skyland Scotty — Scott Wiseman — played banjo and sang mountain songs on WMMN. He built his radio career while attending Fairmont State and went on to marry Myrtle "Lulu Belle" Cooper. The duo became one of the most popular husband-wife teams in radio.

During the 1930's and '40's country music enjoyed increasing popularity at WMMN. Buddy Starcher, the legendary Nicholas County guitar man and vocalist, was one of the station's early stars. He worked there for six months in 1935 and returned twice during his long career. Cap, Andy and Flip came on board in June of 1935. They initially performed on two 15-minute broadcasts, morning and afternoon, at WMMN. Al Hendershot was also at the station in the

1930's. The Grantsville guitarist was known as a comic and emcee as well. Hendershot and his Dixie Ramblers performed for better than 12 years, returning to WMMN twice during that time.

It was not unusual for the musicians to drift from station to station, circulating not only in West Virginia but as far away as Nashville, Dallas and Chicago. When "Cowboy Loye" Pack played on WMMN in 1937 he had already spent four successful years at WWVA in Wheeling and some time in the Columbus, Ohio, radio market. He never made a single record, but was noted for his ability to sell over the air and was one of the most popular performers of his day.

Murrell Poor, known as "The Old Pardner," also came to WMMN in 1937. His band was the Tradin' Post Gang and included tenor banjo player Howard "Big-Eared Zip" Bennix, a Fairmont native. The Old Pardner was killed in a car accident in 1939. His radio fans, 17,000 of them, came out to view the body. It was reported that 10,000 people attended the funeral, an indication of the station's reach as well as the performer's popularity.

Grandpa Jones arrived at WMMN in 1939 and stayed with the station

and Blue-Eyed Jeanie at WDBJ Roanoke. On September 5, 1946, he married Helen Burnette of Gallipolis, Ohio, and his life entered a new phase.

Meanwhile, Cap and Andy took on a new partner, Andy's son Milton Patterson, and continued performing for almost another decade. Born at Oliver Springs, Tennessee, on December 15, 1924, Milt had remained in Tennessee

when his parents separated and Andy left for Akron. Andy subsequently remarried, to a woman named Lena, and although she and Andy had no children they did rear Lena's niece Eulalia Loshier. In 1938, Eulalia married the youthful Grandpa Jones, and Milt began spending summers with his dad.

Cap, Andy and Milt remained a popular trio until the end of the

1940's, when Andy's declining health forced them to disband. This trio issued a pair of songbooks in the mid-1940's. Both were "stock" volumes — one from Dixie Music and the other from Stamps-Baxter — with the group featured only on the cover, so their contents do not tell us much. The trio also recorded about six sides, which featured Cap's son Omer on mandolin. Milt recalls that they went

two years. He had built a large following at WWVA and WCHS. Eventually he returned to Wheeling, but by then Jones and his Grandsons had become one of the most popular acts on WMMN. Jones, related by marriage to Andy Patterson of Cap, Andy and Flip, went on to become the biggest star of any of the WMMN regulars.

By the early 1940's live programming at WMMN had increased to nearly six hours of broadcasting time per day. The station gave more than half of its daily schedule to live country acts, and the audience loved it. Every Saturday evening listeners could enjoy the "Sagebrush Roundup." WMMN's country programming offered serious competition to WWVA, and its audience appeal and broadcasting power attracted the top entertainers of the day.

The colorful stage names give some indication of the fun behind the music — names like the Blue Bonnet Girls, Fudge and Budge Mayse, the Young Old Timers, Curley the Ranch Hand, the Mountaineer Girls, the West Virginia Mountain Boys, "Just Plain John" Oldham, Salt and Peanuts, Radio Dot, Jack Dunnigan's Trail Blazers, Cherokee Sue, the Rhythm Rascals, Hank the Cowhand, Blind Bob Hall, and the Happy Hoedowners. Other familiar names from WMMN's country music prime are the Yerkey Twins, Tweedy Brothers, Blaine and Cal Smith, Lee and Juanita Moore, and Dusty Shaver. Herb Morrison, the reporter remembered for his live coverage of

the Hindenburg crash, was at the station at the time.

By the 1950's live country music was fading from the Mountain State airwaves. Television provided competition in more ways than one as many acts crossed over to the new medium and as TV began to make inroads into the overall broadcast audience. Also, recorded music began to replace live performers on West Virginia radio stations.

WMMN followed most other stations in making the switch, but the result was just the same. Of the stations — WHIS in Bluefield, Charleston's WCHS and Beckley's WJLS,

among others — which had nurtured country music through live programming, only WWVA has a major live show today. In Fairmont and elsewhere, many country musicians went back to day jobs while some others signed on as disc jockeys, playing records instead of guitars.

— Debby Sonis Jackson

For Further Reading: Ivan Tribe's Mountaineer Jamboree: Country Music in West Virginia is the standard source on this subject. The book was published by the University Press of Kentucky in 1984.

The powerful signal of Fairmont station WMMN boosted the careers of many country performers. This is Blaine Smith's group, with Smith behind the microphone. Photographer unknown, about 1940.





Cap was the last of the three to work in radio, ending his career at Charleston stations in the 1950's. He is now buried by Andy in Kanawha County. Photographer and date unknown.

to Richmond, Indiana, and did the sessions at the old Gennett studio. The sides were released on the M&L label, which was operated by Moore's office supply store in Charleston. Like the Fireside Melodies records they were not widely distributed. At present, the only known titles are "The Uncloudy Day" and "Glory Bound Plane."

Andy lingered in ill health for several months, dying on November 19, 1950, in Charleston. His widow, who had done virtually all of the trio's secretarial work for years, ran a Charleston restaurant known as Patterson's Lunch for a time. Son Milt moved back to Tennessee, where he went to work for Union Carbide in 1951, and seemed to take little interest in music. He did receive visitors over the years, including Cap, Flip and several of the Caplinger children.

Warren Caplinger continued in radio as a deejay and announcer, first at WKNA in Charleston, where he hosted a daily show called "Cap's Trading Post" and a program titled "Saturday in the Valley." He moved to station WGKV about 1954 and

worked there until he retired in 1956. *Cowboy Songs and Country Song Round-up* magazines ran brief features on him in his later years, dubbing him "Mr. Folk Music" and calling him a real old-timer in radio but scarcely mentioning his musical career.

In the early '30's, Cap had married again and fathered two additional children. Late in life, he took still another wife, Evelyn Shaver. Like Helen Strickland, she hailed from Gallia County, Ohio, where both the earlier and later version of the trio had been popular. When Cap died on July 7, 1957, at his home in Charleston, friends and relatives buried him next to Andy in the Cunningham Memorial Gardens in St. Albans. Evelyn, 31 years his junior, survived him, along with seven children.

Flip Strickland and his wife moved to Indiana in 1947 and lived near Indianapolis for 32 years. Although Flip earned his living primarily from a day job, he continued to work part-time in clubs. Sometimes musical friends would visit, and in 1963 Flip helped Curly Fox and Texas Ruby on a recording session just before Ruby's tragic

death. Flip and Helen retired in the 1970's and returned to his Alabama home country. Flip's health failed rapidly from 1986, and he died on July 21, 1988. Helen had his remains brought back to the Ohio Valley and he is buried in the Mound Hill Cemetery which overlooks Gallipolis and the river. A mandolin is inscribed on the recently erected tombstone.

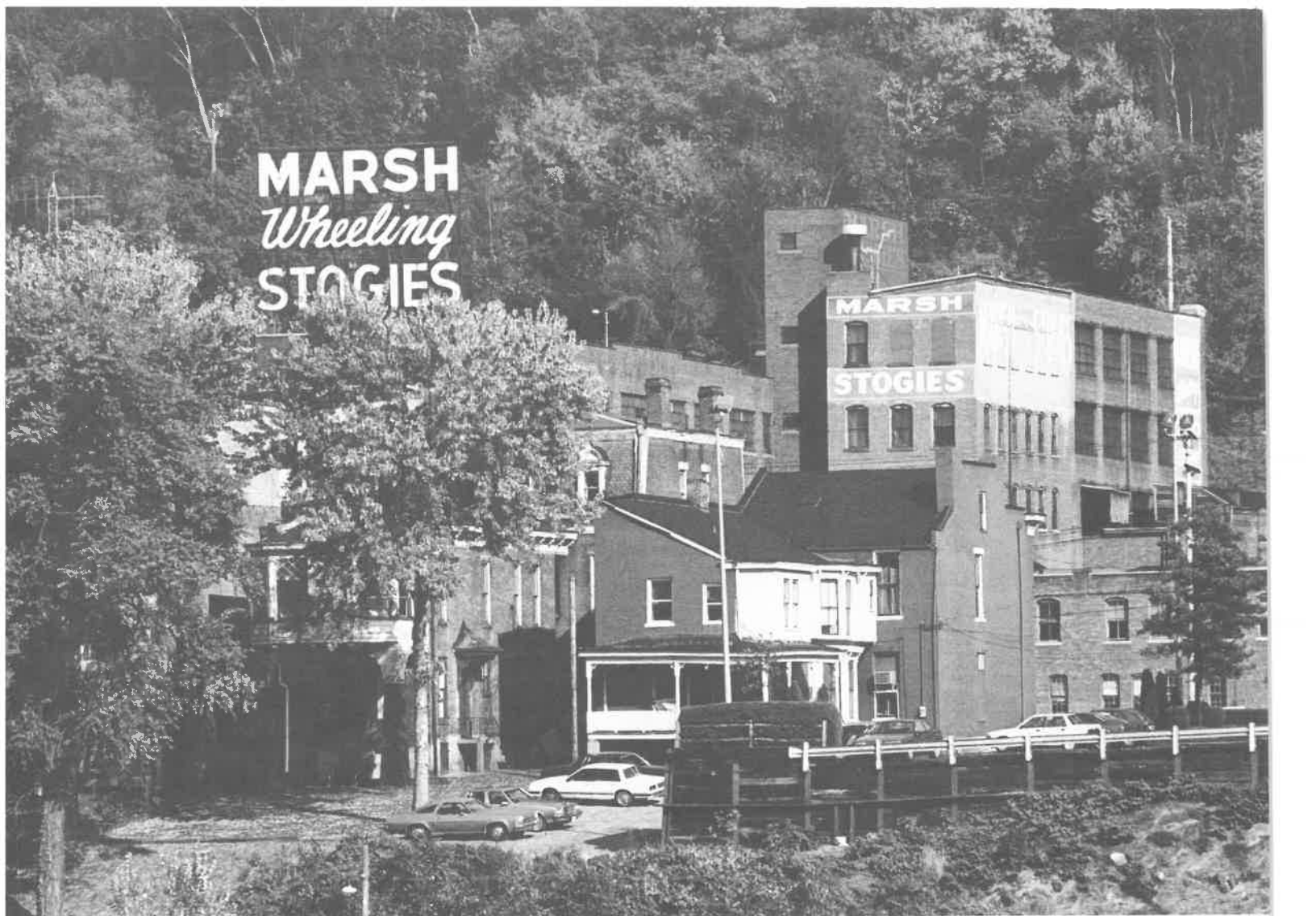
Partly because they recorded sparingly and most of their discs are now rare, Cap, Andy and Flip are little known today. As Grandpa Jones reflected in his autobiography, *Everybody's Grandpa*, this was not always the case. "As Cap, Andy and Flip, they got a really huge radio audience, though they are about forgotten today and seldom mentioned in country music history books," Jones wrote of his former colleagues.

Much of their music survived in the work of Jones and that of Wilma Lee and Stony Cooper, who knew them from their days at WMMN. My own introduction to the West Virginia trio came in 1965 when I asked Grandpa to sing "Roane County" and he explained on stage how he had learned it from Cap, Andy and Flip. Later, I learned that people in my hometown in Ohio had held their photos and songbooks for 30 years and longer.

As Grandpa Jones intimated, the trio enjoyed remarkable success in their day. Johnnie Bailes of the Bailes Brothers recalled that of the numerous Charleston radio acts, only Cap, Andy and Flip and Buddy Starcher ever really made it financially at WCHS. For those who worked the hillside farms and mines of West Virginia or toiled in the gum shops in Akron or in other factories in Ohio or Pennsylvania, Cap, Andy and Flip were products of their own society who had made good. In the process, the singers helped them to maintain their own cultural identity and brightened some of the darker moments of changing times. One anonymous fan put it into poetry:

When I'm blue and weary
Ready to give up the ship
I tune in my favorite program
Known as CAP, ANDY AND FLIP.

Author Ivan Tribe thanks Robert Coltman for help with research and early drafts for this article. 🌸



MARSH
Wheeling
STOGIES

The Marsh Wheeling factory complex has been a city landmark since early in the century. The company has been in business in Wheeling since long before that.

Original and Genuine

The Story of Marsh Wheeling Stogies

By Joseph Platania
Photographs by Michael Keller

A landmark on the Wheeling skyline is the neon "Marsh Wheeling Stogies" sign atop the five-story brick factory building of M. Marsh and Son on Main Street. Stogies have been made by Marsh since 1840, making it Wheeling's oldest active manufacturing enterprise. Marsh also claims to be the oldest American cigar manufacturer still operating under its

original name in the city where it was founded.

Charlie West has been with Marsh for almost half of its history. He was hired in 1926 as a 14-year-old laborer unloading barrels of tobacco. Now in his 64th year with the company, West is the cellar master, the most experienced of the workers responsible for aging, conditioning and blending the

tobaccos that are rolled into Marsh's 13 brands of stogies.

"I feel the tobacco. Chew some of it. It's got to be soft," he said, standing in his aromatic, tobacco-filled workshop on the bottom floor of the Marsh factory.

When West started working, hand-rolled stogies were still being made. Now they are machine-made with



Above: Company founder Mifflin Marsh began rolling stogies in 1840, initially selling his product from a hand basket. Photographer and date unknown.

Right: The basic stogie has remained the company mainstay through the decades. This box of Deluxes and the antique squaring press now belong to the State Museum.

milder cigar leaf. "Those handmade you couldn't beat," said the tall, ruddy 78-year-old. "But the Deluxes have still got that good old Dutch tobacco filler. Try 'em out sometime." The seven-inch Deluxe is the company mainstay.

Marsh president Ron Fletcher also heralds the quality of the company's stogies, but admits the cigars are more for the working man than the corporate executive. Fletcher is thinking of the steelworkers and other blue-collar workers who dominate Wheeling, the surrounding upper Ohio Valley, and nearby Pittsburgh. Half of Marsh's sales are in West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Although the word "stogie" has come into the language as a synonym for cigars in general, in fact a stogie is longer and thinner, with a twisted, tapered mouth end. Fans maintain they are more flavorful than ordinary cigars.

The stogie was invented about 1827 by George W. Black, a tobacco shop owner in Washington, Pennsylvania, the next city east of Wheeling. Black

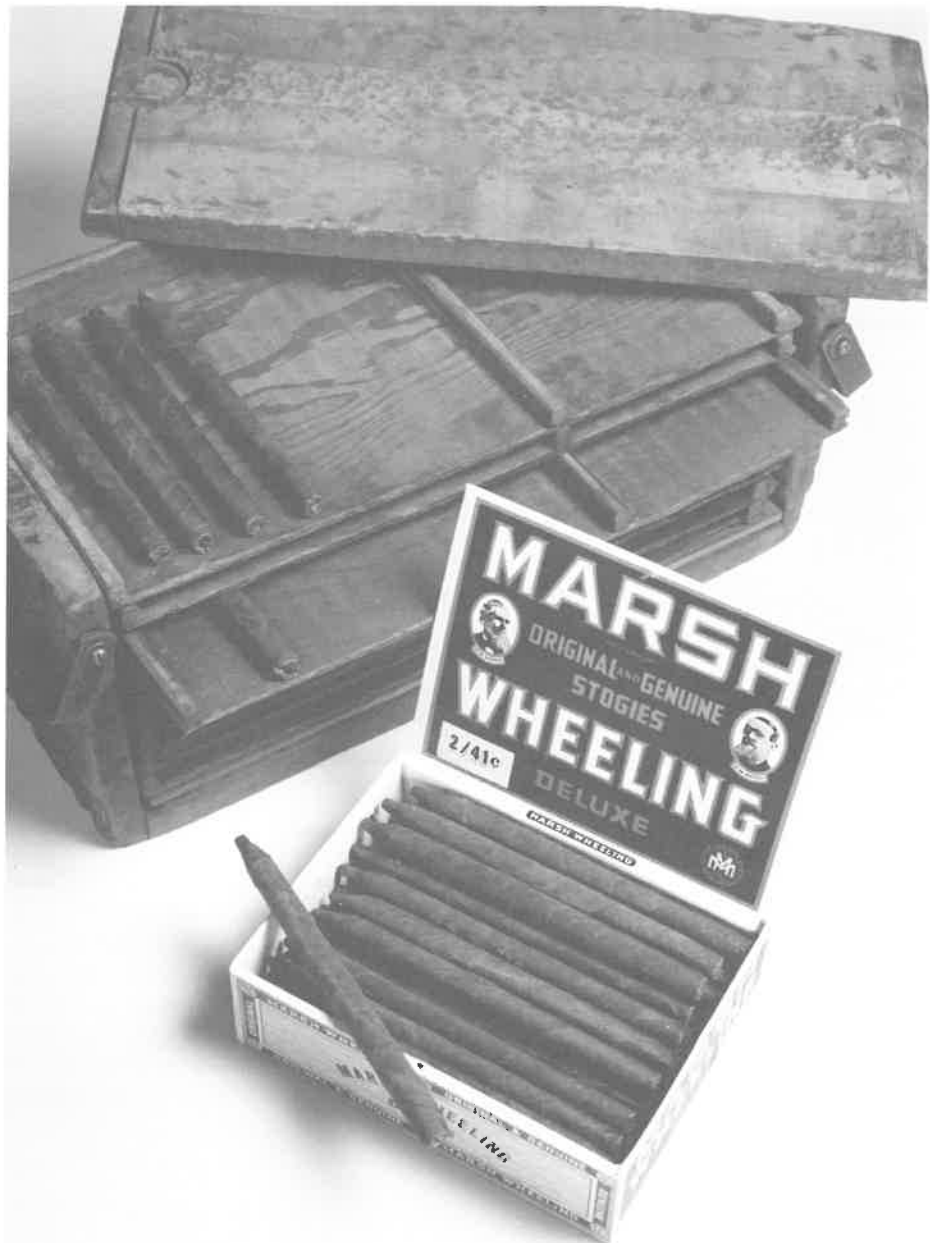
made them especially for the drivers of the massive Conestoga wagons that traveled America's first federal highway, the National Road, running from Maryland to Wheeling and westward. The big wagons gave their name to the distinctive cigar, later shortened from Conestoga to "stogie." Wheeling was a major center on the National Road and soon a new industry arose there to supply the cheap smokes.

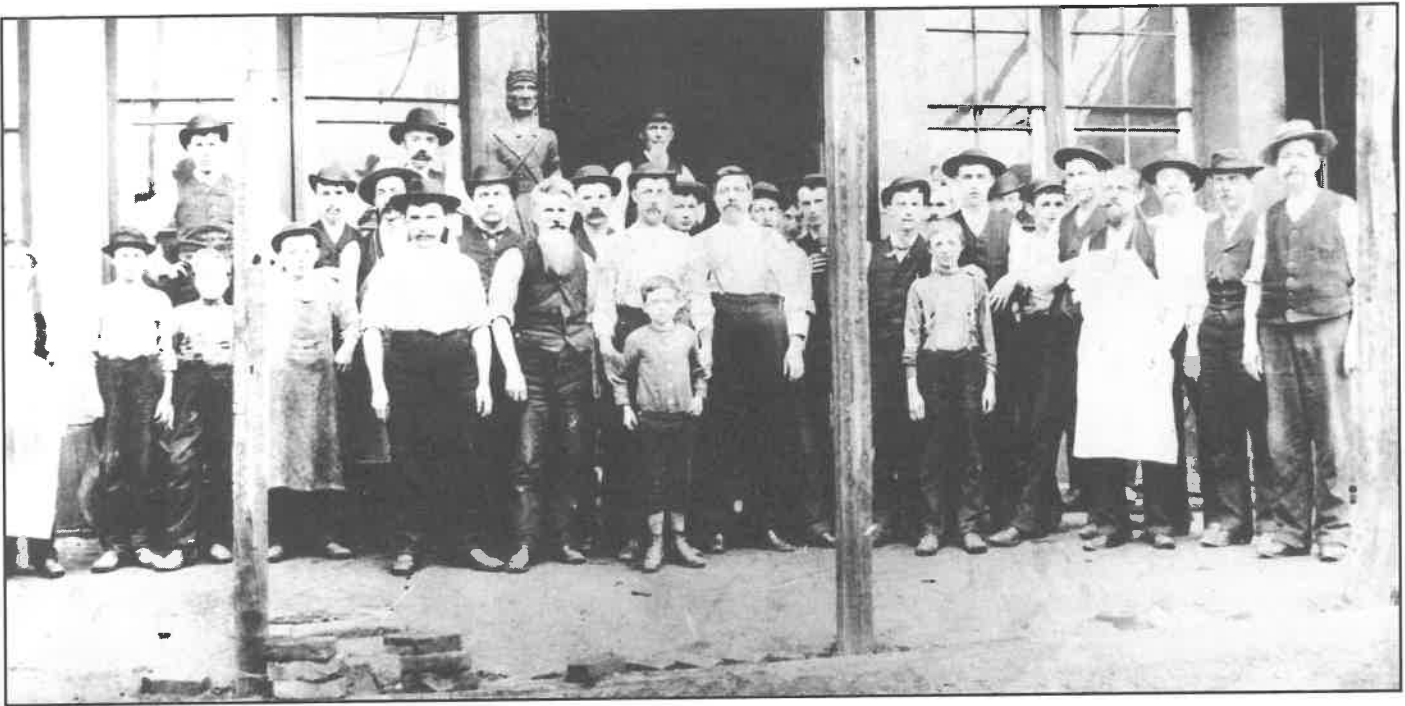
One of the first local cigar entrepreneurs was Mifflin M. Marsh. He began selling his stogies in 1840, at the age of 22, from a market basket carried over his arm. His first customers were the crews and passengers of steamboats at the Wheeling wharf. He also sold to the Conestoga drivers. Smokers liked young Marsh's product, a thin, hand-rolled cigar that he sold four for a penny. Soon they were popular up and down the river wherever the steamboats plied, and from one end

of the National Road to the other.

In the early years, stogie making remained largely a cottage industry with the long, thin cigars being made in homes, haylofts, and one-man shops. It was not until after the Civil War that stogies became a full-fledged factory industry. By 1879, there were nearly 100 stogie factories, large and small, operating in Wheeling, including M. Marsh and Son. This prompted one contemporary observer to write, "Had not Wheeling arranged to go down in history as the Nail City, she certainly ought to be known to posterity as Stogietown. For today it is safe to assume that Wheeling stogies are puffed in nearly every state in the Union."

The tobacco industry expanded with Wheeling's growth and stogie factories multiplied rapidly. By the late 1870's, nearly \$900 a day was flowing into national coffers in exchange for





Mifflin Marsh stands (in doorway) with workers at his shop, about 1880. His son and successor, William M. Marsh, stands in the front row, fourth from right, wearing white apron. The cigar store Indian at Mifflin Marsh's right may still be seen at the company office today (right). Photographer unknown for early photo.

federal tax stamps at Wheeling's Custom House, and almost all of the revenue was on stogies and other cigars. Wheeling factories produced many brands and varieties. Some stogies were dipped in molasses to be either chewed or smoked, depending upon the user's preference.

According to an 1879 Northern Panhandle history, Pittsburgh was then the stogie's best customer, followed by Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis, New Orleans, and Philadelphia. A list of well-known stogie smokers reads like a Who's Who of the 19th century. According to a 1940's Wheeling newspaper article, "Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, the Marquis de Lafayette, James G. Blaine, P. T. Barnum, General Sam Houston, General Santa Ana, Black Hawk, the Indian chief, and many others were among the prominent men who considered Wheeling stogies the finest form of smoking tobacco in existence." And it was not quite a males-only club. Annie Oakley also is said to have enjoyed them.

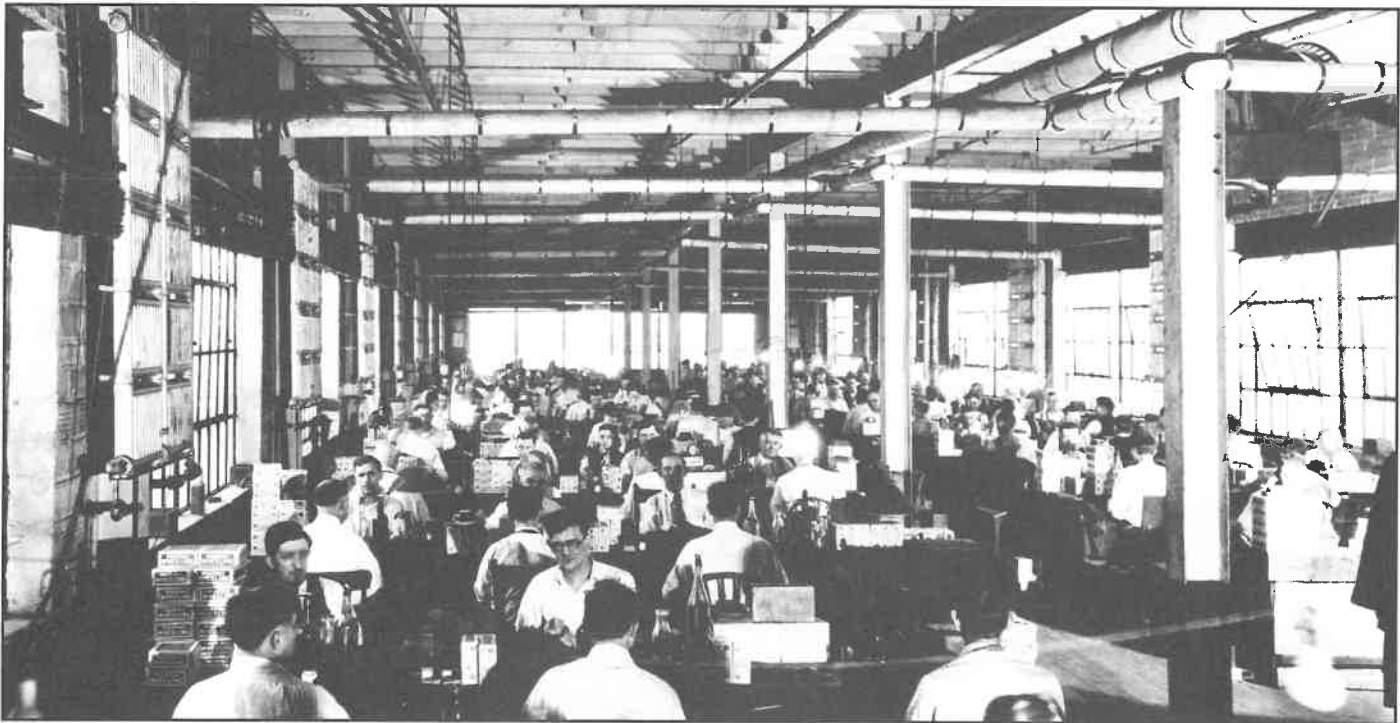
Although stogies were priced for the working man, Pittsburgh industrialist and financier Andrew W. Mellon, once the richest man in the nation, was a loyal consumer. The Pennsyl-

vania plutocrat smoked them "to the exclusion of everything else," according to a newspaper account. James Monroe, John Quincy Adams and Abe Lincoln were among the presidents who smoked stogies, according to the paper, which also counted "Prince Louis Phillippe, later King of France," among the faithful.

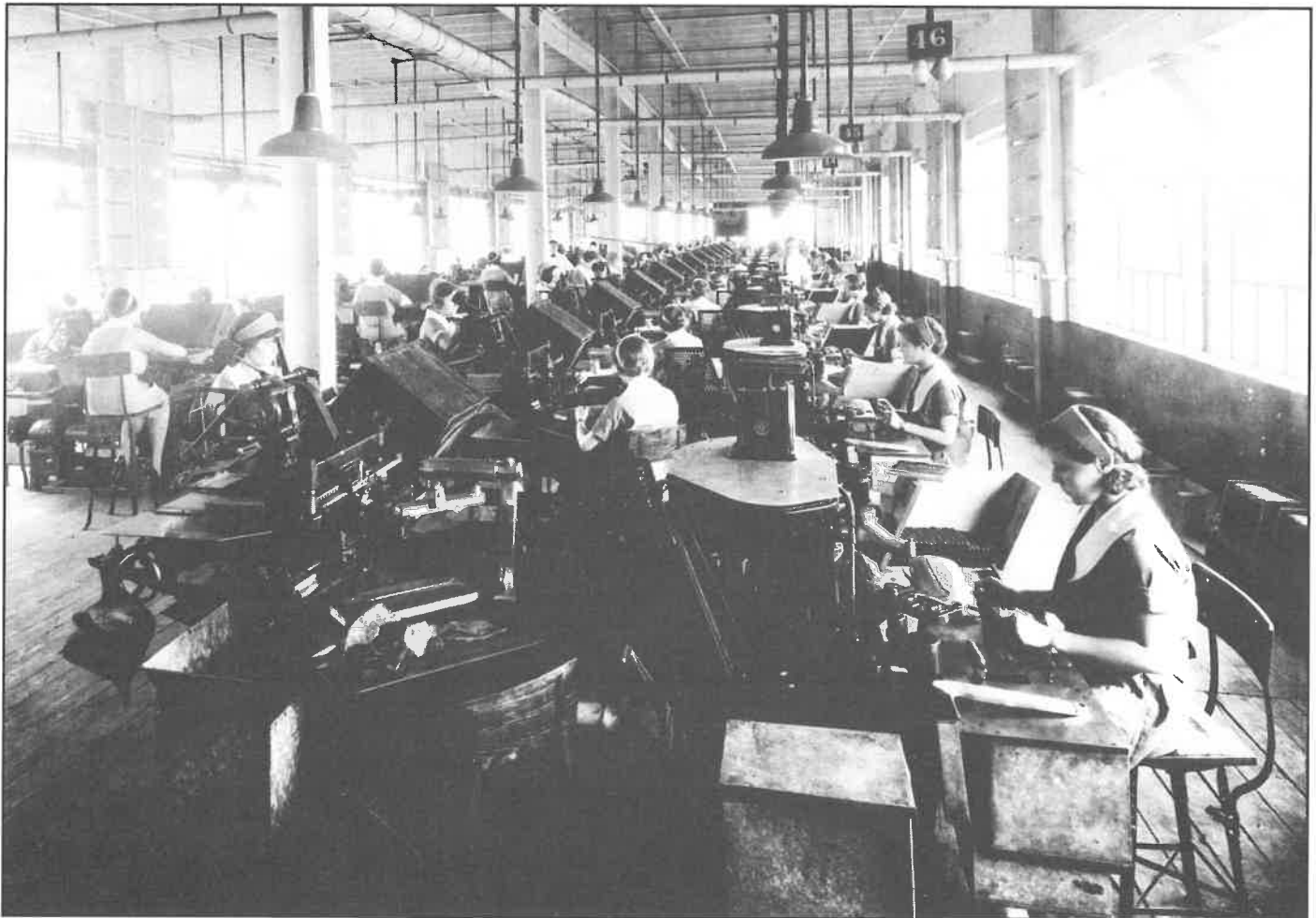
The volume of stogie sales was regarded as a reliable economic barometer. According to a Wheeling newspaper report of October 3, 1899, "the rise of the stogie, being a workman's smoke," indicated that the hard times in the early 1890's were over. In fact, the newspaper reported that September 1899 was a record-breaking month in the history of stogie production, with a little more than 6,510,000 produced by Wheeling factories.

Marsh stogies in particular were known far and wide. This was demonstrated by an automobile journey taken by Wheeling businessman William Colvig and his employee, Guy Pryor, to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Colvig carried a supply of Marsh stogies to give to farmers who helped pull his car out of the mud and found them to be acceptable currency all along the way.





Mechanization brought big changes to Marsh. The key process, cigar rolling, was originally skilled hand labor, done by men for high wages. When machines entered the rolling room, the men were replaced by women, doing semi-skilled work for less pay. The installation of the rolling machines in the 1930's brought an unsuccessful protest strike. Photographers unknown; top photo 1928, bottom photo 1935.



The first Marsh factory was located on Water Street, between 12th and 14th streets. Later the factory was moved to 12th Street, between Main and Water. Both locations were close to the waterfront. Cigar makers worked with gas jets for light and no water in the plant in the early years.

The stogie roller was a skilled professional who commanded high wages, and exercised considerable control over his work. While at their tables, the men improved their minds by education and debate. They hired a reader, each worker contributing a part of his output so that the reader's salary would equal that of the rollers. According to a contemporary account, the reader first read the local newspaper. "When he has finished these, he reads trade papers and articles from magazines on political and sociological subjects."

Harry Parshall of Wheeling, unofficial historian of M. Marsh and Son, states that at one time "the company had more than 500 hired workers, most of them rollers. There were as many as six readers to read the newspapers to the rollers who would give the readers about 1,000 stogies each per day. A good roller could make 1,000 stogies per day and was paid based on his production."

Radio, another important Wheeling institution, later put the readers out of business. "When the radio was invented, the readers were eliminated," Parshall says. Robert Michener, former company president, agreed in a 1978 interview. He said that when radio station WWVA went on the air in December 1926, cigar factory readers joined the ranks of the unemployed.

During the early years of this century important changes took place at the Marsh company. Mifflin Marsh died in January 1901. The following year M. Marsh and Son incorporated. Control passed from the family, although Mifflin's son, William, stayed with the firm until his death in 1921.

In 1908 good business led to the establishment of a new factory at 913 Market Street, adjoining the site of the present Marsh plant. In 1920 Marsh's entire operations were moved over to 915 Market. Later one floor was added to the original building, and two five-story brick buildings were



Victoria Naples packs Marsh Wheeling stogies for market. Photographer and date unknown.

erected. In the spring of 1940, the plant was further enlarged by the purchase of an adjacent building.

Robert Michener, whose father also had been president of Marsh (1941-1964), talked about the effects of the Depression in the 1978 interview. "Fortunately, the company was pretty well fixed financially," Michener said, noting that smokers had to make their cigars last during tough times. "Our product, the stogie, unlike the cigarette, could be adapted by the smoker in such a way that one stogie could last, if necessary, and it was necessary, for the whole day.

"With the stogie, a smoker would light up, take several puffs and his desires would be satisfied. He would lay the stogie down and it would cease to burn. After an hour or so, the stogie could be lit again. This could go on for a full day. The cost of a stogie at that time was three for ten cents."

Michener noted that Marsh began to mechanize during these years. "Early in the 1930's the company purchased over 40 stogie-making machines. This would replace the men that rolled the stogies by hand. One man could make about 1,000 stogies per day while one machine could make up to 5,000 stogies per day. Young women were hired to operate the machines and the men were laid off. The men took their

problem to the local union and a strike was called.

"Unfortunately there was no such thing in those days as strike benefits, unemployment insurance or welfare for strikers," Michener said. "The strikers had to seek other employment or go hungry. They didn't have time or money to walk the picket line."

Although the skilled rollers lost their jobs to the machines, employment at Marsh reached a peak of more than 600 in the 1940's. During that decade there were between one and three million stogies produced per week in Wheeling. The city's tobacco manufacturing industry produced chiefly stogies and chewing tobacco, although pipe tobacco and cigarettes also were made. Additional workers were needed in the manufacture of cigar boxes, wrapping paper, cartons, labels, and machinery. This bustling industry prompted a newspaper writer of the '40's to remark that "Wheeling is truly a tobacco city."

However, America was becoming a fast-paced society with little time to relax and light up a cigar, and Wheeling's stogie industry began to fade. Many smokers turned to a milder cigar and Marsh eventually was left as the only big stogie maker in town. "It's been about 45 years since we've had any competition," Marsh president



Left: Marsh Wheeling cigars begin with unprocessed tobacco, purchased from several areas. This is a cured wrapper leaf.

Right: Richard Beck loads filler tobacco into a rolling machine hopper. This is "Dutch" filler, used for the company's well-known Deluxe stogies.

Rolling Smokes

Stogie Production at Marsh Wheeling

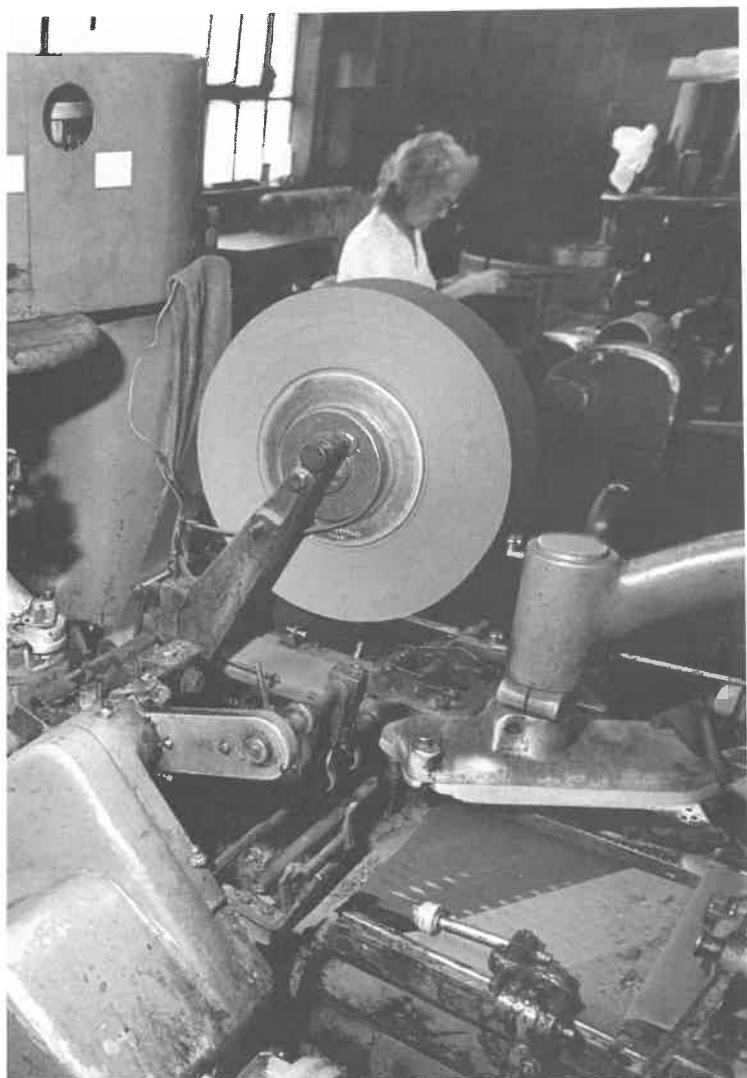
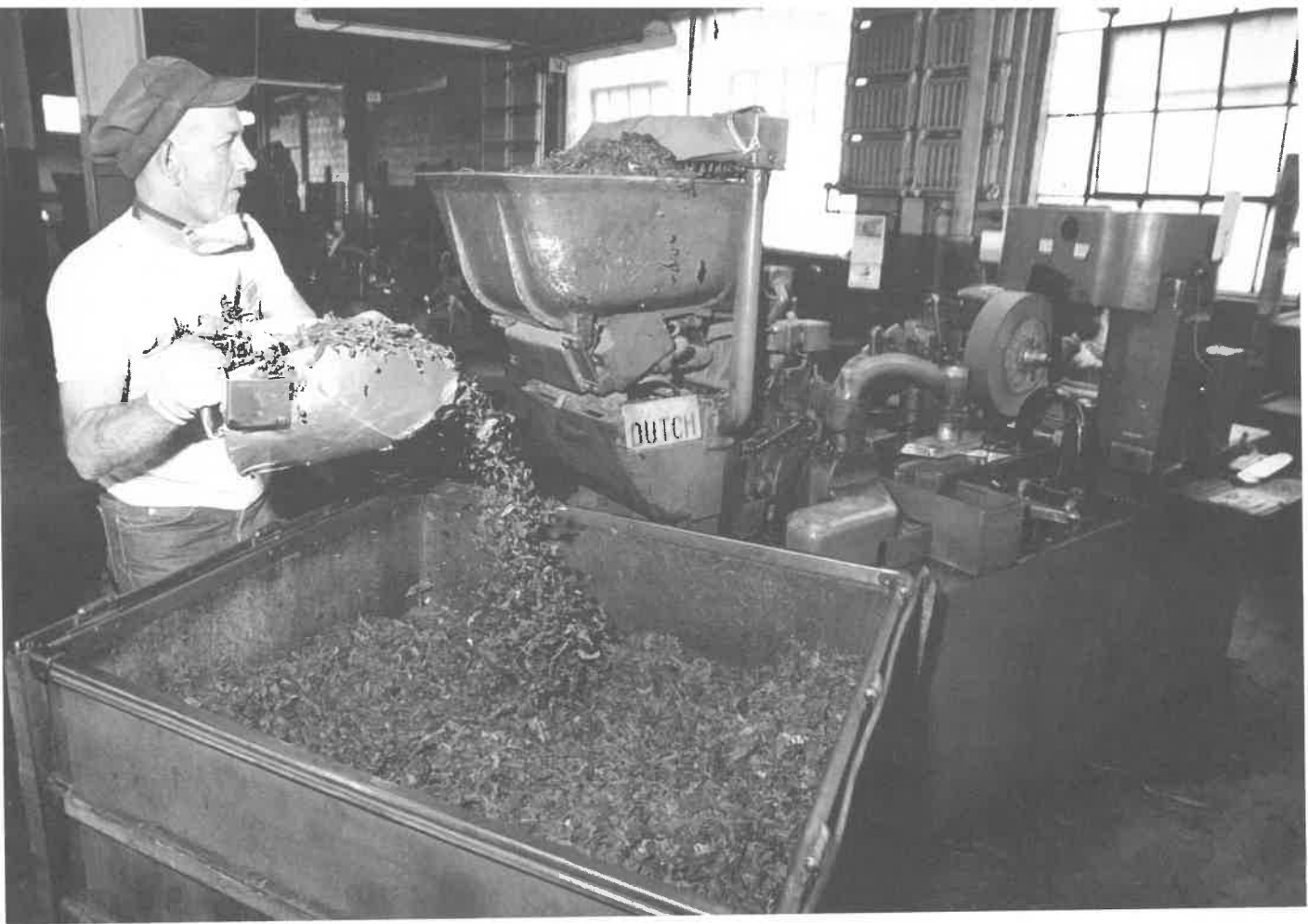
Photoessay by Michael Keller

Below: Wrapper leaf is stripped by machine nowadays, removing the stem and cutting the wrapper into right and left halves. Blanche Kirkland does the work here.

Right: It takes a huge and complicated machine to replace the skilled hand rollers of old. This is company employee Kim Wasko.

Far Right: Tracy Arnold and Diana Benline make a final inspection and sorting by color, the last step in stogie production. These Deluxes will now be wrapped in cellophane and boxed.







Company historian Harry Parshall (left) visits with Marsh Wheeling President Ron Fletcher. William M. Marsh, Mifflin's son, looks on from the portrait on the wall.

Ron Fletcher said in a 1987 newspaper interview.

From his office Fletcher can see the wooden cigar-store Indian that is probably the last remnant of Mifflin Marsh's 19th-century Water Street shop. In bygone years such advertising figures stood at the front of most tobacco shops. Historian Harry Parshall states that Marsh's carved Indian statue was displayed on the sidewalk, sometimes overnight, in the 1880's. Its present value has been estimated at \$10,000.

Inside the Marsh factory, the aroma of thousands of unsmoked stogies brings to mind the days when paddlewheelers plied the Ohio River and man-sized cigars cost a nickel or less. The musty smell of cigar tobacco permeates the sprawling brick building,

Mail Pouch Wheeling's Other Tobacco Giant

By 1879 Wheeling was the world center of stogie manufacturing. Brothers Aaron and Samuel Bloch took notice, and that year they added a stogie sideline to Samuel's wholesale grocery and dry goods store. They soon took their Wheeling venture one critical step further: Observing that many men chewed the stogie wrapper clippings, the Bloch brothers decided to flavor scrap tobacco cuttings and market them in convenient paper bags as chewing tobacco.

The Ohio River flood of 1884 ruined the Blochs' dry goods and grocery inventory but spared the tobacco on the second floor of the store. As a result, they decided to devote all their time and attention to tobacco. The Blochs purchased the old "Sugar Mill" on 40th Street, which is still the site of the business. This location provided access to the packet boats that plied the Ohio River and to the railroad located between the factory and the river. In 1890 the Bloch Brothers Tobacco Company was incorporated with two million dollars in stock inventory, immense for that time.

As the scrap chewing tobacco caught on, the Blochs developed their own brand name and in the process invented an enduring piece of Americana. In 1897 they named their product "West Virginia Mail Pouch," after the familiar large canvas bags then used to bring the mail by train. By this time the Blochs were using their entire plant to produce chewing tobacco. They purchased clippings from cigar wrappers and filler tobacco from numerous locations across the country.

By the end of the 19th century, chewing tobacco consumption reached its peak in the United States at three pounds per person annually. At about this time the Blochs hit upon an advertising brainstorm — barn signs for Mail Pouch. The signs created a widely known image for the company, and farmers benefited from a free coat of paint. The familiar yellow, black and white signs, once scattered as far west as California, now endure mainly in the Midwest. In 1974, they were protected as landmark signs by an act of Congress.

By 1910, the company's chewing tobacco business had outrun the stogie industry's ability to generate scrap tobacco. As a result, Bloch Brothers used more and more whole leaf tobacco in making Mail Pouch, the first tobacco company to do so for chewing tobacco. By 1932 the purchase of stogie clippings was discontinued completely, and only leaf tobacco was purchased. Tobacco stemming, originally done in Wisconsin, was later moved to Wheeling.

The business expanded in June 1939 when Bloch purchased historic August Pollack, Inc., of Wheeling. The famous Pollack "Crown" cigars were added to the company's product line. After nearly 60 years, Bloch Brothers was back in the stogie business. In the 1940's Bloch added famous names of smoking tobacco and many brands of chewing tobacco to a growing list of products that also included pipes. The company had a sales force spread over most of the nation.

Bloch Brothers had one of the first locals of the National Tobacco Workers Union, founded in 1890. The Wheel-

varying only in intensity and flavor.

A stogie is made of three components: the wrapper, which is the outside layer of tobacco, the filler, which makes up the body of the cigar, and the binder, which is the middle layer and holds the filler in place while the wrapper is applied.

The wrapper of Marsh's best-selling Deluxe stogie is made of a variety of "Havana seed" tobacco, grown in Connecticut but descended from Cuban tobacco. The binder, which is made from reconstituted tobacco, is produced by a machine that turns out a roll of tobacco as regular and even as the paper from an adding machine. It also comes from Connecticut. But the filler comes from the Miami River Valley of Ohio, and is called "Dutch" tobacco. Marsh also buys tobacco from

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and the wrapper of its top-of-the-line Mifflin's Choice is made from tobacco imported from Cameroon.

During summer months Marsh people travel to tobacco fields to look over the crop. After the leaves are harvested they are sorted and graded, tied into bundles called "hands," and packed in wooden cases. The tobacco is then stored in warehouses near the fields to age from two to four years to develop flavor and aroma. A month or so before it is needed, the tobacco comes to Wheeling by truck and is unloaded at the Marsh buildings.

The dry tobacco leaves become soft and pliable after being subjected to 120 degrees and 70 percent humidity in the conditioning or "hot room" on the factory's bottom floor. There employ-

ees wheel huge bins of steaming tobacco that will eventually be moved to the production rooms.

The removal of the stem of the leaf destined to become a stogie wrapper is accomplished on a specially-designed machine that cuts out the center stem as neatly and swiftly as a pair of scissors. There are three of these machines, each operated by a woman. One operator, Evelyn Milhorne, has more than 45 years of service at Marsh.

The stripped leaf results in a right and a left half. The operator very carefully stacks the halves into separate piles called "left-hand tobacco" and "right-hand tobacco." This is an important step since the rolling machines are set up to roll either the right or the left half of the leaf. This



It's a safe bet that several of these Bloch Brothers employees are enjoying the company product. Courtesy State Archives, 1905.

ing chapter became Local No. 2 of the international union and is now the oldest active local in the union. As early as 1896 a health and sickness plan was put in effect, paying \$3 a week to any employee who missed work due to accident or illness. The company was among the first to abolish Saturday work and established an eight-hour work day long before it became general practice.

President Aaron Bloch served from

1890 until 1902. It was he who originated the famous barn signs, and under his direction the company advertised extensively on walls, buildings and trolleys, as well as in newspapers. Aaron established a free premiums system in 1896. Vouchers in packages of Mail Pouch could be redeemed for 1,600 items, from hat pins to parlor organs. The system was discontinued in 1917 after many states passed laws restricting the use of

coupons. By that time, premiums worth over \$2.7 million had been given away, according to a newsletter printed on the occasion of the company's 75th anniversary.

Aaron's successor as president was his brother and co-founder, Samuel (S. S.) Bloch. He became president in 1902 and served until 1937. Under S. S. Bloch the company contributed greatly to the industrial, financial and civic life of Wheeling. After witnessing a bad accident on a Wheeling street, he donated the city's first ambulance in 1897. He later gave another horse-drawn ambulance to the city. The specially equipped carriages had the names of his daughters, Madelyn and Dorothy, painted on them.

S. S. Bloch was succeeded as president by Jesse A. Bloch, who served from 1937 to 1947. Jesse had previously served in the West Virginia legislature, where he introduced what became the original Workmen's Compensation Act.

The business stayed in the Bloch family for another generation before being sold in 1969 to the General Cigar and Tobacco Company. The company is now the Helme Tobacco Company, part of a Connecticut conglomerate. But Mail Pouch continues to be manufactured in the former Bloch Brothers factory, contributing a solid chew to those who enjoy that and a part of our heritage for the rest of us.

—Joseph Platania

insures that each wrapper will be rolled with the grain of the leaf. The appropriate stack of wrappers is delivered to one of the half-dozen rolling machine operators. A half leaf of tobacco is large enough for three or four stogies, provided it is not torn in any way. The women who operate these machines cut as many wrappers from each leaf as possible.

The filler is shredded tobacco that is fed by a hopper into the rolling machine. The hoppers are labeled so that the correct filler tobacco goes to the correct machine. First, the filler is wrapped with the reconstituted tobacco binder. Then the operator feeds the leaf wrapper, softened and dampened so that it feels like silk, into the rolling machine which automatically trims it and then wraps it around the binder of the stogie. To keep the wrapper from unwrapping, the end is dabbed with non-toxic adhesive.

As stogies come from the rolling machines they are carried in slanted wooden trays to the inspection table where they are graded as to color and checked for imperfections. They are electronically sorted into "darks" and "lights." Customers prefer a uniformity of color in each package, some liking their stogies almost black.

From the inspection table the cigars go to packers who place them in pressurized trunks for storage in a large cedar-lined humidor. The pressure and the humid atmosphere combine to permanently form them into their characteristic square shape. Before mechanization, the squaring was done by hand. Stogies were placed in wooden stacking flats, then the entire stack was compressed by a hand press, thus forcing the cigars into a square shape. This made packing them into boxes easier.

Once the stogies are squared they are conveyed to machines that band and then individually wrap each one in cellophane. From here they are packaged into either five-packs or boxes of 50 that also are wrapped in cellophane and shipped to distributors in almost every state. Production runs into the millions annually, but exact numbers are kept confidential.

Marsh's early cigars were boxed in shoeboxes and secondhand department store boxes. Later they were encased in wooden containers. Nowadays Marsh manufactures its own cardboard cigar boxes as well as boxes for other cigar companies and for other products. In this way, all of its production and packaging are kept

in-house. The factory has its own machine shop to maintain the many and varied machines in operation.

The familiar blue and gold Marsh Wheeling Stogie boxes find their way around the world. Orders have come from as far away as Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Stogies are regularly shipped to the armed forces overseas, according to company president Ron Fletcher. Traditionally, the company's major market was restricted to the so-called "stogie belt," the tri-state region around Wheeling. But Marsh's Deluxe, at 25 cents each, has "national recognition," says Fletcher.

Marsh stogies are old players in the movies and on TV. They were featured in the movie epic, "How The West Was Won," and other Westerns. James Stewart smoked them throughout the 1971 movie *Fools' Parade*, a film set in the Moundsville area. In the climatic scene, Stewart, rigged with dynamite, a short fuse, and a glowing cigar, threatens to blow up a bank unless the crooked banker backs down. A Marsh Wheeling Stogie box was used in the pie raffle scene in the film *Coal Miner's Daughter*, Loretta Lynn's life story. Anyone who has seen an early Clint Eastwood movie has seen him bite the end off his stogie, spit the piece on the ground, strike a match on a nearby post and light up, all with that famous sneer on his face.

But like the Old West, the times have caught up with the Marsh company. In October 1988, an era came to an end when M. Marsh and Son was the object of a friendly takeover by a Cincinnati company. This represented the first time in Marsh's 148-year history that it was not locally owned. Marsh employment has declined from 100 in 1982 to 50 now.

But M. Marsh and Son remains a venerable West Virginia company that each workday manufactures a bit of Americana called the Wheeling stogie. It's been that way for about 150 years. The boss doesn't think that will change, despite health concerns and changing lifestyles.

"Tobacco has been a part of this country since the Pilgrims," reflects President Ron Fletcher, sitting in his office and puffing on a Mifflin's Choice, Marsh's best smoke. "There will always be room for cigars." ❁

M. Marsh makes a variety of products in addition to the familiar Deluxe stogie. Mifflin's Choice is the top of the line, selling for more than a dollar apiece.



One Saturday morning, quite early last June, a powerfully built man, no longer young, was loading crates of produce into a big International truck parked behind a house on the northern fringes of Lewisburg. He moved slowly through the milky fog of early morning, on which the first notes of bird song burst like liquid falling stars. Behind the curtains of the mist, a hidden sun was rising, and the chorus of birds grew in strength and complexity as if to celebrate this man's labor.

It was a gray morning, undecided as to rain, full of the sound of water dripping, rich with the abundant promise of early summer. In the soft translucent air, the man worked on alone. When he had loaded the last crate of lettuce and locked the heavy wooden door at the back of the truck, he climbed slowly into the high cab and broke the stillness of morning with the cough of the motor. The engine missed and backfired a few times, before settling down to an even hum. Then the big machine crunched down a short gravel driveway, turned left on to U.S. 219, and headed north up the valley toward Marlinton.

An old truck will rattle and this one did. The thump of an unbalanced front tire merged with the clanking tools under the seat and the squeak and hiss of vacuum wipers on the windshield wet with fog. Through the sleeping land, the man pushed the truck over the twisting highway with the careful movements of one who truly knows his road. The light lifted higher, but remained gray, the fog retreated, revealing the empty leaden dome of the sky, seamless and void of clouds. Double-clutching to downshift, the man turned off 219 onto a one-lane state road. Behind him, in the high wooden body of the truck, the groceries slept undisturbed in their shelves.

The man's name is Hale Arbuckle, and the big truck is his traveling store, crammed from floor to ceiling with some of everything that people need to buy. This morning, he is doing what he has done every Saturday for 40 years, in sun or snow, fair weather or foul, making the long trip into the Spring Creek country to bring the goods of the world to the people who live there. The big tires crunch on the gravel shoulder as the truck snorts

Parking the Truck Store

Hale Arbuckle Makes a Change

Text and Photographs by Andy Yale

Hale Arbuckle's truck store brought the groceries to rural Greenbrier Countians for over 40 years. George Clevenger of upper Spring Creek was one who depended on the service.





Running the truck store meant driving the back roads, with a CB radio to keep Hale in touch and an alarm clock to keep him on time.

through the gears, moving slowly up the serpent curves of the narrow road. It is another morning for Hale Arbuckle, the beginning of a long day of hard work.

"My father-in-law, Mr. Lewis, began the business in 1938," Hale recalled in an interview. "He and his wife had a post office and small store at Spring Creek Station. He had taken a trip down south and had seen some truck stores down there and just got the idea from that. He was working at a sawmill at the time and his wife ran the store. He started a route using a pickup truck, that's how it began.

"I married his daughter in '48 and in the spring of '49 he asked me if I wanted to go to work for him. So I went to work for him, the first of May, 1949. By the time I started in with him, we had a larger truck like this one. And I worked a while for him, then he made me a partner, and we worked it partners for a while. Then in 1964 he retired and sold it to me. So he, basically, is the brains of it. I just continued to run the business that he started.

"When he started, he had the same basic three trips that I'm running now," Hale continued. "There's maybe a holler where there were people living then, now there's nobody, we drop that off. We maybe added on an extension to a trip where he didn't go originally. Butler Mountain, we picked that up in later years, and

across the river in Auto, I picked that up. But basically they're the same three routes that he began with. He began the same way of going out three days a week and filling the truck back in the other three days, and having Sunday off. So there hasn't been that much change in the routes, really."

But soon it will all change. It will probably be on a morning like this one, full of bird song and the rich pulsing energy of summer, when Hale Arbuckle makes his final run. Then there will be a great emptiness on the roads out through Spring Creek, a ragged silence over the land.

For after 40 years of faithful service to customers he looks on and treats as friends, Hale Arbuckle is going to park his truck and retire. On that day, an old song will pass away into echoes, leaving a silence heavy with memories. It's a homely song, composed of the roar of the truck's motor, of greetings and jokes between neighbors, the careful recital of countless lists of groceries, the clack and clatter of the old adding machine that Hale uses to keep accounts. A well-used song, a common music — but one that will be badly missed when it is gone.

But that's not today. Today we can still follow him, we can still ride with him on his long journey through the incredible thronging richness of early June in the mountains. We can discover the land again, behold the miraculous in it as if we'd never seen

it before. We can meet our neighbors, to perceive in their faces something we never suspected we shared, some unspoken thing, without a name. And we can encounter Hale Arbuckle, a man whom, it seems, made his living selling groceries and made his customers his friends.

He makes his first stop at Esty, a little place where three roads come together. A store and a post office stood there at one time, but there is no sign of them now, nothing to show that people had named this place, nothing but the three roads gleaming empty in the rain.

He pulls the truck off on the shoulder, cuts the engine and gets out to wait alone with the silence of the mountains. It isn't long before he hears the hum of a motor, and a small white car emerges from the right-hand road. A young woman gets out, having just driven half a mile from her home to meet the truck at its regular stop. Greetings are exchanged, then Hale opens the wooden door at the rear of the truck and climbs into his store. As the woman slowly starts to read from her grocery list, Hale Arbuckle moves among his shelves and drawers and pasteboard boxes, taking from their hidden places all the things his customer needs.

For this truck is magic. It contains everything people ask for, except, on this particular day, donuts. It seems to be a homemade, plywood cornucopia, from which Hale can produce a pound of bacon, a mop, a bottle of aspirin, a tomato guaranteed to be ripe, a sack of chicken feed, a gallon of kerosene. He does it simply, talking softly with his customer all the while. There is no hurry about him, and when the woman's purchases are all made, they talk on. The old alarm clock on the dashboard ticks audibly and further up the road there are people waiting on him. But Hale doesn't need to hurry — his workday is designed to leave time for the people that he meets.

Hale knows those people well and he does his best to serve them. "There's been a big change in people's buying habits," he observes. "A lot of the things I carry now, at the time I went to work, we didn't carry. At one time we didn't carry any milk — you know all country people had a cow, there was no demand for milk as

such. The old-time people bought a lot of flour — we sold a lot of flour, sold a lot of feed, coffee, sugar, salt, baking powder — things like that. So there's been a big change in what the demand is for. I've simply gone along with the demand for what people wanted.

"We bought a lot of eggs from our customers. Other than that, it was cash and credit. Of course, I still buy eggs, though not in very large amounts. I resell them mostly to the people on the route. There's no market elsewhere anymore."

And Hale Arbuckle does far more than bring the groceries. He listens with a steady and careful attention to the joys and sorrows of his customers, and has a good word for everyone. He carries the heavy feed sacks into the shed for the elderly and infirm, tinkers with people's broken machines, brings crates of wilted lettuce leaves to feed their rabbits, cashes checks, worries over a flock of chickens that aren't laying. And to each exchange, and to every action, he brings an unchanging courtesy and respect, silent testimony to the value he places on his friends and customers.

"Probably when I peaked about five years ago, I had more customers than Mr. Lewis ever had," he figures. "Of course the prices have changed so much that your total money sales are greater now than when we both worked at the business. But we probably had more to live on at that time than there is now because of inflation and because it costs more to operate. And really, when an article is a lower price, you can make a bigger percentage of profit on it. When matches sold for a nickel a box, you probably made two cents on it, which was a high percentage of profit. Now the same matches sell for 48 cents and you maybe make a dime on it. But the percentage of profit is still down from when it was a nickel — and all other items are the same way.

"My prices are low because I operate on a lower margin of profit than most of your smaller stores. Of course, I am a one-man business — I don't pay anything out as far as labor is concerned. I do it all myself. What I can't do is not done.

"I get a lot of competition from the supermarkets, which people think is cheaper, whether it is or not," Hale



The rolling general store brought food for animals as well as most of the things people need. Here Hale wrestles out feed sacks, and then attends to the grocery list of Charlotte Elliott of Brushy Flat (below).



continues. "By the time they pay for going to town and spending half a day, probably buying something they wouldn't buy if they didn't see it, you know, they're really not saving any money. But as long as people *think* that they're saving money, it amounts to the same thing.

"Used to be we'd keep a fairly new truck. You could go out here and trade trucks and get one for \$1,500. Now if I went to trade trucks, I don't know what it would cost me. The business, really, my profit, will not support a new vehicle now. I guess that's partly one of the reasons I am retiring."

Hale moves on from Esty, down the middle road, cutting his motor and coasting silently up to a neat little house whose owner likes to sleep late of a Saturday. He takes the grocery list from the mailbox, and a cardboard box from the back seat of the car, where

it's been left for him. Smiling to himself, he fills the box with groceries from the list and returns it to the car, making a note on his customer's account, to be settled up later.

Then he's off again, the way slowly beginning to climb, the road a gray ribbon, switchbacking now over the mountain, the woods closing in thick and wet. At a seemingly empty place, where no mailbox or house or driveway points to inhabitation, he pulls the truck onto the shoulder and waits. In the silence that follows the cessation of the motor, the sounds of the mountains reassert themselves — the hidden note of a warbler, the soft rustle of an unseen stream. And from out of the silence figures emerge, as if the truck had called them forth.

Up a barely noticeable path a man comes walking, two empty pillowcases in one hand, a shopping list and

a Social Security check rubbing elbows in his shirt pocket. He will fill the pillowcases with the groceries Hale hands him, take his change from the cashed check, and slip off as silently as he came, leaving more room for the tumbling words of the barefoot talkative woman who had followed just behind him up the path. And then she is gone too, her groceries stowed in an old blue knapsack, picking her way down the footpath, leaving silence again. Hale starts his truck and moves on.

Midday finds him on the other side of the mountain, far up in the country near the head of Spring Creek. The fog has burned away and the sun is warm, the sky bright with high clouds, the light pouring down, making each rock shine in perfection. The richness of the land is dazzling, a very great treasure which it is impossible to grasp. The truck runs along a wide lush bottom, where Spring Creek muses through stands of orange flowers. At a house beside the creek, the smell of gear oil from the leaking differential mixes with the clear breath of growing mint. Scrambling up a switchback, drifts of yellow butterflies encircle the cab windows, and the shadow of a high-flying hawk crosses the road. And at each stop, the constant exchange of groceries and greetings, the calm and well-considered words.

Soon Hale will lay it all aside. He looks forward to retirement with mixed feelings. "I've got a lot of friends out here on the routes, you know. To say goodbye to all these friends and change what you've been doing for 40 years without missing it — there's no question of that. As the time gets closer I realize how much I'm going to miss it, how much a change it's going to be in my life. But I'm 62 and I can't be sick — if I wake up sick, I got to go anyway. People are depending on me. And as you get older, that's harder to do.

"The truck's getting old. I've got 150,000 miles on the truck. It's like me — it's not as dependable as it once was. To keep it going, it's going to take more money. It's the big worry of my life, whether it will run or whether I'm going to break down back in here and try to get a wrecker to haul me in or try to get a mechanic — that's

A treat from the truck brings a big smile to the face of Dawn Fullen, shown here with brother Jeffrey. Grandmother Dot Christian makes a purchase in the background.



a big worry. The roads in the winter-time is a big worry.

"And as you get older you just don't face these worries quite as well as you did," Hale admits. "That and the fact that I don't have the customers that I used to have — it is a little harder to make ends meet. All these things together just added up till I reached the decision six months ago that it was time I did make a change."

At a house near the head of Spring Creek, where the water slips gently over tilted shelves of rock, a woman in her 80's asks, with a quaver in her voice, "Are you really going to quit, Hale? Well, we'll miss you," she says, "but we don't blame you. I couldn't blame anyone who wanted to rest a little in their older days."

Hale Arbuckle has earned his rest. For 40 years, he has worked six days a week, rising at four in the morning, taking the road by seven for the ten-hour journey back through the hills, in rain or snow or storm, in good health or bad. He knows this country as few men know it, knows its treasures, its humor, its poverty and its pride. The intricate ties that bind him to the land will not loosen, and there is pain in his voice when he speaks of quitting. Yet there is a season for all things and for Hale Arbuckle the time has come to rest.

"When I retire, well, for the first six months, I'll work around the house," he says. "I've got work there that I haven't had time to do for 15 years, jobs that I know how to do. After the first of the year, possibly I'll get a part-time job of some kind. I don't have any particular plans."

"There's been some people I've talked to about taking over the route. Most of them have been people that I really felt couldn't make it. It's no use to me to take somebody's money if I don't think they're going to be able to make a go of it. And I've simply told them that. So as it stands right now, I don't have anyone that will take it over. Because of the few people that do depend on it, I would like to sell it to someone that would continue to run it. But I wouldn't want to sell it to someone that is simply out here to make money off it at the expense of the customers. I'd rather it just quit than do that."

"It's long hours and if you count your pay by the hour it's not very



Wife Gerry Arbuckle expects to see more of Hale now that he has retired. He reports that he has sold the big International truck but found no buyer for the business.

much pay," he continues. "I've been blessed over the years — we haven't made a lot of money, but we've still been able to get by. It's made us a living, that's all. We own the property down there where we live. I don't owe anything. I got both my kids educated and I've got a lot of friends. I couldn't ask for anything more."

Looking back, he has no regrets. After four decades of hard work he is not rich in the goods of this world, but if love and respect could be drawn on like a bank account, Hale Arbuckle would be a millionaire. All through the mountains, at the crossroads and in isolated farmhouses high on the ridges, his customers speak of him

with a fine mixture of respect and affection.

When the big truck no longer rolls up past the head of Spring Creek, Hale Arbuckle will be sorely missed. His customers will find the goods he dealt in elsewhere, in anonymous supermarkets where people meet as strangers, unaware of each other's joys and sorrows. It is not the groceries that Hale Arbuckle's customers will miss — it is the man who brought them.

Hale Arbuckle closed his traveling store at the first of July. No one has taken over his truck routes, although one rural grocer offers home delivery to some of his former customers. ❁

In Time and the River

The Story of Browns Island

By Jane M. Kraina

The island has been called many things. George Washington, who rode by it in a canoe, referred to it as Long Island. A budding preacher who grew up nearby called it the most romantic spot he knew. To the local people who rented a lot, docked a boat and built small cabins there, it was a pleasure island. And it proved a tragic island in a horrible industrial accident killing 19 people.

But the true name is Browns Island, after a family who acquired the property in the late 1700's. It occupies a

long stretch in the middle of the Ohio River just opposite present Weirton. It is within Weirton's corporate limits, in fact, and the history of the city and the island are tied closely together.

The story of the island goes back to the very earliest times. Humans arrived in the area about 10,000 years ago, but it wasn't until about 600 A.D. that the Mound Builders left visible traces. The mounds that still exist in the Ohio Valley were their burial tombs. The Mound Builders crafted fine objects and traded from far areas, for in Ohio

archaeologists have found grizzly bear teeth from the Rocky Mountains. On Browns Island they built a small mound. In the 1950's schoolchildren visited the island during low water to see the Indian mound, its relics and figures carved in stone.

By the time white settlers came the ancient Mound Builders no longer lived here. Other Indians roamed the area, with the Iroquois dominant. Browns Island retains reminders of them also. Indian relics from the island include carved animals of religious and legendary importance. The Indians used the upper Ohio Valley more as a hunting ground than as a permanent settling place, but a few native settlements existed.

The French explored the Ohio Valley first among the white men, with La Salle seeing the river as early as 1669. Next came the English and British Americans. Traders used the Ohio throughout the following century. Diaries from an English visitor, George Croghan, speak of passing Browns Island in 1765. Croghan's party camped close to the island and then proceeded down the Ohio. About 20 miles down the river they encountered a Seneca village.

It was in 1770 that Colonel George Washington came to inspect the lands of the Ohio Valley. Browns Island did not impress him. In his journal Washington said it "is not very remarkable for length, breadth or goodness." Then the future president continued down the river, describing sparse settlements of Indians.

When permanent white settlers came to the immediate area, beginning in 1771, the frontier was still considered dangerous. Whites and Indians alike committed atrocities. The Indians scalped and set fire to dwellings. The white men shot whole families, including the fateful April 1774 massacre of the family of Mingo

Browns Island has shared in the industrial history of the Ohio Valley, as well as earlier eras. This 1971 aerial photo shows construction of the coke plant, with Weirton Steel behind. Courtesy Weirton Steel.



Chief Logan up the river from Browns Island. Logan, previously an ally, was the wrong man to offend. He called for revenge in a famous oration, igniting Dunmore's War, a critical episode in Western Virginia history.

It was after the Revolution that the Browns themselves came to the area called Hollidays Cove, later part of Weirton. The settlers who arrived at this time were able to acquire large chunks of land. Richard Brown, for whom the island is named, had served as a soldier in the Revolutionary War. Brown got 800 acres of land from Benjamin Johnston, who received a 1,700-acre land grant from Patrick Henry, then governor of Virginia, in 1785. Richard Brown lived in Hollidays Cove for several years, and when he died Browns Island went to his daughters.

George Brown, the son of Richard's brother Hugh, is part of the lore of the place. Hugh helped farm the island and young George had many adventures crossing back and forth from the mainland. When he was five, he almost drowned in the Ohio while playfully rocking a canoe. On another occasion George saw cows drinking at the edge of the island, and this gave him an idea. He chased the cattle into the water and grabbed onto the tail of an ox who swam across the river, dragging George along. Once on the shore, he calmly undressed and hung his clothes on the bushes to dry.

George's reckless ways continued as he grew older, to the concern of father Hugh. George had gone to live with his uncle Richard Brown in order to attend school. Hugh came to talk to his son. They walked towards their old house which faced Browns Island. Later, George described it as the "most beautiful and romantic place" he ever lived.

Hugh advised George to settle down and give his life to the Lord. Young George was not inclined to give much thought to the condition of his soul, but tragedy that night may have changed his thinking. When his father forded the river he missed the shallow place and drowned.

This was the period of religious upheaval known as the Second Great Awakening on the American frontier. Many churches had revivals and religion played a big part in people's lives. George Brown was not immune.

He served in the War of 1812 and then traveled to Baltimore. He attended a revival there and this led him into his life's work as a religious leader and reformer of the Methodist Church. Later, he came home as a Methodist preacher.

As the 19th century advanced new families arrived. Oliver Brown, Sr., came to visit the local Browns. He did not stay, but his heirs built important businesses in the area. Hollidays Cove was mainly a farming community, the rich river-bottom soil producing good crops. Browns Island continued to be farmed but nobody lived there for any length of time. A woolen mill in the area supplied cloth for Union uniforms during the Civil War.

In the late 1800's a murder occurred with a Browns Island connection. Samuel Barnell was a hermit who lived in a shanty by the river. He kept the light on Browns Island that guided river traffic on moonless nights. Barnell had done this for 30 years, but

one dark night no light burned. When locals investigated his cabin they found the old man bound and gagged. Two men had beaten and tortured him, thinking he knew of hidden gold. A few days later Barnell died of his injuries.

At the beginning of the 20th century, things changed in this part of the valley. Cyrus Ferguson foresaw the coming of industry and bought up land throughout the area. His purchases included Browns Island, which he bought from the Brown heirs. Ferguson and later owners sensed more potential in the long river island than George Washington had ever imagined.

Cyrus Ferguson systematically developed his holdings. He gave away land to attract industries and for the building of schools and churches. In 1907, he discovered an oil pool which was one of the largest sand oil pools in the world. He developed the deposits, and the community began its tran-

The Panaccis took part in the Browns Island saga, with "Jumbo" concluding his Weirton Steel career there. He and Minnie are now retired in Weirton. Photo by Michael Keller.





James "Jumbo" Panacci recalls many productive years working on Browns Island, as well as the disastrous 1972 explosion. Photo by Michael Keller.

Working on the Island

Weirton prides itself on its rich ethnic culture. Immigrants moved to the area in the early 1900's because of the employment the steel mills offered. Many Italians came and they and other European groups formed a community of close-knit families. James "Jumbo" Panacci, the son of immigrant parents, comes from this background.

Panacci wrestled as a youth and says his muscles earned him his unusual nickname. He claims he shrank in the army, but the name stuck. Jumbo and his wife Minnie have three children. Two of their children still live at home, and a married son lives on the same street. Such closeness is typical of Weirton.

Jumbo Panacci labored in the Weirton Steel mill for 42 years and worked on Browns Island from the time the coke plant moved to

the island in the early 1970's until he retired in 1981. He monitored the temperature in the ovens. He worked afternoon turn the day the coke plant exploded and later served as a pallbearer for one of the workers who died in the accident.

In a recent interview, Jumbo talked of his work on the island. "My job at the mill consisted of keeping track of the temperature in the ovens," he explained. "The temperature had to be kept at a certain degree, about 2,100 degrees. If it got too low more gas had to be added."

"We drove onto the island on a bridge from the mainland," he said. "I worked all three shifts — daylight, which was eight to four; afternoon, which was four to twelve; and midnight, which was twelve to eight. We came in an hour earlier than scheduled because getting dressed to work around the ovens was no easy task.

"First, we put on long johns," he elaborated. "Over them, we wore an asbestos suit which was quite heavy. We had to take off all our rings, watches and chains because they got too hot. Also, we had to put on a green respirator mask. It connected to a tube which drew dust into a box. The box was numbered. Every day we turned our box in and the mill sent the box to Pittsburgh where OSHA measured the dust in our box. We had to wear goggles or safety glasses to protect our eyes, and a safety helmet and an asbestos hood went over our heads. All our clothes got quite dirty."

Minnie attests to the dirt. "It took two days of soaking to clean his clothes," she said.

"We always had to have our safety equipment on," her husband continued. "If we were caught without it we got three days off work without pay. The piece of equipment that bothered the men the most was the respirator mask. The tubing would get caught up in things. It was not uncommon for workers to rip them off and toss them."

Depending on their job, workers

might have to wear even more protective gear. "People who worked on the battery [of coke ovens] also had to wear wooden shoes to protect their feet from the heat," Jumbo noted.

"Teamwork was very important on Browns Island," he added. "I worked with an assistant heater, heater helper and another helper."

The Browns Island team was responsible for transforming coal into coke, a high-carbon fuel, while capturing the related by-products. "The amounts of material used in the coking process were quite large," according to Jumbo. "It took 32,000 pounds of coal to make 5,000 pounds of coke. The by-products of coke were gas, tar and benzil." Coal was trucked from the mainland on the same bridge the workers used in coming to work.

"To cool off the hot coke, the coke was pushed into a quenching or cooling car," Jumbo said. "The amount of water used to cool the coke in the quenching car was 50,000 gallons. The water was pumped in from the Ohio River."

The big industrial plant never quite overwhelmed the natural island, Jumbo said. "The coke plant took up about half the island. The rest of the island was wooded and there was a sizable deer population on the island. Sometimes the labor gang would find stones they believed to be Indian relics."

The veteran employee vividly recalls the horrible explosion of 1972, but also has many pleasant memories of his years on Browns Island. That's where he acquired the family dog, from a fellow employee who had more pups than he could handle. When he learned that the fellow was contemplating dropping them off the bridge, Jumbo Panacci slipped one home to Minnie.

"One day I woke up and a puppy was in a box in the corner of my kitchen," she said. "We called him 'Meatball' because that's exactly what size he was. We had Meatball for 16 years. He finally died of a heart attack."

— Jane M. Kraina

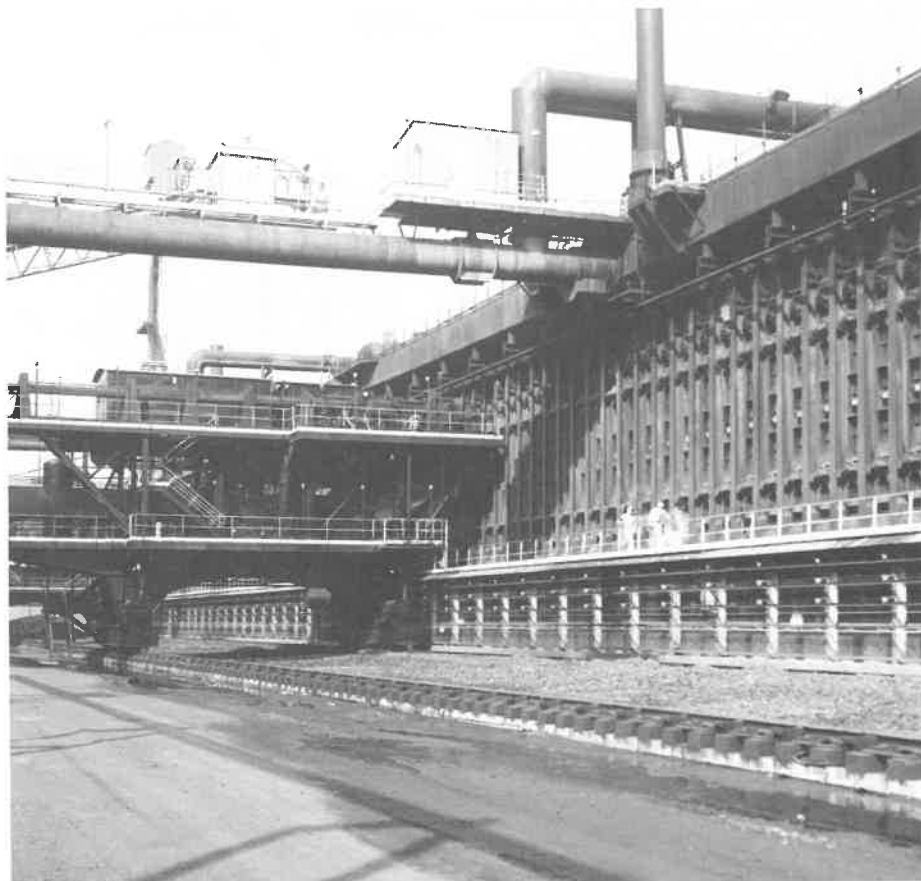
sition from farming country to an industrial town. In 1909, Ernest T. Weir bought an apple orchard from Ferguson as the site for Weirton Steel. That same year, the first tin mill was built at Hollidays Cove and the Weirton saga began.

Industrialization touched Browns Island only indirectly in these first years. Squire McGinnis farmed the island at this time, according to a friend of his wife. He took on an unusual role in local history and a special place in the hearts of the mill workers. These men were paid every Saturday and, since there weren't many drinking opportunities in Weirton, they headed over to Steubenville to celebrate. It was McGinnis's job to get them across the wide Ohio River and safely home again.

The men went down to the riverbank, according to the anecdote, and McGinnis ferried them across to the Ohio shore. Some got rowdy on the return trip, but the Squire was a big man and when he told them to sit down, they sat. He took them off on the West Virginia side and lined them up by a fence post for a count. McGinnis boasted that he never lost a man.

In 1946, Michael Starvaggi bought the island from the Ferguson heirs, particularly Everett Ferguson. Starvaggi, a local example of the rags-to-riches story, had come to America from Italy with \$5 in his pocket. He worked for Weirton Steel carrying water to the workers, but wanted to go into business for himself. He began by opening a small grocery and fruit store. Eventually he owned an ice and coal company, a construction company, a bus company and several coal mines. Finally, he merged them all into Starvaggi Industries. Mike Starvaggi wished to use Browns Island for dredging, and the island remained part of his empire for over ten years.

Weirton Steel purchased Browns Island from Starvaggi in June 1957 for around \$40,000. The steel company rented lots to people in the area, and some built small shacks or barbecue areas for family and friends. Many people used the island for a picnic resort on the Fourth of July. One year it proved a tragic holiday. People boarded a boat at Steubenville to take them up to the island. An overload and mixed signals caused the pilot to



The Browns Island plant was a modern by-product coking operation. Note the men at center right, tending the coke batteries. Courtesy Weirton Steel, 1976.

run into another boat. Several people drowned.

In the early 1970's Weirton Steel found a way to use its island. The Koppers Company of Pittsburgh designed a coke plant with 87 ovens and the largest total capacity in the United States. Koppers and Weirton Steel made preparations to get the coke ovens ready for full operation on the 29th of December, 1972. But on Friday the 15th, workers reported smelling a gas leak and called in an alarm. Minutes later the plant basement exploded, killing 19 men and injuring ten others.

Three more gas explosions occurred and fire engulfed the coal bin and storage areas. Workers at the scene commented that the intense blast was like an "atomic bomb." Rescue workers found debris everywhere. The dead and injured also were scattered and body parts were all around. Men were trapped under rubble, with no chance of escape.

The explosion took more lives than any disaster in Weirton's history. The tragedy was reported widely, and for the first time news of Browns Island made the *New York Times*. Some newspapers closer to home suggested a callous attitude on the part of the city. "Business as usual" articles said

no businesses had closed nor had any special memorial service been planned. On Friday night, as the original figure of three dead rose to 19, city officials gathered at the town's community center to dedicate the Christmas nativity scene. The mayor, however, noted that "people were shocked and upset."

The rescue took many hours because of the debris and the more than 600 men at the site. Most were evacuated soon after the explosion. More men might have been killed except that they had just taken a coffee break and were moving in and out of the complex site. One man, Lee Hazlett, was making a phone call moments before the explosion. He recalled being knocked over, "phone booth and all."

About 100 rescue workers helped sift through the rubble. It took a while to identify the bodies and confirm the missing as early arrivals rescued victims at some risk to themselves. After the accident, a Koppers employee wrote a letter to the Steubenville *Herald Star* praising one professional at the scene, plant nurse Jeanne Sunseri. She rushed about the area, the witness said, rescuing five men and filling an ambulance with the injured.

James "Jumbo" Panacci was a coke plant employee at the time, but fortunately was scheduled for afternoon shift on the fatal day. He missed the mid-morning explosion but helped with the rescue and later served as a pallbearer for one of the victims.

"I went out to work afternoon turn the day of the explosion. We were there to help with the cleanup," Jumbo says, adding that routine plant work went on as well. "The ovens still had to be kept hot. We couldn't let them cool down completely."

Minnie Panacci, Jumbo's wife, reports that friends miles up the valley felt the explosion on the island. "They were drinking coffee at the time and the rumble rattled their cups," she says.

Most of all, Minnie remembers the community strain that accompanies a large industrial accident. "It was a difficult day for the townspeople because

it was a long time before they could sort out who had been injured and killed," she says. "While I was at work all my neighbors and friends were peeking in our garage to see if Jumbo's car was there."

The accident stalled the opening of the new plant for five months. Coking on Browns Island finally began in May 1973. The place took on a new aura. Some of the workmen called it Emerald Island, for the lights and chemicals cast a greenish glow into the air at night. The men who worked at the coke plant did hard manual labor, especially around the ovens.

The coking coal came in barges to the river docks on the mainland. It was unloaded and placed on a conveyor to a coal bin. Trucks brought it across a bridge to Browns Island where it was unloaded in a hopper and then crushed. Then it went into one of five storage bins holding 1,000

tons of coal. The coal was mixed in percentages of high and low volatility, and sometimes oil was added. It then went into one of two coal bins. A transfer car or "larry" took the coal mix to the oven.

The oven was heated to about 2,100 degrees for 17 hours, driving impurities from the coal and leaving only high-carbon coke. The hot coke was removed from the oven and pushed to a quench car and sprayed with water to cool it. The coke was then classified according to size and was ready to be used as an industrial fuel.

But by the mid-1970's, the American steel industry was suffering. Small operations had to close and large mills had to revamp. Many plants needed modernizing but could not afford it. National Steel, the parent company, was unwilling to invest more money to improve Weirton Steel. The town, dependent on the mill for its survival, faced a shutdown of its greatest source of jobs and money.

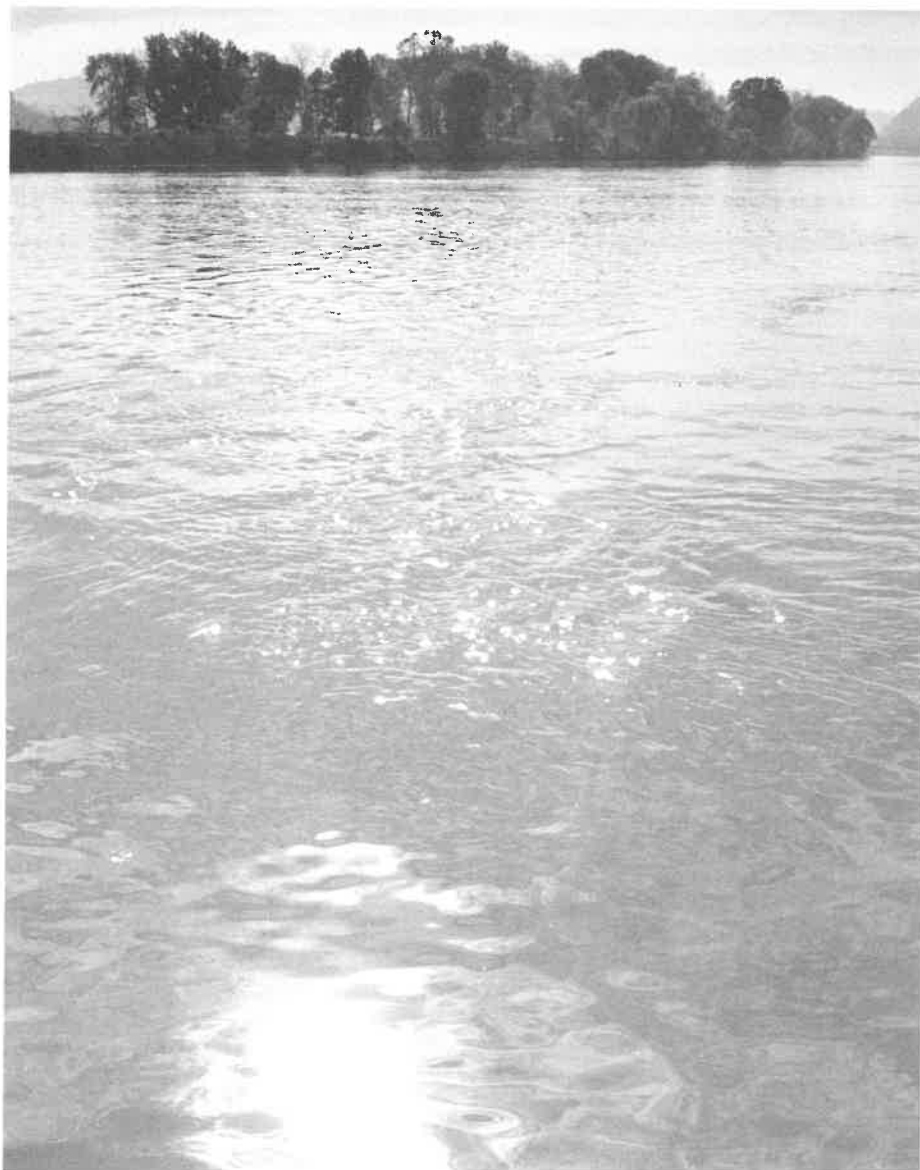
Weirton gambled on an alternative in a story that is now widely known. In an innovative ESOP — Employee Stock Ownership Plan — deal, the employees bought the mill, making it the largest employee-owned company in the United States. On January 11, 1984, National Steel signed the papers finalizing the sale of Weirton Steel to its workers.

Browns Island was not part of the solution. Coking operations ceased there on August 28, 1983. Buying coke had become cheaper than producing it.

So another chapter in the drama of Browns Island had ended, but news still crops up from time to time. Weirton Steel still dredges around Browns Island to keep the river harbor in operation. About 30 people now work in the garage and offices there and on the salvage program. Recently there was talk of a Pittsburgh company rebuilding the coke plant to sell coke to Weirton Steel and other customers.

Browns Island is quieter now than in its bustling industrial heyday, making this a good time to reflect on its history. Its stories cover many of the events that shaped our country. From a ceremonial ground for Indians, to farmland, to an industrial plant, it provided us with a miniature version of grander events, sitting as surely in the stream of time as it sits in the middle of the Ohio River. ✿

With the coke plant now closed and under demolition, the island has returned to quieter times. Here it rises serenely from the Ohio River. Photo by Michael Keller.



Pride surged through me when I first read my immigrant father's account of my birth in Clarksburg in 1915. (I even noted from the date of my parents' arrival in West Virginia that I had been conceived here, and it was then that I felt every inch a purebred!) I learned from the diary that my dad had gone to the next-door neighbor before dawn to call a doctor, then held my mother's hand while she agonized with birth pains. After my arrival, he sent a wire to my mother's parents in Chicago with these words: "New Queen born — both well."

My father was Alexander Moccia. His diaries, along with other records he left, tell the story of our family and of his long service as a Protestant missionary to mostly Catholic Italian immigrants in Clarksburg and Fairmont.

After retiring from my government job, I began collecting his papers from among items my mother had put away for safe keeping. I found two precious and most informative personal diaries of 1912 and 1915. But both diaries were in Italian! I could not speak or write Italian, although I knew Spanish from working in Bolivia and Peru. But Italian was my ancestral tongue, and I found that somehow the words were still in my mind. My folks had spoken both Italian and English in our home, and Father had preached the morning worship service in Italian in our church until 1938. It took me about a year to translate and type the diaries in my spare time. Occasionally I used an Italian-English dictionary, and since my father wrote just as he spoke, I had little trouble.

I learned that in March of 1904 Alexander had landed on Ellis Island, at age 15 with 35 cents in his pocket, and headed for Fairmont, where his sponsor lived. He came like many other im-



The Reverend Alexander Moccia was a Presbyterian home missionary working among the immigrant population. Photographer and date unknown.

migrants to seek his future in the land of golden opportunities, with no education, no relatives and no knowledge of the English language.

The story began in a mountain village between Rome and Naples, where Alexander Moccia was born on May 11, 1889. Thin soil and poverty were a way of life, and the future held little hope. When old enough, Alexander sought permission from his widowed mother to leave. He found a sponsor, borrowed funds for his trip to America and promised his mother that he would send money for the

family. He promised she would not be sorry.

Alexander's first job in Fairmont was to carry water to a gang of thirsty road workers. He worked hard to pay off his loan and still send money to his mother. He managed to do both, but decided to move away to escape bad companions who had influenced him to drink and gamble. He found work in the mines near Uniontown, Pennsylvania. His next move was to Chicago and then to Oklahoma where he had heard miners were needed.

In Krebs, Oklahoma, a Baptist

Humility, Enthusiasm and Time on his Knees

Home Missionary Alexander Moccia

By Carmella Moccia Schnautz



John Carroll Moccia was born in Illinois, coming to Clarksburg with his parents as an infant. Here he stands by the family's first Ford. Photographer unknown, late 1920's.

woman changed his life. My family has always considered it remarkable, a miracle. It was the only time that Mary Philpin taught English for immigrant men, and Alexander was the only member of the class who remained long enough to learn. Her textbook was the Bible. Alexander noted with pride the day he could read John 3:16 in English.

Alexander was Catholic by birth and upbringing, and friends warned him that Mrs. Philpin would "make a Protestant out of him." In six months or so, that prediction came true. The turning point in Dad's life was June 16, 1909, the day of his conversion. In later sermons or conversation he often referred to this date as "the most important day of my life." He was proud



and grateful for his new life, and the result was a joy that radiated in his blue eyes. He had a broad smile and the sound of his voice was like happy music.

Following his conversion, Mary Philpin and members of her church aided Alexander in going to Dallas, where her parents helped him find a job and a place to stay. He began attending the Scofield Memorial Presbyterian Church and continued his study of the Bible and English.

From Dallas he was led to Texarkana, Texas, where he worked as the house boy for a Presbyterian minister, Dr. W. Irving Carroll. The Carrolls became as much like his parents as any couple could. They began to think about a future career for him as a "missionary" to other Italian immigrants. In July 1910 Dr. Carroll wrote to Alexander from Indiana, where he was teaching at a Bible conference. "Praise the Lord! The Moody Bible Institute will send you an application blank," Dr. Carroll wrote. "They are glad to have you there and you will go the first part of September."

Then as now, the Moody Institute was a major Protestant evangelical center. Alexander was grateful for the opportunity to attend the Chicago school. Nonetheless, he hated to leave the Carroll home and said he would miss everything, except the bowl of oatmeal he had to eat every morning.

Friends provided Alexander's tuition each semester, but he labored continuously for his other expenses. While he worked to pay for room and board by scrubbing floors and washing windows, he could not send much money to his mother in Italy. She became angry with his neglect. The local priest told her that her son was lost because he had become a Protestant. She disowned him. Months went by with no letter from home, and it was years before there was a reconciliation between mother and son. It was hard, but Alexander gradually overcame his depression and was able to pass his exams.

The Moccias strove for self-sufficiency by gardening and farming. Here Alexander (left) poses at the farm with church elder Illario Alvino. Photographer and date unknown.

In the meantime, he began attending Taylor Street Mission. There he met Rose Vallo. He convinced Rose and her parents that she too should attend Moody, and ironically, she made better grades there than Alexander. Of course, Rose did not have the language barrier he had, because she had come from Italy with her mother at age two or three, along with her younger sister Mary and an older brother. Mr. Vallo had come first and then sent for his family.

A bundle of letters from the bottom of my mother's trunk provided me with information on my parents' courtship and wedding. Dad's diary systematically lists Rose's good characteristics — as well as the points he considered less desirable. I learned that my grandfather, Vincent Vallo, knew how to write Italian from a letter he wrote to my dad before the wedding. Vincent was self-employed, supporting his family by sharpening knives and scissors in the street. He also made strawberry ice cream and sold it in homemade wafer boats. Vincent Vallo's rent was always paid on time.

After Alexander graduated from Moody, the Presbyterians hired him to work in Ladd, Illinois, with local coal miners and their families. It was a difficult first assignment which he faced with humility, enthusiasm, and time on his knees. Finally, he wrote to Rose that she would have to quit school and come cook for him. He was tired of being a bachelor. They were married in July 1913, and my brother John Carroll was born in Ladd.

It was the Lord's work that brought Alexander Moccia back to West Virginia. Early in November 1914, George W. Pollock of Buckhannon, secretary of the Committee of Home Missions, Presbyterian Synod of West Virginia, wrote Alexander to offer him a job. "The work will be in the West Fork Valley of the Monongahela River, in Clarksburg and Fairmont and in intervening towns," Pollock wrote. "We will pay you sixty dollars per month; and will allow you moving expenses not to exceed thirty-five dollars."

On a snowy, cold day, November 21, 1914, Alexander, Rose and seven-month-old John Carroll arrived in Clarksburg from Chicago, on the Baltimore & Ohio train. Dr. Henry



Above: The farm was a happy place for the children. Here Virgil Moccia takes a small friend for a ride. Photographer and date unknown.

Below: Virgil (in cap) and friend Stanley at church picnic on Pinnickinnick Hill. Domenick Liberati stands at left rear, with Reverend Moccia second from right. Photographer and date unknown.





A new church building was the congregation's dream. Here volunteers break ground with Domenick's horses as construction begins on October 17, 1938. The postcard view shows the completed church, which is still in use today. Photographers unknown.



McClelland, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Clarksburg and chairman of Presbyterian home mission work in West Virginia, met the Moccias and escorted them to a boardinghouse. Alexander never forgot Dr. McClelland's words of welcome: "I trust and pray that you make a success and that you will become the bishop of the Italian people in West Virginia."

The young missionary, now 25, lost no time in starting a night school in one room of the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of Main and Second streets. Soon Alexander had 35 or more men students from 16 to 50 years of age. None had attended any school to learn English. There were Italians, Spaniards, Greeks, Russians and others. Young women from First Church volunteered as teachers. The happy relationship with First Church continued down through the years.

As soon as the Moccias settled into their new home, Alexander began making house visits. He told everyone he saw about his night school and invited them to attend the services at First Church. Dr. McClelland was eager to cooperate. Alexander felt at home in the church and his example influenced his students to attend Sunday school and the worship service. The next step was an afternoon Italian language service which the young missionary conducted. Almost 30 of the night school men attended.

Right from the beginning, Alexander also began an afternoon biweekly service in Italian in the First Presbyterian Church of Fairmont. Many paesani (people from his village in Italy) came. Alexander had always had the dream of bringing the gospel message to his paesani. Many were distantly related or had grown up with close family associations — they were almost like cousins. Paesani are special to each other, much like West Virginians away from home!

Neither did Alexander forget that he was hired to do work in the towns between Clarksburg and Fairmont. On his way back from Fairmont he would stop at some small community and hold an open-air meeting, or he would go to the mining towns close to Clarksburg. He considered this part of his work important, and had enjoyed street meetings since his days at Moody in Chicago. Dad's ledger re-

cords details of those early meetings, even the times he had rotten eggs thrown at him.

The ledger was a personal record of all Dad's church meetings. As soon as he came home from church on Sunday, he went straight to his ledger. The date, place, sermon title, Bible text, attendance and offering were always recorded. The ledger he started in 1911 ended with 1937. Then he began a new one. The first is my favorite because it contains so much information that might have been lost forever. To look in the ledger is like a trip to his study for a discussion with Dad.

After two years of holding the night school in First Church, Alexander wanted a place closer to the Italian neighborhood. After much prayer and consultation with First Church, it was decided to rent an old, vacant two-story frame building that had been a grocery store at 611 East Pike Street, Clarksburg. More than a dozen young men who had joined the First Presbyterian Church began attending Sunday morning worship service in the old store.

My mother's niece, Mary Masesso, came from Chicago for a visit and never returned home. By this time, we had three children in the family and Mary looked after us when Mother helped with the church work. Mary was the first Sunday school teacher for the youngest class at the storeroom church. Miss Blanche Price, a talented young woman from First Presbyterian Church, played the piano, taught a Sunday school class, and constantly encouraged Alexander and Rose.

Alexander was ordained by Grafton Presbytery in September 1917, at its meeting in Buckhannon. Five years later, an opportunity to purchase the rented Pike Street property arose. The money was raised from church groups and from individuals who attended night school and church services in the old store, and the property was deeded to the trustees of the First Presbyterian Church of Clarksburg. Today the price of \$5,250 may seem small, but at the time it meant sacrificial giving.

The Pike Street storefront was first known as the Italian Mission. The mission became the Church of Our Savior Presbyterian and grew into a caring, loving congregation. Finally in 1938 a

new church edifice was built.

During the early ministry Mary Vallo, Rose's sister, came to Clarksburg and became an associate worker. For 27 years she held a daily kindergarten in our church. She taught many young tots to pray before eating, to be honest and responsible, and to get along with other children — as well as their ABC's. The first grade teacher at the neighborhood elementary school recognized Mary Vallo's kindergarten pupils by the first or second day each September. Even Catholic families in the neighborhood sent their youngsters to Mary.

A disciplined life is vital to a minister. Alexander Moccia worked hard, studied continuously, read the Bible from cover to cover. Our family life was well regulated, too. As children growing up, we never had spending money; every penny went for necessities. Charge accounts were not part of our life, for my father believed that you saved first and then you bought. He raised a big, bountiful garden behind our house and took great delight in producing most of the family food supply. Each year my mother and aunt canned more than 500 quarts of vegetables and fruits, including 100 quarts of blackberries. Dad always picked the most during our two-mile dawn hike to the berry patch.

He bought a Holstein cow and did the milking himself. "Blackie" was pastured on the hill above our house. Our dog brought her in at milking time. Blackie became the first cow of the dairy herd which my mother's

niece Mary and her husband Domenick Liberati started across the street from our home. When the herd reached 12 cows, it was time to move the dairy to a farm.

Alexander took a half ownership in the farm, the 40-cow dairy herd and machinery. He paid for a full-time worker for the farm, but at vacation time Dad pitched hay and sweated like any farm worker. He thirsted for the water which we children carried to the field on hot summer days, surely a reminder of his first job in America. He instigated the burning of limestone on the farm, producing lime to keep up the fertility of the land.

We raised chickens on the back of our city lot. Father had us all help with the chickens. On my way to take piano lessons I delivered fresh eggs to the Kobelgard family on Main Street, members of First Church. Sometimes a couple would crack by the time I had walked a mile with the eggs and music books.

Townspeople showed their appreciation for our hard work and for Dad's efforts in the community. Once my father had a bad accident with his first Ford. Our car left the road while passing a truck, went over the railroad track and turned over twice before it stopped. Mother rolled out onto the hard ground, but fortunately no one was permanently injured. Our egg customer, Mr. Kobelgard, called and told Dad that he would pay for all repairs. His friends were genuine and respected him for what he was doing in the Clarksburg area.

Several First Presbyterian Church members gave Alexander Moccia Christmas money each year. And many Italian families who were in trouble over some misunderstanding — some not even our church members — would come and ask that Dad go before the officials involved and explain their side of the story. They too would show their appreciation by a small gift of money. Dad had big plans for all of it. Long ago, he had promised the Lord he would bank any extra money in a special bank account for a new church. When that fund reached \$1,000 the new church was begun on the same Pike Street lot as the mission.

Dad's diary kept track of the building of the church. On October 17, 1938, at 8:00 a.m. Nick Alvaro, former

More on Alexander Moccia

The full story of Alexander Moccia's life and work may be found in *Long Ago, Yesterday in Appalachia*, by Carmella Moccia Schnautz. The adjoining article is based on parts of the book. *Long Ago, Yesterday in Appalachia*, a 453-page hardback with historic photos, sells for \$22.50, plus \$1.50 postage and handling. West Virginia residents add 6% sales tax. Orders may be sent to Carmella Moccia Schnautz, Rt. 1, Box 179C, Bridgeport, WV 26330.



Rose and Alexander Moccia met in Chicago and enjoyed a lifelong partnership in West Virginia. Photographer and date unknown.

elder and trustee, deacon Augustine Costantine, Illario Alvino, a beloved elder, and Ilario Jervasi gathered on the southeast corner of the lot, left vacant after the old store building church had been moved to the rear. Alexander opened his Bible and read Psalm 127 and offered prayer. He then dug the first shovel of dirt. Cousin Domenick's team of horses, Grey and Mable, and their driver were waiting to begin. All the men present the first day worked on the foundation. The second day, ten church men showed up for work, and 11 the day following. Soon it was time for Alexander to

order thousands of tiles and bricks from Charles Town. The weather was ideal, and the men worked together in perfect accord.

Alexander interviewed a half dozen men to lay the brick. He accepted the lowest bid of \$800 from Okey L. Lough. Church men donated the unskilled labor. The carpenter was hired for \$1 an hour, and Alexander was able to get him to agree to give 20 percent to the church. His enthusiasm and winsome way seemed always to be fruitful. The big jobs were contracted out, but it was Alexander who carried the burden of getting things

done and keeping the work moving smoothly.

Christmas 1938 was celebrated in the new church, with no doors or windows and only the subfloor and roof in place. The young people gathered pine and lined the walls. The service was joyous and the chilly temperature a reminder of the first Christmas in a stable.

Besides church activities, Alexander found time for community and social projects. The Lowndes family left one of the hilltop knobs that surrounded Clarksburg to the city, and Dad was instrumental in seeing that work was started there. We lived in Montpelier neighborhood, at the foot of Pinnickinnick Hill, the other knob overlooking Clarksburg. We could see Lowndes Hill like a solitary sentinel from our front porch. Pinnickinnick Hill rose to our west, majestically near, with sunsets hard to surpass. Often Alexander took the church children for hikes and picnics on Pinnickinnick.

During the Depression Alexander was appointed by Harrison County to take charge of the commodities that came from the government to be distributed to the needy. He was pleased to do it. Clarksburg was terribly important to him. He had walked its streets since he arrived. He was proud to help it progress. He encouraged the immigrant Italians to become citizens, the sooner, the better. He helped them learn the naturalization test questions and have confidence that they would make it. He had done it himself.

Alexander Moccia laid down his work in church and community many years ago, and has passed on to his reward. His congregation remains alive in Clarksburg, as does his memory. Last May, Church of Our Savior Presbyterian held a celebration in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of his birth. A few days later his granddaughter, Paula Nespeca Deal, gave birth to a son on the same day that Alexander had been born, May 11. Alexander is his middle name.

The mission work in Clarksburg has grown into a church of nearly 100 members. The solid church that Alexander Moccia built in 1938 still stands, and its doors are still open. The address is the same, and if you get yourself to Pike Street you will find a welcome there. ❀



Participants sample common wild foods at last fall's Nature Wonder Weekend at North Bend State Park. The real feast came later.

Wild Foods at North Bend: **Some Were Eaten and Some Escaped**

By Maureen Crockett
 Photographs by Chuck Mapes

Edelene Wood recalls the time she planned a different kind of birthday party for her Parkersburg friend, Gladys Scroggins. She made all the food from plants growing in the wild. That 1967 party was successful, except that Scroggins wouldn't eat a thing. Who wants to eat weeds?

These days, many people do. One of the reasons is Wood, who has become a leading natural foods proponent. Her serious interest in wild things started when she was dating a biologist who took her on frequent hikes. She kept asking him the names of plants.

Wood learned well. Over the years she has learned how to use natural plants in delicious recipes, and her joy is to share this knowledge with others.

She leads foraging parties, demonstrates cooking methods, and hands out recipes all over West Virginia and in quite a few other states.

When Gladys Scroggins refused to sample that special party menu back in the '60's, Wood told her that the dishes she had prepared all came from the books of natural foods guru Euell Gibbons. Scroggins then relented a bit and suggested that Wood write to Gibbons, famous at the time, inviting him to come to North Bend State Park and talk about food from the wild.

Wood agreed, but figured Gibbons would not accept. Fortunately he did, and he came back to North Bend annually for the last eight years of his life. The state park's annual Nature Wonder Weekend grew out of these

visits by Gibbons. He believed that West Virginia was the wild food garden spot of the country. He asked Edelen Wood to carry on his work after his death, which came in 1975, and the National Wild Foods Association is the result. Wood is the president, and she runs the organization from her Parkersburg home.

She has had to endure some criticism over the years. When she first got interested in the subject, gathering food from the wild enjoyed a bit of a vogue due to Euell Gibbons's popularity. But a friend teased Wood that harvesting nature's bounty was just a fad like the hula hoop. Twenty-one years later, wild food was more popular than ever. For that year's meeting at North Bend, Wood gleeful-

ly decorated the meeting room with hula hoops.

As time went by, Wood gathered recipes from neighbors and friends who knew the tasty plants, animals, fish and fowl that may be found in our mountains. She started to write and give talks and demonstrations. She mails out a newsletter to organization members called *A Taste of the Wild*.

Wood sends out-of-staters a West Virginia wild food friendship box. She includes instructions telling the recipient to call in his chums and have a wild, wonderful West Virginia party. They put on the enclosed red bandanas. The host boils water and makes sassafras tea with roots also provided. Three kinds of jelly — maybe blackberry, mint and blueberry — are there to spread on crackers.

Wood adds information on that particular state's own wild foods. Sometimes the recipient sends back a wild friendship box from his state. Wood remembers a return box from Alaska with Labrador tea, pink bunchberries, high bush cranberries and salmon. Now that's friendship!

Edelene Wood of Parkersburg is the founder and current president of the National Wild Foods Association. She holds black walnuts here, which were abundant in West Virginia this year.



Her fame spread with her work in other states, and that also stirred some criticism. An irritated Parkersburger told her, "Why don't you move to Ohio? We don't need that kind of publicity." This person was worried about West Virginia's image if outsiders learned we forage in the meadows for greens.

Wood knows better, viewing natural foods lore as a part of our cultural heritage. She realizes this knowledge is in danger of being lost, as our supermarkets fill with frozen burritos that taste like cardboard. So Edelene Wood, soldiers on, making converts with each person or group she meets.

The North Bend event is a big part of her efforts. "On the third weekend of September geese fly south and we have the Nature Wonder Weekend at North Bend State Park," she says of the annual affair. West Virginians and people from eastern and southern states meet at the park near Cairo in Ritchie County to learn about wild food, gather it, cook it, eat it, and celebrate the wealth of free food we have.

Each sport has its own clothing, and the wild food gatherer's special attire is the bandana. (They wear other things also, especially if the day is chilly.) West Virginians claim the common red bandana that Euell Gibbons popularized. Other states have other colors, so as people wander through the park at North Bend it's easy to tell where they live. On the trail, some wear their bandanas in back to keep sun off the neck. Turned around, it works as a bib in the dining room.

Bob Rogers, the North Bend superintendent, has long been a lover of food from the wild. "This is not far-out food," he says, noting that our forebears depended upon wild food. "For years we survived on it, especially wild meat. And remember, wild meat has almost no cholesterol. Venison, rabbit, and squirrel are some of the healthiest meats you can eat."

"A lot of our medicines come from weeds. Our ancestors knew all about that," the park superintendent adds. "I call this wild food gathering just getting back to basics. Edelene tells people how they can eat a lot better and save money, too."

At each annual meeting, Edelene and her brother Ira, also known as Woody, sponsor a wild foods cooking

contest. The contest honors Edelene and Woody's mother Hazel, now deceased, who was one fine Appalachian cook. Hazel Wood could cook up anything in the ten-inch black iron skillet she used since her wedding day when she was just 18. She used the skillet to bake biscuits on her wood stove and took it along for frying trout on camping trips.

Most of the entrants in the Hazel Wood cooking contest are West Virginians, so it is fortunate that the judge each year is Bill Faust, a noted North Carolina chef. Faust gets help from previous winners.

This year Bev Beatty of West Liberty won first place with her blackberry torte. Chocolate-covered ground cherries, a wild greens quiche, and a venison dish also won awards. After Faust announces the winners' names and the dishes they prepared, everyone forms a line and attacks the table of entries. This method of cleaning up after a contest leaves no room for improvement.

When she became interested in what other states eat from the wild, Wood wrote to the nation's governors, asking each for a favorite recipe for outdoor food. She had a tremendous response, including Governor Michael Dukakis's recipe for New England Clam Chowder. That came with strong advice to keep out any hint of tomato, which turns this traditional Massachusetts dish into Manhattan clam chowder.

Wood included the recipes in her *Favorite Wild Foods of the Fifty States* cookbook, which she gave at no charge to everyone at the latest North Bend meeting. Wood asked Faust to look over the new book and decide what would make the tastiest items. Saturday afternoon he tested some possibilities in the kitchen of his park cabin. Minnesota's wild rice turkey salad and North Dakota's brandied pheasant won prizes. He served the results at the patio party.

Bill Faust is famous at these wild feasts for bringing rattlesnake salad each year. He decorates his table with an eight-foot rattler skin. Then he lays down crackers covered with dabs of the salad all along the outline of the skin. Adventuresome folks gobble it up.

As a professional chef, Faust can make something delicious from strange ingredients. One year Wood

On the Wild Side With the Beattys

Bill and Bev Beatty, Ohio County residents and biology graduates of West Liberty State College, are among West Virginia's wild foods leaders.

Bill has taught about edible wild plants for ten years. His base of operations is the Oglebay Institute nature education program at the Brooks Nature Center, part of Oglebay Park in Wheeling. Like Chaucer's clerk in the Canterbury Tales, Bill Beatty gladly learns and gladly teaches.

He gathers wild foods on his nature walks and Bev cooks them up. Together they test and create recipes. One fruit of their collaboration is *Bill and Bev Beatty's Wild Plant Cookbook*, published by Naturegraph Publishers in 1987. The pages are chock full of history, nature lore, nutritional information, humor, family wisdom and sheer poetic fancy. It's a great book to settle down with for an evening, even for people uninterested in cooking.

The Beattys can find a good word for most all of nature. Bill spoke up for poison ivy as he and Bev led a group of wild food enthusiasts along the Euell Gibbons Nature Trail at North Bend State Park during this fall's Nature Wonder Weekend. Birds depend on the berries of poison ivy in the winter, he told us.

Poison sumac also causes a severe rash, Bill noted, adding that some people consequently avoid all sumac. He said this is a mistake. "Poison sumac does not grow below 2,500 feet and it needs a swampy area," he told us. He added that staghorn sumac fruit makes a delightful summertime drink that tastes a little like lemonade.

Pick the shrub's red fruit in July or August and don't be turned off by all those hairs. "The hairs disappear when you boil the fruit," says Beatty. "The flavor is in the hairs." Strain, add sugar, stir, and add ice cubes. Then put your feet up on the porch rail and relax with a big glass of something good.

Bill teaches classes around the state in mushroom identification. He advises gatherers to know what they eat and never to eat more than one species at a time. "Sometimes there is an allergic reaction even to edible ones," according to Bill, and if a person gets sick the doctor needs to know exactly what mushroom species he ate. He gets calls from hospital emergency rooms for help with people who ate the wrong kind.

A little girl walking with our group ran up to Bill. "Look, I found a deaf angel." She was hindered by a lisp, but this grade schooler knew her mushrooms. Her specimen was a death angel in the deadly amanita group. Glowing white and looking delicious, the death angel unfortunately also has excellent flavor, Bill said. But for folks who eat them, even a liver transplant may not save their lives, even though squirrels and turtles can eat them safely.

Mushrooms are divided into three categories, Beatty told us as we climbed up the ridge. Some are edible, some are poisonous, but most are neither, meaning they don't make you sick but may cook up slimy or tasteless.

Much safer is the sugar maple. The Beattys have several near their West Liberty home. "On a

40-degree day with no wind I can get two gallons. On a good day, I drill the hole and it gushes out at me," Bill said. Maple seeds from wild maples of all varieties are good to eat right off the tree. "Don't eat the domestic ones," he advised.

As we walked along the ridge passing redbud trees, Bill suggested that newcomers to wild foods begin slowly. Try redbud blossoms in fritters or pancakes next spring. A little later in the spring get black locust blossoms for the same recipes. Still later, use elderberries. "These are fun foods," he added, "good for introducing youngsters to wild food."

As aficionados get more adventuresome they can try exotic dishes such as Edeline Wood's earthworm cake. Bill told his hikers that the best way to fix that is first to put the live earthworms in corn meal for a while. "They eat through, and are then full of corn meal," he assured us.

Undoubtedly more acceptable to most West Virginia palates is the following recipe from the Beatty cookbook. Dandelions and ramps are among the early greens of our mountains and both may be gathered by late March or early April.

— Maureen Crockett



Dandelion-Ramp Quiche

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 3 cups fresh chopped dandelion leaves
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 cup fresh ramps, diced
- 4 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups cream
- One 9- or 10-inch pastry shell, unbaked
- 1/2 cup grated Swiss or Cheddar cheese

Saute ramps and dandelion leaves in the butter for five minutes. Mix, in a blender, the eggs and nutmeg. Scald the cream and add to the blender along with the ramps and

dandelions. Puree in the blender. Pour into the pastry shell and sprinkle with grated cheese. Bake at 375 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes.



Bob and Doris Hughes of Martinsburg were among the wild food fans at North Bend. Friend Howard Baker (right) of Dayton, Ohio, has attended 19 of the events.

spoke to him about earthworm cake, and Faust went home and made one. Wood also fed earthworm cake to North Bend's Bob Rogers. "She told me it was a modern kind of carrot cake," he says. "I was surprised at the flavor, I was surprised at the taste, and I was more surprised at how it stayed down when she told me what it was."

Wood loves to tell the story about the time that her appetizers made a break for freedom. Brother Woody had gathered her a mess of wasp galls from goldenrod plants one year, slicing them to remove the tender grubs curled up inside. Edelene froze them until the next Nature Wonder Weekend tasting party.

The feast takes place on the roofed patio separating public areas of the lodge from the guest rooms. People were setting up their wild foods on tables scattered around the area. Edelene put fancy crackers on a plate, spread them with cream cheese, and placed a frozen grub on each.

The late afternoon was cloudy, but a slanting beam of sunlight struck the patio, most particularly the table with Wood's canapes.

Nature took its course. Soon a party goer sidled up to Wood and whispered, "Edelene, your hors d'oeuvres are walking off the table." As Wood remembers, "Some were eaten, but a lot escaped."

Wood credits her mother whenever she talks about wild food and also in her first wild food cookbook, *The Wild Food Adventures of an Appalachian Cook*. Euell Gibbons called Hazel and Edelene the "foremost mother and daughter team in the wild food world."

Wood also pays respect to ancestors who figured out which plants to eat in the first place. "Many died in proving what was edible and what was not," she warns. "Today all people are encouraged to know the food they eat so well that they will not make a mistake as to its edibility." Euell Gibbons put it more bluntly: "Never eat a wild plant until you eat it with someone who ate it before and lived."

For those who take the care to know, there is no shortage of treats from the forest. At the 1989 North Bend celebration we feasted on venison mincemeat muffins, black walnut

Italian salad, turtle stew, spearmint punch, elk stew, milkweed bud casserole, dandelion jelly, red bud and hickory nut cheese spread, barbecued groundhog, cream of yarrow soup with chanterelles, purslane corn muffins, wild mushroom stir fry, shrimp salad with ramps, squirrel stuffing balls, red chile cactus, quail supreme, blackberry punch, sunchokes in turkey broth, dandelion wine, paw paw bread with spice bush icing, huckleberry pie, hickory nut cake, and ice cream.

The Front Porch Swingers Band played music for an hour while we sat and digested the feast. Then we went inside the lodge and had dinner. ✱

The National Wild Foods Association welcomes people who want to know about gathering food from nature. If you would like more information about the group, contact Edelene Wood, 3404 Hemlock Street, Parkersburg, WV 26104, (304) 428-9590.

Films on West Virginia and Appalachia

Steve Fesenmaier, director of the State Library Commission's Film Services unit, contributed this list of recently acquired films, videotapes and slide shows about West Virginia and the Appalachian region. Film Services, which has the largest collection of mountain movies and tapes anywhere in the country, has many more titles on its shelves. For more information or to make arrangements to borrow any of the films or videos listed here, contact your local public library.

Closing the Book on Illiteracy

28 min. (VHS) Weirton Public Library
Discusses functional illiteracy and the need for public libraries to become partners in teaching the adult poor reader or non-reader. The advantages of volunteer literacy programs, local literacy councils, and statewide coalitions are presented.

Five Million Steps

75 min. (VHS) 1988 Whelden Productions
This documentary follows 16 hikers as they attempt to walk the 2,000-mile Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine in 1987. The famous mountain path travels a short distance through West Virginia.

For Liberty and Union

29 min. (VHS and 16 mm) 1978
Tells the story of the formation of the State of West Virginia from 1861 to 1863 through the actions of such founding fathers as John Carlile, Waitman T. Willey, and Alexander Campbell. The Wheeling Customs House, now preserved as West Virginia Independence Hall, forms the background for this historic dramatization.

Forks of Cheat

60 min. (VHS) 1989 WNPB-TV
A documentary about one of the wildest and least known of America's rivers. Narrated by West Virginia University graduate David Selby, who presents the lives of people affected by the Cheat River. Traces its origins high in the spruce forests of Tucker and surrounding counties to where it empties into the Monongahela.

Friends and Loved Ones

25 min. 1976 Appalshop
This videotape was made from an unreleased film about the Marrowbone Creek community in Mingo County. The residents' ideas about life are mixed with the construction of a log cabin home.



Soldier Jack, home from the war. Courtesy Davenport Films.

Gettysburg: 1863

19 min. Valley Films
Historical analysis of the frightful battle which ended the last invasion of the North by the South in the Civil War.

Hearts and Hands

63 min. 1987 Ferrero Films
Award-winning film about the role played by women, many of them from the Appalachian region, and their textiles in the 19th century. It explores the astonishing lives and accomplishments of ordinary and anonymous women, as well as chronicling the stories of Harriet Tubman, temperance crusader Frances Willard and others.

Josiah Fox

22 min. 1988 Ellis Dungan
Josiah Fox, the naval architect who designed the USS *Constitution*, better known as "Old Ironsides," was born in England in 1763 and retired to the Wheeling area before his death in 1847. Ellis Dungan, the Wheeling filmmaker, is one of his descendants.

Mean To Be Free

53 min. 1988 Harpers Ferry Historical Assoc.
John Brown's plan for a self-governing nation of freed slaves is shown with historic and modern slides and a narration of the words of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Brown himself. Important events in West Virginia and American history are brought to life by faculty and students in Afro-American Studies at the University of California in Berkeley.

Monongah, 1907

29 min. (VHS) 1986 Arthur Young
Tells the story of the struggle for mine safety in the United States, focusing on the mine explosion at Monongah, Marion County, in which 362 miners died.

New River: Older Than Time

29 min. 1989 WSWP-TV
Wayne Sourbeer takes us down the New River, the second oldest river in the world. The people, history and great beauty of this waterway

are skillfully woven together. This production was made in consultation with GOLDENSEAL editor Ken Sullivan.

Pathways to Understanding

20 min. 1970
Daniel Taylor shows the state of contemporary educational thinking in West Virginia as seen by the West Virginia Department of Education.

Soldier Jack

40 min. 1988 Davenport Films
Based on an Appalachian Jack tale, this comedy is set in the late 1940's. Jack returns from the war and through an act of kindness receives two magical gifts — a sack to catch anything and a jar to see if a sick person will recover. He captures Death, only to find out what a mistake he has made.

Talking Feet

90 min. (VHS) 1988 Seeger & Pershing
This documentary features flatfoot, buck, hoedown, and rural tap dancing. These are all styles of solo Southern dancing on which modern clogging is based. Parts were filmed at the Augusta Heritage Workshops in Elkins.

Ten Miles to Fetch Water

29 min. (VHS) 1989 Asymmetry Productions
The southern coalfields of West Virginia have some of the worst water problems in the nation. Abandoned by the coal companies that built them, many communities lack the resources to keep up their water systems.

Thunder of Steam in the Blue Ridge

18 min. 1958 National Film & Video
Various scenes of steam engines used by the Norfolk & Western Railroad.

West Virginia Turnpike Progress Report

20 min. 1954
Narrated by Sam Poland, this film was made just before the opening of the new West Virginia Turnpike in 1954. In addition to parts of the finished Turnpike, it shows the construction techniques that were used in overcoming the rugged terrain of southern West Virginia.



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The index for the first three volumes of GOLDENSEAL appeared in the April-September 1978 issue, and the index for Volumes 4 and 5 in the January-March 1980 magazine. The index for each successive volume appears in the final issue of the calendar year (e.g., Volume 14, Number 4).

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In This Issue

CLARA CASTELAR BJORLIE lives in Shepherdstown, where she writes weekly columns and feature stories for the *Martinsburg Evening Journal*. Her book reviews, poems, short stories and articles have been published in the *Washington Post* and other publications. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

P. CORBIT BROWN is a native of Fayette County. He works as a freelance photographer in the Eastern Panhandle and the Washington area. His photos have appeared in *Washingtonian* magazine, among other publications, and he recently exhibited his work at the Washington Center for Photography. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in the Fall 1989 issue.

GREG CLARK is a photographer for the Division of Culture and History, Department of Education and the Arts.

MAUREEN CROCKETT was born in New York State and attended City University of New York, West Virginia University and other institutions. She lives in St. Albans and works as a freelance writer, photographer and illustrator. She is an occasional contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

MICHAEL KELLER is the chief of photographic services for the Division of Culture and History, Department of Education and the Arts.

JANE M. KRAINA, a Weston native, spent much of her childhood overseas. After returning to West Virginia, she attended WVU and West Liberty State. She works at the Mary H. Weir Public Library in Weirton as a systems operator. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

CHUCK MAPES, a native of Nutter Fort, now lives in Ritchie County. He graduated from WVU in 1979 with a degree in horticulture and has worked as a tree surgeon, landscape business owner, and construction worker since then. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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 the Augusta Heritage Center at Davis and Elkins College. He is an occasional contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

JOSEPH PLATANIA, a Huntington native, earned his B.A. and M.A. at Marshall. He has worked for the West Virginia Department of Welfare and for the Veterans Administration, and is now a freelance writer. The story in this issue is Joe's tenth contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

CARMELLA MOCCIA SCHNAUTZ of Flemington is a Clarksburg native with a master's degree from WVU. She taught three years at Potomac State Junior College in Keyser and worked as a home economist for 26 years, spending four years in Bolivia and Peru. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

BARBARA SMITH of Philippi has written poems, short stories, journal articles and the novel, *Six Miles Out*, published by Mountain State Press. She chairs the Division of the Humanities and teaches writing and literature at Alderson-Broaddus College. She is a periodic contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

TOPPER SHERWOOD, a Charleston freelance writer, came to West Virginia when less than a year old. He was educated in Ohio and West Germany and served in the Peace Corps in Africa. He has worked at the *Charleston Gazette* as a copy editor and for the *Charleston Daily Mail* and the Associated Press as a reporter. He has published in *Time*, the *Boston Globe*, and other publications. This is his second contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

IVAN M. TRIBE attended Ohio University and earned his Ph.D. at the University of Toledo. He has published many articles on old-time and early country music and authored the book, *Mountaineer Jamboree: Country Music in West Virginia*. He now teaches at Rio Grande College in Ohio and is an occasional contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

ANDY YALE is a New York writer and photographer who recently relocated to Sandstone in Summers County. He has published articles and photos in *The Rolling Stone*, *Memphis*, and *Natural History* magazines, as well as other publications. He is an occasional contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

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Inside Goldenseal

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Page 39 — Wheeling was once called "Stogietown" for the local manufacture of good, cheap cigars. The Marsh Wheeling company keeps the tradition alive after nearly 150 years.

Page 65 — Those with adventurous tastes can have a wild time at North Bend State Park. The National Wild Foods Association meets there each September.

Page 30 — Fifty years ago, Cap, Andy and Flip were a hot country music act. Fairmont radio station WMMN was important to them and other musicians.

Page 59 — Alexander Moccia was a Protestant "home missionary" working among the immigrant population of the Clarksburg area. His church still stands today.

Page 23 — Martin Snyder started his Berkeley County ham business decades ago. His daughter's family runs Snyder's Hams today.

Page 18 — Lair Morrall built Philippi's steamboat house in 1878. The property still remains in his family after four generations.

Page 6 — West Virginia lost two important carriers of traditional culture with the deaths of Maggie and Sherman Hammons. Our author remembers their lives.

Page 49 — Hale Arbuckle made his living driving a truck store until he retired last fall. Our story takes you on one of his last Greenbrier County runs.

Page 9 — The Boone County Smoots have one of the longest-running black family reunions in America. They met for the 60th time this year.

