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Goldenseal



From the Editor: Thank You

Last issue, I used this space to ask you to send your \$12.50 voluntary subscription payment to GOLDENSEAL.

This time, I'm back to thank all those who did. We haven't heard from everyone as of the time of this writing in late fall, but enough money has come in to lead me to believe this will be another successful year. We're running about eight percent above the year-ago total at this date and slowly pulling ahead.

That means we're doing well, but still have a ways to go. As I indicated in the fall issue, we must shoot for 100% self-sufficiency in order to insure GOLDENSEAL's survival. The current trend will put us around 90% by the end of the fiscal year, if things continue as they're going now. That's quite good, the best we've ever done, in fact, and we're genuinely grateful for that. Let's work together to make it better.

So a big "Thank You" if you're among the thousands who have already sent their subscription money. If not, I'll expect to hear from you soon. Take it from me, the longevity of your favorite magazine depends on it.

With that said, let's move on to other things. First, my thanks also for the letters, notes, poems, cartoons, photos, cards, religious tracts, etc., etc., which accompanied this year's subscription checks. We're always glad to hear from our readers. We try to reply to everything that looks like it needs a personal response, although our small staff can't do all we'd like to in that regard.

In setting priorities for response, our first goal is to take care of practical business matters. Cornelia Alexander will do her best to straighten out your subscription problems right away. New orders, gift subscriptions, and address changes will be entered in time for the next issue.

We give equal priority to your story suggestions. We can't do nearly all the stories we're asked to, but each one is given due consideration. We'll get back to you if we need further information. We don't have any staff writers, so we hold the most promising ideas for the possible use of our freelancers. This system leaves us unable to make promises on particular stories, but it always delivers a magazine full of good articles. Some ideas take years to mature — we had a file on West Virginia's last public hanging for most of a decade before finally publishing the story last spring, for example — but you can bet we never turn loose of a good one.

Actual manuscripts are treated a little differently. Cornelia and Debby Jackson read them first, render their opinion, and pass them on to me. You'll get an acknowledgement from Debby early on, and hear from me later. I'm the bottleneck in this process, but eventually you'll get either a polite rejection notice or a letter of acceptance. Bear with us, for story selection is about the most important thing we do here. We give it all the time it needs.

Along with business concerns and story suggestions, we take your editorial criticism very seriously. We'll stop just about anything to answer a complaint of this sort. If your

letter has to do with our treatment of a story, we'll try to work it into the next letters to the editor column. If it's a more general matter, we'll probably write to you personally. We'll do our best to explain things to your satisfaction, or at least to explain ourselves. So let us know if you've got a gripe. You won't offend us by speaking up. In this regard the old saying definitely holds true — it's the people we don't hear from who worry us.

But please don't feel that you have to wait till you have a beef to write to us. We like pats on the back as well as anyone, and your notes of encouragement mean a lot. We show them around to each other, send copies to the particular writer or photographer you may have praised, and even send some to the commissioner's office to make a few points up that way.

Thanks also to those who took the opportunity of the free postage to let us know that they no longer want GOLDENSEAL. We hate to lose anyone, but if you're genuinely not interested we'll be pleased to divert your magazine to someone who is. We're fortunate that the folks who like GOLDENSEAL like it a lot, but we understand that the magazine is not for everyone.

As for my usual year-end report, you got the financial gist of it last time: Our needs are urgent but, with your support, manageable.

Otherwise, we're doing fine. GOLDENSEAL family news has been pretty unexciting this year — no new babies or shotgun weddings among the circle of staffers and freelancers that I know of. Photographer Greg Clark has shifted over to the Archives side of the organizational chart here at Culture and History, but he continues to do the same excellent work for us as before. We regularly ask miracles from Greg in reviving old photos, and you can see the results in every GOLDENSEAL you pick up.

Greg's reassignment puts more of the photography fieldwork burden on Michael Keller. That seems to suit him, and we'll definitely take advantage of that fact. I've found that the key to photographers is that the good ones live to shoot pictures, so it's pretty easy for a crafty editor to overwork them. We'll continue to fill the magazine with Mike's fine pictures, drawing in Doug Chadwick, Ron Rittenhouse and our other freelancers for the more distant assignments.

I tag along whenever possible, most recently when Mike shot this issue's cover. That was a fun one, let me tell you. The trick was to line up 11 effervescent nuns on a frosty Parkersburg morning, keeping giggles and shivers to a minimum. We thank Mother Superior Jane Frances for shooshing them all out on the porch steps on time, and the sisters for their cooperation. You've given us a nice cover and another in our series of stories on West Virginia religions.

I see the bottom of the page looming up fast, so let me close with best wishes for you and yours. May you have only the best for the holidays and the new year to come.

— Ken Sullivan

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Goldenseal

Volume 16, Number 4

Winter 1990

COVER: The sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary represent a Parkersburg teaching ministry only one year younger than West Virginia. Our story, "Faith and Works," begins on page 9. Photo by Michael Keller.

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The 1918 Flu Epidemic

By Lorna Chamberlain

The 1918 flu was different from the flu we know today. When you got the flu in 1918 you had a throat so sore you couldn't swallow, you ached all over and became violently ill. As your fever began to shoot up you started vomiting. Your fever went higher and higher, and soon you became delirious. More than half its victims went straight into pneumonia.

If you lived for a week, there was a turning point. You began to get better. Your nose started to bleed, and you became conscious of how weak you were and how glad you were to be alive. The second week was one of recovery. You slowly began to toddle about on your own, knowing you'd really been through something. The 1918 flu was the killer kind that comes along every hundred years, experts say, and it claimed 20 million lives worldwide.

World War I was at its peak when the epidemic struck our Ohio County community. Two of my brothers were in Europe helping to fight the war. One had already been wounded and the other had given us quite a scare. While he was still in the States we had had a telegram from the War Department stating that Clarke was seriously ill. He was in an army hospital in Texas, with measles, mumps and pneumonia.

Night and day we prayed for him. Dad sent a telegram to inquire about Clarke within a few days. Back came the news that his condition had improved. It was better than a check for a million dollars, and soon we had a letter from Clarke himself.

Despite his grave illness, Clarke never actually contracted the flu. Others were not so lucky. Two young boys from our community, draftees between the ages of 18 and 20, were shipped home in boxes. Each boy had been away from home for only a few weeks and neither had seen the war, dying from a more deadly enemy at home. Each was well-known, well-

liked, and in the prime of life. The community was stunned.

Our farm was in West Virginia, but the nearest village was West Alexander, Pennsylvania, two and a half miles away. A young woman from there died soon after getting the flu. She was an expectant mother. It was understood that the flu was usually fatal in such cases. Our own mother was pregnant.

We tried to avoid public places. Almost from the time of the first outbreak, all district schools closed and stayed closed for months.

Kay, the brother next to me, began to show the signs. He had a sore throat, a headache, and started vomiting. Within a couple of days his temperature skyrocketed, and he was out of his head, shouting wild things. Over and over he'd yell, "Lorna, get away from that hornet's nest." He was always protective of me.

I tried to reason with him. "I'm right here beside you," I said. "I'm not near a hornet's nest."

"Do you want to catch what he has?" a sister shouted. "Mother, Lorna's getting too close to Kay."

Mother was doing all she could to check Kay's fever. She had her own ways of doctoring. For a fever she gave aspirin. For sore throats she had us gargle with a solution she made by boiling white oak bark and alum together. For chest congestion she applied flannel cloths soaked in crude oil. When Kay's condition got beyond her she called for the village doctor.

He couldn't come. He had the flu.

It wasn't long before I was sneezing and sniffing and aching all over, wincing every time I tried to swallow. Dad and Mother kept looking at me, and then at each other. And those sisters who'd screamed at me to keep away from Kay began to have like symptoms.

There were two doctors in the village. After learning that our own doctor was sick, Mother called for the

other doctor to come. He, too, had the flu. There was an entire community, with the flu ravaging all about, without the services of a doctor. Dad, being a veterinarian, knew more about doctoring than the average person. He did what he could.

But, one after the other, we all caught it. To keep Mother from having to climb steps too often they put up cots in the living room. With six children down with the flu and Mother pregnant, things had to be made as convenient as possible.

Someone told Mother that others were calling on Claysville doctors for help. Mother called one of them and he promised he'd come within the next couple of days. Claysville was eight to ten miles from our farm. That doctor made more than one trip, for a calamity happened soon. Dad got the flu. There was everybody but Mother down with killer influenza.

Never before had I seen my father sick in bed with anything. Along with Mother he'd been helping the rest of us hang on, holding our heads when we'd retch and fall back on our pillow as if already dead. Now he had to go through the same thing. From our cots we'd call out to one another.

I don't think Mother had any sleep for days. Some way, she kept three coal fires going night and day, in the grate, the kitchen stove, and the heater in one of the bedrooms. She slaved over our food. I well remember when I was given something solid for the first time. It was a poached egg in a cup, with bread crumbled in it. Did it ever taste good!

Milking had to be done, the horses and cows watered and fed. The chickens had to be tended to. On a farm there's a lot of outside work both morning and evening. It got done, somehow, by the grace of God and the help of neighbors.

And best of all, we all survived. Mother was the only one who didn't get the flu. In March of the following year our baby brother arrived.

We still had our soldier brothers to think about. They didn't come home for about a year after the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918. It became a ritual for us to go to Mother's knee each night, just before going to bed, to pray for them, each in our own way. ❁

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.

Charleston, West Virginia
September 24, 1990
Editor:

After reading your editorial, "Renewal Time," enclosed is my check — no beating around the bush!

As recently as June 9, 1990, I made my first trip to Cedar Lakes for the West Virginia Writers Conference. From early 1950 I recalled the Cedar Lakes site as a farm, with a hilltop view on old Route 21 going from Charleston toward Ripley.

GOLDENSEAL answered my question: Who used to own it? "Hawks Nest Revisited" was even more responsive to musings I have had.

For me, this is no mere subscription: You are offering classics, as evidenced by the Fall 1990 issue.

Very truly yours,
Wm. Roy Rice

Keyser, West Virginia
October 1, 1990
Editor:

Please accept my check for a subscription to the GOLDENSEAL magazine. I am 86 years old and relived part of my life when reading the article "Making a Living from Mountain Land" ["The Hill Farm," Summer 1989, pp. 18-30]. My heart went out to them. I think those times kept us closer to God and the earth.

Sincerely,
Essie Llewellyn

Quinnimont

Colorado Springs, Colorado
October 5, 1990
Editor:

I am writing concerning the fine article on Quinnimont in the Fall 1990 edition.

I spent many summers in Quinnimont visiting my grandparents Captain and Mrs. C. E. Ashley. Later my parents moved to Quinnimont in 1942.

The house in the article said to be Captain Ashley's is not. The house shown is the Wilson house. The Ash-



Photo by W. Monypeny, 1935; courtesy C&O Historical Society.

ley house was to the left between the Lawton house and Wilson house.

The Wilson house was very well maintained, as were all the houses in that general area. The Wilsons had a fierce dog called Dober. Everyone was frightened of him. They also had a pony that lived in the woods, called Vannie.

Quinnimont was a very active town with a good ball team and a busy church. My grandparents had a bedroom we called the "preacher's room."

I have been a subscriber for four years. Enclosed is my check for another year of enjoyable reading. Mrs. W. B. Sheaves, Jr.

You're right about the Wilson house, according to author Leona Brown, who has done some further checking for us. The

Ashley house no longer stands, as far as we can determine, but sharp-eyed readers tell us that that is the corner of its roof to the right of the fully-visible Lawton house in our 1935 photo of the Quinnimont station. —ed.

Hats Off to Hancock

Weirton, West Virginia
October 17, 1990
Editor:

Your editorial of the Fall 1990 issue demonstrates in a small way the ideas that the Northern Panhandle has been fighting for so long. So many people from "down state," the capital in particular, think of Hancock and Brooke counties and the rest of the Northern Panhandle as so far away. It's as if we are not a regular part of the Mountain State but more like an afterthought. This discussion will always raise the ire of many people in the Panhandle and resurrects the feelings of those who feel they are neglected by the state government.

In your editorial, you state, "We made it all the way up to Hancock County — West Virginia's northern-



most, for those of you without a map handy . . . And our writers and photographers traveled to a bunch of closer places, [including] Wheeling . . . for those in between." Hancock County is only 28 miles from Wheeling, folks. If you get out that handy map, Wheeling isn't so much closer to Charleston, nor is Wheeling so much "in between" Hancock County and Charleston. This may seem trivial to some but it is a real concern of many. It is one of the reasons there has been talk of secession of the Panhandle for so long by so many.

The GOLDENSEAL is an entertaining and informative magazine. Keep up the good work.
Thank you,
Mark Bunner

Sorry, no offense intended. I get to Hancock occasionally and spent a lot of time there a few years ago while helping to prepare the big Homer Laughlin China exhibit for the State Museum. It's worth the trip — but, by golly, it's still a long way, especially if you travel the all-West Virginia route up State Route 2, rather than coping out and taking the four-lane through Ohio. —ed.

Last Hanging

West Columbia, South Carolina
October 8, 1990
Editor:

Referring to the last public hanging story in the Spring 1990 GOLDENSEAL, my foster mother, who would now be 118 years old, was 25 at the time of the hanging. She remembered the excitement it caused in her community, between Walton and the Roane-Kanawha line, particularly among the Greenes and those who had known John Morgan. She did not attend the hanging but many of her friends and relatives did, and her account of it was very close to the GOLDENSEAL account.

Sincerely,
Lee R. Gandee

Seventh-Day Baptists

Clarksburg, West Virginia
September 27, 1990
Editor:

In the Fall issue, I eagerly read of talented, distinguished Virgil Bork, youthful friend of my parents, Deuron

and Goldie Anderson Davis, both deceased. I'd heard so many wonderful things of Mr. Bork from them. He gave much happiness to so many people!

Since I, too, am a descendant of the Seventh-Day Baptists, who settled Salem and surrounding areas, I enjoyed that article very much. But I questioned the author's findings in the paragraph that stated: "The White Day Creek congregation sold their Monongalia land and followed Randolph to Harrison County (italics added)."

The *History of Harrison County*, by Dorothy Davis, pp. 575-576, says: "The migrating ten families settled on White Day Creek in Monongalia County where they stayed two years. Then because they were disappointed in their land, they listened to a friend from across the Pennsylvania border, Samuel Fitz Randolph, tell of a large tract he had bought . . . in 1790. Randolph persuaded the dissatisfied settlers to go inspect his newly acquired lands. When the families decided to form New Salem on Ten Mile Creek, where, immediately after arriving, they built a blockhouse, as protection against Indians, Samuel Fitz Randolph followed them, in May 1792 . . . (italics added)"

From *Davis: The Settlers of Salem, West Virginia* by Susie Davis Nicholson, page 2: "When Benjamin Thorp (Tharp) bought land in Harrison County, Virginia, 17 January 1791, he gave his residence as Monongalia County. According to Corliss F. Randolph's account in *History of Seventh*

Day Baptists in West Virginia, the Davis group was dissatisfied with their land and location and were persuaded by Samuel Fitz Randolph to settle on the land which he had bought in Harrison County from Catherine Swearingen.

"In May 1792 the Davis group journeyed to the location in Harrison County and formed the village of New Salem, Virginia. Fitz Randolph joined the group at New Salem sometime during the year 1792."

Thanks for the informative, interesting, enjoyable articles you have given us for so many years. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,
Mary Virginia Davis Sprouse

Thanks for the clarification. Your sources demonstrate that Randolph physically followed others in making the move, but it still appears to us that he took a leading role in making the decision to move. —ed.

More 1924 Football

Apache Junction, Arizona
October 10, 1990
Editor:

Since there have been a couple of letters regarding the 1924 Pullman football team coached by my father, Louis Reed, I thought you might be interested in a picture of the team.

My father was given to exaggeration at times to improve a story, so I suspect that Mr. Sutton's recollection of the team's departure from Cairo is more accurate.

Yours,
William B. Reed

Coach Louis Reed stands at left rear and Clive Sutton kneels at right front in this 1924 team portrait. Photographer unknown.



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.

Strange Stories

Dennis Deitz is the author of a new book, *The Greenbrier Ghost and Other Strange Stories*. Deitz presents narratives from more than 45 writers that deal with West Virginia premonitions, ghosts, legends, and tales of the supernatural.

The book's title comes from a tragedy that took place about 15 miles from Rainelle in 1897. Zona Heaster Shue died mysteriously only two months after she was married. Her ghost appeared to her mother and described how her husband had murdered her. The mother's story eventually helped convict the husband, Edward Shue, and today an historical marker located on Route 60 claims the incident to be the only known case in which testimony from a ghost helped convict a murderer.

Dennis Deitz is also the author of the popular *Mountain Memories* series, *The Flood and The Blood*, and *The Search for Emily*. *The Greenbrier Ghost and Other Strange Stories* is a softcover book of 204 pages with numerous photographs and illustrations. It is available in many bookstores and in The Shop at The Cultural Center. Mail orders may be sent to Mountain Memories Books, 216 Sutherland Drive, South Charleston, WV 25303. Add \$1.50 for postage and handling. West Virginia residents must also add 6% sales tax.

Fayette County Landmarks

Melody Bragg, Fayette County native and local historian, is the author of a new book titled *Art and History of Fayette County: Historical Places on the National Register*. The publication is a joint effort of Fayette County's Historic Landmark Commission and Arts and History Commission. County businesses provided funding for the book.

Art and History of Fayette County takes a look at 15 historic sites and landmarks in the county. All but two prop-



The Bank of Glen Jean is among National Register properties included in the new book of Fayette County historic sites. Photo by William Trevey, before 1917.

erties are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Fifteen artists, from high school students to great-grandparents, provided detailed illustrations of each property as it was in its prime. The art produced for the book is now on permanent display at the county courthouse.

The courthouse is one of the sites featured, along with the Altamont Hotel, Tyree Stone Tavern, Gauley Bridge railroad station, Thurmond historical district, Bank of Glen Jean and the Prince Brothers general store at Prince. Famous homes are also included, such as Colonel George W. Imboden's "Contentment," Governor Okey L. Patteson's home, the Page-Vawter house and the Hawkins-Ballard house. Institutions are represented by Camp Washington-Carver at Clifftop and the main building at West Virginia Institute of Technology.

Art and History of Fayette County, an 85-page softbound book, sells for \$6 including postage and handling. Send orders to Daniel E. Wright, Fayette County Landmark Commission, P.O. Box 303, Oak Hill, WV 25901.

Appalachian Studies Conference

The 14th annual Appalachian Studies Conference will be held at Berea College in Kentucky, March 22-24, 1991.

The meeting is the largest regional conference of its kind, bringing together hundreds of scholars and other professionals from throughout the mountain states. It is sponsored by the Appalachian Studies Association, the major regional studies organization.

The theme for the 1991 Appalachian Studies Conference is "Environmental Voices: Cultural, Social, Physical and Natural." The program will address Appalachia's natural and physical environment and how it affects and is affected by history, culture, social and economic development, literature, and current issues.

Each year the conference is rotated among the Appalachian states. The 1989 conference took place at West Virginia University and last year's meeting was at Helen, Georgia. Speakers, research papers, panel discussions and films are presented. Entertainment is planned for two nights of the conference, and there will be a banquet as well.

For more information contact the Appalachian Consortium, University Hall, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608; (704) 262-2064.

New Children's Book

GOLDENSEAL contributor Marc Harshman has published his second children's book, *Snow Company*. Harshman, a storyteller and elementary school teacher who lives in Marshall County, published his first children's book, *A Little Excitement*, just last year. His poems have been published in the U.S. and England. Harshman is also a judge during the state Liar's Contest held annually at Vandalia Gathering at the Cultural Center in Charleston over the Memorial Day weekend.

Snow Company was released in September of this year by Cobblehill Books, an affiliate of E. P. Dutton Children's Books. It is the story of a boy who weathers one of the worst snow

SNOW COMPANY

BY Marc Harshman

ILLUSTRATED BY Leslie W. Bowman



storms in 20 years with his family and neighbors. Like *A Little Excitement*, the tale is set in the country and conveys the message of people helping one another. The colorful illustrations of Leslie Bowman bring Harshman's text to life. Bowman, who has done work for *Cricket* magazine, began illustrating children's books in 1986.

Snow Company and *A Little Excitement*, both hardcover, large-format books, sell for \$12.95 in bookstores nationwide.

Award Goes to Coal Archives

The Eastern Regional Coal Archives in Bluefield has received a prestigious national award. This past fall the American Association for State and Local History presented the archives with a certificate of commendation for its work. West Virginia University historian Barbara Howe, who chairs the AASLH awards group for West Virginia, said the Coal Archives was the only West Virginia nomination this year, selected from several submitted from across the state.

The Eastern Regional Coal Archives, located at the Craft Memorial Library, collects items on the coal industry and its history. It is the only institution in the state solely dedicated to collecting and preserving material related to coal. The extensive collection includes photographs, tools, maps, company records, newspapers and rare books, scrip, blueprints, films, diaries, scrapbooks and oral histories.

Dr. Stuart McGehee, archivist for the collection, said the award was for "all the people who have donated items to

the archives." The AASLH is the leading organization of its sort, serving state and local history organizations and professionals nationwide. The certificate of commendation recognizes superior work using available means.

Bethany Sesquicentennial

Brooke County's Bethany College is continuing its year-long celebration of the school's founding 150 years ago. Through the year, Bethany has sponsored a number of special events and speakers highlighting its anniversary and emphasizing its liberal arts heritage. Bethany president Dr. D. Duane Cummins says the school is the oldest degree-granting institution in West Virginia and among the oldest liberal arts colleges in America.



Bethany was founded by Alexander Campbell, a Scotch-Irish minister and educator. Born in Ireland in 1788, Campbell emigrated to America in 1809 and settled in Bethany two years later. He represented Brooke County at the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829-30 and was an early advocate of the rights of Western Virginians.

The final event for the school's anniversary, Founder's Day, takes place on March 1, 1991. The guest speaker will be futurist John Naisbitt, and Lester McAllister's book *Bethany History* will be released.

Mystery Novel

John Douglas of Berkeley Springs recently published his third mystery novel with *HAUNTS: A Mystery of the Alleghenies*. In this latest release he brings back Detective Edward Harter, the hero of his first book, *Shawnee Alley Fire*. *HAUNTS* is set in a declining Allegheny Mountain railroad town. When a November flood hits,

it uncovers an old skeleton and a good chunk of the town's past. As Harter unearths the tragic story behind the bones, two more people are murdered and the mystery of another long-ago death is solved.

Douglas is news editor of the *Morgan Messenger*, Morgan County's weekly newspaper. He is originally from nearby Cumberland, Maryland, the city he has fictionalized as "Shawnee." The first mystery, set in Shawnee and the surrounding West Virginia countryside, is a modern murder-arson story. The second Douglas mystery, *Blind Spring Rambler*, is set amid the unrest of a West Virginia company coal town during the mine wars of the early 1920's.

Douglas's books have been issued in both hardcover and paperback, and published in countries around the world. His latest, *HAUNTS*, sells for \$16.95. The books are available in the mystery section of bookstores or by contacting St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010; (212) 674-5151.

GOLDENSEAL on Newsstands

The best way to get GOLDENSEAL is to become a subscriber. But if you want extra copies or would like to tell a friend where to look for the magazine in West Virginia, it's likely that a newsstand or store in your area carries your favorite publication. GOLDENSEAL began newsstand distribution with the summer 1989 issue and sales had doubled by winter. The spring 1990 issue was a sellout, and newsstand sales continue to do well.

The magazine is now distributed primarily in the central and western counties of the Mountain State, and GOLDENSEAL is seeking a distributor for the Eastern Panhandle. GOLDENSEAL sales locations include Nick's News in Huntington, Trans Allegheny Books and B. Dalton Bookstore in Charleston, Bookland in Beckley, The Shop at the Cultural Center, and The Open Book in Lewisburg, among others.

Films on West Virginia and Appalachia

Steve Fesenmaier, director of the State Library Commission's Film Services unit, provided *GOLDENSEAL* the following list of recently acquired films and videos about West Virginia and the Appalachian region. Film Services has many titles on its shelves and the largest collection of mountain movies and tapes anywhere in the country. The movies are available through local public libraries all over the state.

Ballad of a Mountain Man

55 min. (VHS) 1989 PBS
Early in the 1920's, noted folklorist Bascom Lamar Lunsford began a campaign to preserve the music and dance of the people of Appalachia and staged the first folk music festival ever presented in this country. Co-produced by WSWP-TV of Beckley with some footage provided by WVLC Film Services and Charleston filmmaker Robert Gates, *Ballad of a Mountain Man* was part of "The American Experience" series for PBS.

Catching Up With Yesterday

29 min. (16 mm) 1989 Catching Up With Yesterday Inc.
A portrait of Eastern Panhandle instrument maker and musician Andrew F. Boorman, an active bearer of folk tradition, Vandalia regular, and former *GOLDENSEAL* subject. This film explores his unique banjo style, virtuoso Auto-harp playing, and the construction of Boorman's masterfully crafted "Dixie Grand" banjos.

Chillers

88 min. (VHS) 1988 Raedon Films
This feature film was totally produced by West Virginians and has an all-West Virginia cast. Danny Boyd directs this collection of five short tales of horror. Excellent technical qualities, especially in the music and lighting.

Andy Boorman is the star of *Catching Up With Yesterday*. This 1986 portrait is by Michael Keller.



Chuck Yeager (VHS)

1989 Ross Taylor
Personal videotape showing the dedication of a remodeled Yeager airport in Charleston. Also shows Chuck Yeager in his home town of Hamlin. Recorded by photographer and pilot Ross Taylor.

Dreadful Memories

29 min. (VHS) 1988 Appalshop
The story of Sarah Ogan Gunning, a hard-scrabble lady who grew up in Appalachia the hard way. She lost her mother and a baby to starvation. Gunning wrote biting protest songs and became one of the founders of the contemporary folk music scene along with Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly.

An Evening With Don West

90 min. (VHS) 1989 WSWP-TV
Librarian and occasional *GOLDENSEAL* contributor Yvonne Farley interviews radical poet and preacher Don West. An activist since the 1930's, West has worked with many of the leading men and women of the 20th century. This tape includes the public TV broadcast plus one and a half hours of unedited material.

Fresh Horses

104 min. (VHS) 1988
Cincinnati is a place where two different worlds collide — Country Club Big City versus rural Appalachia — in this film adaptation of Larry Ketron's play. Molly Ringwald plays Jewel, the world-wise daughter of the country, looking for a man. Andrew McCarthy is a Cincinnati engineering student supposedly celebrating his recent engagement to a debutante. They have to choose whether to follow their hearts or their prejudices.

The Last of the Blue Devils

90 min. (VHS) Kino International
Butch Miles, a native of Charleston, is the drummer for one of the greatest jazz bands ever, the Count Basie Orchestra. *The Last of the Blue Devils* is a fine documentary about jazz.

Lil' Abner

113 min. (16mm) 1959 Films Inc.
Lively Gene DePaul-Johnny Mercer musical based on the Broadway version of Al Capp's comic strip. Loud and brassy, with corny comedy and good songs. Stubby Kaye is fine as Marryin' Sam, with other Dogpatch characters vividly enacted.

Next of Kin

111 min. (16mm/Rated R) 1989 Swank
Patrick Swayze stars as Truman Gates, a tough city cop transplanted from the backwoods of Appalachia to the hard streets of Chicago. When Truman's young brother is murdered by gangsters from a very different "family," the inevitable clash of the two clans — one from the country, the other from the city — results in an explosive drama of violence and retribution.



Don West. Photo by Yvonne Snyder Farley.

On Our Own Land

29 min. (VHS) 1988 Appalshop
The latest episode in the long struggle between Appalachian landowners and strip-mining companies, with an emphasis on how the broad form deed is used unjustly against the landowner. Filmed in Kentucky, the only state which still recognizes the unlimited use of the broad form deed.

Trouble Behind

56 min. (16 mm. & VHS) 1990 California Newsreel
This profile of the Kentucky mountain town of Corbin explores the origins of present racism, dating back to World War I when 200 blacks came to work the railroad. When whites returned from the war, economic competition heated up. Witnesses and newspaper clippings along with scenes from the classic film *Birth of a Nation* reconstruct events in Corbin and place them within the context of the times.

West Virginia — What America is All About

10 min. (VHS) 1990 Department of Commerce
Leslie Nielsen, star of *Airplane* and the *Naked Gun*, takes us on a tour of America's most beautiful state.

Winter People

110 min. (VHS) 1989 Nelson Facets
This film, adapted from an outstanding John Ehle novel, takes place in the North Carolina mountains. Starring Kelly McGillis, Kurt Russell and Lloyd Bridges, *Winter People* focuses on a unwed mother who must make a difficult decision when she falls in love with a stranger who's accidentally killed the father of her child.

Christmas at the Company Store

By Nancy A. Nash

In the coal camp no gala parties or society functions marked Christmas, or New Year's either, for that matter. There were practical reasons for that. Only a few houses had a dining room in the company town I grew up in on the Virginia-West Virginia state line. Most had just the kitchen and living room to entertain guests. The closest of friends, counting their children, strained the available space of any of our homes. So holiday parties did not happen, except maybe small Saturday night get-togethers with a couple of men around the kitchen table while their wives took to the living room.

The season opened for us the Monday evening after Thanksgiving. All day the previous Sunday clerks at the company store cleared the attic in order to display the new stock of toys. They draped tinsel and silver icicles and hung red and green paper bells, the kind that fold out in a honeycomb pattern. The final effect, although somewhat amateurish and even tawdry, justified all their effort. It announced that Christmas was coming, and it would come from the store.

As the Monday night opening drew near, a crowd lined up in the business part of the store. Two queues wound along each side of a big glass display which held suits for men and boys and Sunday dresses for the ladies. The lines usually extended out the front entrance, coiled around the side wings of the porch and trailed down the double tier of steps. The other end headed up the stairway toward the accounting office, which looked down from a mezzanine, and on up another narrow flight to the attic, now all fixed to dazzle.

The attic officially opened at 6:30. Once moving, the lines inched along in slow motion. Screams of wonder and delight echoed when the first little ones caught sight of the coal company version of Santa's workshop. In reality it represented an attempt to dis-

play the sort of things Sears and Montgomery Ward featured in their catalogs, only on a reduced scale. Everybody had those pages committed to memory, but to behold such items sitting there in real life was a dream come true.

The attic was not large enough for viewers to linger. One line filed around a long table surrounded on three sides by shelves reaching to the low ceiling. Table and shelves teemed with Christmas goods, piled and stacked against each other from front to back. As the procession filed past, parents forbade children to touch anything for fear that they might break it. No one could afford to pay for a gift twice. The second line wandered among wheeled toys on the floor, then the groups exchanged places. Babies cried, children shouted, and parents yelled. Clerks called prices above the pandemonium.

Each year was like the first time. For my brother and me, who were taken on shopping expeditions to Bluefield two or three times annually, it was not so awesome. It looked very much like Woolworth's and Kresge's toy counters, only more cluttered. But for small children and for families who had not been to Bluefield at Christmas, it was all they expected and wanted.

There were plenty of dolls, even black ones wearing bandana kerchiefs. A very few had glass eyes which opened and closed, "real" hair, and fancy dresses. These stood in gift boxes above the more simple styles, away from grubby fingers. Sets of toy dishes rested in cartons with slots to hold cups and saucers and plates. You'll see some of these, cheap enamel on metal, sporting expensive price tags in antique shops today.

Girls screamed over cardboard doll-houses filled with miniature furniture. Boys chose among dart boards, bow-and-arrow sets, toy cars, cap pistols and spring-operated shotguns. Ten-gallon cowboy hats and gaudy Indian war bonnets supplied dress for future

re-enactments of Saturday westerns. A few costly specimens came as one-of-a-kind, single samples.

The attic could not accommodate everything in the world. The company's Christmas collection lacked books, jigsaw puzzles and advanced games, such as Monopoly. These had to be ordered from the catalogs. I remember when Monopoly came out. My brother and I played one game for years. When the money ran out we continued on credit until he joined the Navy in World War II.

The company store viewing lasted until about ten o'clock. Shopping began the next day. Since those were Depression years, parents bought only what they could pay for. Large Christmas debts came much later. Some children got only one thing from their wish lists.

At school and Sunday school, children drew names in each grade. Some wanted to give their teachers something. School presents were quite modest — boxes of three small handkerchiefs or one large handkerchief embellished with embroidery and trimmed with lace, scarves with matching mittens or gloves, pencil sets in presentation cases having an inner compartment on hinges, and simple toys like pick-up sticks and tops. Sad to say, some families were so financially strapped that their children failed to come on the day of the gift exchange and party. A thoughtful teacher kept a reserve of small presents to cover such crises.

The holidays advanced steadily after that last Monday of November. In the first December weeks, children plundered their homes to find presents tucked away in such hiding places as a house with only two closets might have. They had no trouble uncovering what had been purchased so far. Once seen, the treasures were returned undisturbed, the young spies satisfied that Santa would bring another Christmas from the company store. ❁

Many graduates of Catholic school carry with them an indelible image of somebody we'll call Sister Grace Marie — their third grade teacher, a strict disciplinarian with a ready ruler and hawk-like gaze. I was no exception as I planned my recent trip to DeSales Heights, formerly a Catholic girls school and now a Parkersburg Montessori academy. With memories of my own school days etched in mind, I entered the red-brick, three-story building with some trepidation. I had spoken to Sister Jane Frances, Mother Superior of the Sisters of the Visitation, a few weeks earlier, and wondered what she would be like.

As I enter the dimly lit compound, modeled after the French monasteries of the turn of the century, I follow in the footsteps of an elderly nun who leads me down a long, narrow hall. We pause as she opens the dark oak doors to a small chapel. She motions for me to enter.

Sunlight pours through the huge stained glass windows which depict various religious scenes, falling onto an elegant marble altar that takes up much of the room. The altar, a memorial to Sister Michaela Kelley and her brothers and aunt, has nearly life-sized angels adorning both sides. A large mural occupies the wall behind. A cut crystal chandelier hangs in the middle of the chapel.

Another nun appears. A petite woman with thick silver hair, a thin face, and a twinkle in her eye, she introduces herself as Sister Mary Josephine. "Mother will be right down," she announces.

Then Sister Jane Frances appears. We move to a sitting room and settle ourselves on chairs that need upholstering. A large yellow dog named Honey rests at her feet. The youngish mother superior wears a modified black habit, short skirt and trim veil. Her appearance is not so far removed from other women our age, nor her manner. A nun for 25 years, she lets me know that she has vowed poverty, chastity and obedience to God and is satisfied with her decision.

"There was never any thought about going back. I just knew I wanted to be here. I just knew as soon as I walked in. It was very strange. It was just really a peace," she says. Although mother superior and there-

Faith and Works

The Sisters of DeSales Heights

By Jacqueline G. Goodwin

Photographs by Michael Keller

Mother Superior Jane Frances with a group of DeSales Heights Montessori students on a bright day last fall.





The monastery chapel is a small room dominated by stained glass and a large altar.

fore in charge at DeSales Heights, she is at age 45 the youngest of 12 nuns who make their home there. The oldest at 100 years is Sister Innocentia, who came to DeSales in 1904.

I soon discover that like the rest of the nuns, Sister Jane Frances is a passionately religious woman who has held fast to the traditions of the order and the spirit of its founders, Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Jane Frances de Chantal. They founded the order, formally the Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary, in France in 1610. It is the mission of this order to prac-

tice both faith and works, combining the contemplative life with what the mother superior calls an "active apostolate of teaching."

I learn that the sisters no longer run a boarding school for young women, closing the academy in 1975 and opening the first Montessori school in West Virginia in its place. "This year, the school opened its doors to 203 pupils," Sister Jane Frances boasts.

She tells me she has reached an important personal milestone in her spiritual service. "Celebrating my Golden Jubilee means I have been prac-

fessed for 25 years," she explains. "When Sister Innocentia took her vows, it was forever the first time. Now, when a nun takes vows, it's temporary for three years. Then at the end of those three years, she renews them for life."

Sister Jane Frances continues. "I came here in 1958 to begin the eighth grade and graduated in 1963. There were ten of us that graduated that year and I was the only one that stayed on."

"I really was apprehensive — no, scared to death — when I first came here, because I didn't know what to expect. The lifestyle was very different than it is today. The nuns unlocked the door and let me in, and then they locked the door behind me. All the time I kept thinking, 'I'll never get back out again.'"

"The nuns were cloistered and the students were told they could not, under any circumstances, go through this door," Sister Jane Frances says, pointing to a door down the hall. She reaches down to pet Honey, who licks her hand in response. "We were told that if we did step in there we would be excommunicated. The sisters would say, 'If you put one foot in here, you'll be excommunicated.' Needless to say, we didn't venture in."

"When my parents and I first moved to Parkersburg I went to Saint Margaret Marys. I came in April and they closed the school in May. Eventually, they decided to keep the boys at Saint Margaret Marys and the girls had to find another place. Since DeSales was an all-girls school they encouraged us to come here."

"I liked the place once I got here, and I grew to really love it. But the sisters were very strict. We could not listen to radio, and we could not play any music. We had supper precisely at six at night and recreation until 7:30 p.m. We studied from 7:30 to 8:15 and then we went upstairs, showered, and got into bed. At six o'clock the next morning, the nuns would turn on the lights and say, 'Rise promptly, girls, and give your hearts to God.'"

"We were allowed out on weekends and the boarders were allowed to go downtown on Saturday, but we first had to ask permission from the director or principal. And for whatever reason, we weren't allowed in the Sun Drugstore on the corner of Seventh and Market streets. I don't think she

liked the atmosphere. The store had magazines, and she thought if we read them we would be corrupted and led astray. Many of the girls had enough nerve to go in. But before they got back to DeSales the principal was waiting for them. She would greet them at the door and say, 'You were in Sun Drugstore! You are not going out next weekend.' It really amazed me that she could find out so fast."

According to Sister Jane Frances, the school curriculum was no different from the public high school's, except for religious instruction. "We studied basically the same subjects as kids who attended the public school. We even produced plays. The sisters enjoyed staging all of the Gilbert and Sullivan shows.

"In the spring we would put on a big concert, and we even had a May-pole dance. During this event we had a big outdoor religious statue that we would walk around and say the rosary. All of the students had to wear blue dress uniforms with a white frilly lace blouse, except for the seniors, who wore gowns. The lone matron wore white. Mary Albright, an alumna, made the uniforms and they were an awful shade of blue.

"Years ago, the sisters didn't go out except for education or for medical attention by doctors who wouldn't come here," continues the mother superior, noting that many doctors would make house calls for the nuns. "In fact, Dr. Gallagher, a dentist, was still coming here in 1965. He would bring his equipment and use the old-fashioned drill that was located in an upstairs room. Dr. Harris, a medical doctor, would also come to us. He even performed surgery in a little upstairs room with candles providing the only light. He would never take anything, as far as payment was concerned."

I bring Sister Jane Frances back to the present by asking her to describe the day's routine. "Our usual day starts at 5:30 a.m., when we get up and have meditation. Then we have office. That's where we say prayers for the church and all the needs of the world. Then we have mass at 7:00 a.m., followed by breakfast. Then the teaching sisters go to the academy."

The non-teaching nuns work at other things or take turns minding the door, she continues. "We have a sew-

ing room and some of them work there. At 11:30 a.m. we have private office. Then at 4:30 p.m. we have evening prayer, followed by meditation for 45 minutes. Next we have office of reading. Then at six o'clock we have supper, followed by recreation until 8:15 p.m. Then we have night prayers. Finally, we are free to go to our rooms and get ready for the next day."

"Are you allowed to read newspapers or watch television?" I inquire.

"Yes, we can read papers and watch television. Many of us listen to the radio. It seems that a lot of people still see us in an old stereotypical role. I guess it's because of the cloister. Because the public can't go inside to

observe our life, they wonder what we are doing. Just because we can't open the door and let them come in causes a lot of mystique about us."

Sister Jane Frances gets up and motions for me to follow her to the door. "As you will notice, none of our doors have door knobs," she announces. "No keys can open up our doors from the outside. We have to open the doors ourselves from inside. A former mother superior compared this tradition to that of our Lord knocking at the door." She points to a framed print that hangs on the opposite wall. "It's symbolic. The door has to be opened from within."

She says that the Visitation Order

Three schoolgirls pray to the Virgin in a secluded grotto. Experiences of this sort bound some girls — the current mother superior among them — to a life of religious service. Photographer and date unknown.





The 12 nuns at DeSales Heights today recall when many more sisters occupied the monastery. This 1948 picture shows 22. Photographer unknown.

operates schools and monasteries in 14 states, with the total membership of the order around 100. "Unfortunately, we don't have as many entering as we once did," she states. "This monastery was built to house 45 sisters and at one time we had that many. But as I said before, our number has dwindled down to 12," she says. "It is not particular to any one order, and both progressive and traditional orders

have suffered the loss of numbers."

Sister Jane Frances says that in the past many entered as a safeguard against poverty and old age. Many came in obedience to some mysterious command or in fear of marriage or spinsterhood. But that has all changed.

"Three years ago we had two sisters leave DeSales and we haven't had any other women enter. We've had some widows who were interested in mon-

astery life, but our strict lifestyle just wasn't for them.

"Our founder, Jane Frances de Chantal, was a widow herself, and at times our order was the only one that would accept widows. However, it got to the point that all of our monasteries were top heavy with the elderly, many of them just wanting a place to retire. They wanted the security that they were going to be taken care of.

But we had to put a stop to it, because we don't have enough young people in our monasteries to take care of the elderly as it is.

"Now we encourage people to enter after they've gone to school or held a job. That kind of growth is necessary," the mother superior says, adding that she herself felt sheltered during her early years as a nun due to her lack of outside experiences.

"Now we want young women to decide to enter because they believe that it is the type of life they desire," she says. "What we can do now, which we were never allowed to do before, is if someone shows an interest in our type of life, she can come and spend weekends. She can keep returning, and maybe once a month, or every weekend if she chooses, she

can go to office and prayers and recreation and take meals with us and see on a first-hand basis what our life is all about. And then she can come and live with us for a longer period of time before she makes the commitment.

"We still consider our order cloistered, but after Vatican II* advocated broad, liberalizing changes in the 1960's we took down the cloister separation. We can come and go as we see fit. No longer do we move about in strict antique garb, speaking only when spoken to," she says. "We're not so isolated. What goes on in the

*Vatican II, the 21st ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church, met in Rome from 1962 to 1965. Called by Pope John XXIII, the council liberalized many points of Catholic belief and practice.

world goes on here too. But we're still cloistered and we're still a contemplative order.

"Our family members and relatives can now visit whenever they desire, where they once were restricted to once a month. And we can go home to our families and visit. When I first entered, we were not allowed to go home at all. If a family member died, we did not get to go to the funeral. But that has all changed," she explains.

Sister Marie Antoinette Hynes appears in the doorway. Sister Jane Frances motions for her to sit down.

"I have been here for 63 years," Marie Antoinette tells me. "I was born in Parkersburg in 1919 and first came to DeSales when I was seven years old. My parents were separated, so I came here. It was so much like home

Sister Mary Raphael at work in the library.



to me, I considered the sisters my mother and the other students my sisters. It was my second family.

"I don't know if Mother explained the difference between out-sisters and in-sisters or not," she says. Sister Jane Frances shakes her head and tells her to continue.

"The out-sisters could go outside the building," the older nun says. "They could go downtown. They could meet people. And they wore a slightly different habit and they took slightly different vows. They didn't take a vow of chastity but one of obedience. I chose to be an in-sister. It was up to us to decide at the time we made our commitment to the Church. The out-sisters did china painting and made lace doilies and other items and sold them to help pay off our mortgage.

"Until the early 1970's, I never even came out here into the lobby. There was a grate over there which we stood behind. But times have changed.

"Our oldest sister is Sister Innocentia, 100 years old on July 4. We call her our little patriot. She lost her parents at an early age and had been living in an orphanage when she came to

DeSales as a teenager. She took her final vows in 1911 and has lived and worked here ever since. Her duties have included cooking and working in the laundry room, but she has been confined to bed in the infirmary for the past six years. She has the use of all of her faculties and hears well, and she is loved by all."

Sister Marie Antoinette quickly stands up and announces, "I'm sorry, but I must go now and ring the bell. It's my responsibility." Sister Jane Frances excuses her. She explains that the ringing of bells governs life at the monastery. "When the bell rings we're supposed to consider it the words of God calling. A lot of monasteries don't use the bells anymore, but we do for everything."

She leaves the lobby for a few minutes, returning in the company of an elderly nun. Her arm draped around the older woman's shoulder protectively, she introduces Sister Francis de Sales. The two nuns sit down and the conversation resumes.

"I will have been here for 69 years on December 1," the former Josephine Nordlund explains. "I came here at age 20 because I wanted a contempla-

tive life. At the time I entered, I said, 'If I leave the world I will leave it content.'

"At the time I came here my parents lived in Gassaway, and the town only had a public high school. My mother was distressed at the thought of my sister and me attending the school in town. She said that more than one girl has gone out of that high school 'expecting,' so she made the decision to send me here. My uncle paid the tuition the first year I came. Then my sister came in my place, and I worked for two years. When I was 20 years old my parents moved to New York, and I entered DeSales in 1921 and have been here ever since.

"There were so many sisters here when I first came. I know there must have been over 30 of them. I remember several elderly ladies wanted to enter — widows — and we had to open part of the academy to make rooms for them. That was back in 1942.

"You know, we used to grow all of our food here in large gardens," Sister Francis de Sales continues. "We also raised flowers and grew grapes.

(continued on page 18)

Sister Philomena, a dwarf, teaches sequential learning to a group of pre-schoolers.





In the Cloister

Photoessay by Michael Keller

The teaching mission of the Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary requires them to work in the secular world daily, but they live in cloistered quarters, in the Catholic tradition of religious separation for those who choose it. The cloister is ordinarily closed, but photographer Michael Keller was privileged to be an exception. He describes his recent visit in the following words and pictures:

After touring the classrooms and other public facilities at DeSales Heights, Sister Immaculata brought me to a door with a simple, hand-lettered sign that read "Cloister—Do Not Enter." This door separated the public area of the monastery, with its sanctuary and schoolrooms, from the private living quarters of the sisters. When Sister Immaculata led me through the door and into the cloister, it was like stepping into another world.

While the classrooms were spacious and uniformly lit with modern fluorescent fixtures, the cloister (left) was dark and mysterious, a contrasting world of bright light and deep shadows. Simple single-bulb lamps hung from the ceilings in the hallways, and if the window light was adequate the lights were kept off. Some outer



halls had rows of windows streaming daylight into the cloister, illuminating the wood floors and the statues, either on floor pedestals or on wall sconces, that were present in every hall. It was in one of these halls (left) that Sister Immaculata and I came upon Mother Superior Jane Frances checking the day's mail.

The sister led me through the corridor, past more of the ever-watchful statuary, to a typical cell, or bedroom. This cell (left, below) was presently unused, but representative of the private quarters. Simply furnished with bed, a dressing table with a hand mirror hanging on the wall, two chairs, a table with lamp and a wall-mounted porcelain fixture with bare bulb, the cell reflects the Spartan life the nuns have chosen for themselves.

Back on tour, Sister Immaculata stopped outside Sister Mary Vincent's cell to discuss some business with her, then she led me to the assembly room to look over old scrapbooks. Sister Mary Francis de Sales came in to assist in identifying photographs (facing page, upper left), and as she perused the books she became amused at the photos of past Christmases and the decorations that were used.

Three dogs have the run of the Parkersburg cloister, and outside of an office Sister Immaculata introduced me to her favorite, a large black dog named Ebony. Ebony accepted a good scratch behind the ear from the sister (far right), then went back to sleep.

I am sure that Sister Immaculata thought that she would get away without being photographed. She was wrong. Outside of another sister's cell (right, below), the always-smiling Sister Immaculata stands between the light and shadows in the private world of the cloister at DeSales Heights.







Sister Mary Josephine's cross holds relics of the founders of the Visitation Order. The nuns, sworn to poverty, exchange crosses to symbolize that they must not become attached to personal belongings.

(continued from page 14)

But that has changed, too. There's no one to take care of the flowers and the grapevines have all died. I've got arthritis so bad I can't even bend, but I love flowers and would love to have them."

Sister Mary Josephine reappears and lets Sister Jane Frances know that she is needed upstairs. The mother superior helps Sister Francis de Sales up and guides her down the hall. Before she goes she thanks me for the interview.

As the two wander off, Sister Mary Josephine offers to lead me on a tour of the monastery. As I accompany her through the old structure, I learn that she was born in Fairmont. A teaching nun, she also will soon celebrate her Golden Jubilee.

Even though her once dark hair is now silver gray, Sister Mary Josephine still has plenty of bounce in her step. We start the tour in the school's base-

ment and quickly move upstairs, finally resting in the mother superior's office. Over 15 photos of Sister Jane Frances's pet dogs adorn one wall. Two cockatiels and one parakeet chirp in cages on the other side of the room. Ten African violets stand behind the desk.

From a window I look to the courtyard below. The grounds are green and the flowers in bloom. As we walk out of the office, I steal a glance at the forbidden area down the hall — the cloister. The place is illuminated only by a single light bulb with a pull chain, and I conjure up thoughts of what it is like. Reading my thoughts, Sister Mary Josephine says, "That's where our cloistered area is. Nothing fancy."

We walk outside. Up close, the building looks its age. Paint has peeled and hangs in tiny pieces from the window sills. There's a tear in one of the window screens. The gardens and shrubs need more attention, although Sister Mary Josephine tells me that two laypeople take care of the grounds.

"That building over there used to be the laundry," she says. "We used to take care of the seminary's laundry. The sisters would wash the young men's clothes. But we don't do that anymore. Mother's dogs and puppies live in the building now," she adds.

We make our way down a steep flight of steps and soon are inside an underground vault that contains the remains of those sisters who lived, prayed, and made their home at DeSales Heights. Some of the burials go back to the late 19th century, and some are very recent. The latest is that of Sister Francis McBride who died July 23, 1988, at 65 years. She had been a nun for only three years.

As we walk back upstairs I ask about the silver cross which Sister Mary Josephine wears. "It contains the relics of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal and Saint Francis de Sales," she replies. "Every year we must exchange crosses. We believe that no one should become so attached to an item that she would not want to ever part with it. In the past, sisters were required to change their bedrooms or cells once a year. But we don't have to do that anymore."

Like Mother Superior, Sister Mary Josephine wears the modified habit.

She says she prefers the shorter style rather than the long traditional habit many of the older nuns wear. It's a matter of convenience, as are some other clothing changes. "Years ago when straight pins were used instead of zippers it took us over 20 minutes to get dressed," she says. "But that too has changed." We part company and I head for my car. Sister Mary Josephine waves good-bye.

As I walk out of the compound into the parking lot I take one more look at DeSales Heights. Inside are 12 women who have chosen the religious life. They have told me that it was the voice of God that called them here. It is a calling heard only in the heart, but unmistakable. "You hear it. You know it" were remarks I heard more than once.

The sisters of the Visitation Order are proof that the basic essentials of the contemplative life are as relevant today as they have ever been. It is apparent that they will continue to speak of the cross with shining eyes and retire at an hour when the rest of the world is beginning to seek out entertainment. They will rise for each new day while the rest of us are still resting. And they will continue to follow the rules of an order founded centuries ago in France.

"This is still a struggling order. But I am positive we will continue to grow," Sister Jane Frances had told me earlier. "We will always continue in service to God." ❀

Noon prayer in the choir room off the sanctuary at DeSales Heights.



"Good for Us to be Here"

The Sisters Settle In

By Jacqueline G. Goodwin

In 1864, when West Virginia was one year old and the Civil War still far from over, the pastor of St. Xavier's Catholic Church in Parkersburg needed some help with the Lord's work. Father Parke made application to the Bishop of Wheeling for teaching sisters, specially trained nuns to take charge of the religious instruction of the youth of the parish. The request was approved, and the Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary in Washington, D.C., and Frederick, Maryland, were asked to send reinforcements.

Led by Mother Superior Mary Appolonia Diggs, a colony of eight nuns set out for Parkersburg in July. Travel was uncertain under wartime conditions. First the trip was delayed due to combat along the route. Finding another avenue of transit, the group again set out on July 25. They traveled by way of rail.

According to the "Annals of the Convent of the Visitation," a typewritten volume among the Parkersburg monastery's records, the sisters had scarcely gone a few miles when they were informed that the westward tracks were torn up and the route intercepted by the Southern army. That meant an immediate return to Frederick and another delay. Meanwhile, the mother superior received correspondence from Father Parke in Parkersburg, urging the nuns to hurry lest their new house on Avery Street be taken over by the government for troop barracks.

On July 30, the journey was again undertaken, the group proceeding this time toward Baltimore and Pennsylvania. After going three miles, another delay was announced, this one due to the rapid transfer of government



Sister Mary Appolonia Diggs, the founder and first mother superior of the Parkersburg monastery, led her nuns to West Virginia during the turbulent Civil War era. Photographer and date unknown.

troops. Darkness coming on, the train again pulled back into Frederick. The sisters decided to spend the night aboard the train, according to the "Annals," the discouraged mother superior nearly convinced "to accept another delay as a sign from God." The next morning found the group finally on their way. They were held up again by the transfer of troops from the west, and it was late afternoon before "the spires of Baltimore came into view."

In the "Annals," the mother superior describes the ill-fated trip with some humor. "Some of the conjectures of fellow travelers concerning us were

rather amusing," she writes. "Thinking we were Methodist ladies going to or returning from camp meeting, which supposition was no doubt suggested by our peculiar styles of dress, bonnets and shawls disguising the religious habit, which was not so generally worn then by traveling sisters."

Father Parke, worried by the delay and unable to obtain any word about the group, decided to go to Baltimore to see what was wrong. Arriving shortly after the sisters, he assumed all responsibility for the journey. The little party set out again on August 1, reaching Wheeling two days later. After a short stop the journey resumed, broken by another stopover in Grafton. Finally, on August 6, the teaching sisters arrived at Parkersburg.

The "Annals" describe the sisters' newly built house as not quite complete upon their arrival. "The doors and windows were unfastened, no beds were prepared and the whole setup was not a little discouraging. Our dear venerable Mother, looking around through the unfurnished rooms and upon the bare walls, exclaimed, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here.'

"By the advice of our good Father we repaired to the residence of Colonel J. Cass Rathbone for a few days, he and his wife having offered it for our accommodations previous to their leaving for the Springs. Colonel and Mrs. Rathbone, recent converts to the faith, had generously aided all the plans of their indefatigable pastor for a community of Sisters in this place, lending their wealth and influence to the work, and continuing their kind, generous assistance to us for years."

After staying at the Rathbone residence for three days, the nuns took possession of their new home. A sleeping room was selected for the mother superior, the other sisters occupying the large dormitory, bedsteads and curtains being adjusted to form alcoves. "To shut out the lightning glare at night and hot sunlight by day, as well as to shield ourselves from outside view, we had recourse to the expedient of dividing our counterpanes and bedspreads for window curtains, making a most amusing variety of colors," the "Annals" report.

The next concern of the sisters was to arrange a chapel where they could have the consolation of assisting at holy mass. The wooden altar destined for their use was not finished, so a borrowed piano was transformed into an altar and the first mass was celebrated on the feast of St. Lawrence on August 10.

The place gradually assumed a monastic character. "Enclosure was not at once established," the "Annals" state, "so that many were the visitors that called, some to show their respect and kind feeling, and others to gratify their curiosity to see what kind of beings nuns were. Our Mother had been advised to allow freedom of admission for the satisfaction of the favorably disposed and the gratification of the curious. Many of these latter were much surprised to find us 'like other people' to know that we could laugh at all, and were not shut up in dungeons. In a few more weeks our parlor grate was in position and turn set up, giving our home a more monastic appearance."

As the people of the town became acquainted with the sisters and their work, help came from various sources. A \$500 loan from Colonel Rathbone and contributions equalling nearly as much enabled the sisters to purchase classroom supplies and open school with a large enrollment of pupils, both Catholic and Protestant. During the first months sisters were sent from other houses of the order to help teach. Postulants or probationary sisters also began to arrive, making the house seem smaller than ever.

The "Annals" describe the crowding in detail and sometimes with amusement. One sister who had the misfortune to occupy a room used for piano practice "from morn till night"



finally found it too much and asked to return to her original house, the old book reports. "Always amiable and good natured, cheerful in every circumstance, she could not, however, restrain from saying, 'I'm so tired of pianos that I fear I would not want to go to heaven if I knew there was a piano there.'"

The first scholastic year ended successfully in the latter part of June 1865. But the future was not assured, as other private schools sprang up, diverting many of the best patrons from the academy. Changes had to be made in the teaching staff and finances sank so low that often the strictest necessities could not be procured.

In spite of everything, the sisters resolved to carry on and even to expand their mission. Preparations were made for another year of teaching and the order was asked to establish a benevolent school for very poor children. The sisters accepted the challenge and a frame building adjoining the church was moved to the convent grounds. The new building was provided with desks and blackboards, and in September 1867 enrollment reached over 75.

The sisters were under the impression that the Parkersburg property belonged to them, and they hoped to build an addition from the dowries of newly professed sisters. It turned out the property belonged to the diocese, however. A debt of \$13,000 was incurred and the privations of cramped quarters continued for years. In May 1881, additional classrooms, dormito-

ries and halls finally made life at the little convent more bearable. Later a basement laundry was added and water was piped to the upper floors of the academy and monastery, relieving the sisters of the necessity of carrying it upstairs from the pump.

As time passed, the city of Parkersburg crept closer around the convent on Avery Street. The number of sisters grew and more room was required. It soon became evident that a larger site would have to be obtained and a new building erected. Ten acres overlooking the Ohio River were located.

The sisters dreamed of building a real monastery there, in accordance with plans laid down in the Custom Book of the Order. According to the "Annals," they were anxious to get out of the city where they might have a little monastic seclusion; where they would not have to make their meditations to the tune of "In the Sweet Bye and Bye" and "other popular ditties as was often the case in their present location, for the proximity of a cheap theater, which was also used for local band practice, made the night hideous."

The "Annals" state that in 1892, Mother Superior Mary Vicent Kilduff set her nuns to work praying for divine assistance with the building program. Prayers were fervent and continuous. A novena or nine-day devotion was begun to Saint Francis de Sales, the founder of the order. Each day his statue was carried to the different parts of the house where prayers and hymns were recited and



Left: The Parkersburg nuns have had a teaching mission from the first. This is a procession of 19th-century schoolgirls. Photo by Ned Starkey, 1885.

Below: The completion of the new monastery in 1900 marked the end of the early history of the sisters' mission in Parkersburg. Photographer and date unknown.

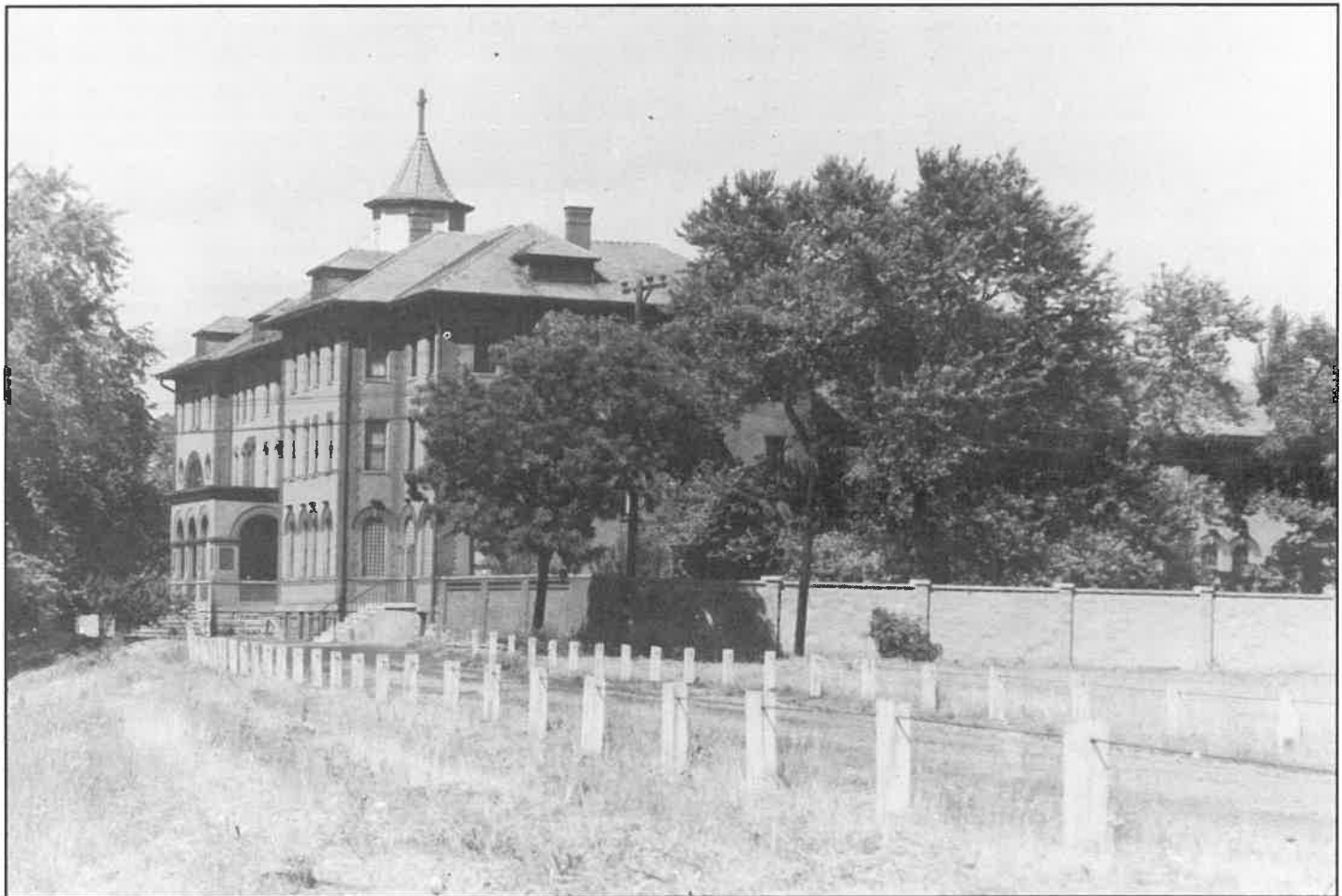
sung in his honor. Help came from unexpected sources, first through a large legacy left to one of the sisters and then through a benefactress. Steps were taken to obtain the new property, about a mile and a half away.

Plans were submitted by architect

D. W. Daley and excavation for the new monastery was begun in March 1899. The cornerstone was laid in May of the same year. Construction continued during the summer and winter, and by May 1900 the building was almost finished. Before enclosure was established an opening day was held

during which the public came to see the new monastery and to learn what they could about the mysterious lives of nuns. According to the "Annals," "Many were disappointed for there was not much attraction in the white walls, bare floors, and austere furnished rooms. Curiosity was far from satisfied but an amount of prejudice was broken down by the visible poverty which reigned throughout the house."

On July 16, 1900, the sisters took possession, beginning a new century in a new home. This is the red-brick monastery, named DeSales Heights by Mother Superior Mary Cecelia Mulrine, that has served the sisters down to the present. ❁



The Dunkles of Deer Run

A Pendleton County Family

By John L. Dunkle, Sr.

My parents, Newman Greenberry Dunkle and Genina Margaret Dahmer, were married and went to housekeeping on the Philip Mallow farm less than a mile from their Pendleton County birthplaces. They shared the Mallow home with Mr. and Mrs. Mallow and their son Philip, who kept them in maple syrup that he dipped from the kettle and slipped to them. Mother told us that young Philip did it so cleverly that his father was unaware of his pilfering.

Leonidas Wirt, their first child, and Walter Scott, second child, were both born there. Father kept the family in meat through the winters by killing wild turkeys that foraged on the corn shocks. He had a Pittsburgh muzzle-loading rifle that we all learned to shoot. We had a bullet mold, so we bought bars of lead, melted it and poured it into the mold, bumped the bullet out, and cut off the neck. From a pound of lead, we had nearly 200 bullets.

Mother inherited 91 acres improved by a four-room log house connected by an entry way to a log kitchen. That became our new home. A log barn for horses, sheep and cows was on this property that joined her family's homeplace near Deer Run. Only about 20 acres were tillable, with 50 acres

woodland and the remainder in pasture, ground oak brush, mountain laurel and huckleberry brush, also called weed brush, that was almost indestructible.

There was no cash crop except the mountain chestnuts, sold in the fall to clothe our large family. For years our family of seven boys and one girl produced a chestnut-picking squad of four or five, who having gone barefoot through the summer could walk with impunity over the frosty ground covered with chestnut burrs. When our feet were numbed by cold we made a cow stand up so we could warm our feet where she had lain. The blight wiped out the chestnuts in 1923, but fortunately our family had grown into adulthood.

The third child was William Wayne, then Wade Hampton. I was born on November 4, 1884, the fifth son. My father said many times that my birth almost kept him from voting in the presidential election. Then came John Lee, Glenn Howard, Etta Mae, and a stillborn Charles Elmer. Last came Roy. My parents, exhausted in finding names, did not confer a middle name on Roy, but somewhere in his teens he added an O, probably because Dr. Osceola Dyer attended him when he had an attack of pleurisy.

Our farm life was not monotonous. Sundays were for rest and recreation. Our parents were very hospitable, and there were always guests. With so many, we children ate at the second, sometimes even the third table. Many Sunday afternoons became hymn fests. Father loved to sing and the hymn book, *Harmonica Sacra*, published at Singers Glen, Virginia, had many of the hymns popular at that time. We all joined in and vied with each other in efforts at harmony.

Wirt had a violin and played for the square dances following house raisings, log rollings, land clearings, and quilting parties. One unforgettable evening Will Bowers and Uncle Adam Dahmer, neighbors who lived near us, came for a night of dancing. The cider was good. Both men were clever tap and clog dancers. Wirt played "The Arkansas Traveler," "Turkey in the Straw" and other favorites. The rag carpet was rolled back and the dancing continued until Will Bowers, a bachelor, decided he must go home and feed his chickens.

Dad was a staunch Democrat, and he never forgave Uncle Ad who Dad said received a hat from a merchant who was a Republican and became one, too. My father was active in the

Walter Scott Dunkle was the second brother in the sprawling Pendleton County family recalled by our author. Walter went into the world as teacher, merchant, and politician. Photographer and date unknown.

Farmer's Alliance and in politics, nationally and locally.

Pendleton County had run its own Civil War. The Democrats were in the majority and volunteered heavily for the Confederacy. The Republicans hid in groups in the marshy areas of the county and were called Swamps. They raided farms night and day. My mother told me how they had to bury their meat after fall butchering, and my father often told how they would take their horses to the woods to escape from the Swamps when they came on a pillaging foray. There is a story that the leader of the Swamps sent a group of his followers to raid a chicken coop. The fellows raided the coop of their leader and brought in his rooster. The next morning he held up his own rooster and said, "You damned secessionist, you'll taste mighty good!"

As the teenage manpower increased, our need for provender also grew — more corn, wheat, buckwheat, oats, rye, pumpkins and beans. Many farmers had worn-out fields they were letting go fallow. Dad rented such properties and we farmed them. The croppings were not good but we needed the production. Fallow land accumulates a surplus of weed seeds to harass the farmer, and I learned much about getting bread by the sweat of one's brow.

Near my tenth birthday I became Mother's helper. I welcomed the release from farm chores. My sister was the baby and I became baby sitter, assistant cook and housekeeper.

Dad liked to check on my school work, and after study time in the evening I would take McGuffey's speller to him. With the speller in one hand and a long piece of kindling pine in the other, he would put me through the

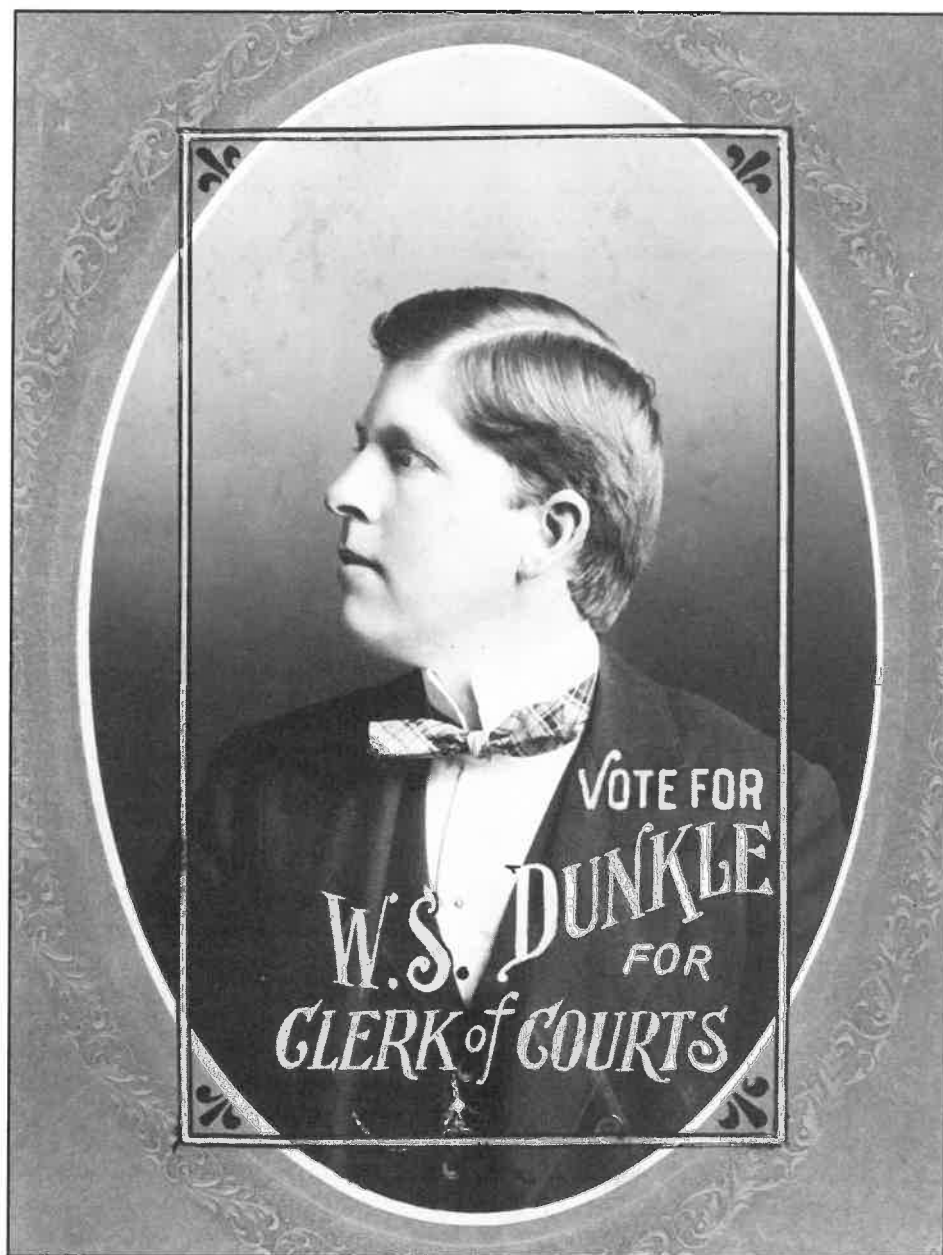
lesson. Each word had to be spelled by syllables and carried through cumulatively. All errors were corrected by a hit on the head, so I soon learned to be prepared before approaching him.

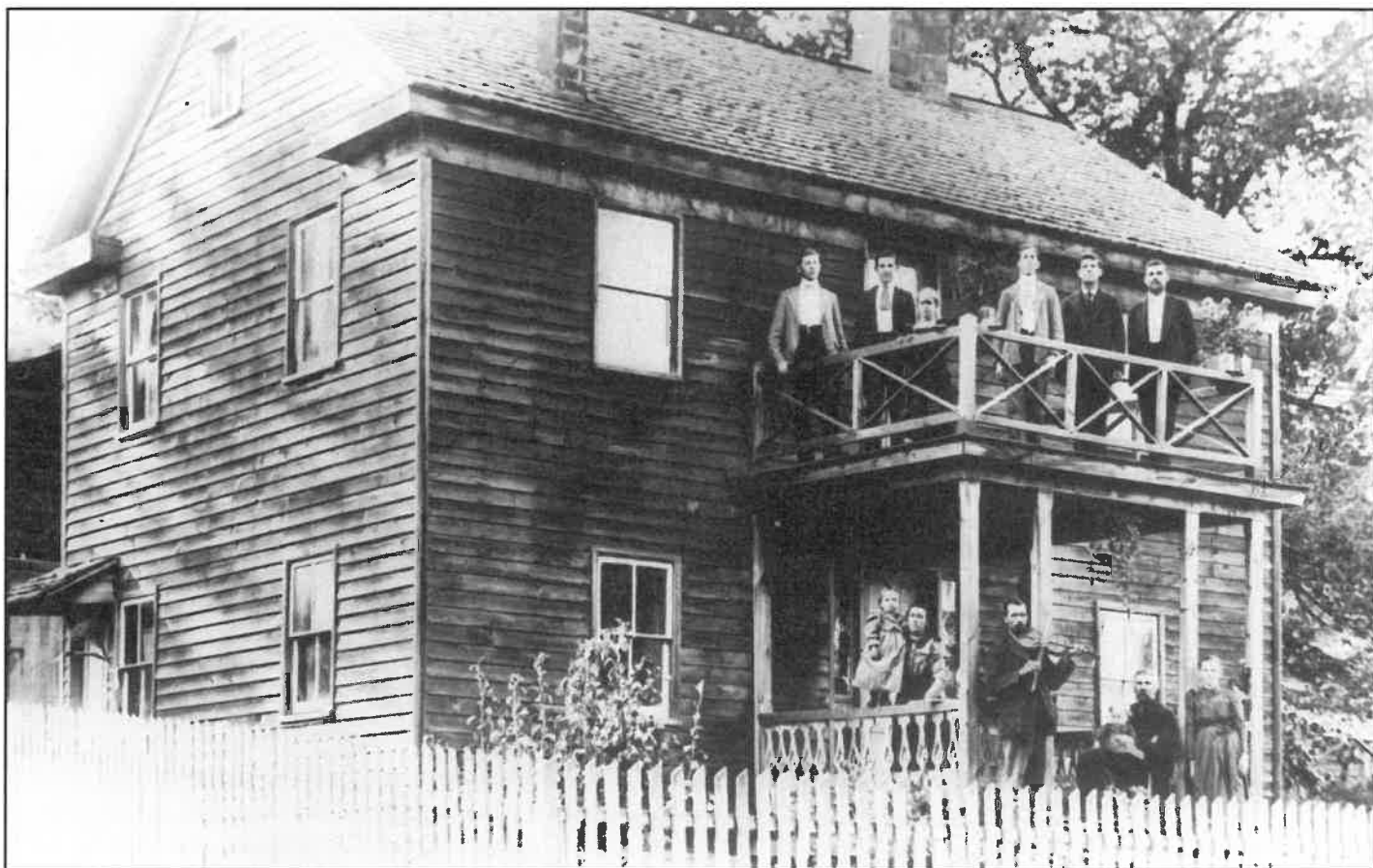
Apple butter was made in 40-gallon stir-offs. This was usually a two-day task, for ten bushels of apples had to be peeled and cored. Ad Martin, a neighbor, had a 40-gallon copper kettle that he rented for a gallon of apple butter. Plans must be made ahead if a family wanted to rent it. Boiling and stirring continued until the butter was ready to be removed from the fire and dipped into one-gallon crocks.

There was a cellar more than half

underground where the hard cider, vinegar, sauerkraut, potatoes, apples, turnips, and pumpkins were stored. Cabbage, beets, and more potatoes were buried to protect from freezing. A pit was dug, lined with straw, the food stored and covered with more straw, and then came boards and a foot or more of soil on top. Pit storage was good but difficult to open.

The wood ashes from the fireplace and the kitchen stove were emptied into a V-like box made of five-foot boards. Water poured on the ashes leached out as lye into the trough and then into an iron kettle. We had kept some of our fat hog meat for soap





Above: The Dunkles of Deer Run, at the house built during John's boyhood. Walter, Howard, Etta, John, "Ham" and Will occupy the upper porch, left to right, with Mary, Lizzie, Wirt, father Newman (with baby Roy) and mother Genina on the lower porch. Photographer unknown, about 1900.

Below: Oldest son Wirt followed in the Dunkle tradition of farming. He is shown here with nephew William. Photographer and date unknown.



making. The lye and fat were boiled in an iron kettle. The soap hardened when it cooled, then was cut into blocks and aged briefly before using. It served for bathing, laundry, and all washing needs. Kind to your hands? Well, if used vigorously it would get them clean.

We always had ten or more stands of bees. Dad cared for them until the older brothers took over. Frequently a stand would swarm, and we lost some every summer. They would choose a hollow tree on the mountains. We would set bait on a high point, give the wild bees two or more days to find it, then the bee hunter would go and trace the bees. It was a challenging pastime. I spent many afternoons tracing bees and found five bee trees. In the fall we harvested the honey by cutting down the trees, controlling the bees by pine torches. Three gallons of honey was a good find. The trees were initialed when found and that brand was respected by other wild bee enthusiasts.

In the spring after the sheep were sheared, the best fleece was selected and carefully picked through to remove thorns and dirt, then taken to the carding machine to be prepared for

spinning. The spun wool was usually colored by boiling bark from the oaks, then knitted into mittens, scarfs, caps, wristlets and sweaters.

Medical care was almost impossible to get and parents and neighbors became quite proficient in treating the accidents and ills that plague man. Each fall, my mother had us gather boneset, slippery elm bark, and other plants that were tied and hung to dry for teas and poultices. Farm animals, too, were cared for by community health practices. Sheep were dipped for ticks, chicks treated for gapes by swabbing the throat with stiff hairs from a horse's tail, doubled and twisted, and fever blisters were rubbed with wheat straws from manure piles.

There were some faith cures, haunted areas and other magic peculiar to our community. My father could remove the fire from burns. I can attest to it, for I felt great relief after he blew, rubbed and repeated some words over my burns. He passed the technique on to my sister, and she gave it to my son who has forgotten it. Jacob Heavener, who lived down near Greenawalt Gap, was afflicted by witches and spent seven years in bed, then lived normally for five years, then repeated that cycle before he died of old age.

A dentist came to Franklin in my early teens, too late to help us greatly. Before that if a tooth ached, it was either pulled or broken and the patient suffered until nature gave release. Once I had a decayed molar that was aching. I started to Franklin, but met the dentist on horseback before I had gone a mile. We dismounted, tied our horses, and I sat on a log while he found a straight-handled hooked blade that was covered with dried blood. He made two or three hooks around the tooth, took his forceps and presto, out came the tooth with small pieces of gum attached. We mounted our horses, he off to his patient, I for my home, thankful that my toothache was gone.

In my early teens the whole family spent almost a year building a frame two-story, six-room house to replace the old log house. Timber was cut, logged to the saw mill, and the lumber kiln-dried and planed. My brothers and I exchanged farm labor for carpenters' pay. When this house was completed we had a house-moving

party to tear down the old log house and rebuild it about 200 feet away for use as a woodworking shop.

Soon after the house was built, we found a new spring. A dozen or more white pine logs 16 inches or more in diameter and 12 feet long were bored from end to end through the center, to make a pipeline to bring the spring water nearer the house. The piped water poured into a large trough for horses and cows, then on to the new milk house which had been erected for storing milk, butter and cheese.

There were four maple sugar orchards in the neighborhood, each operated by us at least once during my teens. We made spiles from straight stalks of elder cut 15 inches long, tapered by pocket knives to fit the hole made by the tapping bit. The pith was removed from the spiles with a heated iron rod. The troughs were made from two- to three-foot blocks from trees 12 or more inches in diameter, split through the middle, then adzed out to catch the sugar water dropping from the spiles. A well made trough held two or more gallons. On good days, 500 gallons of water would be collected by a worker with a team of horses, a sled and one or two barrels. A season's run produced 300 to 500 pounds of sugar and 20 to 40 gallons of syrup.

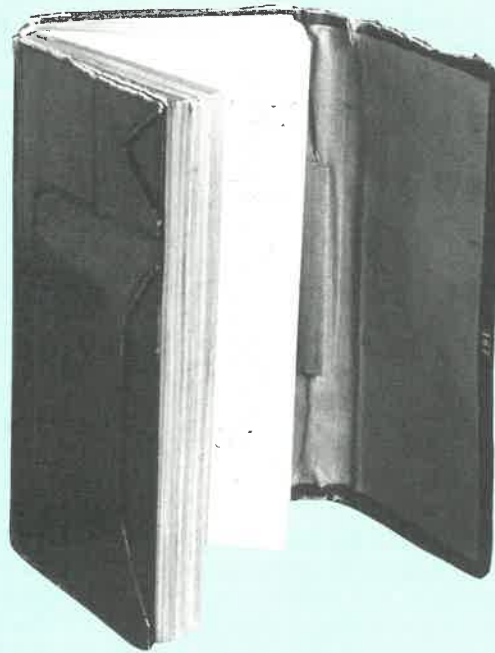
Most farmers made a trip to Harrisonburg, Virginia, 40 miles away, for fertilizer for fall wheat and rye planting. It was a four-day trip, usually in August. One year Dad and I took four horses and a heavy wagon. Mother sent a food box full of bread, bacon, ham, eggs, potatoes, coffee and pie. Dad rode the saddle horse with lines to the lead horses. I was on a seat in the front of the wagon to handle the brake. On the second day about 10 o'clock, we arrived in Harrisonburg, loaded our fertilizer, fed our horses, got a bucket of beer, ate lunch and returned ten miles.

Coming home the fourth day I felt my brake lever go slack while descending Shenandoah Mountain. I yelled, "Stop!" as I saw the rear left tire roll over the edge of the road. Dad turned his team to the right to block the wagon and reined in his wheel horses.

"Lige" Hiser, a neighbor farmer following in his wagon, was able to stop just back of us. The three of us cut a

Howard and Ella Dunkle at the time of their wedding. Photographer unknown, 1912.





A Dunkle diary.

The ambitious, energetic Dunkles left a variety of historical evidence behind them, including oral traditions, photographs and written materials. One of the most charming items is son Walter's diary from 1899.

Walter Scott Dunkle, 23, began the last year of the old century with the following observations: "Sun. Jan. 1, 1899 — Today I launch into another year. It finds me teaching the Circleville school, with an enrollment of 49 scholars. I have raised a flag on the school-house, which I hope will soon be followed over the county. It is the first I remained at my boarding place all day owing to snow which is about shoe-mouth deep.

"I am opposed to Imperialism. Favor the Free Coinage of Silver. I look forward to a time when the Negro will cause more trouble than he has ever caused before. I have spent the day pleasantly."

long pole, pried the wheel off the ground, and blocked it up. We gathered big handfuls of green chestnut leaves, for the tire was too hot to handle with bare hands, and retrieved the tire and had it back on the wooden rim before it cooled. We drove nails in the check block to deter the tire from again slipping off, and continued down the mountain.

We had an apple orchard of 50 or more trees and nearly every spring Levi Eye came with new varieties of apples to graft onto new trees and onto vigorous limbs of old trees. Many trees thus bore several varieties. Father bought plums, apricots, peaches, pears, and sweet, sour, marilla, and blackheart cherries from nurseries. The McGuffey readers had taught us to "waste not, want not," so all surplus fruit was preserved, pickled, canned, jellied, dried or made into jam. There was no refrigeration.

When I was ten years old, open roads were built. Prior to the open road, there were only right-of-ways

across farms leading to the county seat. A trip by wagon or horseback meant the opening and closing of from ten to 20 gates. Farms had at least two gates, and some had three to five. When the open or public road was built each adult was required to work four days a year on road maintenance under an appointed road supervisor. Progress, yes, but poor roads. No snow removal. If a horse could not break the deep snows and drifts, we didn't travel until a change of weather opened the roads.

The diamond-back rattlesnake and the copperhead came down from the mountains during the summers. We learned to be alert for them and luckily none of us was ever bitten. I had two close escapes, one when I climbed a rail fence and reached the top with my hands on either side of a coiled rattler. I jumped off and away. The second fright came in picking huckleberries when I placed my bucket against two rattlers mating. Once in my late teens Hampton and I found a

rattler. He suggested skinning it alive, so I stuck a tang of a pitchfork through its head and held it while he skinned it. Dad was not pleased and assured us he would not condone such cruelty.

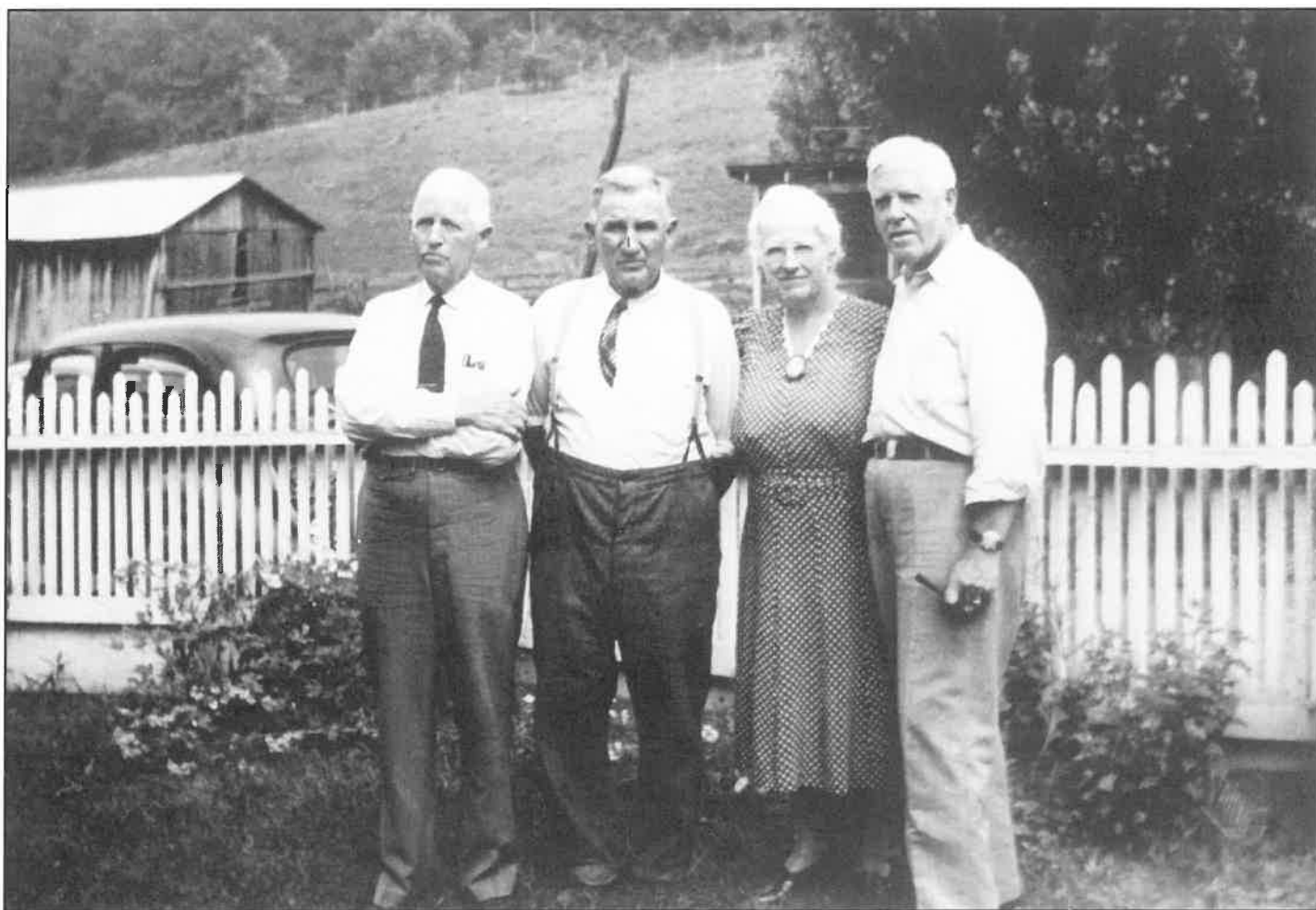
We threshed wheat, rye, oats, and buckwheat by flail on the barn floor in my early childhood. The flail was a wooden handle at the end of which a stouter and shorter stick called a swiple or swingle swung freely. Later came the threshing machine with eight horses, next the portable steam engine, then the traction engine, and lastly the tractor to power the threshing machine. We saw the sickle for cutting grain, then the cradle, followed by the binder.

All bed mattresses were emptied and the ticking washed and refilled with wheat straw just after the grain threshing — an annual event and a busy day, too. The refilled mattress required some agility until the straw was crushed into a safe, comfortable place to sleep. One could always look forward to the mattress yielding more to one's body each night.

We kept ducks and geese. They were the source of feathers for pillows and comforters. Usually twice a year, spring and fall, Mother would take a chair and go out onto the lawn. We would catch a duck, put it in her lap on its back, and she would hold the duck with one hand and pluck the feathers with the other. At each pluck, the duck squawked. The geese were treated likewise.

Sunday mornings at about nine, 20 or more ewes and their lambs led by the belled ewe came off the mountain where they grazed. Dad always met them promptly with his salt bag. In the late afternoon, they returned to the woods that we burned yearly to keep the brush tender for forage. Dad's second Sunday morning chore was to go to his father's home with his razor, brush and shaving mug to shave him.

Easter was the big event of the year, participated in by all ages. Eggs were boiled with the outer skins of onions and other vegetable dyes. The Easter Rabbit hid the eggs for the children's entertainment. Much of Easter day you could hear the cry, "Anyone got an egg to break?" Many boys and girls carried an egg called a "fighter,"



Four of the Dunkles in mature later years. They are Walter, Howard, Etta Dunkle Eye, and John, our author, photographed at the Pendleton County homeplace. Photographer and date unknown.

which had been carefully selected and the small end prepared to resist breaking. Frequently the fighter had been dipped in beeswax several times to give it a more resistant end. The fighter was held snugly in the hand, exposing only the small end that had been prepared to resist breaking. The winning fighter claimed all eggs it broke.

There were always dogs in the house. They were trained to run foxes, and hunt raccoons and rabbits. Father often would climb a stake-and-rider fence and incite them to bark. We would hear the dogs barking, go to see what they had treed and find him on top of the fence as though he were a raccoon. Snowy Saturday mornings were fox-hunting time. The dogs sensed the first preparations, and put the living rooms in shambles while guns were taken down and clothes collected. At her wit's end, Mother ordered us and the dogs out. After a long day the dogs would be brought

home with sore and bleeding feet to lie down before the wood fire to sleep and dream. Many times they seemed to be chasing foxes by the yelps they made in their sleep.

We lived about a mile and a half from the country store and post office. Beginning at about age six, I was sent to the store once a week with some eggs, eight cents a dozen, and maybe a chicken, ten cents a pound, to exchange for plugs of tobacco, a box of snuff, and coffee beans that had to be browned and ground. If the produce did not pay for my purchases, the unpaid part was charged. Once a year the account was cleared. There was no money.

There was rapport among the children in the home and between parents and children as we grew into adulthood. If our parents had disagreements we never heard them.

Life was simple and to shirk any responsibilities was base behavior.

One time we boys were playing "Seven Up." It was a cold rainy day. Mother called to us to bring a bucket of water and an armful of wood for the kitchen stove. After a few minutes, she came in, picked up the board that the cards were on, and threw the cards into the fire and walked back into the kitchen, without saying a word. The water was brought, the wood box filled. No one spoke. There were no grounds for argument.

All felt the responsibility of contributing his or her share. When adulthood came, we went out into the world knowing the way would not be easy. Our mistakes would be way stations. While young, we never felt poor, never discouraged. We liked people, we had learned to live that way. So we entered life ready to become productive, happy citizens.

This account is edited from memoirs John Dunkle left to his family. Mr. Dunkle died in 1975. ♣



Apprentice Ben Carr (left) is pleased to learn stonecutting from master stonecutter Dare Crawford. The two men work together to keep useful skills alive.

Stonecutting

Passing on an Old Tradition

Text and Photographs by Gerald Milnes

Finding Dare Crawford, a resident of Calhoun County, ended a long search for Ben Carr and me. Ben had been working with stone on his own and needed help with the techniques and theory of stonecutting. My job as coordinator of the Augusta folk arts apprenticeship program at Davis & Elkins College was to find Ben the help he needed. We had admired cut stone work all over central West Virginia and now sought someone who had the tools, knowledge, and a working experience of the craft.

Dare was our man. He is a practical master of increasingly rare skills, although he considers it just everyday knowledge he has picked up. Much like gardening, carpentry, horsemanship, or a myriad of other rural skills,



Dare traces his stonecutting heritage back three generations, to his grandfather, mountain farmer William Crawford. This rare photo shows William with a favored fowl. Photographer and date unknown.

stonecutting, and all the know-how it entails, was once a common activity practiced by many.

Dare now lives with his wife, Greta, at Greta's old family homeplace on Crummis Creek east of Arnoldsburg. They raised six children there. The Crawfords came to Crummis Creek from nearby Daniels Run in 1917. Dare recalls other families — Parsons, Schoolcrafts, Cottrells, Groves, Schar-tigers, Dillons, and Cogars — living in the neighborhood at that time. Back then, the community had its own schools, and Dare got an eighth-grade education at the schoolhouse at the mouth of the creek. Local legend has it that Crummis Creek got its name from a deer with a crumpled horn that lived in the vicinity.

Dare is at least a third-generation stonecutter. Family tradition says that grandfather William Crawford carried the steel bar stock on his back for 25 miles, all the way from Spencer, to make many of the old wedges still in Dare's tool kit. William came to Cal-houn County in the late 19th century from Green County, Pennsylvania, and settled on Daniels Run. Dare

Folk Arts Apprenticeships

Dare Crawford is one of many West Virginia artists and craftspeople teaching apprentices under the West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program, a part of the Augusta Heritage operation at Davis & Elkins College.

Any West Virginia resident, who practices a traditional or ethnic folk art or craft, is eligible to apply for qualification as a master artist under this program. Apprentices should have some familiarity or experience in the art or craft they wish to study. A knowledgeable panel meets twice a year, in May and November, to

review applications and make awards.

The West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program was begun in 1989 with major funding from the National Endowment for the Arts Folk Arts Division and the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College. Additional funding comes from the Arts and Humanities Council of the Division of Culture and History. For more information, contact the Apprenticeship Coordinator, Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241.

notes that his grandfather was quite a walker and that he walked back and forth to Pennsylvania several times to visit a brother. He suggests that since William knew all the near-cuts over and through the hills, it wasn't that hard for him to make the trek.

He doesn't know if there is a stonecutting tradition in his family before his grandfather, but Dare has picked up some of the early lore of the trade. He suggests the use of old "hack" (horse-drawn buggy) axles as a good make-do source of steel for stone wedges. And he has always heard that in early settlement days, back before iron and steel were easily obtainable, people would chisel holes in the stone, drive poplar wedges in, and then soak the wedges with water which would cause them to swell and crack the rock. He also allows the possibility of early settlers splitting stone by pouring water into chiseled holes in cold weather. As the water froze and expanded, the rock would crack.

Dare is also a blacksmith, as was his father, and finds these skills handy to keep his stoneworking tools sharpened, as well as to make the occasional new tool he needs. Dare recalls that his father did a lot of smith work sharpening hoes, mattocks, and farm tools for himself and neighbors. He doesn't remember whether his grandfather did smithing or not, but since

many of Dare's older hand-wrought stonecutting wedges have come down from his grandfather, he probably also followed the trade.

There are plenty of examples of the work of Dare and other country stonecutters. The stonecutter's work, a durable testimony to his skill, may be seen almost everywhere in the rural countryside of West Virginia. The hand-cut stone of early times, although pleasing to most eyes, may be taken for granted unless you've witnessed a stonecutter at work, in which case one quickly develops an appreciation for the craft. A time-consuming activity, stonecutting goes back thousands of years in many cultures, but has declined in modern times. Most people who remember and who have actually practiced the craft are now well up in years.

Most noticeable to the casual observer is the stone work around the farms and homes of bygone days. One description of pleasing architecture is that it should be connected to its surroundings through both design and materials. Perhaps this explains our fascination with the log houses of the pioneers, whose foundations, walls, roofs, and chimneys literally sprang from the land on which they were built. An old song succinctly describes the early West Virginia settler's dwelling place:



Ben Carr learns stonecutting by the time-tested "watch and try" method. In these photographs, above and at right, Dare Crawford shows how to score a boulder with chisel and hammer, then lets Ben try it.

The mountain homestead rose from the land, taking its materials from the site. Well-fitted sandstone was an important part, as the chimney of this Webster County cabin shows.



"They build their houses of log walls
And for windows, they have few
at all
A clapboard roof and an old
slab door
A sandstone chimney and a
puncheon floor."

As time went on, sawmills changed log walls and puncheon floors to frame construction; gradually slate, tin, and then asphalt shingles replaced clapboard roofs; and brick, block, ceramic tiles, and recently stainless steel have replaced stone chimneys. But cut stone for foundation and chimneys continued to be the choice of rural builders well into the 20th century. Chimneys are often "chimleys" or "chimblays" to many West Virginians who use the old Scottish pronunciations, even though these variations have long disappeared from English dictionaries.

Most stone masonry today utilizes the natural shape of the stone, just as in most new log construction the logs are left in their natural round shape. Our forebears did otherwise. They carefully hewed their logs flat and cut and dressed their stones, maintaining this touch of civilized formality as they



tamed the wilderness. This is not so important in today's comfortable world where the "rustic" look is in vogue.

Cut stone cellar houses are often seen near country kitchens. With their entrance face exposed, the remaining walls are mounded with earth or buried in a hillside to provide cool, rodent-free security for the annual harvest of garden fare and orchard fruits. Traditionally, cut stone is also the building material for house, barn, and outbuilding foundations, chimneys, retaining walls, culverts, bridge abutments, and wherever else strong support is needed.

In central West Virginia, as the old

song indicates, sandstone is the common material used in traditional stone work. To the east, limestone shows up in the Greenbrier Valley and the Potomac Highlands. Dare Crawford told me that his father once cut some of that "old bluestone that we have around here" that "shows out" along road banks. He says that it is "harder than all get-out," but he isn't sure exactly what kind of stone it is. In Calhoun County, sandstone was exclusively the local stonecutter's choice. Of course, not just any sandstone will do. Deciding on good, sound stone is an important early decision in any stonecutting project.

In rural West Virginia, hand-cut

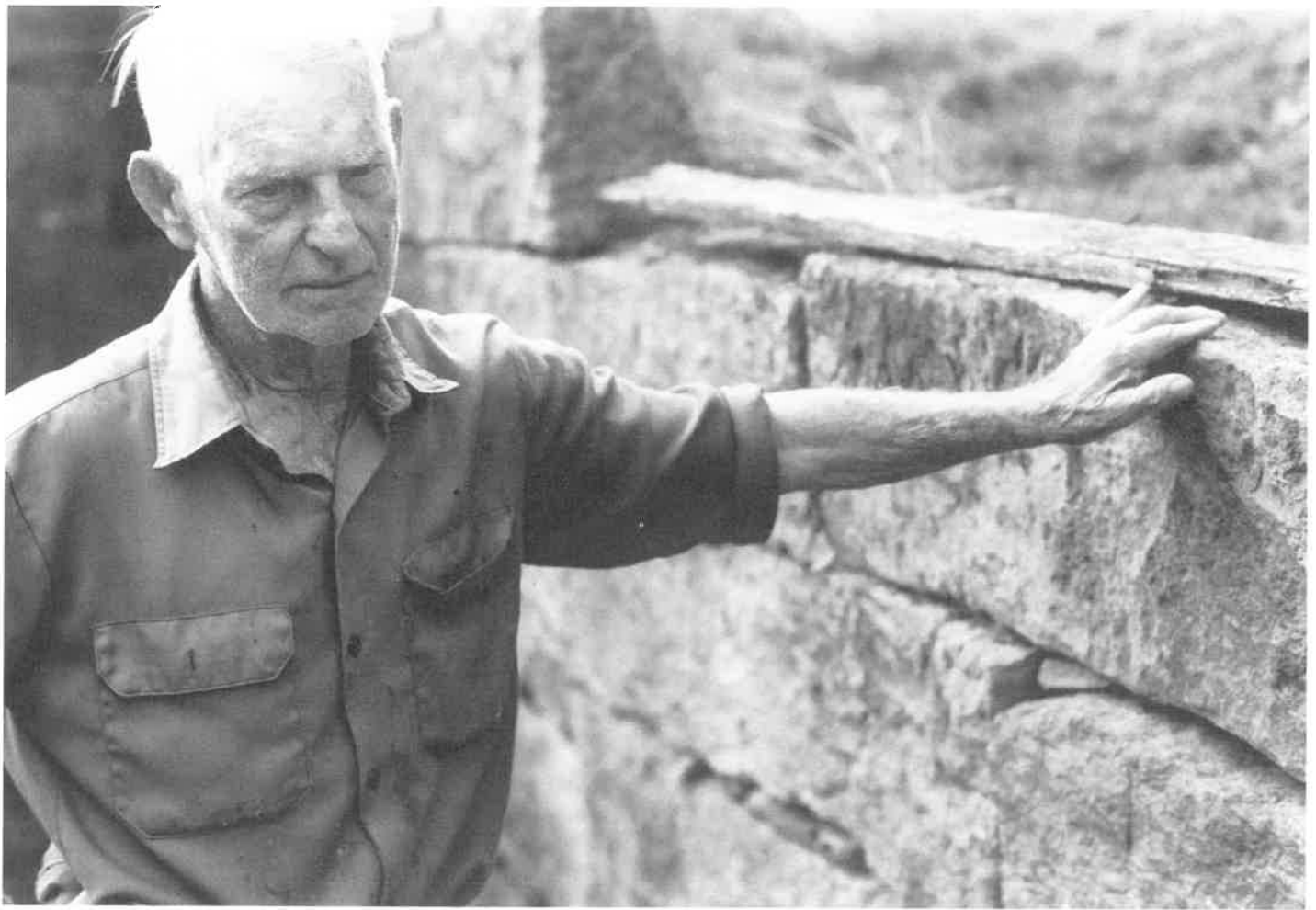
stone masonry was common through the 1930's, when it quickly began to be replaced by poured concrete. Commercial stonecutters had faced an earlier challenge. Stoneworking machines were developed about 1880 and gained common usage after the turn of the century, meeting with resistance from stonecutting unions. These machines were mostly used at large limestone quarries and for big construction projects in urban areas. The theory that machine-cut stone would deteriorate quickly was put forth by troubled stonecutters, who feared their craft and very livelihood were threatened.

This occupational unrest was probably viewed with indifference by rural West Virginians who, for the most part, worked local stone by traditional hand methods. Most communities had a few individuals who specialized in stonecutting, but these craftsmen didn't follow the trade as an exclusive lifetime employment.

Jake Casto, an octogenarian resident of Hacker Valley in Webster County, is a good example. Jake still lives on his family homeplace. He has numerous cut stone walls, foundations, and culverts on the old farm that he and his father built. Although obviously quite proficient in the craft, Jake also retains the tools and knowledge to make brooms, tan leather, do blacksmithing, shoe horses, and even create homemade entertainment by playing his fiddle. Life on an old-time mountain farm required a jack-of-all-trades approach.

On such farms, where cut stone is present, a trained eye can sometimes ascertain the whereabouts of the rock source. Outcropped rock or large boulders with flat surfaces will often, on closer inspection, reveal the telltale marks of the stonecutter's chisels, wedges, and pick. Occasionally, when the stone did not outcrop, the stonecutter would have to excavate some earth to reach bedrock and begin his cutting.

Dare Crawford speaks of an old wooden derrick, which remains in the family, that his father made out of chestnut. It employed a windlass at the base of a 12-foot vertical pole, enabling one man to lift and maneuver large stones into place. This pole was set into a stone in the ground with



Jake Casto shows a stone retaining wall at his family homeplace in Webster County. Stonecutting is one of many rural skills Mr. Casto has mastered.

guy wires to hold it perpendicular. The vertical pole was rigged with a boom, or horizontal pole, which could swivel around, pick up large stones with the assistance of the windlass, and place them in the desired position on a wall, chimney, or whatever. Dare reckons that this device could pick up a stone weighing 1,000 pounds. Some stone masons used a similar device powered by horses.

Dare started into stone work when a teenager, with his father, William, and brother, Glen. He points out an old cut stone cellar that they built in 1928, just down the creek from his present home. His father was employed as a stonecutter in 1922 when Route 16 was graded through Calhoun County along the West Fork, mostly cutting stone for culverts. Some Italians had a contract to do the work, and Dare's father worked for them. Dare remembers that the Italians, noted for their stoneworking skills,

were in the area for several years before moving on. He says that they were never permanent residents, but rather they just "followed the work and boarded wherever the work was."

During the Franklin Roosevelt New Deal era, Dare worked for the National Youth Administration doing stone work on public projects and teaching others. "We built a retaining wall over here on Millstone," he reflects. "We had a two-room school over there. We split out stone and built that retaining wall, me and my brother and just a bunch of young fellows. They'd work two or three days a week, then there'd be another bunch."

"Another place was down off of Mt. Zion on White Pine. We built a stone culvert. It was 90 feet long. We built the two walls up till they'd bridge themselves on top and that was covered with dirt. It was in a school lot. The water ran right through the

school yard. I was teaching other people. At one time I had 80 fellows to teach. It was new to them." Dare says that opportunities to work at the trade declined a few years later. "About the time World War II was over there wasn't too much stone work going on. Since then, I haven't done too much, just occasionally."

Having gained most of his stonecutting knowledge from his father, Dare Crawford regularly quotes William's reaction to certain stonecutting problems and situations. He uses words and phrases unfamiliar to novice ears. Rock will "spraw" or "run out" if split incorrectly. He also notes that dynamite should never be used to make large splits in rock because it will cause the whole rock to "shiv," meaning that it will become crumbly and lose its structure.

Dare was recently designated as a master artist in the Augusta apprenticeship program. Ben Carr, who lives

at Wilsie, in neighboring Braxton County, is a willing and able apprentice. He became interested in the trade while building a house on his own. Upon meeting Dare, and finding he still had his old tools and a remarkable knowledge of the skills required, they jointly applied for an apprenticeship in which Dare is paid for his time and expertise while instructing Ben in the knowledge and methods used to cut stone.

Ben learns like Dare's NYA boys did, by doing. On a relatively balmy winter day, the two men picked up a wooden bucket of wedges and tools, a pick, a sledge hammer and a water jug, and went to a large boulder in the woods at the edge of a meadow on Dare's Calhoun County farm. Dare set right in, showing Ben the steps that are taken to split stones. Along with wedges, a stonemason's tools include chisels, hammers, picks, a measuring device, a straight edge, and sometimes special tools for producing the rough surface on dressed stones.

After demonstrating each operation, Dare gave Ben a chance to execute the appropriate methods to produce usable stones. With his experience, Dare was able to "read" the grain of the rock and determine which direction the splits should be made. He then plunged into the tasks of making lines, chiseling out holes and setting wedges, and instructed Ben on how, when, and where to apply pressure by hammering in the wedges to crack and split the rock. Once large slabs were cut, these were further split using the same techniques until long stones of the desired height and depth were obtained. Cuts were then made "across the grain" at right angles to the original splits, to create shorter stones of manageable sizes.

Once they are roughed out, other steps are taken to finish or "dress" the stones into finished pieces. Sometimes the corner edges are carefully worked with picks and flat chisels while the rest of the outside surface is left deliberately rough. Tops, bottoms, and ends are kept flat for a good fit with other stones in the wall. In chimney work, the capstone is the crowning touch, requiring great skill to make. Many were made with round intersecting holes and sloped roofs to shed water. Other fancy cut stone

work may be seen in the form of old water troughs. Ben Carr has a cut stone sink from an early Braxton County home.

Many of our older traditional crafts are fading and becoming rare. Once performed out of necessity, some are now appreciated and have been continued for esthetic reasons. There

hasn't been a substitute invented that can replace the natural beauty and sturdy design of quality traditional cut stone work. Through Dare Crawford's efforts in the West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program, the knowledge and understanding of this craft has been passed to yet another generation. ❁

Thanks to his apprenticeship, Ben Carr is now able to work on his own. Here he prepares to cut a stone slab in two.



A black and white photograph showing the side of a large military landing tank (LT #217) under construction. The ship is light-colored with a dark hull. Scaffolding is visible around the upper part of the ship. In the foreground, there are large stacks of lumber. A tall, thin mast or pole is visible on the left side of the frame. The ship is positioned on a dry-dock or construction area.

The army's LT #217 was one of the military craft built at Point Pleasant. It is shown here on the marine ways on May 17, 1943. Photographer unknown, from the collection of G. W. "Jerry" Sutphin.

Boat Building at Point Pleasant

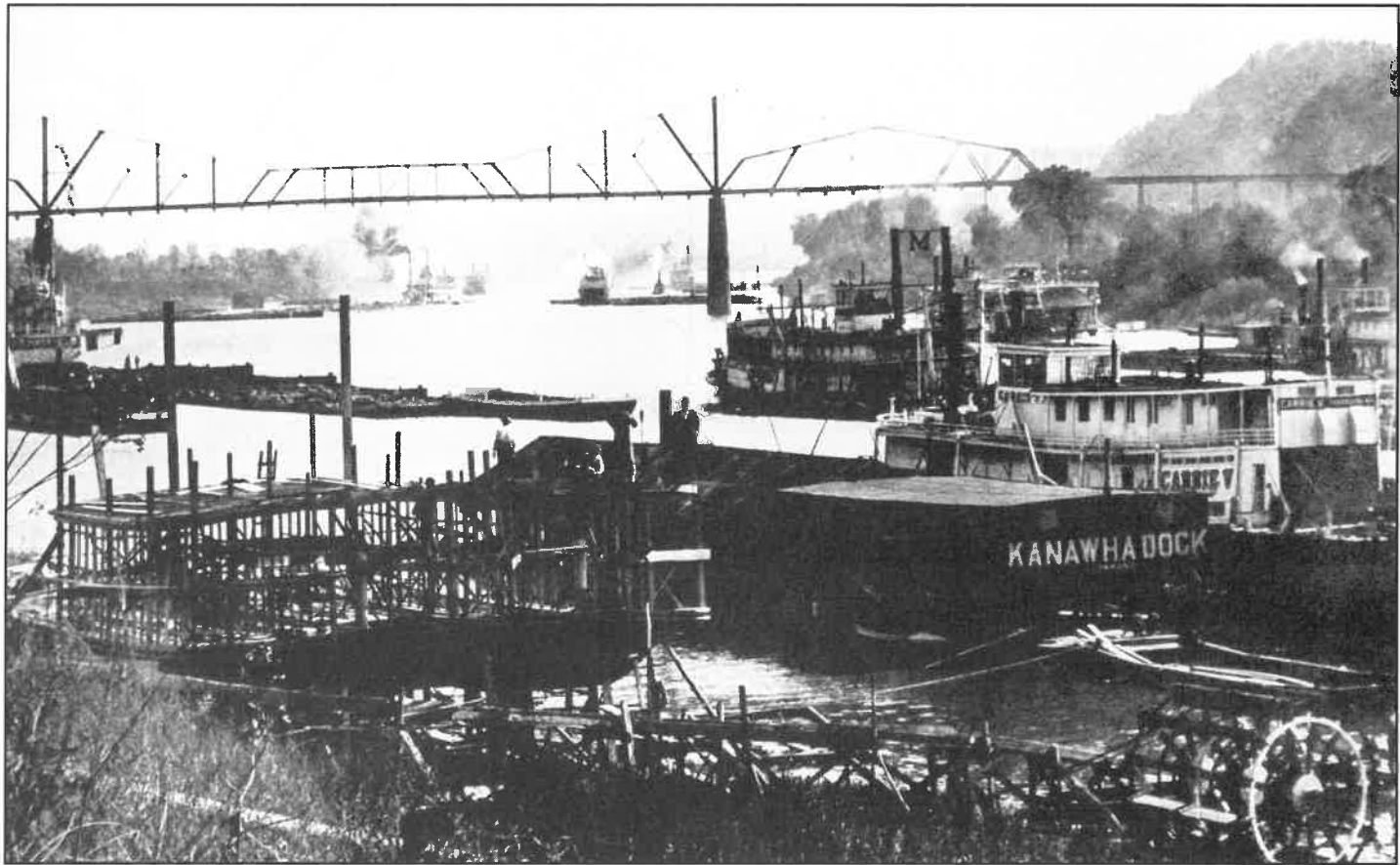
By Irene B. Brand



Point Pleasant is a river city, a town that boats built and a town that built boats. Its dry docks and floating docks provided boat and barge building and repair for Ohio and Kanawha river shipping from the mid-19th century until 1967.

A dry dock enables a boat to lie out of the water until repairs are made below its water line. A floating dock is an oblong contraption without ends or top, with watertight bunkers on each side. When water is pumped into these compartments, the dock sinks low enough for a boat to enter. After pumps suction out the water, the dock rises, lifting the vessel above the stream. The boat is held in place with wooden blocks, and after repairs are completed, the bunkers are again flooded until the dock sinks enough to allow the vessel to float free.

According to Captain Charles H. Stone, lifetime resident of Point Pleasant and keen observer of river history, wooden barges and flatboats were being constructed along the lower Kanawha well before the Civil War. As early as 1835, the towboat *Hope* was built on the banks of the Kanawha, near the mouth of Crooked Creek, by James A. Payne and John Hall. The



machinery used on the *Hope* had formerly been on the *Enterprise*, a steamer brought from Pittsburgh in 1830 for use in the salt trade.

Point Pleasant's strategic location at the confluence of the Ohio and Kanawha rivers was chiefly responsible for the growth of its boat works. Other regional assets contributing to the success of the industry included the numerous white oak and poplar forests capable of providing the necessary building lumber, as well as the many fine craftsmen living in the area.

The first dry docks in the region were modest operations, perhaps started by men who ran sawmill boats up and down the Kanawha. Stone recalls that, "Captain Sherman Hanes told me once, when he was in his 80's and pilot on my father's towboat, the *Tu-Endi-We*, that his father operated a sawmill boat, and would travel from one farm to another buying trees close to the riverbank to saw into lumber. They also sawed lumber for the farmers."

Logs were also rafted directly to the dry docks at Point Pleasant. When the stream levels were high, logs could be floated out of any creek or river, tied into rafts and brought to the docks. Some log rafts simply drifted down with the current, but small boats were also used to deliver large rafts and to maneuver them toward the docks.

The first major outfit for building boats in Point Pleasant, the Kanawha Marine Dock, started in 1886 when Jake Heatherington bought riverfront property north of Crooked Creek. He built a sawmill and obtained several sections of dry dock. Shipbuilder Samuel Wheaton, Sr., and sons John, Joseph, and Samuel came from Wheeling to furnish the know-how for the new venture.

Ten years later, the Kanawha

Marine Dock was purchased by A. F. Kisar, who changed the name to the Enterprise Marine Dock Company. After another change of ownership, May 24, 1897, the business became commonly known as Gardner's docks by local people and river men who worked the area.

"Practically all of the stock is owned by Mr. George P. Gardner," according to an article in a 1905 illustrated industrial issue of the *State Gazette*, the local newspaper. "Mr. Gardner has made a success of the dock business just as he has of everything else he has ever attempted. Connected with his splendid set of docks, he has one of the best sawmills in the country, and thus without delay, the Enterprise is able to get out any piece of lumber for either a new boat or repair work on shortest notice. This dock is better equipped than any set of docks on the Ohio River. They build and dock all size of boats."

The Gardner docks consisted of ten sections for the construction and repair of barges and boats. The Gardners also provided a special service for ferryboat operators in Mason County and neighboring Gallia County, Ohio. The firm owned the *Relief*, a small boat which was loaned for ferry use when the regular ferryboats had to be docked for repairs.

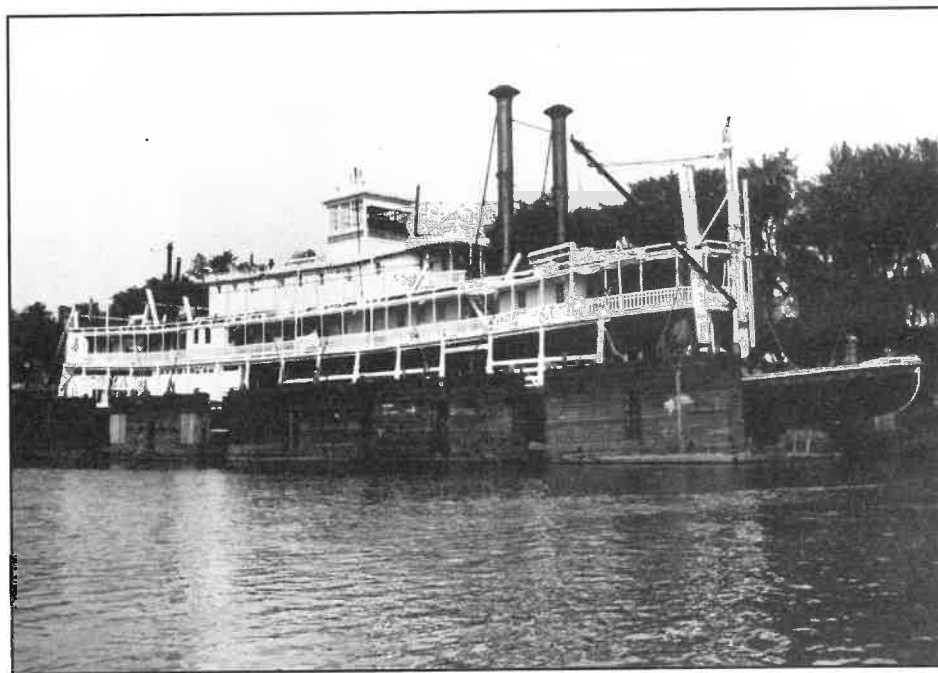
In November 1902, the Kanawha Dock Company started operations at Point Pleasant. Its docks, composed of

six sections, had the capacity for docking boats 50 by 200 feet, two at one time. Captain John N. Parsons, the first superintendent, was considered one of the best draftsmen and boat builders on the Ohio River.

The owners purchased a half-square adjacent to the Kanawha River at the foot of Viand Street and north of the Kanawha ferry landing, upon which they built yards, offices, a foreman's residence, and a blacksmith shop. A track was constructed to the river to pull logs up the bank to the sawmill. They also obtained a mill boat where lumber could be planed and prepared for use in building or repairing rivercraft. At the height of its success, the Kanawha Dock Company employed more than 80 workers.

Captain Stone recalls that relations were strained between the Kanawha Dock Company and the neighboring ferry operation run by his family. "There was much hard feeling between the dock personnel and my grandfather, J. H. Stone, and even continuing to my father, C. C. Stone. The dock company often let the log rafts float down over the Point Pleasant ferry landing operated by my family, and they couldn't land the ferry at the proper place." Eventually J. H. Stone asked for help from the Corps of Engineers to force the dock company to keep the logs away from the ferry's landing.

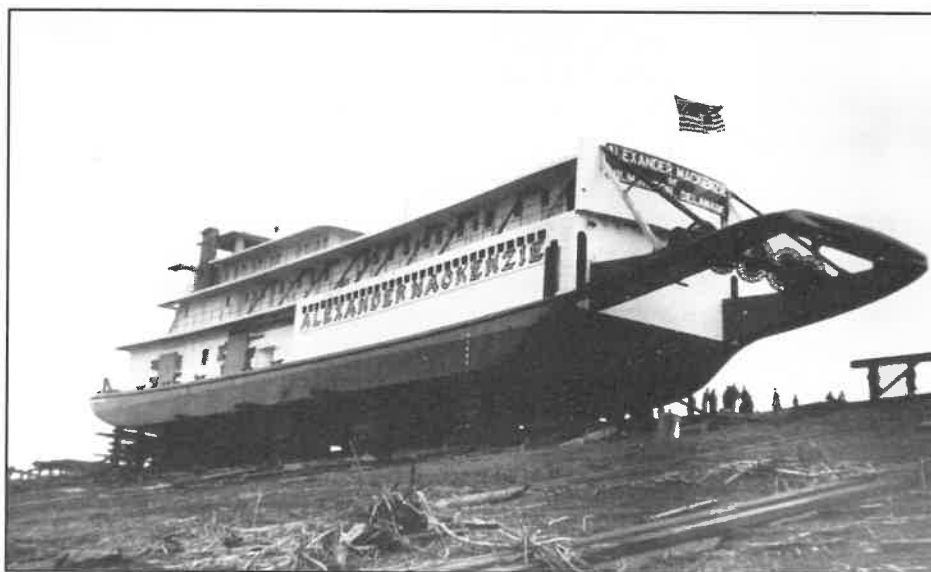
The third dock, and the one located



Top Left: Kanawha Dock Company was one of several major docking operations established at Point Pleasant near the turn of the century. This photo shows a steamboat under construction, at left, with the Kanawha River railroad bridge behind. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Captain Charles H. Stone.

Left: A battered *Sea Lion* enters a floating dock for repair. Note the men standing by the large handles at right and left to pump water from the bunkers and raise the dock. Photographer and date unknown, from the Sutphin collection.

Right: This Gardner's floating dock has had the water pumped out and raises the packet *Tacoma* above the river for repairs in the fall of 1912. Photo by Captain Jesse P. Hughes, from the Sutphin collection.



Top: The second *Chris Greene* was the combined product of two major West Virginia marine works. Ward Engineering of Charleston produced the hull and the steamer was finished at Gardner's docks. Photographer unknown, 1925, from the Sutphin collection.

Above: The *Alexander Mackenzie* on the marine ways at Marietta Manufacturing, 1939. The sternwheel has not yet been added. The *Mackenzie* served mostly on the Mississippi and Illinois rivers before being dismantled near Charleston in 1954. Photographer unknown, from the Sutphin collection.

nearest the mouth of the Kanawha, was the Point Pleasant Dock Company. Owned by William F. Smith, it was organized in 1909. The equipment Smith brought from Pittsburgh differed from the section docks then in use. His apparatus consisted of one big dock, which sank just by opening valves. When the boat to be repaired was in place, steam-driven pumps removed the water in two hours with the use of only a few men. The other docks in the area used hand pumps to raise a boat, taking eight to ten hours to lift a vessel out of the water.

The docks at Point Pleasant suffered considerable damage in the disastrous ice breakup of 1918, which occasioned

the fastest water rise in Ohio River history. Severe cold weather had started in early winter, and by the middle of December navigation was suspended. By January 20 ice blockades formed at the mouth of the Kanawha River, the first time the Ohio had frozen over there in more than 20 years. A rain started the breakup, and high water resulted. Hundreds of rivercraft, including some famous packet boats, were crushed or swept away.

High water carried the Smith dock out into the Ohio River, along with the mill boat, barges, and a small towboat. Weeks later, the big dock finally stopped about ten miles below Cincinnati, badly in need of repair. Several

years passed before the dock was returned to Point Pleasant. In the meantime, Smith purchased sectional docks, and he and John W. Hubbard of Pittsburgh bought the holdings of the Kanawha Dock Company and operated both facilities.

The Point Pleasant Machine Works, located along the Kanawha near Crooked Creek, supported the local dry docks. This business specialized in steamboat repair and supplied metal parts for the boat builders. The Heslops, owners and operators of the shop, carried a huge stock of items needed for repairing and equipping boats, and parts not in stock could quickly be molded in the foundry.

"As a kid I watched craftsmen in the foundry pouring that iron and bringing it out rough," Captain Stone says. "Then on the different cutting machines in the shop, they would smooth it down so it could be used on the steamboats."

No definite record exists of the number of boats built by early craftsmen in the Point Pleasant area, but some that were well-known on local rivers were the *Neva*, *C. C. Bowyer*, named for a prominent Point Pleasant resident, the first *Chris Greene*, the *Florence Marmet*, and the *Alabama*.

The depression of the '30's and the advent of steel-hulled riverboats sounded the death knell of the old Kanawha River dry docks, but modern boat building continued at Point Pleasant at the Marietta Manufacturing Company. Organized in 1892 at Marietta, Ohio, the company's organizers and major stockholders were Alla Windsor, J. D. Lashley, and James H. McConnell, the latter also the company draftsman. Alla Windsor was president until his death in 1911, when his son, Walter A. Windsor, took over.

Soon after the 1913 flood, which devastated downtown, a group of concerned citizens began developing land in a northern section of Point Pleasant known as the Heights. J. S. Spencer, a local entrepreneur looking for a business to occupy this land, approached the Marietta company. As a result the firm relocated to Point Pleasant in 1916, at a time when the demand for steel-hulled steamboats was rising.

At first Marietta's operations were confined to machine shop and foundry.

dry work to make the tandem compound steam engines.* Marietta engines were much in demand because of the high quality. "A set of these engines is turning the paddle wheel of the *Mississippi Queen* today," Stone says.

During World War I, Marietta Manufacturing was put to work for the United States government, since the plant could make engines, boilers, and other items for the war effort. The workers successfully produced ten batteries of water tube boilers for ocean-going service, and eight large triple expansion marine engines. Fulfillment of the company slogan, "Made Mechanically Correct," took on extra urgency in wartime.

*Compound steam engines have multiple cylinders, more efficiently extracting the power from the steam that passes from one cylinder to the next. Tandem compound engines each have two cylinders.

Launching of a government dredge, October 28, 1933. Boats slid sideways down the skids into the river, with final outfitting done afloat. Photographer unknown, courtesy Captain Stone.

River Heritage Group Stands Watch

The Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen is a nonprofit organization dedicated to "preserving and furthering the history of the Mississippi River system and the river boats that plied upon its waters." The group, which has an active membership on the Ohio, Kanawha and other West Virginia waterways, is open to those interested in river affairs and is not restricted to descendants of river pioneers.

The Sons and Daughters publish a quarterly journal, the *S&D Reflector*, that features historical and current articles and many illustrations. It was first published in 1964. In 1941 the group founded the Ohio River Museum at Marietta, Ohio. The museum has a large collection of photographs, models and artifacts pertaining to the history of

Midwestern rivers and their boats. The oldest existing steamboat pilot-house from these waters is located at the Ohio River Museum. The museum also has one of the last surviving steam towboats, the *W.P. Snyder, Jr.*, the last steamboat to be repaired by Marietta Manufacturing of Point Pleasant, as Irene Brand points out in the adjoining story.

Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen established an Inland Rivers Library in Cincinnati in 1955. The library has historical books, manuscripts, documents, photographs and maps. It is said to be the largest collection of its sort.

For further information on membership, meetings and programs contact Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen, 126 Seneca Drive, Marietta, OH 45750.





The towboat *Kansas City* was a modern, propeller-driven steamer, built at Marietta Manufacturing for the Mississippi River Inland Towing Company. Photographer unknown, 1938; courtesy Captain Stone.

ALWAYS A RIVER

**The Ohio River
and the
American Experience**

The Humanities Council of West Virginia has worked with other councils in Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania to organize a six-state celebration of the Ohio River. The floating festivities will tour West Virginia river cities next summer.

Planners have named the monthslong event "Always a River: The Ohio River and the American Experience." Many of the activities will take place in a museum barge, 152 feet long and 34 feet wide, equipped with a theater and a comprehensive exhibit. The craft will be launched from Pittsburgh on May 22nd, National Maritime Day, and make its first West Virginia stop in Wheeling, June 18-22. It will then go on

to three additional locations in the Mountain State — Parkersburg/Marietta, June 25-28; Point Pleasant/Gallipolis, July 1-2; and Huntington, July 4-6. The floating museum will end its trip at the mouth of the Ohio, Cairo, Illinois, on September 2-8.

There are 11 elements emphasized in the barge exhibits, beginning with the river and its tributaries, and including such other topics as geology, prehistoric people, and navigational surveying and mapping. Other parts of the celebration include a history and folklore conference on May 10-11 in Louisville; the publication of a book, *Always a River: An Anthology*, educational programs and a watercolor exhibit.

The Humanities Council of West Virginia is a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information about "Always a River: The Ohio River and the American Experience," contact the Humanities Council, 723 Kanawha Boulevard, Charleston, WV 25301; (304) 346-8500.

Marietta started full steamboat construction after World War I. "They could build the hull and cabins, install their own power plant, engines, boilers, capstans, everything," Captain Stone says. In 1921 the plant built the *Cairo* and *Baton Rouge* for the Federal Barge Line. In 1923 and 1924 the packets *Tom Greene* and *Sailor* were constructed. Marietta Manufacturing also bid successfully on several government projects, and two boats, the *Nike* and the *Nemesis*, were built for the U.S. Coast Guard prior to World War II.

Marietta constructed many boats and barges for foreign countries. At least 40 vessels were sent to South American rivers, including several 300-foot coal and oil barges and at least 11 steamboats. Craft put into operation on the Mississippi and its tributaries included the *Coiner*, *Kansas City*, *Walter A. Windsor*, *Alexander Mackenzie*, *Jason*, and *Jack Rathbone*.

Captain Stone recalls the details. "Skids were constructed on the riverbank, and on cribbing set on the skids, vessels could be built. When barges, and the boat hulls, were ready, the cribbing on which the vessels rested was released, and the boat slid sideways into the Ohio River, making a

big splash. A harbor boat would catch it and tie the vessel at the docks, where the riverboat would receive engines, boilers, and other equipment. The remainder of the work could be done on the floating hull."

The marine ways at Marietta were designed to hold several vessels up to 300 feet in length for construction or repair. Once a boat needing repair was secured on these ways, it was slowly pulled to the top of the bank, and work could be performed by the craftsmen in the shipyard. Steel hulls were riveted together until welding came into use.

In the Second World War, Marietta was again taken over by the government. "During World War II, Marietta Manufacturing employed 2,500 workers at its peak period," Ray Proffitt, longtime employee, recalls. "We built

four net tenders for the Navy, 16 mine planters, and 53 steam tugs for the Army, and two towboats for the Defense Plant Corporation. During this period, a tugboat was launched every two weeks." In 1944 the plant received the Army-Navy "E" award for exceptional services in production.

After World War II, the Point Pleasant plant went back to civilian production, and as late as 1962 750 people were employed there. The business closed in 1967. The last steamboat to be repaired by the plant was the *W. P. Snyder, Jr.*, a sternwheeler which is now a part of the Ohio River Museum at Marietta, Ohio. Point Pleasant citizens are now planning a river museum of their own.

Boat repair continues today in the Point Pleasant area at Point Marine Company, located along the Kanawha

above Henderson, and O'Kan Dock and Machine Company, situated below Kanauga, Ohio. But it's nothing like old times, according to Captain Stone who treasures childhood memories of the days when Point Pleasant craftsmen labored over hulking wooden vessels.

"I can still hear the ring, up and down the river, of the caulkers as they moved along," he recalls. "I remember the steel ring of mallets, and caulking tools driving cotton and oakum in the seams of wooden craft.

"You could smell oakum in the air, and hear the screech of the sawmills, and the steam whistles that were used for certain signals. But I'll hear them no more, for where once the commands and voices of craftsmen echoed across the river, only peace and quiet remains today." ❁

The *Robert F. Brandt* herds a flock of ocean-going tugs down the Ohio. These vessels were built for the U.S. Army. Photographer unknown, 1946.





“Absolutely a Sportsman’s Paradise”

An Oral Memoir by Paul Ashton Hepler

Compiled by Ann Bishop Griffith

Paul Ashton Hepler was born March 14, 1906, on a farm near Meadow Bluff in western Greenbrier County. The youngest of three children and the only son of John Moore and Olive Bell McClung Hepler, he early showed a preference for the woodsman ways of his neighbor, Mr. Bud McClung, rather than the farming life of his father. Tall and straight, with rugged good looks, he never tired of hunting along the ridges and fishing in the mountain streams.

After attending business school in Virginia, Hepler entered merchandising in the southern coalfields. Respiratory problems, however, forced him in 1954 to leave his position as a company store manager and relocate to Florida, where he worked for

RCA in the space program until his retirement in 1971. Throughout his long medical exile, he returned as often as possible to the Greenbrier woods where he was most at home.

In the early 1980's, at the request of a niece, Paul Hepler dictated an oral history of the Hepler and McClung families, including a wealth of personal recollections and autobiographical sidelights. The project spanned more than three years and resulted in eight hours of audio tape on which his deep-pitched, dynamic voice weaves a rich tapestry of memories — family anecdotes, ancestral lore, stories of life on the farm, and, as in the excerpt that follows, tales of hunting and fishing in the backwoods of West Virginia.

Paul Hepler. Mr. Bud McClung's full name was Ulysses S. Grant McClung. With a name like that, naturally he was a Republican. Being largely Democrats in our area, Republicans were almost always referred to as Old Black Republicans. But love of the outdoors knew no party lines. Mr. Bud was the man that taught me how to hunt and fish. Dad was no hunter, no fisherman. Mr. Bud was my tutor, and a good one.

I started with Mr. Bud when I was about seven or eight years old and got a-hold of an old single-shot rolling-block rifle that Dad kept around to kill hogs. Every time Mother and Dad left, I'd sneak that rifle out and shoot it.



Paul Hepler had a storybook boyhood in Greenbrier County in the World War I era. Here he and sister Emma pose with pony Dot and unidentified dog. Photographer and date unknown.

Old Mac Austin over at the store in Meadow Bluff had ammunition for it. I saved up my pennies — ammunition was cheap back then — and I bought me a box of shells. That was the first gun I learned to shoot.

After I got a year or so older, Dad let me take the gun out and shoot crows in the cornfield. Mother had misgivings. She was afraid I'd shoot myself or something. She only gave me three shells each time. She didn't know that I had a box of shells hid, that I had a pocket full of shells.

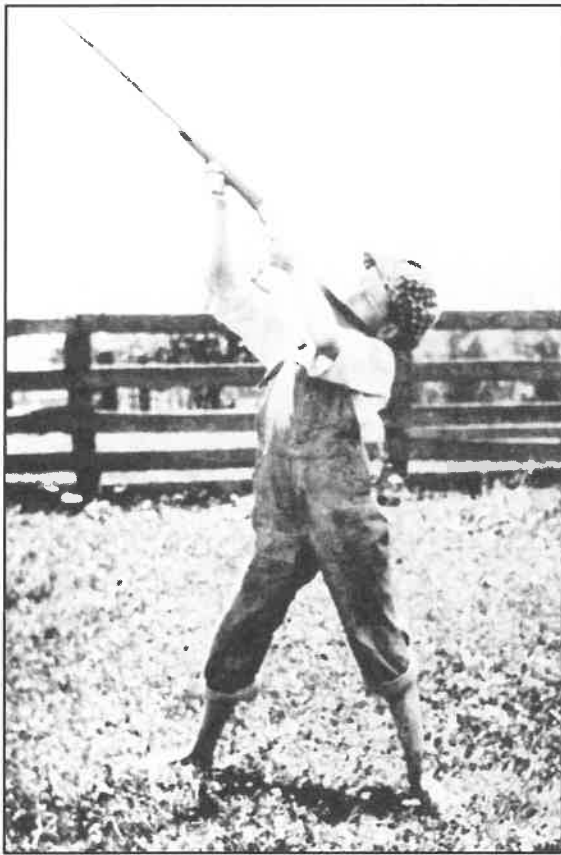
I roamed all over Otter Creek glade and back in there, and in Meadow River bottom. I killed my first squirrel, my first groundhog, my first crow, my first hawk, with that old .32 rim fire rifle. Then I got with Mr. Bud, and we trapped muskrats and minks and we caught possums — he had a couple of dogs — and we shipped the fur out and I got enough money to buy me a little Winchester .22 pump-action. I was proud as a peacock. I got so good with it, I could knock a gnat's whiskers off at 20 paces.

As I grew older, I finally graduated to shotguns, and I covered all of Meadow River bottom and killed squirrels by the hundreds, maybe up into the thousands. I don't remember. Dad liked to eat squirrel and Mother did, too, but Dad didn't like to hunt. He never had time, but he would eat all the squirrel I could bring in.

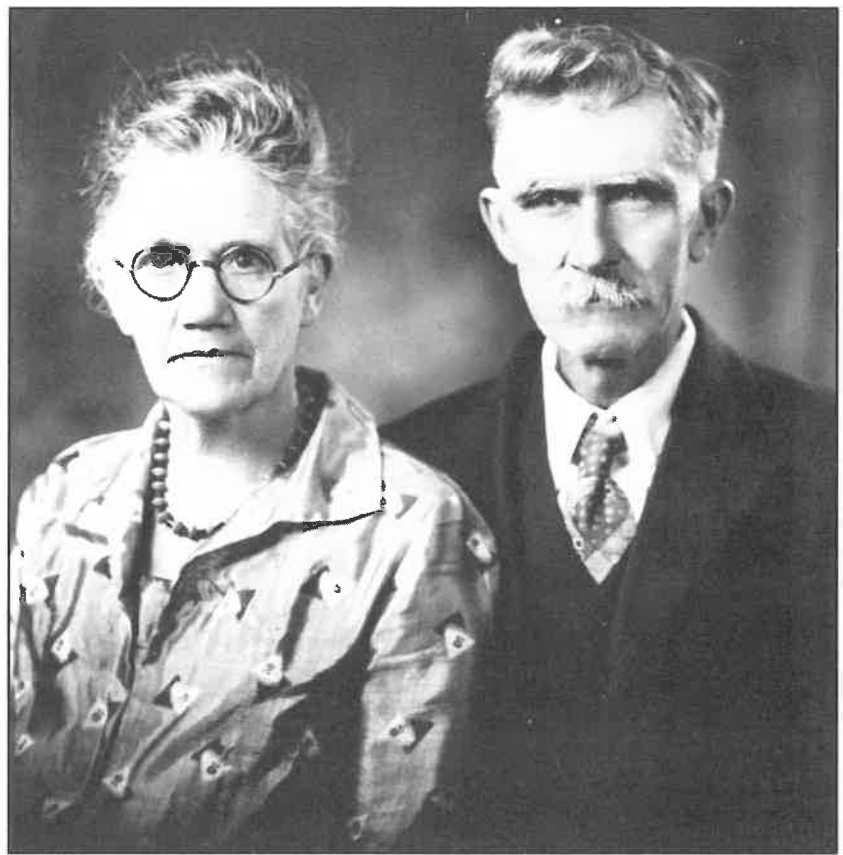
Mr. Bud took me on my first trout fishing trip up at the head of Little Clear Creek. We had to walk about ten miles to get in there. We made packs and carried some sugar-cured bacon and some ham. Of course, there was no such thing, back then, as a loaf of bread unless it was homemade, salt-rising. Mother and Miss Alice — that was Uncle Bud's wife — would make what we called flapjacks. We would take those flapjacks with us, and go back there and camp in what was called Lafayette Springs.

There was a fine spring amongst some big oaks down in what was called Loyal bottom. And we would trout-fish the tributaries all up through there, and catch the little brook trout, native brook trout, by the hundreds. We'd never heard of a hatchery. The timber had never been cut. It was absolutely, as I see it now, a sportsman's paradise.

Mr. Bud and I went on our last



Left: Paul began his shooting career at an early age. His mother gave him only three shells at a time, but he says he kept his own box of ammunition hidden. Photographer unknown, 1917.



Right: Ulysses S. Grant McClung — "Mr. Bud" — was Paul's tutor in the ways of the woods. He is shown here with Mrs. McClung, about 1938. Photographer unknown.

camp-out together in 1935. He was born April 6, 1866, and he lived to be 83 years old.

In November 1935, I got a vacation while I was company store manager for the Clearco Coal Company at Clearco. Being past 29 years old, I decided it was time I got married, but first Mr. Bud and I had to go on a camp-out. We had been on many expeditions to hunt and fish at Hickory Mountain — which some call Cross Mountain — and at the head of Little Clear Creek. Of course, he knew all the ridges and hills in there, the Shell Camp Ridge, the Big Buffalo, Joe's Rock, and a dozen and one others I can't remember.

We had to plan this particular hunt around my vacation — and, of course, my wedding date — so we took off on Sunday, November 8, and drove to the North Fork of Big Clear Creek and to Duo.

Duo belonged to the Raine Lumber and Coal Company. It was the old Albert Williams place. I remember Mother telling about going with Granddad up there to buy cattle when

she was a girl. The old Albert Williams place took off at the North Fork of Big Clear Creek. When you got up above Duo the first place you hit is Job's Knob, then you went through a low gap and you hit Grassy Knob. And then you went through another low gap, came on out, and you hit Cold Knob, and all those knobs were above 4,000 feet elevation.

Mr. Bud and I took my old Dodge, packed up our blankets — sleeping bags were unheard of then — and a tarpaulin, and we went between the low gaps, between Job's Knob and Grassy Knob, and crossed over on the Smokehouse Branch of Big Clear Creek. At one time a settler had come in there and built a house, probably before Old Man Williams's time. It was 11 miles to the old Richwood road. We dropped over to where the house had been. There was a good spring and there was still an old chestnut log that had been dug out with an adz. It was used for a watering trough, and someone had hollowed out a chestnut pole to form a spout from the spring.

We unwrapped our tarpaulin, made a lean-to, and laid the old chimney rocks to build a fireplace that would reflect heat back in, because the eighth of November can get pretty chilly up there. To make our bed, I went down the hill where there were quite a few hemlock trees growing. With my hunting knife I cut off hemlock branches. Starting from head to foot, sticking the stem ends in the ground — if you cut them off the right length, you can make a nice, cozy, springy mattress. We had a wool comforter — a couple of them, in fact — and some wool blankets. We didn't need any pillows. We took off our hunting coats and wrapped our hunting boots up in them, and used that.

Mr. Bud was an expert turkey hunter and a turkey caller. He used the wing bone out of a wild turkey hen, and he could talk turkey better than a turkey could. And it was his desire to call up a turkey for me to shoot. At that time I had never killed one.

Mr. Bud was one of the greatest conservationists I have ever known. And



Left: Beckley Hunting Club members were Mr. Hepler's hunting buddies. Here he poses in front, second from right, with other members in Pocahontas County.



Right: Paul Hepler with a fine buck shot on a 1966 Pocahontas County hunt. The photograph was made at the Beckley Club's camp, photographer unknown.

he practiced safety. I think he was the man that wrote the safety rules for firearms and hunting: You never took your gun into camp loaded. You unloaded before you came in. You never shot at anything unless you were sure of what it was. You never pointed your gun at anything you didn't intend to shoot. And you were very sure that when you did shoot at something, that there was no livestock or no human in the background.

When you went turkey hunting with Mr. Bud, you hunted turkeys, and that was all. So we hunted turkeys all day long. We crossed Smokehouse Branch, and we went over Shell Camp Ridge, and we made a big circle around. There had been an old cabin out about a mile or a mile and a half from where we were camped, called the old Jake Mullins cabin. There had been a settlement there at one time, and a fellow lived there — named Jake Mullins, of course — and there was a little bench, as we called it, in the mountains that ran back to the west from there.

We came out right where the cabin

had been, and that evening — after we had hunted turkeys all day and had found none — Mr. Bud said, "We might as well kill a few squirrels to eat."

Well, if the limit was three, that was all you killed when you hunted with Mr. Bud. If it was four, you killed no more than four. And no matter what the limit was, you never killed any more than what you could consume. He was very conservative and insisted that nothing in the way of game was ever wasted.

There was a profusion of beech along the bench at the old Jake Mullins cabin, and that bench was loaded with nuts. Well, on our way back in I had killed one squirrel and Mr. Bud hadn't killed any. We had seen quite a few that day and had jumped some grouse, but I dared not shoot at them because we were turkey hunting, and Mr. Bud's word was law when you were out hunting with him.

I saw a squirrel run down a log right at the edge of the beech bench. I cracked down on it, and killed it. And if one squirrel barked there must have

been 10,000. I never heard anything like it. The sun was going down to the west, and we were facing in that direction. There was no underbrush, and as far as you could see to the west on this beech bench was nothing but squirrels. They were on the ground. They were in the trees. They were out on all the limbs, up and down.

Mr. Bud said, "Here I am almost 70 years old, and I've heard of instances like this from old-timers, but I never thought I would live to see a squirrel migration." I had never seen anything like it before — and never expect to see anything like it again. There were squirrels everywhere you looked, working like maggots in a dead horse, so to speak.

Mr. Bud said, "Let's round out our limit to four each." I said, "We won't have far to go." And he said, "Now kill only the big, fat ones. We don't want to kill any little ones."

Well, I already had two, so I walked down and killed two more. He walked down from me a few feet, stood in his tracks and shot four. One of them was coal black, had just a little white spot

under its chin right by its wishbone. I had never seen a coal black gray squirrel before.

We picked up our squirrels and walked on back into camp. Our policy was one [of us] cut wood and the other cleaned the game. I cut wood and built a fire, and got ready to cook supper, and he dressed the squirrels. He put them in an eight-pound lard bucket, salted them good, and said, "Let's parboil these down, and have a cup of good, hot squirrel broth before we go to bed."

We hung the squirrels over the fire in the eight-pound lard bucket and boiled them down to where we had a nice amount of broth in the bottom. Mr. Bud said, "Now we'll fire those up in the morning and we'll have all we want for breakfast. Then we'll pack the rest of them for our lunch."

That night we left the squirrels in the bucket, and he said, "Maybe it would be all right, maybe we won't be breaking the law, if we hike out there early tomorrow morning and kill eight more squirrels, which will be our day's limit. Then we won't have to fool with them in the evening."

The next morning we got up before daylight and went out there as soon as it was light. And there they were, just as thick as they were the evening before. We fired eight shots and killed eight squirrels. We brought them back, dressed them, and put them in salt water to soak, and put a lid on that lard bucket. The water in the watering trough was so cold you could hardly drink it, coming as it did from under the mountains, so we sunk the bucket down in there, and put a rock on it to hold it under, and went turkey hunting.

Well, we didn't have any luck that day, so we came back. We didn't have to fool with [hunting] squirrels. We had our camp meat. We cooked them that night, parboiled them as usual, and fixed them up the next morning. I think we also had sugar ham or fried potatoes. I don't remember exactly, but we had plenty to eat.

We stayed up there until Saturday — from Sunday to the following Saturday — when we broke camp. Up until Friday we had found squirrels — not as many, but enough that we could get our limit each day on that particular bench. Went out there Saturday morning and there wasn't even a

ground squirrel. There wasn't even a chipmunk out there.

Mr. Bud said he was going to drop over on the Big Laurel side of the ridge and see if he could roust up a turkey, and I said, "I'm going to see if I can find those squirrels because I want to kill a few to take to Mother and Dad."

So I got in my car and took off out the ridge in one of those ridge runoffs they called the old Knight meadow. I went a mile and a half, maybe two miles, from where we were camped, as far as I could get the car, then I got out and dropped down over the ridge, and ran into the tail end of the migration. I killed Mother and Dad a good mess of squirrel, and in the meantime I ran onto a couple of grouse and knocked those off, too. I came back, loaded up the car, and we came out that afternoon.

The migration of squirrels was a phenomenon that I never expected to see, and never expect to see again. It was like a migration of carrier pigeons, when they come in by the thousands. I've heard the old-timers talk about the sky being completely black — the sun blocked out — they were so thick.

There are very few people I have contacted in my lifetime that ever heard of a migration of squirrels, much less saw one.

Squirrel Query

In the adjoining story, Paul Hepler describes a huge squirrel migration he witnessed in 1935. Squirrels move in massive numbers at such times, estimated in the thousands or tens of thousands. Naturalists believe the numbers are exaggerated in the retelling but concede that such migrations may occur at long intervals, according to Braxton County nature writer Skip Johnson, who says shifting food stocks are a probable cause.

We want to hear from GOLD-ENSEAL readers who recall squirrel migrations of 1935 or other years. Please write to the Editor, GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25305.

Paul Hepler kept up his hunting and fishing after that last camp-out with Mr. Bud, but he gradually lost touch with the backcountry the two men favored. Decades later he had the opportunity to return with another old hunting buddy.

We had the Brown Lee place up at Trout Valley, which Grandfather McClung gave Mother as a wedding present. It was 350 acres of grazing ground, so every spring along about April we'd make the 20-mile drive across Bryant Mountain, come out at Cornstalk up by Williamsburg, and into Trout Valley, up to the Brown Lee place.

There was a family lived down at the foot of the mountain, which was a bench of what is now known as Cold Knob. The name was Parley Knicely, and he had some children. He had one son, Jim, and we became friends. Jim was three years older than I was, but he remembered our first meeting, and we hunted together for years.

Jim's retired now. I visit him on his farm at Friars Hill near Lewisburg, and he comes to Florida to see me. We have a wonderful time rehashing our hunting and fishing trips — camping out in the woods in the rain, and sleeping under cliffs, and making lean-tos out of old log-camp boards they used to build barns for the horses back 50 years before. We fished in Big Laurel, the head of Cold Knob Fork, the Cherry River, and the south fork of Big Clear Creek, and the head of Little Clear Creek, and roamed the mountains and hunted every opportunity we got.

In 1974 and again in 1975, when I was up in Friars Hill visiting him, we went out through there in his International four-wheel-drive Scout, toured the country where we had hunted and camped since 1933. I would do some hunting with Jim every chance I got, but I hadn't been over that country since all the timber had been cut, since it had been stripped for coal, gouged out during the war where they hogged it all.

All through Grassy Knob and Cold Knob had been stripped. What used to be in my day the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company in Covington, Virginia, had formed a big corporation they called Westvaco, and had about all the land, all the holdings that headed Little Clear Creek, and all the holdings of the Gauley Coal Land

Company with the exception of Duo. That was owned by the Raines of the Raine Lumber and Coal Company.

I had been over all that territory in the past, and honestly, I did not know where I was when Jim took me through there in that Scout. They had clear-cut — and when I say clear-cut I mean they had cut everything, about 40 to 50 acres in a patch. Then they would go in and cut another 40 to 50 acres. They had this huge shredding machine in there. They'd grind even the limbs, the old dead snags, all the timber that heretofore had been wasted or left lying to rot or catch fire or what have you.

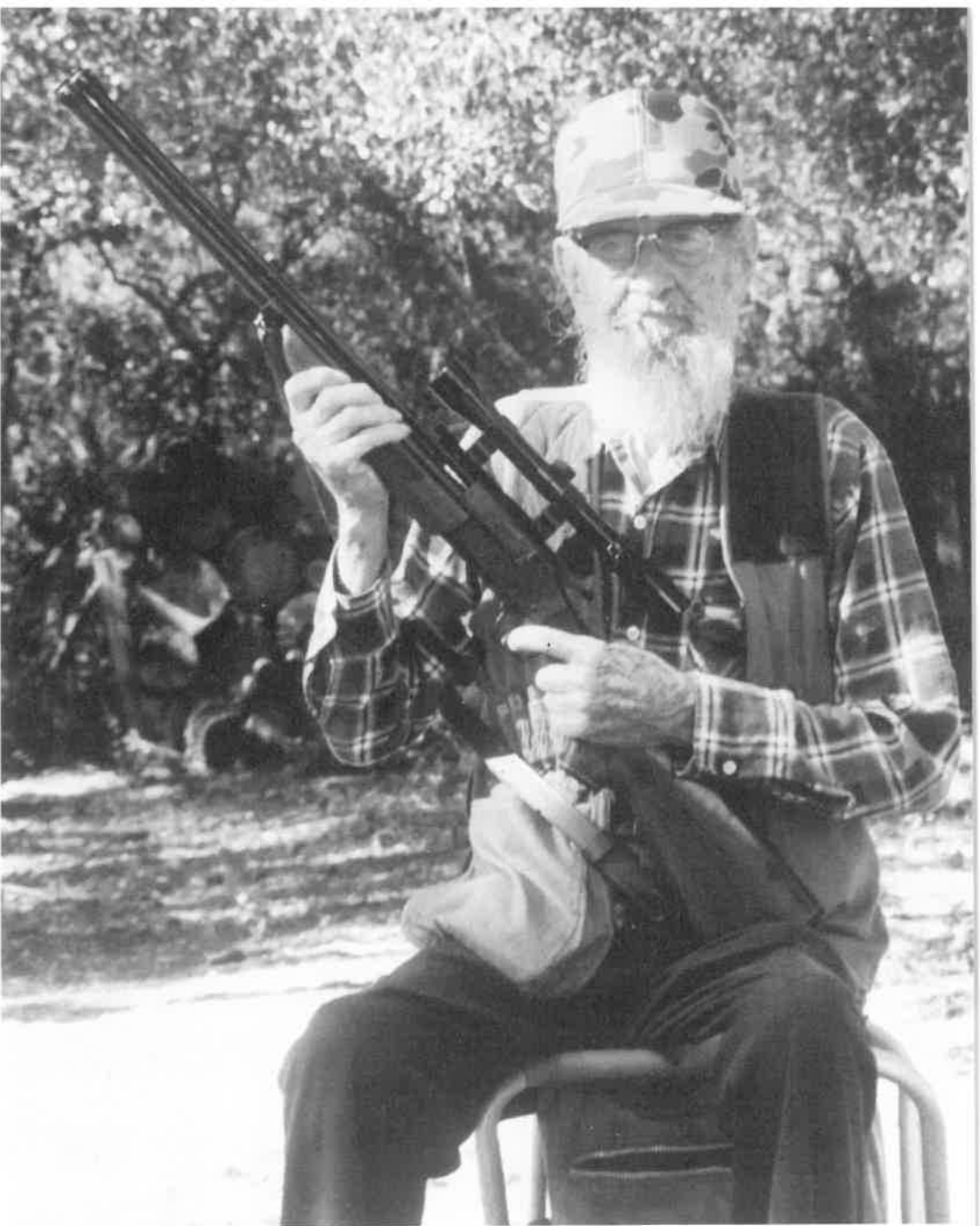
He took me to where they had cut three or four years before, and I was amazed at the native timber that was there, with the exception of chestnut. The chestnut died out years before, and that country abounded in chestnut. Some of the old snags of chestnut were still standing, and they were grinding those up, too.

They had built roads as far as they had gone, roads you could take a Cadillac over. They were using 16-wheelers to haul this wood over to Covington where they had their big pulp and paper mill. And they were gluing all these shreds of lumber together and making various and sundry items, also making all sorts of paper, cardboard boxes, you name it.

After a lifetime in the outdoors, sometimes it was the funny stories that stood out most clearly in memory. Mr. Hepler recalled one bear-hunting expedition in particular.

When I was at Clearco we went on a hunting trip to Point Mountain after bear. It was quite an interesting trip as we had two fellows at Clearco who thought they had some prize dogs, and there were a lot of bear in that particular vicinity. Now Point Mountain is on the head of Little Clear Creek, and it is one of the roughest, thickest forests that you ever thought about getting into. There's nothing but big boulders and caves and fire cherries and greenbriers. I don't see how a bear or a dog or anything else ever got through it, but anyhow, Colin Campbell went on a trip with us over there to try to get a bear.

The fellows had this big old dog that was supposed to run anything, and he did — he ran away from anything that came along. The dog goes into the



Paul Hepler made his last deer-hunting trip in Ocala National Forest, Florida, in November 1985. Photo by Glenn Bowely.

thicket, and we hear an awful commotion and — oh, boy — he's got a bear! Here he is, yelping and yelping and raising Cain. He comes dashing out of there and right on his tail is a big bobcat. He was the pursued instead of the pursuer! We never got a bear, but Colin Campbell laughed about it and kidded the owner, whose name was Shorty Young, about his prize bear dog. He was a prize, all right.

I had quite a number of experiences back in those mountains in the seven years I was at Clearco. I only regret that for me those days are gone forever, because I'm missing the best time. Under the game management of

the Department of Natural Resources there is more game back in that section of the country now than there was when the Indians were there. There's bear and deer all over the place, and I can remember when bear was almost unknown around where I grew up. And deer — you never heard of a deer, because they were killed out commercially years before, back when you could sell them. Now there are deer all over the place. I am very glad about that. ♣

Paul Ashton Hepler died in Melbourne, Florida, on March 15, 1987, one day after his 81st birthday.

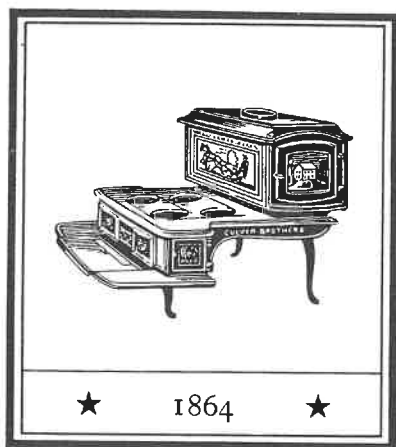


Carolyn Sue Ferguson has a family affair with Home Comfort stoves that stretches nearly statewide and more than a century long. The romance began when her Summers County grandmother ordered her first Home Comfort in 1874, continued with her mother, and culminated when Carolyn brought this beauty from Pendleton County to her Putnam home.

Home Comfort

By Carolyn Sue Ferguson

Photographs by Michael Keller



Home comfort can mean many things nowadays — a reclining chair, warm water bed, Thanksgiving dinner, or generously loving spouse. But from 1870 through the 1950's, Home Comfort meant something more specific, the ultimate in modern cooking stoves for rural housewives in West Virginia and throughout the United States.

One of the first West Virginia housewives to own one of the big wood burners was my grandmother, Eliza Johnson, of Sandstone, Summers County. In 1875, Grandpa Jim ordered

a Home Comfort for his bride of 12 years. My mother got her first Home Comfort in 1923, and another in 1946. I got mine just last spring from a Pendleton County antique shop. Needless to say, there's a story behind this three-generation, cast-iron love affair.

The Culver brothers, founders of the Wrought Iron Range Company of St. Louis, Missouri, created their first kitchen range in 1864. Called the "Farmer's Model," it was a pioneer stove for pioneer days, sturdily built of gray iron even to the elevated oven on the top rear of the cooking surface.

The first Home Comfort entered the family in 1874, when grandfather Jim Johnson ordered a stove for Eliza, his wife. Photographer and date unknown.

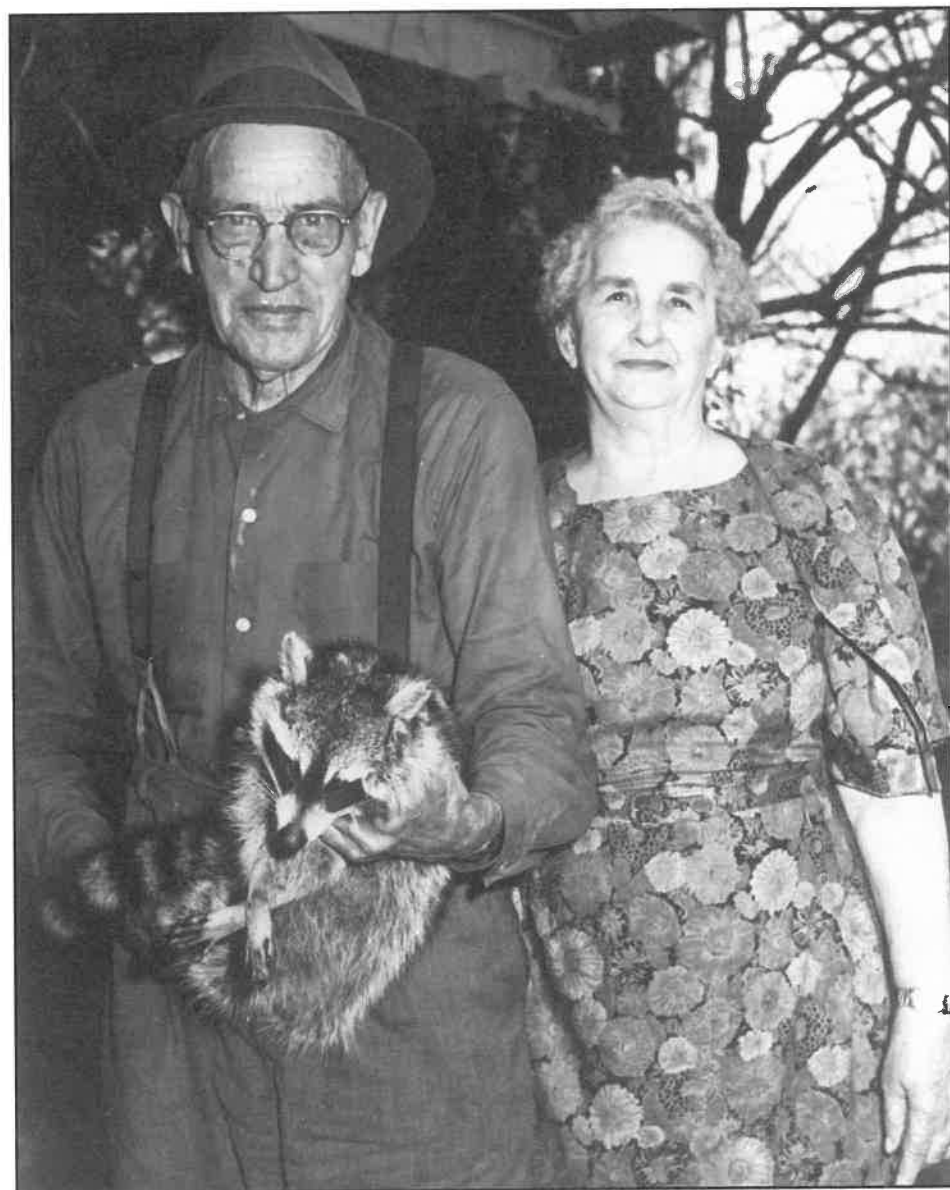
Made with four lids or eyes, this model also became known as the prairie stove. Families following their dreams west started out with everything they owned in covered wagons. Storms, Indian attacks, illness and death, as well as loss of the oxen that pulled their home on wheels, caused many pioneers to jettison possessions to lighten the wagon's load. The iron stove was usually the first thing to go. Dry western air preserved many of these early models, leaving some to keep a lonely vigil beside wagon-rutted trails years after being abandoned by their weary and disillusioned owners.

In 1870, the Culver brothers manufactured a steel-bodied family range, the first of the famous "Home Comfort" line. Gray iron was used for the top castings, door panels, and frames of this large, vault-like rectangular black box. The oven door was hinged on the side.

The style of the Home Comfort range changed dramatically in 1890. The strength and beauty of this creation made it as much a piece of furniture as the kitchen table. The expensive malleable iron body and cooktop of this new range withstood the constant expansion and contraction from heating and cooling without cracking.

Polished malleable iron trimmed this ornate black stove. The oven, now

Bun and Effie Lively raised their family on Home Comfort cooking, wearing out two stoves in the process. Bun was an avid coon-hunter. Photographer unknown, about 1961.



1870



hinged on the bottom, was located beneath the cooktop and to the right of the firebox. The new design included a back wall with a warming closet on each side of the stovepipe. A warming closet is a rectangular compartment with a door where bread and other food keeps warm without continuing to cook.

Lacelike iron ledges, approximately six inches wide, were fastened to each side of the cooktop, ready to hold cast-iron utensils as they were removed from the heat. Towel bars along these ledges displayed feed-sack dish towels and thickly padded pot holders. Another bar across the front of the stove kept the cook's stomach from being seared by the hot iron cooking surface.

The 1923 Home Comfort retained the beauty and strength of the 1890 stove. However, it was coated with a speckled gray and white, glass-based enamel called Verluc. This smooth, sanitary surface protected the underlying metal from moisture and rust. The company issued a stern warning to stove owners to "never use a damp cloth . . . when the range is hot," because to do so would crackle and craze the Verluc coating into a giant spider web.

The oven door on this elegant new model boasted a crude thermometer, numbered 1 through 9, with 9 meaning "hot." Prior to the addition of this thermometer, you gauged the oven temperature by opening the door and

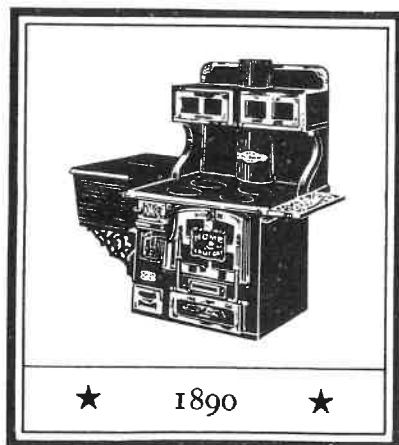
feeling the air inside with your hand. A good cook could tell to perfection the right temperature for everything from custard pies to yeast bread. Tub-type polished copper water tanks could be added to either side of the stove to store and heat water.

Ordering from a catalog was the normal way of purchasing everything from corsets to turning plows, but not the Home Comfort stove. In the summer of 1923, my mother, Effie Lively, ordered her Verluc-coated Home Comfort stove, complete with warming closets and water tank, from a

salesman seated at the kitchen table in her home at Green Sulphur Springs.

These salesmen were trustworthy, the company wanted you to know. "The Home Comfort sales organization is known in practically every state in the union," the Culver brothers proclaimed. "Honesty and integrity have always been the first qualities considered in employing our salesmen . . ."

Home Comfort salesmen covered specific territories, retracing their routes in a regular pattern. Each carried with him a miniature stove, a



replica of the big one, and used it to demonstrate the latest innovative features of the full-sized range.

Home Comfort stoves were shipped from the St. Louis factory to the nearest train depot, which meant that Mama's gray-speckled beauty would arrive at the C&O station at Sandstone, some ten miles from home. On the specified day, my father, Bun Lively, two of my older brothers and a neighbor man left our house before daylight in a horse-drawn wagon. When they returned near dark, these four strong men struggled to move the heavy stove from the wagon to Mama's kitchen.

Dad worked most of the next day to install the stove properly. It had to be a safe distance from the wall because of the heat it would generate. The stove pipe required at least one elbow to prevent rain from coming down and rusting the iron interior.

While Dad was working, Mama would rub her hands over the glass-like surface and exclaim, "What a beautiful stove!" A diamond ring would not have been as pleasing to her eye.

The Home Comfort cookbook that came with the stove was much more than a collection of recipes. Besides telling you how to prepare corn frit-

ters, whole young pig, pickled pig's feet, oxtail soup, spaghetti noodles, spoon bread, mince pie and apple brown Betty, you received detailed instructions on the operation and care of this modern appliance.

By the time I was born in 1935, the "new" stove was 12 years old, but it didn't seem old to me. From my earliest memory, Mama's sentiments echoed in my heart. This stove was absolutely the most beautiful thing in our home.

But as much as I loved that stove, nostalgia does not blur my memory of having to build fires at five o'clock on bitter cold winter mornings.

Today, I wake in a uniformly heated house, walk on thick carpet to my warm kitchen, and turn a knob to engage an electric burner as I drink coffee pre-perked in my timed electric pot.

Back then, I would reluctantly leap out of bed, knowing my feet would be flash-frozen by the linoleum on my bedroom floor, even through knitted woolen socks. Peering through the frosty fog of my breath, I ignored the company's warning about volatile materials. I would place three or four kerosene-soaked corn cobs in the firebox, tepee kindling around them and frame it all with larger pieces of dry

wood. I would strike a kitchen match, or sometimes half a box, praying all the while that I'd adjusted the dampers properly. If I had, a fire would flame quickly. If not, the kitchen would soon be filled with choking smoke.

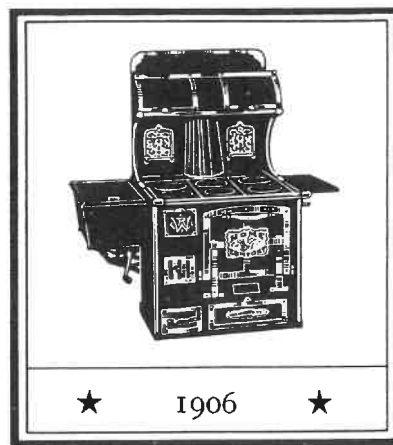
To control the temperature needed for cooking, you made a logical progression from left to right. The lids and burners directly over the firebox were the source of the most intense heat, with the areas to the right graduating from medium to warm.

In the winter, large pots of beef or pork, as well as a pot of dry beans — usually pintos — were started early in the morning on the hot side and moved slowly right to end up on the back corner, simmering forth tantalizing aromas as a prelude to supper. The winter kitchen was the coziest place in the house.

Summer cooking produced an intensely different and uncomfortable climate. Fires burned all day during the canning season, elevating the kitchen temperature to a broil. At other times during hot weather, food for the entire day was cooked with breakfast, whenever possible, and the fire was allowed to go out. Dinner and supper were then served at room temperature.

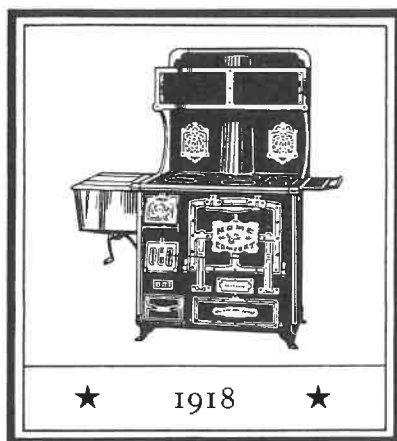
Dry, gray-white, powdery ashes had to be removed daily. And once a week, as the instructions said, the cook had to "scrape accumulated soot and ashes off the oven top and remove

Left and below: Like other wood-burning ranges, the top of the Home Comfort breaks down for ease of operation. Taking out the small eye allows direct flame cooking, while removal of the whole assembly permits full access to the firebox. These are the hottest eyes, with areas to the right progressively cooler.





The Home Comfort layout is similar to that of modern electric and gas ranges, with the addition of firebox and ash doors to the left.



★ 1918 ★

through the soot door directly under the oven." This sounds so easy. But soot is a black powdery substance consisting chiefly of carbon particles, and there was plenty of it. Most people could have played in a minstrel show without benefit of additional makeup by the time they finished this job.

Singed fingers often resulted from another chore. To prevent the cooktop from rusting, you were instructed to "wipe down the stove top with an oily rag." This must be done daily. In our house, a large fat-lined skin from a slab of bacon or a ham replaced the oily rag. The stove had to be warm, and only painful experience could teach just how warm.

Sadiron, both the solid ones and those with removable handles, were heated on the different areas of the cooking surface to the correct temperature for ironing everything from sheer lace and lawn blouses to heavy denim bibbed overalls. To make certain the iron had been heated to the right degree, you moistened a finger and touched it quickly to the bottom

surface. This was another skill that only experience could teach.

Winter evenings, the family congregated in the kitchen. There were many reasons, one being warmth, another the availability of food for snacks. There was something special about late-night biscuits or cornbread washed down with cool sweet milk or fresh buttermilk. The taste buds of my memory declare those snacks unequalled by any of today's frozen yogurt, individual pan pizzas or nachos supreme.

By the late 1940's, the Home Comfort stove had lost much of its old ornate individuality to sleek modernization. The new model looked a lot like the 1870's black box, except it was enameled white. In spite of this, Mama was so proud when Dad and his helpers carried in her new 1946 post-war Home Comfort range. I cried when they carried away our beautiful but worn out old friend from 1923.

Both Mama's stoves are lost to time now, as is the 1875 model treasured by Grandma Eliza Johnson. For many

years, I searched through antique shops and attended many remote estate sales, dreaming I'd find a duplicate of the stove of my childhood. In the spring of 1990, a wrong turn on U.S. Route 33 in Pendleton County took me to Brandywine and Shaeffer's Antique Shop, where my dream came true.

So it is that a big, speckled Home Comfort range now graces the hearth in my living room in Hurricane, Putnam County. Scrubbed and polished, it holds a cast-iron Dutch oven, a large chicken-fryer skillet, another large iron skillet, and several feed-sack dish towels embroidered by my mother some 50 years ago. It is not Mama's stove, but it is a stove she would understand.

To those of us old enough to remember, it evokes memories of delicious food and a special warmth shared with family and friends. Of course, I know that Home Comfort is only the brand name of a solid old stove, meaning no more in its time than Maytag or Whirlpool mean to us today. But somehow the words say more than that to me, signifying a way of life that meant love and comfort in a wonderful West Virginia country home. ♣

Home Comfort, a solid product of the Midwest, graced homes throughout West Virginia and much of America. Our author hopes to have this one up and cooking soon.





Emmie — Emma Edna Samples Durham — was a strong woman with a mind of her own. Photographer and date unknown.

Emmie

The Last Years of a Long Life

By Mona Walton Helper

In truth, she was always more Emmie than Grandma to me, most likely more Emmie than Mother to her children. Once widowed, Emmie remained widowed better than 60 years, the arbitrator of her own life — and a few others besides. Thoughts of her long ascendancy in our family came back to me at the hospital late in Emmie's life.

"Careful," a middle-aged nurse instructed two young orderlies transferring Emmie to a gurney. The nurse

moved around the hospital bed pulling the bottom sheet from beneath the edges of the mattress. Emmie was lifted and transferred rather awkwardly onto the gurney. She grimaced as she was settled upon the portable bed. We walked along beside her, my mother Maysel and I, down the hall as far as the elevator. Emmie did not realize who we were and fought my hand when I reached for hers.

"The shot is working now," said

the nurse.

How could she know that for the last 15 years, Emmie had seldom known who I was, or who her own daughter was most of the time, preferring to believe Maysel to be Mat who, like Emmie's other sisters and brothers, was long dead and buried.

While we waited in a lounge outside the operating room for doctors and nurses to tend Emmie's fractured hip, 25 years of images wrestled with one another, merging in and out of a maze of contradictory episodes. The shriveled, thin-limbed woman of 98, who ate and ate, devouring sweets with the cunning of a child, nibbling away whole apple pies piece by piece in stealthy return visits to Maysel's kitchen, and yet remained deceptively frail in appearance, vied with the spongy grandmother of 73 who had been fully in charge of her own circumstances. She had walked half a mile to church on Sundays, traveled by bus from West Virginia to Michigan whenever the urge struck to visit her younger brother's family, spent weeks on her twin brother's farm helping with planting, canning or quilting, depending upon the season, and fought her own battles on her own terms.

There was the time, for instance, she had marched into our living room carrying a yellow plastic pitcher of water, took a solid stand and flung the entire contents into my sister's 12-year-old face. I cannot remember Wanda's crime, but I recall Emmie's satisfied departure.

Emmie was never to be proved wrong. Once her mind was set on something, it was set to stay. When my cousin, Barbara Jo, was visiting with us once, she introduced Emmie to her boyfriend.

"Grandma, this is Steven Hammack."

"Hammack," she mused aloud. "You any relation to the Hammacks up Queen Shoals?"

"No, Grandma. His name isn't Hammack. It's Hammack," Barbara Jo corrected.

"Yep," Emmie said firmly, "Ole Doc Hammack's boy."

"No, no, Grandma, not Hammack, Hammack."

"Yes, I know. Ole Doc Hammack's boy. There wasn't no good coming to any of 'em."

"No, Grandma, his name isn't

Hambrick," Barbara Jo tried to clarify. "It's Hammack." She pronounced the names slowly, enunciating each syllable carefully and precisely, "Hammack — not Hambrick — Hammack."

"Well," Emmie demanded, "How'd you get so smart, swallow a college?"

It was that same steely determination to have things her way that prompted Emmie on numerous occasions to impose her will upon others. When my mother, as a young adult, had gone job hunting for the first time, Emmie had encouraged her to seek employment with the telephone company. Failing to get a prompt follow-through from her daughter, she greeted Maysel one afternoon with a message.

"The telephone company called and left word for you to come in for an interview."

"The phone company called me?"

"That's what I said, are you deaf?"

The following day, Maysel reported to the employment office of C&P Telephone Company and explained that she was there in response to their summons — only to be informed, of course, that no such call had been made. Embarrassed and uncomfortable, Maysel filled out a job application under the dubious eye of the receptionist, but no offer of employment was ever extended.

Emmie's absence did not necessarily diminish her dominance over a situation. Years after she moved from her farm in Clay County to take up permanent residence elsewhere, her will continued to make itself felt back home. Although various of her sons would occupy the farmhouse, she never let them forget it belonged to her.

While son Cecil lived there, she insisted that one room be reserved exclusively for her use. The interior doors were locked in order to isolate it from the rest of the house. It had its own entrance and boasted a stove, refrigerator, large iron bed and other items of necessity and comfort she might require on her occasional visits. Cecil and his wife were left with the other four rooms in which to raise their five children.

There were rare occasions, however, when Emmie was brought up short. Once, at a family reunion, she went bustling up to one of her cousins who was toting an infant in his arms.



Emmie and twin brother Ed remained close throughout their lives. This photo was made at Ed's Wirt County farm in 1953. Photographer unknown.

"Well, Lawrence," she declared loudly, "he looks just like you. You certainly can't deny this one's yours."

A big smile rolled across Lawrence Samples's face. "Boy, I better," he drawled, "'cause this one belongs to brother Orvis."

Emmie held to her own clear vision of truth. When leveling admonishments upon her grandchildren, she made it a common practice to affix whatever age she deemed appropriate to strengthen her point. For example, a nine-year-old child might hear, "Twelve years old and can't boil a potato!" A 17-year old, on the other hand, would most likely hear, "Thirteen years old and wanting to go trolloping off with some boy. Why, I never heard the like!"

Always eager to spend time with her twin brother, Emmie often went to his farm in Elizabeth for long visits. On one such occasion, preparations were made in advance to meet my parents

at a family gathering in Parkersburg at the end of her stay, thus sparing Ed the long drive from Wirt County to Charleston.

After having spent several weeks with Ed and his wife, Kate, Emmie was ready to abandon their company. From the moment she arrived at the roadside park in Parkersburg, Emmie nagged my parents to leave. She transferred her belongings from Ed's truck to Dad's car while Ed and Kate were some distance away conversing with other family members. Finally, my parents succumbed to her prodding and, without waiting to catch Ed or Kate's attention, left for home.

Later, when Kate called to inquire as to why Emmie had left without so much as bidding them goodbye, Emmie informed her, "Well, Maysel's young'uns were so fussy she was plumb worn out, so we just gathered up and come on back home."

Nor was the time of day exempt

from her adjustments. Striding into a bedroom at 6:00 a.m., she would set about rousing the occupants by calling out in an accusing voice, "After nine o'clock and still laying in the bed!"

Long before Emmie became confused about her surroundings, her memory had been a little loose in regards to her age. She could drop as much as 20 years in an afternoon. I think it was merely that she counted her years from the stamina within herself and not by the number of turns to the calendar. Though Mrs. Meadows, one of her closest friends in later life, was many years her junior, Emmie always referred to her as "poor old Mrs. Meadors" — and did, in fact, live to see her "old" friend laid to rest.

For all that Emmie pushed and shoved facts around, she was very definite about the rightness or the wrongness of a thing. She lived by a strong code of propriety. The hem of her dresses and petticoats reached well below her knees. Never once did Emmie don trousers. Neither did she wear garters to hold her hose in place. She would roll each stocking to her knee, then twist it with one finger into a tidy knot that never sagged or fell, a skill her teenage granddaughters thought a wonder but could never master.

Sundays found Emmie in church. It was not important so much which church, Nazarene, Baptist, Presbyterian, or Methodist, as long as she could worship in a church. Wanda referred to her churchgoing habits as "Emmie's vegetable-soup religion."

After Emmie and Mrs. Meadows began regularly attending Fairview Methodist, they often accepted a ride to and from church with Mr. Raines, a neighbor who belonged to the same congregation. Although Mr. Raines was 35 years younger than Emmie, both elderly ladies always elected to ride in the back seat of his car because "it wasn't seemly for a widder woman to ride up front with a married man."

Emmie was not low on curiosity, either. "Who in the deal is that?" she would ask whenever anyone passed within seeing distance of her. Anytime my parents had company, Emmie was sure to come slipping through the back door to investigate. Her cover story was always the same. "Well, I



The mother of a large Clay County family, Emmie is shown in these pictures with daughter Maysel and son Leon. Maysel is dressed up for her 1940 prom, and Leon is home from the service. Photographer unknown.

thought it was Bill come to visit." Bill was one of her eight sons.

Images of Emmie assume different hues and are as diverse as the people reminiscing. The time of an event or the age of the person doing the recollecting has less bearing upon the discrepancies involving Emmie than does privilege, for it was no secret she had her favorites. Aunt Ann, Bill's wife, voiced the theory that Emmie only had one daughter-in-law at a time. She preferred a couple of her grandchildren to the other 16, and 24 great-grandchildren and six great-greats received her notice in varying degrees.

But there was one who was never out of her favor, who possessed Emmie's highest loyalty and devotion. To her mind, he had never failed her

and she was bound to him more surely than darkness to night. Her twin brother, Ed, would always be a part of her life.

Even after Emmie's mind started to slip backwards into her past and Ed had given up driving, she would pack her grip and sit waiting. "Ed's coming to get me," she'd say. Hundreds of times over the next years, and beyond his death in September 1981, she would tell any who would hear her, "Ed's a-coming."

The years had worn heavily upon Emmie. Before 1911 she lost two infants, one stillborn, the other six weeks out of the womb. In 1928, her husband, Walter, and Thurman, one of their sons, were killed in the same mining accident at MacAlpin. Walter



Edward Durham was 49 when he died, Thurman 22.

Like an eroded stone hammered by the weather, Emmie endured. When the Raleigh County mine explosion suffocated her husband and son, she still had six children living at home. Cecil, a miner, was 20 years old. The others, Sebert, Bill, Wes and Leon, were 16 and younger. Maysel, her last born, was not quite seven. Only Herman, with a wife and four-year-old daughter, lived elsewhere.

Emmie believed in taking care of her own. She had her farm and her older sons and her own two hands. Everybody worked. Widowed at 44, she got through day to day, giving her best and making do. Sometimes outsiders sticking their feet under her table were

in a better position to provide for themselves than she was, but Emmie put before them, ungrudgingly, her hot bread and hard-earned provisions.

The old adage "waste not, want not" applied literally to Emmie's habits. When she opened a can of paint, she did not cease painting until the can was empty. If paint remained after she completed her original task of coating the walls of a room, she would begin on the furniture. Failing even then to empty the container, Emmie would move to the out-of-doors and paint whatever lay in her path till her supply of paint was exhausted.

Through all the making-do, getting-by years, however, the children may have been required to make do with

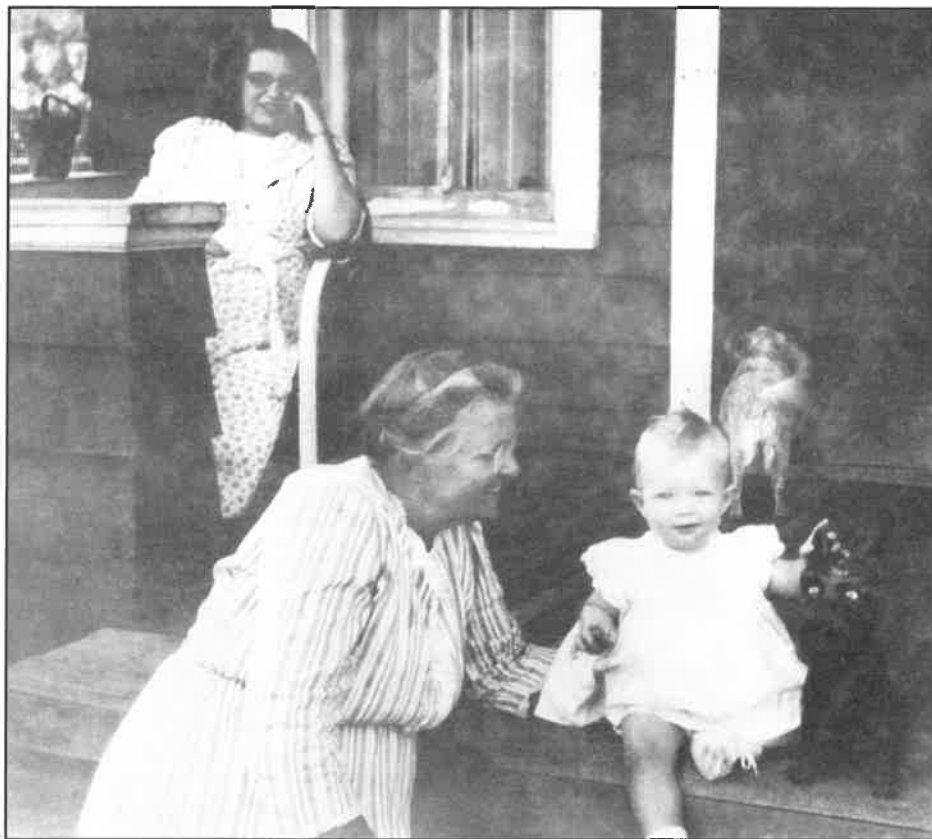
a tad less than Emmie. Pride in her appearance allowed Emmie the occasional purchase of a new hat or dress. Going to church, visiting family or friends, she strove to look her best. When any of her younger children registered a complaint about their apparel, Emmie chided, "You won't be the worst-looking one there."

With age, Emmie became less resilient. Setbacks and hardships pulled at her with the force of an outgoing tide. Graves consumed other sons. In 1958, Wesley died in Ohio of a heart attack. He was buried in the yellow clay of the Samples Cemetery near his father and his older brother. Twenty years later, Herman died in Florida and his widow, Frances, brought him back home to be laid in the shadow of the mountains. After years of swallowing coal dust, Cecil died in 1979, one breath at a time. Recipient of the Silver Star for his bravery during the Allied invasion of Normandy, he was honored at the burial service in the Samples Cemetery by a seven-gun salute.

Cataracts impaired Emmie's vision and virtually retired her needles and crochet hooks when she was in her 70's. Surgery allowed her to read her large-print Bible with greater ease, but her ability to discern the fine stitches she fed into a quilt remained sorely diminished.

At the age of 81, Emmie developed a facial tic, a condition which struck unexpectedly and ripped with searing pain through one side of her face, ultimately stopping her periodic travels. Only a shot would forestall or subdue the painful bouts. Fear of being too far from her doctor should an attack seize her kept Emmie close to home. Eventually, a nerve in her left cheek was clipped, rendering that portion of her face from the ear down permanently numb. By that time, however, fear of the recurring pain had embedded its talons too deeply within her, curtailing her travels. Months of phantom pain robbed her of much of her former independence.

Another blow came in 1966. At three o'clock one morning, a buzzer sounded in my parents' bedroom. During all the years Emmie had lived in the garage apartment behind my parents' house, the buzzer system connecting the two residences had provided Emmie with a means of summoning



Emmie's preeminence in the family continued as the third generation came along. Here she is shown with our author, Mona, with Norma, another grandchild, behind. Photographer unknown, 1950.

someone to run errands or check for prowlers without it being necessary for her to leave the apartment. That morning in 1966 it rang for the last time.

The smell of smoke and the crackle of burning wood had awakened Emmie. Fire soon engulfed the garage and clawed at the walls of her apartment. She huddled in our living room. "Everything I own in the world is in there," she said, her words echoing the despair in the lines in her face.

Faulty wiring in my dad's car had sparked the blaze that erupted into a furnace beneath her floor boards. Little was salvaged. Fire took most of Emmie's things, water saturated the rest.

The pieces of furniture that escaped ruin, furniture she had lived with for over 20 years, Emmie gave to a needy family up the road. The small, three-room trailer which was hauled into my parents' backyard and was to become Emmie's new home could not accommodate them. She took the few tangible remnants of her previous years and moved into the "old tin can."

Little by little she let go of the

present. It no longer brought her satisfaction. Slowly, Emmie slipped backwards, taking refuge in her past. The ghosts of old friends came to keep her company. She saw the faces of her sisters in our faces. "Mat, Viry, that you? You'll let me come stay with you a spell, won't you?"

Over and over she asked the same questions, the repetition tearing at the nerves of those close to her. "Who are you?" "You'll take me home, won't you?"

Always, she was trying to get back home. Seldom quiet, Emmie searched for a way of getting back to her girlhood home in the unattainable past. She took to wandering. Neighbors brought her back or called to report that Mrs. Durham had been seen going out the road.

My parents enclosed their property inside a chain-link fence, and finally resorted to padlocking the gates to keep her safe. But for all her diminished capacities, Emmie was Emmie.

At about two o'clock one morning, a voice over the telephone informed my mother they had Emmie at the Nitro police station, six miles away.

She had climbed the fence, put the lane far behind her and been picked up by a man driving along the highway. Not able to determine her identity, he had taken her to the nearest authorities. Emmie was nearly 90.

Exhausted from the physical and emotional strain of trying to curtail Emmie's exploits, Maysel sought out a reputable, affordable nursing home. With feelings of guilt and trepidation, she relinquished the care of her mother to others.

After only one night, they called Maysel to come get her. Emmie had threatened one of the nurses with a rock. When Maysel arrived to collect her, Emmie purred amiably and bid the staff goodbye with a "Honey" for each of them.

Over the ensuing years, Emmie's roaming abated somewhat. She became more concerned with the creature comforts. Though she was in excellent physical health and ate mightily, Emmie gradually changed from my softly plump grandmother into a shriveled miniature. In the middle of the hottest day in August, Emmie would sit in the sun with a winter scarf tied around her head, wearing a long-sleeved dress and sweater.

When Emmie did not come to breakfast one morning, Maysel went out to the trailer and found her lying in the floor of the tiny kitchen, cold and hurting. And so we came to sit in the hospital, my mother and I, waiting.

The doctor approached us in the waiting room. Surgery had gone well. Mrs. Durham's bones were remarkably hard for a woman of advanced years, especially a woman of 98, he told my mother.

As day followed day, Emmie's hip continued to mend. She lay in the hospital bed, dozing briefly or muttering fragments of bygone conversations. Often she would utter in a singsong, nursery rhyme chant, "One, two, three, and that's enough for you and me." Then she would smile as though we shared a secret.

It was necessary for someone to stay with her 24 hours a day. When her hands slid beneath the sheet, it was time to be on the alert.

"Grandma, don't bother those," I said as I hurried to her bedside. "Here, Grandma, you mustn't pull

the tubes out. If you do, it will hurt you," I told her firmly as I attempted to extract her hands from underneath the cover.

Emmie drew back her fist and thumped me squarely in the chest. The impact not only startled me but forced me back a step.

"Grandma," I persisted, "you have to leave that alone."

But before I could even reach for her hand, Emmie tried another tactic. In a loud voice, she yelled, "Doctor, doctor, she's hitting me!"

A nurse flew into the room.

Emmie's doctor was also subjected to a taste of her power. When she was taken to his office for a post-surgery checkup, Emmie resisted his examination. She smacked his hands away.

"You leave my dress alone," she commanded as she made another swat at his hands.

"But I'm your doctor," he told her.

"You better be my doctor, if you're going to be tugging at my dress tail."

After several more attempts, the doctor finally decided to accept my mother's word that the incision was well healed.

Prior to her release from the hospital, we were told that, like most elderly patients, Mrs. Durham might never walk again. At best, her ability to get around would be greatly reduced. That may have been true of Mrs. Durham, but they did not know our Emmie.

Emmie was made of durable stuff. She had watched her brothers march off to battle in the First World War. She handed over four sons to fight overseas during World War II, while she lent her skills closer home. She worked at the Charleston Laundry. For a time, she also did restaurant work, and during a polio epidemic she cooked at the Marmet Crippled Children's Home.

Her years stretched from rut-pocked roads traveled by horse and wagon to asphalt highways and the computer age. During her lifetime, invention after invention transformed the world and carried mankind into space.

Not that she believed it all, by any means. When the static-spattered transmission of the first lunar landing was broadcast over her television set, Emmie thought it was only playacting. Man on the moon was inconceivable,



Emmie in old age. She poses here by Maysel's house at the age of 100. Photographer unknown.

her own life was too firmly rooted in yellow clay and the mountains of home.

In early summer, a year after Emmie had suffered her fractured hip, I pushed open the gate leading into my parents' yard. As I started up the walk, Emmie opened the front door. She walked, unassisted, across the porch, sat down in the empty porch swing and spoke to the thin air. I guess Ed was keeping her company again.

On July 9, 1984, Emmie attended an outdoor celebration at Little Creek Park in South Charleston. One hundred white balloons danced upward into a blue-gray sky. One hundred multi-colored candles fought to hold their flame against a strong breeze. A letter of congratulations from President and Mrs. Reagan was proudly displayed. The voices of family and friends joined in song to wish her "Happy Birthday." Emmie had survived a century of years, had more than survived them.

In the years that followed, from West Virginia, North Carolina, Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia, Michigan, Florida,

friends and family, along with new great-grandchildren and great-greats, came to honor Emmie as she turned 101, 102, 103. Being Emmie, she would tell any who asked that she was 56 or, perhaps, 53.

It is just as well that she could appreciate only the attention and not the cause, when during the summer of 1987 she attended the centennial ceremony of the Fairview Methodist Church. The retired minister paid Emmie homage as the oldest member. Standing at the pulpit before all those gathered in the airy, light-filled room, he recalled the days when Emmie and Mrs. Meadows had regularly attended services, and spoke in awe of how she was older than her century-old church.

And still Emmie was not done with life. She lived two years and more beyond the church centennial. Then on December 11, 1989, Emma Edna Samples Durham died at the age of 105 at her daughter's house. She had grown increasingly feeble but she died without lingering illness or suffering, closing her eyes in final rest in the security of her own room. ♣

A black and white photograph of a Balm of Gilead tree branch. The branch is dark and textured, with three prominent buds. One bud is at the top, and two are lower down, one on the left and one on the right. The buds are pointed and have a slightly scaly texture.

Healing from the Hills

Folk Medicine of the Southern Mountains

By Charlotte H. Deskins
Photographs by Doug Yarrow

Three buds
from a Balm
of Gilead tree
planted by Frank
Rasnake's father in
1936. The tree has a
variety of medicinal uses.

The faces of Franklin and Pearl Rasnake are deceptive. Both look much younger than the middle years I know them to be. Franklin is a tall, dark-eyed man with a melodious voice. Pearl, his wife of 40 years, is russet-haired and has the blue eyes of her Irish father.

Both of them grew up in the once-bustling settlement of Mountain Fork, nestled in the McDowell County hills. In the old days in Mountain Fork,

when the babies came there was the midwife. When there was a hunting or farming accident, homemade splints did the job. When someone fell sick, another family member would go, not to the doctor's office or pharmacy, but to a small shelf in the pantry or root cellar. There, waiting in their tall, glass bottles and squat, round Mason jars or hanging in batches from the rafters, were found the ingredients for the healing elixirs

used by so many mountain families. If someone became seriously ill a knowledgeable elder, either a man or woman, might be called upon to brew a special medicine. Town doctors were expensive and far away. Even a trip to the nearby town of War often required special planning. Doctors were usually kept as a last resort.

Today the community of Mountain Fork has all but vanished. The families that once raised crops and children have all sold out to the coal developers and moved away, save for a few lease holders and the occasional summer farmer. Now all that remains of that more civilized time are a few broken chimneys and some blooming Rose of Sharon bushes in what used to be the front yards of houses.

The moss-covered hollows, the cold, hidden springs and the high, lonely crags have reclaimed the land now that most of the coal, too, has been taken. It is rumored that deer, bear and even mountain panthers once again roam these parts. Yet, there are other treasures here if, like the Rasnakes, you know where to look.

Frank and Pearl have a long, winding history with West Virginia. They were married here on March 10, 1952, and stayed until 1958, when they relocated to Michigan. After a mishap on the job rendered Frank unable to work, the couple, along with their three children, returned to the nearby town of Cucumber. It was during this time they resumed their interest in the herbal lore they had both been taught as children. At first, it was just something to do. Habits learned early in life are hard to discard. But as the Rasnakes noticed an improvement in the health of their family, they got more serious about their medicine gathering. Pearl maintains that it was plenty of this herbal doctoring, plus fresh air and exercise that enabled Frank to go back to work years after the doctors in Michigan had declared him disabled.

In 1975 Frank made his mine foreman's papers and took a job with one of the local coal companies. Pearl, who has always shared her husband's interests, also went to mining school where she completed the 80 hours of training necessary to get her mine safety and first aid certificates.

By this time the Rasnakes had quite a little mountain pharmacy going.

Neighbors began stopping by to see whether they had "something to break a fever" or "a brew for the upset stomach."

"Frank and I have always relied on so much of this type of medicine," Pearl says. "We learned it from the cradle, just as our parents and grand-

parents did. A lot of people think such things are superstitions, but that's nonsense. Most of the plants we use have now been proven to have scientific value."

Even now that Frank has retired and the couple has again moved away they still return a few times each year to the

The Rasnakes, shown here on a fall herb-gathering expedition, attribute their beaming good health to traditional medicine. Frank holds turtle bloom, useful for tonics and edible on salads.





Mouse-ear or preacher's feverweed is used as an astringent, to stop nosebleeds, and for kidney problems, according to Frank.

gathering places. Most herbs and a few roots can be dug in the spring-time, but the Rasnakes do most of their gathering in the autumn. "We use different parts of the plant for different things," Frank explains. "Tops, shoots and stems must be gathered while they are still green, from early spring until late summer. They keep better that way. Just tie them in bunches and hang them upside down in the shed until they are good and dry.

"However," he continues, "it is best to gather your roots in the fall of the year. That way they have had the entire summer to store up strength and energy from those long, sunny days."

"To preserve the roots," Pearl instructs, "wash and dry them carefully. Then, spread them in a single layer on paper toweling to catch the excess moisture. When they are completely dry we can use them a little at a time to brew as much tea as is needed at the time. Sometimes a handful of roots can last the whole winter."

Each ingredient gathered may serve a single function or be used in combination with other herbs. For example, yellow root (also known as goldenseal)

is used as a sore throat gargle or to heal a sore mouth or as an antiseptic. Long ago, the Indians also used it to make a brilliant yellow paint. Today the alkaloid derived from yellow root is used in prescription eyedrops.

To make yellow root tea, take two good-sized roots and either grind them up or crush them with a hammer. Add one pint of water and bring to a boil. Allow the mixture to boil for one minute, then set aside to cool. It is now ready to use as a gargle or mouth rinse.

Both Frank and Pearl had parents who were skilled in the gathering of mountain remedies. "People used to come for miles around to have my father break a fever," Frank recalls. "He had several remedies for this. One is bervine root and plantain root mixed together. Another cure came from mouse-ear or preacher's feverweed." Feverweed itself has a lot of uses. Legend has it that hawks will tear open the plant and rub their eyes with its juices to improve their vision. It was also used to stop a nosebleed and as an astringent to heal boils on the skin.

Another commonly-used skin treatment was witch hazel, which can be purchased in most drugstores today.

To make this preparation the Rasnakes mix the plant's bark, twigs and leaves with alcohol and water. For a soothing treatment for bruises, apply with a hot towel. This same mixture, when applied cold, will ease a fevered brow.

Many people assume the name "witch hazel" has to do with black magic. Actually, its name comes from an old English word meaning "to bend" because its branches make excellent divining rods.

Medicines such as boneset or wild cherry bark are used in the treatment of colds and flu. Boneset (also called feverwort or Indian sage) will break a fever or help loosen the bowels. A tea is made from the leaves and flowers.

Wild cherry bark serves as a cough remedy. Sometimes wild hickory bark and sugar are added to it to make a pleasant tasting cough syrup. The leaves and fruit pits of the wild cherry tree should not be consumed. They contain the potent poison hydrocyanic acid, whose effects include shortness of breath, loss of balance and convulsions.

One of the prettiest mountain herbs around is the lady's slipper, so named because its blossom resembles a tiny, yellow shoe. The Rasnakes use lady's slipper tea as a nerve tonic. It also eases tension headaches and acts as an antispasmodic. People who suffer from dermatitis should never touch or consume this plant, as it may aggravate the condition.

Sometimes mountain remedies come from unexpected sources. Take, for example, the lowly onion. Aside from being a tasty and healthy treat at the dinner table, the Rasnakes say it has the ability to relieve a bee sting. Cut the onion in half and lay the cut side against the sting. It will stop the pain and draw out the swelling. Pearl remembers that her father always used to take an onion with him whenever he went in the woods. He claimed it had enough drawing power to pull the poison from a snakebite.

Two other plentiful and easily identifiable mountain "weeds" are plantain and dandelion. The virtues of dandelion alone are infinite. Cut the tender, early shoots for a springtime salad or cooked green vegetable. Use the bright blossoms to make a summer wine. Grind up the dried roots, roast and brew as a coffee extender or substitute. Boil the blossoms over a hot

fire and you get a soft, yellow dye. Boil the roots in the same manner and you get a brilliant magenta dye.

Dandelion is also a good treatment for heartburn, or as a laxative. A tea made from its roots is used by the Rasnakes in the treatment of liver problems.

Plantain is nicknamed the "mother of herbs." Besides eating its tender shoots and leaves as a green the Rasnakes use it in combination with other remedies as a fever reducer or colds and flu treatment.

The soft inner bark of the slippery elm also has a multitude of uses. The Rasnakes use it as a tea for upset stomach and vomiting. This substance when soaked in water makes a gummy material which the Indians used to soothe chapped lips, burns or cuts on

the skin. During the American Revolution colonial surgeons used slippery elm as a dressing on gunshot wounds. Mountaineer midwives also used it as a lubricant to ease the child through the birth canal during labor.

Other herbs used for gynecological purposes include a tea made from witch hazel bark to clear up bleeding between menstrual periods and wild ginger tea to help ease monthly cramps and help regulate a woman's cycle.

The wild ginger herb is nothing at all like the fragrant spice used in cakes and gingerbread. Wild ginger stinks. The foul odor it gives off resembles rotting meat. This smell attracts the flies which pollinate it. Early settlers used this tea to relieve intestinal gas, to break a fever or to stimulate the

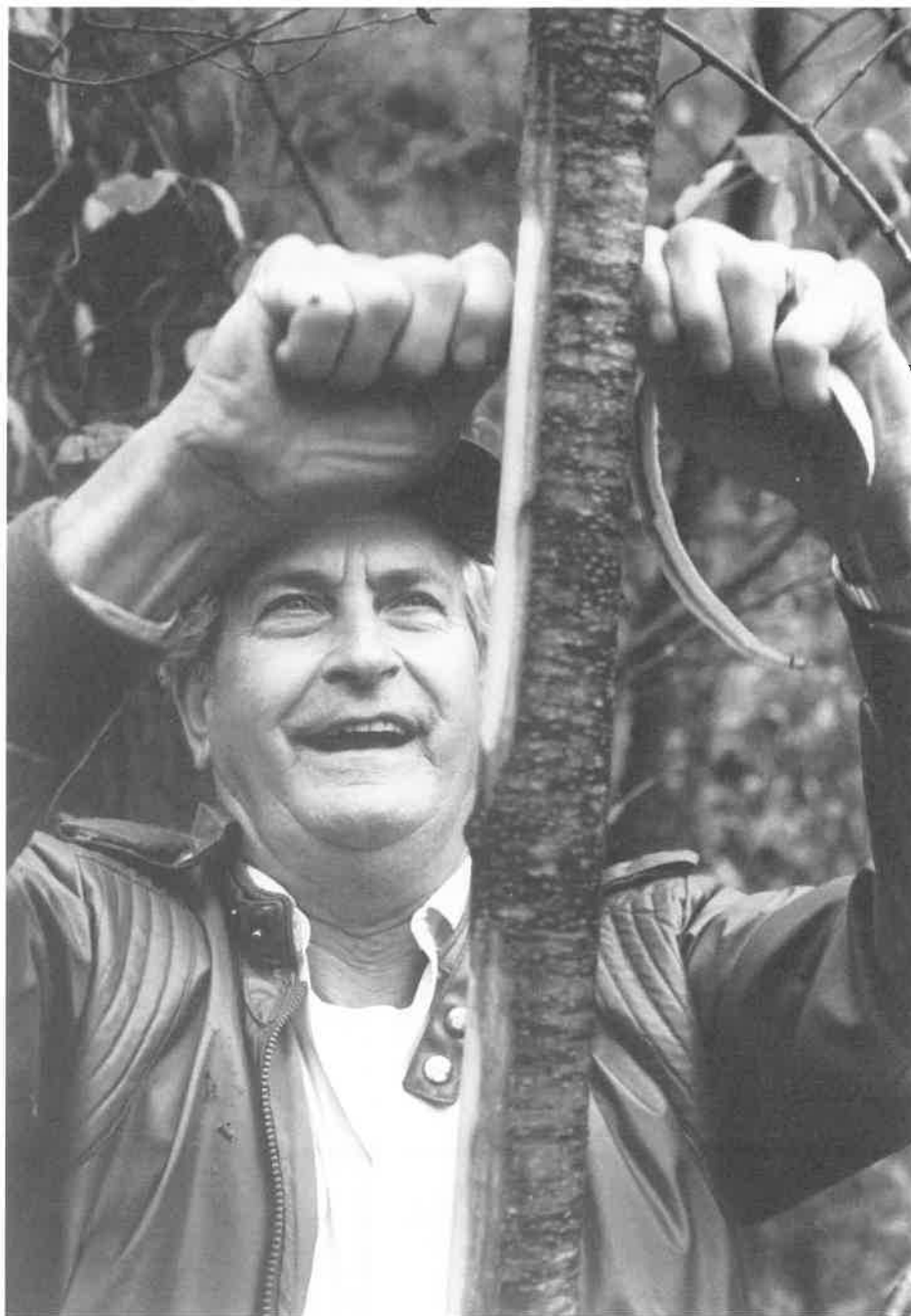
appetite. Modern science has proven its effectiveness in all these areas.

In addition to their medicinal uses, some teas make a refreshing change from the usual coffee or soda pop fare. One of these distinctive tasting table teas is made from the sassafras root. Sassafras tea has a musky, brown taste. It was used in the flavoring of toothpaste, root beer and chewing gum up until the 1960's. At that time the United States Food and Drug Administration declared the compound safrole, found in the root bark, potentially carcinogenic if taken in large amounts.

Catnip, that bushy, fresh-smelling herb with the downy, grey leaves and lavender flowers of which our feline friends are so fond, makes another excellent tea. Unlike cats, humans get

The matching Bart Simpson T-shirts suggest Bryan and David are hip to TV culture, but Granddad Frank makes sure they know of their rich mountain heritage as well. The leaves are sassafras.





Frank Rasnake takes joyously to the woods, finding a wealth of uses in the plants around him. Here he strips bark from a wild cherry.

no "high" from the special oil that the plant secretes as an insect repellant. Still, catnip offers us plenty of benefits. Chewing a handful of its leaves relieves a toothache. The tea also eases menstrual cramps, provides help for insomniacs and prevents nightmares. Catnip makes a pleasant afternoon tea. Pour boiling water over two teaspoons of the dried leaves. Steep for five minutes. Serve with lemon slices and honey.

Another favorite, spicebush, is gathered in the spring of the year when its golden forsythia-like buds appear. The twigs and tender leaves are broken into one-inch pieces. Use one cup spicebush pieces to every two

cups of water. Simmer 15 minutes. Add brown sugar for extra flavoring. Its berries may be dried, ground and used as a substitute for allspice.

The leaves of another common plant, goldenrod, make such a delicious tea it was once exported to China. At the Boston Tea Party the protesters threw all the tea into the harbor, leaving the colonists with nothing to drink. They were forced to turn to the native plants. One ingenious soul concocted "Liberty Tea" from the leaves of the goldenrod and a new beverage was born. This plant's flowering tops are used as a treatment for the colic or to treat urinary disorders.

The Rasnakes caution would-be herb gatherers to always take plants only from a toxin-free area. Do not use plants that have been exposed to automotive fumes or commercial herbicides or pesticides. Be careful, of course, to positively identify any plants you intend to ingest or apply externally.

Once you have gathered, prepared and labeled your medicines the Rasnakes say the dosage given depends upon the size and age of the patient. Usually an adult will need twice the amount of a child. For example, an adult will need one cup of yellow root tea. A young child (under age 12) will need only half a cup. Infants take only four or five teaspoons.

Most teas and dried roots will last an entire year if properly stored. Others, such as boneset, pennyroyal or lady's slipper can be kept for two to three years in a cool, dry place.

Modern science has decidedly mixed feelings regarding herbal cures. Some professionals feel all such remedies should be avoided. Others admit that some of them have merit. Evidently, the Rasnakes are doing something right, for they are full of energy and spirit. Extensive travelers, they have visited 39 states together, and Frank has been in 47. They have also been sightseeing in Canada and Mexico.

The Rasnakes have as much faith in modern medicine as anyone else and do not hesitate to go to the doctor when necessary. Yet, they do not agree with those who feel that the mere presence of health care facilities necessarily means the old methods should be forgotten. They are grateful for the knowledge they have of these mountain cures and feel they can still serve certain purposes today. They see no reason to turn their backs on these green gifts so thoughtfully provided by the Creator long ago, healing treasures of the West Virginia hills. 🌿

Author Charlotte Deskins recommends great care and common sense in the matter of folk medicine. "Although generations of my family have thrived on herbal medications," she says, "I urge readers to use caution before concocting or ingesting any folk remedies." Avoid wild foods or herbs about which you have any doubts.

Piecing Together the Past

Documenting the Mountain State Quilt Heritage

By Janice D. Lantz

Photographs by Chuck Lantz

More than a dozen West Virginia women have set out to piece together a portion of state history that often never makes it into print. As members of the West Virginia Heritage Quilt Search committee, these women — all quilters themselves — have begun the task of documenting quilts and quiltmakers in the Mountain State prior to 1940. Their goal is to locate and identify as many West Virginia quilts made before this time as possible and tell the story of the quiltmakers in a published volume representative of the collection.

"West Virginia has a terrific heritage and we want to get this out," said Alice Hersom of Delray, Hampshire County, who chairs the committee.

"We're proud of the folk artists in our state and we'd like them to come forward to receive the credit they deserve."

West Virginia's quilt documentation effort springs from a nationwide trend that has gained much momentum in the last ten years. According to Barbara Howard, committee member from Fairmont, Kentucky was the first state to complete such a research project, publishing its results in the early 1980's. Since that time more than 15 other states have followed suit. "It was time," commented Howard. "A lot of the quilts had been made in another generation and the makers were dying off. A lot of history was being lost."

Actually, Marion County started a similar project on a local basis about six years ago, but it was never completed. This time, Marion Countians have joined forces with quilters from Charleston, Bluefield, Princeton, Romney, Green Springs and Morgantown in order to cover the entire state. Begun in the spring of 1990, the project is expected to take three years.

Committee members know that simply collecting the material will be an enormous task. "We don't dare think about it or we will be overwhelmed," surmised Howard. Their primary method for locating the quilts will be a series of "Quilt Days" to be held in various areas of the state beginning in spring 1991. "There are a lot of quilts

Members of the Heritage Quilt Search at a recent meeting. They are (left to right) Barbara Howard, Margaret Meador, Alice Hersom (seated), Marjorie Coffey and Martha Offut (seated). The quilt pattern is the "West Virginia Star."





Ireta Randolph takes needle and thread to a feedsack quilt at her Harrison County home. The "Mohawk Trail," her favorite quilt pattern, may be seen behind her.

in West Virginia," she noted. "But a lot of people don't like to bring them out of the house to show people.

"It's a very private thing. We're hopeful that by working through local quilt guilds and with publicity in newspapers and radio, we can encourage people to bring the quilts out."

Ireta Randolph and Gilla Core are the sort of women project organizers seek. They have never met, but a common thread runs through their lives. Each is a quilter, who — like so many other West Virginia women — told her story with scraps of fabric and endless hours of delicate needlework.

Now 87 and 94, respectively, Ireta and Gilla have been making quilts practically their entire adult lives. Because of health problems, their production has now slowed down, or as in Gilla's case, stopped. But the memories roll off their tongues just like it was yesterday.

"I was in my late 20's when I started quilting," recalled Ireta Randolph. "One of the very first quilts I ever made was that 'Double Wedding Ring,' " she said as she pointed to a brightly-pieced quilt on a cornflower blue background piled among other family quilts on her couch. The time

she recalled as about 1935, and Ireta was living in the Hepzibah community of Taylor County with her husband, Forest Wayman, and their two small children, Forest Wayman, Jr., and Ruth Elizabeth. Wayman was a machinist for Hazel Atlas Glass Company in Clarksburg, and although Ireta had worked as both a school teacher and an office clerk in earlier years, she was a homemaker in those days.

"I remember the pattern had just come to our attention and my neighbor — that would be Mrs. Thamer (Halcie) Goodwin — and I decided to try it. She made a yellow one and I made a blue one. We pieced a lot from leftover scraps we had around — you know we sewed a lot making clothes — and then she and I would trade some fabrics. She'd come help me quilt on mine, and I'd help her quilt on hers."

Mrs. Goodwin has long since died, according to Ireta, but the memories of her are part of that "Double Wedding Ring" quilt as surely as the circles are entwined in the pattern. Ireta's quilt frames also came from that period in her life — neighbor Dorsey Cropp made them by hand.

Ireta kept on quilting when her third child, John Henry, was born and when the family moved to their 300-acre farm in the Marshville community, Harrison County, where she still resides. "I'm a member of the Marshville Homemakers Club. In fact, I'm a 50-year member between Upshur and Harrison County. Lots of times we'd have a quilt in there and I'd go down and work on it. Then we'd chance them off to make money for the club."

World War II began; her husband went to work for Matheson Chemical Company in Morgantown; and her youngest child, Mary Etta, came into the world. "I made a lot of quilts for utility purposes out of feedsacks," Ireta remembered of those years. "They had some real pretty fabrics. But feedsack quilts were feedsack



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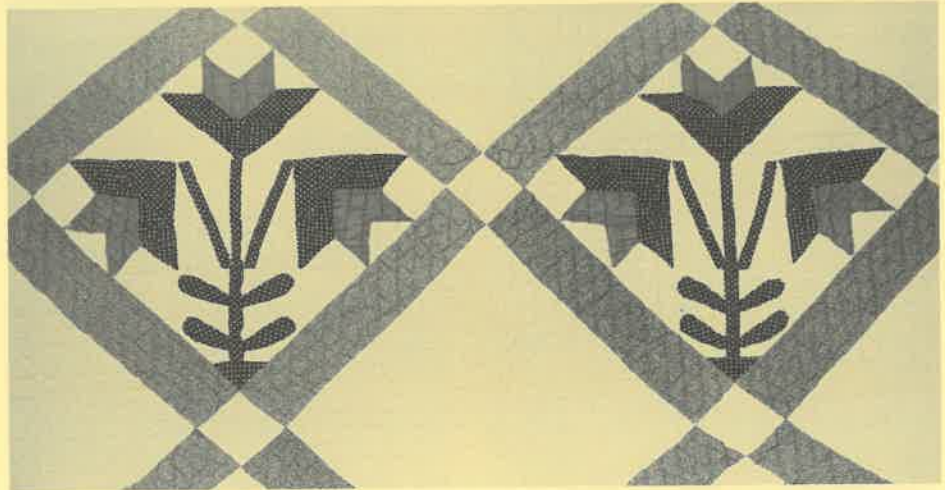
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Above: Ireta's family exemplifies the sort of heritage the search project seeks. Mother Effie Lawson Queen, center, made quilts, while grandmother Helen Marple Lawson (shown with husband Mifflin) wove woolen coverlets, including the one at left. Aunt Lori Queen Satterfield, right, made the Battenberg lace.

Right: This "Meadow Lilly" quilt was made in 1840 by Delila Wright, grandmother of Gilla Core. Fabric analysis by the Oglebay Institute identifies the fabric as having come from the Stifel Mills in Wheeling, making this a West Virginia quilt through and through.



quilts, and print quilts were print quilts — I never mixed the two together."

Although Ireta never quilted as a child, she recalled that her relatives were involved in all kinds of needle crafts. Born in 1903 in Upshur County, she was the third of six children of Oscar and Effie Lawson Queen. "Mom was not an expert needleworker," noted Ireta. "It wasn't until after my father died and she went to Washington, DC, to live with my sister that she made any fancy quilts. She worked in the fur department of a big department store and she made this one out of lining scraps," she said, pointing to a heavy, embroidered coverlet of silk and satin.

Ireta remembers that her grandmother, Helen Marple Lawson, was an expert weaver. "Grandma wasn't any bigger than a cake of soap, and she had a little log cabin down the hill

from the house where she kept her looms. I don't know how she had time to do it, but she was always down there making coverlets out of wool and linen. I expect she spun her own wool." Several of Ireta's aunts who lived close by were expert needleworkers. She has several samples of their work, including Battenberg lace made by her Aunt Lori Queen Satterfield and a pieced "Log Cabin" quilt top made by her Aunt Robirdie Queen Bond.

In 1955, Ireta and her daughter Ruth opened the Marshville General Store, which they operated for 15 years. During this period, Ireta's husband passed away. A woman of great forti-

tude and determination, she continued with her quilting and other crafts, becoming very active at Fort New Salem, a restoration fort affiliated with Salem College. There she helped revive almost forgotten needle crafts and spent endless hours acting as instructor and interpreter in needlework and as a volunteer quilter until just recently. Now some of her many needle crafts, including the antique Teneriffe embroidery and crocheting, are offered for sale at the Randolph House, a gift shop operated by her children, John and Ruth.

As for her quilts, they are prized possessions of her many family members and friends. One of her latest was



Gilla Core, now 94, quilted until her eyesight dimmed two years ago. This recent family snapshot was made at her daughter's home. Photo by Robert Segessenman.

made for her great-granddaughter, Jaclyn Colleen Randolph, three. "I've done a lot of quilts, some by hand and some by machine," said Ireta. "I don't know why I make them. I guess I just like pretty things."

Gilla Gore of Morgantown doesn't remember exactly why she started quilting, either, but she does know "she had so many quilts I didn't know what to do with them." Her daughter, June Myers, noted that there was no central heating in the family homestead in western Monongalia County and heavy coverlets were essential on cold winter nights. Many of the quilts, including those made by Gilla's mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, have been lovingly preserved in a cedar chest, carrying with them endless memories.

Gilla was one of three children born to William and Emma Eddy Wright. Raised in the Core area of Monongalia County, Gilla, her older sister Gertrude and her brother Glenn went to school at Morgantown High and boarded with the Reed family there. After graduation, she returned home

and met Campbell Lemley Core at a church function. They were married in 1921.

It was prior to her wedding that Gilla started making quilts on a hand-made frame constructed by a cousin in 1912. Most of them were "true scrap quilts" made from bits of fabric of favorite dresses or other clothing, but she recalls making one or two from store-bought material. Gilla frequently worked on quilts as a member of the Women's Organization at Core. "We'd put one in and everyone would quilt on it," she reminisced. "Then we'd chance it off to raise money for the cemetery or the school."

Sometimes the club would buy material in bulk so that members could make quilts at less expense. Daughter June remembers one particular quilt — the "Rainbow Quilt" — that was made from strips of brightly-colored materials purchased in this manner.

Gilla comes from a long line of very talented quilters and needleworkers. Tucked in the family cedar chest is a collection of quilts that includes

several nine-patch and a windmill pattern quilt made by her mother; a "Wreath of Roses" quilt made by her grandmother Elizabeth Barrickman Eddy; a "Meadow Lilly" pattern made by her paternal grandmother Delila Wright which dates to 1840; and a 1830's-vintage "Tree of Life" pattern made by her great-grandmother Mary Fetty Barrickman — to name just a few. Another sampler quilt top is a collection of her mother's favorite patterns.

Gilla's favorite was the "Wreath of Roses." "I admired it each year when the quilts were aired," she recalled, "until one year, my mother told me to take it home with me. I probably wouldn't have it today if I hadn't admired it so."

Quilting, tatting and crocheting up until two years ago when her eyesight became dim, Gilla claimed that her quilting stitches "weren't spectacular." "My mother and my sister were really neat quilters, though. Even when I would make dresses, my mother would always tell me to let my sister make the buttonholes."

Gilla would quilt mostly in the evening or whenever her busy schedule as a homemaker allowed during the day. Her favorite place to set up the quilt frames was on the sun porch, she noted. "I remember one time, my husband was the postmaster in Core and this woman I knew came into the post office. He told her to get her thimble and get up to the house, that I had a quilt in. Well, here she came a-peckin' at the window of that sun porch. She'd come to help me quilt."

June Myers remembers going at a very young age with her mother to where quilts were being made. "The neighbors came in and they quilted and gossiped and laughed," she noted. "I remember when you were just a little bit of a thing, they threw a cat out of the quilt," added her mother, referring to the old superstition of tossing a cat in a newly-made quilt to see which unmarried quilter would be wed first.

Gilla also recalled a quilt at her homeplace that was singed when it was used to put out a fire. Her grandmother, Elizabeth Eddy, could not walk, but was still an avid quilter and needleworker. When the house caught on fire, Gilla reminisced, her grandmother was carried to the yard.

When the fire spread nearby, she used the quilt she was holding to put it out.

Although June, Gilla's only daughter, has never been interested in quilting, granddaughter Debbie Myers McDonald avidly carries on the family tradition. "My daughter says I've broken her chain to a long line of quilters," laughs June. "I admire the quilts greatly and am thrilled to death to have a connection with the past. I just never had a desire to make one."

But even at that, her insight for the art sums up what makes quilts so special: "The women who made them did take a great deal of pride in their work, and there's a great deal of memories in every scrap."

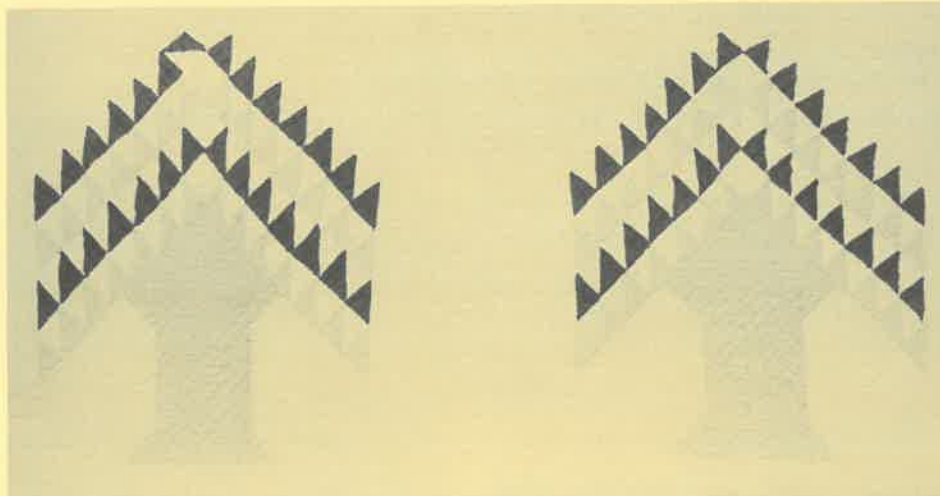
The Heritage Quilt Search committee agrees. They hope to turn up many women like Gilla and Ireta, and collections of quilts like those in Gilla's cedar chest. During Marion County's previous campaign, over 100 quilts were recorded in just one Quilt Day. At each Quilt Day location, a research team will be in charge of documenting and photographing each quilt brought in.

"This will include measuring the quilt, determining what pattern was used and then inspecting the batting, fabric and quilting," said Barbara Howard. A second team will then catalog a history of the family who owns the quilt and that of the quilt-maker, as well. "We want to find out who made the quilt, when it was made and what special events were going on in the family at the time it was made," she added.

"From there, we will decide which quilts are book quality," continued Howard. "Not all of them will be, but they all need to be documented. The committee will decide which ones will go in the book, and they will probably have to be re-photographed. However, all of the quilts will be recorded and the information kept in a central location."

Howard noted that 1940 was chosen as the cutoff date for the quilts because of the change in the manufacture of fabrics at that time. "World War II had begun and they started making more polyester-blend fabrics and adding sizing. Prior to that date, there were more pure colors in fabrics, as well, and the textures were different."

Although the committee is not sure



This "Tree of Life" was made in 1830 by Mary Fetty Barrickman. Note the "mistake" at the top of the tree at left, an intentional act of humility to acknowledge that only God's creations are perfect.

exactly how costly this project will be, it will take a lot of funding, particularly for publication of the book. According to Hersom, the committee is in the process of applying for grants from the National Quilters Association and the West Virginia Humanities Council. In addition, they hope to secure other support. Some donations have already come in from quilt guilds across the state, and plans call for a fund-raiser to feature a drawing for a handmade sampler quilt.

Even though the task at hand is sizeable, the West Virginia Heritage Quilt

Search committee seems undaunted. Perhaps it's the quest for history that spurs them on; more than likely it's the love of quilts. "Quilting is such a personal thing," said Barbara Howard. "This project will be more than just the documentation of the quilts. We'll be documenting people's lives." ❁

For more information about the West Virginia Heritage Quilt Search Project, write to Alice Hersom, P. O. Box 93, Delray, WV 26714 or Barbara Howard, Route 9, Box 441-A, Fairmont, WV 26554.

The skilled hands of West Virginia women continue to stitch together the Mountain State quilt heritage.



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In This Issue

IRENE B. BRAND, a lifelong resident of Mason County who earned her B.A. and master's degrees at Marshall University, writes Christian romance novels. She is a member of West Virginia Writers and the Romance Writers of America, and taught at Point Pleasant Junior High School for 23 years until her 1989 retirement. During 1990 she wrote three historical novels. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in the winter 1987 issue.

LORNA CHAMBERLAIN, a Wetzel County native, studied English at the College of Steubenville after graduating from Warwood High School near Wheeling. She is a freelance writer whose articles have been used in many publications. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in the fall 1990 issue.

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CHARLOTTE H. DESKINS, a McDowell County native, now lives in neighboring Tazewell County, Virginia. Her nonfiction, short fiction and poetry have been published in various magazines, and she has received awards from West Virginia Writers and the Mountain State Press. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in the spring 1990 issue.

JOHN L. DUNKLE, SR., was born in Deer Run, Pendleton County, in 1884. He worked his way through three colleges, including Columbia University, and was president of Maryland's Frostburg College when he retired in 1944. Mr. Dunkle died in 1975. His family offered his writings to GOLDENSEAL for publication.

CAROLYN SUE FERGUSON is originally from Green Sulphur Springs in Summers County. She has worked as a real estate agent since 1970 and is the author of numerous articles and short stories. She is a member of West Virginia Writers and is working on a Board of Regents degree from West Virginia State College. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

JACQUELINE G. GOODWIN, born and raised in New Jersey, earned her undergraduate and master's degrees at West Virginia University. A former teacher, she is now director of communications for the West Virginia Education Association and a freelance writer. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in the summer 1990 issue.

ANN BISHOP GRIFFITH, a native of Scarbro, Fayette County, earned a degree in journalism from West Virginia University. During 26 years on the staff of the *Charleston Daily Mail* her work received wide recognition, and she was named a Woman of Achievement by the West Virginia Press Women. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MONA WALTON HELPER, an award-winning poet and short story writer, is a native West Virginian. She has been widely published in journals and periodicals, including *Mountain Ways* and *Appalachian Heritage*. She is co-author of *Our Separate Days*, a book of poetry and short stories. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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

CHUCK LANTZ, a native of Monongalia County, is a professional photographer with numerous photo awards to his credit. In addition to a small freelance business, he works as a stringer for United Press International and serves on the board of directors of the Professional Photographers of West Virginia. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

JANICE D. LANTZ is a native of Elkins and a graduate of West Virginia University. She edited the *Morgantown Dominion Post's* Sunday magazine, *Panorama*, for more than six years and now works as a public information representative for Monongahela Power Company. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in the fall 1984 issue.

GERALD MILNES was born in Pennsylvania and now lives in Elkins. He is a fiddler, photographer and staff member at the Augusta Heritage Center at Davis & Elkins College where he coordinates the West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program. He is an occasional contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

NANCY A. NASH worked mostly as a medical technologist until her retirement in 1988. She earned a B.A. in English and an M.A. in German from Texas Christian University. She is a quilter and a longhair cat judge for the Cat Fanciers Association. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

DOUG YARROW has lived in West Virginia since 1969. He has taught at Big Creek High School in McDowell County and now teaches at Liberty High School in Raleigh County. His photography has appeared in many publications, and includes a *Newsweek* cover in 1978. He has contributed photos for many GOLDENSEAL articles over the years.

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