Goldenseal

Volume 2, Number 4 October-December 1976

Ida L. Reed, Barbour County Hymn Writer • Mail Pouch Barnside Ads • Armstrong and Martin, Black String Band Touring W. Va. in 1930s • Sidney Box, British Coal Miner as U.M.W.A. Official

Goldenseal

A Quarterly Forum for Documenting West Virginia's Traditional Life

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Tom Screven
Editor

Colleen Anderson
Editorial Assistant and Designer

Gay Knipp
Typist

COVER Ida L. Reed at about 22 years of age. Photographer unknown. A section on the writer begins on page 25.

Current: PROGRAMS • FESTIVALS • PUBLICATIONS

MOUNTAINEER WEEK PLANS

The West Virginia University Student Foundation will present its Mountaineer Week '76 between November 13 and 20. The theme selected for this year's campus-wide series of events is "Mountain Mystique: Memories and Melodies." There will be considerable attention to State and Regional traditional culture during the week, which will contain a football game and at least one beer bust.

Events concerned with mainly bygone rural pastimes will take place as follows:

Nov. 14. Square Dance, MountainLair.

Nov. 15. Street Fair, 6:30 p.m., including a woodchopping demonstration.
Mountain music concert, Courthouse Square.
Folk Club of Morgantown performance, Blue Tic Tavern, MountainLair

Nov. 16. Doughnut eating and tobacco spitting contests, 2:00 p.m., MountainLair Plaza. Judging of beard growing contest.
The Story Peddlers, 8:00 p.m., Lair theatre.

Nov. 17-20. 5th Annual Arts and Crafts Festival and Students' Arts and Crafts Fair.

SIX IN MORGANTOWN PERFORM AREA'S FOLK MATERIAL

The Story Peddlers of Morgantown like to call themselves "an independent and toughly professional company of six musicians-actors." Formed in October of 1975 the troupe has developed programs that blend Appalachian folk tales and music, much like the "play parties" popular in the Mountains before the days of radio and television. The repertory of The Story Peddlers includes Jack, Grandfather, and other folk tales, as well as riddles, ballads, and gospel and old-time music. They have performed for adults in such diverse settings as the Bridge Gate Dinner Theatre in Morgantown, the Fourth of July celebration in Rowlesburg (Preston County), and the Salem College Heritage Arts Festival. For children the troupe has played at Scott's Run Settlement House in Osage and at several public schools and camps. In September they performed during freshmen orientation week at West Virginia University. The company consists of Marcia McIntosh of Spencer, Nancy Fisher of Romney, Lynette Orbovich of Weirton, Martha Willis of Asheville, N.C., Vinnie Farsetta of Morgantown, and Michael Mozena of Wheeling. Although young, all of The Story Peddlers are veterans of professional theatrical and musical groups. To contact the group for bookings write The Story Peddlers, 115 Cornell Ave., Morgantown, W.Va. 26505.

The Story Peddlers. (front row, left to right) Marcia McIntosh, Nancy Ann Fisher, and Martha Willis; (back row) Vinnie Farsetta, Lynette Orbovich, and Michael Mozena. Photograph by Ed Stockard.

UNIQUE STATE HISTORY TEXT

Jim Comstock, the nearly legendary editor of the West Virginia *Hillbilly*, has compiled and edited a 200-page history of the State in the form of a tabloid newspaper. The illustrious editor considers this page-per-year chronicle possibly the most important work of his life and has intimated--though unconvincingly to some--this may be his "final bow."

The State Department of Education accepted the text for classroom use and ordered 30,000 copies. Mr. Comstock's *Bicentennial Supplement* tells the State's history in front-page newspaper style, and it is thought by the editor to be more valuable possibly than a book since "the American boy and girl grow up with a daily newspaper."

The editor assures adults they will enjoy the *Supplement*. *Hillbilly* subscribers have received the text free of charge and non-subscribers may purchase it for $8.00 per copy from West Virginia *Hillbilly*, Richwood, W.Va. 26261.

BLUEFIELD HISTORY PRINTED

Early History and Development of Bluefield, West Virginia is the name of a new 58-page volume by Bluefield State College history professor John R. Rankin. Co-sponsors of the publication were the Craft Memorial Library and the Bluefield Bicentennial Commission. The history outlines the industrial, business, and educational development of the Mercer County city and contains a detailed bibliography. The book may be ordered by sending $2.95 plus $0.20 for postage and handling to the Craft Memorial Library, P.O. Box 4297, Bluefield, W.Va. 24701.

NEW PRODUCTION SCHEDULE FOR *MOUNTAIN TRACE*

The spring 1976 issue of *Moun-*

tain Trace contained the following explanation of their new schedule of publication.

"*Mountain Trace* is a folklore magazine produced by students at Parkersburg High School. Because of financial reasons and the amount of time involved in producing a magazine such as *Mountain Trace*, we will be printing only two magazines a year (bi-annual) from this point. The magazine will be released in December and June each year."

The new subscription rate is now $5.00 for two issues and $2.50 for one. Checks should be made payable to Parkersburg High School. The address is *Mountain Trace*, Parkersburg High School, 2101 Dudley Avenue, Parkersburg, W.Va. 26101.

U.S. FOLK MUSIC LPs BEING PREPARED

An anthology of 15 long-playing records, *Folk Music in America*, is in the process of production at the Library of Congress in Washington. Around five of the discs in the ambitious series are already available. Although selections from West Virginia are scant or nonexistent, examples of the major folk music traditions of the United States such as Anglo-American, Afro-American, American Indian, and other rural and urban ethnic ones, are to be included. Selections were chosen from actual field recordings in the Library's Archive of Folk Song and from commercial sources, and they include recordings made from the 19th century to the present. Accompanying each record is a booklet providing descriptive, biographical, and background information about the music and performers, along with supplementary bibliographies, discographies, and illustrations. The series is being published as part of the Library's American Revolution Bicentennial program with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Folk Music in America Series

Volume 1 Religious Music: Congregational & Ceremonial
Volume 2 Songs of Love, Courtship, & Marriage
Volume 3 Dance Music: Breakdowns & Waltzes
Volume 4 Dance Music: Reels, Polkas, & More
Volume 5 Dance Music: Ragtime, Jazz, & More
Volume 6 Songs of Migration & Immigration
Volume 7 Songs of Complaint & Protest
Volume 8 Songs of Labor & Livelihood
Volume 9 Songs of Death & Tragedy
Volume 10 Songs of War & History
Volume 11 Songs of Humor & Hilarity
Volume 12 Songs of Local History & Events
Volume 13 Songs of Childhood
Volume 14 Solo & Display Music
Volume 15 Religious Music: Solo & Performance

Individual records may be purchased for $6.50 each. A shipping charge of $0.50 is required for all U.S. and Canadian orders under $13.50. Advance payment, including shipping charges, or a signed purchase order is required for mail orders. Checks should be made payable to the "Music Division, Library of Congress." Subscriptions to the complete 15-volume series are available for $85.00, which includes postage and handling in the U.S. Orders may be sent to Library of Congress, Recorded Sound Section, Music Division, Washington, D.C. 20540.

BOOK REVIEW

The Appalachian Dulcimer Book by Michael Murphy. Folksay Press, St. Clairsville, Ohio. 103 pages. $4.95.

With a plethora of dulcimer books on the market, there would seem small need for another. Mike Murphy's new book, however, proves that a need does indeed exist. This small volume may be the most complete of the lot. It deals first, in a very readable way, with the history of the "only folk instrument native to the United States." This history section is obviously well researched, although the scholarly paraphernalia of footnotes and such is noticeably absent.

The beginners' instruction section is clear and straightforward, something that is not the case in many other works of this nature. Nothing the rank beginner might need to know is absent. For the advanced player, there is the only set of dulcimer chord charts that this picker has seen in print. Even the almost lost art of bowing the instrument is considered.

The photographs, from the pensive lady on the cover to the back flyleaf, are clear and appropriate. One hopes, however, that in the next edition all those unidentified players can be named. That would probably be impossible due to the age of the pictures, but one can hope.

The book's only real shortcoming may be in the number of photographs printed. Space given to the pictures might have been given to a wider selection of songs to good advantage. Playing through the music, one feels the desire for more.

If Mr. Murphy had chosen to print only the appendix of his book, it would still be worth the purchase price. An international listing of dulcimer makers, sources of materials, bibliographies of other dulcimer and general Appalachia-oriented books, and a long discography with ordering information are included.

If, as a dulcimer player, you can afford only one book, buy this one. If you can afford several, buy this one first.

--Michael E. "Jim" Bush

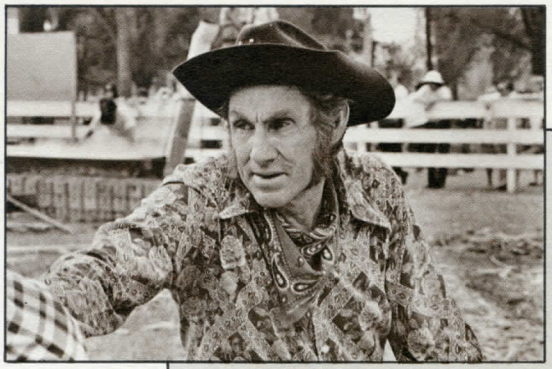
West Virginians at Washington Festival

A Photo Essay by
Carl Fleischhauer

Two dozen West Virginians participated in the Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C., during the week July 5-11. The summer-long affair was jointly sponsored and organized by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Park Service. Groups appearing at each area within the festival changed every week. West Virginia was well and proudly represented when the Regional America section featured the Upland South. Above, Harvey Sampson of Nicut (Calhoun Co.); right, a portion of the Regional America area.

A shower brought the audience to the shelter of the festival's largest covered stage during the evening performance of the Regional America musicians. Nimrod Workman of Chattaroy (Mingo Co.) sings a coal mining song while Phyllis Boyens, his daughter, and Sara Ogan Gunning wait their turns. Opposite above, the gospel singing Carper Family of Kelly's Tank (Mercer Co.) are joined by Ed Cabbell, Director of the John Henry Memorial Foundation based in Princeton.

Music occured offstage, usually in the shade of a nearby tree, but sometimes further away. Opposite below, Braxton County fiddler Melvin Wine visited the Washington home of Alan Jabbour, Director of the Library of Congress's American Folklife Center, accompanied by GOLDENSEAL editor Tom Screven and photographer Carl Fleischhauer.



Crafts included quilts made by members of the Cabin Creek Cooperative, stone sculpture by Connard Wolfe of Bergoo (Webster Co.), and toys from the Wileyville (Wetzel Co.) shop of Pemberton Cecil. Dow Gill, above, of Sandstone (Summers Co.) and a few neighbors demonstrated log skidding and also used his team to drive the syrup mill seen in the center of the large photograph. Sorghum cane was brought from Mississippi and molasses was made in the evaporator next to the mill. The blacksmith shop, right, was set up by J.E. Dillon of Beaver (Raleigh Co.) and his former apprentice, Mike Snyder of Wymer (Randolph Co.).

Photographs commemorate events. Above, Phoeba Parsons, the banjoist and singer from Orma (Calhoun Co.) holds a picture of herself with Debbie Norton, a festival participant from North Carolina. Mrs. Parsons made the photograph of Carl Fleischhauer, right.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Montana Mines, W.Va. 26586
July 28, 1976

Editor:

Would you please send me two copies of your "Goldenseal" publication for July-September, 1976?

Your article on Mr. Thurman Fletcher is most interesting, as he is a lifelong friend. What you have written is splendid and the pictures so clear and sharp. "Thurman" is one of our finest Marion County gentlemen. Thanks for covering this good man's life in your story.

Sincerely,
Frank Spevock
Marion County Church & Community Worker

Roanoke, Va.
August 14, 1976

Editor:

WHOA! Look at page 10 [GOLDENSEAL, Vol. 2, No. 3, July 1976]. "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" was written by James A. Bland [1854-1911].

The Lions [Clubs] of Virginia have put on a musical contest for the young people for years (the Virginia Lion's Bland Music Scholarship competition began in 1947). Lions International recently presented me with a plaque for my work in Bland--1958-1976. I have served as club, zone, district, and state chairman in this very fine program.

I am telling you this James A. Bland, a black man, composed "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" as well as 600 other songs for the banjo.

My brother-in-law, Elmer Dodson, who lives on Noyes Avenue [in Charleston] sent me a copy of your publication. Now look at page 33. Please send me another copy for the father of [John] Guerrant Smith. He was named for the Guerrant family. Roy Smith, the father, is a longtime--½ century--friend of mine.

Sincerely,
Saunders Guerrant

Houston, Texas
Sept. 9, 1976

Editor:

Please enter my subscription for your GOLDENSEAL magazine.

Also I noted with more than casual interest the article by Alicia Tyler about logging in West Virginia that appeared in the July-September issue. I would like to know if anyone identified the people in the photograph on page 30. We are reasonably sure the 3rd from left is my wife's father, the former A.F. (Arch) McCutcheon and the 2nd from right is his brother, Rippitoe (Rip) McCutcheon. They both lived at Zela and worked for Flynn Lumber Company.

C.B. Mastin

GOLDENSEAL welcomes letters of general interest from readers. Our address is Science and Culture Center, State Capitol, Charleston, W.Va. 25305.

On Tour With a Black String Band in the 1930s

Howard Armstrong and Carl Martin Reminisce

By J. Roderick Moore and Kip Lornell

Howard Armstrong and Carl Martin form one-half of Martin, Bogan, and the Armstrongs, a black string band, that is popular at folk festivals around the country. Ted Bogan, guitar and vocals, and Howard's son Tom, bass, complete the group. They have two excellent albums to their credit, *Barnyard Dance* (Rounder 2003) and *Martin, Bogan, and Armstrong* (Flying Fish 003). Both LPs are highly recommended to those who have never had the opportunity to hear the band. Martin, Bogan, and the Armstrongs are, however, best heard and seen live. This interview was conducted during the course of the Winter Folk Festival at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in January, 1976.

Carl Martin, 70, is a multi-instrumentalist who most often plays guitar and mandolin with the group. He was born in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, but at the age of 12 he moved with his family to Knoxville, Tenn. After his days of traveling with his brother Roland and Howard Armstrong, he moved to Chicago in around 1934. Between 1934 and 1936 he recorded 14 sides for several labels, accompanying himself exclusively on the guitar. Also during this period, he played in recording sessions with a number of important blues musicians, including Tampa Red and Bumble Bee Slim. He gave up music for a number of years only to be recorded again in the mid-1960s by Testament records. Since that time he has remained active in the music field. An interesting interview with Mr. Martin appeared about 1968 in the now defunct magazine, *78 Quarterly*. It was done by Pete Welding and concentrates on Martin's life after he moved to Chicago.

Howard Armstrong was born in about 1910 near Knoxville, Tenn., and plays fiddle in the present Martin, Bogan, and the Armstrongs lineup. In addition, he plays mandolin, guitar, string bass. He speaks a number of foreign languages including Mandarin Chinese and Swedish. It is likely he is the most articulate blues musician around, and he is, of course, a superb musician. Like Carl Martin, he moved up North after playing with his string bands in Tennessee, West Virginia, and Virginia. Mr. Armstrong divides his time between Detroit and Chicago, when he is not traveling with the group. Unlike Carl Martin, Howard recorded only in 1930 with the Tennessee Chocolate Drops and in recent years with Martin, Bogan, and the Armstrongs.

Playing and Fighting

Lornell. How long did you and Carl Martin play around West Virginia?

Armstrong. Well, let's see. We played around West Virginia in and out. Oh, I don't know the exact length of time, but it was several years anyway around that part of the country--Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky.

Lornell. Well, was there a regular circuit you used to play, like go from camp to camp, or how did you do it?

Armstrong. Well, now, we did do what we called "making paydays" in the coal mining districts like over in Harlan County, Benham, Lynch, Forsythe, all over there in Kentucky. Then we would go up to the old Virginia, you know, Appalachia, Norton, and four or five different places. We'd go up in West Virginia. Oh, we used

A recent photograph of Howard Armstrong.

Carl Martin. Both photographs by Jon Gilbert Fox.

to go up to Welch, McDowell County up in the mining--

Lornell. How long did you stay in each town if you were meeting the paydays? A couple of days in town?

Martin. Yeah, maybe two or three days 'cause they would have two or three house parties for us to play for. And then, we would go, oh, to the next place like that. We would try to make all the paydays in a row, you know, then we would come back to town.

Moore. Where would you cross into West Virginia, Bluefield or Tazewell?

Armstrong. Well, as we were coming through from Virginia, why, we would come up through Tazewell.

Martin. We played in Tazewell--at that time I was a young man and had been fighting a little bit around Knoxville. So I got in the ring. A fellow asked me if I would fight a fellow around there--called Pepe. I said, yeah, I'll fight him. I needed a little money at that time so I jumped in the ring with him that night. I rented the American Legion Hall. I fought the final fight and I refereed the semi-final fight. And then I knocked that fellow out in the fourth round. I knocked him out in the fourth round and then that fellow went right around. He came to me and asked me if I would fight another fellow who they called the Wild Kangaroo. He was about six-foot-six, it looked like to me, and weighed 185 pounds. I was only 155, and I fought him in the ring. They said it looked like a father grabbing his son in there, in the ring. You know, fighting--I knocked him clear through the ropes in the second round. The fight was over with. And I left there. They was giving away a 20-dollar gold piece for the main fight. He had gone and told everybody that he was going to knock me out--being so funny and all, and all the girls sitting up there waiting and all, you know. I had been fighting and I had speed and power and, you know, if I hit him and he didn't fall down, why, he was standing up dead. So at that time--so I knocked him out. I knocked him out of the ropes. He fell off on the piano and onto the floor. And then he went on into his dressing room and he didn't come back no more. And that fight was over. But the fellow that yearly sponsored the fight, he gave me that 20-dollar gold piece. And I didn't even want to fight no more. They looked at me and said, "You don't look like you are all muscle." But at that time I was pretty rugged.

And I kept on fighting, and I'd get to places where I'd run out of money, why, then we would fight. I'd run on up to Gary. I met a fellow there called the Goldy Gun. I don't know whether you know him or not, but he used to be champion of West Virginia. I sparred with him one afternoon. I didn't know who he was, and a fellow looked at me and he says, say, "You know, you can get money for fighting that fellow there." And I said, "Who is it?" And he said, "Goldy Gun." And I didn't know Goldy Gun was the champion of West Virginia but I told him I'd fight him, and I was holding my own with him in the workouts, you know. He was just working out over there. And I went over there and put the gloves on. I went up there with a medicine show fellow out of Keystone, and I happened to see him working out there and I went over and worked out with him. So the word was sent to him to fight. But we never did get the fight on somehow. Back in those days I was a pretty good man.

Fellow Musicians

Moore. Now you mentioned some musicians in Bluefield.

Armstrong. Yeah. Well, we used to play--there was a fellow name's Steve and George Eskirt. They ran a barber shop there. They were very good musicians.

Lornell. Eskirt?

Armstrong. Yes. He was a very good violinist, an all 'round musician. I think they did more to influence my life in the music field than almost anybody I know in my early life.

Lornell. What about Roland, Blind Roland? Was he a good musician?

Martin. Yes, he was a good musician. He played the violin. He played all the instruments. He started me out to playing. Mostly I had heard some fellows play before I ever met him in Appalachia (Va.). I had learned to play two or three numbers on the guitar. When I saw my brother--well, he was blind--glaucoma had set up in his eyes and he was blind. But he could play that fiddle. Oh, I never seen a man yet that could outplay him on that fiddle. You could go up to a lot of places that would have those fiddling contests. In places they'd never let us play in the contests. I played the bass fiddle and another fellow played the guitar and he played the violin. And, man, we played. We had a good time playing. A lot of people knew us. I got started practicing when he made me come in from school and sit down and take the guitar and practice every afternoon. I didn't want to practice. I wanted to go out and play with other boys but I couldn't whip him so I had to come in. In about two week's time, well,

continued on page 46

Treat Yourself to the Best

Text and Photographs by Tom Harvey

The American landscape is very much a product of our culture, and it is filled with artifacts that tell our story. A few years ago I started looking at one part of the landscape of the Midwest, the Mail Pouch chewing tobacco barn advertisements. I became intensely interested in finding out the story of these barns. Where are they? Why are they there? What is their history? I worked along on this geography of advertising until I realized I was looking at two things, the relics of an uncommon type of outdoor advertising *and* an icon of rural America.

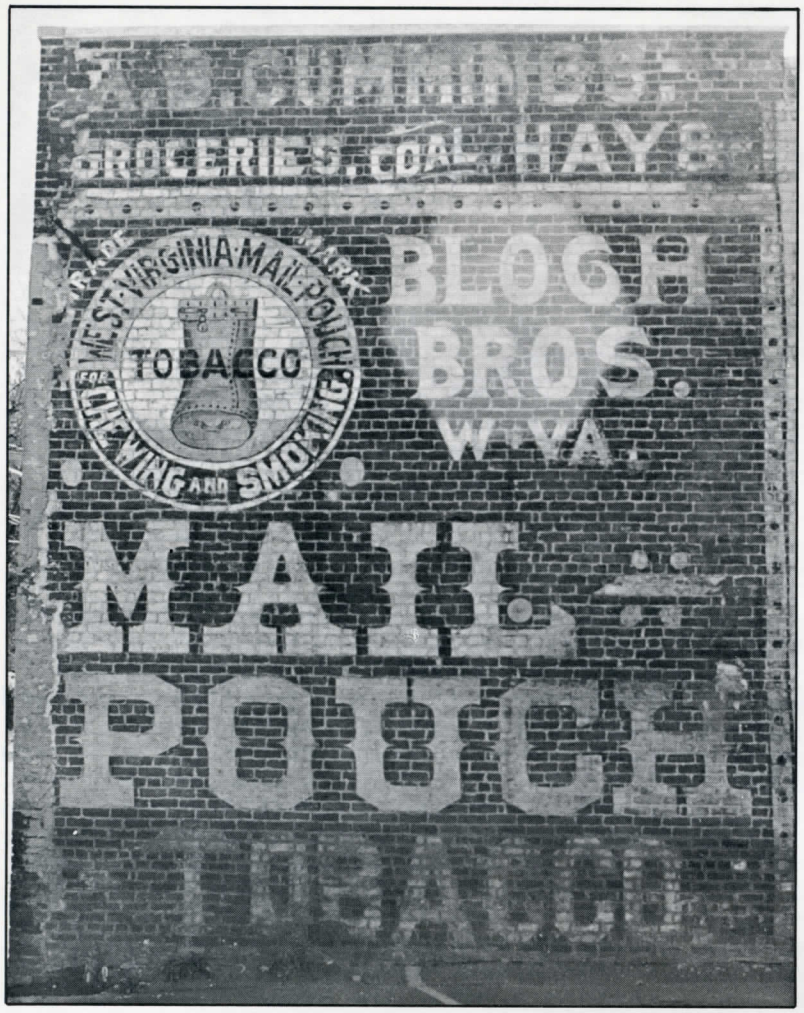
Mail Pouch barns are not unique as icons of rural life. Other objects carry much the same meaning, for example, wagon wheels in the front yard. I'll concentrate on Mail Pouch barns because I know more about them. But there is more to the barns than just my biased interest. Mail Pouch signs are the most numerous of the barn side ads. Mention barn ads, and people think Mail Pouch; mention Mail Pouch, and people see barns, at least in the Midwest. Though rare, the barns are not all relics; hundreds are still being repainted. Even the manufacturer of Mail Pouch chewing tobacco sees the barns as rural icons and helps reinforce the image.

The Bloch Brothers Tobacco Company of Wheeling had no idea it was creating a national image when its founders entered the tobacco business. Beginning in 1879, they made only cigars as a general store sideline. It wasn't until 1897 that they first sold scrap tobacco cuttings as chewing tobacco. They were in the business of selling tobacco and they started using painted signs to do it. The ads were aimed at their market, primarily rural and small-town. I suspect they painted their first signs shortly after the turn of the century. These were probably at or near stores selling their product.

The early sign (Figure ①) quite accidentally preserved in Jonesboro, Tennessee, is similar to the tobacco packages used as late as the mid-1920s, but there are some remarkable differences about this sign. It says "For Chewing and Smoking," which does not appear on the packages. People did sometimes dry and smoke the tobacco. The sign painter, not the company, probably altered the slogan. According to company folklore, the dots along the border of this sign were used to determine how much to pay the sign painter. Painters were, and still are, paid by the square footage they paint. The dots were spaced one foot apart. As the story goes, the painters sent in photos of each sign to Wheeling, where the company, using the dots, computed the square footage and paid the painter. The company tells stories of clever painters who spaced the dots at nine-inch intervals, until the crafty artisans were discovered and fired.

No one knows when the modern style of sign (Figure ②) replaced the early type. From all indications, these signs date back to around 1910. They are still painted today. The basic modern sign, with its encouragement to "Treat Yourself to the Best" has yellow and white letters on a black background, usually with a sky blue border. Such signs appear on previously unpainted buildings. Sometimes red barns are chosen as good locations. In that case shaded yellow and white letters are used with a white border. The red signs are uncommon; they fade faster than the black so are not favored. Every now and then you can find sign variations, an experience that sends Mail Pouch freaks into ecstacy. Bloch Brothers tried a style in the 1950s and 1960s that used a bull's-eye type image for greater product identification. This wasn't successful and most of the signs were painted over. Sign painters sometimes varied the signs by putting "Chew" in script or by using an old product slogan (Figure ③--south

1

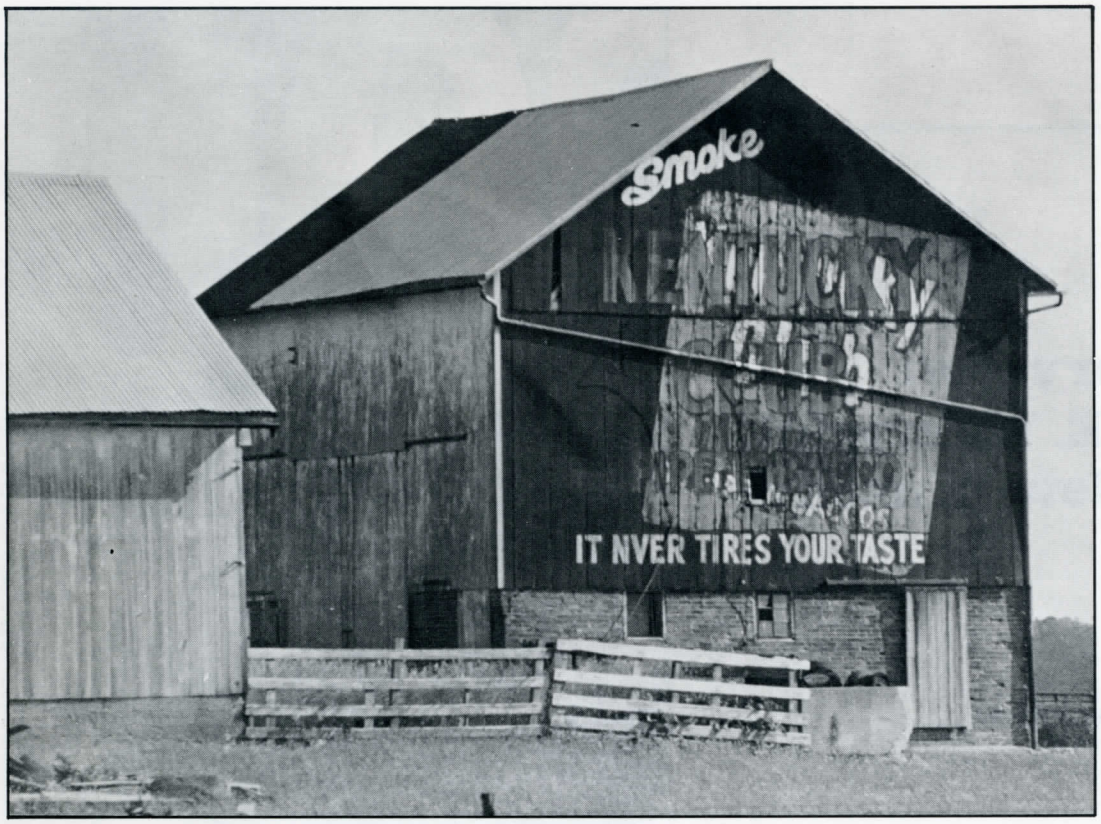

GROCERIES & COAL
HAYS
WEST VIRGINIA MAIL POUCH
TOBACCO
FOR CHEWING AND SMOKING
BLOCH
BROS.
W.VA.
MAIL
POUCH
TOBACCO

2


CHEW
MAIL
POUCH
TOBACCO
TREAT YOURSELF TO THE BEST

3


Chewing serves to steady nerves
CHEW
MAIL POUCH
TREAT YOURSELF TO THE BEST



④

of McGee's Mills, Pa.). Bloch Brothers advertises two other products with painted signs, Melo-Crown stogies and Kentucky Club pipe tobacco. These signs are placed where Mail Pouch sign density is too great. At least one newer Kentucky Club sign was painted over an older style sign with a pouch symbol (Figure ④).

In most instances, signs are on the sides of barns, though in California roofs were painted, owing to different barn designs there than those found in the Midwest. I have found one such oddity, a roof sign, on a barn in Ohio. Not all of the signs are on barns. Sometimes buildings in small towns--usually stores--have exterior signs (Figure ⑤, page 20--Van Buren, Oh.). Urban signs were rare. Men used to painting barns were uncomfortable above city streets, and union painters caused problems. But, most importantly, the chewing tobacco market was rural. The best locations were on well-travelled roads that farmers took to town (Figure ⑥ --near Evansville, W.Va.). Barns were a convenient place for such signs.

Perhaps as many as 4,000 signs have been painted. According to Bloch Brothers, most of the signs are in nine states, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, southern Michigan, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and the panhandle of Maryland. One painting crew made a trip to the west coast and painted signs in California, Oregon, and Washington. I've seen signs in Tennessee, but the vast majority are in the Midwest. Barn rental records of 1965 and 1975 show 1,900 signs in five states--Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York (Figure ⑦). Three hundred of these signs are being repainted (Figure ⑧). These records are incomplete; long abandoned signs have been dropped from the records, and several states with active and inactive signs are not included. But it does show the rapid disappearance of the signs.

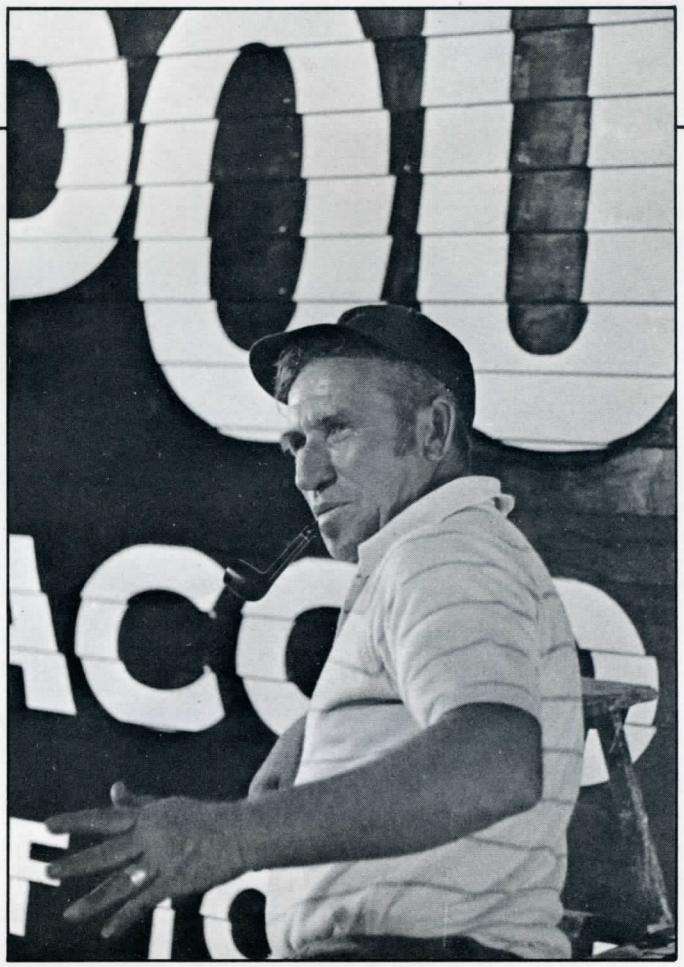
Routes shift, making locations no longer desirable, signs are painted over, and buildings collapse. The paint resists weathering and, it is claimed, attempts to paint over it. But the signs do eventually fade away. Farmers are sometimes left with abandoned, no-rent signs. Some take their revenge. There's no need to let that free ad stand for a few years; you can plant trees in front of it, selectively overpaint, or move every board of the sign (Figure ⑨--near Arlington, Oh.). Other advertisers move in where Mail Pouch moves out. In Pennsylvania a Texaco station placed its ad over an old Mail Pouch sign and even included the border stripes.

Mail Pouch outdoor advertising takes other forms. Thermometers are placed at stores and taverns or anywhere near points of purchase. In the early 1960s the company placed small metal signs where buildings weren't available (Figure ⑩). Billboards are common around Pittsburgh, Mail Pouch's largest urban market. These signs are changed often. The ones I saw had a picture of a baseball pitcher

text continued on page 22

An Interview: Harley E. Warrwick Visits New Museum

By Tom Screven, Editor



Harley E. Warrwick, 1976.

It was truly an occasion when the only practicing painter of Mail Pouch barnside ads showed up only a few steps from our desk on a Tuesday in July. Harley E. Warrwick was here, we thought, at the perfect time; the final draft of Tom Harvey's article was due any day from Pennsylvania. What would better complement that young geographer's excellent research article than an interview with the unique practitioner of an all but lost art?

The artisan for the Bloch Brothers Tobacco Company of Wheeling spent surprisingly little time painting one of the company's Mail Pouch ads on a clapboard covered wall in the Archives and History Museum. During Mr. Warrwick's nearly five-hour visit to the new Science and Culture Center--also GOLDENSEAL's home--he contended with around a half-dozen photographers, at least one interviewer, and a steady stream of other understandably curious Center and construction company personnel. The Center opened officially only four days later.

Before leaving Charleston that day, Mr. Warrwick most genially accepted our invitation to go upstairs and speak with us into a tape recorder. As is his custom, he had skipped lunch, yet he did have some coffee and a couple of our menthol cigarettes. He noted that he had left his Mail Pouch tobacco in his pickup truck.

Just as effortlessly as he had brushed his sign on the wall below, he answered our barrage of questions. Along with his sizable artistic and business management capabilities, he has become a skilled public relations man. A number of reporters from national publications and other media have interviewed him, and a documentary film on him and his work was made a few years ago in West Virginia by a young filmmaker, a graduate student in Ohio.

Mr. Warrwick's home is in Bellemont, Ohio, and he is able to get back there every weekend. He has worked for Bloch Brothers for 30 years. Returning from service in World War II, he began as an apprentice when there were around a half-dozen barn painters working for the company.

In the several years he has been their only barn painter (*not* "the last," he corrected us at one point), he has absorbed at least one other job than artisan. The company stopped hiring advance men or space salesmen, and Mr. Warrwick became virtually the sole decision maker as to whether a particular barn is "a wide open shot," or one

(left) "Cutting in," the step in sign painting requiring the most skill. Warrwick uses no penciled lines, only the brush, freehand style. (below) Warrwick "filling in," the final step which completes the black background of the sign. Photographs on pages 16-19 by Ed Connor for the W.Va. Department of Commerce.

whose sign may be seen to the best advantage by passing motorists. Then he must make the rental arrangement with the barn owner before he starts to paint.

Early in the conversation he spoke about the advantages of being a down-to-earth person himself and also about the way it used to be when the company still employed space salesmen.

Harley Warrwick. Well, uh, a farmer is naturally suspicious of anybody that comes in with a suit on and carrying a briefcase. He thinks, you know, it's someone working for a government agency or something, see. Right away, if you drive in in a big car with a suit on, a farmer dislikes you right then. But if you go in there, you know, just an ordinary working man, and you start talking to him about his crops, he's got a pretty good idea what you're there for--naturally with the "Mail Pouch" on the side of the truck. But you start talking about his crops, about his hogs or his cattle or whatever he's raising. Whatever he's raising, that's what you're interested in, see. And, then, finally you get around--like horse trading--you get around to talking about what you're there

for. He knew all the time what you was there for, but he don't want to mention it, you see. But we've had guys out from the company [space salesmen wearing suits]--they would come out and lease the space for us, see. They didn't last very long. They went out there with a big Oldsmobile and a briefcase, and they started telling the farmer what they was going to do, see. They were going to put a sign on his barn or--you don't tell a farmer....

I worked for a contractor, and he had a space man out ahead of us leasing space, and all we had to do was just paint them, just drive up and paint and go on, see. That's the reason you could get so many done in one day. You didn't have to hunt up the owner or anything like that, see. But now I have to do the whole works. You have to hunt up your own space, you buy the material, your own material, and furnish everything. And take care of those license tags [in Ohio due to state law], too, now, see--paper work on it. But West Virginia's got a blanket permit; we just put the tags on once and then forget about it. They [the company] just send a check in every year, and we don't have to keep changing the tags, see.

In talking about how he selects barns to be painted, Mr. Warrwick revealed his knowledge of both human nature and the chewing tobacco market.

HW Well, we try to stick more to industrial areas or, uh, where there will be users of the product, in other words. The coal mines--naturally they can't smoke in the coal mines, so they're going to chew. So, say, the guy chews some other brand of tobacco, you know. He's chewed all his life, far as that goes. But he's riding down the road, and he keeps seeing this Mail Pouch, Mail Pouch, Mail Pouch. And then after awhile, maybe he comes up short. He hasn't got a pack of tobacco *he* wants. What's the first one he's going to think of? It's going to be Mail Pouch, see. He just, you know--if he drives past it every day, he's going to remember that name, see. If he goes in a store, and then maybe he tries it, he'll keep on using it, see.

There's quite a few businessmen, yeah, they chew it, but I mean they're not large users, you know. They'll take a little pinch of it. The old coal miner, he goes through a pack, pack and a half, a day, I would say. And steel mills, you know, they're big users, too. So you try to get most of your signs in those areas, you know, like around Pittsburgh--not in Pittsburgh but around it, see.

The lone barn painter commented on the necessarily shrinking territory that he covers.

The artisan with his newly completed sign.

HW And, well, then they're more or less now trying to squeeze it down into a three-state deal now, West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. And these other ones we're kind of little by little dropping them out--just to keep it in a three-state area.

Asked if he recalled any especially interesting experiences in West Virginia, Mr. Warrwick told about a startling encounter with an older farmer in Lewis County around two years ago.

HW Uh, it was below Weston. I don't know what the old fellow's name was, but it was right south of Weston, and he was an invalid and--of course I didn't know that at the time. And I went up and knocked on the door, and he says, "Come on in." So I opened the door and pushed it back and here's a double-barreled shotgun pointed right at you, you know, and he was kind of shaky anyhow, you know. He was old and shaky, and he wanted to know, "What you want?" And I told him. "Oh, yeah," he says, "I remember you was here before." "I painted here before, you know." And he finally--it seemed like it took him a year to get that shotgun back

down, you know, where he could relax, you know. Then he says, "Well, if it had been somebody trying to get me," says, "if my shotgun hadn't worked," and he reached underneath the covers, you know--that big old long revolver, you know. He was shaking it around. But I guess he had--he'd been robbed there once before. Some guys come up there in broad daylight, come in the house and robbed him. 'Course he couldn't get out of bed. So that's why he had that shotgun.

And his son come up after that and he says, "Boy," said, "that worried me." Says, "I seen you pull up there. I was afraid maybe you would go up there, and he'd pull that on you and you might hit it or something, and it'd go off," you know. I said, "No, I wasn't about to hit that thing." 'Cause I had no business, you know, being in his house.

(After arranging to paint the barn) He was tickled to death, and, in fact, I went down the road and got him--he wanted to know if I had any Mail Pouch, you know. He chewed it all the time. And he wanted to know, he says, "You got any samples out in the truck?" And I said, "No, I haven't got any right now, but I'll get you some." So I drove down the road to the old country store there and bought him a carton and brought it back, see. He was an old lonesome guy, you know, nobody there to take care of him. His son'd come down and feed him or something like that, you know, once or twice a day, wash him up. And he just wanted somebody to talk to, you know.

So when I was working on up the road there, I'd told his son, I said, "If you see this truck up here, don't worry." I says, you know, "Ain't nobody robbing him or anything." He says, "Oh, I know that." So, anyway, every evening when I'd stop and see if he needed anything, and sat and talked to him for about, oh, an hour or so, you know.

Mr. Warrwick enjoys stumping those who watch him when he walks up to an unpainted barn, mounts a ladder or scaffold, and, seemingly without using any guide marks, begins "spotting on" his letters. "You can drive a guy nuts sometimes on that one," he said.

His eye is so trained by now, in fact, that he is able to find the center of the side of a barn by sighting from the peak on an end or by counting the roof beams, rafters, or side boards on a long side. The sign itself is permanently etched in his memory.

HW The secret of it is you just got to center your barn, and you're doing a sign where you have a known center, in other words. Like the right side of the P in POUCH--of the vertical bar of the P--the right side of it is dead center. All right, you work to your right, space them out to your right. Then use the same spacing back the other way, and it has to come out right, see. The center of your TOBACCO is A, right in the center of the A. Center of TREAT YOURSELF TO THE BEST is between the L and F. Well, if you come out right this way, use the same space the other way and it has to be right, see.

Harley E. Warrwick, with characteristic logic, deftly answered our question as to why there are sky blue borders on nearly every Mail Pouch sign.

HW It doesn't signify anything, see. I mean it's just the color we happen to use. When I first started painting, they were yellow. Then they thought blue would look prettier so they put blue. 'Course it is the colors of West Virginia, see. It just happened to come out that way. You've got blue and yellow. And that could have entered in there. I don't know, see. You have to have a border on it. It's not a sign without a--It's like a picture without a frame, you know.

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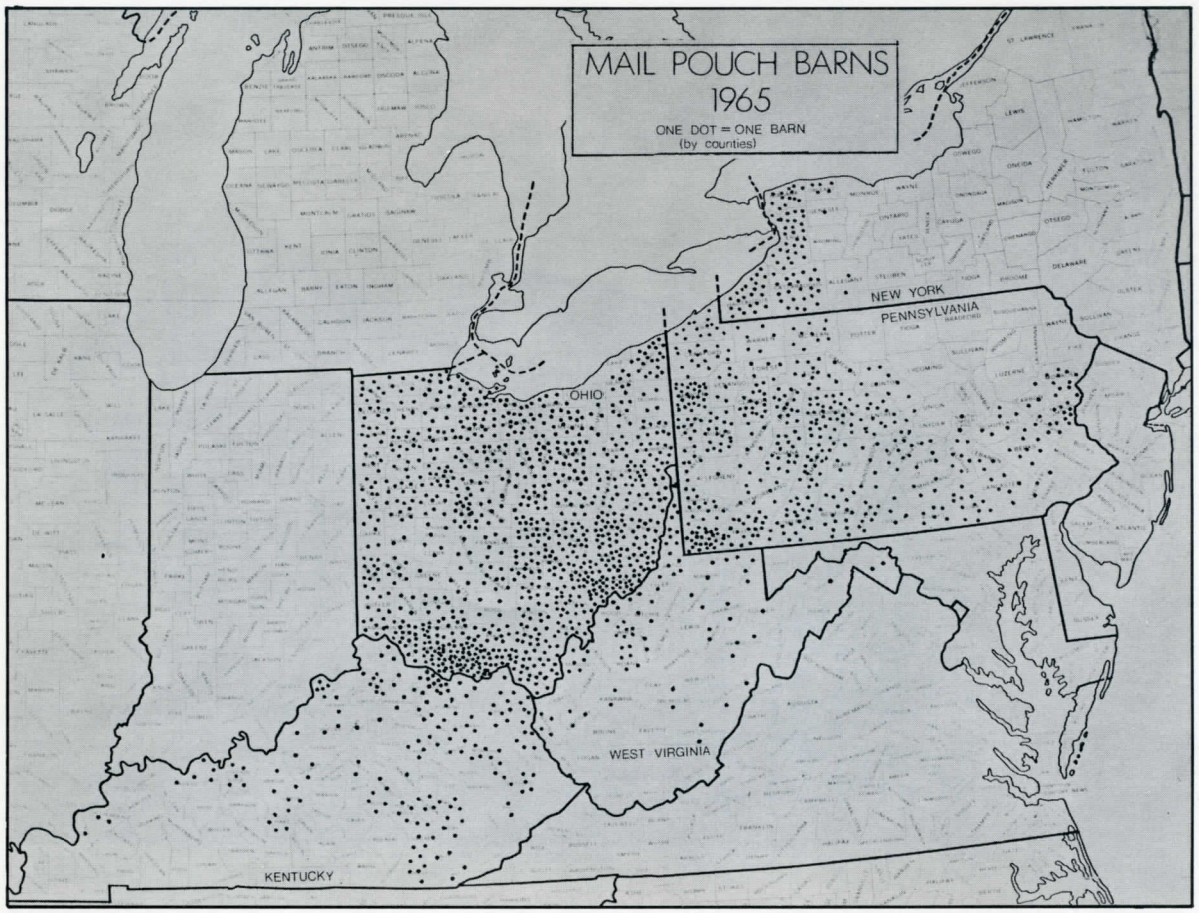
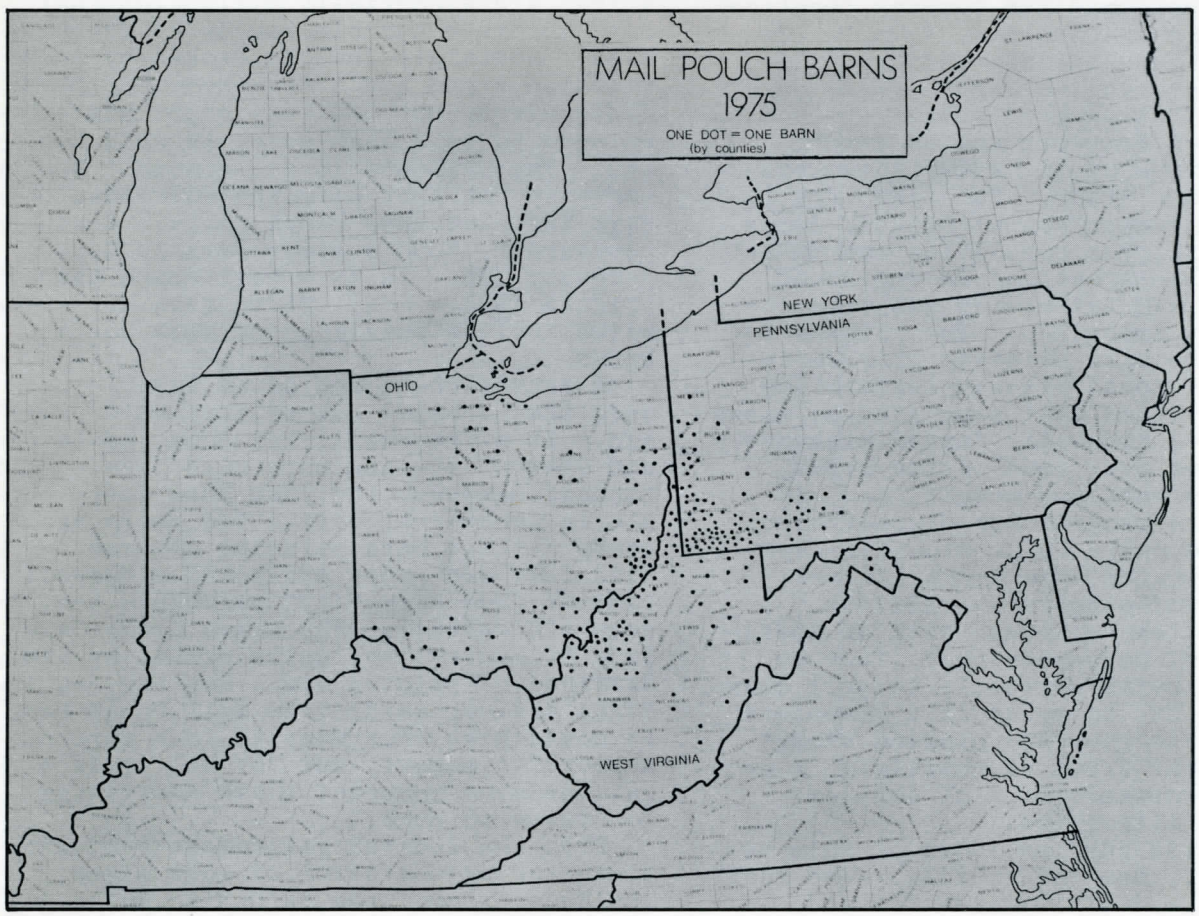

MAIL POUCH BARNS
1965
ONE DOT = ONE BARN
(by counties)
NEW YORK
PENNSYLVANIA
OHIO
WEST VIRGINIA
KENTUCKY

7


MAIL POUCH BARNS
1975
ONE DOT = ONE BARN
(by counties)
NEW YORK
PENNSYLVANIA
OHIO
WEST VIRGINIA

8

(9)

text continued from page 15

and the slogan, "Bring Back the Spitter." A few billboards around Wheeling reflect the barn imagery and the company location (Figure (11) --near Wheeling, W.Va.). On these billboards the sign is idealized; they are placed on the common image of a barn--red with a gambrel roof.

Today Bloch Brothers spends a very small percentage of its advertising budget on the barn signs. The signs are inexpensive in comparison with other forms of advertising, but population and market shifts to urban areas and an increased use of radio and television ads make the barn ads less important. The company deemphasized the barn painting program in the 1960s. Federal highway legislation of 1965 prohibited most sign's being within 660 feet of federally funded highways. States painted over some of the signs, new locations were not sought, and, in 1969, the barn program was discontinued.

But in the early 1970s Bloch Brothers started repainting some barns, largely "for reasons of corporate tradition." They now see the barns as "bits of Americana worthy of preservation." They no longer paint barns primarily to sell chewing tobacco, but to maintain a corporate image. In this they are playing along with a national trend of nostalgia, a generally held romantic view of earlier, more bucolic lifestyles.

The barnside ads, as icons of this bucolic imagery, are interesting. The Mail Pouch signs, and similar ads for soft drinks, bacon, salt, tourist attractions, and chewing tobacco competitors, to name a few, are essentially billboards that have become monuments worthy of preservation. Nostalgic feeling evoked by some roadside signs isn't new--remember Burma Shave signs--but the last eight years or so seem to be a high point in such feeling. The evidence is all around. Restaurants in New York City and Columbus, Ohio, have interior Mail Pouch walls. Another restaurant, Wood's Steer Barn in Upper Sandusky, Oh., is in a Mail Pouch barn (Figure (12)). Small Midwestern art shows often include paintings of Mail Pouch barns.

A recent Chevrolet ad on television uses the barnside ads as they were years ago. It's "baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet"--and barn paintings. Chattanooga Gardens, the "See Rock City" people in Tennessee, only a few years ago stopped their barn painting program. When they did, they sponsored a competition of "See Rock City" paintings that drew 130 entries. The Frame House Gallery of Louisville, sells prints by Jim Harrison of painted ads. Ray Day, an Indiana artist, said, "The Mail Pouch barn is nostalgia. For many it is a part of a youthful memory, but for all it is a rural man-made monument worth cherishing for years to come."

Even the federal government now sanctions the preservation of such signs. The Senate Committee on Public Works stat-


CHEW
MAIL POUCH
TREAT YOURSELF TO THE BEST

10


Wheeling 1½ Miles
Home of
CHEW
MAIL POUCH
TOBACCO
TREAT YOURSELF TO THE BEST

11

(12)

ed in 1974, "While a major objective of the highway beautification program is the control of outdoor advertising, including the removal of billboards, there are some types of outdoor advertising of a unique character that justify preservation. Some firms advertise their products or services exclusively with signs painted on the sides of rural barns. Others have their messages displayed on rocks in natural settings. Some of the advertising has been used for many years and has become part of the American folk heritage." The amended highway appropriations law, passed in late 1974, excludes from removal "signs lawfully in existence on October 22, 1965, determined...to be landmark signs, including signs on farm structures or natural surfaces, of historic or artistic significance."

The individual states, along with the Secretary of Transportation, determine which signs are of historic or artistic significance. There is little doubt that Mail Pouch signs are prime candidates for preservation. Bloch Brothers lobbied for the law allowing preservation. Indeed, they are one of the few advertisers actively repainting their signs. Most of the other signs will fade away soon, law or no law.

Yet, in the end, it is the image not the barns that are important. Mail Pouch signs are not strictly a rural, barnside phenomenon. Nor are they, I guess you could say, antiques. Hundreds are being repainted. The signs are traditional and rare. During the last ten years or so, the Mail Pouch sign has become an idealized image--always a barn image--that conjures up memories and visions of rural America. It is an element not only of traditional culture--the barnside ad--but also of popular culture--the nostalgia image. ■

Ida L. Reed: 1864-1951

Barbour County Hymn Writer, Poet

By Lola Ross-Robertson

Ida L. Reed was my great aunt; her youngest sister was my grandmother, Mrs. Dora Reed Ball. My mother, Ida Lois Poe, would visit Aunt Ida some Sundays taking something special she had cooked or baked. My dad, John R. Poe, would sometimes cultivate Aunt Ida's garden in the spring and help with the hay in the summer. The one relative who was most helpful with my research was my Uncle Hobert, F.H. Ball, who cared for her extensively the latter years of her life. He went to her home every day to do the chores, both inside the house and on the farm. In addition to tending his own farm and caring for his family, he was completely dedicated to Aunt Ida's well-being.

As a child, I remember my devout aunt quite well. Not only did I visit with her in her own home, but she spent the last weeks of her life in our home. Aunt Ida always kept a small Bible within reach. She was an intelligent, talented, and interesting person; and, above all, she was a lady.--Lola V. Ross-Robertson

Ida Lilliard Reed was born November 30, 1865, on a small farm in Pleasant District, Barbour County, near the small community of Arden, W.Va. She was one of eight children born to James Harrison and Nancy Lilliard Reed, who moved over the mountains from Harrisburg, Virginia, in 1859 to Barbour County because of Reed's health and financial state. He had been employed in a mill in Virginia but felt that living on a farm would be healthier for him and his family; and he had invested considerable money in land in West Virginia, but with the advent of the Civil War had lost all of his holdings in Virginia and most of the land in West Virginia as well.

The farm he bought in Barbour County was rough, rocky, and the soil was thin. In fact, the farmers in the area were called "stony hill farmers" because the land was so difficult to cultivate. The timber had to be cleared in order to plant crops, and much of the valuable timber was burned. The house the family lived in was a long building divided into four rooms with a porch running the length of the house in the back and a detached kitchen, which was fairly commonplace at that time. While the men were busy clearing the fields, the women worked on quilts, "wool picking," cleaning, carding, and making the wool ready for the weaver. Everyone had a part to play in farm economy from the youngest member of the family to the oldest.

The family was typically religious

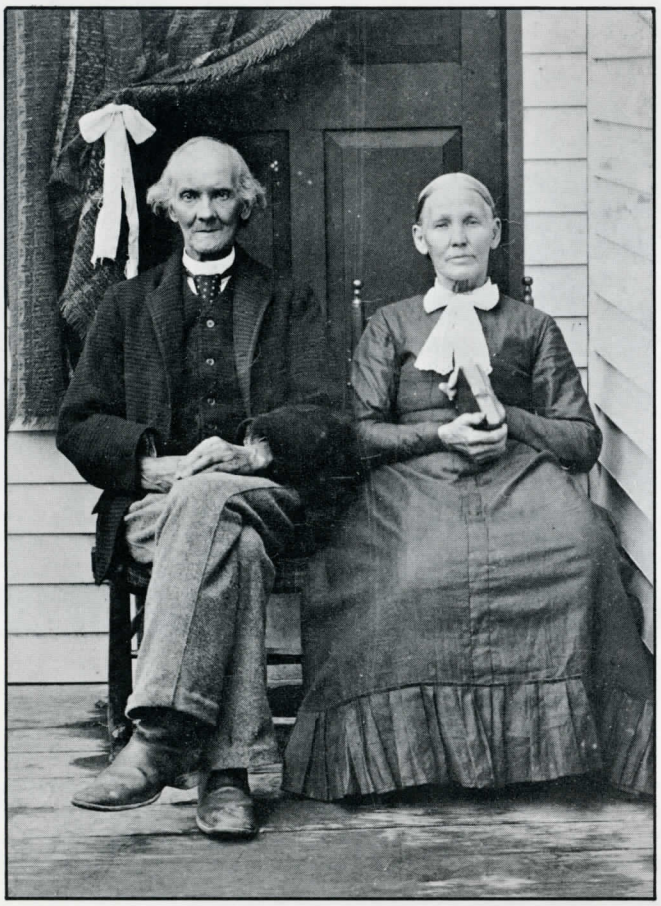
(right) Ida L. Reed in her 70s. Photographer unknown. (opposite) The writer's parents, James and Nancy Reed. Date and photographer unknown.

for that time, and this upbringing is reflected in almost everything Ida L. Reed wrote. The family attended services at the Old Ebenezer Church, a Methodist Episcopal Church which was a log building with seats of hewn logs supported by pegs and without backrests. The services were long and the seating most uncomfortable. Ida, at every opportunity, enjoyed slipping out of church to the oak grove to sit by a stream. Many of her memories of that period of her life helped considerably when she later wrote material for children.

Her love for books and reading began when she was five. Her favorite book was a small hymnal given to her by her father. The first reading material available to her were Sunday school (or Sabbath School, as it was called then) books. They were filled with stories reproaching children for bad behavior, stories of tragic little children who often died in the last chapter. This collection had been left at the church by a traveling missionary. Other books at her disposal were *The Life of Christ*, *Good's Book of Nature*, and a large collection of *Graham's Magazine*, all of which the family had brought from Virginia.

An epidemic of diptheria broke out in the community when Miss Reed was 15, and she was one of the first victims. She lost one whole school term that year and it took her months to recover. She was blind for a time and felt the effects of the disease for the rest of her life.

Miss Reed attended Teachers Institute meetings in Philippi, and when she was 17 took the examination for her first grade teaching certificate. She passed it and set out to find a teaching position, and applied at the Old Carlin School. The school trustees were very skeptical about having such a frail woman teach school, because most of the students were bigger than she was. The trustees warned her about the big boys in the school and told her the only way she could handle them was to "hoss whip" them. She accepted a trial period of three weeks and agreed to resign if she could not control the students. When she arrived at the school, she was appalled to see looped wires hanging from the ceiling. They had been used by the previous teacher literally to string students up by the thumbs. The one student who had been labeled a real trouble-



maker, however, turned out to be most cooperative and helpful. Her first year was a very difficult one; there were so few women teachers, and she had to work hard to overcome many obstacles, including the prejudices of parents and school trustees. Her main concern was winning the confidence and trust of the students, parents, and the community as a whole.

The next fall she applied to teach in Philippi, but just before the fall term started, she fell ill again. She was able to teach that fall but was still faced with problems. Miss Reed was trying to rent a room in town, yet no one wanted her as a tenant because of her poor health. Her trips to Philippi were often hampered by miserable winter weather and the spring floods on the Tygart Valley River. Even with reduced fare for the train, those trips were expensive and bad for her health.

In the spring after elementary school was closed, she decided to attend school in Philippi to further her own education. She was lucky enough to rent a room at last, but no sooner had she moved into the room than she became ill again and had to drop out of school.

Her brother, in an attempt to relieve her depression and speed up her recovery, encouraged her to write an article for the publication, *The West Virginia Protestant*, which was being published at St. Marys. Much to her surprise, the very first manuscript she sent to this publication was accepted and printed. A few months later, the editor of the Sunday school periodicals for the Methodist Church in Pittsburgh wrote to Miss Reed asking her for contributions to his publications which enjoyed a hearty circulation at that time.

The following year she again taught at the Old Carlin School in her community. On Friday afternoons, she supplemented her regular curriculum with Bible stories and readings from Sunday school literature which the students found most enjoyable. Out of these Friday afternoon sessions came her inspiration to write children's pantomimes and material for religious programs.

In the spring of 1887 Miss Reed was able to attend the National Normal University at Lebanon, Ohio. This university attracted students from all over the United States who were interested in pursuing a career in the literary field as well as those who wished to become missionaries. Entire families attended the school and even some foreign students who were studying to become missionaries in their own countries.

Miss Reed taught school again in the fall of 1887 and hoped to return to the University the next spring. However, she was in such poor health that she took the money she had saved for her tuition and purchased an organ instead. At that point in her life, she realized her teaching career must end and that she would have to concentrate on writing and music instead.

In the fall of 1888, at the age of 23, she sent her first hymns to Fillmore Brothers in Cincinnati, Ohio. They not only accepted and paid for several of her lyrics but they encouraged her to write more. This acceptance gave her a sense of accomplishment and a renewed dedication to her writing career.

Miss Reed's father died of tuberculosis in August, 1892, leaving her to manage the farm and support her mother and two sisters still at home. Her father had never regained his financial losses and left the family with heavy indebtedness. Miss Reed summoned all the strength and courage she possessed to keep the family from losing their home. Foreclosure was always a threat; the mortgage had to be paid with the money she made writing, yet at that time she was paid only $1.00 per hymn on pub-

lication. The mortgage was paid once a year and was delivered by Miss Reed on horseback--a round trip of 20 miles. She was able to raise enough food for the table, and the surplus was exchanged for household supplies or sold for taxes, farm repairs, tools, and the like. Produce was difficult to sell because the local markets were overflowing, and other markets were too far away to deliver fresh, choice vegetables. Most of the farm produce she was able to sell had to be delivered and the economy in the area was somewhat unstable. Sometimes the mines did not produce full-time, or they were even shut down periodically, causing the population to fluctuate and the market to suffer.

Life was very difficult for the Reed family during those years. The breadwinner traveled afoot or by horseback in all kinds of weather. In order to shop or simply visit the local post office, she had to cross the Tygart Valley River by boat. A boat was kept moored on the river by storekeepers on the other side for their patrons. When the boat was on the other side, one had to yell across and wait for it to be returned. If the river were flooded, it would sometimes be necessary to make a seven mile detour to reach a point one half mile away. These crossings were more often than not hazardous, since there was no paid ferryman.

In 1906 Miss Reed's mother died and Ida could not face living on the farm alone. She moved to a little cottage in Philippi and began her first book, *My Life Story*, which was published in 1912. The manuscript had been finished for two years, but her illness delayed its publication. During those two years, she had to have surgery on her spine in a Philadelphia hospital and spent many long months recuperating.

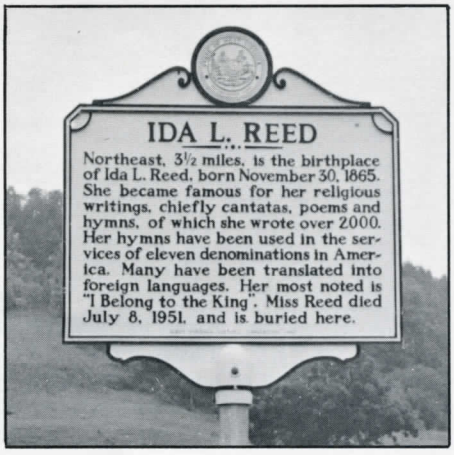
Miss Reed moved back to the old homeplace in 1918 into a house built in 1886 by her brother, James Lee Reed (the house is still standing). There she continued writing lyrics for various religious publishers. Sometimes the publishers would tell her what type hymn they wanted her to write and would often even select titles for those hymns. "I Belong to the King," translated into many languages, was the most popular hymn she wrote, as well as her personal favorite. The Hall-Mack Company of Philadelphia said that in addition to Scandinavian, German, Japanese, Hindustani, "I Belong to the King" was even translated into several African dialects. During Miss Reed's lifetime, she wrote 2,500 to 3,000 lyrics for hymns as well

as many poems, carols, contatas, and verses, almost all of which were published outside West Virginia. Her major publishers were located in Chicago, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, New York, Dayton, and Stockton-on-Tees, England. She enjoyed an international reputation and was especially popular in England.

Miss Reed's writing career spanned approximately 63 years, and during this time she made many friends who offered encouragement to her. Although many people were instrumental in making her works known, she was most grateful to Dr. and Mrs. J.W. Myers for making others aware of her books. The Myers family were friends of Miss Reed's almost all her life. Another friend was a Philadelphian, Miss E.E. Hewett, who was one of the most prominent hymn writers of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Miss Reed and Miss Hewett had much in common and shared their problems in a friendship which lasted many years. Miss Reed saved every letter sent to her by people who were interested in her writing because she gained so much strength from them.

Inspiration for Ida Reed's writing often came at odd times; when she had difficulty sleeping she would get out of bed and work on a hymn. Men who worked the "cat eye" shift in the mines would pass her house on their way to or from work and would hear her playing the organ, which gave them an eerie feeling. One particular poem, "Only a Little Deed of Kindness," was written while she was in the waiting room of the train station in Grafton.

(opposite) Nestled in the hills, Ida L. Reed's home is situated on Route 6, only a short distance from the Ebenezer Church. (below, left) The cornerstone of her home is easily seen from the road. J.L. Reed is James Lee, her older brother. (below, center) This state historical marker is located about six miles from Philippi, W. Va., on Route 250 South at the intersection of Route 6. Contrary to the marker, Miss Reed is buried almost four miles away at the Ebenezer Church near Arden. (below, right) The Ida L. Reed Memorial Park can be found near Arden on Route 6. The park is a portion of her farm and is maintained locally. Photographs by David Ross-Robertson.



Having loved nature from her early childhood, she found beauty all around. Her poems about West Virginia are particularly moving and reflect her sensitivity to the environment. Many of these verses are included in her book, *Songs of the Hills*, a collection of poems, hymns, carols, and pantomimes for children. It was published in 1940 with the assistance of American Society of Composers and Publishers. Her love for West Virginia is very well expressed in the title poem of her last book.

THE SONGS OF THE HILLS

The songs of the hills are mine, are mine,
  Soft winds in the tree-tops high;
Bird songs that ring when the dawn-lights shine
  And glow, in the clear deep sky

The songs of the brooks, in their stony beds,
  Deep notes where the rivers run
And leap, where the boulders lift up their heads,
  Mist-veiled in the morning sun

The breezes that sing through the golden wheat
  The beautiful harvest song;
Strong winds through the meadows, blossom-sweet,
  The hills, and the vales along.

So many voices the hill choirs know,
  And each has a part in these.
Majestic and full do the harmonies flow,
  And sweet are the melodies.

The songs of the hills are mine, are mine,
  A part of my life are they;
They tell me the story of love divine
  That brightens the whole long way.

In the middle 1940s Miss Reed's health had declined to the extent that she needed someone to come in to do the chores. Her nephew, Mr. F.H. Ball, who lived in the area, went to her home daily for eight years to care for her. Eventually she became so ill that she had to move into his home. She stayed there a few months and was then moved into the home of her niece and namesake, Mrs. Ida Lois Poe of Moatsville. Miss Reed, after being bedridden for some time, passed away on July 8, 1951. Her request had been that she be buried on her farm near the Old Ebenezer Church she had loved so as a child. When this was done, the grave was enclosed by a white picket fence and a monument erected with the inscription "I Belong to the King."

Histories mistakenly omit the contribution of simple, ordinary people such as Ida L. Reed. Similar to Job in maintaining her faith, perserverance, and dedication, even with her constantly poor health, she accomplished a great deal during her lifetime. Not only was she a competent teacher, but she strengthened West Virginia's literary heritage considerably. Hymns and verses may seem insignificant, but the fundamental faith of hardworking people contributes to the strength of the whole social order.

Some Selections From the Writings of Ida L. Reed

Prose

The writing of hymns was to me my life work but there were other lines in which I did a great deal. Especially through the work for the children and young people, in the way of exercises, nature lesson stories, motion exercises, and songs, carols, tableaux, drills, etc. Beside these there were the Sunday School services for the various special seasons of the year written through many years past.

Having from my earliest childhood an intense love for the outdoor world I made it (for the work just mentioned) my chief study. I found in its beautiful, varied, and every changing life, all about me in my beloved hills, the inspiration that made my work possible.

--from the preface of *Songs of the Hills,* 1940.

Back there among the hills of the old home, there is hardly a thicket or out of the way corner of the fields, scarcely a cluster of trees or a covert of woods, hardly a corner of the old barn that was not dear to me because God met me there and gave me in answer to my prayer, when I cried to Him in anguish of soul for help new strength and grace to endure the almost intolerable burden, and peace in the midst of my pain and care....

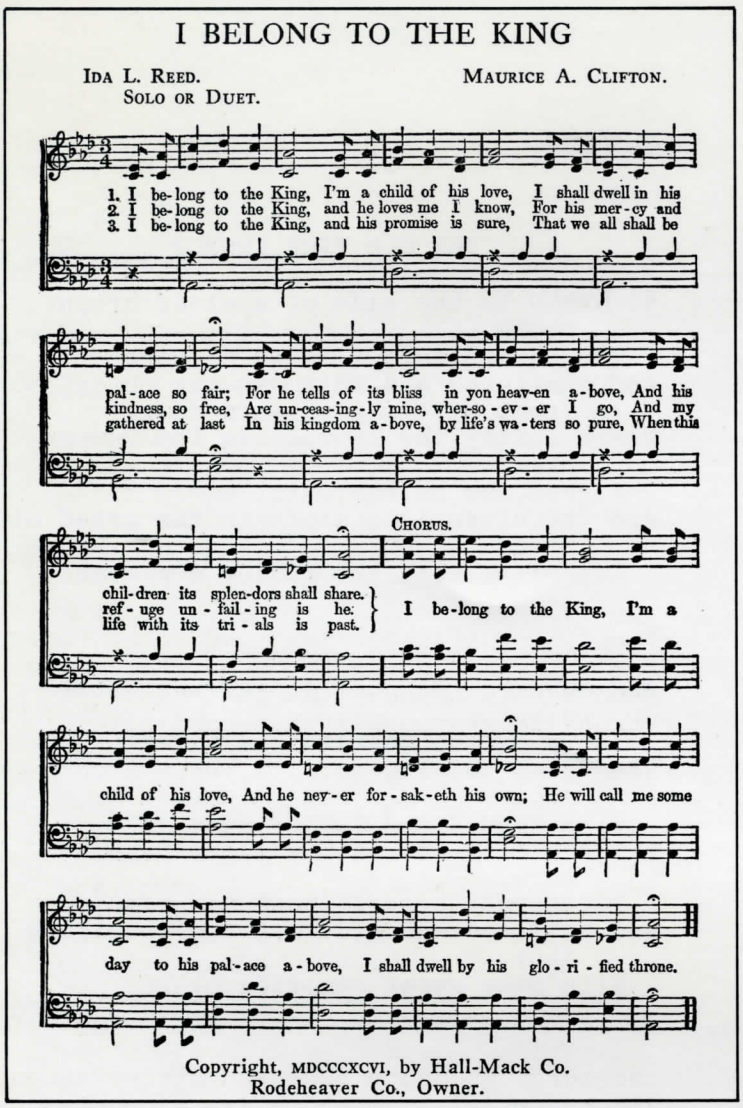
Not once in all these years has this, my anchor, failed to hold no matter how heavy the storms that have beaten upon my life barque or how dangerously near to the reefs of fear and doubt I have been driven not because I have been more faithful or stronger to endure perhaps *but because I realized so clearly that I dared not let go* for there was nothing else to cling to, no other refuge and my own strength pitted against all the I fought easily would have failed me utterly. Then, too, it was the sure hope of eternal life and joy in the beautiful world beyond this shadow land that made me strong to endure all that came between.

I know that with God's help I have tried hard and faithfully all the way to fill full my humble place for Him and have sought ever to bring to others all the hope and cheer and love and joy possible that the world about me might be at least a little brighter because I have lived and wrought in it. I have learned patience in the hard school of suffering and sorrow; and my faith in God's love and mercy and care has been strengthened all the while. He has been so good so merciful to me and has given me in these sad years so many proofs of His love and tenderness and faithfullness that my heart overflows with thanksgiving and praise to Him even in the darkest days.

Whether or not I shall ever be able to take up even in part my work again I do not know. It is all in God's hands. I only know that I can not get well; and that however long I may live I shall never know what it means to be free from pain and weariness and weakness and that living alone and wholly dependent upon my own efforts with God's help to obtain the wherewithal to live, it is only reasonable to suppose that life will always be a struggle. But I hope to face it with a faith growing ever stronger as life's eventide draws near taking thankfully every gleam of sunshine and joy that falls to me, day by day doing all the little good I can for Him. All my hope is in Him and whether life and ease or pain and death be mine it is well and with a heart at rest in His love I wait for the morning.

--from *My Life Story,* 1912.

A Hymn



A Children's Pantomime

THE GIFTS OF THE SEASONS

SPRING

(Little girl with sheaf of pink and white blossoms and long tufts of green grass.)

I come with my garlands of beauty
  Across the brown meadows and hills;
The grasses have followed my footsteps
  By hedges and waysides and rills.
The sweet vernal tints of the springtime
  Are gleaming so tender and fair,
And white are the orchards as snowdrifts;
  Their fragrance is filling the air;
And yonder the plowmen are turning
  The furrows, as gladly they sing.
And all earth's sweet voices re-echo
  The songs and the promise I bring;
For the fruitage must follow the blossoms,
  And up from the bare brown sod
The harvests will spring, in their beauty,
  Fulfilling the promise of God.

SUMMER

(Little girl in rose with sheaf of wheat, lilies and roses, and basket of fruit.)

With roses and lilies and golden wheat
  I come, the fulfillment of promises sweet;
With glory of blossoms the earth is a-light,
  All of her pathways with beauty are bright
And as it ripples the wheat-fields among
  The soft wind is singing a beautiful song.
Of plenty and peace and of glad harvest days,
  And everywhere rises an anthem of praise;
From out of earth's bosom, for harvests I bring,
  The fruitage that follows the blossoms of spring.

AUTUMN

(Little girl in rainbow colors with goldenrod, ferns bright leaves, clusters of grapes, and basket of nuts.)

I bring you the woodland's treasures,
  The beauty of fern and leaf,
Aflame in their dying glory,
  The shock and the garnered sheaf;
The rich brown nuts and the clusters
  So purple and sweet from the vine.
The songs from the bending orchards,
  Where the sunkissed apples shine.
And up from glad hearts overflowing
  Now rise to the vaulted dome
Of heaven, glad songs of thanksgiving,
  The music of Harvest-Home.

WINTER

(Little girl in white dress, cloak, and hood with hands full of bare branches and long dead grasses.)

I bring to the fields of their harvests shorn
  The meed of a needed rest,
And over earth's bosom, so bare, forlorn,
  My blanket of snow is pressed
That she may lie still through the long, long days,
  And gather her forces new
To nourish seed treasures she holds in her breast,
That they till the spring-time may sleep and rest
  Safe under the sleet and the snow.
Then with the shower and sun they'll rise,
Glowing with beauty 'neath May-time skies,
  And the buds that are folded away
Safe in their warm blankets, will open again,
O'er hillside and fallow, o'er valley and glen,
  To cover with blossom and leaf each spray.
Then hail to the Winter glad welcome now bring,
  For she puts the flowers to sleep,
To 'waken rejoicing when winds of Spring
  Shall over the brown fields sweep.

--from *Songs of the Hills*, 1940.

A Poem

THE OLD TIME CHURCH

It stood by the side of a clear bright brook,
  The church that I loved of yore,
And sheltered and fair was the shady nook
  In front of its gray worn door.
Where softly the leaves, in the summer breeze,
  Sighed low on the quiet air:
And the birds high aloft in the grand old trees
  Kept time with the pastor's prayer.

And down by the door flowed the waters clear,
  Adown by the gnarled oak's feet;
The waves chiming in with the church's choir,
  With ripple and murmur sweet.
And peaceful and calm was the Sabbath morn,
  The sermon brought hope and rest;
And hallowed and glad was the cherished spot
  With many sweet memories blest.

The green velvet moss to its time-worn walls,
  Clung close in the sun and rain;
And o'er it the trees hung their waving boughs
  And sang it a love-sweet strain.
And now it is fallen, the old time church,
  Another stands in its stead,
The pastor has gone to the land beyond,
  The trees of the grove are dead.

Still memory clings to the olden time,
  The church that I loved of yore,
The music of birds and the leaves soft rhyme,
  As they swayed o'er the gray worn door.
The sweet songs of old come again to me,
  Glad echoes from the years gone by
I hear in the brooks and the bird songs free,
  The winds and the leaves low sigh.

--from *Songs of the Hills*, 1940.

Burials and Funerals of Long Ago

By Ida L. Reed

Miss Reed wrote the following article for the February 1934 issue of *The West Virginia Review*. That most interesting monthly magazine was in existence between 1924 and 1948 and was edited by Phil M. Conley. --Ed.

Often when I see a long line of cars following a large shining hearse, through the crystal clear windows of which are seen a costly casket and heaps of beautiful flowers, and moving on to the church and the cemetery, my mind goes back to the burials and funerals I knew in the long ago.

Burials and funerals then were always spoken of separately because they were separate events. In that distant day, in a far out-of-the-way settlement, such as was ours, undertakers were unknown. The dead were buried without funeral sermons, and on some day near or far distant, when convenient to the "circuit rider" of that time, the "funeral was preached," as the people phrased it.

When a death occurred in a family the neighbors went to the bereaved home, took charge of the dead, bathed, and after having made the burial clothes, dressed the body. They also made arrangements for digging the grave and making the coffin. Some neighbor took a smooth straight stick, measured the body, went to a carpenter nearby and gave him the measurement in order that he might know what length to make the coffin.

The carpenter planed and fitted the boards into the old-fashioned coffin shape, lined the finished work inside and out with some simple inexpensive material and the few preparations were completed.

Some other neighbor, if the dead was an adult, brought his farm wagon and took the corpse to the grave. If the corpse was that of a small child, it was carried to the burial ground.

So far as I remember there were no flowers except possibly a cluster in the folded dead hands. There were usually a few words, the singing of a hymn, and a prayer by some neighbor at the house or

grave, but always the funeral sermon came later.

I remember when very small watching a crowd pass in a heavy rainstorm to a burial. The wagon that carried the mother's body held also several of her children. A quilt had been drawn up over the sides of the wagon and lifted above the bed. Under this poor shelter they sat, but the heavy downpour of rain was beating it, wet and sodden, down over their heads. They must have been thoroughly drenched, though hardly out of sight of their home. But they went on, in the storm for several miles.

A very few dollars covered all the cost of such a burial and funeral. It was the best that could be done in the new lands.

Once in my childhood I was sitting in church beside my mother. During the service a man entered carrying a stick in his hand, and a woman near us began to cry. Turning to another she said, "Johnny's little boy is dead." The child was the only one near who was desperately ill and she knew the stick was the measure for a coffin.

Sometimes burials were noisy events. There were those who seemed to cry out all their grief at the graveside, or when the dead was taken out of the house. They then forgot their sorrows. The incident was closed.

There was the getting together afterward of groups to talk it over, and to discuss the behavior of the bereaved family. Those who had not attended the burial wished to know about it. The stock question always was, "How'd they take it?" Usually the answer was, "Didn't seem to keer much," or "They took it awful hard." The grief was always supposed to be *hard* when it was noisy.

Those who were quiet and self-controlled, whose tears fell silently, and who grieved long and deeply over the passing of loved ones, were not supposed to "keer" as much as those who screamed and wept noisily, and talked much of their great love for their dead until the grave closed over them.

There were scattered here and there small cemeteries in the open fields far from churches. In some of these were very old graves, many of them marked with only rough field stones set in the earth at the head and the foot of the graves, with no mark to tell who slept there. After the passing of many years, only the older people of the communities who had seen many burials, and the descendants of these long dead pioneers, knew in which graves the dust of their own kinsmen lay. It happened that some of these cemeteries, through the changes the years brought, were leveled and settled in places. The old graves were lost; in the cultivation of the fields about them, they were plowed over. All marks to tell where they had been were removed.

Several years since, I attended in one of these churchless cemeteries high in the hills, the burial in a quiet and beautiful spot of the baby son of a nephew. An old, old cemetery it was, and the father of the little one had many relatives buried there, for his father's people had been among the first settlers in this section.

It was early spring and the hills were growing green all about the burial ground. The beauty, the solitude of the hills seemed to hush into stillness the crowd which came in small groups up from the many bypaths to this quiet spot. My sister, the grandmother, with several friends, and I were a little late in reaching the cemetery, and the crowd was waiting. The tiny white casket was resting on the grass outside the enclosure and when we arrived the simple service began.

A local minister, who worked as hard as his neighbors during the week and was very close to them because of his friendly sympathetic interest in all that touched their lives, and because of their confidence in him, had charge. The song, the prayer, the tender words of comfort, and consolation carried the simple service to its close. The sunlight fell softly upon the tiny face of the babe and touched into pale gold the silken hair, upon the strained sorrowful face of the young father, and full upon the faces from which fell silent tears. Silently the little casket was lowered to its resting place, and the grave was filled.

The crowd had been made up of humble, hard-working people, of whom the minister was one. The service was so simple, so devout, it seemed to me far more impressive than those which have all the glamour of wealth, and show, and the eloquence of prominent ministers, as well as the beauty of the songs or hymns sung by well known singers. It seemed to me God was nearer to that quiet lonely little burial ground in the heart of the hills, than in the great crowds that follow the shining blossom-filled hearses and glittering cars to large churches, and beautiful cemeteries. In the beauty and cost of these funerals something precious is lost, something that must add to the grief of the bereaved. ■

The 'Ups and Downs' of a British Miner in the West Virginia Coal Fields

By David A. Corbin

In the early part of the century, as a prime employer of unskilled labor, the coal fields of West Virginia attracted workers, not only from other parts of the country but also from many other countries. Seeking work and a home, thousands of southern blacks and tens of thousands of European immigrants flooded the Mountain State to dig coal. Their stories, often buried beneath accounts of bloody strikes and dynamic union leaders, are nevertheless fascinating and important.

Besides constituting a workforce for the nation's number one coal producing state, they contributed heavily to West Virginia tradition, culture, and history; most importantly, they helped build a labor union--the United Mine Workers of America. One of these immigrants was Sidney Box.

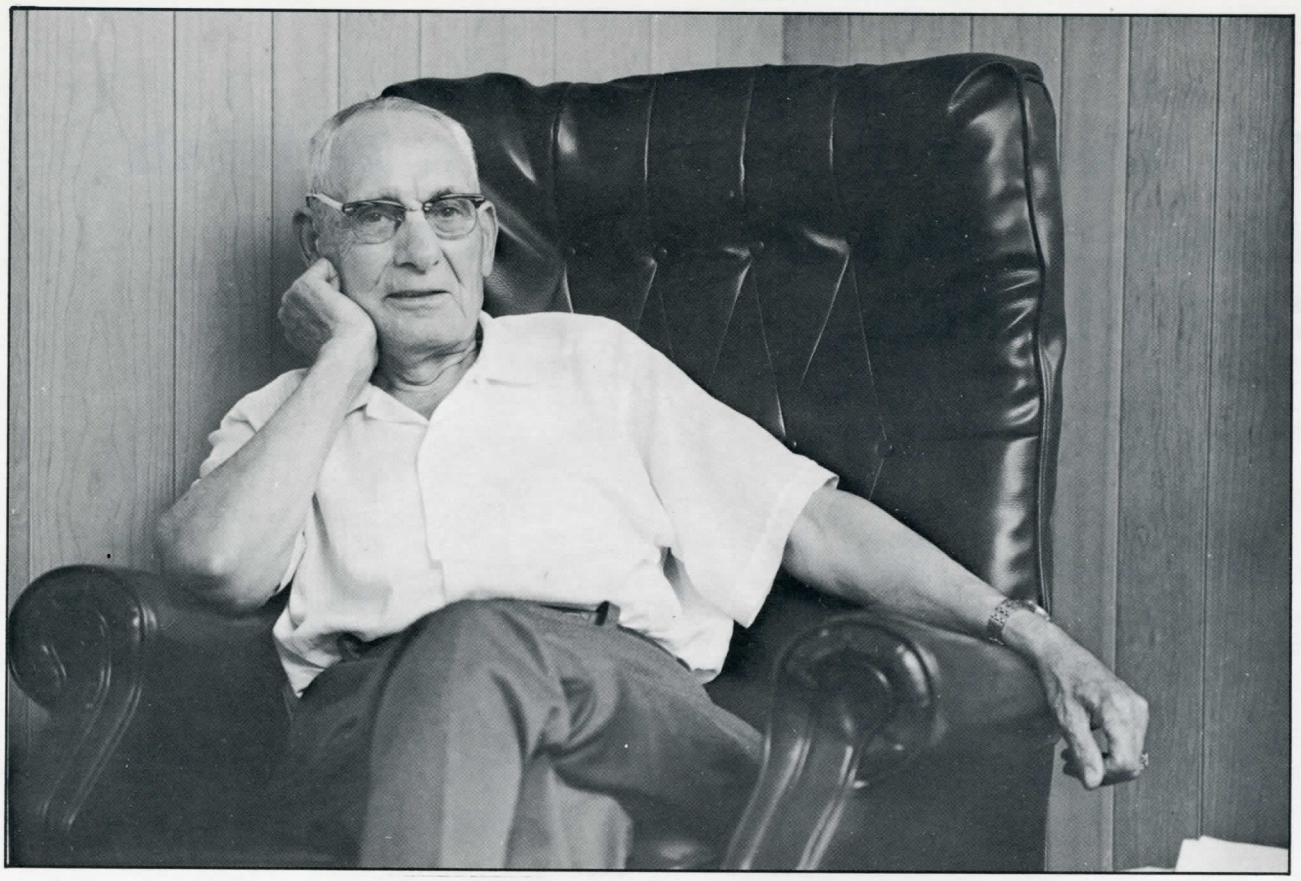
Mr. Box was born in Ledberry, England, August 21, 1896. At age ten, he left school to work on a farm and later in coal mines in South Wales to help support his widowed mother and his brother. With the outbreak of World War I he enlisted in the British Army's Worcestershire Regiment.

After several years on the battle front, Mr. Box was about to return home when he was ordered back into fighting in an effort to halt the final German push. During this campaign he was captured and placed in a German prisoner-of-war camp. Eight months later he escaped and returned to England. He was later cited by the King of England for his actions and bravery. Because of the post-war depression he decided to emigrate and in 1922 brought his family to the West Virginia coal fields.

His story, with minimal editing, is printed as he narrated it. It reveals that the history of coal mining in West Virginia and the building of the United Mine Workers of America involved more than violent strikes, "armed marches," and colorful, hot-tempered leaders. It required competent and cooler heads, willing to recognize the interests of all sides and to arbitrate. His story reveals the life and extraordinary experiences and the "ups and downs" of one of the tens of thousands of immigrants who became a West Virginia coal digger.

Sidney Box

I went into the coal mines first in South Wales where I worked in two or three different mines. When World War I came on I joined the Army. I was wounded on three different occasions and was a prisoner of war for the last eight months of the war. After the war was over I returned to Wales and again worked in the mines there. Shortly afterwards our grateful government advised us to emigrate because unemployment was great. It wanted us to emigrate to one of the Brit-



Sidney Box in 1976 at home in Glen White. Photograph by Douglas Chadwick.

ish Colonies such as Canada or Australia or New Zealand, but we decided that we would come to the United States of America. Of course, we were very glad that we made the decision to come to the United States instead of going to one of the British Colonies, because America has been real good to us. We've had our ups and downs, of course, but we have been very fortunate.

We arrived in New York on the 22nd day of January 1921. We went to Glen White in Raleigh County, where my wife's family was located. Coming down on the train, we noticed all the wooden houses. In England most of the miners' houses were built with brick and stone, so we thought all these wooden houses were chicken houses. We didn't realize that people were living in them, but when we came to Glen White, of course, we found out different.

I remember the time, when I first came to Glen White, when they used to lock the gates at night to stop you from going to town to do your trading. Years ago the coal companies used to control all of the mining camps, all of the activities in the camp. Glen White was under the ownership of the E.E. White Coal Company, and they were outstanding as coal operators went in those days. They gave turkeys at Christmas, and they were very good to the veterans who had returned from the war. On Armistice Day they always gave a party and a five-dollar gold piece to each veteran. Well, the first year that I was there I didn't go to the party; since I had fought for the British Army, I didn't know that it involved me. Mr. Eddie White, who was the owner's son, he came to the house and asked me why I wasn't at the party. I told him I didn't think I was involved in this. He said, "Oh, yes, you fought in that war, you were allies, we want you to come down there." So I changed clothes and went down there and had a wonderful time. From then on I attended all of the parties, and I gave a few of my experiences as a prisoner of war because I happened to be the only person who had been a prisoner of war at that time in Glen White, and they were interested in hearing about it.

We stayed in Glen White a couple of years and then heard mining conditions were better at a place called Eccles. In Glen White we loaded coal by the car, in Eccles we loaded coal by the ton, and it made quite a difference. I worked at the mine in Eccles until the Stoney Company wanted to close down.

Then my brother-in-law in Orient, Illinois, sent for me to come up there. So we went up there and I worked there for

a while. I liked that part of the country, but my wife didn't on account of the terrific electric storms. So after about nine months, to satisfy my wife, we came back to Eccles, which had started up again. However, my brother-in-law was mine foreman over at Glen Rogers which was a real hot, gassy mine; they had just had an explosion there, killing 29 men. My brother-in-law asked me to come over there and work, because I was considered to be a good gas man at that time. I stayed in Glen Rogers and worked in various capacities in the mine for a period of 18 years.

I have always been a union man, in fact I brought a union card to this country, but there was no miners' unions in West Virginia at that time. In 1933, however, under President Roosevelt, we were given the right to organize and bargain collectively and I took an active part in that. I helped President William Blizzard out of District 17 in Charleston organize Glen Rogers. We built a local union there with 1,100 members.

I held every position there was to hold in the union, including the presidency. I was also president of the burial fund, which we had taken away from the company who had handled it through the years. I had the pleasure and the honor of serving as scale committee representing all of the Winding Gulf Fields in 1939. I spent about six weeks in New York with President William Blizzard, who was at that time president of District 17 in Charleston. Bill was kind of a radical in many of his ideas, but he was certainly a good union man. I was also glad to work, in my own way, with George Titler and Jim Leeber, both presidents of District 29, and all the other officers in District 29. We cooperated with one another. I had a great satisfaction working with them, and they were a great help to me on many occasions when we did have strikes which were unavoidable--and I suppose always will be.

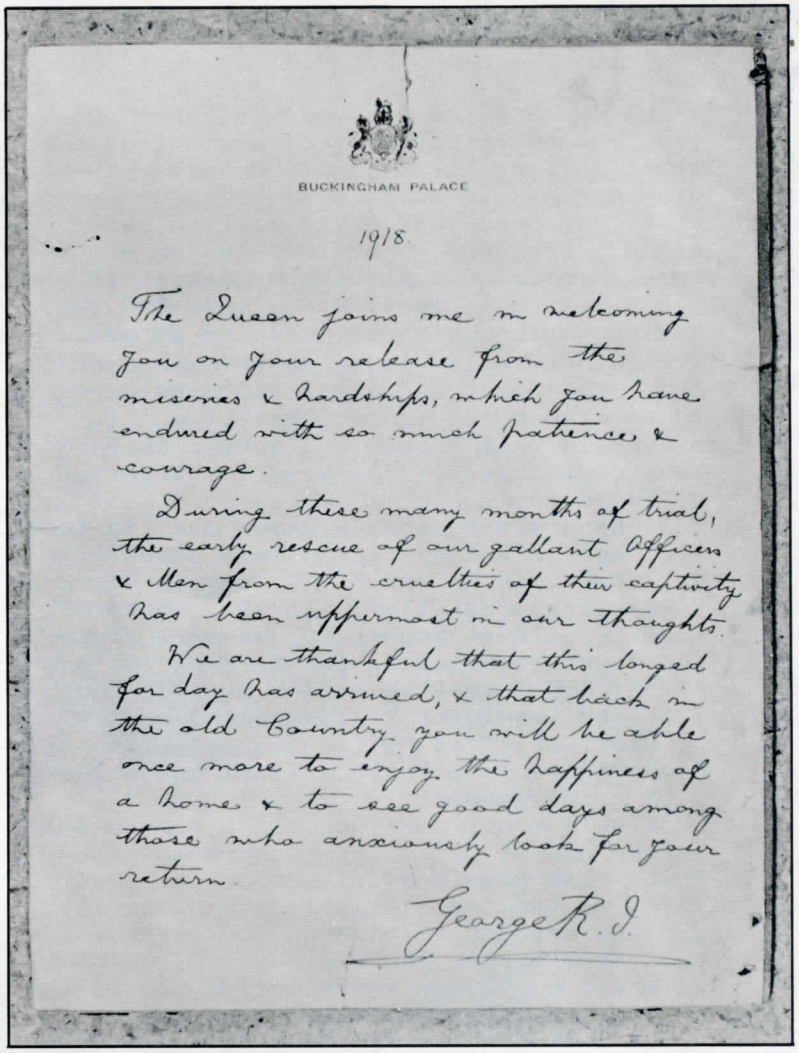
In 1944 I was unfortunate enough to get caught in a slate fall and suffered a broken back. We didn't know what we were going to do. Our home was less than half paid for, and the doctor had already informed me that I would never do manual work again. So I was laying in the hospital wondering what was going to happen.

A man by the name of James Leeber, who had worked with me on union committees many times, came to see me. The doctor had told him that I wasn't doing as well as I should have been because I had something on my mind, which, of course, was wondering what I was going to do because I didn't have much education. This Jim Leeber knew I had been active, very active, in union affairs and he felt that there was a place for me in the union. Mr. Leeber asked me if I knew a Mr. Brett, the regional director of United Constructions Workers, which later became District 50 of the United Mine Workers. I said, "No, I don't." He said, "Well, I'm going to talk to him. I think he can use a man like you." He came back to see me the next day and told me that the day I came out of the hospital I was to go and see

Sidney Box in England as a small boy--his hands folded on his lap--posed with his mother, seated on the right with Fred on her lap, and all of his brothers and sisters except William.

Mr. Brett, which I did, and he hired me. He told me, after he hired me, "Now, I don't want a man working for me who doesn't want my job. I want every man under me to want my job." As strange as it may seem, in 11 months I had his job as regional director, because he was promoted and given a better job in Washington, D.C.

I served in Beckley as regional director for about 14 years and then transferred to Marion, Indiana, where I served for two years. Then I was promoted to regional director out of the national office in Washington, D.C. That was a



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

1918.

The Queen joins me in welcoming you on your release from the miseries & hardships, which you have endured with so much patience & courage.

During these many months of trial, the early rescue of our gallant Officers & Men from the cruelties of their captivity has been uppermost in our thoughts.

We are thankful that this longed for day has arrived, & that back in the old Country you will be able once more to enjoy the happiness of a Home & to see good days among those who anxiously look for your return.

George R.I.

(left) Sergeant Sidney C. Box, a Royal Worcester in the British Army in World War I, ca. 1917. (right) On returning to England after his release as a German prisoner of war, Box received this letter from King George V.

wonderful experience for me, to be in the nation's Capitol and to be in control of so many different organizations there. I stayed there until I retired in 1963 at the age of 67.

The day I left Washington, D.C., I rode the elevator down with President John L. Lewis. President Lewis remarked to me, "Sidney, I am sorry you're leaving. I've heard you're going back to West Virginia to retire." I said, "That is so." He said, "You know, I like West Virginia, it's possible that some day I may retire to West Virginia." Of course that never happened.

I feel very proud of the fact that, during my years, I was a union representative. Since I've retired I've been told by various members of the management that "Sid Box was hard, but he was fair." I take that as a great compliment. It is said that there are two sides to every question. I always contended that in a strike there were not two sides to the question, there were five, namely, the union, the company, the employees, the community, and the customer. They were all, more or less, implicated when a strike was called, which sometimes could have been avoided by negotiation, arbitration. I always thought that if you win a strike you lost it in the final analysis, because you lost so much in wages during the time you were on strike. It would, perhaps, take a year or more to make up for your losses. So I was always trying to negotiate contracts without having a strike, and I would go out of my way to do this, which I found was for the benefit of all parties....

I am very glad to see that the old retired miners are being well taken care of, and I always advised them that whatever they do to stick to the Union, because they know what happened years ago when the union was taken out of West Virginia. I am not a recipient of the miners' pension or hospital card, because of the fact that I was injured in 1944, which deprived me of my miner's pension and

Sidney Box, standing, right, with his three brothers in England about 1919. William is standing on the left. Seated are Francis, right, and Frederick, left. Fred, the youngest and the only other brother who came to this country, died in 1960 while a resident of Pineville.

also hospital card. Talking about pensions, I may state, too, that I was receiving a pension from the British government for war wounds until I became an American citizen, which I did in 1926. Three weeks after becoming an American citizen, why, the British government took my Army pension away from me, so I've had my ups and downs.

Many changes have occurred since I worked in the mines. I really wouldn't know anything of the coal mines of today. They are all, more or less, mechanized. In my time in the mines, why, most of it was hand picked and hand loaded. Now it's all done by machines. I would like, however, once more to go in the mines and see the difference in procedures today than what it was when I worked in the mines....

I've traveled in a good many states of the United States. I've always come back to good old West Virginia. My wife and I, we don't think there is another state in the union to compare with it, as far as the climate is concerned, friendliness of the people, and the cooperation we have received through the years. ■

RELATED READING

The stories of rank-and-file coal diggers are a fascinating but neglected phase of the history of American coal mining. Useful and probably the best are: Fred Mooney, *Struggle in the Coal Fields*, ed. by J.W. Hess (Morgantown, W.Va.: West Virginia University Library, 1967); Herbert Gutman, "The Negro and the United Mine Workers of America," *The Negro and the American Labor Movement*, ed. by Julius Jacobson (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1968), deals with the work of a black U.M.W.A. organizer, Richard L. Davis, who spent considerable time in West Virginia. Also, one should see John Brophy, *A Miner's Life*, ed. by John O.P. Hall (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964); Although Brophy was not involved in West Virginia, this autobiography vividly portrays the life and work of a coal digger.

Old Tales, New Places

By Barry J. Ward

The West Virginia scene is a familiar one. A small white church sits high on a majestic hill above the farmland below. A couple is just entering the sanctuary with the minister who obviously will be conducting a wedding ceremony that day. Clouds drift aimlessly over pines interspersed everywhere with boulders. Now a country lane meanders across the scene where farm animals graze peacefully, unaware of the minor auto mishap above their heads in front of the place of worship. Majesty, tranquility, love--the human comedy in West Virginia.

But we are in suburban Round Lake in northern Illinois, not in West Virginia. Take a step back and the illusion vanishes. Now the admirable scene is reduced to its component parts: miniature plastic trees and animals, model cars, painted clouds, and, unexpectedly, windshield wipers, headlights, and tires. A piece of West Virginia has been refashioned on a most unlikely medium, a 1969 Toyota coupe.

For a moment, at least, California "van-art" (not to be confused with the mass produced variety disgorged by the factories of Detroit) may come to mind. The psychedelic scenes painted on Chevy vans certainly bear scant resemblance to this landscaped Toyota, but both evidence noteworthy ingenuity and a personal bond between creator and machine. The car, like the vans, is at once audacious and naive in its conception, but unlike its luminous counterpart the car does not celebrate the liberated, Sunbelt present of the surfer. Rather, it embodies nostalgia for the past and for a particular place in that past. And for its creator, Grover Ellison, it is a means for reconstructing in a highly technical, professional society the rural social context of the traditional Appalachian storyteller.

Grover Ellison is one of the thousands of West Virginians who left the state as youths in search of employment. Born in 1922 in Edmond, W.Va., he worked in area coal mines for nine months during his last year in high school. Following graduation and in need of a job he headed north to Connecticut where he found a position as a machinist. A tour in the service during World War II and marriage to a girl from Chicago followed. They moved to Round Lake, Illinois, and Mr. Ellison began his career in what is now termed industrial hygiene at Abbott Laboratories, a major pharmaceutical company. In his job he is concerned with the working environment of Abbott employees, seeing

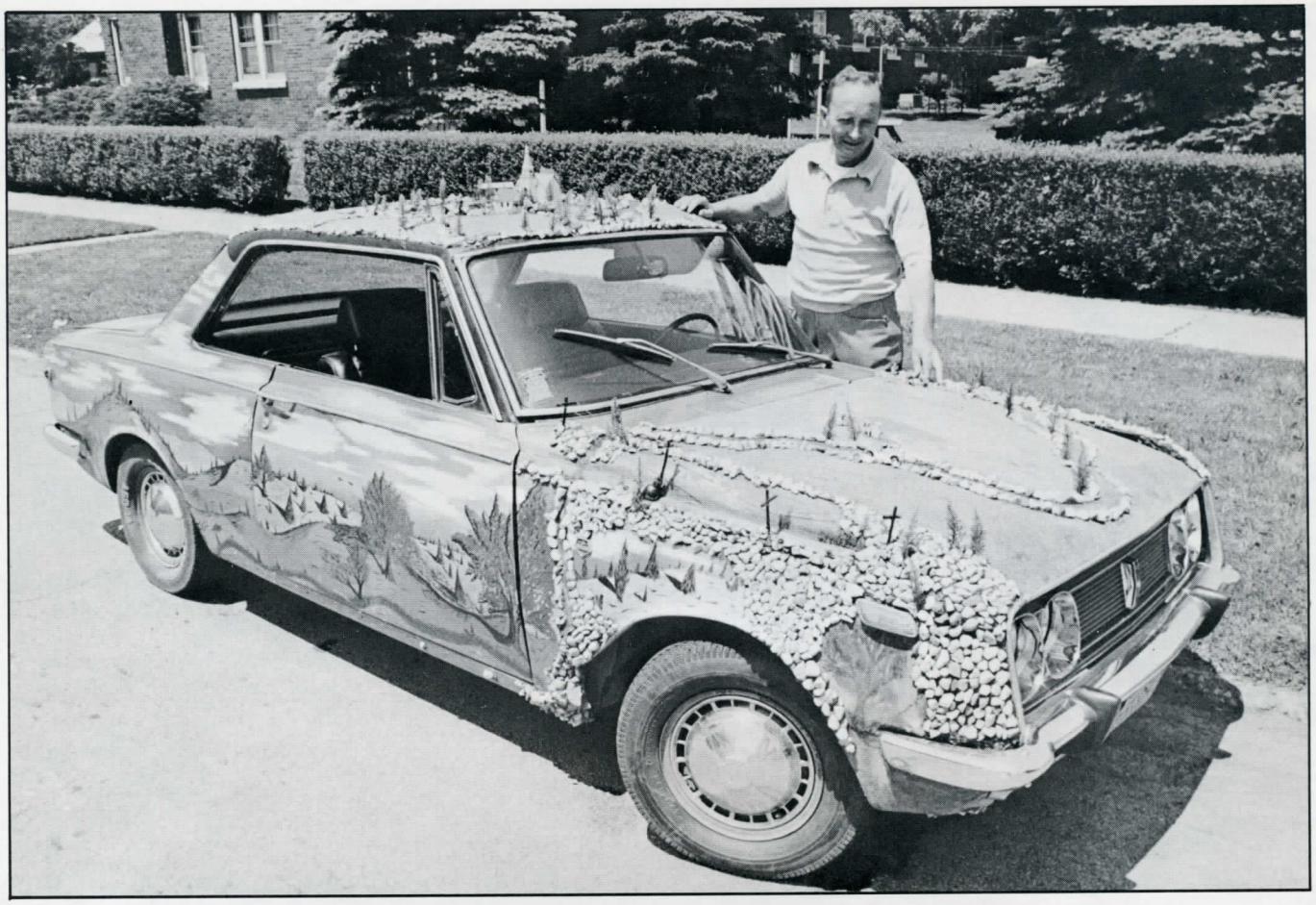
Grover Ellison and his cartop replica of his homeplace, Edmond, W.Va.
Photographs courtesy of Mr. Ellison.

that they are protected from the dangers of toxic gas, excessive noise, explosions, fires, and the like. The enactment of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) elevated industrial hygiene to an important position at firms such as Abbotts and has given Ellison considerable responsibility and status. His expertise and years of experience have led to speaking engagements and a consultant position on industrial medicine at a medical school.

In spite of dislocation from West Virginia and a responsible professional career which occupies much of his time, Ellison maintains close emotional ties with the town and state of his birth. This tie is evidenced in many ways. He has bought a farm in the state, what he calls his Edmond survival acreage "in case everything else [goes] to Hell in the country." In spite of his family ties, he encountered a familiar problem, "no one wants to buy, but no one will sell." In good times there is no need to sell, and when times are bad people feel they need the property in order to survive. Additionally, he speaks with love and respect of the Sunday afternoons on the front porch of his grandmother's house in Edmond when the family would exchange stories. His son and grandson were born in Illinois but consider West Virginia their home. The tie to Edmond and West Virginia is most evident, however, in Grover Ellison's automobile.

The 1969 Toyota had been in a severe accident. The roof was caved in, the windows smashed, the hood and fenders dented and scratched. Ellison purchased the car with the intention of restoring it to its original condition. Initial repairs went as planned. He raised the roof using a tire jack and replaced the windows. He applied a Naugahyde roof lined with foam rubber. Next he applied body putty and began the arduous task of rubbing it out when he asked himself the eventful question, "What can I do *not* to finish it?"

In disgust or frustration, he does not



(above and opposite) Two views of the 1969 Toyota, that Grover Ellison decorated. The mountain scene murals on the sides of the car were painted with the help of a nephew.

remember which, he picked up some driveway stones and began to place them one after another on the body putty. Somewhere in the process, he reports, a vision of Edmond, W.Va., came to him. His alternative to body repair began to blossom as the Naugahyde was displaced by a few yards of green indoor-outdoor carpeting. A disused artificial Christmas tree forfeited its branches to become stately pines in the scene. A severed radio antenna became the first in a series of telephone poles. Some plastic domestic animals were added, and roadways established with stone borders. A church and cabin, meant to resemble his grandmother's home at the turn of the century, capped the scene. Later, with the assistance of his nephew, Mr. Ellison painted mountain scene murals on the car doors. In two weekends at a cost of about $10.00 for Black Magic bond, Grover Ellison's car had emerged from a wreck to a replica of the home of his youth. He is quick to say the town does not look exactly like his reconstruction. It was necessary to take a little license and to follow the contours of the accident, not of the hills around Edmond.

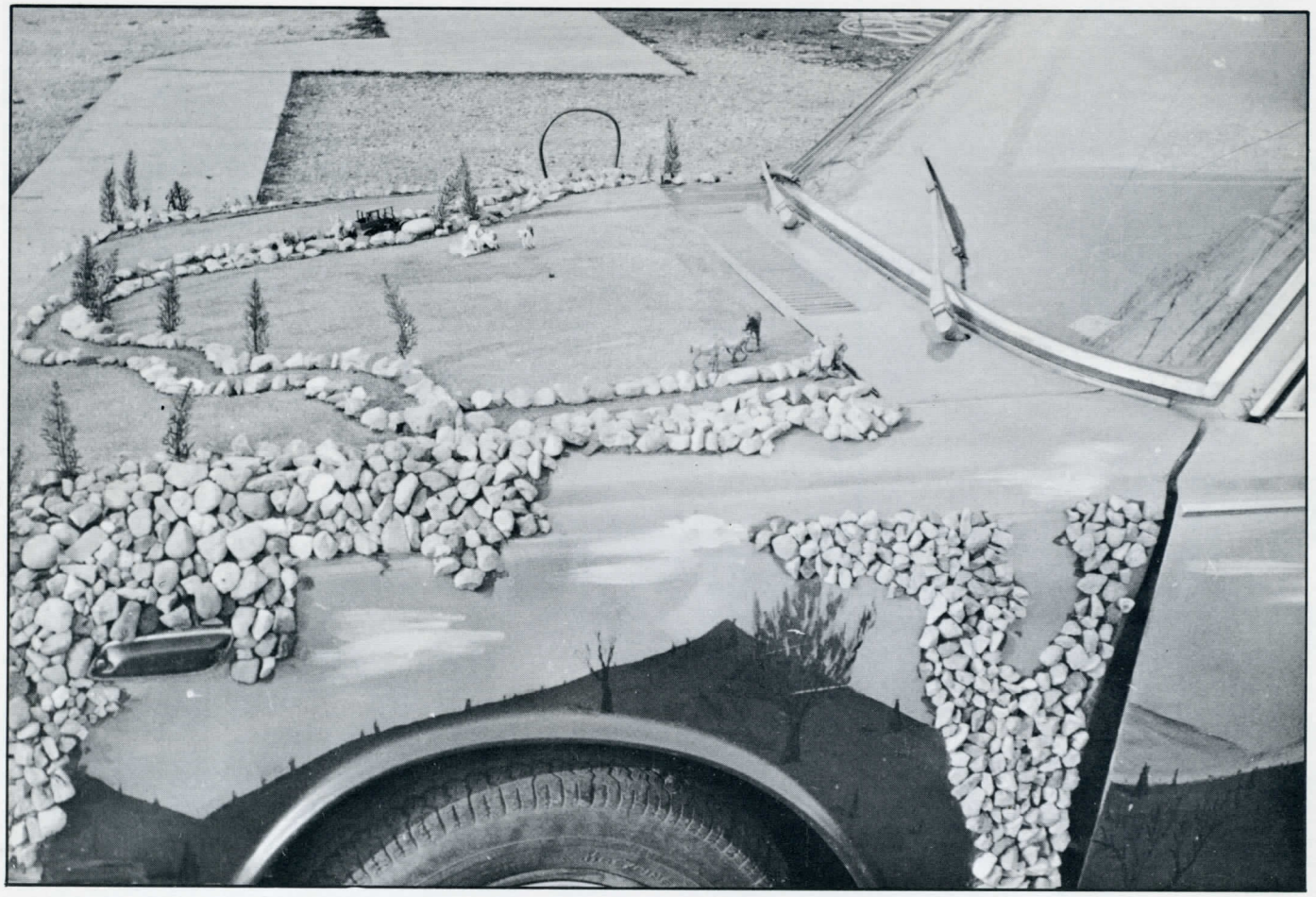
He drives the car to work daily, and the response has been intense. Several local newspapers have run short articles. Abbott Laboratories has featured the car in *Abbott Topics*, its in-house newsletter and in its 1975 *Investor news & Report* (2nd quarter). All international divisions of Abbotts receive *Topics*, and word of Mr. Ellison's reconstruction of Edmond has been translated into Spanish for Puerto Rican readers. NBC in Chicago has run a seven-minute feature on Bob Smith's "Sorting It Out" show, after which, the Ellison's report, telephone calls from admirers rang for hours. The car has made one brief story at that time. Mr. Ellison reports that during the trip through Indiana and Ohio state troopers would occasionally stop his car and ask to take photographs.

Newspaper accounts and the NBC televi-

sion feature, like the state troopers just mentioned, have focused their attention on the automobile itself, generally as an example of nostalgia *in extenso* or as an example of "folk art." The argument runs something like this: Mr. Ellison is not a trained artist; he is from a rural West Virginia (quintessential folk) background; he had aesthetic as well as practical considerations in mind when he fashioned the replica of Edmond; therefore, the car is an example of folk art. Lacking in this formulation, of course, are those elements found in most established definitions of folklore: oral transmission (plus demonstration and imitation), tradition within a group, the existence of other versions, and anonymity of creation or composition. The car may be art, but it is not folk art.

The car is, however, a very important medium for the transmission of folklore. Mr. Ellison, as I have pointed out, is a man displaced from the Appalachian culture which nourished him. In the 18 years he lived in Edmond and listened to his elders during those Sunday afternoon family gatherings, he amassed a considerable repertory of tales and legends, which, had he stayed in Edmond or a similar setting, he would have passed along to his own children and grandchildren. But he left and in a sense became a storyteller without an audience. One can conceive of a ballad singer who sings to himself, but a storyteller relating the old tales to himself is certainly improbable. A storyteller needs a context, and the Toyota provides it. Best of all, the "context" travels with him, announcing to anyone who cares to look that the driver is part of West Virginia's extended family, that he is "one of ours."

Though Mr. Ellison does not speak of his car in quite this way, he is aware of how it functions. When he travels, he seeks out people from West Virginia, shows them the car, and tells them the "stories" depicted. "I put stories to it all the time," he says. Ellison may tell



Plastic animals graze and a miniature country lane meanders across the hood of Ellison's car.

admirers that the tiny couple standing before the church lived together out of wedlock for 20 years because the preacher had an accident on the way to the marriage. Sometimes he will change the denomination of the church as he tries to guess the faith of the listener. The log cabin house of Mary Ramsey, his grandmother, is likely to set him reminiscing about the days of his youth and the tales he heard then.

In my own inquiries he told me a personal anecdote (Item A) of the pranks children played on one another during his youth, when ghosts were just over the hill. Next, he related a tale said to be about his grandfather's sister, still told as true by family members (Item B).[1] Later, he recounted a humorous tall tale about his uncle's hunting dog (Item C).[2]

It comes as no surprise, then, that although Mr. Ellison has had offers to buy his handiwork, he will not sell it because "[he's] having so much fun with it." He has always been a man of abundant energy, remodeling homes and automobiles, running a successful beauty shop (he sets, colors, and cuts hair) out of his house in his spare time, collecting antique furniture, but none of these activities has apparently pleased him so much as his car.

For awhile he contemplated buying another Toyota and trimming it in red, white, and blue with flags, soldiers, and battle scenes in commemoration of the Bicentennial. But he abandoned the idea when he saw the irony of portraying the spirit of '76 on a foreign car, and, from the perspective of providing an audience for storytelling, he did not really need a second vehicle.

As he nears retirement age, Grover Ellison dreams of returning to the hills of West Virginia, perhaps with some sort of appointment in public health. If he does return, he will not need his replica of Edmond to provide an outlet for his aesthetic impulses. But even if he stays in Illinois, traditional stories of West Virginia will be transmitted to his son, grandson, and anyone who stops to see Edmond, W.Va., on the roof of a 1969 Toyota.

ITEM A

There was a funny one took place when I was just a kid. Ghosts and this sort of thing, you know. So this brother and sister, they were adopted to a family, to an old maid school teacher was really the one who had their adoption, they would come down to our house which was just down the hill. We had a sand bar out in front and we'd gather around there and, gosh, there was 25 or 30 kids in the yard just about every evening. So in the summer time and so there was a hill there in the road there as it leaves there where we would all play. Just as it's getting dark, dark, dark, so just at this moment, this girl had disappeared and nobody had missed her. She was probably 15 to 18 years old. They were schemers. So she had gone up to her house and got a white sheet. She put this thing on over her head and she comes down flopping this thing down to the side of the road. You look up and see this thing. I saw it myself. A lot of adults there who saw it. Of course, the brother drew our attention to it so we didn't miss it. So we saw this thing, and it floated like that, and it was too far away so you couldn't see any movement [of legs]. She floated over to the ditch line, put the sheet under a black sweater, and slid over the bank. Then she went back to the house, and then she joined us. And so this went on as a complete mystery. We saw a ghost! Actually, yeah.

She got tied up years later into a religious kind of, I don't know what kind of a cult it was, but they had told her that this kind of a hoax was a very, very grevious sin, and so she came back there, this must have been 20 years later, and explained what had happened. So this shot the ghost of 20 years.

ITEM B[1]

These things come up presumably true stories, and I emphasize presumably. This girl was apparently 12 years old. Every night she would disappear. So one of the boys followed her out there one night. She was out there feeding this huge snake. She'd take a bite and give the snake a bite. So the boys, of course, were ready to do the snake in. She said, "No, don't kill that snake. If you kill that snake, I'll die at midnight." They didn't listen to her, of course, and they went ahead and demolished the snake. That night at midnight she got ill and passed away.

And, of course, you tell kids this at 10:00 or 11:00 at night and they have to walk home. It's quite impressive.

ITEM C[2]

This one on perserverance is the one she's referring to, about the coon dog. So my uncle owned this coon dog, fabulous everywhere throughout the country, and everybody liked this dog. So this guy came in and they were always trading this and that, and my uncle agreed that he would trade this dog off for this, that and the other thing. He [the other man] had been told this was the best coon dog around. So this guy takes him out hunting. The guy comes back the next day complaining. Says, "That dog of yours," he says, "I took him out one time and he disappeared. We haven't seen him since. That was days ago." My uncle says, "I can't understand that. That dog has been a very faithful dog. He's never done that before." So it was a sort of a mystery. So he refunded the guy's money.

It must have been a couple of years later, and they were out hunting in the same section. And there it was; the whole thing was explained. There was a skeleton of a coon sitting up looking down at the skeleton of the dog looking up. He hadn't moved.

That's perserverance.

1 Type 285, "The Child and the Snake" is a widely known European and American tale. Many readers may remember it from their childhood as one story of the brothers Grimm (No. 105). In 1959 a dissertation, *The Child and the Snake, A Comparative Folktale Study,* was completed at Indiana University. The fact that Mr. Ellison's family believes the incident to be part of their own history is evidence of how basic folklore is in our everyday lives.

2 Type 1920F*, "Skillful Hounds" (motif X1215.9, Lie: obedient or dutiful dog) is another tale with a long history, at least as old as the lying tales of Baron von Münchhausen. Like any gifted storyteller, Ellison personalizes and localizes his version.

continued from page 12

he didn't have a guitar with him and he had a fellow that played guitar. They called him Big Boy. And my brother got on the train and went to Asheville, North Carolina, and got a small guitar, and he brought it up there for me to learn on. In two weeks' time I was playing in the band.

Armstrong. Well, Roland was the first man that ever I saw play a violin and-- He really made an impression on me because I had never seen a violin before and I like the way he played and everything, so I wanted to emulate him as much, of course, as possible, you know. So they'd pick me up and take me around and I would play with them and then--and so, during--why, I came in contact with other musicians, many black and white ones, too. And so that's how I was indoctrinated into the type of music that I play now, mainly.

Lornell. Now, when you were on the circuit meeting paydays, were there other small groups or individuals that were on the same circuit?

Armstrong. Yeah. Oh, yeah, definitely so. We used to, now, like--up through the West Virginia coal fields like Gary Number 10, and so forth, we could run into some fellows with very peculiar names that were, in my opinion, very good musicians. Like, we had some odd names like Salty, Sweet Jesus, Good Boy, and names like that. Cocaine...there was a guy named Cocaine.

Lornell. Were these all black musicians?

Armstrong. These fellows were black except a few of them up in Appalachia, Va. There was an integrated group. They were called, I think, the Black and White Band. Smith Parsons was that black fellow who played piano and there was, I think, about three white musicians and two black ones, as I recollect. And I listened to them quite a bit and I even sat in once or twice with them.

'Roaming Through the Country'

Lornell. You were playing mostly violin back at that time, or mandolin, or what?

Armstrong. Well, along about then I was playing mostly mandolin, because I played mandolin and then guitar 'round there. But I could play violin.

Moore. Did you play mostly house parties?

Armstrong. Yes, we played house parties. We played songs for school kids and things like that. We played for what we used to call chittlin' suppers, catfish balls, and just anywhere we could make a few extra dollars. That's the way we did that. We were just roaming through the country.

Martin. We played for house parties mostly. We played, and paydays we'd meet them, and people would give us clothes, nickels and dimes, quarters, and anything we could get hold of. We were just scouting troubadors. We called ourselves, I think, one time, The Wandering Troubadors.

Moore. Did you ever play for school closings and all?

Armstrong. Well, yes, we played for school programs and things like that. Yes, we sure did.

Moore. Did you ever play for white school closings?

Armstrong. Those were the ones we played for. Most of all, the playing we did, other than playing some free music once in a while in church for the black people, or either one of the house balls or something, were for white people. That's why we got most of our little money, from the white people. They would even come out of their district to get us. They'd of heard about us. And I remember one time that we were in Huntington and we went to Charleston and played for a convention or something for the railroad men, you know, the big executives in the C & O (Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad). That's where we played, mostly, for white people. We even played for some moonshiners. We were going across Black Mountain and run into some guys who took us to where they had their still. And I played my mandolin and Carl played his guitar until he got so full of white lightning that he couldn't play no more.

Moore. Now, where is Black Mountain?

Armstrong. It's between, uh, it's near Benham--Lynch, Ky. You go from Wise County, Va., and you cross over the mountain. That's called Black Mountain--into Harlan County.

Moore. Did you all ever play in any theatres?

Armstrong. Oh, yes. We played, not big theatres. As a matter of fact, we started out playing-- In West Virginia we used to play at the War Theatre. And they didn't have music, you know, on the screen, so they had a fellow who played the piano or organ or something, but they liked our playing. We had a better guitar. And so we sould sit up and play music and watch the picture all at the same time.

Martin. We met the mayor in War. He got us to play a piece and we played for him and he told us, "I want you to play for my theatre tonight. Before the show starts, each show, I want you to do about 15 to 20 minutes, or something like that--a half hour." The same mayor at that time owned the coach line from War, W. Va.,

and you go all the way over to Bluefield. And he told all his bus drivers, he says, "Let these boys ride anywhere they want to go during the day. Just be back at night here for the show." And we stayed there for a good while.

The Recording Fever

Lornell. Now, you recorded about 1930?

Martin. Yeah.

Lornell. The Tennessee Chocolate Drops?

Martin. Yeah.

Lornell. How did that come about?

Martin. Well, that came about--the company, Bentzig and Baldwin Recording Company, recorded it. They have agents that they sent out in all the different territories. They write letters there and they tell you in their letter if you got any kind of ability or any song that you composed or even if you can just catch what the other fellow put out, there's your chance to make good. Well, now, the fellows they sent out there, they were professional men. They would know when it is right and when it is wrong. Then they'd wrap it up. They'd ship it back to the company and they'd record it. So the fellow came in from Knoxville and he said anybody here that played music, had any piece of their own or composed, or even if they could just catch what the other fellow put out, why that was a chance. So everybody you know back then--everybody wanted to get out and make a record. Everybody heard you and you wanted to be heard, things like that. So we practiced for about a week or two and before they came there--see, they set up in the big St. James Hotel, and we went up there. We recorded the "Vine Street Rag" and the "North County Stomp."

Moore. Now, who played? I know all three of you could play different instruments. Who exactly--who played what instruments on those cuts?

Martin. Well, Howard was playing the violin.

Lornell. On those cuts?

Martin. Yeah, yeah.

Lornell. What did Roland [Carl Martin's brother] play?

Martin. Roland played the guitar and I was playing the bass violin, and we recorded those numbers. But we never did hear that number. When I heard it again, it was on a vendor [juke box]. The fellow told me when we recorded it, "Now, in 30 days you'll hear from me," and he says--we waited for 30 days and we waited for 60 days but we never did hear from him. And when we did hear the record, why, it was on a vendor. You had to pay to hear it and the fellow who put the record out-- My name wasn't even on the record. He said, "My name is Brown, and you'll hear from me," and I didn't know whether his name was Brown or not. He says, "Come up here at your own risk." You know what I'm talking about?

Lornell. Yeah.

Martin. He didn't make you no big promises. He said, "Come at your own risk. Here's a chance for you to make good." But, naturally, we was trying to make good and they said that the record didn't come out and--but my name wasn't on it. Some other man's name was on it.

Lornell. Now, how did you pick the--Who decided the record, you can remember--the name of the Tennessee Chocolate Drops? Was that the record company?

Martin. No, that was us.

Moore. How did you pick that name?

Martin. Well, we got together and we was just trying to see what name we could give our little group so we could make it--so it would be noticeable, you see. So we called it the Tennessee Chocolate Drops.

Moore. Did you all play on the street at all?

Armstrong. We played on street corners and we even played in jailhouses. We'd go play for prisoners and things like that.

Moore. Did you get paid for that?

Armstrong. No more than what the sheriff and people like that would give us. We didn't get any special salaries for doing that. But we played mostly in taverns and things like that. Most of the time we didn't have an engagement, we'd just go by the place, you know, and they would say, "Come on in and play." They didn't have so many juke boxes then. If they did, they would pull the cord out and we would play. And they would make a kitty for us and sometimes the house man would donate a few dollars and that was about it.

Moore. Now you all played around Keystone right much?

Armstrong. Yes, we did.

Moore. Did you ever play at any of the houses there at Keystone?

Armstrong. What kind of houses? You mean the "good time" houses?

Moore. The "good time" houses.

Armstrong. That's really--yes, we sure did. We played for those red light district houses, you know.

Lornell. Did they pay pretty good money to play in places like that?

Armstrong. Mostly it was kind of like down in New Orleans, you know, out in Storyville. You played for what you got. Usually the women who worked in those houses would urge the men to donate

money to us. And I know like when we were playing a club over here in South Bend, Indiana, called the Cotton Club on Washington Avenue, well, there were several women there and they would urge the men, you know--go around and take up--"Give 'em so much money," you know. We were very happy, you know, because they would always give us more then these women would avail with them.

Moore. Did you play in any of the red light hotels in Welch or in any of the other towns?

Armstrong. Well, I don't remember playing in any of the red light hotels or not, but we did play in many of the other towns and we played even for the mayor and we played for the Elks and at big picnics and things like that--the Shriners or whatever organization that would have a special date.

The Medicine Show

Moore. You all played for medicine shows?

Armstrong. We played for a medicine show. This was a black man who was of a kind of olive complexion. He wore Western garb and he wore these wide hats with snakeskin bands on them and everything. He had a very fair complected wife. And she was supposed to be Swedish and he was a Hindu. His name was Leon de Bandara. That's what he said.... But I whipped some Swedish on her and she couldn't say one word back, and he almost put her out in the street because I saw through the ruse, you know, through the farce that they were presenting me, you know. And we played for medicine shows all up on the Winding Gulf* and up around the north counties--Smithers and Gauley Bridge, Beckley, and we would help him hawk his wares. We would have to back up the big lie he was telling, you know. He would tell the people, "Ladies and gentlemen"--you know--"this medicine, this tonic is nothing but the juices of berries and herbs, the lifegiving herbs that the Creator put here for you people who are afflicted. And if there is one drop of water in this concoction, I hope that the Creator will strike me dead." And the people didn't know that we'd been pouring water from Tug River all night long to make all of this crazy stuff that he was foisting off on the people.

Moore. How did you all travel?

Armstrong. Well, we traveled-- You mean with this doctor?

Moore. Yes.

Armstrong. He had two cars. He had one that was a house car, like a truck, you know--a living thing. And then he had a coupe. They used to call them a coupe or sedan or something. And we traveled in that, but he and his wife and monkeys and a rattlesnake traveled in the big van.

Lornell. Did you run into any other medicine shows that carried animals with them besides this one?

Armstrong. Oh, yes. I run into one that--it wasn't....I ran into one in West Virginia. I don't remember the name. And I run into one in Knoxville, and a little peculiar thing happened. He had a rattlesnake in a cage. And it was a very hot day, and after he had given his exhibition, you know, and sold so many bottles of his tonic and everything, he decided that he wanted to go into a drugstore and get him a cold drink or some kind of refreshment. While he was in the drugstore somebody stole the snake. He said, "I hope it bites them because the poison sacs have not been removed."

Moore. Well, this medicine show that you all traveled around with--who all played with them before you did?

Armstrong. Well, now, that I can't tell you because, as a matter of fact, I think this was this man's first time on the road as a medicine show because he had a store in Cinder Bottom there in Keystone, W.Va., and he sold herbs and all kinds of things like ginseng--

Moore. Did he sell candles?

Armstrong. I think he did-- No, I don't think he sold candles because at that time candles weren't too popular, especially among black people. But they were content to come down and get all kinds of tonic, you see, blood tonic, tonic for impotence and things like that, run down, nervousness, anything he said he sold them for, you know, they bought it. But the same medicine would do for anything. It could even cure a heart, to let him tell it.

Lornell. Now, I got a question for you. Was he a contemporary of yours in terms of age?

Armstrong. No, I was only a kid.

Moore. Was he much older than you?

Armstrong. Oh, yeah. He was even older than Martin. This man was--he wasn't an old man, but he was a middle-aged man. And as a matter of fact, you couldn't determine what age he was, you know, at that time. He was pretty--he was kind of a portly man, stout, you know. And he wore his hair way down his back. In those days, black people didn't wear their hair real long and most white men didn't either. And he wore a goatee. I

* One of the ten coalfields in West Virginia is called the Winding Gulf, and it is lies in Raleigh and Wyoming Counties.

think he copied his style from Buffalo Bill, William Cody. That's what he looked like in a carbon copy, William Cody.

Lornell. Do you know where he got his medicine from? Did he buy it from a supply house or did he make his own medicine?

Armstrong. He made--that's what I was telling you before--when he said he didn't put no water in it. He made it. He had some ground up powder and what not, anything, you know, and flavorings, etc. It was a humbug, that's all. Now, maybe that's what he called snake oil. He had a liniment he called snake oil, but had nothing to do with snakes because he didn't milk snakes or get venom from them. He didn't, 'cause one day I asked him, "How do you get this oil from these snakes?" I knew oil had to come from some fatty substance. He said, "Don't believe that malarkey," he says. "There's not enough oil in a dozen snakes to make a bottle of this medicine. They haven't got enough fat on them," he says. "Who wants to kill a rattlesnake? It takes a lot of money to make a few bottles of medicine."

Lornell. Now, did he ever cut any of his medicine with liquor?

Armstrong. I don't think he cut it with whiskey, but he did put alcohol in it.

Lornell. To make it more attractive?

Armstrong. To preserve it and all that. He put--I think, just anything in it that came to his mind that he thought--He didn't want to kill anybody.

Lornell. That was nice of him.

Armstrong. He did know one thing, he knew that most of the people who were sick were--a mental thing, you know. What do they call it?

Lornell. Psychosomatic.

Armstrong. Psycosomatic. So he knew if they believed that would cure them, well-- He made out, because whenever he would leave a town and be gone a few weeks, every time he came back, he always had a little bigger audience, you understand.

Moore. How far did you all travel with him?

Armstrong. We didn't do very much road traveling with him because he found a new location. He left Keystone and went up in Kanawha County up on the old K & M Railroad, up at Smithers and Montgomery, and he opened up a store. After he got situated we would go in Beckley and some of the surrounding areas and meet paydays and things, and then he would sell this medicine. But he didn't do much state--you know, like crossing over into Pennsylvania.

Lornell. Then he had his own circuit through there?

Armstrong. Oh, yes. He had it. And then after the people found out about him as the medicine doctor, herb medicine, why, he would leave circulars and so forth and so on, and they would even write. He told me that he would mail them as many bottles as they wanted.

Moore. Let me go back. How would he--he would set up the tent and what would happen then?

Martin. Well, they'd set up the tent, and then at night when the people would get off from work in the coal mine regions he'd come out there and the show would go on--lights up and we would be singing and playing and dancing and then he would sell his medicine.

Lornell. Did he have a pretty big show? Was there any other entertainers besides you?

Martin. Well, just me and Howard at that time in particular. We was the only ones with him.

Lornell. So, it was just Dr. Raja and you two? Fairly small--

Martin. People come out for the entertainment, you know, and we would tell the people, "Hey, hear the God-sent blessing to humanity. If there was any man in the crowd that had an ache or pain about the body that was caused from a physical operation, step out here on this platform. If you got the Bright disease or something like that, there ain't but one thing I can tell you. Go see your undertaker and make peace with your God." (laughs) You know that's the way you appeal to the people. Then the doctor would say, "When you lay down at night and you can't rest a-twistin' and turning like that, right here is a God-sent blessing to humanity." He'd sell that medicine. And they would come out here and I would go out and sell it, you know. Me and the boys. And I'd holler, "Hey, doc, none is sold over here." And he wouldn't be selling nothing and he would say, "After five minutes I wouldn't sell you another bottle for $10." And we sold a lot of medicine like that. We got along pretty good.

Moore. How long did you all travel with the show?

Martin. Well, we traveled with the show, I guess, about two or three months, or something like that, you know.

On the Radio

Moore. Now, you all were on a radio in Charleston?

Armstrong. Yes, we were. Several times.

Moore. Do you remember what station?

Armstrong. No, but I know one in Huntington. WSAT.

Moore. Okay, what type of programs were you on?

Armstrong. Well, all I know [is] that we just played musical programs. Naturally, the man would announce something, an advertisement or something, but we just played music.

Lornell. Now, these shows you played, were these regular shows, like every day at a certain time there would be live music on this show and you happened to be on or something?

Armstrong. Well, no. We played...I can't remember exactly how it was in West Virginia, but we had what you might say [was] a regular job playing Sundays for radio station WROL in Knoxville or WNX. We played on Cass Walker's program. Maybe you remember Cass Walker? And things like that. We also played for-- They had a kind of a little package deal, you know. Like the radio station, like Cochran Lumber Company and such and such a drugstore and Cass Walker.... That's the way they did them things. They would pay us so much to play--a regular thing, really.

Lornell. Were you---at this time was it still you and Carl then? Was anybody else with you?

Armstrong. No, we had about--we had the whole group, the four of us. We were called at that time the Four Keys. We had Martin and Bogan and Bill Ballinger who played the bass and I played the violin and the Four Keys, that's what they called us.

Lornell. Was this pretty much during the Depression when you were on the radio?

Armstrong. Yup. Well, the country was just beginning to recover from the Depression.

Lornell. Around '34?

Armstrong. Yeah, 'round about there. We were teenagers, you know. I was, anyway.

Black Men and the Blues

Moore. Did you all run into much trouble on the road in West Virginia?

Armstrong. What do you mean, what kind of trouble? Being black?

Moore. Being black, yeah.

Armstrong. Well, let me break this down to you. I think I was fortunate in being able to play music because by being a musician, and since I was black, many doors were open to us that were never open to other blacks. It seemed paradoxical to me then that even places I would have to go in the back door, to go in when I wasn't playing-- I could go places right into the parlor, even better than the guests of honor, because many of them liked the music we played and treated us like long lost brothers or something.

Moore. You told me a story yesterday about a man coming in with a bass on his back. Was that in West Virginia?

Armstrong. No, sir. Asheville, N.C. That was my brother Roland. You know Carl had a brother named Roland.

Lornell. Blind Roland?

Armstrong. Blind Roland, and I had a brother named Roland. Well, Roland played the bass but we had gotten off the train and this barber shop--it was a white barber shop--sent the porter, the shoeshine fellow--he was black--to tell us to come over and play a few songs and that they would take up a collection. Well, we complied, you know. And I-- Carl was in front and I walked behind him, and my brother came in. And he had-- In those days they played bass fiddle with the bow. They hadn't started a-picking those days, and so he had a bow in his hands and his bass was on his back. And no sooner than we walked in the door, one of the guys was very hostile. And he called us a very ugly name, the name which was a very common name for racists to call black people in those days, and said, "I mean, if your don't get your hat off, by God, I'll knock it off. But take your hat off when you come into the presence of white men." That was, you know, that was very rare that we really ran into those kinds of things. Because, I'll tell you something else that happened to Carl and me.

We left Tazewell, Va., hitchhiking. I played the mandolin and banjo, and he played guitar. And we got up into some place-- There were many towns through Virginia, West Virginia, and Tennessee and Kentucky where they didn't allow black people to even pause to get a drink of water. We ran into signs like, "You Know Who, Don't Let the Sun Go Down on You Here." "Nigger, Read as You Run, Don't Stop and Read, Just Read While You're Running," you know. Well, anyway, what happened, our money ran out, and a man-- We got on a train down there somewhere in Kentucky, I believe it was, and we wanted to go to West Virginia. We said, "Just give us a ticket as far as our money will go." And this guy, he must have known what he was doing, because he put us right in one of the most hostile towns there were--there was for black people. When the man put us down--why, they hadn't seen a black man there for years. And so we-- Some old guy hobbled down there on a stick. He had a

beard hanging down to here, white, and he looked at us and squinted up his eyes, and I didn't know, you know. He says, "Look," he says, "are you bears? You are the first no-tail bears I've seen in years." I said, "What's a no-tail bear?" "You are." "Oh," I said, "you must be saying hotel bearer," you know.

Lornell. Hotel bearer?

Armstrong. No-tail bear. No-tail bear. And he says, "You know," and he looked at us again, chewing his tobacco and spit a big stream of ambeer across to us in the dust, and he says, "You know, if I was just a few years younger, by God, I'd have the privilege of hanging you all myself. But I've got religion and now I'm going on to meet my Maker. But, I don't want to see any blood spilled even if it is black. And I would advise you to keep moving just as fast as you can."

Well, anyway, we started to take off. But we didn't get far. We heard a lot of hollering and a big commotion and they hemmed us up. And they were really going to make short work because I saw... So one of them says, "No, wait a minute. Don't do it yet." I don't know what they intended to do. I know it wasn't very nice. (laughs) But they says, "By golly, what's them things you got there?" They had never seen a banjo, mandolin. I'm sure they'd seen a guitar and a fiddle. "So you can play them things, boys?" I said, "We sure can." They said, so we'll tear off a strip. And we started to playing, and they liked the music so well that they forgot what they were going to do. They says--and a big crowd had gathered-- They says, "Let's take them over to Miranda's--" or somebody's. And they took us to this house. Every instrument they brought out there, if I couldn't play it, Carl played it, everything, old five-string banjo and everything. We played on all the fiddles and everything. And so we got out, and you know what they did? They got up about $30 in silver, and that's more money than I had seen in my life, really, you know, that was ours....

Then somebody suggested that, "These boys are hungry, aren't you boys?" I says-- Well, really, we were scared to say, to ask for any food. He says, "Well, you better go out and fix these boys some vittles." I didn't know whether it was going to be some snakes or what. But they went out and killed two chickens and cooked two chickens, and they were little frying chickens. And so they put one on my plate and put one on Martin's plate. They had all kinds of homemade apple butter, canned preserves, buttermilk, sweet milk. I ate more than I would have eaten because I was afraid to leave anything on my plate. I was so blamed full I almost busted my lining of my stomach. But, anyway, they gave us an hour and I tell you what. "The next place where your kind of people are was in a place called Berlin, West Virginia. And we're going to let you have our car." They had an A-model or a T-model. I think it was a T-model. "So you drive it over there and leave it by the commissary and we'll pick it up on Monday morning." We did. We drove it on over there. And they said, "If you're ever back through here, don't you forget to stop." And I said, "I sure would remember this place." I meant to keep on moving because it might not fare so good the next time.

Lornell. Were there any other integrated bands besides the one you run into that worked in West Virginia and all?

Armstrong. Well, I don't know of any integrated bands. But in Tennessee we played-- Man, we had what you wouldn't call an integrated band. We just got together and played with white boys. I'd go over to the house and eat with them and everything else. That was breaking the law of the state, because they didn't care for what they called miscegenation and all these things. But we did--like I said before, by being able to play music, I got in many doors that black people wouldn't have gotten in to otherwise.

Moore. Now, you said you played around Logan...

Armstrong. Oh, yeah. Logan and just about all over the state. You name it. All over. Especially the coal mining districts, and that's about what you'll find all over West Virginia is coal mines.

Lornell. Did you ever run into a man around Logan named Frank Hutchison, a white guitar player, played rack harp?

Armstrong. Sure I told you about this guy, playing with them.

Lornell. Frank Hutchison?

Armstrong. Oh, yeah. He played it, too. He was a harp blowing man. Really bad.

Moore. Now, he played blues, didn't he?

Armstrong. Yeah. That's one reason why I remember him so well, because in those days very few whites would even deign to play blues. They called that the black music. Now, there were a few, white musicians, as you know, like Jimmy Rodgers, you know, and all like that, called themselves playing blues, but it was a combination of blues, a little taste of blues and a lot of yodelling, you understand. See, they were not blues, man, because they didn't know how to play solid blues, you know.

Because blues was actually a second re-

ligion to black people, even now. I remember when I was a kid we used to play for chittlin' suppers, catfish balls, and things. Well, even staunch black members in the church, like on a Saturday night, like you heard Martin sing a song about when this old man, 82, flung his crutch away and said, "Let them go." I seen this exemplified many times. Some old black sister or brother that was a staunch member of the church, they would get carried away just like they would if you would play some sacred music, and they would sing some verses of versions of the blues that I had never heard before, you know. And they said, "I don't care, honey, if I get put out of the church tomorrow, I'll just be put out of the church. I'm going to sing the blues tonight and pray to the Lord when I go home." And they would play them.

It was like I said in the first place, you know, blues--the type of music with black people--they culiminated from slave songs. They were sung long before black people even spoke English. And so the blues came out of that as you can, well, see by listening to them that they are plaintive and they are elegiac because it seems that the music of all such people seems to be plaintive or elegiac.

You listen to the ancient songs of Russia, and it's got that little sad note in it. You listen to the Jewish--I used to sing the Jewish national anthem in Hebrew. I sang it. I translated it into English, my version of the English. Sometimes I'd do it. Hatikvah--which means "I hope."* And if you would hear it, it's in a minor key and all those little variations are elegiac. They seem to reflect the sadness that they have felt through the years and during their struggle. And that is what black blues is like, when they were struggling in the cotton fields and so forth and so on and toiling in the sun-- Well, they sang these songs and finally they culminated into the blues.

Now, white people here lately have just started to accept blues. Because when we used to play the white balls, proms, and what not, well, we wouldn't dare play but one blues or sometimes maybe two. And they were well accepted, and those were the blues that W.C. Handy composed. He composed "The St. Louis Blues" in 1920 or '21 and then "The Memphis Blues." Other than that you better not open your mouth and start playing a dirty lowdown funky blues like they played and turned it into rock and roll like today. You didn't do that or out you went.

Lornell. What kind of music did you play for the whites?

Armstrong. We played white music. You name it, we played it. I'll tell you what we played. We used to play songs like--the popular songs--like "Sheik of Araby" and "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" and "Bye, Bye, Blackbird," "When the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin' Along," "Hard to Get Gertie," "Dinah," and you name it, we played it. "Clay's Older Horses," and then we would play some of the old standards of whatever area we were in like "Red River Valley" and a few Western songs and things. We played a little variety, you know. But we usually played the very latest songs because we taught ourselves to read music, and we would go to the music stores and by piano stores and we would outline our part for each, rearrange them, you know, in our own way.

(conversation blurred on tape)

Lornell. ...Hatikvah...how did you know how to translate...?

Armstrong. Well, I spoke that much. As a matter of fact, languages is the method of communication, as you well know. And if you want to establish a rapport, you got to relate to people. You see, now, I came out of a melting pot in the South, right in Tennessee, what is known as Appalachia now. Had blast furnaces, coal mines, iron mines, rock quarries, and coke companies and things like that. And they had many ethnic strains from all over the world. They brought many of the Caucasians like Italians and so forth in Southern Europe, you know what I mean, to work in these hot furnaces and things, and then they brought them from other parts. Well, by me being exposed to this, I learned to pick up the languages. As a matter of fact, I learned to speak Italian when I was nine years old....

We played for the Spanish people, we played for the Italians, we played for the Hungarians. I used to play even with the little kids, you know. And I would hear these women talking to the kids. I know that much Hungarian, you know what I mean. I used to know quite a bit.

Moore. Well, West Virginia must have been pretty rough at that time.

Martin. Yeah, it was rough at that time. It was pretty good because musicians could make it at that time. It wasn't so bad, being the cost of living wasn't so much, and sometimes we got up and walked from one town to another. You know, over there the mountains are high and sometimes you can't even see the sun coming up until afternoon. ■

* Hatikvah is actually the Israeli national anthem and is more commonly translated "the hope."

Collection of Six Quilts Made for State by Cooperative Members

By James Thibeault

In the fall of 1973 the *New Yorker* published a cartoon which, as one might expect from that weekly magazine, clearly captured the spirit of a major national trend--the booming interest in this country for around a decade in patchwork quilts. That cartoon showed a sweet, sunbonneted older woman sewing on a quilt on the porch of her modest rural home. She replied to a young city slicker standing by his late model sports car, "Thank you kindly, sonny, but I already have an agent."

Opening old trunks filled with quilts and creating new ones may, in the early 1960s, have been a move to pay the light bill. But it turned a practical American pastime into a profession for many and inspired what is probably the most flourishing period in the history of quilts and patchwork.

The passion for reading and learning about quilting has skyrocketed since 1970 with 38 books, 65 magazine articles, and 52 features in the New York *Times*. Printed reproductions of patchwork on everything from at least one bolt of fabric in every piece goods store to vinyl eyeglass cases at your favorite notions counter indicate that patchwork is a common denominator of American folk art.

A more scholarly tribute to patchwork as an art form was mounted in 1971 at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Early-American quilts received their most important exhibition to date, and the show's beautiful catalogue has been a best-selling book. A similar major exhibition was presented by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington around a year later in its new Renwick Gallery. The Smithsonian toured that show extensively, even to three European cities.

It is indeed appropriate that West Virginia, which had so much to do with bringing about what might be called the Golden Age of Quilts, should have its own special collection. At this writing six West Virginia quilt makers are combining their 200 years of experience to create six quilts that represent as many periods in our State's history. The women are members of Cabin Creek Quilts Cooperative and range in age from 52 to 72. All of them live in rural areas of the State, and the six received assistance from family members ranging in age from five to 97.

Sponsorship for the project came from the West Virginia American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, Cabin Creek Quilts Cooperative, Sunrise Foundation, Inc., and the Westmoreland Coal Company. A first set of six quilts is earmarked for the State and will hang in the new Science and Culture Center. A second set will be toured by Sunrise to museums around the country.

The six quilt makers took time away from their work in July to talk about it. Their pride in these tasks is understandable; their remarkable expertise shows through in what they recently said.

Nema Belcher's 1776 Star of Bethlehem quilt measures 10'5" on each side. It is pieced and quilted entirely by hand, and the large star alone contains some 1800 pieces.

James Balow

James Balow

Nema Belcher
1776 Star of Bethlehem

Nema Belcher lives on a small farm where she was relocated when I-79 moved her off her homeplace further up on Jordon's Creek. She is a small, quiet woman whose eyes twinkle when you hit upon a subject that interests her.

"From the research that I have, quilts around 1776 were often very large. They had what they called trundel beds then that were popular because the whole family could sleep on it. The parents would sleep on the top which sat very high, and the children would sleep on mattresses that were pulled out from underneath the bed in the evening and put back under the bed in the morning. There wasn't a lot of room in the cabins they built so it was kind of a space saving method--like a Hide-a-Bed or a rollaway.

"Of course West Virginia wasn't a state yet, but there were people that were living in these hills. They used 100 percent cotton then, usually from old feedsacks or pieces that they got from other sewing. The filling was unginned cotton or an old blanket, and the backing was muslin.

"The pattern that I did was the Star of Bethlehem with a small star in each corner. The finished size is 125 inches by 125 inches, which is larger than the king size by today's standards. I have to admit I was nervous working on it, knowing that it was going to the Science and Culture Center."

Mrs. Belcher switched with a sense of amusement to other unusual projects she has taken on in the past. "I did a shower curtain for a lady in Charleston that had her children on it hanging from a tree and their two dogs underneath it. It was all applique work. Then there was a quilt of [a map of] the world which was appliqued too. It identified all the places this famous psychiatrist had served as the head of the organization of psychiatrists that was giving him the quilt. Neither of these took the thought that this 1776 quilt did.

"I studied on my colors for three or four days after I had all the pieces cut. Quilts from that period that I've seen pictures of looked very faded and pale. I laid one point of the star on my bed since the whole star wouldn't fit, 'cause there were 1,800 pieces in the center star alone. I wanted someone to come out from Cabin Creek before I sewed on it, and I left it there on my bed for two days and slept on another bed, 'cause they weren't able to get out. I knew I would know it when I got it just the way that satisfied me. You know, so I would feel right about it."

She changed the subject from her own work to a trip she made in July with three other Cabin Creek quilt makers to the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife in Washington. "I wonder if Blanche Griffith is going to sew a piece of that Indian's hair into her crazy quilt." A little puzzled, I ask for more details. "We were riding this shuttle bus from where we were staying in Washington to the Festival grounds and Blanche asked this Indian who had met the Queen of England for a piece of his hair. She just took the scissors out of her bag and cut it off."

James Balow

Dimple Brown
1820 Barnraising

On the map, the most direct route from Mrs. Belcher's to Dimple Brown's in Clay County is to cross the Elk River at Queen Shoals and travel a secondary road. Not long after it goes over the Elk, the hard road turns to gravel, giving a ride reminiscent of a buckboard that Mrs. Brown's ancestors might have ridden in the 1820s to the general store.

Mrs. Brown is a wisp of a woman with a youthful appearance. Her right leg was bandaged, and she offered an explanation before I had a chance to ask. "I was walking from the kitchen to the washhouse, and first thing I know 30 inches of copperhead strikes at my leg and bites me. Let me tell you, the shock was worse than the bite. I ended up in the Montgomery hospital for four days, and when they released me they told me to keep my foot up and take it easy. I'm not the type of person who can stand to be idle, so I just propped my foot up on a stool and got back under the quilting frame and finished those last two reaches on the Barn Raising.

"The Barn Raising is a variation on the Log Cabin pattern. It makes a large diamond out of the individual blocks. This quilt never saw a machine from the beginning to the end, which was the way they done them then. I even sewed the backing up by hand. There is nothing synthetic in the quilt. It's 100 percent cotton including the half layer of cotton filling."

When you stand back from the quilt, the total effect of the thousand-plus tiny strips of prints in primary colors takes your eye all over and leaves your mind questioning how so many prints could be so skillfully coordinated. Mrs. Brown's 30-odd years at her art were evident in her explanation. "I've been at this long enough to know that you don't put an orange next to a red, and it's a good idea to put a bright print next to a dark one to pick it up. I wanted variety around the quilt, so I scattered my color, using my material all over."

Courtesy: Cabin Creek Quilts

Alberta Johnson
1876 Centennial

Back over the hill following the Gauley River to Gauley Bridge and then downstream on the Kanawha River to East Bank, Alberta Johnson lives 150 feet up the mountain bordering Route 61. She is specific about this distance because she and her husband dug the gas line a few years back. Mrs. Johnson is also extremely specific about her work. When asked what overall feeling she was working for in her quilt, she simply replied, "just something outstanding.

"In 1876, we [in the United States] were celebrating a Centennial and many of the quilts had a patriotic theme. I've always liked an applique quilt, 'cause it's a little fancier than a pieced quilt. Because this is a Centennial quilt, I don't think that it necessarily had to be red, white, and blue. The colors that I chose were lavender, grey, green, pink, ivory, tan, brown, and gold. They are colors that I like to work with, and they're natural for the flowers and leaves and things that I'm putting on the quilt. The material is linen, chintz, and cotton, which were used a lot in those days.

"The eagle in the center was the most difficult part of the job. I just couldn't get a bird to suit me. If it wasn't a Centennial quilt I probably would have left the bird out, since I think there are a lot prettier designs that can be put into an applique quilt. But people were civic minded in those days too. Once I got past the bird I figured that I could do the rest all right."

When asked if she thought that quilting was as popular during the Centennial as it is today, Mrs. Johnson flatly said no. "From what I've read and seen I don't think there was anymore interest than there is today. Everyone that I met at the Smithsonian and at other shows was interested in quilts, especially young people who are the ones who are looking through old family trunks and

things hoping to find family quilts. There's a much better selection of materials to work with today. The materials aren't heavy and hard to wash like they used to be and the color selection is far better. These things are what make quilting as popular as it is. And, too, I think people are nostalgic for the old times."

James Balow

Blanche Griffith
1890s Victorian Crazy Patch

Blanche Griffith has the wisdom of grandma, the charm of grandpa, and more dialectical tricks than all the Waltons put together. She laughed when asked about the Indian in Washington. "Well, I told my grandchildren that I would bring them back a souvenir from Washington. I hadn't gotten them anything, 'cause I didn't see anything too authentic. Well, sure enough, along comes this Indian that I'd seen here and there at the Festival and he gets on the shuttle bus. So I go up to him and ask him if I can have a piece of his hair for a souvenir. It's as simple as that. My grandchildren said I was the first white woman they ever knew to scalp an Indian. (She roared with laughter) But he was just wonderful. The Queen of England had brought him over to England and made him a knight. I've thought about slipping a bit of that hair into the quilt, and I think I just might do that." [See box on pages 58-59].

Roy Kelly

Stella Monk
1910 Young Man's Fancy

Mrs. Monk has held court in her kitchen or behind quilting frames for TV cameramen from England, Japan, France, and this country, as well as for many other reporters and writers. Charming and straightforward, she has poured cups of coffee for as many different kinds of people as Mrs. Griffith has chosen various patches for her Victorian Crazy quilt. "Next to my family, Cabin Creek Quilts is my second love," Mrs. Monk proudly announced.

"At first I didn't want to do the Young Man's Fancy quilt when I saw the pattern. But it really wasn't the Young Man's Fancy pattern. I went looking through my books and found the pattern, which turned out to be much more interesting to me. Some of the pieces aren't much larger than an inch, and when they're pieced up even smaller than that. I believe there are 2,310 pieces in the quilt which is made up of blocks. The material is 100 percent cotton, which is pretty hard to find nowadays. Back in those days you would have bought your material at a coal company store or a general store. I looked everywhere and found a lot that I could use at Goodwill and places like that.

"When you live in a place like Ohley Hollow, most of the colors that you see are green, which is the mountains, and blue in the sky. Those are the colors that I chose. I like natural colors. I probably learned more about color from Earl Dotter [the Washington, D.C., photographer] than from anyone else. He made up some color wheels for me five or six years ago and I still use them. I like borders on a quilt; I think it makes a neater job." It's the borders on her beautiful and bold quilts that keep the colors from running away.

Mrs. Monk has made nearly 500 quilts in the 25 years she's been quilting. She never wonders what she's going to be doing next, since there is always someone in line with a special order, like a family heirloom quilt in need of repair. When she takes the time to dream, it's usually about quilts and the day she'll have a special room for them, coffee, and company.

Gertrude Blume
1976 New River Bridge Quilt

Climbing the stairs of her Fayette County farmhouse, Gertrude Blume stated she has received offers of up to $2,500 for her New River Bridge quilt. Her second floor workshop has three overhead fluorescent lights that speak of serious business. The lights illuminate the largest patchwork puzzle imaginable. "Dennis, my nephew, he's an extension worker in Raleigh County, he brought me his Ping-Pong table, and I took the sliding door off the closet. There are 8,550 pieces in the quilt top. They're an inch and a half cut, and they'll be about an inch when they're pieced together."

Her sewing machine had postage stamp-size pinned pieces stacked on it, and within easy reach were boxes of many other neatly cut pieces. She used textures from polyester double

Roy Kelly

The Blume sisters, Florence, Gertrude, and Retta (Holiday).

knit to velvet and from cotton to satin. Freehand style, without the aid of an outline drawing, she expertly used those tiny pieces to create her bridge picture quilt. A variety of sketches and both a black and white and a color print of the New River Bridge were nearby for perspective. The real thing is only three miles over the ridge from Miss Blume's workroom.

"Come over here in the corner and squint [at the patchwork covered table]. That's what Dennis does, and he says that he can see what I'm doing." I followed her suggestion of a technique for imagining the finished product, and it did bring me closer to where she was with her work.

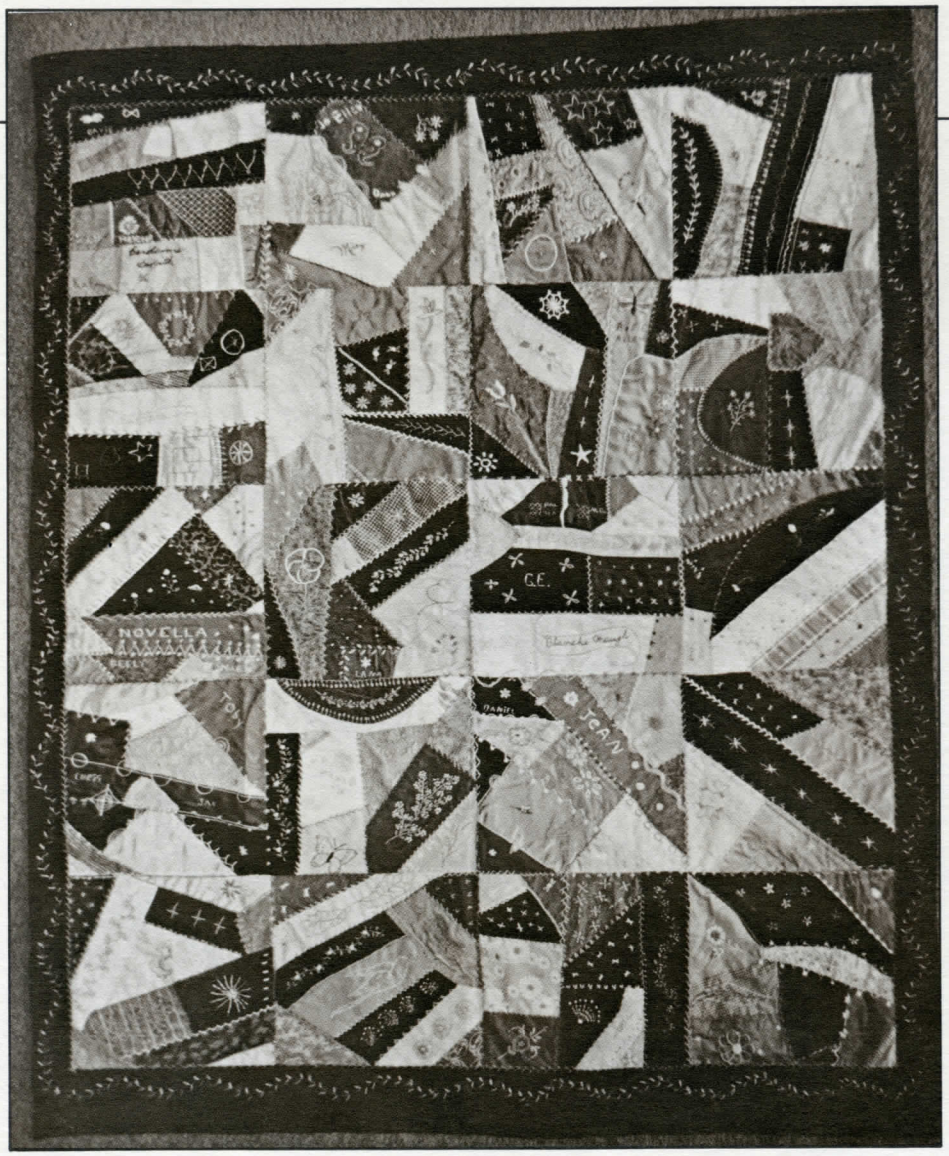
There was a quiet pride in her voice as she talked about her project. "I had plenty of time to think what I was doing when I was cutting the pieces. I didn't have to learn the hard way that I needed a system to work with this many pieces. I've laid awake at night and thought about this quilt and how to do this and that. The most difficult part has been the bridge itself. Using a tiny square to create the arch of the bridge is almost impossible. I spent two whole days working on a plan, and I had to throw it out. It just wouldn't work. I'm going to have to do the bridge in triangles and there probably won't be two pattern pieces alike in the thing. Oh, there may be two, I'm not exactly sure yet. The mountains and the sky and the river haven't been as much of a problem, except that the blue satin pieces of the river are nearly impossible to stitch to the green velvet pieces that are the trees on the river bank."

She remembered some help she got by just standing in the doorway of the tiny Spy Rock Grocery which she operates with her two sisters just below their farm on Route 60 in Lookout. "I used to watch for those huge steel trucks to come by to see what the color of the steel was. When it came by it was an orange rust color, but after it was put into the bridge it turned brown. They say it will never need painting, so I guess I don't have to worry about the shade of brown I'm using."

Downstairs in a country living room Miss Blume's 82-year-old sister Flossy rocked and spoke about Gertrude as a child. As Gertrude thumbed through *Quilts in America*, she didn't interrupt, take offense, or dispute her sister's words that have been with her for 61 years. "Gertrude was the youngest of 13 children. Because she was the baby we kind of amused her, so she had plenty of time to learn to be the best. I remember her sitting on the floor with pieces of Mommie's material before she went to school. She made a little Nine Patch quilt for her baby crib."

Miss Blume came upon a picture of Myrtle Fortner's Matterhorn quilt, which is also done in one-inch pieces. "Why, this quilt was made in 1934, and it's in the Denver Art Museum." Then she recalled an incident at the store a few days earlier. "A woman from California stopped in the store and saw the boxes of cut pieces and asked what I was doing. When I told her I was making a quilt of the New River Bridge, she asked if she could take a picture of it. She was disappointed that it wasn't done but then asked if she could take a picture of me and said that she would probably see the quilt someday."

A grin came across Miss Blume's face indicating she might have figured out an even better way to do the arch on the bridge. "When I'm done [with] this quilt and before it goes to the Science and Culture Center, I'm going to pick a real pretty day and hang it from the second floor porch railing so that everyone who wants to can come and look at it."



Making a Quilt

In creating her Victorian Crazy Patch quilt Blanche Griffith wholeheartedly assumed the techniques and traditions of the late nineteenth century quilt maker. As was the custom in those days, she sought help every step of the way from her large family and a wide circle of friends.

"Well, let me tell you this quilt is going to be a memory for me and I hope for the State. I have pieces in this quilt from people on welfare to the Rockefellers. There are black people, white people, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. I think there is just about every kind of person there ever was in West Virginia.

"I have one block in the quilt that is strictly for politicians and their wives. Mrs. [Hulett] Smith sent me a piece of her dress that she wore to her husband's inauguration and to a tea at the White House when Mrs. Kennedy was First Lady. Mrs. [Arch] Moore sent me a piece of material that she got in China, and Governor Moore's secretary sent me one of his ties that I couldn't use. It had red elephants on it, so I just went up inside the tie and snipped off some of the lining and used it. Okey Patteson's [governor of W.Va., 1949-1953] wife sent me a piece and so did Carolanne Griffith, head of the Bicentennial.

"I've got pieces in there from friends that I knew from Mountain Artisans. Dorothy Weatherford [that company's manager-designer] sent me a piece of her majorette's outfit that she wore in a parade in Washington for Eisenhower. Florette Angel* sent me a piece of her bag that she carried when she won the Mademoiselle Award. Reggie Brooks* sent me a piece, and I called Sharon Rockefellar and she was leaving town but she cut off a piece of her wedding dress and sent one of Jay's ties.

*Former Mountain Artisan staffpeople.

(below) The five generations of Blanche Griffith's family who worked on her quilt (opposite). Mrs. Griffith is at the far right. (right) She holds her husband's World War I Navy tie. (below, right) An anonymously drawn sketch of a bird on the matte of an old family photograph became an embroidered motif on the quilt. Photographs by James Balow.

"Oh, there are things in there from doctors and lawyers and preachers and teachers. There are personal things in there, too. There's a piece of my husband's wedding shirt, and in between it and a piece from my wedding dress is some lace off our first baby's dress. Then there's my husband's Navy tie that he wore in the First World War, and between it and a piece of my son's tie from the Second World War is a piece of my youngest daughter's dress. Gay Hughey was a nurse in the Second World War and she's devoted her life to people, and I have something in there from her, too.

"My granddaughter was visiting from Missouri and when she saw the quilt she started to cry. Five generations of my family worked on the quilt, from my mother who is 97 to her great-great-granddaughter who is five."

Mrs. Griffith finished her patchwork of West Virginia personalities with beautiful embroidery stitches surrounding the simplest cotton and the most elegant silks.

Three Documentary Films by State Filmmaker Now Available

Three films by Carl Fleischhauer, the Morgantown TV reporter, photographer, and filmmaker, have recently been made available for rental and purchase. Two of them were made in West Virginia in 1970 and are called *All Hand Work* and *How to Make Sorghum Molasses*. They were produced by WWVU-TV, West Virginia University's Public Television station. The third, *John Mitchel Hickman*, was one of Mr. Fleischhauer's films made in 1968 while he was a graduate student at Ohio University, and he is distributing it himself. Following are accounts of each film and particulars about them.

All Hand Work. A 16mm film/15 minutes/color/sound.
Rental $17.00/sale $195.00

"All Hand Work" is a film about a visit of retired West Virginia University folklore professor Patrick W. Gainer to the Clay County home of Jenes Cottrell and his widowed sister Sylvia O'Brien.

Cottrell is well known in West Virginia through his regular appearances at art and craft fairs and music festivals, where he plays the banjo and sells his homemade whistles, decorative toadstools, billy clubs, whimmy diddles, and rolling pins.

In *"All Hand Work,"* Cottrell takes Gainer and the camera crew on a tour of the workshop where he builds his craft items while his sister is seen preparing dinner in their home. Cottrell explains that "more photos have been taken here than at any other home in West Virginia--hundreds of 'em."

Neither the workshop nor house are electrified. Jenes uses a foot operated lathe while Sylvia cooks on a wood burning stove. In an on-camera monologue, the 73-year-old craftsman explains how he and his father used to raise tobacco but after his father died he turned to "more cleaner" woodwork and soon stopped farming altogether.

The film ends with Jenes performing two pieces of music on his front lawn. Between tunes, he explains construction details of his banjo, which uses a Buick transmission housing for a shell and hand carved walnut for the neck.

Cottrell is skilled not only at making craft items and performing music but also at presenting himself and traditional ways of life to the outside world. He is a man who successfully moves between the present and the past.

How to Make Sorghum Molasses.
A 16mm film/20 minutes/color/sound.
Rental $20.00/sale $200.00

Three Gilmer County farmers, Johnny Weaver, Bernard Weaver, and Herbert Shaver, and some of their neighbors, prepare sorghum molasses every fall. The cane is cut by hand and horses drive the mill. The film is a step-by-step documentation of the molasses making ritual in direct cinema style, without narration.

During the first day, the cane is cut and the equipment erected. The next day begins when Johnny Weaver brings the two horses down the long steep hill from the pasture. The fire is started and the first horse begins the circular walk around the mill, pulling the drive bar. The first trickle of green juice begins to flow.

The process is enlivened and interrupted by an accident. Slowly, almost lackadaisically, the three men try to lift the heavy antique mill back onto the platform from which it fell. Luckily two more neighbors arrive and with their added strength it is restored and the process is resumed.

After the accident, the juice is boiled until the thick brown molasses is ready to bottle. The film details the mixture of shiny new galvanized steel pails, old wooden stirring paddles, and skimmers with their patina of rust used in the cooking process. We see the men working together, and get a feeling for what they are like.

This is not a recreated event, but an activity filmed in 1970, bearing all the inescapable signs of the contemporary world. Still, what emerges from this sweaty communal endeavor is a complex of values and personalities suggestive of an older way of life. The jokes, conversations, and work are shown in such an insistently specific way, however, that any hackneyed nostalgia about a pastoral way of life is avoided.

A nine-page explanatory essay accompanies this film. It presents the history and context of the activity as seen by the participants, describes the process and apparatus, and includes a partial transcript of the film's dialog and a selected bibliography.

Both of the above films are distributed by Extension Media Center, University of California, 2223 Fulton Street, Berkely, Ca. 94720.

John Mitchel Hickman. A 16mm film/17 minutes/b&w/sound.
Rental $20.00/sale $175.00

A student film produced at Ohio University in 1968, *John Mitchel Hickman* is a short portrait of an Appalachian migrant bluegrass banjo player, then living in Columbus, Ohio. The film is black and white with a running time of 17 minutes. The distribution address is Carl Fleischhauer, Box 3126, Sabraton Station, Morgantown, W.Va. 26505.

In This Issue

JAMES BALOW was born in Detroit and grew up there and in New Jersey. He studied civil engineering at Brown University and received both the A.B. and Sc.B. degrees. Since 1974 he has lived in Lincoln County where farming and photography have commanded his time. In September he became an Artist-in-Residence in McDowell County; he teaches photography and filmmaking in that program which is partly sponsored by the State Arts and Humanities Council.

DAVID A. CORBIN, a Dunbar native, received his B.A. and M.A. degrees from Marshall University and is currently working on his Ph.D. in American labor history of coal mining and working-class politics in West Virginia. Corbin has been employed as a counselor for the West Virginia Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and as a historical researcher for the United States Department of Labor.

CARL FLEISCHHAUER works as a reporter and photographer for WWVU-TV in Morgantown. A native of Columbus, Ohio, he graduated from Kenyon College and received his M.F.A. from Ohio University. In six years in West Virginia his "extracurricular" work has included the Library of Congress documentary record albumn, *The Hammons Family*, produced in conjunction with Dwight Diller and Alan Jabbour. He has exhibited photographs widely and has won a number of prizes. Fleischhauer is a periodic contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

TOM HARVEY, a Tupelo, Miss., native, is a graduate student in geography at the Pennsylvania State University. He was granted a B.A. degree in geography from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. As part of his Antioch studies he was a special student for a semester in America Folk Culture and History Museum Administration at the Cooperstown Graduate Program of the New York State Historical Association (N.Y. State University). Also while at Antioch he spent one semester at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and two different semesters in Mississippi, one doing independent fieldwork, mainly photographic documentation of tradition architecture, and another locating traditional craftspeople and musicians for the Smithsonian Institution's 1975 Festival of American Folklife. He spent still another Antioch semester based at the University of Texas as an intern at the Winedale Museum at Round Top.

KIP LORNELL is a student in the graduate program in folklore at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. He has been interested in blues and other forms of black music for eight years and went to Chapel Hill "to escape the cold weather in (his native) upstate New York" and to be "in an area more conducive to field research." In 1972 he received a Youthgrant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to conduct research on rural blues in Georgia and the Carolinas. He has been a contributing editor for *Living Blues* magazine and has published articles in such periodicals as *Jazz Journal*, *John Edwards Memorial Foundation Quarterly*, *Blues World*, *North Carolina Folklore Quarterly*, and GOLDENSEAL.

J. RODERICK MOORE is a native of Fincastle, Va., and was raised in Welch, W.Va., where he was a student through high school. He received his B.A. degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and M.A. from New York State University in the American Folklife Program sponsored by the New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown. He is now associate director of the Blue Ridge Institute at Ferrum College, Ferrum, Va. He has held offices in the Virginia Folklore Society and is on the board of directors of the National Folk Festival Association. He has been a frequent consultant to public agencies and for writers in the field of folk art and crafts, and he has produced both folk music record albums and documentary films. As visiting curator, he has mounted several exhibitions of Southern folk art and crafts. Moore has co-authored two articles for GOLDENSEAL with Kip Lornell.

LOLA ROSS-ROBERTSON, born in Moatsville, was a student in Barbour County schools. She attended West Virginia Business School in Clarksburg and in her career she has worked in various fields, government, chemistry, electronics, trade associations, and the frozen food industry. After living and working in such places as Washington, D.C., New York, N.Y., Upper Montclair, N.J., and Chicago, she and her family now reside in Fairmont. She is employed by the Division of Social Sciences at Fairmont State College and is taking Appalachian Studies courses. In 1963 she and her husband produced and published *The Encyclopedia of Drum and Bugle Corps* and are presently collecting material for a gourmet cookbook.

JAMES THIBEAULT, a Malden resident, was born and grew up in Massachusetts. He graduated from Westford Academy in 1964 and subsequently attended schools in Boston, Miami, and New Haven. In 1970 VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) brought him to West Virginia, where he helped central West Virginia quilt makers start Cabin Creek Quilts Cooperative. In June 1976 he resigned as director of the co-op.

BARRY J. WARD, Assistant Professor of English and Folklore at West Virginia University, is a specialist in folk drama and migrant folklore. He is a graduate of Lake Forest College (Illinois) and the Ohio State University where he received his doctorate in folklore and medieval studies. He has served as research consultant to the American Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C., for the Smithsonian Institution, and to the Ohio Folk Festival for the State of Ohio. Before coming to West Virginia University in 1974 Dr. Ward directed the Ohio State University Study Abroad Program.