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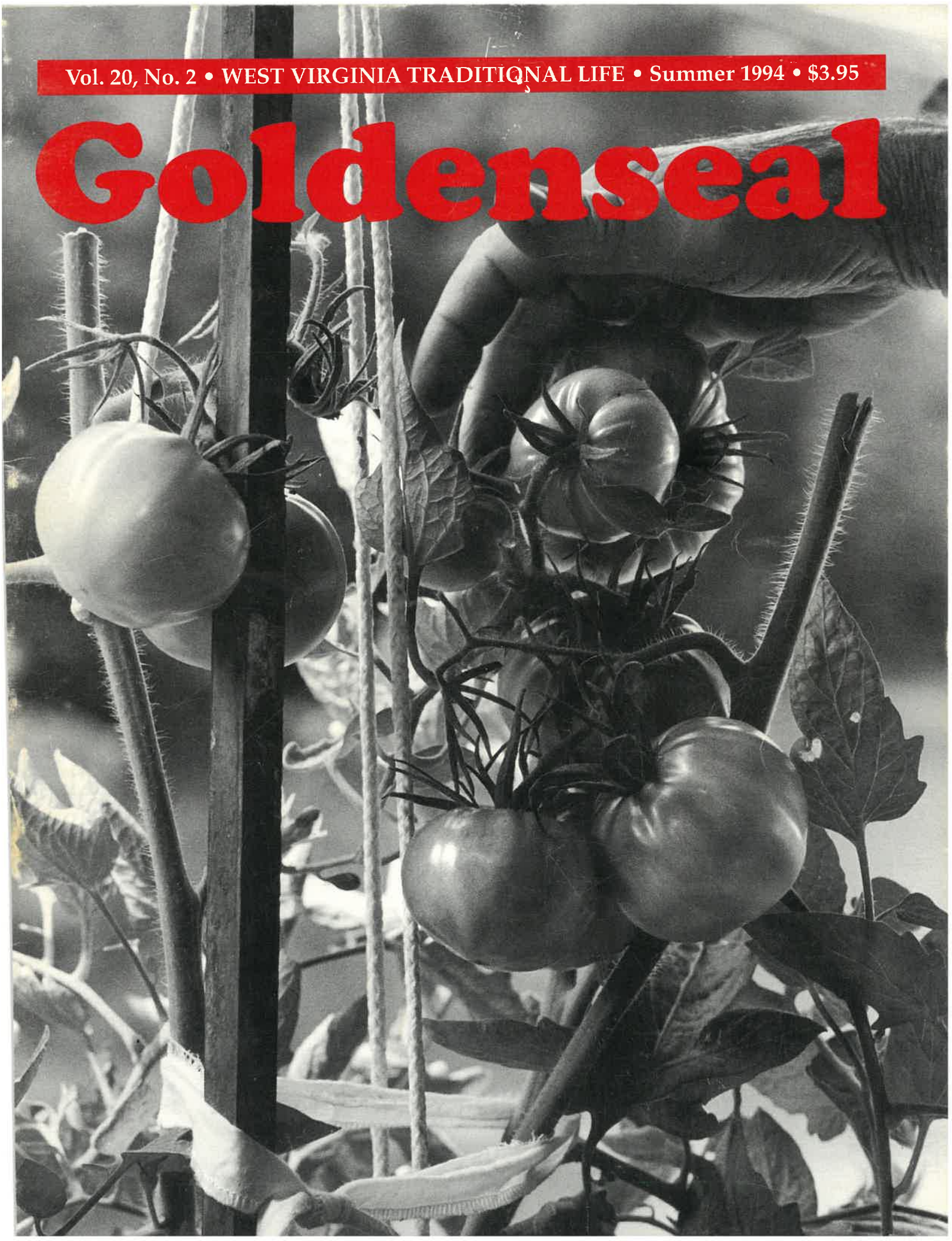
Goldenseal



From the Editor: The Big Bus Trip

So how about a GOLDENSEAL road trip?

The idea is to charter a big bus — pardon me, make that a fine motorcoach — and load up as many of our readers as will fit, then hit the road. We plan to bring the magazine alive by visiting at least a half-dozen story sites, eat plenty, find a good bed for the night and generally enjoy ourselves.

This is something we have wanted to do for a long time. Here is the itinerary for the mid-October trip.

Our first trip — and we do hope for more — is a southern West Virginia run. After an early start from Charleston, we will cruise down the Turnpike and then across to the Pioneer Farm at Twin Falls State Park, the old Bower family homestead which provided our Fall '93 cover story. We will tour the farm, discuss its history with the folks who know it best, and enjoy a buffet lunch at the Twin Falls Lodge.

On our way out we'll swing through nearby Itmann for a look at one of the finest coal company stores you'll ever see, then it's on to Mercer County's Bramwell for a distinctly different side of coalfields life.

Bramwell was featured in "Millionaires' Town" in the Winter 1982 GOLDENSEAL. The little town tucked into a curve of the Bluestone River was once home to some of West Virginia's wealthiest coal barons, and their mansions still stand today. Charming Lou Stoker has promised us her famous walking tour of Bramwell's National Register Historic District.

That will wind up the afternoon, so we will head to our lodgings for the night, historic Pence Springs Resort in the Greenbrier Valley of Summers County. This place also is on the National Register of Historic Places, from the days when White Sulphur was by no means the only fashionable spa in the mountains of the two Virginias. And as you may recall from "Doing Time in Style" in the Summer 1990 GOLDENSEAL, the old hotel also was the state women's prison during one phase of its long history.

A maximum security cell remains on exhibit from that era, but nowadays a stay at Pence Springs is a sentence to all the comforts of an old-time country inn. Put chain motels out of your mind. Pence Springs has a spacious downstairs parlor with fireplace, easy chairs, and plenty of bookshelves; a nice little upstairs parlor if you don't make it down to the big one; verandas above and below — and way down below, in the cellar, a shadowy old bar dating from Prohibition times. Think of it as a bed-and-breakfast place on a big scale.

And that brings me to the food. Pence Springs is operated by Ashby Berkley, also the proprietor of nearby Riverside Restaurant and one of our finest chefs. We expect to prevail upon Ashby to cook for us, and he has promised at the very least to supervise the preparation of the evening meal. It's included in the price of your trip.

We are booking the whole resort for the duration of our stay. We will have the run of the place and the entire attention of the staff for as long as we are there. There will be evening entertainment, too, also straight out of the pages of GOLDENSEAL.

Next morning, its up-and-at-'em. After breakfast in the hotel dining room, we will backtrack over to Jim Wells's Old Mill at Greenville in Monroe County. This is a water-powered gristmill with adjoining blacksmith shop, as you may recall from the Spring '91 GOLDENSEAL. Jim has promised to be there to show us around.

When he turns us loose, we will set off for Camp Washington-Carver in Fayette County, as mentioned in the Spring '94 GOLDENSEAL and plenty of other times. Washington-Carver, also a National Register property, is West Virginia's old black state 4-H camp. It has all the good things you will remember from summer camp, not to mention the biggest chestnut log lodge east of the Mississippi. Nowadays the camp is operated as a summer heritage center by the Division of Culture & History, GOLDENSEAL's parent agency, so we are sure to be among friends there — and in the hands of a couple of fine country cooks.

From there, we will slip over to nearby Babcock State Park. Most folks think of Glade Creek Mill when they think of Babcock, and we will certainly see that, but I want to direct your attention in particular to the fine CCC stonework of the lodge, pool, and surrounding grounds. You may remember Yvonne Farley's "The Civilian Conservation Corps and Babcock State Park" from the Spring 1981 GOLDENSEAL.

Then it's on to Hawks Nest State Park, for the last stop of the day. We will concentrate on the overlook area, and make sure to talk about the little-known Hawks Nest Tunnel tragedy as well. You won't find much about that in the history books, but it was featured in GOLDENSEAL in 1981, 1987 and other times.

I promise there will be no homework or pop quizzes, but I think we can learn a lot about our West Virginia heritage by visiting places which we have read about in GOLDENSEAL. There will be a complete set of article reprints for the places we visit, yours for the trip and as a souvenir to keep.

Folks, this is not an econo-motel, fast-food trip, mass-produced for the purpose of separating you from your money. This is an adventure, a bona fide West Virginia expedition as only West Virginians can plan it. I'll host the trip, and we will meet with people all along the way who know firsthand what they are talking about. We will sleep in one National Historic Register property and lunch in another, after touring still another, and visit more genuine West Virginia places than a travel agent would send you to in a long time. We have kept the price competitive, and the proceeds will go to benefit our favorite magazine.

You will find the details in the coupon on page 72. I hope you will plan to join us.

—Ken Sullivan

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Goldenseal

Volume 20, Number 2 Summer 1994

COVER: The "Mortgage Lifter" tomato is a West Virginia native. Born and bred in Cabell County in the 1920's, it remains a big favorite with Tri-State gardeners. Our article begins on page 9. Photo by Michael Keller.

PHOTOS: Greg Clark, Mark Crabtree, Eugene Edmunds, Jr., Neil Glass, Michael Keller, Chuck Lantz, Ron Rittenhouse, Doug Yarrow

Letters from Readers

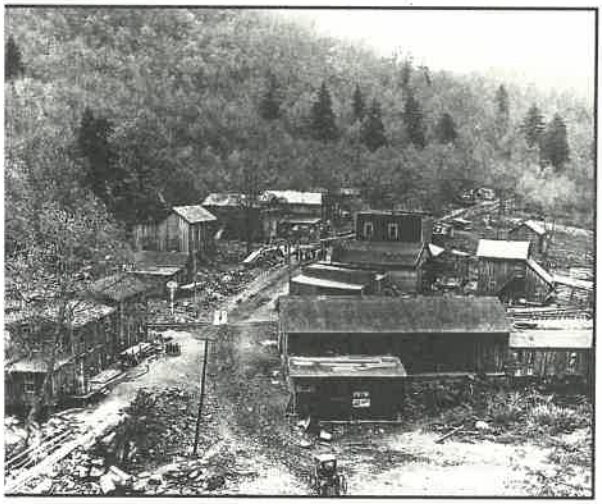
GOLDENSEAL welcomes letters of general interest from readers. Our address is The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Published letters may be edited for brevity or clarity.

February 10, 1994
Milton, Ontario
Editor:
I read with great interest the article by Elizabeth Williamson entitled "Tools of Mountain Living: The Grain Cradle" (Winter 1993). We have more than 40 grain cradles here which I am endeavoring to describe. Your article introduced me to the term "Bow Cradle." It is frustrating to add this to my lengthy list of Grape Vine, Mulay (full, half, improved, French), Turkey Wing, Morgan and Harvest King, none of which I am able to differentiate.

If the author, your staff or your readership can shed any light as to how to distinguish between these different configurations, it would be greatly appreciated. Another source of frustration is the differentiation between a wide-heel scythe blade and a narrow-heel one.
Sincerely,
Ron Groshaw
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture

Readers able to help Mr. Groshaw may write to Ontario Agricultural Museum, Ministry of Agriculture, P. O. Box 38, Milton, Ontario, Canada L9T 2Y3. — ed.

Death in Durbin



Durbin west end, about 1904.

March 29, 1994
Bartow, West Virginia
Editor:
Eugene Burner gave my brother a copy of the Spring 1994 GOLDENSEAL, and I got to read the article "Death in Durbin."

We moved here from Virginia when I was six years old, and I'm now 92. Charley Slavin was then a neighbor, and later Theodore Slavin was my neighbor. He built a new home next to our lots. Today Theodore's sister from Charlottesville came to visit me. She gets GOLDENSEAL, and I think we both shed tears when we read it. I knew so many people in the pictures, including Napoleon Arbogast. I have two large pictures of Cheat Mountain Club and Durbin taken in 1917, and lots of memories.
Helen Wilfong

March 29, 1994
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Editor:
I have just finished reading with great interest the article, "Death in Durbin," by Elaine Prater Hodges. Imagine my surprise to see the names of my grandfather, Warwick Lambert, and my great-uncle, Dr. J. L. (Jesse) Lambert, who later became mayor and a long-time physician in Franklin, Pendleton County.

My grandfather had finished medical school at the University of Louisville, Kentucky, in 1898, and had gone in the year 1900 with my grandmother to live in Durbin and be with his brother, Dr. Jesse. He later moved to Valley Head, Randolph County, to practice medicine until his death in 1939.

My grandmother, who was Bertie Sutton from Arbovale, Pocahontas County, used to tell me stories about the time she lived in Durbin and how it was like a Wild West town. She was afraid because on Saturday night the local men after drinking at the saloon would ride their horses up on her porch to the front door. Her first child was a few months old. That child is my mother, Mona Lee Lambert Hight, who resides in Valley Bend and is 94 years old this year.
Very truly yours,
Fred A. Hight

April 29, 1994
Miami, Florida
Editor:
Your last issue, Spring 1994, had a story in it on page 20, "Death in Durbin." You mention my uncle "Poly" Arbogast, first name Napoleon, who lived in Durbin and was postmaster at the time of the story. My cousin Gene Burner, whom I used to fish with in the branches of the Greenbrier River, furnished the pictures for the story.

In fact the main character, Bud Burner was probably a relative. My father and his brothers lived in Durbin and my grandfather Peter Arbogast was a much respected doctor there for several years. My father was a lumberjack. So I have some roots and much interest in the area.
Many regards,
Mack Arbogast

March 27, 1994
Wenatchee, Washington
Editor:
In reference to the 45-90 rifle mentioned in the story "Death in Durbin," it was a heavy rifle, also made in 45-70 caliber. I was born and raised in a house with many guns, from a single-shot .22 to a 45-90 rifle, and two muzzle-loading shotguns. The 45-90 had plenty of "knock down" power for deer or bear and was just one notch below the 50 caliber Sharps, also called the "Buffalo Sharps," as the buffalo hunters and Western trappers and Indian fighters could depend on it. I don't know who made the 45-90, but it was a good gun in its day.
Walt Thayer

We understand that the Durbin 45-90 was made by Winchester. — ed.

Curing Cheese

March 15, 1994
Buckhannon, West Virginia
Editor:
The Spring 1994 GOLDENSEAL is especially good. They really did put

MICHAEL KELLER

that cheese in the manure pile, and maybe still do (Bärg Käss: Cheese-making Among the West Virginia Swiss).
Josephine Shaw

Flying Post Offices

April 11, 1994
Moundsville, West Virginia
Editor:
I sincerely enjoyed the article, "Flying Post Offices: Airmail Comes to Rural West Virginia," in the Spring 1994 GOLDENSEAL. My father-in-law, Neil C. Crow, who is quoted on page 55, is one of only two surviving siblings of Captain John Russell Crow, one of the All American Aviation pilots mentioned in the article.

Although "Uncle Russ" has been deceased for many years, his family remembers him fondly and we were all very touched by the article and the photograph of him in uniform.

Russ Crow was a fine man who led an interesting and varied life. At one time he was a helicopter pilot and also owned a barge equipped to drive piling in the rivers. He and his wife, Pat, even built an apartment in the bottom of this barge! The article by Louis E. Keefer is a fine legacy to a man who has no living descendants, but a handful of relatives who enjoy reminiscing about him from time to time.

Neil Crow and his son still farm the family farm on Route 250. Russ Crow's widow, Pat Miller, has always remained a close member of the Crow family and she and Neil, along with Neil's wife and sister Jean, regularly attend the AAA "forty-niners" reunion in Pittsburgh.

On behalf of the family of Captain John Russell Crow, I'd like to thank you for publishing this article, and assure you that our family will be looking forward to enjoying more fine articles in future issues.
Sincerely,
Brenda J. Crow

April 9, 1994
Columbus, Ohio
Editor:
Your article in the Spring 1994 issue about the airmail pick-up service in West Virginia allowed me to settle a long-standing argument with some friends about the beginnings of Allegheny Airlines and subsequently USAir.

It also brought back vivid memories of that sunny Sunday afternoon in June 1939, when the service came to my hometown, Grantsville. I had just completed eighth grade and our Boy Scout Troop (85) was on hand to help direct traffic at the pick-up point, about two miles north of town on State Route 16. Several bags were grappled and only one sailed off into the woods south of the site. Everyone pitched in to recover it. I enclose a copy of my first day cover of the event.

The early steel poles with wooden flags (shown on page 51) were replaced with a more efficient sectional light-weight setup (shown on page 50), which required setting up after its removal from a wooden storage container. In Grantsville this setup was installed about two miles south of town along Route 16, above the Barr Schoolhouse near Mt. Zion. A high school friend, Dale Gunn, took the airmail to the site and occasionally I had the opportunity of riding with him to help. As I recall, a colored banner was placed on the ground between the poles — one side to indicate that an additional bag was present and the other side to indicate the last bag.

To test the service once I sent a 26-cent Air Mail Special Delivery letter to my good friend Bobby Riggs in Charleston. He received the letter in less time than it took to drive the 80 miles from Grantsville to Charleston. The U.S. Postal Service can no longer duplicate that service!
Sincerely,
David B. Hathaway

March 25, 1994
Ivydale, West Virginia
Editor:
The Spring 1994 GOLDENSEAL was one of the best. "Flying Post Offices" was interesting and well-displayed story and art.

For many years I have been interested in flying, not as a pilot but passenger and observer. I spent some time during World War II as a Navy photographer and during that time I was required to do quite a lot of flying.

In Louis Keefer's story a sentence caught my attention that described certain types of flying which I experienced.

In the second paragraph he said, "Such flying was a chancy business

— like almost landing on the short narrow deck of an aircraft carrier, but being waved off at the last possible minute."

I well remember, while photographing landings and take-offs of Navy and Marine aircraft, the nervous feeling I experienced as my pilot joined the landing pattern, circled and started his approach to the carrier. We were just a few feet above the water and I was unable to see the carrier from my seat to the rear of the pilot. We apparently made an acceptable landing because the signalman near the stern of the vessel accepted our approach and gave the all-clear signal. We bumped down with a slight jar, a grappling hook underneath our plane snagged a cable stretched across the carrier deck and jerked us to a halt.

This landing on the deck of an aircraft carrier was a highlight of that photo assignment, an experience I have always remembered.

Sincerely,
R. Ferrell Friend

Ashford General Hospital

February 21, 1994
Palmyra, New York
Editor:

I'm delighted when my friend in Charleston, Jane Ferrell, sends us copies of GOLDENSEAL. The Fall 1993 edition especially captured my interest, featuring the Greenbrier hotel, known as Ashford General Hospital during World War II.

Boosting morale at Ashford General.

I attended Charleston School of Commerce in 1943-44, and was a member of its business sorority. Happily I was among a group of ladies whom Charleston's Elizabeth Taylor Carter recruited to entertain servicemen at Ashford. Our business teacher, Miss Effie Bishop, even outfitted some of us with her evening gowns! She lived on Kanawha Boulevard and invited us one day after school to her stately abode for fittings and try-ons. Heavily chaperoned, we took the four-hour train ride on Saturday, returning on Sunday.

In my mind's eye and your article I was able to re-visit Ashford — the excitement of my first train ride; the Saturday night dance at the Casino; the Non-com Officers Club on the mountain; church on Sunday; and touring the wards dispensing candy, gum, cigarettes and the like to the severely wounded.

What an impression all of this made on a 17-year-old from Clendenin!

Sincerely,
Ethel-Mae Johnson

Still More On Salt-Rising

March 17, 1994
Greenville, West Virginia
Editor:

I was much interested in the letter that Mrs. Charles C. Czompo wrote in the Spring GOLDENSEAL about the salt-rising bread. That was my home neighborhood. I too have carried the risin' to her grandmother.

I not only carried yeast to her grandmother, but when I was a teenager I kept close watch on our phone the day that Mrs. Czompo was born, and carried the word of her arrival to her grandfather who was working in the cornfield that day.

I learned to make salt-rising bread at an early age, but seldom make it now as we no longer have the old wood stove and tank to help get the starter. I have passed my 95th birthday.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Robert Larew

March 30, 1994
Titusville, Florida
Editor:

I don't know how far back in my family the practice of baking salt-rising bread started, but when my father asked my mother to marry him in 1930 there was one prerequisite to becoming Mrs. Berna S. Law — and that was that she had to learn to make salt-rising bread like his mother's.

She fulfilled her promise and they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in 1990.

My father passed away in January 1991. My husband retired from General Dynamics Corporation as a missile inspector at Cape Canaveral, Florida, and we now spend our summers on the home farm in West Virginia, raising a garden, especially those big plate-sized tomatoes than when sliced, just fit a slice of salt-rising bread for a sandwich.

My mother will be 82 years old in May. She still makes the bread and we sometimes have to take turns setting the "risin'" to get it to "come." Sometimes my Aunt Freda Steele, mother's sister, gets a good starter. Then the call comes and off we go to her house with a bath towel in hand to put around the bowl to keep the sponge warm on the trip back to our house. The sponge can be divided and more flour and water added to make multiple batches.

This year I haven't had a failure with the sponge. Basically I use the same recipe as Mrs. Barlow's. I don't use meal as I think its grainy flecks show up in the bread.

My mother and Aunt Freda swear by Robin Hood flour and save coupons and watch for the store ads. In Florida we can't get Robin Hood, but I've had good results with Pillsbury's bread flour.

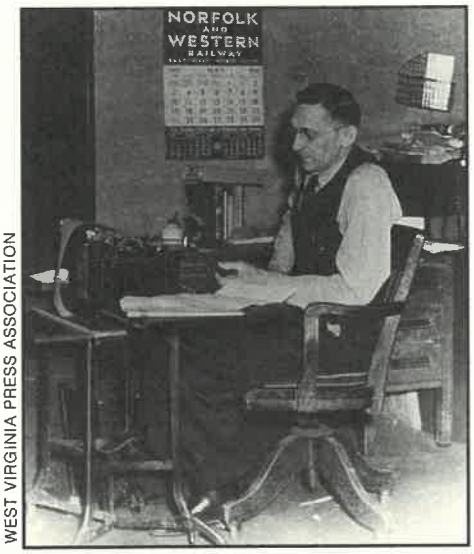
I've shared my bread with my neighbors and they all like it. My son, who does not appreciate the aroma of the toasted, crusty bread says that I'm going to have the whole street stinking. I remind him that the smell is no more unpleasant than the smell of beer, which he

doesn't seem to mind.

I just wanted you to know that the art of making salt-rising bread is far from being extinct. In fact, with letters coming in from different parts of the country, it sounds like we may have a new generation of salt-rising breadmakers.

Sincerely yours,
Lulu Belle Law McDougal

Will Keyser of Welch



WEST VIRGINIA PRESS ASSOCIATION

April 7, 1994
Lapwai, Idaho
Editor:

I can't begin to tell you the pleasure I receive from your publication. The story on Welch and the *Daily News* was most enjoyable.

I knew Will Keyser and most of the staff. I had one of the larger paperboy routes down McDowell Street to Hemphill during World War II. The picture of Mr. Keyser on page 45 was taken during May of 1942. A little detective work on the calendar behind him shows that the 1st fell on a Friday and not again for several years.

The photo on page 44 has to have been in the late '50's. I recognize several people as fellow classmates and judging from Mr. Keyser's loss of hair, it had to be much later.

I too am a Presbyterian and knew him also from my Sunday school days.

Regards,
James D. Moore
Mayor of Lapwai

We have used our perpetual calendar to date lots of photos in the past and are embarrassed to have overlooked the possibility this time. Thanks for helping. — ed.

Long Live Jane George

May 7, 1994
Vienna, West Virginia
Editor:

MICHAEL KELLER

I sure enjoy your magazine to the utmost, especially the article on Jane George and Frank ("Proud To Be a West Virginian," Winter 1993).

Jane George is a household word here on Statler's Run. She recognized Mama's innate ability to piece a quilt and stood up for it. That meant lots to an old hillbilly like Mama.

Long live Jane George! The mold was broken when she was made, definitely.

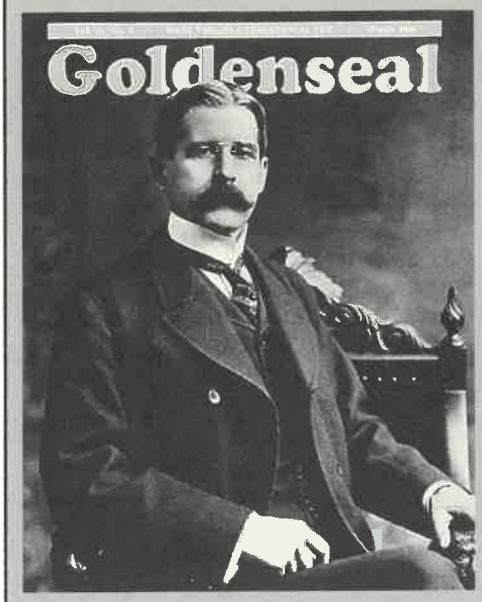
Sincerely,
Janet Heron

Thanks for writing. Your comment about your mother and Jane George confirms an old belief of ours, which is that one of the keys to Jane's success in promoting West Virginia's heritage has been keeping in touch with people.

"When I was little," she recently wrote to us, "I used to go visit the old people in the community. I liked to listen to them talk, to see the way they dressed and to ask questions. I remember Aunt Lib Dixon, who used to come and stay with her daughter who was our next door neighbor. I remember Aunt Nancy Cottrell, who lived up the dirt road and who was a cousin of my grandmother.

"When I was growing up, people had milk cows, chickens, pigs, and they churned butter, made cottage cheese, gathered eggs, and butchered hogs. I started to a one-room school where we played ante-over and prisoner base at recess. We also had lots of visits from family members and we went to reunions. I believe I developed a greater appreciation than most for genealogy. It was as if someone had turned on a light when I met Franklin in 1966 and listened to him play his music and talk about the Scots and Irish people who came to live in West Virginia."

Fans of the Georges will be pleased to note that Frank has just joined Jane as a winner of the Vandalia Award. They are two of a kind, for sure. — ed.



Looking for Old Gold?

We often hear from people looking for old issues of GOLDENSEAL, or folks who want to swap or sell copies. We try to help when we can.

For example, reader Nathaniel Neblett recently wrote from Virginia to tell us he was "trimming his collection" of GOLDENSEALs. He has several magazines for the years 1977, 1978, and 1980 and complete sets for the years 1981 through 1993 that he wants to sell. Contact him at P.O. Box 137, Sterling, Virginia 20167; (703)430-1976.

Current Programs • Events • Publications

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

Summers County History

James H. Miller's *History of Summers County* is once again available for purchase. The book may be ordered through Thomas In-Prints of Gauley Bridge.

Miller's *Summers County* is one of West Virginia's classic local histories, a huge book of the sort issued for many counties after the turn of the century. James Miller was among the second generation of Summers County leaders, best known as a circuit judge, Democratic politician and Hinton banker and businessman.

He was an avid amateur historian, as well. His history traces Summers County origins back to the first founding of Virginia, and he also considers the prehistory of the area. Summers County was less than 40 years old at the time of his research, and much of Judge Miller's book necessarily is devoted to the pre-county period, particularly the era of early exploration and settlement. There are chapters on the 1871 formation of the county, sparked by the arrival of the C&O Railway, on churches and other institutions, on local elections through 1904, and on prominent families and individuals.

The current version of the *History of Summers County* is a facsimile reprint of the 1908 original. The reprint was first published in 1970, then reissued in 1981. The 838-page hardbound book sells for $40. Send mail orders, including an additional $4 shipping and handling, to Thomas In-Prints, 88 Imboden Street, P. O. Box 108, Gauley Bridge, WV 25085. West Virginia residents should add $2.40 sales tax.

Summer at Augusta

The summer workshop series of the Augusta Heritage Center will focus this year on "Celebrating Traditional Dance." As always, there

will be plenty of classes in music and crafts, but the 1994 program places special emphasis on dance traditions, including square and contra dance, tap, Irish step dance, West African dance, clogging, and more.

Details of the program, which include over 100 week-long classes, are available in a free catalog published by the Heritage Center, located at Davis and Elkins College. The five-week schedule begins July 11 with "Old-Time Week" and runs through August 12. The curriculum is international, and so is the teaching staff. Every year, some of the best-known practitioners of the creative arts share their skills with Augusta students.

"Old-Time Week" focuses on the music of our region, and includes West Virginia's Dave Bing, David O'Dell, and John Blisard among its staff of 16 accomplished musicians. Melvin Wine, Wilson Douglas, and Leland Hall will be West Virginians among the Master Folk Artists on hand for this week.

There are also dozens of craft classes, folklore workshops, dances, and concerts. Contact Augusta Heritage Center, Box GN, Davis and Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241, phone (304)636-1903.

Folk Art at Huntington Museum

The Huntington Museum of Art will open a major exhibit of American folk art of the 19th and 20th centuries this summer. "By the People: American 19th and 20th Century Art of the Folk and Self-Taught" opens July 3 and will continue through October 30.

The show, which was put together from the museum's collection, will feature more than 200 examples of traditional art in the form of paintings, drawings, engraved powder horns, quilts, canes, and other unusual decorative items. Many of the objects are works by anonymous artists while others are well-documented. West Virginians S. L. Jones and the Reverend Herman Hayes are among the 20th-century artists in the show.

The Huntington Museum of Art, a 50-acre complex, is West Virginia's largest art museum. Opened in 1952, the museum boasts a permanent collection, changing exhibit area, studio art classes, workshops, lectures and special events. It includes an art reference library, museum store, sculpture garden, nature trails, and summer day camps.

The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 5:00 p.m. Admission is $2 for adults and $1 for students and seniors. Children 12 and under are admitted free, and no admission is charged on Wednesdays. For more information contact the Huntington Museum of Art, 2033 McCoy Road, Huntington, WV 25701; (304)529-2701.

Rare Books

Looking for a rare, out-of-print book about West Virginia or Appalachia? Bookman Donnell Portzline recently sent a copy of his third catalog, listing mostly first edition

books on genealogy; church, county and local history; literature; religion; and the social sciences.

The autobiography of West Virginia's ninth governor, William Alexander MacCorkle; *Thunder at Harpers Ferry* by Allan Keller; and Ruth Ann Musick's *The Telltale Lilac Bush and Other West Virginia Ghost Tales* are among the publications recently offered for sale. The Portzline catalog is divided into three sections: books on West Virginia including biographies, county histories, coal history, and works by West Virginia authors; books relating to neighboring Kentucky, Ohio and Virginia; and Americana.

Books are fully described as to content and condition, with return privileges to unsatisfied purchasers. Like other used book dealers, Portzline buys as well as sells, and currently seeks old GOLDENSEAL magazines, Volumes 1 through 5, to add to his inventory.

Portzline calls his operation Mountain Memories, not to be confused with the Mountain Memories publishing venture operated by Dennis Deitz of South Charleston. The Fayetteville bookseller accepts checks or money orders from individuals and will invoice libraries, educational institutions, and organizations. A search service is offered free of charge. For more information contact Mountain Memories, P.O. Box 63, Fayetteville, WV 25840-0063; (304)574-0365.

Family History Conference

"Mining Your History," the first West Virginia Family and Local History Conference, will be held September 16-17 at the Cultural Center in Charleston. The conference will feature speakers from national, state, and local organizations and include a variety of topics on genealogy and local history research in West Virginia.

Mike Musick from the National Archives will conduct several sessions on military records, and Bob Plowman of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives in Philadelphia will address other federal records relating to West Virginia. Conley Edwards of the Virginia State Library and Mary Kegley of the Family History Institute of Southwest Virginia will talk about Virginia records. Noel Tenney, co-editor of the folklore journal *Traditions*, will be Friday evening's dinner speaker.

The more than 30 sessions will include presentations on the Draper Manuscripts at the Wisconsin Historical Society and the vast collections of the Genealogical Society of Utah in Salt Lake City. A number of publishers and historical organizations will be on hand with the latest works on genealogy and local history.

The pre-registration cost of the conference is $55 for both days or $35 per day until July 15. Registration between July 15 and August 19 is $70 for both days or $50 per day. The Friday evening banquet is $16. For more information, contact the West Virginia State Archives, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300, (304)558-0230.

Eastern Panhandle Churches

This fall four churches in Jefferson County will revive an old custom, put out their welcome mats, and spruce up their sanctuaries for two days during the Church Flower Festival. The custom of church flower festivals originated in England to aid in the restoration of churches damaged in World War II.

The Jefferson County event began as a project of the Shenandoah Garden Club, but grew to include the co-sponsorship of the Nelson Cluster of Epsicopal Churches. The tour includes four country churches, each over 100 years old. St. John's Church in Rippon (tour headquarters), Grace Church in Middleway, Church of the Holy Spirit in Summit Point, and St. Bartholomew's in Leetown are all included on the Church Flower Festival tour.

Each church will be decorated in a different liturgical theme — Pentecost, Wedding, Christmas, and Harvest. Fresh and dried flowers, grasses, grains, fruits, and vegetables will be among the decorative materials used. Musical interludes will accompany displays at the churches and a special "Evensong"

Back Issues Available

If you want to complete your GOLDENSEAL collection or simply get acquainted with earlier issues, some back copies of the magazine are available. The cost is $3.95 per copy, plus $1 for postage and handling for each order. A list of available issues and their cover stories follows. To get your back copies, mark the issue(s) you want and return with a check for the right amount to GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

_____Fall 1980/Recalling Mother Jones
_____Fall 1981/Myrtle Auvil of Grafton
_____Winter 1984/Webster County's Mollohan Mill
_____Fall 1985/Dulcimer Maker Ray Epler
_____Winter 1985/Huntington 1913
_____Spring 1986/Blacksmith Jeff Fetty
_____Summer 1986/The Draft Horse Revival
_____Fall 1986/West Virginia Chairmaking
_____Summer 1987/Camden Park History
_____Summer 1988/Hugh McPherson
_____Fall 1988/Craftsman Wilbur Veith
_____Spring 1989/Printer Allen Byrne
_____Winter 1989/Smoot Reunion
_____Summer 1990/Cal Price and *The Pocahontas Times*
_____Winter 1990/Sisters of DeSales Heights
_____Summer 1991/Fiddler Melvin Wine
_____Winter 1991/Meadow River Lumber Company
_____Summer 1992/Dance, West Virginia, Dance!
_____Fall 1992/Bell Bottoms at Bethany
_____Summer 1993/Fairmont Romance
_____Fall 1993/Twin Falls State Park
_____Winter 1993/Monongah Mine Disaster
_____Spring 1994/Sculptor Connard Wolfe

You may also order bulk copies of current or past issues of GOLDENSEAL, as quantities permit. The price is $2.50 per copy on orders of ten or more copies of the same issue (plus $3 for postage and handling for each order).

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will be sung at Grace Church on Sunday afternoon. An English country tea concludes the weekend.

The Church Flower Festival is scheduled for September 10 and 11, Saturday and Sunday. Tickets, which can be bought at each church, are $10 for the whole tour or $3 for individual churches. Box lunches are available for $5. The cost of the tea is $4 and advance reservations are required. For more information contact the Church Flower Festival, P.O. Box 1687, Shepherdstown, WV 25443; (304)725-5171.

Laidley History Reprinted

William S. Laidley's *History of Charleston and Kanawha County* was published in 1911, and today first-edition copies sell for as much as $400 — if you can find one. Fortunately for the researcher if not the collector, the West Virginia Genealogical Society recently reprinted the big book. Copies sell for $60, plus $5 shipping.

The group describes Laidley's book as "fascinating and a gold mine for genealogical research," with more than 1,000 pages of text and 142 rare photographs. It includes detailed family histories of over 865 different families, as well as chapters on politics, public institutions, transportation, education, churches and religion, physicians, coal history, rivers, and pioneers of Kanawha County.

Kanawha County, formed in 1788, is one of West Virginia's great mother counties. The original county included all of modern Mason, Clay, Putnam, Cabell, Wayne, Lincoln, Boone, Logan and Mingo counties, as well as parts of Raleigh, Fayette, Nicholas, Braxton, Calhoun, Roane and Jackson.

For a copy of Laidley's *History* contact the West Virginia Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 14, Blue Creek, WV 25026, or call Ella May at (304)965-1043. All proceeds support the Genealogical Society's library at Blue Creek, which is open to the public at no charge.

Folklore and Education

A new West Virginia publication, *Traditions: A Journal of West Virginia Folk Culture and Educational Awareness*, was recently produced for the use of teachers and students.

Traditions was developed following the 1992 West Virginia Humanities Council Summer Seminar for Teachers, where participants learned that very little folklore, especially regional folklore, is included in primary and secondary school curriculums.

Volume One, Number One is devoted to putting folklore in the classrooms. Topics for lessons and activities submitted by elementary, middle and high school teachers include family heritage, coal, and Appalachian customs. The journal continues with a "childlore" section of riddles, rhymes, and stories that are just plain fun for kids, along with traditional Christmas recipes, songs, old-time remedies and Appalachian games.

The first issue honors West Virginians Louise McNeill, the late poet laureate, and Dr. B.B. Mauer, WVU professor emeritus. The journal also includes "Articles and Notes" offering scholarly folkloric interpretations. The final section reviews available folklore resources.

Traditions is co-edited by Fair-

JOHN H. RANDOLPH

mont State professor of language and literature Dr. Judy P. Byers and Noel W. Tenney, adjunct instructor of cultural topics at West Virginia University. The 48-page softbound publication sells for $6, and is published twice yearly. Write to *Traditions*, Fairmont State College, 1201 Locust Avenue, Fairmont, WV 26554-2491.

The Mortgage Lifter

A Man and his Tomato

By John L. Marra

Photographs by Michael Keller

William S. Estler made his big discovery one summer day in 1922. While walking through a planting of tomatoes on his Cabell County farm he spied an unusual plant with beautiful ripe fruit. He knew it was unlike any tomato he had planted. Estler was enough of a gardener to suspect that the plant was an accidental cross-pollination and therefore something completely new in the world.

And so it was. Bill Estler's find would help change taste preferences and set a regional benchmark for quality that has lasted until the present among lovers of homegrown tomatoes in the Tri-State area of West Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky. That strange tomato in his garden would later come to be named the "Mortgage Lifter," a horticultural treasure.

Born in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, in 1884, Estler was of German descent and a West Virginian by choice. In 1910, he made his way to Chattaroy in Mingo County, where he landed a job as a coal mine superintendent.

Tomatoes brought Bill Estler his fame and his greatest satisfaction.

He landed a wife, as well. Edith Campbell had been born in Nova Scotia, far from the mountains of West Virginia. Her parents migrated to the United States and sent her to school in Virginia. After graduation, she too ventured into Mingo County, seeking employment. It was there that she and Bill Estler met. In 1910 they married and moved into a new house constructed by the groom himself.

It was not an auspicious time to establish a home in Mingo County. This was the era of the West Virginia Mine Wars.Tension ran high in the southern coalfields, as miners struggled to unionize their in-

William Estler with his hands full of Mortgage Lifter tomatoes. The plants tower over him in this 1956 picture, photographer unknown.

dustry. The situation worried a family man like Estler, according to his son Bob, who now lives in Barboursville. "Dad was very concerned for the safety of his family," Bob says. "Many times he mentioned that shots could be heard in the neighborhood, and on one occasion a bullet did hit the house."

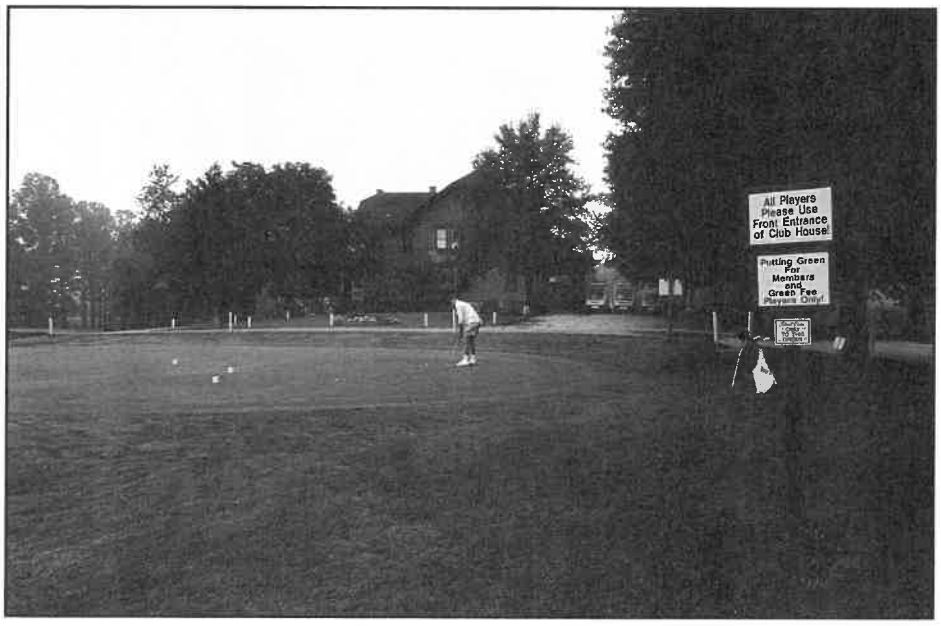
The Mine Wars prompted many citizens to leave the strike area. The Estlers prudently joined them. "My dad knew that his job as mine superintendent encouraged extra dangers, and in 1920 he packed up the family and their belongings and headed to Huntington," says Bob Estler.

The Estlers settled on a small farm near Barboursville, on the present site of Orchard Hills Golf Course. The place is well named. In earlier years, Cabell County was known for its vast commercial orchards and ranked in apple production with such Eastern Panhandle giants as Jefferson, Mineral and Berkeley. The Estler place did its part. Two years before the family moved to the farm, Cap Allen, the previous owner, had planted about 2,200 apple trees there.

"Today only one of the original apple trees remains," Bob Estler reports. "But it still produces, and I've propagated cuttings from the tree several times."

The lush vines climb high above the gardener's head and produce tomatoes weighing two pounds and more.

Bill Estler kept in touch with the coal industry by sending his apples into the coalfields for sale in the company stores. Apples were shipped from the Estler farm for several years, the main destination being the mining companies in Logan and Mingo counties. "Most of the apples were sent to Island Creek Coal in Holden. A gentleman by the name of Kickmer was the purchasing agent, and Jim Francis was the president of Island Creek at the time," says Bob.



Estler's tomato patch is a putting green today, with the farmhouse at rear now serving as the Orchard Hills Clubhouse. The photograph below shows Mr. Estler planting his Mortgage Lifters on this site in the spring of 1956.

"I helped Dad pack the apples into wooden barrels, three bushels to a barrel," he adds. The "Ben Davis" apple was the variety of choice for shippers, because they were tasty and also firm enough to travel well. Barrels for Orchard Hills apples were made right at the

Estler farm. The cooper was Dan Kirby, whose son Bill now lives in Guyandotte, not far from the farm.

"Apple graders would sort the fruit for size and quality. Size was determined by metal rings placed over the apple," Bob Estler recalls.

"The grader would place his apron he wore over the top of the barrel, and when the apron was full of apples he would gently lower it into the barrel. This caused little bruising to the fruit. It was a common practice to place a 'ring pack' on the top of the barrel before shipping. The ring pack was a layer of choice apples that were placed on top of a barrel of lesser quality apples."

But however important apples were at Orchard Hills, it was tomatoes that brought Bill Estler his fame and his greatest satisfaction. At first he raised two varieties popular around the turn of the century, the Prichard and the Ponderosa Pink. The Ponderosa Pink is regarded as a good tomato still today, but is susceptible to early and late blight and doesn't have the typical tomato shape that people prefer. The Prichard is a smooth red variety. It has that ideal tomato shape and other qualities that consumers look for. Estler tried to crossbreed these two varieties to combine their qualities.

It's hard to say whether he succeeded. Bob Estler is quick to mention his doubts about whether the unusual tomato plant that turned up in his father's garden in 1922 was actually a cross between the Prichard and the Ponderosa Pink. "I think that it might have been a botanical accident, not a planned crossbreeding, in the discovery of the Mortgage Lifter tomato," Bob speculates.

Whatever its ancestry, the operative word for Bill Estler's tomato is "big." The lush vines climb high above the gardener's head and produce tomatoes weighing two pounds and more. Dwarfing today's compact varieties, the robust Mortgage Lifter is reminiscent of a time when West Virginians gardened for food as well as pleasure.

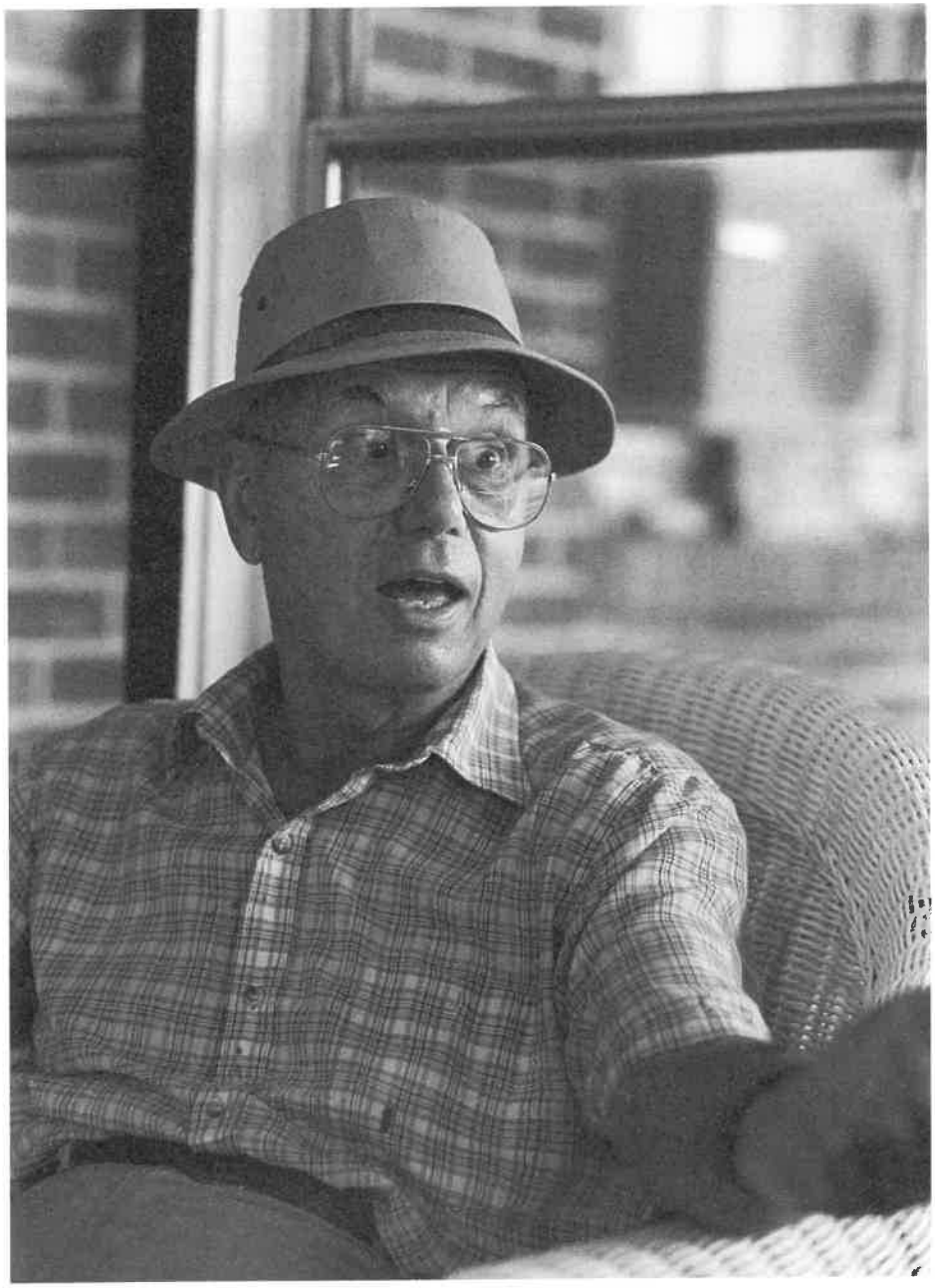
The new tomato was in good hands, for Estler was a meticulous gardener. Even without formal training, he was a master of plant breeding. He had a unique way of pollinating his Mortgage Lifters. He would use a chicken feather, moving from plant to plant, touching each bloom with the feather. Spreading the pollen this way would help guarantee pollination, he thought.

He wasn't about to leave matters to the birds and bees, if he could help it. After his discovery, Estler never permitted any other tomato variety to be grown on the farm, lest there be a chance of cross-pollination diluting the quality of his Mortgage Lifter.

Estler cautiously maintained two different plots of Mortgage Lifter tomatoes. The idea was to protect the breeding stock, son Bob remembers. "If there was some kind of trouble such as disease in one of the patches, Dad's other nursery plot, located nearly 200 yards away, could be a guarantee that an ample crop of Mortgage Lifters and resulting seeds could be harvested."

Still, there was one close call. In 1930, the new strain of tomatoes was nearly lost because of pesticide injury. Luckily, Estler had not seeded all of his Mortgage Lifter

Bob Estler speaks enthusiastically of his father's horticultural accomplishments. Today he is responsible for continuation of the Mortgage Lifter variety.



Saving Garden Seed

Bob Estler still extracts seeds by his father's method. He starts with top-quality tomatoes, lets the seeds ferment in their fluid to loosen them, and finally dries them on a towel resting on a wire screen.

Saving seed is a common practice among gardeners throughout the world. Before commercial plant breeding began in the mid-1800's, it was the only way to reproduce crops from one year to the next.

These days seed saving is mostly a hobby. It makes financial sense, especially when you consider the tiny pinch in most commercial seed packets, but probably the most popular reason for saving seed is to perpetuate an old garden variety no longer available in seed catalogs or garden centers. Propagating heirloom vegetables protects their existence and helps to promote the biological diversity upon which our future may depend.

Seed saving is practical only for non-hybrid or open-pollinated varieties. Hybrids don't reproduce true. Even with non-hybrid fruits and vegetables, accidental cross-pollination can be a problem. To reduce this risk gardeners can put extra space between varieties similar enough to crossbreed, or plant varieties with different flowering times.

Don't underestimate the importance of selecting quality fruits and vegetables for seed extraction. Choose parent plants that represent the quality you desire. Give the selected plant a little extra care, especially plenty of water during dry spells and ample fertilizer during the growing period.

Seeds have their best germination potential at the moment they reach maturity on the plant. After that, it all depends on how you process and store them. The important factors are temperature and moisture.

Let there be no mistake, the most crucial consideration is the moisture content of the seed itself. According to Dr. J. F. Harrington, seed physiologist at UCLA, when the moisture content of a seed is between five and 14 percent, a further one-percent reduction in moisture content doubles the life of the seed.

That means you need to dry your seeds thoroughly. For the home gardener that can be as easy as placing them in front of the heat outlet of your refrigerator. Another way is to place a light bulb above the seeds to be dried. Never dry seeds in the kitchen oven.

After drying your seeds find a suitable container. The home gardener need only look on the canning shelves for an empty mason jar. With a new lid it becomes a moisture-proof container. Rigid plastic or metal containers are fine, but avoid bags made of thin plastic, cloth or paper.

The ideal temperature to store dry seed is below 32°F. Temperatures above 45° will reduce germination. When removing seed from freezing temperatures, be careful to allow the container to reach room temperature before removing part of the seeds.

You may store seeds for a surprisingly long time, as much as five years for squash, watermelon and cucumbers. Tomatoes, spinach and beets are good for four years, and peppers, peas and beans for three. Keep corn no more than two years. Many individual seeds will sprout after even longer periods, but it isn't something you can count on.

Plant diseases sometimes live on the surface of seeds. These fungi aren't harmful to the actual seed but later may spread disease to the seedling. Take a tip from the commercial seed business and treat against it.

For the home gardener, the best defense for most seed coat organisms is common household bleach. Use one part bleach to 19 parts water, or 2½ teaspoons of bleach per cup. When you are ready to plant, soak the seeds in the solution for 90 seconds, then be sure to rinse them in fresh water.

Saving seeds can be intimidating for the beginning gardener. It shouldn't be. These are age-old skills, easily mastered and nearly foolproof when practiced properly. The best way to learn is to jump in and try it yourself this harvest season.

— John L. Marra

Readers interested in saving and exchanging seeds will find many ads in the classified section of The Market Bulletin, *published free of charge by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture. You may also join the Seed Saver Exchange by sending $25 dues to 3076 North Winn Road, Decorah, IA 52101. The Exchange's most recent yearbook lists more than 15,000 varieties.*

Archer's Greenhouses propagated the Mortgage Lifter after 1930. This photo shows the complex during the 1937 Ohio River flood. Photographer unknown.

stock. With little seed in hand and desperate to save his tomato, he contacted Clifford Smith, a well-known horticulturist in Huntington. Smith took the remaining seeds to Archer's Greenhouse, where they were successfully propagated.

For over 50 years, Archer's Flowers of Huntington operated a greenhouse complex on Route 2 along the bank of the Ohio River north of the city. Founder William Spriggs Archer had started small. He built his first greenhouse to raise flowers for the family flower shop that's still in business downtown. Smith was the greenhouse superintendent, and he, Archer and Estler now became partners in raising tomato transplants.

This began a new, more commercial phase in the Mortgage Lifter story. During the early years, Bill Estler hadn't had a greenhouse of his own nor any arrangements with an outside producer. He distributed plants himself as the Mortgage Lifter's fame spread locally. The agreement with Archer's changed that, putting the big tomato on a production basis.

The idea was to sell tomato plants, not tomatoes. Estler provided the Mortgage Lifter seed to Clifford Smith at the greenhouse. Smith

Don Spence of Kenova finds that the big tomato plants provide shade for his porch and food for his table.

would raise the plants to sell to gardeners and provide Estler with a royalty for each one sold. There was enough money in it to keep everyone interested, and apparently the relationship was rewarding in other ways as well. "William and Mr. Estler were buddies and spent considerable time with horticulture projects," recalls William Archer's daughter-in-law, Myrtle Archer of Huntington.

Shorty Meadows, a greenhouse worker at Archer's, is given credit for naming Estler's famous tomato. His son, Gene Meadows of Huntington, recalls the anecdote. "One day when approaching Mr. Estler with a tray of those 'special' tomato transplants, Dad said 'I've brought you your mortgage lifters.'"

Gene figures that his father meant that the tomato was so popular that any commercial producer could pay off his mortgage from the sales proceeds. Bill Estler loved the idea, and he took Meadows's phrase as the name for his tomato.

For almost 25 years, Archer's Greenhouse raised Mortgage Lifter tomatoes for Estler. There was a one-year interruption when the 1937 Ohio River flood destroyed the greenhouse complex. Archer's provided a reliable source of garden plants, and people in the Tri-State came to love the big tomato.

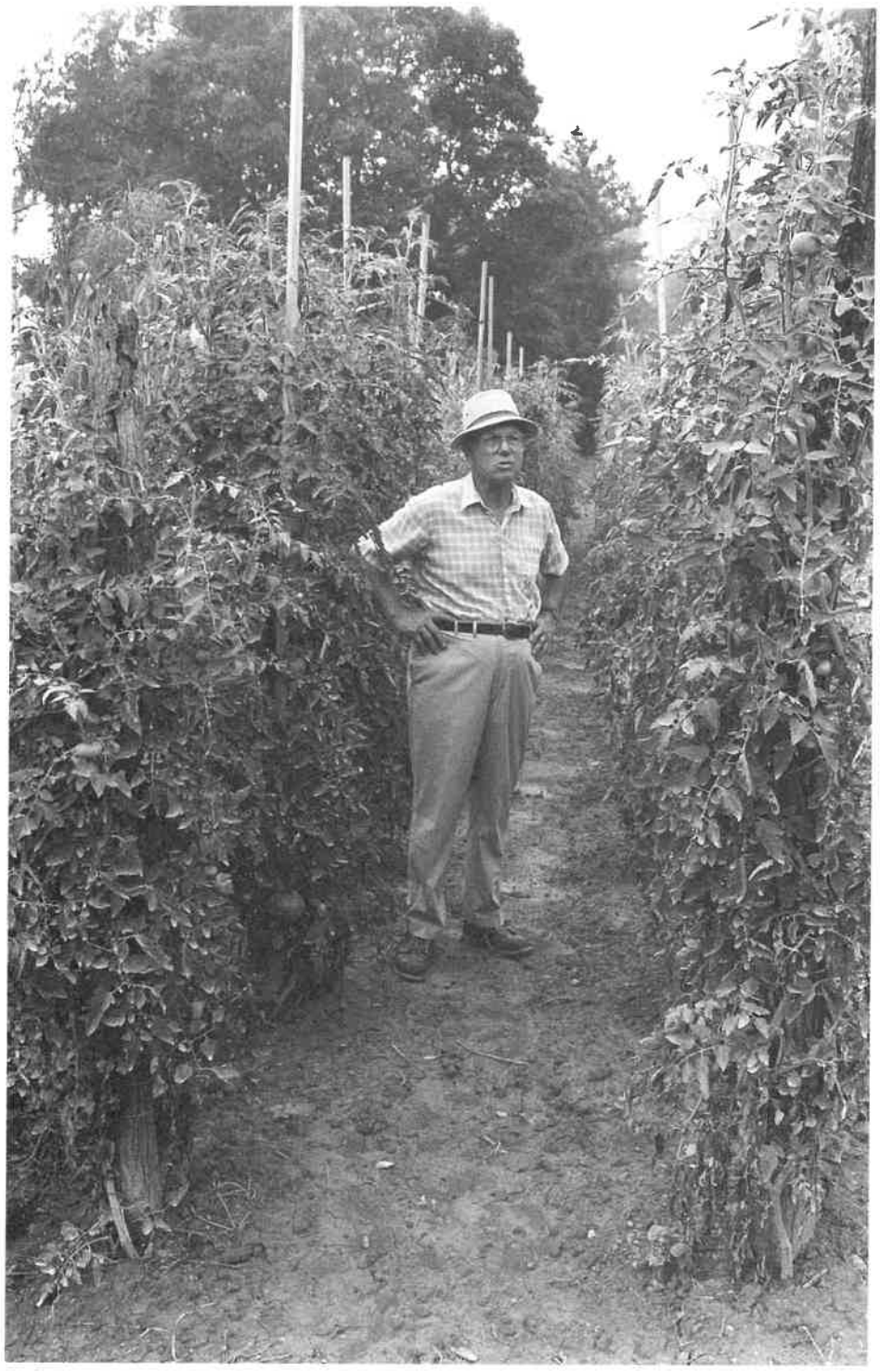
In 1932, with the help of Huntington attorney Okey P. Keadle, now deceased, the term "Mortgage Lifter" was registered to protect its discoverer and safeguard the quality of one of the best non-hybrid tomatoes ever developed. Nonetheless, the name has come to be applied to more tomatoes than just the one belonging to Bill Estler. Today you can find several varieties in seed catalogs using some variation of the name, such as the Pink Mortgage Lifter, Mortgage Lifter Type and Radiator Charlie's Mortgage Lifter, the latter named for "Radiator Charlie" Byles of Logan County.

"Probably all those tomatoes listed in today's seed and garden catalogs have similar qualities to the true Mortgage Lifter that had its origin in Barboursville," says Bob Estler.

A recent issue of *National Gardening* magazine, with a worldwide circulation of over 250,000 subscribers, featured an extensive story on heirloom tomatoes. Author Jack Ruttle listed the Mortgage Lifter as one of the top five "Classic Tomatoes" of all time.

Estler knew he had a winner because the new tomato produced large fruit with a low acid content that permitted people to enjoy its full flavor without stomach distress. Today we commonly buy low-acid, sweet tomatoes, but to find such a tomato in the 1920's was rare.

As his Mortgage Lifter established a reputation Bill Estler's



Mortgage Lifters still dwarf the Estlers who grow them. This is Bob, photographed in the summer of 1993.

main goal was to guard his breeding stock and produce quality seeds to supply plenty of transplants. "During harvest time," says Bob Estler, "Dad selected the 'best of the best' that represented the quality tomato first discovered nearly 80 years ago.

"The extra-select seed was used for breeding stock on the farm the following summer. All other seed of high quality was distributed to greenhouse growers."

With seed extraction as with pollination, Estler had his own particular methods. Bob recalls his father's procedure and still follows it himself. Bill Estler selected vine-ripe tomatoes that represented the quality he desired to raise the next season, according to Bob. With a spoon, he scooped out all the seeds along with the locular fluid, the thick jelly-like filling that surrounds tomato seeds.

The seed mixture was placed in a bowl covered by a damp cloth. Here it remained for two to three days to ferment. The fermentation broke down the locular fluid and freed the seeds. Estler washed them with water through a sieve or screen, then placed the washed seeds on a towel supported on a wire screen. The purpose here, according to Bob Estler, was to speed drying of the seeds to avoid fungus problems.

All that remained was to store the seeds in an air-tight jar in the freezer, awaiting the next year's propagation of another generation of Mortgage Lifters.

A little seed went a long way, according to William D. "Farmer" Click, Cabell County Extension Agent in the 1950's. The Mortgage Lifter tomato and its discoverer were among the subjects Click wrote about in the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch*. "William S. Estler always saved six to seven ounces of his best Mortgage Lifter seed," Farmer Click pointed out. "One ounce made about 3,000 to 4,000 tomato transplants."

Bill Estler died in a tragic house fire in 1968. "Unfortunately, many pictures of Dad, along with his extensive tomato production records, were lost. However, the Mortgage Lifter tomato lives on in tribute to his hard work," Bob notes.

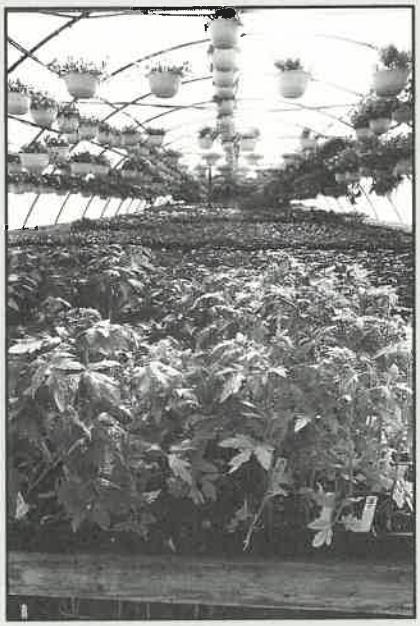
Greenhouse worker Shorty Meadows is given credit for naming the famous tomato. Approaching Mr. Estler with a tray of transplants, he said, "I've brought you your mortgage lifters."

Joyce Fortner, owner of Joyce's Greenhouse, is quick to mention her pride in growing Mortgage Lifters. "Raising a tomato first discovered in Cabell County gives me tremendous satisfaction as a commercial producer of garden transplants," she says. "Many of my customers buy Mortgage Lifter tomato plants today because their parents raised the same variety, and they have been accustomed to its fine, full-flavored qualities."

It isn't hard to find gardeners who recall a long relationship with Bill Estler's big tomato. James LeMaster, a garden enthusiast in Huntington, can remember back to the early 1940's when his father, Ben LeMaster, always had a patch of Mortgage Lifters. "Dad could always depend on a tremendous crop of large pink, sweet, and low-acid tomatoes. That's why he raised them for decades."

Jack Vannatter of Milton, also an avid gardener, has raised Mortgage Lifters for over 38 years. "It's the tomato that can't be beat," he says.

Getting Yours



Mortgage Lifter seedlings at Blatt's Greenhouse.

It's a little late in the growing season to plant Mortgage Lifter tomatoes, but for next year keep in mind that three West Virginia greenhouses are authorized to sell the Estler seedlings — Joyce's Greenhouse in Barboursville, Stadler's in Nitro, and Blatt's in Lavalette. The average cost for the plants is $1.50 for a six-cell pack.

In the meantime, perhaps you can find the tomatoes themselves for sale. Though we couldn't confirm that Mortgage Lifters are commonly found at other farmers markets, author John Marra says you can find the big tomatoes at the Farmers Market in Huntington on Third Avenue and at the Route 10 location. The tomatoes cost about 45¢ a pound.

Mortgage Lifters usually come to market in mid to late July, and are so big and so pinkish-red that it's difficult not to recognize them. Marra tells us the primary reason for the lack of Mortgage Lifters in grocery stores is that they do not ship well, but he emphasizes that it is a "great home garden tomato."

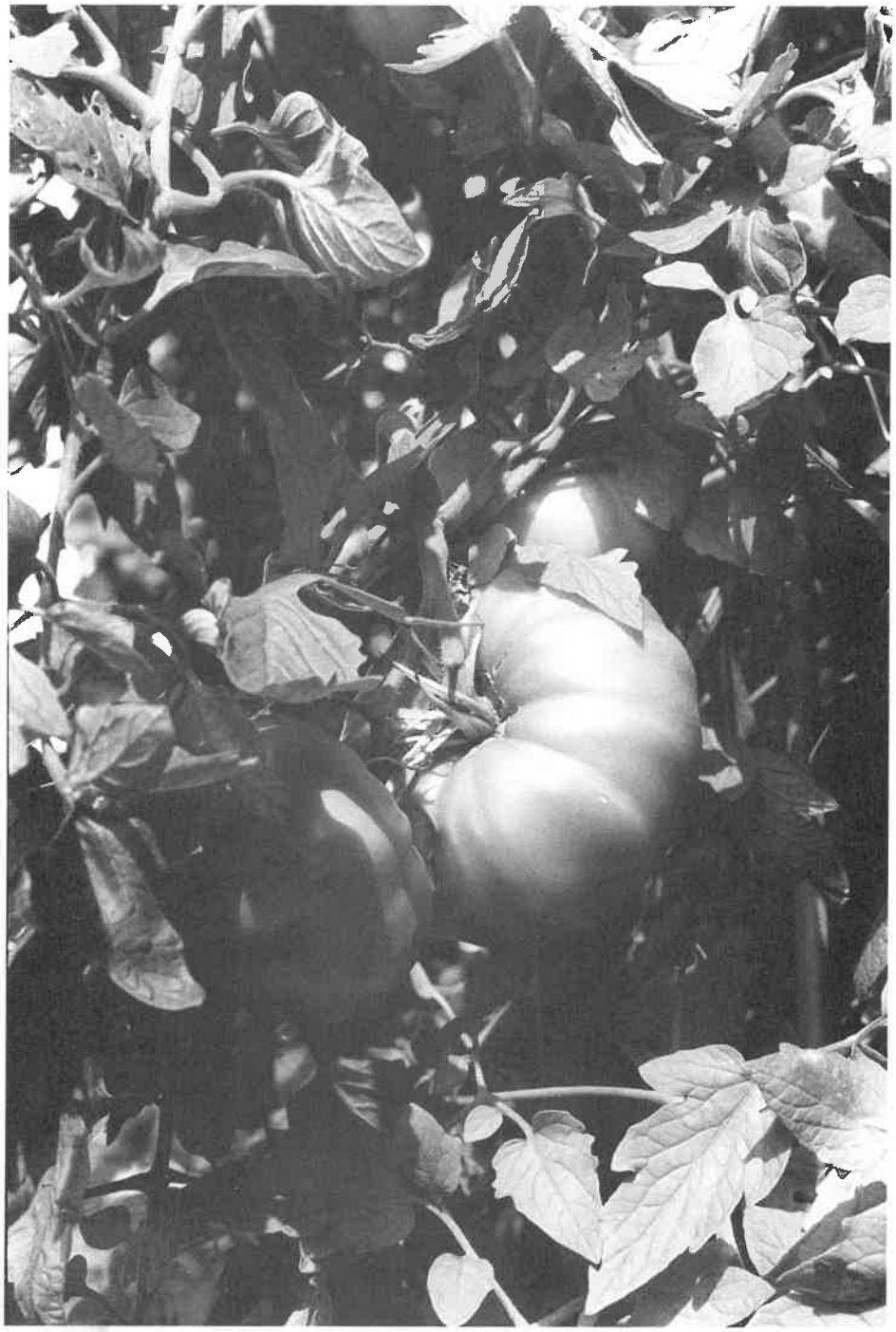
So if you want to enjoy this West Virginia tomato, planting it in *your* garden next spring may be the best bet.

"Most of them average two to three pounds and have a beautiful taste. I would recommend them to anyone." Mr. Vannatter bought his first plants from William Estler himself.

No doubt, the Mortgage Lifter is a gardener's dream and a delightful addition to any summertime meal. Admittedly, it isn't perfect. It produces big fruit, too big for a lot of folks, in oddball shapes. Furthermore, the plant needs special care and pruning and its delicate skin makes it an unpopular shipping tomato. This reduces the Mortgage Lifter's commercial potential.

But who cares? The home gardener usually looks for just those qualities which can't be found in a supermarket tomato. The Mortgage Lifter has them, and the taste is marvelous.

The Mortgage Lifter, ripe and ready.



A Rare Farm Experience

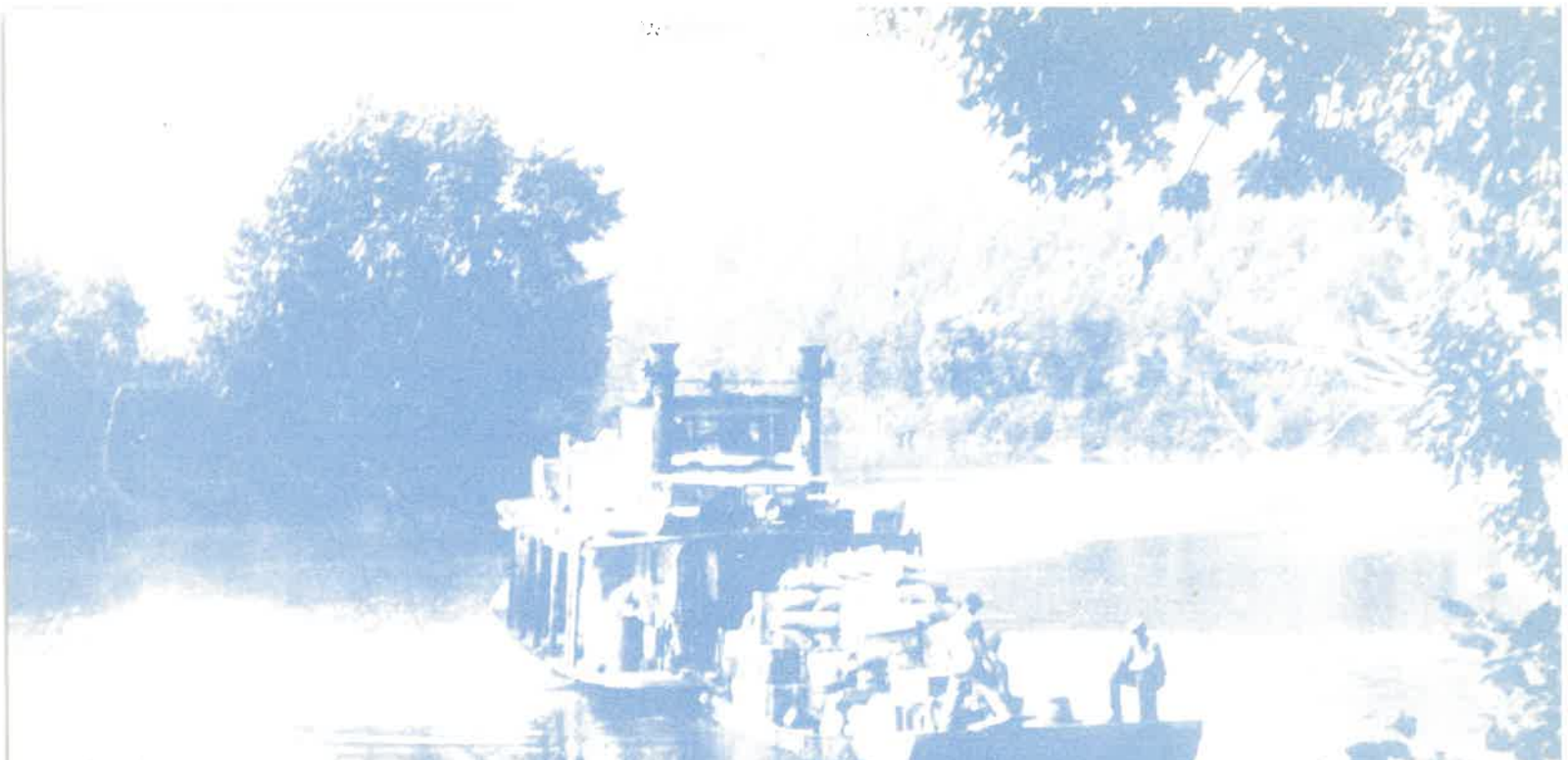
If you like animals, especially rare breeds of domestic animals, then Gate Farmpark in Upshur County invites you to visit for a "family farm experience."

The park is located near the West Virginia State Wildlife Center at French Creek. In addition to a petting zoo, Gate Farmpark has a playground, picnic areas, and country store stocked with West Virginia farm-produced crafts and products. The park usually has livestock available for sale from its breeding programs.

At the Gate Farmpark, pygmy goats, donkeys, and Jacob sheep are among the park's alternative livestock, along with unusual fowl such as black swans, giant dewlap geese, royal palm turkeys and peafowl. The donkeys and Jacob sheep are both rare breeds, meaning they exist in small numbers. Both are on a "watch" status, according to the American Minor Breeds Conservancy, indicating their breed has shown a steady decline in recent years. In the United States, Jacob sheep are favored by handspinners for their wool.

Gate Farmpark is open seven days a week from Memorial Day Weekend to Labor Day Weekend from 10 a.m. to dusk. Admission is $1. For more information call (304)924-6176. The park welcomes large groups, school groups and family reunions.

The American Minor Breeds Conservancy, with more than 4,000 members, works in behalf of rare breeds of domestic animals. For more information write to P.O. Box 477, Pittsboro, NC 27312 or call (919)542-5704.



"It Was Crowded Up There"

Paddlewheelers on the Little Kanawha

By Joy Gregoire Gilchrist

Nearly three years ago the folks at GOLDENSEAL asked me to do a story about the riverboats of the Little Kanawha River.
I didn't know what I was getting into.

First, my husband and I drove Route 5 eastward from Parkersburg. It was a good way to start. Route 5 follows the Little Kanawha valley nearly to the headwaters and actually traces the meanders of the river in places. We stopped in every little town. "Do you know anyone who used to work on the boats?" we asked.

The reply was always, "My dad — or uncle, or Old Man So-and-So — did, but he's dead." One lady in Elizabeth said, "I remember seeing them on the river, but that's all I know."

Then one snowy day in March 1992, Kyle Emerson, the librarian in Glenville at the time, helped me find an informative Glenville Democrat *article by Dr. Berlin B. Chapman. Kyle also told me about two ladies, Margaret Moss and Jane Singleton, whose grandfathers had worked on the boats. Jane was wintering in Florida, and Dr. Chapman had retired there.*

That left Margaret, and Kyle was optimistic. "Even though Mar-garet's too young to remember the riverboats, she has a good collection of material about them," he said. "You could talk to her. I think her uncle who lives in Parkersburg worked on them."

Months passed and my efforts to catch Margaret at home were fruitless.

Then came the West Virginia State Folk Festival at Glenville in June 1992. At last I met Margaret! She was overseeing a small museum display about the riverboats for the Gilmer County Historical Society. Yes, she would share her knowledge with me; yes, she had an uncle who had worked on the boats; and, yes, she would take me to see him.

But more time passed, and I still didn't go to Parkersburg to see Margaret's uncle. Soon it was Folk Festival 1993. Margaret and I made a date. We were going to see Bo Shuman in a few weeks.

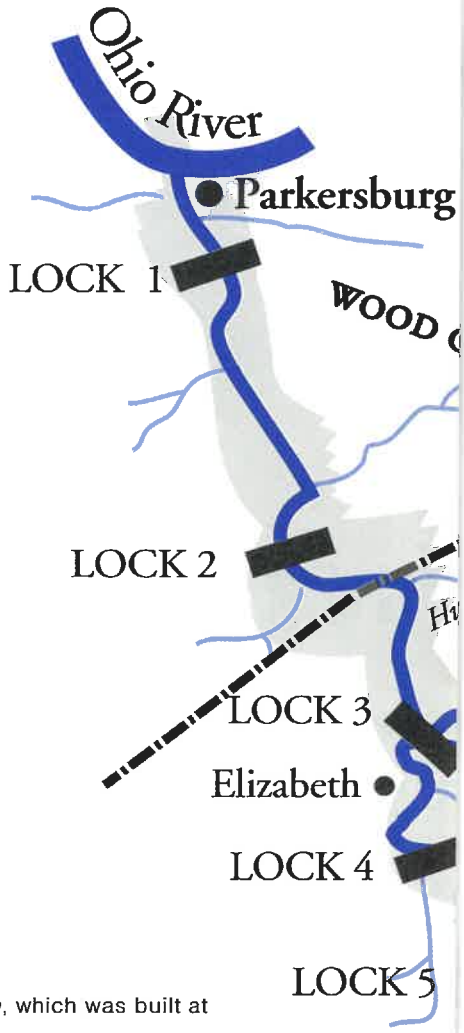
And, at last, I arranged a visit with Jane Singleton. This story is the result of those visits.

In an all-but-forgotten day, gasoline-powered riverboats traveled the upper reaches of the Little Kanawha River delivering mail, freight, and passengers. These paddlewheelers were the last in a long string of efforts to make the river a primary transportation route into the heart of West Virginia. Ultimately, they were doomed by the automobile.

The gasoline boats themselves had displaced the earlier steamboats on the Little Kanawha. "Gas boats" had the advantage of being lighter and less expensive to operate. They also required far less water depth than the steamboats, getting by with as little as a foot of water when necessary. Sometimes their sturdy paddlewheels literally crawled the bottom.

Mail came by train to Gilmer Station and then was picked up by John Shuman's boats, first the *Ora D* and later the *Ruby*. It was taken to

"The old man said, 'You'll never get that thing in the boat, that's too big a motor.' I said, 'That's just what we want!'"



Boats and barges crowded a river as small as the Little Kanawha. This is the gas boat *Return*, which was built at Grantsville in 1904. Photographer and date unknown, State Archives.

Glenville for delivery by contract carriers in the Gilmer County seat and the surrounding countryside.

Students who were attending Glenville Normal School (now Glenville State College) rode the train from Parkersburg or from Orlando, Lewis County, to Gilmer Station. There they embarked on Blair Gainer's boat, the *Gainer No. 1*, to Glenville. The same boats and others, like the *Orion* and the *Flora D*, both owned and operated by Beckworth Nomic Boyles, hauled freight and groceries to the stores and citizens of the college town on the Little Kanawha.

Hope Natural Gas owned the *Euell S*, the *Gray Eagle*, the *Mildred M*, and the *Sunshine*. They were used to haul pipe and other materials for the oil and gas business that was booming in Gilmer and other counties along the river in those days. When their own boats were busy, Hope would hire private boats such as the *Reliance* and the *Vance* to help.

Every town on the river was served by the gas boats. Burnsville, Glenville, Elizabeth, Creston, and Burning Springs had docks for the shallow-bottomed boats. According to William "Bo" Shuman, who is believed to be the last surviving Little Kanawha riverboat pilot, "It was crowded up there."

Some boats traveled the entire length of the river, but the Shuman boats generally worked the Gilmer Station to Glenville section. At times they made special trips to Parkersburg and Burnsville.

Bo remembers one occasion when he hauled a boys' basketball team and May Cramblett's girls' team from Glenville to Parkersburg for a tournament. Coming back upriver after the games, the girls wanted to take a turn at the wheel of the *Ruby*. Bo says, "I told them to hold her out from the bank and watch up ahead. If they saw anything, they were to steer away from it. All at once the boat went this-a-way. We'd hit a big log. I grabbed the wheel real quick and swung it hard as I could to get it off the log. None of them wanted to steer after that."

He started working on the boats when he was "just a kid, only nine years old," Bo says. Born in 1910, the eldest of the eight children of John and Ora D. (Sims) Shuman, he is retired now and lives in Parkersburg with his dog for companionship. His wife died a few years ago, but his sons check on him each day.

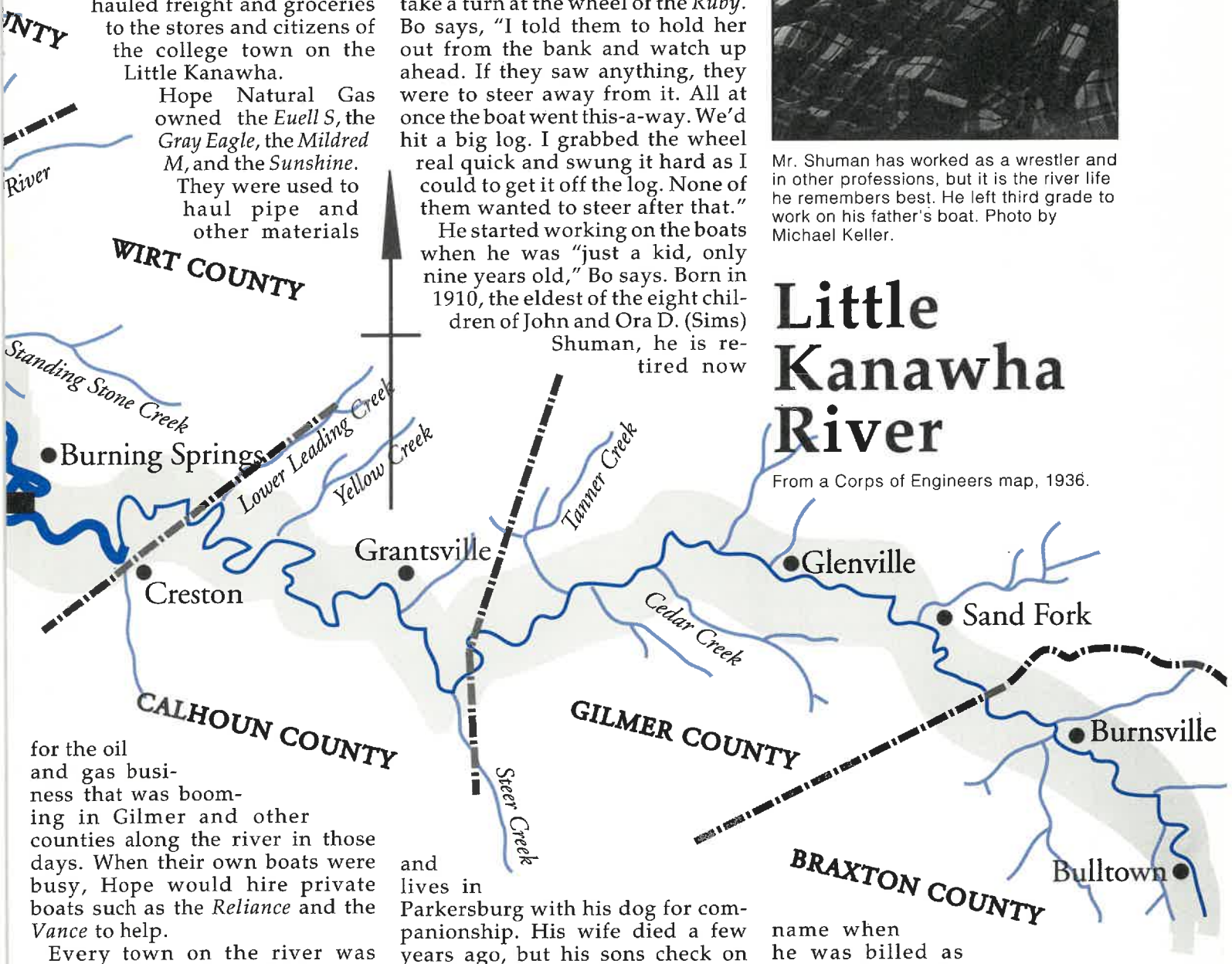
At 83, Bo has some problems with his legs but retains the physique that made him a professional wrestler as well as one of the best pilots on the river. He earned his nickname when he was billed as "Bozo, the West Virginia Bone Crusher" on the county fair circuit. "I was always big and stout," he says. "Lifting freight and 16-inch pipe on the boats helped me."

Bo traveled as a professional

Mr. Shuman has worked as a wrestler and in other professions, but it is the river life he remembers best. He left third grade to work on his father's boat. Photo by Michael Keller.

Little Kanawha River

From a Corps of Engineers map, 1936.



wrestler with a carnival in West Virginia for two seasons. "Anybody who could stay in the ring with me for five minutes was paid $5. That was a lot of money in those days," he boasts. "One time I wrestled Bill McMasters who was a world champion wrestler. I held my own."

Bo grew up on the river. "I didn't have much education," he says. "The old man pulled me out of school when I was in the third grade to work on the boats. What education I got, I got from Cap'n O'Brien. He was a captain in the army in the Spanish-American War. He had a big place up there on Glenville hill. I'd go up there and clean his barns, and he'd teach me to read."

John Shuman contracted all seven mail routes out of Weston, including the one to Gilmer Station. There was no hard road to Gilmer Station in 1919. Bo says, "It was dirt with mud to the horses' bellies in the wet weather. Everything came to Glenville either up the river or over the road from Weston. The mail came by train from Parkersburg to Gilmer Station and then up the river."

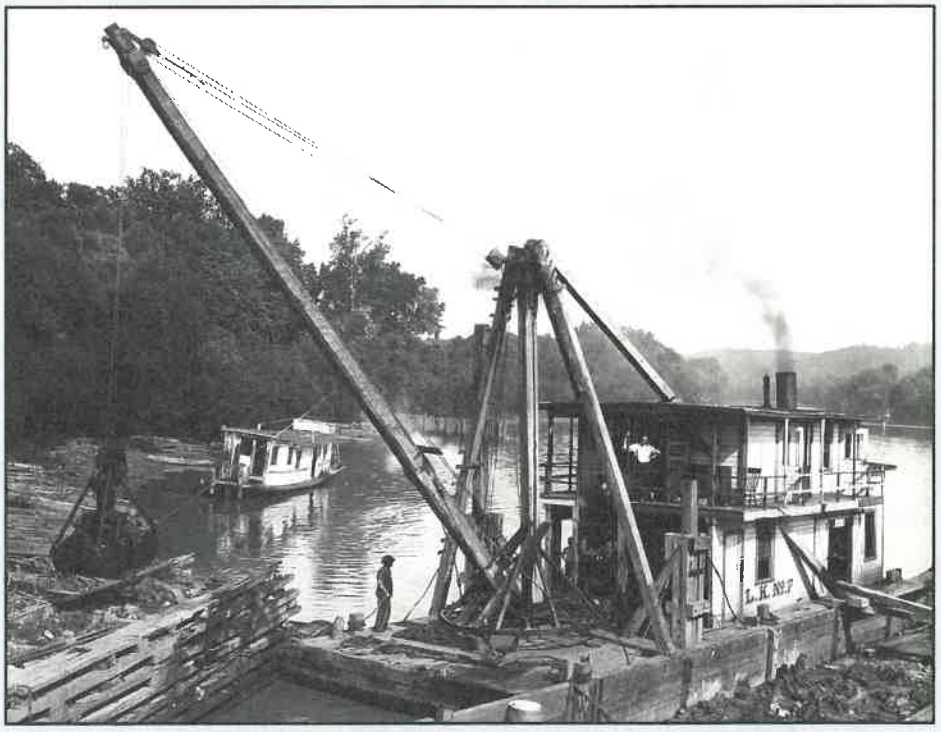
John moved his family from Weston to Glenville and hired Ed Snyder and his brother to build a boat. According to Bo, "We didn't know nothing about boating. None

Some Historical Background:
Navigation on the Little Kanawha

The Little Kanawha Valley is rich in river history.

The Indians traveled the river and walked the valley trails to get salt from Bulltown, in the center of our present state. The first white inhabitants of the area came by way of the Ohio River and settled the Little Kanawha from west to east, heading upstream. In the 18th and 19th centuries there were few roads over the Allegheny Mountains to the western parts of Virginia, and they were passable only during certain times of the year.

Christopher Gist, a representative of the Ohio Company, explored the lower reaches of the Little Kanawha in February 1751, making his way to the vicinity of the present town of Elizabeth. In 1765, George Crogan, a famous Indian trader, land speculator and British agent for Indian affairs traveled down the Ohio to the mouth of the Little Kanawha. Following the American Revolution, the valley of the Ohio was rapidly settled, and there was sufficient settlement along the Little Kanawha River by 1790 for the inhabitants to forward a petition to the Harrison County Court for a road.



A small stream like the Little Kanawha required plenty of improvements for navigation. This is the dredge *L.K. No. 7* at work, with the *Glenville* behind. Photographer and date unknown, G. W. Sutphin Collection.

The Board of Public Works was established in Virginia in 1816. This board fostered "internal improvements," such as turnpike and river development. Rules governing navigable rivers were included under turnpike legislation. The Little Kanawha River is mentioned as early as 1803, with regards to the erection of mill dams and other obstructions to navigation.

The General Assembly of Virginia passed legislation on February 20, 1838, directing a survey of the Little Kanawha from its mouth to Bulltown. The survey was done by Claudius Crozet, the director of the Board of Public Works. Crozet recommended that ten locks and dams be constructed at the cost of $480,000, which would permit navigation from Parkersburg to the Bulltown salt works, a distance of 158 river miles. In 1845, the Virginia Assembly appointed three commissioners to locate suitable places for the locks to be built.

In 1847, the Little Kanawha Navigation Company opened books for the sale of stock to make the river navigable, but by the time the Civil War started there were no locks and dams on the Little Kanawha. Peter G. Van Winkle, later one of the founders of West Virginia, was

of us did. But that didn't matter. The old man was a 'jack of all trades, master of none.' He'd try anything.

"The boat was built down there on the gravel bar where the new bridge is now," continues Bo. "They put an old Model T engine in her and put her in the river there on the bar. We named her the *Ora D* after Mom. Sometimes we called the old O.D. boat 'Old Devil.'

"She was an ol' devil," Bo affirms. "That's the reason the old man took me out of school. I had to keep pouring oil into her engine as we'd go up the river.

"In late '21 or early '22, she caught fire. We were pretty near to Gilmer Station when the pilot told me to put some gasoline in her. The gas ran down and hit that old hot exhaust and she went up in flames. We had a whole bunch of mail piled up in there. I threw a lot of it in the river to keep it from burning."

With a chuckle Bo says, "Back then people would shell walnuts and ship them to sell. There were some of them in there. After the fire, I ate those things till I was sick.

"That was some fire!" he reminisces. "She burned right down to the river's edge. The old barge part was still floating and some of the gunnels were left when we got the fire out. We floated it back down

among the prominent figures in the formation of the company.

Coal and timber were thought to be in great enough quantity to justify the improvement of the river. Timber had been floated downriver since the beginning of the 19th century. But it was the discovery of natural gas, and most important, oil, that was to spark an excitement that demanded the river be improved.

The oil of the Volcano Anticline is produced at a fairly shallow depth, and oil and gas seeped from the ground at Burning Springs in Wirt County. Successful drilling for oil in Wirt County was accomplished in 1860, within months of the discovery at Oil City, Pennsylvania. Towns grew up overnight with such names as Petroleum, Oil Springs and Volcano.

Speculators began buying land. The Rathbones, Johnson Newlon Camden, and others began drilling oil wells. Acres were subdivided and sublet to individuals hoping to strike it rich. The town of Burning Springs was said to have grown to over 6,000 inhabitants, exceeding the entire population of Wirt County today. Hotels sprang up everywhere. The whole region boomed. With no improvements to the river, oil was floated downstream in barrels or carried on rafts and shallow-draft boats when the water depth allowed.

The Civil War put an end to the big boom. On May 9, 1863, Confederate General William E. Jones arrived with 1,500 troops at Burning Springs. They set fire to every house, derrick and oil storage tank. It is estimated that between 150,000 and 300,000 barrels of oil were burned either in tanks, barrels or barges along the river. Burning oil flowed on top of the water. The fire could be seen all the way to Parkersburg. It was feared the local oil industry would die.

But even before West Virginia became a separate state on June 20, 1863, the Unionist "Restored Government" of Virginia passed a special act officially incorporating the Little Kanawha Navigation Company. The West Virginia Legislature amended the charter in March 1864, and the end of the Civil War in 1865 brought renewed interest in the oil business. With a potential production of 2,300 barrels of oil per day, the incorporators of the navigation company were more determined than ever to construct locks and dams along the river.

Contracts for the first four locks and dams were let in 1867. Due to problems with labor, contractors and materials, the locks were not finished until 1874. Now boats could travel from Parkersburg upriver past Palestine, the location of Lock No. 4. These were private locks, and the company took a toll. In 1891, the "Government Lock" was built near Burning Springs. The dams were carefully located to provide the maximum slackwater pools.

Boats now traveled regularly from Parkersburg up the Little Kanawha River, expanding upon a tradition already decades old. The first steamboat to go one mile up the Little Kanawha had been the *Paul Pry* in 1837. The *Sciota Belle*, a sidewheel steamboat nearly 120 feet long, was the first to go to Elizabeth, in 1842. The *Zanesville* also traveled as far as Elizabeth in 1842. After these pioneers hundreds of boats made trips up and down the Little Kanawha. They encompassed a wide range of vessels, from elaborate steamboats to the later gasoline-engine boats.

The chambers in the first four locks were 125 feet long and 23 feet wide. Boats of all sizes and descriptions now were able to travel the river. Companies such as the Little Kanawha Transportation Company and the Parkersburg and Creston Packet Company were formed to make regular passenger runs. Goods needed for everyday life could easily be brought up from Parkersburg, and those produced upriver could be taken back for sale.

Coal, carbon black, railroad ties, oil, staves, hoop poles, lumber, grain, salt, and hay were some of the products taken downriver, while farm machinery, dry goods and groceries, hardware, oil well supplies, paints and other non-agricultural products moved in the other direction. Many boats traveled between the upper locks on the river. More lockages are shown for the upper locks than with Parkersburg, indicating that there was a brisk trade between towns along the river.

A new industry also was started along the banks of the Little Kanawha. Boats were now being built at towns such as Creston, Burning Springs, Stumptown, Grantsville, and Burnsville. Some of the first boats built on the river were the *Wirt* (1871) and *General Jackson* (1875), built at Burning Springs, and the *D.D. Burns* (1885) and the 104-foot *W. A. Hilton* (1890), built at Elizabeth. Grantsville led the way in boat production on the Little Kanawha River, with more than two dozen fair-sized boats being built there.

— Larry N. Sypolt

the river, tied it up at Glenville, and started hauling the mail with horses. When a flood came, I cut the burned barge loose and let it go on down the river. I don't know what became of it.

"That summer then — it was in '22 — we built the *Ruby*. I named her after my sister who had just been born. Old Man Bush and Ed Snyder and his brother built her. I helped. That Ed Snyder, he was some carpenter. He could make anything."

The boat builders went over on the other side of Leather Gap to a sawmill to get the gunnels, "gunwales" to us landlubbers. They were 40 feet long. They spliced them together and made the boat 70 feet long. They laid 12-foot oak boards for the floor.

John Shuman wanted to put another Ford engine on it. Bo said no. He wanted the new boat to be the fastest on the river. He wanted to make it so the *Ruby* would "wheel" the Floyd Riffle under its own power.

According to Bo, another of John's sidelines was hauling junk. Bo recalls, "He was going out of there with a load of junk in an old Model T Ford truck. He and old 'Pegleg' Crummit were going to Bob Winer's junkyard down at Clarksburg.

Never mind what the cap says, Bo Shuman is talking boating not fishing. Mr. Shuman is one of the last of the Little Kanawha rivermen. Photo by Michael Keller.

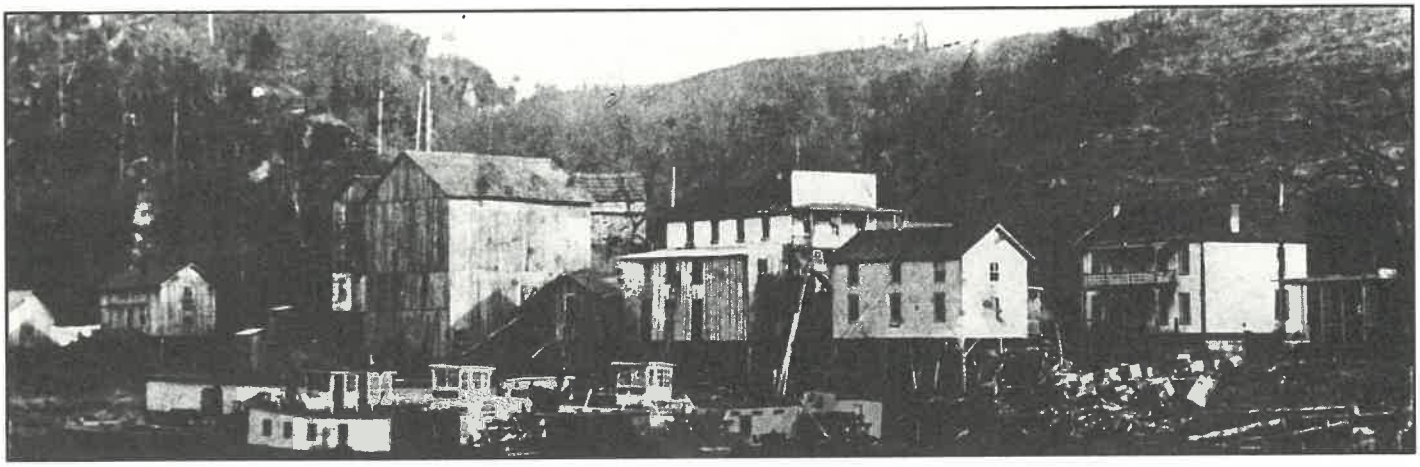
"I said, 'I'm going along. Bob has a lot of big old trucks sitting there with big old motors in them. I'll bet he has something that will work in the new boat.'

"Well, I looked around down there and then I went in to Bob. I said to him, 'Bob, what do you want for that big old motor of that big old truck out there?'

"'Aw,' he said, 'Beings it's you and your dad and you're good customers for me, hauling in a lot of junk, I'll take $50 for it.'

"I said to him, 'Get your guy with the horse. We want to load it on this old Model T and take it home with us.'

Riverboats carried goods in and out of the Little Kanawha Valley, and plenty of stuff from town to town within the valley. This is Beckworth Nomic Boyles's *Orion*, with Mr. Boyles perched on the roof. Photographer and date unknown.



Creston was once a bustling river harbor. This photograph of the waterfront was made about 1906. Photographer unknown, West Virginia Collection, WVU.

"My old man said, 'You'll never get that thing in the boat, that's too big a motor.'

"I said, 'That's just what we want.'

"When we got back to Glenville," Bo continues with a mile-wide grin, "we brought the *Ruby* down and got some cross-ties and got the motor in the boat and lined up. Boy, it would throw water clear over the front of the boat, clear up on the deck. We'd put that wheel down deep, and, boy, we'd go with it.

"I've gone to Gilmer Station by myself a lot of times with it. I'd get some guys up there to help me load. And she'd wheel right up Floyd Riffle!"

The story of building the *Ruby* finished, Bo talks about the river itself and the riffles and eddies between Glenville and Gilmer Station. He says, "The river was wider then. We kept it dredged out and cut the brush from the bank.

"There would be a nice big eddy water, deep water, and then rocks it would break over. Some riffles, like Floyd Riffle, were more than four feet high.

"There were ten big riffles in that section of the river. Going right out of town [Glenville] was that little old Town Riffle. It was a pretty hard one. It didn't carry the water the way it should. You had to jaw down pretty hard."

By 1931, the automobile was in general use on much improved roadways. Quite naturally, the slow boats gave way to faster cars.

There wasn't much glamour to Little Kanawha riverboating, where barges were often nudged up to a muddy bank to unload onto any available overland transportation. This is the gas boat *Crane* at Grantsville, about 1916-17. Photographer unknown, courtesy G. W. Sutphin Collection.

Getting into his story, Bo leans forward in his chair and continues without seeming to draw a breath, "You'd go through what we called the Rock Bottom, till you got up to the Big Bend. Next you'd hit a big sand ridge. Then you'd go through the Charlie Hayes Riffle — Charlie Hayes used to be the assessor in Gilmer County, you know. Then you'd go on up to another little riffle, the Snyder Riffle. That was pretty hard going through. Then you'd go on up through the eddies clear up to the big swinging bridge that went across the river there. Up above the bridge, you had to go around a curve and that was a tough one. None of it was easy.

"About four miles from Glenville you came into Floyd Riffle. You could stand down there and look up, and it looked like it was over your head, with the water coming

down over there. It was swift. I've went up in there many times.

"Then there was another pretty hard riffle. I can't remember the name of it right now. Then True Beatty Riffle was the sixth riffle; Sand Fork Riffle was seven; then on up above Sand Fork was the eighth riffle, ninth riffle; it was more than half a mile long and not very deep. Then just before you got into Gilmer [Station] there was another riffle."

His litany of the route of the river told, Bo Shuman relaxes and pats his dog on the head. I had to ask more about the "riffles," the points at which the Little Kanawha ran so fast as to challenge navigation. Bo says that the riffle at Gilmer was one that tested some boats.

"Yeah," Bo says. "Sometimes you'd get another boat up in there and you could hardly get through. Old Man What's-His-Name would get up in there and have to winch through. He'd put a winch on the front and lay his line to a big pole up ahead and start winching it. It'd take maybe an hour or two to get up through there.

"I never would wait on him; I'd just climb on up to the side of him. He said he'd never seen a boat that had so much power as the *Ruby*," Bo brags. "I'd go on up there to the eddy waters where I could pull them on up through."

Bo says that "anybody could pilot a boat going upstream," but that

Riders Remember:
Taking the Boat

The riverboats have been gone from Glenville for more than 60 years, but ask anyone there and they'll tell you that the Gainers had boats. That's because the Gainer family, notably Blair Gainer, operated a passenger service between Glenville and Gilmer Station and were well-known to the public.

Dr. Berlin B. Chapman, now a resident of Orlando, Florida, remembers riding the *Gainer I* in April 1921 when he entered Glenville Normal School, now Glenville State College. He had been teaching in the one-room Coal Lick school in Mannington District, Marion County, on a certificate from a teacher's institute. Eager to improve himself, he enrolled as a freshman at Glenville.

"I was sent the school's *Bulletin* for 1920-21," Dr. Chapman recalls. "It said that automobiles, hacks, and boats made connections with all trains at Gilmer [Station], 12 miles away. During the summer and fall an automobile line made daily connections between Glenville and Weston. Students who planned to attend should contact the president who would advise in the matter of conveyance, according to existing conditions.

"I contacted President Edward G. Rohrbaugh and he directed me to take the boat," continues Dr. Chapman. "I left Mannington on the first. It took me three days by street car, railroad, and boat to reach the school. Shortly after noon on Monday, April 4, 1921, I boarded the boat, the *Gainer I.* It had two decks.

"It was a beautiful day and an enjoyable ride. The boat floated most of the way. The men pushed it through the riffles with poles, and in a few places they pulled it through. I enjoyed the ride."

Chapman lived with Mr. and Mrs. William Moss, near present Clark Hall, until he completed his studies in 1922 and moved on to West Virginia University to further his education.

"Mr. Moss and a partner, Van Arnold, owned and operated a boat, the *Willy Moss*," he recalls. "They used it to supply their store in Glenville that dealt in general merchandise and feed."

Lytle Powell was probably the pilot on the boat trip that Dr. Chapman remembers. Others who worked on the boat over the years included Clyde Luzader, Tom Woodyard, and Pud Luzader.

The *Gainer I* would leave Glenville at 6:30 a.m. and would generally reach Gilmer Station around noon, in time to meet the train. Passengers paid $2 for a one-way trip; trunks cost $2.50. When the boat reached Glenville, it docked under the old bridge; passengers then climbed 45 steps up the steep bank to the street level. Trunks and luggage were hauled up a nearby dirt track and delivered to the student's Glenville residence by a local porter service.

Blair Gainer's father, Lee, owned the *Gainer II.* In all but its cargo, it was an exact duplicate of its sister boat. Piloted by Blair's brother, Harley, the boat carried goods to Third Run where Lee had a feed store. The goods were hauled by wagon from the store to Tanner and other nearby points.

The two boats were each 60 feet long. The *Gainer I* was powered by a gasoline engine of 150 horsepower and had a capacity of 50 passengers.

Bayard Young of Glenville also remembers riding a riverboat one time. He says, "It was 1915 and I was 15. My grandfather, Carl Young, had died in Palestine, Ohio. We were going to his funeral.

"We got up before daylight and walked over the hill at Northview below Glenville. We flagged the boat down with a lantern. We rode to Gilmer Station where we caught the train for Orlando and rode to Clarksburg. There we boarded another train for Parkersburg.

"We spent the night in a hotel in a little town above Parkersburg. The next morning, the hotel people ferried us across the Ohio River. We went on to the funeral and then went through the whole process again, in reverse.

"Today we would make that trip by car in three or four hours," emphasizes Bayard. "Then it took two days."

— Joy Gregoire Gilchrist

it was hard coming down. It was to the pilot's advantage to have good help.

"I had good help too," says Bo. "Roy Herron was my engineer sometimes, and John Sprouse and his two boys worked for me. And there was Bill Holbert. Me and old Bill Holbert, we usually ran the *Ruby*. We ran it for two or three years. He was one of the best. He'd just do anything I told him."

River life could be hard. Some winter mornings they'd go out and the "mursh ice," or mushy ice, would be running. Paddles would break and the men would have to get in the water and replace them.

On an especially icy morning near Stout's Mills, the chain to the paddlewheel broke. There wasn't an extra chain, so the men had to get in the icy water and retrieve the broken chain. Barney Fitzpatrick stripped to his shorts and went in first. When he was unsuccessful, Bo took his turn. He lucked out and found it on his first jump.

One cold November morning, the *Mayfloat*, owned by Butch and Hunter Beall and piloted by Hunter, and the *Ruby*, piloted by Bo, were going upriver and breaking ice as they went. John Sprouse was working for Hunter, and Howard Sprouse was working for Bo. They reached True Beatty eddy where the ice was thick. Bo considered turning back to Glenville, but Hunter talked him into staying. They tied up side by side.

Bo says, "It wasn't a hard decision. We had hammocks to sleep in and a big cupboard above the stove stocked with peaches and everything. The boys started playing cards, and I started cooking. I put in a big ham and about 20 pounds of soup beans, and I mixed up a great big pan of cornbread.

"We were all playing cards and having a big time when old Porter Darnell came along on his horse. He hollered, 'Hey, boys, throw out the gangplank and let me on.'

"So we did. Porter said he was worn out from riding. I told him there was plenty to eat. We even had peaches!

"We started eating and pretty soon Porter says, 'I was starved. That's the best Thanksgiving dinner I've ever had. I'll never forget this Thanksgiving dinner right here on the Little Kanawhy River.' I don't suppose I'll ever forget it either. Boy, that was s-o-m-e eating!"

I could tell from the turn of the conversation that it was nearing lunchtime. Bo invited us to sample his potato salad. We did. And boy, that was s-o-m-e eating too!

In 1923 John Shuman traded the *Ruby* to Cline Ralston for the *Robin*. Cline hauled one load of pipe with the *Ruby* and docked it by the old bridge in Glenville. Bo says, "It rotted right there."

Shortly after the trade, Bo started using the *Robin* to haul 16-inch pipe for the pipeline that was being installed below Grassy Run and below Third Run. Dewey Westfall was his helper. Pushing a barge ahead of them, they would go to Gilmer Station to load the pipe. "We'd put four across the bottom, then three on top of them, then two, and then one," Bo says.

"Loading them wasn't any problem," he continues. "But unloading was different. Them that went down in the bottom, you had to pick them out. They weighed 2,200 pounds, and we didn't have a crane. I'd throw a four-by-four down in the end of it and lift it up and we would sprag it. Then I'd go to the other end and lift it up and sprag it. Then we could roll it off. It put muscles on me."

Besides the *Ora D* and the *Ruby*, the Shumans owned the *Bluebird*, the *Robin*, and the *Gravel Scratcher*. Bo piloted all of them at one time or another. After his father left the boat business in 1924, Bo continued to work on the river piloting for other boat owners until 1931.

By then, the Little Kanawha's riverboat era was coming to an end. Route 5 from Glenville to Gilmer Station was paved in 1929, and, by 1931, the automobile was in general use on much improved roadways. Quite naturally, the slow boats gave way to faster cars and trucks. The *Acme* was the last boat to operate on the river in Gilmer County.

Most of the gas boats on the upper Little Kanawha were finally docked and abandoned between the bridges in Glenville. Here they lay, rotting and sinking, until World War II when, according to Margaret Moss, "Red Paugh went down and took all the metal off of all of them and sold it." The wooden parts sank and were eventually washed away on the floods.

Though Bo left his work on the Little Kanawha River more than 60 years ago, he hasn't forgotten those exciting years. Today he spends his winter days building models of the boats of his youth. In the summer, he fishes the big Ohio in his bass boat. Yes, the river is still in Bo Shuman's heart.

Bo Shuman's model *Ora D* stays a lot drier than the original ever did. The boat was named for his mother. Photo by Michael Keller.

Daughters Virginia Bostic and Eurcell Broyles show off the Friendly Hands quilt made about 1910 by Catherine Riner Mann.

A Mother's Legacy

Quiltmaker Catherine Mann

By Eva Siebold
Photographs by Neil Glass

Quiltmaking is one of West Virginia's oldest and most treasured traditions, handed down from one generation to another. But many of the quiltmakers remain anonymous, only their quilts surviving to speak to us of their lives and the circumstances in which the quilts were made.

Fortunately, that is not always the case. This article will preserve the name of one quiltmaker, whose identity is well-known and deserves to be remembered. The information was gleaned from conversations with members of her family: two sisters, two daughters, a son and his wife.

Mary Catherine Riner Mann learned her sewing and quiltmaking in the traditional manner, from her mother and grandmother. She was a hard worker and an enthusiastic quilter. "She loved to quilt" was the sentiment

Quiltmaker Catherine Mann at age 50. This portrait was made in 1941, photographer unknown.

echoed by everyone I spoke with. Today her family treasures the quilts she made over her lifetime and speaks of Catherine with admiration and respect.

In Monroe County, 13 miles north of Peterstown, is the small community of Wikel. It was here that Catherine Riner was born in 1891. Two miles southwest and over the hill is a smaller community, Assurance, where Catherine lived after her marriage and where her children were born and raised.

Wikel, where Catherine grew up, was a community of small farms with, at one time, a store, a blacksmith and a grist mill. In 1917 Catherine's brother, Ote Riner, and Frank Mann, the twin brother of her future husband, built a one-room schoolhouse which also served as a place of worship. Before this building was constructed, the community held religious services in a pine grove near the village.

Catherine's ancestors were some of the first settlers in this area. Her maternal great-great-grandfather, William Ballard (1732-1799), is buried in a Wikel cemetery. Her paternal great-great-grandmother, a widow with ten children, came to Monroe County in 1818. Catherine was the eldest daughter of Joseph and India Ballard Riner, the second of their nine children. The Riners lived in a two-story log house on an 88-acre farm. Two of Catherine's sisters, Ann and Louise, still live at the old homeplace.

Catherine's mother, India, made the family's quilts. Ann Riner recalls, "Mother taught us to quilt. I remember I pieced a quilt when I was seven years old." Ann thinks that Catherine pieced a quilt at an early age, too. Another sister, Maude Crawford, now 94 years old, recalls that while her own role was to help with the washing and cooking, "Mother and my older sister [Catherine] always done the quilting." One of the upstairs rooms in the log house held the full-sized quilting frame suspended from the ceiling.

Catherine, like many of her neighbors, was a woman with broad responsibilities in the home, the dairy, the poultry yard, barn and garden.

Although India Riner showed her daughters how to quilt, it was Margaret Riner, India's mother-in-law and Catherine's grandmother, who encouraged Catherine to develop her sewing skills. And Catherine did not need much encouragement. When she was nine or ten years old, she "would slip and use the sewing machine to make doll clothes while her mother was out berry picking, then hide the doll clothes so her mother wouldn't know," recounts Catherine's eldest daughter, Virginia Bostic.

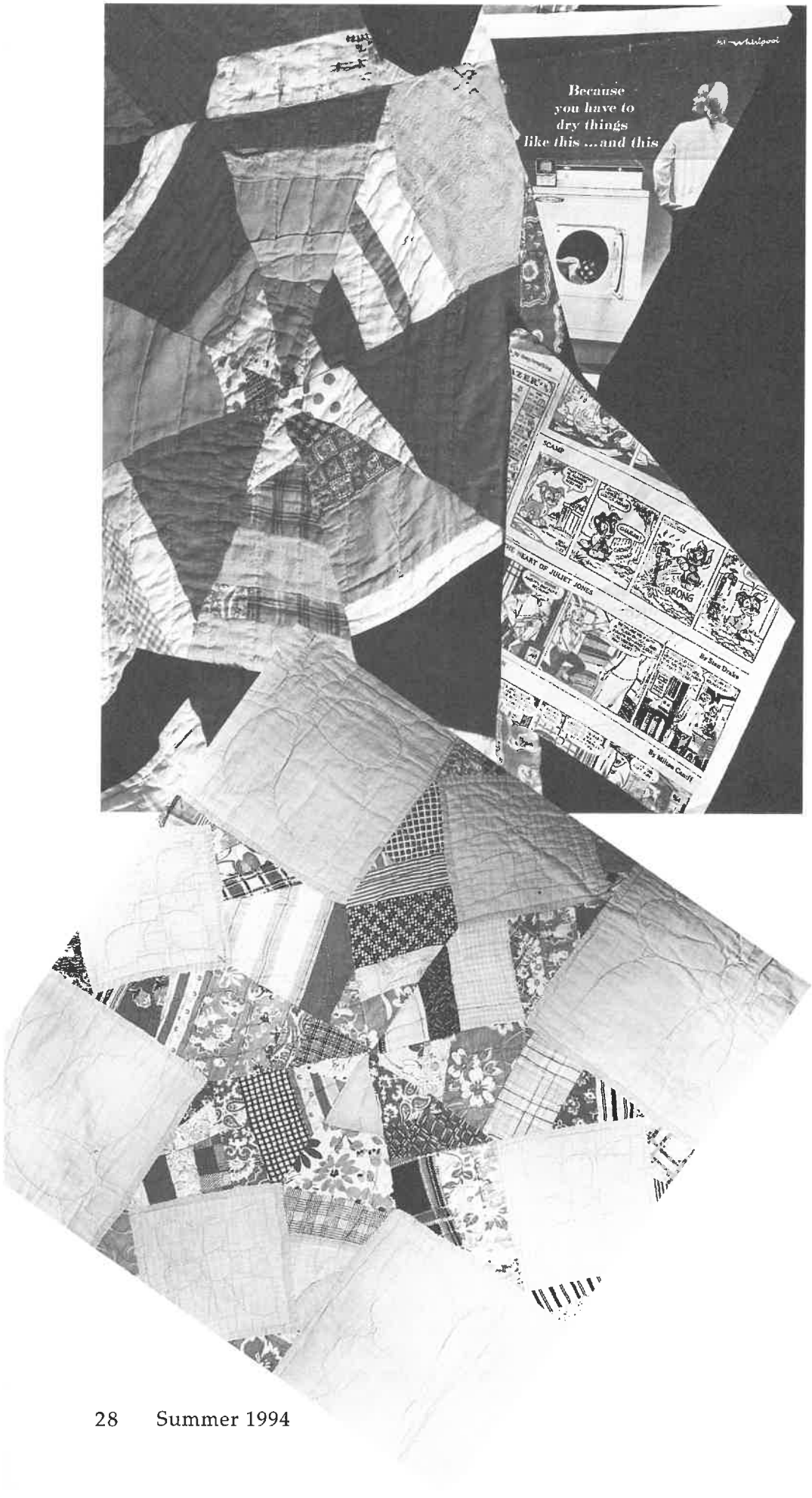
As far as is known, no harm befell this sewing machine during its surreptitious use. Later, when Catherine was a teenager, Margaret Riner offered to teach her to use the sewing machine. "It was Grandma Riner who said she guessed Mother was old enough to learn to use the sewing machine," Virginia continues. "And Mother said, 'Yes, I guess I can. I've been using it for years.'"

Margaret Riner was a quilter, and she enjoyed teaching her grandchildren. Catherine would not miss an opportunity to improve her sewing. Grandma Riner lived nearby, Maude recalls. "We walked there a lot of times. We went in a buggy, or horseback — that's the way we all used to travel." Margaret Riner gave all her grandchildren quilts when they got married.

Catherine picked up her grandmother's ways.

"She quilted lots," Maude remembers. It was Catherine who found a pattern called Friendly Hands; both Maude and Catherine made a quilt from the same pattern. Maude's quilt "wore out a long time ago," she says. Fortunately, although Catherine's has been well used and is in fragile condition, it is now cared for and treasured by

her daughter Virginia, who brought it to be documented by the West Virginia Heritage Quilt Search. The Friendly Hands quilt was made



Like other frugal quilters, Catherine used and taught the "pieced-on-paper" technique to join tiny scraps into useable quilt pieces. These photos show (top) a quilt pieced by daughter Eurcell, with the paper templates, and (bottom) an eight-pointed star pieced together by Catherine.

from carefully coordinated maroon prints and sprigged white shirting cotton. The sashing is a medium blue chambray, the backing muslin.

As a young woman, Catherine went to live with and care for her grandparents, Margaret and Lewis. It was during this time that she met Fred Douglas Mann, who would become her husband in 1920. Fred Mann was a teacher at Stoney Creek and Pine Grove schools in Monroe County. Catherine and Fred bought a 141-acre farm with a small house on it, adjoining the Lewis Riner farm in Assurance. The couple had six children: Virginia, Joseph, Mildred, Leola, Jewel and Eurcell. After Joseph was born, Fred left school teaching and became a full-time farmer.

Catherine, like many of her neighbors, was a woman with broad responsibilities in the home, the dairy, the poultry yard, barn and garden. The family heated with coal and wood, and the bedrooms were none too warm in the wintertime. Catherine's youngest daughter,

"You never went without taking your work along. You pieced quilts while you talked."

Eurcell Broyles, recalls that her mother made all the quilts that went on their feather beds. There would be four or five quilts on a bed, with "a quilt for a bedspread on top," Eurcell says. "Mother made quilt after quilt." Catherine's husband, Fred, supported her quiltmaking. Eurcell recalls her father always made sure that Catherine had some time to work on her quilts.

Because so many quilts were needed, it was expedient for Catherine to make everyday quilts from large pieces of fabric — wool or cotton scraps pieced together until they were big enough to cover

A GOLDENSEAL Update:

The West Virginia Heritage Quilt Search

Members of the Heritage Quilt Search at an early meeting. They are (left to right) Barbara Howard, Margaret Meador, Alice Hersom, Marjorie Coffey, and Martha Offut (seated). Photo by Chuck Lantz.

Over the past four years, dedicated volunteers — members of the West Virginia Heritage Quilt Search — have been uncovering quilt stories throughout the Mountain State.

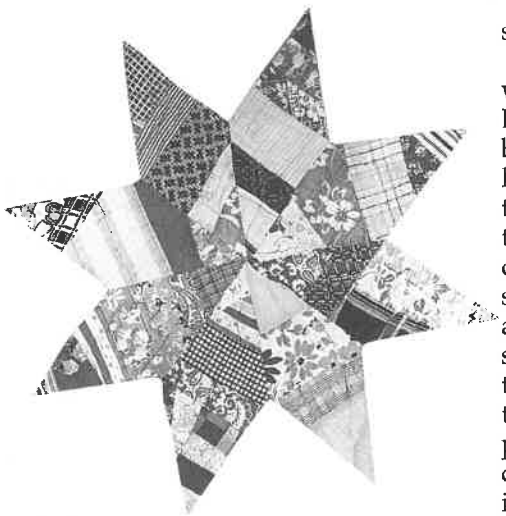
The Quilt Search was first reported in GOLDENSEAL in Winter 1990. During 1992 the West Virginia Heritage Quilt Search conducted a statewide survey to locate and document quilts made before 1940. Thousands of West Virginians participated by bringing their quilts to regional sites where the quilts were photographed and measured, patterns identified and information about the quilt and its maker recorded.

In order to preserve the voices, traditions and recollections of older West Virginia quiltmakers, the Quilt Search launched an oral history interview project with support from the West Virginia Humanities Council and One Valley Bank. It was while participating in this project that Eva Siebold discovered the Mary Catherine Riner Mann quiltmaking legacy featured in the adjoining article.

During the next phase of the Quilt Search, volunteers will computerize and analyze data gathered during the documentation process. The oral histories, along with information garnered from more than 4,000 quilts registered with the project, will become the basis for a book about West Virginia quilt history. Publication of this book is projected for 1996.

By profiling quilts and quilt-makers in West Virginia, the Quilt Search team hopes to illuminate our often overlooked domestic history — the experiences of families and homemakers. The project is exploring the influence of ethnic settlement patterns upon quilt styles, and also seeks old quilting photographs and details about fundraising quilts and quiltmaking as paid employment. GOLDENSEAL readers with information about these topics may contact Margaret Meador, Route 6, Box 109, Princeton, WV 24740.

— Fawn Valentine



a bed. Catherine made these quilts with either all wool or all cotton scraps. "She never mixed them," says Eurcell.

Sometimes the everyday quilts were pieced on the sewing machine. Decorative embroidery — like the brier stitch — occasionally embellished the seams of Catherine's cotton everyday quilts. Otherwise, there was nothing fancy about these quilts. Virginia remembers that the smallest pieces of fabric were saved and used for everyday quilts. These scraps were "pieced on paper" on the sewing machine, meaning that they were sewn together onto a paper cutout. Thus little pieces became big ones, with the paper backing torn away once the desired shape had been filled out.

Catherine not only was an industrious farmwife, but she found time to knit, embroider, and make clothes as well as quilts. Virginia recalls, "Mother made all our dresses and her own." Catherine liked to dress fashionably. Virginia says that her mother "would pick out the most expensive dress in the catalog. She would get her material, cut her own pattern out of newspaper and make the dress. As soon as she got the dress made she would burn the pattern. She knew if she kept it, someone else would want the pattern."

Sometimes clothing was made from feed sacks. "We used to get some really pretty feed sacks. We wore feed sack dresses," Virginia recalls. Eurcell notes, "It didn't matter what it was made of, be-

Catherine's quilt legacy remains alive today. Here daughter Virginia, great-granddaughter Alicia Hylton, granddaughter Wanda Hylton, and daughter Eurcell pose with their "first quilts."

cause Mother was such a good seamstress you would never know. She bought some new fabric whenever she could and made us what she would call our Sunday dress."

Sunday was the day to dress up, and to do no work which could be avoided. Eurcell remembers that they never did any sewing on Sunday. The family attended the Rock Camp Methodist Church and were "brought up to keep the Lord's Day holy."

Catherine taught all her children how to piece quilts when they were very young. When the child's quilt top was pieced, she would arrange a "quilting" for their birthday. Joseph learned the same as his sisters. He remembers piecing his quilt, a red and blue four-patch set together with white. "Had it quilted on my seventh birthday," he recalls.

Eurcell remembers her first quilt, as well. "My mother started me on my Double Wedding Ring when I was four years old. We quilted it on my sixth birthday."

Catherine's quilts were mostly made from dressmaking scraps and old clothes — skirts, jackets, even pieces from britches legs.

This is a difficult pattern, especially for a youngster of four, but Eurcell says "Mother would mark the seams and she would start the needle in." Virginia explains how Catherine taught them to quilt. "Mother cut out the pieces," she says. "She would mark the line for me to sew on so I'd keep my seam even. When I went to sew the long seam through the patches, she'd pin that middle seam so I'd be sure and make my corners match. They had to match. My mother was very particular."

Virginia remembers that her mother held a quilting on her seventh birthday. On that day, the teacher let the children out of school early so they could have dinner at the Mann house and join their mothers at the quilting. At this point Virginia's quilt top was already

pieced, and the women of the community did most of the actual quilting. But Catherine made sure her children put at least a few quilting stitches into their first quilt.

In rural areas few diversions were available, and people looked forward to social gatherings. Quiltings were a popular way for groups of women to meet in their homes and help each other. This was when the intricate work of stitching the pieced quilt top to the backing and batting took place, and several women could gather around a quilt frame and work together. Only the need to care for a sick child could keep Catherine from participating in a quilting. Eurcell remembers that each woman would bring a covered dish for lunch, and they would "quilt all day long."

Evidently the women of the neighborhood took their handwork on informal visits, as well. "You never went without taking your work along," Virginia says. "You pieced quilts while you talked. You always stayed busy."

Quiltings and visiting were also opportunities to see other quilts and exchange quilt patterns. This is how Catherine got most of her patterns. Virginia recalls her mother's ability to draft her own patterns from a quilt she saw or from a picture in a magazine. "Mother could make most any pattern that she wanted to make," she says.

The patterns that Catherine favored were the Double Wedding Ring, Flower Garden, Four Patch and Nine Patch. The Eight Pointed Star and a variation of Kaleidoscope are two patterns she used for everyday quilts that were pieced on paper. Virginia remembers the interesting curved design known as the Friendship pattern, "It was like a double-bitted axe," she says. She recalls that neighbors exchanged small pieces of fabric to make this friendship quilt, "with every piece different."

Catherine's quilts were mostly made from dressmaking scraps and old clothes — skirts, jackets, even pieces from britches legs. Virginia says, "Anything she could get to piece a quilt out of, she did." Eurcell notes, "She always saved her pretty pieces to make a good quilt." New fabric was purchased occasionally. Eurcell remembers her mother would take eggs to the store to sell and then might buy some material. "Of course material was cheap back then, but money wasn't plentiful," she says. Virginia remembers that fabric sold for about eight cents a yard.

Feed sacks were often used for backing a quilt. Virginia recalls that her mother preferred unbleached muslin, especially for her good quilts, because "the older it gets, the whiter it gets."

Any quilt that required the use of a pattern was considered a "good" or "fancy" quilt. These were always hand pieced and quilted with more decorative motifs. Flowers and hearts, which she drew herself, were Catherine's favorite quilting designs. Eurcell recalls that her mother sometimes tacked quilts but "she didn't like them tacked. She liked to quilt them." The quilting frame was suspended from the ceiling in the living room. Catherine lowered the frame and quilted during the day, raising the frame out of the way when the children came home from school.

Catherine was widowed in 1940. Her youngest child was nine years old. Relatives offered to help by taking some of the younger children, but Catherine was determined to keep her family together. Eurcell

MICHAEL KELLER/STATE MUSEUM

National Quilt Show

This summer Charleston welcomes the National Quilting Association to the Mountain State for its 25th Annual Quilt Show. Hundreds of quilters and quilt enthusiasts will come to the Kanawha Valley for West Virginia's biggest quilt event ever. The show is hosted by the Kanawha Valley Quilters Guild and will be held June 23 through 26, Thursday through Sunday, at the Charleston Civic Center.

The National Quilting Association was established in 1970 to encourage quiltmaking and recognize its history. The group does this through its shows, seminars, and publications, as well as with grants and scholarships, a national quilt registry, and the Heritage Quilt Search project. NQA also certifies professional quilters as teachers, judges or master quilters.

The 25th Annual Quilt Show is a full four days of workshops, lectures, and special events. Hundreds of judged quilts will be on display, and quilt appraisals are available by appointment. A merchant mall will be set up with more than 70 vendors selling fabric and the latest quilting notions. Fawn Valentine, co-director of West Virginia's Heritage Quilt Search, presents a slide show and lecture on Friday, June 24. Saturday's program includes the Little Quilt Auction where doll quilts, miniatures, and small wall hangings will be auctioned off.

The Cultural Center joins in the spirit of Charleston's summer of quilts with an exhibit of contemporary and heritage quilts in the Great Hall and the north wing of the State Museum. The Cultural Center quilts will be on display throughout the summer.

The NQA's 25th Annual Quilt Show is open to the public. Admission is $5 per person each day of the show. Workshops cost $50 per day and $35 per half-day for non-members. Advance tickets and registration are required for some events.

For a registration packet send $1.25 to Kanawha Valley Quilters Guild, P.O. Box 8952, South Charleston, WV 25303; and for general information call Juanita Reed at (304)342-2943.

remembers her mother saying, "As long as I can keep a roof over their head and food on the table, my children will stay together."

The two oldest, Virginia and Joseph, found work and helped financially. "I farmed, too," Joseph recalls. "We sold calves, lambs, chickens, eggs, turkeys — things like that." They also raised wheat and grew feed for their livestock. Eurcell remembers how necessary it was for her and her sisters to help with the outside chores. "That was the only way we could stick together as a family," she says.

With determination and the help of her children, Catherine worked through this period of adversity, her quiltmaking always a comfort to her.

As each child married, Catherine gave them the first quilt they had pieced, along with one or two she had made. As her children became parents themselves, they came to understand the benefit of their mother's teaching. Eurcell recalls that the first quilts she made on her own were a lot like her mother's everyday quilts. Later, she borrowed patterns from her mother and made prettier quilts.

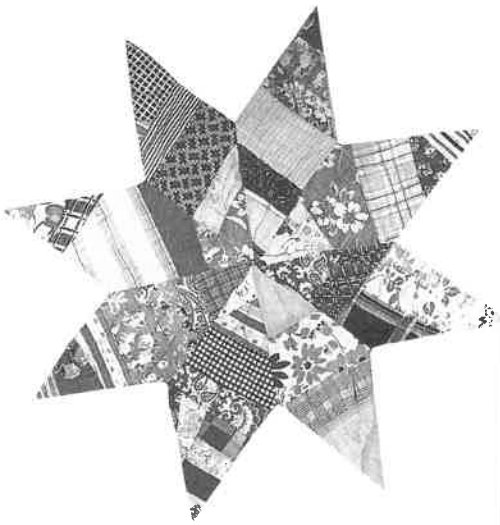
Catherine was always willing to share her skills. Joseph's wife, Marie, who had never quilted, was encouraged to learn. "Yes, you can," Marie remembers Catherine telling her. Catherine taught her to quilt almost 50 years ago — and "I've been quilting ever since," Marie says. Eurcell remembers a time when a son-in-law expressed a desire to learn to quilt. "Well, just sit down here at the quilt and I'll show you," Catherine told him. Virginia recalls her mother helping her by piecing Maple Leaf squares until Virginia had enough squares to make a quilt for each of her five children.

When Catherine was 86 years old, she went to live with her daughter, Leola, in North Carolina. There she continued to make quilts and was able to participate in quiltings sponsored by Leola's church group. Eurcell sent a pieced quilt top to North Carolina to be quilted by the church group, so that the quilt would contain her mother and sister's stitches.

When Catherine was in her 90's, she returned to Monroe County for a while, visiting among her children. By this time she had difficulty cutting fabric. "She would sit down and start sewing," Joseph laughs. "That's all she did! She'd keep Marie busy cutting quilt pieces. She really loved to quilt."

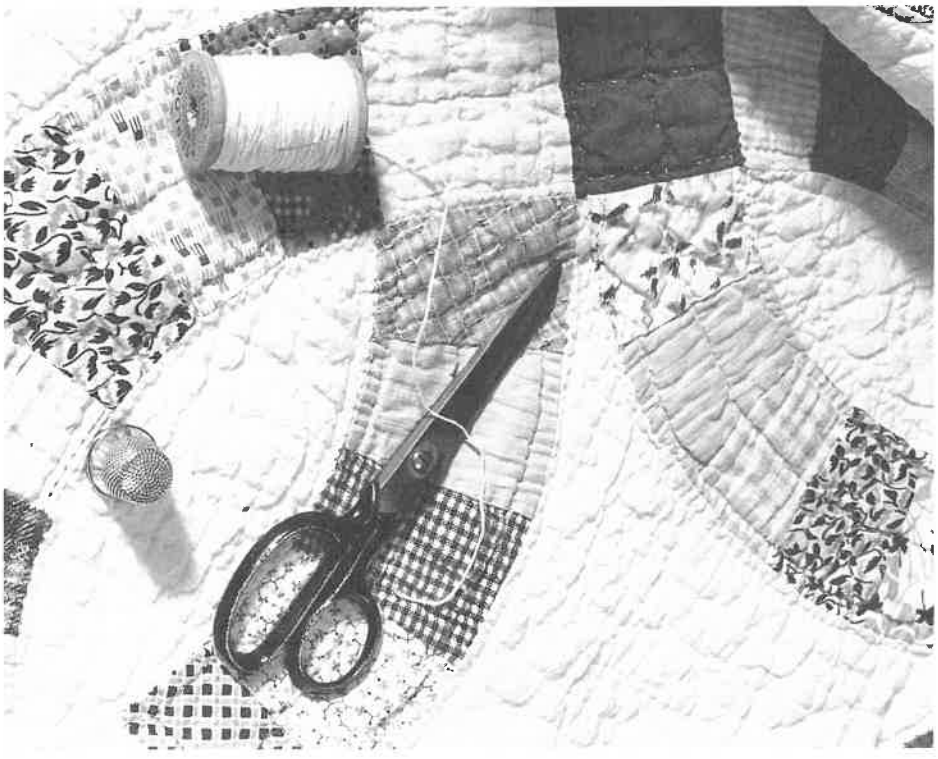
Catherine's children have all taught their daughters and some of their grandchildren how to piece quilts. Three of Eurcell's grandchildren, including a grandson, have completed their first quilts. Eurcell is delighted that her daughter-in-law, Lynne, has become interested in making quilts. The family's pride in their quiltmaking legacy is evident as Virginia explains that one of her granddaughters, Catherine's namesake, will have a quilt "pieced by her great-grandmother and quilted by her grandmother."

Catherine lived 94 years. Her many quilts are now treasured by her children, remembrances of a mother who considered sewing and quiltmaking an important part of life. The scrap quilts Catherine made evoke her presence. The quilts are lively. Catherine was not afraid to use bright colors. Her quilts exhibit a spontaneous yet careful organization, and her piecing is precise. Looking at Catherine's quilts, one knows that Joseph is right. She truly loved to quilt.



Mary Catherine Riner Mann not only taught her children quiltmaking, but also to become hard-working and self-reliant, and to strive for quality in all their work. Catherine's respect for accuracy continues to influence her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, now the caretakers of her legacy.

The tools of a quilter are simple ones. Here are Catherine's scissors and thimble, with thread salvaged from the mouth of a feed sack and used to tack fabric to quilt frames. The quilt is one of her "good" quilts, in the Wedding Ring pattern.



"Nickels and Dimes by the Barrelful":

Taking the Bus in Huntington

By James E. Casto

Huntington residents have been taking the bus since the 1930's, when the city's streetcars were junked. Now, Huntington bus service is entering a new chapter with the acquisition and renovation of the city's Greyhound terminal by the Tri-State Transit Authority.

The Transit Authority needed to move its busiest bus stop off a badly congested 4th Avenue in downtown Huntington. Greyhound, now operating only a fraction of the busy schedule it once offered in West Virginia, no longer needed such a large terminal.

"It was a perfect marriage for both of us," says Vickie Shaffer, TTA's general manager. "We're getting the kind of off-street facility we've long dreamed of, and Greyhound will keep on using the terminal as our tenant."

The changes at the Greyhound terminal mark the continuation of a story that dates back more than a century. Huntington's mass transit history began in December of 1888, when the Huntington Electric Light and Street Railway Company began streetcar service from the Guyandotte Bridge west along 3rd Avenue to 7th Street. Local legend claims Huntington was only the second city in the nation to have an electric streetcar line, the first being Richmond, Virginia.

In 1890, a rival streetcar company built what it called the Huntington Belt Line. It extended along 4th Avenue east, turned at 10th Street and went south to 6th Avenue, then east on 6th Avenue to 16th Street and south on 16th Street to 8th Avenue. In 1892, the same company was granted a franchise for a line extending west on 4th Avenue to Central City. Later that same year, both these companies were acquired by the new Consolidated Light and Railway Company.

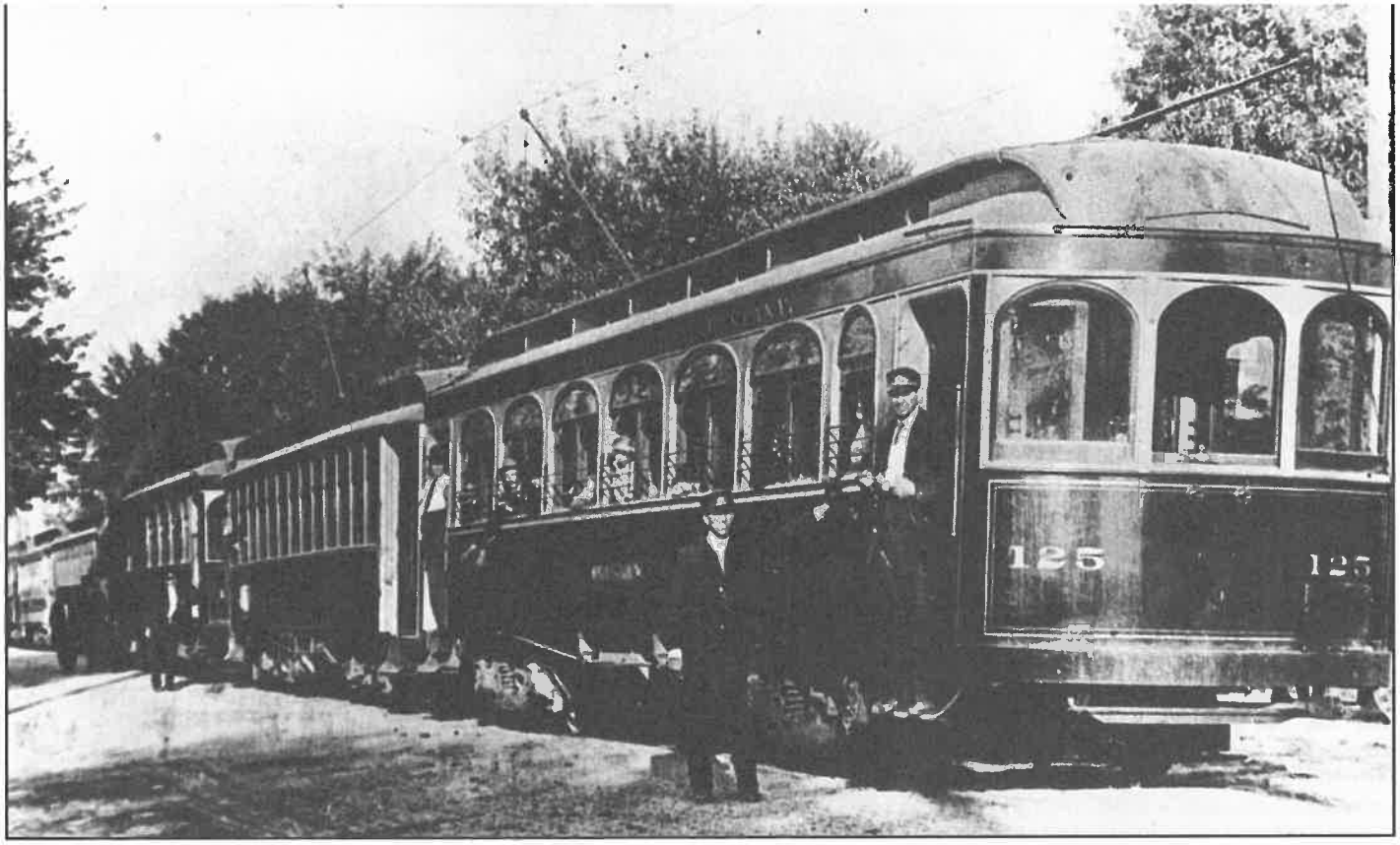
Huntingtonians of a certain age will remember this kind of bus from the 1930's and later. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Huntington *Herald-Dispatch*.

In 1899, Huntington's street railways were operating in the red, and the same was true for those in the nearby Kentucky cities of Catlettsburg and Ashland. Enter Huntington businessman Zachary Taylor Vinson, who was determined to acquire the existing lines and establish service connecting the three cities.

Lacking the considerable cash needed for such a venture, Vinson enlisted the backing of Johnson N. Camden of Parkersburg, a railroad builder and major capitalist. In 1899, the Ohio Valley Electric Company was organized. A connecting line and bridge were built across the Big Sandy River, and service between Huntington and Ashland began in 1903. That year also saw the company change its name to the Camden Interstate Railway Company.

Like streetcar companies in many other towns, the Camden Interstate Railway established a picnic grove and amusement park to boost weekend and holiday ridership. Camden Park, on U.S. Route 60 west of Huntington, eventually was sold to other owners. A 1987 GOLDENSEAL article by Joseph Platania discussed Camden Park and associated streetcar history.

In 1916, the company changed its name again and, as the Ohio Valley Electric Railway Company, continued to operate streetcar service into the 1930's.



Before the buses, Huntington had streetcars. These stand loaded and ready to roll. Photographer and date unknown, G. W. Sutphin Collection.

Leonard Samworth was "Mr. Bus" in Huntington, the head of Ohio Valley Bus Company for most of its history. Courtesy *Herald-Dispatch*, 1964.

According to Huntington's premier historian, the late George S. Wallace, the area saw its first bus service in 1909. In his 1935 book, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, Wallace related how that came about. "D.W.B. McCown, town marshal of Guyandotte, went out of office in the spring of 1909 and with an admirable foresight, but perhaps poor judgment, bought a truck and for a brief period operated a bus line for passengers between Huntington and Guyandotte in competition with the electric railway company. The venture was not successful financially but it has the distinction of being the first motor bus line in the county."

Notwithstanding that early failure, the advent of bus service eventually doomed the street railways. In the mid-1920's, the Ohio Valley Electric Railway organized a new affiliate, the Ohio Valley Bus Company, and began offering bus service between Huntington and Ironton, Ohio, and between Huntington and Kenova. In 1929, it established a bus line along 11th Avenue. In 1930, it started a Monroe Avenue line. And in 1933, it inaugurated bus service to the nearby Veterans Administration Hospital in Spring Valley.

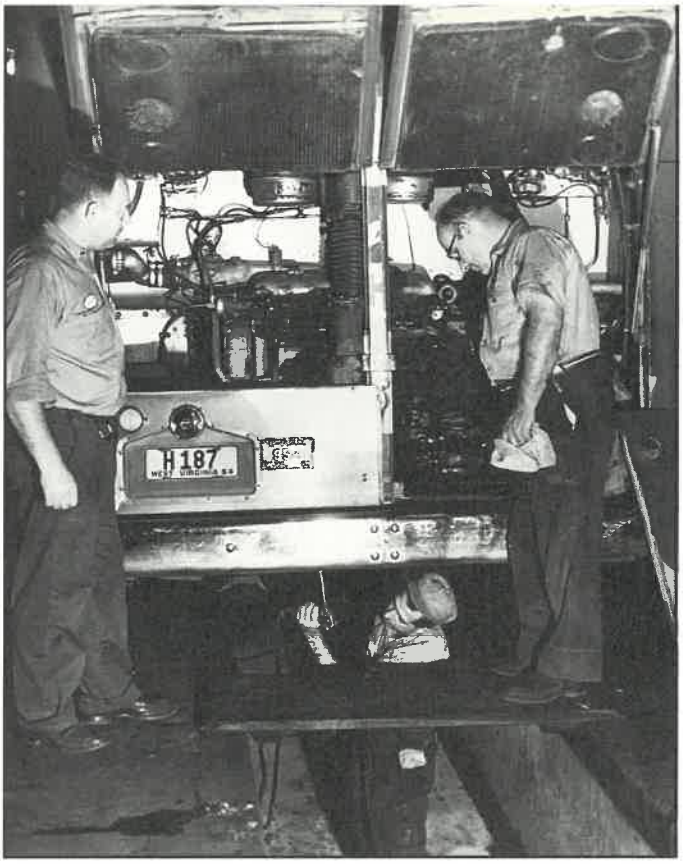
Fred W. Samworth became Ohio Valley Electric's president and general manager in 1933. Samworth, who had come to Huntington from Delaware in the 1920's, was convinced that buses, not streetcars, were the answer to the city's future transit needs and resolved to convert completely to bus service.

That was accomplished on November 7, 1937, when Huntington became the first city in West Virginia to be served entirely by buses. The Ohio Valley Electric Railway Company vanished into history, to be replaced by the Ohio Valley Bus Company. Fred Samworth died in 1939, only two years after seeing his dream of all-bus service accomplished. On his death, his young son, Leonard H. Samworth, became the company's treasurer. Five years later, in 1944, he took over as its president and general manager. For the next three decades, Leonard Samworth would be "Mr. Bus" in Huntington.

In the 1950's, the Ohio Valley Bus Company operated a fleet of 80 buses on more than a dozen routes in the Huntington area, including adjacent sections of Kentucky and Ohio. In 1953, more than 13.8 million passengers traveled a total of more than three million miles on the company's buses. That year saw Ohio Valley's buses burn 215,765 gallons of gasoline and 457,389 gallons of diesel fuel, while using 33,571 quarts of motor oil.

Operating from a garage at Washington Avenue and West 18th Street — originally built to house and repair streetcars — the bus company employed 235 people, including 145 drivers. There the company's me-

Employees handled "nickels and dimes by the barrelful," as Mr. Samworth said. Helen Jeffries and Janice Adkins wrapped coins daily during the 1950's.
Courtesy *Herald-Dispatch*.



The guys in the garage kept the wheels rolling. Harold Spears and Joe Hagley check the engine, while French Wellman works the grease gun, in this picture from 1954.
Courtesy *Herald-Dispatch*.

chanics kept the buses in repair, the transportation department juggled a complicated schedule that saw the first bus of the day leave at 4:45 a.m. and the last return at 1:15 a.m., and the accounting staff each day counted millions of pieces of small change, wrapping them all in paper tubes for deposit at the bank.

In a 1954 interview with the *Huntington Advertiser*, Leonard Samworth boasted that Ohio Valley was one of the first of 18 city bus systems in the United States to change over to diesel-powered buses. All the company's buses in regular service were now diesels, he explained, with only a few for special service still using gasoline, and those were being retired as they became obsolete.

Samworth also noted that Ohio Valley was able to offer charter bus service. Interstate Commerce Commission regulations barred most local transit companies from doing so. But, because Ohio Valley could trace its origins directly to 1888, it was older than the ICC regulations and thus a "grandfather clause" exempted it from the ban. The company took full advantage of that exemption, conducting a brisk business in charters. "On a recent day," Samworth said, "we had five buses in Cincinnati; three at Buckeye Lake, Ohio; one in Detroit; two in Pittsburgh; one in Williamson; three at Institute; and one in Charleston."

Nonetheless, Ohio Valley Bus Company already was beginning to encounter the financial problems that eventually destroyed it. In his 1954 newspaper interview, Samworth complained: "Despite every effort to provide fast and efficient transportation, business continues to decline because of constantly increasing use of personal automobiles. Our volume is 47 percent under what it was five years ago."

Citing the mountain of small change that passengers deposited in the company's fare boxes every day, Samworth noted: "We handle nickels and dimes by the barrelful, but making a profit out of them is something else."

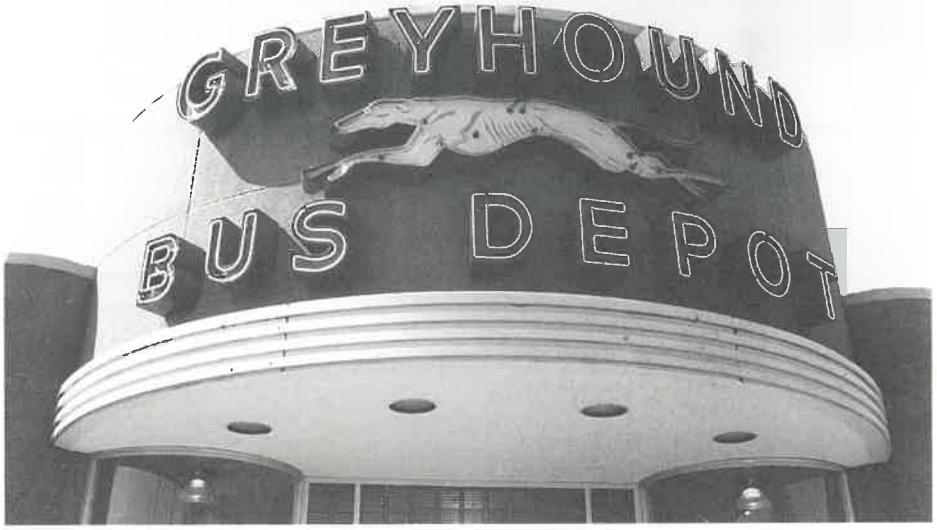
Ridership declines continued throughout the 1950's and '60's, and the bus company found it tougher and tougher to operate at a profit. Meanwhile, its employees complained that they, too, were having it tough. Pay was low and benefits few. And so, on October 1, 1971, when their union contract expired, Ohio Valley's drivers and mechanics went out on strike, leaving thousands of Huntington area residents with no way to get to work — or anyplace else.

Hopes for a quick settlement evaporated as the bus strike dragged on, with the days stretching into weeks and the weeks turning into months. Gradually, it became clear that this wasn't just another work stoppage but truly a day of reckoning for local transit — one that heralded a change every bit as fundamental as when the streetcars of yesteryear gave way to buses.

It wasn't a change by any means unique to Huntington; the 1960's saw privately-owned bus companies all across the nation come to the end of the line. With more and more Americans owning cars, fewer and fewer were riding buses. Increasingly, buses were becoming the transportation of the poor, the young and the elderly — those with no other way to get to work, to school, the doctor's office or other places they needed to go.

Squeezed by increasing costs and declining ridership, many private bus companies no longer were able

Huntington's Greyhound Station, shown above under construction in the summer of 1953, was a modernistic structure for its time. The building has been carefully rehabilitated by the Tri-State Transit Authority (bottom), but the big dog will keep its place over the entry. New photos by Michael Keller.



to turn a profit for their owners. Speaking at a meeting of the Greater Huntington Area Chamber of Commerce shortly after Ohio Valley's drivers and mechanics went on strike, Samworth said his company had been losing $8,700 a month even when it was operating. "Transportation," he told the Chamber, "is a public service that we've been subsidizing, but we've reached the point where we can't continue as a private industry."

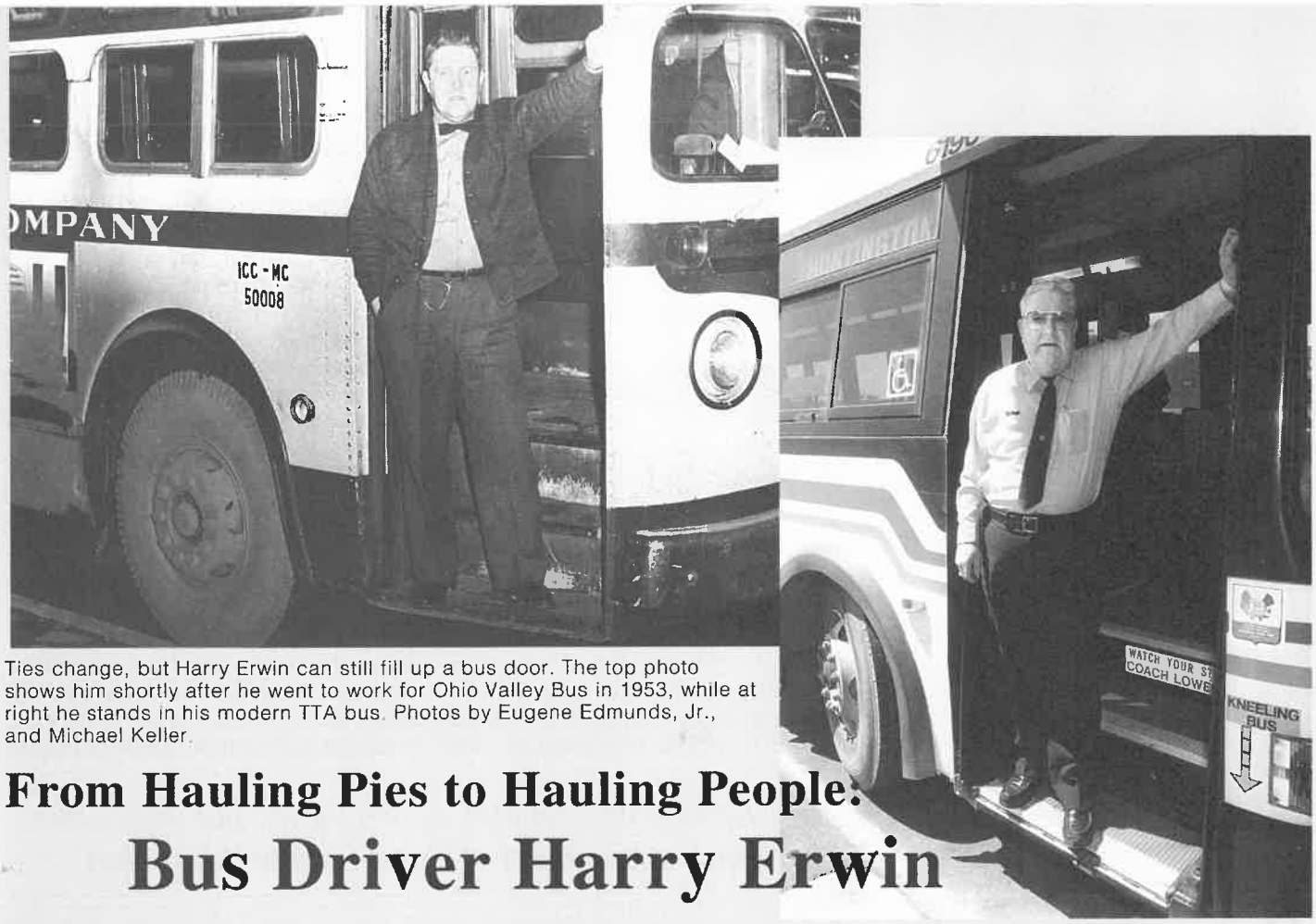
With private bus companies all across the nation calling it quits, many communities turned to public — that is, taxpayer-supported — transit systems. Thus, a group of concerned Huntington residents hatched the idea for what would become the Tri-State Transit Authority.

Urged on by local merchants who were being pinched hard by the bus strike, public officials put together $3.2 million in local, state and federal funds to acquire the strike-bound Ohio Valley Bus Company and put its buses back in service. A $427,559 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission was a key element in the funding package.

The Tri-State Transit Authority was created as a public corporation on April 3, 1972, but it wasn't until July 17 of that year that buses returned to the streets. Huntington had been without city buses for more than nine months. Their return was cheered not just by riders but by a community that had learned — the hard way — of public transit's important role in the local economy.

The first month of renewed bus service saw a return of nearly 75 percent of the system's ridership. A management consultant who had been hired by TTA had predicted the new system would be lucky to get back half its previous passengers. The late John Quarles, a local businessman who was TTA's first board president and one of the prime movers behind creation of the new system, told the *Herald-Dispatch* it was "very gratifying to see the number of people riding the buses. It just proves there was a great need to get the buses rolling again."

The Transit Authority hired



Ties change, but Harry Erwin can still fill up a bus door. The top photo shows him shortly after he went to work for Ohio Valley Bus in 1953, while at right he stands in his modern TTA bus. Photos by Eugene Edmunds, Jr., and Michael Keller.

From Hauling Pies to Hauling People: Bus Driver Harry Erwin

Huntingtonian D. Harry Erwin served with the U.S. Marines in the Korean War and was wounded during the bloody battle at Inchon. Returning home, he got a job at the Lewis-Price Bakery but kept looking around for other work.

Says Erwin, "I heard they were looking for somebody to sweep out buses at the Ohio Valley Bus Company. I went down and applied. The fellow asked me if I was working anywhere. I told him I was baking pies at night and delivering them the next day. He said he figured that if I could haul pies, I could haul people and hired me on."

That was in 1953.

Today, more than four decades later, the 64-year-old Erwin is still driving a Huntington bus — although he now does so for the Tri-State Transit Authority, the public transit system that's the successor to the long-defunct Ohio Valley Bus Company.

Harry — as everybody at TTA calls him — recalls that he started out making 93 cents an hour and had to put in a 48-hour week before drawing any overtime.

Over the years, Harry drove a number of different routes. "I must have been on most all of them at one time or another. I drove 3rd Avenue a lot, also Madison Avenue. I'd go to Ashland and Ironton, and the run that went to Point Pleasant and Graham Station. Of course, you have to remember we had 171 different runs on the board then. Today, at TTA we've got 17."

In 1971, when a strike brought Ohio Valley's operations to a halt, Harry figured his days as a bus driver were over. "Most of us felt that way," he recalls. "We figured the buses would never come back."

As the strike continued, he worked at several different jobs — at American National Rubber, at Heck's and the local Coca-Cola plant. When word came from the newly created Tri-State Transit Authority, calling former Ohio Valley employees back to their jobs, Harry was overjoyed. "I loved my job and couldn't wait to get back behind the wheel," he said.

Eventually, TTA would get a new fleet of buses. But when it first started up, it was faced with using Ohio Valley's buses, most of which had seen better days. "Everybody pitched in to get them ready," says Harry. "We had to totally recondition them. Why, we had to even put new rubber around the folding doors."

Today, Harry is one of ten or so veteran TTA employees who got their start working at Ohio Valley. He has served in several posts with Local 1493 of the Amalgamated Transit Union, AFL-CIO, including two terms as the local's president.

"At one time or another, I guess I've driven just about every kind of bus there is," he says. "You name it and I've driven it."

During his long career, Harry has proven to be a favorite with passengers. He's won a hefty stack of awards, and in a 1989 poll conducted by the *Herald-Dispatch* he was honored as the region's "Driver of the Year." When he was sidelined by illness last year, a number of his regular passengers made a point of visiting him in the hospital.

What's the secret to this bus driver's enthusiasm?

"I love people," Harry Erwin says. "I love to see 'em and talk with them. And something else I like about the job is that no day is like the day before. There's always something different. That's what keeps me going."

— James E. Casto

Leonard Samworth as interim general manager to get the bus system operating again. Resigning that post in 1973, Samworth remained active in civic affairs and spent much of his time pursuing a longtime passion — an extensive collection of antique tin and cast-iron toys, which he exhibited in area galleries and at the Taft Museum in Cincinnati. The veteran bus man died in 1990.

Over the years, TTA has had its ups and downs. It quickly retired the old buses it had inherited from Ohio Valley, replacing them with new ones. Ridership remained good, far exceeding the experts' predictions. But in its early years, the fledgling transit system's annual operating deficits more than once had worried local officials threatening to junk it. In 1982, however, the voters in Huntington and Cabell County went to the polls and approved an operating levy that's been regularly renewed ever since. That levy now provides half of TTA's annual $2.2 million budget.

Currently, TTA has 47 employees. That includes 26 drivers, 11 people in maintenance and 10 office staffers. The TTA fleet includes 27 buses and two replica streetcars. Originally housed at the old Ohio Valley Bus facility, TTA later built its own headquarters, garage and maintenance shop at Virginia Avenue and West 11th Street.

In 1989, TTA hired a consultant to study a long-standing problem in the 900 block of 4th Avenue — the downtown transfer point for all TTA buses. Many merchants in the block complained that bus riders who crowded the sidewalk discouraged customers from patronizing their stores. Others complained about the noise and diesel exhaust fumes from the buses. The consultant's recommendation: an off-street location for the transfer point.

Once TTA's Shaffer started her search for a new location for the system's downtown transfer point, the old Greyhound terminal at 4th Avenue and 13th Street quickly caught her eye. The building could shelter waiting passengers from the winter cold and summer heat, and provide restroom facilities and other conveniences lacking at the sidewalk stop.

Opened in December of 1953, the station is a handsome Art Deco design widely replicated by Greyhound in cities all over the country. Here's the description offered in a newspaper account of its opening: "The structure has ten loading platforms covered from the weather, an ample waiting room, three ticket windows, greatly enlarged baggage handling capacity, a cafeteria-style restaurant as well as a snack bar, soda fountain and newsstand, and up-to-date restrooms. The building will be completely air conditioned."

Greyhound service in the Huntington area has its roots in the 1920's. In 1924 Arthur M. Hill bought two existing intercity bus lines — the Huntington-Charleston Motor Bus Company and White Transportation Company, which originally linked Huntington and Milton and later began offering service to St. Albans. Hill merged the two into what he called the Midland Trail Transit Company, which later became the Blue and Grey Transit Company and, in 1931, part of the Greyhound system.

Hill's original Huntington terminal was on 9th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues. Next, the terminal moved to the Hines Building, on the south side of 5th Avenue between 9th and 10th Streets. Later, the old Lyric Theater on 4th Avenue between 8th and 9th Streets was remodeled for use as a bus terminal, opening in February 1930. Still later, both Greyhound and Consolidated Trailways operated out of Huntington's old Baltimore & Ohio Railroad passenger station, which today is home to the Heritage Station Restaurant.

When Greyhound built its new station at 4th Avenue and 13th Street, Trailways moved to a former service station just one block away, at 4th Avenue and 12th Street. Trailways shut its doors there in 1974, and the building now houses a sporting goods shop. Trailways briefly used the Greyhound terminal, then a building at 5th Avenue and 28th Street before discontinuing its Huntington service in 1984.

Just as local bus companies lost their passengers to the automobile, long-haul buses have lost millions of riders to the airlines. Today, Greyhound's network is only a shadow of what it was in the 1950's when it opened its new Huntington terminal. And, as Greyhound service to the area dwindled, the once-busy terminal here fell on hard times. First, the cafeteria closed, then the snack bar was replaced with a row of vending machines. Once the terminal was open 24 hours a day; in recent years, its doors have been locked for all but a few hours daily.

Purchasing the 40-year-old terminal for $200,000, TTA has spent another $215,000 to renovate it. Some of the money went to making it handicapped-accessible and other necessary upgrading. A painstaking effort was made to restore the terminal to its original condition.

"We handle nickels and dimes by the barrelful, but making a profit out of them is something else."

Some temporary walls that had been erected in the building over the years were dismantled, but no structural changes were made. "The building was in wonderfully good condition," says Vickie Shaffer. "Essentially all we had was a chip-and-paint cleanup job."

The terminal shows few signs of the countless bus passengers who made their way through it over the years. Shaffer points to the terrazzo floor that's worn down in front of the ticket counter. "That's the only thing that I can think of that's a reminder of the many years the building was used."

Shaffer says she and others at TTA didn't give a minute's thought to removing any of the Greyhound signs on the terminal — including the bright neon over the front door which shows the company's name and the racing dog that's been a familiar trademark to generations of travelers. "This is history," she says. "You don't tamper with history."

Thus the Greyhound signs will remain at the Huntington terminal — still beckoning people to take the bus.

Off to see America, a long-haul bus rests briefly at the Huntington station in 1974. Courtesy *Herald-Dispatch.*

In a League of Its Own

The Golden Era of Fairmont Softball

By Louis E. Keefer
Photographs by Michael Keller

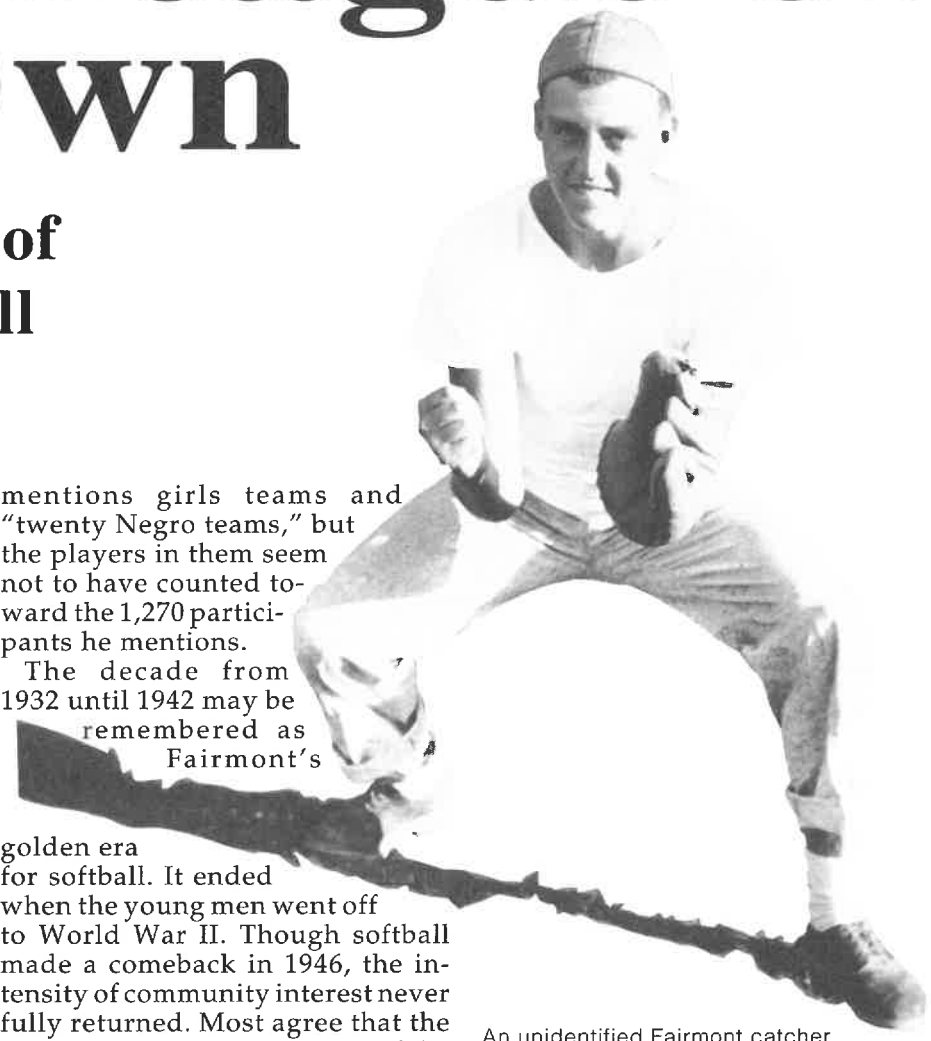
On May 11, 1932, the nation was mired in the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt was yet to be elected president, the tragedy of the day was the kidnaping of the Lindbergh baby — and the first official league game was played in Fairmont's newly-organized Diamond Ball softball circuit, according to a story in the Fairmont *Times-West Virginian*. All those things would have their lingering consequences, great and small.

Certainly softball did. Within half a dozen years, more men, women, and children were said to play softball in organized leagues in Fairmont than in any other town of similar size in the United States.

Patrick A. "Patsy" Tork, director of Fairmont City playgrounds, wrote in the October 1940 issue of *Recreation* magazine that anyone from age six to 60 had a chance to play. There were 56 teams organized into 16 different leagues. Tork described the 1,270 players in 1940 as coming from all walks of life: "doctors, lawyers, city officials, clerks, laborers, mechanics, miners, the mayor, the sheriff, railroaders, bankers, teachers, and truck drivers."

Under Tork's leadership, there was a City League consisting of the best players; a Rocking Chair League; a Lame Duck League; a Pop Time League for players 30 or older; a Junior League for boys up to 19; a Midget League for boys up to 15; and a Baby League for boys up to 12. His article in *Recreation* also mentions girls teams and "twenty Negro teams," but the players in them seem not to have counted toward the 1,270 participants he mentions.

The decade from 1932 until 1942 may be remembered as Fairmont's golden era for softball. It ended when the young men went off to World War II. Though softball made a comeback in 1946, the intensity of community interest never fully returned. Most agree that the early leagues were a product of the Depression, and that America's postwar economic boom greatly reduced their once huge popularity. In this story, we'll look mainly to the early days and to some of the better teams in the top two adult leagues.

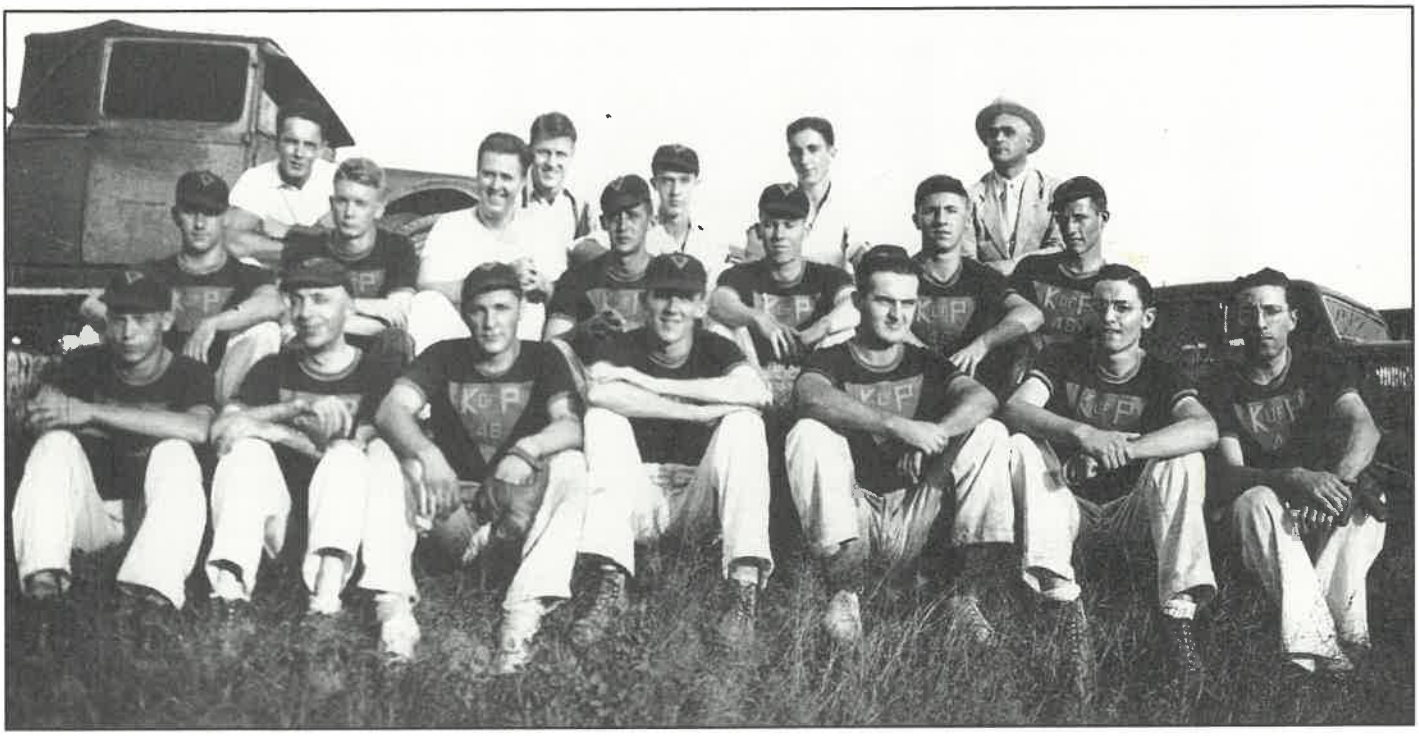


An unidentified Fairmont catcher, ready for business. Photographer and date unknown, Neil Shreve collection.

The City League was always the fastest, and Harry "Red" Potesta's Quick Shoe Cobblers from East Fairmont among its perennial powers. One of the Quick Shoe stalwarts was John Seifrit, an infielder who sometimes caught. In the first league contest ever played, Seifrit and his teammates defeated the OnIzed Bottlers, the Owens-Illinois team with a funny name, by a solid 9-0. That prompted a huge spaghetti feed from the delighted Potesta, the team's sponsor. At the end of the summer, the Cobblers beat a good Fairmont Business College team in three straight playoff games to become city champs.

One of the things John Seifrit remembers best about those early days is how smoothly the leagues ran. "There weren't any fights, or problems, or appeals on umpiring decisions. We just played and had fun," John told me in an interview at his house.

Though the league teams only played each other twice weekly for the standings, he told me, they played pick-up games at almost any other opportunity. Mrs. Seifrit quickly added that the 1930's softball craze left Fairmont with more than its fair share of softball wid-



The Knights of Pythias were one of the powerhouse teams. Buzzy Fultz sits in front, third from right, in this team portrait. Photographer and date unknown.

Patrick "Patsy" Tork was the man behind the 1930's softball boom in Fairmont. Photographer and date unknown.

ows.

Though fun was the object, games in the City League featured lots of tough play by serious competitors. There's nothing sissy about softball. For one thing, regulation softballs aren't soft — they're almost as hard as a baseball, and half again as big. A mishandled line drive might break an infielder's nose just as cleanly as a baseball. The "mush-ball" now widely used in slow-pitch playground games is larger and softer and nothing like so threatening. It comes to the plate in a slow, high-arcing curve that anyone's Aunt Fanny can hit.

In John Seifrit's day, all league games were fast-pitch. Thrown balls arrived at the plate with the speed of baseballs, and were even harder to hit because the pitchers could whip in their screwballs, curves, and sinkers from only 37' 8" away. When he caught, John Seifrit always wore a mask and chest protector, but the twisted fingers on his right hand still attest to painful stoving by errant foul tips.

Moreover, the playing fields weren't always the well-manicured, grassy expanses we prefer today. Many were sun-baked to the hardness of concrete. In the early days, the city of Fairmont allotted no funds for the maintenance of the ball fields. The designated home team bore the brunt of dragging the infield and powdering fresh foul lines before each game. Some team managers carried base bags to away games just in case the home teams forgot them.

Times were hard during the Depression, and Patsy Tork was lucky even to get city funds to pay small salaries to his summertime play-

More men, women, and children were said to play softball in Fairmont than in any other town of similar size in the United States.

ground staff. His widow, Virginia, recalls that the playground program — which covered more than just the softball leagues — provided the Torks' only summer income. She describes her late husband as a man "who devoted his entire effort to any project he undertook."

The games were played on every available athletic field. The most active fields were those at South Side Park, now Fairmont East-West Stadium, where three games could be played at one time. Though the areas covered by the outfielders of the different teams overlapped, collisions never occurred — or at least

none are recalled today. Games also were played at the Old Fairgrounds (now Windmill Park), at Fairmont State College's Rosier Field, at Norwood, at East Fairmont High, and at the Owens-Illinois field on the Speedway.

Harold "Deacon" Duvall, who would go on to coach Fairmont State to the NAIA national football championship in 1967, played baseball before playing softball. When someone from his father's baseball team was absent, he'd step in as a substitute. Later, his father switched to softball, then so did he.

Red Potesta's Quick Shoe Cobblers defeated the Owens-Illinois team by a solid 9-0. That prompted a huge spaghetti feed from the delighted sponsor.

"At first, I thought it was just a girl's game," Duvall admits. "But we had a pitcher that wasn't too good at getting people out, and one day my dad said, 'Why don't you pitch?' And that became the challenge."

By watching how other pitchers snapped and twisted their wrists to make their pitches curve different ways, Duvall began to learn, then to experiment. "I chalked up a strike zone on a big wall at the old Fairmont Junior High School to pitch to. I practiced hard and eventually I got pretty good at throwing the ball how and where I wanted it."

Duvall began playing in the Rocking Chair League, but soon moved up to the City League. In 1938, he pitched the Knights of Pythias team to its first championship, and became one of its brightest stars. In 1939, he led Owens-Illinois to its first title. In 1941, he returned to the Knights, and took them to the city title again. In this his last season before entering the service, Duvall threw both games of a double header playoff against the Joe's Esso team, winning by scores of 8-4 and 8-2, and clinching the city championship.

Edgar Jaynes, professor emeritus and former chairman of the business school at Fairmont State College, grew up hitting softballs on a vacant lot near his Oakwood Road home. He later played with Deacon Duvall on the highly regarded Knights of Pythias team. Exceptionally fleet of foot, he played center field while his older brother Frank played left field.

Together, they drove opposing fielders crazy, because both were opposite-field hitters, the right-handed Edgar hitting to right field and his left-handed brother hitting to left field. One sportswriter called them the "Poison Twins," after Paul and Lloyd Waner, the Hall of Fame Pittsburgh Pirates who were nicknamed "Big Poison" and "Little Poison."

Ed Jaynes didn't play much after 1935, when he broke a collarbone making a diving shoestring catch of a line drive. His brother Frank proved to be the veteran ballplayer of the family. He and Neil Shreve were the only men who had played at the beginning of the program in 1932 and were still playing almost

Deacon Duvall's speed may be off a little, but he can still fling them in there. Fast pitch softball requires power pitching, underhanded.

Former players Bud Heffner, Ed Jaynes, and Tony Rote reminisce by the backstop at Windmill Park, known as the Old Fairgrounds in their day.

How Softball Captured Fairmont — And Our Attention

Sports gear from the '30's recalls softball's golden era in Fairmont. The Fairmont Machinery Company team won the trophy, now batless, as champs of the Rocking Chair League.

Ideas for GOLDENSEAL stories are everywhere. Credit this one to Canadian author Lois Browne, whose *Girls of Summer* (Harper Collins Publishers, Toronto, 1992) became the hit movie, *A League of Their Own,* with Geena Davis and Madonna as players in an all-womens' baseball league formed during World War II. Browne's book noted softball's popularity during the Depression, when *Time* magazine estimated there were more than two million amateur players, on 60,000 organized teams. Fairmont was singled out by Browne as a town "with a population of only 25,000 which had over 1,000 players on 56 teams."

When I queried Ms. Browne about her sources, she graciously forwarded several stories from the magazine *Recreation,* one of them — "Softball Captures a City" — published in 1940 by the late Patrick "Patsy" Tork, then Fairmont's director of city playgrounds. A few phone calls later, I spoke with Fairmont State College's Dr. James Priester, Tork's son-in-law, who gave me all kinds of leads — especially the names and addresses of the former players whom I eventually interviewed with great pleasure.

During my visit to Fairmont, Robert "Bud" Heffner arranged a get-together at the Fairmont Field Club for as many former players as he could locate. Though very informal, it was the first such "reunion" ever attempted. The roster of attendees (in order of their signing-in) read like an all-star batting lineup: Bud Heffner, Haymon Fortney, John Seifrit, Bob Bosely, Tommy Noble, L. O. Bickle, Eugene Piscitelli, Earl Keener, Frank Belcastro, Rocky Priolette, Tony Rote, Ed Jaynes, Marvin Watson, Walter C. Traugh, Tony Pizatella, "Buzz" Fultz, H. "Deacon" Duvall, and Manuel Garcia.

As a result of that special evening I'm now the proud owner of a brand new, official 12-inch Wilson softball, approved by the Amateur Softball Association of America, autographed by every one of those men. It's a great souvenir.

So thanks, Lois Browne, for mentioning Fairmont in your book: It's led to thousands of GOLDENSEAL readers learning more about the fine game of softball and a number of the fabulous athletes who played it way back when.

— Louis E. Keefer

two decades later, with time off in the military.

"Neil Shreve really deserves the credit as the organizer of what softball became in this city," Ed Jaynes told me. "It was about in 1931, I think, that Neil, here on the west side of the river, and Red Potesta, on the east side, organized two teams and agreed to play. It was probably the first 'east-west' contest ever completed without serious incident. Out of this grew the city leagues."

Shreve is remembered not only as an excellent player, but also as a highly successful team manager. His 1949 City League champions from radio station WVVW were among the strongest of all the post-war teams. Among its stars were Kurt Wohlert, Jimmy Feltz, Virgil Reese, Bob Perrine, Jake Murphy, Frank Jaynes, Earl Keener, Bob Pence, Buzzy Fultz, Ken Whisler, and Deacon Duvall.

Sports and writing about sports for the *Times-West Virginian* were Shreve's consuming interests. For a time, he attended all West Virginia University home games, typing out play-by-play for the wire services as the games progressed. In the 1950's he wrote a Sunday feature column for the Fairmont newspaper — for which he won several awards — and had sports articles published in national magazines. Today, a "Neil Shreve Memorial Scholarship," established by a friend and admirer, Russell Bonasso of Fairmont, is given annually to some deserving Marion County high school senior matriculating at Fairmont State College.

Team managers carried base bags to away games just in case the home teams forgot them.

While Neil Shreve may have fathered the softball leagues, it was Patsy Tork who kept them running efficiently. Tork, in his younger years a star athlete at Fairmont High, went on later to become assistant dean of physical education at WVU as well as a nationally recognized sports official and rules authority. Capable of assessing stiff fines and long suspensions against players using profanity or protest-

ing umpiring decisions too vigorously, Tork was respected for combining discipline with quiet good humor.

Robert L. "Bud" Heffner starred at second base for the Eddie's Grocers team, the 1941 City League champions, having started at age ten in the Baby League and worked up through the other circuits. His skills came naturally. His dad, Jake Heffner, who also played for Eddie's Grocers, once played professional baseball in the Mid-Atlantic League; his cousin, Don Heffner, played 16 years in the majors, first with the New York Yankees, then the St. Louis Browns. After the war, Bud Heffner played a season for the Pittsburgh Pirates farm club in Salisbury, North Carolina, but returned to Fairmont State College for his degree after deciding he'd never reach the big leagues.

"Our Eddie's Grocers team really started with the boys from one block of Virginia Avenue," Heffner says. "What's amazing is that four members of that team went into coaching: myself for five years at St. Peters High School; Ray Hedrick, who's just retired as principal of North Marion High School; Jimmy Cale, now dead, but who'd been the athletic director at East Fairmont High School; and Bill Blosser, who coached first at a school in Waynesboro, Virginia, and then at Barrackville."

Heffner's own coaching career, though relatively short, saw him guide an all-star Fairmont team to a third-place finish in the 1951 national Little League baseball championship at Williamsport, Pennsylvania. The team won a regional tourney at Hagerstown, Maryland, then a mid-Atlantic tourney played at Edgewood, Maryland, before its near miss at the national title at Williamsport.

In his own softball playing days, Heffner says that getting a team started was easy. "Once you had the guys, you'd try to find a sponsor who'd pay the $10 initiation fee to Patsy Tork. That helped the City Parks Department with the costs of running the leagues. The sponsor also supplied the bats, balls, and uniforms. The cost was minimal, compared to the good advertising generated."

The WVVW team won the City League championship in 1949, at the end of the era. Manager Neil Shreve stands at left and Deacon Duvall third from left, with sponsor J. Patrick Beacom in the nice suit. Photographer unknown, June 1949.

Other means were also used to support the leagues. Among them was the widespread practice of selling chances on peg boards displayed in various shops and barrooms around town. The player, in pushing a small peg through a honeycomb-like game board, would eject a tightly rolled paper pellet with a number on it. If the number was a winner the player won a prize. At a nickel or dime a chance, peg board proceeds mounted up.

At some point, the leagues began charging nominal admission fees to games — in 1941, for example, ten cents for adults, children under 15 admitted free. Crowds varied with the teams playing, much as today's better teams attract the biggest crowds. Many games went into the hundreds of spectators, and playoff games often attracted as many as 500 to 600. Specially arranged intercity games might draw even better. When Red Potesta's Quick Shoe aggregate journeyed to Tarentum, Pennsylvania, to play a twin bill against the Clyde Shirt Shop team, a Tarentum newspaper story estimated the crowd at between two and three thousand.

Once the Fairmont city championship had been decided, a citywide all-star team was selected to participate in what became an annual Monongahela Valley tournament. Morgantown teams dominated the tourney in its early years, while Fairmont and Clarksburg held their own later. Fairmont all-star teams also competed for the state softball championship, but never took the title.

Softball's preeminence in the Fairmont of the 1930's had a fascinating history, some of it recaptured in Patsy Tork's 1941 WVU master's thesis. It began, he says, with a Marion County playgrounds committee of the Woman's Club of Fairmont in 1914. Most of its meetings were held in the home of Mrs. E. F. Hartley, who served as the first chairperson. The group raised $440.85, sufficient to employ a supervisor and three assistants to operate three playgrounds for six weeks.

In subsequent years, the committee continued its efforts and found ever more innovative ways to raise funds. Through the sale of Chautauqua tickets, the proceeds from suppers, the operation of a merry-go-round, and the distribution of 5,000 publicity fly swatters, $3,000 was collected. The committee oper-

ated the playgrounds until 1922 when the Fairmont public school system took them over. But school support was discontinued in 1930 because of the Depression.

From 1933 through 1940 the city's playgrounds were developed and operated by the Fairmont City Playground Association, without financial support from the city. Association members included school officials and business leaders, as well as Patrick Tork as city playgrounds director.

Funds for the first three years were raised from various community enterprises. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal was rolling now, and the federal Works Progress Administration provided the labor to build five new playgrounds. In 1936, the Playground Association was admitted to Community Chest membership, and allotted $868.65 to conduct that summer's playground program. Over the next few years the support doubled and the number of playgrounds rose to 12.

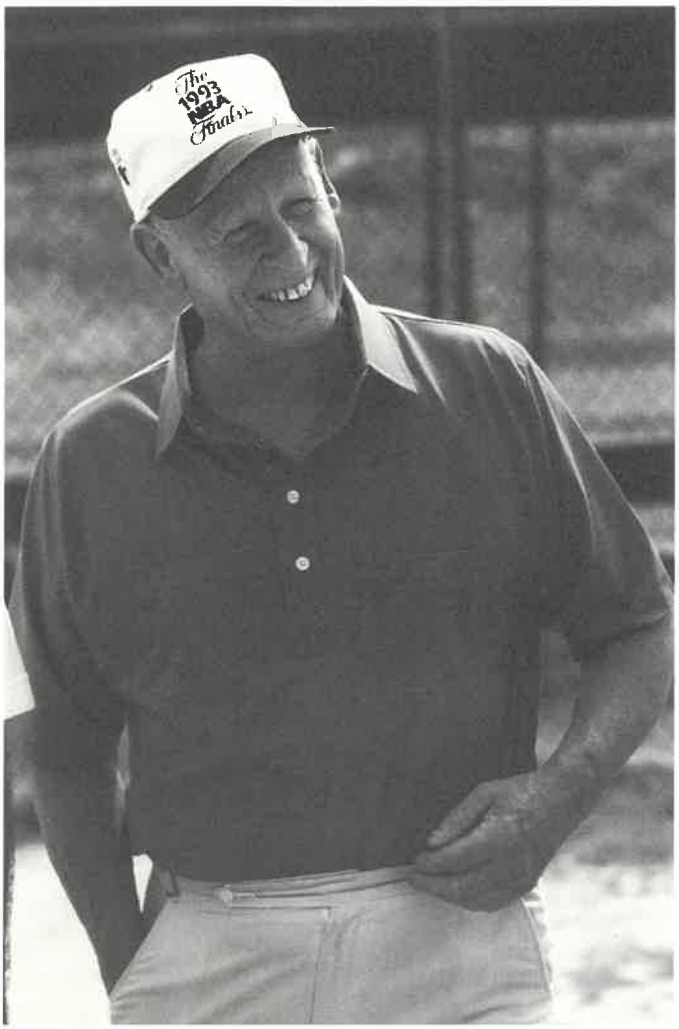
Three of the fields were considered "public play areas" — the East Side Athletic Field, South Side Park, and Rosier Field — but by far the most popular use was for softball. In 1940, given a 12-week summer budget of just over $2,000, the Playground Association employed 15 people, 11 of them full-time; 15 additional people were furnished by the WPA. Fourteen umpires were needed during the regular season, and four during tournament playoffs.

The American Softball Association reported some 63,000 teams nationwide in 1935. Softball's success during these hard times is easily understood. Few families had much money for other kinds of outdoor recreation, and there weren't any Nintendo games or television or even especially good movies in those days. On the other hand, any kid with a bat and a ball could get a game going, and the field didn't have to be very big, or very smooth.

Many of Fairmont's "golden era" softball greats excelled in other sports as well: Albert "Buzzy" Fultz, an all-state basketball player at Fairmont High and all-WVIC at Fairmont State College; Robert Pence, a top basketballer at Fairmont State; Earl Keener, a great running back at Fairmont State; Tony "Keg" Mustachio, an all-state tackle at East Fairmont High; Bill "Bones" Blosser, an all-state guard at Fairmont State; and Jimmy Cale, an all-state Fairmont High basketball player.

Now mostly retired, the 1930's softball stars still follow sports. Among those I talked with, John Seifrit admits that the sports pages are the first thing he reads in the morning. Edgar Jaynes is an ardent Pirates and Penguins fan. Deacon Duvall roots for Fairmont State and WVU. Although some speed afoot may be missing, one suspects that these men and their 1930's and '40's teammates could still step up to the plate and belt out a few long ones. And wouldn't it be great to see them do it!

Manuel Garcia has a Joe DiMaggio grin and a headful of memories from his days in Fairmont softball.



Softball Still Going Strong

The softball leagues of the 1930's and 1940's remain unchallenged in their popularity and sheer number of players, but the game is still enjoyed today in the city of Fairmont.

GOLDENSEAL contacted league director John Christian to ask a few questions about Fairmont softball these days. He tells us that there are 10 "A" league teams and 11 "B" league teams. All are sponsored by area businesses. Each team has a 25-player roster.

The games are held Monday through Thursday evenings at 6:00, 7:00, 8:00, and 9:00 p.m. throughout the summer, on one of the fields at Windmill Park. The other two fields at the park have games at 6:00 and 7:00 p.m. only as there are no night lights.

Windmill Park is a city-owned park and is maintained by the Marion County Parks and Recreation Commission and the City of Fairmont. Robert Heffner sent a clipping from the *Times-West Virginian* explaining that Windmill Park was known as the Old Fairgrounds until 1969. Windmill Park has been home to the city's Babe Ruth League as well as the Fairmont Bulldogs of the Pop Warner football league.

So Windmill Park is still home to sports-minded citizens of Fairmont, just as the Old Fairgrounds was in the golden era of softball a half-century ago.

Echoes of Things Past

Preston County's Oak Park

By Peggy Ross

If you stand stock still and listen very closely, you may hear something in the wind that sounds like calliope music in the wild, grown-over Preston County spot that once was Oak Park.

If you tilt your head just so, you may think you hear people laughing in the distance, a strong man challenging all comers, barkers calling their wares, or an umpire yelling, "Strike three!" You may hear the metallic clank of horseshoes, or even feel the hair on your neck stiffen as you pick up the ghost wail of an excursion train as it rounds a bend approaching the place.

Dressed for the occasion, patrons indulged in promenading. It demanded only that people stride gracefully on a public walk built for one purpose: to be seen.

Eighty-five years ago, the amusement park which lay just behind Masontown, and between Bretz and Cascade, was so popular that trains 20 or more cars long unloaded folks

Wooded paths were typical of Oak Park. Lover's Walk was a favorite. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Ron Rittenhouse.

Oak Park's roller coaster was a surprising sight, standing like a castle in the Preston County forest. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Ron Rittenhouse.

Park Director Ira Bishoff stands at left in this staff photograph from 1910. Wife Elsie sits second from left, with son Alva on the way. Photographer unknown, courtesy Ron Rittenhouse.

from miles away on a regular basis every summer weekend and holiday. Today there's nothing left of Oak Park except a few bent dam supports, a concrete-wrapped communications box, train tracks and a siding, a few pottery shards buried in the ground, and the echoes of things past.

It doesn't take much imagination to put it all back together in the mind while you walk the tree-studded acreage. An amusement park of note, it beckoned to tens of thousands of people during the quarter-century that it was in business. They came singly, with families, and in pairs by horse and buggy, spring wagon, and automobiles: Model A's with carriage lamps mounted on the side and no two tires alike, and in "Modern T's," according to Charlie Hawkins, who was a mechanic most of his life.

And they came by the trainsful, from Memorial Day through Labor Day, beginning back about 1905. But the gates were shut for good on the 100-acre site after the Depression hit at just about the same time that paved highways made it easy for automobile travel. The railroad age was passing, and Oak Park was owned and populated by a railroad.

That's how 84-year-old Alva Bishoff happened to be born in one of the rooms of the hotel. His dad, Ira (pronounced Ary), worked in Morgantown as a railroad blacksmith's striker.

"At the end of a day, Old Man Murphy — I can't think of his first name right now, but he was president of the railroad — told my dad to go get his stuff and take it home with him," Alva says. Ira mistakenly thought he was being fired.

"I was so mad I could've bit a spike in two," Ira later told his son. "I said, I've been doing a good job for you. What do you want to get rid of me for?"

That was just it, Murphy told Ira Bishoff. He was doing such a good job that he was being transferred to Oak Park to run the place. Murphy

told him to expect wagons to come the next morning to move the family to Preston County.

That was in 1910. Alva has a picture postcard of the hotel and its staff taken just about then. His father, about 24 at the time, stands with the other employees, which include his wife, Elsie, and her sister. Elsie managed the hotel and restaurant, and from her condition it looks as though Alva himself was expected within the next few months. He was born at Oak Park in early 1911.

"I slid down that slide time and again. You wouldn't believe it, but it burned your rear end. You didn't want no splinters."

Growing up there wasn't in his future, however, especially after railroad men found the chubby two-year-old heading down the track toward Masontown once too often.

"My grandpap came and saw me tied up to keep me home and he didn't like that, so he took me with him. I stayed down at Grandpap Livengood's and went to school down in Union Grove."

But Alva was there enough to remember how Oak Park looked. Almost exactly. He can place every walk and ride, every bridge and slide, every pavilion and walkway, and almost every concessionaire.

But then so can 81-year-old Charlie Hawkins of Masontown.

"I was there hundreds of times," he said, eyes bright with the memory. "I'd leave home in the New Addition and walk over the hill to Oak Park and boy, I'd be tired when I got home.

"I was just a boy, 10 to 12 years old. I went till it shut down. That must have been about 1929. That's when Bretz mine shut down, and the powerhouse for Oak Park was there. All of it was electric."

All except the slide, which by modern standards was an unusual piece of equipment. We're not talking about the short, roofed-over slide above the sandbox for the small children; no, this was a highly-polished wooden slide about 65 feet long — one which adults could enjoy.

Charlie and Mary Hawkins both frequented Oak Park in younger days. "I was there hundreds of times," Charlie says. Photo by Ron Rittenhouse.

"I slid down that thing time and again," Charlie chuckled. "You wouldn't believe it, but it burned your rear end. You'd go a-flying — it was a lot longer than it looked. It went down over that railroad. It was planed; you didn't want no splinters."

Mary Hawkins, 79, Charlie's wife, has a picture of her and her brother, Richard Graham, standing by a hand pump that Charlie says "was down below the ball field on the right side." She was about eight years old, and the photo proves that going to the park was no small deal. She wore a short white ruffled dress, long black stockings and black hightop shoes. There is a white ribbon in her hair. Richard wears a suit.

It wasn't just an everyday thing to have a gigantic amusement park nestled practically in your backyard — a place where people came from Washington, DC, and from Pittsburgh, Uniontown, and Connellsville, Pennsylvania; Baltimore and Cumberland, Maryland, and all points in between. Oak Park was a popular place for companies to hold outings for their employees. Holiday excursions were in, and people were hungry for a good time.

"I've seen trains parked from Oak Park clear back into Beantown," Charlie Hawkins said. Beantown is the upper part of Masontown, about a mile away. "They'd come early — sometimes the night before."

People wanted to get the most out of their day, and at least one day every summer all the folks getting off the trains were black. Charlie remembers that blacks were always welcome there, though, and attended as regularly as the whites.

The curved entrance sign fairly shouted in its large capital letters "OAK PARK." Beneath it, an added

sign in gothic script said, "One Hundred Acres." There was no admission charge.

Much of it was wilderness, providing wonderful cover for walks along "Lovers' Lane" or shade for lazy picnics. Tall trees marked the property boundaries.

"There was no underbrush. It was all kept very nice," one person remembered. The management meant for it to stay that way. Scattered around the mostly-natural park area were warnings against carving trees or other damage: "Cutting Names Not Allowed" and "Breaking or Cutting Shrubbery is Prohibited."

Dressed for the occasion, patrons came in droves. Once there, they indulged in promenading, a popular attraction of the time — one liberally practiced at county fairs, too. It demanded only that people stride gracefully on a public walk built for one purpose: to be seen. Many steps led up to the "Air Castle" where people gathered to watch promenaders below.

Oak Park was a place to see and be seen, and people dressed up to go there. Men wore suits, while women preferred light-colored summer attire. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Ron Rittenhouse.

"Naturally, we looked at them. You don't think young men would go down there and not *look at women, do you?"*

J. W. Borgman of Kingwood hauled ladies to the park by the carload. "Us young men would go to see the girls," says Mr. Borgman, now 96. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Ron Rittenhouse.

Fashion depended upon the year, of course, and looking at old postcards it's obvious that hemlines grew shorter as the century grew older. Flouncy white dresses acces-sorized with enormous flower-bedecked hats and parasols to ward off the sun gradually became tailored suits topped off with smaller, flatter, narrower-brimmed hats. Girls' hairstyles changed from buns to bobs.

We owe much of our knowledge to another popular attraction at Oak Park, having one's picture made. "Your Photo on a Post Card Finished in 5 mins." boasted the sign over the unknown photographers' tent. Photographer Ron Rittenhouse of Morgantown has collected an album of Oak Park picture postcards, an excursion schedule, ride tickets, and so forth.

Men wore light summer suits and boaters, if they had them, and usually carried some sort of walking stick — sometimes souvenirs won at the park. Others of the male persuasion wore the only suits they had, Sunday-go-to-meeting outfits that often were wool. By the time the afternoon ball games started, the heat was intense so coats and ties were abandoned along with derbies and caps — all tossed on the grass or over ladies' arms. Boys watched from any available perch in shirt sleeves and knickers.

Ball games were popular, and most of the Preston County mines and towns formed teams to vie at Oak Park. Ira Bishoff "cleared and grubbed off" for the diamond while he was manager.

"I've seen some games down there that some of the big teams you see today couldn't have won to save their necks. They could really hit the home runs. I knowed a lot of the players," Charlie Hawkins said.

So did Milton Groves. "There was Braithwood from Rowlesburg, who had pitched in the major leagues," Milton said. He only had three fingers on one hand, a thumb and two others. Then there were the Beveridge boys and the DuPont boys from over here at Bretz.

"These were great ball games. All mines and all coal companies had a baseball team," Milton confirmed. "If you were a good ballplayer, you got a job wherever you wanted to work. You got preferential treatment. There were mines at Cascade, Rowlesburg, Tunnelton, Kingwood, Masontown, Bretz, Burke, and Richard, the last four owned by Bethlehem Steel, and there may have been more."

Milton Groves knows about Oak Park because his dad, Howard, was the B&O's water tank attendant there for ten years from the time when Milton was just a tyke.

"The water was taken from a wooden and metal dam to a tank that had a big old reciprocating plunger pump. The tanks would hold, oh, well, they were about 15 feet in diameter and stood about 30 feet high. There were two of them. Flexible metal pipes, about the size of stovepipe with an elbow, went [from the tank] into the water reservoir on the train. Workers would open the valve and let the water go into the tender."

Heated by coal, the water provided steam to power the locomotives that were the park's lifeline.

"Has anyone told you about the greasy pole?" Milton asked. It had "a five-dollar bill and if you could reach it, you got the money." The pole was coated with axle grease — dirty axle grease — so contenders wore old clothes to try to shinny up. They started up, slid down and fell into the sand at the bottom. "They'd get into the creek to get the sand off and go back and start over again," Milton chuckled.

He remembers lots of things from the years his dad worked at Oak Park "seven days a week 24 hours a day, always on call." His family lived only a mile away "in New Addition, pretty close to where the water tanks are," where the Hawkinses lived and where Milton and Sarah Groves still reside.

Josephine Street reminisces with grandson Frank Street. "Oak Park opened when I was a little girl," she says. Photo by Ron Rittenhouse.

"There were shooting galleries and ice cream, Cracker Jack, hot dogs, and soft drinks put out by Whistler and Coke. Coke was out then — just a little six-ounce bottle. Everything was a nickel.

"It was a romantic area. The girls and boys all went to Oak Park."

Sarah, who grew up on a farm near Tunnelton, missed out on all the excitement, but she often heard Milton's mother talk about growing up in Masontown. "She used to tell me lots of things. They would go over there and meet the boys. They all had these big hats and full dresses and they were on their way to Oak Park. We used to have a picture."

J. W. Borgman of Kingwood is 96 years old. "All those young people would come from Connellsville and all the girls would come, and us young men would go to see the girls. There would be 15 or 16 coaches [on the train].

"Sometimes we'd get aboard the train in Rowlesburg. Naturally, we looked at them. You don't think young men would go down there and *not* look at women, do you?" he asked.

Josephine Holmes Street, 90, grew up near Gladesville, a name George Washington gave the beautiful green area when he was here surveying in the mid-18th century.

"Oak Park opened when I was a little girl," Josephine said. "The B&O Railroad had an awful lot to do with it. They owned the hotel right on the park property and all

Decker's Creek was dammed at Oak Park and boating a popular attraction. This party of young people waits at the dock. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Ron Rittenhouse.

that; they ran the trains in and out. I was about ten years old the first time I went. We wore white dresses and hats. They didn't wear slacks in those days.

"It was exciting to go; we were excited to get to go anyplace. My father and a neighbor had horses and a spring wagon, and we parked at Burke and walked down. There wasn't a road opened. People used to walk up the railroad track to Oak Park.

"It was a going place for the time. They had everything for kids' amusement."

Josephine never went alone as a girl, though. She went several times as a teenager, always with other people. "Our parents came with us, young and old together," she said of Oak Park outings.

"The neighbors and our family picnicked there. They had refreshment stands where you could get eats and at the hotel, you could get a meal. I never was in it because I had no interest in it, but it was nice enough for the time."

Josephine added, "I remember the ice cream."

Everyone did. Alva Bishoff even remembered who sold it, C. V. "Gus" Kwedis. "Theodore and John Batlous and Gus, all from Morgantown, ran the concession stands," he said. "When they closed up at the end of the day, all the leftover hamburgers and hot dogs went up to the hotel."

"I do remember the Ferris wheel," said Josephine Street. "That was something else in those days."

Eighty four year old Lawrence Bolinger of Lenox never risked the frightening ride — at least not more than once back when he was eight or ten years old. "It scared the devil out of me," he said. "My brothers would make the car shake."

Lawrence remembers that his father piled all 17 children onto the farm wagon and took them from their Herring farm "over the hill to Oak Park. My dad would tie the horses to the wagon, and he had hay and grain to feed them." Mrs. Bolinger took along their favorite creamed chicken and biscuits to feed the children.

"I had a brother that worked on the railroad. They brought the workers in to help run the machinery at the park," Lawrence said.

"I was only a kid, but I liked to see the round and square dancing," which took place in the dance pavilions. "I liked to do a little after I grew up, too," Lawrence joked. The park eventually had three pavilions, one for square dancing, one for round and one for roller skating.

A day wouldn't be complete without a ride on the merry-go-round with its galloping horses and calliope gurgling out that old-timey steam-pipe music. Not many people could turn down a treat like that, but Charlie Hawkins remembers that it came to a bad end.

"It was a real nice merry-go-round," Charlie said, "but I think a kid got killed on it." The horses were made stationary after that.

The hands-down biggest attraction at Oak Park was the awesome roller coaster with its turreted top and up-down-and-around roadway. Built at the foot of a timber-covered hill, it was very near the caretaker's home. There are postcards showing the ride both under construction and finished, with a car hurtling downhill at daredevil speed. You can almost hear the screams of the four people in it, some showing off with their hands in the air. Old Glory is seen whipping in the background.

"I never cared about getting on that roller coaster," said Charlie Hawkins. "I never did ride it, but now I wish I had. I rode those down at Pittsburgh."

Beneath the roller coaster was the gear house. About 50 feet away was one of the large, airy picnic pavilions where more flags waved in the breezes that relieved the summer heat.

As far as can be substantiated, an

Elkins coal company owned by the area's leading capitalists, U.S. Senators Elkins and Davis, built Oak Park and later sold both it and the local railway to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. Hawkins said the Elkins company tossed in the park for a dollar. The B&O, in turn, sold the businesses to the M&KRR, the Morgantown & Kingwood Railroad.

Memories conflict on this point. Some say the coal company sold the park complex to M&K, which later sold to the B&O. This version may make more sense, since the Elkins group had funded the M&K and did in fact sell it to the B&O.

Whatever the details, Prestonians who loved going places and having a good time must have been thankful for the railroad connection. Just about every little village — Garner, Reedsville, Tunnelton — was a whistlestop; many had good-sized depots. Tunnelton had two. Trains unloaded park goers near a bridge over Decker's Creek, where there was a formal entrance to Oak Park.

This was iron and coal country, and the train runs were regular. The railroads and the mines were just about the most important factors in Preston County's economy, aside from farming. Oak Park added jobs. It used porters, cooks, attendants, and operators, and created more jobs for people in support businesses, photographers, concessionaires, and others.

All along the line, whether it was just an in-county trip or the more exciting and much longer excursions, the scenery was spectacular, although it may have been spoiled by the widespread mining and clear-cut timbering then taking place. The mountains were punctuated with tunnels, like the one owned by the Morgantown & Kingwood Railroad in Albright or the big one at Tunnelton. Trestles and bridges spanned streams which sang and splashed their ways to the Mon River. Visiting Pennsylvanians and Marylanders watched as their wide open, rolling countryside became our lush green mountains.

That there were railway accidents is proven by an August 11, 1912, postcard photo showing lime- or sand-filled cars off the track. Sightseers made the wreck part of their excursion. Men climbed atop the crushed metal of cars twisted crazily off the tracks. Their women simply looked on, keeping white dresses and hats clean and smooth. Washing and ironing were no easy tasks.

Decker's Creek, encircling the park, was dammed providing a fenced-off swimming hole complete with springboard and boating for patrons. Boats were available for rent. They were tied up just under the railroad bridge into the park, where they waited to be let.

"I used to get one of them and ride all over that creek. Hell, you could run it all day for a quarter," Charlie Hawkins said. "Would you have a chew?" he asked me, pausing to think. "I'm going to as sure as anything. I surely am."

Some folks pitched tents along the water and camped at Oak Park for a week or so. Even if the park wasn't open and in full swing on weekdays, there were always horseshoes, baseball, fishing, campfires and talk. For the less hardy, there were the hotel meals, glider swings and nasturtium-filled flower beds.

The people who knew it best hated to see it go. "That park should have still been in business. Cars came out and they thought people wouldn't come anymore, but they would have come regardless," Charlie Hawkins maintains.

And maybe they would have, who knows? But today there are many people living right in Masontown who have no idea there was ever such a thriving enterprise near them. Those people do not include the council or waterworks employees, who got to know the site when they built a reservoir there two years ago to provide water for town residents.

And Oak Park is very much alive for Charlie Hawkins, J. W. Borgman, Milton Groves, Alva Bishoff, Josephine Street, and other people whose youth took them there. They sometimes speak of it as a present entity rather than past.

"I was up there about eight or nine years ago and I found where the hotel was and a few other things. It's growed up so bad you couldn't hardly get through it. Summertime there are too many copperheads around there," Alva Bishoff said.

But snakes and underbrush can't stand in the way of nostalgia. Folks do wander around the place occasionally, stepping over those dam supports and around the railway communication box. Eric Belldina, a young man with an avid interest in the place, has dug for bits and pieces of the past at the site but others go just for the outing.

For them, that umpire's call or the wail of that train whistle isn't so ghostly. It's just something that happened a few yesterdays ago.

Boats await their riders at Oak Park on a long-ago summer day. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Ron Rittenhouse.

The Cliftonville Riot

A Forgotten Panhandle Mine War

By Mary Zwierzchowski

Smoke still rises from the burned-out tipple as these men confer at the Cliftonville battle site. We believe these are reporters questioning combatants. Photographer unknown, July 1922.

In the early dawn of July 17, 1922, the small mining town of Cliftonville was thrust suddenly into the nation's attention.

The sun had just begun to break above the east hill when this quiet Brooke County village was caught in the crossfire of a blazing battle. For more than an hour a fight raged between striking coal miners and deputies defending the mine property, leaving in its wake bloody death and destruction.

The story of the Clifton mine war made national headlines within 24 hours, but today it is not widely known beyond the borders of Brooke County. But although it is not ranked among West Virginia's most notable labor troubles, the episode is filled with the drama and devastation common to all of them. It is a profoundly tragic story that is worth the telling.

"Suddenly there was a shot. Then another. Then all hell broke loose. About 500 men were marching along the ridge."

Retrieving this incident from the back pages of history was not easy. In an attempt to reconstruct the battle and uncover remnants of the past, my husband Dave and I hiked across a narrow trestle, through creek water and thick foliage to reach the backcountry site of what was once the town of Cliftonville. Our journey yielded little more than a few good photos and a coal loader's brass tag inscribed with the number "61."

The real treasures were found in the archives of local libraries. After many hours of sifting through microfilmed pages of old newspapers and other accounts of the battle, the story finally came together. As near as I could determine, this was the way it happened.

Cliftonville was a company-owned town built along the banks of Cross Creek. It was tucked among the hills more than halfway up the

Northern Panhandle, seven miles east of Wellsburg and just short of the Pennsylvania state line. The main part of town — set snugly in a hollow — contained about ten houses, a post office and a company store. Trains traveling the Wabash Railroad stopped there on a regular schedule. Chiseled in the hillside to the south was the gaping mouth of the Clifton mine. The railroad tracks and creek ran to the north.

There was trouble at Cliftonville in the summer of 1922. Striking miners and their families, evicted from company houses, were camped in the tent dwellings which had sprung up along the creek. The mine, owned and operated by the Richland Coal Company, now employed only nonunion labor. It was this displacement of union workers which brought bloodshed to Cliftonville.

For several days that July a stifling heat wave had hovered over the Ohio Valley as temperatures soared into the 90's. It matched the many heated disputes between the coal operators and union miners which persisted through that long, hot summer. The labor trouble was not restricted to the local area. Dissension in America's coalfields dominated the news. President Harding issued an appeal to the nation, urging striking miners to return to work.

The local episode began Sunday, July 16, the night before the violent encounter. A crowd of striking miners gathered at the union hall in nearby Avella, Pennsylvania, to make plans to march on Cliftonville. Their goal was to shut down the Clifton mine by bringing out the nonunion miners, although it is unclear whether they intended at this stage to drive them out or coax them out. An eyewitness report in the *Steubenville Herald-Star*, on July 18, described the meeting as having been "quiet and orderly. So far as outward appearance there was no thought of violence and it was generally accepted here that it was a march to bring out the miners at Cliftonville."

At 10:00 p.m. the men began their four-mile march to Cliftonville along the tracks of the railroad, down through the Wabash Tunnel and into West Virginia. They added to their ranks every able-bodied man they could find along the way, forcing some into the march according to testimony at the later trials. Before reaching the tunnel, they stopped to regroup at the Penova ball field. What began as a peaceful march now took on a more aggressive tone. One of the marchers assumed the role of leader and began giving orders. Following a session of rousing speeches at the ball field, the miners resumed their march toward Cliftonville.

They arrived shortly after midnight. As darkness hung over the sleepy hamlet, the marchers — estimated at about 300 — crept up the slopes and positioned themselves in the hills surrounding the Clifton mine, having full view of the pit mouth, tipple and conveyor.

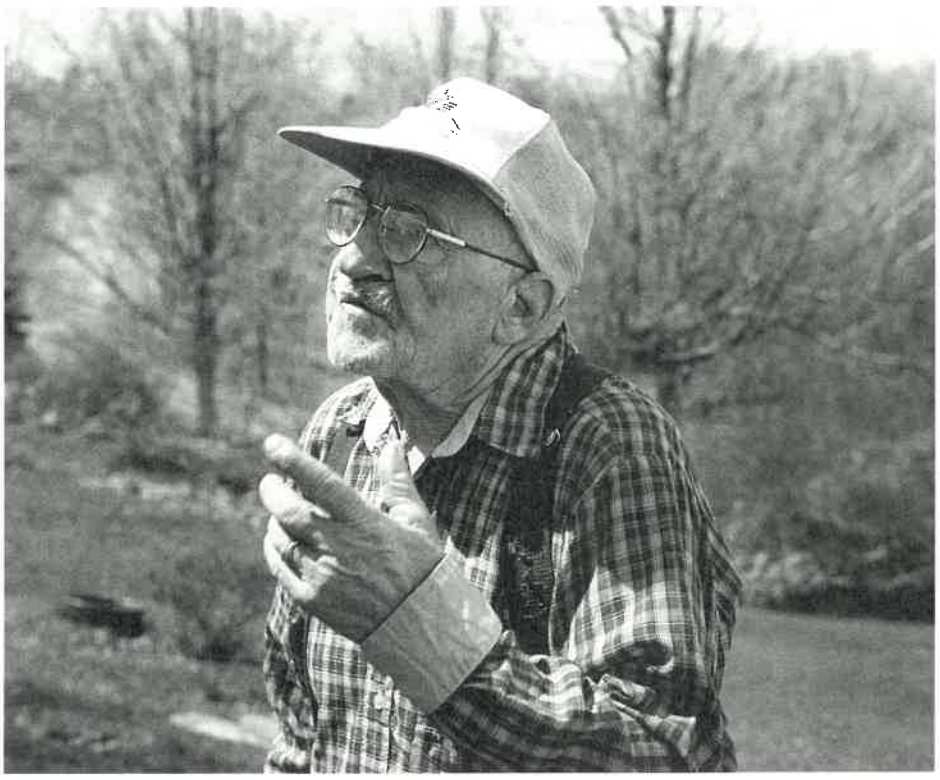
Meanwhile, as the march was getting underway in Avella, other plans were being made at the Brooke County sheriff's office in Wellsburg. Around 8:00 p.m. Sheriff Harding H. Duval received a tip that trouble was likely at Cliftonville. He quickly formed a posse and rushed there with seven or eight armed deputies. Among those deputized were the sheriff's son, Tom, several mine guards, and George Caldwell, a mining engineer in his early 20's.

Around midnight Sheriff Duval returned to Wellsburg for more men and ammunition. As he began the long dusty ride back to town, he left the youthful engineer in charge at the mine site.

Caldwell remembered his fear of that terrifying night in an interview with Gary Chernenko in 1974. "I was scared to death," he said. "I didn't think it was right of the sheriff to leave and place all of the responsibility on someone as young as I was." Duval soon returned with his chief deputy, Irvin Mozingo, and several others, bringing the total number of deputies to about 20. Ordering them not to fire unless fired upon, Sheriff Duval placed his troops around the mine property.

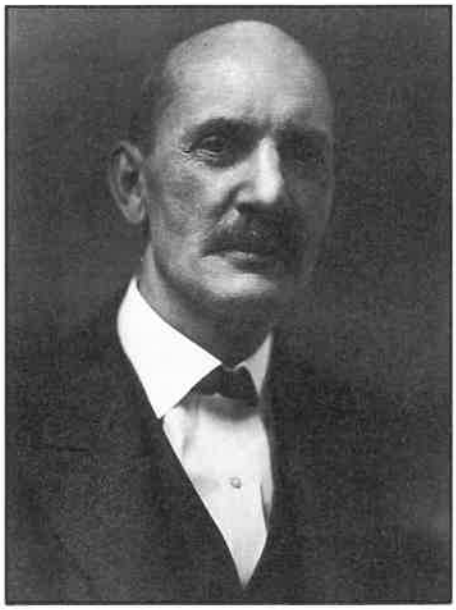
The first disturbance — believed to have been an abortive signal for attack — came at about 2:00 a.m., when rocket flares and explosions of dynamite ripped through the quiet night. Tension mounted as the deputies braced themselves. But all remained still. The next few hours became a long and agonizing wait.

Suddenly, at daybreak, violence erupted. The shrill whistle of the



Nesto Zambarda was an eight-year-old in July 1922, living within sight of the shootout. He remembers it "like it was yesterday," he says. Photo by Mark Crabtree.

Brooke County sheriff Harding H. Duval (below) died in the fight. The photograph above, probably staged for the ensuing trials, shows the scene where he fell. Note that an actor lies right of center, where the sheriff's body was found. Portrait by George Kossuth, other photographer unknown.



5:15 train echoed through the valley as if to herald the events to come. Nonunion workers began arriving for the morning shift. Unaware of the danger surrounding them in the wooded hills, they walked up the steep incline past the tipple and conveyor toward the mine opening. As they reached the pit mouth, a shot rang out from the hill above. Soon firing opened from all sides.

A front-page story in the *New York Times*, July 18, described the action. "The attackers were heard to shout, 'Come on, boys; let's kill these scabs.' With that the entire body of men proceeded toward the tipple and the first shots were fired."

Three times the union men charged the tipple and twice they were beaten back by deputies' gunfire. On the third try they took possession.

"Two guards stationed in the tipple house kept up a terrific fire and the miners tore off the roof of the enclosed incline in an effort to get at them," the New York paper continued. "Deputies say that all the while they were under fire at the top of the tipple, constant shooting came from the union miners' camp across Cross Creek." At this point, the attackers' main objective was the destruction of the tipple. Union miners doused the structure with oil and set it ablaze. The tipple and conveyor were the only link to the mine pit. Having disabled the operation, the attackers retreated back into the woods, being fired upon as they went, stopping only long enough to pick up those who were wounded.

The sheriff's body, riddled with bullet holes, was found about an hour later by his son, Tom.

Mrs. Louis Bennett, who ran the boardinghouse in Cliftonville, watched from her porch as the battle scene shattered the gray dawn of that muggy Monday morning. She gave a graphic account to the *Wheeling Intelligencer*. "Suddenly there was a shot. Then another. Then all hell broke loose. About 500 men or so it seemed to me, were marching along the ridge," she told the newspaper.

"At the head of the column was a man dressed in what looked like an army uniform. He was carrying a banner. They disappeared into the woods for a short time. Then come out shouting and shooting their guns. One column of what I guess was a couple hundred men swept down on the tipple. As I could see, that brute carrying the American flag was waving like fury and shouting. He was one of the first into the tipple, and then stuck his head out of one of the windows still waving his flag. The next thing I knew the tipple was on fire." Mrs. Bennett soon found herself in the line of fire as several shots narrowly missed her.

While the fighting continued, a tremendous explosion brought down the burning tipple, which added to the chaos. Not until after the battle was it learned that company guards had dynamited the tipple to keep the fire from spreading to the mine opening.

The Brooke County Courthouse has seen many trials, but none more spectacular than those following the mine battle. This is a recent view by Mark Crabtree.

Villagers, terrified by the whizzing bullets, barricaded themselves in their homes, using mattresses to cover the windows and doors. Then sometime during the morning Brooke County lost its only sheriff ever to fall in the line of duty.

The *Steubenville Herald-Star* reported that Sheriff Duval and a small band of deputies had climbed the hill above the mine in an attempt to outflank the invaders. The sheriff and his son, Tom, took the east slope. The east hill was the most difficult and dangerous route since it was from this direction that the attack had been launched.

Facing tremendous odds, the little band of defenders fought relentlessly uphill. During the course of the fighting, Sheriff Duval became separated from the other officers. Young Deputy Duval said he last saw his father "hurrying after a small party of the mob." The sheriff's body, riddled with bullet holes, was found about an hour later by his son, near the top of the incline. He had been stripped of his pistols and marks on his head and face indicated that he had been clubbed.

The only other serious injury suffered by the defending forces was Deputy Irvin Mozingo, who was wounded in a fight below the tipple. The *Wheeling Register*, July 18, told of the duel-to-the-death encounter. The rioters "charged into the generating plant to kill the deputies," the paper reported. "Standing behind a barrier in the generating plant, a man said to be Frank Malich shot [Mozingo] in the mouth. Mozingo said he held in his hand a .44 U.S. automatic revolver which spoke and the man who shot him went down." Mozingo later recovered from his wounds. His assailant did not.

Finally, at 7:00 a.m. the fighting subsided and the attackers slipped back through the woods into Pennsylvania. By now, the sun had moved well above the horizon. Its warm rays flooded the valley below, revealing the terrible aftermath.

At least eight marchers lay dead and an undetermined number were injured. The weeds were stained with blood where the bodies of the wounded had been dragged through the hills and carried off by their companions. Three marchers perished in the tipple fire. One man was seen lying in the smoldering ruins; still grasped in his hand was the torch with which he had fired the tipple. The bodies of four marchers lay strewn about on the wooded hillside.

Gary Chernenko, a Brooke Countian who researched Cliftonville for his 1974 Bethany College senior paper, believes the carnage was even greater. "Further research has discovered that for days following the gunfight secret funerals were held in the woods of Pennsylvania under the cover of darkness," Chernenko wrote. "Also it has been discovered that men were buried in Ohio and West Virginia in unmarked graves or under assumed names so as not to implicate their family and friends."

The official investigation concentrated on rounding up live miners, rather than accounting for dead ones. Shortly before noon, Thomas Duval, son of the slain sheriff, was appointed to succeed his father as sheriff of Brooke County. Young Duval, who had fought in the early morning skirmish, now had the grim task of bringing to justice those responsible for his father's death. His first act as sheriff was to call for a grand jury investigation of the Cliftonville uprising.

State police were called to the scene and guards posted through-

An Eyewitness Recalls Cliftonville:
"Guards with Guns"

Ernest "Nesto" Zambarda was an eyewitness to the Cliftonville shoot-out.

Zambarda is a retired coal miner who now lives on Fowler Hill Road near Wellsburg. His home is located not far from the ridge where the marchers massed on July 17, 1922, in preparation for their assault on Cliftonville.

Nesto Zambarda was a big help in reconstructing the story of Cliftonville. Here he examines historic photographs with Mary Zwierzchowski. Photo by Mark Crabtree.

Nesto was just eight years old at the time of the shooting, but says he remembers it "like it was yesterday." He lived with his mother, stepfather Andy Busatti, and several brothers and sisters at Virginia Station. Their house was about a half-mile from the mine site.

"We were already up and about that morning when the shooting started," Nesto recalls. "I ran to the window to see what was going on. But my stepfather pushed me back and shouted, 'Get down! You might get hit by a bullet!'

"From the kitchen window we could see across the railroad tracks and creek over to New Camp where the company houses were, about 30 or 40 of them. I could hear the shooting. They were firing from up there on the hillside and I could see some of them running up the hill. There was a big barn over at the camp. A bunch of women were standing around it. They were yelling and screaming and throwing up their hands. They were trying to tell them to stop shooting."

Apparently the women had been caught in the crossfire, a reminder of the peril the situation posed even to non-combatants. When the shooting finally died down, Nesto could not venture outside for several days. "It was too dangerous," he said. "We couldn't have gone down there to Cliftonville even if we wanted to. I could see guards with guns walking back and forth patrolling the tracks."

Nesto digressed to more lighthearted times when he would roam the hillside at Cliftonville. "I remember this open field with a merry-go-round and swings, and big three-story houses. I used to buy candy at the company store. Mostly on Saturdays and Sundays we would go down there and play."

Over the years, Nesto has collected stories from the Cliftonville miners. He gave me this version of Sheriff Harding Duval's death: "The sheriff was shot from Miller's Cut. Someone with a rifle stood high up on the cliff and fired across the hollow into the hillside. The bullet hit the sheriff and he went down.

"I was told that if you walk to the top of that hill above the mine, you'll find a big white rock — a limestone rock. That marks the spot where the sheriff died."

"I was told that if you walk to the top of that hill above the mine, you'll find a big white rock. That marks the spot where the sheriff died."

Nesto says that a few years ago he and a friend walked down the hill from the top of the ridge in search of the legendary stone. They hoped that it had survived the onslaught of strip mining operations which moved through that area during the mid-1960's.

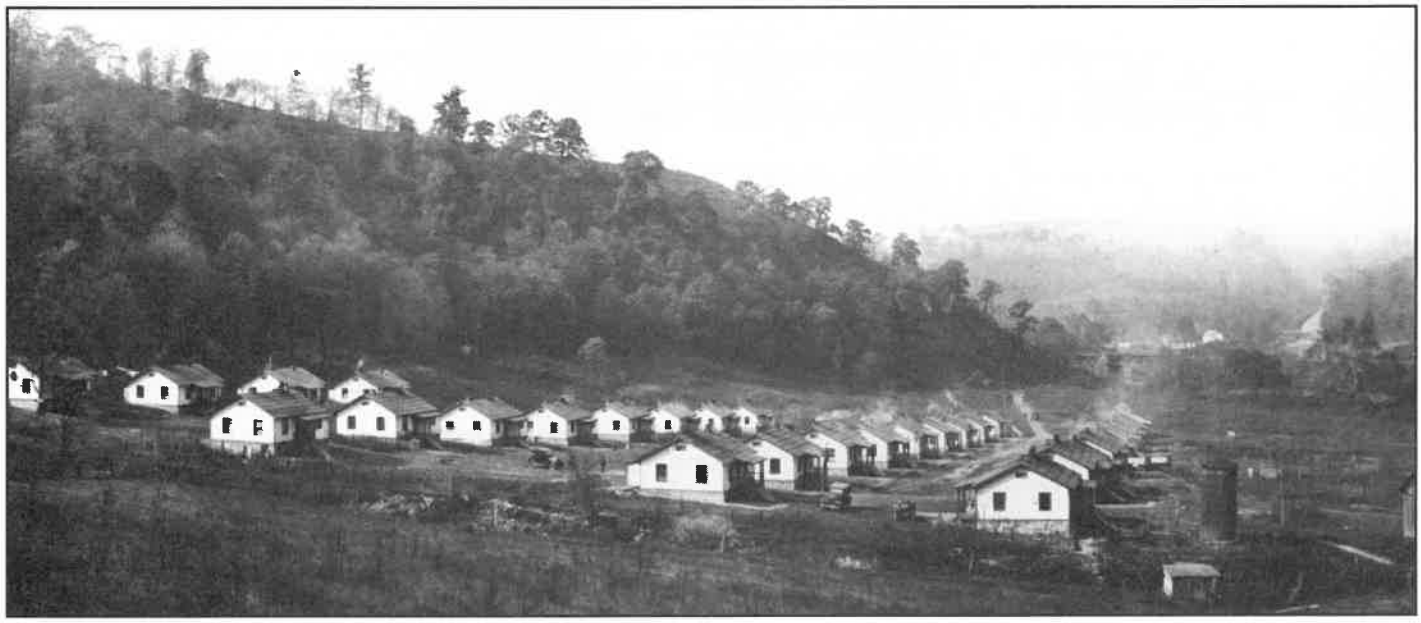
The limestone rock appears to have been as durable as the mystery still surrounding the battle of Cliftonville. The huge earth-moving project had left the marker virtually untouched, according to Nesto Zambarda.

"I found it," the rugged mine veteran beamed. "It's still there."

— Mary Zwierzchowski

out the mine property. Acting on orders to disperse the colony of striking Cliftonville miners and their families camped near the creek, deputies tore down their tents, forcing them to flee the area. Smoke continued to billow from the smoldering tipple into the night of July 17.

An all-out effort to apprehend the Cliftonville marchers got underway, resulting in more than 200 arrests. Seventy-eight miners were indicted on charges of first degree murder, while 138 were charged with conspiracy to burn, destroy, or injure. Most of the charges came to nothing, but 30 men were sentenced to at least three years in prison. Miners from the local unions of Avella, Donahue, Cedar Grove,



The New Camp section, from about the time of the mine riot. Today just Mrs. James Mack's house (left) remains, the only structure still standing in Cliftonville. New photo by Mark Crabtree.

Penobscot, and Studa soon were represented at Moundsville, Chernenko notes. No one was ever convicted in the death of the sheriff. His murder remains an unsolved mystery.

On July 20, funeral services were held for Sheriff Duval. Hundreds of mourners lined the streets of Wellsburg to pay tribute to the fallen leader. The funeral procession, which included dignitaries from throughout the state, made its way slowly up Pleasant Avenue toward Brooke Cemetery where Duval was laid to rest in the family plot.

Seventy-two years after the battle, memories of the tragic event still linger. One old-timer, who declined to be named, lived near the mine. He remembers being caught in the round-up of fugitives. He recently told me of his brush with the law. "I was only 17," he recalled. "My older brother and I, along with a lot of others, were arrested. We spent the night in jail." When I asked who shot the sheriff, the old gentleman's eyes misted over, and he turned away in silence.

The town itself has yielded to time if not to its infamous past. Today the site of Cliftonville is a lush, green valley given completely back to nature. Thick with underbrush, the place bears little evidence of its early history. The pit mouth was covered over by strip-mining operations in

the mid-1960's. The tipple is gone. All that remain are a few concrete foundations at the train station.

In a clearing about a quarter of a mile east of the old mine, nestled between the creek and the hillside, lies a sprawling meadow. One small house dominates the landscape where over 30 new coal company houses once stood, giving it the name New Camp. The house is now owned and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. James Mack. When asked what she knew of the mine incident, Mrs. Mack replied, "Not much. I just know there was a terrible fight and the sheriff was killed. But I do know this house had a number. It was Camp House No. 36."

The Macks' well-maintained home is about the last physical vestige of the battle of Cliftonville. It stands as a lone reminder of that warm July morning in 1922, when hundreds of miners marched on Cliftonville and the green grass of Brooke County turned red.

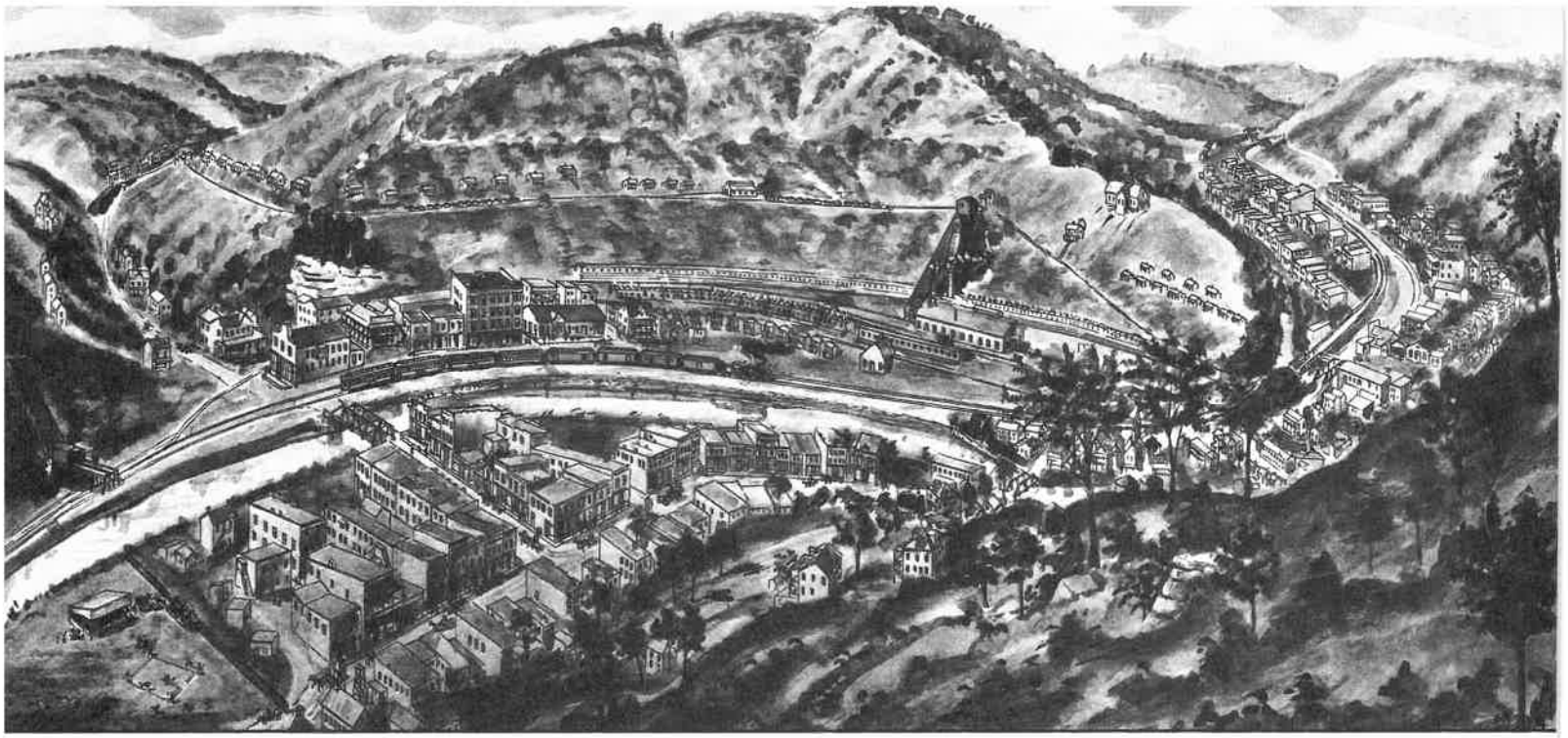
Labor Sites Sought

The National Park Service and the Newberry Library of Chicago seek help in identifying significant labor history sites in the United States. The purpose is to generate nominations for National Historic Landmarks.

The Newberry Library is contacting state historical societies, labor organizations, state preservation offices, and labor scholars for suggestions. The National Park Service and the Department of the Interior plan to designate 20 sites. National Historic Landmark status is reserved for locations with truly national significance. "The site or structure must be associated with events or individuals that made contributions to American history which are of exceptional national value," according to the Newberry Library. In 1992 a West Virginia labor site was named a National Historic Landmark, the Mother Jones Prison Site in Pratt.

Nominations may commemorate labor history in the broad sense, and not only strike-related events. Sites or structures will be considered under the categories of work processes, events, people, leisure establishments such as amusement parks or theaters, labor education, and labor organizing. For more information contact The Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago, IL 60610; (312)943-9090.

This photo shows men loafing peacefully at the company store even before the tipple stopped smouldering in the background, but it was a long time before things returned to normal in Cliftonville. Photographer unknown, July 1922.



The Cinder Bottom neighborhood lays to the right in this bird's-eye view of Keystone. Map by Thaddeus Mortimer Fowler, 1911, courtesy Library of Congress.

Cinder Bottom

A Coalfields Red-Light District

By Jean Battlo

Easily the most notorious of the wild West Virginia towns, with legends sweet and sour and a reputation so deep mean and ornery as to out-bad Dodge City and Tombstone, was the little McDowell County town of Keystone.

And the worst of Keystone was the Cinder Bottom red-light district. Cinder Bottom seems to have been universally known in its day. McDowell's World War II veterans claim that they met soldiers from New York, New Jersey and other regions of the United States who were not all that certain where West Virginia was but were pretty sure they could locate Cinder Bottom. My brother met men in France who had heard of the place.

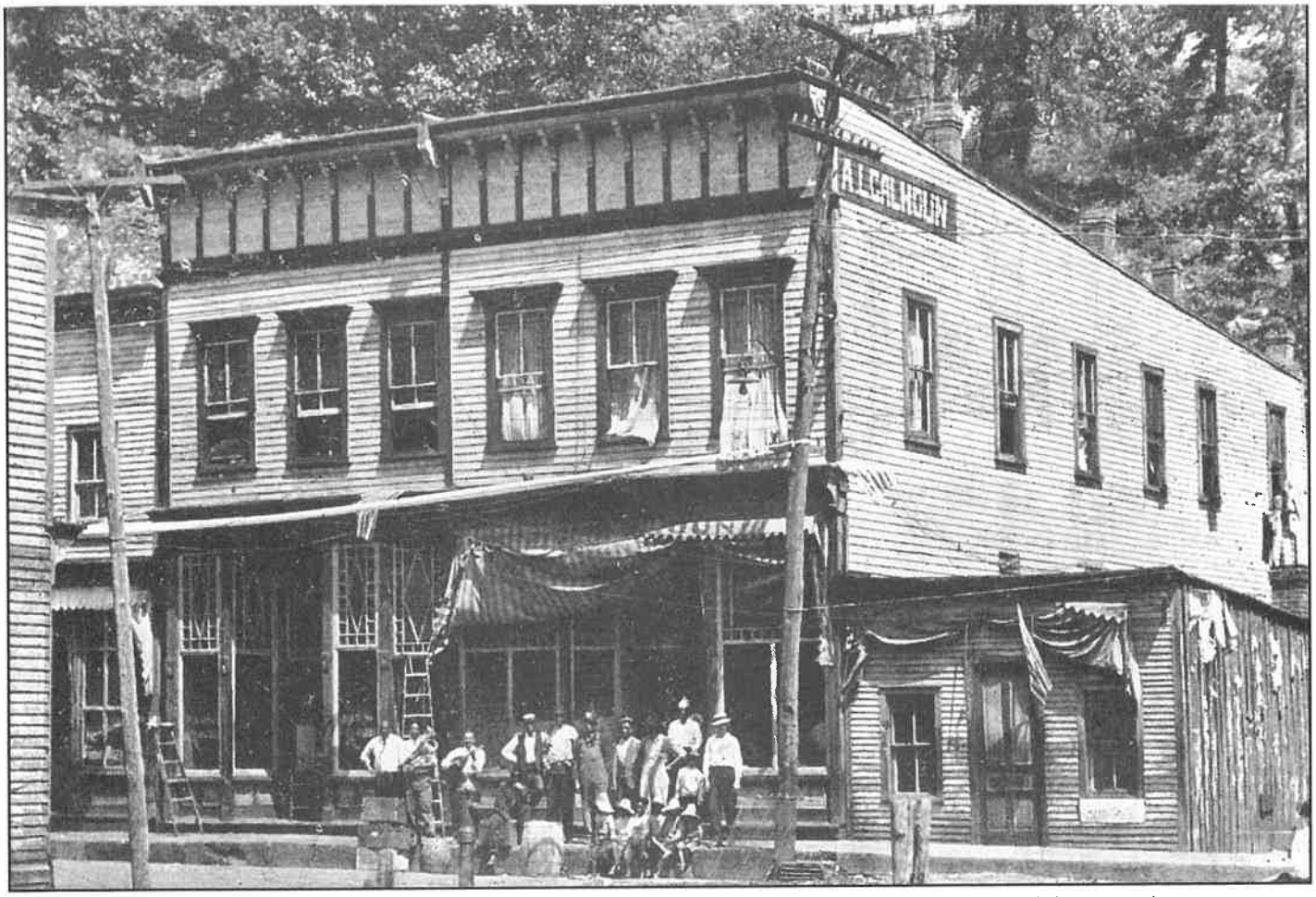
Howard B. Lee, in his book *Bloodletting in Appalachia*, begins his description of Keystone by calling it the "Sodom and Gomorrah of McDowell County's early coal fields." Perhaps he picked that up from *The Sodom and Gomorrah of Today*, an anonymous 1912 pamphlet subtitled *The History of Keystone, West Virginia*.

Lee, later West Virginia's attorney general, recalled in his 1969 book that he was a young lawyer just beginning practice in Bluefield in 1909 when he first heard that Keystone was "a revelation of human depravity." Two years later, in June 1911, he joined the ranks of what he called the "morbidly curious" and made his first visit to the place. He and a companion reached the Elkhorn Creek town in midmorning. They were told by the chief of police that it was a little early for business, and "the ladies of Cinder Bottom might not be up yet."

Given $5 for his trouble, the chief told the visiting gentlemen to come back later. Although he recommended the hours between nine and 12 in the evening as the time to see Cinder Bottom "at its best or worst, whichever way you look at it," they chose a daylight tour that afternoon. The lawman gave them plenty of information about the town under his jurisdiction. According to him, Keystone had approximately 2,500 people at the time, with blacks and foreign-born making up at least 75 percent of that number.

The chief plainly had his doubts about the latter groups and rushed on to reassure his guests. "Of course, there are many fine people here," he told them, listing "mine superintendents, merchants, doctors, dentists, store clerks, school teachers, and their families." These good people were living in Keystone not by choice but necessity, their police chief felt.

The chief, whom Lee does not identify by name, also acknowledged that there were "a number of honest Negroes and European immigrants living here." Like the



Calhoun's Saloon was owned by A.L. Calhoun, black businessman and politician. Calhoun, a man with high connections, was pardoned by Governor Glasscock for a 1908 liquor conviction. Photographer and date unknown.

other fine people they were understandably afraid to go out at night, and they too remained because it was necessary to their livelihood. The lawman made no bones about the fact that the heart of his town consisted mainly of "saloon-keepers, bartenders, roustabouts, gamblers, bouncers, thieves, prostitutes, pimps, white slavers, and panderers." He seemed almost proud of it.

As in other places, Keystone's vice district was confined to the less desirable part of the community. Cinder Bottom was located in the bottom land at the upper end of the town, where over time one to two feet of cinders from the coke ovens had been deposited.

The rest of Keystone seems to have been a decidedly more pleasant place, to judge from the 1929 *West Virginia Encyclopedia*. "Keystone, McDowell County, is situated in a hilly section of the State, twenty-six miles from Bluefield," the encyclopedia reported. "It has one bank with capital of $50,000 and deposits of $650,000; one weekly newspaper; one modern theatre; one hospital; and six churches. Three schools employ 50 teachers.

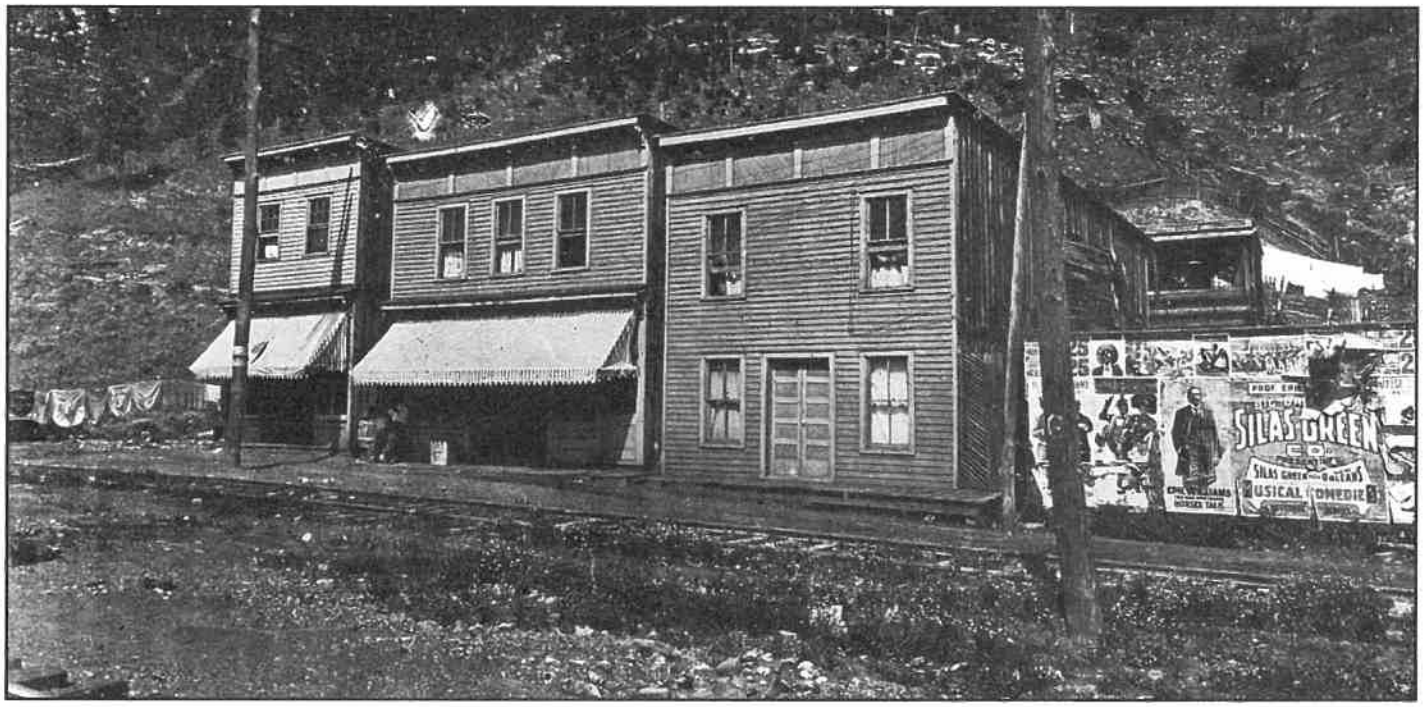
"The city maintains two miles of paved streets. It has a municipal hall. Electric power and lights are supplied by the Appalachian Power Company. The water is supplied from deep wells." Obviously, a town of this size and substance had more going for it than just the flesh trade.

The lawman seemed almost proud that the heart of his town consisted of "saloon-keepers, bartenders, roustabouts, gamblers, bouncers, thieves, prostitutes, pimps, white slavers, and panderers."

Still, Cinder Bottom's bad name rubbed off on Keystone as a whole. The only other place in the region with anywhere near as colorful a reputation was Thurmond on the New River in Fayette County. Floyd Hendricks, Jr., says that Thurmond and Keystone had something like an early cultural exchange system, in that the working ladies of Thurmond were exchanged with those in Keystone and vice versa.

There were unconfirmed stories that women were imported not only from Thurmond and other parts of West Virginia but also from other states, including Pennsylvania and New York. And more than that: "In addition to America's white and Negro prostitutes, their likes are here from nearly every country in Europe," the police chief told Howard Lee. "That gives the place an international flavor."

Hendricks, a retired miner and something of an unofficial oral historian of McDowell County, bases his stories of these early years on those told to him by his father. Floyd Hendricks, Sr., came to nearby Vivian following his service in World War I and worked in the mines at Peerless until his retirement. Many of the women coming in were from Williamson, in neighboring Mingo County, when Floyd,



A 1912 exposé identifies this as "Harper's Saloon and houses of ill fame." We are not sure which is which. Photographer and date unknown.

Sr., was a young miner in 1919.

Cinder Bottom, according to information coming down from the elder Hendricks, was tolerated or even fostered by the coal companies to keep their workers happy. The Norfolk & Western Railroad was alleged to have run special trains for the miners' visiting convenience.

The stories of the women themselves, their lives, dreams and tragedies are common legends today. Clearly some of those working in the oldest profession in the world were just that, shrewd professionals. These were hard-core, hardheaded businesswomen with a sense of capital. Only opportunity, education, gender and class prevented them from competing with the local coal barons for the legitimate economic leadership of the region. Among these women was a madam whose name is recalled by Floyd Hendricks, Jr., but whom we will call "Nora."

Nora came to the houses of Cinder Bottom as a young prostitute and rose through the ranks, saving her money until she could buy her own house. Evidently, she was able to hold special customers who paid her much more than the pittances usual at the time. She saved money and used it to expand.

In time her property included a restaurant where Cinder Bottom patrons could eat and drink. Combining services, Nora became a wealthy woman. Apparently she had enough business acumen to foresee the big coalfields bust coming after World War II. She sold her restaurant and sporting house, alledgedly for a considerable profit, escaping before the Bottom bottomed out in the hard times of the 1950's.

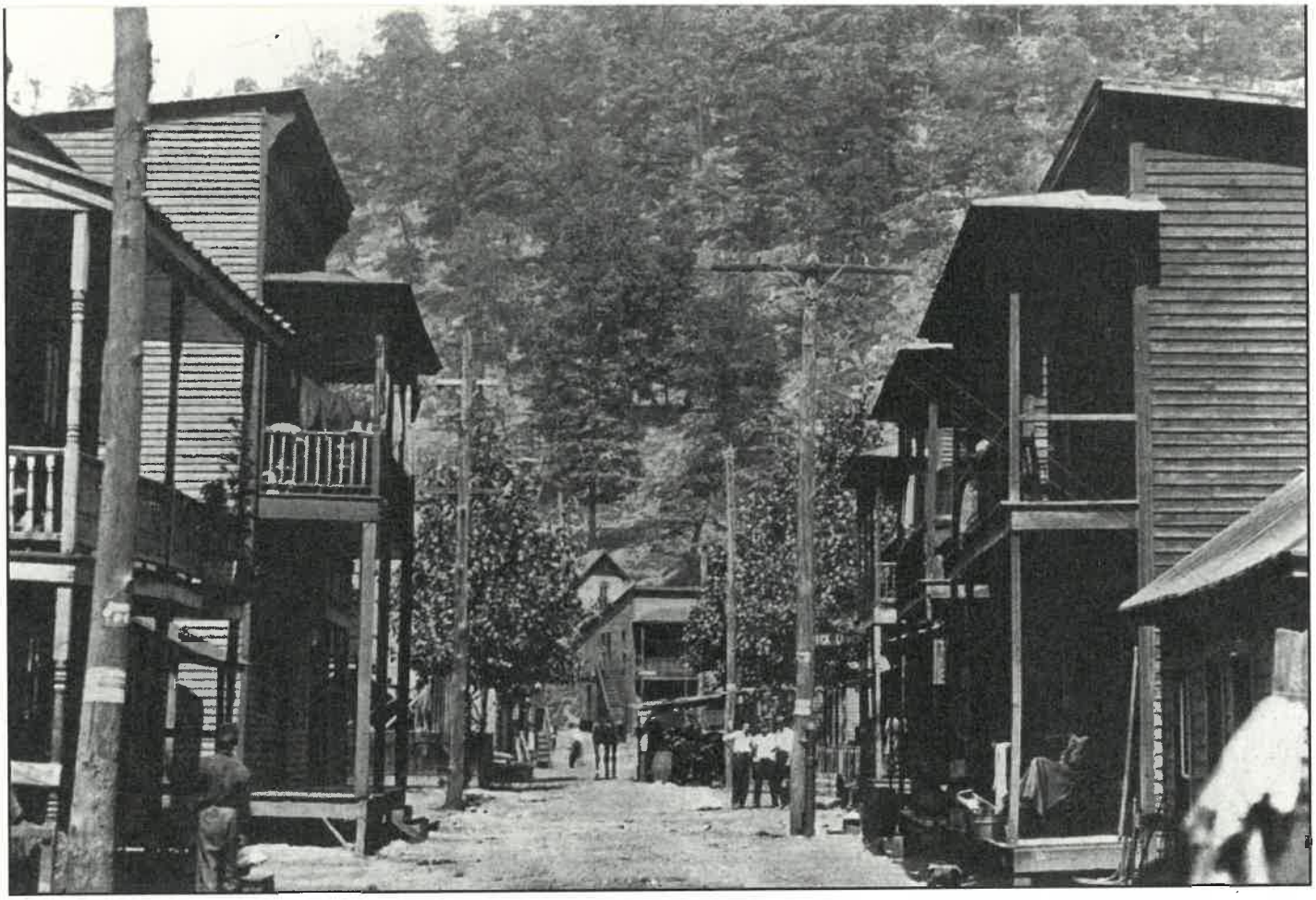
Clearly some of those working in the oldest profession in the world were hard-core, hardheaded businesswomen.

Howard Lee describes meeting a less impressive madam on his 1911 foray. Reaching the red-light district that afternoon, the police chief began the promised tour. Gaining entrance for himself and his guests at the first house, he took them to a "short, fat, stringy-haired, coarse-featured Hungarian Madam," in Lee's words. She vigorously protested the unexpected visit by the chief, saying she had paid him off just the day before.

Lee says that the police chief struck the woman and spoke harshly to her. The chief later noted to Lee that, yes, he had collected her "rent" yesterday. Floyd Hendricks confirms this as typical of the time, open lawlessness complemented by the law's connivance with the law-breaker. The upshot was that neither side respected the other.

In all, Lee was allowed to explore eight houses, according to his memoir. He found "complete racial, social and sexual integration," definitely a bad thing as far as he was concerned. There were occasional "all-colored houses," but it was usually a fact that the houses of Cinder Bottom were not segregated. Lee was moved to note that in one house "a white girl [was] on the lap of a Negro man, both drinking beer from the same bottle," while in another a "Negro girl and a white man were swigging beer from a common bottle."

Lee seems as much put out by the fact that the couples were sharing their drinks as by anything else they may have had in mind for the evening. Part of the trouble with Cinder Bottom from the standpoint of its critics was the racial mingling there and the broader freedom that prevailed. Blacks enjoyed extensive liberties and even held political



This Cinder Bottom street scene looks as much like the Wild West as West Virginia. This photograph was made before 1912, photographer unknown.

power in Keystone, while complete "Jim Crow" discrimination was the rule only a few miles away in Virginia. This seems to have bothered Lee and greatly vexed the anonymous "Virginia Lad" who authored the 1912 *Sodom and Gomorrah* pamphlet.

Whatever their color, the average Cinder Bottom house employed eight to ten girls, though those numbers varied according to the madam's position, the size of the house, and so forth. The prostitutes are said to have been taken in for regular health check-ups, although no doubt that varied as well. The layout of the houses was typical for such places. Hallways led to rooms of various entertainments, including drinking and often gambling or even dining and dancing in the better houses, where the women and their clients could whoop it up before going on to their private rooms.

Mostly private, anyway, for the Keystone police chief was not bashful about opening doors. That included bedroom doors. One must wonder what thoughts ran through the minds of young lawyer Howard Lee and his companion when their host started twisting door knobs in Cinder Bottom that June afternoon.

"In one bed we saw a white man and a Negro girl," Lee recorded. "In another house it was the reverse — a Negro man and a white girl in the same bed. In some houses we saw girls moving around, some in nightgowns, others in panties and bras, and in one house we saw two girls clad only in smiles."

She sold her restaurant and sporting house for a considerable profit, escaping before the Bottom bottomed out in the hard times of the 1950's.

And so it goes. Inquiring minds want to know.

Not much seems to have been kept from Lee, but he got nowhere with one of his inquiries. "Who owns these dives?" he asked the chief of police. "That is a matter that is never discussed," said the law officer.

Apparently they let it go at that. Local lore has its own answers to the important question of ownership. Practically everybody from respectable businessmen to some of the region's coal companies are reported to have taken part in the commercial exploitation of human weakness in Cinder Bottom. And no doubt there were other women like Nora, who had made their nest eggs in the old profession and reinvested in the same.

The permissive lawlessness spiralled outward in crimes more violent than prostitution. The worst of it came to rest at Dead Man's Cut, a deep cut made by the railroad as it came over from North Fork and into the Bottom. A man might be robbed and murdered and then have his corpse dumped on the tracks, all in the privacy of Dead Man's Cut. Plenty were, according to surviving stories.

The history of Cinder Bottom has provided some of the best — or, as the police chief said, the worst, depending on how you look at it — of the tall tales of McDowell County. At this time it is difficult to distinguish fact from fiction. Certainly the stories have been exaggerated,

and today some people doubt them. Members of the local Femino-Gianato family, for instance, claim they have never heard any real evidence for the more outrageous stories.

Their grandmother ran a respectable boardinghouse several miles down the railroad line, between Vivian and Kimball. Mrs. Femino operated one of the largest Italian boardinghouses in the county, averaging 22 boarders at any given time. Rosie Gianato of Kimball, Femino's daughter, recalls the boardinghouse matron had to cook all the meals and wash all the miners' clothes. Mrs. Femino went so far as to bake bread in a stone oven in the backyard, after the fashion of her country. The very hard work of women at such establishments was strictly to keep a decent house for the miners under their charge.

Nor were most McDowell County miners carousers of the sort which appear in the Cinder Bottom tales. The work week was six days long. By the time the short weekend rolled around, rest was the principal recreation for most coal miners.

Regardless of the details of Cinder Bottom's history, the place is much changed today. The boom-and-bust coalfields economy undermined the enterprises of the red-light district, just as it undid so much else. When Howard Lee revisited Keystone in 1961, a half-century after that first trip, he called the place a ghost town as compared to its former self.

And some of the ghosts were still alive, according to Mr. Lee. "At a number of second- and third-story windows sat aged-looking women," he wrote, "with wrinkled faces and gnarled hands, their elbows cushioned on pillows placed on window sills, and their chins cradled in their cupped hands. Some stared fixedly toward the mountaintops, while others looked stoically down upon the almost deserted streets — pictures of utter frustration and hopelessness."

A few years later The Bluefield *Daily Telegraph* summed matters up in the headlines to a retrospective article on Cinder Bottom. "Lights are Low in the Land of Crimson Glow," the coalfields newspaper proclaimed. "The Bottom is no More."

"Wide Open"
Nat Reese Remembers Cinder Bottom

Musician Nat Reese is too young a man at age 70 to remember Cinder Bottom's glory days just after the turn of the century, but he says there was still plenty of life in the place when he came along. Sometimes it got too lively for a guitar picker who wanted to survive to make music another day, as Nat recalls below. This excerpt is from the Winter 1987 GOLDENSEAL cover story by Michael Kline.

Nat Reese, years after the Cinder Bottom shoot-out. Photo by Doug Yarrow.

Nat Reese. Keystone was open, wide open. Cinder Bottom — that's where I was playing the night the guy shot through the guitar.

We were playing and the people were having a good time and dancing and somebody got to arguing, a sailor and some guy got to arguing, and somebody shot. I felt a tug and when I looked down it was a hole there, and in the back of it was a hole there. I got up and politely made it to the door and pointed to the guitar and told them, I says, "Someone has shot a hole in it and I won't be back!"

I went out and got in the car and locked my door, and I didn't go back any more. That seemed to have been a warning to me, and I tried to heed it. Well, they stood around and tried to see if anyone was hit, or anything. And then they went on and played the rest of the night.

Michael Kline. Tell us a little more about what people mean when they say Keystone was wide open.

Nat Reese. Well, someone was killed down there about every week. There was gambling, hustling, numbers playing, prostitution. You could buy whiskey, any kind you wanted: Scotch, bourbon, good moonshine, bad moonshine, almost-good moonshine. And home brew. Every other door, or every three or four doors there was a house you could buy whiskey, or something else. And if that's not wide open, I don't know what you would call it.

And see, the law at that time was ruled by the biggest company that's there. It was a politician deal. People had no say-so, much. The politicians say, "I'm getting money from that place and that place and that place, so don't you bother them. As long as nobody ain't hurt or nothing, just pass on by."

"You could buy Scotch, bourbon, good moonshine, bad moonshine, almost-good moonshine. And home brew."

There was a lot of places like that in the coalfields here.

Another Idea of Cinder Bottom:

"Sure We Got Problems"

Denise Giardina's novel Storming Heaven *fictionalizes Keystone as the town of "Annadel" and suggests a distinctly different perspective on Cinder Bottom. Like Keystone, Annadel is an independent, incorporated community surrounded by company towns. This made it an unusual place in the coalfields, governed not by the coal industry but by its citizens, many of them black. Annadel was a place where "a man can be free," as the following excerpt puts it, and the novel diverges from conventional views in emphasizing the positive side of the freedom of Cinder Bottom.*

The narrator of the following passage is C. J. Marcum, an Annadel drugstore owner and community leader. Ermel Justice is the town's founder and leading businessman. Rondal is Rondal Lloyd, a central figure as the story develops and at this time a young man whom C. J. looks after. These figures are all native whites, representing the mountaineer's adaptation to the shock of industrialization. Doc Booker is Annadel's black doctor and former mayor.

Ermel built the Hotel Alhambra in Annadel, fanciest hotel in southern West Virginia, yellow brick, stained glass windows, mirrors and carpets inside. He built the Roxie Theater and give it to [his son] Isom to run when he growed up.

* * *

Truth was, Ermel was into politics even back then. The coal operators controlled the Republican Party and held all the local offices at that time. But through business connections, Ermel knew every bootlegger in the area and had already got himself on the county Democrat committee. He seen the Alhambra and the whorehouses as a way of saving the county from the Republicans.

I wasn't happy with what he was doing. I wished he would have kept on farming his land. Of course if he had, I wouldn't have no drugstore, nor money saved up. I wouldn't have no icebox nor electric nor water inside my house. It keeps me awake at night wondering if I done sold my soul for them things.

I tried to forbid Rondal going to the Alhambra with Isom. But Ermel took it like I hurt his feelings, so I shut up about it. Ermel has been good to me. So I just told Rondal no drinking. He said sometimes Sam Gore, the bartender, slipped them whiskey watered down. I whipped him for it and went to talk to Sam. Sam promised he'd stop it, and keep an eye on Rondal, too. I felt better then, because Sam is a man to trust, not like a lot of white men I know.

What they don't like is that this here is the one place in all these coalfields where a man can be free, speak his mind, do like he pleases.

They's a lots of Negroes in Annadel, and I like about most of them. The Jim Crow don't go here. Ermel ain't happy about it, but he admits that colored people's money spends just as good as white people's....

I was scairt of the Negroes at first. It was something different. Then Doc Booker come on the city council with me. One night we got drunk together after a meeting and Doc started cussing the coal companies. After that we got on just fine.

Doc told me a lot about history that I didn't know. The Negroes, they been kicked around. They know what it is. The white man, he's a little slow to learn. You got to kick him about ten times solid...before he catches on that he's been whupped.

We got four Negroes on the council now and Doc Booker was mayor twicet before me. We got Negroes on the police force, and colored and white mix in the hotel and in the whorehouses. The *Justice Clarion* claimed Annadel is like "Sodom and Gomorrah, a den of violence, drunkenness, depravity, and miscegenation." Last couple of years they added "radicalism" to their list. What they don't like is that this here is the one place in all these coalfields where a man can be free, speak his mind, do like he pleases. Sure we got problems. The police is busy most nights breaking up fights, and Doc does a lots of business on people that been shot. But it beats what happens other places.

—Denise Giardina

An unidentified Keystone policeman, with children of the town. Photographer and date unknown.

Blackberry Time on Cold Knob Mountain

By Ruth Spencer Zicafoose

The end of July signaled blackberry picking time on Cold Knob Mountain. The berries up there did not fully ripen until then, or even the first of August. At that elevation they took longer to develop and sweeten. It was just the right time for us, after the hay and wheat harvests and before the cut-the-corn and fill-the-silo season.

My family lived in western Greenbrier County in those years after the First World War. Sometimes travelers on horseback would come by from Richwood, and we would ask if the berries on Cold Knob were ripe yet. They would know, because the road from Richwood came right across the top of the mountain. Folks were tempted to rest a bit by getting down off their horses to pick a few blackberries to eat. If no travelers came by for a couple of weeks, one of my brothers or one of the neighbor boys would ride up to check.

When word was received that the berries were black and sweet my brothers and sisters and the older teenagers of two neighboring families would get ready to go early the next Monday morning. The older folks and the youngsters would stay at home to milk the cows, feed the chickens, hoe the garden and keep the home fires burning.

The three families would get their farm wagons ready by cleaning the inside of the wagonbeds and making sure that all the harness was stout and strong. The horses were selected for patience and strength. We would be gone for a week and wanted horses which were experienced and would not scare easily. We needed dependable transportation, just as we do for long trips today.

The next Monday we arose before day to make sure we had all the things we needed for a week's stay on top of Cold Knob Mountain. As soon as we had eaten breakfast the boys would go hitch up the horses.

We took three wagons. One was for hauling our eating and cooking and canning utensils. We always canned the berries in glass jars there on the top of the mountain. We needed large kettles for cooking the berries and half-gallon jars to can them, as well as food for ourselves and all other domestic necessities.

The second wagon was for hay and grain for the horses, and spare parts for the harness and wagons. We also put in some wire and a few tools. Should something break we would have to make repairs on the road or on the mountain.

Each morning at camp, the boys would build fires for the girls to cook ham and eggs or buckwheat cakes with maple syrup. Meals seemed especially good when cooked out of doors.

The third wagon was for us to ride in, for human transportation. It was about 30 miles to the top of Cold Knob. The wagon seats were not padded, and we would take turns driving the teams of horses. Everyone but the drivers had comfortable places in the back. We had filled our riding wagon with lots of loose hay the day before we started.

The blackberries on top of the mountain were bountiful, large, and delicious. The young men and women considered the annual berry picking event a vacation from home and farm and an opportunity to get together around a campfire at night.

Early each morning at camp, the boys would build the fires for the girls to cook ham and eggs or buckwheat cakes with maple syrup. Meals always seemed especially good when cooked out of doors. Sometimes the rock furnace fireplace we had built the year before would still be there, ready for use.

When breakfast was over and the dishes washed every person took one of the ten-quart galvanized buckets and began picking berries. As soon as a bucket was full it was brought back to the camping place and the berries poured into one of the big kettles. By noon the picking would cease, because it would take all afternoon to wash and can the berries we had picked that morning.

After a substantial lunch the dishes were put away and most of us would busy ourselves washing berries and discarding the stray sticks and leaves that had dropped into the buckets. The berries were cooked unsweet-

ened in the big kettles, the jars rinsed in boiling water, and the steaming berries put directly into the jars and sealed. The boys helped move the kettles and hot jars as needed and kept a good fire in the rock furnace.

The berries that were picked each morning would all be canned and placed in the wagon before suppertime. The acid in the berries kept them from spoiling, and we never lost a jar. Our people had never heard of the "hot water bath" for canning fruit in those days.

The evening meals were something to behold. They were imaginatively prepared and considerably satisfying. Supper might include potatoes fried with onions, or potatoes baked in the hot ashes with skins on and plenty of butter. We brought salt rising bread from home and cooked dry beans in one of the pots with ham or fatback. One of the boys might shoot some squirrels, pheasants, or a wild turkey, and we would be treated to that, plus gravy! One time we found a bee tree and confiscated the honey, which was extra good. This was mountain honey, made from wild flowers and white linn bloom.

The horses were kept tied to trees and in the shade. They seemed content. Each evening after supper the boys would put bridles on them and ride barebacked around the field or a little ways down the road so that the horses would get a bit of exercise. They got their ration of grain and hay morning and evening. The horses were taken good care of because they were our transportation back home.

If a rain came while we were on the mountain we would get under one of the canvas tarpaulins that we had stretched between the trees. Our food and equipment were kept in the covered wagons.

Fortunately most evenings were beautiful that time of year, although coats felt good in the cool mountain air. After supper we would sit around the open campfire and take turns telling tall tales and ghost stories while big hoot owls exchanged hoots from one pine tree to another. Whippoorwills were whipping "poor Will" all over the mountainside. Sometimes even a nightingale could be heard in the distance.

Then it was time for sleep. Our beds were old quilts and blankets on the ground. We gathered leaves to keep the cold from the damp ground from getting through our blankets.

Thursday after supper we got ready to go home the next day. The glass jars of blackberries were carefully packed in the hay in the wagons. Breakfast on Friday morning often consisted of fruit from the surrounding fields, cheese and cold biscuits, and water from the spring which we had found just under the hip of the mountain.

After finishing breakfast, hitching the teams, and double-checking camp to make sure we hadn't left anything, we climbed into our wagons and started down the mountain. The boys who were the best drivers drove the first and steepest parts, because they had a better feel for working with the teams. There was not much conversation as we rode along because we were tired.

But we were happy with what we had accomplished. In the wagons with us we had between 75 and 100 half-gallon jars of blackberries. The canned berries could be made into jelly or jam, or used for baking cakes, pies, or muffins. Often they were used as a fruit dessert with just cream and sugar. There were plenty to last all year long.

We came home worn to a frazzle, but by the next year we were always anxious to go again. In the meantime we had great tales to tell about the pranks we had played on each other. Every trip was a great trip.

And the welcome home was the best part of it. Our fathers were glad that we were safe and that their horses and wagons were all right. We got hugs from our mothers. They were glad we were home, and glad we had brought a year's supply of blackberries, already canned and ready to be put in the cellar. And we were glad we could take baths, put on clean clothes, and eat meals that someone else cooked.

I believe the welcome home will be the best part of the trip through life, as well. I remember my grandfather in his later years, yearning to go home. He was in his 90's then and anxious to be with his family, his friends and with Jesus. It may have seemed strange to a young Cold Knob berry picker, but now that I am in my 80's I understand.

Tips on Blackberries

July is the prime month for blackberries .If you are lucky enough to know where blackberry bushes grow and want to pick the fruit and keep it, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture offers some tips on picking and preserving blackberries. Wild or cultivated blackberries are right for canning, jams, jellies, preserves or freezing. Blackberries are high in Vitamin C and one cup of berries is about 85 calories.

Whether you pick or purchase blackberries, handle the fruit with a light touch and use it as soon as possible. Wash the berries quickly just before serving as the juices are lost if you leave berries standing in water. To store berries in the refrigerator, remove any damaged fruit and place the rest in a shallow covered container in the refrigerator.

Two quarts of fresh berries will yield three pints of frozen. Ripe berries are best for freezing. Before you freeze them, wash, sort and drain the blackberries. Use a syrup pack for berries to be served uncooked. To make a syrup pack, mix and dissolve 2½ cups of sugar in 4 cups of water. Bring to a medium boil and then let cool. Add 1 cup of this syrup per quart of fruit.

For information on canning blackberries — hot pack, raw pack, and processing in a boiling water canner — contact the West Virginia University Cooperative Extension Service, P.O. Box 6031, Morgantown, WV 26506. Processing instructions are for West Virginia conditions only, maximum altitude 4,000 feet.

Mountain Music Roundup

By Danny Williams

The distinctive sound of our Appalachian music is durable and adaptable. From the earliest Baptist hymns to the modern professional "country" songs, there's a spirit that ties together all our mountain music. **Ginny Hawker** and **Kay Justice** work both ends of this musical heritage in their new recording, "Come All You Tenderhearted."

Several of the songs here are from the old Primitive Baptist tradition of the early 19th century. These songs, not all of them religious, feature stunningly powerful vocal harmonies of a sort which are seldom heard now. Hawker and Justice have for years been self-appointed missionaries for this music, and their new recording will surely win more converts.

Other songs on this record are relatively modern, written or popularized in this century by professional musicians from the hills. Putting these songs beside the older ones demonstrates the enduring appeal of the Appalachian traditional sound. From the Carter Family and the Blue Sky Boys several decades ago, to Hazel Dickens, these "modern" musicians wrote music the way they liked it, new music in the old mountain way.

If you get chills from powerful, emotional music, wear a sweater when you listen to Ginny Hawker and Kay Justice.

Tracy Schwartz plays some fine fiddle and guitar on this record, Justice plays guitar, and a few other people help out, but the focus is on the unforgettable solo and harmony singing of the two women. If you get chills from powerful, emotional music, wear a sweater when you listen to Ginny Hawker and Kay Justice.

"Come All You Tenderhearted" is available on Cassette or CD from June Appal Recordings. Any good music store can order it. (Catalog JA0069)

* * *

Fans of West Virginia music know **John Blisard** as one of our finest and busiest banjo pickers. He is less well known as an author, but 18 years ago he did write and publish a book. Blisard's subject? Banjo playing, of course. Now *A Clawhammer Banjo Book*, first published in 1976, has been reprinted by the author.

"Clawhammer" banjo, the distinctive old Appalachian technique, evolved when the banjo's primary task was to accompany the fiddle in playing lively dance music. This is an older style than the more commonly heard "bluegrass" banjo playing.

When we say Blisard wrote this book, we mean it literally. He doesn't have a typewriter. Blisard hand-lettered the book in a large, neat hand, and provides especially clear drawings of the right-hand position which is so crucial to playing this style.

The music is written in tablature, a system which is easy to learn and which is better suited to clawhammer banjo than "normal" music notation is. The tablature system is explained in the book. The book is designed for pickers: It lies flat so you can keep both hands on your banjo, and none of the tune arrangements require page turning.

Blisard is careful to point out that old-time music is meant to be passed from person to person, not learned from a book. The book, he writes, is "a last resort, a reference tool" to reinforce the lessons learned from a teacher.

It is also a valuable tune book. Blisard has arranged 20 old-time tunes in a style accessible to beginning or intermediate pickers. "Soldier's Joy," probably the best-known Appalachian dance tune of all, is here, along with a dozen other pieces from the "Top 40" of hoedown music. Anyone who learns these tunes will find plenty of op-

MICHAEL KELLER

Ginny Hawker and Kay Justice.

portunity to play along at any gathering of mountain musicians.

In addition to these mountain standards, Blisard presents a few of the more rare tunes from his broad repertoire, including two Celtic pieces not usually associated with the banjo. (Blisard is a master of the Irish harp, too.) Non-musicians will appreciate Blisard's background on the sources of the tunes, and his comments on the old-time style.

You can order A Clawhammer Banjo Book *from John R. Blisard, 1125 S. Homewood Drive, Charleston, WV 25314. The cost is $6, plus $1.50 for shipping.*

* * *

"Half and Half," a new cassette by **The Country Siders**, has one of the most clever and eye-catching cover designs we've seen in a while. Inside is some fine picking from the southern part of the state, and a sneaky little music-appreciation lesson.

The tape's cover is a play on the familiar red and green design of the old Half and Half tobacco package. We're not sure what the name of the tobacco meant, but on this tape it means the music is half bluegrass and half old-time. **Roy Hughes** puts on his finger picks and plays bluegrass-style banjo on side A, then on Side B **Ike Southern** shows how old-time clawhammer banjo is done. Fiddler **Gene Wright** and guitarist **Booge Monk** go both ways, and also sing a little.

The five bluegrass selections are all old standards, and the Country Siders don't try to break any new ground with their arrangements. They take turns playing clear, solid solos, while the other instruments keep the rhythm going and wait their turn. Two of the numbers are instrumentals, and the other three alternate vocals with the instruments. All five have the traditional old bluegrass sound, a bit more raw and lively than the smoother styles developed in recent years.

"Crossing the Creek," the first tune on Side B, was composed by Southern, but it is firmly within the old-time tradition. The arrangement is old-time, too, with all three instruments playing seamlessly together instead of trading solos. The seven other instrumentals on Side B are old standards, several of them from the square-dance tradition.

The tape concludes with "Unclouded Day," the familiar gospel tune which has long been popular as an instrumental. Here the Country Siders break out both banjos, bluegrass-style and old-time, and let the listener hear them side by side. For anyone interested in learning to recognize the difference in the two styles, this is a fine place to start. For the rest of us, it's just good music.

"Half and Half" may be ordered from WCIR Radio, Industrial Park, Beaver, WV 25813. The cost is $8, plus $1 shipping and handling.

* * *

"Vintage Wine," the new cassette tape from West Virginia fiddling legend **Melvin Wine**, adds 27 great tunes to our rich store of Wine recordings.

As on his previous records, Wine plays a few well-known mountain standards along with other tunes known to very few contemporary fiddlers. **Kate Brett** plays banjo on this tape, and **Gerry Milnes** adds his guitar. Milnes also wrote the informative liner notes.

In recent years, Melvin Wine has been one of our most thoroughly documented folk treasures, with two previous cassettes and a videotape devoted to his remarkable life and music. (Wine was the cover subject for the Summer 1991 GOLDENSEAL. The videotape was reviewed in "Mountain Music Roundup," Fall 1993.) This new recording is another valuable link to our musical heritage.

"Vintage Wine" is widely available through Marimac Recordings. To order direct, send $10, plus $2 postage, to Augusta Heritage Center, Davis and Elkins College, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, WV 26241. (Catalog AHS 6)

* * *

In GOLDENSEAL "mountain music" naturally refers to the music of our Appalachian mountains. But when Morgantown's **Utt-Most Country Band** went to the Rockies on their latest tape, we had to follow. "Utt-Most Country Goes Western" is filled with the sweet harmony singing, straightforward instrumental work, and imaginative arrangements we've come to expect from this tight-knit group.

Ronnie Utt, his wife **Nancy**, brother **Carroll**, and friends **Paul Austin** and **Jesse Jolliffee** take on several songs from the heyday of the singing cowboy, such as "Tumbling Tumbleweed" and "Cool Water." They also found room on this tape for some instrumentals and old country standards. As always, they sing a few familiar gospel songs, including "Where Could I Go" and "Where the Soul Never Dies." No one plays a broader range of old music than this group does.

This is the third cassette by this band. Their previous releases are "The Utt-Most Country Band" and "Utt-Most Gospel."

This band's cassettes are self-produced, so they may be hard to find in stores. They are available by mail from Ronnie Utt, P. O. Box 327, Morgantown, WV 26507. The cost is $8 per cassette, plus $1 postage.

* * *

Before the emergence of the cassette tape, a column like "Mountain Music Roundup" would have been pretty slim. Producing a recording on LP was an arduous and expensive task, and there probably wasn't a record a year which featured real West Virginia mountain music.

One of those rare recordings was "Traditional Music for Banjo, Fiddle and Bagpipes" by **Franklin George**, released in 1967 on the Kanawha label. George's musical ability and his connection with the roots of his music and culture were apparent on the album, and the record caught on and became probably the most influential collection of mountain music ever to come out of West Virginia. (Frank George was the cover subject for the Spring 1983 GOLDENSEAL.)

County Records has reissued this landmark recording on both cassette and compact disc, and the tunes are as exciting today as they were when this was one of the very few recordings of its type available.

Nearly half of the record features George and Indiana fiddling great **John Summers**, with George playing banjo or second fiddle on these tunes. George also plays several banjo and fiddle solos, and two medleys of Irish bagpipe music. The late **Pat Dunford**, the young music enthusiast who conceived and produced this recording, plays along on a few tunes.

Frank George remains one of West Virginia's most active performers and teachers, and his music is available on several more recent recordings. Still, despite the limitations of 1960's-era home recording equipment, there's something special about this record. After all the years and recordings which have followed, these performances remain among the most perfect examples of Appalachian instrumental music ever produced.

County Records is a major recording producer, so the "Traditional Music for Banjo, Fiddle and Bagpipes" cassette or CD can be ordered at any full-service record store. (Catalog County 2703)

* * *

Many of the items featured in "Mountain Music Roundup" are available at The Shop in the Cultural Center, or at other businesses which sell real mountain music. Prices may vary.

String Band Festival

Clifftop, 1993. Photo by Michael Keller.

In its first four years, Camp Washington-Carver's annual Appalachian String Band Music Festival has grown into one of the most popular events of its kind anywhere. The fifth edition of this festival will be August 4-7, at the mountaintop retreat near Clifftop in Fayette County.

The popularity of this festival is no accident. The hottest bands and soloists compete for substantial prize money, and respected professional bands provide entertainment. Outstanding musicians designated "West Virginia Masters" demonstrate the fine points of our state's unique brand of mountain music, and the dancing goes late every night in the historic Great Chestnut Lodge.

Fiddlers Frank George, Wilson Douglas, and Melvin Wine are this year's West Virginia Masters. Each will lead a workshop on Saturday afternoon, and will no doubt be fiddling away the rest of the weekend in the spontaneous jam sessions which flare up so readily at festivals. There will also be folk songs and games for kids, and a workshop on old-time dance. There will be a group hymn sing Sunday morning. A new feature this year is a child-care program.

All this costs only $4, or $3 for seniors and children. Camping costs $20 per person for the weekend, or $50 per family for the weekend, and many folks say the best times happen in the camping area.

The Appalachian String Band Music Festival is a program of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. For more information, write or call Camp Washington-Carver, HC 35 Box 5, Clifftop, WV 25831-9601, (304)438-3005.

Farewell to a Dulcimer Man:
Walter Miller, 1914-1994

Walter Miller as a young man.
Photographer unknown, 1932.

Old-time dulcimer player Walter Miller, of Tioga, Nicholas County, went to a spring to get some water on a cold day last February. Walter fell in that rocky, icy place, and the fall caused severe head and neck injuries from which he never recovered. He passed away on March 3, 1994, at the age of 80, after weeks of constant attention from his family and the best of medical care.

Walter began a lifelong association with the instrument when he "traded up" an old dulcimer in 1928 at the age of 14. He immediately went to work on making them himself, an activity that, with few interruptions, lasted until his misfortune at the spring. His dulcimers were innovative, his playing was unique in many ways, and his humanness and generosity touched many.

I first sought Walter out at his Nicholas County home in 1987, after a chance visit with a neighbor who told me of his dulcimer playing. Over the years we became friends and fellow musicians. Walter cooperated with several musical documentation projects on which I've worked.

An obituary in the *Charleston Gazette* announced Walter's passing as that of a master dulcimer player who had taught at the Augusta program at Davis and Elkins College. Many younger dulcimer players met Walter there, and some acquired instruments from him. Especially interesting are some replicas he made for students of a dulcimer he'd made in the 1930's. His playing is documented on a cassette tape, "The West Virginia Hills," produced by the Augusta Heritage Center. I accompanied Walter at several contests held at the Vandalia Gathering in Charleston, and I presented Walter at the Celebration of Traditional Music at Berea College in October 1993.

Walter was a bit confused by the attention he was given at the sunset of life for something that was perfectly normal and unexceptional for him — his love for and mastery of old-time dulcimer music. He played old ballads learned from his mother, fiddle tunes he'd heard at the square dances of his youth, hymns and spirituals with deep-felt faith, and even a blues number learned 50 years ago from a black co-worker in the mines.

Walter was an innovator who, in 1956, constructed what was probably the very first electric dulcimer ever made. (They're now played regularly in Nashville.) He experimented with various woods, usually liking best the native hardwoods of his beloved Nicholas County hills. The shapes of his instruments, including their peg heads, sound holes, and tail pieces, all exhibited his stylistic touch.

Walter had an impish grin that he would flash, along with a wink and a nod, when he concurred with something you said. During our last visit, while he was in the intensive care unit at a Charleston hospital, he had no feeling in his arms or legs and could not move his head due to the spinal injury. He had developed pneumonia, and was having heart and lung problems. He was hooked to a breathing machine, his only contact with the world what he could see and hear from his pillow. Leaning over so as to be seen, I told him I thought everything was going to work out all right. That little half-wink and attempt at a nod assured me he had heard.

As many mountaineers do, Walter liked to get his drinking water from a clear, cold mountain spring. Such springs sustain body and soul. Falling as rain and having been filtered through a mountain canopy of oak, ash, hickory, and pine, the water is intermingled with the minerals deep within the limestone and sandstone of the mountain's interior, and surges from a rocky crevice in a mountain laurel thicket, beckoning the thirsty.

I'd like to take one of your dulcimers, Walter, to that mountain spring where your life met its end. I'd launch that little dulcimer-ark like a new life's beginning. It'd cascade down through the rocky hills, through swirling blackwater pools of life, and through the eddies of time. It would survive, like you, to reach calmer waters and a peaceful river. It would float on placid waters through quiet valleys to the old salt sea. It would eventually sink, like you, to its final resting place.

There are depths of space in that sea, Walter, that are deeper and darker than the coal mine shafts you descended with your pick and shovel. There are whales in those depths that are bigger than your workshop that sing eerie songs you would have liked to try to play. There are creatures, tiny and delicate, that could make extraordinary designs for the sound holes on your instruments. In that briny deep, your little dulcimer can still be heard. It joins a symphony deep within the earth that fans mighty fires which make powerful steam to drive the wheels of the world. This steam escapes at places to become dark clouds, driven by winds, to rain on mountains. It's purified and mineralized and flows again from clear bubbling springs. It quenches our thirsts and becomes the babbling brooks that inspire our music.

Goodbye, Walter Miller.

— Gerald Milnes

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Our Writers and Photographers

JEAN BATTLO, a native West Virginian and professional artist, taught 22 years in the public schools and as an adjunct college professor. She is a playwright who helps to develop community theater groups and conducts playwriting workshops in schools and for the public. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1993.

JAMES E. CASTO is associate editor of the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch* and a commentator on West Virginia Public Radio's "Morning Edition" news program. He is the author of *Huntington: An Illustrated History*, and has written for *Appalachia* magazine and other publications. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Spring 1993.

GREG CLARK is photo preservation archivist for the Division of Culture and History.

MARK CRABTREE was born in Brooke County and earned a B.S. in journalism from West Virginia University. Crabtree, who now lives in Morgantown, has worked extensively as a photographer and served as project coordinator for the West Virginia Coal Life Project photography exhibit. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1993.

DENISE GIARDINA, who was born in Bluefield and grew up in coal country, is a major Appalachian novelist. She is the author of *Good King Harry* and the West Virginia coalfields novels, *Storming Heaven* and *The Unquiet Earth*. She teaches at West Virginia State College.

JOY GREGOIRE GILCHRIST of Lewis County is a founder of the Hacker's Creek Pioneer Descendants and a member of the state Archives and History Commission. The author of six books, most recently *A Pictorial History of Old Lewis County*, she has published articles in many state newspapers. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Summer 1993.

NEIL GLASS, of Monroe County, mostly photographs historic properties. He is the husband of quilt researcher Fawn Valentine and together they operate a house restoration business, Glass-Valentine Renovations. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

LOUIS E. KEEFER was born and raised in Wheeling and educated at Morris Harvey College, WVU and Yale. He learned league softball firsthand, playing for the Owens-Illinois plant in Charleston from 1949 to 1950. He has published two books and numerous articles, and contributes frequently to GOLDENSEAL.

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

JOHN L. MARRA, born and raised in Morgantown, is the county extension agent for Cabell County. He is the garden columnist for the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch* and a television host for "Saturday Report" and "Home and Garden" on WSAZ-TV. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from WVU. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

GERALD MILNES, a fine old-time musician, coordinates the West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program at the Augusta Heritage Center at Davis & Elkins College in Elkins. He is a fiddler, photographer and author of the children's book *Granny Will Your Dog Bite*. He is an occasional contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

RON RITTENHOUSE, a Mannington native, is chief photographer for the Morgantown *Dominion Post*. He is a member of the National Press Photographers Association and other professional organizations, and a collector of old cameras and photographs. He is a long-time contributor to GOLDENSEAL, his last contribution appearing in Winter 1993.

PEGGY ROSS moved to her husband's 200-year-old family homeplace in Preston County several years back. She spent most of her life in Cincinnati, where she worked for the *Cincinnati Post*, and has worked in public relations and advertising. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1993.

EVA SIEBOLD of Union is a quilter with "an ever-increasing interest in quilt history." This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL, and she says she would never have finished it without the "spirited encouragement" of her friend Fawn Valentine.

LARRY N. SYPOLT works with the Institute for the History of Technology and Industrial Archaeology at WVU. He and director Emory Kemp conducted a study of the Little Kanawha River that was published in 1991 in *Canal History and Technology Proceedings*. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

DANNY WILLIAMS is the folk arts specialist for the Division of Culture and History.

RUTH SPENCER ZICAFOOSE was born on a farm near Renick in 1912. She taught school, raised a family, and worked for the Department of Human Services as a social worker for 25 years. She and her husband have served in the Silver Haired Legislature for the past five years. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MARY ZWIERZCHOWSKI grew up near the old town of Cliftonville, hearing stories of the mine riot. She researched the subject at the Mary H. Weir Library in Weirton, where she works. She is a graduate of the West Virginia Northern Community College and has published in the Weirton *Daily Times* and elsewhere. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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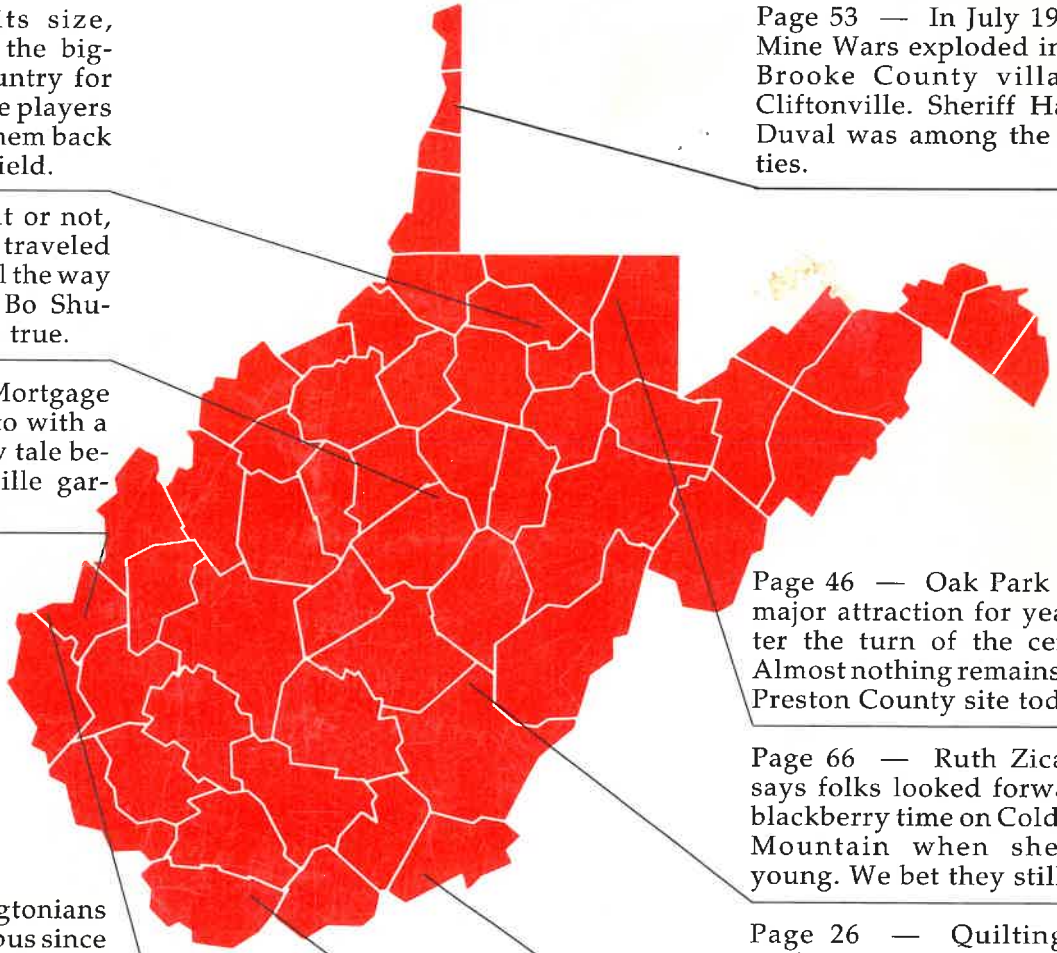

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