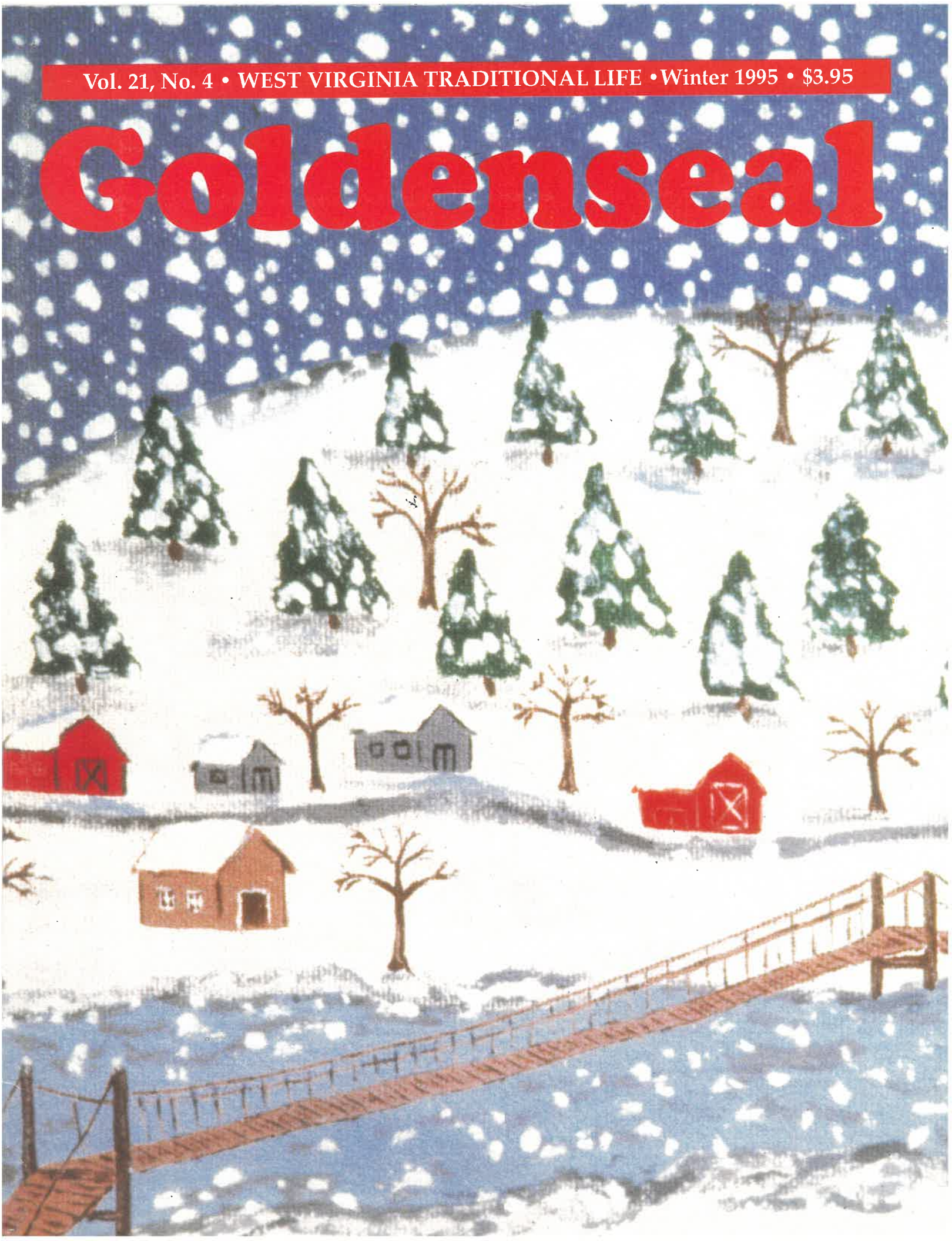
Vol. 21, No. 4 • WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL LIFE • Winter 1995 • $3.95

Goldenseal



From the Editor: Giving Thanks

We publish the Winter GOLDENSEAL in December, which means the final details come together here about Thanksgiving time. That always puts me in the mood for a big thank-you editorial, so here goes:

Thanks, first and foremost, to the good people who pay our bills, our subscribers old and new.

All those who sent in their fall GOLDENSEAL renewals so promptly are fresh on my mind, in particular. Most of our subscription reminders go out in late September, so by now we have a pretty good feel for the response. It looks good so far, with our revenues running slightly ahead of last year. We won't get rich at the rate we are going, but we can keep the wolf away as long as income continues to exceed expenses.

MICHAEL KELLER

As always, we are especially grateful to the many subscribers who enjoy GOLDENSEAL so much that they want to share it with their friends. Gift subs have become our second biggest source of income, contributing better than $25,000 to our annual cash flow and keeping Cornelia Alexander hopping this time of year.

Thanks also to those who buy back issues, newsstand copies, our Mine Wars book, GOLDENSEAL reprints and so forth. It adds up, especially now that we are doing a respectable business in bulk reprints. We sold very sizable reprint orders to the Moundsville Economic Development Council and to the Homer Laughlin China Company this year, nearly 10,000 copies in all, and look forward to reprinting for them and others in the future.

And a very warm thanks to the hardy adventurers who traveled the Eastern Panhandle with us in October, on GOLDENSEAL's second Big Bus Trip. We wangled a fine West Virginia University motorcoach this year, as the photo shows. I think half the folks who saw us thought the Mountaineers had shown up for an exhibition game, but once they got over the disappointment everybody treated us royally.

Among the trip's highlights for me were the tour of restoration work on Senator Davis's mansion in Elkins, with a surprise visit by the architect in charge, GOLDENSEAL freelancer Paul Marshall; an unforgettable lunch on the lawn at McCoy's Mill near Franklin; and a cookout steak supper as evening fell and the stars came out at Capon Springs. Phoebe Heishman did us proud in Moorefield, as did John Douglas in Berkeley Springs and the other people we visited along the way.

It was a real treat for Debby Jackson and me to get to know a busload of GOLDENSEAL readers so well, and we want to bring more people into our road show in the future. The trip sold out again this year — two or three times over, in fact. So there is no lack of interest, and you can bet we are working on future plans. Watch these pages for details.

I need to thank another small group of readers for a very special service, but this will take some explaining. Let me begin by directing your attention to a new feature in this issue, the postal information statement at the back.

This year, for the first time ever, GOLDENSEAL qualified for second-class mailing privileges, a milestone in the growth of the magazine. This is the most favorable postal classification available and promises to save us $8,500 yearly at present postage rates and more with any future increases. The second-class permit requires the publication once a year of the postal statement, giving certain basic facts about the ownership and management of the magazine, our circulation figures, and so forth.

Getting the permit was a major piece of work, requiring months of interaction with postal officials. The key need was to verify to their satisfaction that we in fact met the strict paid subscription requirements for second-class. Sounds simple, except that the United State Postal Service won't accept computer records as documentation of payment. They want cancelled checks or something similar.

That's where things got tricky. Our goal is to get those checks cashed and out of here as quickly as possible, and we certainly have never dreamed of having to copy the thousands and thousands of checks we handle each year. So when the postal workers pulled a random sample of 50 paid subscriptions and said, "Prove it," about the best answer I could manage was, "Huh?"

Fortunately, those 50 subscribers were more creative than that. Once we gathered our wits and contacted them directly, every single one came through with the documentation we needed to satisfy the post office. Our new permit was approved, and we have made another nice step toward solvency.

So, a big, big thanks to the chosen 50. We are working to get our record-keeping in shape to suit the post office, and hope never to have to bewilder another group of subscribers with so unusual a request. If we do, please bear with us.

Thanks finally to the GOLDENSEAL family circle. I've mentioned Debby and Cornelia already, but must add the designing Anne Crozier; Culture and History photographer Michael Keller, as well as Greg Clark and Debra Basham in the State Archives old photos operation; volunteers Chuck and Esther Heitzman, who keep our cash flow flowing during the subscription rush; and dozens and dozens of freelancers.

As you have probably figured out, GOLDENSEAL is the product of a lot of folks all doing a little more than they have to, and these are the prime contributors. I appreciate their work and your support for it.

Our best to you and yours for the holidays and the new year.

— Ken Sullivan

Published for the
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Gaston Caperton
Governor

through the
Mountain Arts Foundation
in behalf of the
Division of Culture and History
William M. Drennen, Jr.
Commissioner

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GOLDENSEAL (ISSN 0099-0159, USPS 013336) is published four times a year, in the spring, summer, fall, and winter. The magazine is distributed for $16 yearly. Manuscripts, photographs, and letters are welcome; return postage should accompany manuscripts and photographs. All correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Phone (304)558-0220. Second Class postage paid at Charleston, West Virginia.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Articles appearing in GOLDENSEAL are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life.* The Division of Culture and History is an Equal Opportunity / Affirmative Action Employer.

Goldenseal

Volume 21, Number 4 Winter 1995

COVER: James Tyree Rexrode, the Pendleton County folk artist who died 20 years ago this February, captured the spirit of West Virginia in wintertime. Our holiday features, beginning on page 7 and page 26, recount Christmas customs from Pendleton and elsewhere.

PHOTOS: Herb Clagg, Greg Clark, Mark Crabtree, Frederick Bryce Hoover, Captain Jesse P. Hughes, Hunter Johnston, Michael Keller, George Kossuth, Gerry Milnes, M. Wagoner, Danny Williams

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.

G.I.'s at Morgantown

September 28, 1995
Funkstown, Maryland
Editor:
We have subscribed for several years, but this issue [Fall 1995] is the best yet. Perhaps that is because we could really relate to the article "Life in College Park: The G.I. Bill Changes WVU" by Leona G. Brown.

We were there! My husband, Fred, having attended WVU one semester in 1941, returned to WVU in January 1946 as a former G.I. under the G.I. Bill. He had served our country in the 15th Air Force in Italy as a B-24 pilot.

When we first went to WVU we had a room with cooking and laundry privileges. After our daughter was born we moved to College Park to a trailer. After living in a trailer for 15 months, we were able to move to one of the small apartments. The walk-thru closet became our daughter's bedroom.

It was a lifetime experience, and we made lifetime friends. We've said a number of times that all of us had so much in common: We had the same type housing and the same income and the G.I. experience.

Most of us wives worked. I worked for lawyers on Chancery Row until I quit because I was pregnant. Then I learned that the Baptist student minister, Joe Gluck, needed a part-time secretary for two weeks. I applied for and got the job, but I ended up working full time and had to quit again because of my pregnancy, just a month before our daughter was born.

We spend quite a lot of time in West Virginia. We still have my husband's homeplace in Burnsville, and would like to see some articles about that area.
Sincerely,
Bonnie M. Kuhn

September 11, 1995
Clendenin, West Virginia
Editor:
The excellent story, "Life in College Park" by Leona G. Brown, brought back many pleasant memories of living in a surplus trailer at WVU following World War II. I am surprised at how much detail Ms. Brown recalls about living at College Park after almost 50 years. She mentions many things that I had long forgotten.

My former wife Ann and I enrolled in WVU during September 1946. We rented an attic apartment in Sunnyside and placed our name on a waiting list for a trailer, which became available in January 1947. We had no car and not even an electric fan but were happy to have a reasonable and safe place to live for over three years.

Our address was 109 College Park. We made the place more homelike by planting flowers and adding a one-foot-high white picket fence around the yard. We also painted the trailer each fall.

We made a foot-wide bench and placed it beside the fold-down back couch so that we could use a full-size mattress for a more comfortable bed. We had a small hot plate and tiny metal-box oven for baking. Our biggest problem was keeping the smelly and bulky oil-burning space heater operating during the winter. Having no running water and community bath houses made our stay seem like camping out.

One amusing incident that took

In his letter concerning the Hatfield article, James Kidd also provided feedback on the photographs accompanying Leona Brown's article about

G.I. Bill students in Morgantown: The student on the right (above) in the dark jacket is George Gianodis. He worked for the *Charleston Daily Mail* for many years and died several years ago. The student on the left is familiar to me but I cannot recall his name.

Incidentally, the students were not setting type; this is likely a posed photo. The *Daily Athenaeum* was printed by the West Virginia Publishing Company in Morgantown, publishers of the *Morgantown Post* and the *Dominion-News*. The shop was unionized, and the student newspaper staffers were not permitted to handle type.

In the other photo (below), the student on the right is Roy Burton. I do not recognize the other men or the woman behind the counter.

I was greatly pleased to see the

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY

picture of Joe Gluck. I came to know Joe well during the years I was at the University, 1941-43 and 1946-48 as a student, and 1949-53 on the School of Journalism faculty. He looks hale and hearty to be a veteran of World War II.

place in our part of the park stands out: Before daylight one morning one of the ladies placed a pair of tall men's boots with toes sticking out under the door of one of the ladies' toilet stalls. Then, she and some of her co-conspirators hid. When the first early riser saw a "man" using the ladies' bathroom, she screamed and ran from the bathhouse to get her husband to investigate. Of course, the lady who placed the boots in the bathhouse, her friends and all the rest of us got a big laugh out of this incident.

Due to some paperwork foul-up, we didn't receive our first $90 G.I. stipend for over three months. Joseph C. Gluck was a big help to us when he sent us to the Red Cross to get an interest-free loan until our checks started arriving. Money was in short supply at WVU, and I supplemented our G.I. stipend by working part-time as a handyman for a Morgantown attorney and taking Army ROTC which paid me $28 a month.

All in all, living in a College Park trailer was an interesting and rewarding experience.
Sincerely,
Ottis L. Dilworth

Hatfield History

September 17, 1995
Winchester, Kentucky
Editor:
In regard to Bob Spence's "Hatfield History" article [Fall 1995]: I was born on Paint Creek near the Fayette-Raleigh county line. Some time in the early part of this century Devil Anse Hatfield set up some of his sons in saloons in Fayette County. It was said that he was trying to get them away from the feud around the Kentucky border.

One saloon was in sight of our home. It burned in the mid-'20's after the Hatfields sold it. The other saloon was at Boomer. I have been told by my parents that two of the brothers ran that one. They got into a squabble with an Italian immigrant who operated a neighboring saloon. It was over which saloon would serve which area. The brothers (Troy and Elias, as best I can recall) went to the Italian's saloon with guns at the ready. He shot and killed both of them, and they shot and killed him. The bullets went through the wooden door.

COURTESY STATE ARCHIVES

Back in the '70's when a news item appeared about Willis, the last surviving son of Devil Anse, I and my wife were visiting my old home. We asked my mother who was raised in Fayette County if she knew the Hatfields. She said yes, and Willis tried to date her, she being a young woman at the time. We asked if she did date him and she answered with a scornful "No!"

We asked why and she said the Hatfields were gunslingers and she would have nothing to do with them. She died in 1990 at age 100.

Keep up the good work on GOLDENSEAL.
Sincerely,
James R. Kidd

You're right about the shoot-out with the immigrant and, yes, the brothers were Detroit ("Troy") and Elias Hatfield. The event, a liquor dealers' turf battle, came in 1911, long after the end of the feud.

Incidentally, GOLDENSEAL freelancer Bob Spence has been interviewed for an upcoming Arts & Entertainment Network biography of Devil Anse Hatfield. Watch for it in early 1996. — ed.

September 21, 1995
White Sulphur Springs,
West Virginia
Editor:
I sell books on the Hatfields and McCoys by Virgil C. Jones and Otis Rice in the Coal House and am happy to say that in the last two weeks I sold out! Partially, I am sure, it was due to showing people your article in GOLDENSEAL. Seeing photographs of the actual people involved seemed to make the books more real to them.

The "Raising Cane" article in the last issue was also of special interest, as I was born and grew up in Calhoun County.
Sincerely,
Phyllis Fetty

Root Beer

September 14, 1995
Bluefield, West Virginia
Editor:
There's one little thing Mr. James Casto left out of his article "Something About Stewart's: Curb Service in Huntington" in your fall issue. There was a picture of a large empty root beer mug but not of a very small one, served to very little people *gratis*.

I can now in my imagination taste both the very delicious hotdogs and best root beer I ever drank. I have never found any half as good elsewhere.
Yours truly,
Ann McGhee Schruler

Stewart's still offers a four-ounce mug of the famous root beer free to their youngest customers. Thanks for reminding us. — ed.

Mystery Miner

April 27, 1995
Fayetteville, West Virginia
Editor:
After reading Joe Savage's article on the Battle of Blair Mountain in the 20th Anniversary GOLDENSEAL, I thought that it may be of interest to you to know about a grave in the Odd Fellows Cemetery in Oak Hill. The marker reads: John W. Dixon/Dec. 25, 1879 Nov. 19, 1951/Leader Of The Lens Creek March.

When I first found this grave a few years ago I knew nothing about a Lens Creek march and was unable to find anyone who could give any information. After reading Lon Savage's book *Thunder in the Mountains* I realized what it was, as

Cartoon from the Mine Wars era.

miners camped on Lens Creek before they started for Mingo County. When I was a boy I had always heard this referred to as the March on Mingo.

I wrote Mr. Savage and he informed me that none of his material mentioned John W. Dixon. [But the] government was looking for someone to hang, so to speak, and anyone would have been stupid to claim any part in it at that time. And we all know that things like this don't happen in an orderly manner without some leadership. If anyone thinks so I would like to sell him the New River Gorge bridge at a bargain price.

It was my thinking that Mr. Dixon wanted it known and knew that after his death there was nothing that the government could do to him as he had ended their statute of limitations.

So I decided to try to find out more about him. I finally contacted a woman who said that Mr. Dixon was her uncle and that he and her father had been very active in the mine labor troubles and that they later had a machine gun at Widen. No doubt you recall the troubles that they had at that non-union mine in Clay County, as it was a thorn in the UMW's side.

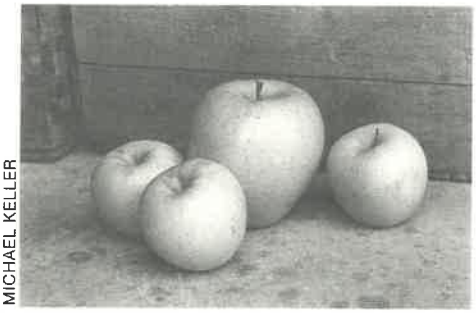
Later in an article by Melody Bragg I found a mention of a union representative named Dixon. I feel certain that this was John W. Dixon. I contacted [Melody Bragg's husband] George, a member of the UMW, and told him about this grave. Sometime later at a reunion for the town of Glen Jean, George happened to meet a nephew of Mr. Dixon who told him that he was the one who put the marker on the grave and that he had his uncle's material and planned to write a book about him. Unfortunately, this nephew died before he could do anything about the book.

I believe that there is a good story here if someone could get the material together.
Sincerely,
John F. Clark

We appreciate your interest in bringing another story from the Mine Wars to light. You will find an article on the Widen troubles in this issue, incidentally. — ed.

Golden Delicious

September 13, 1995
Procious, West Virginia
Editor:
My highest compliment to John L. Marra for the beautiful story, "The Greatest Apple in the World" [GOLDENSEAL, Fall 1995]. I have read and re-read the story and have



MICHAEL KELLER

purchased copies as keepsakes for our son and daughter and for several of my brothers and sisters in and out of state. I know the story and pictures will touch their hearts as they have mine. The lovely picture of my Aunt Roberta McQuain and her input into the whole story was special also.

I am a granddaughter of Bewel and Nancy Mullins and am happy to say I live in the Clay County area. Last year I had the honor of being chosen the 1994 Clay County Apple Belle Queen. I rode in the festival parade on Saturday, October 1, 1994, in a 1983 Mustang convertible, driven by my brother David Whited of Parkersburg, a grandson of Bewel and Nancy. I also rode in the Roane County Black Walnut Festival parade a few weeks later, as the Apple Belle representing Clay County. It was truly a great honor for me and I felt within my heart my grandparents would have been proud.

The picture that was in the article of Grandma Mullins holding the picture of Grandpa at the tree hangs on the wall in our home, also a picture of Grandpa outside their Avon Street home in Charleston and a picture of the old homeplace on Porters Creek. The pictures surround a heart-shaped shelf my husband Dudley made for me to display my crown and trophy I received as the Apple Belle.
Very truly yours,
Elaine Dawson

Calling All Pronunciators

November 3, 1995
West Virginia University
P.O. Box 6690
Morgantown, WV 26506
Editor:
Thank you for all your help in getting *A Guide To Pronunciation Of Place Names in West Virginia* information to your subscribers.

I truly enjoyed hearing from the many people who took time to send along a bit of folklore in their requests. I have passed many of their tidbits on to others to enjoy and had a good laugh at some of the stories.

I received requests from California, Florida, Ohio, Arizona, Georgia, Texas and many places I cannot remember. You have a wonderful following of people who praised your magazine to me. Many said they have learned more from your magazine than from history books. I think that I may have had about 350 requests from your readers. It sure was surprising.

Perhaps you will put in a little reminder that the books are still available. I have about 500 left and would like to see more people enjoy this book.
SIncerely,
Mrs. Olive E. Shultz

OK, folks — she asked for it! We recommended the pronunciation guide in the Fall GOLDENSEAL, and we still think it is a dandy little book. Single copies are free, at the above address. — ed.

A Sportsman at the Concert

By C. M. Waybright

"Would you like to go to a concert with me Sunday?" my mate for over a quarter-century queried, a while back.

"A concert?"

"Yes. The West Virginia Symphony Orchestra is in town and is to perform at the junior high school auditorium the day after tomorrow. I have tickets."

Now, age has stiffened my knees and slowed my feet, but my mind works as good as ever. As soon as I heard the word "orchestra," I started organizing my defense. I was about to explain how I would love to accompany her anywhere, especially to a Sunday afternoon concert, but my favorite team would be playing on television. And if that by chance was rained out, I really needed to give my old bird dog — who had hardly been out of the kennel since the season closed — some exercise.

I'm sure those of you who have been involved in such confrontations can understand the delicacy of the situation. Timing is everything and, sad to say, before I could utter a word she had the floor again.

"It's been ages since we've gone anywhere together on a Sunday afternoon," she said. "It seems you're always either watching a ball game or running that smelly old dog of yours. Sometimes I believe you think more of her than me."

Something in the tone of her voice and the angle of her chin got my attention. I heard a male voice, much like my own, muttering something about always wishing to hear an orchestra in person and not having a thing planned for Sunday.

The appointed time came and we drove into Parkersburg. We found our seats, and they were good ones, just a little left of center and very close to the stage. There was a large crowd, lots of proper ladies in long dresses and men in jackets and striped ties.

The musicians were already playing when we sat down, but seemed to be having trouble getting together. I listened for a while and was about to suggest that they just stop and try the whole thing over when my beloved leaned over and explained, "They're just warming up. They have to loosen up their lips and fingers. It's kind of like a baseball team doing their pre-game drills, except they don't spit on the floor or adjust personal protective equipment that should be done in private."

My beloved leaned over and explained, "The musicians are just warming up. It's kind of like a baseball team doing their pre-game drills, except they don't spit on the floor."

Studying the folks on stage more closely now, I realized that many of them were playing fiddles. There were small ones placed between the chin and collar bone and played with a bow, middle-sized units which the seated musicians held upright on the floor between their knees, also played with a bow, and huge models which the operator stood beside and strummed with his fingers.

The abundance of fiddles made me a bit more at ease since I knew something of fiddling. My great-uncle Daryl, renowned fox hunter, horse trader and storyteller, was a fiddler.

He and my dad fox-hunted often. They didn't hunt foxes as you see pictured today, with a bunch of sleek spirited horses and pretty ladies in red coats. They pursued the quarry at night like real men, with long-legged hounds that sounded as soon as they struck scent and would stay on the track till the bitter end. Fortified by food and drink, the hunters tracked the sound of the chase from beside a hilltop fire half a county away. These forays usually started with a drive to Uncle Daryl and Aunt Maude's place.

"By gollys, Maude, bring me my hat and fiddle and I'll play this boy a tune before we go hunting." Uncle Daryl started all his sentences with 'by gollys,' and he never played the fiddle without first installing a battered felt fedora at just the proper angle.

Folks said he was very good. His chin had a strange angle to it and I thought that maybe God had made it that way just so he could hold a fiddle easy. I didn't find out till much later that a horse had kicked him in the head years before, broke his jaw and made a better fiddle player of him, or so folks said. Anyway, I always enjoyed his music. He'd play "Cotton Eyed Joe," or "Turkey in the Straw," or some other foot-stompin' piece and then always finish with "Danny Boy," because he knew it was my favorite.

"By gollys, what do you think of that?" he would ask, and then laugh uproariously as if the whole thing was our private joke.

A kind of hush fell over the concert room, and I was jerked back to the present. The musicians stopped their drills and waited expectantly. A very serious looking young lass entered from backstage and strode purposefully to the very front. She carried one of the little fiddles in her left hand and a bow in her right. Her long brown tresses were tied

up with a ribbon, and she appeared quite confident.

My wife seemed to feel the need to explain each new move, and I humored her. "That's the concertmaster," she whispered. "She's kind of like a team captain, sees that everyone is ready and in their proper place."

She came to the front of the stage, turned her back to the audience, made a couple squeaks on her instrument, nodded first to those on the right and then the left, who squeaked their fiddles in response, then faced the audience with a wide smile on her face, bowed at the waist and quickly sat down.

I was about to comment that being the concertmaster didn't look all that tough to me, when another figure entered by the same route as the young lady with the ribbon in her hair. He walked quickly to the front and began talking about the songs they were going to play.

I listened closely but didn't recognize any of the names. It seemed the composers were all German or Italian and they must have had a fearful time writing American music because almost every title was followed by a number, like Bach's 5th or Somebody's 11th. I figured out myself that it must have taken that many tries to get it right.

The latest arrival was an imposing figure as he was dressed entirely in black and had an impressive gray mane and beard. He carried a long thin stick in his right hand and gestured with it constantly as he spoke. I wondered if it was some sort of musical instrument, but after a better look decided it wasn't something you played. Most likely he will use it to keep order, I thought. I had a teacher in grade school who carried one of these things, and he was forever cracking knuckles or rapping heads with it.

Then it was time for more explanation from my know-it-all. "That's the maestro," she explained. "He has charge of the whole show; tells everyone when to start and stop and even how loud to play; does it all with hand signals and that baton he's carrying."

"He's the third-base coach," I exclaimed.

The music started, and to say the maestro was in charge was an understatement. No one made a move until he ordered it and then they all moved at once. His hands were constantly busy, sometimes waving his stick frantically. I even saw him jab it into the air once as if he was piercing an imaginary foe. As threatening as his actions were, I never actually saw him smack anyone with the thing.

I decided he must have rapped plenty of heads in practice though, because nobody gains such control of a team without a little rapping.

To say the maestro was in charge was an understatement. No one made a move until he ordered it, and then they all moved at once.

Watching him work took me back to my days of coaching Little League. What I would have given for one of those sticks back then. I'd touch the bill of my cap, rub my chin, tug at my ear, check my belt, raise one hand or maybe both skyward. All the while my young charges would either stare wide-eyed and immobile when they should have been running, or be gleefully off to the races when I wanted them safely hugging the base.

Then along came Todd. Todd would actually look at me when I was trying to give signals, and he could bunt. I was overjoyed. A little left-hander who could run like the proverbial thief, he could drop a ball down the third base line using a bat as gently as most kids could by hand.

His only flaw came to light quickly, for although he would look at me before each pitch, he had a terrible time picking up the signals, particularly the bunt. When I wanted him to display his unique skill, I would stand with arms folded across my chest like a cigar store Indian and stare at the young performer.

A minute or so would pass and finally a gleam of understanding would show in his eyes, a wide smile and a nod of approval would follow. But by then, a cry of "watch the bunt" would be reverberating across the field and all the infielders would be creeping in like cats. By the time the pitch was made, it looked as if we were playing marbles instead of baseball. How I envied the maestro with his little stick.

On the afternoon went, the music rising and falling, the performers responding perfectly to each whim of the gray-beard dressed in black. Then it was over, sooner than I expected. There was polite applause and quickly the stage emptied.

"Let's go," I suggested. It was 2:45, and there'd be plenty of sports left on TV by the time we got home.

She arched her back and raised her arms overhead slow and lazy like a cat. "It's not over, silly; it's intermission. You know, seventh-inning stretch."

She was right, for soon they were back. The girl with the ribbon in her hair did her thing again and the musicians seemed even more in tune with the maestro than before. I wondered if perhaps he had a talk with them during intermission.

We heard more music written by long-dead people from Germany or Austria and even a few with real American names. The next time they quit I played it smart and sat still. There was wild applause and cries of 'bravo.' Then back they came, but I wasn't surprised. By this time, a pony on stage wouldn't have surprised me. Strange people have strange ways. I leaned over for the explanation.

"It's the encore — if they play really well and there is enough applause, they play a couple of extra innings." I nodded my understanding and settled back down.

Soon it was really over. Even the applause and bravos failed to coax more music and we walked toward the car.

"Well, what you do think? Will you bring me again sometime?" She was holding my arm, smiling.

"Sure," I replied. "About 1997 would be nice. I've been wondering, do you think they would play 'Danny Boy' for me?"

Christmases Past

By Amazetta Jackson

Some children have an elaborate Christmas. Others have none, or just a little. I remember only two Christmases when I was growing up.

The first was 1921 in Huntington, and I was almost three. It was a happy time because Dad, Mom and I were a family.

That day my daddy laid a bundle in my arms, wrapped in a sweater.

MICHAEL KELLER

A Bye-Lo Baby, courtesy of a Charleston collector.

It wiggled. A little nose was sticking out, then I saw an eye, then the whole body. I was so excited — my own puppy! I held the pup against my face, and its velvet tongue licked my cheek.

"For me?" I squealed. Dad was glad I liked his gift.

Surely I received other gifts, but that puppy is all I remember getting for Christmas that year. "Buddy" and I spent many happy hours together. He was a fluffy, tawny ball of fur and would do anything I wanted him to — roll over, play dead, chase the ball and chase me, beg, even "talk" to me. My parents watched us, and laughed at our antics.

Ten days later in the year of 1922 my baby brother was born. I now had a brother and a puppy and was a happy little girl. Buddy adored the baby and looked at him constantly through the crib slats.

Christmas 1926 was different. My parents were divorced, and my dad no longer lived with Mom, my brother and me. My puppy was gone, too. We now lived with Mom's parents in Ethel, a coal camp nestled in the high hills of Logan County, where my Grandpa Briggs worked at the Manitoba mines. But Grandpa and his dinner bucket were home Christmas Day.

Grandma had strung red crepe paper from corner to corner in all the rooms downstairs, and a large red paper bell hung in the center of each room except the kitchen. I'll always associate my grandma with Christmas. She loved that time of year and was as excited as a child. She greeted everyone who entered our home with a cheery "Merry Christmas" and a hug. Christmas was sometimes bleak through the years, but Grandma remained enthusiastic.

That year the Christmas tree,

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which Grandpa had brought from the woods behind the camp, was in the entry room. It was decorated with Grandma's cherished ornaments, strings of popped corn, and a colored paper chain I had made at school. Of course, there was an angel at the top. Grandpa had also brought pine boughs and cones from the woods, for decoration and aroma. The rooms of the coal camp house were cozy from the three coal-burning fireplaces, decorated with holly.

I was awake before daylight. I crept down the stairs hoping to sneak a look at the Christmas tree. But Grandpa was already up and had stirred the fire which he had banked the night before. Now he was sitting beside the fireplace smoking his pipe. I had a feeling he

The rooms of the coal camp house were cozy from the three coal-burning fireplaces, decorated with holly.

was expecting me, for he had a big smile on his face.

"Couldn't wait, could you? Come sit beside me," he said.

I looked under the tree and saw no gifts, so I sat down to wait. My grandpa and I sat there and talked, the flickering firelight lighting up our faces and the tree. It was a precious moment.

"What do you think Santa will bring you?" Grandpa asked.

It didn't take me long to answer. "Anything he wants to," I answered. "I'd really like to have a desk. Do you think he'll come here?"

Grandpa smiled as though he was pleased with my answer.

My brother and I (by now he was almost five years old) were all eyes when Santa Claus came into our home later that Christmas Day. We had a chimney, but he came through the door. I don't remember what he brought my brother, but he presented to me, as though I were a princess, a little girl's desk. How did Santa know?

When Grandma asked me if I liked the desk, I replied, "Oh yes, just what I wanted." Grandma was pleased with my answer, and I noticed Santa was too. I could see a twinkle in his eyes.

Church was across the railroad track. When Santa Claus showed up there to hand out candy, he looked just like the Santa who had been to our house. Many years later I found out that Grandpa always had the honored role of Santa as long as my grandparents lived at Ethel. My grandfather was respected in the coal camp.

I loved that desk. It gave me a feeling of importance. When I let down the front, it became a writing surface. I spent many happy hours sitting there, reading, doing my lessons and writing letters to my daddy. That desk remained in my possession until 1949, when I had to part with it.

Also that Christmas Mom bought me twin dolls called Bye-Lo Babies. The dolls I had had before were rag ones. These were store bought, had sweet kissable faces, and were wrapped in a blanket tied with a big ribbon! I cherished those Bye-Lo Babies until I was a teenager. I gave them during the Depression to two little girls who had no dolls.

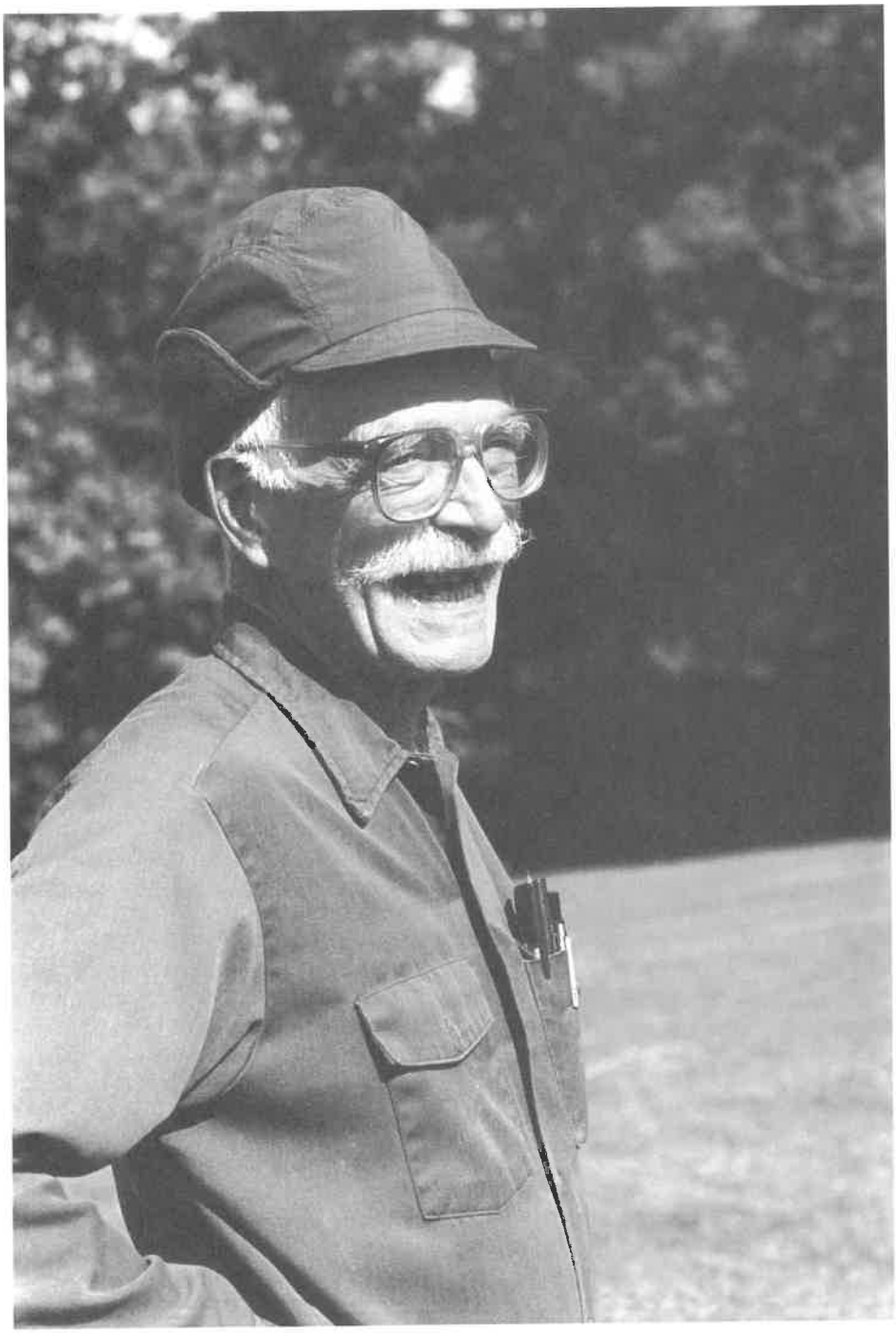
That Christmas was special in another way. Our table was usually covered with oilcloth, but today it was covered with white linen, which Grandma used only on special occasions. Grandma cooked a big dinner on the coal-burning cook stove. All the groceries came from the Ethel company store.

At every coal camp where we lived in Logan County the railroad tracks were in front of our house. Each day I looked forward to seeing the passenger train go by and waving at the engineer and conductor. I must have missed them that day. After Christmas I wondered if the train went by and I wasn't on the porch. I hope they had a nice Christmas.

We certainly did. The weather outside was cold and blustery, but inside was cozy and I was safe with my mom, little brother, and my grandparents. It was Christmas Day, and I was almost eight.

Battling the Blight

A Second Chance for the American Chestnut



By Lucille Griffin

Photographs by Michael Keller

The spreading chestnut trees disappeared from our mountains more than a half-century ago. Folks of that generation will never see their like again – but maybe their children's grandchildren will.

He drives an old yellow jeep with no seat belts and a handicapped tag hung from the rearview mirror. We're in Boone County, going up a rocky, rutted track along a ridge where young American chestnut trees grow everywhere. The chestnuts occupy what foresters call the "understory," beneath the big trees which make up the forest canopy.

Leslie Baldwin remembers the good old days when the chestnuts were the big trees, with full-grown specimens blanketing most of the ridges around here. The nuts were a treat, he says, though hard to get from the huge trees.

"They were much too tall to climb, and you had to get up early or the squirrels beat you to them," Leslie

Winton Covey is happy to battle the chestnut blight. Professor Covey, retired from Concord College, volunteers on chestnut projects in the southern counties.

Leslie Baldwin, alias Mr. Bee, ready for a chestnut run into the Boone County woods.

recalls. "When I was about 12, we took a two-inch auger and drilled a hole into a chestnut tree. We packed it full of powder and tamping, then shot the tree, the way they mine for coal. The tree splintered and all the nuts came down at once. We were awful boys, the things we did."

But no one noticed, there were that many chestnuts. That was back in the 1920's. The chestnut blight was already on the rampage in New York, where it had been imported on Oriental nursery stock at the turn of the century, but it hadn't reached West Virginia yet. Spread by wind, birds, even by the workers who attempted in vain to halt its progress, the blight fungus within 40 years would kill nearly all the American chestnuts within the natural range, estimated at three and a half billion trees.

By the time of the Great Depression, the chestnut forests of Virginia were dead, and by the early '50's the last large groves in West Virginia had also succumbed. Everywhere the forests were haunted by dead chestnut trees, tall gray ghosts which covered the mountains. The lumber — straight as yellow poplar and nearly as strong as oak but much lighter, more easily worked, and more versatile — was still valuable, and chestnut bark was the preferred source of tannin for tanning leather. So the dead standing timber was harvested, except in remote areas where some snags may still be found today. The chestnut, like locust, is highly resistant to rot.

In mountain communities the loss of the chestnut trees undermined the independent existence they had helped to support. Chestnuts had been a big source of cash income to many families, and provided nutritious food for man and beast.

Because the trees bloom after the last frost, the nut crop was 100-percent dependable. Fruits and berries might fail some years, but there were always chestnuts. Every fall, when the nuts dropped, all energies were directed toward their harvest. Just about everyone dealt in chestnuts. Families who did not own chestnut groves collected what fell in the nearby open woods where the underbrush had been cleared to facilitate nut gathering.

Transported by horseback or wagon to the country store and from there to the railroad, the first sweet nuts of each season brought ten cents a pound. This was at a time when sugar and meat were four and five cents a pound, the best grade of flour was 49 cents for the 25-pound bag, and $1.75 was a daily wage. On a good day an adult might collect as much as 100 pounds of nuts. Many a farm family earned enough at chestnut harvest to provide the cash needs for that year, including school books, clothing, all food which was not produced at home, and occasional treats.

And it didn't end there, according to Leslie Baldwin. "After the harvest we turned the hogs out to range," he told me. "When we drove them back in they were stuffed with chestnuts." Before the blight killed them, American chestnuts also supported an abundance of wild game which today's forest cannot match. That too was indirect income to mountain families, putting meat on the table.

Today only a few big chestnuts survive in the natural range. The rest are mostly live roots which the underground environment protects against blight, and their shoots, which inhabit the understory, sheltered from the wind-borne blight by taller trees but also stunted for lack of sunlight, unable to flower and produce nuts.

He knows it is an uphill fight but Leslie is battling the chestnut blight, working to bring back the old days. He is managing this Boone County ridge for chestnut revival, follow-

Blight-struck chestnut trees rarely grow more than a few inches in diameter. The larger trunk at left has died, the middle-sized one in the center is suffering severely, while the smaller one is still relatively healthy.

ing guidelines developed by the American Chestnut Cooperators Foundation and Gary Griffin of Virginia Tech.

Gary has been studying chestnut blight and the ecology of forest chestnuts since the 1970's. He observed that chestnut sprouts on newly clear-cut lands do fine at first, growing as rapidly as any other tree and bearing nuts within a few years. Then the blight strikes and the trunk is killed, while at its base new shoots appear. Whenever a chestnut sprout is not browsed back by deer and rabbits or shaded out by other trees, it too can make a nut-bearing chestnut tree within four or five years. But once again blight will kill the tree, and once again its roots will send up more sprouts.

Each time this is repeated the chestnut shoots compete against greater odds, because other species growing nearby are not affected by chestnut blight. Gradually the chestnuts are overtowered by competing hardwoods and receive less and less sunlight. The chestnut shoots, being the newest growth available, are also more heavily browsed. Within a dozen or so years, most of the young chestnuts are dead, roots and all.

Such a site is Leslie Baldwin's ridge. Leslie is a retired mine inspector. From his coon hunting days, he remembered that plenty of chestnuts once grew here. On top of High Knob, he has seen the remains of a giant chestnut with a stump eight feet in diameter. A forest fire several years ago consumed the last traces of the tree. Clear-cutting has opened other parts of the ridge. Leslie works in these open areas, where the forest has not yet reestablished itself. He

Elm Trees in Danger

Elm trees are dying in record numbers in Jefferson and Berkeley counties, according to the state Department of Agriculture. Several factors have contributed to the deaths including a disease known as "elm yellows," bark beetles, and Dutch elm disease. The outbreak is not just in West Virginia.

Elm yellows symptoms develop between mid-July and mid-September. Leaves on infected trees turn yellow, droop and then drop. All branches eventually develop symptoms and die within a matter of weeks. There is no known control. Elm yellows has been observed in both American and red or slippery elm. American elms usually die during the first year of infection, while red elms die over a two-year period.

According to Clark Haynes, a forest pathologist with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, elm yellows disease can only be confirmed using DNA analysis. The state agriculture department will continue to survey for this disease, monitor its outbreak and confer with other states and researchers. For more information contact agriculture's Plant Industries Division, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0191; (304) 558-2212.

has flagged the chestnut stems and his Boone County chapter of Chestnut Cooperators cuts out competing trees within ten feet of them.

This work must be repeated every two years to give the chestnuts plenty of light. It is a rough job requiring lots of hands. In past years Leslie recruited help from the Boy Scouts of Boone and Logan counties. This year the Girl Scouts also signed on to help out.

Leslie stops the jeep to point out the biggest chestnut on the edge of the road. It is seven inches in diameter, over 30 feet tall, but recently died of blight. At its base the new shoots are sprouting, and within ten yards there are two other chestnuts, three and four inches in diameter, both in bloom at the time of our visit in early summer. They will produce at least one big nut crop before the blight kills them too. That is the usual pattern in sunny sites.

It is a frustrating cycle, allowing the trees to reproduce but never to reach their mag-

Illustration from *Flora of West Virginia.*

Chestnut Memories

West Virginians of a half-century ago vividly recalled the towering chestnut trees of their younger days, as some still do. The following account is excerpted by permission from Eugene Scott's "Waking 'Em Up!" column, Beckley Post-Herald, *September 17, 1942.*

During this period of battles and turmoil in the world, one finds little time to dwell on the past, or to call up those fond memories of experiences that have been lived and all but forgotten. Yet, come September and invariably our mind goes back some two decades when, as a lad, we used to gather chestnuts from under the hundred or so giant trees that formed a chestnut orchard along the slopes just back of our home.

Those chestnut trees have been dead for years, and have long since been cut down, but autumn never comes that we do not think often of the glorious days when we arose at dawn to beat the turkeys to the chestnut orchard to gather up the first nuts that had fallen during the night. No experience in all the years since has been so colored with sheer delight, with such fantastic enjoyment, as "picking up" chestnuts during the month of September.

We had most of the chestnut trees named. There was old First, old Second, old Third, named in order as they stood beside the pathway leading to the barn. There was old Wormy, old Gray, old Blackie, old Hillside, old Chunky, and many others — all named according to the type of chestnuts they bore or in regard to location. There was old Early, which always started "cracking" first in the fall.

The chestnut trees were too large to climb. Most of them were 60 to 75 feet tall and some three to five feet in diameter. When the first burrs began to turn brown and to crack open we would stand on the ground and toss rocks and sticks high into the trees to bring down the first ripening nuts in a spirit of eagerness that could not wait until the burrs burst wide and the rich, brown nuts pelted down in showers.

Vivid is the recollection at night when we would sleep close to the window and listen to the chestnuts falling through the branches. Come dawn and we would attempt to steal out of bed without awaking our brother in an effort to get the first nuts to fall. The flock of turkeys, likewise aware that chestnut season had arrived, would often be out before dawn and running from tree to tree to gobble up the nuts that had fallen during the night.

After the burrs had opened wide, the ground would be literally covered with nuts during the early morning. And when it chanced to rain during the night it was not uncommon to find as many as a half-bushel of chestnuts under one tree.

Chestnut season lasted for about three weeks, affording the richest experience of our life as a farm lad. The first money we can recall earning for ourself was by picking up chestnuts. The nuts used to sell for as much as five to eight dollars a bushel, and the orchard most years would yield 15 or 20 bushels.

It was a sad day when the giant trees began to blight and to die, limb by limb. In the course of two or three years they were all dead — and now only the big stumps remain of the great chestnut empire over which we used to rule as a child.

The years, however, have failed to erase the bright memories of that happy period of boyhood. Even yet, in the midst of pressing duties and the strain of the war, we find our mind drifting back to the past, into that golden age of rich experiences. Sometimes at night, when the katydids are singing their notes of coming autumn, we lie awake musing on the innumerable nights we used to lie beside the window listening to the chestnuts fall. We still think that if little boys are to be completely happy in Heaven, there ought to be a lot of chestnut trees there.

— Eugene Scott

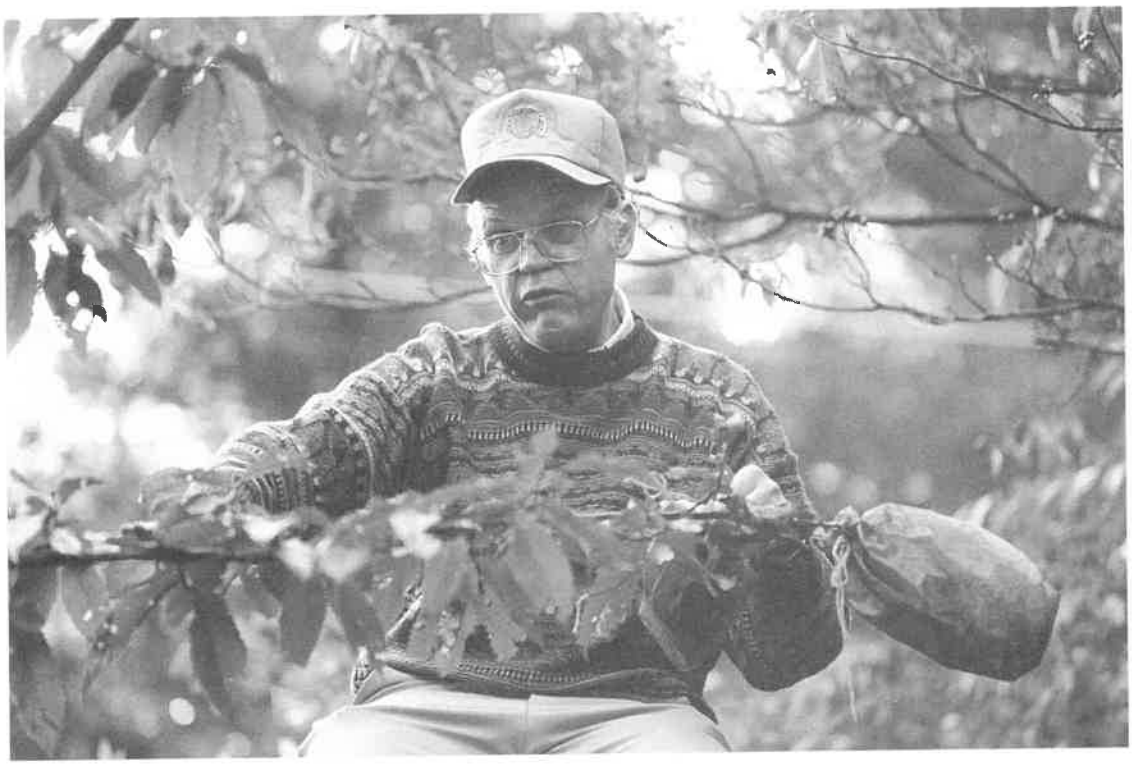
nificent maturity. Chestnut Cooperators like Leslie work to alter this pattern and permit the trees to survive and produce nuts longer. Cutting out the competition is the first step. In the opened areas, continuous rounds of blight cause "hypovirulent" strains of the blight fungus to develop within several years.

Ironically, hypovirulent blight strains themselves suffer from a disease. These strains are weakened by a virus infection, and not as efficient at killing chestnuts.

Normally the blight fungus enters the inner bark through wounds or cracks and spreads there to form sunken cankers that expand rapidly until they girdle the tree, usually in a year or two. In contrast, hypovirulent strains of the fungus make swollen cankers which grow more slowly and usually do not threaten the tree's life. It is ugly but less deadly. Thus, by cutting out competing trees and giving the chestnut stems more space and light, Leslie's volunteers not only assist chestnut growth but also make it possible to exploit a flaw in the blight organism.

That is phase one of the American Chestnut Cooperators Foundation master plan, meant simply to enable blight-struck trees to survive longer and in greater numbers.

Fighting the blight depends on a lot of local efforts. There are major plantations of American chestnuts at several places in our region, including one at Concord College. Another is at Virginia Tech at Blacksburg, Virginia. This is a planting from the second generation of American chestnuts which the late Al Dietz had exposed to ionizing radiation to induce mutations. Al, a West Virginia native, was an industrial chemist who spent his spare time prospecting for surviving chestnut trees, collecting the seed, having it treated and distributing it throughout the eastern United States.



Concord College professor John Elkins is at home at treetop level. He perches here to check on an earlier cross-pollination, protected by the fabric bag.

This particular grove is 23 years old, and so far none of these trees have shown any evidence of blight resistance. All have gone through many cycles of blight and death, followed by regeneration from root sprouts. Nevertheless, most of them are now 30 feet tall, and the grove has been producing large nut crops for the past 10 years. By managing for chestnut revival, Cooperators like Leslie Baldwin are making chestnut groves which can reasonably be expected to produce similar nut crops.

Timber companies have also entered the fray. Through its West Virginia Forest Research Center, Westvaco Corporation has established American chestnut revival plots at 2,200 and 4,100 feet, and mapped the plots for long-term observation. Georgia Pacific has alerted its foresters to include American chestnut in population surveys and report sites suitable for American chestnut regeneration. Groups such as 4-H, FFA, forestry and hunt clubs are encouraged to adopt and manage similar sites.

None of this will defeat the blight, but only hold strategic territory. Chestnuts may survive only five to ten years past nut-bearing age before succumbing to a lethal blight infection. But remember, in four or

A long-handled pruning hook is the instrument of choice for harvesting ripening chestnut burrs.

five years new shoots from the same roots may produce nuts again. Furthermore, the trees on each site follow individual schedules, so that at any given time up to half may be in nut production, and a forest site can become a dependable source of chestnut seedlings and of nuts for wildlife.

It is doubtful that such a site will ever produce large chestnut trees, until a more efficient control of blight or blight-resistant trees — or both — are developed. This brings us to the next part of the battle, which involves the introduction of American chestnuts specially bred for blight resistance.

Autumn field trips are among the rewards of the chestnut battle. Here Winton and Mary Covey make their way to a chestnut site near the Summers-Monroe county line.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture began a breeding program to improve blight resistance in American chestnuts by crossing with Chinese and Japanese chestnuts in 1925, headed by Russell Clapper. A few years later, Arthur Graves began breeding with the same goal. Richard Jaynes carried on Graves's work after USDA support was discontinued in the 1950's. These early efforts produced many hybrid chestnuts with good blight resistance, but hardly any with the straight rapid growth habit required to compete in the forest.

The American Chestnut Cooperators Foundation aims to produce resistant American chestnuts, not American-Oriental hybrids. After the blight epidemic had run its course a few American chestnuts survived, suggesting that there was some natural resistance in the chestnut population.

The late Bruce Given, leader of the West Virginia Division of Forestry's American Chestnut Project, collected and grafted shoots from several of these survivors. Gary Griffin and John Elkins tested and found some of these chestnuts had low but significant levels of resistance. Since 1982 John has been making controlled pollinations, inter-crossing among resistant American chestnuts to develop all-Americans with improved blight resistance.

John, a Concord College chemistry professor and native southern West Virginian, remembers very well what chestnuts meant to mountain people. "As a boy growing up, I knew American chestnut was important to the family," he recalls. "How to bring back the old-timey chestnut was often the topic of conversation on Sunday afternoons when the clan came home to Grandpa's." Eventually, John decided to give it a try himself. In March of 1986, he chartered the American Chestnut Cooperators Foundation in West Virginia.

When he is not teaching, John is treasurer of the Foundation. He is in charge of a search for chemical markers for blight resistance, as well as breeding and grafting efforts.

John admits that "resistance" is a relative term. A resistant chestnut may withstand a blight attack for many years, but eventually succumb to the disease because its resistance is not adequate to allow the tree to compete with other species in the natural environment. A tree has to be both healthy and strong to hold its place in the forest.

Gary and John suspect that several genes may be involved in blight resistance, and therefore that combining different American chestnut parents may produce improved resistance among the offspring. In 1982 they made the first controlled crosses among the best American chestnut survivors of the blight epidemic from Ohio, Virginia and West Virginia. John now has chestnut stock from several states represented on his property south of Beckley.

In 1990 and 1991 the all-American crosses were tested for blight resistance by inoculation with the lethal fungus. Several have shown resistance levels equal to or slightly better than their parents. This is good but not good enough. It means that more generations of crosses will be needed to produce American chestnuts that breed true for blight-resistance.

Chestnut Cooperators use grafting as another weapon against blight, introducing scions of the best blight-resistant American chestnuts into forest clear-cut plots such as Leslie Baldwin's. On weekends in late spring for the past five years, John Elkins has shared his skills with interested volunteers at grafting clinics sponsored by the ACCF in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service. The grafted scions are protected from browsing by installing tree shelters and attaching bags of human hair nearby. Just one inch tall at the start, successful

Chestnut Construction

As West Virginia's chestnut trees sickened and died of the chestnut blight, the valuable timber was harvested and put to use. One of the most impressive results was the assembly and dining hall (right) at Camp Washington-Carver in Fayette County. Made of 534 logs and measuring 110 feet long, the great chestnut lodge is the biggest log structure in the state.

Camp Washington-Carver, now operated for summer programming by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, was built during the days of segregation as West Virginia's black state 4-H camp. The chestnut lodge was built by the WPA and other public works agencies, the big job lasting from the spring of 1941 to the spring of 1942.

PHOTOGRAPHS by MICHAEL KELLER

The builders were practical people, and perhaps had no intention of erecting a monument to a great American tree. But they recognized free material when they saw it, according to later researchers. "Of special significance was the availability of large quantities of native chestnut timber recently killed by the blight that ravaged chestnut stands throughout West Virginia," noted the form nominating the chestnut lodge to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

A letter to Walter R. Thurmond, who was then president of the State Board of Control, suggests that all or most of the timber was taken from the camp's own property. "The timber is scattered over the entire 600 acres," wrote Harold J. Cramer to Thurmond, adding that "the clearing of these dead chestnut trees would reduce the fire hazard and increase the beauty of the area."

The construction of the lodge shows the solid craftsmanship typical of the public works programs of the Roosevelt era. The corner saddle notches (left) fit as snugly today as they did when put in place more than a half-century ago. The logs were sawed square on two sides, then dressed by hand with a broad ax or adze. The timber (left), while showing the prominent cracking or "checking" common in seasoned chestnut, has suffered little from rot or weathering.

The great chestnut lodge, which served untold thousands of young campers during its decades as a 4-H camp, still sees hard use every day of the busy summer season. It appears little the worse for the wear and likely to serve many more generations of West Virginians.

This embattled tree is a beautiful sight to the chestnut crusaders because it still puts off vigorous shoots and good nut crops after decades of the blight. "Something there wants to live," Winton Covey says.

grafts reach five to nine feet in the first growing season.

As always in the chestnut battle, the key word is cooperation. In Boone County, Leslie and his recruits cut and prepare sprouts that are blighted or too small to produce nuts for use as grafting stocks. Then each May John brings his resistant scions and teaches volunteers to graft them. They have named the sessions the Bruce Given Memorial Grafting Clinics.

On our recent jeep trip Leslie and I stopped to see the results of John's work. Some of the grafts are growing well; others did not take. Leslie cuts new growth back by half on the successful grafts, to promote a stronger graft union and stouter stem. Farther along the ridge he shows me some of his own grafts. With adequate sun, a new graft can bear nuts within four or five years and continue to grow in the presence of blight.

Joining the Fight

The West Virginia Division of Forestry's tree nursery is a battle center in the fight against chestnut blight, supplying chestnut seedlings to landowners across the eastern United States and in other countries. GOLDENSEAL readers may join the battle by planting these seedlings or in other ways.

Superintendent David McCurdy has been raising chestnuts from seed at the Mason County nursery since 1967. The nursery's seed orchard, established by the late Bruce Given, has been improved with additions of chestnut seedlings and grafts from other states and from the first cross-bred all-American chestnut trees. The orchard has been producing seed nuts for 14 years. McCurdy marks his seed beds according to the mother tree from which the nuts were harvested. Blight will test all the trees planted, and natural selection will reveal the resistant individuals.

For the past five years, working with the American Chestnut Cooperators Foundation, the tree nursery has sent out between eight and ten thousand American chestnut seedlings per year. The West Virginia seedlings are growing in 38 states, Canada, England, Italy and New Zealand. They are distributed at cost to growers who agree to send annual reports of their tree's progress, so that resistant trees can be tracked.

Interested landowners may contact Clements State Tree Nursery, West Virginia Division of Forestry, 101 Allison Drive, West Columbia, WV 25287; (304)675-1820. Inquiries from out of state should be sent to the Foundation.

And you need not be a landowner to participate in American chestnut restoration. To join the work at Leslie Baldwin's Boone County experiment sta-

tion, write to him at Box 335, Danville, WV 25053.

To start your own project on public land, contact your district ranger for permission and assistance in locating a suitable site in a National Forest. Choose a clear-cut site where numerous chestnut sprouts and good-sized stumps are already present. In fall or spring (when leaves assist identification but are not so dense that mistakes may be made) flag all the chestnut stems and cut out competing vegetation to make a ten-foot clearing around each.

Maintain the site by cutting new non-chestnut growth every other year. Two small adjoining plots might be manageable, alternating the work each year.

Above all, keep in touch. Write to the American Chestnut Cooperators Foundation at 2667 Forest Service Road 708, Newport, VA 24128, and report where you have a plot under management. It will be recorded and considered for chestnut blight biological control research and as a possible site for grafting American chestnuts with improved blight resistance.

— Lucille Griffin

Chestnuts grow again in West Virginia, largely through the efforts of committed volunteers. Leslie Baldwin named this one Lucille's tree, for author Lucille Griffin.

His back to a strip mine, Leslie Baldwin checks a chestnut sapling. He hopes that future generations will see trees as huge as those of his youth.

Chestnut enthusiasts plant as well as graft, using seedlings from the West Virginia Division of Forestry's Mason County tree nursery. American chestnut seedlings take from seven to ten years to mature and produce nuts, and only some seedlings inherit the blight resistance of their parent trees. Leslie has made some plantings along the road and in a clear-cut and has extensive planting plans for the future.

Where the last clear-cut abuts on a vast strip mine, we stop for lunch. The contrast could not be more striking. Gray terraces sculpt the hollow just beyond, rising to the next ridge top and cutting off the last grafting zone, so that I am too dizzy to inspect two tall grafts near the edge of the precipice.

Leslie is not dizzy. He is a former mine inspector, after all. And he still mines, after a fashion, for chestnuts and very patiently, his last years committed to reclaiming the part of West Virginia's heritage stolen by the blight.

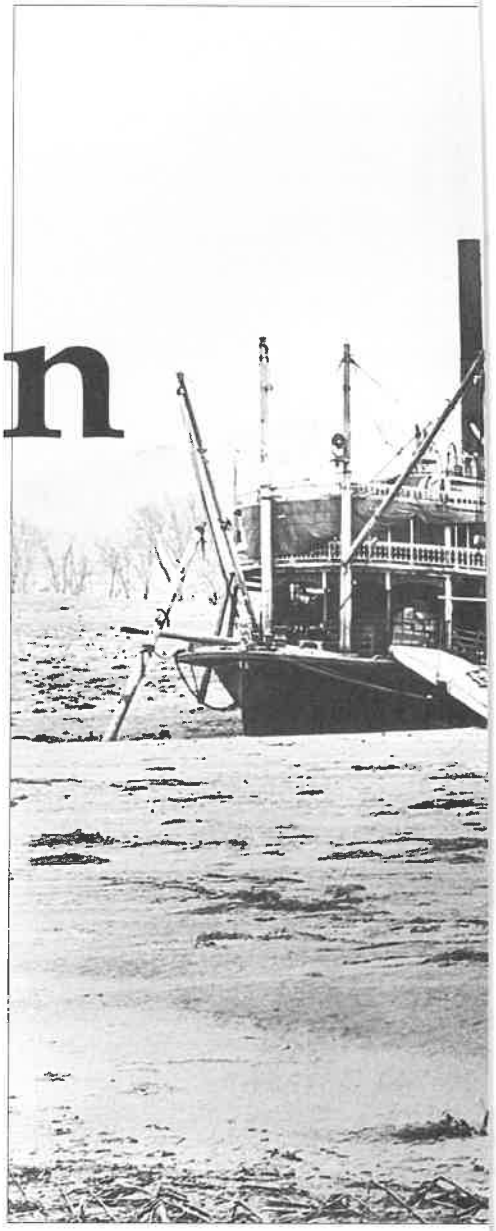
Cornfield Navigation

The Boat Wreck at Willow Grove

By Bob Withers

When an Ohio River steamboat met up with a Jackson County cornfield in the spring of 1910, a world of trouble awaited.

The farmer, the boat's owners, a Pittsburgh house-moving crew, the courts – and according to the judge, God Himself – had a hand in it before the proud Virginia was made shipshape again.



The boats passing in the background show how far the *Virginia* was from where she should have been. The sternwheeler spent several months of 1910 in a Jackson County cornfield. Photographer unknown, from the Steamboat Photo Collection of G. W. Sutphin.

Feast or famine.

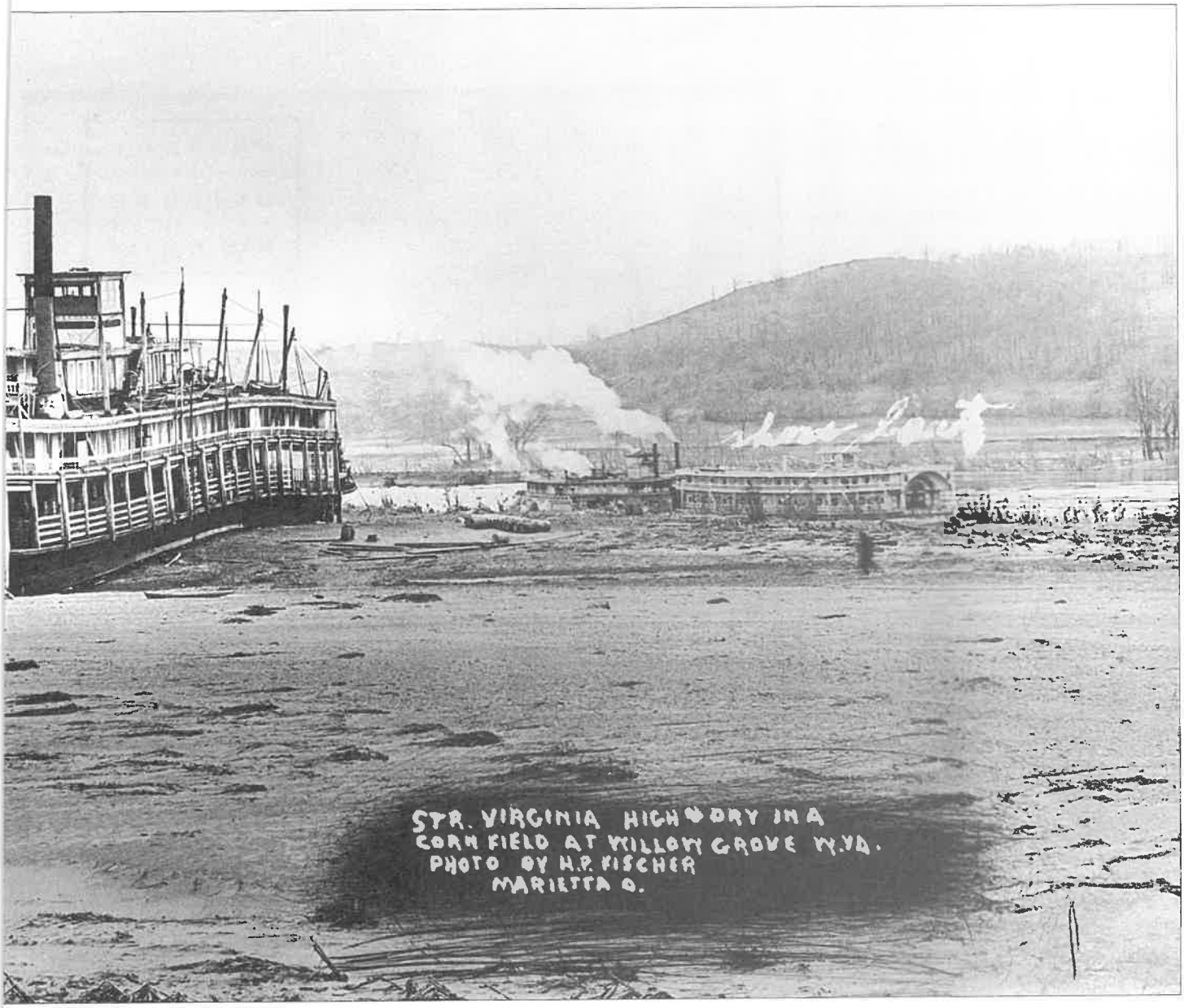
That was the lot of the much-acclaimed Pittsburgh and Cincinnati Packet Line — "waterway of the world" — for several months before the spring of 1910. The packets were passenger boats, providing a much needed service to river communities. But these were the days before completion of the first system of locks and dams on the Ohio, and low water had kept P&C's boats tied up since the first week of the previous July. Expected rises in the water level had not materialized — neither in the early fall, nor at Thanksgiving, nor Christmas. The company was in receivership.

Then the spring thaw handed the packet line the opposite problem. Flooding was forecast. Worse, massive ice floes in the Allegheny River north of Pittsburgh were breaking up, choking the rising and fast-running Ohio with navigational hazards for wooden-hulled boats.

But the P&C was desperate to get back on its feet. So, on the morning of Saturday, March 5, its elegant packet boat *Virginia* set sail from Pittsburgh for Cincinnati — with 600 tons of freight, more than the line had carried on a single vessel in years, and a crew of 30 and about 50 passengers. The departure had been delayed a day to allow the river to fall ten feet from its flood crest. Most of the long trip would take place in West Virginia waters, for, its name notwithstanding, we own the mighty Ohio to its western shore. Numerous stops were scheduled for both sides of the river.

The *Virginia* was not an auspicious vessel for a hazardous journey. The boat had seemed to be star-crossed from the very day she was launched. During her first 15 years, she collided with the steamer *Bonanza* near Portsmouth, Ohio; nearly cut the *Greenwood* in two at Beaver, Pennsylvania; hit the riverbanks at Maysville, Kentucky, and Portland, Ohio; and sank at Steubenville, Wellsville and Cincinnati.

The very fact that the *Virginia* was now on the river at all was because her sister vessel, the *Queen City*, just recently returned to service herself, had been battered by upper Mississippi ice and an unfortu-



nate encounter with a sandbar on the way back from a Mardi Gras excursion. She had tied up at Cincinnati for repairs, forcing the *Virginia* out of her involuntary seven-month retirement on February 7 so she could take on the *Queen City's* freight and carry the worn-out excursionists home to Pittsburgh.

During her first 15 years, the Virginia *collided with the* Bonanza*; nearly cut the* Greenwood *in two; hit the riverbanks in Kentucky and Ohio, and sank at Steubenville, Wellsville and Cincinnati.*

The anticipated $20,000 profit from the New Orleans trip had been eaten up by creditors, so the *Queen City* was removed from service to wait until the company could afford to repair her.

Everything depended on the *Virginia* now.

So Billy Anderson doubtless had pressing matters on his mind as he piloted the *Virginia* down the swollen river that fateful Saturday in 1910. At 67, the lanky-framed Anderson was the line's most respected pilot. He was a moral man, noted for his vitriolic crusades against alcohol and tobacco. He refused the company's uniform, usually wearing a swallow-tail coat and derby hat, his appearance punctuated by a long white beard.

Those whiskers were Billy Anderson's vainglory. It is said that, when he retired each night, he encapsulated them in a cloth sack made for the purpose and secured with a drawstring.

Anderson's concerns at the moment were the swift current and the strange complexion of a land submerged in high water. The river had crested at Marietta, Ohio, the day before. When Anderson docked his vessel there at 4 p.m. Saturday, townsfolk were scraping mud from their cellars and sidewalks. His problems would be compounded now. Beside the fact that the *Virginia* was catching up with

the Ohio's flood crest, there would be even more water in the river because of the contribution of the swollen Muskingum River.

The flood had sidetracked trains of the adjacent Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company, so the *Virginia* did some hefty freight business at Parkersburg. Darkness fell, but the vessel plodded on — Anderson and his relief pilot Tony Meldahl running "slow bell" and "dead slow" and constantly sweeping the channel with the arc searchlight. Government navigation lights were out, no doubt drowned out. It was tough to find the way.

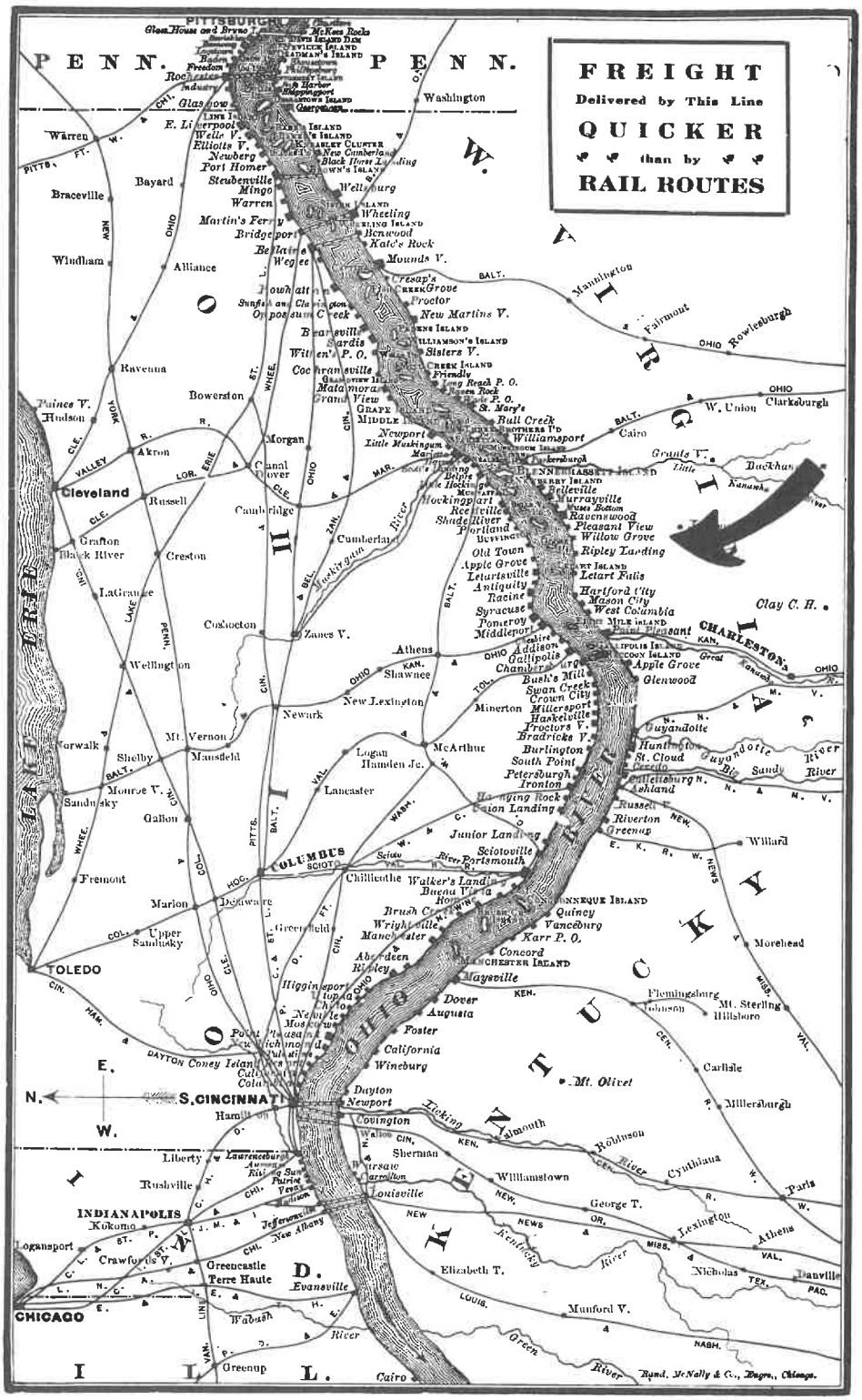
During the stop at Ravenswood, Jackson County, Meldahl suggested to the vessel's captain, Charles W. Knox, that he might wish to stay put until daylight. Knox was inclined to agree, but the *Virginia's* passengers included several Pittsburgh deckhands headed for Middleport, Ohio, to man towboats floodbound at that point. These deckhands, instead of going to bed, were drinking and becoming rowdy, and Knox wanted to get rid of them before real trouble erupted. The dangerous voyage resumed, now on the river's crest, with Billy Anderson on watch.

Another conference ensued. Purser Clyde Packard had registered a passenger boarding at Ravenswood for Willow Grove, seven miles downriver — a 50-cent fare. The *Virginia* also had freight for a grocery store there. Anderson didn't want to stop; landing would be too dangerous, he said, and the freight could be shipped back from Middleport on the packet *Valley Belle*. The passenger was another matter, though, and after Captain Knox huddled with Anderson in the pilothouse, the old pilot said he'd try it.

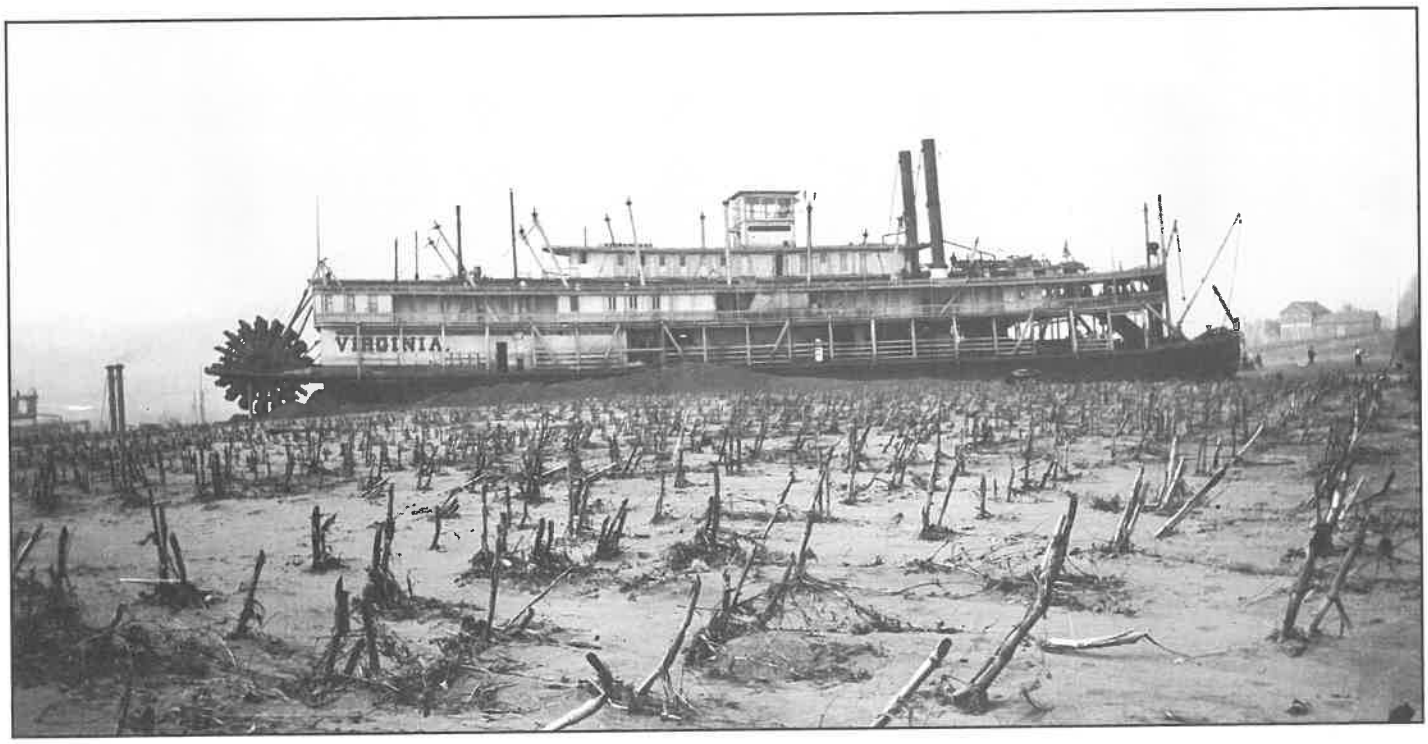
The Willow Grove landing lay at the head of a mile-long bottom that was once a part of the riverbed. The river had since straightened its course, and the B&O had built its right-of-way around the bottom on a broad, gentle curve. The gently rolling land in between was known as Williamson's cornfield, and in the wee hours of Sunday, March 6, 1910, it was totally under water.

Vessels always land headed upstream for better control. Anderson carefully "rounded to" and eased his boat across the flooded cornfield. The stage was lowered, freight unloaded, and passenger and valise discharged. Knox, on the hurricane deck, called to Anderson in the pilothouse, "I think she'll float herself out of here if you take it easy."

Anderson set the rudders to port and rang back slow. He expected



The service map of the P&C line shows the ambitious dreams of a company near bankruptcy. The wreck at Willow Grove (arrow) finally put the steamboat company under. From the Steamboat Photo Collection of G. W. Sutphin.



A full 235 feet long, the *Virginia* was an imposing sight on land or water. She carried 600 tons of freight on the ill-fated trip in 1910. Photo by Captain Jesse P. Hughes, courtesy Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.

the vessel's stern to lift toward the channel, but because of the current racing into the cornfield, it didn't. The *Virginia* swung wildly down the cornfield — and when it was nearly sideways to its intended course, an ominous grating halted all motion.

The *Virginia* was stranded.

The crew tried everything to free her. A shipment of barbed-wire spools was thrown overboard to lighten the load. Spars — forward poles mounted on pulleys and used to push off of sandbars — were rigged and tried. The Marine Coal Company towboat *Volcano*, happening along about daylight, tied on and jerked repeatedly.

Nothing worked.

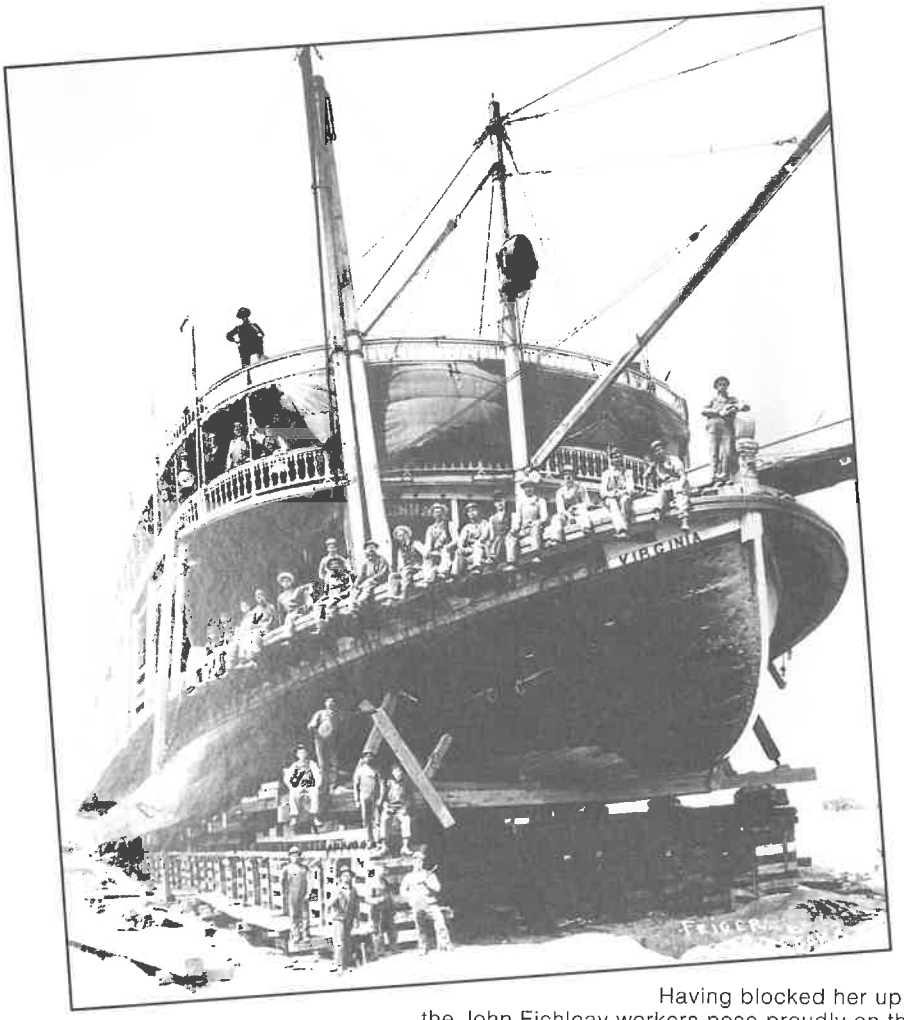
Crew members gave up. They fed passengers their breakfasts at the usual hour and took them onto a couple of small ferry flats to catch No. 705, the morning downbound B&O train, at 9:10. As the river fell, the *Virginia* began to hump up at midships, making the queenly vessel assume the most unbecoming pose of a measuring worm at midstride. The strain parted her port hogchains — an arc-shaped rigging running from stem to stern designed to hold the boat together should its flexible wooden hull ever encounter just such a contortion. Fires were hauled from under the boilers to prevent accidents in case of broken steam pipes.

There the *Virginia* sat for more than three months. The river fell; the cornfield came up for air. The riverboat turned out to be 600 feet from the riverbank, and while she boarded no passengers, robins built nests on her pilothouse sills and mud daubers buzzed around her hogchains. B&O trains eased around the curve as passengers pressed their noses against coach windows. Railroad patronage climbed so significantly that special excursions were arranged.

There the Virginia *sat for more than three months. The river fell; the cornfield came up for air. Robins built nests on her pilothouse, and mud daubers buzzed around.*

Competing packet lines joined the act. As early as the following Sunday, March 13, the Greene Line steamer *Tacoma* brought 330 excursionists from Point Pleasant and Gallipolis, Ohio. The packet *Bessie Smith* brought several hundred more with their picnic lunches from Marietta. There were more than a thousand people tiptoeing through the corn stubble that afternoon. On March 27, Easter Sunday, the *Jewel* brought a crowd from St. Marys that included the town's military band; packets *Valley Belle* and *Klondike* and the ferry *W. O. Hughart* brought gawkers from the Ohio towns of Pomeroy, Syracuse and Racine; and the *Tacoma* returned — the second of several trips — with 53 more guests from Gallipolis.

It must have been mortifying to company officials, and press coverage didn't help. The *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* reported in a front-page story March 8 that the grounding had resulted in the death of a passenger it identified as C. H. Priestly. Not true. No one had drowned, but the myth persisted. Years later, whenever strange sounds emanated from the *Virginia's* innards, a crew member would quip, "Mr. Priestly is restless tonight." The *Marietta Register-Leader* announced the same



Having blocked her up, the John Eichleay workers pose proudly on the decks of the *Virginia*. The crew normally moved houses. Photo by Feiger Studio, courtesy Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.

Once the big boat was braced, the idea was to ease it down the chute to the Ohio River. Photo by Captain Jesse P. Hughes, courtesy Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.

day that the *Virginia* was "rendered in twain" and a "total wreck." Also not true, as subsequent events proved.

Captain James A. Henderson, president and general manager of the P&C line, was undeterred by the long, steady march of misfortune. He called in the Kanawha Dock Company from Point Pleasant to block up the sagging *Virginia*, and contracted with the John Eichleay Junior Company, a house-moving outfit in Pittsburgh, to refloat her for the sum of $2,900. Henderson took charge of the resurrection, often taking up residence on the vessel and turning over to his son Alex the day-to-day operation of his affairs in Pittsburgh.

The remainder of the *Virginia's* freight was removed, and the company settled in to the long, difficult task of reclaiming its own.

The Eichleay crew — including John Jr.'s sons, John P. and Walter B., and six other men — arrived on the scene at 11:40 p.m. Thursday, April 21, bringing with them three lanterns, six shovels, four reels of chalk line and 20 pounds of bacon. They started to work at 7:00 a.m. the next day on a survey to determine lines and heights.

J. W. Williamson interrupted this effort to demand that work stop until he was paid a $500 fee for parking the boat on his cornfield. Someone called Henderson to inform him of this snag, and Henderson decided to come to Willow Grove to handle the matter himself. He arrived on Sunday, April 24, the same day packets *Ohio* and *Greendale* brought materials from Pittsburgh. The *Greendale* brought most of the timbers, rollers and jacks needed for the job.

On Monday, Henderson arbitrated and settled Williamson's claim. The irked landowner refused Henderson's check and demanded cash, whereupon Henderson wrote out a demand draft on George W.C. Johnston, his brother-in-law, and told Purser Packard to catch the next eastbound train and cash it at a Ravenswood bank. Williamson got his cash.

Work now began in earnest. Excavations were made to set blocks. Timbers were placed under the vessel to straighten her out and pitch her forward slightly. Crews were dispatched into the surrounding countryside to find lumber and teams of horses. A flat load of timbers arrived from Antiquity, Ohio. A man came from Pittsburgh with a supply of beef — but no butter, one of the workers whose identity isn't certain moaned in a small red leather diary that has been preserved. Five teams were contracted for at Ravenswood.

A carload of materials from Fairmont arrived on the B&O on Tuesday, and the *Valley Belle* brought in Pittsburgh freight from Marietta. The bracing of the stern was com-

By mid-June the house movers had the *Virginia* in God's reach, as a judge later ruled, and rising waters soon floated the boat free. Photo by Captain Jesse P. Hughes, courtesy Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.

pleted, and the teams — seven of them now — kept busy all day scooping out a trench so crews could place timber cradles and a wooden track under the boat. While all of this was going on, iron sheeting was spiked to the stem and sides of the hull to protect it, after which it was painted.

One-hundred-fifty feet of gradplanting deadmen — stationary posts that helped guide the vessel. On Friday, the *Virginia* came 140 feet closer to the mighty Ohio, and on Saturday another 39 feet. A thunderstorm halted work at 2:45, but didn't deter several boatloads of excursionists.

On Monday, May 9, the *Virginia* groaned another 73 feet toward the river. Another Eichleay brother, Harry O., visited the Williamsons and returned with a supply of ice cream for the weary workers. Noted the diarist, "Boys fishing every evening with poor success." On Tuesday, he noted that "every one [is] well and able to eat three square meals a day requiring about 75 pounds of meat each day."

The Eichleay crew arrived on the scene with three lanterns, six shovels, four reels of chalk line and 20 pounds of bacon.

ing was done by Wednesday, and on Thursday the boat was raised about five feet. On Saturday, it was moved 180 feet toward the river, "viewed by a very large crowd of people who thought it wonderful," the diarist noted. The *Valley Belle* brought cables and chains on Sunday, May 1, and the *Virginia* was inched riverward another 70 feet.

On Thursday, a team was sent to nearby Millwood for 30 crossties and a crew that had swelled to nine laborers and 15 house movers continued grading and laying runs and

During the digging, artifacts were unearthed which proved that the *Virginia* had run afoul of an ancient Indian mound, a historical revelation likely not appreciated by anyone present.

On Wednesday, the vessel was another 59 feet closer to her home; on Thursday, another 40. She was now clear of the mound, and on Friday the 13th the process of lowering her was started. Aware that the project would come to a rapid and successful conclusion if only the river would flood mildly, John P. Eichleay took a train to Parkersburg, researched weather records for the previous ten years and prayed for rain. But the skies remained clear, and early risers each morning kept track of the glowing tail of Halley's Comet in the eastern sky.

On Monday, May 23, workmen struck for $2 a day instead of $1.50, whereupon the Eichleays "sent them all home and told them to stay off the place." The brothers called Paden City and found two new men to continue the job, four more later.

The idea was to grade a launchways down the bluff and skid the boat the remaining 30 feet into the river stern-first. Scooping out the launchways was time-consuming, and the *Virginia* was moved down the first eight feet on Monday, June

A Floating Palace

The 650-ton *Virginia*, billed as a "palace steamer," was grander than most boats working West Virginia's waters at the turn of the century.

It was launched by the Cincinnati Marine Railway Company on Tuesday, November 19, 1895. The *Virginia's* hull, 235 feet long and 40 feet wide, featured an oak bottom and framing with long-leaf yellow pine sides to reduce her weight. The main deck, providing cargo space and housing twin tandem coal-fired compound steam engines, was oak with "two-threaded" cotton and oakum seams. Also tucked away on the main deck was the kitchen and a multipolar General Electric DC generator driven by a 40-horsepower steam engine. The *Virginia* was electrically lighted — a rarity at the time.

The vessel's main cabin, located on the second, or boiler, deck, was 190 feet long, with 25 private staterooms along each side. The aft portion was partitioned off and designated as the ladies' cabin. The full-length main cabin doubled as a dining room, offering place settings for as many as 120 passengers and officers.

Wooden stateroom bulkhead panels were covered with buckram, a coarse linen cloth, to which was glued a fanciful design in relief. The bulkheads were blue; the relief work white with gold trim. Each stateroom featured a beveled plate glass mirror in the upper panel of its door, brass hardware and decorated glass doorknobs. An upper and lower berth in each one were accompanied by a single electric light, and a washstand, bowl and pitcher.

The cabin was heated by ornamental coal stoves, both forward and in the ladies' cabin; transoms allowed heat to waft into the staterooms from the main cabin. A barbershop was nearby, complete with chair and professional barber on duty.

Above the boiler deck was the shorter Texas deck, with ten more staterooms for officers and crew. The open space outside, including the area in front where the two tall smokestacks poked through the boiler deck's roof, was named the hurricane deck — for obvious reasons.

Finally, on top was the pilothouse, whose huge pilot wheel was connected to the rudders by a powerful booster rig not unlike the power steering mechanism of modern automobiles. Whenever pilots turned the pilot wheel, they got an assist from the steam gear.

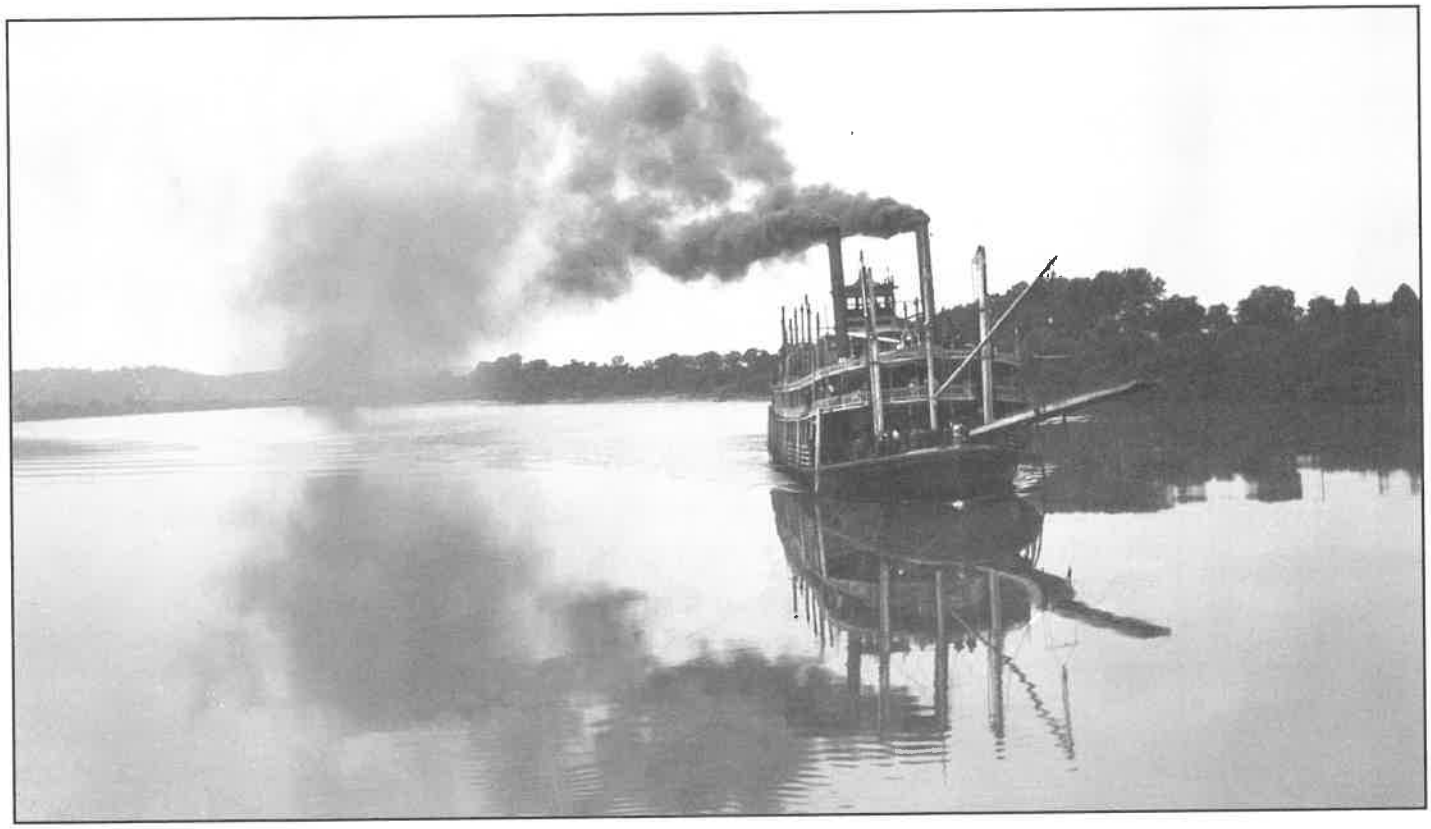
Back on the boiler deck, the floors of each stateroom and the ladies' cabin were covered with velvet carpet, dark blue with floral designs. An upright piano garnished the ladies' cabin, and the velvet reclining chairs and settees scattered throughout were the best money could buy. A circular settee surmounted with an ornamental brass pedestal was capped by a spray of fancifully-globed electric lights.

Community restrooms, or "reception parlors," braced the staterooms at each end and featured the same blue-velvet carpeting, dressing tables and good-sized mirrors, but — alas — only curtained, backyard-style toilets. The unheated ladies' parlor, in the starboard aft position, was nevertheless warm winter and summer since it was above the engine room.

The *Virginia's* electric lights cast a ghostly aura at night, and country people built bonfires and waited up to see her pass. Willow leaves were said to twitch as though a gentle breeze had caressed them when the pencil-stab of the arc searchlight swept by, and those who had actually seen the purplish beam considered themselves men apart.

— Bob Withers

Tickets on the P&C line normally brought travel in trouble-free comfort. Courtesy Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen.



The *Virginia* in her natural element. This photograph was made in 1908, before the mishap at Willow Grove. Photographer unknown, courtesy Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.

6. Another move followed on Tuesday, and 18 inches of water lapped against her stern. By Thursday, after the third move, the stern was in two feet of water.

But on Tuesday, June 14, launchways supports began to sink into the sandy soil as rising water cascaded into the construction work. "Too high to do anything," our chronicler noted, and the work stalled.

On Saturday morning, June 18, word came via the *Queen City* from Pittsburgh that the river rise was a general one, and there was more water on the way. The steamer *Ohio* arrived the next day with an order of 60 steel rails and a supply of 16-foot oak timbers, but it was clear now they wouldn't be needed.

Several June thunderstorms had done their work well. On the morning of Monday, June 20, Old Man River made up with the *Virginia* and took her back. Steam was raised; at 11 a.m. three days later, she steamed happily away, first going downstream to retrieve materials captured by the current, then heading toward Pittsburgh to resume her trade. The Eichleays had large signs attached to her sides at Marietta bragging on the fact that it was their company which had given the vessel her new lease on life.

The *Queen City* was back at work, too. Things began to look up for the company, but the good fortune was not to last. The storms went away, the river fell again, and within a scant two weeks both boats — and the P&C line — were out of business again.

On the morning of Monday, June 20, Old Man River made up with the Virginia *and took her back.*

The story has an unhappy postscript. Since the rising river had actually reclaimed the *Virginia*, Captain Henderson claimed that the Eichleay Company had failed to honor its contract and he refused to pay up. The case went to court in Pittsburgh, where the P&C lawyer declared that the vessel had been refloated "by an act of God and not by Eichleay." The judge ruled — perhaps tongue in cheek — that whereas God had raised the vessel, Eichleay had put it within God's reach and must be paid.

By that time, the packet line had been turned over to the U.S. Marshal for sale, and the $22,200 in proceeds were distributed in thin slices to its creditors, including the Eichleays.

But there is a happy ending, too. On at least one occasion, John P. Eichleay brought his family down from Pittsburgh to stay on the boat during its slow move off the cornfield. Later that year, Mrs. Eichleay gave birth to a daughter, the Eichleay's third child. They named her — what else? — "Virginia."

The namesake *Virginia* herself sailed through many more adventures and misadventures under different owners and names — *Steel City, East St. Louis, Island Belle* and *Greater New Orleans* — until being dismantled in 1929. But none of her exploits ever drew the attention and sympathy she attracted in that West Virginia cornfield in 1910.

Old Christmas

Our Early Holiday Traditions

By Gerald Milnes

Holiday traditions we take for granted weren't always the way they are today. Until recent times West Virginians masqueraded at midwinter, raised a ruckus from Christmas to New Year's, and even debated the "true" date of Christ's birth. Some still do.

This hand-painted Saint Nicholas is the work of Terrie Cordray of Kanawha County. Photo by Michael Keller.

Gifts, goodies, glittery trees, and turkey with all the trimmings come to mind when we think of the upcoming holiday season. But Christmas celebrations were simpler affairs during the childhoods of many older West Virginians. A religious observance, visits with neighbors, and a few special treats hung on a tree were often the extent of it.

Sometimes the festivities were radically different from ours. An old neighbor of mine on Birch River, the late Glen Roberts, once told me that his grandparents didn't observe "this *new* Christmas," that they "used that *old* Christmas." Sylvia O'Brien of Clay County also remembers her family's observance of Old Christmas, and connects it to a fiddle tune, "Old Christmas Morning," that fiddler French Carpenter used to play.

Old Christmas has an interesting history. In 1753 the modern or Gregorian calendar was adopted in Britain to bring it in line with the calendar used by the rest of Europe. Other western countries had dropped the Julian calendar in favor of the Gregorian calendar at a much earlier date. Britain, a Protestant country, was reluctant to embrace a calendar which was tied to the name of Pope Gregory. This had caused the British calendar to be 11 days off from the rest of the western world.

When the British Isles finally changed to the newer, more accurate calendar, these 11 days had to be dropped. This moved the original December 25th date of Christmas to January 5th, and caused a controversy. Which day was the true Christmas, the day marked as December 25th on the new calendar, or what would have been December 25th on the old calendar and was now January 5th?

Which day was the true Christmas, the day marked as December 25th on the new calendar, or what would have been December 25th on the old calendar and was now January 5th?

In the 1750's, natural wonders were used to confirm that January 5th, or Old Christmas, was the "true" date of Christ's birth. In England, for example, a certain thorn

and Belsnickles

These young Pendleton Countians were dressed up for belsnickling. Note the masks at their feet. Photographer unknown, about 1915; courtesy West Virginia State Archives.

tree in Glastonbury always bloomed on Christmas Day. During the controversy, it was watched to see which day it would bloom. Sure enough, according to reports, the thorn tree bloomed on the date of Old Christmas.

In England, Scotland, Ireland, and the British colonies in America, December 25th gradually came to be accepted as the date of Christ's birth and January 5th was forgotten. But on America's frontier, including what is West Virginia today, the old date lingered among Protestants who had migrated at an early date and were accustomed to the old calendar. So it is that some older people, like Sylvia O'Brien, still remember their parents or grandparents using this curious old date for the observance of Christmas.

Among the Hammons family of Pocahontas County the Old Christmas observance was also remembered. Emma Hammons Roberts recalled that in her childhood they would go down to the ice on the river at Old Christmas and "have a play."

Emma might have been remembering the "Mummers Play," a medieval folk play involving a "King George," who slays several opponents, "Father Christmas," who laments their death, and the "Doctor," who revives them. This ancient drama was once widely performed at this time of year. Such folk plays provide rare insight into old beliefs regarding the death of the natural life force in winter, and its rejuvenation with the coming of spring.

In West Virginia, the Old Christmas celebration inspired an array of music and song. Variants of "Old Christmas Morning," the fiddle tune remembered by Sylvia O'Brien, crop up among the Hammons, Carpenter, Humphreys, Wine and other prominent musical families.

The Old Christmas tradition is associated with various accounts whereby the natural world, as with

the Glastonbury thorn tree, in some way observes the Nativity. These traditions involving animals and plants easily made their way into the modern or "New Christmas" tradition.

One common belief in West Virginia is that domestic animals bow down at the stroke of midnight on Christmas Eve, in recognition of the birth of the Christ child. Animals are also thought by some to speak at this time. Phyllis Marks of Gilmer County says she was told the animals always bowed down and spoke at midnight on Christmas Eve. She wished she had been allowed to go to the barn to see, but never was.

Sylvia O'Brien remembers that it was thought in her family that the animals bowed and prayed at midnight on Old Christmas Eve. An Old Testament verse, Isaiah 1:3, gives a biblical source for these beliefs: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." The worshipping beasts are seen in countless works of art, and they have been proclaimed through the verse of an ancient Christmas carol:

Ox and ass him know,
Kneeling on their knee;
Wondrous joy had I
This little babe to see.

Phyllis Marks connects a song she learned as a child, "The Friendly Beasts," to this tradition:

Jesus our Savior kind and good,
Was humbly born in a stable crude;
And the animal beasts around him stood,
Jesus our Savior, kind and good.

Ay, said the donkey all shaggy and brown,
I carried his mother up hill and down;
I carried his mother to Bethlehem town,
Ay, said the donkey all shaggy and brown.

The carol goes on to acknowledge the ox, sheep and dove in similar fashion. This ancient song, known today through modern recordings, can be traced to the 12th century.

Phyllis Marks also sings the "Cherry Tree Carol." This is another example of the natural world paying homage to the Christ child as being divine and of God. Here is Phyllis's version, learned from her mother:

When Joseph and Mary
Were walking one day.
They came upon an orchard
With cherries to behold.

Then Mary said to Joseph,
So meek and so mild,
Go gather me some cherries,
For I am with child.

Then Joseph flew in anger,
In anger flew he,
Let the father of your baby,
Gather cherries for thee.

Then the cherry tree it bowed down,
So low upon the ground,
And Mary gathered cherries,
While Joseph stood around.

These carols originated in western Europe, where most of West Virginia's early settlers or their forebears had come from. European rituals and ceremonies have been handed down as well. Some people in Pendleton County, where there are many of German descent, still practice "belsnickling" during the holiday season.

The "Belsnickle" was traditionally a little character who was scary to children. "Be good, or the Belsnickle will get you," was the often-heard warning. The word derives from the German "Pelz Nicholas," a furry figure associated with St. Nicholas. In Germany a character known as the "Pelznickle" accompanied St. Nicholas from house to house. He was a threatening "dark figure," who dressed in old rags or furs. In his various forms he grumbled, growled and rattled his chains, rewarding the good children with gifts and whipping the bad with his rod.

The custom of belsnickling in West Virginia is of dressing up in disguise, old clothes, or rags with covered faces or masks and going from house to house. Belsnickles generally got involved in making mischief. Jocie Armentrout, of

Jocie Armentrout recalls holiday customs from her younger days in Randolph County. Photo by Gerry Milnes.

Harman in Randolph County, remembers the tradition of belsnickling there.

She says it took place in the week between Christmas and New Year.

In Upshur County, if the serenading did not force an appearance of the family at the door, it was common to throw a sack of feed over the chimney and smoke them out.

"Nearly all the young people, they'd gather up gangs and they'd dress up in all kinds of silly costumes. Whatever they had to put on, you know, and hide their faces and then they'd go visit the neighbors.

"You know how young people are, carrying on all the time. Nothing special, but they'd get into trouble sometimes. They'd get kicked out. I know my dad kicked them out once. They'd put off some kind of a firecracker inside the house, and he got mad and run 'em

off. They'd do all kinds of silly stunts. They'd hide their faces and have you guess who they were, and all that.

"They'd make paper hats sometimes like Halloween, like the Halloween kids do," she continued. "Whatever they could get. If they could get any ready-made masks, they used them, but if they didn't they just wrapped their faces with some kind of cloth or something. Something to hide who they were. They usually dressed rough. They wore old rough clothes. They'd put something over their heads, an old stocking cap or something. And they'd tramp for miles and visit every house they came to. They'd stay a little while and go on to the next one."

The Lewisburg Shanghai Parade, featuring some pretty ferocious characters in times past (left), more recently has become a general community celebration. The sheep shearers shown above represent local agriculture. Early photo courtesy Greenbrier Historical Society, 1939.

In Grant County, belsnickling was done in groups as big as 50 and was also called "Kris Kringling." In Pendleton, men would sometimes go from house to house and "shoot in" the new year.

The belsnickling accounts are all similar to the "mumming" found in Irish, English, and Scottish traditions in both the old world and the new. Whether it be called mumming, belsnickling, a-mumping, a-gooding, a-Thomasing, wassailing, serenading, shooters or skylarking, the ritual seems to have the common motive of a group, usually young people, intent on cavorting about the community in masquerade, often setting off fireworks, banging dish pans or shooting guns in the air, and generally getting into mischief. Caroling is similar, but without the misbehavior.

Serenading, usually with the implicit intent of disrupting a couple's wedding night, is a form of group mischief that is still practiced in places. Serenading is sometimes

associated with these midwinter traditions of making mischief at or about the time of Christmas, and that may have preceded the wedding usage. In Upshur County, if the serenading did not force an appearance of the family at the door, it was common to throw a sack of feed over the chimney and smoke them out.

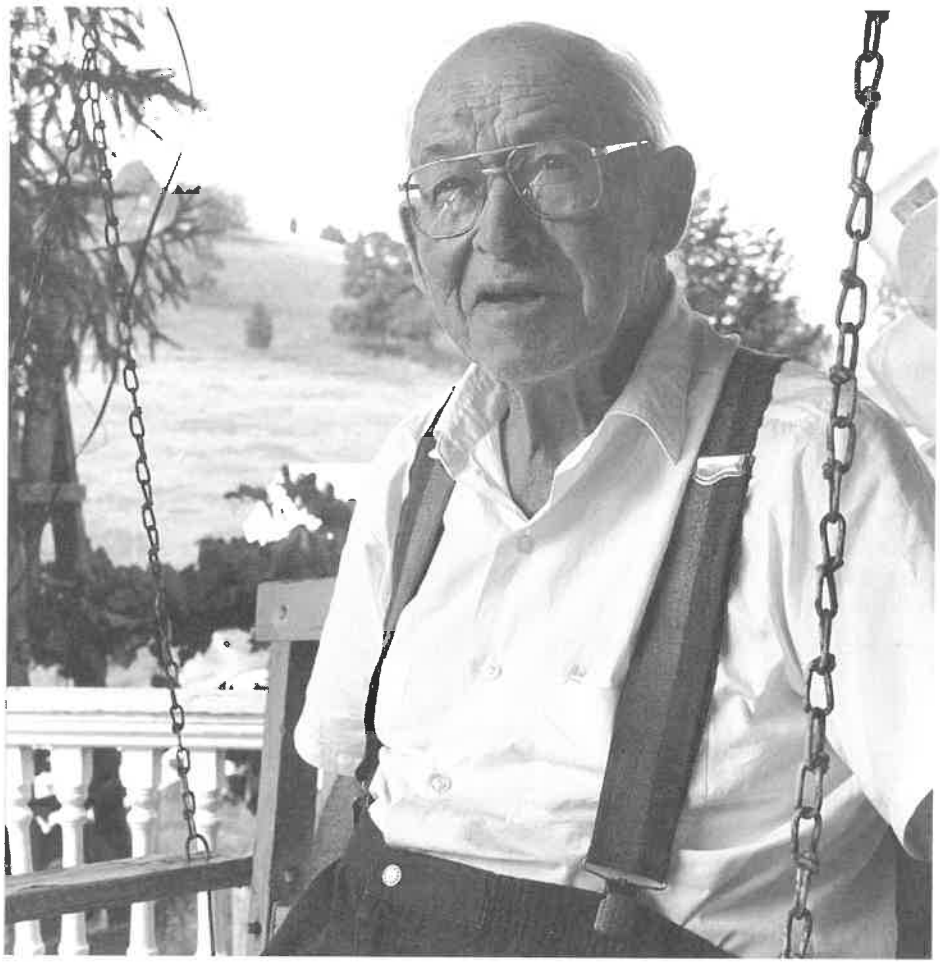
"Shanghai" or "shanghying" is still another term for holiday carrying-on. As these old traditions have lost favor, sometimes an organized community event rescues them from oblivion. This is happening in some small towns at Halloween where, because of real or imagined danger, a community Halloween Parade is held instead of the unorganized nighttime shenanigans. Likewise, in Greenbrier County, a community tradition lives on in the Shanghai Parade, the annual New Year's Day event in Lewisburg.

Older Greenbrier Countians remember attributes of shanghai that tie it to other midwinter rituals. A 1937 Lewisburg participant recalled dressing in rough clothes and banging on pots and pans all through the event. Photos from the 1920's and 1930's show masquerading figures parading through town.

Robert Simmons, of Moyers in Pendleton County, relates that the shanghai tradition was practiced in his community, but in the older, unsanctioned way, not as a formal community observance. He says that shanghai is basically "belsnickling in daytime." It happened for a week before Christmas, then on to New Year's.

"We'd get belsnickle suits and false faces to put on when we'd go belsnickling," Mr. Simmons says. "Be disguised, you know. Didn't want 'em to know who we was. We'd take some candy along. And a switch, you wanted a good switch. We'd throw this candy on the floor and [when] they'd reach down to get it, we'd crack their fingers!

"We'd go in bunches. Sometimes 15 or 20 in the bunch, sometimes just four or five. Disguised, you wouldn't know one from the other. I was with them [and] I didn't hardly know the others that's with me.



Robert Simmons is a good source of Pendleton County holiday lore. Shanghai was "belsnickling in the daytime," in his area, he says. Photo by Gerry Milnes.

"We'd be in our teens, somewhere there. We'd just knock on the door and everybody knowed belsnickles were around. If they said come in, you went in — and if they didn't invite you in, you went on. But everybody, at that time, they was glad to see belsnickles. [There] wasn't much visiting, much company other than walkers, you know.

"And we'd go in daytime," Mr. Simmons continues. "They called that shanghying.

"You'd have two weeks of it. One week before Christmas you could go and one after, up to New Year's. Then it's supposed to been over. Sometimes we'd get together every night and go. Wasn't at the same place. It'd be different places.

"Oh, it was fun in a way, and in another way it wasn't so funny. I walked clean clear way up there halfway to Doe Hill, then I crossed over and went on South Fork. It was about 11:00 o'clock then. I didn't mind it a-going, but coming back, it wasn't so funny.

"Some just put on old clothes or something like that. Just anything that people didn't know who wore it. If people knew you wore that, they could pick out who you was. And you'd change your voice. You wouldn't talk like you usually do.

"Sometimes they'd have stuff for you to eat. And, they'd expect you to bring candy for them."

An old fiddle tune that was played by Burl Hammons is titled "Shanghai," and it may be connected to the tradition. The shanghai custom in Lewisburg has been traced back at least to the post-Civil War period. Despite several attempts by researchers to pinpoint the origin of the celebration, nothing definitive has come to light. William Graybill, a local scholar, made a lengthly inquiry in the 1930's but came to no conclusions. One theory proposed that the celebration came to the area

with an 1840's minstrel show that included a cake walk competition with a reference to a "shanghai rooster" contest.

The word, used in reference to a midwinter tradition, does not seem connected to the maritime sense of sailors being "shanghaied" for duty unwillingly. Maybe our "shanghai" goes back to the Scottish language. The Scottish words "colie-shangie" and "colie-shangle" both mean a disturbance, and are possibly the origins of the term in West Virginia.

A 1930's edition of the *Greenbrier Independent* announced the Shanghai Parade with a poem:

Let millionaire and pauper meet
And go marching down the street.
The lid is off, fun is rife
Let's have the best time of your life.

Another announcement said: "Silly...impersonators will wise crack with all the spectators in good humored ribaldry — and every person there will have a lot of fun during the afternoon and evening of January 1, 1930."

The newspaper announcements are in the spirit of diversion that has been part of midwinter Saturnalian and "Feast of Fools" celebrations in Europe since ancient times. These events traditionally started on December 19th, or about a week before Christmas, about the same time that belsnickling and shanghai traditions got underway in Pendleton County according to Robert Simmons.

There appears to be some deep psychological healing brought about through the sanctioned practice of ritual anarchy. Throughout history, these affairs have caused all usual business to be forbidden. For awhile, rich, poor, slave and free were deemed equal. Wit, jest, mirth and jollity were the rule of the day, and feasting, masquerading, drinking and dancing were encouraged and expected. Fools, jesters, mock kings, the "Lord of Misrule," silliness, cross-dressing, animal disguise, ribaldry, and general revelry have been observed at these affairs since ancient times. Belsnickling, shanghai, serenading, mummering, and the many similar practices have their roots in these old customs.

In Germany, there is a custom called "knocking night" where masked figures go from house to house, just prior to Christmas, doing mischief. This is very similar to the antics of the descendants of Pennsylvania German settlers among Pendleton County's belsnicklers.

All of these reflect a struggle between the good and the bad, life and death, a dark spirit and a light or good spirit. Through these practices, ancient people sought to help their crops to grow and their animals to thrive. They assisted in the struggle of life to win over dark and sinister forces.

For awhile, rich, poor, slave and free were deemed equal. Wit, jest, mirth and jollity were the rule of the day, and feasting, masquerading, drinking and dancing were encouraged and expected.

The struggle is between good and evil. Whether it be between the realities of sunlight and darkness, between the life force and the grim reaper, or in a religious sense between God and the Devil, it has always been observed at about the time of the winter solstice, and it plays out in many forms. The birth of the Christ child, representing the hope of the Christian world, becomes a welcome observance in the midwinter cold. Most West Virginians recognize the joyful event, as is evidenced by the Christmas lights illuminating the houses, celebrating the deeper meaning of Christ's birth, a light to the world. Traditions have become plentiful at this time of year, whether they involve family or community, religious or ethnic background, or personal prayer and meditation.

The holiday season has always been a time for affirming religious belief among Christians in West Virginia. It is a time when they observe and reflect on the holy and prophetic virgin birth. With the proximity of the new year, the holiday festivities not only include the celebration of Christ's birth, but traditions and practices to help ensure good fortune in the months to come. During the darkest depth of winter, the natural process of increasing sunlight warms the body and the mind with the hope of spring. The affirmation of the birth of Christ stirs the soul, and reportedly stirs the beasts of the field and the trees of the forest.

These traditions bear out the eternal hope of *Peace on Earth and Good Will Towards Men.*

This modern Santa was hand carved by Jesse Lazear of Cabell County. Photo by Michael Keller.

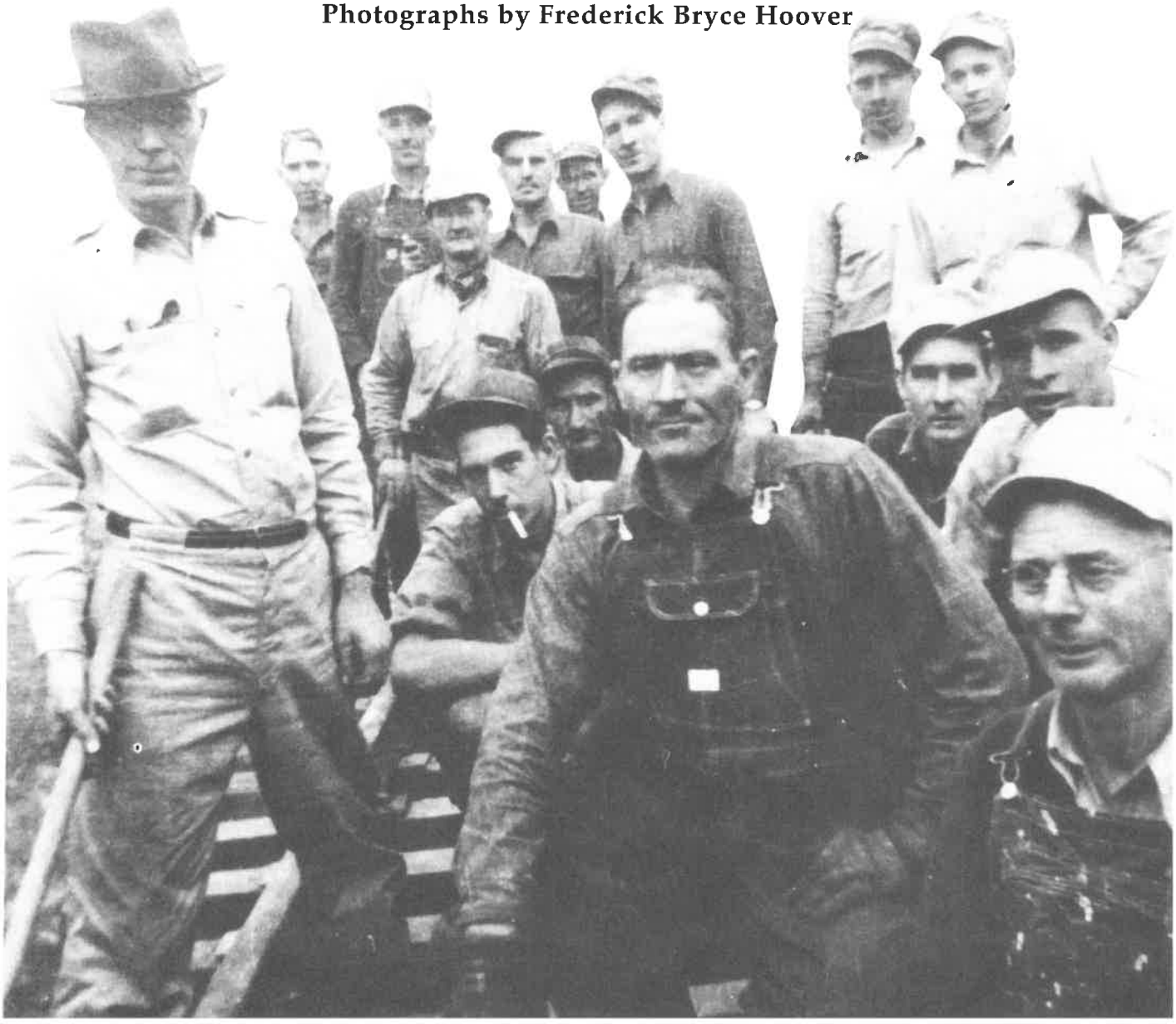
The West Virginia Mine Wars did not end with the bloody battles of the 1920's. The struggle continued, including brutal strikes at the Clay County town of Widen in the 1940's and early 1950's. Trooper C. C. Stewart was there, both times, and at the Gary strike in between. Labor and management have had their say, he figures. Now it's time to hear from the men in the middle.

Strike Duty

A State Trooper Recalls Trouble in the Coalfields

By C. C. Stewart

Photographs by Frederick Bryce Hoover



A lot of stories have been written about the two mine strikes at Widen — from the viewpoint of the union, the company, the townspeople — but I can't recall reading anything from the policemen who were there trying to keep peace. Let me tell you how that was.

In April 1941, I was stationed at Hamlin, Lincoln County. My corporal, Dallas Wilfong, was one of the best members of the West Virginia State Police I ever worked with.

We were called from Company B headquarters, advised that we were assigned to strike duty at Widen, and we reported to a rooming house at Clay. In addition to numerous state policemen, there were several FBI agents there. One of them was Kenny Moore, who was raised next door to me on South Chestnut Street in Clarksburg.

We had to double up in the overcrowded boardinghouse, and few of us had had much sleep when we reported to the Widen area the next morning.

The situation was complicated. The United Mine Workers were attempting to organize the Widen mine, opposed by the company and the company union already there. The UMW pickets had dug slit trenches on the tops of the hill above Widen. The Clay County sheriff had appointed a group of anti-UMW miners as special deputies and put Ralph Winters, a former state trooper, in charge of them. This group had made a barrier of overturned trucks. These deputies were company thugs, as far as the UMW supporters were concerned.

Things stayed quiet until about mid-afternoon of our first day, when some pickets who had flanked the special deputies started shooting 30-30 rifles. The deputies, also armed with 30-30 rifles, began shooting as well. Then the pickets in the slit trenches on the hill joined the firing.

We troopers were caught in the middle, between the two factions. Bullets were passing us from above and below. I said, "Wilfong, I hope all those guys like me. Those bullets sound bad!"

Several small saplings near us were shot in two. The firing went on for about an hour, and then thankfully both sides ceased. I asked Dallas Wilfong if the new superintendent, Gus Crumpecker, was going to issue combat medals to us. He said, "Damned if I know, but we sure earned them."

One of our men was assigned to each side to see if anyone was wounded. No one seemed to be.

At about dusk we were pulled out and returned to Clay. The next morning Governor Matthew Neely came to the scene. We had seized a stack of rifles from the pickets, and there were numerous split saplings and other indications of shooting. Neely, standing beside the stacked rifles, said he saw no evidence of gunfire.

I heard one of the troopers behind me say, "Along with all the other things wrong with him, he is blind."

After Neely left, we were told that a truce had been reached. The pickets were withdrawing and we could leave. We were also told that the new State Police superintendent had had a heart attack and died.

At that time our cars had radio receivers but no transmitting equipment. Dallas and I started home and as we approached Clendenin, we were told to call in. I called from a pay phone, and the trooper on the desk told me that John Bosworth had been appointed to replace Crumpecker as superintendent, and that Wilfong and I were to report to Beckley.

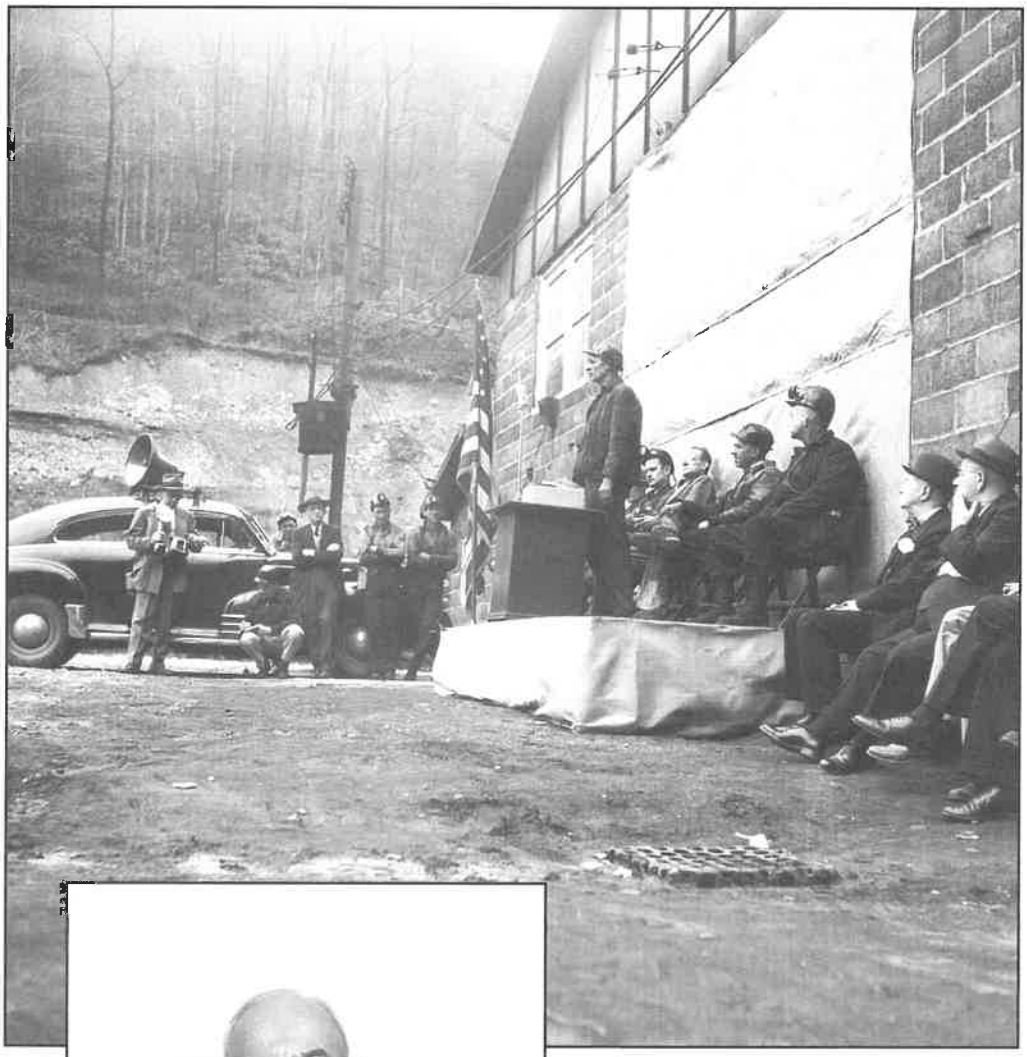
We arrived in Beckley at about 8:00 p.m., along with 150 other troopers. We were told that shooting had broken out at a captive mine in Gary, McDowell County. The captive mines were owned by large corporations, U.S. Steel in this case, and the coal they produced went to the plants of the parent corporation. The miners in the captive mines at Gary were non-union.

The next night the pickets attacked in full force. Most of the contact was hand-to-hand fighting.

Our author, a few years before he first saw Widen. He remembers strike duty there as his hardest service in the West Virginia State Police. Photographer unknown, 1936.

United Mine Workers pickets from Harlan, Kentucky, and some from West Virginia were on the hills overlooking Gary and shooting into the streets, houses and other buildings. When we arrived all of the roads leading into Gary were blocked. I was told that our new superintendent was at the company office.

We had no problems the first night, but the next night the pickets attacked in full force. Most of the contact was hand-to-hand fighting. We seized pistols and bombs out of their cars. The pickets tried to run over us, but most of their cars



Mine officials kept up with activities of the company union which opposed the United Mine Workers. The photograph above shows a meeting with owner J.G. Bradley and general manager H.L. Gandy seated at right. Gandy, shown also in the portrait at left, represented Bradley in daily operations at the mine site.

were wrecked. We routed them and they went back toward Welch and Tug River.

The local radio station broadcast that we were going to be overrun by the pickets the next night.

We had to sleep in a bowling alley on cots, and had been given silk comforters for covers by the company store. Between trying to keep the comforters over us, and sliding down the bowling lanes, we didn't get a lot of sleep.

The next morning we were given breakfast at the clubhouse. The coffee was really rank, but a bottle of Golden Wedding whiskey was given to each four men. I'm not sure which one upset our stomachs more badly.

Sure enough, that night the pickets came with clubs, guns, and bombs. But we won the battle once again and followed them almost to Welch this time. The gunfire from the hills had stopped because we had started shooting back with our 30-30 rifles. At least the residents were starting to get some rest.

Thereafter, we had peace and tranquility for about a week, so we were relieved and returned to our stations. We had been there a few days when Wilfong and I were called and told to report to the House of Delegates chamber in the state capitol for an investigation.

The union had complained that the state police had mistreated the pickets. The assistant state attorney lined up the troopers who had been at Gary, along with a number of troopers from other areas. There were about 150 men, all dressed alike in the same uniform, and the first two or three picked by the pickets had been in the northern part of the state during the Gary strike. The pickets were completely stymied, and the assistant state attorney told them to forget the matter.

John Bosworth ended up taking the heat. He was fired by Governor Neely and H. Clare Hess was appointed superintendent.

The miners lived a rough life, but so did the policemen who monitored their strikes. Leland Farley, a UMW picket from Raleigh County, was shot during the gunfire at Widen and eventually died from the wound in a Charleston hospital. The rest of us were fortunate to have escaped Widen and Gary without permanent injury.

When the strike at Gary ended, I returned to duty at Hamlin. World War II was heating up and I figured I would be drafted. The lady in charge of my draft board had been married to a State Policeman who ran off with another woman. She kept changing my draft status, and I figured she did not like State Policemen. I did not want to end up in the Army, so I went service shopping.

I wound up in the Navy and served there for four years. When the war was over, I returned to the State Police. I was reassigned to Company B and stationed in Ripley. This was probably the best duty I

had while in the State Police. The citizens and public officials were marvelous, and treated me well. I was ultimately reassigned to Chelyan, Cabin Creek district.

Governor Okey Patteson was the chief executive of West Virginia at the time. He was originally from Fayette County, where he had been a sheriff. In my opinion, he was one of the best governors we ever had, if not the best.

Okey Patteson was C. C. Stewart's favorite chief executive. He says that the governor stood behind the State Police in their actions in Clay County. Courtesy West Virginia State Archives.

In the latter part of September 1952, more trouble started in Widen. Sheriff Wilson of Clay County asked the State Police to take over his county. Since I had been there previously and was a veteran of the strike, I was, of course, reassigned.

There were about 25 of us at first; then as the situation worsened, we received more men. There were instances of roads being blocked, power plants blown up, and sniper shots at passing motorists. The governor ordered that we take necessary steps to preserve law and order, and to protect persons and property in the area.

On October 9, Governor Patteson ordered additional troops to be assigned to Widen. We took over a large house, cots were brought in, and we established residence. Our living quarters were terrible. The water was black with coal dust, and so were the bare floors in the house. To get a decent shower, we had to drive to the Clay County detachment or to Summersville.

One afternoon the troopers approached me about going swimming at Birch River in lieu of going to some detachment for a shower. I agreed, and we all went. We had only been there a short time when several girls appeared on the scene. I do not know where they lived, but my men soon were having a ball with them.

One of the troopers had a camera and started taking pictures. Two other troopers came to me and said they did not want their pictures taken because the pictures would probably get back to their wives. They had all been complaining at home about the terrible duty at Widen, and felt if their wives saw these pictures they would not believe a word of what they were being told.

I went to the photographer and told him he was disturbing the troops with his camera. I asked him to give me the film, and he did so, under great protest. As soon as I exposed the film, the happy troopers went back to swimming and romping with the girls.

We ate in a company restaurant managed by a Japanese chef named Harry Taka. The food was good, and that was about the only thing good about strike duty there.

I became a favorite of Harry's and he took personal care of my food wants and even offered me a room at the clubhouse. He had been there for many years. After I retired from the Sheriff's Department in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and returned to Mt. Nebo to live, I joined the golf course in Summersville. A Japanese woman played with the ladies, and I asked Gloria Monroe, the manager, who she was. Gloria told me that her husband was Harry Taka, a mine engineer.

One day while I was playing I encountered him on the golf course, and told him that I had once had a friend named Harry Taka, who was the manager at the clubhouse in Widen. He told me that he was Harry's son. I asked that he remember me to his father.

Getting back to the matter of Widen, we set up shifts of eight hours around the clock. I ended up in charge of one detail and according to orders I was relieved periodically by another Company B corporal. We rotated every two weeks.

This was probably the worst duty I ever had in the State Police. The men were sent to me from companies A, B, C and D. I managed to keep a clerk who drew up assignments and kept up with my correspondence, and answered the phone and the radio.

Rumor had it that the general manager at Widen was a dictator. I was told that if a miner went to Charleston and was arrested for being drunk, the manager docked him a week's pay. I had just come away from Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo, so I was not much in favor of dictators.

One day one of the coal company employees came to the house where we were staying, and told me that the general manager wanted me to come to his office. I told the messenger to go back and tell the manager if he wanted to see me, to come to my house.

My clerk told me that the manager would call the governor's office. I said, "What can they do? Send me back to my station? The State Police would have a helluva time trying to find another corporal to do what I am doing."

Within a week, Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Boyles came to me and told me the manager had called the governor's office and complained. Okey Patteson had called Boyles and told him to tell me not to take any guff from the coal company office at Widen. Boyles also told me that Attorney General Fox had checked the law, and advised we were within bounds in what we

Tensions heightened after a fatal shooting in early May 1953. These photos show the shooting victim's car (above) and a roadside gathering the following morning.

were doing in Widen, even though we were on private property.

While I was on my two weeks away from Widen, there was a shooting at one of the mine offices where several people were wounded and one or two people killed. The fight was between the organizers and the non-union miners.

I told the other corporal when I returned that he was not keeping the trouble down. A delegation from Widen and Clay County went to the governor's office and complained that the highways and the community were not safe.

Governor Patteson appointed retired Captain Charles Ray as the police officer for the Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad, which served Widen and was owned by the coal company. The railroad bridges and the power line buildings were being dynamited.

The governor then issued a proclamation which virtually established martial law in Clay County. Notices were posted. The proclamation was to be enforced by the State Police. The governor also told the press that if necessary and if requested by the state troopers, he would call out a company of the National Guard.

I spent Christmas that year at Widen, the worst Christmas of my life. The pickets, who were pro-union miners, would tie sticks of dynamite in the trees and late at night set them off. I was used to that, as the miners in Cabin Creek did the same thing at Christmas and the 4th of July. However, the noise did jar one's teeth.

One night the man operating the radio came to me and said Trooper Red Turner wanted to talk to me. I went to the radio room and told Red to go ahead. He said, "I am up here on the mountain. How about meeting me?" I told him I would, but I needed to know where to go. He told me just to start, and he would guide me to him by radio. He also asked that I come alone.

Red told me to blink my lights about halfway up the

mountain. I did so, and he told me to keep on coming. I soon reached a wide place and found Red parked there. I got out of my car, and he and another guy got out of his car. The other man was a black man.

Red said, "Tell my boss what you just told me."

The man said he and his family were in trouble. He said, "I signed up with the UMW and someone snitched on me. I was fired, my store bill cut off and my power shut off. I am in a bad fix, and I'm afraid the thugs will hurt my wife and four kids. I gotta get out of here."

I asked him if he had any place in particular that he wanted to go, and he said, "All I know how to do is mine coal." I asked him how long it would take to get his wife and children ready to go. He said, "I'll be ready tomorrow evening."

I told him to make arrangements with Red for a place to meet, and asked him if he had any money. He said, "Not a crying dime." I told him Red and I would figure things out, and when he met Red tomorrow evening, Red would know where to take him.

He thanked me profusely, almost to the point of embarrassment. After I got loose from him, I told Red to take him home and then meet me at our headquarters. Since I had been stationed at Chelyan I knew several coal company officials, so I figured I could work out something.

When Red came in I told him to take the family down Route 60 to Shrewsbury, then go to the Valley Camp Coal Company office after 7:00 a.m. I told him to see Mr. Brown, tell him he was working for me, and ask if Mr. Brown could arrange for housing and food for the family, and if at all possible to give the man a job. Mr. Brown was the personnel manager.

I gave Red a $20 bill, which left me broke, and told him to stop at Boomer and feed the man and his family.

When Red came back he told me he had talked to Mr. Brown and to another gentleman, a Mr. Ewig. I told Red that Mr. Ewig was the owner of Valley Camp Coal Company. Red said Brown and Ewig told him they would take care of the guy and his wife and family. Mr. Ewig also sent my $20 back to me.

Frederick Bryce Hoover

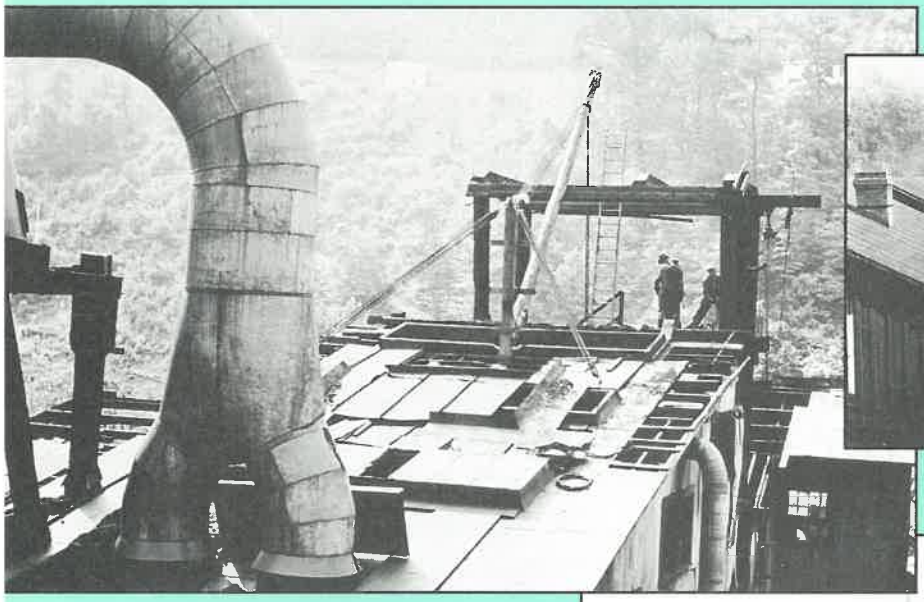
Our Widen strike photographs are the work of Frederick Bryce Hoover, whose pictures serve as an important record of Widen's history. They came to GOLDENSEAL largely through the efforts of Clay County teacher and documentarian Jerry Stover.

Hoover was a part-time photographer. He worked for coal operator J. G. Bradley at Widen, and he would often be pulled off his job as a machinist and asked to put on his photographer's hat. Hoover was also a pilot and he took aerial photos as well as plenty of pictures on the ground. When Stover finally got in touch with Bryce Hoover after years of searching, the photographer told him many people had asked for his collection of pictures, but that he wanted to get them into the right hands. "I've been waiting on you," he told Stover, a respected local historian and West Virginia's 1994 Teacher of the Year.

Mr. Hoover now divides his time between West Virginia and Florida. Through his cooperation with Stover, thousands of images of Clay County's past have been preserved. GOLDENSEAL is pleased to be able to present some of them to our readers.

Frederick Bryce Hoover, in a 1947 self-portrait.

The State Police were caught in the middle at Widen, our author says. Here an unknown trooper shows a gun believed to be associated with the May shooting. Photo by M. Wagoner, 1953.



Widen at Peace

Despite the industrial conflict which rocked the town in the early 1940's and again a decade later, Widen people prefer to remember their community in times of peace.

Widen was a cornerstone of capitalist J. G. Bradley's Clay County empire, a coal company town like many other communities in southern West Virginia. Men worked in jobs connected to railroading or coal mining, such as the group shown repairing the tipple above. Their families lived in company houses, such as those above right, and worshipped at the Catholic Church (above) and elsewhere. There also was a company store and other facilities typical of a West Virginia coal camp.

Today Widen is much smaller than in times past, but it is still home to many families. The modernized houses at left are representative of many in the community now, according to photographer Michael Keller.

Photographers unknown for the early photos, 1930's; courtesy West Virginia State Archives. Recent photo by Michael Keller.

These men, suspects in the May shooting according to notes on the photo, were loaded onto a coal company truck for transport.

That was the first time since I had been on duty at Widen that I felt I had accomplished something.

On another occasion, one of the troops asked me to meet him on top of the mountain. When I met him, he had another man with him, and told the man to tell me his story.

It seems that this man had been in Clay and talked to a UMW organizer. Someone had reported that fact to the manager, and the company thugs had beat him up, saying he had joined the union. He had been laid off, his store account shut down and his power turned off, just like the man I had met a few days before.

His car had been sabotaged, and he said he was afraid to go outside or let his wife leave the house. I told him I would check the matter out, and see what I could do.

The man in charge of company guards, was an ex-State Policeman, and I never underestimated him. I knew that he and the company thugs were leaving no stone uncovered in trying to locate the black man we had just rescued.

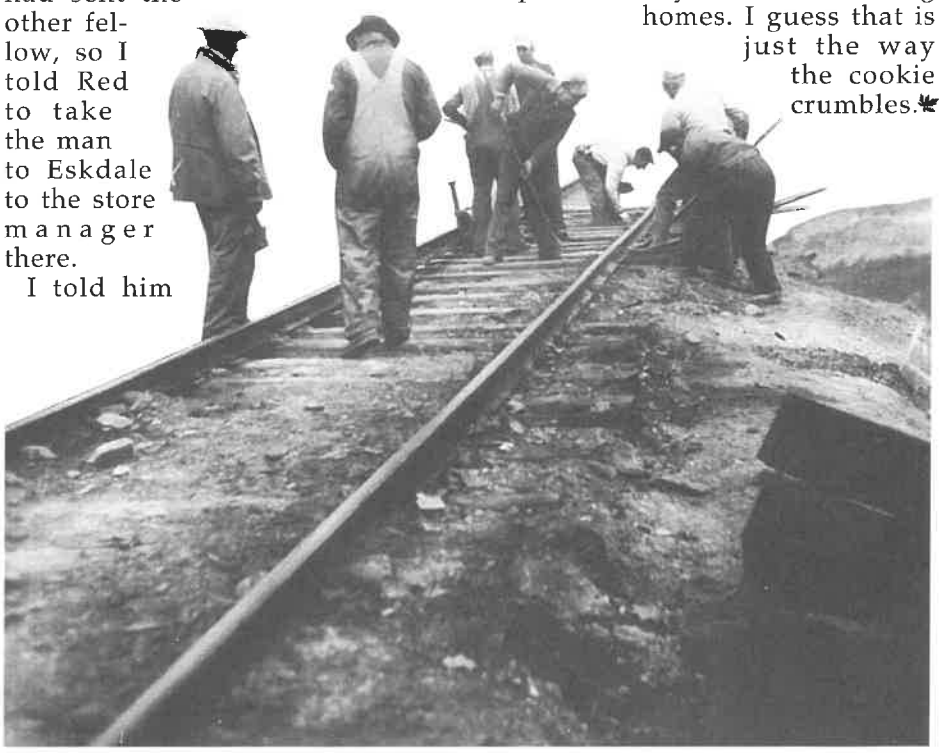
I discussed the new man's story with my trusted troopers, knowing they would keep their mouths shut. I told them I was not sure this man's tale rang true, and I figured the company was trying to slip me an imposter. However, we finally decided that we should have Red Turner take the man and his wife to Cabin Creek. I didn't want them to go to Valley Camp, where I had sent the other fellow, so I told Red to take the man to Eskdale to the store manager there.

I told him to have the store manager contact the superintendent of the Wyatt Coal Company and tell him of our suspicions about the man. He was to tell the store manager not to trust this dude, but to have the union issue him a card and put him to work. Red was to tell the store manager to have the mine foreman watch the man.

Red came back and said he had placed the man with "another one of your people." I told Red that it might sound unusual, but I knew my opponent very well — both his capabilities and his faults. Any man who worked for him had to be tough.

Finally, after the fatal shootings, Widen started to settle down. Our people could get some rest. Eventually the coal company at Widen sold out, and the first thing the new company did was turn the operation over to the union. The place quieted, and I believe that now the coal has been worked out. The only memories I have are unpleasant, and I have no desire to go back.

The thing that has always puzzled me about Widen was the fact that the State Police had numerous sergeants, lieutenants, captains and majors. Yet here I was a lowly corporal, exposed to both the coal company and the residents, while my superiors stayed in their snug homes. I guess that is just the way the cookie crumbles.



The conflict brought discouraging times to Widen. These men labor to repair strike damage to the coal-hauling railroad.

Back to Beason

Recalling Family Times on the Pullman Road

By Larry Bartlett

Generations lived and died in Beason, and made good lives for themselves and their families in between. The Ritchie County community was once a lively spot, and it's still a big place in the minds of the people who remember.

But don't look for it on the road map.

A Beason family: Minnie and Albert Lamm with their children, as drawn from a 1916 photograph. Young Lucy, our author's mother, stands second from right. Illustration by Larry Bartlett.

"The sign says we're on Route 74, but this is really the old Pullman Road," my mother tells me as we follow a winding blacktop lane through wooded hills south of Pennsboro in Ritchie County. My mother has been away from West Virginia for almost half a lifetime, and today she wants to revisit the scenes of her childhood.

"We're coming into Beason," she says as our car approaches a scattering of farm homes on the hillsides and in the meadows. There are no road signs to identify Beason, it has no public buildings and its few retail businesses have faded away. But the community continues to exist, as it has for almost 200 years, bonded together by friendship and kinship. During those years, there has been enough joy in Beason to encourage the founding of large families and enough grief to fill a cemetery.

"Here's where I grew up," my mother says, motioning for me to park the car beside a field of weeds and wildflowers. "The house is gone, of course," she explains. "It was torn down not long after World War I."

My mother was born in Beason on September 17, 1911, the third in a family of nine children. Her parents, Albert and Minnie Lamm, named her Lucy Virginia. Half a dozen teasing uncles called her Lucy Juicy Tootsie Wootsie Becky Martha Jane Peachblossom.

Albert and Minnie Lamm's frame house, with an adjoining grocery store, stood beside the Pullman Road. The unpainted store, decorated with the tin signs of tobacco companies, was a focal point of Beason social life before World War I. In those days, many oil wells were being drilled in the area and a pipeline was being built through Beason to Sistersville on the Ohio River. The boom provided work for local men, and it also attracted to Beason

a swarm of itinerate roughnecks, tool pushers, pipeliners and teamsters. Lamm's grocery store prospered, in a small way, during those busy days.

"Pop bought his merchandise at the Wholesale Grocery in Pennsboro and hauled it to Beason with a horse and wagon," my mother recalls. "His best selling item was chewing tobacco. But he also sold burlap sacks of soup beans, lima beans and flour, sugar, lamp oil, salt, sulphur matches, gallon cans of molasses, and dried meat. He had a gristmill, down by the creek behind our house, where he would grind cornmeal for sale."

Albert Lamm also provided tonsorial services in the store. "Pop would give customers a shave and a haircut for 20 cents," my mother says. "Often there would be a dozen men waiting to sit in Pop's straight-backed chair for a trim. But no one minded the wait. People came to Pop's store to loaf. They'd sit around on benches and barrels, chewing tobacco and telling stories."

There has been enough joy in Beason to encourage the founding of large families and enough grief to fill a cemetery.

Even after business hours, Lamm's store was a popular hangout. "In the evening, Pop liked to sit in the store and play music with his friends, Amos and Fred Dotson," my mother remembers. "Pop played Hawaiian guitar, Amos played the banjo and Fred was a fiddler. People passing by the store would see the kerosene lamps burning, they'd hear the music and they'd wander in to listen. Some evenings, half of Beason would be in the store, singing along with the band."

My mother doesn't remember the band's repertoire. But, through the years, I have heard her singing softly to herself a number of obscure ballads. Among the songs is a Civil War tear-jerker called "Break the News to Mother." I'm sure she learned these ballads as a toddler, during jam sessions at Lamm's store in Beason.

The store was also a center for sporting activities. Its loungers organized a baseball team, riding on horseback to play games at Oxford, White Oak, Otterslide, Pullman and other nearby communities. The Beason team's uniforms consisted of short, homemade grey jackets and dungaree pants. Albert Lamm was the team's pitcher, noted for his cannonading fast balls. Among other players were two of Albert's brothers, Clay and Lakin, his friends, Amos and Fred Dotson, as well as the Jones boys, Everett, John Henry and Wheeler.

Minnie and Albert in later years. Photographer unknown, about 1937.

Every Friday night in Beason was boys' night out. "Pop, his brother Virgil and other Beason men raised foxhounds," my mother says. "They took the best care of those dogs, and they could recognize the baying of each dog from miles away. On Friday nights, Pop and his friends would take their dogs to a hilltop in back of Beason. They'd build a big fire and turn the dogs loose. Then, they'd sit all night, drinking coffee and listening as their hounds chased foxes through the countryside.

"We children were never allowed to go along. But on Friday nights we'd drift off to sleep listening to the cries of foxhounds deep in the woods."

While Albert Lamm managed the grocery store, his wife Minnie spent much of her time making clothes for the family. "People used to say that Mom was the most marvelous seamstress they'd ever seen," my mother says. "She didn't need patterns, she didn't need measurements, she could just look at a person and cut the material to their exact size. Mom would take us in a buggy to Guy Hawkins store in Pullman, where she bought fabric. She made us a lot of dresses with silk embroidery and eyelet lace. I always thought we were the best dressed children in Beason."

My mother's grandparents, the Reverend Harrison and Barbara Lamm, lived across the road from the grocery store. The elder Lamms owned a six-bedroom house in which they had raised ten children. The house had homemade furniture that was gradually being replaced by store-bought items. My mother recalls that there was a hand-braided rug on the living room floor and a genteel silk-fringed fabric was draped over the mantlepiece. An ancient foxhound named Drum always lay on the fireplace's stone hearth, baking his arthritic bones before the blaze. Drum was so old, and clung to life so tenaciously, that he almost seemed immortal.

Author Larry Bartlett is a talented artist as well, frequently making drawings and watercolor paintings from family photographs. Compare his rendering (left) to the original photograph (above) of Hildred, Lucy and Tessie Lamm on the porch of the family store. Photographer unknown, 1912.

My mother remembers her Grandma Barbara as being a woman who had grown stout in middle age. She carried a long ivory back scratcher with an end carved like a human hand. Barbara Lamm wore her hair pulled back in a high bun, held in place by tortoise-shell combs, and with a delicate row of finger curls at the nape of her neck.

Barbara Lamm operated a boardinghouse during the oil boom, renting out rooms in the family home as well as other rooms above the smokehouse. Although the teamsters and pipeliners who boarded there were a lively crew, they understood that no drinking was allowed on the premises. Grandma Barbara was known to chastise drunks with a blow from her wooden corn-mush paddle.

The Reverend Harrison Lamm left boardinghouse chores to his wife while he attended to farm work and the Lord's work. "Grandpa was a slim, handsome man — six feet, six inches tall," my mother says. "When I was a child, he was the most important person in my life. Every morning after breakfast, he'd come across the road to visit me before doing farm chores.

"When the work was done, he'd sit on his front porch swing and read the Bible," she continues.

"On Friday nights we'd drift off to sleep listening to the cries of foxhounds deep in the woods."

"Sometimes, I'd be playing in our yard and I'd fall down. Right away, I'd hear Grandpa calling: 'Crawl over here, Tootsie Wootsie, and I'll pick you up.' I'd run across the road and Grandpa would let me sit on his lap while he read the Bible.

"Every Sunday morning, Grandpa would put on his celluloid shirt collar and his black broadcloth suit. He'd come over to our house with a handful of roses to pin to the dresses of me and my sisters, Hildred and Tessie. Our whole family would walk a mile down to the Beason Methodist Church. Grandpa would let me ride on his shoulders and he'd hold Hildred's hand. But Grandpa was so tall that, by the time we got to church, Hildred's arm would be aching.

"There was always a big crowd at Beason church before World War I, but when Grandpa stood in the pulpit, I thought he was talking just to me."

In addition to boarders, one of the elder Lamms' sons, Virgil, also lived at home. Virgil, who remained a bachelor for most of his life, spent winters teaching in a one-room schoolhouse and helped with the farm work in summer. Apparently, neither occupation was especially congenial to him. My mother and her surviving sisters tell me that I'm a dead-ringer for their Uncle Virgil. If so, it's eerie to think that

my face was seen around Beason in those horse-and-buggy days.

Virgil Lamm owned a beautiful gray mare named Roxie, and he both loved and feared that temperamental horse. When he first acquired Roxie, she knocked him against the barn wall and leaned on him, trying to crush his chest. Suffocating, Virgil gnawed on Roxie's shoulder until she stepped away. Thereafter, Virgil carried a wooden plank for self defense when he went to the barn each morning.

Grandma Barbara would stand worriedly at the kitchen door and watch him go. Boarders would sit down at the breakfast table, but they had to wait. From the barn would come the sound of stamping hooves, the thud of a body hitting the wall, and resounding whacks from the wooden plank. Then Grandma Barbara would tell the boarders, "I'll serve breakfast now. Virgil's done fighting with that horse."

My mother's Uncle Bubby carried mail on horseback in the Beason-Pullman area. In 1913, he bought the first automobile ever seen in Beason, hoping to speed up his mail deliveries.

"I wasn't two years old, but I remember Uncle Bubby's car had flat, horizontal fenders and carbide headlamps," my mother says. "People would line the roads to look at the car when he passed by. Horses were so terrified of it that they'd rear and plunge until the teamsters had to pull them off the road.

"I was the first to ride in Uncle Bubby's car. He drove me all around Beason, calling me Lucy Juicy Tootsie Wootsie Becky Martha Jane Peachblossom."

In those days, there were frequent illnesses and injuries in Beason, but the community had no doctor. Fortunately, the Reverend Harrison Lamm had a knack for first aid and home remedies. "When people were sick, they'd send for Grandpa at any hour of the day or night," my mother recalls. "He was always in the saddle, riding out to help someone. Grandpa's own health wasn't good, but he wouldn't allow other people to suffer. It was those nighttime rides in the rain and snow that caused him to get consumption."

Lucy Lamm Bartlett with her son Larry, our author, back at Beason. The church where Harrison Lamm preached still stands. Photo by Michael Keller.

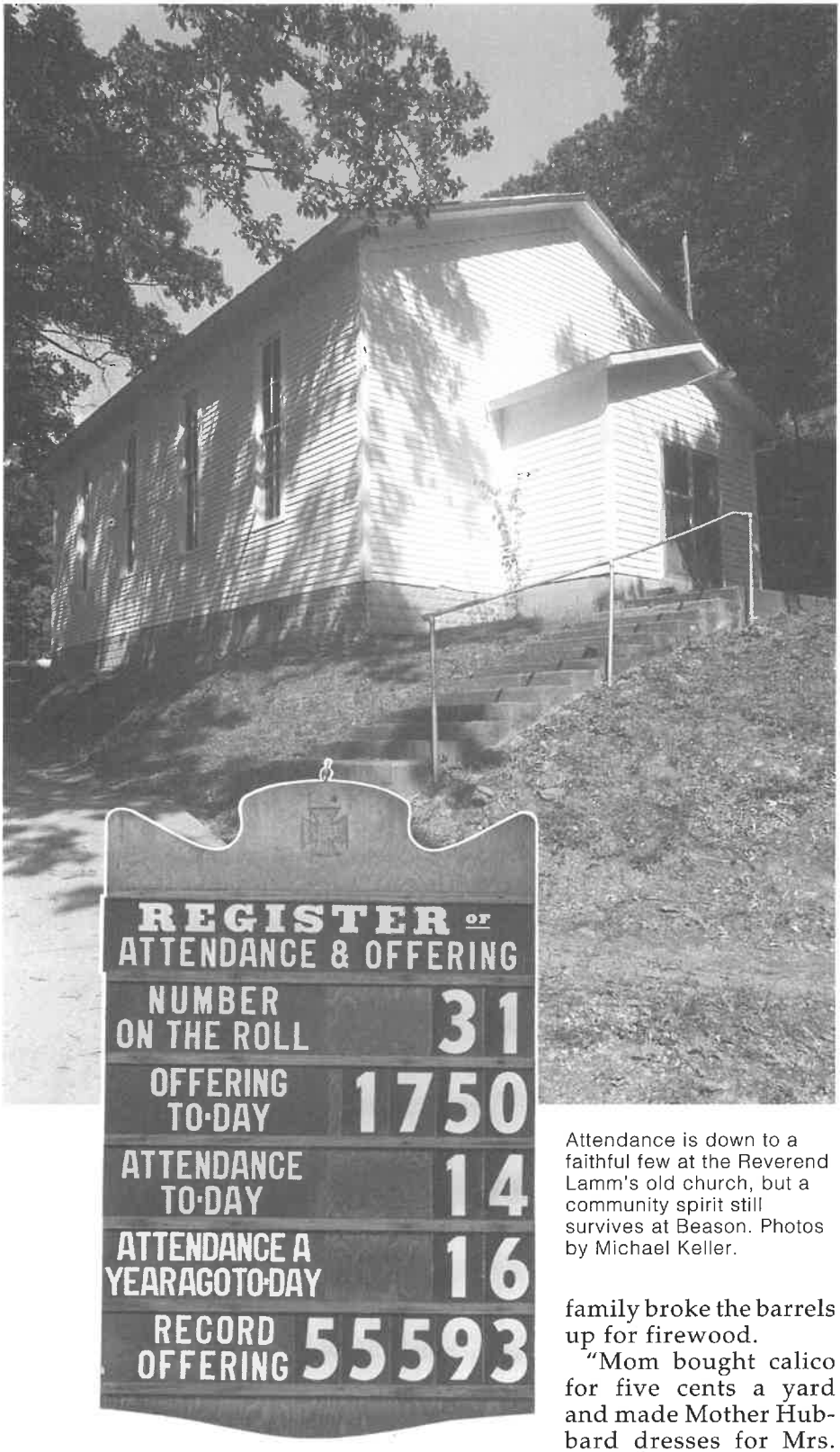
We call that tuberculosis today, and in 1916 the Reverend Harrison Lamm died of it. "I couldn't believe Grandpa was gone," my mother says. "He was such a good man, I thought God would want him to live forever."

During her 42-year marriage with the preacher, Barbara Lamm had also helped the sick and the needy, and she continued to do so after her husband's death. "Every afternoon, Grandma would put on a clean apron and a wide-brimmed straw hat, and she'd walk to people's houses to see if they needed help," my mother says. "Usually, she took a grandchild along."

Grandma Barbara often went to visit Mrs. Strange,* who lived with two grown sons in a tiny house up a wooded hollow. "Mrs. Strange was born and died in those woods," my mother says. "There wasn't room on her face for more wrinkles, and I was afraid of her. But Grandma said she was a nice person."

The Strange family was a throwback to pioneer days, ill-suited for life in the 20th century. Its mem-

*This name has been changed. — ed.



Attendance is down to a faithful few at the Reverend Lamm's old church, but a community spirit still survives at Beason. Photos by Michael Keller.

bers were illiterate, they had no skills or income, they didn't even have furniture in their house. Occasionally, storekeeper Albert Lamm gave them empty barrels to use as tables and chairs, but the Strange family broke the barrels up for firewood.

"Mom bought calico for five cents a yard and made Mother Hubbard dresses for Mrs. Strange," my mother recalls. "Grandma had to take the dresses to her because, while Mrs. Strange was too proud to take charity, she was willing to accept gifts from a friend."

Mrs. Strange had a run-in with the federal government in 1910. Virgil Lamm was then working as the Beason census taker, and he knocked on her cabin door. In filling out her census form, he asked when her sons were born. "Well, Virgil, don't you call yourself an educated man?" Mrs. Strange snapped. "You ought to know! My oldest boy was born in berry-picking time and the young'un was born in tater-digging time."

She feared all things mechanical, and referred to machines as "'chines." When automobiles became common in Beason, a motorist would occasionally offer a ride to Mrs. Strange as she trudged along the road gathering berries and wild greens. But she would threaten to hit such motorists with a rock, shouting, "Get away from me with that devil 'chine! You know I won't ride in no 'chine!"

Beason had its share of odd characters. "There was a man — I won't mention his name — who lived in a holler near our house," my mother says. "The man was a good friend of Uncle Virgil and of Beason's wealthiest farmer, Earl Wilson.

"Most of the time, the man was cheerful and a good neighbor. But he would go crazy when the moon was full. We'd see him come out of the holler in the moonlight, carrying a butcher knife and shouting for blood. Mom would tell us to stand away from the windows. But we'd hear him go past the house, yelling: 'Come out, Virgil Lamm! I'm going to cut your head off and carry it on a platter. Oh, you, Earl Wilson! I'm going to cut your head off and hang it in my window!'

"People in Beason liked the man, so they just ignored his occasional craziness. No one ever mentioned it to him, and he probably went to his grave without knowing how he'd behaved."

A more welcomed visitor on the Pullman Road was Barbara Lamm's sister Rachel. "Aunt Rachel was such a cute person — hardly five feet tall and not weighing more than 90 pounds," my mother recalls. "She wore a sunbonnet that almost hid her face, and she smoked a long pipe. We'd see Aunt Rachel marching down the Pullman Road with that long pipe sticking out of her

sunbonnet and the smoke just rolling. Grandma would say, "'Oh, dear. Here comes Rachel, smoking in public. I'm so embarrassed.'

"Sometimes Aunt Rachel would stay at Grandma's house for a two- or three-day visit. Aunt Rachel loved to tease Grandma, so they'd often get into arguments. But when Grandma lost her temper, Aunt Rachel would say, 'Now you hush, Barbara, or I'm going to light my pipe.' That always ended the argument."

"There was always a big crowd at Beason church, but when Grandpa stood in the pulpit, I thought he was talking just to me."

Travelers weren't safe on the Pullman Road during each summer's water wars. "When the weather warmed up, people in Beason loved to ambush one another with buckets of water," my mother says. "The adults were as bad as the children. We'd hide buckets, cans and jars of creek water all over the lawn, to use as ammunition."

Not even a stranger riding down the road was safe from assault. The water wars became so intense that a man in neighboring Lynn Camp asked his wife: "What goes on at Beason? Every time you go over there for a visit, you come home in borrowed clothes."

During Beason's harmless water fights, World War I was devastating Europe. My mother's uncles were too old to be drafted, but Albert Lamm received his induction notice in November 1918. "Grandma was just frantic," my mother recalls. "She burst into tears and shouted, 'If those people in Washington want to fight, let 'em fight. But they're not taking my boy!'

"Pop packed a suitcase and got ready to leave for the Army. That night, he came into our bedroom and kissed us good-bye. But the next morning, we got word that the war was over and Pop wouldn't have to go. Grandma declared her prayers had been answered."

The community was invited to a victory celebration at Ed Taylor's farm, just north of Beason. That evening, Ed lit a big bonfire and roasted meat on a spit. Party-goers danced "The Dusty Miller" and "Strip The Willow," while the bonfire sent a barrage of red sparks into the night-time sky. It's been almost 77 years since Ed Taylor's bonfire, but people are slow to forget a great party.

After the war, automobiles became more common and Beason's horizons expanded. Farm boys began to seek factory jobs in the cities. Grandma Barbara bought a new Oldsmobile, but she still couldn't get Mrs. Strange to go for a ride. Albert Lamm found work as a tool dresser for the Carnegie Gas Company, and he bought a new Ford.

In 1925 Albert and Minnie Lamm moved their family to Pennsboro. That prosperous little town offered such advantages as a high school, medical doctors, a summer chautauqua, a county fairground, movie theaters, ice cream parlors and a railway station.

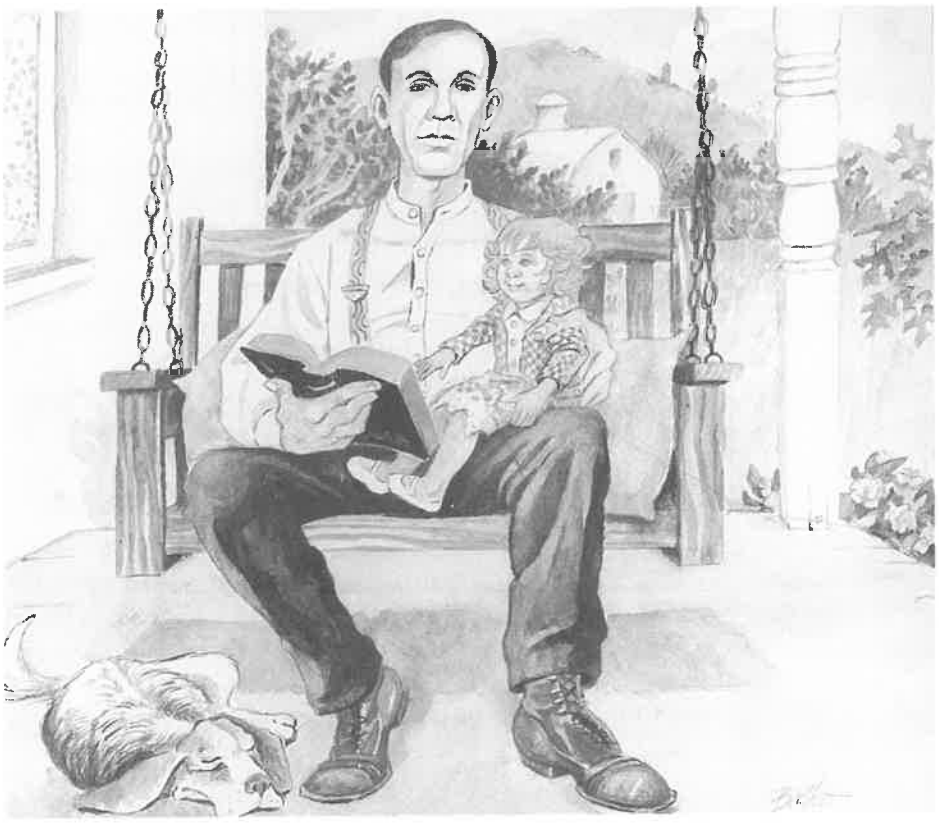
When the Lamm children were grown, most of them moved to urban Wood County to raise families. Many Lamm descendants now live in the Deep South or in western states.

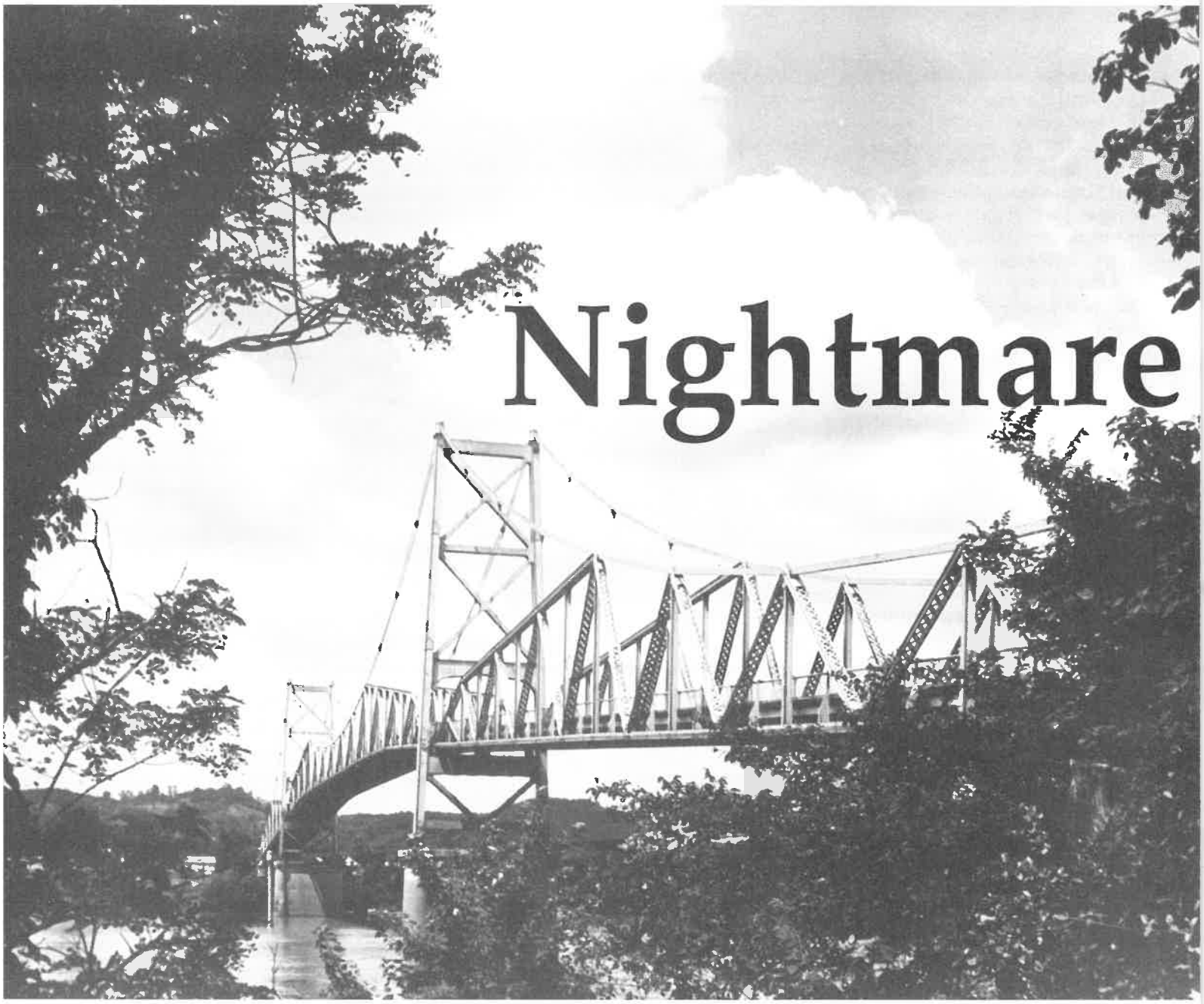
My mother, who has spent the past 40 years in Colorado, recently moved to Parkersburg. Returning as a widow to West Virginia, she is confronting a flood of memories.

"Here is where our front yard fence stood," she says, wading into the weeds along Route 74. "There was a hole in the fence, right about here. I'd crawl through that hole when I ran across the road to see Grandpa."

For a moment, I can almost see the tall preacher sitting over there on his front porch swing.

Harrison Lamm with Lucy. "When the work was done, he'd sit on his front porch swing and read the Bible," she recalls today. Illustration by Larry Bartlett.





The Silver Bridge in better times. The big bridge was an engineering novelty and a daily convenience to Ohio Valley commuters. Photographer and date unknown.

The Fall of the Silver Bridge

By Jane M. Kraina

"The bridge folded up like a deck of cards."

"The bridge collapsed like a child's Erector set."

"The bridge appeared to have fallen upside down on the cars. It resembled cars in a bird cage."

"The bridge looked like a wriggling snake before it disappeared into the river."

Eyewitnesses gave these accounts of the collapse of Point Pleasant's famous Silver Bridge on December 15, 1967, in which 46

in Point Pleasant

people lost their lives and nine were injured. The last driver to make it over the bridge parked in a Christmas tree lot, lost all coloring and got sick.

He had good reason. People at the scene said it was hard to see what was going on, but they could hear "screaming and moaning." They spoke of one truck resting on the riverbank and "the driver hanging from the open door of the cab, dead."

Miraculously, his driving partner survived and banged from the back of the cab for rescue. Firefighters worked for two hours before they could release him.

The disaster soon turned into a national media event, with newsmen in helicopters circling the scene. On the river itself divers gave up their rescue efforts as night set in. The Coast Guard patrolled the area, playing their spotlights on the cold water as they tried to locate survivors.

Although the collapse was sudden and without warning, Dr. D. B. Morgan, Point Pleasant's mayor, had noted that the bridge was deteriorating prior to the accident. He had aired his complaints with the State Road Commission. Mayor Morgan was concerned enough that he would not allow parades to cross over the bridge.

The Point Pleasant bridge across the Ohio River was built in 1927-28 and originally operated by a private toll company. It was called the Silver Bridge because it was one of the first to be covered with aluminum-colored paint.

It had an unusual construction. The only bridge like it in the United States was also in West Virginia, up the river at St. Marys. The Silver Bridge had two rocker towers resting on river piers and an unusual eyebar chain suspension. If one eyebar link broke the towers would come down and the bridge would fall. The original specifications had called for wire-cable suspension, but at the last minute an eyebar plan was substituted to save money.

Witnesses before the National Transportation Safety Board gave different accounts of the collapse. One man said he saw a huge nut on the roadway before the bridge fell. Others heard "cracking or popping" noises. The board ruled out "aerodynamic instability, sabotage, displacement of bridge anchorages, piers or tower seats." It concluded that the total collapse that occurred had "required the failure of some element in the supporting chains or towers."

The investigators said the problem originated at the Ohio tower, and the collapse resulted from a failure in some element of the chain itself. They blamed a brittle fracture in eyebar no. 330. Metallurgists found tiny cracks they believed to have been the result of corrosion. The cracks caused high stress concentration and finally grew large enough to initiate a major break. The failure of this eyebar set forth a series of reactions that brought the big bridge crashing down.

Bill Needham, a 27-year-old truck driver, broke his back in the fall. He pushed the truck window down and grabbed an object floating in the river. Mr. Needham feared that his driving partner had perished because he had been strapped into the sleeping berth. Unfortunately, he was right.

Another victim, Howard Boggs, believed both his wife and 17-month-old daughter were dead. His wife had just commented on the way that the bridge was shaking before they plunged into the water. He blacked out and found himself hanging onto a barrel. He claimed his feet touched the bottom of the river and remembered the water as freezing.

Another rig driver, Frank Wamsley, couldn't remember much about getting out of his truck, but recalled holding onto a barrel-shaped object to keep afloat.

A tragedy like the one at Point Pleasant makes philosophers out of those involved, as they try to find reasons for the way things turn out. I interviewed three people who still vividly recall the events. Luck was on the side of two of these people, but not the third. Small coincidences made a difference in the way things turned out.

Charlene Wood considers herself very lucky. She would have been the next person over the bridge as she traveled home to Gallipolis, Ohio, from her job as a beautician in Point Pleasant. She noticed the bridge shaking and had the presence of mind to reverse her car, sparing herself the horror of plunging into the river. "The experience made a believer out of me," she says today. "I realized it was not my time."

"I thought that a boat had run into the pier, and I decided I wasn't going across that bridge."

She attributes her survival in part to the stories her father had told of his experiences as a riverboat captain. One of the things he spoke about was how boats would ram into piers, causing damage to bridges. "I thought that a boat had run into the pier. Remembering what he had told me, I decided I wasn't going across that bridge."

Mrs. Wood was 21 at the time of the disaster and — although she didn't know it then — pregnant with twins. Her fast reaction saved three lives. She was afraid to get out of her car because of dangling electrical wires. A state patrolman noted her plight and helped her.

Shortly after her near miss, Mrs. Wood went into shock and was taken to the hospital. She experienced nightmares after the event,

Pt. Pleasant Bridge Collapses; 5 Known Dead, High Toll Feared

The Herald-Dispatch
The Tri-State's Leading Newspaper
FINAL
AP, AP Wirephoto
N. Y. Times Service
Vol. 67 — No. 300 | HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA, SATURDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 16, 1967 | 20 Pages—2 Sections—10 Cents

Trucks, Cars Caught In Fallen Girders As Pt. Pleasant Bridge Collapses —Staff Photography by Lee Bernard
This is the Ohio side, Pt. Pleasant skyline is in the background

9 Survivors, 14 Missing After Plunge

Motorists Are Trapped In Cars, Steel, Concrete Smash Vehicles

(Additional stories and photos pages 7 and 11)

The 40-year-old Silver Bridge connecting Pt. Pleasant, W. Va., and Kanauga, Ohio, collapsed Friday at the peak traffic rush hour with an uncounted toll of lives. There were some survivors.

With a "whoosh" like a jet plane's sonic boom, the steel suspension span plunged into the 40-degree Ohio River, trapping motorists in an estimated 70-80 automobiles as tons of steel and concrete smashed the vehicles like tin cans.

The bridge's concrete piers unaccountably remained in place.

Dr. Donald Warehime, Gallia County coroner, late Friday identified four of the victims. The fifth fatality, a woman, was not identified.

George McManus, Southside, W. Va., died in the bridge collapse. Other victims were Cecil Counts and Melvin Cantrell of Gallipolis Ferry, W. Va., and Leo Blackman of Richmond, Va.

Nine persons were hospitalized, five at Pleasant Valley Hospital in Pt. Pleasant, the others at Gallipolis' Holzer Hospital.

Official parties from both Ohio and West Virginia agreed with the death toll and set the injured at 10 with 14 persons missing or unaccounted for.

The bridge collapsed from shore to shore. Witnesses estimated that at least 70 vehicles were on the bridge at the 5 p. m. rush hour.

In addition to holiday shopping traffic and homeward bound industrial employes, a large number of commercial vehicles were on the span, which carried north-south U. S. 35. It is four miles north of Gallipolis.

The structure apparently dropped straight down, according to witnesses and survivors. Cars on the Ohio approach ramp toppled into the water and were smashed by tumbling girders and the six-inch-thick concrete slab flooring.

Some persons were heard screaming for help as startled residents rushed to the riverbank. Cars were smashed flat, and wrapped in and around the steel girders.

The swift stream is reportedly 50-70 feet deep at the disaster scene.

Some persons were pulled from the water by crews of boats that rushed to the scene after the collapse.

J. A. Saxton, assistant administrator of Holzer Hospital, identified those persons hospitalized:

Samuel F. Ellis, 30, of Winston-Salem, N. C., multiple lacerations of legs and face; Frank Nunn, 27, of Greenville, N. C., a fractured back and facial cuts; John Fishel, 42, of Petersburg, Va., leg and foot burns; and Mrs. Margaret Cantrell, 35, of Gallipolis Ferry, W. Va., treated for shock after she jumped from the automobile in which she was riding with her husband.

In the Point Pleasant hospital were William Needham, 27,

(See Rescue, Page 3)

Hupco Covers Disaster From Both Sides Of River

Huntington Publishing Co. news people and photographers teamed Friday night on both sides of the Ohio River to bring the Point Pleasant bridge disaster to Herald-Dispatch readers in story and picture.

Newsman Russ [illegible] and Photographer Howard [illegible] hurried to Point Pleasant where they were joined by Pat Siler, correspondent there, and her family in covering the tragedy from the West Virginia side.

At Gallipolis and at the bridge site on the Ohio side were Keith Kappes, correspondent based in Gallipolis, Newsman Sam Neal and Photographer Lee Bernard.

Mrs. Siler and her family drove across the bridge from Ohio to Point Pleasant only 30 minutes before it collapsed.

Similar Huntington Publishing Co. team coverage will bring the still unfolding disaster story with pictures to readers of The Advertiser today and The Herald-Advertiser on Sunday.

2 Fellow Truckers Survive, 2 Perish

Badly Hurt Driver, Grabbed Box And Floated Until Rescued By Boat

By PAT SILER

POINT PLEASANT — William Needham is one of the lucky ones.

The 27-year-old truck driver from [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

rear of the bridge. It was 4:55 p. m.

The traffic came to a stop. Suddenly, Needham recalls, the bridge shook violently and there was a loud, piercing noise.

"I have to get out of here," he thought.

[illegible]

(See TRUCKER, Page 11)

Survivor William Needham
From [illegible], N. C.
Staff Photograph by [illegible]

'Was Like A Chain Reaction,' Says Witness Who Watched Bridge Fall

By SAM NEAL

According to an eyewitness, Mrs. Charlene Fowler of Kanauga, Ohio, who lives a quarter mile from the bridge, both lanes were full of traffic when the span collapsed.

Mrs. Fowler said, "My sons, Terry, 10, and Scott, 8, were going down the [illegible] to go [illegible] when Terry yelled, 'Mommy, mommy, the bridge is falling.'"

Mrs. Fowler ran to the back door and saw the bridge collapsing on the West Virginia side.

"It was like a chain reaction," she said.

"It started across the river. It did not all fall at once.

"My God, it was horrible," she said.

"As soon as I gained my senses, I called the operator right away who already had heard about the tragedy.

Later a man was pulled from the river just behind the Fowler house. He was sitting on a [illegible] trailer truck which was floating near the shore, Mrs. Fowler related.

He was screaming, "Help me! Help me!"

Mrs. Fowler said [illegible] of Point Pleasant had a rescue boat in operation and someone told the man to hang on and they pulled him off the truck, Mrs. Fowler said.

Sgt. [illegible] of the Ohio Highway Patrol would not estimate how many vehicles were on the bridge at the time of the collapse.

"There have been four or five bodies taken from the wreckage on the Ohio side of the river. I can't say how many are in the river. Some boys [illegible] across the river from Point Pleasant and [illegible] to safety on the West Virginia side."

The wreckage of crushed cars and trucks was entangled in the steel webbing that supported the superstructure of the bridge. [illegible] the bridge [illegible] and [illegible] of the river bank. Emergency crews from both sides of the river are there, trying to pull the vehicles from the tangle.

Dow Closes At 880.61

NEW YORK (AP) — News that General Motors had reached a contract agreement with the United Auto Workers [illegible] the stock market [illegible] GM stock [illegible]

The Dow Jones industrial average closed with a gain of 2.82 at 880.61.

[illegible]

(See RAILS, Page 9)

Top Stories On Page 5

Inside News

CHARLESTON — The W. Va. Board of Education Friday adopted two standards to follow in selecting a new Marshall University president after being told the step would help stifle rumors. The standards are that the next president have an earned doctorate degree and a demonstrated record of administrative leadership, preferably in higher education. Mentioned in rumors for the post has been Gov. Hulett Smith.

WASHINGTON — The 90th Congress adjourned with reminders [illegible]

DETROIT — General Motors Corp. and the United Auto Workers [illegible] $1 an hour over the next three years.

but following the advice of her husband and family she continued to travel across the river to her job. She will probably always be leery of bridges. "I try to be a speed demon when I cross, and I get nervous when I am caught in a jam atop the bridge," she admits.

Although people speculated about a prolonged red light on the West Virginia side sending a heavy flow of vehicles onto the bridge, Mrs. Wood thought traffic conditions were normal. Local residents traveled the bridge routinely from one state to the other, without much concern.

Mrs. Wood said many people from West Virginia crossed to Ohio because a grocery store there offered good prices. In turn, Ohioans came to West Virginia to work in several industries. Her husband worked 17 years for the Pantasote plant, a plastics and vinyl factory.

Other businesses attracting workers from Ohio were Akso, a chemical plant, and Kaiser Aluminum in Ravenswood. After the bridge collapse, everyone worried about the economic consequences. Mrs. Wood believed that Point Pleasant took the brunt of the blow. "Point Pleasant was never the same," she says. "Gallipolis is still growing."

After the accident, commuters crossed the river in train cars using the nearby railroad bridge, which still stands. The Shadle Bridge crossing the Kanawha River also remains in place and still in use. Charlene Wood said when the accident occurred everyone at first assumed it was the "Blue" or Shadle Bridge that had fallen, because it was older than the Silver Bridge.

Mrs. Wood did not tell her twins about the accident when they were young. The years passed, and when her children were in seventh grade they came home from school where their class had been talking about the bridge collapse. They were shocked to hear of their mother's close escape, and their family's good fortune.

Jimmy Wedge did not share Charlene's luck. Both his parents died in the disaster. They had come to the area for a special reason, to see Jimmy's first basketball game as a head coach. They had driven all the way from Kansas City.

The bridge's unusual eyebar-chain construction was the key to its engineering and its collapse. The photograph shows one of the big eyebars after the crash, while the cutaway drawing shows a typical joint. The vertical element descends to support the bridge deck below. Photo by Herb Clagg, courtesy West Virginia State Archives; drawing courtesy National Transportation Safety Board.

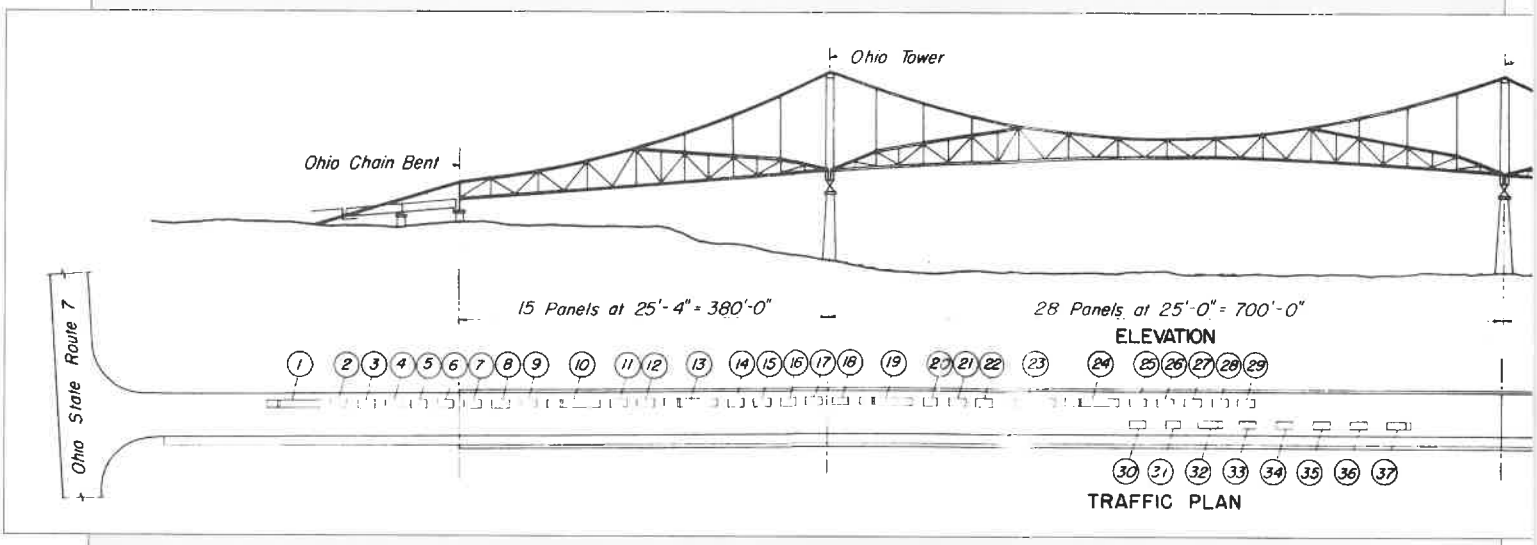
Mr. Wedge did not find out for sure that his parents were on the bridge until the next morning. He was fairly certain that something had happened to them when they didn't show up as expected. "They were responsible people who were true to their word. If they promised to come, they would be there." He was told that his parents had stopped in Gallipolis to purchase a Christmas tree for the upcoming holidays and boarded the bridge at just the wrong moment.

He said he and his sisters and brothers have come to terms with the accident. They do not blame anyone. Mr. Wedge said the greatest regret was that his parents had finally raised their children and, being in their early 50's, were at the point where they could enjoy life. "It was a major sacrifice for them to raise five children, and they had also taken in other kids. They had a lot to offer the world."

Like Charlene Wood, Mr. Wedge thinks Point Pleasant suffered economically from the disaster. "The old bridge forced people to stop downtown. Business suffered when the new bridge was built." The new bridge is on the opposite side of the Kanawha, changing the traffic flow and causing much of Mason County to bypass the downtown section of Point Pleasant.

Andy Wilson viewed the tragedy from a different perspective than that of the victims, as head of Civil Defense and the man in charge of rescue efforts. He spent a frantic hour right after the collapse because

Terrible news from Point Pleasant monopolized the front page of the *Huntington Herald-Dispatch* (at left) on Sunday morning, December 16, 1967.



Tragedy at Point Pleasant:

The Big Picture

One of the most interesting elements of the National Transportation Safety Board's official report on the collapse of the Silver Bridge is "Exhibit 1," a fold-out drawing showing the ill-fated bridge from the side and from above.

The side view shows the basic engineering of the 40-year-old bridge. The Silver Bridge was a symmetrical structure resting on the opposite sides of the river and supported by piers near each shore. Each of these piers supported a tower from which the eyebar chains descended. The chains held up a long central span, stretching 700 feet from pier to pier, and shorter spans from each pier to the shore. The fatal collapse originated at the Ohio tower, according to the report, and progressed in sickening slow motion toward the West Virginia side. The entire process took about 60 seconds, the federal investigators figured.

The overhead view shows the positions of 38 vehicles at the time the bridge fell. The occupants of vehicles 1 through 9, westbound into Ohio and nearly across the bridge, all escaped unharmed. Both men in vehicle 10, a McLean Trucking Company tractor-trailer truck, were injured, as was the driver of car 14, a 1959 Rambler. The two passengers in the Rambler were killed, as was at least one person in vehicles 12 through 37.

Not surprisingly, those nearest the center of the bridge fared worst. Everyone in vehicles 26 through 37 perished, falling into the middle of the cold Ohio River, and all but four people in vehicles 12 through 25. Jimmy Wedge's parents occupied car 34, a 1961 Oldsmobile sedan. In all, 46 people died, with two of the bodies still missing when the government report was issued nearly a year later.

Charlotte Wood was perhaps the luckiest person at the Silver Bridge on the awful day of the crash. She drove car 38, heading home from her Point Pleasant job to her home in Ohio. Mrs. Wood had just started up onto the bridge, as the diagram shows, and was able to reverse off of it as the big structure folded in front of her.

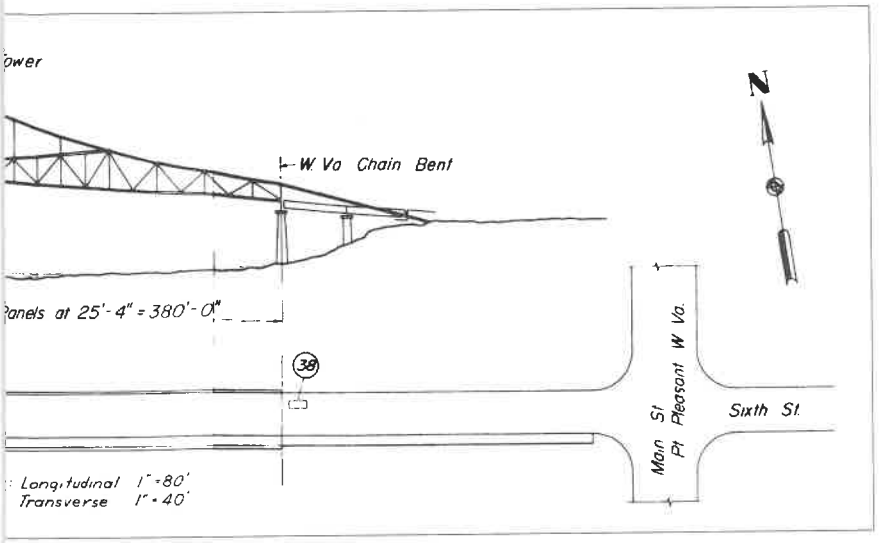
"The experience made a believer out of me," she says in the adjoining article by Jane Kraina.

— Ken Sullivan

he could not locate his own family. He had been driving home from work when he heard the news on the radio. When he came home and no one was there he was sure his wife had been on the bridge. "I just knew my wife was on it, because she had mentioned that she wanted to go Christmas shopping in Gallipolis."

Fortunately, Mr. Wilson's family turned out to be safe and he went on to the accident site. Both the Ohio and West Virginia governors had arrived, and they surveyed the scene in a boat accompanied by Mr. Wilson. Without prior consultation with Andy, West Virginia Governor Hulett Smith made a public speech to the media that had gathered. He announced that Mr. Wilson would be the personal representative for the disaster, and the State Police as well as others in the rescue effort would answer to him. "It was a unique position for an old country boy like me," Mr. Wilson recalls. "It was kind of scary."

Luck helped in his rescue efforts. "We had just completed a fallout shelter behind the courthouse. It got a workout." Also helpful was the presence nearby of two cranes. "That was unusual," he says. "They were using them for work on the Racine Locks, and it was helpful to



have them on the scene."

One of the big problems for the rescuers was the lack of an easy way to get across the river, Mr. Wilson recalls. "Going up the river 14 miles to Mason was pretty burdensome," he says.

Mr. Wilson tackled that problem by enlisting the cooperation of the New York Central Railroad, whose tracks crossed the river at Point Pleasant. The railroad's Columbus, Ohio, representative was uncooperative, so he looked up the corporation's top executive in *Who's Who in America*. "I found his number and the sweetest old lady answered the phone," he remembers. She said the railroad man had retired, but she managed to get him on the line.

"One of the things that got the executive's attention was my ability to use railroad language," Mr. Wilson says. "He sent three cars to the scene and they really helped with transportation problems. The railroad cars proved a novelty and people rode them just for fun. It was the highlight of the whole affair and one of the few pleasant things about it." He says that he had picked up railroad lingo from his father, a train engineer.

Mr. Wilson believed Point Pleasant's coordination efforts were outstanding. He found problems on the Ohio side because of politicians who didn't get along, but said the local broadcasters were helpful. "The radio station in Gallipolis would announce anything we wanted. I put out a plea for plastic jugs for the divers to use for buoys. I received a riverbank full of jugs."

People really pitched in to help, he remembers. One woman took her Christmas dinner off the table and brought it down to the rescue workers.

The collapse prods us to consider luck and coincidence. Mrs. Wood and Mr. Wilson both noted that their father's occupations had aided them with the special knowledge imparted through family stories. Mr. Wedge's luck ran the other way. His proud parents traveled the Silver Bridge for the best of reasons, only to find themselves on it at the wrong time.

All three agree that, aside from the loss of lives, the main misfortune was the negative impact on Point Pleasant, especially its businesses. Fortunately, the town's historical heritage and gracious charm keep it alive, along with local people like Mr. Wedge, Mrs. Wood, and Mr. Wilson — people of courage, character and conviction.

And the old river town needed the good efforts of all its citizens following the tragedy. As the year of 1967 wound down, events rattled on like an awful drumbeat:

People really pitched in to help. One woman took her Christmas dinner off the table and brought it down to the rescue workers.

Friday, December 15, at 4:55 p.m. — The Point Pleasant bridge col-

Twisted steel met the cold river water when the Silver Bridge came down. This photo shows the western pier, with a salvage crane already in place. Photo by Herb Clagg, courtesy State Archives.

Most of the survivors fell to dry land on the Ohio side. Point Pleasant is visible across the river. Photo by Herb Clagg, courtesy State Archives.

lapsed. It was initially estimated that 75 cars and trucks had fallen into the Ohio River. Five motorists who plunged into the water managed to escape from their vehicles.

Saturday, December 16 — Giant derricks dragged the river, but the number of dead had not been confirmed. Five families reported 35 persons missing, and by six o'clock the official death toll was eight. Divers searched the river for bodies but had trouble with the current, the heavy silt at the bottom, and the 44-degree temperature of the water.

A newswriter for the *New York Times* described a full moon sinking behind the hills and a swirling river that had been there long before the towns and the factories. Policemen, defense workers and volunteers huddled around small fires in the chilly night.

Survivor Paul Hayman described how he thought he was going to die as he grabbed both his steering wheel and his wife and rode a beam down into the river. His wife could only call out her husband's nickname, "Oh, Buck!" Fortunately, both survived.

Sunday, December 17 — An accurate death count was still unavailable, and estimates varied from 20 cars on the bridge to 70. Divers continued to search the river, marking where debris and vehicles could be found. The confirmed death toll rose to 13 as salvagers pulled four more automobiles and a truck out of the Ohio.

Twenty-three upriver dams were closed to reduce the current and keep divers from being pulled downstream. The scuba divers heated their suits with hot water before submerging themselves in the cold river. Once underwater, they placed cables around the cars so the vehicles could be pulled from the river. Divers said visibility was bad, the water pitch black.

Police put up road blocks to control the heavy traffic resulting from people coming to view the disaster site. Air traffic also created a problem.

Monday, December 18 — Figures on the missing rose to 52, and the count still wasn't accurate. Threatening skies worried rescuers as rain might raise the river and increase the current. River traffic was stalled because of the underwater work.

Meanwhile, authorities fielded the rumor about the red light having created a bumper-to-bumper situation which sent a heavy load of traffic onto the bridge. Mayor D.B. Morgan could not confirm it. The residents of Point Pleasant were said to be hospitable to the volunteers who had reported to the area. A temporary morgue had been set up at the National Guard Armory.

Harry Ernst reported from the *Charleston Gazette's* Washington bureau that President Lyndon Johnson planned an investigation to see how safe the nation's bridges were. Mr. Ernst wrote, "The col-

lapse of the Silver Bridge across the Ohio River at Point Pleasant which killed at least 19 persons with another 44 missing, understandably aroused fears in river towns across the country."

Tuesday, December 19 — Civil Defense Chief Andy Wilson widened the scope of the search to extend 14 miles down the river to the Gallipolis Dam. The New York Central Railroad set up its commuter train across the railroad bridge, a few yards from the sunken Silver Bridge.

The West Virginia Road Commission closed the St. Marys' bridge, with its similar eyebar construction. Bodies were still being dredged from the river. One truck cab had washed a mile downstream. Workers said seven miles of the river had been surveyed with sonar but nothing positive resulted.

Lawsuits were being filed against West Virginia. The state's attorneys hoped West Virginia could have help from Ohio and the federal government because the bridge was a federal bridge. Both the Federal Highway Administration and West Virginia had investigators looking into the accident. President Johnson expressed sympathy for those who had relatives and friends involved in the bridge collapse and promised assistance to Ohio and West Virginia.

From December 20 through 30, as the death count rose much focus was given to the nation's other bridges, 1,800 of which were over 40 years old. Like the Silver Bridge, eleven of those bridges spanned the Ohio River between West Virginia and Ohio. U.S. Senator Jennings Randolph commented that failures like Point Pleasant "are almost unknown in our modern history." Randolph, our senior senator at the time, said the Senate Public Works Committee would decide what could be done.

The emotions of the townspeople and shock of the nation led many to assign a quick blame. The *Engineering News-Record* figured that inadequate inspection had been the cause.

Then came the unscientific claims, some of them ludicrous. A fabled "curse of Cornstalk" was mentioned. Supposedly, the embittered Shawnee Chief Cornstalk had put a curse on the area two centuries before. Cornstalk was the Indian commander at the Battle of Point Pleasant, later murdered in captivity. Author Robert Keel claimed that Point Pleasant is a "window" of high UFO activity. He said that on the night of the bridge collapse one family had reported 12 sightings of UFO's at tree level.

The less imaginative National Transportation Safety Board named a committee to investigate. As events on the riverbank subsided, investigators in business suits replaced the grieving onlookers waiting for their loved ones to be brought ashore.

On December 30, 1967, it was announced that at least 50 people were working to determine the cause of the accident. Engineers and chemists analyzed the bridge materials and original specifications. Engineers later said that as a result of the ensuing inspections many bridges were found to have deteriorated and were spared the fate of Silver Bridge. Like other disasters in West Virginia's history, this tragedy was the spark that initiated major reform.

In 1968, magazines were still writing about the reasons for the collapse of the bridge. Alan Armagnac in *Popular Science* said that although the disaster had people wondering about bridge safety they could be assured they'd be hard pressed to find another bridge with the quirky design of the Silver Bridge. By 1980 the only similar bridge in the world was located in Florianapolis, Brazil. The South American bridge, constructed by the same company that made the Silver Bridge, was used for pedestrian traffic.

Those of us who live near major rivers cross bridges frequently, not worrying much about the concrete and steel we pass over. We take for granted that we will pass safely to the other side, putting ourselves into the hands of unknown engineers and contractors. Usually it's a safe bet. But on a dark day in December 1967 for the motorists on one Ohio River bridge it was not.

The official federal report condensed the worst of the news down to a few lines. "The U.S. 35 highway bridge connecting Point Pleasant, West Virginia, and Kanauga, Ohio, collapsed at approximately 5:00 p.m. e.s.t., December 15, 1967. Forty-six persons died in the accident and nine were injured. Two of the 46 persons are still missing."

The West Virginia ramp became a road to nowhere on December 15, 1967. Charlotte Wood reversed her 1964 Pontiac off the ramp to safety as the bridge fell in front of her. Photo by Herb Clagg, courtesy State Archives.

The Hermitage Hotel, in other times called The Cunningham or The Oriental or The Taylor House, stands in Petersburg three proud stories tall. The hotel crowds the curb, taking up nearly a block in depth and a slot on the historic register.

Myrtle Schaeffer Arbogast, a soft-spoken woman of 96 who has finally made time in her life to learn to play bridge, remembers growing up in the old place after her father bought it in 1911.

"Lawsa me, I remember when there were chamber pots under the beds and an outhouse. I remember doing the laundry outside. The streets were all mud," she said. She vividly recalls her mother's death during childbirth six years after the family of seven children moved in, leaving her with the chores of a woman, including a four-year-old sister to rear. Myrtle was 12.

"O Lord, I haven't done anything but work all my life and I've lived a long time," she chuckled. "I remember when meals cost 25 cents. One summer, it rained for a whole week and we had 25 people for every meal. I cooked."

"There was a college on each side of the hotel," Myrtle recalls, adding that salesmen later used the buildings to show their wares. "Eventually they became storage buildings, and drummers displayed their goods there. In rainy times, when they couldn't get out around the countryside, people would come into town to see what they had."

The old hostelry's history stretches back way before Myrtle. If walls could tell stories, this place would ramble on about John and Mary Cunningham's slaves firing the bricks and raising the building in 1841 as a private home — a gift for their daughter when she married Dr. Jacob Kenney Chambers.

The Cunninghams, ancestors to some of the town's leading citizens, lived across the South Branch Potomac. The river runs quietly behind the old building, which was the Chambers home during the Civil War. Federal Army officers took it over as headquarters while they occupied Petersburg and operated Fort Mulligan up on the hill where Grant Memorial Hospital is today. When Dr. Chambers died, John Cunningham and Mary took over the property again, and it was they who operated the hotel part during the early days.

The first property transfer in 1851 called it a "red brick with necessary outbuildings; an eight-room house, no porch, two-storey back porch, L-shaped, one of the first houses..."

Well, it may have been one of the first grand houses, but probably not one of the first. Petersburg had been settled more than a hundred years before — around 1745 — as Lunice Creek, and that name became official when the post office set up business in 1833. Experiencing an identity crisis for a long time, it became Petersburg at some point — probably for Jacob Peters, owner of the first general merchandising store there. After the Civil War, the town took the name of the new state's newest county, itself named for the victorious General Ulysses S. Grant, and became Grant's Court House for 40 years before switching back to Petersburg again.

By the time Petersburg was named county seat in 1870, the Cunningham-Chambers house was undoubtedly among the most prominent in town. But the Cunninghams were long gone by then. "John Edd Taylor sold it to my dad, G. P. Schaeffer," Myrtle said. "Now, these Taylors had nine daughters, so he had to enlarge the hotel to make room for them and all the guests, too."

Although the hotel's name had previously changed with its owners, something happened during John Edd's watch that gave it permanence. There was a frequent guest whose name was Dr. Hoy B. McCuskey, a dentist from St. Marys who came to Petersburg to trout-fish. One evening in 1904, some of the men were sitting around the place talking about fishing, and McCuskey wondered why more people didn't come to Petersburg. One thing led to another and they decided that a high-falutin' name for the hotel would bring more visitors to town.

At ten o'clock that night, one of the men took the old Taylor House sign off the post and carried it to his bedroom while McCuskey went to John Edd's smokehouse to find paint and a brush. They had decided upon "The Hermitage" for a name and had the new sign painted and up on the post before midnight.

John Edd Taylor called McCuskey a scalawag when he discovered the sign the next day, but the new name soon won him over. By the following week, new stationery had been printed and letters sent out to former guests and friends all over the state. "We wish you were here," the message said. "Catchin' bass three feet between the eyes! The only place on earth where the big ones never get away...Petersburg, the heart of the beautiful South Branch Valley."

There was a P.S. to the effect that Dr. McCuskey's grandfather, an early B&O engineer, had originally stocked the local waters with bass, having "carried them in a fish box in the water tank of his engine, then liberated them into the South Branch."

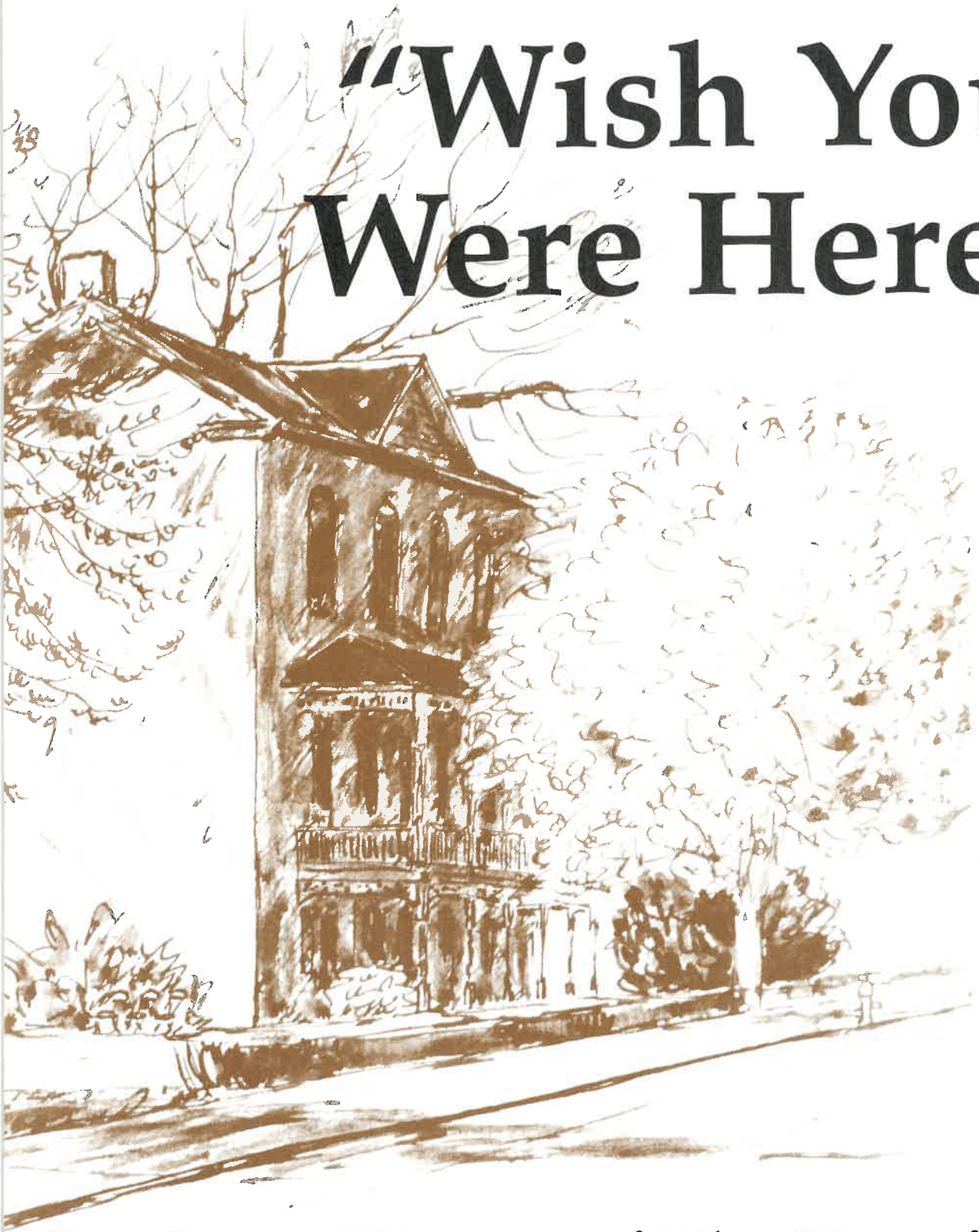
Today Hoy McCuskey's initials are still carved in the right hand side of the entrance door. His visits and friendship were so valued that the dining room in the original part of the building was later named for him.

When G. P. Schaeffer took over he kept the name but changed the building to suit himself. He added what is now the back dining room and a bedroom off it. "Then Dad built the third floor, the sun porch, and added plumbing and electric," Myrtle reported. Her husband, known as "C. O." (for Clarence Orin) Arbogast, a plumber all his life, did the work. "He boarded at the hotel, that's where I learned to know him," Myrtle said.

In the late 1920's, Mr. Schaeffer even added a miniature golf course. He liked to travel and had seen miniature golf at other places.

Alma and Jerry Cowherd pick up the story after Myrtle leaves off. The Cowherds, who owned The Hermitage for 40 years, later moved to Moorefield. I interviewed them there before Jerry's recent death. I quickly learned that they had a basket of memories and more than a few mementoes from the old hotel.

"Wish You Were Here"



The Long History of The Hermitage

By Peggy Ross

The Hermitage, already an old house at the time of this 1911 photograph, still had some growing to do. G. P. Schaeffer, who bought the hotel that year, later added a third floor. Photographer unknown.

Proprietor Schaeffer in the yard of his hotel. Photographer unknown, 1913.

They even had the front desk organizer with its original advertising intact, a place for pens and cards, and the bell to ring for the clerk.

When they bought the place, The Hermitage was already a century old. It had watched Petersburg's water-powered roller mills produce 25 barrels of flour a day; sawmills and logging come and go; the creamery start up; and the slaughterhouses become busy, bloody places. It had seen the tannery and row housing come during the 1890's, and the building of the big Bee Hive and the New York Bargain stores downtown. It had settled in by the time other hotels like The Sites and Swick's opened their doors, and the hatcheries and breeding farms, which exist yet today, came into being.

The Hermitage had seen the local blacksmith shoe horses and then fashion replacement parts for Model T's; the muddy streets graveled and then paved; water and sewage systems arrive; and The Hampshire-Southern Railroad become important. Part of Myrtle Schaeffer's responsibility had been to drive her father's carriage to the train station to meet hotel guests.

The Hermitage had watched as coal was mined and banks rose from the wealth, and it had survived to see some folks ride to the hounds instead of scratching out a living.

Yes, the old hotel had seen a lot of history, and it had played a role itself. When court was in session, the judge and all the lawyers would come in to wait while the juries were deciding. Judge Drane and Judge See from Mineral County stayed over, and juries were sequestered here. They all shared one room, with extra cots brought in.

"Number 1 had two double beds. There was a locked jury and they were all put in that room," Jerry Cowherd said. Decisions about bed partners were easy, Jerry figured. "You know that feller? You sleep together."

The fact that the hotel drew an upper-class clientele didn't inhibit the horse trading which took place in the dusty or muddy street just down the way. And cattle, the animals that gave neighboring Hardy County the money for its miles of antebellum mansions, were driven down the Petersburg streets, the

beasts milling around the hotel.

By the time the Cowherds came along, the country had won a world war and was fighting a second. Donald J. Baker was in charge of The Hermitage when they got there.

They remember Don at age 24 as a typical young man, rambling in the evenings. Alma Cowherd says that after being out into the wee hours, he would return to the hotel, choose an unoccupied room and fall asleep on the bed. Next morning, guests would have their breakfasts, then go to the vacant desk to leave their room keys and their money. Donald had an assistant who would arrive a couple of hours later and make sense of everything.

The Cowherds hadn't gone to Petersburg to buy a hotel. An engineer, Jerry came to build the concrete bridge that spans the South Fork of the Potomac, now scheduled for replacement as part of a flood-prevention program.

But because it was wartime, the bridge construction materials didn't arrive for 14 months. The couple and their two small children lived in The Hermitage while waiting. When young Baker was drafted, the Cowherds decided to buy the place.

"Rooms were $1.00 to $2.25 a night," Jerry recalled. "We had this one dry goods salesman who would headquarter there. We always bought our sheets from him for $11 a dozen.

"Well, this man always took a dollar-a-night room, but inflation began to hit and we finally moved the prices up. He was really upset and he told us so. Finally, I told him that if he'd continue to sell us sheets for the same price, we'd rent him a dollar-a-night room. But he said, oh, he couldn't do that."

Jerry said that traveling salesmen made themselves at home. "There was a desk in the lobby and in the evenings, they'd get their orders straightened out and then they'd visit or sit back and listen to radio programs."

Getting hotel workers wasn't easy at the time. Most people had left the area to serve in the military or work in defense plants. Alma tells a couple of favorite stories about the employees they managed to hire during the World War II years.

"There was a woman from Smoke Hole who said she'd come to work if she could bring her 12-year-old granddaughter. We had rooms in back where employees could live, and when she moved into the hotel, she came out to tell Jerry there was no light in her room. Jerry went in, flipped the switch, and the lights came on but she wanted the cozy comfort of her old-fashioned oil lamps. We had to get ration stamps to buy the kerosene," Alma recalled.

"Then there was another woman, who needed to run an errand in the rain. I told her to use my umbrella, but she had never seen one before. I thought that was the strangest thing."

While the hotel had been marvelously updated in 1911, by the 1940's things weren't exactly ultra-modern. For instance, laundry was still done outside. Baker had paid those wash women a dollar a day, Alma recalled, adding that she gave them a raise.

"There were strings across the windows to hang the curtains on, and every window had nails to hold the strings. There were chamber pots in some rooms. A room on the third floor had the only plumbing facility. There was a commode there, behind a door that wouldn't quite close."

So the Cowherds, too, remodeled and changed the old hotel. Jerry built the little dining room behind the office. "We built two-thirds of the old building in the back in 1964," he said. "We rented 16 rooms."

Judging from the appearance of Alma's current home, the Cowherds had a knack for decorating. Kay Evans often spent fall days in the Petersburg area with her writer husband, George Bird Evans [GOLDENSEAL, Winter 1993]. "Alma always did things so nicely," Kay said. "One time when we were there, she had a branch of apples with the apples on them hanging in the stairwell."

Myrtle Schaeffer Arbogast, photographed last summer on the porch of the old hotel. "I remember when there were chamber pots under the beds and an outhouse," she says. Photo by Michael Keller.

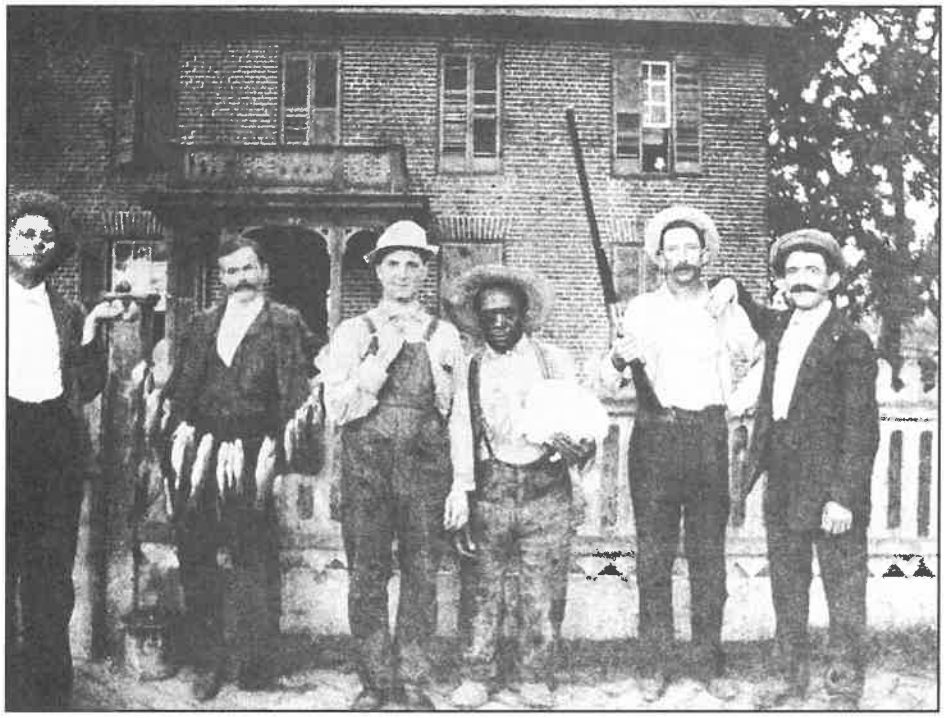
By happenstance, the Cowherds fell heir to the Cunninghams' hotel dinner bell. "The Casey Van Meters lived in the Gap on a dairy farm, and they moved into town when they got older," Alma said. "One day she showed up with this brass dinner bell and said, 'I think the bell should come home. When I was a little girl and dinner was ready, John Cunningham would come out into the mud road in front of the inn and ring the bell. It could be heard over all of Petersburg at the time.'"

Mrs. Van Meter's father got the bell when the Cunninghams left the hotel. He took it to the farm, where it had continued to be rung to bring in the family. "She thought that I

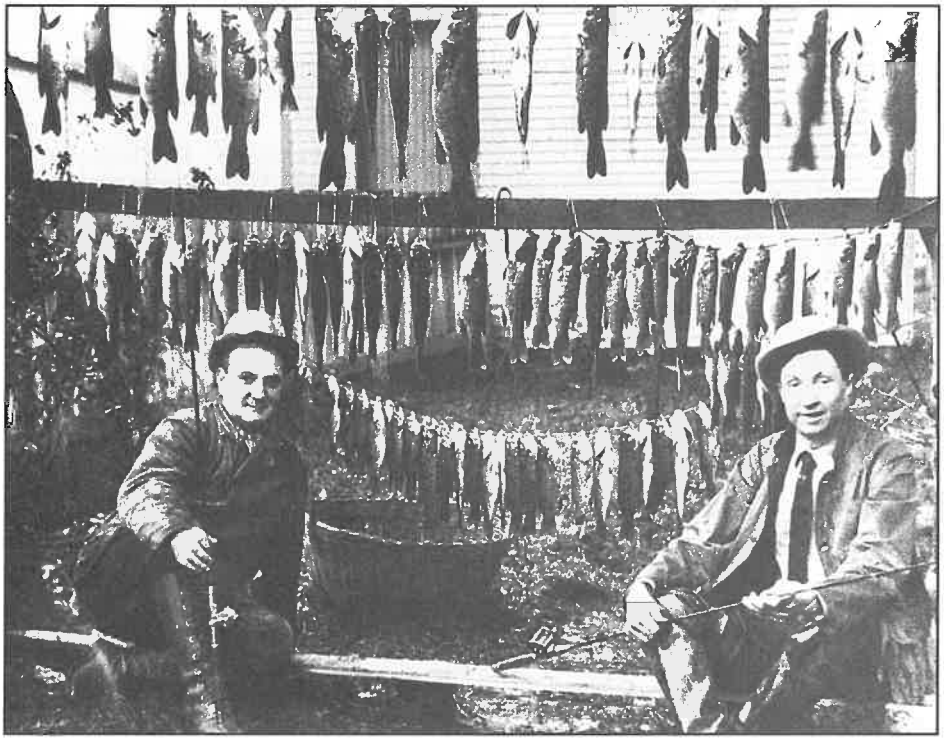
should have it," Alma said. "It sat on the mantel in the hotel dining room for many years."

That bell is a popular part of Petersburg lore. When John Cunningham rang the dinner bell, people would come in from the fields or go home from their businesses for the heavy noon-day meal. Court would recess; everything stopped. Ministers would even wind up their Sunday sermons when the bell sounded. Its tone was inviolate.

There are other hotel tales, as might be expected of a place that's been part and parcel of a community for such a long time. One of recent origin has to do with Augusta Heritage, now a thriving operation at Davis and Elkins College, where people gather each summer to learn the traditional arts. Augusta has been going on for 24 years, but there was a time when few people touted the wares of our rural artisans because few folks saw the value.



The Hermitage was a sportsman's refuge in earlier times. The hunters and fishermen above pose with Uncle Frank Taylor, third from right. The picture of the two fishermen (below) is labeled "best of a week's catch," no doubt from the neighboring South Branch. Photographers unknown, about 1906.



Alma Cowherd did, and she began bringing the best of what she could find to sell in her hotel shop. "We were among the first people in the state to really retail crafts. You wouldn't believe the miles I've driven up hollows to find craftsmen and how many craftsmen we gave a start in business. Some of the first were hippies; they were good potters, excellent craftsmen. We still hear from them sometimes," she said.

"Augusta Heritage started right in our dining room," Alma said with pride. "We had a meeting one day and the first workshop grew out of it. This Mrs. Laird, a basketmaker at Beverly outside of Elkins, was there. She took the idea and ran with it, organized classes in Elkins and out of that, the Augusta Heritage program grew."

The Cowherds foresaw the Washington area becoming a major market for West Virginia crafts. "Jerry went from business to business telling them how much ads in the Washington paper would cost. About 95 percent of my craft sales came from the D.C. area," Alma said.

"We had the first cooperative advertising ever to be done in West Virginia, I think," Jerry added.

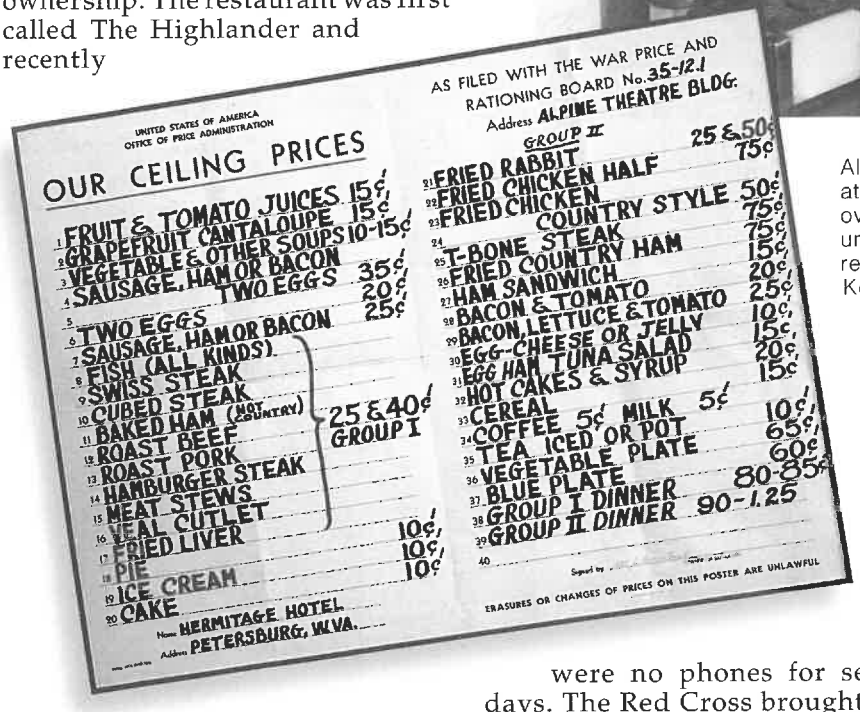
Meanwhile, the story of the old hotel continued. Jim and Diane Roby bought The Hermitage in October 1980. Like the Cowherds, they just sort of fell into it. Jim wasn't happy in his Washington-area partnership, and they happened to come to his hometown for a wedding. While Diane and their two daughters were getting dressed, Jim walked into The Hermitage and ended up buying the place.

Now the Robys are taking their turn at nudging the grand old building into the future. "When we took over, every light had to be flipped on individually," Jim said. "We've

replaced the carpeting twice. We've painted inside and out at least once, and we added the pool. We doubled the number of rooms. There are 39 now."

That was accomplished by adding a large motel building in the back, and the swimming pool went where Mr. Schaeffer once had his miniature golf course. Additionally, the Robys tore down the old colleges, which they called sample houses. Now a nice square building with four new non-smoking rooms sits on the site of one of them, snuggled up close to the main hotel.

The restaurant reopened July 11, 1990, ten years after the Robys took ownership. The restaurant was first called The Highlander and recently renamed Brookes Landing. The food is not only delicious but it is beautifully presented, and there is a lounge. Reopening the eatery "has helped the hotel, yeah," Jim said.



Alma Cowherd was one of a long line of innkeepers at The Hermitage. She and her husband Jerry took over during World War II, and initially operated under war time conditions. The ration board (left) reflects that era of hotel history. Photos by Michael Keller.

The Robys have the distinction of having owned the structure during Petersburg's second most notable and historic event, the flood of 1985. "It was a hectic time," Diane said. "A 60-foot wall of water took out the bridge in the Smoke Hole Gap. It was a dark night."

"It sounded like an ocean," Jim added, speaking of the floodwaters which burst the doors of the nearby bottling plant.

"We were without power. There were no phones for several days. The Red Cross brought local homeless families in to stay. We had homeless employees that we fed out of our freezer," Diane said.

Television people, medical personnel, and work crews were housed at The Hermitage. Everyone got one flush of the toilet a day, compliments of Jim, who carried one five-gallon bucket of water to each of 41 toilets. "After that, each person was on his own," he said. "We worked hard, but we didn't have any loss and we were grateful for that," he added.

"It worked us to the limits," Diane agreed.

The Robys, like the past owners, say that no ghosts walk the halls of the old lodging place, although at least one person died there.

The famous, near-famous and would-be-famous have slept in the hotel over the years. U.S. Supreme Court Justice William Rehnquist was there about eight years ago, in room 102. Petula Clark, probably best known for her rendition of "Downtown" and her role in *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, was going to a race track concert in Charles Town with her sister when they stayed over. They didn't call attention to themselves.

Dottie West, well-known for her hit country and western songs, stayed there shortly before she died. Jim remembers how much makeup she wore "from the amount left on the towels," he said. She didn't say who she was, either, but just signed in.

While the Cowherds ran The Hermitage, Governor Arch Moore stayed over, and the artist Charles Harper, and even Senator Robert Byrd.

The hotel business has been good to its owners. "We had a wonderful life, we did!" Alma Cowherd exclaimed. "We loved our guests. They are still our friends. When we left, I walked out the back door and didn't say good-bye to anybody.

Jim and Diane Roby are the hosts at The Hermitage today. They took over from the Cowherds in 1980. Photo by Michael Keller.

My heart broke.

"It was our home and it was our business and we loved it," Alma said.

And remember the nine Taylor girls? Well, up until a couple of years ago, two of them visited regularly. Diane smiled when she said it was as though they still owned the place, the way they looked around.

Folks flock to the Petersburg area to visit the Smoke Hole and Smoke Hole Caverns, or to join in the Spring Mountain Festival. Others come to get some of those wonderful trout in April or hunt bear, grouse, quail or deer in the fall, although not as many sportsmen stay at The Hermitage as once was the case. The flood somewhat affected hunting and fishing, and some salesmen found other places to stay.

But, yes, the Robys agree with past owners: It's a good life and a good living. "Business is good even if it slows down [in winter]. We had a super December, January and February," Jim Roby said.

"It's been good to us," Jim added. "We'd do it again." ✱

The Hermitage has outlasted generations of innkeepers and still looks good after a century and a half. Photo by Michael Keller.

Carrying on the Music

Dulcimer Player Patty Looman

By Danny Williams

Photographs by Mark Crabtree

Always ready to go, Patty sits here by a Marion County roadside. The old family feed store stands behind her.

Friends of West Virginia music and heritage are fortunate. Most of our musical traditions live on in rich variety. Our hills were once full of fiddlers, singers, and banjo-pickers, and they still are. We have dozens of musicians who are preserving the music of the legendary old-timers.

But hammered dulcimer players are scarcer. Mainly there are Patty Looman and a handful of others.

The hammered dulcimer was never as common or widespread in our state as some of the other instruments. The recent history of the hammered dulcimer in West Virginia is dominated by two men — Russell Fluharty and Worley Gardner. Both of these gentlemen have passed on, but the spirit and music of each of them lives on in Patty.

There are actually two unrelated instruments named "dulcimer." The hammered dulcimer of this article descends from an ancient Middle Eastern instrument which has infiltrated many of the world's folk traditions. It consists of many strings stretched across a shallow box. The player strikes the strings with small beaters or hammers.

The smaller "mountain" or "fretted" dulcimer is an Appalachian invention, and has never spread far beyond our mountains. It's a long, narrow, three-stringed instrument which is usually held on the lap and strummed with a flexible pick.

Confusion over the name has drawn these two separate instruments together, and now they frequently appear at the same events. Patty is an accomplished performer and active teacher on both dulcimers, but her first love and her great mission is the hammered dulcimer.

She enlivens the West Virginia dulcimer scene in every way — as a performer, tune collector, teacher, and promoter. She even owns the largest collection of historical instruments in the state. To hear Patty tell the story now, it sounds almost like it had to happen.

Patty was born 70-ish years ago in Mannington. She recalls that music was an important part of her community and her early family life.

"My parents were very insistent that I would be a professional musician," she says. "It's real interesting, because my dad was not a person who had a lot of education; I know he didn't get any farther than seventh grade. He had been taking piano lessons — which surprised me, because he was pretty wild. But he loved music. When Georgie Moore, the pianist for the silent movies at the Mannington Theater, would get sick, she'd call on Dad to take over. He would play from sheet music, you know, the chase scene, or the burning scene. I still have all of that sheet music.

"Mom tried to play," Patty continues. "For a while she was fairly decent on the violin, but she developed arthritis at an early age, and that took care of her. Mom liked to sing.

"And so I was supposed to be a professional musician. They really

went out of their way. For two years, I was excused from school every Wednesday, and I rode the train up to Wheeling to take organ lessons. It was a two-hour ride, and I took my lesson and stayed up there and practiced, and caught the evening train back.

"And they gave me private piano lessons here in Mannington. Piano was quite important for kids at that time here; we all had to take piano lessons. We were all scared to death of her — Miss Baker. Lovely lady. And everybody that took lessons, you practiced! She had a ruler, boy, she'd hit you!

"So then I had all these lessons, played in the high school band, went to All-State Orchestra on the cello, went to All-State Band on the trumpet, then went to Fairmont State College and took music courses."

Dutch Looman's children, ready to roll for their father's hauling business. Brothers Joe and Jack joined Patty in this playful picture. Photographer unknown, 1920's.

While Patty was growing up in Mannington, her neighbor Russell Fluharty was waging a vigorous campaign to popularize the hammered dulcimer. Fluharty was a fine musician, but was even more well-known as a performer, a personality, and a gentleman. His mixture of music, banter, and sincere corniness made him a familiar figure across West Virginia. The current popularity of the instrument is largely a tribute to the energy and persistence of Russell Fluharty. Patty Looman recalls that converts were not easily won.

"We had to listen to Russell," she says. "He always played at the Mannington District Fair, and we were expected to go because my parents knew Russell and Marge very well. And so we'd go over to the fair, and we just hated it. We didn't like the music, and we didn't like the instrument. It was the '30's, [with] the development of swing music and that sort of thing, [and I was] a teenager.

"Then at the end of my sophomore year at Fairmont State, in 1945, I went to Central Michigan University, and up there I liked speech and drama so much that I ended up with a triple major — speech, drama, and music."

Patty's degree was in education. After graduation, she worked in Michigan as a high-school teacher for 35 years. That's hammered dulcimer country, as it happens. The instrument occupies only a small place in traditional Appalachian music, but it is very important in the folklore of the Midwest. So as Patty's musical tastes matured beyond the pop music of her youth, the corny old dulcimer was right there waiting for her.

"I taught speech and drama, and did a lot of work on musicals. I came home to Mannington summers and all holidays during that time, and came to have great respect for Russell Fluharty as the years went on.

"It was in the early '60's I really began to think about the instrument as being maybe something worthwhile to consider. I'd gone over to Russell's house, even in the '40's, because I was interested in the instrument just as something different, and he would try to show me how to play. But in the '60's it was really Worley Gardner that got me going."

The late Worley Gardner of Morgantown is the second major figure in the hammered dulcimer's history in this state. An accomplished musician on several instruments, Gardner extended the range of the dulcimer beyond the folksy simplicity of Fluharty's style. With his brother Asel, Worley Gardner designed and built dulcimers more complex than Fluharty's, and he was the first in West Virginia to show that the dulcimer could be played alongside guitars, mandolins, fiddles, and banjos. Sitting at her own Gardner dulcimer, Patty explains how Gardner's designs removed so many of the instrument's limitations.

"You could take the instrument and fool around with it, but to really get definite, that's what Worley did.

"Most of the time Russell never tuned to a tuner or anything; he just tuned to whatever sounded good, and the people who played with him adjusted to Russell's playing. Russell had only nine strings on his dulcimer. (Modern dulcimers commonly have 23 or more groups of strings.) And he played mostly, as he said, 'by hear.' He played in two keys, C and F, or C and G, depending on the tuning. Sometimes I'd tune up one of his old ones to the key of D, so he could play with some of the fiddlers around here.

"But now, Worley's dulcimer was different," Patty adds. "The key of A was good, the key of D was good. Worley played a lot in the key of G, and he could always manage to hit that F-sharp up there. Here at the bottom you could move one of the bridges and play in the key of C, after a fashion."

So Gardner's instrument design carried the dulcimer beyond its role as a solo curiosity. Now it could be played in the wider circle of string music, and appealed to more ambitious musicians. Patty notes also that the Gardner brothers' fine woodwork improved the tone of the instrument. "The earliest dulcimers around here were very, very tinny sounding. They used to say

that a man could take just any piece of seasoned wood, and whatever wire he had, and that he would get a hammered dulcimer built. Now, the idea seems to be to make them as mellow as possible."

Once Patty had developed an interest in the hammered dulcimer, she didn't have to look far to find an instrument of her own. Her mother, Edith Looman, had long been West Virginia's most active collector of folk instruments. Patty chose an antique instrument decorated with a pokeberry-juice design and took it back to Michigan. Soon she was performing and teaching everywhere — in the Michigan area during the school year, and home in West Virginia during summers and holidays.

After her retirement from the classroom in 1982, Patty hurried back to West Virginia and threw her considerable energy and enthusiasm into promoting her instrument. She found a variety of opportunities to spread the word.

Russell Fluharty, the original grand old gentleman of the dulcimer, had organized a dulcimer club in Mannington in 1971; five players attended the first meeting. As Russell's energies declined, Patty began to organize and conduct the twice-yearly conventions. Now the meetings usually attract about 100 musicians and friends to Mannington, and Patty conducts the affair with charming authority.

Friends say Patty is busy all the time. Here she unpacks her car to teach a music lesson at a friend's house.

Patty carries on Russell Fluharty's work at the Mountaineer Dulcimer Club. She presides over last fall's meeting in this photograph.

The take-charge manner developed during 35 years in the classroom still serves her well. Patty remembers everyone's name, and introduces each in turn for an opportunity to perform. At this event, master musicians and beginners are treated equally. When it's time for a group tune, Patty's "one, two, three, play!" gets everyone off at the same speed. The Mountaineer Dulcimer convention is the largest dulcimer gathering in the state, and it's one of the most comfortable anywhere. Patty is especially proud that so many closet musicians have felt safe enough to play their first public tunes in this group.

As a stage performer, Patty trusts her audience and her tunes. "Most people would rather hear 'Golden Slippers' and 'Redwing' than hear some really complicated piece of music that they can't follow," she says.

Patty does let her listeners hear a few of the obscure tunes she learned from Fluharty and Gardner, but she always plays plenty of familiar hoedowns, smooth waltzes, gospel tunes, and Carter Family material. She believes that these tunes work on their own, and don't need a lot of help or improvement from the musician. She performs them with

The late Worley Gardner, with a mountain dulcimer of his own making.

Catching Up

GOLDENSEAL has published articles on both of the great past masters of the dulcimer mentioned by Danny Williams in the adjoining story. Russell Fluharty, the 1986 Vandalia Award winner, was featured in the Winter 1986 article, "Russell Fluharty: The Dulcimer Man," by Ken Sullivan. Morgantown freelancer Mark Crabtree wrote and photographed "Worley Gardner: Mountain Music, Dance and Dulcimers" for our Summer 1992 issue.

Back copies of these magazines are available for $3.95 each, plus $1 shipping, through the coupon on page 69.

Patty Looman's main interest is the hammered dulcimer, but that is not the only instrument to carry the name. For a treatment of the other dulcimer, see Danny Williams's "Here all the Time: The Mountain Dulcimer in West Virginia," in the Spring 1988 GOLDENSEAL. We've sold out of that one and recommend you try your local library.

If you would like to order Patty Looman's cassette, "Nothing Fancy," write to her at 1345 Bitonti Street, Star City, WV 26505. The price is $10, plus $1.50 for postage and handling. Patty is also featured on "Mountain Heritage: West Virginia State Folk Festival Sampler 1995." It is available for $10 from Roane Records, Route 3, Box 293, Spencer, WV 25276. The price includes postage and handling.

grace and rhythm, and without distracting embellishments or showy techniques. Patty's approach to performance is summarized in the title of her recording, *Nothing Fancy, Old Favorites for the Hammered Dulcimer*.

Besides her musical ability, Patty possesses a charm and sincerity which easily cross the gap between the stage and the audience. She has become the most active hammered dulcimer performer in West Virginia. Any time you talk to her, she has just played somewhere and is on her way to play somewhere else, and she always reports that she is "enjoying it enormously."

Patty is also the busiest dulcimer teacher in the state, currently seeing about 40 private students. She teaches at home in Morgantown, and drives to Fairmont, Clarksburg, Oakland, Maryland, or wherever someone is willing to learn. Often she can't be persuaded to take any payment for her teaching. By emphasizing her music's origin in Russell Fluharty and Worley Gardner, Patty makes her students aware that this is a tradition, a document of a past time which today's musicians need to understand and preserve. Patty is now teaching Worley Gardner's music to Gardner's grandson, and living around the corner from Worley's widow Margaret.

Patty regularly teaches group classes at Garrett Community College in Maryland and at the Augusta Heritage Workshops in Elkins. These events offer a special opportunity for her to preach her music to students from outside the Appalachian region. Patty says there are plenty of non-teaching performances, as well. "We do clubs, weddings, festivals, nursing homes, or wherever we're wanted."

Like any great teacher, Patty commissions her students to go and teach others. As soon as one of her beginners learns a few tunes, Patty brings them onto the stage or into the classroom. Several of her former students are now quite active themselves, playing and teaching like Patty herself, anywhere they're wanted.

On a recent recording from the West Virginia State Folk Festival, there are two hammered dulcimer performances. Patty plays "West Virginia Waltz," one of Russell Fluharty's signature tunes. Her young student, Eric Cox, performs "Redwing" with his fiddling granddad, Frank George. Listeners who remember Worley Gardner will recognize that master's style in Eric's playing.

Once again, Patty has combined good music with a little lesson in the history of her instrument. Practically all the hammered dulcimer music in the state points back to these two men. "I am trying to keep Russell and Worley's music alive," she says. "Their contribution to West Virginia's heritage is enormous." Now that list has expanded by one, adding Patty Looman's name to those of past masters.

Dulcimer player Patty Looman makes a point.

A Family Tradition: Collecting Old Instruments

Patty Looman's ability to turn everything she touches into music seems to have run in her family.

For many years Patty's parents operated the feed store in Mannington. Occasionally a farmer would offer the Loomans a trade, hoping to save some cash. If the farmer's end of the proposed barter was an old musical instrument, Patty's mother Edith was always ready to deal.

Apparently everyone in the area had fiddles, dulcimers, or guitars sitting around unplayed. Many of the instruments had suffered from too much time in an attic or barn, but Edith Looman wasn't particular. If it had strings, she wanted it.

As the Depression years wore away at the cash supply, the barter system brought a wealth of old instruments into the Looman collection. Edith also searched for instruments at every estate sale, auction, and flea market, and eventually amassed probably the finest collection anywhere of West Virginia stringed instruments.

Shelves in Patty's music room are stacked with hammered dulcimers. As she lifts the heavy instruments onto a stand, Patty points out the interesting features of each.

"See the flower designs painted on this one? The paint is pokeberry juice. The old-timers knew it was a really long-lasting stain," she says.

"These two are from Russell Fluharty. They're a lot simpler than any you see nowadays. There's only the one set of bridges, and the strings are only in groups of two. On the back Russell used paneling, just something like you'd put in your house. In his day no one would ever use something new when there was plenty of scrap around like this."

The demonstration goes on, with dulcimers by at least a dozen builders from West Virginia. Several others are unidentified, but recognizably old. Patty also continues to collect, and has several fine dulcimers by today's craftsmen.

Patty Looman is a collector of music and old musical instruments. This ornately carved lap dulcimer is typical of the things which delight her. Photo by Danny Williams.

The Looman lap dulcimer collection reflects the greater popularity of this instrument in the mountains. The dulcimers were built in a variety of shapes and sizes, and in styles from masterful to "rough as a goose's foot."

There are traditional three-string dulcimers, and every other number up to six strings. One has a gourd body and a slender banjo-like neck, one is arched like a fiddle, and another has the false bottom characteristic of the "Galax-style" dulcimer. One has the date 1816 scratched on it.

Patty is sorry now that she didn't ask her mother sooner to write down what she knew about the history of the items in her collection. "Documentation just didn't seem that important to us at the time," she says. "When we did think to try and get this information, Mom's memory was starting to go."

The stack Patty calls "miscellaneous" contains a wealth of fiddles, mostly by area craftsmen. Several of these are crudely made, produced by amateurs who needed an instrument and lacked the cash to buy one. One fiddle has the classic cigar-box body, but like most of Patty's instruments, it is playable.

Not all of the instruments in Patty's collection are products of the hills. She pulls one guitar from the stack and explains, "When I was a girl, radio stations had live musicians on the air instead of recordings. Our local station was WMMN from Fairmont, and my favorite was Cowboy Loy, who played the guitar and sang in just a lovely voice. Of course, the stations had all manner of items for the fans to buy. My mother bought me the Cowboy Loy guitar, and this is it."

The little guitar has cowboy-motif decals under its lacquer, and looks new. Patty tunes it and strums, and it still sounds fine.

— Danny Williams

Get Well Wishes to Patty Looman

Just as the winter issue was going to press we heard from writer Danny Williams and photographer Mark Crabtree that Patty Looman was in the hospital in Morgantown with a broken hip. She stepped the wrong way off a curb in Maryland where she had been teaching dulcimer music to an Elderhostel group.

"It hurts," she told us. But her spirits were fine and she even managed to play a good bit of music during the hospital stay. "When things happen, you have to get out of it as best you can and get about your business again," Patty said.

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.

Tamarack on the Turnpike

Travelers on the West Virginia Turnpike have most likely noticed a huge crown-shaped structure under construction at the Beckley Travel Plaza. Known as "Tamarack," the building is scheduled to open this coming spring.

The West Virginia Parkways Authority is working with West Virginia artists and craftspeople to stock the new facility. They have also held meetings around the state to gather suggestions and general input on the operation of Tamarack. Craft materials are being incorporated into the design as well, according to architect Clint Bryan.

Tamarack was planned as a major tourist attraction and will offer arts and crafts of every kind from traditional to contemporary, decorative to functional, and classical to whimsical. Tamarack will also feature recordings, videos, magazines and books.

The Parkways Authority works closely with the state's craftspeople in marketing their works. The state agency also publishes a newsletter, "Grapevine," with useful information for artists, craftspeople and buyers. Recent issues included articles on copyrights, fairs and festivals, workshops, and the "West Virginia Made" warehouse. For more information contact the Parkways Authority at 252B George Street, Beckley, WV 25801; (304) 256-6702.

Fairs and Festivals

Each spring GOLDENSEAL publishes a comprehensive listing of

The Mountain Heritage Arts & Crafts Festival, as photographed by Hunter Johnston.

fairs and festivals in the Mountain State — those with a traditional flavor. If you would like your event listed, we'd like to hear from you.

We are interested in fairs or festivals that relate directly to the state's traditional culture, and publish only as many events as our limited space permits. Send in your listing by January 15 for consideration in the 1996 "Folklife, Fairs, Festivals" calendar. Please include the name of the event, dates, location, and the contact person or organization, along with a mailing address and phone number.

Kitchen Incubator Opens

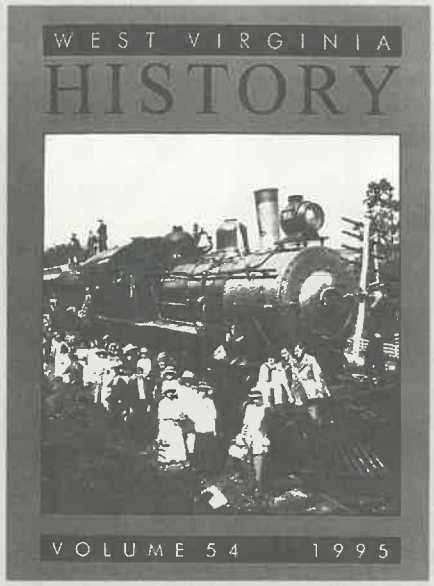
There's a new kitchen in White Sulphur Springs, operating in the spirit of the community canneries which older West Virginians will recall from Roosevelt days. Greenbrier County's "Kitchen Incubator" is for specialty food producers. It is the second such operation to open in

Annual Journal In Print

West Virginia History, published by the Archives and History section of the Division of Culture and History, is now available. Volume 54 of the annual journal was published this past summer. Industrialization and social change are the recurring themes in the new issue, spanning more than 200 years of West Virginia's history.

The first article is about Virginius Island, a small strip of land in the Shenandoah River near Harpers Ferry that was the site of several industrial enterprises between 1800 and 1860. The diversity of West Virginia's population is explored in "The Jews of Clarksburg: Community Adaptation and Survival, 1900-60." Another article looks at McDowell County's reaction to the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, desegregating public schools in 1954.

West Virginia History has several other articles, as well as book reviews and notes on state and regional topics and a list of



recent accessions to several special collections and archives in the state. The 198-page softbound publication is fully indexed. The history journal sells for $12. Subscriptions and orders should be sent to *West Virginia History*, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Call (304)558-0220 for more information.

West Virginia under the sponsorship of the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, Mountain Resources Conservation and Development Area, and the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.

The new facility, located in White Sulphur's Green Devil Civic Center, is a state-of-the-art commercial kitchen. It is FDA-approved and has the necessary equipment and facilities for small businesses which otherwise would not be able to afford them.

West Virginia's original kitchen incubator is in Beckwith, Fayette County. The White Sulphur Springs kitchen serves residents of Greenbrier, Monroe and Pocahontas counties, according to manager John Gunnoe and Clyde Bowling, the chairman of Mountain Resources.

Cindy Martel of the Department of Agriculture says the kitchen is rented by the hour. The funds are used to operate the kitchen and improve equipment. Both the Department of Agriculture and Mountain Resources assist producers with technical, production, packaging and marketing needs.

"The demand for home-based Mountain State products has exploded," Martel says. For more information on the White Sulphur Springs kitchen contact Cindy Martel at (304)574-3036 or John Gunnoe at (304)536-2010.

Prison Tours Continue

The old West Virginia State Penitentiary in Moundsville will be open to the public for tours every weekend through the end of the

GEORGE KOSSUTH

year, and in January and February weather permitting. Tickets are $5 per person with discounts for groups numbering more than 25.

Thanks for the stamps!

Those receiving our fall subscription reminder found a special message in the upper left corner of the postpaid reply envelope: "Your stamp will save us much-needed funds!"

That is our invitation for you to stretch your subscription payment a little further by adding a first-class stamp to the return envelope. Most folks did, and we sincerely thank them. The post office reimburses our business reply account a full 32 cents for each stamp received this way. It looks like the total will come to a few thousand dollars in postal savings this year.

We will still cover the postage if you won't, so don't let the lack of a stamp delay your renewal. But if you can spare the stamp we appreciate it. Those pennies add up on this end, and we can definitely put them all to good use.

Saturday hours are 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday hours are noon to 5:00 p.m. The walking tours begin at the Eighth Street Wagon Gate. Tours depart every 20 minutes and last about 45 minutes. The tour depicts life behind the walls of the prison, which was built in 1866 and closed only this year. The old prison was the Summer 1995 GOLDENSEAL cover story. The Moundsville Economic Development Council recently ordered reprints of the article, and they are being sold during the tours.

For more information contact the tour information office at (304) 843-1993. Reservations are required for large groups.

New Wilson Douglas Tape

Clay Countian Wilson Douglas recently released "Back Porch Symphony," a cassette recording reflecting years of fiddling experience and the rich musical legacy Douglas so willingly carries on.

Wilson Douglas began fiddling when he was 13 and remembers it was during the severe cold winter of 1935-36 [GOLDENSEAL, Winter 1977]. His music was influenced by his grandmother and especially by the late French Carpenter, who learned from his father Tom Carpenter, who had learned from his father Solomon. "Carpenter drove me all the time and he kept telling me he had a bad heart condition and he said, 'I want to push you all I can,'" Wilson recalls. "He was a wonderful old-time musician."

The same may be said of Wilson Douglas today. His fiddling style and sound are all his own, but firmly rooted in the music of those who came before him. On "Back Porch Symphony" Wilson emphasizes old-time tunes learned from the likes of French Carpenter, Lee Triplett, Burl Hammons and grandmother Rosie Morris. Old-time fans will recognize such tunes as "Brushy Run," "Pretty Little Cat," "Cluck Old Hen," "Cold Frosty Morning" and "Run Johnny Run." "Cotton-Eyed Joe" shows off Wilson's old-time bowing style.

"Back Porch Symphony" may be ordered from Wilson Douglas, 143 Spencer Road, Clendenin, WV 25045. The cassette sells for $10 plus $1 postage and handling.

Genealogical Society Reprints

Another rare West Virginia county history was recently reprinted by the West Virginia Genealogical Society. J. R. Cole's *History of Greenbrier County* was first published in 1917, and the Society believes there are fewer than five copies of the original book left in the state. The reprint, a hardbound publication nearly 400 pages long, is fully indexed and illustrated. The book sells for $40 and may be shipped for an additional charge of $5.

The Society's book committee has produced a good many reprints of particular interest to genealogists and local historians. Their publica-

tions list includes Laidley's *History of Charleston and Kanawha County* at $65 and an every-name *Index for Laidley's History*. George W. Atkinson's *History of Kanawha County*, originally printed in 1876, sells for $33. Marriage records for Clay County, 1858-1958, and Kanawha County, 1869-1884, have been reprinted, along with early court records for Kanawha County, 1789-1803. The Society has also reproduced Kanawha County censuses for 1830, 1840, 1850, and 1870; the 1880 census for Roane County; and the 1820 Greenbrier County census. Back issues of "The Log," the Society's quarterly newsletter, are also available.

For more information contact the WVGS Book Committee, P.O. Box 14, Blue Creek, WV 25026-0014; or call Ella May at (304)965-1043.

Researchers and genealogists should also note the new Mining Your History Foundation, formed this past spring. The group publishes the quarterly newsletter "Mountain News" and provides a way for its members to work together on a statewide basis. The Mining Your History Foundation also plans to provide volunteers and financial support for the West Virginia State Archives. For more information contact Mining Your History Foundation, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston WV 25305-0300.

Leaving Ireland

Francis J. Gallagher emigrated from Ireland as a young man in the 1940's. The Fall 1993 GOLDENSEAL article "Migrating to the Mountain State: An Irishman Comes to The Greenbrier" told some of his story. Now Mr. Gallagher has written *Leaving Ireland*, a 216-page softbound book chronicling his early years on the rugged northwest coast of Ireland and describing how he came to leave there.

Mr. Gallagher's life in Ireland and his eventual departure revolved around the sea. His home parish of Inniskeel offered only one way to make real money, and when he was 16 Frank Gallagher was fishing for herring in the cold, dark waters of the Atlantic. His initial trip yielded

Frank Gallagher and his mother, at home in Ireland.

10,800 herring, and his first decent payday. He began to see a way to America.

Gallagher eventually makes his way to Belfast and leaves there as a servant aboard the 23,000-ton liner *Strathaird* bound for London, Egypt, Arabia, Ceylon and Australia. His next berth aboard the *Aquitania* took him to Canada and from there the 84,000-ton *Queen Mary* took him to New York. He heard about a huge resort in West Virginia hiring experienced hotel waiters and that's how The Greenbrier and White Sulphur Springs came to be his new home.

Frank Gallagher tells a fascinating story. With language as colorful as his characters, he writes of his struggles and ultimate success with plenty of heart. To order *Leaving Ireland* write Plimsoll Press, HC 69 Box 220, White Sulphur Springs, WV 24986 or call 1-800-527-6345. *Leaving Ireland* sells for $11.95, plus $1.95 shipping and handling.

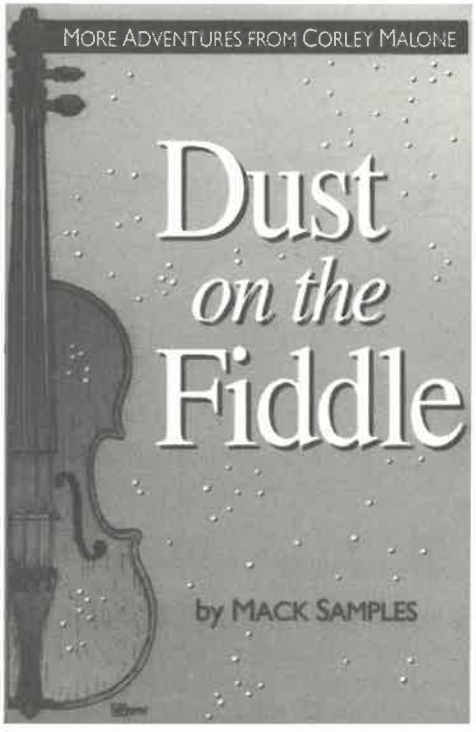
Mack's Back!

Friends who were startled by Mack Samples's unexpected firing by Glenville State were soon more pleasantly surprised to discover that the old-time musician and former college registrar was also a closet novelist. His popular book, *Doodle Bug, Doodle Bug, Your House Is on Fire*, was published last year.

Now Corley Malone, the 1950's Elk Valley youth portrayed in *Doodle Bug*, is back in a new book, *Dust on the Fiddle*. Corley is out of high school and out of the service, and he's been around. But his solid country values and native West Virginia contrariness remain intact, and he is ready to settle down, a little. He enrolls at fictitious Mountain View State College and soon enters into battle with the despotic college president. The novel plays itself out around that dispute as well as Corley's music and a love interest or two.

Mountaineers are taught from the cradle not to put on airs, that we're no better than other folks — but that, by golly, nobody on the planet is better than we are. Corley has that attitude, in spades. If you do, you will understand him very well.

The language in *Dust on the Fiddle* is a little raw in places and there are a few typographical problems, but overlook those and you are in for a rollicking read. The book, a 254-page paperback printed by McClain Printing Company of Parsons, sells for $12 at bookstores or at the same price, postpaid, direct from the author. Send mail orders to Mack Samples, P.O. Box 145, Clay, WV 25043.



Goldenseal Index

Volume 21, 1995

Articles which appeared in Volume 21 are indexed below, under the categories of Subject, Author, Photographer, and Location.

In the Subject category, articles are listed under their main topic, with many cross-referenced under alternate Subject headings. Each entry is followed by the seasonal designation of the issue, issue volume and number and page number. Short notices, such as appear in the regular column, "Current Programs, Events, Publications," are not included in the index.

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

SUBJECT

New To GOLDENSEAL?

We're glad to make your acquaintance and hope you want to see more of us. You may do so by returning the coupon with your subscription check for $16. You will find a place there for a friend's name as well.

Thanks—and welcome to the GOLDENSEAL family!

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The Cultural Center
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AUTHOR

PHOTOGRAPHER

LOCATION

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION REQUIRED BY 39 U.S.C. 3685 FOR GOLDENSEAL: WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL LIFE (U.S.P.S. No. 013336), Filing date October 31, 1995, published quarterly, at The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Number of issues published annually: 4. Annual subscription price: $16. The general business offices of the publisher are located at The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

The names and addresses of the publisher, editor and managing editor are: publisher, West Virginia Division of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300; editor, Ken Sullivan, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300; managing editor, Ken Sullivan, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

The owner is: West Virginia Division of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: NONE.

Publication Name: Goldenseal: West Virginia Traditional Life
Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Fall 1995 (October)

The average number of copies of each issue during the preceding 12 months are:
A) Total no. of copies printed:
Net press run: 31,875
B) Paid and/or Requested Circulation:
1) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors and Counter Sales (Not Mailed) 871
2) Paid or Requested Mail Subscriptions (Include Advertisers' Proof Copies/Exchange Copies) 23,742
C) Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 24,613
D) Free Distribution by Mail, (Samples, Complimentary and Other Free) 6,305
E) Free Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or Other Means) -0-
F) Total Free Distribution 6,305
G) Total Distribution 30,918
H) Copies Not Distributed
1) Office Use, Leftovers, Spoiled 663
2) Return from News Agents 294
I) Total 31,875
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 80%

The actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date are:
A) Total no. of copies printed:
Net Press Run: 32,000
B) Paid and/or Requested Circulation:
1)Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors and Counter Sales (Not Mailed) 1,032
2) Paid or Requested Mail Subscriptions (Include Advertisers' Proof Copies/Exchange Copies) 24,109
C) Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation 25,141
D) Free Distribution by Mail (Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free) 5,910
E) Free Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or Other Means) -0-
F) Total Free Distribution 5,910
G) Total Distribution 31,051
H) Copies Not Distributed
1) Office Use, Leftover, Spoiled 949
2) Return from News Agents -0-
I) Total 32,000
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 81%
I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
Ken Sullivan, Editor

Our Writers and Photographers

LARRY BARTLETT, a native of Wood County, recently returned to West Virginia after being away for 39 years. He earned his Master of Fine Arts at Tulane University in New Orleans and went on to work as a college instructor, reporter, cartoonist, and art director in New York City, New Orleans, and Colorado. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Spring 1995.

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 Summer 1994.

LUCILLE GRIFFIN is executive director of the American Chestnut Cooperators Foundation and has worked with the organization since 1984. She says "the next most interesting thing to raising children is raising trees." Her first article about chestnuts appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

AMAZETTA JACKSON was born in Cabell County 76 years ago and says she has "a lot of memories." She now lives in Ohio and recently completed a book manuscript about life with her grandparents in the coal camps of Logan County in the 1920's. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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

JANE M. KRAINA, a Weston native, spent much of her childhood overseas. After returning to West Virginia, she attended WVU and West Liberty State and earned an M.S. in journalism from WVU. She works at the Mary H. Weir Public Library in Weirton. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1989.

GERALD MILNES works for the Augusta Heritage Center at Davis & Elkins College. He is a native of Pennsylvania and has written numerous articles for GOLDENSEAL on such subjects as heirloom vegetables, traditional crafts and music. A fine old-time musician, Gerry wrote the children's book *Granny Will Your Dog Bite And Other Mountain Rhymes*.

PEGGY ROSS was born in Ohio where she worked as a journalist and in public relations for most of her professional life. She is the mother of four children and recently became a grandmother. Peggy moved to Preston County in 1988 with her husband to occupy his 200-year-old homeplace. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Summer 1994.

C. C. STEWART served as a West Virginia State Policeman from 1935 to 1955, and later also retired from the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, sheriff's department. He served four years in the Navy during World War II. Stewart says while doing strike duty in Widen, he was "on the excitement plan — lots of things were happening." This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

DANNY WILLIAMS, a native of Wayne County now living in Boone, is a former folk arts specialist for the Division of Culture and History. He holds an M.A. in English from WVU where he has taught English and worked as an archivist for the West Virginia and Regional History Collection. He teaches music and is a regular contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

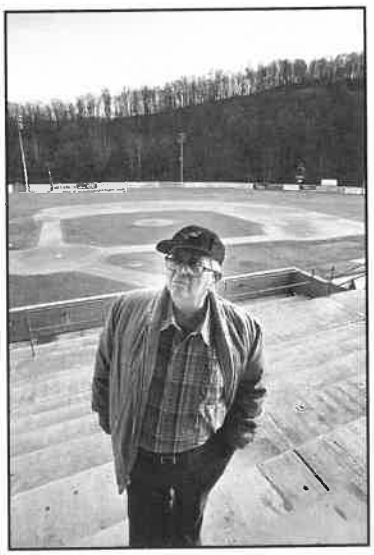
C. M. WAYBRIGHT was born at Staats Mill in Jackson County and now lives in Wood. Bird dogs and shotguns are his passion and he has published articles on hunting and "other ramblings" in *Quail Unlimited*. The idea for his GOLDENSEAL essay came to him at a concert where his wife introduced him to classical music. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

BOB WITHERS, a Huntington native, is a copy editor at the *Huntington Herald-Dispatch* and pastor of the Seventh Avenue Baptist Church. A Marshall University journalism graduate, he describes himself as a lifelong railroad enthusiast. He has written for *Moody Monthly*, *Trains*, and *Grit*. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1991.

Bluefield Loses Mr. Baseball

Cal Ripkin, Jr., gained a record and lost an old associate on September 6, 1995. George Fanning, who managed the Bluefield Orioles during Ripkin's time there, died the very day Ripkin broke the major league consecutive games record.

And George Fanning's time in baseball exceeded Ripkin's, in fact. The subject of a Spring 1990 GOLDENSEAL story, Fanning babied the Baby Birds for nearly half a century. He oversaw the daily care of the field, the stadium, and the front office. His role as general manager was constant whether the season was good, bad or great — and ironically 1995 was the best year ever for Bluefield. The team saw a win/loss record of 46-15, high attendance, and vast improvements to their ballpark.



MICHAEL KELLER

When the Baltimore Orioles took over Bluefield's farm team in 1958, it was the beginning of the longest such affiliation on record. Over the years the southern West Virginia town saw its share of future Oriole greats. Ripkin is remembered as a gentleman who was devoted to baseball, but GOLDENSEAL freelancer Stuart McGehee said he didn't have a good year in the Appalachian League.

In a farewell editorial, the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* commented on the notoriety George Fanning had achieved as a spokesman for rookie league baseball. "He wasn't in it for the fame. He was in it for the game," Fanning's hometown paper wrote.

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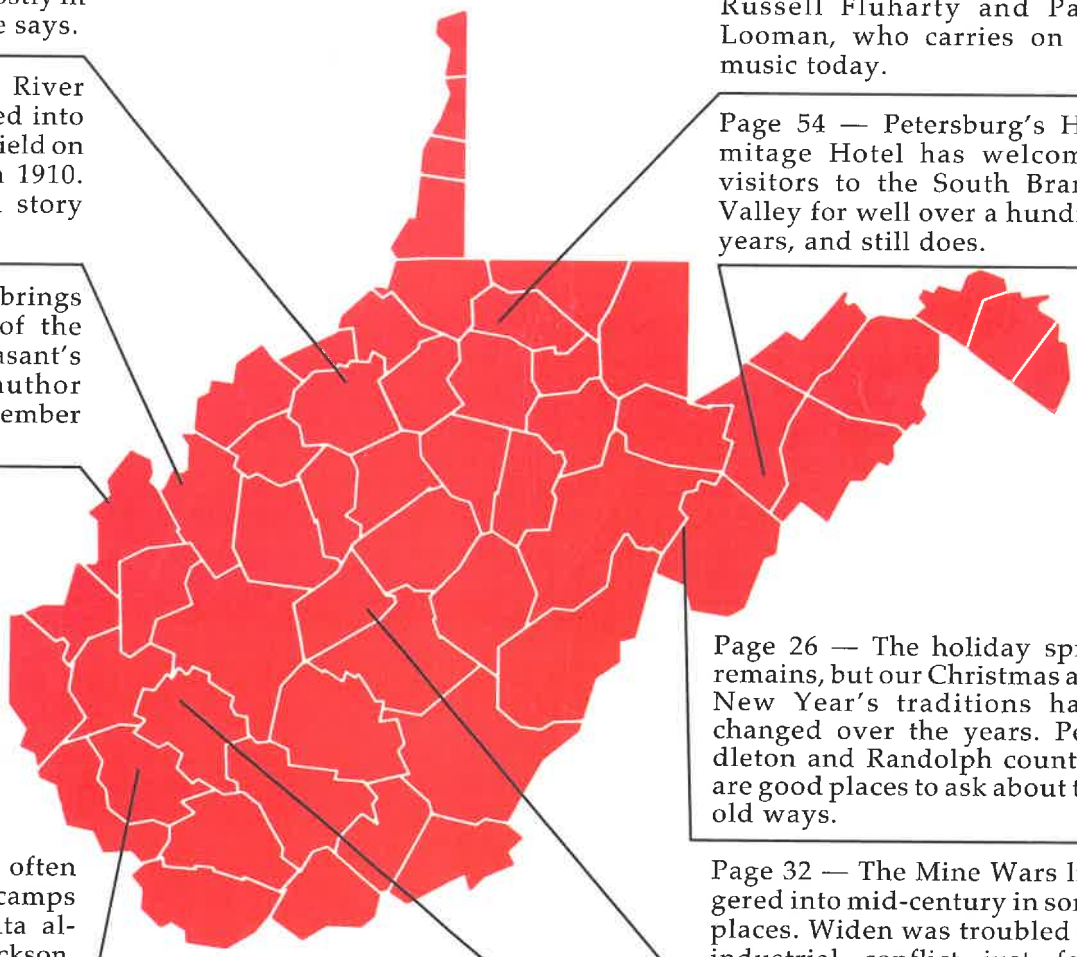
Inside Goldenseal



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