

# Goldenseal

## Bringing the Steel Driver Home

Family Fun in Preston County

Cool by the Pool

Summer Camp

And More!



## From The Editor: The Big Bus Trip

Pardon the bragging, but I think we have outdone ourselves in planning this fall's big bus trip.

The autumn expeditions are getting to be an annual tradition, and this is our third. The first GOLDENSEAL bus trip, back in 1994, carried us down the edge of the southern coalfields and through neighboring areas to the east, and last fall we rambled across the Eastern Panhandle. This year's trip covers much of the ground in between.

We will roll out of Charleston on Friday morning, October 11, heading up Elk River to Sutton. We travel from Sutton to Helvetia in the mountains of Randolph County. Helvetia, as faithful readers know, was founded last century by Swiss settlers and still cherishes its Old World heritage. Eleanor Mailloux of the Hutte Restaurant has promised us lunch in the tasty Swiss style, and we've booked a walking tour with Helvetia native Bruce Betler.

From there we swing over to Durbin, a frontier-style timber boomtown at the time of the 1900 shootout featured in our Spring '94 issue.

And then its on to Cass, everybody's favorite sawmill town. We spend the night in the historic company houses, rehabilitated to modern standards and now part of the state park. We will pretty much own Cass while we're there, taking all but a couple of the cottages.

We have wonderful things planned, with a bounteous evening barbecue as well as food in the Mennonite tradition from local cooks and bakers, a Cass town tour, and entertainment by Dwight Diller. Dwight is one of our most authentic mountain musicians and just about worth a trip to Cass all by himself.

We won't be taking the Cass train ride, by the way, concentrating instead on the things ordinary visitors usually can't do. Catch the train on your next trip, if you haven't already had that pleasure, and this time let us offer you the special treats which GOLDENSEAL's unique contacts in the local culture make possible. You won't regret it.

Next morning we roll deeper into Pocahontas County, making our first stop of the day at the county seat of Marlinton. Jane Price Sharp, editor emerita of the *Pocahontas Times*, has agreed to meet us there. Jane is the daughter of the legendary Calvin Price, the distinguished pipe-smoking gent on GOLDENSEAL's Summer 1990 cover, and herself a grand West Virginian.

Then it's on down Route 219 to lunch at Four Winds Restaurant, a local landmark located in the old R. D. Moore Hardware Store at Hillsboro. Pearl Buck's birthplace is just up the road, but since she hasn't made it into the pages of GOLDENSEAL we'll just wave as we go by and get our knees under the table that much quicker.

We'll have to tuck in our shirts and comb our hair after that, for our next stop is one of the great destina-

tions in the world, the magnificent Greenbrier resort at White Sulphur Springs. I'm afraid we can't offer you overnight lodgings on a GOLDENSEAL budget, but we have something which in its own way may be even better — a backstairs, behind-the-scenes tour with veteran Greenbrier waiter Frank Gallagher.

Frank, as you may remember from the Fall '93 GOLDENSEAL, is an Irish immigrant who worked at The Greenbrier for decades, serving President Eisenhower among many other VIP's. Dr. Robert Conte, official Greenbrier historian, helped with the arrangements and promises to be present for the tour.

Time permitting, we will work in one last stop on the way home, slipping in to historic Camp Washington-Carver in Fayette County for light refreshments and a leg stretcher.

The trip is a nice time for GOLDENSEAL staff and readers to get together, and we will invite local freelancers to dine with us along the way.

We will visit with other nice folks, as well. I usually try to avoid name dropping, but I see that I sprinkled plenty of names above. Almost all these people have been in the magazine, and of course that is the whole point — to bring the pages of

GOLDENSEAL alive for a select group of readers.

And by select I mainly mean fast. We take reservations on a first-come, first-served basis and past trips have sold out in a hurry. One traveler last year told me he got his summer magazine as his mailman headed up the street, filled out the coupon and handed it back to the mailman as the mail truck headed down the block on the other side.

I don't know that it's necessary to be *that* quick, but please do let us hear from you soon if you're interested in making the trip. There is a reservation coupon on page 72 with all the details and fine print.

The price you'll find there is actually lower than last year, if you will permit me one last boastful note. That reflects lower costs we've been able to negotiate on certain items, and we're pleased to pass the savings along. Of course, we do build in a margin which goes to support the magazine — no use doing it, otherwise — but at the same time we try to keep the price as reasonable as possible.

In other words, if you decide to make the trip you'll be doing a good deed for your favorite magazine while you're having a good time — and getting a pretty good deal, too.

—Ken Sullivan



MICHAEL KELLER

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# Goldenseal

Volume 22, Number 2

Summer 1996

COVER: John Henry belongs to the world, but he made his name in Summers County. He will be honored at the Big Bend when his stamp is released in July. Our story begins on page 9; image courtesy U.S. Postal Service.

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PHOTOS: Bessie Allen, Doug Chadwick, Greg Clark, Craig Cunningham, Michael Keller, John E. Kenna, Gerald Milnes, Melissa Moore, Ron Rittenhouse, Jim York

# 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.

January 1, 1996  
Valencia, California  
Editor:

When my husband and I return home to visit our families — his in St. Albans, mine in Logan County — I always steal away to my father-in-law's basement to read his back copies of GOLDENSEAL. He has been subscribing for years.

Your magazine helps me feel closer to home. My husband and I are in the entertainment business, and left West Virginia in the late '80's to seek our fortunes elsewhere. Unfortunately, we had gone as far as you could go in West Virginia at that time. We had both worked for Theatre West Virginia in Beckley for several years.

Both of us hope to return to West Virginia, and your magazine (when I get to read it) helps to ease the pangs of homesickness.

A faithful and slightly behind reader,  
Denise Gillman

## Kanawha City Memories

March 28, 1996  
Huttonsville, West Virginia  
Editor:

Thanks for printing Jeff A. Green's article, "A. O. Barnette's Neighborhood: Changing Times in Kanawha City." As a resident of that home on



CRAIG CUNNINGHAM

Changing times in Kanawha City.

Lancaster Avenue the writing brought back waves of memories of the neighborhood, landmarks, and

characters both young and old.

The twin plants, Libbey-Owens-Ford and Owens-Illinois, supplied more than an income to its employees. They had a social conscience that eclipses the industrial giants of today, and which resulted in a community spirit of pride and cooperation unheard of by current standards.

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*"It was not uncommon for the likes of Mark Workman, "Hot-Rod" Hundley, Nemo Nearman — and yes, Jerry West — to appear. Just older kids that were better than we were."*

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They supplied transportation for elementary children on cold frosty mornings and a return trip. And although a hospital was within a block, their emergency infirmaries would not turn away the scuffed knee of an overly zealous pre-teen who had awkwardly rounded third base.

They supplied summer recreation in the form of picnics, as well as fast-pitch Industrial League softball played in full uniform, under the lights, with roofed bleachers, a real dug-out and "color" supplied by local sports personages.

There was a regulation-sized basketball court on the corner of 57th Street. It had tiered bleachers, a regulation clock, sound system, showers with lockers. There was time set aside after school and before dinner for the kids [to play]. It was not uncommon for the likes of Mark Workman, "Hot-Rod" Hundley, Nemo Nearman — and yes, Jerry West — to appear in the doorway. We didn't know who they

were, just older kids that were better than we were.

There was the plant carnival, looked forward to by all of Kanawha City. It was surprisingly professional, with side shows, a variety of rides, and of course games. All manned by plant personnel. Would you give up a week-end of your life, unpaid, to "work" for the community?

The Union Hall was a block and a half west. It hosted numerous formal and informal dinners and dances. It was the local precinct voting spot, and a hotbed of activity during strikes.

Every major religious denomination was represented within walking distance. Sunday mornings were like a parade of dressed-up families walking to church. [After church] the local restaurants, including MacArthur's Grill, the Southern Kitchen and Cassem's were full.

It was a neighborhood where hourly wage earners lived side by side with skilled tradesmen and craftsmen, and college-educated engineers and administrators. Crime and delinquency were almost nonexistent. Find a place like that today.

Times were simple back then. And good.

Sincerely,  
Ben F. Morris III

## Robbery Recollections

March 13, 1996  
Shinnston, West Virginia  
Editor:

I got my copy of GOLDENSEAL today and I never laid it down until I finished the story on the Buffalo Bank robbery. After all of these years how did Mr. Stewart remember all the dates, names and details and how did he come up with the pictures? That was a well-written article and very interesting to me [as a retired state policeman]. I rec-

ognized C. P. Taylor and Mike Murphy before reading the caption.

I was at the bank robbery at Wadestown, Monongalia County. It was more exciting than the Buffalo job because one robber was shot dead at the scene and another severely wounded. Right now I can't even think of the dead man's name; the wounded one was Roy Taylor of the Mannington area. I helped guard him at the hospital in Morgantown for about a week or until the federal authorities removed him. I have no idea what year it was except that it had to be between 1935 and 1938, when I was stationed in Morgantown. Captain D. C. Bailey, Lieutenant E. E. Stout, Sergeant R. P. Harris, Corporal W. E. Murphy, Corporal C. C. Taylor and myself were the only ones that I can remember being there. They all are dead now but me.

The robber that was killed fired the first shot and the bullet hit the ground in front of Lieutenant Stout. I always thought that R. P. Harris cut the robber down with a riot shotgun loaded with buckshot. I think Taylor had seven or eight holes in him. I often wonder if there is anything in the State Police files about that bank robbery.

There is one thing about that job that I will never forget. Corporal W. E. Murphy and myself were sent to tell the wounded Roy Taylor's mother about what happened. She was sitting on a back porch peeling potatoes when we approached.

The first thing she said was, "What in the hell has Roy done this time?" Murphy said, "He got shot today while robbing a bank."

She said, "The hell you say."  
Sincerely,  
Eli Stark

*Thanks for writing. As noted in the spring issue, we are indebted to Trooper Mike Murphy's widow for the photos. — ed.*

March 16, 1996  
Burlington, West Virginia  
Editor:

The Spring 1996 issue of GOLD-ENSEAL is outstanding. As I read each article, I was transported back into bygone days and relived some of my past.

The car the Buffalo Bank robbers

used as a getaway vehicle was not a wise choice. Although the Hudson was a very fast automobile, they were not very common and stuck out like the proverbial sore thumb. I can attest to the speed as I owned a 1951 Hudson Hornet.

I also enjoyed "The Recollections of Robinson Fork," especially the reference to polecat grease. It reminded me of a story a retired school teacher friend told on one of her pupils. She had one student who disliked school intensely, so he would grease himself quite generously with polecat grease. As the warmth of the school room increased so did the aroma emanating from the boy. He would be sent home for the remainder of the day. Of course, that was his intention all along.

It was interesting to read of the trials and triumphs of Clennie Workman, but the car he and his cousin are sitting on is a 1925 or 1926 Chevrolet, not a Model A.

Enclosed is payment for my subscription renewal and another year's worth of great stories.

Yours truly,  
Ed Weaver

**Ford or Chevy?**

March 29, 1996  
Wheeling, West Virginia  
Editor:

I wish to comment about a picture in the spring issue of GOLD-



ENSEAL. On page 21, you identify the car as a Model A Ford. I think it is a 1926 Chevrolet.

Sincerely,  
Charles R. Muldrew

*Thanks — we appreciate the sharp eye. Ed Weaver also says it's a Chevrolet in his letter above, and as the owner of*

*Mineral County's gas station museum (GOLDENSEAL, Fall 1993) Ed knows cars. We checked with the Henry Ford Museum, and they figure it's a mid-20's Chevy as well. — ed.*

**John Hartford's Steamboat Story**

March 19, 1996  
Batavia, Ohio  
Editor:

Because my husband stashes all the good stuff in his briefcase (or banjo case) and carts it to his office, I sometimes don't get to read GOLD-ENSEAL unless I can get to the mailbox first! Hence the lateness of this letter.

In the Spring 1996 "Letters from Readers" you replied to Mr. Brandt's letter regarding his concern for your omission of the John Hartford book *Steamboat in a Cornfield* in your article about the fate of the packet boat *Virginia*. I had also read through the article and was alarmed when I noticed Hartford's

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*"Shame on you! My heart fell and my dander arose when you missed this opportunity to urge readers to use their public library."*

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skillful research was completely ignored. You stated, "We didn't mention *Steamboat in a Cornfield* because the book is out of print and off the market."

Tch, tch, tch, shame on you! My heart fell and my dander arose when you missed this opportunity to urge readers to check out the book in their public library. Hartford's research skills and expertise at storytelling are both featured in this glorious little tale and should not have been dismissed simply because the book is out of print. That's why the wonderful public library is there for us avid history buffs, who already realize that most of our favorite stories ARE out of print and off the market! Please remember your public library.

Hartford did, and he mentioned

the special Inland Rivers Collection in the Rare Book Department of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County as one of his resources for hard-to-find photographs of mighty steamboats and the men who piloted them.

I am a John Hartford fan, children's librarian, and still an eager reader of GOLDENSEAL, whenever I can get my hands on it. Barbara J. Childers

*You're right — we missed a chance to promote library use, and we apologize. We understand that Steamboat in a Cornfield is in 13 branches of West Virginia's fine public library system, and we urge our readers to check it out. — ed.*

### Our Cover Boy's Grandson

March 19, 1996  
East Dubuque, Illinois  
Editor:

You can imagine my surprise when I received the Spring 1996 issue of GOLDENSEAL. There on the cover, smiling out at me, was my grandfather, Arthur Kenna. That very picture hangs on the wall of our home out here in far northwestern Illinois.

Arthur Kenna took after his father. He was employed as a photographer for the State of West Vir-



JOHN E. KENNA

ginia and was a lifelong avid fisherman. He carved his own musky lures, tied his own flies and fashioned his own rods, all of which are

still in our family.

Your article indicated that John E. Kenna's father died when the future senator was eight years old. In fact, his father (my great-great-grandfather, Edward) was assassinated by his three brothers-in-law in the lobby of the Kanawha Hotel in Charleston in 1855. The cause of this violent family rift was the impending divorce suit brought by Edward Kenna, a lawyer, against his wife and my great-great-grandmother, Marjorie Lewis of the Lewisburg Lewises. The assassins were not prosecuted for this public murder, and one of them removed to Missouri, became a county sheriff, and was the uncle mentioned in your article as having taken in young John E. Kenna and his mother and sister in Missouri.

A very interesting family, indeed. Sincerely,  
John E. Kenna V

### Appalachian Ways

March 18, 1996  
Huntington, West Virginia  
Editor:

Patricia Workman's essay, "Recollections of Robinson Fork: Nicholas County Rural Life" [Spring 1996] was a super bit of Appalachian lore. Without wincing, she showed the undaunted character of mountain folk.

Sincerely,  
Danny Fulks

*It is good to hear from Professor Fulks, occasional GOLDENSEAL writer and himself the author of a new book of Appalachia lore. His Tales Along the Appalachian Plateau may be purchased at Huntington's Renaissance Bookstore and other bookstores for \$9.95. Send mail orders to Bottom Dog Press, Huron, OH 44839. — ed.*

### Mine Wars Memories

February 2, 1996  
Lorida, Florida  
Editor:

I am sending a check for another copy of your book on the mine wars. I enjoyed it very much. I lived in

Logan County from 1930 until the '40's with my uncle, Millard "Red" Cassidy. He was appointed a union rep by John L. Lewis in the mid-'30's.

My uncle fought for the union in Logan County, plus the adjoining counties. He first started at Mallory where he lived until 1938 or '39.

He then moved to Logan. He also was in Kentucky fighting for the union, in Harlan County. This is where gas was thrown beneath his hotel room door. From then on he had health problems. He died at age 42 and is buried at Pecks Mill in Logan County.

I want this copy for his daughter, Rae Cassidy Miller, who lives here in Florida. She and her husband Jerry were raised in Boone County. Rae was small when her father died. Millard also had a son, Millard, Jr., who lives in Ohio.

I am 75 years old and remember back in those days when the union was still trying to get a foothold in West Virginia and Kentucky.

I remember when the mine thugs came and got him at Mallory. The union guys followed and got him back from the thugs. It was very frightening.

In 1937 I married Russell Chafin, now deceased, who was a distant cousin of Don Chafin. When I told my Uncle Millard I'd run off to Paintsville, Kentucky, and married a Chafin, his reply was, "I've fought that damned Don Chafin for years and now you've gone and married a Chafin!"

Thank you,  
Helen Chafin Wickline

*We appreciate your enthusiasm for the GOLDENSEAL Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars. Other interested readers will find a coupon in this issue. — ed.*



West Virginia is  
wherever you are,  
with a subscription to  
**Goldenseal**  
See coupon on page 70.

# Buffalo Banker W. L. Smith

April 13, 1996

Saint Albans, West Virginia

Editor:

Concerning the Buffalo Bank robbery, the names in the caption were mixed up. My dad, W. L. Smith, cashier of the Buffalo Bank, is seated, using the telephone, and K. C. Atkeson, director, is standing. I received two phone calls from Florida from longtime friends telling me about this. They were excited to read the account of the robbery.

We lived in Charleston. In 1944 my dad was working at the Kanawha Valley Bank and he owned a big farm in Buffalo on 18 Mile Creek Road. He would drive down to Buffalo during hunting season, and he had a big garden there during the summer. He allowed a wonderful couple to live in the house on the farm, to farm as they wished and look after the property.

One day a banking director came into the Kanawha Valley Bank and asked my dad if he would like to live near his farm and work in the Buffalo Bank. To say Dad was thrilled was an understatement. He took the job as cashier with a large old house adjoining the bank's property for him and my mother to live in. They became active in the town and church there and made many good friends.

The picture of my dad shows him with his old clothes on. He always wore a white shirt and tie in the bank, but this particular day was the last day of squirrel hunting season. The season closed early that year due to extreme danger of fire, a very dry fall. He had donned old clothes and gone hunting on his farm. He didn't have much luck, and as he traveled back into town on 18 Mile Creek Road he passed the bank robbers. He waved at them (that was always the custom there) and they waved back to him. He was surely shocked to hear of the bank being robbed, and more so that he had passed the robbers and given them the friendly wave.

My dad was so thankful they had not put the girls in the bank vault and locked them in. He declared if he had been there they would not have robbed his bank as he had his pistol in the drawer at the counter, one he had had in the little bank at Winona, Fayette County, in the early 1900's. The Lord surely watched over him, for when he tried firing it it would not fire as it hadn't been used for such a long period of time.

Our oldest son, Larry, six years old at the time, was so concerned and worried when my mother



Banker Smith takes a call, while K. C. Atkeson stands by. Photographer unknown, 1953.

called and told us about the bank being robbed. Larry just knew they had taken his money he had in the bank — perhaps \$8 to \$10. My dad had gotten his grandsons to put their money from their piggy banks into a savings account. Our younger son, Rick, three years old at the time, was too small to be that much concerned. We drove down to Buffalo and my dad took the boys into the bank's vault and showed them some money. That satisfied Larry that his savings were safe.

Many people saw the robbers' strange-looking car that morning. It was brightly painted. Everybody

knew everyone's car, and no one had seen this car before that day. It was very noticeable, as they drove all around town for a good while. They were later caught under a tree, dividing the money from a bread wrapper bag. My dad said when they balanced out that day they had two or three dollars more than before the robbery.

There are many interesting stories of the bank at Buffalo. One Saturday morning soon after my dad started working there, this huge, tough-looking man came and plopped down a full bag of money on the counter in front of my dad.

He asked the big man, "What is this?"

"Money I want to deposit."

My dad told him to go over to the counter along the wall and fill out a deposit slip and bring it back to him and he would gladly assist him. He told my dad that of all the time he had had money in that bank he had never filled out a deposit slip. My dad told him while he was cashier there this would be the procedure.

The big man mumbled something and reluctantly went over to the side counter and began writing. The girls in the bank came over and said, "Mr. Smith, do you know who that man is?"

My dad answered, "I don't care who he is. While I'm here he will comply to banking procedures."

They told him that this was the toughest, meanest man anywhere in Putnam and Mason counties. He'd just as soon shoot him as not. My dad got busy doing something. The big man came over to my dad, handed him the required slip and left. The next time he came in he had a freshly slaughtered, dressed-out lamb for my dad and they remained friends over the years.

My dad told him he should keep his shirt buttoned when he came in the bank. He said if he could find a shirt big enough for him, he would surely keep the buttons on.

Sincerely,  
Mary Louise Smith Wolfe

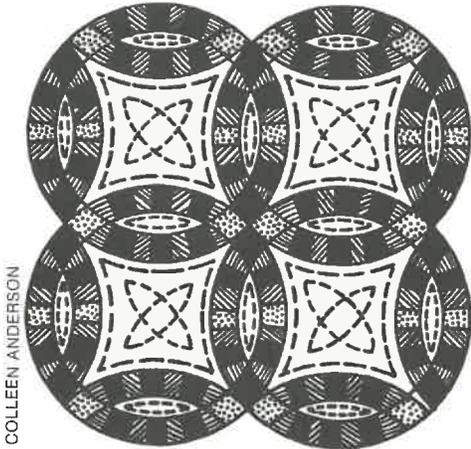
# Current Programs • Events • Publications

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.

## Homecoming '96 Quilt to Tour

A special quilt, created by West Virginia quilters, is touring the state as part of the governor's Homecoming '96 celebration. Many Mountain State communities have joined in the year-round activities, including the quilt project and many other events.

The Division of Culture and History located a quilter in each of West Virginia's counties to piece one quilt block. The quilt fabric, pattern and instructions were shipped statewide this past February. The blocks were then assembled into a quilt top, the final



COLLEEN ANDERSON

sashing added, and the top made ready for quilting. Finally, three quilt guilds provided the basting and quilting and the Homecoming '96 quilt became a reality.

The colorful quilt will make its debut at the 1996 Vandalia Gathering, the annual folklife festival held at the Capitol Complex each Memorial Day weekend. From there the quilt will travel to various communities across the state.

It will be displayed at some state fairs and festivals, including the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair near Ripley and the West Virginia State Fair near Lewisburg. Tamarack on the West Virginia Turnpike will also exhibit the quilt. Eventually it will be given to the West

Virginia State Museum's collection of quilts.

To schedule a visit from the Homecoming quilt call the Homecoming '96 office at 1-800-CALL-WVA or write Homecoming '96, 2101 Washington Street East, Charleston, WV 25305.

## Home Societies Commemorated

Two West Virginia service organizations are celebrating 100 years of working with children and young women.

The Children's Home Society of West Virginia, a nonprofit organization, was started in 1896 by six men concerned with finding homes for needy children. Since that time, the society has become the largest child care organization in West Virginia.

A commemorative book, *The Children's Home Society of West Virginia*, was recently published. The book by Stan Bumgardner contains historical text and photographs highlighting case histories, society history, and the many children associated with the agency over the last century. Many of the photos are the work of Bessie Allen, a gifted photographer who grew up at the society's Davis Child Shelter, worked for *Stars and Stripes* during World War II, and returned to become the society's publicity director.

The commemorative book may be purchased for \$25 plus \$2 shipping and handling from the Children's Home Society, P.O. Box 2942, Charleston, WV 25330; or by calling (304)346-0795.

In addition to the book, the Division of Culture and History has Children Home Society photographs on display at the Cultural Center in Charleston through September 15. The show was designed as a traveling exhibit in hopes that it will tour other West Virginia communities. Fifty black-and-white photographs, most by Bessie Allen



BESSIE ALLEN

in the late 1940's, are on exhibit.

Wheeling's Florence Crittenton Home also recently celebrated 100 years of helping mothers and babies. This organization opened in April 1895 with an initial mission of "rescue work." "Rescue work is going into the streets, into the jails, into the alleys and houses of ill fame," Amanda List, one of the organizers, said of the agency's endeavors in 1899.

Today the Florence Crittenton Home's mission has expanded. The organization concerns itself not only with adolescent pregnancy, but with parenting and prevention issues, and advocacy for young people. A special commemorative history, *1895-1995: A Century of Service to Mothers & Babies*, has been produced in honor of the agency's 100 years of service. The project was funded in part by the West Virginia Humanities Council.

For more information contact Florence Crittenton Home & Services, 2606 National Road, Wheeling, WV 26003; (304)242-7060.

## Helvetia Restorations

In 1967 Helvetia, a Randolph County Swiss community, estab-

lished the Helvetia Restoration and Development Society. The non-profit organization raises money for the restoration, preservation and development of Helvetia, emphasizing the community's culture and rural beauty.

In the past year the society's work has meant a new roof for the town's museum, a new foot bridge and a stone foot path for Historic Square, repairs to the Community Hall, the Star Band Hall, and the Settlers' Cabin, and the restoration of a one-room log school house. A \$2,000 grant was also obtained for archiving genealogical records.

There is still plenty of work to be done and the development committee is seeking members and contributions. Several new projects are under consideration. Donations may be made to the general fund or to an approved project. Individual memberships are \$15, couples are \$25, and a family membership is \$35. Corporate memberships are \$100. To join the Helvetia Restoration and Development Society, send contributions to Treasurer, Development Committee, Helvetia Restoration and Development Society, P.O. Box 34, Helvetia, WV 26224.

Members receive a newsletter describing activities of the society, and their support helps preserve West Virginia's unique Swiss community.

### New River Book Reprinted

The popular pictorial book, *New River: A Photographic Essay*, has been reprinted. The outstanding color photographs are mainly the work of West Virginia's famous outdoor photographer, Arnout Hyde, Jr., with additional photographs by Gerald S. Ratliff and Stephen Shaluta, Jr. *New River* also features 23 historic black and white photographs of the river. GOLDENSEAL editor Ken Sullivan wrote the introduction to the book, originally published in 1991.

The book traces the New River from its source in North Carolina to its ending at Gauley Bridge, West Virginia. The short text accompanying the photographs tells many of the stories found along the ancient stream. Tales of the second largest diamond found in North

America, the white water industry, fishing, and coal town boom days are found throughout the book's 96 pages.

To order an autographed copy of the new softcover edition of *New River: A Photographic Essay*, send \$17 plus \$3 shipping to Cannon Graphics, 418 Lehigh Terrace, Charleston, WV 25302. Orders may also be placed by calling (304) 346-7602. West Virginia residents add 6% sales tax.

### Folk Arts Workshops

This summer several sites are offering an extensive lineup of classes, workshops, concerts and events celebrating American folk-life. Perhaps the most well-known of these summer programs is provided by the Augusta Heritage Center at Davis



& Elkins College in Elkins. The Augusta Heritage Workshops are held from July 7 through August 11. The 1996 theme at

Augusta is "Year of Song." Vocal traditions, singing styles and songs will be emphasized in classes and at public events. Public concerts will feature performers such as John Hartford, Roy Book Binder, Les Freres Brunet, Frank Harte, Lynn Morris, Balfa Toujours and The House Band.

Augusta also operates the West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program and Augusta Heritage Recordings. The newsletter *Penny-whistle* is published by Augusta Heritage Center as well. For information on these programs, a detailed description of year-round activities, and a complete listing of rates and schedules call the Augusta office at (304)637-1209 or write to Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, WV 26241, for a free catalog.

Two other long-running tradi-

tional arts programs also have their 1996 summer offerings set. The Cedar Lakes Crafts Center has been operating classes for craftspeople for the last 18 years. Classes are offered for everyone from beginners to professional artisans. July and August classes include basketry, quilting, weaving, wood carving, stained glass, and watercolor design. Cedar Lakes has a fall schedule of classes too. And of course the Mountain State Art & Craft returns to its Jackson County home every summer, the 1996 dates being July 3-7. It's the state's largest outdoor craft fair. For a brochure detailing Cedar Lakes class fees and enrollment information, contact Gloria Gregorich at the Crafts Center, Cedar Lakes, Ripley, WV 25271; (304)372-7873.

Fort New Salem is located at Salem, near Clarksburg. This Harrison County fort depicts a West Virginia historic community, a settlement of log houses and period buildings emphasizing lifestyles and working skills of early settlers. The 1996 Fort New Salem Heritage Workshops are held from June 24 through August 11 and include classes in hearth cooking, folkways, textiles, and blacksmithing.

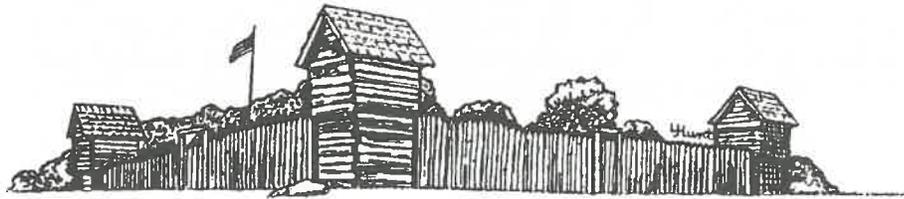
Fort New Salem also offers many programs and public events through the year for children and adults. Contact Carol A. Schweiker, Fort New Salem, Salem-Teikyo University, P.O. Box 500, Salem WV 26426; or call (304)782-5245.

### Pricketts Fort at 20

Pricketts Fort near Fairmont, opened 20 years ago as a newly-reconstructed refuge fort from Western Virginia's frontier era, is the centerpiece of the state park by the same name. This July 4, the date of the fort's dedication, a special anniversary celebration is planned.

Pricketts Fort is known for its living history programs and costumed interpreters representing the original Pricketts Fort of 1774 to 1799. Visitors may meet a gunsmith, blacksmith, storyteller, or weaver, and tour the Job Prickett House which dates to 1859 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Pricketts Fort was originally one



of some 200 forts built along the Monongahela, Allegheny and upper Ohio Rivers during the latter part of the 18th century. They provided security for local settlers.

Pricketts Fort stayed in use for about 20 years.

In later years various attempts were made to reconstruct a memorial to the fort. Finally in the 1970's,

the Marion County Historical Society and volunteers made the reconstructed Pricketts Fort a reality, using state grants, donated log structures and other resources.

A day-long celebration is planned for the 20th anniversary, with craftspeople, food vendors, concerts, children's events, colonial meals and more. For a complete schedule or a copy of Pricketts Fort's annual calendar of events, contact Pricketts Fort Memorial Foundation, Rt. 3, Box 407, Fairmont, WV 26554; or call 1-800-CALL-WVA.

### Another Cowpoke

Just after the Spring GOLDENSEAL published a photograph of Brooks Smith on a pony at his home about 1926, we heard from another reader who figures he met the same pony at about the same time. Jan Christian of Charleston loaned us a pony photograph made at his parent's home in Beckley.

He remembered that he was about six years old at the time. "A man came through and made pictures with other children, too," Mr. Christian recalled. He noted that the hat, rope, chaps, and even the pony are identical to those in the other photo. His mother paid the man with the pony for the photo and "it was

Jan Christian (left), photographed in Beckley, and Brooks Smith (below), from the Spring GOLDENSEAL. Photographers unknown, about 1926.



very cheap," Mr. Christian said.

Brooks Smith has about the same memory but his photo was made in Charleston, so we figure there must have been a grand West Virginia trail drive — pony tour, anyway — 70 years ago. We'd like to hear from others who know about it.



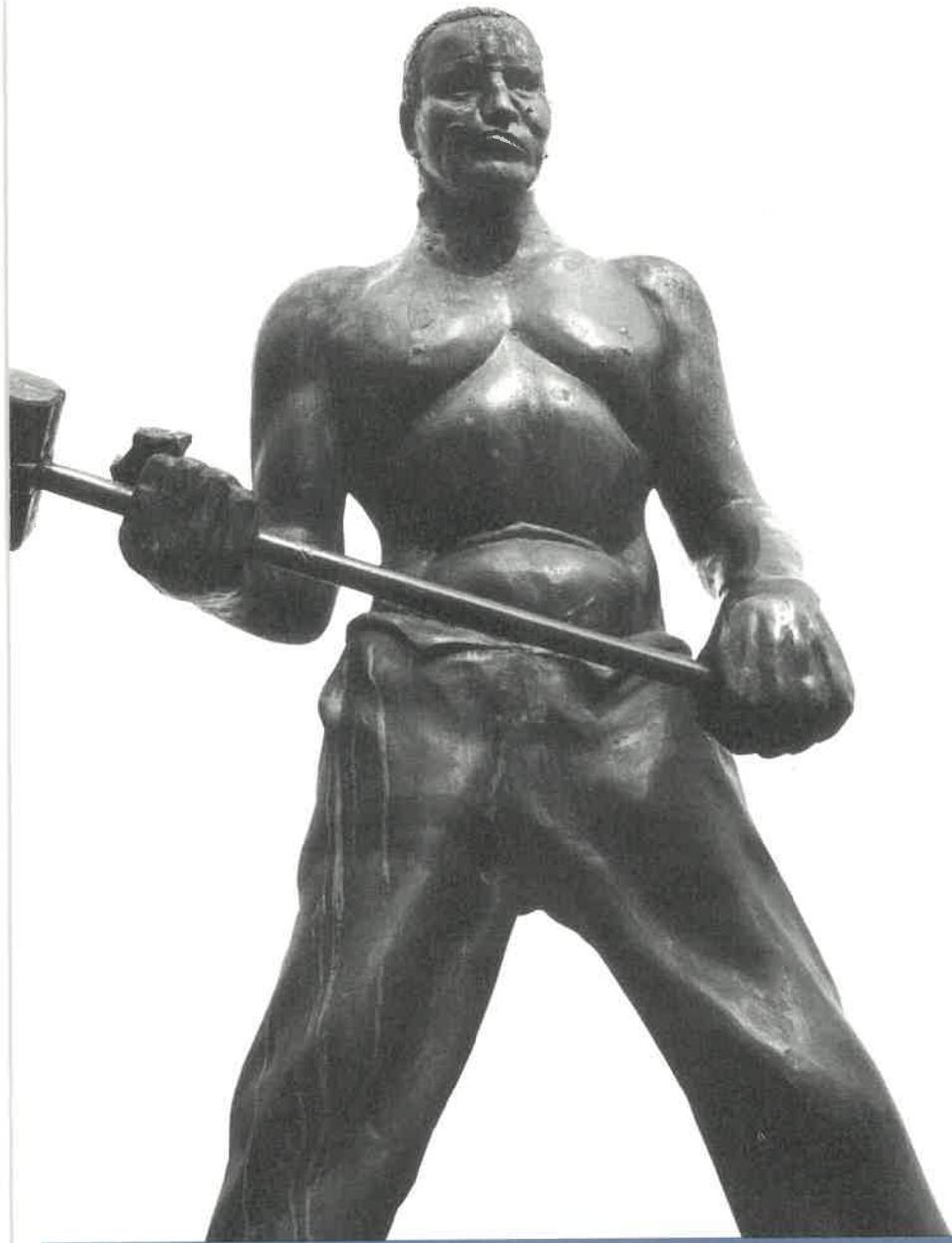
### Aracoma's Story

A West Virginia legend is acted out each summer at the Chief Logan State Park amphitheater in Logan County. *The Aracoma Story*, dating back to the Revolutionary War era, is performed five nights a week on July 31 through August 4, August 7 through 12, and August 14 through 17. It is the story of Shawnee princess Aracoma (Corn Blossom), the daughter of Chief Cornstalk.

Aracoma was also the wife of Boling Baker, a renegade white man. Baker was a leader of Shawnee Indians who lived on the site which later became Logan. In 1780, a group of 90 Virginians led by William Madison and John Breckenridge attacked the Indians. All were killed or scattered and the Indian village was destroyed. Aracoma was gravely wounded and later buried amid the ruins of her home.

In 1852 the town was named "Aracoma" in her honor, but in 1907 the State Legislature changed the name to Logan. Today a small community adjoining Logan still holds the name Aracoma, and the Aracoma Story theater group continues to tell the story of the Indian princess.

*The Aracoma Story* celebrated its 20th anniversary in 1995. The outdoor drama association also presents performances of *Joseph & The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* on June 26 through 30, and on July 10 and 12. The musical *Hello Dolly* is performed July 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13 and 14. For more information on the 1996 schedule, contact Aracoma Story, Inc., P.O. Box 2016, Logan, WV 25601; or call (304)752-0253.



One of the world's great folk heroes made his name working on the Big Bend Tunnel in Summers County, West Virginia. John Henry attained immortality as he hammered his life away in a glorious battle of man versus machine.

**M**y earliest memory of John Henry comes from my grandfather, Cecil Brown. He was a route man for the Hodel newspaper company in the mid-1940's, delivering the Beckley *Post-Herald* to the scattered villages along Route 3 from Beckley into Summers County. Sometimes I traveled with him.

The trip took us through the heart of John Henry country. The famous steel driver died, legend has it, as a result of a contest with a steam drilling machine during construction of the C&O Railway's Big Bend Tunnel sometime between 1869 and 1872.

The Big Bend is up the Greenbrier Valley from Hinton, and Route 3 goes over the mountain which the tunnel goes under. As we headed down the other side, Grandpa would begin singing, to the rhythm of his thumbs tapping on the steering wheel:

John Henry was just a little  
baby,  
Sittin' on his mama's knee,  
Said, "The Big Bend Tunnel on  
the C&O Road  
Is gonna be the death of me,  
O Lawd,  
Gonna be the death of me..."

I had no idea at the time what the old song meant. No one ever talked about it in school, and Grandpa did not explain anything, and I didn't ask. It was only in the years that followed, when I ventured into the South and began to study black his-

# John Henry

## The Story of a Steel-Driving Man

By Robert Tabscott  
Photographs by Michael Keller

The local Ruritan Club erected this life-size statue of the Steel-Driving Man in 1972 to mark the John Henry centennial.



Grandfather Cecil Brown introduced our author to the John Henry legend years ago in Summers County. Photographer and date unknown.

tory, that I came back home to investigate the origins of the John Henry tradition.

I discovered that the history of the Big Bend Tunnel and the legend of the powerful hammer man lie deeply embedded in the American experience.

First, there is the great tunnel itself and the saga of railroading, coupled with the ghostly, half-forgotten men and boys who dug the passageway through the mountain. Big Bend Tunnel is located on the main line of the old Chesapeake & Ohio, now CSX, about nine miles east of Hinton and one mile west of Talcott. The Greenbrier River veers sharply southward here, meandering ten crooked miles in a big bend around the mountain before returning to a spot less than two miles from its point of departure.

The railroad construction engineers had the choice of following the twisting river or taking a short cut by tunneling a mile and a quarter through Big Bend Mountain. It was a mammoth, dangerous undertaking. They decided to dig. Construction began in 1869 and was

completed by the autumn of 1872, when track was laid through the tunnel. Shortly thereafter the first train passed the portals on its way west.

Big Bend is not one of the great tunnels of the world, but its construction is considered a feat of genius and skill. The job meant blasting and digging through treacherous, shifting red shale. At the time of construction, the area was rugged and remote, accessible only by a narrow, twisting road. A New York reporter called the place "a howling wilderness" in 1871, and recommended a "sure-footed horse and steady nerves" for anyone going there.

Tunneling is hard, hazardous work even today, and John Henry researcher Brett Williams says it was worse at the time. "Big Bend was much too deadly for the technology a-

available," she concluded in her 1983 book. Safety standards do not appear to have been a priority for railroad officials who oversaw the operation. The purpose of the project was profit.

While no authoritative records on the construction of Big Bend survive, fatalities among the tunnel workers are believed to have been astonishingly high. Many died of tunnel fever

A highway marker on nearby Route 3 commemorates the heroic legend. The highway crosses the tunnel near Hilldale.

(later known as silicosis), inflicted by the foul stone dust generated by nitroglycerin explosives and the smothering heat encountered in the poorly ventilated cavern.

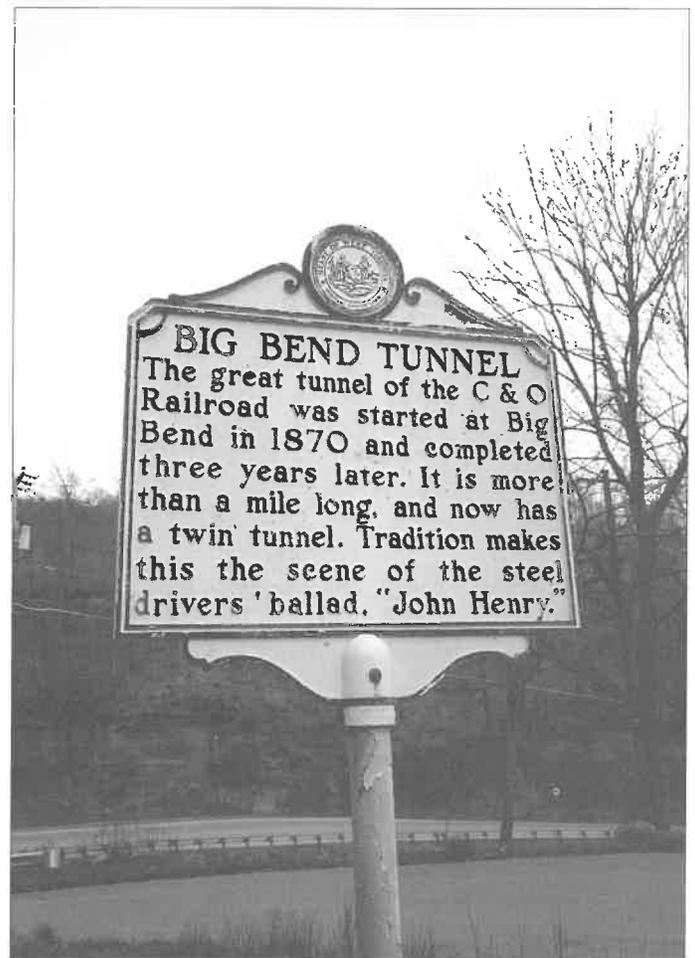
Accidents resulting from bungled blasting and falling rocks were common. Williams estimates that hundreds of laborers, men and boys, of African and Irish descent, perished during the three-year construction

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*Was John Henry an actual person who appeared at Big Bend and took up his hammer in this epic battle? Or is he just a symbol?*

---

of the tunnel. The dead were buried quickly and unceremoniously in makeshift pits near the portals at both ends and covered with rocks.



# The John Henry Ballad

As Sung by Jim Costa

After wading through dozens of versions of the John Henry song and finding none that sounded exactly like what the folks in southern West Virginia sing about their greatest folk hero, we decided to do the obvious thing and call Jim Costa. He lives at Talcott, John Henry's last known mailing address on this earth, in a cabin on the Big Bend of the Greenbrier and nearly within the shadow of the tunnel mountain.

Jim grew up with the legend in Summers County, and as one of West Virginia's best-known folk entertainers he has sung the song many times. He admits to changing the verses himself at times, but gives the following as his preferred version of the famous ballad:

When John Henry was a little baby  
A-sittin' on his mama's knee  
He said, "That tunnel on the C&O line  
Goin' to be the death of me, Lord, Lord,  
It's goin' to be the death of me."

The captain said to John Henry,  
"I've got a contest for you.  
If you can beat that steam drill down,  
I'll give a hundred dollars in your hand, Lord, Lord,  
I'll give a hundred dollars to your hand."

John Henry said to his captain,  
"Well, a man ain't nothing but a man,  
But before I let that steam drill beat me down,  
I'll die with a hammer in my hand, Lord, Lord,  
I'll die with a hammer in my hand."

John Henry said to his shaker,  
"Boy, you'd better pray.  
For if I miss this six-foot piece of steel,  
Tomorrow's going to be your burying day, Lord, Lord,  
Tomorrow will be your burying day."

Then the shaker said to John Henry,  
"Well, I believe this mountain's a-caving in."  
But John Henry just laughed and he never missed a  
stroke  
Said, "It's only my hammer sucking wind, Lord, Lord,  
It's only the hammer sucking wind."

Well, John Henry was on the left side,  
And the steam drill was on the right.  
They hammered all day and they hammered all night,  
John on the left, steam drill on the right, Lord, Lord,  
John on the left, steam drill on the right.

The man who invented that old steam drill,  
He thought she was mighty fine.  
But John Henry drove his steel down 14 feet,  
While the steam drill only made nine, Lord, Lord,  
The steam drill only made nine.

John Henry said to his captain,  
"I've got an awful roaring in my head."  
Then John Henry looked to the heavenly sky,  
He fell over and was dead, Lord, Lord,  
John fell over and was dead.

Well, John Henry had a little woman,  
And her name was Polly Ann,  
She picked up that hammer and the old steel bit,  
And Polly drove that steel like a man, Lord, Lord,  
Polly hammered just like a man.

They carried John Henry to the portal  
And they buried him in the sand,  
And every time the engines come a-roaring through,  
Say, "Yonder lies that steel-driving man, Lord, Lord,  
Yonder lies that steel-driving man."

These were the years just after the Civil War. Captain John Johnson, who was hired by the C&O as one of the construction chiefs, was reported to have recruited his workforce from recently emancipated slaves and transported them to work sites such as Big Bend. The recruits hired on by Johnson entered into a new industrial bondage.

As their ranks diminished by accident, disease and death, Johnson would dispatch his agents south to

fetch new workers for a rendezvous with the mountain. Once hired, it was hard to break Johnson's hold. Such contractors kept their workers isolated, far from home, and often deep in debt to the commissary. No doubt many "owed their souls to the company store," as a later song about coal miners put it.

West Virginia University folklorist Louis Chappell, author of the 1933 *John Henry: A Folk-Lore Study*, asserted it was in the best interests

of the C&O contractors to keep their workers' origins obscure. "Negroes who died at Big Bend hailed from nowhere and had not been christened," he observed, and it was easy not to notice when such men were used up and cast aside.

So it was at Big Bend that those just emerging from the terrible institution of human slavery ran up against the monstrous power of the young and growing Industrial Revolution. Circumstances were ripe for a hero. It was in the tunnel,

amidst these terrible conditions, that the drama of John Henry was born. The foreman bragged about his powerful new drilling machine, as the story goes, but the steel driver begged to differ:

“A man ain’t nothing but a man,  
But before I let your steam drill  
beat me down,  
Gonna die with my hammer in  
my hand, O Lawd,  
Gonna die with my hammer in  
my hand...”

The railroads symbolized a new age. The train dramatized a power and glory which were to change America forever. Steel rails unified the continent, revolutionized farming, manufacturing and travel, linking small towns to great industrial cities. Southern West Virginia’s first railroad was the C&O. It opened the region’s great timber and coal resources for exploitation by rich Northern capitalists. Robber barons, they were called.

While railroads brought progress, they also became hotbeds of anti-industrial sentiment. Workers were often poorly paid and ill-treated, and the company towns which sprang up around the engine yards and mining enterprises were frequently centers of conflicting attitudes of dependence and resentment. Sometimes bloody labor wars resulted, including the national railroad strike of 1877, sparked by the dissatisfaction of B&O workers in Martinsburg.

At Big Bend these sentiments found a different expression, when a lone man made his stand. To John Henry the future took the shape of a steam drill, a tireless, inhuman contraption that wanted his job and his dignity.

The machine had been coming on for a long time. As early as 1813 inventors in Europe and America were experimenting with steam drilling rigs, according to Brett Williams. Ingersoll Rand was perfecting its highly sophisticated rock drill at just about the time of the Big Bend job, and putting proto-

types out for testing. A successful steam drill offered the prospect of increased efficiency in the mines and tunnels, more work from fewer men.

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*John Henry’s life is the  
heartbeat of the  
pick-and-shovel men, the  
shakers, the mule  
skimmers, the steel drivers.*

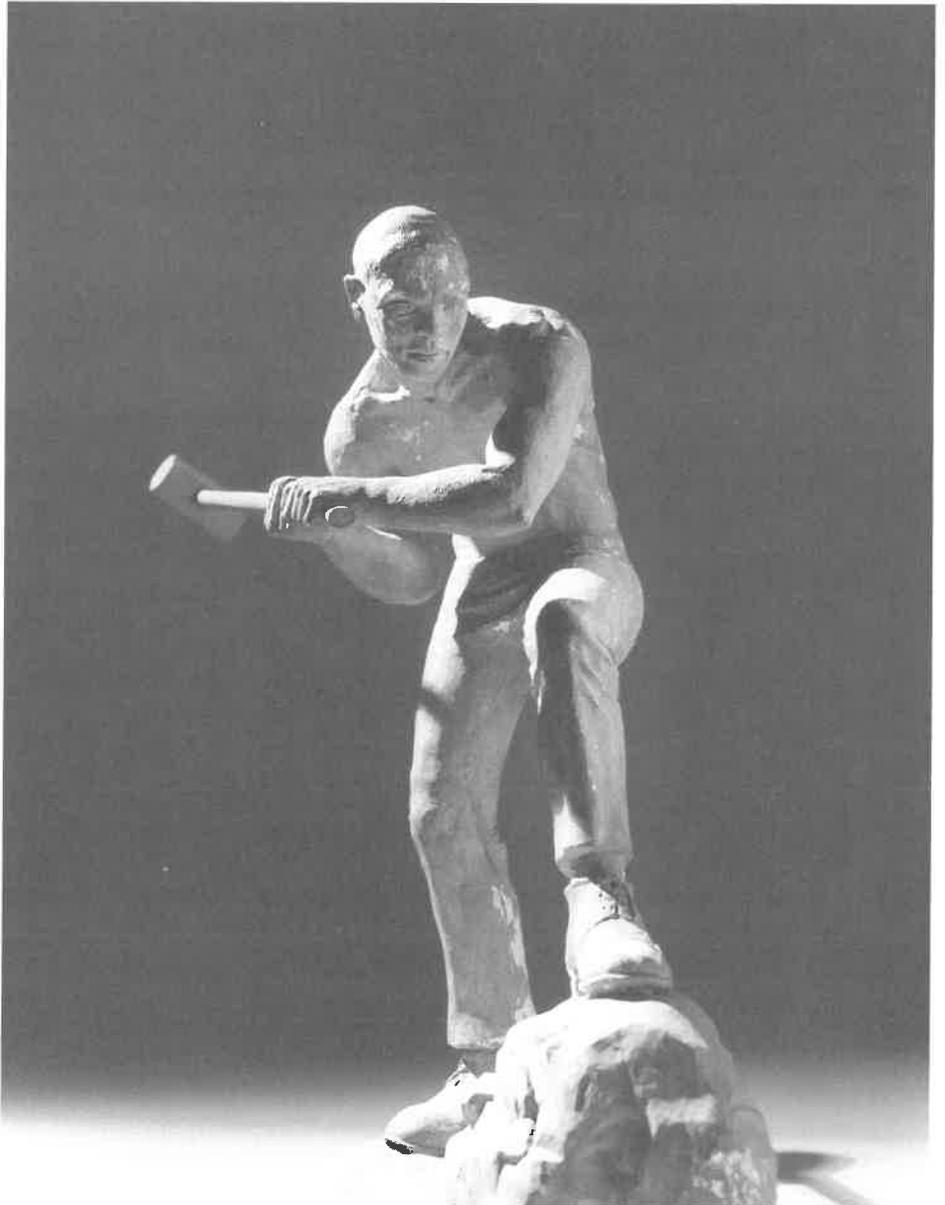
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And so it came to a showdown. Contests between hammer men were already common in the rail-

roading and mining projects of Appalachia. The appearance of the steam drill set the stage for a battle between man and machine. Some versions of the ballad label John Henry a hammering fool. Others suggest that barely out of slavery and with no place to go, the mighty steel driver fought to save his job and his soul, standing down the steam drilling machine. I like that interpretation better.

Of course, the question that must be asked is, “Who was John Henry?” Was he an actual person who appeared at Big Bend and took up his hammer in this epic battle? Or is he just a symbol?

It must be admitted that there is no hard historical record of John



John Henry, as sculpted by Betty Lynn Baker. The 31" statue, a 1969 purchase award winner at Huntington Galleries, now belongs to the West Virginia State Museum.

Henry, and that the evidence for his existence rests on the large body of legend and lore. Take him as legend, as I do. Some things are truer than facts.

We know plenty about workers like John Henry, iron men who pounded steel into hard rock. Each steel driver worked with a partner, a shaker or turner whose task it was to rotate the drill after each blow to prevent debris from clogging the hole and jamming the bit. It was dangerous, arduous, back-breaking work. Six hammer men working 12-hour shifts needed a full day to bore enough holes for just one blast, which advanced the heading by only ten feet. The process was similar to pick-and-shovel coal mining, with holes drilled, explosives inserted, and the stone "shot down" and loaded out.

John Henry said to his shaker,  
 "Shaker, you'd better pray.  
 If I miss this steel with my  
 nine-pound hammer,  
 Tomorrow be your burying day,  
 O Lawd,  
 Tomorrow be your burying  
 day..."

Pacing was essential. The laborers found, as their predecessors had on the cotton plantations down South, that singing helped. The hammer men sang to plant a cadence, a rhythm. And so the time passed, singing and swinging.

William Barton, who chronicled the evolution of railroad songs in 1899, described the sound of the railroad work gangs.

"To hear these songs is an experience which I shall never forget," wrote Barton. "The sledges descend in unison, as the low chant gives the time, the chink of the steel mixed with musical words and tones echoing in the tunnel, the music of the workplace, the strokes and the synopated chants."

The life of John Henry is foreshadowed in work songs and ballads that arise from the old South, songs from Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, South Carolina, Arkansas, Virginia and Mississippi. His origins lie in the field songs of the plantations, but his life belongs to the railroad builders, the gandy dancers laying track and the

## Bringing the Steel Driver Home

When West Virginians heard that the U.S. Postal Service was unveiling its new John Henry stamp design in Pittsburgh last fall it just didn't sit right, and GOLDENSEAL was among the first to blow the whistle. "You've got to be kidding," editor Ken Sullivan said in a front-page story in the *Huntington Herald-Dispatch*. "The stamp ought to be unveiled in West Virginia because John Henry belongs to West Virginia."

Others agreed, apparently. At the urging of Third District Congressman Nick Rahall the Postal Service arranged a special ceremony at Talcott for July 13. The John Henry Folk Hero stamp will be introduced there along with a pictorial cancellation depicting Talcott as "John Henry Station."

Talcott Postmaster John W. Dillon is coordinating a weekend of activities in conjunction with the John Henry event, including a Friday buffet and dance, a golf tournament, dramatic readings at the face of the tunnel, and tours of the historic Graham House. Dillon says the community is busy collecting John Henry memorabilia. One of the items found was a vintage John Henry liquor decanter from the 1960's — unopened.

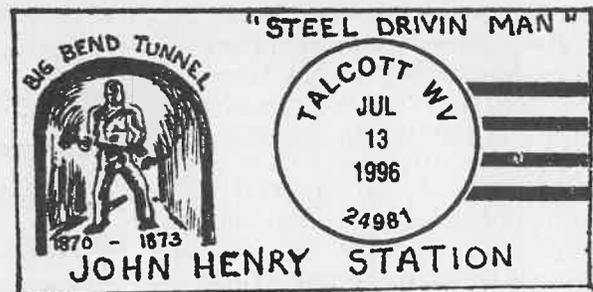
The Saturday commemoration will begin about 10 a.m. at the entrance to the tunnel where John Henry took on the steam drill. Many people from Talcott with local stories about John Henry will be on hand. Jimmy Costa, a Talcott storyteller and musician, will perform and

Ed Cabbell, the founder of the John Henry Folk Festival will attend.

The weekend will be a real homecoming for John Henry, as



The John Henry stamp goes on sale in July. Letters mailed from Talcott on July 13 will carry the special cancellation below.



the stamp brings people together in the little town where an American folk hero lived and died.

For more information about the John Henry event call the Talcott post office at (304)466-3640.

hard-working tunnel crews. His life is the heartbeat of the pick-and-shovel men, the shakers, the mule skimmers, the steel drivers — and behind them, the forlorn figures of the cotton pickers, men, women and children, stooping, pulling and stuffing raw cotton into their field bags, sunup to sundown. And singing.

John Henry's song is a song of laborers everywhere, and in time the song would be sung everywhere. "No matter where you went," as one old traveling man said, "you could always find someone who could sing, 'John Henry was a steel-drivin' man.'"

A U.S. sailor in Shanghai wrote to Louis Chappell during his research, saying, "I've heard the song in a thousand different places." He added that he had heard it from "hoboes of all kinds, coal miners and furnace men, river and wharf rats, beach combers and sailors, harvest hands and timber men. Some of them drunk and some sober. It is scattered over all the states and some places on the outside."

One of the first scholars to explore the John Henry saga was John Harrington Cox, who in his 1919 doctoral dissertation on West Virginia folk songs revealed what he considered were remarkable similarities between the songs about John Henry and John Hardy. Also a black man, Hardy was remembered for his gambling, drinking and philandering. He was executed for murder in Welch in 1894 [GOLDENSEAL, Spring 1992].

Cox concluded that John Hardy and John Henry were one and the same. He based his hypothesis on a letter from William A. MacCorkle, West Virginia's governor when John Hardy was hanged. Governor MacCorkle contended that Hardy was, in fact, Big Bend's legendary steel driver.

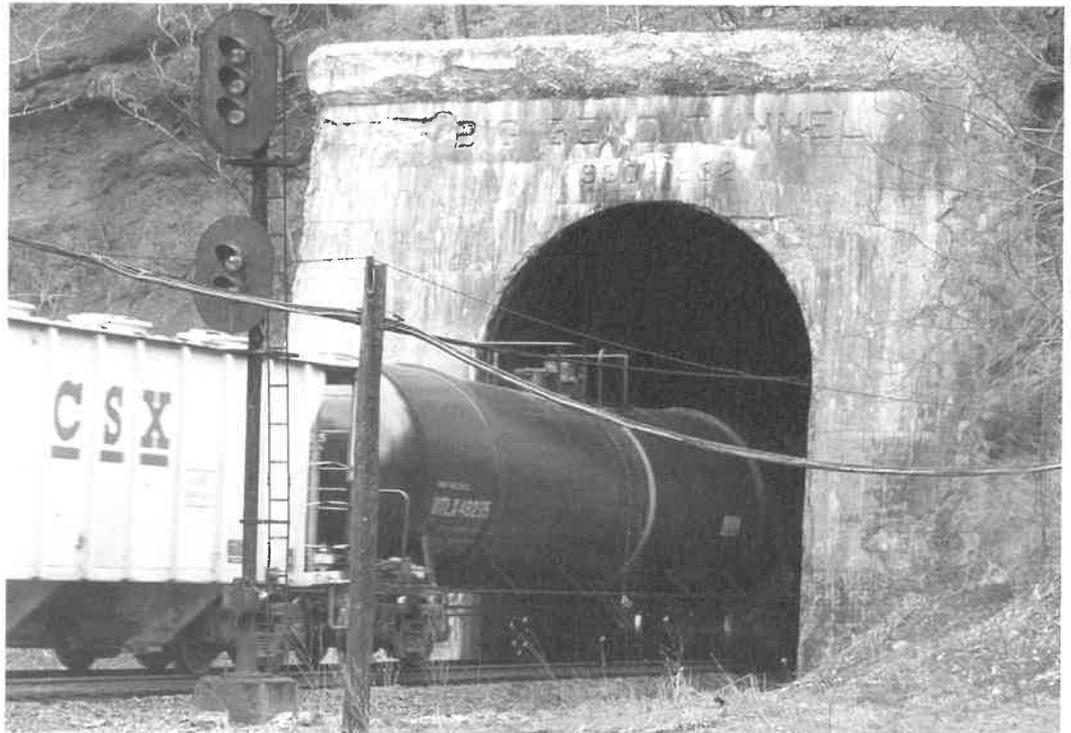
But subsequent research has made this seem unlikely. Perhaps John

Hardy sought to emulate John Henry in the course of his own defiant and tragic life, but the tone of their two legends is much different. John Hardy is described in his song as a "desperate little man," a murderer, after all, while John Henry stands untainted, proud, heroic and strong.

In 1929, black sociologist Guy Johnson laid the groundwork for

endurance and triumph which are necessary for the survival of a race or a nation. In other words, we are what we remember.

While he could not prove it, Johnson believed that John Henry was indeed a real person. But Johnson was primarily interested in the folklore process, in how the Henry story evolved and spread and why it was so appealing to



Trains still pass through Big Bend Mountain. The original John Henry tunnel, beside this one, is now out of use.

subsequent black folk studies. His *John Henry: Tracking Down a Negro Legend* prepared the way for further investigations. Johnson under-

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*Pacing was essential. The hammer men sang to plant a cadence, a rhythm. And so the time passed, singing and swinging.*

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stood that behind every enduring culture are myths, legends, sagas and traditions that give people the essential ingredients of memory,

blacks in their struggle to find their place in the American saga.

The earliest black folklore in America was drawn from animistic African sources. Fables of the fox, the rabbit, the turtle, the lion were retold in the slave cabins and the cotton fields of the antebellum South. Like the spirituals, they were cloaked with hidden meanings.

These fables found expression in the trickster tales of Uncle Remus, himself a fictional creation of white journalist Joel Chandler Harris. His tales, glorifying the slippery and resourceful Brer Rabbit, lauded humor, cunning and accommodation in matters of survival. But they also supported, in the white community's eyes, stereotypes of blacks as lazy, shiftless and con-

niving. There is none of that in John Henry. He rises above the trickster stories to embody defiance, courage and sacrifice.

There were other sources for a black folk hero, including songs too threatening to white audiences to be widely performed. Following Nat Turner's bloody slave rebellion in Virginia in 1831 a series of swamp songs arose, celebrating the mayhem and martyrdom of Turner and the longed-for liberation of slaves. In a sense, Nat Turner prefigures John Henry, as a defiant black man, but because Turner's deeds were so terrifying, he could not emerge as a hero acceptable to a broad spectrum of people. It remained for John Henry to transcend race.

And maybe the roots go even deeper. John Henry is in the tradition of Old Testament heroes such as the shepherd boy David who stood down Goliath and the Hebrew patriot Moses who challenged Pharaoh down in Egypt. His ballad is a song of liberation and hard-won triumph, ancient ideals. While "a man ain't nothin' but a man" he can still make his stand and is still worthy of respect. This is the ageless truth embodied in the John Henry legend.

John Henry was a steel-drivin' man,  
He died with his hammer in his  
hand...

So who won the race between John Henry and the steam machine? Most versions of the song claim that John Henry drove his drill 14 feet into the rock while the steam drill only made nine.

And most versions claim that John Henry died as a result of the contest, "from a rollin' or a roarin' in his head," perhaps a stroke; or because he "busted his entrails;" or that he simply "hammered himself to death." But no matter. John Henry *had* to die, but it was a triumphant, memorable death. Soon his ghost came to haunt Big Bend Tunnel, and — through the song — labor camps across the nation, and, indeed, the world.

No wonder the legend of John Henry was taken up by the tunnel workers. Life at Big Bend with its accidents, its camp brawls, its mur-

## For Young Readers

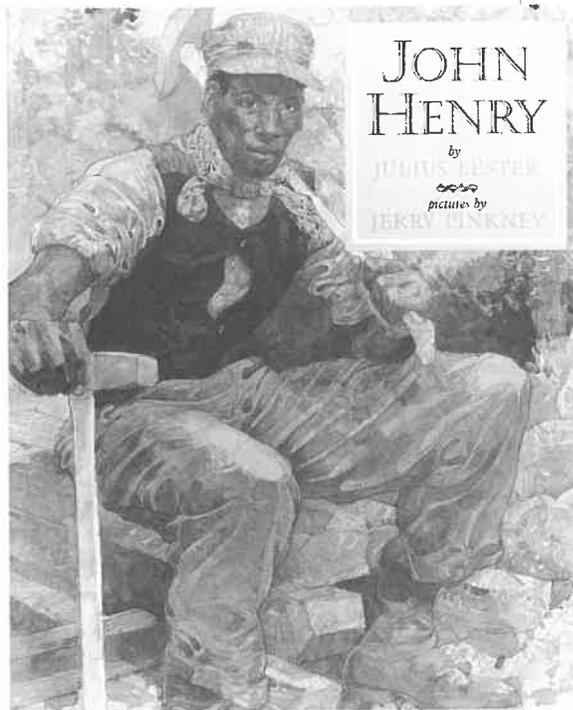
*John Henry* by Julius Lester takes on the legendary steel-drivin' man and brings him to life in 35 pages of powerful writing and superb watercolor illustrations by Jerry Pinkney. It is a captivating story told for children, but enjoyable for all ages.

Of John Henry coming to West Virginia and taking the challenge to dig through a mountain faster than a steam drill, Lester writes "On one side was a big machine hooked up to hoses. It was belching smoke and steam. As the machine attacked the mountain, rocks and dirt and underbrush flew into the air. On the other side was John Henry. Next to the mountain he didn't look much bigger than a wish that wasn't going to come true.

"He had a twenty-pound hammer in each hand and muscles hard as wisdom in each arm." John Henry triumphs in the book as in the song, but at a terrible price. Lester and Pinkney honor his deed as well as his spirit.

*John Henry* was published by

Dial Books, a division of Penguin Books, and sells for \$16.99 in bookstores nationwide. Lester is a Newberry Honor winner and Pinkney a Caldecott Honor artist. The two recently completed



an award-winning four-volume collection of *The Tales of Uncle Remus*. Both have won the Coretta Scott King Award for their work.

ders and isolation made an unforgettable impression upon the men who came to the great mountain to puncture it. The black laborers, only a few years out of slavery, unweaned from old superstitions, needed a story to hold them against the horrors of the experience.

And soon John Henry's story took on a broader meaning for working men and women wherever they defied dehumanization in the tunnels, the mines, the factories, the railroads, the sharecropper fields. For those who fought and who inspired ensuing generations to stand their ground, John Henry was a good friend to have.

It's a hometown story to me, as I said at the outset, and it means a

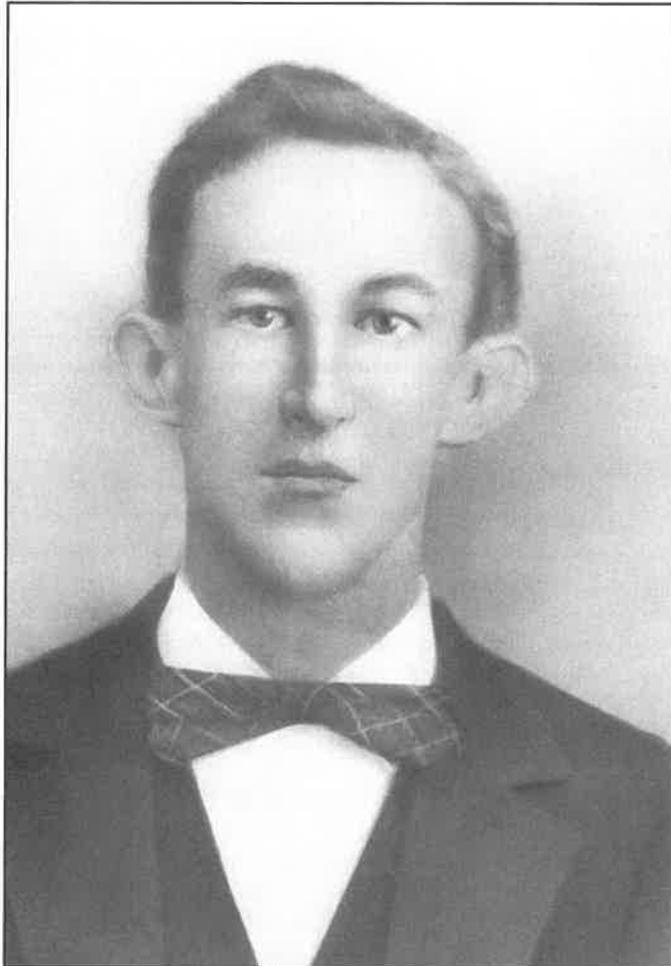
lot. While one of my grandfathers sang of John Henry to me as a child, my other grandfather, W. W. Wickline, Jr., a C&O engineer, actually followed the mythical trail of the old steel driver during the first two decades of the 20th century. Many times he pulled coal and later passenger cars on regular runs out of Hinton through the fabled tunnel at Talcott on the way to Clifton Forge and beyond.

They took John Henry to the  
graveyard,  
Buried him in the sand,  
Every time that train rolls by,  
Say, "Yonder lies a steel-drivin'  
man."

As I see it, the ballad of John

Henry is as American as Yankee Doodle, with a better tune and more to teach us. And as the heritage of resistance passes down from his time to ours, John Henry is Joe Hill, is Karen Silkwood, is Tennessee Ernie Ford's coal-digging man and Loretta Lynn's coal miner's daughter, is Mother Jones, is Muhammed Ali, even Ralph Nader. As long as their struggle endures, the shadow of John Henry will remain.

Perhaps that is why the United



W. W. Wickline, Jr., in his younger years. Wickline, our author's grandfather, was a locomotive engineer and later a C&O official. Photographer and date unknown.

States Postal Service has decided to issue a stamp commemorating the legacy of John Henry this summer. The stamp was first announced in Pittsburgh, some bizarre twist of the bureaucratic mind associating the Steel City with the Steel Driver, and there will be further activities in California this

summer for a panel of four stamps honoring American folk heroes. But the Postal Service has promised to bring John Henry home to Talcott in special ceremonies in July.

They will have come to the right place. It was at nearby Big Bend Tunnel that the drama of the end of slavery, the exuberance of emancipation and the meaning of our Constitution all found expression in the hammers of John Henry.

The tradition was captured in the statue of the old steel driver erected atop the Big Bend Tunnel by the Hilldale-Talcott Ruritan Club in 1972.

Across the years the monument has been white-washed and scrubbed back to its original cast numerous times. Dented and punctured with bullet holes, the statue has acquired a living dignity of its own — defiant of an ugly racism that haunts America but which is not to be found in the lyrics of the old ballad itself. John Henry is a triumphant song, speaking for all of us.

I think this is what my Grandfather Brown understood years ago; and while he could not say it, he

could, at least, sing it. His young grandson heard it and pursued the song the rest of his life.

And that's why, come summer, I intend to gather with the other folks in Talcott to honor the occasion. I expect the ghosts of John Henry and my grandfathers will be present, too. \*



### A John Henry Checklist

Those wanting to learn more about John Henry should check into the following publications. The books are most likely to be found at public or academic libraries:

✓ *John Henry: Tracking Down a Negro Legend* by Guy B. Johnson (University of North Carolina Press, 1929). The author did original research among people with memories of the John Henry era, and concluded that the steel driver was a real person.

✓ *John Henry: A Folk-Lore Study* by Louis W. Chappell (Walter Biedermann, 1933). This classic study by the distinguished WVU folklorist, published in Germany, includes dozens of versions of the song.

✓ *Folk Songs of the South* by John Harrington Cox (Harvard University Press, 1925). Despite the title, this is largely a collection of West Virginia folksongs. Cox's conclusion that John Henry and John Hardy were the same person has since been discredited.

✓ *John Henry: A Bio-Bibliography* by Brett Williams (Greenwood Press, 1983). A handy recent compilation of earlier research, drawing especially on the three other books listed here. Williams lists hundreds of John Henry recordings and many films and printed sources.

# "We Need To Get Together"



The first Brown Reunion was held at Brown's Mill in 1895, with a well-dressed crowd in attendance. Photographer unknown.

## 100 Years of the Brown Reunion

By Peggy Ross

Photographs by Ron Rittenhouse

West Virginia families like to get together in the summertime, and the Browns of Preston County are no exception. But chances are they have been doing it longer than most of us, as they begin their second century of annual family reunions.

"We used to look forward to two things every year — Christmas and the Brown Reunion," Truman Brown said of his boyhood. Ninety now, Truman was the oldest at the 100th consecutive gathering of the Preston County Browns. He has missed few reunions over the years, and then only because war or sickness kept him away.

Last September, about 300 people

from 20 states and two continents showed up for the centennial reunion. Pulling off a big celebration of any kind is not an easy thing to do, but the Brown family has planned a centennial before. That one, in 1905, celebrated their first hundred years in West Virginia. That probably means that before too long, the go-getters among them will be working on a bicentennial.

Pat Brown Jenkins of Morgan-

town was one of the chief organizers of last year's get-together. She worked closely with her dad, former state legislator Ralph Brown of Arthurdale, cousins Bonn Brown of Elkins and Walter Brown of Fairmont, newspaper correspondent Irene Taylor from Reedsville, historian Gladys Shackelford Eddy of the Gordon community, and others.

"When I was a little girl, we



Dress for the 100th reunion was less formal than in the early years, but the spirit of togetherness was the same.

couldn't wait for the Brown Reunion," Pat recalled. "It was just like a holiday. We looked forward to seeing cousins we hadn't seen since the year before. It always happened at the same time each year, just about the time we were going back to school. I remember the boys always got haircuts, and we always had new shoes and a new outfit. You wore it to the reunion because it was new."

The reunions have been taking place in the Reedsville town park, an extension of the school grounds, since 1910. Tree-shaded and smooth enough for tables and tents, the terrain changes abruptly around the park perimeter where it becomes

solid rock — huge, craggy rocks the size of small houses. "When I was a kid, these rocks were as big as the trees," said Paul W. Brown of Fairmont.

A hundred years is a long time for a family to not miss a gathering, especially in light of the growth of the Browns and the distance members have put between themselves. There have been four or five wars which stole people from their midst. Earlier reunions were easier, perhaps. Most of the people who attended them lived within surrounding counties, if not right in the area. And there were all those homefolks with beds available, if need be.

The Browns go back a long, long way. Thomas Brown was one of the four children of William Brown III, whose grandfather, the first William, more than likely came to Virginia from England or Scotland in 1632. Thomas was not the first Brown in these parts, but he was the Revolutionary War veteran who built the historic stone house on Sack's Run (now Sack's Run Road, more locally recognized as Dogtown

Road) back in 1837. He and his wife, Anna Ash, had moved to Preston County in 1804, where they raised their eight children. Thomas died in 1844 in this house, now included in the National Historic Register.

One of his children was Samuel Byrne Brown, a veteran of the War of 1812, who had 11 children by marriage to Julia Zinn, daughter of the Major Zinn who owned a farm and mill near the Brown's stone home. One of those children was William Byrne Brown, a Union officer during the Civil War. He survived the conflict, coming home to raise 11 of his own children, from whom many of the Preston County clan descend. He inherited his grandfather Zinn's mill and all other holdings.

Even though the mill ceased operations about 1904, after having been run several years by the Shackelfords (whose family a daughter married into), and ceased to exist at all after a flood around 1914, the little crossroads at Sack's Run and State Route 92 has been known as Brown's Mill ever since. That's where the first reunion took place in 1895, right in the field at the old Shackelford homeplace two miles south of Reedsville.

Reunions first took place on Sat-



Brownies, from the 1902 Brown Reunion program.

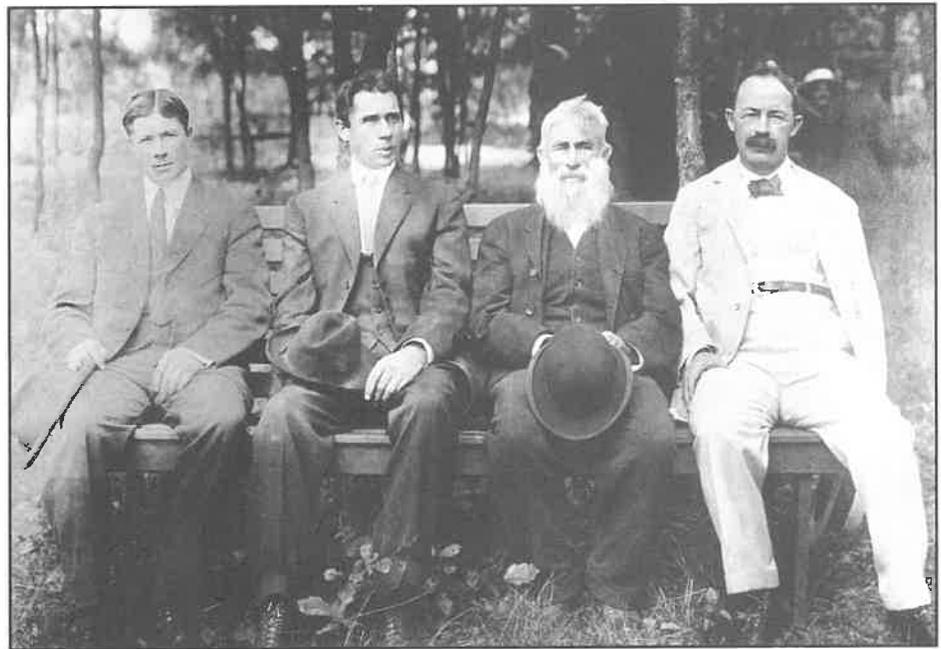
urdays because the people were religious and Sunday doings simply were not tolerated, particularly after money began to be awarded for competitive games. The 1895 officials included William Byrne Brown, professor Samuel Boardman Brown, publisher J. Slidell Brown, and lawyer James Edgar Brown, who after moving to Chicago wrote the family's voluminous genealogy.

The stiffly-posed photograph depicts spotless children, strangely-bewhiskered men, and well-dressed but unsmiling women. According to 80-year-old Ralph Brown, who also was once county sheriff, two former slaves prepared the "old Virginia-style" dinner served that day. A quick head count shows that about 114 people partook of the ham, biscuits, watermelon pickles, and other mouth-watering delights.

About the same size crowd turned out for the 1896 meeting at Gladesville Schoolhouse, a neat, well-painted building with a split rail fence that was nearly new. A picture from that year shows that the group brought musical instruments, including a mandolin, guitar, bass and fiddle. These folks were ready for a hoedown, glad to have an afternoon together and away from home.

The black women who cooked the year before returned, and this time there were black children in the crowd. The area had long been home to the black Browns as well as the white ones. They, too, had been born, married and died there for generations. Legend has it that they held a dance every year upstairs at the mill.

Slidell Brown, a newspaperman and Bonn's father, probably not only printed the invitations in his "Argus" printshop in Kingwood but also created the poetry, judg-



Bygone Browns: Civil War veteran Granville Brown poses with sons Elery, Virgil and James Edgar at an early reunion (above). J. Slidell Brown (below) was one of the organizers of the 1895 get-together. Photographers unknown.

ing from the characteristic wit. "Crescite et multiplicamini," one program instructed. It's been a while since freshman Latin, but I think that repeats the Biblical order to be fruitful and multiply — a thing the Browns certainly have done.

There was always an official Annual Address at the early reunions. The big speech was presented by President Dr. D. Ashford Brown in 1897. Afterwards, everybody sang "America." That was followed by an Address of Welcome by First Vice President William T. Brown. Professor Brown of Morgantown offered a Response. Third Vice President William Cartwright of Stewartstown apparently kept his silence, but Miss Annie Brown gave a recitation. Then James E. Brown presented "The Browns Away From Home," followed by a speech by Billy Brown, Jr. The group sang



"Old Folks at Home" and the national anthem.

Official family poet became a favored post beginning with the 1899 reunion at Brown Grove west of Kingwood. Mrs. Mary Brown Bent of Benwood was the first. She was

### Kingwood Walking Tour

The county seat in Preston County, Kingwood, has organized an historic walking tour as part of its Main Street Kingwood program. Kingwood, established in 1811, was named for a grove of big trees located there. Today,

the town's courthouse stands where the grove of trees did. The downtown area is about the same as the town's original boundaries.

The walking tour takes in Kingwood's historic district, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Many of the town's historic properties were built in the

last century, such as The Inn, built in 1859, and the Preston County Journal office, built in 1880. The James C. McGrew house was built in 1841, as was the Preston Academy. For more information contact Main Street Kingwood, P.O. Box 357, Kingwood, WV 26537; or call (304)329-2717.

the same Mary Brown who was among the first ten women to have applied for and gained admittance to West Virginia University, brave girl.

As it happened, another of those pioneering women students was Mary's friend Ella Butcher, who later married Professor Samuel Boardman Brown, Mary's brother. At the 100th celebration in 1995, a large array of memorabilia was displayed as part of the Women's Centenary Project of WVU. Four of

Mary's and Ella's grandchildren attended, some for the first time.

By then, one of the family's most widely-known poets and biggest supporters had died. Sylvia Smith Cornwell, a respected local historian and writer, was a Brown two ways. According to her son Rick, Sylvia's grandmother or great-grandmother was a Brown, and her dad's sister Carrie had married Peyton Brown, who lived in that old stone house for years.

Rick himself is related a third way

through his father, whose great, great-grandmother was a great-granddaughter of Thomas Squires Brown who, you'll remember, built that beautiful stone place. These kinds of overlapping relationships are not uncommon. Pioneer families stayed within their own communities and married there. As the generations passed, strangers met and married only to find out that somewhere along the line they had mutual relatives.

Chorister, too, became an official position, and perhaps there never was one to compare with Truman Brown, judging from all comments. Blessed with a voice that could bring tears to the sternest faces, Truman's popularity ranged beyond his Dogtown Road home area. One of his favorite stories is about an old Civil War veteran who always asked him to sing, declaring that Truman's voice was the best the old man had ever heard.

"Yes, sir, that's what he said,"

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*"Crescite et multiplicamini," one program instructed. That repeats the Biblical order to be fruitful and multiply — a thing the Browns certainly have done.*

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Truman recalled with pride. He doesn't lead the reunion singing anymore, but one look into his eyes tells you he still could if he chose.

An official chaplain was named in 1899, Reverend G. W. Bent of Benwood, Mary Brown's husband. The program shows that "West Virginia Hills" was added to the usual repertoire that year, which by then included "Blest Be the Tie that Binds," still sung today.

By 1902, money was needed. The Browns wanted to purchase a lot in the Reedsville Cemetery to gather together the remains "of some of

The family's rich heritage is evident in the Brown memorabilia displayed at the annual reunions.



## Meanwhile Down South: The Lilly Reunion

Just before the Brown family gets together at Reedsville, another big West Virginia family holds its reunion on Flat Top Mountain in Mercer County.

The Lilly Family Reunion was first held in 1930 and was billed as "The Greatest Reunion of All Time." It was then and still is a huge affair. Lillys from all over the country attend, and the state Highways Division accommodates them with special reunion road signs on the West Virginia Turnpike.

Most of the southern West Virginia Lillys trace their roots to pioneer settlers Robert and Frances Moody Lilly, both born in 1696, who lived at the mouth of the Little Bluestone River near Hinton. In 1980 Yvonne Snyder Far-

ley wrote an extensive article about the Lilly reunion for the spring issue of GOLDENSEAL. The reunions were founded by State Attorney General "Cousin Abe" Lilly, who was responsible for the 15 gatherings between 1930 and 1949. In 1977 the reunions were revived by Jack Lilly of Canton, Ohio.

These days, Sylvia Lilly and C. Berkley Lilly serve as contacts for the annual event. It is always held the third weekend in August. The 1996 Lilly Family Re-



DOUG CHADWICK

A scene from the 1979 Lilly Reunion.

union dates are August 16-18. Call (304)253-7883 for more information.

the pioneers of our family." The group also was working on erecting a "handsome granite shaft to the memory of Colonel Thomas Brown, a soldier of the Revolution," and to move his body from his family's cemetery on the farm to the one in town. "Send what you can to the secretary," the invitation — finely-penned Brownies marching across it — concluded.

The group picture from that year was taken near the campground close to Tunnelton, a popular spot where week-long church meetings took place. All summer, people would flock there by train for the revivals, pitching tents or putting up in the wooden buildings. By September, those meetings had ended for the year, so the expansive grounds were available to others. Judging from the wraps, suits

and buttoned jackets, cold weather came early that year; it does in Preston County. Still, about 130 people came to the 1902 reunion.

If anything that isn't food sticks in the minds of old reunionaires, it's games, victories and the loot they brought. In the earliest meetings, games were played by all ages. Competitors were spurred on by the thought of taking home a shiny \$5 gold piece, or perhaps a lesser prize. Silver dollars became the thing as time marched on, and they've held their popularity through years of sack and watermelon races, carrying eggs on a spoon, and things like elocution contests. In 1915, there was a prize for the prettiest baby, decided by the men, and the homeliest man, decided by the ladies.

"I got a dollar for sewing a button the fastest," laughed Ruth Rowan of Masontown. Jack Simms, a grandfather now and the only Brown who can say that his picture is in The World Book Encyclopedia (he's shown running the first continuous miner machine), recalls the times he left the reunion a richer kid. "I got silver dollars, I expect eight or ten over the years. Won them in

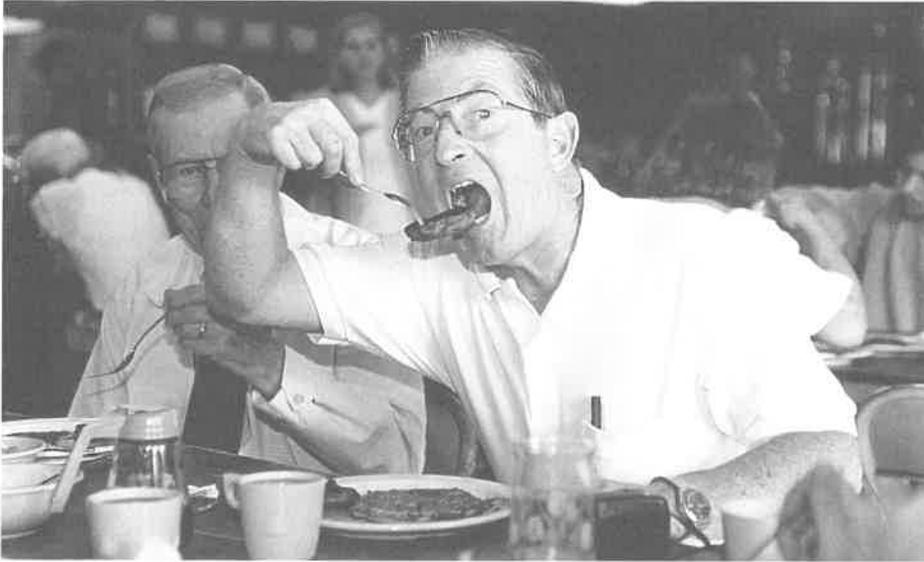
races, banana-eating contests and stuff like that. My wife, Mary Ellen, won two years straight for the best cake."

Carma Lee Brown Fazzoni of Sublette, Illinois, recalled that she "won the hog-calling contest every year." In 1952, she and her husband Al won a silver dollar for being the newest married couple to show up. They have the dollar framed with their wedding picture.

The family motto could be "Once a Brown, always a Brown." Goldie Brown Phillips, for instance, married Truman Brown's brother, Perry, about 70 years ago. Perry was killed at a railroad crossing not many years later. Since then, "Aunt Goldie" remarried and was widowed again, but she's still a Brown as far as the family, the reunion, and she are concerned. There are shirt-tail Browns, Browns by association, and friends of Browns — all considered family and all welcomed by the group.

With few exceptions since 1910, reunions have been in Reedsville where then the school was brand, spankin' new. It aged along with the people, seeing fashions and fads





The Brown Reunion is no place for dieting. Reunionaires found plenty to eat at the Sunday breakfast of traditional Preston County buckwheat pancakes and sausage (above) and at other meals, as well.



come and go and watching history evolve. Most of the dashing young men photographed sitting on its windowsills long ago and the women on its graceful porches are no more. Cherub-faced babies and fidgety kids have turned into great-grandparents themselves. Early on, the school's walls watched glad-handing politicians kiss babies and press the flesh with voters. Less of that takes place now, although at least one county commissioner showed up in 1995. "I've done a little of that myself," Ralph Brown said of his years in public office.

There is no doubt that the Browns have been achievers; there is a

plethora of doctors, lawyers, and teachers among them. The first Union soldier to die in the War Between the States was T. Bailey Brown. A highway marker on U.S. 50 near Grafton marks the spot where he fell, and there is a tall stone marking his burial place in the National Cemetery in Grafton.

The Reedsville school saw a reunion in 1917, the first time the world went to war, and another in 1945 when the men and women who served in World War II were back in their civvies. That was the 51st reunion — probably important in a way it hadn't been for a long time. Families were together again after

five hellish years of worrying whether they ever would be.

There were some vacant seats and heavy hearts here and there in '45, and some of the men present would never be whole again, but I'll bet the prayers offered up that day were ones of grateful thanksgiving. When the time came for "The Expansion of the Browns," as Slidell once had called dinnertime, people ate with a full appreciation after years of rationing.

For if anything is certain it's that food has played a major role in the Brown Reunions since the day they started. "Pack your basket," began one invitation, Bob Cunningham remembers.

Bob's mother had been left alone to raise their family, so the brothers and sisters all worked hard on the farm near Gladesville. "We really used to look forward to this," he said. "I was raking oats one time and my brother said, "Do you know

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*In 1915, there was a prize  
for the prettiest  
baby, decided by the men,  
and the homeliest  
man, decided by the  
ladies.*

---

what weekend this is? It's the Brown Reunion. Let's hurry up and get done so we can go!"

"We'd go down that line, and get the fresh fruit and stuff," Bob recalled of the dinners. The food comes hot, cold, in molds and out; in casseroles, salads, on platters and relish trays; raw, boiled, parboiled, baked, broiled, fried, basted, dry, liquid, solid, fresh, canned, stuffed, deviled, plain, conserved, frosted; fat-free and sugar-free or butter-drenched and calorie-laden. The makeshift tables groan under the



weight. When the say-so is given, people line up without further coaxing. They choose from a hundred entrees and another hundred or so desserts.

"Did you get some of that fresh corn?" someone asks. "Umm, umm, yes, and did you try that bread?" or "Did you ever taste such a sinful cake?"

Compliments are the order of the day for an hour or so while people overeat in a way expected of everyone once or twice a year. Emilee Brown McLaughlin recalls a time when each individual family brought its own picnic meal and fed itself. Chop-licking outsiders

tasted mama's superb fried chicken or sister's famous potato salad only if they were lucky enough to receive an invitation to sit and partake.

"Not once has anyone gone home hungry," the 1966 invitation proclaimed, in what may have been the understatement of the century.

Last year, Louis and Susan Brown served Preston County's traditional buckwheat cakes and sausage to at least 180 people at the Reedsville fire hall on Sunday morning before the memorial service. They served that many and more wonderful prime rib dinners the night before. Attendance has been falling in re-

cent years, but the Brown Centennial Reunion seems to have more than compensated for it.

Family members came and went all weekend, showing up for tours and digesting displays and exhibits in the Methodist Church Sunday school building near the park. Pat Jenkins estimates that at least 300 people came during the two-day event, and if little children had been absent in the past several years, they weren't in 1995. Gary Brown and his helpers entertained them with games and prizes all afternoon.

Folks freely dropped cash into conspicuously placed boxes to help offset major expenses. Pat said she was hoping for \$3,000 and thought that by the time everything was over and counted, they would have that much.

The people at last fall's reunion did what Browns had done for the 99 previous years. They came home. They were excited about being together, learning about each other, becoming reacquainted, recalling old times. Even after attorney Ron Brown called for attention in the park after dinner, it was hard to keep them quiet.

They discussed family lore and legends — stories handed down orally, like the one about the big, barefisted fighter who challenged people wherever he went, or how some Browns switched political parties during FDR's long reign; speculated about what happened to the third of the triplets born to one family; told how a young mother burned up in a fire; wondered about the Civil War soldier some say was killed not by Rebels but by his own men; and repeated the story that the old cemetery on the Thomas Squires Brown farm was where the slaves were buried. They parted with hugs and good wishes and promises of tomorrows.

Anyone who ever doubted that blood is thicker than water needs to come here. "The family goes beyond brothers, sisters, children, Mom and Dad," wrote Timothy Brown in the 1986 invitation. "It is to be concerned about each other. To want to help each other the best we can. So we need to get together at the reunion." \*



Thomas Brown was among the family founders. Pat Brown Jenkins and her father, Ralph Brown, stand by the Revolutionary War veteran's grave.

*At Home with the Browns:*

## A Morgan Ridge Legacy

By Shari Brown



The Browns of Morgan Ridge: Virgil and Lydda, with children Morris, Lloyd, Edna and Robert. Photographer unknown, 1912.

Between reunions, the Browns carried on the industrious daily life of hard-working mountain people. A closer look at the Virgil Brown family.

Turning the pages of family photo albums and driving the ridges of eastern Marion County helped to bring an earlier way of life back into focus for me. I grew up nearby but never actually explored the area until I spent a captivating weekend with my husband's Uncle Walter Brown, visiting his birthplace and listening to him recount his youth.

The Browns are an old clan, deeply rooted. Walter was the youngest of six children born to Virgil and Lydda Morris Brown in

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*Walter recalls his mother spending days in the potato patch with her infant nearby in a cardboard box.*

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the residence previously owned by Governor Ephraim Morgan. Now owned by William and Margaret Scivo, the remodeled house still stands on a picturesque bend on Morgan Ridge. In its earliest days, possibly before the formation of West Virginia, two of the downstairs rooms served as the community post office. A peaceful hillside rises behind the house, and a stand of pines across the road protects it from the blustery winds that sweep across the ridge. Remnants of the apple orchard are still visible, as is

the well that Virgil Brown had dug behind the house.

Of 11 children born to Granville and Elizabeth Watson Brown, Virgil was the ninth, smallest in stature and frailest in health. He never received a formal education. Nevertheless, he was an industrious and disciplined farmer and father, working continually to provide for his family in lean times. He was considered an upright and just man, serving several years as Winfield District's justice of the peace.

The Brown farm covered approximately 140 acres. The family fed themselves, producing their own vegetables, fruit, grains, dairy products, and meat — mostly pork, though they had chicken on special occasions.

They all worked and worked hard. Walter recalls his mother spending days in the potato patch with her infant nearby in a cardboard box. The Browns mined their own coal from a neighbor's seam, making several wagon runs to haul enough fuel for the winter. Hog butchering was done in the fall and sheep shearing in the spring, both supplementing their meager income.

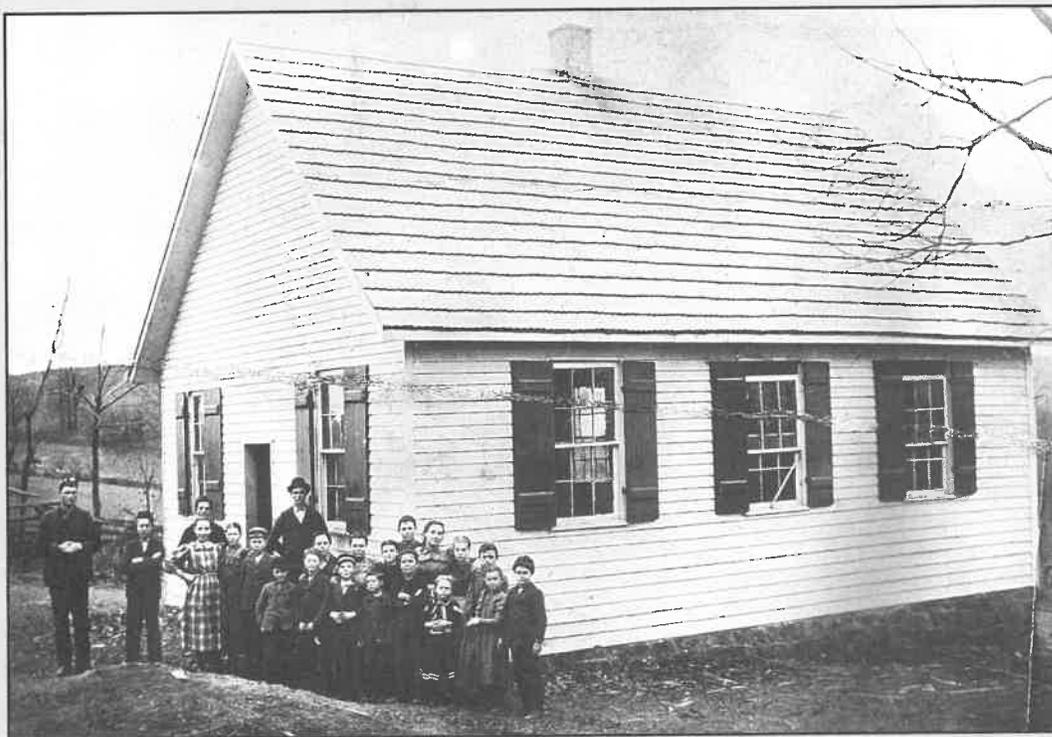
The Depression hit the area early, reinforcing the resourcefulness of the ridge people, and their community spirit. Though poor by our standards, they weren't aware of it, having no basis for comparison. Virgil and his neighbors shared horses to plow their acreage. They mutually engaged the services of an outside grain thresher each fall, paying him with a portion of the grain. This trading of services and goods was the normal method of transacting business. Very little cash changed hands. To raise money for the annual property taxes, Virgil and his sons hired onto the road crew in the district, earning \$3.50 per day. A team of horses, when they had a team to offer, earned half as much.

Rarely did they own a car. The

roads were dirt and often deeply rutted. On countless occasions they would have to stop, find a pole, and pry the narrow tires out of the mire. Also, Virgil never could get the hang of gear shifting, often prompting Lydda to bail out of the car on steep grades. Walter remembers the time he wanted to buy a

an unpleasant degree. The Layman school also functioned as the community social center and a gathering place for debates.

Attending school beyond the elementary level meant walking eight miles into east Fairmont. Many times Edna, the only daughter, stayed overnight with friends.



The original Layman School, when Lydda Morris was a schoolgirl. She stands at center rear, under shutter. Photographer unknown, 1892.

neighbor's older Model T. The asking price was \$12.50. Although he worked for two years for the car, he never could manage to get that much money together at one time.

The Brown children all attended grade school at Layman School, out the ridge about a mile. It was first built in the 1870's and rebuilt twice after that.

Those were the days when multiplication tables were memorized forward and backward and students "parsed" and "ciphered." Teachers were hired more on their ability to maintain order than for the college degrees they held. "Snow days" didn't exist, and Walter recalls that Virgil would hitch a log to his horse to clear a path for his children. The boys carried drinking water from a neighbor's well, and a potbelly stove supplied heat, which in the winters accentuated body odors to

When they had a car, they parked it halfway home up a shortcut known as Reuben's Run, avoiding the muddy roads the rest of the way. In the early mornings when they reached the car, faithful neighbors had a teakettle of hot water waiting to pour on the engine. Eventually Virgil decided it was more practical to move into town than keep up a car, so each year he rented a house in east Fairmont, permanently moving there in 1932.

"My ornery boys," as Lydda referred to her sons, found time in their long days to get into trouble. Morris, my husband's father and the oldest, once discovered a still on a relative's farm. Late one night he and brother Bob pushed the Model T out to a field where they could start it without being heard. They drove to the still, confiscated three bottles of moonshine, and returned home just as stealthily, se-

creting the bottles in different locations. Several days later they went to retrieve their moonshine, only to find two of the bottles upset and emptied and the third one gone. Little escaped their father's eye.

Virgil was not a mean man, but he rarely smiled and he was definitely the head of the house. When there was mischief or disobedience, he gave three warnings: first, pointing his finger sternly at the offender; second, crooking that finger; third, crooking that finger and menacingly tipping his head. That was all it ever took for Walter.



Compare this to the portrait on page 24 and you will see that the Browns were still a fine-looking family 35 years later. The circle was unbroken, with a couple of new faces added. Brothers Lawrence, Lloyd, Walter and Robert stand at rear, with Edna and Morris flanking their parents. Photo by Ray Stoker, 1947.

Morris pushed his luck occasionally and was soundly thrashed.

Though their lives were frugal, the Browns were charitable neighbors. Lydda was called on numerous times to help deliver neighbors' babies. Though a physician was present at the births of all of her own children she would assist other women, often in the middle of the night, taking young Walter to carry the lantern. And she was never one to let visitors leave her home empty-handed, sharing her sauerkraut, berries, green beans, and other good things.

Driving on out the ridge, listen-

ing to Walter's stories and later poring over family memorabilia, I could sense the long legacy of my husband's people. Old Thomas Brown's 1837 house still stands on the Dogtown Road, and the Lydda Morris Brown house at Smithtown is still older. The Morris family history records that William Morris made whiskey and hauled it over the Cumberland Trail to Baltimore, bringing back salt to pay for his land.

Because of its inaccessibility, we didn't visit the Granville Brown farm in neighboring Monongalia

and James Edgar Brown, the Chicago attorney and Brown genealogist. Numerous others lie there as well. They include slaves who served the Browns, though their markers have disappeared.

The Browns have always been prompt to enlist in the nation's service, a tradition passed on to Virgil's sons. All five served in World War II, as did Edna's husband. And always community oriented, they have served on boards of education, church committees, and in civic organizations. Of particular note is Samuel Boardman Brown, one of Virgil's brothers, a highly respected professor of geology at West Virginia University.

Though not a member of the Brown family, Tommy Doolittle was a ridge man whose life made a

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*Virgil was not a mean man, but was definitely the head of the house. When there was mischief, he gave three warnings. That was all it ever took for Walter.*

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lasting impression on all of them. Tommy lost his eyesight when he was 19, and his other senses seem to have intensified. The community watched as he became a master craftsman, making over 230 musical instruments. One of his violins still remains in Walter's proud possession. Tommy was a giant of a man in heart and cherished by everyone, always available to entertain with his music and loving to dance. The warmth of spirit of people like him helped offset the often harsh environment of life on the ridge.

I didn't know it then, but the Browns were getting ready to celebrate their 100th annual reunion just about the time I was exploring their history. I'm not surprised. Their past has produced a heritage of solid, productive families, and plenty of character-building lessons, the fine fruit of Morgan Ridge. ✪

# “Listen to That Beautiful Music”

## Fox Chasing in the Mountain State

Text and Photographs by Gerald Milnes

There are no horses or fancy red jackets in fox chasing, West Virginia-style, but you will find plenty of dedicated sportsmen and some mighty fine hounds.

The fox usually wins, by the way.



You can bet that fox chasing put some of the sparkle into Hoy Saville's eyes. The Hardy Countian, 83, enjoys late nights in the woods.

Earl Conley closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep after talking with me for over an hour about memorable fox chases of bygone days. At 101 years old, Earl deserved his nap. I'm sure he was dreaming about old "Sink" and "Vick," his favorite fox hounds of times past. Earl has owned and listened to many hounds during a lifetime of fox chasing in Calhoun County. He'd just been reliving old chases for me, and the look on his face told me the dogs were running the foxes of his dreams.

Fox chasing is a sporting custom that spans centuries and continents. The thrill of the chase has enticed followers from the old world to the new, from nobleman to working man, and from casual chaser to dedicated hound breeder. There are plenty of enthusiasts in West Virginia.

The wily fox, known throughout history and literature for his cunning ways, presents a challenge for man and dog alike. With their hounds, fox chasers match wits with an old nemesis. The sport is truly in the chase, or as some like to call it, "the race," where the dogs are likely to be "outfoxed" and left in a state of utter confusion.

Although they are the object of

the hunt, chasers seldom kill foxes or harm them in the pursuit. Occasionally, on a chase over hill and through hollow, the dogs will overtake and kill a fox, but it's a rare day that they get that opportunity. Red foxes are much faster than dogs, and are masters of deception in losing the pack. At one time hunters killed foxes for their pelts, but with a steep decline in the fur business that motive no longer exists. Most fox chasing in West Virginia takes place at night, which also rules out opportunities to see and dispatch the quarry.

Fox hunters have great respect for the object of all the commotion and excitement. An old chaser told me that when he hears of someone killing a red fox, "it's like a kick in the belly!" But these same chasers may not get as upset when hearing about someone killing a "little smut-faced gray," which comes in second-best in any fox popularity contest.

While red foxes are the quarry of choice in West Virginia, gray foxes seem to exist in about equal numbers. Gray foxes don't have the sporting disposition and cleverness of the reds, according to the chasers. Whereas the gray, which is slower than a red, will often head straight for a hole or den and safety, reds will run huge circles, sometimes miles in diameter. Chases with reds commonly go for many, many hours. They will often pass near their original location, giving the dog-owners an occasional chance to sight the fox.

There are differences of opinion among fox chasers about whether red foxes are native to North America. Many believe reds were imported from England, early on, for the sole purpose of giving fox chasers a more sporting quarry. At one time red foxes were imported



West Virginians prefer Walker hounds for fox chasing. Hubert and Dean White have bred Walkers such as these for decades.

from France to England to replenish a dwindling supply there. At various times West Virginia fox chasers have bred them in captivity to restore their numbers in the wild.

*Walker hounds,  
originally bred by the  
Walker brothers in  
Kentucky, are far and  
away the most popular  
breed among West  
Virginia fox chasers.*

Red foxes are also the game of choice for English-style fox hunting, that is, the venerable method of chasing on horseback. This sport is popular in Europe and the eastern United States. It depends on equestrian skill and open, somewhat agricultural land where following the hounds on horseback is possible. In her fine book about fox hunting, *Chaseworld*, Mary Hufford

contrasts the two approaches. She notes a definite separation of social class, the more formal English-style sport being practiced by club members in conforming red-jacket attire, using registered hounds, always hunting in daytime and adhering to ceremonial customs. There is a "master" and a "mistress" of the hunt, a "whipper-in," and so forth, that constitute a hierarchy within the group.

West Virginia fox chasers are more likely to use unregistered hounds, own their own dogs, and chase in smaller groups of one to three hound owners. The chasing is most likely to be at night, and there is keen interest among chasers as to whose dog can hold the lead. The competition reaches a fever pitch at meetings of the West Virginia Fox Chasers Association, where numbered hounds score points by their actions in an actual chase.

In the English-style sport the clubs, or "Hunts," typically use the Maryland breed of hound. These dogs are a bit slower than breeds found here. They have the unique

# Foxes in West Virginia

To the delight of fox chasers and other nature lovers, red and gray foxes both are found throughout the Mountain State. The red fox belongs to a different genus from the gray fox, but both belong to the Canidae or dog family. The red fox weighs from about eight to 15 pounds with the males averaging about two pounds more than females. Adult gray foxes weigh six to 15 pounds. Gray fox males are slightly larger than females.

The fox chasers fox of choice — the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) — prefers open fields and farmland, according to Dave McClung at McClintic Wildlife Station in Mason County. A fox trapper himself, McClung says the red fox is especially prevalent in the Eastern Panhandle in heavily farmed areas. He also points out the effect that coyotes have on the red fox. Red foxes are in direct competition with coyotes and where coyotes roam, red foxes are dwindling.

The gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) is a far more

secretive animal and prefers the forest lands of West Virginia. Though it is smaller than the red fox with shorter legs and tail, it is such a robust animal that the two species often seem about equal in size.

"The red fox is much preferred by houndsmen as this fox runs in front of the hounds much better than does the gray fox, which tends to hole up quickly. The fox is seldom shot during these hunts by the true fox chaser," says Division of Natural Resources District Game Biologist James Evans.

Evans also provided some general information for those who want to get into the chase. The dog training rules are somewhat involved. Basically the season for dog training by West Virginia residents runs from August 16 to April 30 with



The red fox.

Other dogs like Blue Ticks, Red Bones and Plotts are usually used for coon or bear hunting, but are occasionally used for fox chasing as well. Piggots, Dawsons, and Marquis are also sometimes mentioned. In general, fox hounds are slightly smaller, more sleek looking, and faster than the larger dogs bred to hunt raccoon and bear. "Lemon-spotted" hounds, a type popular in West Virginia, are named for their distinctive coats, but are a variation of the Walker breed.

Many old chasers in West Virginia have experience with following the dogs on horseback, although never as an organized event where numbers of people, as in hunt clubs,

some exceptions. A West Virginia resident may train his dogs at any time on public land, or on private land with permission of the landowner, except in Mineral, Hampshire, Hardy, Grant, Tucker, Randolph, Webster, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Greenbrier and Monroe counties. In these counties residents may only train their dogs from August 25 to February 28 because of concerns about bear populations.

For more information on this traditional West Virginia sport, contact the West Virginia Fox Chasers Association. Mel Clark of Mason County serves on the board of directors. Readers may contact him at Rt 1, Box 97, West Columbia, WV 25287; (304) 773-5405.

—Debby Sonis Jackson

trait of always staying in packs, with dogs readily relinquishing the "lead" at intervals to other dogs. Faster breeds in this situation, with open land, would result in many foxes caught, normally not the object of the chase.

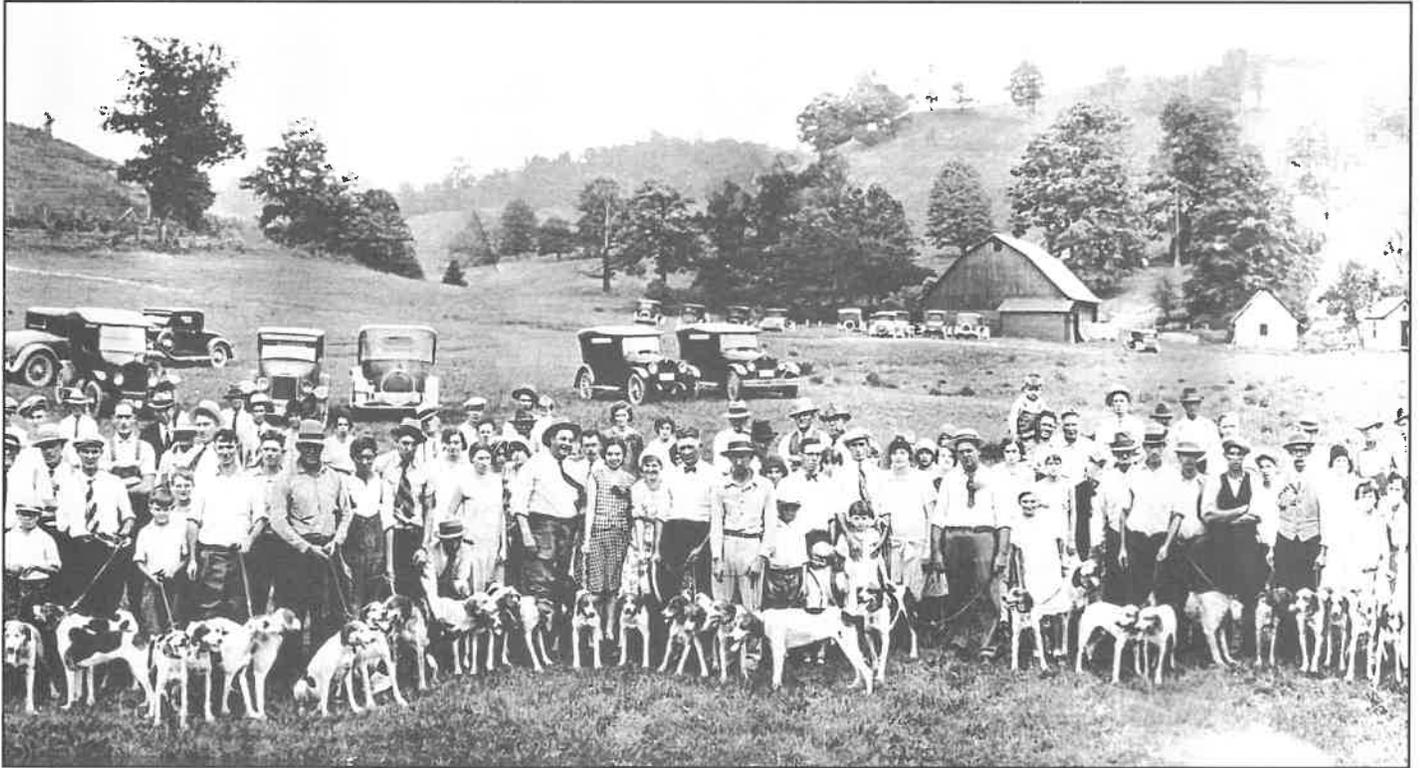
Walker hounds, originally bred by the Walker brothers in Kentucky, are far and away the most popular hound breed among West Virginia fox chasers. Other breeds and types are still found, but in diminishing numbers. Some chasers speak of Julys. Some mention Trigs, which have been bred out of Black and Tan hounds.

Hoy Saville, an old chaser in Hardy County, remembers when people there had Birdsongs and Goodmans. An uncle of Hoy's had a type he called Fox Beetles. These were Beagle hounds, normally rabbit dogs, that were bred with larger hounds to run foxes.

chase the pack over open land. Fox chasing in rough mountain terrain

has always been a different proposition. Earl Conley would follow his hounds on horseback as much as was possible. Hoy Saville tells of an old man, Lee Kline, who rode his horse to the hounds in Hampshire County. Hoy's uncle, Elmore Saville, had a horse who followed the chase by the sound of the hounds. Dean and Hubert White, active fox chasers in Calhoun County, have ridden horses to the chase in recent years.

But unlike English-type fox chasing on horses, bred to jump fences in open rolling countryside, they didn't attempt to follow the dogs throughout the chase. The Whites, as with the others, only hoped to get in the proximity of the chase to be better able to hear the action.



The sport goes about as far back as there have been men, dogs and foxes. This photo shows an Upshur County fox chasers reunion. Photographer unknown, probably 1930's.

There are stories about old-timers who got so involved in the chase that they would run from hill to hill in order to better hear the hounds. Fox chasers know the sound of their dogs like parents know the voices of their children. Some have preferences for different "mouthed" dogs. Some like a "coarse mouth" while some like a "fine" or "tenor mouth." Some like a "fast chop," or "turkey mouth," while others prefer a "loud-squalling mouth," or a "pretty-tongued beller." Some hounds have a "crying mouth."

Other dogs, especially those bred with Red Bone, Blue Tick, or Black and Tan blood will have a separate "treeing bark." But most fox-chasing breeds will not bay up a tree. If a fox trees, which they will do, the hounds will simply go on and look for a new trail. The popular Walker hounds won't bay up a tree, but their close relatives, the Treeing Walkers, will, as they are bred for coon hunting.

The abundance of deer these days is a problem to fox chasers. Many hounds can't resist the scent of a fresh deer trail. Seasoned hound owners have no time at all for a hound with this trait, and will soon

"put him down the road" (often to Virginia where dogs may legally hunt deer in season). Deer chasing is a habit that's extremely hard to break. Hoy Saville says he doesn't have much luck breaking dogs of

*Fox chasers know the sound of their dogs like parents know the voices of their children. Some like a "coarse mouth," while some like a "fine" or "tenor mouth."*

the habit, but he says he can "breed it out of them." Hoy finds that by breeding "deer-proof" dogs to each other for several generations, he can get pups that are deer-proof. Many older men note that when they started chasing, deer were so rare that the problem didn't exist.

Chasing foxes is something that men have bred into hounds over hundreds of years. Left to their own choice, it is more natural for hounds to chase deer than foxes. Dogs were

originally bred from wolves, which would seek deer or other large game to provide food for the pack, much as wolves still do in the wild. Since domestication, humans have so influenced dog behavior that they now hunt animals like foxes, a not-too-distant relative.

Hubert and Dean White have hounds that go back many generations, 30 to 40 years in their family. They have Walkers that are "full of our old-time breeding," and not interested in running deer. Breeding hounds is a discriminating undertaking. Hubert warns that inbreeding can create genetic problems, but he practices "line breeding" to some extent. He and Dean are quite proud of their hounds, which are the result of many years of careful attention.

Carl Davis is an avid hound breeder and fox chaser in Braxton County, and is well respected around the state for his hounds. A fireplace mantle at his house is full of trophies and ribbons that attest to the prowess of his hounds. His lemon-spotted Walkers are his prize possessions, especially two young "gypts" he currently runs. Hound men normally refer to males as



Carl Davis shows off two fine lemon-spotted Walkers. The Braxton Countian is an avid fox chaser and dog breeder.

dogs, while females are bitches or gyps. Back in 19th-century England, where fox chasing was a passion, foxes were identified by these same terms, thus a male fox was a "dog."

There are several large fenced-in areas in the state that are kept up by enthusiasts for fox chasing. High fences, well maintained, go completely around these areas. The pens assure a good chase every time out. Perhaps more importantly, they contain no deer, which eliminates a major distraction for hounds and a major headache for chasers. The White brothers like to run in pens, especially during hunting season, as there is less chance of the dogs getting shot by hunters in the open woods.

One night Carl Davis and his chasing buddy took me to one of these pens for an all-night chase. This one, in Upshur County, is about 400 acres in size, and contained numerous foxes. After Carl let the hounds out of the truck, it wasn't long before they latched onto a good trail and the "race" was on. There were a few hours of intensive pursuit, narrated for me by Carl, who seemed able to interpret all aspects of the chase solely through the noise of hounds echoing through the hills.

Later, after several hours of hot pursuit, there was a lull in the chase. After a few silent minutes I was puzzled by the odd, gruff, whining-yelp sound of a fox barking. It occurred to me that the fox was

laughing! Carl explained that red foxes actually enjoy a good chase, and if they happen to lose the hounds, they will sometimes bark at them to disclose their whereabouts. It seemed to work, as the dogs quickly got back on the trail, and the race was on again. Hubert and Dean White later affirmed this strange behavior among red foxes. They have owned dogs that would quit and return to the truck if a fox barked at them — embarrassed, no doubt.

A little later that night the moon had come up, almost full, so I headed off through the woods towards the hounds in hopes of glimpsing the actual chase, but no luck. When I returned, Carl said that the fox and hounds had come so close to the camp, he had actually seen the old fox go by a few hundred yards ahead of the dogs. But now the dogs were a good ways off, so we all went in the camp to stoke the fire and warm up. Some tales emerged about memorable chases of yesteryear.

Carl told about an old fellow who took a novice out for an all-night fox chase. After several hours, the fun wore off for the newcomer, and he just sat there shivering, wishing the night was over. Directly the old fellow said, "Just listen to that beautiful music!"

To this the shivering fellow gruffly replied, "I can't hear nothing for those old dogs a-barkin'!" I've heard versions of this tale from all the old chasers I've met. Mary Hufford traces it back to Elizabethan England.

About nine o'clock on a crisp fall night in 1995, I helped Hoy Saville load his fox hounds into his old pickup for a chase in Hardy County. Hoy has listened to many a fox chase, and at 83, he's not about to quit. He never runs in the pens, believing that by being artificially removed from deer, the dogs would be more apt to chase them when they did encounter them in open land. Hoy is continually buying, selling, and trading hounds, and normally has four or five at any given time.

This night, we drove down a dark hollow a few miles away to a place where Hoy was sure there was



Hoy listens to his hounds with a little help from a low-tech hearing aid (above) and later recreates a fox chase on his fiddle. Most of the sport's pleasure is in listening to the race, with the fox and hounds seldom seen.



some fox activity. Upon letting the dogs out, they "hit" before ten minutes had gone by. At this point, we jumped back in Hoy's truck and beat it up a gravel road to a point on the ridge above the chase.

From here, we could hear every bit of what the fox and hounds were up to. When the fox took the dogs on a wide circle away from our station, Hoy produced an old funnel from the pickup with an altered,

angled spout, and put it to his ear. "My ears ain't what they used to be," he explained, "this is how I can still hear them run."

The fox and hounds had a big time of it for a few hours, but then the fox took them straight down the hollow and out of hearing range. After waiting awhile in hopes of them coming around our way again, Hoy said that given the direction they were going, it was his experience that they were

headed "clean, clear out of the country," and would be gone all night.

After waiting and listening for a while longer, we headed back to the old log house on the farm where Hoy has lived all of his 83 years. Had we been further from home, Hoy would have left a jacket or coat for the dogs to come back to, and he would have gone back later to collect them. But being this close, he said they would not have any trouble finding their way. Like many chasers, Hoy uses a horn to call his dogs when the chase is over and they're in earshot. But this night they seemed hopelessly out of hearing range.

Hoy hadn't gotten enough of a chase to satisfy his enthusiasm. Back at the house, he got out his old fiddle and, with great relish, he mimicked a chase for me. Hoy relives the whole event with his fiddle, replete with commentary about what is happening. The fiddle barked and bellowed, imitated the yaps and cries of the pack, as the chase went over hill and dale, and

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*Red foxes actually enjoy a good chase, and if they happen to lose their hounds they will sometimes bark at them to disclose their whereabouts.*

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through thicket and wood.

Hoy's fiddling performance is similar to the actual chase in many ways. Fox chasers live vicariously through their hounds. When listening to a chase, they're imagining how their dogs are "cutting to the lead," overtaking a friend's hounds, or picking up a lost trail with triumphant barks. The endless clamor of the yelping hounds, hot on a trail but out of sight and in the darkness, stirs some primitive instinct within. Well-trained and well-bred hounds have been a longtime partner of humanity. If imitation is, after all, the ultimate compliment,

## The Foxy Reynard

Foxes live in folklore as well as in the hills of West Virginia, and stories of their exploits have come down to us since ancient times. For example, Reynard the Fox was a hero of medieval tales and epics which satirized the upper classes of Europe.

Reynard's sassy tradition endures in Gilmer County in the form of an old song. Rita Emerson, born in 1908 at Coxs Mills, remembers fox hunting with her father. She still sings "Bold Reynard," as learned from her parents.

### Bold Reynard

First I saw was a farmer,  
Plowing out his ground;  
Said he saw Bold Reynard,  
Running around and around.

### Chorus:

Come a-whoop, whoop, whoop,  
and a hi lo,  
All through the merry terrain;  
Come a ram, tam, tam, with a  
hippy, tippy tam,

And away with a rally, with a bow-  
wow-wow,  
Come a hoodle, doodle, doodle, with  
a bugle horn,  
Through the woods he ran, brave boys,  
Through the woods he ran.

The next I saw was a maiden,  
Combing out her locks;  
She said she saw Bold Reynard,  
Among the geese and flocks.

### Chorus Repeats

Next I saw was a blind man,  
Blind as he could be;  
He said he saw Bold Reynard,  
Run up a hollow tree.

### Chorus Repeats

Rita, a retired minister featured in a Winter 1992 GOLDENSEAL article by Susan Leffler, is a regular at the West Virginia State Folk Festival at Glenville.

— Gerald Milnes



Rita Emerson gets a foxy look when she thinks of the Bold Reynard.

Hoy's fiddling fox chase pays tribute to man's best friend in a genuine, appreciative way.

It was long after midnight and Eva, Hoy's wife, had a feather bed made up for me. I had to leave early the next morning, and the dogs still hadn't come home. But Hoy didn't seem concerned, saying they would make it back in due time. He also indicated that he didn't care much about any dog who didn't know where home was. He'd grown very particular about the traits of his hounds, and at his stage in life, he didn't have time for dogs that didn't measure up.

Many an enchanted evening begins at the back of a pickup truck by a West Virginia roadside. Here Hoy Saville releases his hounds in Hardy County.

Days later, I checked back with Hoy and Eva to thank them for the hospitality, and to hear how the dogs made out. Hoy said they had

made it back much later that morning, panting, with sore feet and their tongues drooping. Old mister fox had given them quite a chase. ✪





The park overlooks New River Gorge, with Fayette County on the other side. This is the view from Turkey Spur. Photo courtesy Division of Natural Resources.

# Grandview

By Leona G. Brown

Photographs by Michael Keller

Early settler Joseph Carper exclaimed over the view more than a century ago, and for generations the Grandview story and the story of his family were the same. Now the famous view and rich traditional heritage may be enjoyed by all.

**W**hen Ritchie Carper was a boy, the cliffs near his Raleigh County home were a fascinating playground. He and his friends climbed the towering rocks, explored the tunnels and crevices, and played around relics remaining from the old timbering and coal mining industries. They

dug sulfur from a seam they found in the rocks. It had a pungent smell when burned, and they used it to play pranks on their friends.

Today, the boys' old playground is beautiful Grandview, formerly a state park and now part of the New River Gorge unit of the National Park Service. Grandview's location

near I-64 makes it easily accessible to visitors. Its scenic grandeur, history, hiking trails and picnic facilities make it a favorite spot for many.

Family tradition has it that Joseph Carper, Ritchie's great-grandfather, named the place. Looking across the chasm with the New River twinkling far below and over

to the magnificent mountains on the other side, he is said to have exclaimed, "That is a grand view!"

This was in 1855. Joseph Carper had migrated from Monroe County by way of Paint Creek, and by then was famous for the rifles he hand-crafted. The family story is that he traded one of these rifles to "an Englishman" for all the land he could see, on the south side of New River, from the rock which is now the main overlook at the park.

Joseph Carper died February 9, 1880. Around his grave, atop a knoll in the Grandview Cemetery, not far from the entrance to the park, is an iron frame. This frame was made at the Alderson Foundry, and shipped by train to Quinnimont. It was to be hauled by wagon up the old McCreery Road, a narrow dirt road

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*Tradition has it that Joseph Carper named the place. Looking across the chasm with the New River twinkling far below, he exclaimed, "That is a grand view!"*

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which led up the steep mountain-side to the community of Grandview. But New River was high and raging when family members attempted to bring the frame across in a boat. The boat overturned. The people made it to shore, but the iron frame sank to the bottom of the river, there to remain until dry weather the following summer allowed its recovery.

Grandview, famed for the view, held other treasures. There was coal under the mountain, and the mountaintop was covered with timber. After the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway opened up the New River Gorge to coal mining and logging, the once quiet Grandview area became a noisy place, busy with industrial activity. James Beaty began operating a large lumber mill, with his business office at Crow. The first coal mine in Raleigh County opened at Royal, below what is now the Turkey Spur over-

look. According to Jim Wood's 1994 history, *Raleigh County, West Virginia*, the first recorded coal mine fatality in Raleigh County occurred at Royal, when a freed slave, William Tice, was crushed in a slate fall in 1897.

Mrs. J. B. McGinnis of Beckley wrote about life at Royal. Her story was published in a 1957 issue of the *Beckley Post-Herald* in Eugene Scott's column, "From Day to Day." James Laing was superintendent of the mine, she said, and James Kay was foreman. Both came from Scotland.

"The Grandview men worked

there from the opening of the mine until it closed," she wrote. "Among them were the Haneys, Wrights, McClures, Carpers, Rinners, Smiths, Ennises, and many others." These family names are still prominent in the community.

Mrs. McGinnis also described the method of getting coal from the mine to the railroad. "The coal was transported from the top of the mountain to the cars on the C. and O. Railway across the river by means of a lofty and endless cable which was anchored on the Prince side near the tunnel. Half-ton buckets were spaced at intervals along



This early tourism promotional photo shows a family enjoying Grandview State Park. Photographer and date unknown.

this aerial tramway. There were 38 buckets and they operated by gravity — that is, the loaded ones going down the slope would pull the empty ones up the mountain.”

The timber industry used similar means to transport logs down the steep mountainside. “Drum Hollow,” near the main overlook in the park, got its name from a huge wooden drum which sat at the head of the hollow. Cables wrapped around this drum were attached to monitor cars, running on wooden rails. The cars hauled logs from the mountaintop, to be floated across the river by ferry to the railroad. Later, the company built a small railroad to carry the logs down the mountain to a bandmill at Glade. A railroad bridge carried the cars of sawed lumber across the river to the main line. The supports for this bridge are still standing in the river just above the mouth of Glade Creek.

Other relics of the industrial days remain. Ritchie Carper tells how he and his father, Van, when hunting in what is now the park, came across the remains of a brick furnace built to ventilate the Royal mine. The draft created from a fire in the furnace, connected to the mine by another shaft, pulled fresh air into the mine.

This primitive ventilation system is described by C. A. Lawson, who worked in the Royal mine, in Jim Wood’s book. “I saw all of it,” Lawson said. “I worked through the time when we used lard fat lamps with a little spout shaped like a coffee pot’s, when we ventilated the mine by sinking a shaft in the floor and building a fire in it to suck in the good air and drive out the bad through a hole in the roof.”

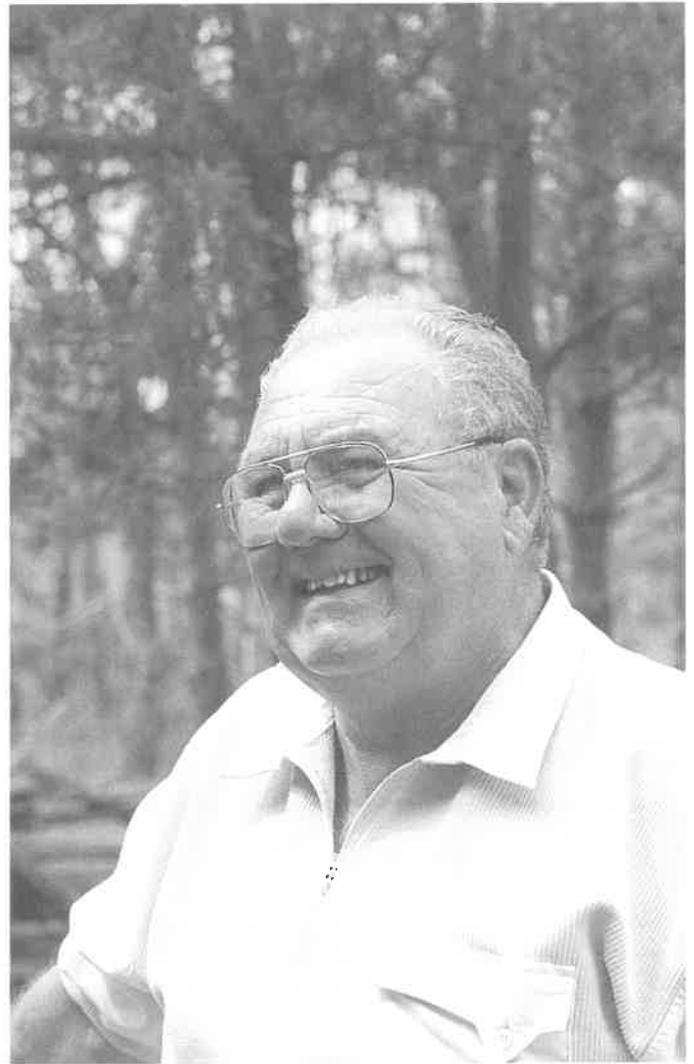
Later, a narrow-gauge track was built around the side of the mountain to connect two mine entrances. On this track a small “dinkey” engine pulled coal cars. When the mine was abandoned, the dinkey was left sitting on the tracks. This was another place for Ritchie Carper and his friends to play, climbing into the rusting locomotive and pretending to drive it.

By the mid-1920’s most of the timbering was over. But the grand view remained, and people began driv-

ing out to see it. The road had never been paved. It was rocky and bordered by stumps left by the timbering operations, and sometimes so muddy it was impassable. Jim Wood reports that in May of 1926 county road supervisor L. M. Dorsey had suggested that the road be improved so that the “autoists” could “see this wonderful beauty spot.” The road and surrounding land were still private property. At last, in 1939, the West Virginia Conservation Commission purchased a 52-acre tract of land, including “the Grand View Rock,” from Admiralty Coal Company and its lessee, Royal Coal Company, for the development of a state park.

In January 1940 an architect started laying out the new park. The Civilian Conservation Corps began constructing roadways, foot trails, picnic areas and parking lots. The road to the park, however, was still in bad shape. The Beckley Chamber of Commerce worked for eight years to get the road blacktopped. Finally, in October of 1948, Governor Clarence Meadows spoke at the dedication of the final 5.6 miles.

Once the road was finished, the new governor, Okey Patteson, fulfilled his campaign promise to buy more land at Grandview. Strip mining across the river from the main overlook had marred the view, and it seemed more stripping might be done in areas adjacent to the park itself. To prevent this, the state

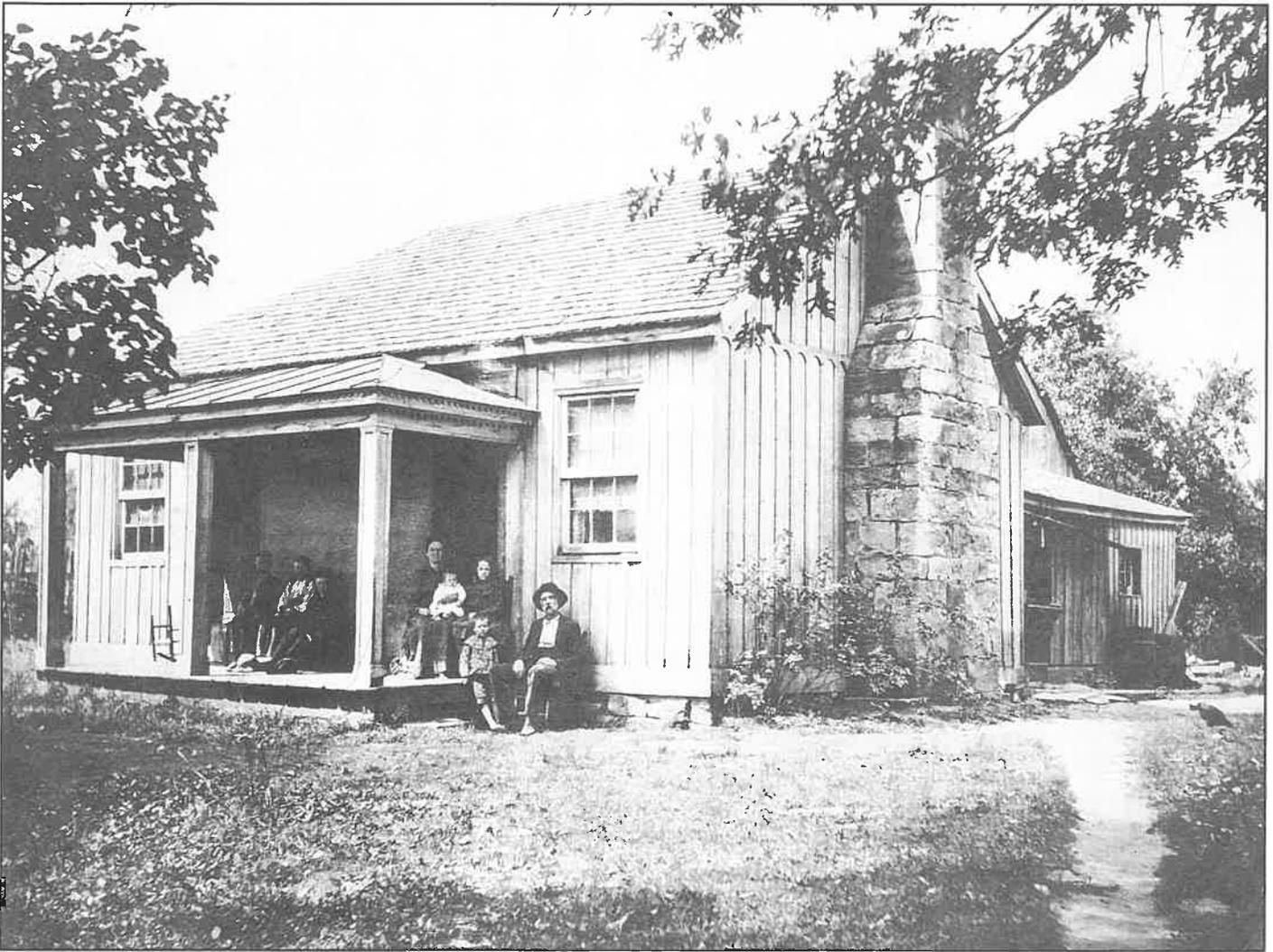


Ritchie Carper, a descendant of early owner Joseph Carper, lives near the Grandview entrance.

bought another 825 acres in 1949. This area included Turkey Spur, from which visitors can now see as far as the bridge and Stretcher’s Neck tunnel at Prince. The stripped land across the river has since been reclaimed.

Improvements continued. Many local people were employed by the park. In the ‘50’s, Van Carper, Ritchie Carper’s father, worked there for awhile, doing much of the stonework, building walkways and the pillars at the park entrance from stone quarried at Prince Ridge. Thomas Haney was the first caretaker, followed by James Jennings, superintendent from 1958 to 1961. During Jennings’s tenure, the amphitheater and superintendent’s residence were constructed.

In the mid-1950’s, several civic



The Carpers made comfortable lives on plateau lands later incorporated into the park. This was the home of Joseph Carper's daughter Mary, first wife of Henry A. Smith.

groups became interested in establishing a local historical drama. Dr. Kermit Hunter, an associate professor of drama at Hollins College and producer of *Unto These Hills*, an outdoor drama performed at Cherokee, North Carolina, contracted to write such a play for local presentation.

The West Virginia Historical Drama Association, now Theatre West Virginia, was organized to promote and perform Dr. Hunter's play. Grandview Park seemed the most suitable location, at the amphitheater begun by Vipperman Construction Company in 1958. *Honey in the Rock*, an epic story of West Virginia's creation, was performed for the first time on June 27, 1961. In 1970 the popular *Hatfields and McCoy's* became the other regular offering at Grandview. Over the

years, many plays and concerts have been staged, attracting audiences from around the world.

In 1961, Hunter Boggs, with his wife and four children, moved into

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*"We ventilated the mine  
by sinking a shaft and  
building a fire in it to  
suck in the good air and  
drive out the bad."*

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the superintendent's house at Grandview Park. Hunter, a native of Clay County and a graduate of West Virginia Tech, had spent two years at Hawks Nest State Park. The house at Grandview was to be his family's home for the next 29

years. It was also sometimes home for orphaned animals, like Rocky, the white-tail fawn, adopted from the forest around them.

Hunter Boggs's duties as park superintendent were many and varied. Law enforcement within the park was his responsibility, and he had been trained for this at the State Police Academy. All maintenance and repair of equipment were his duties.

Doris Walker, who began working at Grandview in 1974, says that Hunter used to refer to his job as "a glorified janitorial position." Usually his staff consisted of only three people, though in the summer the Governor's Youth Corps and college students gave him as many as 50 workers. He regularly cleaned picnic areas and restrooms, in addition to caring for the needs of



Lillian Carper is one of the founders of the Grandview Reunion, a popular event since 1983.



tourists or administrative work like report writing.

Doris refers to her own job as "Jack of all trades." Actually, she was Grandview's secretary; a procurer of supplies who wrote purchase orders and paid bills; and a reservations clerk who arranged for the use of picnic shelters. Whenever she found time between these duties, she also assisted in the janitorial and maintenance work. She praises Hunter Boggs for his skill in keeping equipment operating. Under the state park system, funds for new equipment were limited, so it was important to keep mowers and other machinery in tip-top shape. Boggs did such a good job at this, she says, that when the National Park Service took over

employees from other state parks trooped in to scrounge the used equipment from Grandview.

As law enforcement officer, Hunter Boggs remembers that his duties became much easier after alcoholic beverages were prohibited in state parks. Before this time, the park had sometimes had the reputation of being unsafe for family gatherings, especially in the late evenings when it became a hang-out for local young people. And during the late '60's and early '70's, Hunter recalls that groups of "hippies" camped out in the park. Although no camping was allowed, they sometimes took over the public areas. The state police offered good backup whenever there was a serious law enforcement problem at

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*Honey in the Rock, an epic story of West Virginia's creation, was performed for the first time in June 1961. In 1970 the popular Hatfields and McCoys became the other regular offering at Grandview Amphitheater.*

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Grandview.

The park had long been a favorite location for would-be suicides, people who wanted to jump off the Grandview rock. Hunter recalls only one successful suicide during his time, and feels he talked some others out of the idea. The overlooks are safer now, with higher railings. There were no serious accidents to tourists during his administration.

In 1990, Grandview became part of the National Park Service as an area within the New River Gorge National River. Hunter Boggs and Doris Walker were part of the deal. They both donned the uniforms of the National Park Service and con-

Retired Grandview staffers Hunter Boggs and Doris Walker enjoy return visits to the park. They pose here with Ritchie Carper.

# Drama at Grandview

## From the Prologue to *Honey in the Rock*

By Kermit Hunter

**M**any West Virginians know Grandview best as the summer home of Theatre West Virginia. Since 1961 the professional theater company has produced grand outdoor dramas there, recounting tales from our state's history. The first of these was *Honey in the Rock*, the story of West Virginia's birth as a state. We excerpt the Prologue of the play by permission.

A group of narrators take their places on stage. They include Dave Morgan, an American Indian, a modern woman, a miner, a pioneer, a colonial Virginian and a Civil War soldier (in blue uniform).

**Dave:** We are West Virginia — a part of it, at least. I am Dave Morgan, out of the 1850's.

**Pioneer:** We are here to tell you a strange and wonderful story.

**Dave:** How our homeland became the 35th state of the United States.

**Woman:** A story of conflict and destruction, when a country was torn apart...

**Indian:** A story of this land: hills and mountains washed down smooth by the beating, grinding eons of time — ridges, valleys, cliffs and bottoms — oak, pine, and poplar — persimmon, paw-paw, birch and elm —

**Miner:** Underneath the land, under the piles of mountains, far below the floor of the rivers, lies God's promise:

**All but Indian:** The Honey in the Rock!

**Indian:** Honey in the Rock!

**Miner:** Salt, crude oil, natural gas, West Virginia smokeless coal — blasted from dark seams under the earth and cast up to the sunlight after long centuries,

**All:** The Honey in the Rock!

**Pioneer:** This is West Virginia, workshop of the world. We're still pioneers, in a way.

**Soldier:** West Virginia was a child

of battle, conceived in a cauldron of fire! For us to be born, a nation had to turn upon itself, brother had to slay his own kind, friends had to flay at one another in hate.

**Six:** We were, sad to say, born of battle.

**Colonial Virginian:** For today at a fort in South Carolina, war is underway.

**Dave:** The news has not yet reached the mountains, but the decision that will change all our lives is already being made.

**Pioneer:** Our motto means "Mountaineers are Always Free Men." We said with Thomas Jefferson, "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

**Woman:** A Virginian said that. We were once Virginians.

**Dave:** But believing in those words, we turned away from the mother state.

**Woman:** What you'll see is our beginning. In a sense West Virginia has been destroying itself. After we had created a new state in the union, we divided into Eastern Panhandle, the Ohio Valley, the mountain section, the coalfields... We lost our sense of unity. Human

beings make mistakes. We learn from the past. Now, as we continue to grow, we are gaining back our birth right. Still growing, but not in sections,

**Six:** Growing together.

**All:** West Virginia!

**Indian:** The real honey in the rock is the underlying faith of the people:

**Dave:** Faith in themselves,

**Woman:** Faith in the future.

**Miner:** When the real challenge comes, West Virginians are never

found wanting, because they have a great heritage.

**Colonial:** Let us tell you about it. Let's turn back to the rising flame of the Civil War more than a hundred years ago.

**Pioneer:** This New River country was almost a wilderness,

**Indian:** but it was a kind of crossroads, a trail leading toward the west, a trail of blood for many



A scene from *Honey in the Rock*. Courtesy Division of Natural Resources.

of us — the Mound Builders — the Hunters...

**Soldier:** a dividing line between North and South...

**Indian:** ...East and West.

**Dave:** There had been talk of a big canal from here to Richmond, from the New River to the James. But there is no longer time to question or debate — no time to alter, bargain or delay.

**Colonial:** We are set on a course of violent interruption.

## Summers at Grandview

In addition to Grandview's natural beauty, each summer the park features music and drama set in the great outdoors. This year Theatre West Virginia, based at Grandview, brings regular performances of *Honey in the Rock*, *Hatfields & McCoys*, and *Anything Goes* to the park's Cliffside Amphitheater from early June through mid-August.

*Honey in the Rock* was Theatre West Virginia's first production back in 1961. The script is by Kermit Hunter and the music by Ewel Cornett and Jack Kilpatrick. The drama tells the story of West Virginia's split from Virginia during the Civil War with music, drama, dance, intrigue and romance.

*Hatfields & McCoys* is also the work of Ewel Cornett along with one of West Virginia's favorite humorists, Billy Edd Wheeler. It came to Cliffside Amphitheater in 1970. Presented as an historical drama, *Hatfields & McCoys* tells the story of the famous feud between the West Virginia Hatfields and Kentucky McCoys. The play depicts the families' battles and bloodshed and explores the lore surrounding the long-running feud.

Performances of *Anything Goes* are interspersed between the two popular West Virginia dramas. This Cole Porter musical follows

two young lovers on an ocean voyage from New York to London in the 1930's.

Tickets for each show are \$10 for adults on Sunday through Thursday and \$12 on Friday and Saturday. Children under 12 pay \$5, except on Friday and Saturday when their tickets are \$6. All shows begin at 8:30 p.m. For a schedule or reservations write to Theatre West Virginia, P.O. Box 1205, Beckley, WV 25801; or call 1-800-666-9142. Group discounts are available.

Theatre West Virginia also produces Music in the Mountains concerts. This is the second year for the music shows, expanded to three separate concerts this year based on the success of last year's program. Each concert brings West Virginia musicians and performers to the stage.

The first, on June 24, promises plenty of traditional Appalachian music with Danny Arthur, David Bing, Jimmy Costa, Dwight Diller, Luke Kessinger, Robin Kessinger, Paul Lepp, Kate Long, Jim Martin, Mark Payne and Ron Perrone. The second concert will be held on July 22 with a fine gospel program by



A moonlight dance from an early production of *Honey in the Rock*.

the McCumbers Family, Rex and Eleanor Parker, Elaine Purkey, Carl Rutherford, Sounds of Heaven and Theatre West Virginia's choral group.

The third concert on August 12 is a "mixed bag" with Jenny Allinder, Jack Bowman, Don Drummer, Alan Freeman, Al Jeter, Jeff Curry, Darrell Meadows, Kathy Pheasant, Susanna Robinson and Bob Shank. In case of rain, each concert will be held one week later. Concert tickets are \$5 for adults and \$3 for children under 12. All performances begin at 7:00 p.m. For more information contact Theatre West Virginia.

continued to work until their retirement in 1995. Hunter became maintenance supervisor for the New River southern district. Doris continued many of her old duties at Grandview. In December of 1995, they were given a retirement dinner at the Raleigh County Armory in Beckley, and presented with beautiful solid oak rocking chairs.

Hunter is the man responsible for Grandview's glory, the arresting array of Catawba rhododendrons which bloom in late May and early June. A few specimens of these gorgeous shrubs, more common in Catawba County, North Carolina,

grew naturally around the main overlook and in other areas of the New River Gorge. Some naturalists believe they may have been among the plants which migrated south to north, by way of the New River Valley, since they occur naturally in only a few other places in southern West Virginia. The state flower, the larger, paler *Rhododendron maximum*, which grows naturally over most of the state, does not bloom until later, in late June to mid-July. The Catawbas now surrounding the main parking lot in the park were planted during Hunter Boggs's administration.

As the park became more developed and attractive, local people found it to be a pleasant place for family outings. Summer days brought many to the park for picnics and reunions. In 1983, four descendants of Joseph Carper conceived the idea of a "Grandview Reunion." These are the children of Robert McClure, grandson of Joseph. Sisters Lillian Carper, Mary Pitzer and Nellie Ellison began organizing and making plans. Word spread, and to their amazement about 200 people showed up for the first reunion.

The following year, brother Bob

McClure, owner of Central Printing in Beckley, agreed to print some invitation letters. They sent these to relatives, neighbors, and former community members who had moved away. Again, many people came, from many parts of the country.

The Grandview Reunion has since become an annual affair, held on the first Saturday in August at the main picnic shelter. Over the years, Lillian Carper says, people have come from California, Texas, Idaho, Maryland, Virginia, Florida, and even from as far away as Greece. In 1994, Governor Thomas R. Carper of Delaware and his family attended.

Today, children of all ages still explore the tunnels and hike the trails in Grandview Park. Rangers lead walks and talk about the plants, animals, geology, history and folklore of the area. There is a visitor center and a small museum. Picnic shelters and playgrounds dot the park. The views from the Main Overlook, the North Overlook and

lofty Turkey Spur continue to attract visitors.

In January of 1992, the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress began a survey of cultural traditions in the New River Gorge region. Specialists Rita Moonsammy, Dillon Bustin, and Karen Hudson came to the area to collect taped interviews, photo-

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*In 1990, Grandview  
became part of the  
National Park Service.  
Hunter Boggs and Doris  
Walker were part of  
the deal.*

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graphs and documentary materials. The results were to be used in Park Service planning for a cultural heritage center proposed for Grandview. This center would preserve

the culture of the region, provide educational opportunities, help interpret the area to visitors, provide opportunities for craft sales, and perhaps offer food and even lodging.

Recently Warren Snyder, Chief of Interpretation at National River headquarters at Glen Jean, said that plans for the cultural center have been put on hold for the present. Other priorities have taken precedence. The cultural center option remains part of the overall Grandview development concept plan, however.

It is something to think about. Much community effort, combined with state and federal support, has already gone into making Joseph Carper's old farm a wonderful place for homecomings and reunions. In the future, perhaps our rich heritage and mountain ways will be honored here in a cultural center. It will be a good place for visitors to get the big picture — or as we say hereabouts, the grand view. ♣

The Carpers have enjoyed the grand view for generations. Mary Ann Carper, left, poses with friends in this 1948 photo. Photographer unknown.



# Mr. Grandview Meets Mr. Grandview: A Grouse Tale

Hunter Boggs was “Mr. Grandview” to the many people who knew him during his decades as superintendent there. He himself says another park resident deserves the title, a feisty critter possessing the necessary qualities of pride, perseverance and plenty of spunk.

**M**y first acquaintance with the Grandview grouse was made on a sunny Sunday morning one October, along the Turkey Spur Road in what was then Grandview State Park. I don't know what his name was, but since he was a resident of the park I hung the tag “Mr. Grandview” on him. I was on a routine clean-up mission, picking up litter that had been “accidentally” dropped from passing cars the day before.

Rounding a curve, I came upon Mr. Grandview strutting in the center of the road, prouder than all the peacocks in China. Wing tips scraping the road surface, tail feathers spread like a giant fan and the sheen of his neck feathers shining with a diamond lustre, he was truly the King of the Road. I stopped my truck a short distance away to marvel at his beauty.

After a few minutes watching his fancy footwork I remembered several more chores ahead and eased the truck into gear. I drove to the opposite edge of the road and pulled around him. I looked through the rearview mirror, hoping to catch another glimpse. What I saw was a mass of feathers hurling toward my rear glass with the speed of a bullet as he came crashing into my truck.

Stopping immediately, I walked to the rear of the truck expecting to find a very dead grouse. But lo and behold, here was Mr. Grandview flogging the right rear fender with all the tenacity of Muhammad Ali with a sparring partner. Befuddled and bewildered, I stood and stared until he finished with the fender and strutted proudly off into the woods.

My second encounter with Mr. Grandview occurred the following



Hunter Boggs looks like three decades at Grandview did him good.

Saturday in almost the same spot. This time he came sailing out of the woods and crashed into my left door and bounced back to the edge of the road. I backed up to where he was standing, shaking out the kinks and preening his feathers. The air was filled with loose feathers drifting lazily down to earth. He mustered all the pomp and style he could, then disappeared under the hemlocks.

This started my mind to wonder-

ing. What was behind his belligerent behavior? Why did he attack my truck on two different occasions? I remembered reading several articles on the zany antics of the grouse. Each writer had a different theory. One was that wild grapes might ferment in a grouse's craw and cause him to go into a drunken state. If this was true, Mr. Grandview Grouse sure had a bad case of D.T.s to think he could overwhelm a 1968 Ford truck.

Later in the afternoon of the day of this second attack, my son Greg and I drove slowly through this area

looking for the grouse. He wasn't hard to find. He came charging on foot, out from under some hemlocks and straight at the truck. As we continued by him at a slow speed, he took up the chase, still on the ground with his feathers bristling like porcupine quills. He broke off this foot race after following the truck approximately 100 feet. The enemy had fled, victory was his.

Several days later, a car pulled briskly into the park residence park-

ing area and stopped abruptly. Glancing out the window, I recognized the car as belonging to my good friends, Mr. and Mrs. John Davis of Beckley. The Davises were ardent outdoor enthusiasts and frequent visitors to the park. Fearing something wrong by the giant strides taken by Mr. Davis as he headed toward the residence, I met him on the porch steps.

He began by stating that he was sane and sober and that his eyes were good. And he had just experienced an unbelievable event.

Parked alongside the Turkey Spur Road, he and his wife were watching squirrels playing on the ground when suddenly a large grouse appeared from nowhere and strutted into the area of the squirrels. After several minutes, Mr. Davis had started his motor, eased the car into gear and began to move. Swishing through the air like an arrow, the grouse landed on top of the car.

The Davises stopped, wondering what would happen next. Mr. Grandview walked around on top of the car for a few minutes, then flew down and landed a short distance away. Mrs. Davis eased out of the car and walked over to him, holding out her right hand. He advanced slowly toward her and began to peck her hand. She picked him up and returned to the car. After stroking his feathers Mrs. Davis poked the grouse out the window. He was gone in a flash.

November 1st signaled the end of the park season, and barriers were placed

## Grandview Homecoming

In 1983 the Carpers and McClures expected a small turnout for their first reunion at Grandview and were surprised when more than 200 people showed up. This year they are ready for a crowd of any size for the annual event, which brings in people from as far away as Nevada and California. Things will get underway for the 14th annual Grandview Homecoming about 12:30 in the afternoon, August 3. Everyone brings a covered dish and the eating starts promptly at 1:30 p.m. The rest of the day is spent visiting. Come to the main shelter at Grandview or



Grandview, now part of New River Gorge National River, retains rustic stone and timber work typical of West Virginia state parks.

contact Lillian Carper at (304)763-3374 for more information.

across the roads. The Grandview grouse would now enjoy more peace and quiet, and I would have time to get better acquainted. I started making daily visits with him, and found that he never strayed more than 50 feet from the same place.

I would stop in his favorite spot,

*I saw a mass of feathers  
hurling toward my rear  
glass with the speed of a  
bullet as he came  
crashing into my truck.*

wait a minute or two, and he would appear on the road and walk around to the driver's side of the truck. He was very fond of corn. When I would get out of the truck and sit down in the road, he liked to hop up onto my right hand and eat corn from my left hand. This didn't take long to spoil him, and he expected corn every time I came. Sometimes he would

run out to meet the truck, and I would drive slowly on, with him running alongside.

After I had gained too much speed for him to keep up on the ground, he would fly, just outside the window. Several times he flew 200 yards or more beside the truck.

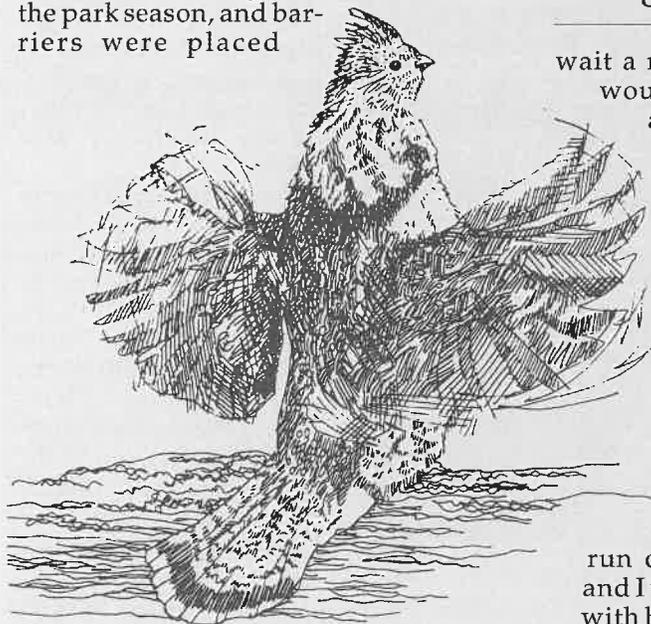
He liked to be talked to. He would walk up very close to you and stare you in the eye and make a cooing sound similar to that of a pigeon. Also, I learned that he liked to fight, and several times I completely exhausted him. I would toss my cap or gloves up into the air and he would fight them while in mid-air. Once they were on the ground, he wasn't interested in them.

Another thing that I discovered about Mr. Grandview was that he was a one-man bird. When a second person would approach, he would give out a shriek and fly away. I continued our visits through the month of November. By then he had become accustomed to me and was very tame.

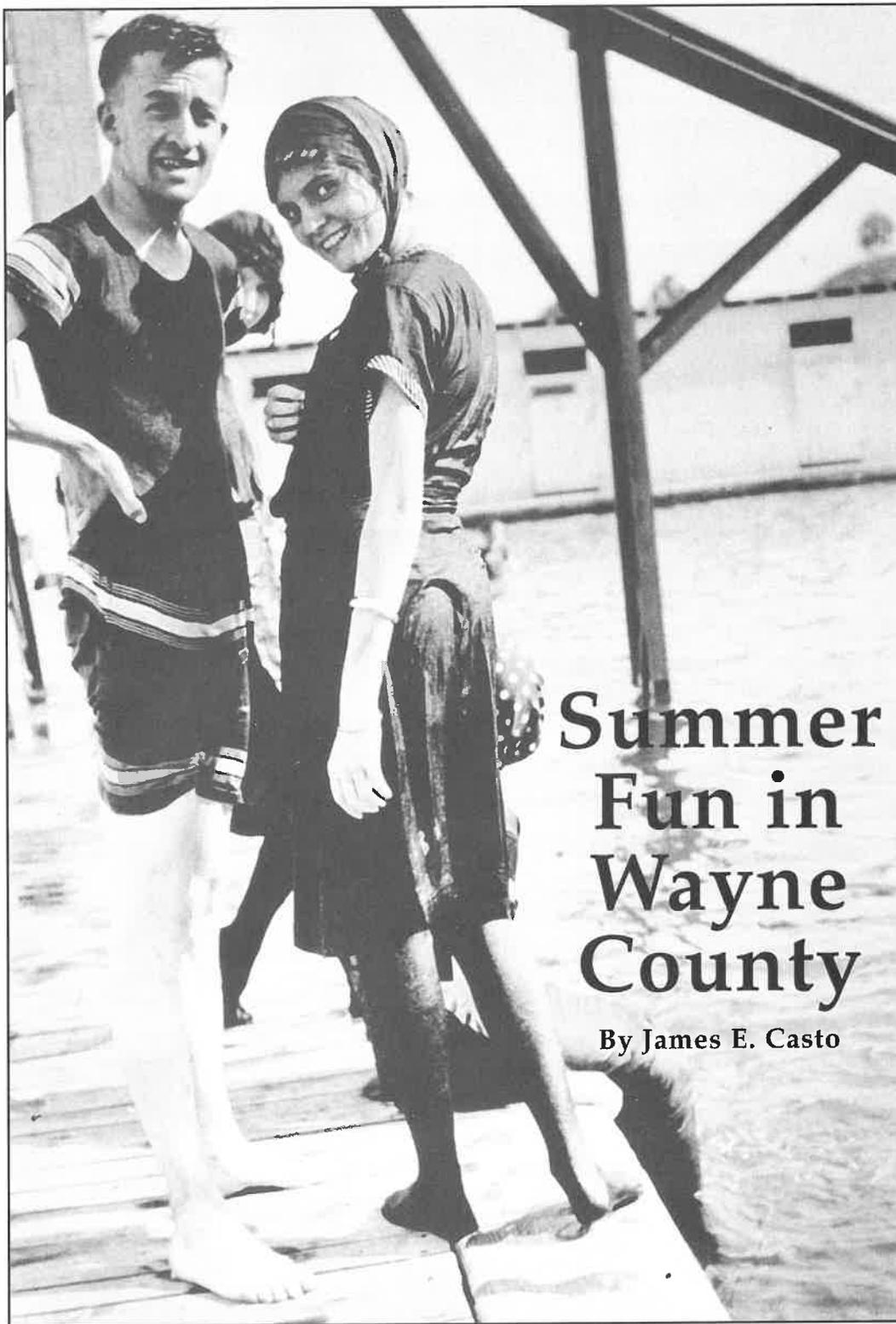
Our last meeting was on the morning of December 8th when I left to attend the annual state parks meeting. Later that day, our area was hit with a severe sleet and snow storm. Mr. Grandview disappeared during the five days I was gone. Whether he fell victim to the storm or to a predator, or simply moved off the mountaintop to a warmer spot, I do not know.

But I hope he did well, because he was a very interesting fellow.

— Hunter Boggs



# Dreamland



## Summer Fun in Wayne County

By James E. Casto

Since 1925, going to the pool has meant going to Dreamland for people in Kenova and a good chunk of the Huntington metro area. At 71 and counting, it must be one of the oldest public pools in West Virginia.

**D**reamland. Its very name sounds like fun, doesn't it?

Over the years, untold thousands of youngsters virtually grew up at Dreamland, spending an endless procession of long summer days at the popular Kenova swimming pool, the oldest and largest in the Tri-State region of West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio.

From Memorial Day to Labor Day each year, Dreamland was where teenage girls went to show off their new bathing suits, work on their tans — and check out the guys. The place where teenage boys could practice their dives from the imposing high board, roughhouse with their friends — and, of course, check out the gals.

Meanwhile, adults

Early Dreamland swimwear left plenty to the imagination, but the lady's high-voltage smile was bound to attract attention. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Kenova Historical Society.

flocked to Dreamland for Saturday night dances that featured not just popular local musicians but a virtual Who's Who of musical talent from the Big Band years. Music lovers say the unofficial end of the Big Band era came in 1956, with the death of band leader Tommy Dorsey. But, for many in the Tri-State, it came in 1973 when the Dreamland dance pavilion was destroyed by fire.

"My grandfather, J. D. Booth, built Dreamland in 1925," says Alex E. Booth, Jr., a retired Huntington businessman who now lives in Stuart, Florida, and summers in West Virginia. "At first there was nothing but the pool itself, along with a little sandwich stand."

J. D. Booth already ran a successful Kenova grocery store. Venturing into the swimming pool business might seem an odd course of action for a grocer, but there was logic to it, Alex Booth says.

"My father had opened up a business selling ice and house coal. They

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*Kenova was a religious community, and the opening of the pool caused quite a commotion. People didn't think it was right for men and women to be swimming together.*

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had wells for the ice house. They saw all that water going to waste, and they started thinking about businesses that used lots of water. That's when they got interested in a pool. Ironically, despite the wells, they didn't build it anywhere near the ice house but down on the Big Sandy riverbank."

Booth confesses he's really not sure where the name came from. "I know my father later told me he traveled all over the eastern United States looking at other pools. I have to think that maybe he saw the name 'Dreamland' on another pool or park somewhere and liked it. He never made any claim that it was original."



The pool was huge, with plenty of room for sunning nearby. The photo below shows a good view of the open-air dance pavilion atop the main building. Photographers and dates unknown, courtesy Huntington *Herald-Dispatch*.



Located on U.S. 60 at the eastern end of what was then a private toll bridge over the Big Sandy to Kentucky, Dreamland was situated about as far west as West Virginia goes. The pool was an immediate success, partly because it was convenient to both Huntington and Ashland. Soon, people from as far away as Logan were driving to Kenova to spend the day at Dreamland.

The new pool was not universally welcomed, Booth says. "Kenova was — and is today — a very religious community. And the open-

ing of the pool caused quite a commotion in some of the churches. Some people didn't think it was right for men and women to be swimming together, although the bathing attire of that era was certainly not what you would call revealing. And then, too, some people didn't think it was right for the pool to be open on Sunday."

Nonetheless, Dreamland thrived and each season saw more activities added. Soon, in addition to swimming, there was tennis, handball, basketball, volley ball, table tennis, badminton and shuffle-

board, along with facilities for picnickers.

The pool itself was constructed on an imposing scale — 125 feet by 250 feet — and graduated from only a few inches at the shallow end to a depth of nine feet at the other. On busy days, long lines formed to use the diving boards and water slides, and two mid-pool floats

running right. I was still pretty young when my father put me in charge of the chemicals we used to purify the water in the pool. We took the water straight from the Big Sandy and ran it through a settling basin. We tried drilling wells but the well water had too much iron in it. When the chemicals hit the water, it turned brown. Nobody

was going to swim in water that looked like that.

“Our home was right beside the pool, and I remember my father had a button rigged up that he could hit it and turn on lights that would illuminate the whole place in case we heard somebody trying to sneak in at night. Down in the basement of our house, we had a kitchen where we got all the food ready that we sold at the pool.”

The dance pavilion was added to the roof of the main building in the late 1930’s, and quickly became a popular spot.

“The place could hold more than 1,000 people,” recalls Booth.

“We generally had a house band, but we also regularly booked the big names of that day. We had most of the greats. Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman, for example. We had Ray Anthony, long before he was famous. We had Gene Krupa, the drummer. There were girl bands on the road then and we had Ina Ray Hutton. We had Bob Crosby and his Bobcats. My, but he was a ladies man.”

Today the Booth house, a modest

red brick, is home to the Kenova Historical Museum and houses a variety of memorabilia chronicling the town’s past. Director Steve Jordan is happy to show visitors around and points out a number of items connected with Dreamland. Among them: an old photo of two singers sharing a microphone. The face of the girl singer doesn’t ring a bell, but there’s no mistaking the guy — it’s a very young (and very skinny) Frank Sinatra. Jordan says the date of the photo is unknown but the donor insists it was taken at a Dreamland dance.

“I have to honestly say I don’t remember Sinatra being there,” says Booth. “If he was, it would have been really early in his career, before he hit it big, and so maybe he just didn’t make that much of an impression on me.”

Somebody who did make a big impression on the young Booth, however, was Louis Armstrong.

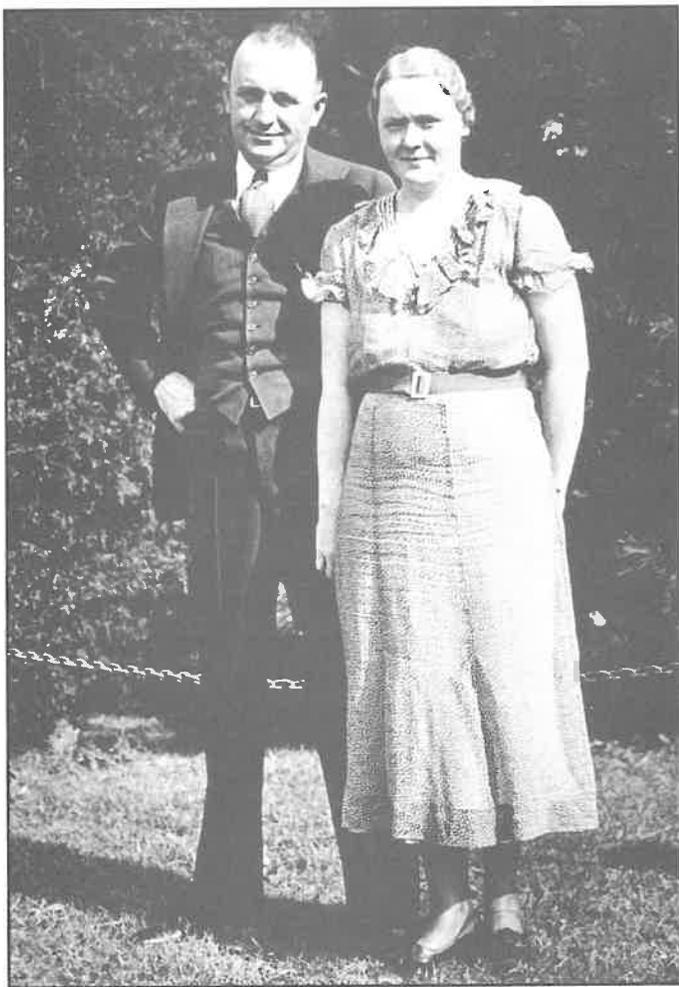
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*Flames leaped into the sky. Motorists pulled off nearby I-64 to view the blaze, battled by fire companies from virtually every community in the Tri-State area.*

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“Armstrong had a whole week before his next engagement and wanted to stay a few days and rehearse. We thought that was great, but we had a devil’s own time finding anywhere for him to stay. Remember this was the late 1930’s or maybe the early 1940’s and things were so different for blacks then. We finally found him a place somewhere over in Ohio but there wasn’t anywhere he could go eat so he ended up taking his meals at our house. He didn’t seem to mind. I guess he was used to that sort of treatment.”

As Booth recalls, World War II made surprisingly little impact on the pool business. Of course, there were fewer men and a tremendous supply of women. “For us, the



The Booths — Alex, Sr., and Roxanna — operated the pool until after World War II. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy Kenova Historical Society.

were crowded.

“My grandfather died in 1936,” says Booth, “and the management of the pool fell to my grandmother, Bertha, and my father. Then, my father got involved in the coal brokerage business, so he didn’t have time to deal with the pool. From that point on, my mother, Roxanna, and I more or less ran it.

“There was lots of hard work involved in getting the pool ready every summer and then keeping it



A Dreamland diver shows his stuff. Photographer unknown, courtesy *Herald-Dispatch*.

toughest part, with food rationed, was getting enough to serve. But we always managed somehow. Gasoline was rationed, too, but even before the war lots of people came to the pool by bus. The old Ohio Valley Bus Company sold a combination ticket for 75 cents that gave you your round-trip bus fare from Huntington, plus your pool admission. At least half the people there on most weekends came by bus. There were so many of them the company had to run extra buses."

By the late 1940's, Booth's father had become so busy in the coal business that the family had to get rid of the pool. "We sold it and moved to Huntington," Alex Booth says.

It was April of 1949 when the Booths sold Dreamland to a trio of

Huntington businessmen — Nicholas Tweel, Felix Hage and Fred Salem. Salem eventually would become the pool's sole owner and general manager and would operate it for more than 20 years.

The 1950's and '60's would see dramatic changes at Dreamland. Not long after Fred Salem bought it, the City of Huntington built an Olympic-size swimming pool in Memorial Park, along with smaller pools in several of the city's neighborhoods. The new Huntington pools robbed Dreamland of many of its best customers. No longer would a hot summer weekend prompt hundreds of Huntington residents to head for Kenova.

Meanwhile, the nation's changing musical tastes and the escalat-

ing cost of touring combined to prompt many of the Big Bands to call it quits. So more and more of the dances at Dreamland featured local musicians rather than the kind of big names that had headlined there in the past.

In the early 1950's, Fred Salem hired local band leader Ed Lancaster to entertain every Saturday night during the summer. Lancaster fronted a 16-piece band that included a young saxophone player named Mel Gillispie, who soon would go on to form a popular band of his own.

"Ed had traveled all over the country with some well-known bands," Gillispie recalls. "He had some kind of day job with the Corps of Engineers, but he was really, really talented. He wrote most of the material and it was a wonderful band. It was excellent training for a youngster like me, just starting out. We played several summers, then I left to go study at Julliard and Columbia.

"In late 1959 I came back to Huntington and started forming my own band. I went to Fred and asked him if he could use us. He said 'sure' and we played there off and on for several summers.

"It was a great place to play — and a great place for couples to dance," Mel says of Dreamland. "It's a real shame there's not some place like it now."

In April of 1972, rumors circulated that the pool might be closed and its riverbank site used for a new coal-loading operation. Salem was cagey when asked where things stood.

Dreamland "has been for sale for the right price since the day I got it," he told Huntington's *Herald-Dispatch*. "There's nothing definite right now. It will be run by me this summer, but beyond that I can't tell you a thing."

Kenova officials, shocked at the unhappy prospect of losing the pool, immediately started exploring its purchase. Eventually, Salem gave Kenova an option on the place. But his asking price of \$450,000 was a huge question mark. How could the little town raise such a imposing sum?

Mayor Earl M. Bowen turned

to Governor Arch A. Moore for assistance.

Some suggested the town could use the jobs that could result if the pool were closed and replaced by industry, but the mayor and others were determined to keep a coal tippie from going in. They hoped the state could help.

"It's either buy the pool or breathe and eat coal dust," Bowen told the *Herald-Dispatch*.

Governor Moore, speaking at the annual meeting of the Ceredo-Kenova Chamber of Commerce, promised a combination of state and federal dollars to cover 80 percent of the purchase price, if Kenova could come up with the other \$90,000.

But even that smaller sum was a tall order for the small community.

An appraisal put the pool complex's replacement value at \$1.3 million, but added: "It would be almost impossible to replace this 28-acre site at any cost."

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*"Close Dreamland? Why,  
that would be like  
shutting down City Hall.  
We're tickled to death  
we've got it."*

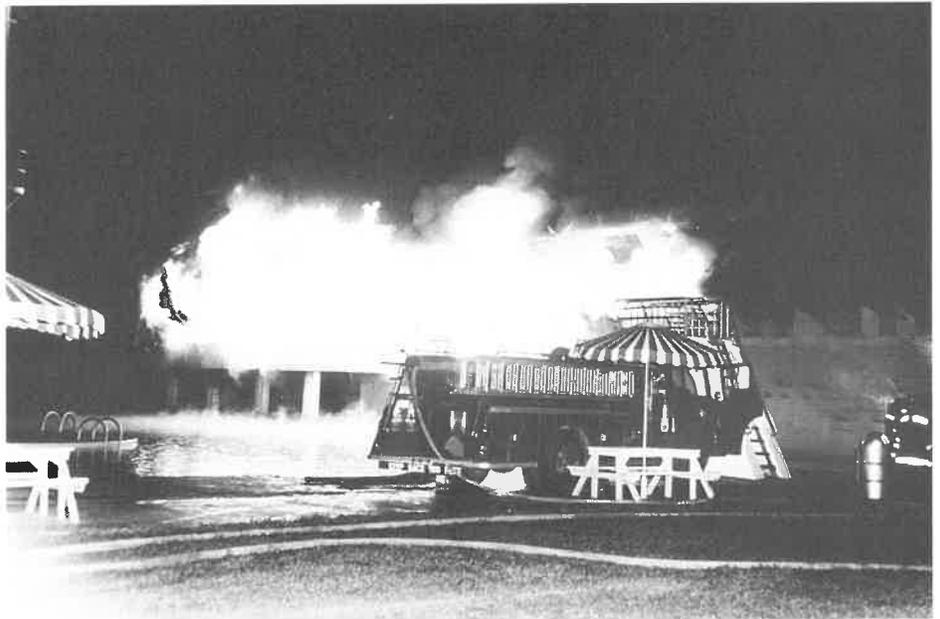
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Even so, Kenova was rebuffed when it sought a bank loan to finance the local matching money. And state tax officials refused permission for the town to sell revenue bonds to be retired with a combination of pool admission fees and parking-meter receipts.

That left only one other route — ask Kenova voters to approve the issuance of general obligation bonds.

On February 17, 1973, Kenova voters overwhelmingly approved a \$100,000 bond issue to help finance Dreamland's purchase. Some 1,700 residents were eligible to vote, and 1,066 did so. Of these, 926 voted for the bond issue and 140 against it.

The following May, with the wheels of bureaucracy still processing the promised funding for Dreamland's purchase, Salem opened the pool for its last summer



A roaring inferno struck Dreamland on the night of June 29, 1973. When daylight came (below) the main building, including the dance pavilion, was a total loss. Photos by Jim York, courtesy *Herald-Dispatch*.



under private ownership. Planning started for a celebration ceremony to mark Kenova's purchase of the recreation landmark.

Then, on the night of June 29, disaster struck.

A raging inferno, fed by a series of explosions, gutted the three-story building topped by the dance pavilion. Flames leaped into the sky. Motorists pulled off nearby I-64 to view the blaze, battled by fire

companies from virtually every community in the Tri-State area. When chlorine storage tanks exploded, the fumes felled more than a dozen of the fire fighters. There were no serious injuries, however.

As Friday night turned into Saturday morning and the blaze burned on, a crowd of more than 200 gathered to watch. Among them was owner Salem, who told those standing near him he was to have

been paid by city officials that very Saturday. The building, he said, was insured for only a few thousand dollars.

Eventually, after a lengthy investigation and another suspicious fire, three Kenova teenagers were charged with arson in connection with the Dreamland blaze.

In the fire's wake, Kenova pressed ahead with acquiring Dreamland but the damaged complex had to be re-appraised and the deal re-negotiated. Dreamland remained closed as the weeks dragged into months and summer gave way to fall. Finally, on November 26, Mayor Harold Rollins, who had succeeded Bowen, presented Fred Salem a check for \$395,000.

In May of 1974, the old pool, refurbished by volunteers, again opened for business, as Kenova officials began working on plans for a new \$175,000 bath house, with new showers, dressing areas, lockers and restrooms. The bath house was completed in 1977.

In its 20-plus years under town ownership, the pool has had its share of ups and downs. On most days the crowds are only a fraction of those Dreamland attracted in its heyday, and some summers have seen pool revenues fall short of covering the bills for its operation.

But town officials see Dreamland as more than just a swimming pool. It's part of Kenova's heritage, and they're determined to preserve it, not just for today's fun-seekers, but tomorrow's as well.

Just ask Mayor Larry Smith.

"Close Dreamland? Why, that would be like shutting down City Hall. Every year, we have former residents who come back to town on vacation and make a point of spending a day at Dreamland, just like they did 30, 40 or even 50 years ago. We're tickled to death we've got it and are still able to keep it going after all these years."\*

## Camden Rink Burns

Fire dealt Huntington area fun-seekers another blow when the skating rink at Camden Park was destroyed in an April 22, 1996, fire reminiscent of the big 1973 blaze at Dreamland. Camden's business office and Ske-Ball game, housed in the

nic pavilion, was erected in 1903. The first rides, including a merry-go-round, were installed in 1907, and by 1920 the park boasted six rides, including a small steam-powered train and a roller coaster.

Colonel E. G. Via went to work as the park's manager about 1910 and in 1916 bought it from the streetcar company. He would run the park until his death in 1946. His heirs sold it to James P. Boylin, a Huntington furniture dealer and father of the current owner.

Clinton Burley, public affairs officer for the Ceredo Volunteer Fire Department, says

the Camden Park fire had a deep impact on him. His father, Robert Burley, was the park's business manager for 30 years before he died in 1981.

"I've spent a lot of my life at Camden park," Burley says. "My dad worked there seven days a week during the summer, and five days a week during the off-season."

Burley was among hundreds of the curious who flocked to the park the day after the fire to survey the damage — and remember. "A lot of people are comparing this fire to the one at Dreamland Pool," he says.

Ironically, the park's skating rink was built in 1959 to replace an earlier rink that burned the previous year. Another major fire in the 1960's destroyed the park's large horse stable area.

— James E. Casto



Firefighters battle the Camden Park blaze. Photo by Melissa Moore, courtesy *Herald-Dispatch*.

same building, also went up in flames. Park owner John Boylin estimates the total loss at \$1 million or more — and notes the building was uninsured.

"Insurance on an amusement park is astronomical," says Boylin. "You have to pick and choose what you want to insure, and invariably it's the wrong thing."

Like many amusement parks around the country, Camden park, located on U.S. 60 just west of Huntington, originally was built to stimulate the streetcar business [GOLDENSEAL, Summer 1987]. On weekends and holidays, picnickers would ride the trolley to the end of the line. Camden Park was the creation of the Camden Interstate Railway Company — both named for their principal owner, Senator Johnson N. Camden of Parkersburg.

The park's first structure, a pic-

# Booger Man

## Recalling Revenuer Mack Day

By Jean Battlo

Revenuer Mack Day carried pearl-handled pistols and the King James bible in his pockets, and controversial principles in his heart.

He went to an early grave in 1925, leaving a reputation still remembered in the Elkhorn Valley.

If ever legend lived in the hills of McDowell County, it walked in the boots of Malcolm Malachi Day. He was better known as Mack Day, sometimes spelled without the "k." Such were his exploits that they are said to have been immortalized even in the comic pages, in *Ripley's Believe It or Not*. According to his late son, Jim Day of Belcher Mountain, *Ripley's* reported that Mack had once "married a man to his sweetheart, baptized the same man and then, regrettably, had to shoot and kill the man for his later crimes. Preacher Day preached the funeral."

As the unfortunate man was never identified and rumors sometimes run riot in what we natives call the Free State of McDowell, the story may contain its share of Appalachian bull. The facts are, however, that Mack Day was fully qualified to have done it all. Being both a preacher and a bona fide law enforcement officer, he buried plenty and shot some and married more than a few.

Day was a career lawman, serving successively as county jailer, deputy sheriff, Welch police chief, and federal prohibition agent. Eventually he died in the line of duty. His methods were adapted to his surroundings, as effective in the mountains of West Virginia as any

urban detective's were in the streets of a big city.

"Dad would hide out in the hollers in rain or snow for days at a time just to catch moonshiners," Jim Day told the *Welch Daily News*. "If that didn't work, he'd tie a cowbell around his neck and slowly zigzag through the mountains to trick the operators of those stills. They were always surprised to find out the cow had two legs."

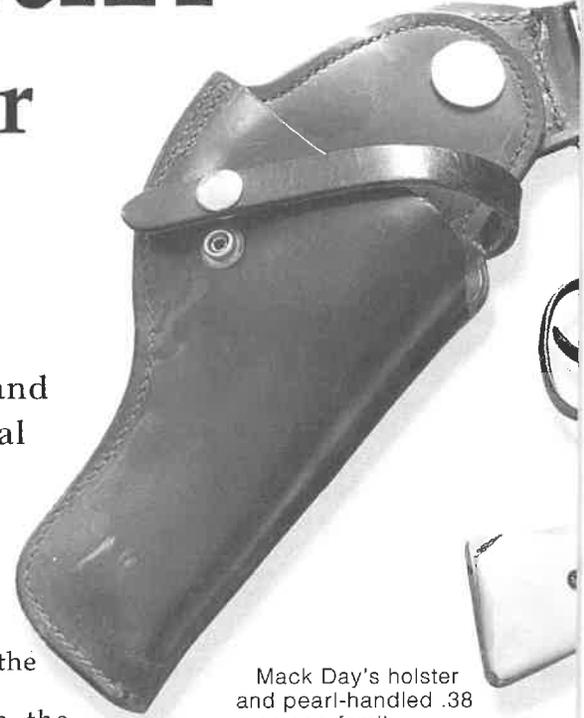
Surprised and frightened too,

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*He'd tie a cowbell around his neck and slowly zigzag through the mountains to trick the operators of stills. They were always surprised to find out the cow had two legs.*

---

more than likely, for Mack Day was a dangerous man as well as clever. He carried pearl-handled pistols and had the reputation for using them. He was not a tolerant man and not always one to observe the



Mack Day's holster and pearl-handled .38 are among family mementoes of the famous lawman. Courtesy Bobby Day, photo by Michael Keller.

niceties. Some folks still remember Mack as the "booger man," following the old mountain pronunciation for bogey man.

No doubt, he was one of the most colorful personalities to live and die in southern West Virginia. Given the height and heft of the legends, it's difficult to unearth the exact truth. Ironically, one of the hardest obstacles in researching Day's life is the biography by William Grant Burleigh, *Mac Day: Crusader*. Burleigh, a minister who took part in Day's funeral, was still eulogizing him when he wrote the book, and everything in it has to be taken skeptically. Subtitled "A Story of the Fight for Americanism," the 1925 biography is also sodden with bias. But since no other complete biography exists, Burleigh's work must provide basic information.

It appears that Mack was born about 1872 on Dismal Creek, in neighboring Buchanan County, Virginia, although one newspaper said he was a native McDowell Countian.

He got off to a hard start in life. Father Joshua Day was said to be inordinately fond of "corn liquor and the female of the species." He left Mack's mother, Narcissa, for another woman, and Narcissa then married Jacob Keen.

Confirmed and saved in the old-time religion, Narcissa tried to lay its foundation in her son. Maybe it was her good example and Joshua's bad example that set Mack on his

righteous course. He is supposed to have had his wild times as a young man, but he soon adopted a hatred for liquor that later made him the most famous teetotaler in McDowell County.

Strong in body and increasing in faith, Mack left home to find his fortune in the developing Pocahontas Coalfields. The coal rush was drawing many other young men, and they made McDowell County a lively place. To earnest Mack Day it looked like a "Sodom and Gomorrah, with its red light districts and hard evil times," according to his biographer. "Vice

and debauchery" Burleigh added, "rolled in swelling floods down the Elkhorn Valley from Pocahontas to Williamson." His geography was a little off, but Burleigh's lively prose leaves no doubt as to what he is talking about.

Day decided to make the best of the situation by extending his limited education. He enrolled with much younger students at the Bottom Creek Grade School just outside Kimball's city limits. Additionally, he was working the mines at Tidewater and Vivian as well as contracting to deliver timber. Strengthening roots, he leased some land and married Charlotte June Milam, from a prominent local family. Charlotte was a match for Mack, and she adds her own episodes to the Day legend.

Wed on Christmas Day 1898, the couple settled at Bottom Creek and began planting young Days to grow amid the mountain laurel and scattered sumac. Eventually they produced eight boys and four girls, a family with a general reputation as solid citizens, convicted Christians and reliable leaders. Mack's standing in the community was demonstrated when McDowell Sheriff E. T. Sprinkle made him jailer in 1902. The Days moved to Welch, the county seat, and eventually to a fine farm on top of Belcher Mountain.

In 1906 Mack Day became an ordained minister. Though he never pastored a church, Day carried the New Testament everywhere he went and preached when he could. He was an old-time fundamentalist, a King James man, maybe leaning more toward the fire than forgiveness. He told those who called him dogmatic that "the Bible is a dogmatic book," according to Burleigh.

It became popular to be married by the gun-toting preacher. Reportedly, once while taking in a prisoner Day was stopped by a couple anxious to wed. He added the bride and groom to his entourage, and then met still another couple with the same desire. The whole group went on until Day handed over his prisoner and married both couples.

This Mack Day portrait is from William Grant Burleigh's 1925 biography of Day.



That night he conducted one of his famed still-busting missions, all in a day's work.

Although noted by some as big-hearted and friendly, Mack would brook no foolishness. Once, while he was Welch police chief, the town's Old Oak Saloon housed a cat that had adopted a passel of young rats. Many a happy brewster sat and watched the motherly feline, and one of them invited Mack in to see the miracle of cat and rats. The upright officer declined. "It is not a fit place for a decent man to be seen and you should be ashamed to go in there," Mack declared.

That episode took place early in Mack's career, when drinking was still legal and public. That soon changed. West Virginia outlawed

alcohol in 1914, six years ahead of the nation. The dry law bitterly divided people, producing a shooting war and dangerous times. Burleigh lists more than 40 federal prohibition agents killed nationally from 1920 to 1925, and the loss of local officers — not to mention bootleggers and moonshiners — would drive the battle count much higher.

With his strong notions of right and wrong, Mack Day flourished under the strident conditions of prohibition. Ardent patriotism was another facet of his personality, in an era when few had the courage or inclination to question even abusive nationalism. The "Americanism" in the subtitle to Burleigh's book refers to an exclusionary movement of that time, meant to

reserve the blessings of our country for white, native-born citizens. This philosophy suited Mack, and he found a home for his beliefs in the Ku Klux Klan, then undergoing a major revival.

It made sense to writer Burleigh. "To Mac Day's logical mind it was the most logical thing in the world

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*The coal rush made  
McDowell County a  
lively place. To Mack Day  
it looked like Sodom and  
Gomorrhah.*

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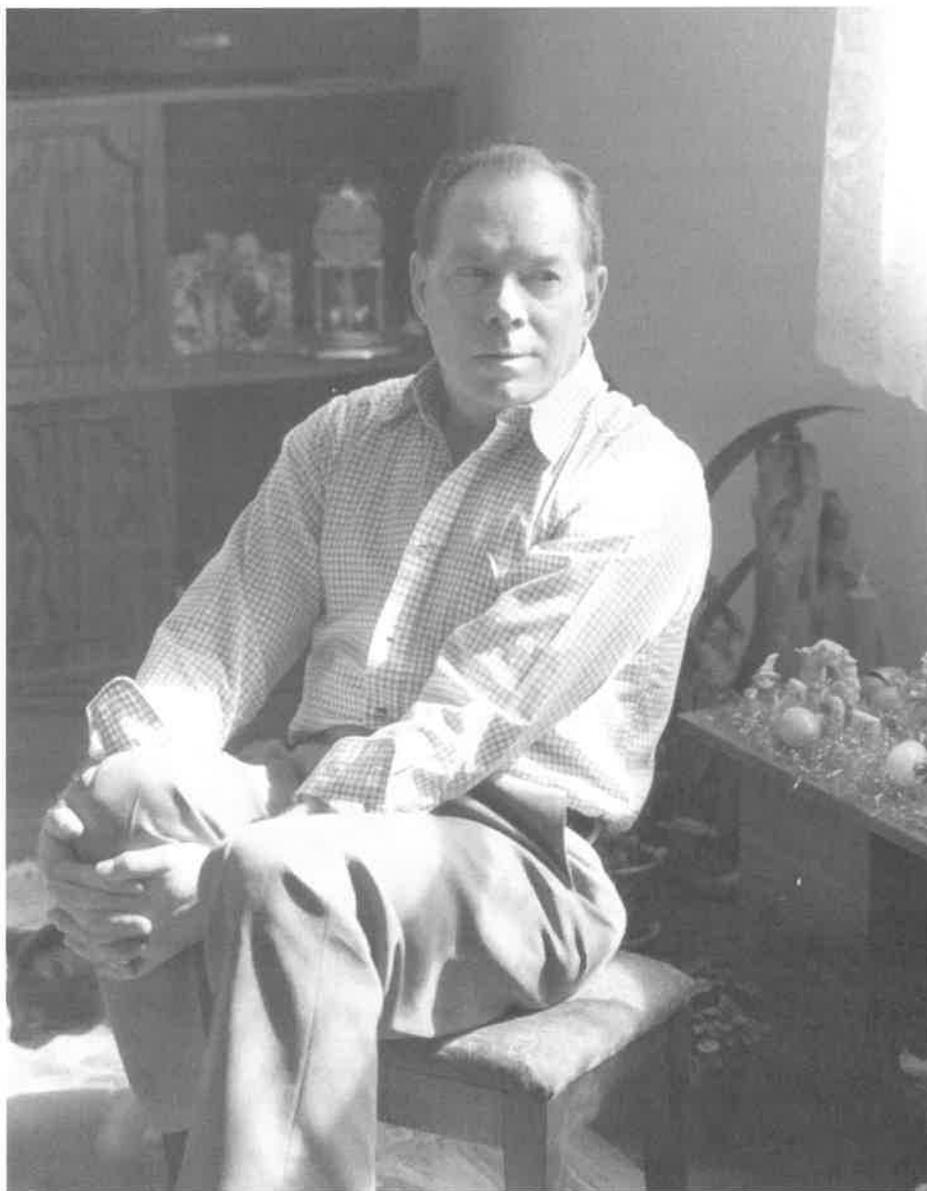
for the Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, to appear under the banner of the fiery cross to summon patriotic, liberty-loving Protestant Americans," he wrote. Burleigh concluded that the KKK was a "movement of Divine Protestantism for an evil time," and declared himself also a brother to those ideals.

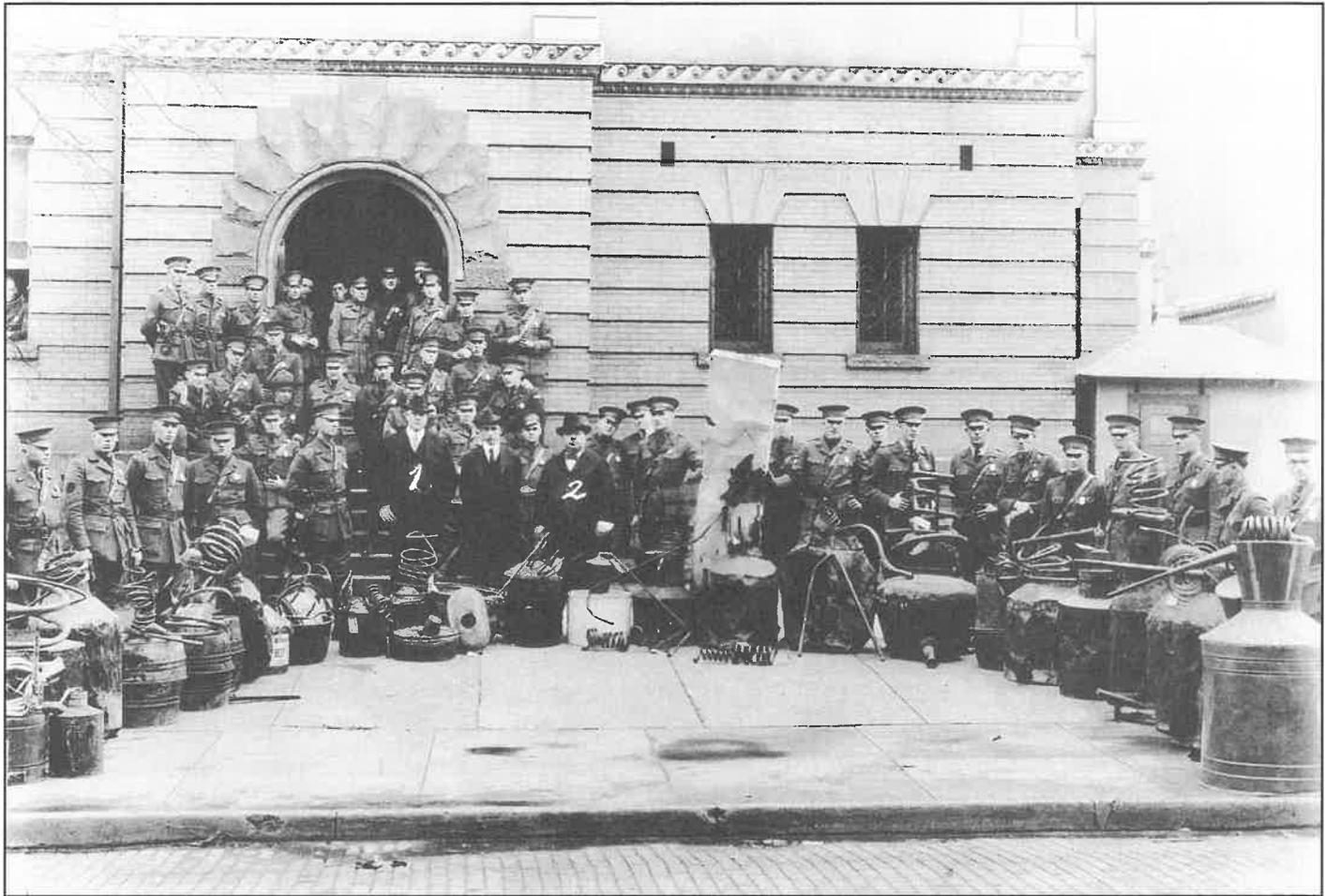
Jim Day, who was 15 when Mack was killed, believed that Burleigh accurately related his father's beliefs, but Jim held no high opinion of the writer. He said that Burleigh claimed that sales of his book would profit a special orphanage with which Day was associated. In fact, Jim said, Burleigh absconded with the money.

It is not surprising that the name Mack Day struck terror in the hearts of many, leading to his booger man fame. He relished his notoriety and took advantage of it. Burleigh mentions the time when Day ran into a woman bootlegger's house. "The booger man is coming," he cried. "Hide your liquor or pour it out, quick!" When she started pouring out the booze, he had his evidence. "Hold on," he told her. "The booger man's got you."

And there are those who say that not all of Day's actions were squarely on the side of the law. Burleigh admits that Day got along surprisingly well with a certain class of lawbreakers. "So friendly

Grandson Paul Day recalls his father's stories of Mack's work and Day domestic life. Photo by Michael Keller.





Prohibition kept the authorities busy in southern West Virginia. This photo shows Judge R. D. Bailey (marked number 1) and others with a wide variety of distilling apparatus.

and righteous was Mac Day that his real enemies were not among the native moonshiners," the biographer wrote. "The real mountaineer lawbreakers had a high regard for Mac Day's honesty and purpose."

Mack had his gentle side, Burleigh says. "The unfortunate conditions of women and children, the real sufferers from the moonshiners' lawlessness and the helpless victims of his punishments always touched Mac's heart," he wrote. It is told that a woman in Northfork Hollow, involved in the liquor trade, was captured by Day. Learning that the liquor business was her only means of supporting her children, he let her go, merely warning her to sin no more.

"God called him to prohibition," Burleigh concluded, adding that he personally knew of Day's refusal of \$1,000 from crooks who suggested that he might just "loaf on the job and keep out of danger." In declin-

ing to play it safe, Day accepted deadly risk as a daily fact of life. Some said he wore steel armor in his gunfights. Day denied it, according to the Welch paper, claiming that his real protection was "the armor of the Lord."

His statistics are difficult to pin down. Local legend credits Mack with countless killings, but Burleigh says there were only two or three. The first happened while Mack was jailer. Jim Allen, a murderer released from prison, had made the unhealthy decision to return to McDowell County. Arrested for "rampaging," Allen attempted to escape and was shot. Officer A. C. Hufford is thought by some to have done the shooting; Burleigh says it was Day, though he says the killing was unintentional.

A second confirmed Day killing was a man identified in the newspaper simply as "a Negro desperado." Day had been called to

the "colored section of Welch" because the man was terrorizing the community. All attempts to subdue him failed until Day drew his pearl-handled .38's and killed his second man.

A third killing attributed to Day was the most controversial. Noah Short was an "above average moonshiner" and a well-to-do businessman from Wyoming County who had dealings in Twin Branch and Davy in McDowell. On April 23, 1920, Short was hauling liquor to Davy when he was interrupted by officers including P. R. Tyree. Short shot and wounded Tyree, then made his getaway. The intrepid Mack Day gathered a posse and set out for Short's Wyoming County stronghold.

Short died in the ensuing shootout. Some said friendly fire from his own men accidentally brought him down. Others saw Mack Day "pumping lead as fast as

he could," and thought that he killed Short. Officer Delbert Shy swore that he himself shot the bootlegger. Burleigh leaves this one in some ambiguity, figuring that Short had it coming no matter who pulled the trigger.

Mack Day's raids in such places as Pageton, Lick Branch and Northfork netted barrels of booze, automobiles and plenty of bad guys. Day himself was grabbed one night and bound and gagged by his foes. In this restrained condition, he nonetheless got his fingers on his derringer and fired a shot which alerted fellow officers to come to his rescue.

"It was said that Mack Day was meaner than any man he arrested," son Sam Day recalled in a 1983 interview in the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*. That was maybe "half true," Sam figured. "Until my daddy was 21 he used to drink and get into fights," he admitted, but it was Sam's belief that all that changed after his religious conversion. Mack became so "arrow straight" that he sometimes found himself in trouble for stepping on political toes.

Even the family was not exempt from the zeal of the crusader, according to son Jim, who said Mack arrested "almost more second cousins than I can count."

He also arrested an 80-year-old uncle. The old man had befriended Mack as a boy, and had no appreciation for his uprightness as an adult. "That's what a man gets for helping to raise a d---d ungrateful boy," Burleigh quotes him as saying. Mack collared his own son, Alex, when that young man was involved in running liquor. He saw to it that Alex was put on a road gang at Anawalt.

Mack never learned to drive a car. He had to be driven on his raids or he rode horses, even purchasing some from the notorious Matt Justice at Panther Creek. Jim Day told Cathy Patton of the *Daily News* that his father was on such trips constantly, often coming home with bullet holes in his clothes.

Sooner or later, Mack Day's luck had to run out. The family knew that, and Jim recalled an incident which illustrates their uneasiness.

"The strangest thing happened

two weeks before Dad was killed," he remembered. "We had company at our big 14-room farmhouse up here on the mountain. It was dark and everyone heard whistling. It sounded like two people were on opposite sides of the house whistling some kind of signal back and forth to each other. My brothers slipped up on the roof and fired several warning shots out in the road. When they did, they saw a

man fall. When they investigated the area where they'd seen the man, he had vanished with no trace that anyone had ever been there. We still don't know if it was an omen or a real person."

Omen or real, the Days went back to their routine, keeping up the home place while Mack carried out the business of the law. Burleigh describes the family's Belcher Mountain farm as a charming spot.

## The Klan in West



Klansmen parade through Keyser, the Mineral County seat. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy West Virginia State Archives.

Revenuer Mack Day was a Klansman, and there were plenty like him at the time. That such men saw no conflict between positions of community trust and their membership in the racist organization reflects a curious phase in our state's history.

The Ku Klux Klan, initially founded by white Southerners after the Civil War, experienced a major revival in West Virginia and the rest of the country in the 1920's. The 20th Century Klan, organized in 1915 near Atlanta, expanded its hostilities toward black Americans to include Jews, Roman Catholics, foreigners and organized labor.

These were uneasy, fearful times. Labor troubles, distrust of strangers, and the Red Scare following World War I all contributed to the KKK resurgence.

The Klan's presence, evident in the adjoining story from McDowell County, was strongly felt in other parts of West Virginia as well. In a recent *Hinton News* article, Fred Long describes a nighttime march by the Ku Klux Klan in Summers County in 1924. Citing earlier accounts, Long said they "appeared in full regalia, led by ten horsemen who were followed by the Hinton band in a car decorated by a large burning cross. Klansman marched behind carrying high before them fiery crosses."

"The land was rough, but under a good state of cultivation," he wrote. "From the high points of the farm a magnificent panorama of natural beauty unfolded before the vision, rolling away toward the south, west and north miles upon miles of mountain ridges and valleys between. It was a spot of quiet beauty, where one might love to retire, far from strife and turmoil of public life, to watch the beautiful sunsets

beyond the wooded heights, and make preparations for the final sunset when the curtain of night drops over the scenes of earth."

Mack Day was never to enjoy so blessed a retirement. He ventured from his Belcher Mountain home for the last time on Friday, February 13, 1925. He made early raids that day to Keystone and Gary, but was unsuccessful. "It's no wonder we failed today," he noted. "Here it

is Friday, hangman's day, the 13th of the month." Mack stayed in Welch that night, planning to go to Pageton and Roderfield the next day.

Saturday morning, Bill Watkins and Robert L. Taylor went with Day to the Roderfield residence of James Sneed, a black man suspected of moonshining. The officers had searched but found nothing when Day spotted an abandoned build-

# Virginia

By 1925 a Klan chapter had been established in Summers County. That year they bought a full-page ad in the Hinton High School yearbook, and again in 1926 and 1927. Research for a GOLDENSEAL story in Mineral County also found the KKK represented in a 1926 high school yearbook. The advertisement simply read "Compliments of Ku Klux Klan."

The late Ned Guthrie recalled a chilling Klan incident from his own high school years in the following previously unpublished excerpt from an interview for a 1987 GOLDENSEAL article. It happened in Mason County.

"This was about the summer of 1925," Guthrie reported. "School was out about two or three weeks, and we all got telephone calls and messages from the band director to meet at the high school at 8:30 p.m. Come with your uniforms, your instruments, the band was going to play. They didn't tell anybody anything, we just followed the band director and did what he said.

"So we went up to a place called Harmon Field. That's in the center of Point Pleasant, a com-

bination baseball field and football field. I knew where we were, but it was pitch dark. There wasn't any moon, no electric lights. I could hear people talking, but no lights, no flashlights, no nothing, and I thought that was kind of peculiar. They didn't even have the lights on on the cars when they drove up

*All the way around that baseball diamond was a circle of people, all dressed in sheets, with hoods on. Some of them were on horseback. They scared us to death.*

there. They switched them off when they got down to the field.

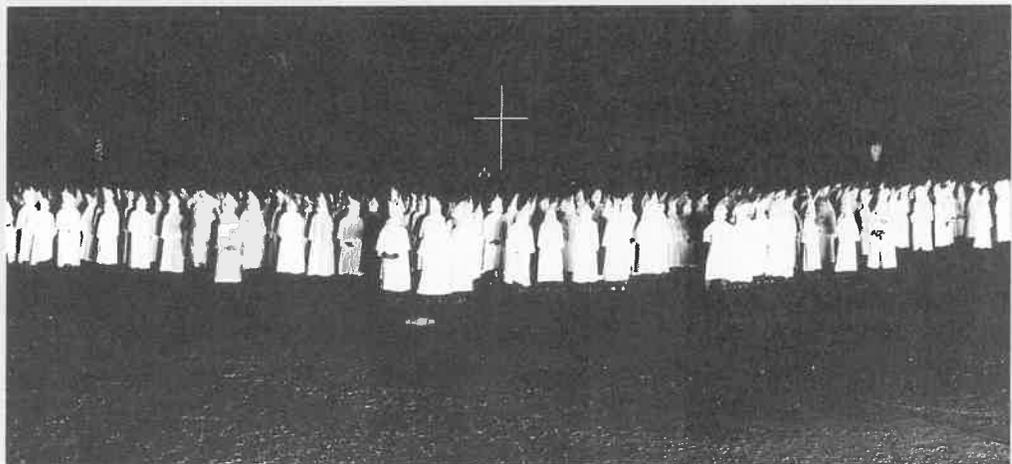
"When they turned the light on, what it was was a 16- to 20-foot cross, right out at the pitcher's mound. Our band was at first base.

And all the way around that diamond, all around all four bases, was a circle of people, and they're all dressed in sheets, with hoods on. It was a Ku Klux Klan rally. Some of them were on horseback. They scared us to death.

"We played and after it was over with we left. Nobody ever said anything, anything at all.

"That was exploitation," added Guthrie, who later became a prominent national labor leader. "Something had to be better than that."

Klansmen helped to lay Mack Day to rest on Belcher Mountain in 1925, and KKK activity in West Virginia and the rest of the country peaked soon afterwards. The Depression years saw membership drop significantly. The civil rights movement of the 1960's brought the group to the forefront again, especially in some Southern states dissatisfied with the 1964 Civil Rights Act. But the Ku Klux Klan never reemerged as a significant force in West Virginia.



Nighttime rallies of the sort Ned Guthrie recalled were popular with the Klan. This one happened in Clarksburg. Photographer unknown, 1920's; courtesy West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU.

ing. He ordered its search and "complete moonshiner's outfitings" were discovered, according to the later *Welch Daily News* account.

"It's no use," Day called out as Sneed tried to get away. "We've got you." The official records state that Sneed then shot Day through the head twice, and the lawman died instantly.

Jim Day upheld this version of events, but Paul Day, son of Mack's oldest son, Josh, says that his father believed that Mack was killed by fellow officers. Paul Day went on, saying that Mack had many enemies, a few of them among his ostensible allies. Moonshining was a considerable business, and sometimes the relatives and friends of lawmen — if not they themselves — practiced the illegal trade.

The exact details may never be known, either of Mack's death or what followed next. It appears that

Taylor, though a noted marksman, shot at and missed Sneed, and a chase took place. Pandemonium broke out as bullets blazed through the coal camp's muddy streets. Watkins ran to the back of a building as the moonshiner dashed behind a coal car. The pursuit continued until Sneed ran into an empty building to reload. A furious crossfire forced him out, sending him face to face with Watkins. It took eight bullets to kill James Sneed, while it had taken only two to stop the life of Malcolm Malachi Day.

Jim Day said that Mack had had no immediate premonitions of death when he left home that Friday 13th. Mack knew he was in a dangerous line of work, accepted the risks and behaved accordingly. The Days kept guns galore, but so did many families at the time and plenty today. They never really knew where Mack was going or how

long he would be away, and could not be sure that he would ever return. They had already had false reports of his death, according to the newspaper.

At least Mack never had to worry about leaving a defenseless wife. Charlotte Milam Day was about as helpless as a squad of Marines, to judge from the memories she left behind.

"One time some folks had come up to our spread to pick blackberries. Mommy got her gun," Jim once recalled. She

waited, not speaking or shooting, until they had gathered pailfuls of her berries. Then, "Mommy started shooting," according to Jim. The trespassers ran, leaving the Days with all those berries without the trouble of having to pick them.

On another occasion, an obviously ill-informed beggar came by, and Charlotte kindly fed him and let him warm himself before telling him to move on. The man said, "No." Charlotte said, "Go." He still refused, so Mommy got her gun again. According to Jim, she shot the man dead and left him on the lawn until Mack came home.

"Mean," Jim said of his mother. He smiled as his wife Bessie and Paul Day nodded agreement.

McDowell County was shaken by the loss of the famous lawman, and the community expressed its grief in ways that would startle us today. The Ku Klux Klan didn't forget its fallen brother, and many robed members — hundreds, by

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*"The booger man is coming," he cried. "Hide your liquor or pour it out, quick!" When she started pouring, he told her, "The booger man's got you."*

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some reports — showed up when Charlotte laid her man to rest. Bessie Day was a school girl at the time, and before her own recent death she recalled the Klansmen creating terror among the young. "They gathered at the far end of Kimball, marched down Main Street, out of the west end of town and up Belcher Mountain," she said.

"'Bout scared old Lee Never-Wash to death," Jim added, speaking of a local beggar. The vagrant was well known on the mountain, and reasonably welcome. The Days often fed him, and even washed him once with laundry soap. But the Klan had no use for paupers or



The Mack Day tales are told by the third generation now. This is grandson Bobby Day. Photo by Michael Keller.



This rare double portrait shows Mack Day from two perspectives. Date unknown.

other unfortunates, and Lee knew that. "When old Lee Never-Wash saw that gang of KKK, he flew off the mountain," Jim said.

It must have been a strange scene on Belcher Mountain. Mack had belonged to the Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias, and his lodge brothers planned the funeral. The Odd Fellows turned out in full regalia to join the KKK in their white-sheeted anonymity, as law officers in uniform trailed their way to the mountain grave site. Gospel singers and ministers of many faiths from both sides of the nearby state line were there, alongside "reformed moonshiners," according to Burleigh. Perhaps there were some non-reformed moonshiners as well, no doubt breathing a little easier with the booger man gone.

Burleigh was there, so let him have the last word:

"Silence reigned over the top of Belcher Mountain, where a new-made grave was heaped with fragrant flowers. The birds had ceased their singing. Beyond the far western horizon a glow of light still lingered as if loath to quit the scene. The stars were again twinkling with the smile of hope. Mother earth was lulling her tired children to sleep — and it was night."\*



Mack Day's gravestone lists his Ku Klux Klan affiliation. Day died at the height of the Klan revival. Photo by Michael Keller.

## REVENUE AGENT



**LIFE AND DEATH  
EXPLOITS OF A  
PROHIBITION AGENT  
IN WEST VIRGINIA**

### Mack Day Reprint

In 1925 William Grant Burleigh wrote *Mac Day, Crusader*, a 224-page hardcover book detailing the famous McDowell County lawman's life. Now Elkhorn Press has reprinted excerpts from the hard-to-find original, mainly sections dealing with Day's dangerous line of work. *Revenue Agent: Life and Death Exploits of a Prohibition Agent* is a 52-page softcover booklet that sells for \$4.75 plus \$1 shipping and handling.

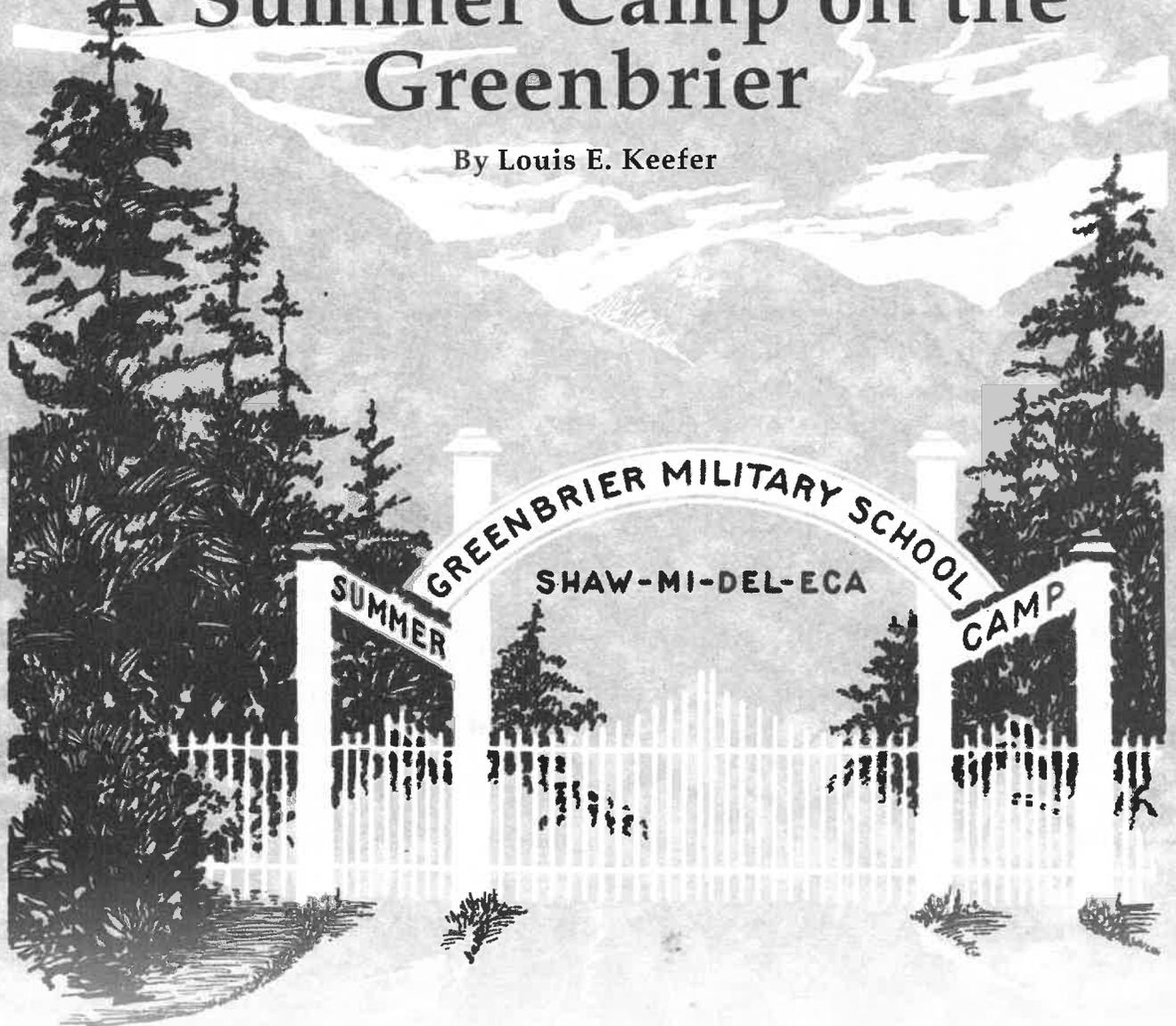
David Wallace runs Elkhorn Press. He describes the Day reprint as anecdotes that "vividly portray the cat-and-mouse game played by law enforcement and moonshiners alike during the early 20th century, a time of rampant lawlessness in these mountain areas."

Elkhorn Press, founded in 1994, specializes in reprints on Appalachian subjects. In addition to *Revenue Agent*, *Blood Feuds* and *Ghouls & Fools* are available at the same price. The books may be ordered from Elkhorn Press, P.O. Box 5, Elkhorn, WV 24831. West Virginia residents must add 6% sales tax.

# Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca

## A Summer Camp on the Greenbrier

By Louis E. Keefer



Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca was everything you remember about summer camp, and maybe more. During its heyday, the Caldwell camp brought hundreds of boys to the banks of the Greenbrier River each summer.

Generations ago, an agricultural America arranged school schedules with long summer vacations so that youngsters could help with planting and harvesting on the family farm. The long vacations for school children became traditional, even as the nation became more urban.

Around the turn of the century, more affluent parents, having no need for farm labor, began to send their out-of-school (and often bored) children to summer camps. There, at some distance from home, the youngsters would spend six to eight weeks learning such new skills as swimming, boating, riding, archery and riflery — activities not readily available in cramped town or city spaces.

Camp Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca, a large summer camp for boys located on the Greenbrier River near Lewisburg, was among the nation's finest. Operated in association with the Greenbrier Military School for 43 years — from 1929 to 1972 — Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca was an immediate success.

As many as 300 boys, ages six to 16, made the valley echo with laughter every year. At first the camp operated two terms of four weeks each: from mid-June to mid-July and mid-July to mid-August. Eventually the camp began a week later, and lasted for only a single, seven-week season. Parents then could join their offspring for an optional eighth-week "Family Camp," and many did.

Most of the campers were from West Virginia, but many also came from Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky and other nearby states. A few young men from foreign countries attended the camp, notable among them the son of General Molina Trujillo, the long-time president of the Dominican Republic. During its more than four decades, Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca was home away from home for at least 10,000 boys. They had the time of their lives, and the camp's influence on them was often remarkable.

One of those with keen memories of the camp is J. W. "Ben" Ben-

jamin, Jr., who not only enjoyed seven years as a camper, starting when he was still in elementary school, but had seven more years as a camp counselor. Benjamin says the camp was started mostly for boys attending the Greenbrier Military School who'd rather spend a summer in camp than at home. Many were on athletic scholarships, and looked on Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca as a kind of training camp. Later the camp was open to all qualified applicants, whether or not they were attending GMS.

Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca was founded by the GMS superintendent, the late Colonel H. B. Moore, who was convinced that most boys would benefit physically and mentally from supervised, competitive outdoor activities. A perfect location was found along the beautiful Greenbrier River at the town of Caldwell, and the necessary riverfront acreage was purchased from the Caldwell family after which the town was named.

About 50 acres of level bottomland soon was covered with build-

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*Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca was an immediate success. As many as 300 boys, ages six to 16, made the Greenbrier Valley echo every year.*

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ings and playing fields (the large swimming pool was added some time later). A wooded, 15-acre river island paralleled this area. By damming the back channel on the camp side of the island, a lake was created in which to swim, canoe, and water-ski. Towering above the camp, Goat Mountain provided a constant challenge to young mountain climbers.

At first, Ben Benjamin was not a happy camper. Like many young children, he couldn't swim and was much afraid of the water. But swimming lessons were compulsory — the only "must" activity at the camp — so he suffered through them with the others. It didn't help that he was somewhat overweight, because there were always a few who made cruel jokes. Nor was it an advantage that his father was Colonel J. W. Benjamin, a Greenbrier

Military School instructor and camp counselor.

Young Benjamin's story is a classic case of the benefit of summer camps. "I went in at rock bottom, without the skill to do anything," he recalls.

"Summer camp helped me to mature in countless ways, to become knowledgeable and even adept at most sports, and to be miles ahead when I eventually entered the Army. As a camper, I won the rifle and ping pong tournaments, was the runner-up in golf and badminton. In the Army I ranked third in my battalion in overall physical fitness. These things would have been impossible for me without the confidence building years at Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca."

Each camper, as he arrived with his parents, was assigned to one of the four great Indian tribes thought to have lived on, hunted, and fought over the ground where the camp was located. The camp took its name from the first syllables of the first three tribes, Shawnee, Miami, Delaware, and the last syllable of Sen-

eca. Year after year, when the boys returned to Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca, they remained fiercely loyal to their assigned tribe. The camp managers believed that such loyalties provided a greater incentive to excel in every phase of camp life, from keeping cabins clean to winning contests at the Saturday night campfires.

In the early years, campers slept in floored, pyramidal tents, with no more than four boys to a tent. The beds and mattresses, and desks and chairs, were those used at the military school and were moved to and from the camp each year in a GMS truck.

Counselors reported to camp a week early to get everything set up. "We had fun," Benjamin says of his years as a counselor. "The big GMS football players did the heavy moving, and we all rode in the back



Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca adapted a colorful interpretation of Indian lore as the camp motif, with the campers divided into the four "tribes." The boys here pose in their ceremonial headgear, with the photo at right showing a detail from the Shawnee totem pole. Totem photo by Michael Keller.



of the truck with the bedding and other furniture. Of course, everyone had a good suntan — nobody wore anything much except shorts and T-shirts — and we sang bawdy songs as we went. We might even leave camp at night to have half a can of beer each, and we thought that was really something!"

Like the other counselors, Benjamin received only a modest salary for his summer's work, but room and board were free, and the meals were scrumptious.

"Oh, they were good!" Benjamin recalls. "And they were cooked right there, mostly with products from the camp's own garden — corn, green beans, carrots, onions, tomatoes, and so forth. Fresh fruit, milk, and meat were delivered daily from nearby farms. We ate a ton! I often went back to the kitchen windows for seconds and thirds of huge steaming bowls of mashed potatoes and beans."

Parents were allowed to identify up to three activities they wanted their sons to pursue, but otherwise the camp program was designed to

permit young men to choose their own weekly schedules. Once that choice was made, the camper's participation was then required — there was no loafing around the cabins. In addition to outdoor ac-

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*At first, Ben Benjamin was not a happy camper.*

*"I went in at rock bottom, without the skill to do anything," he recalls.*

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tivities, campers also might take classes in wood and metal craft, leather work, model building, radio, taxidermy and nature lore. With examples all around them, the boys studied the habits and calls of wild animals and birds, how to distinguish trees and plants, and how to collect plant, insect and rock specimens.

On special days, to give the boys a change of pace, camp buses took them to the Greenbrier Hotel to

swim, golf, or play tennis, or just watch a professional exhibition. Much longer excursions were made to such distant places as Hot Springs, Warm Springs, and Natural Bridge in Virginia. Such trips began as morning mists were still clearing from the river valley, and might end at dusk to the sound of cicadas singing in the trees. Each outing was a big adventure.

Other popular away-from-camp activities were hikes, canoe trips



Ben Benjamin spent years at Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca as camper and counselor. He says camp life was good for him. Photo by Michael Keller.

up and down the Greenbrier River, and cross-country horseback rides. The boys took shelter tents, mess kits, and canteens, and they occasionally camped out for one or sometimes two nights. Simple camp cooking was taught by the leaders, and it was up to each hungry youngster to prepare his own food over a campfire. The most popular such activity was probably the overnight horseback ride over the beautiful roads and trails of the Allegheny Mountains. A sure-footed horse, a rattling mess kit, and a blanket roll could always bring delight to the heart of any boy.

The man most knowledgeable about Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca's history is Captain Richard H. Staten of White Sulphur Springs. His association with the camp stretched from 1935 when, still in high school, he worked at odd jobs there, until 1972, his final year as program director. Staten's nearly 40 years of service were interrupted only once — from 1942 through 1945, when he commanded a U.S. Navy blimp searching for German U-Boats off the Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

A modest man, Dick Staten gives most of the credit for the camp's success to others — to Colonel

Moore for the idea, to Robert M. Harris for his efforts as the camp director until he died, and especially to his widow who then took over for him. "She was wonderful," Staten says of Mrs. Harris. "She was the one who made the place go, handling all of the difficult administrative and financial details. She kept the camp self-supporting, a really fine achievement."

Today Mrs. Harris maintains an attractive home in Lewisburg not far from the former Greenbrier Military School, now the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. She remembers having written to every camper's parents every week, a monumental task when enrollments still numbered in the hundreds. She laughs good-naturedly about telling parents of any illnesses, but neglecting to mention minor disciplinary problems. With five children of her own, and training in child guidance, she was qualified to handle such problems herself. Some former campers still drop by for visits, and she is pleased to see them.

Dick Staten was responsible for camp operations and created many of its facilities, among them its

big 40-by-80 swimming pool, its inspirational Grand Council meeting place on the adjoining island, and its seven-hole golf course.

Camp golf was a little eccentric, he admits. "We lacked the room for a regulation course and were lucky if any of our holes were a hundred yards long. For greens, we dug shallow pits 12 feet square, faced them with two-by-fours, packed them with sand so they were level with the ground, and covered them with indoor-outdoor carpet. We limed off a large circle around each box-green, and if a boy landed his approach shot within that circle, he could pick it up and place it at the nearest inside edge of

the 'green' and putt from there."

As its name suggests, one of Camp Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca's main themes was Indian lore, freely interpreted by camp management. A camp catalog described one of the weekly highlights: "Grand Council, held every Saturday night, is opened with the lighting of the great central fire from the ever-glowing sacred fire, in accordance with ancient tribal custom. The Ritual of the Fire effectively teaches the Law of the Woods. Ceremonial narrative, and solo dances are beautifully enacted to the weird beat of

### Campers Return

The spirit of Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca thrives each summer, when camp alumni return for a week-end of fun and reminiscing. Many of the alumni bring friends to the broad river bottom so familiar to the old campers. The 1996 reunion is planned for July 26 though 28. For information contact Mr. Doug Auld, 1660 Waltham Road, Columbus, OH 43221; (614)486-4008.

Right: Captain Dick Staten and Carolyn Harris on a recent visit to Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca. They worked together at the camp for many years. Photo by Michael Keller.



the tom-tom."

The fireplace was built in the center of a large circle of "magical" rocks enclosed by an outer circle of logs arranged for seating amphitheater-style. Parents who attended may have enjoyed the rituals as much as their sons. Set ablaze only after sunset, the "Fire from Heaven" actually seemed to descend from there. In reality, a counselor hidden high above in a pine tree lit a torch, which slid diagonally down an invisible wire to ignite the stack of prepared firewood in the circle below.

According to Dick Staten, one of the most popular storytellers at Grand Councils was Colonel J. W. Benjamin. "Any man who could take 200 or so squirmy young boys, seated on damp logs around a

campfire in the dark, and hold their rapt attention for an hour or more was a real spellbinder. You could've heard a pin drop. I'm sure he made up many of his stories, and it's a pity we didn't get them on tape. He was equally effective giving Sunday school lessons under the trees

when the weather was good, or in our gym when it rained."

Maintaining an ambitious program of Indian lore wasn't always easy. Each year a real Indian was hired to come spend the summer mingling with the boys in camp.

Staten recalls one year when the

## A Summer Romance

The steady murmur of the Greenbrier River, combined with the croaking of frogs and the rhythmic song of katydids, produced an evening symphony for three young men and three young women gathered around a glowing, crackling campfire in the summer of 1953. It was my most memorable summer.

I had returned to Camp Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca as a counselor after completing a year of service in the Korean War. On the 4th of July the camp sponsored a dance at the lodge, inviting female staff members from nearby Camp Anne Bailey. It was there at the dance I spotted a young lady slow dancing and impulsively cut in. We danced for an hour to recorded big-band music, and then stepped outside. She

lit a cigarette and leaned back against me as a display of fireworks lit up the sky above Goat Mountain. I knew then I was wild about this girl.

The next day we arranged for two

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*"She lit a cigarette and leaned back against me as a display of fireworks lit up the sky."*

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other couples to join us upriver the following night at a place known as Cat Rock. We met as planned and built our small fire in the middle of the big river rock. We roasted marshmallows and snuggled together as the chill of the river fog

gathered around us.

From then on we met at least once a week at Cat Rock to roast marshmallows, hot dogs and ears of corn, and bake potatoes, smoke cigarettes and drink beer. We talked and bundled for hours. On a couple of occasions we greeted the dawn.

My girlfriend and I continued to date the following year at college, but broke up before graduation. One of the other two guys married his summer camp girl. I've always wished I could repeat that summer, but it was not to be. We felt no apprehension at Cat Rock, a part of camp grounds and a peaceful oasis. But the world was a far cry from Camp Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca.

— J. W. Benjamin, Jr.



Trail rides were among the favorite activities at Camp Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca. These boys ford the Greenbrier River. Photographer and date unknown.

Indian was late reporting. "The boys started fussing and asking, 'where's the Indian?' We told them he was late because his horse got sick.

"When the Indian finally arrived and called us from the White Sulphur Springs train station, I told our man at the front gate to hold him there. He had to *ride a horse* into camp. I snuck one of ours out there, so the boys wouldn't notice. It turned out the Indian couldn't ride without a saddle but I persuaded him to get up bareback and I'd lead the horse into camp very gently. The man was terrified."

One of Staten's major off-season tasks was recruiting campers and counselors for the following year. The counselors were often coaches or teachers who brought groups of boys with them. Mahre Starke, Charleston High School's well-known and respected athletic director, was a good example. On one occasion, Starke brought 60 boys to camp. Such arrangements provided good summer jobs for teachers, and

also gave parents an assurance of kind treatment for their sons by counselors they already knew.

Dick Staten particularly remembers three of his staff, Sam Litton, Pete Phillips, and Dale Atkinson. Phillips was from Montgomery,

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*"We had fun. The big football players did the heavy moving, and we all rode in the back of the truck and sang bawdy songs as we went."*

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where during the school year he coached basketball at West Virginia Tech. He was also a first-class taxidermist, and as the camp's chief nature instructor he obtained a state permit to trap and mount for teaching purposes one example of every native West Virginia animal. Atkinson was an all-around outdoors

man from up around Renick, whom Staten recalls periodically catching and bringing in live snakes — usually a blacksnake and a copperhead from near his home — to let the boys see, in the camp's own "snakepit" built for the purpose, the differences between non-poisonous and poisonous snakes.

As wonderful as summer camps were for young men — and there were similar camps for girls, as well — they all had to make ends meet. Most were commercial businesses, and they necessarily competed with one another to attract campers. No exception to the rule, Camp Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca advertised throughout West Virginia and its adjoining states, placing modest notices in the major newspapers and magazines extolling the camp's healthful atmosphere and its Christian foundation. Advertisements also were placed in such popular national magazines as *Boy's Life*.

Things began to change in the early 1970's. After the Greenbrier Military School closed, Shaw-Mi-



Dick Staten recalls the time when the Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca dining hall rang with the music of campers. Photo by Michael Keller.

Del-Eca was bought in 1973 by Lewisburg physician Eugene McClung. For camp director, McClung chose Ellsworth Buck, a Richwood native who had been a counselor under Dick Staten and who had enjoyed an extensive summer camp background before that.

"As camper and counselor, I had spent each summer at Camp Minnehaha in Pocahontas County from age five to age 13," Buck says. "I got to know an awful lot about the business."

By the 1970's, however, Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca was beginning to show

signs of wear and tear, and the popularity of all-purpose summer camps was waning. Springing up instead, Buck says, were more specialized camps — camps with an emphasis on some single sport, for kids wanting to play better basketball, or tennis, or golf, or something else. Though he stayed on for a second summer, Buck recognized this trend. Seeking more security for his family, he joined the Greenbrier County public school system where he is still a school administrator.

Today, 20 years later, the camp has passed into yet other hands and is now used mainly as a short-term recreational campground for motor homes and campers. Many of the original Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca buildings are still in place, but others were scrapped long ago. Though the old camp is gone, the beautiful Greenbrier River, the rocks, and the hills remain. ✪



Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca campers pose horseback in this camp publicity shot. Photographer and date unknown.

## A Lewisburg Institution:

# The Greenbrier Military School

**G**reenbrier Military School, the Gowner of Camp Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca, traced its roots back to 1809. That was the year Dr. John McElhenney, pastor at the Old Stone Presbyterian Church of Lewisburg, seeing the need for an educational institution in that part of the country, began teaching students in his home.

This venerable gentleman was a graduate of Washington College, now Washington and Lee University. He was both a dreamer and a doer, and filled with enthusiasm for the better things in life. His school did so well the citizens of the town built him a school building in 1812. Dr. McElhenney retired as principal at his school in 1824 but continued as trustee and teacher until 1860. He was pastor of Old Stone for 62 years.

The school continued to flourish until the Civil War, when the building was used as a hospital by both North and South. It reopened after the war, then gave its property to the Lewisburg Female Institute in 1875. To meet the needs of male students, a group of residents founded the Greenbrier Military Academy in 1890. Major J. M. Lee took over the school in 1896, calling it Lee Military Academy. In 1899 a Washington College professor became principal of the school and operated it without military aspect as Greenbrier Academy until 1902.

At that time the Reverend M. L. Lacy began serving as principal. He changed the name of the institution to Greenbrier Presbyterian School. In 1906 Colonel H. B. Moore became principal, setting the school upon a prosperous course with a competent faculty. In 1908 Colonel Moore reinstated military training. In 1920 he and his family purchased the school from the Presbyterian Church and took on the name Greenbrier Military School.

Thus Camp Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca and Greenbrier Military School were both owned and operated by the

Moore family, and staffed by the same people. Teachers and student athletes from the school spent the summer at the camp, instructing their young charges in a large variety of sports, crafts, and activities. School farms supplied the meat, vegetables, and milk for the camp.

GMS students did most of the work and loved it. The same men and women who staffed the GMS dining room worked at the camp dining facilities.

The school's football camp was held at Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca in September of each year. Many future all-American athletes worked and trained at the camp such as Joe Palumbo, a GMS alumnus and all-American football tackle at the University of Virginia; Mark Workman, basketball all-American at West Virginia University; and John Havlicek, all-American basketball player from Ohio State. These fine young men were good instructors and heroes for the campers.

The Greenbrier Military School was respected throughout the country. A fire burnt the institution down in 1925, but the school remained open and built a large new building. In 1933 a post-graduate year was added and in 1940 the school became a junior college. It continued its high school and junior high school departments, with 90 percent of its graduates going on to college. More than 400 students were enrolled each year, some from other countries.

More than 1,500 GMS students served in the armed forces during World War II in all ranks from pri-

vate to general. They won every award from the Good Conduct Medal to the Congressional Medal of Honor. Several graduates advanced to West Point and Annapolis each year. Many of its athletes went on to play on college teams, some making all-American. Green-



The old Greenbrier Military School, now the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. Photo by Michael Keller.

brier Military School graduates excelled in every area of life.

The famous old school closed down in 1972, and the facility is now used by the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. Some 250 Greenbrier Military School alumni from all parts of the country return for homecoming each year to see lifelong friends and visit the old alma mater.

— J. W. Benjamin, Jr.

# Mountain Music Roundup

By Danny Williams

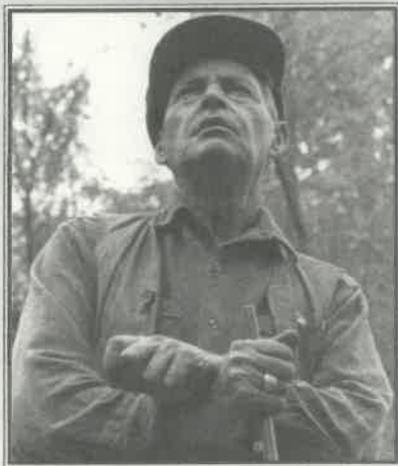
This is a great time for fans of real West Virginia music. Over a dozen recordings have been released in the past few months, and together they present a quality and variety never before equaled in such a brief period.

The rarest jewels are a couple of archival tapes from Augusta Heritage recordings, including another peek into the vast musical vault of **Dwight Diller**. Nearly 30 years ago, Diller immersed himself in the lives of the legendary Hammons family of Pocahontas County, learning their music and documenting the lifestyles of these unique mountain musicians and characters.

Now Diller shares some of his old recordings on *The Fiddling of Burl Hammons*. Included are 35 pieces

The Diller Collection • Volume I

Old-Time Music  
of Pocahontas County



The Fiddling of Burl Hammons

Diller recorded in Hammons's home about 25 years ago. Most of the tunes are associated with the

Hammons family. Several, like "The Dog Passed a Ryestraw" and "Kick Mr. Possum and He Won't Come Down," have possibly never before been available on a published recording.

Burl Hammons was not a worldly man, and not accustomed to receiving much attention. The deft, confident fiddling he produces here could only have been recorded in a setting like this one, in Hammons's own living room with a trusted young friend holding the microphone. Anyone interested in where West Virginia fiddle music comes from — why it sounds the way it does — needs to own this recording.

The second recent archival recording is of the late **Delbert Hughes**, a fine fiddler who until now has been too little known to fans of mountain music. Hughes went to work in the coal mines at age 13, and retired 52 years later in 1970. Mining and raising a family left little time for public or social fiddling, but Hughes's children remember that he always played for his family. In retirement, Hughes occasionally attended some of the festivals around the state, but at his death in 1982 he had not sought or received much recognition for his music.

Late in life Hughes recorded tapes for his children, and those tapes provide most of the material for *Delbert Hughes: the Home Recordings*. Like Burl Hammons, Hughes plays his fiddle solo. It's a musical form nearly forgotten in our current preoccupation with ensemble music, and Hughes is a master. His technique is on the stronger, cleaner side of mountain fiddling. He is not afraid to draw his bow vigorously across the strings, and he hits the notes he aims for. Hughes's

lightness and his perky, solid rhythm make it hard to believe he did not spend his musical life fiddling for dancers. It's another tape fiddle fans have just got to have.

A third offering from Augusta Heritage Recordings is *Tearing Down the Laurel* with fiddling **Israel Welch**. Born in 1912, Israel is the last survivor of several fiddling Welch brothers [GOLDENSEAL, Summer 1984]. In this recording, he shares a little of his vast repertoire from his Mineral County home area, a region largely overlooked by tune collectors. Fiddling at countless dances in the upper Potomac Valley, Welch absorbed an amazing store of hoedowns, waltzes, jigs, and other dance forms often neglected by today's musicians. Welch's strong bowing and impeccable rhythm testify to his background; this fiddling is a dancer's dream. **Gerry Milnes** of Augusta accompanies Welch on guitar.

Another familiar West Virginia fiddle master with a new recording out is **Glen Smith**. Every fan of real



MICHAEL KELLER

Fiddling Glen Smith.

music knows what Smith sounds like, and that's just the way he sounds on *Three Forks of Reedy* — hot, strong, and fearless. Smith tends to favor tunes which sound good played a little on the fast side, and he mashes down on his bow and flings it energetically for plenty of volume and drive. At the same time, Smith avoids any hint of heaviness in his fiddling, and every time he plays a tune it sounds fresh and unrehearsed.

On this tape, Smith plays with two other West Virginians who like to attack a tune. Guitarist **James Summers** is an active accompanist in a variety of musical styles, but he's clearly most at home here pick-

*Dave Bing doesn't quite qualify yet as an old master, but he's already on the job, communicating the tradition and playing some fantastic fiddle.*

ing with vigor. **David O'Dell**, who produced *Three Forks of Reedy* for his Roane Records label, adds an appropriately hot banjo sound.

**Dave Bing** is one fine West Virginia fiddler who doesn't quite qualify yet as an old master. But he's already on the job, communicating the tradition and playing some fantastic fiddle while he does it. *On Family and Friends*, Bing gets help from 10 performers (including brothers Mike and Tim Bing), playing five instruments and reading poetry. Bing arrays these forces in various combinations across his selections, and the result is a range of musical styles and settings rarely matched on any one fiddler's recording. Tying it all together is Bing's characteristic touch — strong, playful, accurate, inventive fiddling. There's no one anywhere playing finer fiddle than Dave Bing, and *Family and Friends* does justice to his music.

One new recording which cannot do justice to its subject is *Mountain Heritage: the West Virginia State Folk*

*Festival Sampler, 1995*. The third weekend in June is the time for all lovers of West Virginia music to be in Glenville, and the unique atmosphere of this most "live" of events can't be captured on tape.

Despite that, *Mountain Heritage*, recorded at the Festival's legendary evening concerts, is an indispensable recording for the fan of mountain music. Over 30 of the state's most respected performers are represented on this tape, singing and dancing, and playing the fiddle, banjo, dulcimer, guitar, hammered dulcimer, mandolin, harmonica, autoharp, spoons, and washtub bass. The range of tunes is similarly impressive, from hymns to hoedowns, and waltzes, comic pieces, hornpipes, and more. For its range of performers and musical styles, there can be no better representation of our music than *Mountain Heritage: the West Virginia State Folk Festival Sampler*. Buy the tape, but go to the festival, too.

This diverse festival sampler serves as a reminder that there's more to mountain music than fiddles. Three other recent recordings by West Virginia performers feature the banjo, guitar, and dulcimer.

**Dwight Diller's** latest recording, *Papa!*, shows off the banjo in an area where it's seldom heard today — old-time Christian music. Many of the old church songs are sung to lively, rhythmic tunes, and it's easy to believe that banjo players of the past probably tried some of them on their instruments. More recent banjo players have seldom ventured into this area, but they may start after hearing Diller play and sing material like "Canaan's Land," "Down in the Valley to Pray," and "Cryin' Holy." Diller's rhythmic, antique clawhammer picking style fits the old hymns perfectly.

No one is better than **Robin Kessinger** at making his guitar fit his material. *On The Third Eyebrow*, Kessinger again tackles a range of music few other guitarists would attempt, including the haunting Irish "Rights of Man Hornpipe," the swinging Delmore Brothers tune "Blue Railroad Train," Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag," and the title cut, a Kessinger original. This column recently reviewed Kessin-



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ger's *Don't Try This at Home* recording, and all the stuff we said then is true of this current tape. Kessinger has used his amazing mastery of hot and fast picking to gain national attention, and now he's using his recordings to show us what a versatile, expressive instrument the guitar can be.

**Alan Freeman** is best known for taking the mountain dulcimer where it has rarely been before, into the hottest jam sessions with the finest musicians (including Glen Smith, Dave Bing, and Robin Kessinger). On his current recording, *Looking Back*, Freeman returns the dulcimer to its more familiar place off to the side of the hot jamming; the entire tape is solo dulcimer. And the way Freeman plays, the dulcimer doesn't really need any help.

**John Blisard** is one of the best-known musicians in the state, but most fans would have a hard time saying what instrument Blisard plays, or what particular type of music. Blisard has for decades played probably the greatest variety of instruments and styles of any musician in West Virginia, and has made good music with about all of our better pickers.

Blisard's first solo recording, *Protect the Innocent*, will not clear up the confusion. Blisard multi-tracks all the arrangements, accompanying himself on Irish harp, guitar, fiddle, cello, banjos, bass, and bagpipes. The tunes are a strong mixture: Appalachian dances like "Salt River" and "Shaving a Dead Man," the old ballad "Lily of the West," the ancient "Greensleeves," and lots of Celtic music ranging from tuneful and familiar to deep and twisted. *Protect the Innocent* says more about the complex roots of Appalachian music than any other available recording, and it says it beautifully.

Listeners especially interested in the Celtic side of Appalachian music have even more reason to celebrate. Two of our finest ensembles have each released their first recordings recently.

Calling **Poteen's** self-named tape a first recording is a little misleading, however. The core of this four-piece band has been playing

together for over 20 years [GOLDENSEAL, Winter 1993], and produced two LPs under their former name **Clan Erdverkle**. Those recordings were ten and more years ago, and since then this band has been probably the most active, visible carrier of Irish and Scottish music in the state. The four performers all sing and play multiple instruments, and they use this versatility to give each piece a unique sound. **Frank George**, West Virginia's master fiddler and Poteen's longtime teacher and friend, adds his light, inventive fiddle style to several of the group's tunes.

A special bonus selection for fans of Celtic music is **Campbell's Run**. This four-piece, Morgantown-area

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*John Blisard plays probably the greatest variety of instruments and styles of any musician in West Virginia, and has made good music with about all of our better pickers.*

---

band has not been together as long as Poteen, and some music lovers may not have heard of them. That will change now; Celtic lovers are a close-knit group, and word will soon spread that this group's first recording is a fine addition to our store of good music.

This tape features the familiar material Celtic fans want to hear: "Over the Moor to Maggie," "Star of the County Down," "Flowers of Edinburgh," and the like. **Craig Sims** carries most of the melodies on his smooth fiddle, and the others add vocals and a variety of traditional instruments. These musicians are all grownups with jobs, but we hope the success of this recording will encourage them to find more time to share their music outside their home area.

**Ordering these recordings:**

*The Fiddling of Burl Hammons, Delbert Hughes: the Home Recordings, and Tearing Down the Laurel* are from

Augusta Heritage Recordings, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241. Tapes sell for \$10 each, plus \$2 shipping for one or two cassettes and \$4 for three to five cassettes. West Virginians must add 6% sales tax.

*Three Forks of Reedy.* \$10 from Glen Smith, Box 493, Elizabeth, WV 26143.

*Family and Friends, The Third Eyebrow, and Looking Back* are distributed by jMp Records, P. O. Box 152, St. Albans, WV 25177. The cost is \$10 per cassette, plus \$1.50 shipping and 6% tax for in-staters.

*Papa!* \$10 from Yew Pine Music, Box 148, Hillsboro, WV 24946.

*Mountain Heritage: the West Virginia State Folk Festival Sampler, 1995.* \$10 plus \$1.50 shipping from

the West Virginia State Folk Festival, Rt. 1, Box 132, Coxs Mills, WV 26342.

*Protect the Innocent.* \$10 plus \$1.50 from Milo Productions, 1531 Connell Road, Charleston, WV 25314

*Poteen.* \$10 from Poteen, Box 426, Union, WV 24983.

*Campbell's Run.* \$10 from Jan Hurst, 609 Farms Drive, Fairmont, WV 26554.

*High Notes*, a newsletter devoted to West Virginia mountain music, debuted in April. The first issue featured a comprehensive listing of available recordings, with ordering information. Subscriptions are free. To order, write to *High Notes*, P.O. Box 35, Bloomingrose, WV 25024.

### String Band Fest Album

The most unusual pick of the current recording crop has to be *A Tribute to the Appalachian String Band Music Festival*. Like the Fayette County festival itself, these 24 tunes offer a startling diversity, showcasing Appalachian music as both a preserved treasure and a living, changing musical form.

Many of the performers interpret the old-time tradition loosely. All five of the Volo Bogtrotters vocalize — one singing the lyrics and four yodeling. The Freewill Savages attack "Cumberland Gap" with fiddle, banjo, electric guitar, and drums. This lively approach characterizes the Appalachian String Band Music Festival. Founded by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History in 1990, the festival already ranks among the most popular events of its kind, largely because of this ready acceptance of diverse styles. You never know what you will hear, and that makes for some big fun.

A little of that spirit is captured on this recording. As the

name suggests this is a tribute album and not truly a "festival recording." Many of the selections were recorded at the 1994 festival, but most were taped at other performances or in the hometowns of the musicians, from New Orleans to Seattle.



Copies of *A Tribute to the Appalachian String Band Music Festival* are available at the Cultural Center Shop in Charles-

ton, the Camp Washington-Carver Country Store at Clifftop, and by mail. To order a copy, call or write The Cultural Center Shop, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300, (304)558-0690. The price is \$15 for CD and \$10 for cassette, plus \$2 shipping and handling. West Virginians add 6% sales tax.

*The 1996 Appalachian String Band Music Festival will take place August 1-4 at Camp Washington-Carver, near Clifftop. For more information call the camp at (304) 438-3005.*

— Danny Williams

### Back Issues Available

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

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

- \_\_\_ Fall 1980/Recalling Mother Jones
- \_\_\_ Winter 1984/Webster County's Mollohan Mill
- \_\_\_ Fall 1985/Dulcimer Maker Ray Epler
- \_\_\_ Winter 1985/Huntington 1913
- \_\_\_ Spring 1986/Blacksmith Jeff Fetty
- \_\_\_ Summer 1986/The Draft Horse Revival
- \_\_\_ Fall 1986/West Virginia Chairmaking
- \_\_\_ Winter 1986/Educator Walden Roush
- \_\_\_ Summer 1987/Camden Park History
- \_\_\_ Fall 1988/Craftsman Wilbur Veith
- \_\_\_ Spring 1989/Printer Allen Byrne
- \_\_\_ Summer 1990/Cal Price and *The Pocahontas Times*
- \_\_\_ Winter 1990/Sisters of DeSales Heights
- \_\_\_ Summer 1991/Fiddler Melvin Wine
- \_\_\_ Winter 1991/Meadow River Lumber Company
- \_\_\_ Summer 1992/Dance, West Virginia, Dance!
- \_\_\_ Summer 1993/Fairmont Romance
- \_\_\_ Fall 1993/Bower Homestead, Twin Falls
- \_\_\_ Winter 1993/Monongah Mine Disaster
- \_\_\_ Spring 1994/Sculptor Connard Wolfe
- \_\_\_ Fall 1994/Boone County Coal Camp
- \_\_\_ Winter 1994/20th Anniversary
- \_\_\_ Spring 1995/Vandalia Time!
- \_\_\_ Spring 1996/Elk River Tales

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## Banjo Man Wins Big

**E**lmer Bird, known far and wide as the Banjo Man from Turkey Creek, has won the coveted Vandalia Award for 1996. The decision was made just as the Summer GOLDENSEAL went to press, with the presentation scheduled for Vandalia Gathering over Memorial Day Weekend.

One of West Virginia's most joyous, energetic performers, Bird came by his music the honest way, through his big Putnam County family. The Birds made music between spells of farm work, and Elmer inherited father Andrew Jackson Bird's banjo. He cherished the old instrument, but found it a little set in its ways.

"It doesn't like modern tunes like *Rocky Top*," he once said of the vintage banjo. "It plays them a mite poorly. The older tunes, they sound fine, though."

Actually, Elmer Bird can play the modern tunes very well when called upon, and is known for his wide repertoire of songs old and new. He is a long-time associate of musician John Hartford. Bird has traveled widely in recent years, carrying West Virginia's music across the continent, and has collected high honors from the Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music in America and others.

The Vandalia Award, West Virginia's highest folklife honor, is given each year by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. The award recognizes those who have made outstanding contributions toward the perpetuation of West Virginia's traditional music, arts and crafts, or other folkways.



# Tools of Mountain Living: The Drawknife

By Richard S. Hartley

Drawknife, courtesy State Museum.

Old-time mountain farmers depended upon simple hand tools to do their day's toil. One tool of these bygone years that still commonly shows its face in country auctions, often rusty from disuse, is the drawknife.

The drawknife, in the American pattern, can best be described as a two-handled knife, eight to 14 inches long, with its blade usually flat and tilted slightly forward. The blade is chisel-shaped and bevel ground on its front edge. Wooden handles extend from each end, bent at right angles to the blade and often splayed outward. A good drawknife is a quality tool, which performs precisely and feels right in the hands of the user.

The drawknife came to the West Virginia mountains with our earliest European forebears, and is one of the tools represented at all three ethnic homesteads — German, English and Scotch-Irish — at the Museum of American Frontier Culture at nearby Staunton, Virginia. The versatile tool helped to maintain self-sufficiency on the early farmstead, and continued in use until after the turn of this century. When something needed to be made or replaced, like a chair rung, a hoe handle, a hay fork or a flail, the razor-sharp blade of the drawknife shaped these items right on the farm.

Generally, this tool was pulled toward the user. Occasionally, it was pushed. Holding the blade at an angle gave the woodworker the quickest and easiest cutting action. More delicate control was accomplished by working with the beveled edge down, as in finishing work. Master users learned to handle the tool with precision and also knew what woods worked best

for a particular use, such as hickory for axe handles and white oak for barrel staves.

The drawknife could be used as a simple tool, to quickly remove excess wood for rough shaping. But in skillful hands it became amazingly versatile. It was used for rounding a hay-rake handle or chamfering the edges of furniture. The handle of a basket was carved into shape with a drawknife. Its byproducts were large chips or paper-thin shavings, depending on the use to which the drawknife was put and the skill of the user.

Their sizes and shapes varied. A drawknife in a gentlemen's tool chest may have been only five to eight inches long. Among the largest ones were mast drawknives, used to work giant timbers for sailing ships. Some of these had blades 18 to 24 inches long and 2½ inches wide.

Shipwrights weren't the only specialized woodworkers to use drawknives. They found useful purposes among basketmakers, cabinetmakers, carpenters, chairmakers, coachmakers, coopers, gunstockers, handlemakers, hoop makers, saddle-tree makers, shingle makers, tanners, and wheelwrights. The drawknife has been found listed in inventories of tools of various occupations. For example, the estate appraisal of John Hollingsworth of April 30, 1800, records two drawing knives valued at five shillings among many other woodworking tools, according to Greenbrier County Will Book Number One.

Drawknives had varied uses within the handicrafts. Special curved drawknives helped produce the staves for a barrel, to make both the outside and inside surfaces round. Rounding square stock into

wheel spokes was the wheelwright's task. The drawknife was commonly used to dress shingles and fence palings which had been "rived out" with the froe.

The uses and the popularity of the drawknife advanced with the emergence of the shaving horse. This bench-like holding device made it easy to clamp the wooden article being shaved while keeping both hands free for work.

And yes, the drawknife was hammered out by the country blacksmith. In fact, the steel of drawknives was sometimes recycled from old rasps and files, welded in as the cutting edge by the blacksmith. Evidence of this can be seen in a criss-cross pattern on the blade. Drawknives made by English and American toolmakers could also be purchased from merchants, as attested by ads in early newspapers. Storekeeper Richard W. Moore of Clarksburg, for example, offered drawing knives for sale, according to the August 26, 1820, issue of the *Independent Virginian*.

The drawknife, like many old tools, became an extension of the user's hands as they worked together with his head and heart. The tool and the worker fashioned wood with ease and expertise. The "skree-scrape" sound of this keen-edged tool moving with the wood grain should not be forgotten.

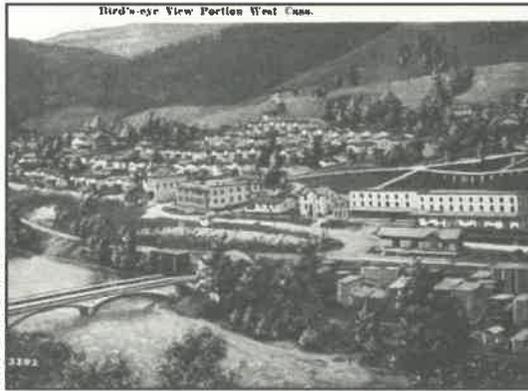
So if you see a drawknife offered at auction, pick it up and admire its simple ingenuity. Then maybe you should buy it and learn to use it.

*Other tools mentioned here were discussed in past issues of GOLDENSEAL, the froe in Spring 1992 and the shaving horse in Summer 1993. We welcome other essays on the tools of mountain living.—ed.*

# GOLDENSEAL ROAD TRIP III

2 Great Days \* October 11 - 12, 1996 \* 9 Counties \* History, People & Places

Goldenseal hits the road again this fall with a big bus trip. We invite you to tour central West Virginia and the Greenbrier Valley, visiting the sites of some of GOLDENSEAL's best stories:



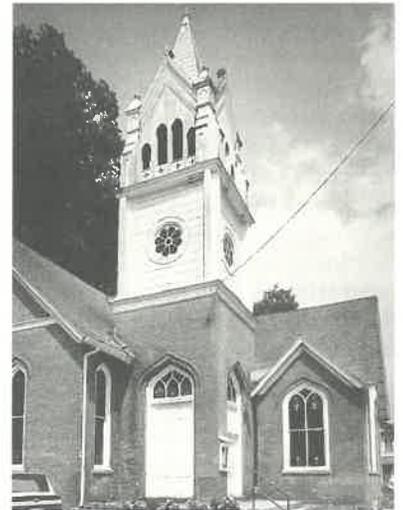
STATE ARCHIVES

Postcard view of Cass.

- \*The Elk River town of Sutton & Landmark Studio
- \*The Swiss community of Helvetia, with lunch served by the Hutte Restaurant
- \*Durbin, the historic timber boom town
- \*Overnight in the restored lumber company houses at Cass, with robust country meals, evening entertainment & town tour
- \*Marlinton, with a visit to the colorful *Pocahontas Times*
- \*Saturday lunch in Hillsboro
- \*Backstairs tour of The Greenbrier

Our trip leaves Charleston Friday morning, October 11, heading up Elk River on our way to a two-day adventure in the real West Virginia.

The idea is to bring the pages of GOLDENSEAL alive, and we will visit along the way with people and places from past issues and with local freelancers.



MICHAEL KELLER

Sutton's Landmark Studio.

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Cost per person for double occupancy \$145

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Cost per person for single occupancy/suite \$150\*

(\*Single rooms are in short supply. We recommend double occupancy or the single occupancy/suite arrangement for compatible singles. The suites give each person a private room, with the two rooms opening off each other.)

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**The fine print:** GOLDENSEAL assumes no responsibility for damage, injury, loss, accident, delay or inconvenience from whatever cause during this trip, nor for damage or theft to cars parked during the trip. We reserve the right to change the tour itinerary if necessary, or to cancel the trip due to conditions beyond our control (including insufficient participation), with full refund in the case of cancellation.

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# Our Writers and Photographers

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**JEAN BATTLO** was born in Kimball and still makes her home in that McDowell County community. She is a teacher, poet and playwright, and has had numerous works produced by professional and community theater companies. Her most recent book is *Behold The Man*, a Mountain State Press publication about the life of Jesus. Jean's last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Summer 1994.

**LEONA G. BROWN** was born in Fayette County and now lives in Raleigh County not so far from Grandview, the subject of her story in this issue. A member of the New River Gwinn family, she has written a book on family history and published numerous articles. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 1995.

**SHARI BROWN** lives in Charleston. She attended her first Brown family reunion this past year with her husband, the grandson of Virgil and Lydda Morris Brown. Shari is pursuing a degree in education, something she started 25 years ago but put off to raise two sons. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL and her first published piece.

**JAMES E. CASTO**, a native of Huntington, is associate editor of the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch*, a prolific freelance writer, and a commentator on West Virginia Public Radio. He is the author of *Huntington: An Illustrated History* and *Towboat on the Ohio*, the latter a University Press of Kentucky publication. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 1995.

**GREG CLARK** is photo preservation archivist for the Division of Culture and History.

**RICHARD S. HARTLEY**, born and raised in Monongalia County, is extension agent for Ritchie County. His interests include heritage education and colonial crafts, and he demonstrates coopering at Fort New Salem with his son David. He has written several of GOLDENSEAL's *Tools of Mountain Living* columns, his last one appearing in Summer 1993.

**LOUIS E. KEEFER** is a native of Wheeling. He was educated at Morris Harvey College and West Virginia University. A retired planning consultant, Louis has written for magazines and professional journals. He has written three books, the most recent *Shangri-La For Wounded Soldiers: The Greenbrier As A World War II Army Hospital*, and is now at work on a fourth. He is a regular contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

**MICHAEL KELLER** is Chief of Photographic Services for the Division of Culture and History.

**GERALD MILNES** works for the Augusta Heritage Center at Davis & Elkins College. A native of Pennsylvania, Gerry has written and photographed numerous stories for GOLDENSEAL, including articles on heirloom vegetables, traditional crafts and music, and holiday customs. He is a fine old-time musician and the author of the children's book, *Granny Will Your Dog Bite and Other Mountain Rhymes*. His last GOLDENSEAL article appeared in Winter 1995.

**RON RITTENHOUSE**, a Mannington native, is chief photographer for the Morgantown *Dominion Post*. He is a member of the National Press Photographers Association and other professional organizations. A collector of old cameras and photographs, Ron has contributed to GOLDENSEAL since 1980. His last work appeared in Fall 1995.

**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 a recent grandmother herself. She moved to Preston County in 1988 to restore her husband's 200-year-old homeplace. Peggy still works on the old 15-room house, gardens, writes poetry, quilts and sews. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1995.

**ROBERT TABSCOTT**, a native of Mullens and the grandson of a C&O locomotive engineer, is an ordained Presbyterian minister. He attended William and Mary College and graduated from Concord College in 1959. His graduate degree from Union Seminary in Richmond is in American Studies. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

**DANNY WILLIAMS**, a native of Wayne County now living at Bloomingrose, is a former folk arts specialist for the Division of Culture and History. He holds an M.A. in English from WVU, has taught part-time at several colleges, and teaches music to private students as well. Danny is a regular contributor to GOLDENSEAL, his last contribution appearing in Winter 1995.

## Appalachian Writers Sought

*Now and Then: The Appalachian Magazine* covers a lot of territory in the three issues published each year, including frequent articles on West Virginia. Wheeling was featured in a big way in the winter 1995 issue. The city's Oglebay Winter Festival of Lights, one of the largest winter light shows in the country, was the cover story.

The magazine is the work of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University. Its editors are always looking for "submissions of poetry, fiction, articles, personal essays, graphics and photographs concerned with Appalachian life, past and present," according to the current issue.

Recently a call went out for writers to address

particular subjects of regional interest. For example, *Now and Then* is putting together an issue on religion in Appalachia for the upcoming winter magazine. The issue will explore various ways "in which religion has shaped Appalachia and Appalachia has shaped religion." The deadline for the "Religion in Appalachia" issue is July 1. The editors remind writers interested in contributing to this issue to keep in mind that *Now and Then* cannot accept articles attempting to convert people to individual religious beliefs.

For complete writers guidelines write to *Now and Then*, Box 70556, Johnson City, TN 37614; or call (423)929-5348.

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## Inside Goldenseal

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Page 17 - The Browns are an old and distinguished Mountain State family with deep roots in Preston County. They begin their second century of family get-togethers with this year's reunion.

Page 24 - Between reunions the Browns worked hard for everything they had. Our author follows one family's history along the ridges of Marion County.

Page 44 - Wayne Countians have been going to the pool at Dreamland for more than 70 years. You can bet they will be back again this summer.

Page 50 - The Booger Man was the scariest thing imaginable to the old mountain people, and that's what they called Mack, Day. He was a revenuer whose name is still recalled in McDowell County.

Page 27 - Fox chasing is an old and honored sport in the hills of West Virginia. Hoy Saville of Hardy County has taken part for most of his 83 years.

Page 58 - Summer camp has been an annual ritual for many West Virginia children. Camp Shaw-Mi-Del-Eca was one of the best for boys.

Page 34 - Grandview has long been a favorite sightseeing spot, first as a state park and now part of a national park. Before that, the grand view belonged only to the Carpers.

Page 9 - There will be big doings at Big Bend in July to honor the world's most famous Steel-Driving Man. Our cover story reviews the John Henry legend.

