Fall 1997 • WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL LIFE • $3.95

Goldenseal

Harvest Time

Fiddler Clark Kessinger

Agnes Nestor at 98

Manheim

From The Editor: Fieldwork, Photos & Fundraising

Fall is upon us. For me, this is a glorious time of year with mild temperatures, rich colors, and good food. It also is a time to look back on the summer and plan for the cold winter months ahead. Those of us at GOLDENSEAL spent most of the summer preparing this fall issue for you — we hope you like it! We are also planning ahead for our winter issue, and making preparations for our annual fall subscription drive.

With this, my second issue as editor, I had the pleasure of working during (somewhat) normal business hours and concentrating my full attention on bringing you the finest possible magazine. From this vantage point, I am even more impressed by the GOLDENSEAL staff, our freelance contributors, and the subjects themselves. Photographer Michael Keller and I traveled to a number of our story locations in search of images for this issue and we were pleased to find not only interesting photo subjects, but friendly, vibrant, and generous people everywhere we went.

Author Gene Bailey of Mercer County took us over the back roads of the Pisgah community (that's "Pisgee") to visit his grandparents' homeplace and introduce us to farmer Hugh Gooch. Gene and Hugh go back a long way. They both recall the harvest and threshing crews of the 1930's, and they are anxious to talk about it. Hugh still works in the fields and gave us a tour of his vintage and modern farming machinery.

A few days later, Michael Keller took his camera to Mason County for the West Virginia State Farm Museum's Pioneer Days and Wheat Harvest. While there, he was able to photograph a demonstration of old-time harvesting methods, including the impressive shot of a grain cradle in use which appears on the cover of this issue.

Michael and I made the long trek to Preston County a week or so later. Former Manheim residents Bunny and Naomi (that's "Naomah") Brutto treated us like old friends, pulling out old pictures, and laughing about old times. They led us down the Cheat River from Kingwood to the dusty remains of Manheim. There we met up with another former Manheim resident, local historian Joyce Ayersman who pointed out some important landmarks. We all gathered again later in the day at Joyce's restaurant and mini-mart outside Rowlesburg where Joyce brought out several photo albums brimming with old postcards and pictures of Manheim and the surrounding communities.

MICHAEL KELLER

Editor John Lilly with Bunny and Naomi Brutto.

The next morning, we retraced author Melissa Ireland's steps up the side of a shady hill in Tucker County, past the "rain rock," to the home of Agnes Nestor. Soon to be 98 years young, Agnes is as spry and fascinating as Melissa's manuscript led us to believe. After visiting for an hour or so in her yard — and shooing pesky gnats away from each other's faces — Agnes brought out a small bundle of family photos. We viewed and discussed these pictures for a while, then Michael and I selected a few and got ready to go. Agnes asked us to wait a minute and she disappeared back into the house. She returned with another bundle of photos, somewhat larger and a good deal older than the first. We repeated the process with these pictures and once again got up to go. Again, she asked us to wait a minute, disappeared into the house, and re-emerged with an even larger, even older bundle of precious family photos. Our eyes bulging, we explored this trove of memories dating back to the turn of the century. We said our good-byes for a third time, only to watch Agnes disappear into the house again. She came back through the door slowly, cradling a small, hand-tooled, leatherbound case. It contained, in a golden frame, a daguerreotype photo of her mother as a child taken in 1875. "I'd like this back," she said, as she carefully passed the case to me. I was very moved. (See page 40.)

Closer to home, the Kessinger family shared with us a wealth of family heirlooms and images of fiddling legend Clark Kessinger. His widow and second wife, Rosie, was a treat, a truly unique individual with some amazing stories to tell. Perhaps the biggest thrill for me in working on the Kessinger story, however, was the discovery of the recently-released videotape of Clark performing in 1966. I never had the experience of seeing Clark Kessinger play while he was alive. Seeing this videotape of his performance, however, convinced me that all the superlatives used by our writers to describe Clark and his music are nothing more than the honest truth. What a fiddler! (See page 69 for video information.)

Our winter issue will include more of West Virginia's best stories including Greek families of northern West Virginia, a history of black coal miners in McDowell County, a profile of gospel music great Ethel Caffie-Austin, Ohio River stories from members of the Army Corps of Engineers, the rise and fiery fall of the Ely-Thomas sawmill in Nicholas County, a visit with mountain cookbook writer Anna Lee Terry, a piece on butter churning, and several holiday features.

I'm learning a lot. I'm learning that a lot goes into each issue of GOLDENSEAL! Plenty of research, travel, talent, memories, and emotion. My hat is off, once again, to my predecessors for the 90-some fine issues they put out before me. I hope you feel, as I do, that the magazine is still on track and continuing in the great tradition they established.

To receive the next four issues of GOLDENSEAL, all you need to do is subscribe. We do the rest. In a few weeks, we will send you our annual fall subscription mailing to ask for your support. Please be on the lookout for it.

In the meantime, sit back, put your feet up, and enjoy the latest issue of your favorite magazine.

—John Lilly

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Goldenseal

Volume 23, Number 3 Fall 1997

COVER: Woody Mace of Point Pleasant, a volunteer at the West Virginia State Farm Museum, demonstrates at the museum's recent Pioneer Days and Wheat Harvest. Harvesting with a grain cradle is hard work, but it was the only way to get the job done before the advent of mechanization. See story on page 49. Photo by Michael Keller.

PHOTOS: Greg Clark, Dave Cruise, Jean-Philippe Cyprès, Carl Fleischhauer, Mike Furbee, Jerry Galyean, Frank P. Herrera, Jan's Studio, Michael Keller, John Runner, Gerald S. Ratliff, L. Wayne Sheets, Phil Swango

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.

Draft Animals

July 15, 1997
Grafton, West Virginia
Editor:
I enjoyed the story about draft animals in the summer edition. Long ago all of the hill streets in Grafton were paved with brick

A Grafton street, paved with horses in mind.

that had a slanted surface and were laid with the lip at the top so that the toe on the horse's shoe could get a hold. Today there is only one short street that is still paved that way.
Sincerely,
William D. Fisher

Gravely Tractor Comments

June 27, 1997
Cross Lanes, West Virginia
Editor:
John Marra's "Ben Gravely's Garden Tractor" (Summer 1997) brought back memories of my pre-war experiences at that factory. I worked in the stockroom beginning at 40 cents an hour in mid-1939 and had advanced to 50 cents upon leaving in late 1941. John's description of D. Ray Hall's spending habits is quite accurate. He went on an annual hunting trip with some of the workmen. Early the following Monday morning he would pay his share — right to the penny, like $19.87.

The machine shop operations were located mainly in the bays on the Charles Street side of the building. This arrangement was a scene from the 1850's, overhead drive shafts the full building length with their pulleys, and flat belts dropping down to power each individual machine. A long wooden handle engaging the overhead clutches was within easy reach of the operator for starting and stopping his lathe, drill press, etc. I never heard of any injuries from the belt but today that layout would send OSHA into orbit.

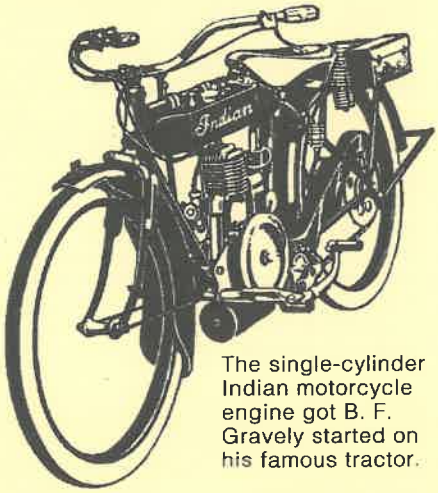
A few more "modern" machines had their own motor power and encroached upon the assembly line floor space, located on the railroad side. Among these were the Fellows gear shapers, at least one milling machine, and an automatic screw machine.

Among my duties was receiving materials and keeping the machine shop supplied with castings and steel for in-house machining. Just about everything was machined in-house. Some exceptions were the carburetor, magneto, bearings, rubber parts (tires), spark plugs, springs, piston rings, poppet valves, and the muffler. However a welded elbow connection was needed to fit the muffler to the exhaust outlet. Even some if not all bolts and nuts were produced at Dunbar.

My second duty was staging parts for the assembly line. During my time there the weekly production of the two-wheel model L tractor seldom varied from 50 units. ...On a few occasions parts shortages would prevent completion of perhaps as many as a half dozen tractors, but these always went out early the following week. There was only one production run of the single-wheel D model during my stay there, and that was for 75 machines. I can't recall the production schedule for accessories such as the rotary plow and sickle bar mower.

The rotary mower was not to arrive on the lawn scene for several years but Gravely ingenuity had been ahead of its time. The world's first rotary mower was actually built at Dunbar in the early '30's and tested in the fields adjoining the factory. Apparently the blade had little if any shielding and much of Dunbar was cow pasture at that time. After a few encounters of the messy kind the unit was wheeled back into the factory as an idea better forgotten.
Sincerely,
Dale Parsons

July 22, 1997
Charleston, West Virginia
Editor:
I just want to compliment John L. Marra for his fine article about Ben Gravely and the Gravely



The single-cylinder Indian motorcycle engine got B. F. Gravely started on his famous tractor.

motor plow in the Summer 1997 issue of GOLDENSEAL.

The story was of particular interest to me because my father, Bernard E. ("Bee") Andre was the Indian motorcycle dealer in Charleston and he and E. D. Doney provided the little single cylinder Indian motorcycle motor that Ben Gravely successfully utilized in his remarkable invention!

About 15 years ago I visited Mr. Gravely's daughter, Louise Gravely Eden, in Pomeroy, Ohio, and realized that there was a story of great interest waiting to be told but I never got around to it. I am sure glad John Marra did!

In this age of electronic marvels and robots that roam the deserts of Mars it is hard for us to appreciate a Gravely motor plow but in 1915 it was on the leading edge of technology and the answer to many a small farmer's prayers.

GOLDENSEAL has once again served an important role in preserving the history of West Virginia!

Keep up the good work.
Richard A. Andre

July 21, 1997
Stouchsburg, Pennsylvania
Editor:
During hectic preparations for your summer issue, you "felt like Henry Kissinger in a pick-up truck," but you certainly delivered the goods.

My grandfather, Clarence B. ("Geed") Kline, bought a second-hand Gravely Model L in 1954, with Dunbar-built attachments: lawn roller, cultivator, reel mower, sickle mower, and a sulky. A salesman who came to his general store and post office in Berne, Pennsylvania (about 17 miles north of Reading in Berks County), recommended the Gravely because soldiers used them to clear airstrips in the Philippine Islands during World War II, corresponding to the 1941 to 1945 entry in your Gravely chronology.

We still use every one of those original attachments, plus a 1973 Super Convertible 7.6 tractor and a 1989 Professional 16 2-wheel tractor powered by a Kohler Magnum engine, with a 50" direct-mount rotary mower. What those tractors do with a 28" Gravely snow blower is a sight to behold.

John Marra's article about B. F. Gravely, his photography, his inventions, and his tractors is the best I've read. After the Gravely Network Mow-In at Dunbar of July 19, a lot of us went to the West Virginia State Farm Museum and enjoyed that remarkable "living memorial to the farmer"

George Bird Remembered

We learned from Paul Gartner's article in the Summer 1997 GOLDENSEAL ("Elmer Bird: The Banjo Man From Turkey Creek") that Elmer's talented cousin George Bird was among the many West Virginians to die in service during World War II. We noticed, however, that George's name was not inscribed on the Veterans War Memorial, located in the Capitol Complex adjacent to the GOLDENSEAL office. We looked into the situation, and forwarded the necessary paperwork to the Bird family. In late June, Elmer, his wife Beulah, and George Bird, Jr., met in our offices with Pat Workman from the West Virginia Veterans Memorial Commission. We are pleased to report that George's name will be added to the Memorial later this year. — ed.

June 25, 1997
Charleston, West Virginia
Editor:
It was a pleasure meeting the Elmer Bird family and talking with them about George Bird. I am glad we could work together, and get the necessary information, to verify his state residency and his military status.

I have truly enjoyed the GOLDENSEAL magazine. I can imagine that folks that live away in other states do get homesick for these West Virginia hills, when they read the very human articles that appear in GOLDENSEAL.

I especially enjoyed the article on the Tuskegee airmen. Several people have come in to inquire about black soldiers, and have asked me about the famous airmen.

George Bird and his banjo in 1942.

Again, many thanks to you for your interest in this matter. You were the force that brought another fallen soldier home. They were forever young, forever loved, and forever missed.
With warmest regards,
Pat Workman
West Virginia Veterans Memorial Commission

and to the Gravely family.

My wife, Beverly, and I live 25 miles east of Hershey and 25 miles north of Lancaster. Local Amish and Mennonite farmers use draft horses, so we enjoyed your "Pull and Get It" articles, too.

Pastor Philip K. Smith

"Steam Nut" Checks In

July 21, 1997
Wenatchee, Washington
Editor:

That steam tractor shown on page 61 of the Summer 1997 GOLDENSEAL ("Stonewall Jackson Jubilee") looks like it might be an early model of a "Case," or possibly one of many other steam tractors of that period. The J. J. Case Company of Racine, Wisconsin, made more steam tractors than any other company, and also built a Case automobile. Their tractors were fired mostly with wood and a few with coal, and a few with "flax straw" as this had the most heat in it.

MIKE FURBEE

These tractors were used mostly for threshing grain, but also used for plowing and harrowing plowed land or even sawing wood. ...The early models, like the one in GOLDENSEAL, were stationary rigs and had to be pulled from place to place. And some of them, like the one in GOLDENSEAL, had a screen over the top of the smokestack to prevent live sparks from starting fire. These were called "Spark Stacks" and the stack itself is a funnel stack.

Today there are hundreds of these old engines of all kinds to be found at threshing bees and engine shows, all over the United States and parts of Canada, England, Hawaii, Australia, and New Zealand. Owners of these antique tractors sell and trade them like used cars, and sometimes it takes two or three years of searching to find parts to restore some rare type of engine. Sometimes a good machinist can make a part.

Some of the larger engine shows also have a short line railroad with a steam locomotive as part of the show and many types of gas tractors and stationary gas engines are displayed at these shows. There used to be one every year at Spencer's Mountain, West Virginia. There's much more news about these old engines, but you have to be a dedicated old engine nut to know and understand all the details.

Engineers and Engines and *Iron Man's Magazine* are two good publications that keep up with national news about old engines of all kinds. I've been a steam nut all my life (including steamboat). When I was a kid and was hoeing weeds, and heard a threshing rig coming, I was ready to drop my hoe and follow it.

Today at past 80 years, I haven't changed a bit. "Back into the belt and let's get this wheat threshed."

Walt Thayer

A steam engine very similar to the one in the photo was in place over the 4th of July weekend in Ripley for the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair. They used it to power a grinder and produced a mountain of freshly milled cornmeal, pausing every so often to let out a loud, hearty whistle. We hope you enjoy our harvest and threshing piece in this issue. Thanks for writing.—ed.

1950 Flood Revisited

April 23, 1997
Elkins, West Virginia
Editor:

"Recalling the Flood of 1950," GOLDENSEAL Spring 1997 — our Mountaineer Amateur Radio Club was on its annual field day exercise in Marion County when we got a call that emergency radio communications were needed at West Union as a result of the flooding there that weekend. Actually our club was out that weekend for the purpose of testing our capability of being able to furnish communications in an emergency.

This meant setting up the necessary antennas and emergency generators to furnish power for our equipment. Two of us left the field day site early on Sunday morning for West Union only to get as far as Salem as Route 50 was closed west of there. We had an airplane overhead that we were in radio contact with and it was able to spot backroads for us and we were able to make it to West Union, only to find out by then that some communications had been restored and our services would not be needed. By then Route 50 East was now open so we started back to Clarksburg, our home location.

The one thing I remember, and for many years after that, when I traveled that part of Route 50 between West Union and Smithburg was the debris hanging from the power pole cross arms that were about 16 feet or more above the road bed. It was hard to imagine that the water had been that deep over the road

only a few hours before.
Yours truly,
Robert D. Hough

June 29, 1997
Parkersburg, West Virginia
Editor:
I don't believe it is generally known that the big Thanksgiving snow storm of 1950 ("More Bad Weather: The Big Snow of 1950," GOLDENSEAL Spring 1997) was not generally widespread over the eastern United States. As an example, my sister, Eleanor, was teaching in Maryland at the time near Washington, D.C. She came home for the holiday on Wednesday night and by Sunday, no one could get from West Milford to the B&O station in Clarksburg. She sent a telegram to the principal of her school telling him she was snowbound and would return as soon as possible.

When she got back to school the next week, she was greeted with skepticism and comments such as, "You extended your vacation, there was no snow here," or, "We heard nothing about any big storms anywhere," (before the days of much TV coverage).

She took it in good humor and replied, "Just wait until I get some of the pictures we took." One picture showed her standing on our walkway with her arm extended level with the top of the snow. She was about five feet tall, (hence the name, "Tiny Tot"). Needless to say, the staff of her school was amazed.

I enjoy your fine magazine and the interesting stories about the people of West Virginia.
Sincerely,
William E. Harris

Miss Alice

March 28, 1997
Albany, Ohio
Editor:
In the Spring 1997 issue of GOLDENSEAL the article that Alice C. Holstein told of the area around Winifrede was delightful ("According to Miss Alice: A Farm Girl Recalls Coal Town Life"). I have been there. My parents were William (Crack) and Rachel Williams Thompson.

I do not know if Miss Alice knew them or not, but I do know that she knew the Goldie and Curt Gay family. Goldie was my father's sister.

We lived in Winifrede from 1919 until 1925. My dad was in the Blair Mountain March along with his brother Jess Thompson. When federal troops were brought into the fray, they left their guns in a hollow tree and walked back to Winifrede.

We were thrown out of our house as the result of my dad's union activities. A lovely lady named Laura Tincher took us in and gave us a place. She owned her own land.

Miss Alice, at right, in 1922.

In 1925 we moved to Winifrede Junction where Dad had a job across the Kanawha River at a construction site. Later Dad worked in a small coal mine for Edward McConihay. Our schoolhouse was in a hollow above where we lived and our young lovely teacher was Miss Pearl Eskins. We moved to Coalburg in 1927 where Dad had a better job.

I do want Miss Alice to know the article brought back many memories. I really enjoyed it. I do not know her personally, but I wish that I had known her long ago. Good luck, Miss Alice.
Sincerely yours,
Margaret Thompson Brooks

Happy Holidays!

Fall in West Virginia finds folks getting ready for winter, and looking forward to the holidays. After Thanksgiving, Christmas is just around the corner. It's the time of year we all scramble to find special holiday gift ideas for friends and family.

Simplify your shopping by giving the gift of GOLDENSEAL.

Sixteen dollars buys a year's worth of good reading. GOLDENSEAL brings out the best of the Mountain State, stories direct from the recollections of living West Virginians, beautifully illustrated by the finest old and new photography. After more than two decades of publication, the stories just keep getting better. Stories that are just right for GOLDENSEAL, for you, and for those on your holiday gift list.

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Happy holidays!

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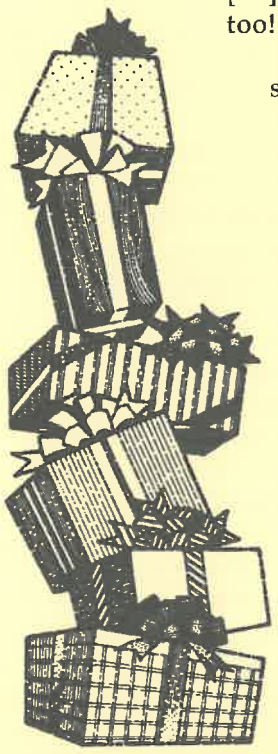

[ ] Add my name too! I enclose $16 for my own subscription.

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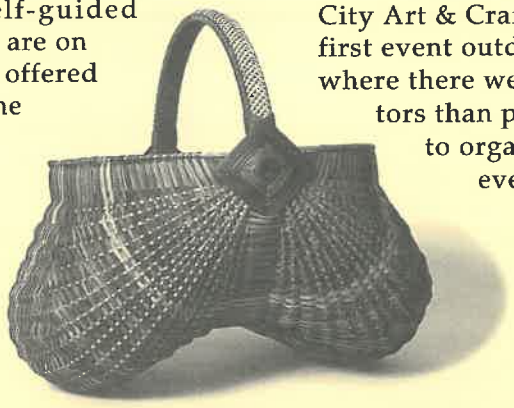
Current Programs • Events • Publications

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.

Fall Craft Events

On November 8 and 9, Saturday and Sunday, the Over the Mountain Studio Tour returns to Jefferson County. This unique craft tour is free and open to the public. It runs each day from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Artists in Shepherdstown, Kearneysville, Leetown, and Middleway open their workshops and studios to the public for the self-guided tour. Works are on display and offered for sale to the public. A variety of crafts are included such as basket making, paper making, quilting, pottery, painting, cabinet making, woodcarving, metal working, and stained glass. Those on the tour are also invited to visit the workshop of Irvan M. Groff, the creator of such whimsical toys as whimmy diddles and whirligigs.



Multicolored egg basket by Anne Bowers of Heirloom Baskets in Kearneysville. Photo by Frank P. Herrera.

The Over the Mountain Studio Tour is a great opportunity to talk with artists, see works in progress, and experience the beauty of fall in the northern Shenandoah Valley. For more information contact Over the Mountain Studio Tour, 38 Paynes Ford Road, Kearneysville, WV 25430; (304)725-4251.

Later in November, the popular Capital City Art & Craft Show celebrates its 30th anniversary at the Charleston Civic Center. The dates for this year's event are November 21 through 23, Friday through Sunday. More than 150 artists and craftspeople from West Virginia and surrounding states will exhibit their work. Craft demonstrations are also an important part of the event.

Thirty years ago, the Capital City Art & Craft Show held its first event outdoors in a field where there were "more exhibitors than people," according to organizers for the event. Today it is the state's largest indoor art and craft show. The non-juried show takes in decorative, whimsical, and functional crafts from watercolors, oil paintings, and stained glass to rocking chairs, jewelry, candles, and leather goods. Visitors will also find plenty of food on hand including funnel cakes, pickles, jellies, candies, maple syrup, and cakes.

The event is sponsored by the Kanawha City Lions Club. Tickets, available at the door, are $3 for adults, $2 for seniors, and $1 for children 12 and under. For more information contact the Capital City Art & Craft Show, P.O. Box 4373, Charleston, WV 25364; (304)345-4565.

Apple Butter Festival

Berkeley Springs will host its 24th annual Apple Butter Festival on October 11 and 12, Saturday and Sunday, with plenty of apple butter making, fresh-pressed cider, a Saturday morning parade, a country fair and craft show, music, and old-time games and contests.

The festival takes place on the streets of Berkeley Springs and in the town's historic park. The streets overflow with homemade canned goods, mountain cooking, and antiques; the park is filled with high quality traditional and contemporary crafts — more than 250 booths in all.

Concerts by Critton Hollow String Band, Dixieland Jazz Band, and New Liberty are scheduled along with the live theater of New World Theater Company. A turtle race, beard contest, egg toss, apple bake, and apple butter competition are also planned.

This year a new regional art show featuring glass, mosaics, and ceramics will be held at the Ice House Gallery. Admission is free to this traditional fall harvest celebration. The Apple Butter Festival is sponsored by the Berkeley Springs/Morgan County Chamber of Commerce. For more information contact them at 1-800-447-8797.

West Virginia Storytelling Festival

This October, historic Jackson's Mill will be the site of Voices of the Mountains, the second annual West Virginia Storytelling Festival. Nationally known tellers Ed Stivender and Mary Carter Smith will join 25 of the Mountain State's top tellers with tales and truths of life in Appalachia.West Virginia storytellers include Bonnie Collins, Cheryl Harshman, Joy Gilchrist, Paul Lepp, Noel W. Tenney, Colleen Anderson, and Kate Long.

The festival will kick-off on Friday, October 10, with a daytime educational program especially for students and teachers in grades three through six. Senior citizens' events will include a guided tour of the historic area and a demonstration "grind" in the restored Blaker's Mill. And, if all of this were not enough, a Saturday night extravaganza of ghost stories from around the world will be held in the barn arena.The festival concludes Sunday, October 12.

Tickets may be purchased in advance or at the gate. Weekend package rates that include housing in Jackson's Mill cottages, meals, and tickets to all events are available for groups of ten or more. For reservations and further information, contact Jackson's Mill Heritage Foundation, Route 1, Box 238, Jane Lew, WV 26378; phone (304)269-7091.

Augusta Fiddlers' Reunion

One of West Virginia's finest gatherings of traditional fiddlers takes place this October in Elkins as the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College presents its eighth annual Fiddlers' Reunion. Scheduled the weekend of October 24 through 26, the Reunion comes on the heels of a weeklong series of traditional music workshops on the college campus.

The Fiddlers' Reunion brings together dozens of old-time musicians, most of them older fiddlers from across the state, to visit, perform, jam, and play for square dancing. Last year, in an informal poll, organizers estimated that over two dozen fiddlers participated in the event and that their combined fiddling experience totalled over 1,200 years. The fiddlers ranged in age from 92-year-old Rosa Pheasant of Marion County to nine-year-old Jason Chewning of Randolph County.

This year, participants will include popular West Virginia master artists Melvin Wine, Woody Simmons, Glen Smith, Wilson Douglas, Norman Adams, and Lefty Shafer; in addition, organizer Gerry Milnes makes every effort to bring in several lesser-known fiddlers, many of whom seldom perform in public. Expected this year are Leland Hall, Elmer Nestor, Lester McCumbers, and many others. They will gather in the college's campus center starting at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 25.

Daytime activities are free to the public; call Augusta for complete schedule and evening ticket information. Their phone number is (304)637-1209.

Hinton Homes Tour

Every other year in Hinton, area residents open the doors to some unusual and elegant homes for the town's Christmas Homes Tour. This year, the special event takes place on Saturday, December 6, from 1:00 to 8:00 p.m.

A total of five homes are included on the tour, in addition to the Summers County Public Library and the First Presbyterian Church in Hinton. Participants can expect to spend three or four hours to complete the self-guided tour. It begins at the library which was built in 1921 and first served as a bank. Tickets may be purchased there for $10 each.

Driving is recommended in order to take in all the sites on Hinton's Christmas Homes Tour.

A map will be provided at the library for participants. Meals will also be offered — lunch at the Rivertowne Hotel and Restaurant and dinner at the Upper Crust Restaurant.

For more information on the Hinton Homes Tour contact the Summers County Public Library at (304)466-4490. All proceeds go to the Summers County library.

"Time Trail, West Virginia"

In September, "Time Trail, West Virginia" returns for its second season on West Virginia Public Radio scheduled through May, 1998. "Time Trail" is a two-minute program which airs weekdays during Morning Edition (6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.) and Dateline West Virginia (4:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.). It features events from that particular date in history. "Time Trail" is a collaborative program narrated and produced by Public Radio's Giles Snyder with research and collections assistance from the Archives and History section of the Division of Culture and History.

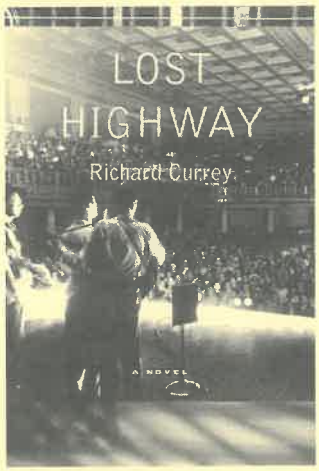
The programs cover a broad range of West Virginia history, including topics relating to African Americans, business, labor, military, politics, sports, and women. Interviews and historical audio clips from the West Virginia State Archives bring events of the last 40 years back to life.

The producers welcome comments and invite listeners to suggest topics for future programs. Also, schedules and transcripts of shows are available. Contact Archives and History, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300, or visit the "Time Trail" web site at: http://www.wvlc.wvnet.edu/history/timetrl.html

GoldenRod Writers Conference

The GoldenRod Writers Conference, which celebrates its 15th anniversary this year, is scheduled for October 17 through 19 in Morgantown. The theme for 1997 is "Mystery, History, and New Frontiers." The conference began as a showcase for the state's writers and was designed to provide them with one-day workshops by top writing instructors. In 15 years, the event has grown to three days; more than 1,200 writers have participated.

The GoldenRod conference is a program of West Virginia Writers, a statewide organization dedicated to helping Mountain State writers. The group sponsors a quarterly newsletter, two yearly writers conferences, an annual writing competition that awards more than $5,000 to state writers, regional literary activities, and the publication of several anthologies.



Author Richard Currey, a Parkersburg native, is a guest at the upcoming GoldenRod Writers Conference in Morgantown.

The 1997 GoldenRod conference includes workshops on mystery, literary fiction, novel, short story, drama, poetry, and creative non-fiction writing. It opens on October 16 with an 8:00 p.m. performance of Appalachian music by Rob Shaw and a reading by novelist Richard Currey.

Currey, a native of Parkersburg, is the author of *Lost Highway*, the fictional story of a gifted country musician and songwriter from West Virginia. His other works include *Fatal Light*, which was accorded a special citation from the Ernest Hemingway Foundation, and *Wars of Heaven*, a collection of southern mountain stories. Richard Currey's appearance at the GoldenRod Conference kicks off a two-week book signing tour in West Virginia.

The Morgantown conference features many outstanding West Virginia writers. Workshop leaders, in addition to Currey, include Marshall University English Professor Danny Fulks, dramatist Joseph McCabe, West Virginia Poet Laureate Irene McKinney, literary history scholar Phyllis Moore, folk singer and songwriter Rob Shaw, fiction editors Michael Seidman and Phil Bufithis, *Charleston Gazette* nature columnist Scott Shalaway, poet Barbara Smith and others. Gerald Swick of Clarksburg will bring a new workshop to the conference titled, "Writing the Civil War and Selling the Civil War."

Registration for the 1997 GoldenRod Writers Conference is $75 for three days and includes three receptions, daily refreshments, and writers' resource information. Those who register by September 30 will receive a $10 discount. A Saturday-only rate of $45 is also available. A $25 rate applies to Friday and Sunday only.

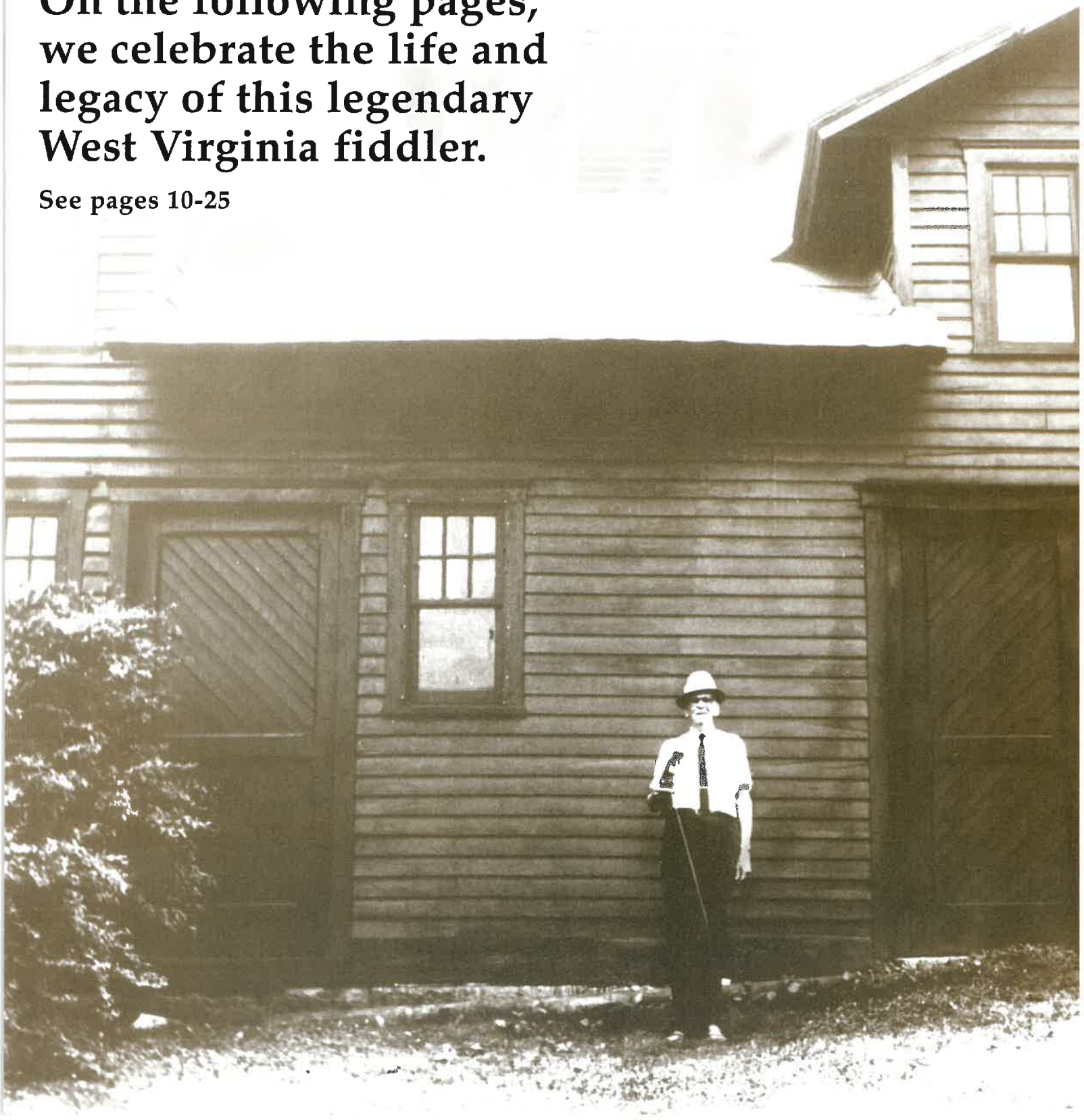
To register contact George M. Lies, Director, GoldenRod Writers Conference, 219 Kingwood Street, Morgantown, WV 26505; or call Linda Christen, registrar, (304)594-2494.

GOLDENSEAL Special Report

Clark Kessinger

On the following pages, we celebrate the life and legacy of this legendary West Virginia fiddler.

See pages 10-25



Clark Kessinger

Pure Fiddling

By Charles Wolfe

In the summers of the late 1960's, the great Southern fiddle contests found themselves awash in new fans. Thousands of young enthusiasts, caught up in the throes of the folk music revival, hitchhiked and drove their way into the humid Southern summers bound for festivals in places like Union Grove, Pulaski, Richwood, Pomeroy, even up in Weiser, Idaho.

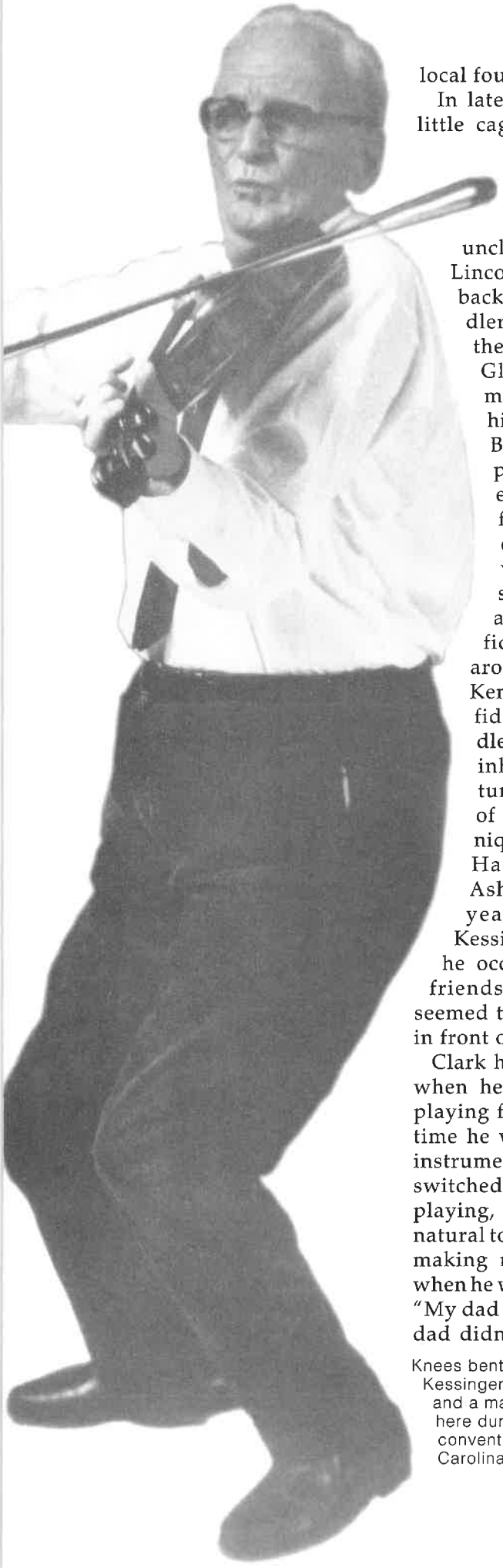
It was an age of rediscovery, and the young fans searched out and coaxed into playing musicians from Eck Robertson to Arthur Smith to Clayton McMichen. But one of the few veterans who could really hold his own at the contests, who needed no patronizing nor special consideration, was a lively, lanky fiddler who wore a small-brimmed hat. He loved to play, and was a master showman: he would shake his hips, crouch like a batter, dance a little, and occasionally let out a spontaneous whoop. He ripped into a tune like a hungry man faced with a plate of fried chicken. He played "Ragtime Annie" with a feverish tempo and launched into "Sally Ann Johnson" in a way that dared anybody to keep up.

People who had heard his old records from the 1920's swore that, unlike the other resurrected fiddlers of those summers, he was actually playing better than he had then. He didn't have to be coaxed out of retirement; he roared out of it. By 1971, many of his fans had no qualms about using superlatives. "He is the greatest old-time fiddler around today," announced Rounder Records founders Ken Irwin, Bill Nowlin, and Marion Leighton after hearing him. Many agreed, and few in those days didn't know his name: Clark Kessinger.

He ripped into a tune like a hungry man faced with a plate of fried chicken.

His was pure fiddling, with no real concessions to popular taste. In the 70-plus sides he recorded for the old Brunswick company between 1928 and 1930, and the five LP's he made during his comeback in the 1960's, he had no novelty numbers, no funny vocals, no cute trick playing, no harmony singing. Except for a few square dance calls on his first records, it was all pure Kessinger; if you didn't like fiddling, it wasn't your music.

He came by it honestly. He grew up in rugged Lincoln County, south of Charleston, across the Kanawha River. "I was born in Kanawha County, Charleston, right out of Charleston, South Hills, and I was raised there," he recalled in 1971. "I stayed up around Boone County as much as I did around Kanawha. We lived around Lincoln County when I was a boy. When I was about ten years old we moved there. We moved back to Charleston then. South Hills that is. I was born the 27th of July 1896. I was the youngest boy." Clark's father spent most of his time working as a molder in a



local foundry, making wheels.

In later years, Kessinger was a little cagey about just where he learned his fiddling. He admitted that "my great-grandfather fiddled. Also my great uncle on my mother's side, in Lincoln County. That was way back." He admired local fiddlers like George Dillons and the brothers Dave and Bob Glens. "One played slow music and the other played hillbilly (country music)." But probably his most important mentor was the legendary Ed Haley, the blind fiddler who never recorded commercially but whom many today consider perhaps the finest of all West Virginia-Kentucky fiddlers. "He was from over around Logan, close to the Kentucky line. He was a great fiddler, he was a smooth fiddler." Young Clark certainly inherited some of Haley's tunes, and most likely some of his unusual bowing technique. For much of his life Haley stayed around the Ashland area, and in later years openly admired Kessinger's playing — though he occasionally complained to friends that Kessinger always seemed to shy away from playing in front of him.

Clark had started playing music when he was only five and was playing for country dances by the time he was ten. Though his first instrument was the banjo, he later switched to violin. "I just started playing, not to learn it. Just come natural to me." His first attempts at making money with music came when he was seven, in local saloons. "My dad used to take me there. My dad didn't drink; he used to take me there just to make money. I'd get ten or 15 dollars a night, more than he made in a week, back in them times. The people who came in...throwing money at me. I used to dance, why I'd get out there and dance a little bit. That was quite a thing...I'd play and dance, carry on just a little bit." Ironically, young Clark didn't even own his own fiddle through all this; he would borrow his brother-in-law's, or "someone would just hand me one."

When America entered World War I, Kessinger was 21, and he found himself serving a stint in the Army. By the time he got back to West Virginia he was starting to get a serious reputation for his fiddling. French Mitchell, a well-known fiddler from the area, recalled that by the early 1920's, he was known throughout the Kanawha Valley as a fierce competitor in local fiddling contests. At one such event, at Point Pleasant, Mitchell recalled that many of the contestants who had signed up suddenly dropped out when they learned that Kessinger was playing.

By this time he had started performing a lot with the son of his brother Charles, Luches "Luke" Kessinger (1906-1944). Nine years younger than Clark, Luke lived in Charleston and South Charleston. Unlike a lot of the older West Virginia fiddlers, Clark Kessinger did not like to play solo; he enjoyed a guitar accompaniment and especially liked Luke's playing. "He played it clear, clear as he could be. That's what I liked about him. He was right there with the notes...every note that I hit, why he'd hit 'em. He didn't slack down on you, he didn't speed up or nothing. Well, we were used to one another. We used to have a time playing around in different places. Play for nothing. Never get no money out of it."

The pair also got their own radio show on the new station in Charleston, WOBU, when it opened in October 1927. The station was not all that powerful at first, but Kanawha

Knees bent and fingers flying, Clark Kessinger was a consummate musician and a master showman. He is pictured here during a 1960's fiddlers convention in Union Grove, North Carolina. Photo by Jerry Galyean.

County, full of factory towns and coal camps, could boast of around 10,000 radios, more than any other county in the state. The people in the area who had somehow missed Kessinger at fiddling contests and dances now had their chance to hear and admire him.

Next came the single most important event in the career of Clark and Luke: in February 1928 a major league recording company set up shop in Ashland, Kentucky, about 40 miles from Charleston. The company was Brunswick-Balke-Collender, which released records on the Brunswick and Vocalion labels. In charge of the activity was James O'Keefe, accompanied by Richard Voynow, a former piano player on some of jazz man Bix Beiderbecke's sessions.

The Kessingers were asked to report at 9:30 a.m. on February 11. O'Keefe's roster was short on fiddlers, and he was interested to hear the Clark Kessinger everyone in the area was talking about. He also had a specific problem he hoped the Kessingers could solve. Archrival Columbia had just issued a hot new seller which was threatening to become the biggest hit of 1928: an instrumental by a Mississippi fiddle band called the Leake County Revelers and entitled "Wednesday Night Waltz."

O'Keefe had sent a copy of the Columbia hit to Clark Kessinger and asked him to work up a version — of both sides. It was no problem for Kessinger, who loved waltzes anyway, and he and Luke added it to the session. It became Brunswick 220, the first Kessinger recording. (It was O'Keefe, incidentally, who decided to name the pair the "Kessinger Brothers" because "it just sounded better.") It took off about as fast as the Columbia original, and soon Brunswick had a best-seller on its hands. In fact, it became the Kessinger Brothers' most popular record. "We'd have made a fortune if they'd paid us royalties," Kessinger said. There was no fortune, but its success did guarantee the Kessingers a recording career, and a chance to preserve some of the South's best fiddling.

Many of the early fiddle records released by the companies were designed for a practical purpose: square dancing. To that end, they were festooned with dance calls, sometimes with the caller right up

In 1964, Clark Kessinger roared out of retirement and made a big splash at fiddlers conventions such as the one held annually in Galax, Virginia. Young fiddle enthusiasts were especially taken with Clark's impressive style and infectious personality. Photo by Jerry Galyean.

Possibly the earliest known photo of Clark Kessinger, this portrait shows him with a fiddle in 1912 on the steps of the family's home. Other family members are unidentified. Photo courtesy of Rosie Kessinger.

in the mike, often frustrating listeners who were trying to appreciate the fiddling. On about half the Kessinger sides from this first session, a caller named Ernest Legg was brought in. Fortunately, Legg was a local man who had experience doing square dances with the Kessingers, and his calls did not distract all that much from the music. Indeed, they even added to the effect. Legg almost sang his calls, using a laid-back mountain tenor and long, cascading, internally rhymed phrases that actually echoed Kessinger's bowing patterns. Of the first 12 Brunswick sides, all but two featured calls on at least one of the sides. Soon the Brunswick bosses figured out that Kessinger's fiddling was attractive on its own terms and did not need to be marketed as a means to an end. After this first session, there were no more recordings using a caller.

The Kessingers' second release was also a best-seller: it was a fine reading of "Turkey in the Straw" backed with the first commercial record of a tune that would become a standard, "Hell Among the Yearlings." Kessinger's arrangement featured a much-copied technique where he brushes the string with his forefinger, creating a subdued pizzicato effect.

Soon Brunswick had a best-seller on its hands.

Though these and future records would carry his name and his music across the country, Kessinger didn't know that at the time. He was working hard at a day job as a caretaker for a wealthy Charleston resident, Harrison B. Smith. Smith knew Kessinger as a good painter and all-purpose handyman, but did not know he was a fiddler. One of the best legends about Kessinger describes how he found out about it. Researcher Nancy Dols tells one variant: "One day the cook was playing one of Clark's records in the kitchen when Mr. Smith came in and asked, 'Who's that wonderful fiddler?' He was amazed to find out it was Clark, and immediately hired him to teach his son to play."

In Clark's early years, he played music with family members including older brother and banjo player Everette Kessinger. Everette was the father to mandolinist Bob Kessinger, featured in the "Kessinger Family" story in this issue of GOLDENSEAL. Shown with guitar is Charlie Montgomery. Photo taken in the late 1920's, photographer unknown.

Throughout the rest of 1928, the Kessinger Brothers' records continued to sell better than any other fiddle records in the Brunswick catalogue. Some were issued on Sears labels under the name "Birmingham Entertainers," and later some of the sides would even be issued on French Canadian labels under the name "Les Deuz Paroissiens." Convinced they had a major act on their hands, Brunswick invited Clark and Luke to come to New York in early 1929 to make a new round of discs. This session, spread out over several days, produced some 23 sides, none with any square dance calls. It too produced its share of classics. One was "Tugboat," in its first commercial recording. This record would make its way to, among other places, Texas, where the influential Texas fiddler Benny Thomasson would learn it and insert it into the Texas fiddle contest repertoire, where it remains to this day. Another was "Salt River" (later redone), an old Irish tune which would eventually make its way to bluegrass star Bill Monroe, who would record it as "Salt Creek."

Clark found a permanent accompanist in his nephew, guitarist Luches "Luke" Kessinger. They achieved early success in 1927 as radio performers over the airwaves of Charleston's WOBU. Photo taken approximately 1930, courtesy of County Records.

Other sessions followed in June 1929 (24 sides) and September 1930 (17 sides) before the Depression,

Clark's recording career began on February 11, 1928, when he and Luke recorded 12 sides for Brunswick records. Many of these early recordings included the dance calling of Ernest Legg (center), but their most successful record was a version of the popular "Wednesday Night Waltz."

and the sale of the Brunswick company, put a premature end to them. Even though these later recordings sold only a fraction of the earlier ones, due mainly to the Depression, many of them are considered true Kessinger masterpieces.

Kessinger occasionally complained that the three-minute length of the 78 rpm records actually caused him to repeat a tune more times than he thought necessary. But often when he did this he managed to infuse the different choruses with subtle variations. A typical Kessinger arrangement often featured a series of short, rhythmic bow strokes where he actually lifted the bow from the strings, followed by a long, breathtaking, cascading run (as in "Tugboat"). Unlike those of modern Texas fiddlers, his variations stayed close to the original tune outline; as Nancy Dols notes, "the smooth, clean exterior of his playing sometimes almost hides the intricate things he does with the melody, rhythm, and bowing." He was fond of devices such as the "brushing pizzicato" effect heard on "Hell Among the Yearlings" and "Going up Brush Fork," and of using entire lines of double stops to enhance a melody. Like many of the older mountain fiddlers, he was fond of adding an extra beat to a phrase, creating an irregular meter, making it hard for a competing fiddler at a contest to duplicate his style.

In later years admirers of Clark Kessinger, noting his bow control, tone, and precision, had assumed that he had had some formal training. Even today it is not clear how much he had. Kessinger himself insisted he was a "natural" musician, a self-taught country fiddler. By his own admission, however, Kessinger knew and studied the records of such popular classical violinists as Fritz Kreisler, Joseph Szigeti, and Jascha Heifetz. All three toured widely in the 1920's, and all three had a wide variety of popular recordings on the market.

Kessinger not only knew the records of these masters, but he heard them in person and actually performed before Szigeti. Kessinger himself later admitted his debt to Szigeti and Kreisler: "[I] caught the touch they had...Some of their kind of bowing, I could kind of add it in with hillbilly. Made it a lot better."

On September 20, 1930, about a year after the stock market crashed, the last of the Brunswick recordings were completed, and Clark Kessinger effectively dropped out of the national music scene for the next three and a half decades. He married in 1927, and began a family that would eventually number six children, none of whom showed any special interest in playing an instrument. "I was a painter by trade," he explained. "I painted for years and years. I painted for one man for about 18 years. One con-

A typical Kessinger arrangement often featured a series of short, rhythmic bow strokes where he actually lifted the bow from the strings, followed by a long, breathtaking, cascading run.

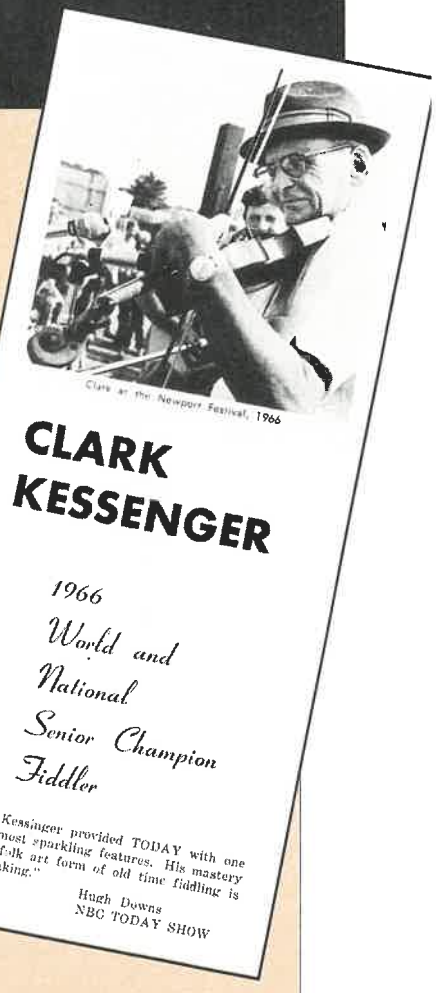
In the 1960's, Jerry Galyean and his brother Brent were involved in the return of Clark Kessinger to the fiddling world.

"We tried to help Mr. Kessinger enjoy a renaissance of recognition for his fiddling abilities," Jerry Galyean remembers. Jerry both arranged and photographed many promotional events for Clark Kessinger, including performances at the Tag Galyean car dealership in Charleston (right).

Mr. Galyean's photographs appeared in state newspapers and graced the covers of Kessinger's record albums and brochures (far right). GOLDENSEAL recently spoke with Jerry Galyean who agreed to share some of his memories and photographs with our readers.

"Clark said that fiddlers were violinists that did not play classical music. In the summer of 1966 we took Clark to Weiser, Idaho, for the National Fiddling Championship where he was declared National Senior Champion and in the top five overall at the age of 70. Clark would have probably won first place in the overall category if the rules of that particular contest had not prohibited 'triple bowing.' He wowed everybody in practice sessions where he could use this technique.

"In July of 1966 he performed on the 'Today' show when Hugh Downs, who is a friend of mine, was host. From there we went to the Newport Folk Festival and the Grand Ole Opry radio show, which was still being aired from the Ryman Auditorium. At the Opry he was the only performer during the four hour show to receive an encore and he received three before the Flatt & Scruggs Martha White portion of the show ran out of time" (left, courtesy of Rosie Kessinger).


Clark at the Newport Festival, 1966

CLARK KESSENGER

1966 World and National Senior Champion Fiddler

"Clark Kessinger provided TODAY with one of its most sparkling features. His mastery of the folk art form of old time fiddling is breathtaking."

Hugh Downs
NBC TODAY SHOW

tractor. Mostly inside painting, decorating. I don't like the outside work. I never was no highclimber." His hand was so steady with the brush that he did not even have to use tape to protect the windows. During World War II he briefly left this trade to work as a guard at a local plant.

Not that he ever gave up fiddling. He and Luke played for a time in the 1930's over Charleston radio WOBU's "Old Farm Hour" and engaged in several of the highly promoted "fiddling showdowns" against Natchee the Indian. He appeared on stage shows with the Delmore Brothers, the McGee Brothers, Arthur Smith, Clayton McMichen, and others. They often played at City Hall for the mayor of Charleston. "One of the mayors was a good friend of mine," he remembered. "He was the Mayor Copenhavery [John T. Copenhaver, mayor of Charleston, 1951 to 1959]. I used to play for him. I'd always played for him when he'd have any doings going on. He liked the old-timey music. He was crazy about hillbillies." Clark and Luke also continued to play at dances and clubs, and in the late 1930's they actually appeared at the National Folk Festival in Washington, D. C. The end to the chapter came in May 1944 when Luke died.

Still, Kessinger kept his skills sharp by playing with different accompanists, whomever he could pick up, at various dance halls and clubs. Rock & roll, with its electric guitars and Elvis imitators, came on the scene in the 1950's, but in West Virginia and other parts of Appalachia, many of the rural dance halls still preferred fiddle bands. In 1963, Kessinger was working at a club called Westfalls, down on U.S. Route 60 just east of Hurricane. It was a center for local square dances, big enough to have three sets on the floor at one time. Kessinger had been playing there for some time, and word had gotten out. One of the people who perked up at the news was Guthrie Meade, then working for the Library of Congress and a devotee of Kessinger's old records. At the National Folk Festival that year at Covington, Kentucky, Meade passed on the information to a young man named Ken Davidson.

Davidson was a young Charleston resident who was deeply interested in traditional music of the area, and was responsible for discovering some of the area's best performers. He had discovered the remarkable fiddler, French Carpenter, as well as instrumentalist and singer Jenes Cottrell. He not only encouraged his finds to get out and perform more, but he took them to fiddling contests and festivals, including ones as far away as the Newport Folk Festival in Rhode Island. He also recorded them and formed a company called Folk Promotions to release his field recordings.

Always looking for an audience, Clark prepares to embark on one of many fiddling excursions with guitarist Gene Meade. Photo 1966, James F. and Ola Comstock West Virginia History Collection, Booth Library, Davis & Elkins College.

There was a new gunslinger in town and the level of play at Southern contests had just gone up.

Acting on Meade's tip, in the spring of 1964, he drove to Westfalls Inn and introduced himself to Clark Kessinger. He was amazed at how well Kessinger was still playing and urged him to go and compete in a fiddle contest at Pulaski, Virginia. He agreed and took first place. A second win at Richwood, West Virginia, soon followed. By August he tried the granddaddy of all Virginia contests, Galax, and lit out down Highway 19. There he formed an impromptu string band with two younger musicians, guitarist Gene Meade (from Draper, North Carolina) and banjo player Wayne Hauser (from Winston-Salem, North Carolina). Though Kessinger had never recorded with a full string band, it fit his fiddling like a glove, and after a few rehearsals the group took first place in the string band category, beating out 60 other groups.

Later that year Davidson recorded the band in Charleston, and released the results as "The Legend of Clark Kessinger" on his Folk Promotions label. Guthrie Meade wrote a booklet of notes and included a

complete discography of the old Kessinger Brothers 78's. By the end of the year, fiddle fans knew that Clark Kessinger was back; fiddle novices knew there was a new gunslinger in town and that the level of play at Southern contests had just gone up.

Kessinger was 66 when Ken Davidson met him for the first time, and his comeback was to last about seven years. He quickly became the most colorful and intense fiddler on the contest circuit, winning dozens of prizes, including the World's Champion prize at the 47th Union Grove affair in April 1971. He continued to record, including three more LP's for Davidson's label (which had by now changed its name to Kanawha). Some of the albums were later reissued on Folkways Records, and then on County. They were popular, and some of them probably reached a larger audience than did the original 78's. Gene Meade became Kessinger's regular guitar player, both at contests and on records, playing in a fluid flatpicking style. Even today, many fiddle fans can still remember where they were when they first heard Kessinger play at one contest or another.

By 1971 Ken Davidson's company was effectively out of business, and he encouraged a newly formed company to take over his chronicling of Kessinger's music. The new company was owned by Ken Irwin, Bill Nowlin, and Marion Leighton — a trio of young Bostonians who were all veterans of the festival circuit and who had named their company Rounder. They drove to Union Grove and met Kessinger. After the finals, they drove over to the Vance Motor Inn in nearby Statesville and began recording the new LP. They got 12 good cuts, 11 fiddle tunes and a guitar solo by Gene, and left with the tapes, planning to return in a few weeks for a follow-up session. A week before the scheduled session, though, Kessinger had a stroke and collapsed on stage at a convention in Virginia. He recovered, but his left hand was severely affected and he had trouble playing. Hoping against hope that therapy would improve Kessinger's condition, the Rounders waited for several months. Only when it seemed Kessinger would not play well enough to continue, they released the album as "Clark Kessinger: Old-Time Music With Fiddle & Guitar" (Rounder 0004). It contained several lively hoedowns, plus some of the lovely, obscure waltzes Kessinger loved to play. One of them might have served as a theme song: "When I Grow Too Old to Dream." Kessinger died June 4, 1975.

Reprinted from The Devil's Box: Masters of Southern Fiddling *by Charles Wolfe, copyright 1997, with permission by Vanderbilt University Press and the Country Music Foundation. This 231-page book is named in honor of* The Devil's Box *magazine, an influential fiddling publication. It also contains chapters on the lives, careers, and music of 11 other legendary fiddlers, and includes a foreword by fiddling champion Mark O'Connor.* The Devil's Box *is available in hardcover at $27.95, plus shipping and handling ($3.50 for the first book; $1 for each additional one). To order a copy, call 1-800-937-5557.*

"When I Grow Too Old to Dream," photo by Jerry Galyean.

I Remember Clark Kessinger

By Bobby Taylor

"The Legend of Clark Kessinger" LP, released in 1964, played a major role in introducing a new generation to Kessinger's music.

My introduction to the music of Clark Kessinger was at the age of 13 when my younger brother Michael ordered "The Legend of Clark Kessinger," an LP with 18 tunes. My father, fiddler Lincoln Taylor, always said that there was more music on this record than any other.

I first met Clark Kessinger in person in 1969. This was when I got my driver's license at the age of 16. I drove to his home right off Kanawha Terrace in St. Albans. He lived in the lower level of a duplex apartment. We always referred to his home being located at Twin Maples. Actually, this was a little nightclub that stood in front of his house where Clark sometimes played. It got its name from the two maple trees standing in the front yard. Clark's little apartment was shared by his second wife Rosie, and Dolly, their small dog.

With a little coaxing, I was able to get him to play the "Arkansas Traveler." As long as I live, I will never forget his incredible bowing and noting. As our visits progressed over the next six years, I learned more of Clark's tunes and techniques. He was always very nice to me and willingly shared all of his secrets, for which I felt very privileged. Clark always told me to put the emphasis on the down bow. With this bow action accenting the down beat, he could achieve the ultimate of drive and dynamics.

A large part of my style and repertoire came from Clark's records and the instruction I received during our visits. I will mention a few tunes that are very special to me. I always thought that Clark's version of "Arkansas Traveler" was unsurpassable. "Durang's Hornpipe," "Red Bird," and "Poca River Blues" were Clark's show tunes. Clark played "Hell Among the Yearlings" the best I have ever heard the tune. Clark composed "Turkey Knob" and "Wilson's Hornpipe," both of which I try to keep alive.

A young Bobby Taylor with guitarist Tom King in the 1970's.

I learned a great deal about bowing from learning "Ragtime Annie," "Mississippi Sawyer," and "Rickett's Hornpipe." His "double back bowing" (as I call it) was one of the hardest things to learn. Only on one of my very good days am I able to perform this technique close to Kessinger's style.

In 1974 the late Tom King and I went to visit with Clark. This was to be a most special visit. I knew Clark had not been able to play since his stroke in 1971. The stroke affected his left noting hand. His bowing arm had not been affected, and I had studied his noting patterns for several years.

I decided to stand behind his chair holding the fiddle in front of him, my hand doing the noting and his doing the bowing. It was here I learned the "triple bowing" technique. There were several tunes we played in this manner. I was able to see what he did on "Hell Among the Yearlings," which has a very challenging bowing pattern. This was perhaps the highlight of my life to be able to note while Clark bowed. Together we played a pretty good tune. Tom was very impressed and continued to tell this story until his death in July 1993.

I had the pleasure of playing with Clark Kessinger's bow on June 13, 1997, at St. Albans City Park. This bow belongs to Jewel McClannahan, who bought it from Clark personally. It was an evening of reverence. The bow seemed to pull soul

and tone from above. Even with the rain pouring down, it sang with the richest of tone. Clark's triple bowing, which I call the "bow jump" was never so easy. The bow seemed to possess the spirit of the greatest master of all time. Since Clark showed me this incredible bowing after his stroke, it is a very important part of my presentation. I feel much gratitude to Clark for showing me his special secret which only he and I have shared to this day.

Benny Thomasson went to visit Clark after his stroke in the early 1970's. This was such an historic event with two legendary fiddlers meeting for the first and last time. This was truly a fitting acknowledgement from one great master to the other. I can only think of the years Benny had thought and waited for this moment.

Clark influenced many great fiddlers with his recordings and performances. I will name a few local fiddlers he influenced. French Mitchell was quite renowned, and regarded Clark as the best old-time fiddler. Fiddlin' Mike Humphreys always had great respect for Clark's playing. Emmett M. "Lefty" Shafer, Reece B. "Sam" Jarvis, John Johnson, Glen Smith, Woody Simmons, Wilson Douglas, plus scores of others borrowed from Clark's vast collection of tunes and techniques.

As long as I live, I will never forget his incredible bowing and noting.

I remember Clark talking about a rival fiddler (who will remain nameless) coming to visit him. I later went to see Clark to get his side of the story. Clark only said that yes, he was here, playing on an old loud fiddle. He said his dog was so disturbed, that it had intestinal distress (to be polite) ever since. The rivalry between fiddlers was always a source of entertainment for me as a young fiddler.

Today, Bobby Taylor is an accomplished fiddler in his own right, who plays and teaches Clark Kessinger-style fiddle at every opportunity. Photo 1995 by Phil Swango, courtesy Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College.

I talked to one of the judges at the Galax Old-Time Fiddlers Convention who judged Clark when he made his comeback to the stage in 1964. He said all was quiet about 2:00 a.m. The young music fans had already sacked out in front of the stage fast asleep. Clark Kessinger, Gene Meade, and Wayne Hauser hit the stage with a thunderstorm of spirit. The judges had listened to a herd of bands, good in their own right, but they did not take the spirit of the night.

The first few notes Kessinger hit aroused everyone far and near. People rushed to the stage, the sleeping hippies started dancing. The festival was back to life. Well, with no doubt in anyone's mind, Kessinger "took the blue." This was the start of an incredible comeback.

I guess it is no wonder that musicians and listeners alike were truly taken by his incredible style.

John Morris, a well-known Clay County fiddler, went to visit Clark. Clark stated some very memorable words regarding old-time music. John shared these words with me. Clark and John were discussing music, and Clark said, "If you are going to play this old-time music, you've got to put the power in it." To me, this describes Clark's philosophy of music.

Clark Kessinger died on June 4, 1975, at the age of 78. I will never forget how saddened I was to hear this news. I could no longer visit and get insight from this musical genius. With Kessinger's passing, more talent departed this world than I could imagine. I do my best to keep his memory alive.

I am very saddened that Kessinger's name has become somewhat unknown in the old-time music community. I hope Clark Kessinger can regain his rightful spot in the limelight.

Bobby Taylor is a fifth generation West Virginia fiddler. He is a champion musician who, in recent years, has coordinated the music competitions at the Vandalia Gathering and at the Appalachian String Band Music Festival at Camp Washington-Carver in Clifftop, Fayette County. His recording, "Kanawha Tradition," *is available through the Cultural Center Shop, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305, phone (304) 558-0690.*

The Kessinger Family

By Paul Gartner

Photographs by Michael Keller

Frances Goad remembers her father — Clark Kessinger — as a man who made a pretty mean pan of corn bread and liked his fried potatoes cooked just so. He didn't own a car and never had a driver's license. In his later years he kept a little dog named Dolly.

"My mother was the disciplinarian. He was the good guy," she says. "He just wanted to sit in his rocking chair and us kids scratch his head."

Frances is one of six children born to Clark and Celia Reese Kessinger: Betty, Tom, Art, Frances, Clark Jr. (known as "Bubby"), and Patsy. Frances recently shared memories of her famous father during an interview at her home in South Charleston.

Frances married Norvel Goad in 1958, and they are the parents of three children. With her family now grown, Frances has worked part-time at the State Capitol for the past 15 years, proofreading legislation and state regulations.

"My mother and daddy divorced when I was 11 after 24 years of marriage," Frances recalls. Clark married Rosie Harper in the 1950's and they spent the next 25 years together. Frances still visited her father often, but once he started going on the road to perform she didn't get to see him much. "I wasn't really with him all the time," she says, "until the last four years of his life after he had a stroke." Frances helped take care of her father during that time. "He would get the fiddle out and play it once in awhile when nobody else was around."

Clark and Celia Kessinger married in 1927. Photo courtesy of Frances Kessinger Goad.

Frances remembers hearing stories of her father working as a house painter during the Depression, but says "I never knew him to do anything else but music." In the 1940's and '50's this meant square dances. Lots of square dances.

When Frances was in the sixth grade at Central Grade School in South Charleston, "My schoolteacher heard about my daddy. She taught us square dancing and on Fridays Daddy would come up to the school and play while we square danced."

Later, in the '50's, "He played at Twin Maples for years," Frances says. She would watch her father

fiddle sets at the St. Albans roadhouse.

"Well, I was too young to be out there, so I'd stay in the kitchen," she says. "Daddy wouldn't let me go out 'cause they sold beer. I used to have to stand in back of the kitchen and watch him. Once in a while they'd take me out there and take me through a square dance."

Frances can still hear her father playing "Down Yonder." "He'd play that and really get with it. The waltz I liked is 'The Waltz You Save for Me.'"

Later, when Clark recorded an album of waltzes, he recorded that one for her.

He just wanted to sit in his rocking chair and us kids scratch his head.

"Music was just his life," Frances says. "I knew that he had a chance to do things, but he wouldn't leave West Virginia. He just wouldn't go. ...He could have made something of himself when he was real young."

When acclaim did come his way in the '60's, "He loved it," Frances says. "He was an entertainer. He could really make that fiddle sing. He would tap his feet, and sometimes he would even stand up and do a little dance while he was playing."

In 1965, on one trip to New York, "He was on the 'Today' show and 'To Tell the Truth.' He stumped 'em on 'To Tell the Truth.' Hugh Downs really thought he was something else."

Clark took it all in stride, she says.

"He didn't talk about it. He didn't brag about it or anything like that. He just liked to play. Oh, he was proud. He had ribbons and trophies, you know, all that.

"He didn't worry about the money. He just liked to play music and he liked people knowing him. That, it seemed like, was more important to him."

Twenty-two years later, it still amazes Frances how many people know, or know of, her father. "Even before [his '60's rediscovery] people would come up to me and they knew who he was," Frances says.

Even U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd. "He was at something up at the Capitol," Frances recalls. Senator Byrd found out who Frances was.

Daughter Frances with Clark Kessinger in the 1970's.

"He said, 'Oh, I've got to talk to you.' He was so nice when he found out I was Clark's daughter. He said he thought a lot of Daddy. He thought a lot of his music."

A few years ago, Frances and her husband stopped in Galax, Virginia, where Clark was such a sensation 30 years ago.

"They knew who he was," Frances says. "After all those years, they still remembered him playing there."

While neither Frances nor any other of Clark Kessinger's children plays musical instruments, another branch of the family carries on this tradition.

Bob Kessinger, Clark's nephew, was born in 1926. He has been listening to Clark's music for nearly all of his life, and does his best to keep his uncle's music alive the most direct way possible — by playing it.

Bob is a minister at the Gandeeville Church of Christ, and is the father of Robin and Dan Kessinger. Robin is a professional musician and the 1985 national flatpicking champion. Dan, a minister like his father, is one of West Virginia's top fiddlers.

They perform together as The Kessingers. It's a family with deep roots in traditional music.

Bob's father, Everette Kessinger, and Clark were brothers.

"Clark was around all the time and I grew up listening to that kind of music," Bob says. "I guess the first time I heard him I was about five years old and I thought it was the most wonderful thing I'd ever heard."

Older generations played, too.

"A lot of people talk about Kessingers, Kessingers," Bob says. "But I think the greatest influence on

Frances Kessinger Goad today in the West Virginia Senate chamber.

our family came from our grandmother's side, Clark's mother — Alice Mann." Bob also believes that his great-grandfather Mann [Alice's father] was a fiddler.

Everette was a banjo player, and Bob grew up hearing music in the home. Bob started out as a banjo player himself, clawhammer style. When he was 12, he played a mandolin for the first time — and he didn't like it.

"First time I picked it up I played a tune on it," Bob says. "My dad heard me and said, 'You need to play the mandolin.'

"I said, 'No, that mandolin made my fingers sore.' My dad said, 'You'll never play the banjo. You go to a mandolin.'" His father insisted, and Bob was convinced, continuing to play for some years on a borrowed instrument.

"I passed papers and I bought my own clothes," Bob says. "I was gonna buy me a bicycle but dad wouldn't let me — he told me to buy a mandolin. I didn't like [the idea] at first.

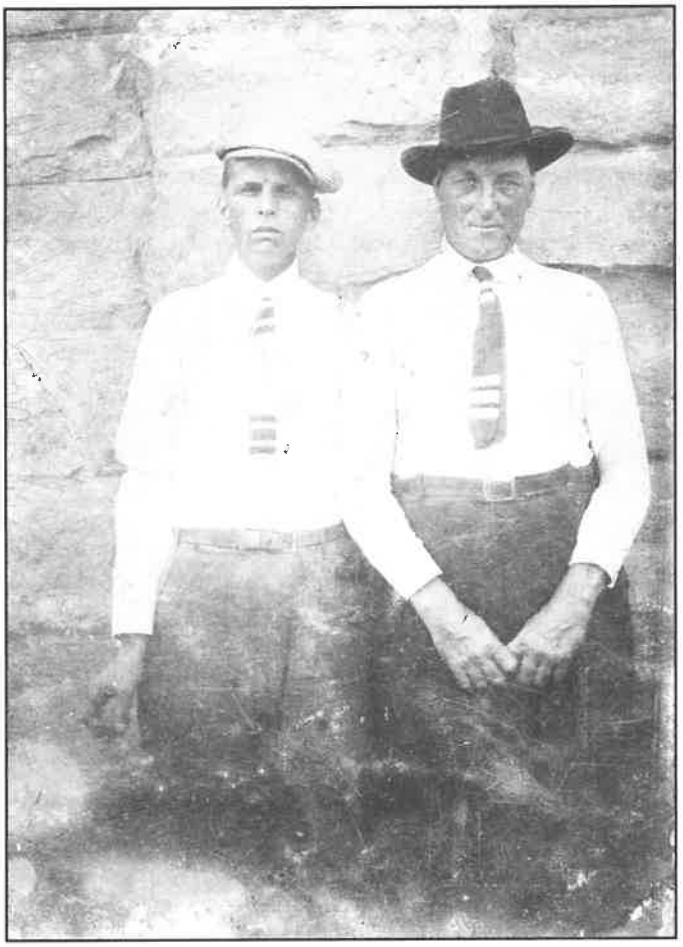
"Dad said, 'I don't care if it is your money, you'll tear up a bicycle. You'll play a mandolin.' I was tickled to death after that."

In the Kessinger home, expert fiddlers were household names: Ed Haley, Arthur Smith, Smoky Harless. But Uncle Clark's wizardry was paramount.

Around 1936, "Clark was on the radio every day, right after noon," Bob says. "We didn't even own a radio. We'd go out to Dad's sister's, Aunt Ruby Keeling. Buttercrust Bread sponsored them. They were something."

One time, Fiddlin' Arthur Smith was in town and found a spot on a local radio show. "When they were going to have a contest, he [Smith] would come and get him a program, and play for two or three weeks so people could get to hear him again," Bob says. "That meant a little advantage."

The family was at Clark's house on Slack Street in Charleston, when Smith's show came on the radio.



Bob Kessinger's father, Everette (right), was Clark Kessinger's older brother. Clark is on the left in this tintype photo from approximately 1914, courtesy of Rosie Kessinger.

"Clark was listening, not saying a word," Bob says. "Soon as the program was over, Clark said 'Listen to that so-and-so. He thinks he's gonna beat me in that contest, but he's not.'

"Clark thought he could beat anybody — and when he got up to play, he was hard to beat," Bob says. "When he was under pressure, that's when he really played." Bob recalls that Fiddlin' Arthur Smith and Clark Kessinger did in fact compete. "He didn't beat Clark," Bob adds.

After serving in World War II, Bob Kessinger returned to Charleston and found work at Food Machinery Chemical Corporation (FMC) in South Charleston. He eventually played radio shows with The Mountain Melody Boys on WKNA, WTIP, WCAW, and other radio stations in Charleston.

"We were on WKNA about a year. It was up on the boulevard, upstairs about six floors from Capitol Street," Bob said. "We started in 1951." Clark would sit in with them from time to time.

The band also did personal appearances, often in rural schoolhouses like King Creek or Midway in Lincoln County.

Cap — Warren Caplinger of Cap, Andy and Flip — was often the promoter and emcee, and he knew his way around the business. (*See "Cap, Andy, and Flip; Mountain State Radio Trio" by Ivan Tribe, GOLDENSEAL Winter 1989.*)

"Cap started this beauty contest thing," Bob says. "It was a gimmick. One dollar would buy so many votes. And some of these fellows would have somebody in their family or a little girl they wanted to win. If you had enough money, you could get anybody to win."

Cap and the band would make some extra money and one thrilled local girl "would be the reigning queen," Bob says.

In 1955, Bob became a minister in the Church of Christ. In the next decade, he preached in six states. Between the beliefs of his church and demands of starting a family, he put his music away.

"A lot of people didn't like it" [the music], Bob said. "I didn't want to irritate them. They associated it with wrongful things."

While he didn't play much during those years, Bob and his family

Doug Young, Warren Caplinger, Jack Scarbro, and Bob Kessinger (left to right) on WKNA Charleston in the early 1950's.

always kept in touch with Clark.

"We moved around a lot when I was young," Robin Kessinger, Bob's oldest son, recalls. "West Virginia was always home to us. We would always come and visit. My dad would call Uncle Clark and ask if we could come over and play."

Robin was born in 1955 and was nine years old when he started playing a ukelele. Younger brother Dan, born in 1963, picked up the banjo ukelele at age five.

It was his sons' playing that brought Bob back to the music. In 1968, he bought 13-year-old Robin a guitar and "started showing him things, and he got me playing again," Bob says.

"We had a big house" [in Georgia], Bob recalls. "We'd have people in. One Christmas we were playing...and I believe there was 34 there that night. A couple missed it and they said, 'How about playing tomorrow night?' We did, and had as many the second night."

Around this time Dan had been working hard on his banjo ukelele. "I had been gone for three weeks," Bob says. "Robin said, 'Dad, would you play "Down Yonder?"' He'd always take that little run. Came time, I thought Robin was gonna take that little run. He'd showed Dan how to get it. I dropped my mandolin and started laughing.

"One of the announcers from the local radio station, WBRO, came down the house and heard us," Bob says. "They was having a big show at the junior high school. He begged me to take the boys up there and play. I said, 'Nothing doing.' It'd been about 19 years since I'd been up on stage in front of an audience. I said I couldn't take it."

"Dad would play these fiddle records sky high — loud — he'd drive us crazy!"

Next day, the manager from the station came, and Bob refused again. When he left, the boys' mother, Doris, said "I think you owe it to the boys. They would love to do that. They've been wanting to play so bad."

This was the first stage appearance of The Kessingers. "We stole that show," Bob says. "When Dan took that run on 'Down Yonder,' that place exploded.

"I taped it and brought it back and played it for Clark," Bob says. "He would say, 'Run that back again.' I told him 'I want you to hear that you're not the only Kessinger who can get a hand.'

"Clark would laugh," Bob says. "Fiddle had always been my favorite instrument. I told Clark I wished Robin would learn to play the fiddle. Clark said, 'You let him alone. Put that little one playing the fiddle.' He knew what he was talking about, too."

Dan did, in fact, take to the fiddle, while older brother Robin developed into a superb guitarist. Robin played with Clark just one time.

"I was 14. My dad told Uncle Clark that I was playing guitar," Robin recalls. "It was the first time I played with a fiddler. He played 'Billy in the Lowground,' 'Chinese Breakdown,' and 'Done Gone.'"

Thanks to Bob, Robin had been listening to fiddle music all his young life.

"Dad would play these fiddle records sky high — loud — he'd drive us crazy!"

Dan remembers "listening" too.

"He'd play it just as loud as it'd go and then yell over top of it," Dan recalls, "Giving you running commentary like a sportscaster: 'Look at what he's gonna do here. Hear that? Listen to that!'"

This generation of Kessinger brothers agrees that Clark's example taught them one key lesson: listen to more than one style of music.

"A lot of musicians listen to only one person," Robin says. "My Uncle Clark was crazy about [classical banjoist Fred] Van Eps. He listened to different instruments.

"Clark didn't listen only to fiddlers, he listened to violinists," he says. "When a famous violinist came to town, he was there. He appreciated the technical aspects. He recognized that whatever the style — he was good."

Dan points to Clark's bowing. "What he was able to do with a bow

Kessingers On Record

By Danny Williams

Clark Kessinger and his nephew Luches "Luke" Kessinger recorded a wealth of material for Brunswick records back in 1928-30.

Now you can hear every one of these tunes, beautifully re-recorded onto three CD's titled "Kessinger Brothers: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order; Volumes 1, 2, and 3," recently released by Austria's Document label.

The repertoire of the Kessingers was a glorious mixture. The Kessingers recorded plenty of the old West Virginia hoedown tunes they grew up with, but also included swinging ragtime pieces, fiddle contest favorites, popular radio songs, and even a few Clark Kessinger compositions.

And the performances! Clark's fiddling is fearless and precise, aggressive but always light. He constantly reinvents the tune, sometimes veering into imaginative variations, but always tailoring his arrangement to the needs of the particular piece. And the guitar work of Luke Kessinger deserves special mention. He recognizes Uncle Clark's ability, so he keeps his guitar in a supporting role, filling out the arrangements with steady rhythm and strong, just-right bass notes.

On an old hoedown like "Old Jake Gillie," Kessinger sticks to the bouncy, light style which propels dancers across the floor, and does not stray far from the tune. "Goodnight Waltz" showcases Kessinger's ability to compose variations, and his mastery of the smooth, airy bowing the waltz demands. He glides seamlessly from low to high versions of the tune, adds beautiful but understated ornaments throughout, and boldly glides into the high notes which many fine fiddlers would never attempt. "Under the Double Eagle" is a show-off tune from early in this century, and Kessinger, well, shows off. He doesn't bother with the familiar first section of the tune, but instead alternates between two keys on the demanding second section, dramatically holding the high notes, then tumbling into some very tricky double stops in the lower portions of the melody.

But praising three tunes from this collection is like singling out three favorite bites of one of your grandmother's pies. It's all great; eat it up!

And for dessert? More Clark Kessinger. The story on Clark Kessinger in this issue of GOLDENSEAL details the rediscovery of Clark Kessinger by the young folk music fans of the 1960's. Kessinger's first recording from that period, "The Legend of Clark Kessinger," released in 1964 on the Folk Promotions label, is available for the first time on CD, thanks to a recent reissue by County Records. (This recording was also released in 1966 as "Clark Kessinger, Fiddler" on Folkways Records.)

Though the public had quit noticing his music, Kessinger kept fiddling all through the years between his two careers. The performance on this 1964 recording compares very well with Kessinger's legendary sessions from 35 years earlier, and the more modern recording quality may lead some fans to prefer this collection. Guitarist Luke Kessinger passed away in 1944; on this recording Clark Kessinger is accompanied by Gene Meade on guitar and Wayne Hauser on banjo.

There were thousands of new would-be fiddlers across the country in 1964, and many of them were smart enough to look to West Virginia for the real music. "The Legend of Clark Kessinger" was one of the very few LP's of West Virginia fiddle music available at the time, and its influence on the direction of folk fiddling is immeasurable. Whenever you hear a fiddler striving for an impossible blend of power and grace, there's a good chance he or she has been touched by the legacy of this recording. *(See Bobby Taylor's "I Remember Clark Kessinger" in this issue.)*

Kessinger's second career included a number of other LP's: "Sweet Bunch of Daisies" released around 1967 on Kanawha

Records, and "Old-Time Music With Fiddle and Guitar" issued in 1972 by Rounder Records. There was also one live LP taken from his 1968 appearance at the Union Grove, North Carolina fiddlers convention (released in 1968 by Kanawha Records and in 1976 by Folkways), and a composite "Memorial Album" taken from different sources and released by Kanawha in 1976.

In addition, County and Kanawha reissued many of the original Kessinger Brothers recordings on a series of LP's during this time period, now out of print and hard to find.

Today, the recent CD reissues of the complete Kessinger Brothers catalog and the "Legend of Clark Kessinger" LP have simplified the task of locating Clark Kessinger recordings.

Here's how to find them:

• "Kessinger Brothers: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order."

Volume 1, 1928-1929. Document DOCD 8010.

Volume 2, 1929. Document DOCD 8011.

Volume 3, 1929-1930. Document DOCD 8012.

Arhoolie Productions, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530. The cost is $16 per CD for one or two, and $14 per CD for three or more, plus $3 shipping.

• "The Legend of Clark Kessinger." County CD 2713. County Records, P.O. Box 191, Floyd, VA 24091. Cost is $13 per CD, plus $3 shipping for up to three CD's. (County also stocks the above Document titles.)

• For information on a newly-released video of Clark Kessinger at the 1966 Newport Folk Festival, see page 69.

The present-day Kessinger family can also be heard on a variety of recent recordings. Clark Kessinger's nephew, Bob, and Bob's two sons Robin and Dan, continue the family tradition of strong, inventive playing and fresh interpretations of traditional music. Robin and Dan are especially active right now, producing new recordings faster than we can keep up. For today, their list of available recordings includes:

Dan Kessinger

• "Jackson Highway." Cassette, $10 including shipping from Dan Kessinger, 704 Dewey Avenue, St. Marys, WV 26170. (This is the newest recording from the Kessinger clan.)

Robin Kessinger

• "Flower of Edinburgh," Cassette.

• "Don't Try This at Home," Cassette.

• "Not for Flatpickers Only," Cassette.

• "The Third Eyebrow," Cassette.

• "Robin Kessinger," CD (material from "The Third Eyebrow" and "Don't Try This at Home").

The cost is $10 per cassette and $14 per CD, including shipping, from jMp Records, P. O. Box 152, St. Albans, WV 25177.

Robin Kessinger, Dan Kessinger, and Rick Tincher

• "Groundhog Gravy," Cassette, $11 including shipping from Dan Kessinger, 704 Dewey Avenue, St. Marys, WV 26170.

The Kessingers (Robin, Dan, and Bob)

• "Family Tradition," Cassette, $10, including shipping, from jMp Records, P. O. Box 152, St. Albans, WV 25177.

Robin Kessinger has also recorded a number of fine cassettes, trading hot licks with other champion guitarists. These include:

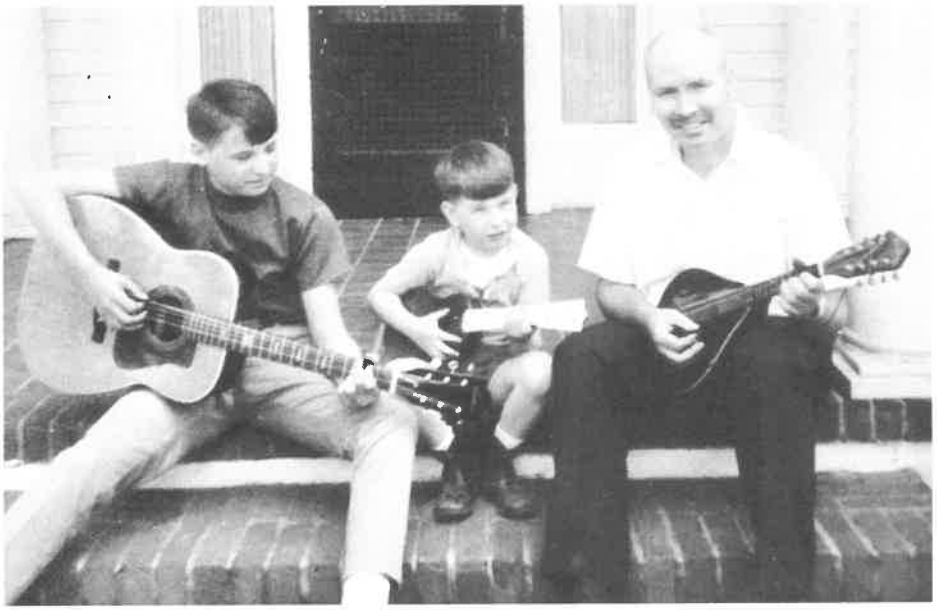
• "Contest Favorites" w/Wayne Henderson.

• "Album of Champions" w/Robert Shafer.

• "Star of the County Down" w/Steve Kaufman.

Cassettes are $10 each plus $2 shipping, available from the Cultural Center Shop, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305; phone (304)558-0690.

Many of the CD's and cassettes mentioned above are also available through the Cultural Center Shop. Call for details.



After several years of relative inactivity, Bob was brought back into performing music by his talented and precocious sons. Robin is on the left with guitar, Dan is in the center with a ukelele. Photo 1969, courtesy of Bob Kessinger.

was say, 'Now, which way, which direction, how sharp is this bow going to sound?' It seemed like he was just able to do that, rather than saying, 'How can I move the bow and get through this series of notes without messing up?'

"Clark's playing all started with the bow," Dan says. "It was the beginning and ending point. It was a weapon for him and he used it like a man would use a sword."

Bob Kessinger today.

Both brothers respect their great-uncle as an artist with a deep passion for the music he was making.

"Clark didn't have a lot of education, but he could see through things real fast," Robin says. "He was real quick to call people's hands. He wasn't very tactful if he didn't like what you were doing. He would tell you."

Like when Clark played a concert with a well-known folksinger around 1959.

"It was up at West Virginia University," Bob recalls. "They was getting ready to play a tune and the folksinger didn't know it. Clark turned around in front of everybody and said 'Now you stay out of this, you'll just mess it up.'

Left: Robin Kessinger, a champion flatpick guitarist, turns a few heads during the 1996 Vandalia Gathering.

"But he was just as good with compliments," Bob says, "when he heard somebody with talent."

These days, Dan is the minister of the Church of Christ at St. Marys. He and his wife Mary Amy have a three-year-old son, D.J. While he has scaled back his music-making, he does have a new recording out titled "Jackson's Highway."

Robin and his wife Mary are the parents of two sons. Robbie, 20, now with the National Guard stationed at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, and 18-year-old Luke, who has been Robin's back-up guitar player for the last couple of years.

"I'm trying to introduce Luke at the same time I'm trying to make him work for it," Robin says. "I want him to have the recognition, but earn it." Luke won fifth place in the flatpick guitar contest at the 1996 Vandalia Gathering.

The brothers continue to play

Above: Fiddler Dan Kessinger mixes the music of his great-uncle Clark with Western Swing and other influences.

The musical Kessinger family in a recent jam session at Fret 'N Fiddle music store in St. Albans. Left to right are three-year-old D.J., Dan, Robin's 18-year-old son Luke, Robin, and Bob.

Clark's music. Robin traces several tunes in his repertoire directly to Clark, and he's "still working on some of them. Tunes like '16 Days in Georgia' and 'Durang's Hornpipe' — that's almost his arrangement."

Robin had another major influence on his playing — Robert "Georgia Slim" Rutland. A nationally-known fiddler and pioneer guitar flatpicker, he played with Buddy Starcher's Mountaineers on WCHS radio in Charleston in the late 1930's, and released an album on Kanawha Records in the 1970's.

Although Clark Kessinger and Georgia Slim never played together, Robin feels that Clark was a big influence on Rutland's music. The multi-talented Georgia Slim learned many of Clark's tunes, and much of his style. Robin, in turn, was inspired by recordings of Georgia Slim, leading him right back to Uncle Clark.

As for Dan, "Clark died when I was 11 years old. He hadn't played in three or four years before that. I remember Clark playing — very clearly — when I was three. In fact that's one of the clearest memories I have, is us getting together.

"When I was six I used to put two sticks together and pretend I was him," Dan says. "First time I ever tried [fiddle] I was 13 and really just messed around with it for a couple years.

"I spent the first years when I was playing just trying to play like Clark and then I got away from it. Robin was always after me to play. When Robin was in high school that was always the chore I had to get around — to go home and play.

They perform together as The Kessingers. It's a family with deep roots in traditional music.

"I started listening to western-style fiddlers about the time I went to college and got away from the old mountain-style long bow that I grew up on. It was kind of strange — when I got away from it was when I learned to appreciate it for real. I didn't really realize just how good Clark was till I got away from it.

"The three tunes I play probably more like Clark," Dan says, "are 'Alabama Jubilee,' 'Durang's Hornpipe,' and 'Sally Johnson.'"

Robin and Dan respect the past, but look ahead.

"There's nothing wrong with imitating those things that were done," Robin says, speaking of old-time music in general. "But I don't care to get stuck there. The whole point is to keep getting better and never be satisfied."

As for Clark Kessinger and his music, Dan sums it up best.

"Music's kind of like food. They say good food is not just the preparation, it's the presentation — and music's kind of like that, too.

"It happened that Clark was lucky in that he was good at both presentation and preparation. He would show up to play and he never played in anything but a suit and tie. He had this natural...not arrogance, but pride. I remember when I was a kid, you could tell: this guy, now he's not putting on, but he really thinks 'I'm the best fiddler in the world.'

"It really is what he thought. Somebody who really believes that of himself, it's hard to take it away from him. So then, at that point he would set about to prove it. And so he would do things if he thought you were watching him. He'd want to dazzle you. And he could do it."

Robin and Bob Kessinger will be teaching workshops this fall at Augusta's October Old-Time Week at Davis & Elkins College in Elkins. Workshop dates are October 19-24. For tuition prices or for more information, call the Augusta Heritage Center at (304)637-1209.

Manheim

Faded Glory in a Quarry Town

By Peggy Ross

In 1928, Governor William Conley came to dinner in Manheim, a dusty little town nestled in the hills and limestone of Preston County. He came to share a plate of fried chicken with his constituents, and to dedicate an industrial safety monument. The marker, poured in locally manufactured concrete, reads:

Safety Follows Wisdom
Portland Cement Association
Safety Trophy Awarded
Alpha Portland Cement Company
Manheim, W.Va., Plant For A
Perfect Safety Record in 1926

Reawarded For A Perfect Safety
Record In
1930, 1933, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939,
1940, 1941,
1943, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1956

A hub of activity during those years, Manheim is now barely-recognizable. It is located along the Cheat River southeast of Kingwood, across the river from Highway 72. Still visible, though, are the remnants of the once-thriving company town that boasted such an admirable safety record, shipped countless tons of cement, and was home to hundreds of Alpha workers and their families.

Manheim, founded in the early 19th century, was named after a small village in Germany. Although economically prominent for its rock and quarry activity, Manheim gets only brief mention in the Preston County history books of the 19th

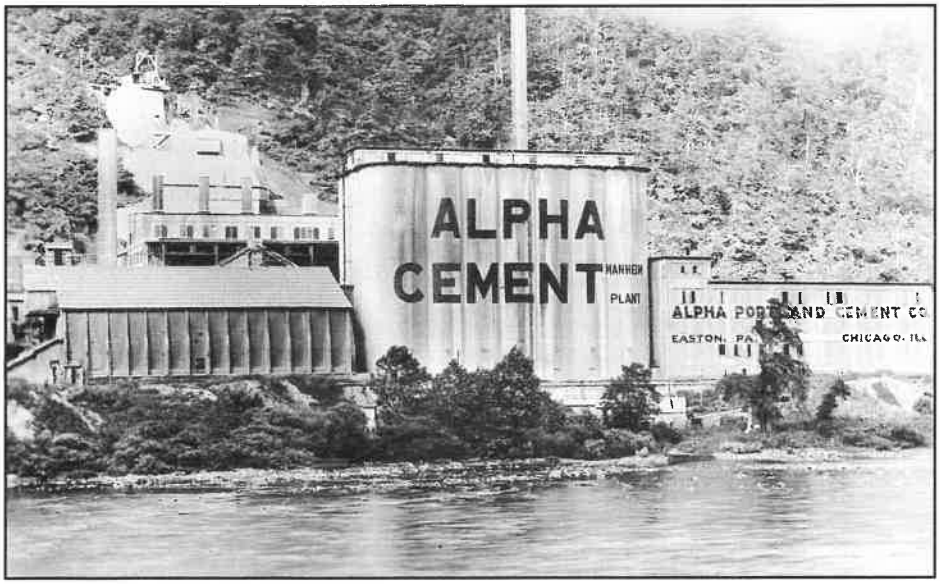
century. At the turn of the century, Buckhorn Portland Cement Company operated a plant in Manheim, and the first shipment of cement left Manheim in 1903. In 1909, the cement mill was sold to The Alpha Company of Easton, Pennsylvania, which ran operations in several other states, as well.

Alpha completely redesigned the plant and the town. In the process of remodeling, Manheim was made the picture of a successful company town.

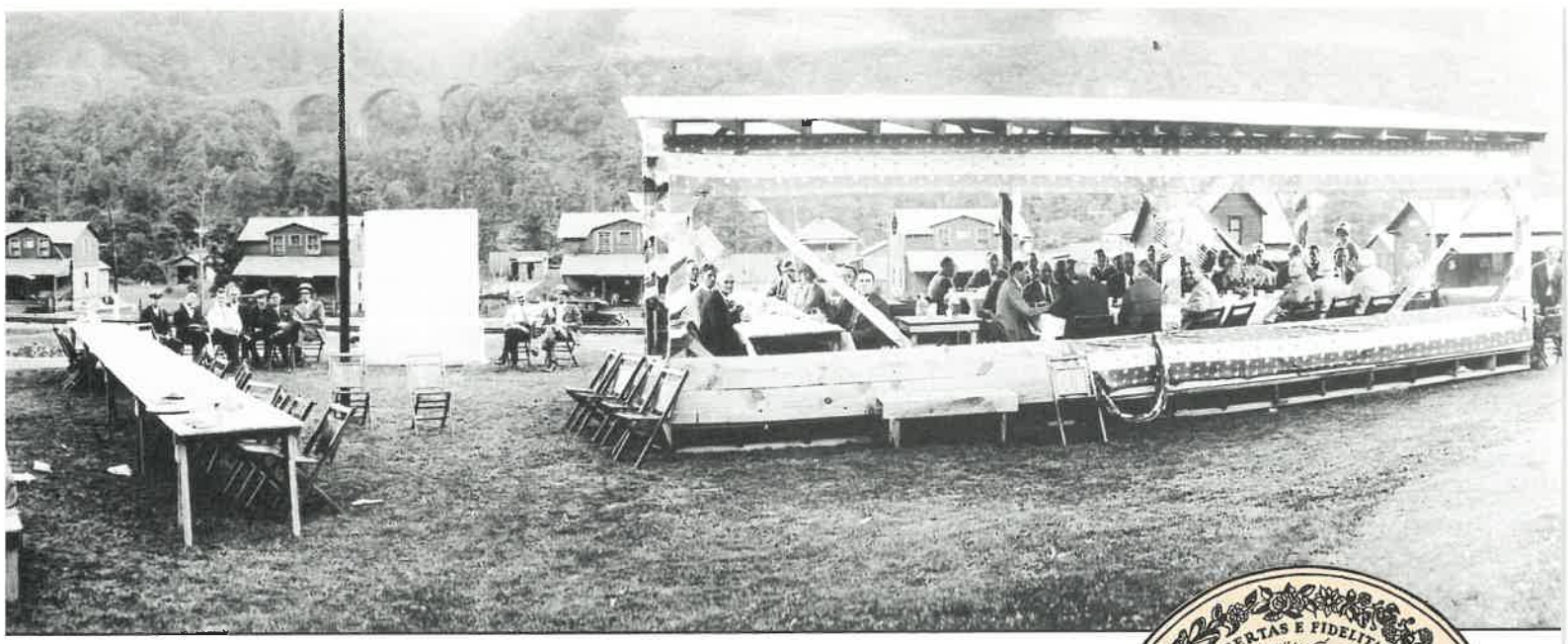
Joyce Ayersman, who grew up as Joycelyn McVicker in one of the 54 company-owned houses, remembers tulips being everywhere in the spring. "Oh, they were all around the superintendent's house, and in the triangle. I don't think you can see the triangle anymore; it was formed by the intersection of two roads and the railroad. But they were beautiful, beautiful." Indeed they must have been; their profusion of color earned the place its long-ago nickname, Little Holland.

The superintendent's house was a large bungalow sitting in a prominent place on a hillside right in the heart of the community. It was next door to the clubhouse and only a few steps from the safety monument. Back in its heyday, the company gardener took care of the lawn and gardens, making them — and the triangle and the riverbank overlooking the Cheat River — literally come alive spring and summer.

The large clubhouse housed single men, provided a place to meet, and was where school was held until the company built a new schoolhouse in 1926. The clubhouse is situated almost directly across from the weigh scales for trucks and about a 100 feet from the gates that opened to the min-



Alpha workers celebrated another year without a lost time accident at this 1938 picnic. Philip "Bunny" Brutto is seated on the front row, far right; next to him is Everett McVicker, Joyce Ayersman's father. Bunny's Italian-born father, Carlo Brutto, is in the back row on the right, between the man with the mustache and the man with the necktie. Bunny's brother Richard is on the far left, squatting with a white tin cup. Joyce's grandfather, David "D.A." McVicker, is in the back row, left, with a hat and folded arms; directly in front of him is plant superintendent William Leo Mathes. Front and center, the plant chefs polish their knives while unidentified hired musicians wait to provide entertainment.



Governor William Conley was among the many dignitaries who came to Manheim in 1928 to dedicate the industrial safety monument, visible on the left. Directly above the monument, in the distance, is the famous railroad viaduct depicted in 1863 on the reverse side of the state seal. Photo courtesy of Preston County Historical Society.

The safety monument as it appears today. Photo by Michael Keller.

ing end of town.

"Manheim was a close-knit community. Everything was so family oriented," Joyce says. "We had programs in the churches and in school. Mom and Dad and the kids went. You knew everybody. We used to have community suppers, where vegetables cost a penny. People carried in cans of milk or whatever they had to donate for prizes, and then we'd win it and take it back home." There were square dances, box suppers, and ball games.

When workers first came to Manheim, there was no bridge across the Cheat River and no railroad line running through town. A swinging bridge was built after 1909 by the men themselves in their off hours. Alpha provided all the materials. It bore only foot traffic but it was an important improvement. Workers who previously could get to work only by crossing the river by boat could now walk over to their jobs. Later, a wooden bridge carried car and truck traffic until, finally, the B&O mainline was extended into town.

Philip "Bunny" Brutto, retired chemist for the plant, says that the first rock mined in the area came from the mountain across the Cheat River. It was hauled over the gorge by cable. By the time the company left town in 1959, the mine on the Manheim side tunnelled two miles back into the mountain and was dug 30 feet high.

Naomi McMillen Brutto, a native of Rowlesburg but a resident of Kingwood today, began her teaching career at Manheim Elementary School. "I was only 18 when I started teaching first and second grades on a two-year certificate in 1934 for $100 per month." That's where she met Bunny, whom she married 58 years ago this October.

Bunny's father Carlo Brutto, who was born in Italy, moved his family to Manheim from Grafton around 1912. He made his living by grinding stone for Alpha. Bunny himself never worked for any other company. Retired since the early 1970's, he recalls his hometown with the same fondness and fervor as does Joyce Ayersman. Bunny started out as a stock and delivery boy for the big company-owned general store. Actually, he started out by feeding the store manager's rabbits every

When the Alpha plant began operations in 1909, mining was done by hand and rock was hauled by horse and wagon. Photo courtesy of Preston County Historical Society.

day on his way to school as a first grader. That job earned him a daily ice cream cone as well as his nickname.

In his off hours, Bunny played a fair game of baseball. He has vibrant memories of catching the likes of Bugs Braithwood, the three-fingered amateur pitcher (*see GOLDENSEAL, "Echoes of Things Past: Preston County's Oak Park," Summer 1994*). A noted baseball and football official, Bunny was asked by the plant manager to coach the junior high school's basketball team in 1936. He did so for three years; his 1937 team earned an enviable 34-2 record.

The school where Naomi taught was a model school, according to Joyce, who graduated from eighth grade there in 1948. "That means other schools were fashioned after it. Its gymnasium was separate and so was its auditorium, and it had the facilities for serving hot lunches," a novel idea at the time. "There were four classrooms on the first floor, each with two grades. There was a dining room, furnace room and shop in the basement. The girls had to take shop as well as learn table setting and manners," she recalls.

Alpha could have afforded to build several new schools, had they been needed. After all, the company was making money. It sponsored teams; built tennis courts, a ball diamond, and a bathhouse for the men; kept a full-time gardener; provided two gallons of paint for each house annually; and provided free water and electricity. It probably didn't need the house rent that started at $5 a month and shot all the way up to $20, but the wise Alpha management people knew the value of requiring the workers to have a financial stake in what they had. The company maintained everything outside of the homes free of charge.

Alpha could have afforded to build several new schools, had they been needed.

"Everyone kept their lights on all the time," Naomi Brutto says. "When you looked down on Manheim, it looked like a big city." That wasn't as wasteful as it sounds even in a time when energy conservation was unheard of; electricity was recycled from the plant.

Manheim was wonderful for the small number of families it accommodated, but it didn't accommodate nearly enough. Eventually, privately built homes were constructed right outside the town limits in a community called New Addition. But that wasn't enough either. Employees lived in nearby communities such as Aurora, Erwin, Rowlesburg, Salt Lick, Sanders Hill, Fill Hollow, Gold Mine, and Bear Wallow, and their paychecks improved the economies of all those areas.

Rowlesburg, two miles to the west, was a boom town. Its growth was fueled not only by the Alpha Portland Cement Company but also by the B&O Railroad, which served the coal and timber industries. The town boasted department stores, banks, general stores, dentists, doctors, pharmacies, and a movie house. So, if Manheim or New Addition residents couldn't find what they wanted in the local general store, they could always be fairly assured they'd find it in Rowlesburg.

The stone diggers in the quarry were mostly Italian. They lived together about a mile up on the moun-

Bunny Brutto (right) successfully coached the 1937 Manheim Junior High School basketball team to a 34-2 record. Also pictured are (back row) principal Clement Teets, Leslie Shaver, Donald McVicker, Charles Shaver, Silver Migliaccio, Kraymer Witt, and Bunny; (front row) Bobby Steringer, Charles Caniford, and Bill Matthes.

tain where they performed the backbreaking and highly skilled labor they learned in their homeland. Other immigrant workers came to Manheim from Poland, Scotland, Czechoslovakia, and a variety of other places. "We had a Duke's mixture of nationalities working and living together," Joyce says. "Blacks, whites, Italians, Scots, and Irish. We children were not aware of races, colors, and creeds." That was not true of the adults.

Joyce McVicker Ayersman, photo by Michael Keller.

Racial segregation was a part of life in Manheim as it was elsewhere in the nation at that time. While the various white ethnic communities mixed freely, the black residents at Manheim lived apart. Black workers and their families were housed separately, and black children were schooled apart from the white children.

Although there was no constable because the village was never incorporated, there was apparently little trouble in Manheim. It was not tolerated. The superintendent acted as policeman, judge, and jury. If, for instance, a couple was involved in a domestic squabble loud enough to concern their neighbors, the superintendent was notified and came in person to tell them to shape up or ship out.

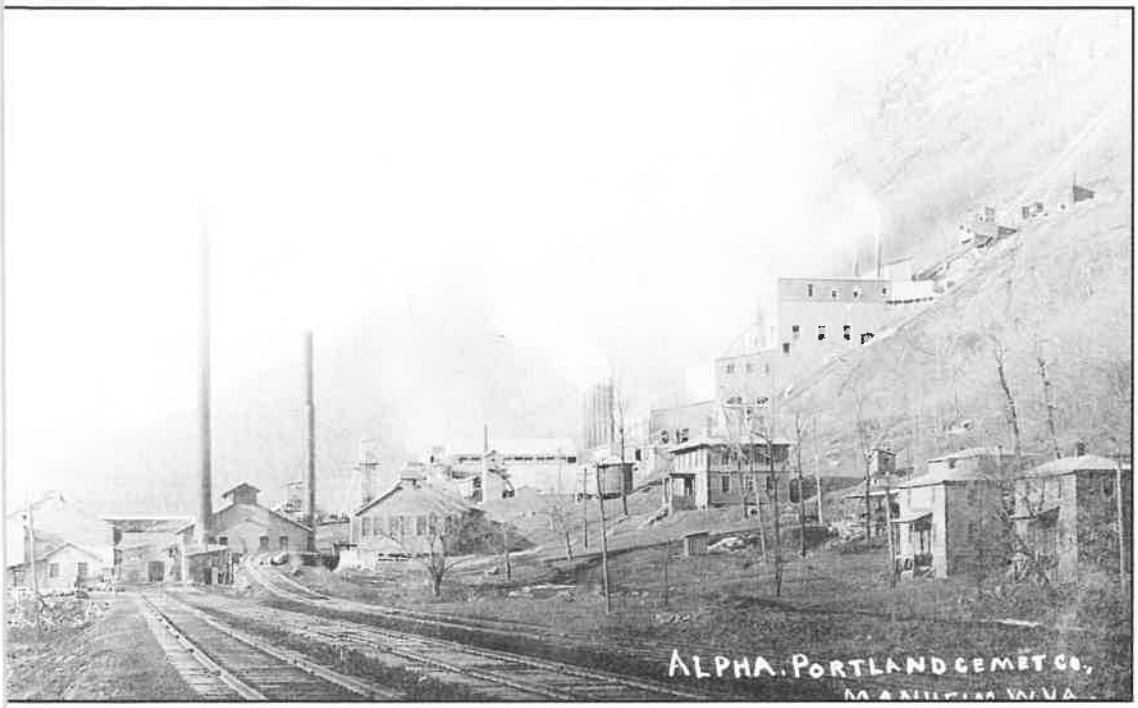
Still, life was comfortable in Manheim. Beautiful and comfortable: unusual words to describe a limestone quarry town. One where the grit from the quarry could sand the paint off the houses and the soot from the trains could turn them black. One where people worked at backbreaking jobs like digging stone out of the mountain with pickaxes, or scaling limestone cliffs to find more rock of better quality, or operating dangerous crushing machines, or tending white-hot kilns.

"When you run a kiln, you don't shut it down," Bunny points out, although the kilns were shut down for three years during World War II. This is how the operation worked: "Stone was dug out, sent down the tunnel to the tram where cars carried it down to the crusher. It was crushed into dust. Then it was put into the kilns where gypsum was added. There were six 60-foot kilns and one 90-foot kiln. They burned the limestone into clinkers, which are used in manufacturing cement. The kilns burned at about

"We had a Duke's mixture of nationalities working and living together."

2,800 degrees Fahrenheit. The clinkers cooled down and were ground into dust and pumped into the silos," which are still visible from Route 72 across the river. "Then that cement powder was bagged or hauled in bulk by rail to customers where they were," Bunny adds.

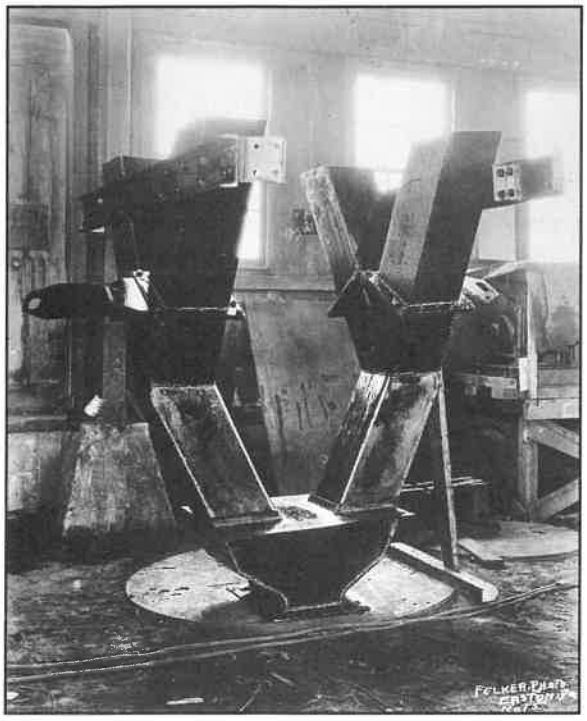
Alpha's capacity for output was 2,200 barrels per day, approximately 414 tons. Bunny recalls, "Back in those days, the cement was put in cloth or paper bags weighing 94 pounds each. Four bags equaled one barrel. We furnished cement for the Tygart Valley Dam. We manufactured 2,200 barrels per 24-hour day right up to the time the plant closed." There was an ad-



During its most successful years, Alpha operated around the clock, shipping over 400 tons of cement a day. Photo courtesy Preston County Historical Society.

equate supply of aggregate to maintain the same production schedule for the next 75 to 100 years, Bunny estimates.

There is no doubt that Alpha was safety conscious, extremely so for its time, but air cleaners and dust masks were unknown. "We had the reputation for having the finest, cleanest plant [of six plants in four states] in the Alpha Association," Bunny says. He prefers not to discuss occupational hazards such as white lung (pneumoconiosis). Still, some quarry workers and miners contracted this debilitating and often fatal disease because their lungs were full of sand or dust.



Looking like some imposing piece of modern art, this clinker chute was part of the industrial process in Manheim. Photo by Felker Photo, Easton, Pennsylvania.

"Quite a few men wore respirators late in life after working 30 years in the mine. Where they bagged cement it was bad, too," Joyce says.

Occasionally, industrial accidents also occurred at the Alpha plant in Manheim, such as the one that claimed the life of Frank Marion Shaver. Frank was the grandfather to Robert Ayersman, Joyce's husband. He worked as a crusher and was killed on the job in 1915.

Joyce's grandfather David Arthur "D. A." McVicker worked as a foreman for Alpha from 1909 until the mid-1940's. At that time, Alpha employed about 200 men for ten- or 12-hour shifts seven days a week around the clock. "In 1941, the union came in," Joyce says. She remembers her father, Everett McVicker, was instrumental in organizing the United Cement, Lime & Gypsum Workers International Union with the help of Charles Caniford and Hosea Funk.

Overall, Alpha's Manheim operation achieved a high standard of safety, resulting in the safety monument dedication in 1928. That dedication was not only a memorable event but it was what Bunny calls "a big feed."

You can almost hear the whoops, yells, and cheers that took place around the flag-draped podiums where men of importance spoke. After the speeches, piles of fried chicken were served on draped picnic tables and benches. Many of the workers wore suits and all of them wore white shirts and ties. Little boys hung around, furtively tucking away tidbits of the day. The entire male population must have turned out to hear Governor William G. Conley, himself a Prestonian from nearby Kingwood, pay tribute. Women not involved in cooking or serving food sat dressed up, watching the hoopla from their porches.

From where he stood to speak, Governor Conley could look across the Cheat River onto Laurel Mountain and see a massive railroad viaduct. This impressive work of public engineering is Manheim's most lasting claim to immortality. From where the governor stood, he could see the scene depicted on the reverse side of the Great Seal of West

Virginia. "One of the great engineering triumphs of the age," the viaduct was first built around 1851 of wood with masonry supports. Its graceful design and structural integrity were remarkable to legislators of the day. On September 23, 1863, it entered state history as a legislative committee, in designing the state seal, submitted this description of the contents of the reverse side: "In the distance, on the left of the disc, there is to be a wooded mountain, and on the right a cultivated slope with the log farmhouse peculiar to this region. On the side of the mountain, a representation of the viaduct on the line of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in Preston County, one of the great engineering triumphs of the age, with a train of cars about to pass over it."

There were parks at either end of the viaduct, once popular for picnics and bedecked with flowers. People climbed the steep mountain to enjoy the quiet and marvel at the vista below. Today, the beautiful stone structure is still visible, though the parks are gone and the picnics and flower gardens are a thing of the past.

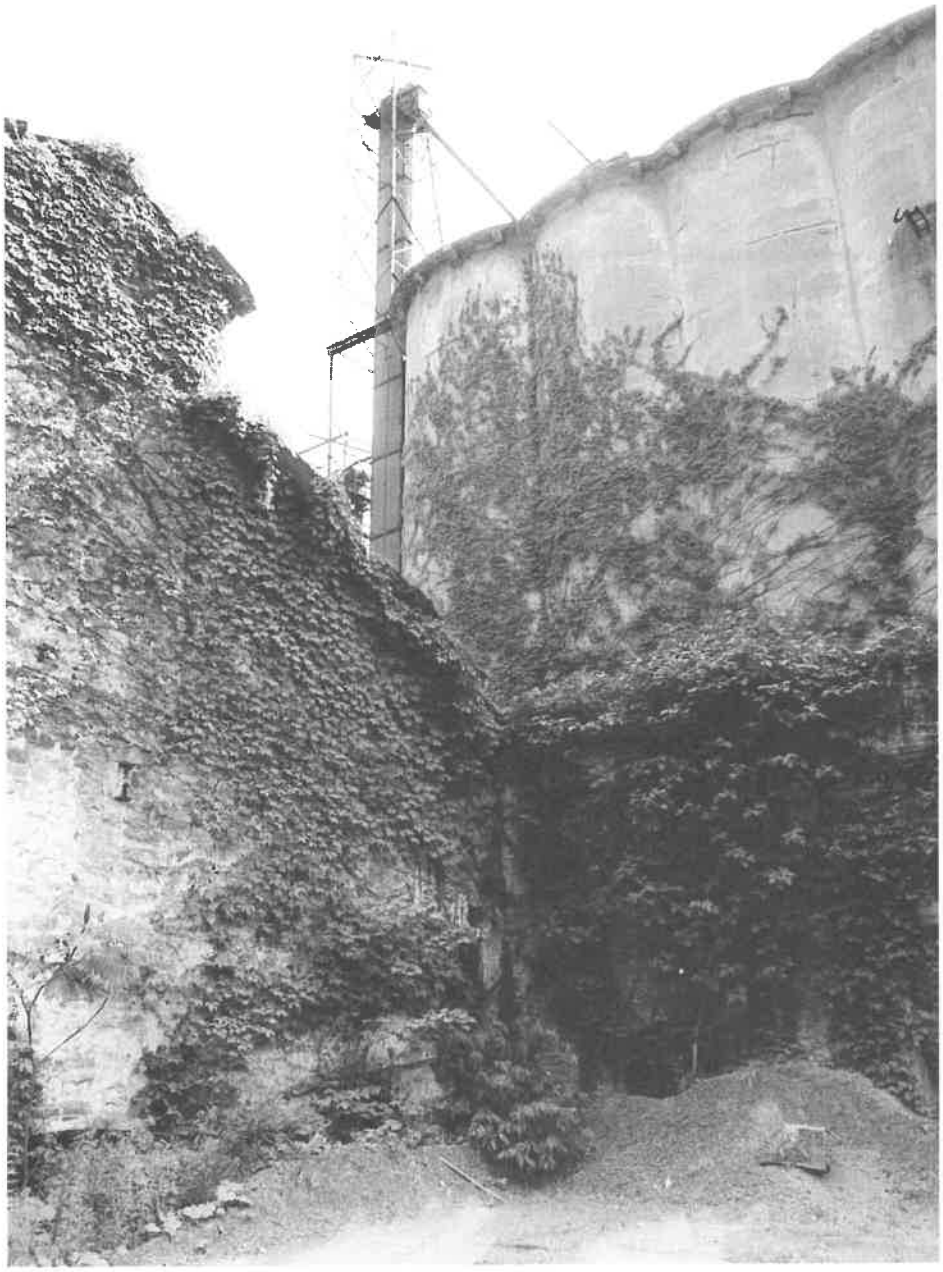
It's ironic that the existence of a specific bridge made Manheim live in the annals of history while the failure to build another bridge caused it to die.

In the mid-1950's, B&O rail freight charges were rising, forcing Alpha to rely more and more on heavy cement trucks to haul their daily plant output. Unfortunately, the old handbuilt wooden bridge was not sufficient to bear this new load. Alpha officials approached the state with a proposal to build a new, stronger highway bridge, one that would hold up to the modern needs of the cement plant. Alpha even offered to supply the materials to build the bridge. The state refused.

So, Alpha began the process of moving to Frederick, Maryland, in 1958. The last shipment of cement left the dusty gates of Manheim on April 12, 1959. The company placed as many workers as possible in other operations. Bunny became chief chemist working in Lime Kiln, Maryland. Naomi, armed with a full college degree by then, continued to teach school, retiring in 1992. Other people found work where they could. Alpha had previously sold its school to the Preston County School Board for a dollar, so elementary school children from the area continued to be educated in Manheim.

Manheim began a long slow slide into obscurity. Today, the site is gray, ramshackle, and all but deserted. The post office closed in 1979. Mostly vacant, the houses deteriorated until the 1985 flood came along and did a fair job of taking them out. Of the remaining few, a couple show signs of paint, bright curtains, and gardens. Others do not. A few mobile homes have been moved in.

Vacant on and off for some time, today the old super's house is in-



The silos at Manheim are now overgrown with ivy. After the Alpha plant closed in 1959, these silos were briefly converted into a feed mill as part of a huge, but short-lived, chicken operation. Photo by Michael Keller.

Today, Greenbrier Aggregates, Inc., operates a successful crushed stone business at Manheim, although the town has never recovered. Photo by Michael Keller.

habited again and work is slowly being done on it. A few red and yellow tulips are scattered among other hobo flowers in its yard. The clubhouse, wearing a "For Sale" sign today, is in fair shape, too, or at least it appears that way from the outside.

Rowlesburg recently annexed New Addition and updated the water and sewage systems in both New Addition and Manheim. The sparkling, sprawling new elementary school is across the road that separates New Addition from Manheim, just below the old school which is boarded up and useless now. School buses travel worry-free across the river on the bridge that was eventually built anyway, after it was too late.

"Manheim was a lovely place to live, really," Naomi Brutto says. That's undoubtedly true although it's difficult to picture. The giggles of today's school children echo through the silent place that was once a busy village.

Joyce Ayersman and her husband traveled extensively after he took a job with the military. Living in England, Spain, and many other far-off ports of call, they eventually returned home and have become deeply involved in the revitalization of their community. They own several businesses in and around Rowlesburg and are currently in the process of converting a former beauty shop (donated by the I.O.O.F.) into a genealogical library and museum. Joyce's face always lights up when she discusses Manheim.

The plant site didn't stay idle for long, although the company-owned town never recovered. Shortly after Alpha closed, J. W. Ruby purchased the site and began a massive chicken farming operation. At one time, Ruby reportedly kept as many as 850,000 chickens in the abandoned mine shafts and converted the huge cement silos into a feed mill.

A company called General Paving began a rock crushing operation there in the mid-1960's. The business changed hands, then was bought in 1978 by Harman Construction of Grafton. Greenbrier Aggregates, Inc., a subsidiary of Harman, continues to operate a successful business there today employing 24 full-time workers and providing crushed stone for the paving industry.

A steady flow of powerful trucks and outgoing tonnage rumbles past the faded remains of Manheim. Weeds grow around the safety monument, and vines climb high up the old silos. Occasionally, a curious child gazes from a second story window of one of the remaining rough-kept company houses, perhaps unaware that Manheim was once a beautiful, vibrant, and thriving company town.

Bunny and Naomi Brutto are retired and live in Kingwood. They lost their home and all their possessions in the 1985 flood, but they still have many fond memories of life in Manheim. Photo by Michael Keller.

"You Name It,"

A Visit with Agnes Runner Nestor

By Melissa Ireland

Agnes Nestor is nearly 100 years old. Her life in the remote mountains and valleys where Preston, Tucker, and Barbour Counties come together is full of quiet accomplishments and rural dignity. Still lucid and enthusiastic after 98 years of mountain living, her story speaks volumes about the history, culture, and ways of life in the hidden reaches of our state.

On a beautiful day in August, I traveled down dusty country roads to the little hamlet of Colebank, nestled at the base of Laurel Mountain. I was there by invitation from my dear friends, basketmakers Joe and Julie Collins, to meet a special acquaintance of theirs, Mrs. Agnes Nestor. Joe had called me earlier in the summer to extol the virtues of this wonderful lady and her phenomenal memory, still keen after 98 years.

Mrs. Nestor turned out to be a delightful person, small in stature, with snow white hair, neatly dressed, with a hint of lipstick on a face that belied her age. She graciously consented to answering my questions, exploring a life that started in the last century. Giggling like a schoolgirl, she was shy about the tape recorder that I convinced her I just had to have, as my memory and fingers were perhaps not as fast as hers. Mrs. Nestor is in excellent health, with only some hearing loss. She lives in Tucker County, where some of the most beautiful scenery in the state can be found on Texas and Pifer Mountains.

She was born October 16, 1899, the eldest child of John and Arthelia Braham Runner at Sinclair in Preston County. Her father worked on logging railroads and her mother was a midwife for mountain folks in her community. Agnes grew up in neighboring Tucker County, where the Runner family soon expanded to include twin sons and two other daughters.

As a young child, Agnes remembers that "church was her life," and that she attended Sunday school and church services as often as possible. She attended school at Macedonia #6, and became a teacher in 1919. She taught school until her marriage to Worthy Nestor of Barbour County in 1925. Two children were born to the young couple; Agnes's mother delivered both of them, because, as Agnes put it, "We didn't have much money."

Worthy Nestor was also a teacher but took mining and other work after his marriage to Agnes. Agnes chose to stay at home to care for her children, ending her teaching career. Worthy and Agnes moved around a lot, until settling near Clover Run in Tucker County, where they built their home. Worthy was an avid hunter and fisherman, who "would leave the cornfield to go fishing," according to Agnes.

She took up seamstress work, inspired by her mother's sewing skills, and became known in the community for fixing and making clothes for anyone that needed them. This sustained Agnes through the hard times after Worthy became ill with emphysema from coal mine

and I Done It"

dust and years of smoking. She stayed on the mountain for almost ten years caring for her sick husband, only seeing a neighbor occasionally when they came to take her to town.

For more than 70 years, Agnes wrote a weekly column for the *Parsons Advocate* newspaper.

Agnes still lives on the mountain where she and Worthy built their home above what is today the community of St. George. One must travel up a steep, winding path to get to her house perched in shady pines, yard brimming with flowers and bordered by a serene, mountain pond.

She spends her time reading and writing letters in her beautiful cursive-style handwriting, doing without such things as a radio or television set. She prefers it that way. Her biggest worry is keeping raccoons out of her flowers and off her porch. One of her simple pleasures in life is going down the hill with the assistance of her good friend, Louise Frymyer, and checking her "rain rock." The stone has a prominent place in the pine needle-strewn path, and serves as Agnes's weather forecast. When it's going to rain, the rock sweats and becomes damp. Agnes swears by it.

When it's going to rain, the rock sweats and becomes damp. Agnes swears by it.

PHOTOS MICHAEL KELLER

Agnes has outlived all of her known relatives, including her grandchildren. She lives by herself and remains relatively independent thanks in part to the generous help and companionship of friends like Louise, and Joe and Julie Collins.

When asked what she would have done differently if she had her life to live over again, she replies that she would have loved to have been a missionary. Her philosophy on life is "Make yourself satisfied in the situation you get, and make yourself happy with what you have."

She is living proof of that.

Students at the Macedonia #6 school, about 1914. Agnes is in the third row (second from the left). Agnes's twin brothers are in the second row: Dale (fourth from the left) and Dallas (sixth from the left, with necktie). Her younger sisters are in the front row: Vada (on left, with large white ribbon) and Marie (on right, with two ribbons). Photo by John Runner, Agnes's father.

Melissa Ireland. Mrs. Nestor, I understand that you are 98 years old?

Agnes Nestor. I will be the 16th of October.

MI. What year were you born?

AN. 1899, October 16th. I was born at Sinclair, right above here. At the home of my great-aunt and uncle. It was my mother's uncle. His wife was Eliza Stafford and she was a sister to my grandma.

MI. Were you the baby of the family?

AN. No, I was oldest one of the family. My brothers were next to me and were born in 1903. Their names were Dallas and Dale.

MI. They were twins?

AN. Yes. Born March 23, 1903.

MI. Alright! There's a lot of twins in my family tree, too!

AN. My father was a twin.

MI. So, it ran in the family?

AN. Yes, I guess so.

MI. What were your sisters' names?

AN. My oldest sister's name was Marie and my baby sister's name was Vada.

MI. So, did you move around with your parents?

AN. Well, I spent most of my time up here at Sinclair. My dad worked in the woods, mostly. I remember the store on Bull Run (Tucker County). I was only two or three years old.

MI. Where did you do most of your growing up?

AN. Basically, in Tucker County, in the King District.

MI. Is that where St. George is?

AN. That was a post office, and people live there today. But, when I was growing up, it was Auviltown. Some Auvils lived there, and they had a store and a post office, and they called it Auviltown. That was a couple of miles below St. George, going down the Cheat River. Down on 72 towards Preston County.

MI. How old were you when you married?

AN. About 25.

MI. You were a smart lady, you got to enjoy single life before you married.

AN. I wasn't smart enough (laughing). I should have kept going!

MI. What school did you attend?

AN. Oh, I went to school at Macedonia. Yes, number six.

MI. Did you become a teacher at a young age? I know you told me that you didn't mix marriage and teaching.

AN. I taught my first school in the year 1919 and 1920. I would have been 19 years old.

MI. What school did you teach first?

AN. Out on White Ridge, out towards Aurora.

MI. Way up on the mountain!

AN. Out toward Terra Alta.

MI. Where it's cold, cold in the winter. Did you board with a family?

AN. Yes, with a family named Dennison.

MI. Did you teach several grades at one time?

AN. Oh, yes, it was a one-room school; you had all the grades. You started right at kindergarten up to eighth.

MI. Who were some of the families attending the school?

AN. Whites, Dennisons, Lipscombs...

MI. So, you taught whole families of children?

AN. Oh, yes. I had numerous children from the same family in school.

MI. Did the kids play tricks on you?

AN. No, no, I didn't have any foolishness in my school. I didn't tolerate it. I told them I'm here for one thing. And that is to teach. To teach school. I had one rule, "Do right." That was the way I was raised. One of my teachers did that and I never forgot it. I said, "Listen, that's what I'm going to do." You know, there isn't anything better than doing right. There isn't anything better than right.

MI. You didn't have any bullies giving you a rough time?

AN. I didn't have all that much trouble.

MI. How did you get your teaching diploma? Did you have to take a normal school test? Is that what they called it?

AN. Back then, you knowed it. Back then, you knowed it! I told some of them, I said, "From what I have understood and from what I have heard, I knew more in my eighth grade than they'd ever know." (laughing) Oh, I didn't mean it like that. When I went to school, it was to learn! And, that was all you went to school for! You went to school to learn! And, if you had the right kind of teacher, when you got through that school, you were just about ready to face life.

MI. So you started teaching when you were 19 and quit when you were 25?

AN. Yes, I taught about five years. I taught at White Ridge, then I taught the next school at my home school, Macedonia #6. The next one I think I taught, was at Hannahsville.

MI. How old were you when you met your husband?

AN. I was 24.

MI. What was his name?

AN. Nestor, Worthy Nestor. His name was Worthy Nestor.

MI. Where did Worthy grow up?

Agnes, as a young woman, at the Macedonia school in about 1924 with sister Vada (standing), friend Ethel Adams (right rear), and sister Marie (right front).

AN. In Barbour County. I think he was born on Bull Run in Tucker County. His mother was a Auvil, Chris Auvil's daughter, and they lived up the road here. At the old Auvil farm here, going up the right hand side here, on this road here.

MI. When was Worthy born?

AN. He was born on Bull Run on the 26th of March, 1892.

MI. So he was seven years older than you. Did you meet your husband when you were both around here?

AN. I was teaching school, I guess down around Preston County. I met him at a literary. At what people called literaries, when people got up and talked on subjects. He had come up from Preston County, up to the edge of Tucker there.

MI. What did you do at literary meetings? I've never heard of them.

AN. It was just a neighborhood thing, a social gathering. They'd pick a subject to talk about. I remember one subject was "Which is the most dangerous, fire or water?" And they would debate on it. And, there were other things that they would debate on, but that was one of the things I remember.

MI. It was kind of like a debate club?

AN. Yes, it was a debate, and included the whole county, the whole community. They'd tell stories, and were judged on the stories. They usually had three judges to rule on who was the best debater. They debated on sides. Whichever side was best, that was the one who won. It was a good, social thing. People from different schools would come to it. It was nice, it was nice!

MI. It was a good thing for you; you met your husband there.

AN. I think that's where I met him. I think it was over at Robinson Hill.

MI. What year did you get married?

AN. 1925. I got married at the

Nestor Family Album

Agnes Nestor's memories are embodied in the precious bundles of photographs which she generously shared with us. Here are a few highlights.

Arthelia (left) and Caroline Braham, Agnes's mother and aunt in an 1875 daguerreotype, preserved in a beautiful gilded frame and velvet-lined, hand-tooled cameo case. This photo was taken in Preston County, near Sinclair (pronounced "Sinkler") and Colebank.

Worthy Nestor (1892-1967) married Agnes at the parson's house in Parsons. They were married for 42 years and had two children. This striking photo of him was taken around 1930.

Agnes Runner posed for this portrait around 1920, as she embarked on her career as a school teacher. She taught until her marriage in 1925.

Virginia Runner (1926-1957) married Dempsey Haller in 1946. Virginia had this portrait made in 1950 as a gift for her parents; Dempsey looks happy, posed in front of a sporty roadster. Together they had two children, Sharon and Wallace.

preacher's house in Parsons.

MI. What do you remember about that day?

AN. We just went to the preacher's. There were people there from Limestone. A family from Limestone was there. I suppose they witnessed the wedding. I imagine the minister had probably called them.

MI. You mentioned that when you married, you quit teaching.

AN. I didn't teach after I was married. I could have gone ahead but the whole thing was new, and I don't know...you can't raise babies and teach school! You didn't have babysitters or daycare in those days. You never heard tell of a babysitter.

MI. When you and Worthy married, where did you take up housekeeping?

AN. Well, we stayed and helped his people on the farm here, right down the road. Then in December, we moved to Philippi, where he went to work at the mines. He had worked in the coal mines before. He thought he would make more money at coal mining than teaching school.

MI. Oh, so he was a teacher also?

AN. Yes. He went to school in Barbour County, right up the road here, up near the Shiloh Church, but I don't know what the name of it was.

MI. Where did he teach school?

AN. His first school was over at Etam, Green Valley, in that section. Then, he came back and taught Clover District, up above where I live now. Above Sugar Grove Church in Tucker County.

MI. Now, Worthy went to work in the mines and you started having children?

AN. Well, in 1926, my first child was born. Not too long after I was married I became pregnant, and of course, that ended school teaching.

Dale and Marie, Agnes's brother and sister stood for this snapshot in the 1930's. According to Agnes, Dale seldom smiled but Marie was usually cheerful and pleasant.

John and Arthelia Runner, Agnes's parents, probably in the 1920's. Standing between them is brother-in-law Eugene Kempner. Arthelia was born in 1868 and died in 1929; John lived 1864 to 1950. They are both buried in the cemetery beside the Macedonia Methodist Church.

Agnes was a grandmother in 1954 when this photo was taken at her home. Pictured are Sharon and baby Wallace, the children of Virginia and husband Dempsey Haller. Below is Worthy Nestor in 1954 with a nice pumpkin.

"I'm a good hand to believe in the Lord," says Agnes who attended this church for much of her life. She intends to be buried in the cemetery there, next to her parents and brother, and near the grave of her infant son, Wallace. Photos by Michael Keller.

Like I said, there was no such thing as babysitters. They would have had a hissy if you could have found somebody.

MI. What was your first baby's name?

AN. Virginia. She was born on her daddy's birthday, March 26, 1926.

MI. That was a good birthday gift! Did she live?

AN. Oh, yes. She lived until she was about 30. She lived until she was just 30 years old. She married a military man and she died in Germany.

MI. I'm sorry to hear that. Did you have any other babies?

AN. Yes, I had a little boy, and he only lived 28 days. And I never had any more children. The little boy's name was Wallace. Wallace Edison Nestor.

MI. How long did you and Worthy stay in Philippi?

AN. Well, we moved in December from his home to Philippi, and he worked until the spring of the next year. Then we came back to my parents' home. My daughter was born at my parents' home.

MI. What did Worthy do then for a living?

AN. Well, the Keystone people had built a railroad from over near St. George over into Preston County to ship timber out. So, he worked on the railroad.

MI. Just like your father had done. How long did you stay with your parents?

AN. We didn't stay there all that long. We rented around here and yonder. Just wherever he could find work. We rented. We moved a lot! Once, I moved two times in a week. It seemed like we would just get finished moving, then we would move again. That was when we moved to Manheim. (See *"Manheim: Faded Glory in a Quarry Town," page 28 of this issue.)*

MI. Did you have a car or a truck in those days?

AN. We had a car. It was a Ford, I guess, it was a '24 model. I had a car, too. I think they were the same year. Yes, I think they were '24 models. But, I didn't drive.

MI. Did you ever learn to drive?

AN. No, no. I just never learned to drive. I wish a thousand times that I had, but I didn't.

MI. Did Worthy want you to learn to drive?

AN. He didn't want me to drive. I even got a Studebaker off my daughter and her husband, and thought I would learn. But, I never drove it.

MI. Did you just leave it in the driveway?

AN. Oh, I sold it about a year later. No use keeping it. I kept it a year or two. I loved the little thing, it was a nice car. It was a dear, little car.

MI. Where did you do your shopping in those days?

AN. Parsons. They had about everything you needed there.

MI. I know you told me that you didn't travel much.

AN. No. The summer we lived with his father, we went with him to Grafton to sell produce and things. We took butter and eggs, and this and that, things off the farm.

MI. Did you raise a garden and can with all this moving going on?

AN. Oh, my goodness, yes. We finally bought a place. Where I live now, near St. George. We bought it off my husband's Uncle Jake Nestor. I don't think we even had

the money to begin with to make a deed. But, we finally got it paid for. We raised everything on that farm.

MI. Do you remember what you paid for it?

AN. I think $600.

MI. After you and Worthy bought your house near St. George, what did he do for a living? Was he still working on the railroad?

AN. Well, he worked on the railroad all along.

MI. What else did you do?

AN. We raised everything. One summer, I stacked five stacks of hay myself. I have a cousin who lives in Texas, and I have been meaning to tell her that. She comes and visits me, when they come up. ...She had written me that she was resting after a big, long trip and that they had been in the hay. She said they had big, round bales and that she had helped to move them around, and that she was tired. I want to give her some history when I write her and tell her about my stacks!

MI. Did you wear pants in the hayfield or did you wear a dress?

AN. Well, I think I had a special pair of coveralls. I think they were white coveralls.

MI. The reason that I asked you that question is that my mother-in-law has never worn pants in her life. She never believed in wearing trousers. She wore a dress for everything she's ever done, like gardening, canning, and yard work.

AN. I never wore pants, either. That was the only time. Well, now I did wear them when using a crosscut saw to cut cross ties.

MI. You helped to cut timber?

AN. Oh, yes, you name it, and I done it. Somebody wanted some cross ties, so my husband and I cut them off the farm. I used a crosscut saw.

MI. That is hard work, and you are a little, tiny woman!

AN. When we went to the woods, we only had a crosscut saw to work with. We cut and built our house with 1,400 feet of wood cut on our farm. We would cut 50 logs a day. It was the time when the chestnuts had died, and the dead chestnuts were around on the farm, so we cut them. Then, we took it to the mill and let them saw it.

One of my favorite memories is today!

MI. That's such pretty wood. And it lasts a long time.

AN. I have a little chestnut tree on the edge of my garden.

MI. Did you help put the house up?

AN. No, I bossed a little. We had a good carpenter.

MI. How long did Worthy live?

AN. Until he was 75. He was born in 1892, and died in 1967.

MI. Where is Worthy buried?

AN. Up here at Shiloh.

MI. Did you stay by yourself on the farm, after he died?

AN. Yes, I still stay by myself. I have a girl to come in and help me. I don't do much anymore. I took a fall, and after that, I slowed down. I hurt my back and it aches still.

MI. Do you still raise a garden?

AN. No, I raise lots of flowers and cats.

MI. How many cats do you have?

AN. Oh, four or five. They come and they go.

MI. You are just like my mother, she loves cats!

AN. I especially love plants and flowers. I'm just interested in that kind of thing. I had rows of gladiolus in my garden, along with roses.

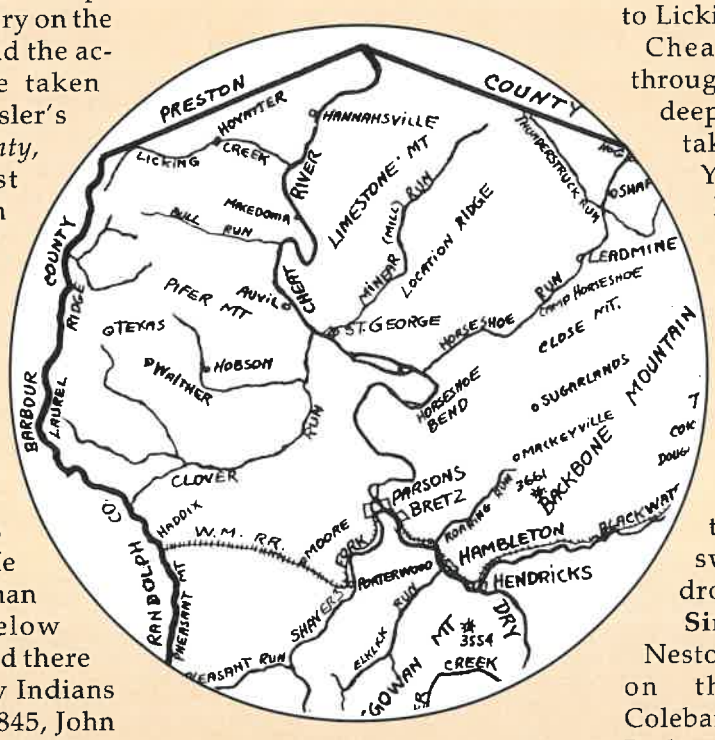
MI. What is one thing that sticks out in your memory that is one of your favorite memories of your life?

AN. One of my favorite memories is today!

Agnes and friend Joe Collins enjoy the shade and keep a lookout for ducks near the pond adjacent to her house. Agnes lives at home and stays relatively independent thanks in part to the help of Joe and his wife Julie Collins, good friend Louise Frymyer, and others. Photo by Michael Keller.

Lost Towns of Northern West Virginia

Some of the towns mentioned in Mrs. Nestor's interview are now just memories. Northern West Virginia had numerous towns with post offices and stores that sprang up around logging and mining operations, only to wither when these employers pulled out. Some towns have a few residences still, others have completely disappeared. This brief history on the towns in this article and the accompanying map are taken from Homer Floyd Fansler's *History of Tucker County, West Virginia*, first printed by McClain Printing Company of Parsons in 1962.



Auviltown was located in Clover District at the mouth of Upper Jonathan Run. William Marsh was the founder of modern Auviltown, but Jonathan Minear was the first settler there. He settled on Lower Jonathan Run, a half mile below Auviltown, in 1776, and there he was slaughtered by Indians on April 16, 1780. In 1845, John Auvil, a native of Pennsylvania, moved to Pifer Mountain, with his wife Catherine, from Barbour County. In 1863, he purchased land from William Marsh and moved to Auviltown where he built a grist mill. He built a dam across the Cheat River and operated the mill by water power. In 1890, a post office was established at Auviltown, with George B. Auvil, a son of John Auvil, as the first postmaster.

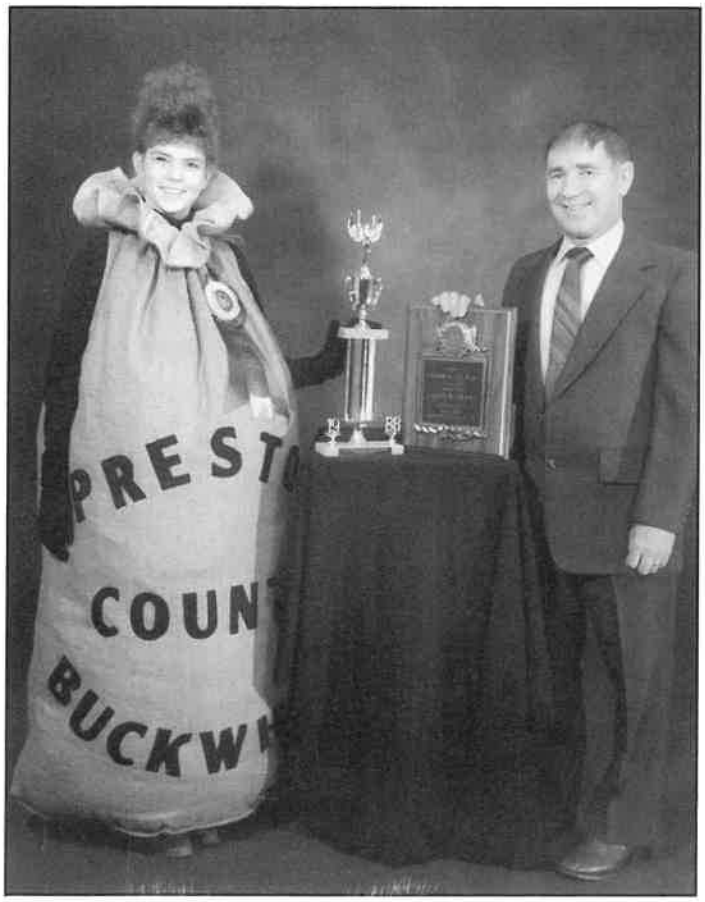
The first settler in **Clover** after Jonathan Minear was a man named Kittle, who built his cabin near the mouth of Indian Fork in 1800. He was followed in the next few years by Andrew Pifer and George Nestor on Pifer Mountain, Isaac Phillips on the main Clover Run, and a man named Mitchell on Texas Mountain. Michael Mitchell, son of the original settler on Texas Mountain and his wife, Nancy Shaw, lost seven of their nine children in three weeks to diphtheria. Some of the other families to settle there were the Nestors, Metzes, Austins, and Ashbys.

Hannahsville is in Licking District in Tucker County, on Route 72, halfway between Long and Louse Camp Runs. Adam H. Bowman was one of its early settlers and, when it received a post office shortly before the Civil War, he became the first postmaster. He named it for his mother-in-law, wife, and daughter. Their names were Hannah C. Beavers, Hannah A. Bowman, and Hannah S. Bowman respectively. Hannahsville was one of three original townships of Tucker County and its name was changed to Licking District in 1873. The Hannahsville school closed there in 1955, and the teachers and pupils were moved to Licking Creek school.

Cheat River, which runs through the Licking District, is deep and treacherous and has taken the lives of many. Years ago, near the **Macedonia** eddy two miles above Hannahsville, four young boys drowned when they got in over their heads. Another tragedy occurred at Hannahsville in 1960, when an outboard motor boat, carrying seven sawmill workers across the river, became swamped in midstream, drowning five of the men.

Sinclair, mentioned in Mrs. Nestor's memories, is located on the mountain above Colebank, on the Preston and Barbour County lines. It is pronounced "Sinkler" by people familiar with it. The one-room schoolhouse is still standing there. Interviewer Melissa Ireland's people, the Rosiers, rest in a cemetery high up on the mountain. They came into this country in the late 1700's, mainly for hunting and trapping. They settled at Sinclair, Colebank, Arden, and Dent in Barbour County. Joe Collins's forebears, the Colebanks, settled Colebank about this same time period. Colebank and Sinclair are just memories now. The general stores and post offices are all gone, and only families with an inherent love for the mountains remain.

Preston County Buckwheat Festival



By Peggy Ross

Buckwheat cakes and sausage is in the air. The annual Buckwheat Festival comes around the last week of September but even if you didn't know the date, you'd sense it.

Flags are up along Route 7 in the county seat of Kingwood. The town is looking downright spiffy: floats are being decorated, signs promise "Buckwheat Cakes and Sausage Anytime," volunteers are scurrying around the festival grounds, "No Vacancy" signs appear in the county's few inns and motels, and yard sale tables dot frontage along the busiest roads.

In mostly rural Preston County, the Buckwheat Festival is a really big deal. With an estimated 100,000 people participating in the last four key days of the

1987 Queen Ceres Jill Dawn Ross with James N. Crane of the Kingwood Volunteer Fire Department. Her bag of buckwheat costume won her "Best of Show" at the annual West Virginia Fairs and Festivals Pageant in 1988. Photo courtesy Jan's Studio.

Buckwheat cakes are served hot off the griddle at the Preston County Buckwheat Festival as shown in this 1968 photo. Photographer unknown, courtesy State Archives.

weeklong event, sometimes there's a little congestion. They want to see the crownings of one queen (Ceres, after the goddess of grain), two kings (Buckwheat and Fireman), and a lady fireman; an auction, and a performance by the Wheeling Symphony. In between, there are events ranging from a water battle between fire departments, turkey calling, sheep shearing, three days of parades, a fair, and country music concerts.

The festival began in 1938 as a

"Ain't no such thing as too-sour buckwheat batter!"

homecoming organized by the Kingwood Volunteer Fire Department and other volunteer groups throughout the county. Four years were taken out to concentrate on winning World War II, and the festival resumed in 1946.

The first queen (then known as Buckwheat), Louise Shaw, ended up marrying first king Scott Miller. The festival committee gave them furniture for a wedding present. Their marriage probably outlasted some of the furniture, as they were married nearly 60 years.

The Friday afternoon School Day parade carries festival royalty shine or rain. As many as 175 units of every imaginable size and description accompany the royalty through town. Mothers march with dancing-class students, band parents carry water for their high-stepping young musicians. Countless stitches have turned plain cloth into royalty garb, old-time apparel, goat covers, or clown outfits.

Throughout Preston County just about every community participates in this grand event which, like hunting season, is cause to dismiss school. Preston Countians donate hours of time as volunteers in Kingwood, while many also throw buckwheat feeds at their own churches and firehalls. Planning begins a year in advance.

Although the fire department is the official sponsor under President Bill Lindley, there is also a special festival committee — this year chaired by Berlin Graham. Most of the committee members have been involved for more years than they like to remember. Secretary Jack Crogan, now retired from a building supply

In 1957, buckwheat cakes and syrup brought lots of people out for the big Preston County festival. That's still the case today. Photo by Dave Cruise, courtesy State Archives.

Photographer Gerald S. Ratliff caught this 4-H youngster grooming her calf at the 1969 Buckwheat Festival. Photo courtesy State Archives.

company, said he's been in his position for 20 years.

Kids assume a large role in the event — the older ones even grind the six tons of Preston County whole hog sausage. Just about every child can participate in the colorful, noisy parades and in the creation of projects for the judgings.

But why celebrate the Buckwheat? Unrecognizable to most modern-day folk, it is the stuff from which those famous sour-batter pancakes are made. It is not a grain at all but a flower — a member of the knotweed family. Once, long ago, it was Preston County's chief crop, a quick-growing one that "done good in newly-cleared poor soil," according to James Seese of Brandonville. As a bonus, it attracted honey bees which made rich and dark buckwheat honey. That was before farmers realized how badly buckwheat drains nutrients from the soil unless it's plowed under instead of harvested. Nonetheless, Seese's family has been raising it for several generations.

Two mills, one in Eglon and one in Hazelton, bag the flour. John Evans, owner of ancient Hazelton Mill, buys what he can locally and encourages other locals to raise it, too. His operation is up and running only during buckwheat season. Eglon's BFS Farm Service's mill is still intact but they don't grind flour anymore. They bring in already-ground buckwheat from New York and bag it at the store so it can carry a local label. Manager Stoney Livengood has attempted to encourage farmers to start raising the crop again, but "the deer damage is so bad that when I threw the idea out, there wasn't even a response."

Throughout Preston County just about every community participates in this grand event.

"If you can keep the deer out, you can make some money on it," says Paul Lewis of the Hazelton area. He raises it for a second crop. These are two of a handful of part-time farmers who sow it, mostly for the deer and wild turkey as sort of a bribe. The easily-recognizable triangular seeds are also gathered by craftsmen and turned into various products, including pillows.

You almost can't claim Preston County citizenship without starting every winter day with the cakes. Store bought mixes don't count;

Parades are a big part of the Buckwheat Festival with a Firemen's Gigantic Parade, a School Day Parade, and a Farmer's Day Parade. This parade photo is from 1957. Photo by Dave Cruise, courtesy State Archives.

There must be buckwheat for a Buckwheat Festival. After the buckwheat was cut and shocked, this early crew of Prestonians knew just what to do next. Photo courtesy of Jan's Studio.

they're a far cry from the real stuff. Grocery and gift shops stock up on the freshly-bagged flour every September. If you're one of those people who really doesn't like buckwheat, it's better not to say so out loud. One visitor, trying them for the first time in a popular local restaurant sent them back because they were too sour. "Ain't no such thing as too-sour buckwheat batter!" a Prestonian in the next booth declared with some umbrage.

During the festival, an average of 17,000 meals are served in the KVFD's building, but it's anyone's guess how many buckwheat cakes are served since it's a county tradition to pay once and eat as many cakes as your tummy will hold. During 1994, about 37,500 sausage patties were devoured. That meant a whole crew just forming patties all day long.

This year, there will be a new tent where folks can just sit down to rest and be entertained by a variety of performers. There will be bingo, a first-class antique show in the civic center, and amusement park rides. Over on the junior high school football field, there will be a half-scale, 226-foot long replica of the black marble Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Locals and visitors alike will spend leisurely days walking the stock barns seeing the prize steers, being amazed at the variety of sheep, looking over the sleeping hogs. Days are spent oohing and ogling the blue-ribboned canned goods and quilts, or the biggest pumpkins and prettiest flower arrangements. These are days of living in the barns with the dairy cows; of walking amid myriad juried crafters' wares to see what's new and clever; of tossing the ring and winning a knife; riding the ferris wheel; shaking hands with political aspirants; learning about the latest woodburner technology; buying raffle tickets for the car giveaway; or picking up a bargain in someone's front yard while the sound of the calliope and the smell of donuts lures us back to the midway and the sprawling festival grounds.

It is all part of the Buckwheat Festival's charisma, and you're invited.

1997 Buckwheat Festival

Preston County's 56th Annual Buckwheat Festival will be held September 25 through 28 in Kingwood. The event is sponsored by the Kingwood Volunteer Fire Department. In addition to the parades, livestock events, exhibits, entertainment, and contests, there's always plenty of buckwheat cakes and sausage on hand. All-you-can-eat buckwheat cake dinners are served at the Community Building on the festival grounds with Preston-produced whole-hog sausage, margarine, syrup, and applesauce.

A draft horse pull, entertainment tent, and an antique show and sale have been added to the 1997 event. Also, the West Virginia Northern Railroad is offering scenic excursion tours for festival goers. For train ride information contact Kingwood Northern at (304)329-3333.

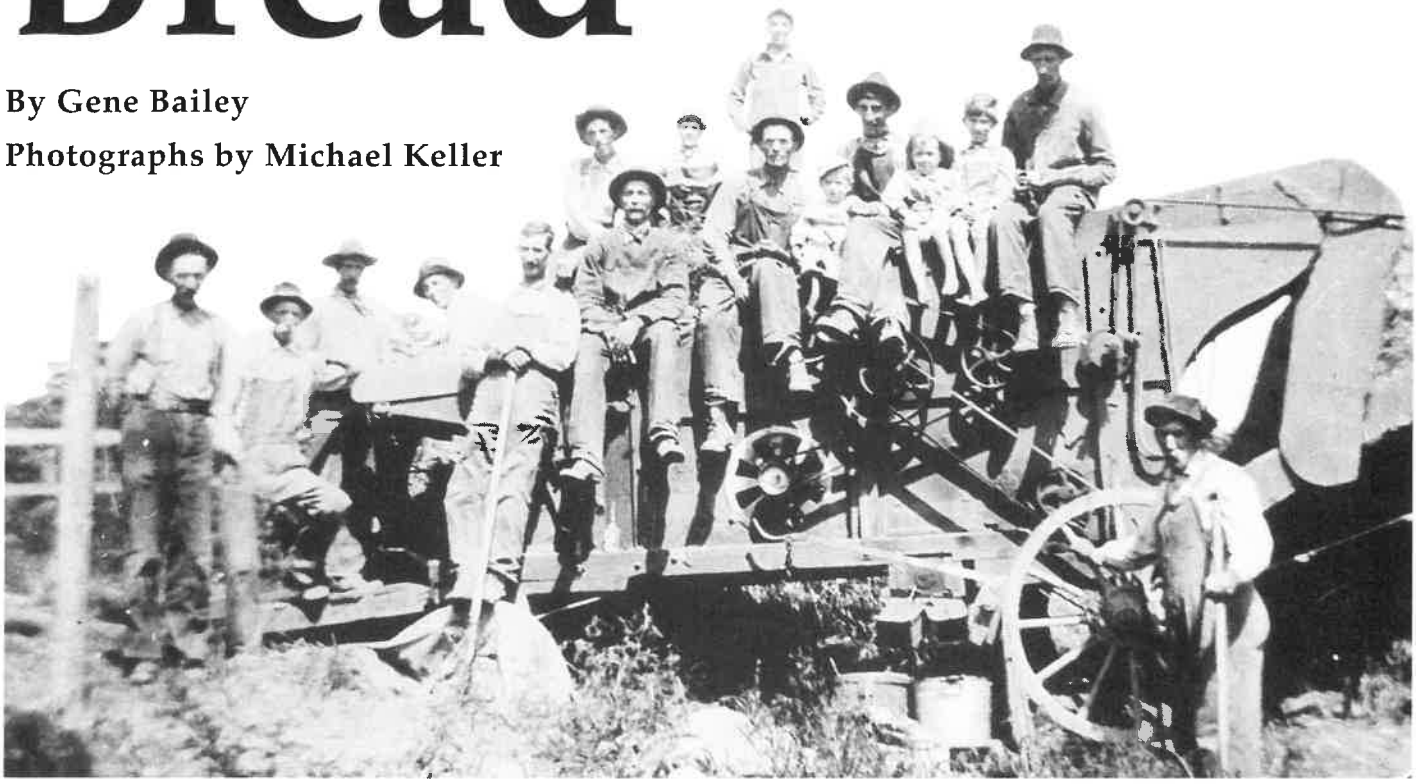
The Buckwheat Festival site in Kingwood is easily accessible from I-79 and I-68, located about 25 miles from Morgantown. For more information contact the Kingwood Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 74, Kingwood, WV 26537; 1-800-571-0912.

Harvesting and Threshing the Grain

Working for Our Daily Bread

By Gene Bailey

Photographs by Michael Keller



This Mercer County threshing crew and machine, pictured about 1919, were similar to those author Gene Bailey recalls from his early years on his grandparents' farm.

"If we don't work we can't eat," was Granddaddy's philosophy on the farm. My early childhood was spent on a mountain farm in southern West Virginia. It was a perfect classroom to show us the relationship between the work that we did and the bread that we ate at meal time. We produced the grain, had it ground, and made the bread on the farm.

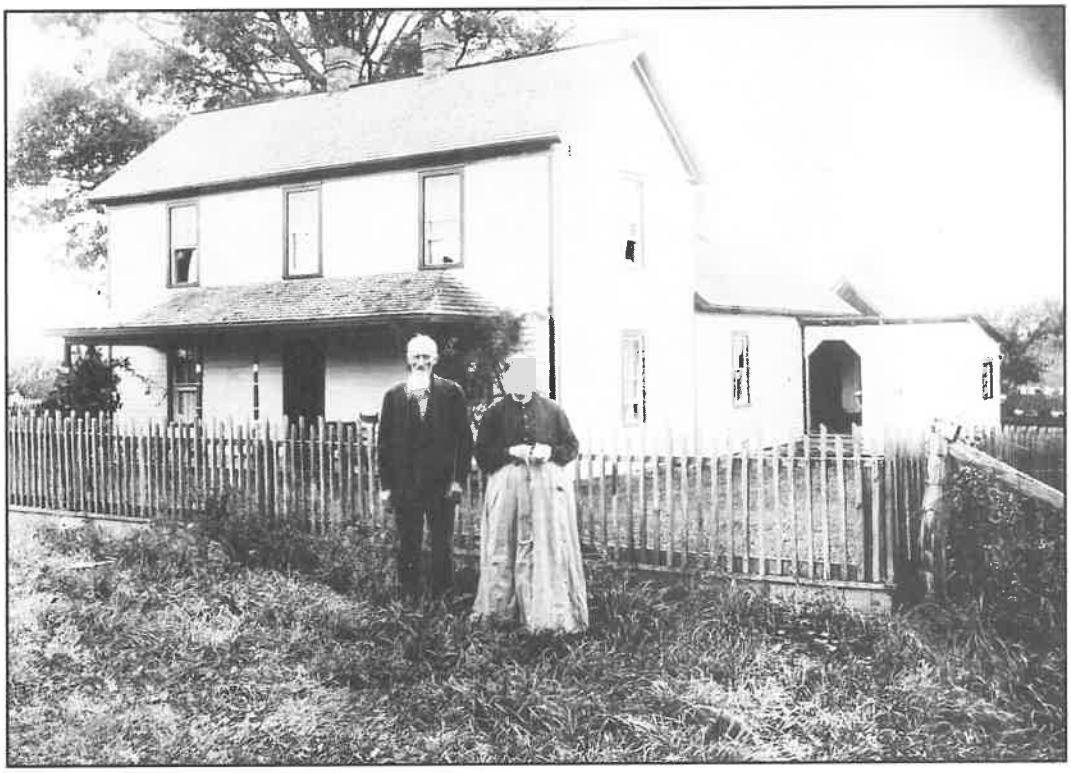
And on a crisp November morning those freshly made biscuits, with real butter melted on them, covered with sorghum molasses or cinnamon-flavored apple butter, did taste good.

I was born in 1933, in the Pisgah community (pronounced "Pisgee") not far from Princeton, Mercer County. My brother Ronald and I lived on the farm with our parents, Forest and Ruth Bailey; grandparents, Gilbert "Bishop" Bailey and

Stella Bailey; and my unmarried aunt, Virginia "Ginny" Bailey — three generations in one house. And all of us, from the youngest to the oldest, had to help with the work. The work was essential if we were to eat because most of our food was produced and preserved on the farm.

My parents and grandparents had little need for money. Most of what we needed we grew or made. Other needs were secured from surrounding farmers usually by trading. But some things had to be bought.

Money was necessary to purchase coffee, tea, and a few other food items; it was needed to pay taxes and buy machinery; and we had to have money to make purchases from the Sears and Roebuck catalog which we received in the mail about twice a year.



The Bailey homeplace was the site of most of the farming activity described in this piece. Gene Bailey's great-grandparents, Masten Bailey and Nancy Lambert Bailey, are pictured in front of the house, about 1920. Gene and his wife Betty also lived here shortly after they were married. The house still stands, although it was moved in the 1970's to make way for the West Virginia Turnpike. Photographer unknown.

To get the money which was needed, Daddy and Granddaddy had several projects, including selling the wool from our sheep. They sold bull Hereford calves for breeding and, if there was a surplus of heifer calves, they sold them, too.

But a major producer of cash was the grain which was harvested each year. Much of the wheat was cleaned and graded with the best of it being sold to surrounding farmers for seed. A grinder powered by an old truck engine produced livestock feed from the grains we grew on our farm and from grains our neighbors brought to us for grinding. Of course, we also kept an adequate supply for ourselves which we ground into flour to make our bread and those delicious biscuits.

The wheat was planted in the fall of the year sometimes with a horse-pulled drill, a sizable piece of equipment with two or three large hoppers filled with seed and fertilizer. The drill is comprised of an ingenuous arrangement of gears, funnels, discs, and chains. It parts the soil, lays seed and fertilizer in the furrow, and replaces the dirt as it is pulled along through the field. But often on our farm, because of lack of a drill or because the fields were steep, the seed was broadcast. When broadcasting the seed, the men planted by scattering each handful of seed using a snap of the wrist to scatter it evenly over the ground. Broadcasting was also done using a crank-type machine carried by the operator, with the seed carried in a cloth bag. These seeders are still in common use today. They are sometimes called Cyclone Seeders and are used to seed lawns.

Grandparents Gilbert "Bishop" Bailey and Stella Bailey, pictured approximately 1950.

After the field was seeded either by drilling or by broadcasting, the wheat came up to form a green carpet of new growth over the winter. When spring arrived it grew rapidly to "head out" in late May or early June. It then ripened and was harvested later in June.

Other crops which we grew, such as oats, buckwheat, and corn, were planted in the spring and harvested

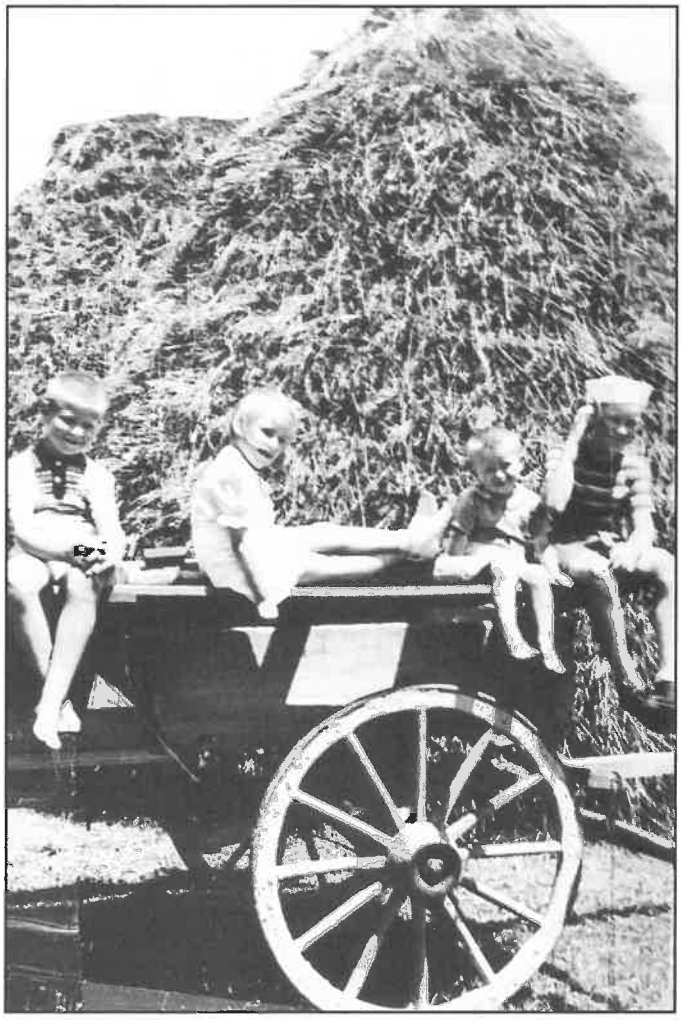
later in the summer with corn being harvested the latest in the fall. Some of the neighboring farm families also grew barley and rye which was seeded and harvested much like wheat.

In my earliest memories of grain harvesting on our farm, on the steeper fields, the men cut the wheat, oats, or buckwheat with cradles. The cradle was made very much like a hand with the lower finger being a scythe. There were five fingers above the scythe-like blade, all attached to a handle. Swinging a cradle was hard work and brought profuse sweating on a hot summer day to the men who were cutting the grain.

When the wheat ripened in June, my grandfather got several men in addition to my father to help harvest it, if it was to be cradled. With Granddaddy in the lead, several men followed, each a few steps behind the one in front and a cradle swath to the right of the man directly ahead of him, cutting the grain in time with the leader. Each harvester would swing the cradle cutting quite a bundle of stalks of grain with each swing. The stalks were caught by the finger-like projections of the cradle. The harvester then gathered the stalks in one hand and laid them on the ground. Then, the line of harvesters took a step or two forward, swinging the cradle again and repeating the process.

Behind the harvesters, Daddy and a helper followed. They gathered up the piles of stalks of grain until they had a bundle about ten or 12 inches in diameter. A few stalks of grain were wrapped around the bundle and twisted so that the stalks of grain were held firmly together.

When about ten bundles had been accumulated, they were gathered together. Two bundles were set upright so that the tops were leaning against each other. Then two more were placed on either side so that four bundles were leaning against each other. Then one bundle was spread apart on each end and placed horizontally over the tops of the other bundles to form a cap. The process was then repeated with a second bundle which was placed over the first cap bundle at right angles to it. These two bundles were supposed to shed the water and protect the shock of grain from weather while the ripening process continued. In these shocks, the grain continued to ripen until it was necessary to get it into a central location for threshing, called "thrashing" by most of us.



According to the author, "This picture shows our farm wagon in front of two stacks of wheat ready for threshing. I am on the left and my brother Ronald is third from left." Photographer unknown, about 1939.

We produced the grain, had it ground, and made the bread on the farm.

On land which was more nearly level or rolling, a horse-drawn machine called a binder was used to cut the grain and tie it in bundles. The cutting portion of the binder had a reciprocating blade like a side mower for a tractor. The grain, after it was cut, fell onto a metal table or bed immediately behind the blade. A belt carried it up to where it was mechanically tied in bundles. It was then discharged into a basket-like carrier on the back of the binder.

When several bundles accumulated it was dumped by the operator, who rode high on the binder. The men who were shocking the grain set it up just as they did when working behind the men who harvested with cradles. This process was much faster than harvesting with cradles and required less labor because the bundles didn't have to be hand tied.

Our binder was purchased when I was only two or three years old; before the binder was purchased, our family used a reaper. The reaper, or "buncher," operated much the same way as the binder, but it did not tie or bind the bundles. I remember the reaper being sold to another farmer after Daddy and Granddaddy made sure the binder actually worked.

Although many of the farmers who had binders used three or four horses to pull the machine, ours was pulled by a team of large gray

Author Gene Bailey and Mercer County farmer Hugh Gooch with a drill, still used for planting on Hugh's farm. The drill plants, fertilizes, and covers several rows of seed at once.

horses. These horses were larger than most of that day and, we believed, they were the strongest horses in the Pisgah community.

Usually, a few weeks after the wheat was shocked, it was hauled on the farm wagon pulled by our team of big horses, or sometimes on a sled if the field was steep, to a central location. There it was stacked. The stack was started on rails so air could circulate under the grain. The stackers began in the middle with the heads of grain placed towards the center. Then a circular layer was placed around those in the middle; the stacking continued outward until the edge of the rails were reached. Then the process was repeated with the middle always kept a little higher than the outside of the stack.

When the stack was some ten feet or more in height, the stacker began to draw it in, making each layer a little smaller in diameter than the one underneath it, this continued until a peaked top was built and two bundles could be laid on it to cap it, just as the shocks had been capped, for protection from the rain. The stacker worked on his knees with a helper on the wagon throwing up bundles of grain with a pitch fork. Each bundle was placed in front of the stacker so he could reach out and get it and place it correctly without getting off his knees.

Several stacks of grain were usually located close together in two rows with enough room in between the rows so that the machine which threshed the grain could get between them. The threshing machine was a huge machine, or so it seemed to me, pulled from farm to farm by an old model tractor with iron wheels. After the threshing machine was in place the tractor was used as the power source to operate it.

The stalks were caught by the finger-like projections of the cradle.

Many farmers in our community used the same threshing machine which was owned by Bud Daugherty, a man who lived in a nearby community. Each summer the threshing machine would start its tour as soon as the first farmer had stacked his grain. It would then proceed from farm to farm until all the grain was threshed.

The threshing machine owner would get a toll, or a portion of the grain, for his work and the use of his threshing machine. The thresher would use the toll to feed his family and his animals and he sold any surplus for cash.

When the threshing machine came to a farm, neighbors would come from surrounding farms to help with the work. They then expected the neighboring farmers to help them when the threshing machine arrived at their farm because many hands were needed for the threshing.

Two men pitched the bundles of grain onto a platform at one end of the threshing machine. Two more men, standing on a lower platform, cut the bands holding the bundles together and fed the bundles into the threshing machine. The machine vibrated the stalks until the grain

A few stalks of grain are wrapped around a bundle and twisted (below), holding the bundle firmly together. Several bundles of grain are carefully stacked together to form a shock (left). The horizontal bundles on top are intended to shelter the ripening grain from rainfall while the shocks stand in the field. Photo taken at the West Virginia State Farm Museum, Point Pleasant.

was separated from the heads.

The grain came out a chute near the bottom of the machine where it was expertly bagged by a man holding a sack under the chute. As each sack was filled it was pulled away by another man, tied, and lifted on a wagon and stacked for the haul to be stored. As soon as the wagon was loaded it was driven to the storage building, or granary, and another wagon immediately pulled into its place and was loaded with more sacks of grain.

From a separate chute at a higher level, straw was blown out into a pile. Several men moved the straw and piled it into a stack called a rick. The rick was usually rectangular in shape and much larger than the original stacks of grain. It had to be stacked rapidly but expertly so that it would stand until it was fed to the cattle or was used for their bedding. The straw was often stacked around two or three poles which helped hold it in place.

In the granary, some of the seed was stored in bulk. The sacks were emptied into large bins and then taken back into the field to be reused. Other grain was stored securely in the cloth sacks.

Threshing was dusty, dirty work. The men usually wore long sleeved, cotton shirts and broad-brimmed hats, either straw or felt. Most of them wore bandanas around their necks to keep the dust out of their shirts. Many also tied their pants legs around their shoes to stop the dust.

But the threshing was as much a social event as it was work. With many men working, the threshing on each farm was usually finished in a day or less. During this rapid work by the men the women were busy, as well. It was their job to prepare a meal for the men who were threshing the grain. Often

Author Gene Bailey inspects a reaper, or "buncher," stored between two corn cribs on Hugh Gooch's farm. This piece of harvesting equipment is pulled through the fields by draft horses or by a tractor, where it cuts and bundles stalks of grain.

Hugh Gooch, in about 1970, pitching bundles of oats into a thresher. Photographer unknown.

Looking down the business end of an old threshing machine on Hugh Gooch's farm. Cut stalks of grain are fed in here on the way to being threshed.

women from surrounding farms came to help with the food preparation. Each farm wife tried to outdo the others in preparing the best, most abundant meal.

Promptly, at noon the men would begin arriving to eat dinner, as we called the noon meal. But before they could eat they had to wash up. For that purpose we had a wooden table under a huge oak tree beside the house. On the table we placed several buckets of water with dippers in each, several wash basins, and some towels. The men would get drinks of the cold water and then pour three or four dippers full of water in wash basins, with the men drinking from the same dippers and washing in the same basins and using the same towels as one another. We also had a couple of rain barrels and some of the men preferred to use them for washing up. After washing their faces and hands the men were ready to eat.

It was a custom with Granddaddy to butcher a lamb for the threshing machine crew and mutton was something that the men probably did not get to eat at very many other farms. A typical meal for this gang of men, children, and women at our farm consisted of mutton, beef, ham, chicken and dumplings, green beans, brown beans, mashed potatoes, fried potatoes, potato salad, mustard greens, cole slaw, applesauce, tomatoes, sweet potatoes with marshmallows on top, deviled eggs, pickles, bread and butter pickles, pickled beets, honey, several kinds of jellies and jams, cottage cheese, buttermilk, sweet milk, coffee, biscuits, two or three kinds of gravy, assorted cakes, apple pie, and lots of cobblers. It would take several tables to feed everyone with ten or 12 people eating at each table.

A hardworking man on our farm might eat five or six biscuits at each meal.

With all the people who were fed at our farm at threshing time, I don't ever remember the food getting low. Although it disappeared rapidly there was always plenty in reserve. We were in the midst of the Great Depression and had little money, but there was an abundance of food because we produced our own.

Needless to say, with all the food and the company, threshing time was one of my favorite events. I enjoyed the smell of the newly threshed wheat and the rides on top of the sacks of grain stacked high on the wagon. Granddaddy even let me play in the wheat in the granary. That was especially fun because the cool, smooth grain was soothing to my bare feet. But the abundant food was my favorite part of threshing time.

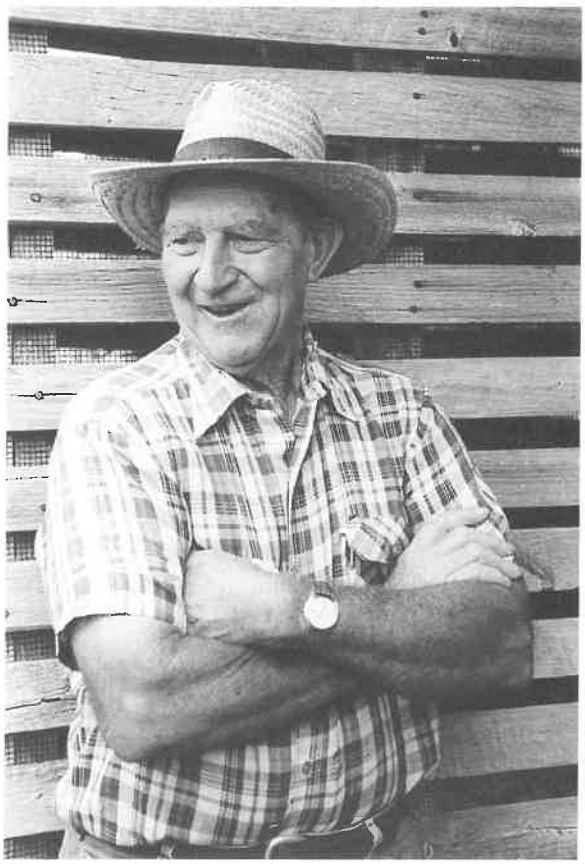
I envied Daddy and Granddaddy because when our threshing was completed they went to neighbors' farms to help them with their work. And each day, when they returned home, Mother and Grandma, if they had not helped the neighbor women prepare the noonday meal, wanted to know how the dinner compared with the one at our house during the threshing there. Of course, the men assured them that none of the meals at neighbors' houses was as good or as plentiful as the one they got at home.

While the threshing of grain was hard work, it provided an occasion for socializing and it taught all of us that cooperation was essential

After threshing, the straw is blown out through a chute for later stacking. The threshed grain comes out the smaller chute on the left, where it is bagged. Photographer unknown.

to our survival. Grain was a necessary part of our diet and no one family could have threshed the grain without having large numbers of helpers. The helpers had to be volunteers because no farmer could have paid enough workers for the threshing. The only way to get volunteers was to volunteer yourself when your neighbor's grain was threshed.

So, whether people wanted to or not, they were forced to cooperate with all the other farmers in the community. From this cooperation a community spirit developed which carried over into other activities. Although disagreements among neighboring farmers were common — they disagreed over such things as religion, politics, and line fences — the differences were kept under control because, next summer, many volunteer workers would be needed again when the grain was ready to thresh.



Hugh Gooch today.

After the grain was stored (most of the grain which was threshed on our farm was wheat), it was allowed to harden in the granary until the corn was cut, shocked, and shucked in the fall. The wheat, then, was cleaned and graded by the use of a hand-powered machine with a series of screens within it. The wheat was poured into a chute at the top, the handle was turned and the wheat was vibrated over screens which separated it into three sizes and removed much of the dirt which was in it. The best grain was saved for seed and for grinding into flour.

Then sometime in late October or early November, Daddy and Granddaddy would remove the back seat from their Chevrolet passenger car, and load the back of the car with cleaned wheat, shelled corn, and a sack of buckwheat. When they had the car loaded the rear would almost drag the ground.

They hauled the grain about 25 miles to Narrows, Virginia. At Narrows, beside Wolf Creek, was a water-powered mill where many people took grain to have it ground into flour. Although there were other nearby mills powered by gasoline engines, my family, for some reason, preferred the water-powered mill for the grinding of their grain into flour.

Sometimes I was allowed to go with them and watch the miracle of wheat being turned into flour and the corn into yellow cornmeal. When the time arrived for our grain

to be ground, the sacks were pulled upstairs where the grain was dumped into a chute and, by some miracle I could not understand, it passed between stones and came out as flour. The flour was bagged in paper sacks, we called them "pokes," of 25 pounds each.

We usually had quite a few pokes of wheat flour, two or three pokes of cornmeal, and a poke or two of buckwheat flour after the miller took out his toll. These were loaded back into the car and we returned home with the delightful fragrance of new flour surrounding us.

We ate a lot of biscuits made from the flour and had corn bread often; the buckwheat flour was mixed with wheat flour and made into pancakes or "fritters" as we called them.

Fritters were a real treat on a cold day for either breakfast or supper, which were the two light meals of the day; for dinner, served at noon, we always had many different kinds of foods.

Fritters were usually eaten swimming in melted butter and covered with sorghum molasses; if the sorghum had run out, we used syrup made from brown sugar.

The old Bailey farm is now a residential subdivision.

The biscuits which Grandma and Mother made were large and delicious. Grandma always saved back a small piece of dough in her large wooden dough bowl each time she made biscuits; her original dough ball had been given her by her mother when she married, she often told me. This ball of dough provided the necessary ingredients to get the new dough to rise to make the huge, fluffy biscuits which I relished.

A hardworking man on our farm might eat five or six biscuits at each meal; one biscuit would be consumed with ham or beef gravy; one biscuit might be eaten in sandwich form with a thick slice of ham; another biscuit would probably be eaten with melted butter and jam; and another biscuit might be eaten with jelly. If there was no dessert for the meal, a last biscuit might be eaten with applesauce over it, sprinkled with sugar, and covered with thick cream. Biscuit dough was also used in making fruit cobblers and chicken dumplings. During the course of a year, with friends and relatives visiting often, we consumed quite a quantity of wheat flour.

Often, our flour would get low before the next fall arrived and the men would make another trip to the mill in late winter or early spring. This was the time that I was most likely allowed to go because the car was not loaded as heavily and there was less concern about a broken spring or busted tire. But regardless of whether one trip or two was made to the mill during


We couldn't resist this 1938 photo of W.T. "Uncle Tommy" Maddy husking corn near the Marie community in Summers County. Photo courtesy of Norman Walter.

the course of the year, we always had plenty of flour to make about two dozen or so delicious biscuits for each meal.

However, by 1940 life was changing for us. The United States was beginning to mobilize for the possibility of war. Some of the younger men were joining the armed forces. Other men were getting jobs in defense plants, on railroads, or in mines. By the summer of 1942, after World War II began, there were few young men available for the farm work.

The older men, with the help of younger teenagers and women, tried to continue the work on the family farms. At ten years old, I did what I could to help Granddaddy harvest the grain and get it prepared for the threshing machine. Daddy had taken a job in a munitions plant and we had moved to a small house adjoining the family farm, but I went back to the farm each day and helped shock hay, harvest grain, and perform other jobs.

The threshing crews got smaller and smaller as more men moved away and the older men were unable to continue the hard work. Fewer and fewer farmers grew grain and, after a few more years, many of the family farms ceased to exist.

Fewer and fewer farmers grew grain and, after a few more years, many of the family farms ceased to exist.

Through all these changes, I feel fortunate to have been raised at a time when families still lived and worked close to the land. By growing our own grain, harvesting it, threshing it, and seeing it ground into flour and the flour baked into bread, we knew exactly why we were working from early spring until late fall, and from sunrise until sunset each workday. Although we were often tired, we knew why we worked; we also knew that if we didn't work, there would be no food during the long winter.

As a child, I learned the work ethic, not because it was hounded into me but because I could see the importance of working. Even though I was young when we moved away from the farm, I learned that a full stomach was the direct result of hard work. A tired back and sore muscles led directly to a full stomach, and that made the food taste better.

Hugh Gooch and the author (right) have been friends and farming companions for many decades. Hugh is one of the few remaining full-time farmers in Mercer County; Gene has farmed Christmas trees for over 40 years.

The Pickens Leper

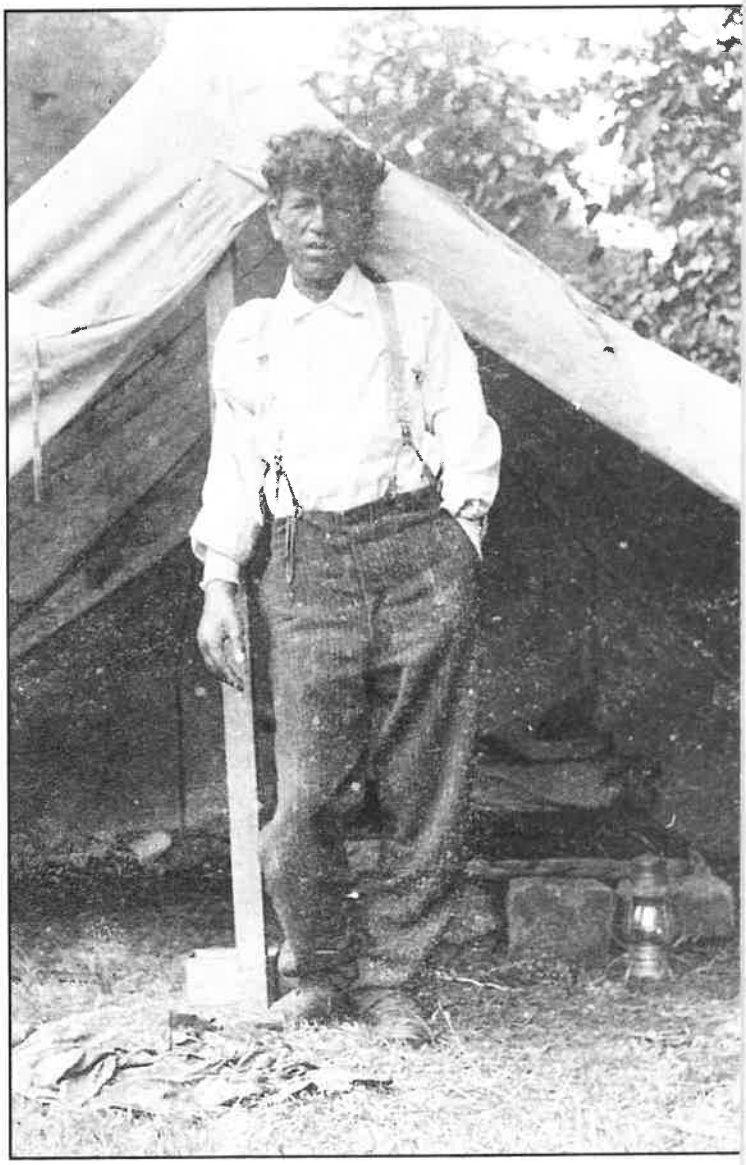
By L. Wayne Sheets

Randolph County writer Wayne Sheets grew up hearing tales about the Pickens Leper. Drawn by this poignant subject, Wayne began extensive research which led to this, his first published manuscript. His sources included personal interviews with family members of those close to the event; personal correspondence; numerous letters and articles printed in The West Virginia Hillbilly *newspaper;* West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia *edited by Jim Comstock; and* Haven In the Hardwood, *a history of Pickens by Arnold E. Nelson, Rosemary Smith Nelson, and Ozella Smith. — ed.*

On a mid-July afternoon in 1906, George Rashid sat quietly in his brother's shack nestled in the Tygart River Valley near Elkins, as Dr. W. W. "Ben" Golden examined the sores on his hands and face. George feared that he had leprosy; the doctor suspected it. Dr. Golden took some tissue samples from the rough, dry sores and went back to his little office laboratory. For hours he made what tests he could, pouring over his medical tomes. Finally, he was certain of the diagnosis — leprosy.

George had emigrated in 1902 to Waterville, Maine, from his home in a small village in what is now Syria. His wife Ollie Yesbec Rashid joined him in 1903. They did not have any children.

He was working for the railroads as a section hand in Maine when his affliction first appeared in 1904. George tried to cover up the symptoms of his disease by wearing gloves and long sleeved shirts, even in the summertime. His coworkers became suspicious. He and his wife began to wander throughout the country. He was in Indiana and Pennsylvania, and the early part of 1906 found him in Enterprise, West Virginia. From there, sources say, he went to Philippi and then to Elkins. His brother Charley had drifted to Elkins earlier and had opened a small oriental goods store dealing in laces, linens, rugs, and native prints. George worked as a salesman for his brother, selling Middle Eastern goods throughout the region until his symptoms, and his desperate attempts to hide them, once again aroused suspicion.



George Rashid in front of his temporary living quarters near Pickens. Photographer unknown, 1906. Photo courtesy of Virginia Bly Hoover.

As Dr. Golden walked back to the Rashid cabin, he turned over in his mind how he should handle the problem confronting him and George Rashid. He knew that once the diagnosis became known to the public, fear and panic would result. He decided he would tell only

the brothers of his diagnosis.

George accepted the doctor's diagnosis with resigned indifference. Since the disease had been in his family before, in the old country, he knew perhaps better than the doctor that leprosy meant ostracism and isolation. It had been so long since he had left those with the disease he was beginning to allow himself a ray of hope that his exposure in his native country was not going to affect him. That hope was now destroyed.

After the doctor left, the Rashids talked far into the night. Each knew that George could not remain in Elkins. To do so would ruin the little business Charley had worked so hard to build. Deep in the post-midnight hours, George decided what he would do. If he could get to Massachusetts, some friends there would help him return to his native country. There, he felt, he could bathe in the Jordan River and be healed of his deadly affliction. He slipped quietly out of the little cabin and down to the railroad yard. An eastbound coal train was pulling out — George swung aboard.

George worked as a salesman until his symptoms, and his desperate attempts to hide them, once again aroused suspicion.

The next morning Dr. Golden returned to the Rashid home to explain his course of action for George's care. From Charley he learned that George had left sometime during the night. Dr. Golden went straight to the Randolph County health officials. Within a matter of hours an announcement was made. By afternoon, the early editions of newspapers throughout the East warned that "a swarthy Assyrian, five feet four inches tall and weighing about 165 pounds" was loose somewhere in the middle Atlantic states with leprosy, spreading a scourge of horror in the heart of every reader.

In the early evening of July 24, a coal train eased into the freight yards in Cumberland, Maryland. A dark, dirty, hungry figure crept from between two cars and scampered behind a tool shack. Despite his quickness, he could not elude the curiosity of a group of youngsters playing near the tracks. They went to investigate. Suddenly a shrill voice raised the cry, "The leper! The leper!" Women screamed; men came running with sticks and stones. From a safe distance they hurled their stones and curses at the cowering shadow of a man.

Doctor James L. Cunningham tended to George's leprosy and was also there to bury him the night he died. Photographer unknown. Photo courtesy of Pickens Historical Society.

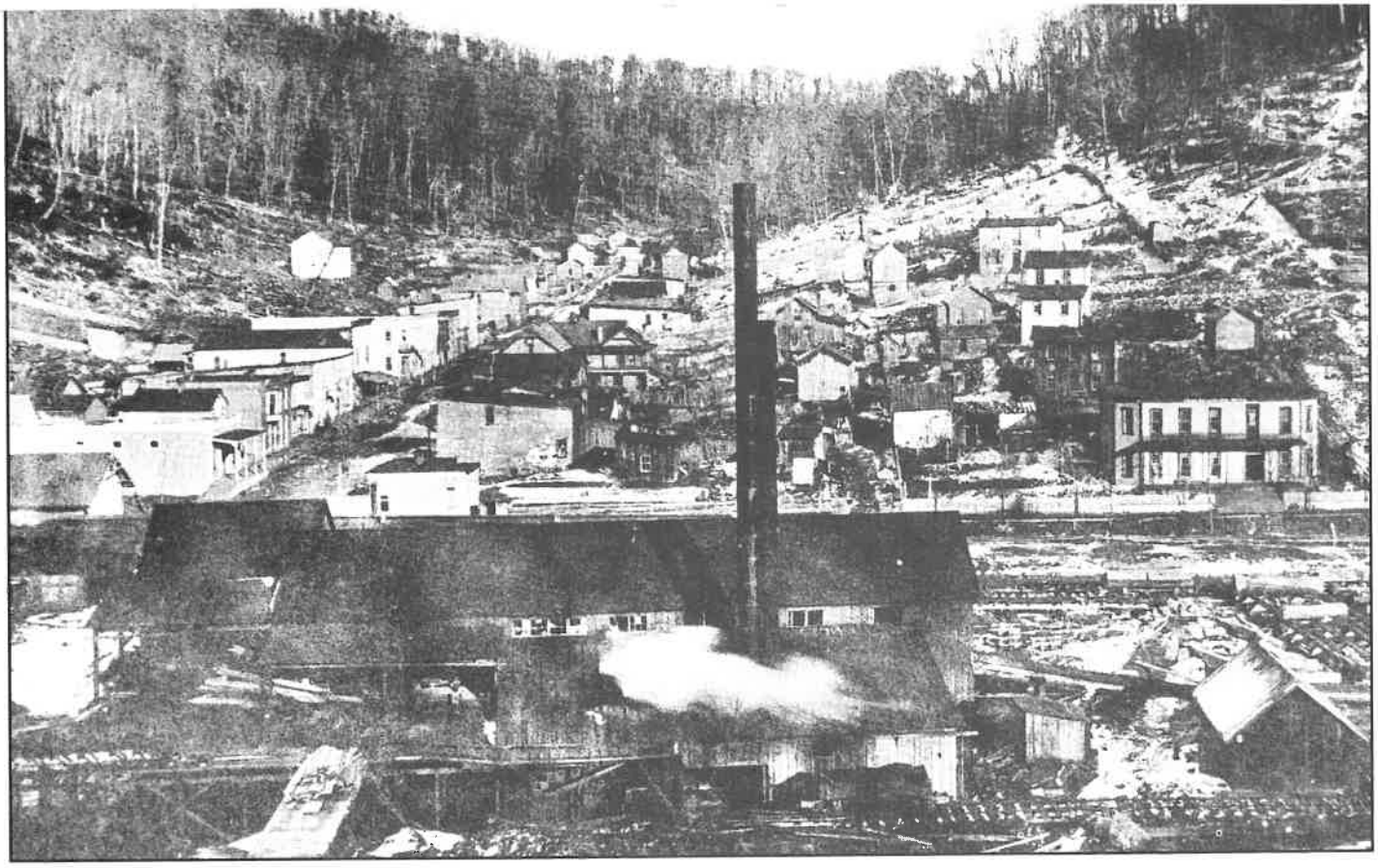
Although George was sick and hungry, he managed to escape these first persecutors by running and hiding. A few hours later he stole back to the rail yard to swing aboard another freight train.

The next morning the train on which Rashid rode was stopped at the Pennsylvania-Maryland border. Pennsylvania health officials and Baltimore & Ohio Railroad guards began a systematic search for the fugitive. They found him beneath the forward end of a gondola. Alternating between threats and cajolery, they enticed the untouchable man from his hiding place.

Old, dilapidated, and out-of-date, B&O boxcar number 93351 sat on a nearby siding. It was a wooden car with no air brakes and the early drawbar couplers. The boxcar was hastily picked as the place of incarceration for Rashid.

With George inside, the car was shunted to an isolated spur where it was guarded by B&O detectives. Three times a day the door eased open just far enough to slide food and water to him. For four days George was confined to abstract darkness at night and unbearable heat during the day. In Harrisburg, the Pennsylvania health authorities and Baltimore & Ohio Railroad officials haggled over who was responsible for him.

On the morning of August 1, car number 93351 was gone from its siding. Only a few high ranking officials knew that George was on



George Rashid came to Pickens about four years after this picture was made. The townspeople were wary of George and his disease, but he found kindness there, too. Photographer unknown, 1902. Courtesy of Ethel Cunningham.

his way back to Randolph County.

At 6:30 p.m. on August 2, 1906, secret running orders were issued to conductor Dorse Yerkey at Buckhannon. With his train of only passenger-type engine number 786, caboose, and crew, he was instructed to travel "light" to Clarksburg and report there to the yardmaster. His engineer was Robert Jeffries of Weston; his fireman was J. B. Ballard. Yerkey reported to the Clarksburg yardmaster at 10:00 p.m. and was told to place his engine and caboose on the northeast siding, to maintain full steam, and to wait for further orders.

Shortly after midnight a special train from Parkersburg rumbled into the yard. It consisted of three empty gondolas and a boxcar — boxcar number 93351. As the crew was coupling up the air hoses, someone inside the boxcar knocked, and in good English, asked to be let out. The railroad surgeon angrily forbade this request as did the train master, W. P. Steward. This three-car train had orders to Pickens.

In the early gray dawn hours of August 3, the "Leper Special" stopped two miles north of Pickens. The members of the train crew climbed down, hauled out a tent from the caboose, and hastily erected it some 20 feet from the track. Food, blankets, and some medical supplies on board the caboose were stored in the tent. Dr.

Dr. Cunningham assured George in a friendly way that he was there to help, would care for him, or would "die trying."

Rogers unlocked the door, and with the help of the two guards, pushed it slowly back on its creaking track. George was summoned to come forth.

After some 30 to 40 minutes of threatening, cursing, and beseechment by Dr. Rogers, George appeared at the door. He sat down, dangling his feet over the boxcar's edge for another ten minutes before leaving his jail of the past several days. He finally slid down, stumbled across the drainage ditch, and disappeared inside his new canvas home. As Dr. Rogers and the two guards climbed back aboard, the train backed down the tracks toward Buckhannon. Boxcar number 93351 was dropped off at Horner. "Strangely enough," Sandy Caines said in a 1963 letter to *The West Virginia Hillbilly*, "on my trip the next day, we picked up this same boxcar and deposited it...near Shinnston. On the return trip from Fairmont, coal was being loaded into this same 40,000 pound capacity, wooden-sided boxcar.

"I made two or three trips to Pickens as a brakeman in the next three months and together with other railroaders we tossed newspapers, candy, and gifts to the leper," Caines wrote.

Dr. James L. Cunningham had practiced at Pickens for 12 years. He was the duly authorized Baltimore & Ohio physician of the Pickens Division. On the morning of August 3, Dr. Cunningham received a telegram from the B&O home office in Baltimore instructing him to walk north along the

James Thomas, George Rashid's caretaker, sits at right with hands on knees. Mr. Thomas's daughter, Mary, prepared meals for George. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Charles Warner.

B&O right-of-way where he would find a stranger. He was told to take care of the stranger and see that he was provided for. Without asking questions, Dr. Cunningham did what he was told. Two miles north, he came upon a solitary figure sitting on the track. Dr. Cunningham knew that the stranger was George Rashid the leper.

George looked at the doctor through haunted eyes. In all probability he thought one more person had come to persecute him. Instead Dr. Cunningham spoke to George the first words of kindness he had likely heard since he fled Elkins on that damp, dark morning in July. Dr. Cunningham assured George in a friendly way that he was there to help, would care for him, or would "die trying."

Although the ravages of the disease were irreversible, Dr. Cunningham attempted to check its progress and slow the further deterioration of George's body. A major part of his treatment was the application of a product called chaulmoogra oil. Although this ointment probably had little lasting effect, it provided the patient with some soothing, temporary relief.

There was a great deal of concern among those residents who lived down stream along the Buckhannon River from where the leper was situated. They feared he would bathe in the river and contaminate the water. Mr. McCord, his first caretaker, stated that he never bathed in the river, and in fact George was very conscious of his predicament and how his affliction could affect others. He would not touch the fence around him for fear others would touch it. When children would get near his place, he would hold up his hands and say, "Unclean, unclean."

During George's ordeal his wife continued to clerk in stores in Elkins. The B&O Railroad provided her transportation to visit him on weekends. She would come in on the Friday or Saturday evening train and leave early Sunday or Monday morning. After visiting him during the day, she would spend her nights in one of the Pickens hotels.

Because of the early arrival of winter to the West Virginia mountains, Dr. Cunningham felt that Rashid must be provided with a more permanent place to live. He ordered a one-room cabin be built on the B&O right-of-way about a half-mile north of the town. A second shanty for the guard was thrown up some 50 feet away. Some say that a fence eight feet high enclosed a 40 square-foot area, with a padlocked gate for security reasons. Others said that only a single strand of heavy wire surrounded the small compound. On October 1, Mr. Rashid moved into his new quarters. His tent was burned.

The erection of permanent quarters for the leper brought open rumblings of discontent in Pickens. The old residents accepted Rashid with typical mountain philosophy. They made no trouble. These men and women had suffered plagues such as smallpox, typhoid, and diphtheria which had taken their toll. Rashid and his leprosy were just

another scourge they accepted with characteristic resignation.

The lumberjacks of the town were cut from a different pattern, however. Most of them came in from the outside. They were hard-living men of the woods. It was this restless group that came out openly against George Rashid. After many days of subdued mutterings, their hostility became tangible. On October 4, a delegation of 16 lumberjacks left the Dyer & O'Donnel Saloon and went down the street to Dr. Cunningham's office. Their spokesman stood framed in the doorway. The heads and shoulders of his followers could be seen in the dimly lighted street outside.

Dr. Cunningham was talking to the Presbyterian minister when the delegation arrived. He rose from his chair.

"Well," he said, "what do you want?"

"Doctor," said the spokesman, "you've got to get that leper out of this town."

Dr. Cunningham had treated these lumberjacks for years. He knew these men. With no show of alarm, he rammed his right hand downward until it grasped the handle of the .38 revolver that he always carried in his coat pocket. The front flap of his coat dangled casually over the end of the muzzle.

"Get out," he demanded.

No further words were spoken. For a moment, they glared sullenly through the doorway. Then the delegation turned and stomped back up the muddy street into the warmer, more comforting atmosphere of the grog shop.

The uproar in Pickens was further aggravated when Mr. Philip Cosman, who replaced Mr. McCord as George's caretaker, was sent by a benevolent society in New York to live with the leper and do some experimenting with the disease. Mr. Cosman would stroll into the grocery store or the church after living in close quarters with the diseased outcast. He also liked to take his meals at the hotel. The townsmen

Biblical Treatment of An American Leper

In 1906, the lumberjacks, merchants, and other settlers in and around Pickens would, in all likelihood, never have seen a leper before George Rashid came into their midst. They were a mix of Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, and other Christians, however, and it is probable that biblical references to leprosy provided them with a large measure of their information on the subject.

The Book of Leviticus (Chapters 13-14) contains a lengthy description of the "plague of leprosy," dating back several thousand years. The priests, who served as public health officials, examined and declared persons with certain symptoms to be lepers. They were then isolated so that they could not contaminate the community. To fully identify the dreaded lepers, their clothing was torn and they were required to warn off anyone who came near by shouting "Unclean, unclean."

And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him (Luke 5:13).

From George's home country in Western Asia there was once a leper named General Naaman who came to Israel for healing. Prophet Elisha did not come near him but instructed him to bathe in the Jordan River seven times. According to the story in 2 Kings 5, the leader of the army of Israel's enemy was cured after the ritual washings.

With this cultural background, it is understandable that Israelites in Jesus' day were amazed that Jesus actually touched lepers that others regarded as untouchables (Luke 5:12-14). While others considered them damned by God for some terrible evil they had committed, that Good Physician, like Dr. Cunningham, provided therapy.

Scholars now recognize that what is called "leprosy" in the Bible refers to a variety of dermatological conditions. Some modern translations of the Bible now use the term "skin disease" in place of leprosy. What is described in Leviticus 13-14 as "leprosy" on clothes or on walls was probably mildew. Ancient people were quite sensitive to surface diseases, because discolorations, swellings, and eruptions could be easily detected and often they abruptly disappeared. They had little awareness of the more deadly internal diseases that most concern us today.

While the threat of leprosy is no longer a source of panic or hysteria in modern America, other diseases still elicit such a response. Sadly, the agony of having such a disease is made even worse by the acceptance of misconceptions, especially that such people have been cursed by God. The most encouraging part of the story of George Rashid is the courageous, compassionate efforts of Dr. Cunningham.

— William E. Phipps

Leprosy: A Medical Perspective

Written accounts of leprosy extend back to earliest historical records. They document not only the persistence of the disease, but also a stigmatization of leprosy victims which transcends cultural and religious boundaries. The systematic casting of victims into colonies for isolation was, unfortunately, the only possibly effective public health measure available from ancient times up to the modern antibiotic era.

Though scientific understanding and treatments have come a long way, the social stigma of leprosy remains strong and damaging. In most cases, ostracization is even worse than the disease itself.

Today, doctors refer to leprosy evasively as Hansen's disease, named for the researcher who identified the causative microbe in 1871.

This bacterium attacks skin and superficial nerves (those closest to the skin surface), producing a very slowly developing disease that is eventually deforming and disabling but seldom fatal. It starts as a rash, progresses to coarsening of skin texture, then to deformity of facial features, and, eventually, to gangrenous destruction of extremities: hands, feet, nose, and ears. It may take as long as ten years for the disease to progress to this point.

Worldwide, the most common cause of hand crippling remains Hansen's disease, but very few American doctors have ever seen a case of leprosy. Of the handful of cases found in the continental U.S., 90% were acquired elsewhere, in the tropical and subtropical regions where the disease is endemic. The very tiny number of cases transmitted in this country occur in southwestern states. George Rashid was originally infected in his native Middle East. To have diagnosed George Rashid, Dr. Golden must have been a very astute physician: he had probably never seen a case of leprosy before or since.

On the other hand, Dr. Golden would have been very familiar with tuberculosis, the leading cause of death at the turn of the century. Perhaps that familiarity helped him, because Hansen's bacillus, *Mycobacterium leprae*, is similar to *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* in its appearance, behavior, and in the body's microscopic reaction to it.

Both diseases are extremely slow to progress, and usually require fairly long, intimate contact to transmit. Leprosy, for example, is sometimes transmitted from a mother to her nursing child, (not, however, by casual contact or by living downstream from a bathing leper). Both leprosy and tuberculosis are now treated with extended courses of unusual antibiotics.

Today, doctors refer to leprosy as Hansen's disease, named for the researcher who identified the causative microbe in 1871.

Study of Hansen's disease continues, a challenging prospect for researchers. Cultures of the rare, slowly growing bacterium cannot be grown in petri dishes or under other conventional laboratory conditions. Instead, scientists utilize the footpads of laboratory mice or other animals, including armadillos, for testing and experimentation.

— Mark Gunther, MD

people, fearful of the spreading of the affliction, asked him to stay away from them. Mr. Cosman insisted that the disease was not as contagious as the citizens feared, and continued his daily mixing with the people. Shortly thereafter, some unknown citizens persuaded him to leave by shooting at him in his camp.

When the nurse from New York left Pickens, Randolph County officials hired Mr. James Thomas to take care of Mr. Rashid. Mr. Thomas' daughter, Mrs. Mary Warner, was hired to prepare his meals for 33 cents a day. The county furnished little wooden butter trays for serving his meals which Mr. Thomas would place on a shelf under the window for George at meal time. They were burned after one use. George's favorite food was chicken. His most requested fruit was apples, his favorite dessert was apple pie.

Soon after the leper moved into his new quarters, Dr. Cunningham gave him a physical examination. He discovered something unexpected. George, in addition to his leperous sores, was further cursed with a heart murmur which indicated mitral stenosis, an untreatable heart condition.

At one time, the doctor believed that his patient was growing better. His dry, scabby sores seemed to yield to the soothing application of chaulmoogra oil. Occasionally, patches of clear skin became apparent upon his face. His wrists and the back of his hands began to clear up. Even his fingers, black from the spread of the disease, began to show signs of life. As the improvement continued, Dr. Cunningham became buoyant.

Then about the middle of October, the infection struck anew. With the return of the infection George gave up. The murmur in his heart became more pronounced. His courage, which had been bolstered by the kind ministrations of Dr. Cunningham and the charitable

expressions of support by organizations and individuals from across the country, began to ebb away. The doctor knew that the end was not far off.

At about 5:00 a.m. on the morning of October 20, 1906, caretaker James Thomas tried to rouse George; he would not respond. Mr. Thomas summoned Dr. Cunningham for help. Together they opened the door to the shack and found George in his bed. Death had set him free.

Dr. Cunningham summoned the firm of Zinn and Morton, Huttonsville undertakers, to handle the burial. They reached Pickens that afternoon about 3:00 p.m. They were halted near the railroad station and told that the disease-infested body of Rashid could not be interred in Randolph County. In spite of the warning, a grave was dug about 20 feet outside the enclosure beside the railroad tracks. By this time an angry, threatening group had gathered near the grave site. Dr. Cunningham conferred at some length with the two undertakers. Then the three men walked outside the enclosure toward the long black wagon-hearse around which the crowd had gathered. "We've changed our minds," stated the doctor in answer to the crowd. "I guess we'll ship him away."

Zinn and Morton drove off. Dr. Cunningham went back to his office. The crowd dispersed. The body of Rashid lay where it had been found.

Toward midnight that same evening, a lantern cast a faint glimmer upon three figures entering the Rashid compound. Dr. Cunningham, Morton, and Zinn were muffled in heavy coats against the cold October night. With grappling hooks they reached through the doorway and managed to roll George Rashid into his casket. The lid was clamped down.

In cold silence the casket was carried to the open grave, and with the same grappling hooks it was lowered to the bottom of the pit. Quicklime was poured over the casket. The dirt came next. In less than an hour the job was finished, with only two small boulders of rough sandstone left to mark the last resting place of George Rashid.

Like his tent before, his shack and all its contents were soon burned.

No one knows exactly how or when George's wife learned of his death and burial. Today, living members of those families close to the story doubt that she knew of his death until after he was buried. She left Elkins soon after and married a man by the name of Kalleel. They had five children, one of which was named John George. John is an author who has reportedly written a book about the extraordinary life of his mother entitled *Step Lightly on My Grave*.

In 1986, a group of Pickens area residents came together to help preserve the memory of George Rashid. An iron fence donated by Thamer Dulaney now protects Rashid's final resting place. Bert Been and Thamer, Roy, and Cecil Dulaney provided the marble headstone that replaced the two rough sandstones that originally marked the grave. Jerry Hull and Bert Been erected both the headstone and fence in 1986. The Pickens Historical Society is raising money to have a permanent roadside marker erected in order that visitors to Pickens will be able to easily find his gravesite.

It is doubtful that anyone alive today recalls this episode from personal experience, yet the story of the Pickens Leper is told and retold. With all its inconsistencies, contradictions, and unanswered questions, we are left with much to ponder about the life and trials of this unfortunate man, and the courage and kindness of those who came to his aid.

There are no known cases of leprosy in West Virginia today. State laws were passed in the 1880's providing for the quarantine of those with infectious diseases. State health records, which date back to the early 1930's, indicate three known cases of leprosy: 1933 in Logan County, 1937 in Randolph County, and 1962 in Kanawha County. —ed.

George Rashid's grave at Pickens sits in a lonely field near the edge of town. Although he actually died of heart disease, George will always be remembered as the Pickens Leper. This permanent marble headstone was erected by local residents in 1986. Photo by L. Wayne Sheets.

Mountain Music Roundup

By Danny Williams

For fans of real mountain music, these are good times to be alive and listening. The old traditions are as fresh and lively as ever, with great picking and singing cropping up so fast around West Virginia that you can't possibly drive to all the festivals or listen to all the recordings.

But we also cling to the music from the past. We're especially interested in a wealth of recent reissues of old, out-of-print records, particularly if the new versions have been acoustically cleaned-up and made available on CD. There's so much exciting news right now about these reissues that we're going to devote our entire *Mountain Music Roundup* this time to bringing you up to date.

The big story is the new availability of recordings by legendary West Virginia fiddler **Clark Kessinger**. Kessinger's life and music are detailed in this issue of GOLDENSEAL.

His entire catalog of early recordings (1928-30) has been reissued on a series of three CD's by Austria's Document Records. In addition, his definitive 1964 LP, **The Legend of Clark Kessinger**, is now available on CD from County Records. For more details and ordering information on these reissues, see "Kessingers on Record," page 24.

Clark and Luke Kessinger were not the only West Virginians whose music was available nationally during the 1920's. Logan Countian **Frank Hutchison** was the first nationally prominent performer of "hillbilly blues," and his complete catalog of old 78's is also now available on remastered CD's from Document.

Hutchison traveled to New York in 1926 to record his first two tunes, the now-standard pieces "Worried Blues" and "Train That Carried My Girl From Town," for OKeh Records. Hutchison learned much of his music from two black guitarists and singers around Logan County, and was one of the first white performers to record music learned personally from the African American community. Hutchison was also one of the earliest white recording artists to play the blues on slide guitar, an instrumental style not widely adopted by white performers until the 1960's. Listening to these songs reminds blues fans that, although this music is often associated with Chicago, St. Louis, and New York, in the beginning it came right out of the rural South.

To his considerable musical skills, Hutchison added an apparent gift for showmanship. He was a legendary stage entertainer, and his easy, natural style was not lost in the recording process. Hutchison gained quite a following among record buyers, and returned to studios in New York and St. Louis about a dozen times, recording another 30 songs for the OKeh company. Like Clark Kessinger and hundreds of other artists, Hutchison saw his recording career wither in the hard times of the Depression.

Blues fans will find all the classic elements of their music in Frank Hutchison's recordings. He contrasts his simple, unadorned vocal style with a stream of ornaments from his guitar. Hutchison constantly toys with the rhythm, jumping into a line a beat ahead of the listener's expectations, repeating a phrase here and there, or inserting a three-beat measure into an otherwise four-by-four tune. The songs are about the personal, everyday concerns which have always stirred blues singers — love, work, tragedy, and hard times. Many of the tunes, like "Stackalee," "The Miner's Blues," and "The Deal (Don't Let Your Deal Go Down)," have since become standards of the style.

Hutchison also recorded a variety of other material, including popular songs, mountain square dance tunes, and a few duets with Logan County fiddler **Sherman Lawson**. The entire set of 32 recordings, which is now available, reveals an amazingly gifted and versatile performer, at home in several exciting musical styles and surprisingly at ease traveling from Logan County to play and sing in a big city music studio. We are sorry to have missed the man himself,

but grateful for these recordings.

How many people lived in Logan County 70 years ago, anyway? If there were not at least a few million residents, then the county somehow had more than its share of musical talent. Another current CD brings us the 1920's music of two more Logan musical groups, **The Williamson Brothers & Curry**, and **Dick Justice** (with fiddler Reece Jarvis). Together with Frank Hutchison's recordings, the varied styles of these two groups gives the impression that the music scene in Logan County was a lively one indeed.

Fiddling Arnold Williamson, his guitar-playing brother Irving, and a banjo picker named Curry (first name forgotten) were friends of Frank Hutchison, and traveled with Hutchison to St. Louis for one of his 1927 recording sessions. Some alert official from the record company took the time to listen to these three play some music, and quickly arranged to capture their art on shellac. The six tunes range from Appalachian hoedown "Cumberland Gap," to the popular humorous ditty "The Old Arm Chair." On every cut, Arnold Williamson's lively fiddle and brother Irving's steady guitar reveal deep roots in the mountain square dance tradition. One tune, "The Fun's All Over," even features dance calls. Dance fans, push your furniture out of the way before playing this CD!

Some other smart record company scout brought Logan Countian **Dick**

New From Smithsonian Folkways

Folkways Records was founded in 1947. This New York-based company amassed an amazing treasure of music and other sounds from around the world, and issued over 2,000 beautifully-produced, well-documented recordings over the next 40 years. Most folk music enthusiasts proudly cling to at least a few Folkways LP's with their distinctive orange-and-black cover designs and the wonderfully informative booklets inside.

The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., acquired the Folkways archive about ten years ago, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings continues the tradition of presenting a wide range of folk and folk-influenced music. They have recently been very active in reissuing out-of-print titles from the Folkways catalog, and are also once again releasing new recordings by important current figures in traditional music. A couple of these recent releases feature West Virginia ties.

Close to Home: Old Time Music from Mike Seeger's Collection (Smithsonian Folkways CD 40097) is a tantalizing glimpse into the personal treasures of one of America's leading performers and collectors of Appalachian music. The 36 field recordings, collected by Mike in a variety of locations between 1952 and 1967, cover a wide range of instrumental styles, gospel singing, ancient ballads, humorous pieces, and more. Most of this material is known throughout our mountains, though only one was actually recorded in West Virginia. That's a strong rendition of the fiddlers' favorite tune "Blackberry Blossom," by Logan Countian

Sherman Lawson recorded in 1964. This is the same Sherman Lawson who years earlier had recorded a few tunes with Frank Hutchison. (*See page 65.*)

Fans of folk music might be forgiven if they mistakenly assume **There Ain't No Way Out** by the **New Lost City Ramblers**, (Smithsonian Folkways CD 40098) is a CD reissue of an old recording. In fact, it's a brand-new work by this influential band who haven't been in the studio together for over 20 years. Like the dozen or so LP's which brought this band to the forefront of the folk music revival in the 1960's and '70's, this new CD is a lively blend of primarily Appalachian songs and tunes. Ramblers **John Cohen, Tracy Schwarz,** and **Mike Seeger** are all deeply involved in collecting and preserving the roots of our music, but they do not sing and play like some somber trio of museum curators. This CD is full of fresh energy and joy. The West Virginia connection here is that several of these selections were learned from field recordings originally collected in West Virginia and that Rambler Tracy Schwarz is now a resident of Coxs Mill.

Dozens of the Smithsonian Folkways recordings are of great interest to fans of real West Virginia music. Children's songs, current urban blues, field recordings from around the world, cowboy songs, work songs, religious music — if it's a little "too real" for the big record companies to handle, Smithsonian Folkways has it. And they're releasing more all the time. For a very attractive illustrated catalog, write to Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 955 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Suite 2600, Smithsonian Institution, MRC 914, Washington, DC 20560. Or call them at (202)287-3262, or e-mail at folkways@aol.com. A database of all 35,000 tracks on more than 2,300 available recordings can be accessed on the Internet at http://www.si.edu/folkways.

Justice to sing and play his guitar in a Chicago recording studio in 1929. Five 78's were eventually released from Justice's one day of work, and all ten pieces are now available on CD.

Several of Justice's songs reflect the popular music of the day. "Old Black Dog" is a swinging ragtime number, while "Cocaine" and "Brown Skin Blues" are from the African American tradition. But the folks at the record company also allowed Justice to sing some little-known songs from his native mountains. "Henry Lee" and "One Cold December Day" are Appalachian versions of ballads known long ago in England, and their inclusion in Justice's recorded works is a special bonus for fans of the old songs.

Equally important is the inclusion of four tracks representing the complete recorded works of renowned Roane County fiddler **Reece "Sam" Jarvis.** A prolific contest fiddler, Jarvis is a legend among older fiddlers today, and was a prominent influence on musicians of his day. Clark Kessinger learned Jarvis's "Poca River Blues" (included here) and later played it to win a world championship. Backed by Dick Justice on guitar, Sam Jarvis

An early 78 rpm recording by Dick Justice and Sam Jarvis.

is also featured on two waltzes, and "Muskrat Rag."

Some additional out-of-print recordings we're glad to hear again are from the more recent past. Wasn't it about six or eight years ago that the **Cedar Point String Band** recorded their LP of hot old-time square dance music? Well, it turns out it was actually 1983. Time

flies, but this rare recording has been brought up-to-date with a recent reissue on CD.

The band was a brief collaboration of West Virginia fiddle master **Frank George** [GOLDENSEAL, Spring 1983], his (then) 18 year-old banjo protege **David O'Dell**, and their guitar picking Roane County neighbor **Bob Roark**. The 14 tunes on this collection are ones every Appalachian musician needs to know: dance and festival favorites like "Magpie," "Massa's Gone Away," "Sourwood Mountain," and "Liberty." The style is just what those familiar with Frank George would expect — straight-ahead hoedown fiddling, without elaborate embellishment or wild variation. Young O'Dell picks in the clean, powerful style for which he's still known, and Roark adds rhythm and depth with his steady guitar playing. These guys just play the tunes with energy, grace, and impeccable rhythm, and let the old music speak for itself.

It is a pleasure to also announce the recent reissue of a 1973 collection of field recordings featuring Clay County master fiddler, **Wilson Douglas**. This CD, **Hot From the Kitchen**, captures some of Wilson's finest fiddling. Backed by his uncle, guitarist **Gruder Morris**, Wilson is relaxed and at home (literally), taking his listeners through over 20 of his best-loved pieces. These generally familiar tunes are presented here in the unique and unusual styling seldom heard outside Clay County.

Fiddler Wilson Douglas in July 1975. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer.

Ordering these recordings:

For information on the Kessinger Brothers 78's and the Clark Kessinger LP reissues on CD, see "Kessingers on Record," page 24.

Most of Frank Hutchison's material is on **Frank Hutchison, Volume 1,** *from Document Records (DOCD 8003). One good source is Arhoolie Productions, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530; $16 per CD for one or two, $14 per CD for three or more, plus $3 shipping.*

The Williamson Brothers & Curry, Dick Justice, *and the remainder of the Frank Hutchison recordings are on* **Old-Time Music from West Virginia,** *Document (DOCD 8004). See ordering information above.*

The Cedar Point String Band *is $15, including postage, from Roane Records, Route 3, Box 293, Spencer, WV 25276.*

Wilson Douglas & Gruder Morris, Hot From the Kitchen *is $16 for the CD, $11 for the cassette including shipping from Roane Records, Route 3, Box 293, Spencer, WV 25276.*

West Virginia Gift Ideas

New Books and Videos Available

With the holidays approaching it's time to think about gift giving. West Virginia gifts are great to give and to receive. If you and those on your gift list already subscribe to GOLDENSEAL (*see coupon on page 5*), you know how satisfying it is to read about West Virginia and its people.

Recently, GOLDENSEAL has received several books of local interest from publishers and authors. These new publications relate good things about the history and people of the Mountain State.

If you're pondering a gift of good reading, and you already get or give GOLDENSEAL, then you may want to know about some of the following new books:

Reopening Glen Rogers by Bud Perry and Karl C. Lilly III is one of only a few Wyoming County historical publications in recent years. The cover proudly proclaims the

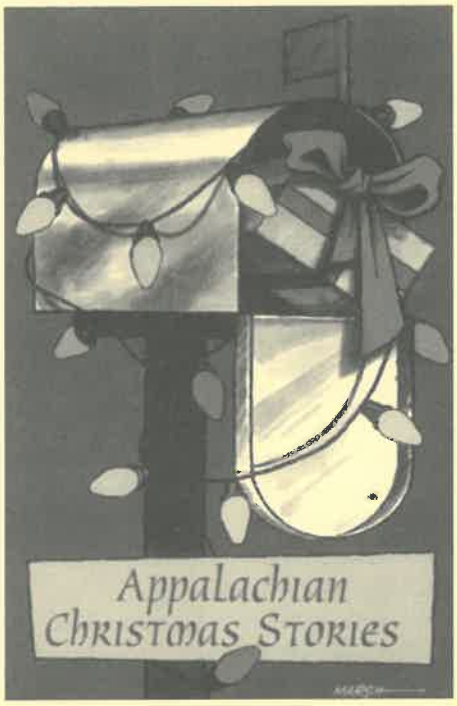
Wyoming Mining Company scrip, from the book *Reopening Glen Rogers*.

work of "two native sons...a look back at a disparate community still struggling to maintain its identity years after its world-class mining industry crumbled and its proud and productive school closed at the hands of modern policy-makers."

The 158-page softbound book traces the history of Glen Rogers from the town's beginnings in the early 1900's through the symbolic closing of Glen Rogers High School in 1992. Karl Lilly and Bud Perry tell of the years in between and how, in a coal town, death was often an unfortunate part of life.

They pay tribute to the 160 coal miners who died from coal-related accidents and in a 1923 mine explosion. The 14 chapters in *Reopening Glen Rogers* bring the dangerous work of a coal miner to life, as well as the activities centered around a mining town — trading at the company store, cutting scrip, living in company housing: "A way of life that some at the time thought would last forever," the authors write. *Reopening Glen Rogers* sells for $15, plus $2.50 for taxes, shipping and handling. Send orders to PAL Productions, P.O. Box 256, Tad, WV 25201.

Appalachian Christmas Stories is especially good for the holidays. The 112-page paperback is a compilation of works by Appalachian writers Jesse Stuart, James B. Goode, Loyal Jones, Billy C. Clark, Harry M. Caudill, Jim Wayne Miller, and Martin W. Blaine. Kentucky's Historian Laureate Thomas D. Clark also contributes with



his story, "A Little Bit of Santa Claus."

The short stories, essays, non-fiction memoirs, and poetry in the book illustrate the Christmas experience of the mountain people of Southern Appalachia, according to the book's introduction. Thomas Clark's piece is a good example: "Families bought a dozen oranges and felt that they were well supplied. Children waked up on Christmas morning to find a golden ball in each stocking, and to discover that Santa Claus, in a generous mood, had left an additional half-dozen by the fireside. ...Peelings were carefully preserved to be used throughout the year as flavoring for cakes, custards, and puddings." *Appalachian Christmas Stories* sells for $9.95 and may be ordered from the Jesse Stuart Foundation, P.O. Box 391, Ashland, KY 41114; (606)329-5232. Include $3 for shipping and handling.

William Sanders of Princeton, the author of four volumes of history titled *A New River Heritage*, recently completed *On the Skirmish Line*. His new book begins with a history of Princeton and a close look at Sanders's family life. It touches on his World War II experiences and post-war work in Berlin. Most of the new book is devoted to Sanders's 50 years of practicing law in southern West Virginia.

On the Skirmish Line is a 256-page softcover book illustrated with maps and historic photography. It sells for $22, plus $3 shipping and handling. Copies may be ordered through William Sanders, 320 Courthouse Road, Princeton, WV 24740; (304)425-8602.

Through the Mill Door and Beyond: Trail Guide To Babcock State Park is another new book from southern West Virginia. It is written by

naturalist Emily Grafton who first visited Babcock State Park more than 20 years ago. "Babcock is where I discovered nature for myself," she says.

Today the 4,100-acre park receives more than 130,000 tourists annually, and the new field guide is just the book to make visitors feel right at home. It includes 96 pages of informative text about the park, supplemented by extensive plant and animal lists. Easy-to-read trail maps, drawn by Morgantown artist Ann Payne, are featured along with photographs and other illustrations. *Through the Mill Door and Beyond* may be ordered from Headline Books, P.O. Box 52, Terra Alta, WV 26764; 1-800-570-5951. The book sells for $8.95 ($9.49 including sales tax for West Virginians), plus $3 shipping.

GOLDENSEAL contributor James E. Casto is the author of *Huntington: An Illustrated History*. The book, first published in 1985, was out of print until Marshall University and

The James Gang was said to have robbed the Bank of Huntington in 1875. Illustration from *Huntington: An Illustrated History*.

the Marshall University Foundation sponsored a second printing. The new book includes more than 100 historic photographs, as well as some new material to bring the community's story up to date.

Jim Casto enlisted the help of Tim R. Massey in profiling many of Huntington's businesses and organizations. Their brief histories appear in the last chapter of the book titled "The Story Continues," and a special portfolio of color photographs provides a look at the Marshall University campus today. *Huntington: An Illustrated History* may be ordered from Renaissance Book Company, 831 4th Avenue, Huntington, WV 25701. The hardbound sells for $39.95, and the softbound $20. Shipping and handling is $1.74 book rate and $3 first class. West Virginia residents must add 6% sales tax.

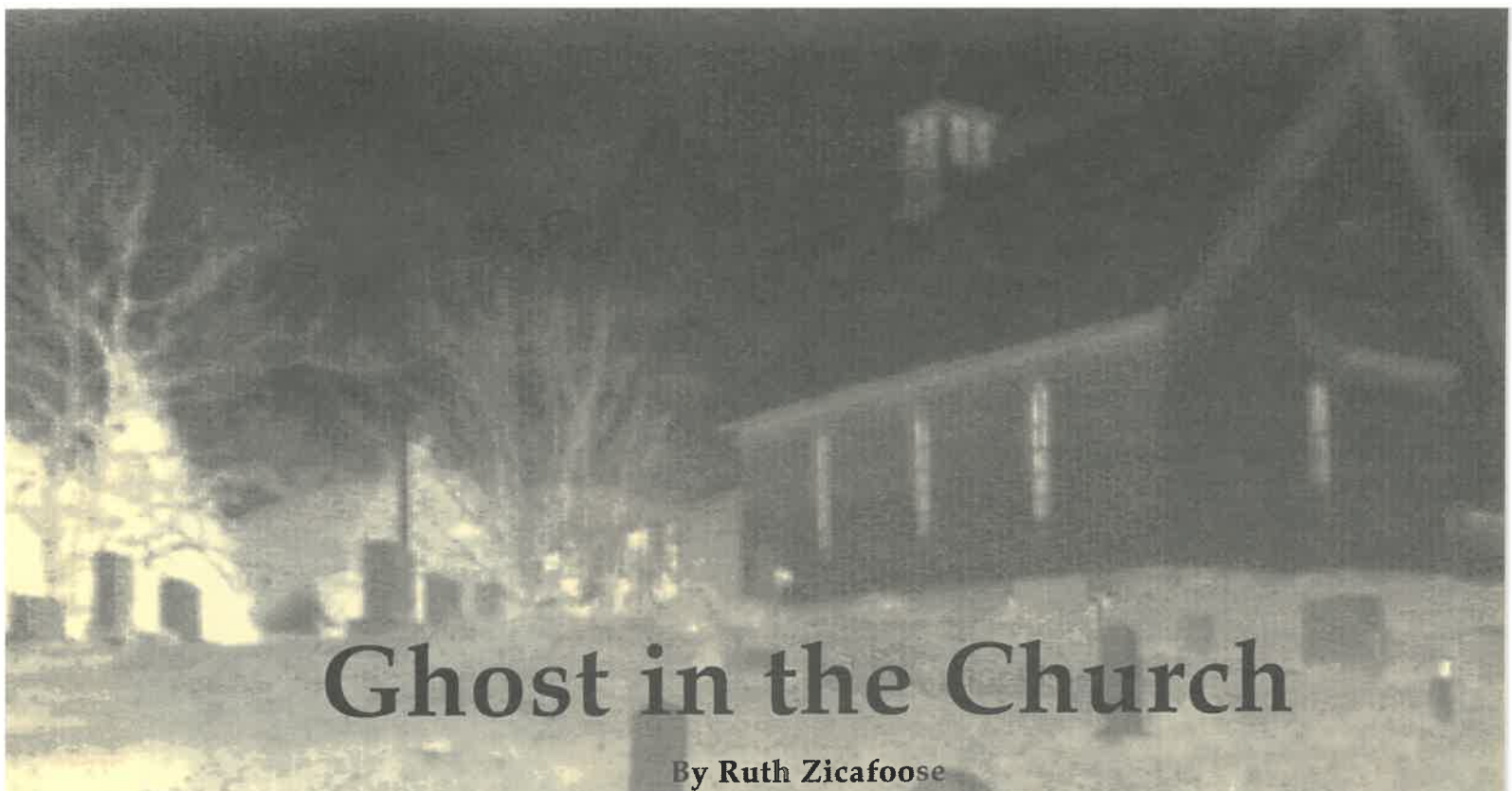
A videotape about West Virginia folkways was recently produced by the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College. "Fiddles, Snakes, and Dog Days" imparts such words of wisdom as "A black snake can and will charm a person," and "It's called Dog Days because of a certain star that's prominent."

The 60-minute videotape, subtitled "Old-Time Music and Lore in West Virginia," is just that. The stories are told by people who live by their beliefs. Well known fiddlers and previously-undocumented folk artists perform traditional music and share their ways of life through the telling of old tales and seasonal observances. Both the music and the words on "Fiddles, Snakes, and Dog Days" have been handed down from generation to generation. The West Virginia hills provide the setting for many of the interviews on the Augusta video. Orders for "Fiddles, Snakes, and Dog Days" should be sent to the Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, WV 26241;(304)637-1209. The cost is $30, plus $4 shipping and handling.

Another new video, "Billy In The Lowgrounds" comes as good news for fans of old-time music and especially fans of prominent West Virginia fiddler Clark Kessinger. In 1966, Kessinger appeared at the Newport Folk Festival. It was there that folklorist Alan Lomax gathered some of the performers together to film them playing music in an informal atmosphere.

The "Billy in the Lowgrounds" video presents Kessinger at his performing peak. He is joined by longtime accompanists Gene Meade on guitar and Wayne Hauser on banjo. The 60-minute video also features Kilby Snow, Jimmie Driftwood, Coon Creek Girls, Tex Logan, and others. Clark Kessinger performs six tunes including several from his early recording days ("Wednesday Night Waltz," "Sally Ann Johnson," and "Chicken Reel"), as well as some tunes that he recorded on his return to the music scene in the 1960's ("Billy in the Lowground," "Leather Britches," and "Poca River Blues").

To order "Billy in the Lowgrounds, Old Time Music from the Newport Folk Festival, 1966" send $24.95, plus $5 shipping and handling to Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop, P.O. Box 802, Sparta, NJ 07871; (201)729-5544. The videotape, also found at some music stores, is distributed nationally by Rounder Records.



Ghost in the Church

By Ruth Zicafoose

This is a true story of an event that happened long ago in our community.

Near Renick, there is an area known as Friar's Hill. In this vicinity there was, and still is, a place of worship known as the McMillion Church.

The area around there was sparsely settled with several miles between families, although not considered far apart according to the way we think of distances today. There was a family of Knights who lived not too far from the church and several families of McMillions, from whom the church got its name.

It was in the summer time when a young gentleman of the community was courting a girl who lived three or four miles away. In those days folks either walked, rode horseback, or drove a horse and buggy. This young fellow had a fine saddle horse which he used for transportation in all of his romantic endeavors.

On this particular Sunday he was spending the afternoon with the object of his affections when about four o'clock the sky suddenly turned dark, signifying that a severe thunderstorm with heavy rain was fast approaching. Desiring to reach his home before the rain started, he bid his beloved adieu, hurriedly mounted his horse, and galloped away.

By the time he reached the McMillion Church, which was right beside the road to his home, the rain was increasing rapidly. Rather than risk ruining his Sunday-best clothes he decided to dismount and seek shelter inside the church.

The church doors were never locked and it was only one step from the ground over the threshold of the church door and into the shelter of the building. He stepped far enough inside to escape the rain, but not too far so that he could hold his horse's bridle reins, leaving the horse standing outside in the terrible storm.

Each time there was a flash of lightning the figure was a little nearer.

It was really pouring rain by this time and the sky had turned so black that one would have needed a lantern to see his way around the inside of the dark church. Occasionally, when the lightning flashed, the inside of the church would be bright as day just for an instant, then even harder to see than it had been, or, as we used to say, dark as pitch.

After standing there and listening to the rain for a bit, he happened to be looking toward the pulpit when the lightning flashed another time. He saw something that made the hair on the back of his neck start to crawl! He caught a glimpse of a figure, dressed in white, rising from behind the lectern. Then it was all dark again. His eyes were riveted in the direction of the front of the church and he could not move!

At the next lightning flash he could see it had not been his imagination playing tricks on him — it really was a tall human-like figure with long black hair. The apparition, if that is what it was, had moved over from behind the lectern and had taken a step down from the pulpit.

At the next flash the figure had taken a few steps down the aisle toward the front door — it was coming toward him! He was

frozen to the spot and scared speechless. In another minute there was a big clap of thunder followed by an unusually bright flash of lightning. The tall white figure was moving slowly, but surely, in his direction. Each time there was a flash of lightning the figure was a little nearer. If ever a heart was tested for failure that was the time.

The tall white figure seemingly floated past the middle of the church, then an arm on the side of the figure started rising. In one of the flashes the young man could see a hand outstretched as though it would grab him! He tried to run but he could not move. Then he felt the hand on his shoulder! It is a wonder he didn't collapse in a dead faint.

Then he heard his name, "Willis!" His heart seemed to stop! He thought his feet had been nailed to the floor. Then he recognized the figure. It was a lady in the community who had lost her mind. In her long white nightgown she had slipped from her bed and out of the house the night before, without any of her family knowing about it. Her folks had searched all day Sunday and had not found her.

Since there were worship services only once a month at the church in those days, the lady had had the church all to herself.

I do not know if the young man married the girl he had been courting that day, but I do know that he never forgot the time when he thought a ghost had captured him for sure! All the rest of his life he would repeat the story for anyone who would listen.

Happy Halloween from GOLDENSEAL! — ed.

More Scary Tales

McDowell County poet, playwright, and teacher Jean Battlo is the author of *Appalachian Gothic Tales*, published this year by McClain Printing in Parsons. The book, a collection of six stories, includes science fiction, futuristic tales, fantasy, and "at least one good old down-home horror story," according to the author.

Ms. Battlo is also a contributor to GOLDENSEAL. Her most recent story, "The War is Over — Weather Fair: The Journal of J. W. Cline," appeared in Spring 1997. The upcoming Winter 1997 issue will include a feature story from Jean on black coal miners in McDowell County.

For *Appalachian Gothic Tales*, Jean Battlo drew on some of her own experiences growing up in Kimball. One tale, "In the Eye of George Mahotep," is based on an actual murder that took place there in the 1950's.

"With her flare for description and her knack for sprinkling in just the right amount of dialect to give a flavor of the people and local surroundings, Battlo makes all of the stories enjoyable as well as sometimes unsettling from beginning to end," writes one reviewer.

McClain Printing is also the publisher of another book by Jean Battlo, *McDowell County in West Virginia and American History*. The book was commissioned by the McDowell County Historical Society and looks at the county's history from the 1700's frontier era through 1929. The new book will be out early next year.

Appalachian Gothic Tales may be ordered from McClain Printing Company, 212 Main Street, Parsons, WV 26287; (304)478-2881. Send $10, plus $3 shipping and handling. West Virginia residents must add 6% sales tax.

SAVE BIG — BUY THEM ALL!

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Back Issues Available

If you want to complete your GOLDENSEAL collection or simply get acquainted with earlier issues, some back copies 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. Mark the issue(s) you want and return with a check (payable to GOLDENSEAL) for the right amount.

You may also order bulk copies of current or past issues, as quantities permit. The price is $2.50 per copy on orders of ten or more of the same issue (plus $4 P&H for bulk orders.)

_____Fall 1980/Recalling Mother Jones
_____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
_____Fall 1988/Craftsman Wilbur Veith
_____Spring 1989/Printer Allen Byrne
_____Summer 1990/Cal Price and *The Pocahontas Times*
_____Winter 1990/Sisters of DeSales Heights
_____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!
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_____Fall 1996/WVU Mountaineer
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Women of Coal

A new University Press of Kentucky publication, *Women of Coal*, documents the lives of three generations of women from the central Appalachian coalfields. Co-author Randall Norris set out with photographer Jean-Philippe Cyprès "looking for strong women with strong stories." Norris is the founder of the Appalachian Writers Center and Cyprès has been featured in publications ranging from *Vogue* to *Rolling Stone*.

For three years the two men traveled the back roads of West Virginia, Tennessee, Virginia, and Kentucky. The result is an eloquent, beautifully illustrated book that pays tribute to women and their ever-changing roles in the coalfields. *Women of Coal* is divided into four sections: Coalfield Women, Appalachian Memories, Women of Causes, Women of Change. Interpretive essays — written by contributing authors Denise Giardina, Nikki Giovanni, Jim Wayne Miller, and Helen Lewis — introduce each part.

The book project, funded by the Kentucky Humanities Council and the Kentucky Oral History Society, began with a single contact in Harlan County, Kentucky. From there, word of mouth led the authors to Grundy, Virginia; Logan, West Virginia; and Jellico, Tennessee. Along the way they met and interviewed women in small towns surrounding these areas.

Interviews with 57 women are included in *Women of Coal*. "We see ourselves as providing an opportunity for people who ordinarily wouldn't be heard to be heard," Randall Norris says. He will return to West Virginia later this fall for a book signing at Renaissance Book Company and Coffee House in Huntington. For more information contact Gordon Simmons at Renaissance Book Company, 831 4th Avenue, Huntington, WV 25701; (304)529-READ.

Linda Underwood works with Big Creek People in Action in McDowell County. Photo by Jean-Philippe Cyprès.

Women of Coal, a 123-page hardback book printed on acid-free paper, is richly illustrated with portraits of the "women of coal" in their respective communities. It sells for $24.95, plus $3.50 shipping and handling from Pictorial Histories, 1416 Quarrier Street, Charleston, WV 25301; 1-888-982-7472. West Virginia residents must add 6% sales tax.

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- Greeks in West Virginia
- Black Coal Miners
- Ethel Caffie-Austin
- Navigating the Ohio
- Ely-Thomas Sawmill

... plus much more!

Our Writers and Photographers

GENE BAILEY spent his early years on a mountain farm near Princeton. A four-term member of the West Virginia Legislature, Mr. Bailey also taught ornamental horticulture at Mercer County's technical center and social studies at Oakvale Junior High School from 1969 through 1989. He serves on the Mercer County Board of Education, and lives on his own mountain farm where he and his wife raise Christmas trees. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

GREG CLARK is photo preservation archivist for the Division of Culture and History.

MARK GUNTHER, MD, lives in Chicago where he has practiced general medicine for 25 years. During that time he has visited West Virginia almost every year to take in the state's traditional music. An accomplished fiddler, Gunther is featured on the cover of the current issue of the *Old-Time Herald* magazine. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

PAUL GARTNER lives in Lincoln County. A native of Ohio's Mahoning Valley, he moved to West Virginia in 1977. He plays old-time banjo and is a regular at West Virginia festivals. He works as a freelance writer and is a copy editor and writer for *The Charleston Gazette*. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Summer 1997.

MELISSA IRELAND moved to West Virginia 20 years ago from Pennsylvania. She often visited her grandparents and great-grandparents in West Virginia when she was growing up; her family roots in Barbour County go back 200 years. Melissa works as a paralegal and a professional genealogist. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

MICHAEL KELLER is chief of photographic services for the Division of Culture and History.

WILLIAM E. PHIPPS retired from Davis & Elkins College in 1995 after 39 years on the faculty. The author of several books and numerous articles on theology, he holds a master of divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond; a Ph.D. in Biblical criticism from St. Andrews University, Scotland; and a second master's degree in philosophy from the University of Hawaii. Dr. Phipps drew on his experiences visiting leper colonies in Asia and Africa for his piece in GOLDENSEAL. This is his first contribution to the magazine.

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 is a grandmother. Peggy moved to Preston County in 1988 to help her husband, Tom, restore his family's 200-year-old homeplace. She gardens, works as a freelance writer, quilts, and sews in her spare time. She is a frequent contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

L. WAYNE SHEETS is a native of Pocahontas County. He is a graduate of Green Bank High School and Fairmont State College, and is now at work on a master's degree in history at WVU. Wayne is a freelance writer and photographer whose work is published in the Elkins *Inter-Mountain*. He spent 15 years as a commercial pilot and is currently an air traffic control specialist. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

BOBBY TAYLOR a native of Kanawha County and a champion fiddler, was named West Virginia State Open Fiddle Champion in 1977. He has judged contests extensively in West Virginia and at Galax, Virginia. Bobby is a regular performer at Mountain State fairs and festivals. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

DANNY WILLIAMS a native of Wayne County, lives in Morgantown. He publishes a newsletter of West Virginia traditional music, *High Notes*, and is an active performer and teacher of West Virginia music. Danny is the former folks arts specialist for the Division of Culture and History and a regular contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

CHARLES WOLFE a professor of English at Middle Tennessee State University, is one of the world's most respected and prolific writers on traditional folk and popular American music. He has authored more than a dozen books on American music, and written liner notes for more than a hundred record albums. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

RUTH ZICAFOOSE was born on a farm near Renick in 1912. She taught school, raised a family, and worked for the Department of Human Services as a social worker for 25 years. She also served in the Silver Haired Legislature. Her last contribution to GOLDENSEAL, a charming essay about blackberry picking in Greenbrier County, appeared in Summer 1994.

Farewell, Elmer Bird

We are sad to report the recent passing of West Virginia's beloved "Banjo Man From Turkey Creek," Elmer Bird. The subject of a feature story in the Summer 1997 issue of GOLDENSEAL, Elmer was a renowned performer, a prolific recording artist, and an effective ambassador for West Virginia traditional music. His unique "double drop-thumb" banjo style earned him countless admirers throughout the state and across the country; his playing also earned him numerous honors and awards including dozens of first place contest ribbons and the prestigious Vandalia Award, presented to him in 1996.

Elmer succumbed to cancer on July 29, 1997, at his home on Turkey Creek in Putman County. He is survived by his wife Beulah, sons Robinson and Craig Bird, and daughter Jane Bird Irwin.

MICHAEL KELLER

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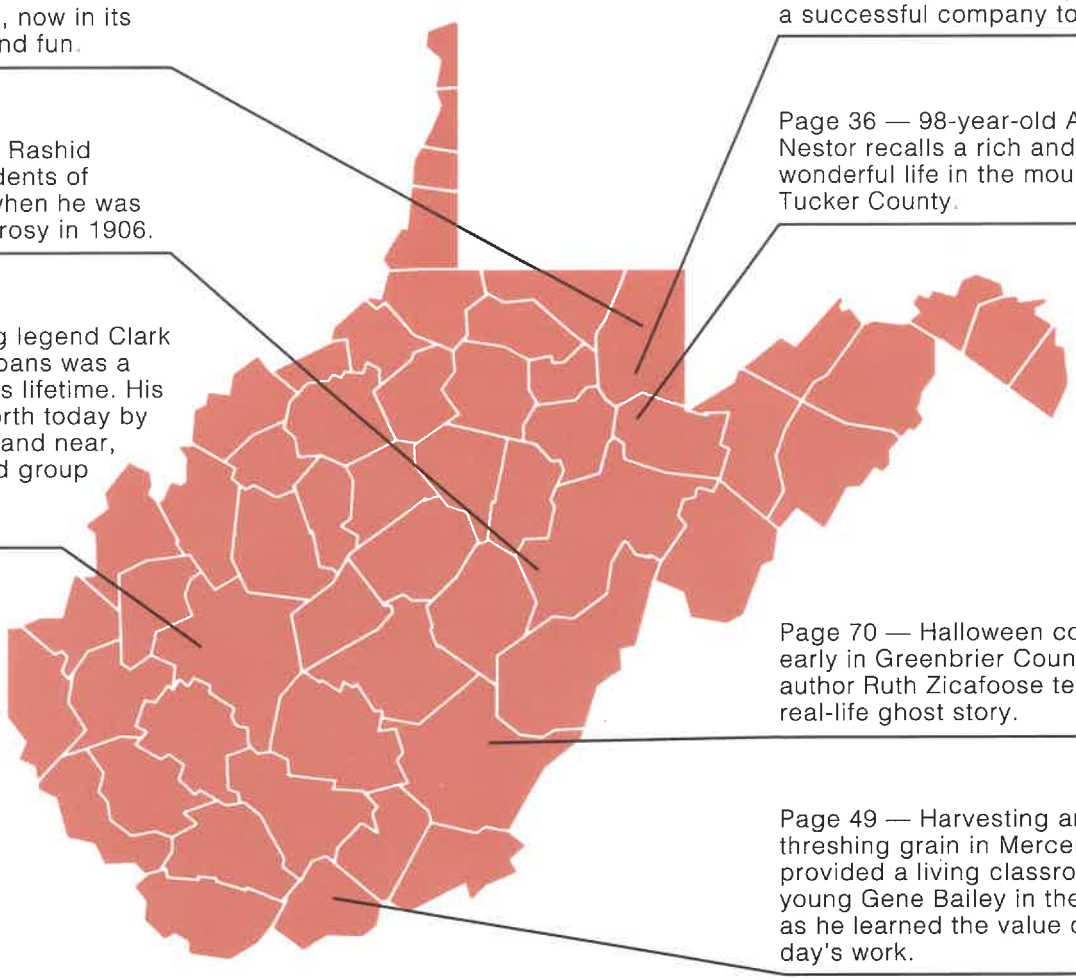

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