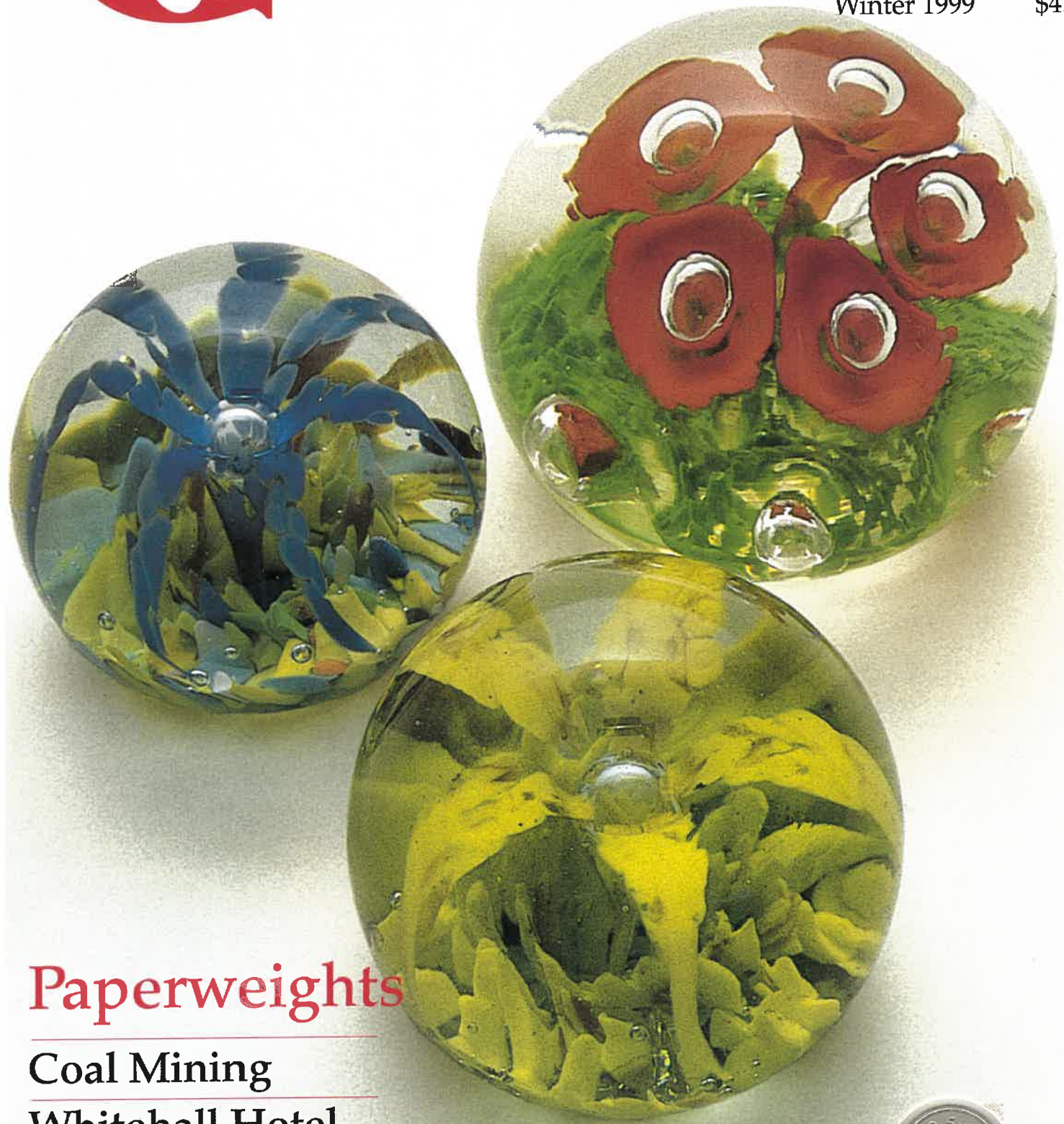
Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Winter 1999 $4.95



Paperweights

Coal Mining

Whitehall Hotel

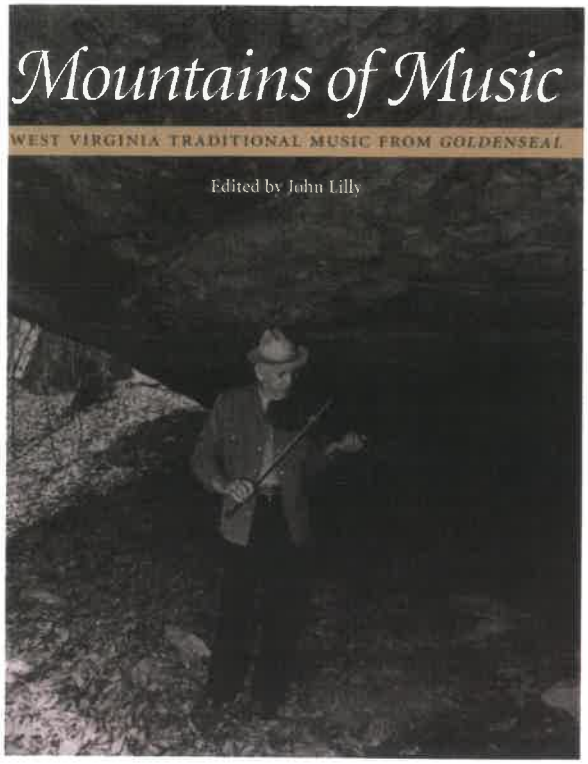
Camp Washington-Carver

From the Editor: *Mountains of Music*

We are proud - and relieved - to announce the publication of our 25th anniversary book, *Mountains of Music: West Virginia Traditional Music From* GOLDENSEAL. This 231-page volume heralds our first quarter-century by bringing together 25 stories from the pages of GOLDENSEAL celebrating West Virginia traditional music.

These articles focus on some of the most esteemed musicians to come out of our state including champion fiddler Clark Kessinger, internationally acclaimed duet The Lilly Brothers, blues guitarist Nat Reese, fiddling Senator Robert C. Byrd, and many others.

More importantly, this collection paints a picture of West Virginia traditional life as seen through the eyes of these valued folk artists. From Nat Reese, for example, we learn about life and race relations in the McDowell County coal camps of the 1930's and '40's; from fiddler Ernie Carpenter we learn how the earliest settlers in the wild woods along the upper Elk River found ways to survive; Robert Byrd tells us the role music played in his early political career; through the story of the Currence Brothers we come to understand how a rural family coped with the stifling disease hemophilia; Sylvia O'Brien shares with us the love and attachment she feels for the mountaintop where she was born and where she still lives. Each of these artists is passionate, talented, and articulate.



And each of these stories represents GOLDENSEAL's legacy as the journal of record for West Virginia's folk culture. Culled from 25 years' worth of magazines, these stories span the tenures of all three GOLDENSEAL editors: founder Tom Screven, magazine stalwart Ken Sullivan, and yours truly. They also span the state geographically with subjects representing 17 counties.

In addition to those musicians mentioned above, the book discusses fiddlers Melvin Wine, Wilson Douglas, Sarah Singleton, and John Johnson; banjo players Clarence Tross, Elmer Bird, Aunt Jennie Wilson, Andy Boarman, and Charlie Blevins; dulcimer players Russell Fluharty, Worley Gardner, and Patty Looman; guitarists Doc Williams, Blackie Cool, and Carl Rutherford; and family bands Lynn Davis & Molly O'Day and The Welch Brothers.

The writers and photographers contributing to this book form an equally impressive list ranging from our own talented photographers Michael Keller and Rick Lee, to familiar authors Gerald Milnes, Michael Kline, Ivan Tribe, and many others.

Along with the reprinted articles, sidebars, and photographs, *Mountains of Music* includes a valuable listening guide, a comprehensive index, subject and contributor updates, and an extensive editor's introduction.

The book is published by the University of Illinois Press as part of its prestigious Music in American Life series and is available at bookstores nationwide. A tremendous effort went into bringing this project to fruition, and I wish to thank everyone who had a hand in it. We are particularly grateful for financial support we received from the West Virginia Commission on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts which enabled us to include ample illustrations. It's a beautiful publication, if I do say so myself. I hope you will agree.

To help us celebrate this important milestone, we are pleased to offer GOLDENSEAL readers a special 20% discount off the list price for a limited time. To take advantage of this discount, please see the attached insert card at right.

We are proud to have this opportunity to look back over GOLDENSEAL's first 25 years, and especially pleased to be able to share this accomplishment with you. Thanks for being a part of it!

John Lilly

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On the cover: Beautiful glass paperweights such as these are the work of glass artist Jennings Bonnell of Jane Lew. Our story begins on page 48. Photograph by Michael Keller.

25th Anniversary

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Herbs and Seeds

September 23, 1999
New Cumberland, West Virginia
Editor,
I enjoyed the article on goldenseal and Joe Coberly in the fall issue ["In Search of the Wild Goldenseal," by Marion Harless]. It has been many years since I also dug ginseng at our property over the hill from Coberly's home.

Due to our age difference I did not know Joe but I knew his father very well and we both attended the Stalnaker Run School. In the eighth grade I came to school early to start the fire in the Burnside coal stove and carry in the coal for the day. The school building is in ruins now but will always be remembered by all who went there.

I, too, sold ginseng at the Fishers Store in Kerens. During the Great Depression when shoppers bought any amount of groceries, Mr. Fisher would give the children a free bag of candy.

My old home, like the school, is in ruin now and nothing remains but memories.
Truly yours,
John Herbert

September 29, 1999
Richmond, Virginia
Editor,
I read with interest the two articles "Seed Saving" and "Boy, That Was a Fine Bean!" by Gerald Milnes in this fall's issue of GOLDENSEAL.

I would like to know if any of your readers ever heard of a small purple tomato we called shuck tomatoes. When ripe, they turn purple and have a thin paper-like cover over them like a nightshade. They are about the size of a quarter, and are only good for making preserves.

A fine bean. Photograph by Rick Lee.

I have lost out on my seed. Our neighbor gave my parents the seed years ago — and I grew them until the last three years. If any of your readers have the seed I sure would like to get them — would be glad to pay for them.

I subscribe to your magazine and really enjoy it.
Sincerely,
Mrs. Blanche M. Roberts

Chestnut Ridge

September 28, 1999
Belpre, Ohio
Editor,
Your fall issue has caused quite a bit of interest here in Belpre and Washington County, Ohio. A number of people rushed out to buy copies when I showed mine with the Chestnut Ridge story to a friend, retired teacher Ruth Barnette Mayle. [See "We, the People of Chestnut Ridge: A Native Community in Barbour County," by Joanne Johnson Smith, Florence Kennedy Barnett, and Lois Kennedy Croston.]
When I read the story of the Indian-black settlement with the names, Barnette, Croston,

Kennedy, and Mayle, all the names were familiar to me. They are the same as such settlements in Washington and Athens counties in Ohio, and more closely to me, in Belpre. The Mayles, Adams, Pryors, Barnettes, and Daltons were among our early settlers in Belpre just across the Ohio River from Parkersburg, coming as free "mulattos" before the Civil War. These people are well-known business people here.

I believe it has been determined that their heritage is mainly Native American. These people have been in this area many generations and although they have been called "colored," they are accepted and look as white as some of the rest of us.

The people here in Belpre know of the Chestnut Ridge settlement, and some of their family have gone there to live and are buried there. These people are a close-knit entity, choosing to marry within their own families, which has become a large ethnic group. As the article states, many of them have migrated to Canton, Ohio, while there is another group in Zanesville. This seems to be where the young people go to find jobs and mates.
Sincerely,
Olive Smith Stone

We appreciate your comments. On July 8, 1999, the Ohio House of Representatives adopted a resolution officially recognizing the Allegheny Lenape Indians of Ohio. Our authors hope that a similar resolution will someday be considered by the West Virginia Legislature for the people of Chestnut Ridge. —ed.

September 24, 1999
Bellevue, Washington
Editor,
I really enjoyed the article on the people of Chestnut Ridge.
A few years ago when our son was running for Barbour County prosecutor, my husband and I went door-to-door visiting with people on his behalf. The folks up on that ridge were some of the friendliest that we met.
Thanks to GOLDENSEAL!
Sara Lyall Morris

October 8, 1999
Canton, Ohio
Editor,
In the article I co-authored "We, the People of Chestnut Ridge," there was a picture of Adam Male and his wife. We had said her name was Mary Ann Norris, but a relative of hers has informed me that it is Mary Ann Hill.

Would you please inform your readers.
Sincerely,
Florence Barnett

Adam Male and wife Mary Ann Hill Male, circa 1900.

September 22, 1999
Chattanooga, Tennessee
Editor,
A native West Virginian, I grew up in Barbour County several miles south of Philippi and attended Philippi High School in the late 1930's. Your article in the fall issue of GOLDENSEAL about the people of Chestnut Ridge interested me.

What the article fails to mention is that there were two communities of so-called "Guineas" in the area: Chestnut Ridge located a few miles northeast of town, and another community called Guinea Holler located southwest and relatively close in, within walking distance.

Whether the two groups shared ancestry I do not know, but individuals from both were labeled "Guineas," considered "colored," and treated shamelessly by the townspeople. They were not permitted to enter either Philippi Grade School or Philippi High School, and the county provided them with no schooling beyond the eighth grade, if that. Many businesses along Main Street had signs reading "No Guineas Allowed."

While those living up on Chestnut Ridge generally had a little farm land (including a garden) to grow corn and vegetables, those in Guinea Holler lived in miserable shacks on land that was basically a slag dump with no opportunity to grow any food. At the height of the Depression in the mid-1930's, they walked the streets in their pitiful rags knocking on doors to beg for any scraps to eat. They were eager for any odd jobs and offered to work all day for a worn-out pair of shoes.

I left the area for college in 1940 and have been back only for brief visits. I understand that with the integration of city and county schools in the 1960's and '70's, along with opening of the central Barbour County High School, children from these communities are now provided full educational opportunities. However, it appears that the stigma associated with the family names listed in the article still exists locally and that only by moving to another state have family members been accepted by their neighbors without prejudice.

In June 1996, I wrote to your magazine asking if they had considered an article about these people. In response, your then-editor Ken Sullivan noted that GOLDENSEAL had published such an article titled "Going Yander: The West Virginia Guineas' View of Ohio," by Barry J. Ward; April-June 1976, and attached a copy. It would have

been an appropriate reference for the current article.
Warren Poling

Thank you, Mr. Poling, for an enlightening and thought-provoking letter. We have discovered, as you suggest, that there are many sides to this poignant story. The perspective presented in our Fall 1999 issue reflects the point of view shared by our three authors and their families, and offers us a rare glimpse into life on Chestnut Ridge as they see it.

Out of respect for our authors, we chose not to include references to any of the outside research which has been published through the years about their people, much of which they find to be inaccurate and offensive. Particularly offensive to them is the use of the derogatory term, "Guinea." On the other hand, a number of people have contacted our office recently to relate alternative points of view regarding the ethnicity and genealogy of the people of Chestnut Ridge.

The full story surely goes far beyond any single or simple explanation. We are pleased, however, to have afforded these three authors an opportunity to speak for themselves, and, in doing so, shed a glimmer of light on this unique and long-suffering community.

Thanks again for your comments. —ed.

Edith Baker

September 25, 1999
North Ridgefield, Ohio
Editor,
I always enjoy the publication. Many times when I read it I find articles about places and people I have known.

The article about Edith Hedge Baker ["Sweeter Than the Flowers: A Visit With Edith Baker of King Knob," by Susan Goehring; Fall 1999] was of much interest as I've known Edith and most of her family for years. I grew up in Ritchie County.

Yours truly,
Geraldine M. Wilson

September 28, 1999
Massillon, Ohio
Editor,
I wish to thank you for your kindness at this time. I think the story and pictures are great. I

King Knob women's basketball team, late 1920's. Edith Hedge is fourth from the left.

have had a number of calls and each have been flattering, and I eat that up like a cat does cream.

Sales of the magazine went well in Parkersburg, for my niece bought all but two copies at one store, and I sent word for two of my friends in the basketball picture to get those. There are six of us still alive in the basketball picture.

Please see that Cecil and Hovah (Underwood) get one. They were my college friends.
Sincerely,
Edith Baker

Mark Twain High School

September 18, 1999
Glen Dale, West Virginia
Editor,
A big thank you for the excellent article on Mark Twain High School ["My Memories of Mark Twain High School," by Pauline Haga; Fall 1999]. The float picture brought memories. Two of my older sisters are there — Goldie Scott (deceased) and Lena Wykle. Rounding out the family are Marguerite Mackey and myself, Geneva. We are the Gilman Girls from McAlpin — all graduates. I attended from first through 12th grade.

Mr. Knapp taught journalism in my time there, too, and I also enjoyed working on the newspaper and our yearbook. Mark Twain was a school of learning, fun, and values.
Thank you!
Geneva Gilman Wright

October 11, 1999
Via e-mail
Editor,
I really enjoyed the recent article on Mark Twain High School by Pauline Haga. I ended up graduating from Stoco High School in Coal City, but the 11 years I spent at Mark Twain have provided me with memories and experiences that will last a lifetime.

I would have liked to have seen more reference in the article to the town of Stotesbury, where the school was located. The old school steps are still there. I was raised in the community there for my first 16 or so years. Life was great in those old coal camps.

I also would like to point out that the Honorable Senator Robert C. Byrd is a 1934 graduate of Mark Twain High School. A

Senator Robert C. Byrd, a 1934 graduate of Mark Twain High School, served in the U.S. House of Representatives when this photograph was made in 1953; courtesy of State Archives.

young man who grew up in the hills of West Virginia, he has developed into one of the most prominent and powerful individuals our nation's capitol has ever known. His wife, Emma, '35, and Pauline Haga, '58, are some of the other more celebrated graduates of Mark Twain.

I also really appreciate you and the GOLDENSEAL staff for the recent article on the Lego Church of Jesus ["Holiness People Revisited," by Yvonne Snyder Farley; Summer 1999]. As a result of the article about our church, we were visited by former state legislator Robert K. Holliday from Fayette County who, at one time, was a champion for snake handlers. He helped stop its abolition. Mr. Holliday was allowed to address our congregation this past Saturday night by Pastor Ray Stewart.

I am sure that you are aware that both the school and the church have played important roles in many people's lives, including myself. Keep up the good work, John, for the congregation of the Lego Church of Jesus loves you!
God bless everyone,
Thomas Puckett, Jr.

Coal Camp Memories

October 11, 1999
Charleston, West Virginia
Editor,
I have been a subscriber for several years. I thoroughly enjoy every magazine and often look at back issues to re-read certain stories.

I especially enjoy the stories of coal camps. I grew up in one of the best: the town of Powellton in Fayette County. My father and mother both worked for Koppers Coal Company.

As soon as I was old enough, I worked summer and holidays in the company store.

The best part was the camp we were able to attend for two weeks each summer. Camp Thomas E. Lightfoot was located on the Greenbrier River near Hinton. I went every summer as a camper. When I became too old, I went as a counselor until I married. We also had a recreational director who organized various activities including a May festival where we performed various folk dances from the countries of the employees as well as local dancing traditions. A wonderful memory.
Sincerely,
Pat Merritt Davis

June 27, 1999
Grandview, Missouri
Editor,
Being a new subscriber of GOLDENSEAL, I am enjoying the magazine so very much.

I was so surprised to see the picture of Vivian in your spring issue[" *'Lavoro e Casa'*: Memories of an Italian Coal Mining Family," by Jean Battlo]. I was even more surprised to see a letter to the editor from Ella Mae (Ramey) Evans in your summer issue. I lived three houses from the Ramey's until I was 9 years old. My family then moved to Kimball. I remember Ella Mae babysitting for my parents. What great memories!

I have spent many years traveling the world with my husband, who was an officer in the Air Force. I can truly say that one never forgets West Virginia. It is so beautiful and the people are so nice.

I was introduced to your magazine by Mr. Melvin "Buddy" French. He has shared some of his short stories with me. He informed me that one of his stories will appear in the winter issue of GOLDENSEAL. I'm looking forward to reading it. He is so very good.

Thanks so much for your wonderful magazine. Looking forward to all future issues.
Sincerely,
Norma Richardson Brower

Thank you for writing. You'll find Buddy French's article, "My First Night In the Mines" in this issue, beginning on page 25. —ed.

Gladys Larew

July 26, 1999
Huntington, West Virginia
Editor,
I was happy to read about my lifelong friend, Gladys Broyles Larew, who is 100 years old [see "'Good for the Soul': Gladys Larew at 100," by Virginia Steele; Summer 1999].

I was born at Red Sulphur Springs, three miles from Gladys'

Gladys Broyles Larew today. Photograph by Doug Chadwick.

home in the fall of 1914. Her picture at age 15 told me how she looked when she announced my birth. She had been stationed near the telephone so she could receive news of my birth, then run outside to call across the creek to my grandfather, George Vawter, who was cutting corn. After the news came, Gladys' call was, "It's a girl!"

When Gladys and Robert were married, I was five years old. The church was decorated with goldenrod. I remember that my grandfather was taking up ribbon along the aisle.

The picture of the church was made in the spring of 1941. My mother and I were visiting my grandmother the weekend. We are in the picture on the left side.

Gladys and Robert had a wonderful home and reared 10 fine children. What happy memories came back!
Elizabeth Hines Czompo

Snow Ice Cream

We received many letters in response to our inquiry in the fall issue about how to make snow ice cream. Here are a few highlights. —ed.

September 29, 1999
Greenville, West Virginia
Editor,
I, too, have made snow ice cream. As I remember, all we did to make it was to get some nice fresh fallen snow and add a little sugar and a bit of flavoring to it, then stir it up well.

Here where I live, we did not have electricity and could not make ice cream in a regular ice-cream maker. The electric power came to this section in 1939, or about that date.

I have passed 100 years.
Gladys B. Larew

September 16, 1999
Huntington, West Virginia
Editor,
I grew up in Davis and Canaan Valley where snow was never a problem. We made snow ice cream many, many times when I was young; I made it for my children until we stopped getting enough snow to have good clean snow.

We always put a can of Carnation evaporated cream outside in the snow to chill it first. After it was really cold, we beat it with an electric mixer until it was whipped like whipping cream — add some sugar and vanilla — then gently fold snow into the cream until it is the consistency of ice cream. Eat quickly and enjoy.
Mrs. Richard Smoot

September, 16, 1999
Bridgeport, West Virginia
Editor,
My mother made us snow ice cream with the following recipe:

2 cups clean snow

1/2 to 1 teaspoon vanilla extract for flavoring

Approximately 1 tablespoon white sugar (may need more or less to taste)

Approximately 1/8 to 1/4 cup of milk or cream, depending on how soft one desired their ice cream.

Mix all ingredients together and ENJOY!

Snow ice cream is a good childhood memory, however with the pollution in today's skies, I would not recommend this dish to anyone. One might try using shaved ice to experience the taste. I really believe, though, that some of the greatness is lost without the personal "gathering of snow" which, of course, would be more exciting to a child.
Sincerely,
Beverly Smith

Mailbag

Many of you include notes along with your annual subscription renewals. We are always pleased to hear from you and value your comments, positive or negative. Here are a few recent samples. —ed.

October 1, 1999
Washington Courthouse, Ohio
Editor,
GOLDENSEAL magazine is great. So interesting to read. Please continue the GREAT job.

How about some stories on hog butchering, rabbit and squirrel cleaning, cooking, etc.? How about a scrip collection story?
Thanks,
Lloyd A. Doss
A proud West Virginian

October 4, 1999
Cairo, West Virginia
Editor,
Sorry — but I like the old binding style and black-and-white covers better. I'm also not interested in seeing articles reprinted. I already read them once, and still remember them. But in general, it's a great magazine!
Thanks,
Cynthia Burkhart

October 1, 1999
Mansfield, Ohio
Editor,
I just want to commend you on such a wonderful magazine as GOLDENSEAL. I enjoy reading the articles so very much.

Since I was reared in the Huntington/Cabell area of the state, I was just wondering why there are not more articles about happenings in that area.
Thank you,
Helen Whitten

September 26, 1999
Charleston, West Virginia
Editor,
Time to raise the rates.
Ken Sullivan

September 30, 1999
Chapmanville, West Virginia
Editor,
I want to express my appreciation of your GOLDENSEAL magazine. It is the best magazine anyone can get, so much good reading and pictures. I do love every story that is in it. I loved the story about Ruby Morris, about the bean seed, and others.

I guess I have all the magazines that GOLDENSEAL has published.
Basil Ferrell

FDR In Elkins

September 26, 1999
Franklin, West Virginia
Editor,
Yes, we were there, and are writing in regard to the picture of Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the 1936 Mountain State Forest Festival on the campus of Davis & Elkins College [see "Photo Curiosity"; Fall 1999].

I was 18, a sophomore and a winter dancer in the pageant entitled "Legend of Peace," which I recall had 40 girl dancers, 10 for each of the four seasons. My husband now, whom I had just met at that time, was one of four slaves who carried an Egyptian princess to the stage as a part of the pageant.

We have often told our children and grandchildren about the time we performed for a president.
Pauline Ruddle Harman
John Harman

September 28, 1999
Washington, D.C.
Editor,
Your "Photo Curiosity" in the fall issue prompted a visit to the periodical section of the Library of Congress where I was already engaged in other research. The Elkins speech of FDR came during the first week of his re-election campaign of 1936. He spoke in West Virginia on his way to Pittsburgh, and crowned Mary Jane Bell of Parkersburg as Queen Sylvia VII.

The text of the speech on conservation at Elkins is not remarkable in today's climate, but it did show a vigorous defense of the first Roosevelt administration's work in the field.
Best wishes,
Clifford P. Hackett

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt greets Mary Jane Bell of Parkersburg — Queen Sylvia VII — at the 1936 Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins. Governor Herman G. Kump looks on. Photograph courtesy of Mullins Antiques, Elkins.

Here are excerpts from the text of President Roosevelt's speech as published on October 2, 1936, in The New York Times:

The setting in which we are gathered today for this Forest Festival turns our thoughts toward conservation.

This wonderland of natural beauty is at one and the same time a challenge and a justification. It demonstrates what can be done in the way of conservation of our resources. ...

The state of West Virginia is rightly proud of its glorious natural scenery, but the state also shows to us what happens when man flies in the face of nature. Today I have seen many square miles of splendid mountains which have been denuded of timber. I have seen yellow streams carrying eroded silt and soil from the steep slopes.

In this state as in many others, we are proud of the growing consciousness of the people themselves that man's errors in the past must be corrected by man in the future. In this worthwhile effort the state and the federal government are working hand in hand. ...

Thus since June 30, 1934, more than two and one-half times as much wildlife sanctuary area has been acquired or is now being acquired than in all the preceding years in the history of our government. This work is now going on and it will be continued with the same vigor and singleness of purpose.

It is pertinent to remind you here that 7 million of our citizens take out fishing licenses each year and that 6 million more take out annual hunting licenses, a total of 13 million — a veritable army to uphold the banner of conservation.

Drainage, drought, and overshooting have greatly decreased the numbers of our waterfowl. I have for three consecutive years, at the cost of much bitter criticism, approved regulations drastically reducing the open shooting seasons and bag limits and prohibiting the use of certain devices known to be unduly destructive. As a consequence, I am informed that there is evidence that these species have shown some increase in numbers and it is believed that they may now survive these disasters.

Such, my friends, is a brief and incomplete statement of the ways and means by which this administration has made effective its recognition of the fact that the wildlife in our fields and woods and waters constitutes a resource of vital importance to all Americans and that it is the responsibility of the federal government in cooperation with the states to safeguard it for future generations. At last we are making definite progress.

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.

Holiday Celebrations

The **Belle Boyd House** in Martinsburg offers a glimpse into the past with its Victorian-era Christmas theme. The house, which was built in 1853, will be decorated inside and outside with wreaths and swags. Antique decorations will grace the branches of the 10-foot tree in the house's ballroom, and docents in period costume will conduct tours of the home of Boyd. Belle, a Confederate spy, is credited with providing General Stonewall Jackson with important information during an 1862 campaign in the Shenandoah Valley.

The Belle Boyd House, which is located at 126 East Race Street, is the home of the Berkeley County Historical Society. Open house hours during the holiday season continue through December 19. Hours are 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Sunday. For more information, call (304)267-4713.

The Knights' Christmas Fantasy in Webster County.

If you're driving along Route 20 at Bolair between Cowen and Webster Springs in Webster County, be sure to check out the **Knights' Christmas Fantasy**.

Beginning the second week of December and running through the New Year, the yard of Sampson and Wynonia Knight is decorated with thousands of lights and numerous holiday scenes.

It takes the couple about two weeks to put up all the decorations. People have traveled from Kentucky, Washington, D.C., Charleston, Weston, and Beckley to see the display, Mrs. Knight says. Mr. and Mrs. Knight encourage people to view and enjoy their hard work, but for safety purposes involving their use of electricity and numerous extension cords, they ask that visitors not enter their yard.

The Cultural Center in Charleston gets in a festive mood with an exhibit of 20 holiday trees, children's events, and a gingerbread contest.

With the theme "Glorious Gingerbread," the Great Hall of the Cultural Center will feature an 18-foot tree; gingerbread decorations will line the walls while the Lobby Gallery will be home to a gingerbread village. The holiday trees, courtesy of the Kanawha Garden Council of the West Virginia Garden Clubs, will be on display in the West Virginia State Museum.

"Choo Choo ... Trains," a display of model trains sponsored by the Island Creek Model Railroad Club of Logan, will be on display through December 12 as will entries in the Gingerbread House Contest, which was conducted earlier in the month.

Dolls have long been a holiday tradition and "Doll Collectors' Day" is planned on December 18 from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., at the Cultural Center. The Kanawha Valley Doll & Miniature Club of Charleston plans to display dolls and playthings from the past 100 years.

Children are invited to make gingerbread houses, ornaments, and crafts on December 18 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

The West Virginia Division of Culture and History's free exhibitions and events continue through January 3.

Admission to all events is free and on a first-come, first-served basis. Weekend parking is free. For additional information or to receive a schedule of holiday activities at the Cultural Center, call (304)558-0220.

GOLDENSEAL Story Wins Award

GOLDENSEAL contributor Danny Williams won second place in the best feature category of the "Celebrate the Best of West Virginia Tourism Media Awards" for his article "Clifftop: Appalachian String Band Music Festival." The article appeared in the Summer 1999 issue of GOLDENSEAL.

Award winners were announced October 27 in Wheeling during the West Virginia Tourism Conference. The awards contest was sponsored by the West Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association and the West Virginia Division of Tourism.

This is the seventh year for the awards contest, and it marks the first time a GOLDENSEAL story has been honored.

Way to go, Danny!

Goodbye, Andy Boarman

Andrew "Andy" Forrest Boarman, 87, of Hedgesville died August 26, 1999, at his home on the same farmland on which he was born on October 11, 1911.

Boarman was a retired barber, a banjo craftsman and player, and recipient of the 1991 Vandalia Award. Andy was featured in GOLDENSEAL in the January-March 1979 issue in an article titled "Andrew F. Boarman: The Banjo Man from Berkeley County," by Peggy Jarvis and Dick Kimmel. The article also appears in the newly published book *Mountains of Music: West Virginia Traditional Music From* GOLDENSEAL [see inside front cover].

Andy Boarman (1911-1999). Photograph by Michael Keller, 1986.

In the article, Andy said that he started making banjos with his uncle in 1928, although he had already been playing the instrument since the age of 11. In fact, he began playing the Autoharp at the age of 6.

"I love music and I love people," Andy said. "I love bluegrass, but I don't go to them festivals just to hear bluegrass. I go there to meet people. You meet some of the best people in the world at the festivals. Fine, fine people, fine musicians."

Ethnic Heritage Recognized

A recent report titled *An Introduction to West Virginia Ethnic Communities* highlights 57 local communities in the Mountain State. It includes descriptions and contact information for groups such as Hungarians in the Eastern Panhandle, Carpatho-Russians in Morgantown, and Slovenes in the Richwood area, along with 16 individual ethnic communities in the Northern Panhandle.

African American, Native American, and Jewish communities statewide are the subjects of essays in the report detailing each group's history, current size, activities, and organizations.

The study was sponsored by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History and conducted by the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College, with financial support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the West Virginia Commission on the Arts.

The report will be made available on the Internet in the near future and printed copies will be available for purchase. For more information, contact John Lilly, GOLDENSEAL Editor/Folklife Director, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Charleston, WV 25305.

A new brochure by the West Virginia Division of Tourism outlines a brief history of African American heritage in the Mountain State.

The brochure points out that there are 25 sites on the National Register of Historic Places that spotlight African American heritage in West Virginia. Camp Washington-Carver is one such site [see "Camp Washington-Carver: An African American Landmark in Fayette County," by Norman Jordan; page 56].

The African American heritage brochure is one of several created recently by the Division of Tourism. Other heritage brochures look at the Civil War in West Virginia, railroads, and the glass industry.

To receive a brochure or a free state travel guide, call the West Virginia Division of Tourism at 1-800-CALL WVA.

Ethel Caffie-Austin, West Virginia's "First Lady of Gospel Music," is featured in a new Appalshop Film and Video production titled "His Eye Is On the Sparrow." Ethel is the subject of a feature story in our Winter 1997 issue, "Hand-Clapping and Hallelujahs: A Visit with Ethel Caffie-Austin," by Michael Kline.

The video follows Caffie-Austin from the late 1980's through 1998. The production, which was directed by Anne Lewis, shows Caffie-Austin at her church, the

Ethel Caffie-Austin. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Rimson Memorial Church of God in Christ in Charleston. She is shown working with young people in Cumberland, Kentucky, and ministering to inmates at Mount Olive Correctional Institution.

Ethel is also shown leading a choir during the Black Sacred Music Festival at West Virginia State College in Institute; the next festival is slated to run from February 11-13, 2000. For more information on the festival, call (304)766-3146.

For information on video purchase or rental, write to Appalshop Film and Video, 91SLP Madison Avenue, Whitesburg, Kentucky 41858 or call 1-800-545-7467.

Appalachian music, research paper sessions, and a storytelling workshop are part of "Piecing It Together: Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia," a conference planned for March 3-5, 2000, on Marshall University's campus in Huntington.

Speakers scheduled during the conference include GOLDENSEAL contributors Ancella Bickley and Fred Barkey along with scholars Susan Eacker, Geoff Eacker, Linda Tate, Roberta Campbell, and Rita Wicks-Nelson.

There is no registration fee for the conference, but it is necessary to preregister because of limited seating. There will be a fee for luncheons and dinners.

For more information about the conference, call Mary Thomas, administrative assistant at the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Gender, at (304)696-3348. Information about the conference is posted on the center's website at www.marshall.edu/csega.

Commemorative *Hillbilly* Issue

After purchasing a building in Richwood, Glen Facemire, Jr., discovered several hundred copies of a special bicentennial issue of the *West Virginia Hillbilly*. The *Hillbilly* was formerly published from the building.

The special issue, printed in November 1976, has more than 200 pages jam-packed with interesting and informative stories about the history of the Mountain State. There is one page devoted to each year from 1775 to 1975, with a seven-page index of people and subjects covered.

"I'm looking forward to sharing this with people," Facemire says.

Facemire is selling the original editions of the commemorative issue while supplies last for $12 each, which includes shipping; people who are interested may write to him at P.O. Box 571, Richwood, West Virginia 26261.

John Gillispie Joins Staff

We welcome new assistant editor John Gillispie to the GOLDENSEAL staff. A native of Logan County, John comes to us via Huntington where he served as features editor for *The Herald-Dispatch*. He is a 1988 graduate of Marshall University. In addition to his work at *The Herald-Dispatch*, John has newspaper experience at *The Register-Herald* in Beckley and *The Republican-American* in Waterbury, Connecticut; television experience at WOWK and WPBY, radio experience with WMUL-FM, and magazine experience with the *Huntington Quarterly* and *Marshall* magazines. John started work at GOLDENSEAL on October 4, replacing former assistant editor Connie K. Colvin who recently accepted a teaching position in the Parkersburg area. John is a tremendous addition to our staff.

GOLDENSEAL assistant editor John Gillispie. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Welcome aboard!

Agnes Nestor Celebrates 100

About 160 people turned out at the Tucker County Senior Center on October 16, 1999, to celebrate the 100th birthday of Agnes Nestor of Tucker County.

Agnes Runner Nestor. Photograph by Michael Keller.

She is the subject of a feature story in our Fall 1997 issue, "'You Name It, and I Done It': A Visit With Agnes Runner Nestor," by Melissa Ireland.

Those attending the celebration brought Mrs. Nestor nearly 200 roses to mark her centennial celebration.

Mrs. Nestor had a wonderful time. She told friend Patti Mullennex of Harman afterward, however, that she was the most tired she had ever been.

Mrs. Nestor is the daughter of the late John and Arthelia Runner of Preston County. She attended school at Macedonia and later taught school there for four years, in addition to teaching at Hannahsville, White Ridge, and St. George Academy. She married Worthy Nestor of Barbour County in 1925.

Mrs. Nestor has two great-grandchildren and one great-great-granddaughter.

Congratulations, Agnes!

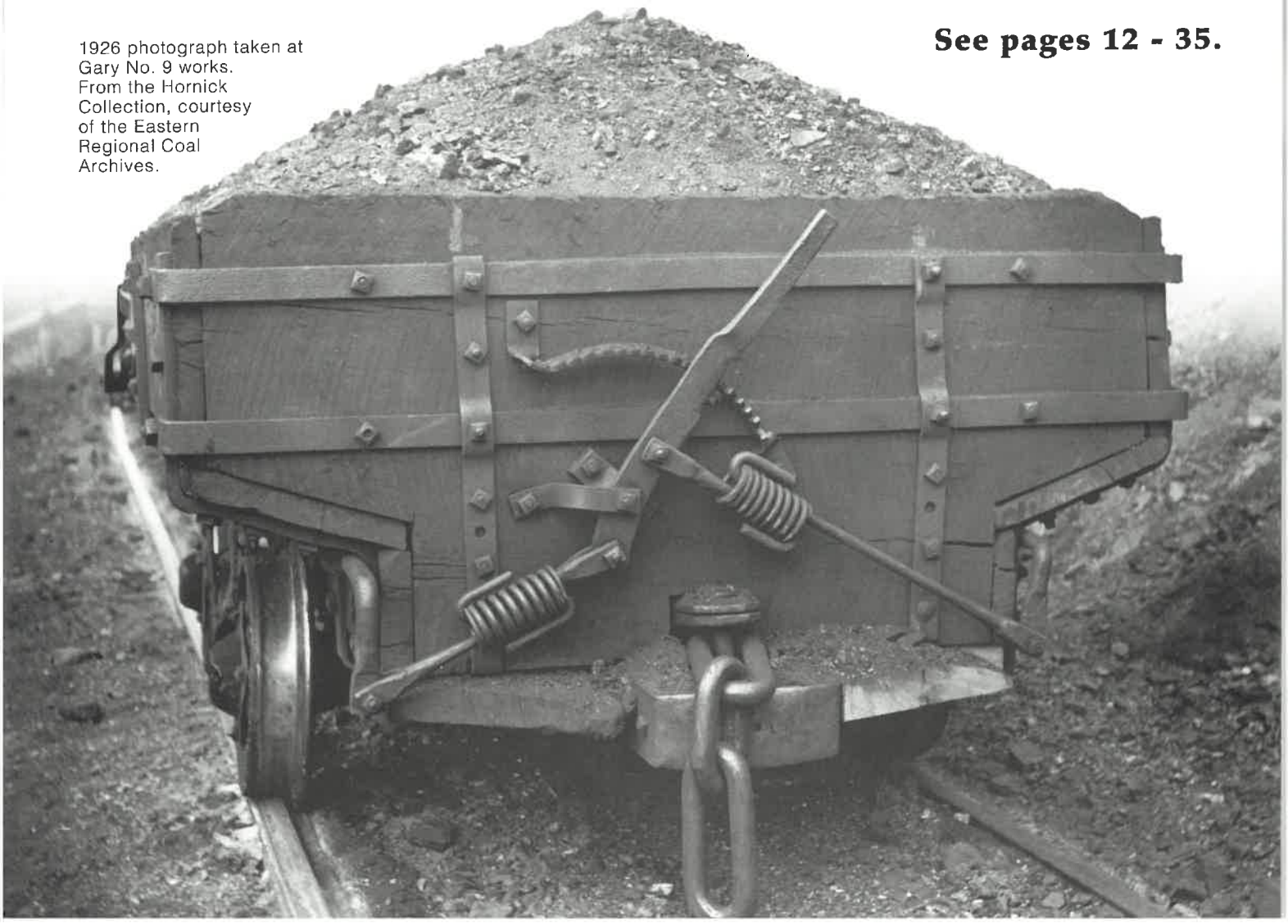
GOLDENSEAL Special Report

Coal Mining

West Virginia and coal are bound together, for better or for worse. Today, as the state and the industry ponder an uncertain future, GOLDENSEAL reflects on the past.

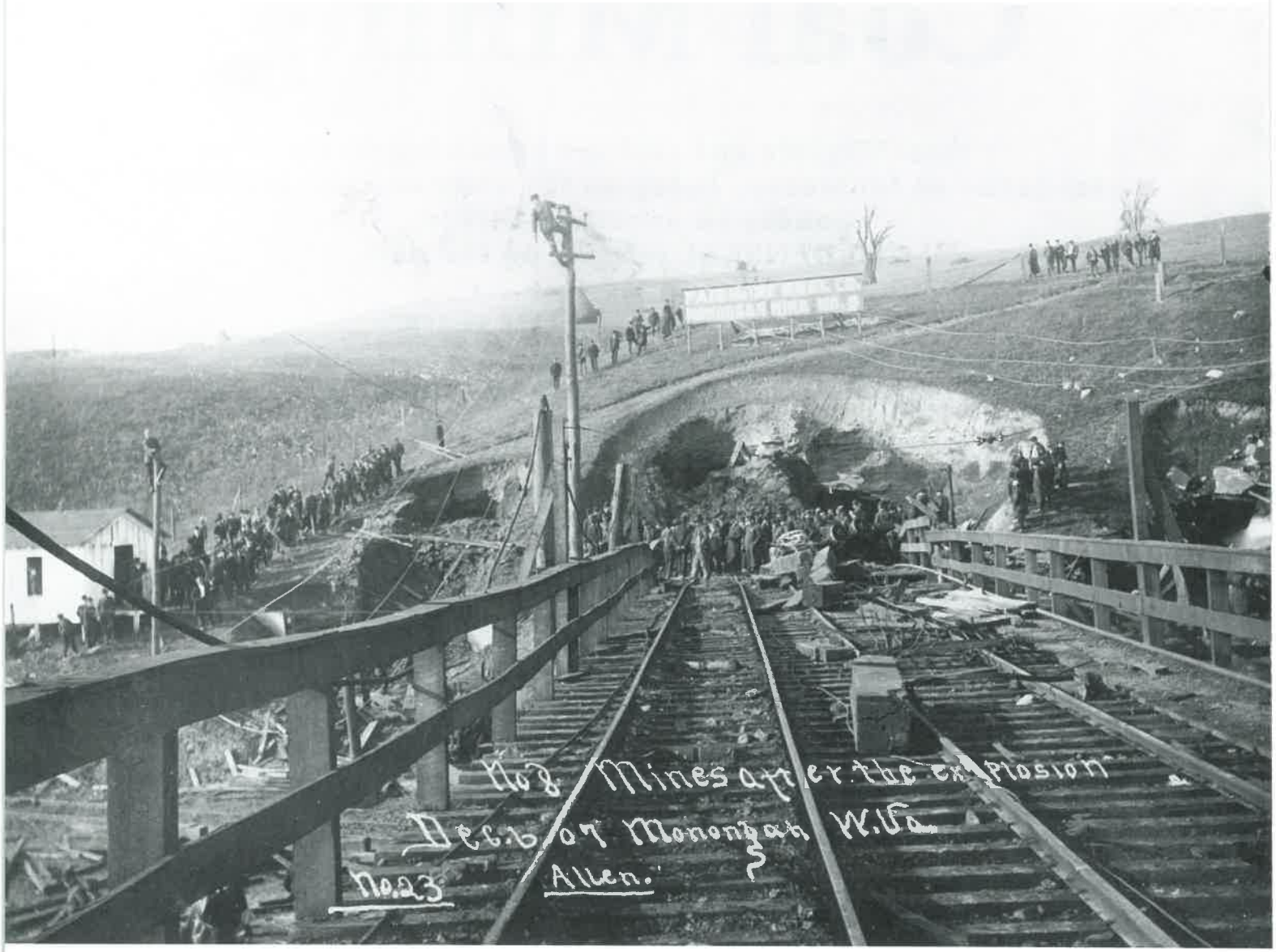
From the perilous early years, to the mechanized experience of recent times, join us as we take an extended look at West Virginia coal.

See pages 12 - 35.



1926 photograph taken at Gary No. 9 works. From the Hornick Collection, courtesy of the Eastern Regional Coal Archives.

No Christmas



December 6, 1907

Reprint 25th Anniversary

[Originally published in GOLDENSEAL Winter 1993; Volume 19, Number 4.]

By Eugene Wolfe

Above: The disaster scene on December 6, 1907. The entry to Monongah No.8 was badly damaged. Photographer unknown, courtesy of the Reverend Everett F. Briggs.

at Monongah

The mines at Monongah, first No.8 and then interconnected No.6,
blew on the rainy morning of December 6, 1907.
Three-hundred-sixty-one men and boys died, according to the official count.
It was a tragedy of unprecedented proportions
and today remains the worst mine disaster in the history of the United States.
For a long time it was the worst in the world.
Certainly it was the biggest thing that ever happened in Monongah.

I was born there a decade later, grew up there, and went to high school there. My earliest memories include plenty of talk about "The Explosion." Let me relate the story to you in the context of the broader history of the town and what it meant to the townspeople.

The site of what became Monongah was five miles south of Fairmont where Booths Creek enters the West Fork River. About 1850, long before the coal mines were opened, an agrarian village was laid out. As the streets were being surveyed, the legend goes, a gawking kibitzer asked what the place would be named. "Pleasantville," he was told. "Well," he allowed, "You ought to call it 'Briertown' because you're sure as heck laying it out in a brier patch."

The wag proved to be prophetic. For years, the village was called "Briertown" or "The Patch." I remember hearing my father, John Wolfe, and his sister, my Aunt Mollie Jones, trying to remember whether the Wolfe family "came to the 'Patch' in '78 or '79."

The main Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, which came west through Grafton and on into our area, helped to make northern West Virginia the most populous area in the state. By the 1880's, rich seams of coal beckoned railroad spurs up every river, stream and "holler."

As railroads brought in the coal men, Briertown became Monongah. It was named after industrialist Johnson Camden's Monongahela Coal and Coke Company, although by early this century the mines were operated by Fairmont Coal Company, itself a part of Consolidation Coal. Even so, Monongah was never a 100 per cent company-owned town. Coal predominated, but no company ever ruled Monongah with bully-boys and gunfire as sometimes happened in the southern West Virginia coal towns.

As Monongah became a boom town, in came the Italians, Irish, Poles, Hungarians, Austrians, and other Europeans. They brought new foreign flavors to the original hill country population stew, mostly old-

Right: A group of miners paused for a photo at the entrance to the ill-fated No.8 mine before the explosion. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU.

Men look through debris including the remains of the No.8 fan following the explosion. Photograph courtesy of Ron Rittenhouse.

stock families of British and German origins.

Perhaps most of the immigrants had not the slightest notion of where the recruiters who signed them on in Europe were sending them. Many thought in some fuzzy way that they would be close to clusters of their countrymen in New York City. All looked forward to a better life. In fact, European miseries often were compounded when immigrants found themselves whisked from New York docks to the rugged West Virginia coalfields.

The foreigners' speech sounded like jabberwocky to the native mountaineers whose forefathers, like my own, had settled the land under the tomahawks of the Delawares and the Ohio tribes. In general, the newcome alien workers kept to themselves. They had a reputation for volatile tempers, but whatever violence there may have been was kept mostly among themselves. These people were to bear the brunt of the coming disaster.

Men and boys of native farm families went "inside," often literally underneath their own homes, although not in great numbers compared to the immigrants. But everyone was touched by the bustling industry around them. On the railroad, the big hoppers of Monongah's rich low-sulphur coal rolled east to Baltimore and west to the Ohio River at all hours. No West Virginian who has heard it will ever forget the crashing sound of coal cars being coupled, or the haunting wail of a steam locomotive's whistle up from the valley on a rainy night. These were the sounds of my youth in Monongah, and they were the sounds which prevailed a generation before.

The mines, three on the east side of the West Fork and two on the west side, were modern for the year 1907. Electricity was used, especially for coal cutting machinery, for "motors" to haul out the coal, and for large new ventilating fans. In fact, the Fairmont Coal Company's Monongah mines were acknowledged as models of what was most up-to-date in the mining industry.

But on the Black Friday of December 6, it happened. At 10:20 in the morning, a bombshell mix of coal and dust and methane gas which had accumulated in No.6 and No.8 on the west bank ignited.

The rolling, death-dealing thunder inside the hills subsided as quickly as it came, but the social and human aftereffects reverberated for decades.

The two mines connected underground. Their mouths were about two miles apart and both faced the West Fork, over which bridges took coal cars to the east side of the river to tipples and the railroad. The Monongah explosion made the long mine tunnels into giant cannons. A portion of the fan house in No.8 and a section of a 22-foot fan were blown 500 feet out of the mine entrance and across the river.

Marion County farmers felt the mine explosion as though it were an earthquake. The rolling, death-dealing thunder inside the hills subsided as quickly as it came, but the social and human aftereffects reverberated for decades.

The shocking fact was that 358 miners had

been killed in the blast, mostly residents of one community, many leaving widows and orphans. According to a local chronicler, among those who died were "74 white and colored Americans, 171 Italians, 25 Austrians, 52 Hungarians, 31 Russians, and five Turks." In addition, three rescue workers lost their lives, making the final total 361.

Polish immigrant Peter Urban, above, was the lone survivor of the Monongah disaster. His photograph appeared on the cover of our Winter 1993 issue, courtesy of the Reverend Everett Briggs. Urban crawled to safety through the air shaft pictured below, photograph courtesy of Ron Rittenhouse.

Of all who went inside on that unlucky morning shift, one man alone, Peter Urban from Poland, escaped with his life by crawling up an air shaft on No.6. In an ironic sequel which could only occur in this hard land of coal, Urban himself was killed 18 years later by a slate fall in the same No.6.

The great force of the explosion did ghastly work. Mine passageways turned into charnel houses. Corpses were found draped around support stanchions, covered with wreckage and debris, pressed into mine walls, and thrown into trolley wires. Many had clothes burned away and more than a few were charred beyond recognition. It took more than two days for rescue workers to reach those in the farthest rooms, a mile and a half into the mountain.

Newspapers described the condition of many of the recovered bodies as "horrible." Miners were dismembered and crushed and blackened and burned. A pit boss, famous in the area as a great coal miner, was beheaded, and his body could be identified only by its clothing and shoes. Thirteen bodies eventually were buried without benefit of any positive identification. Concerned miners rushed to Monongah from coal camps throughout the region, including Pennsylvania. Other volunteers, some of whom had never been inside before, comprised the rest of the rescue workers. Twenty-five were struck down by inhaling what was then called "black damp," air which contained a moist gas of coal dust and explosion fumes. One of the effects of black damp was to cause temporary insanity. In one case, according to the *Pittsburgh Post*, it took five men to control a stricken rescue worker. More than three rescuers might have died had not physicians been hurried to the mine entrance.

Even though the rescue work was quickly and efficiently organized by highly motivated professionals, the physical task of bringing bodies out was horrendous. It took hours of tedious, slow, and painstaking work to locate and transport a single body through the wreckage of seemingly endless rooms and passageways.

In a situation which seems odd now, nearly 100 years later, rescue workers found themselves confronted with amounts of cash running into thousands of dollars. Many of the slain miners knew little or no English, often they were illiterate in their own languages, and they had little understanding or trust of banks. Some kept their life savings in their pockets, in cash, even at work in the mines.

When such a miner was blown to bits or completely burned up, his survivors not only lost him but also whatever happened to be the family fortune. If the funds survived intact it was up to the rescuers to

deliver them into the right hands. This practice of carrying money was described in the *New York Times* December 10 story on the Monongah explosion. I also recall my father mentioning that some miners kept their money with them, when he talked about the explosion.

Hundreds of people gathered at the mine openings of No.6 and No.8. Newspaper accounts told of the wailing and screaming wives and children whose men were still inside. There were also townspeople both curious and anxious to be of help. Sightseers descended on Monongah from a broad surrounding area.

The 1907 explosion is beyond the recollection of most residents today, but Monongah retains a collective memory of the event. Thomas J. Koon, now president of the Marion County Historical Society, is among those with a personal connection to the explosion. The first husband of his mother was killed in No.8. His name was Scott Martin, and his wife, eventually to become Koon's mother, was pregnant with an earlier child at the time. Koon says that she, like other wives, went to No.8 to wait tearfully for several days. He remembers her saying that she finally received the body pieces which the authorities told her were her husband, but she was never certain. It sometimes bothered her that she had not discouraged Scott Martin from going to work that morning.

Ever after she remained frightened by anything connected with the coal mines, and Koon says she cautioned him again and again never to go near one. Her father had also been killed underground, by a slate fall in 1895. She didn't want to see a third generation added to the grim family tally.

Each case at Monongah was an awful one. A *New York Times* reporter on December 9 wrote of one woman who stood for more than 34 hours with a bunch of white carnations tied with white ribbon in her hands.

By December 8, rescue workers had the No.8 portal timbered up and the retrieval of bodies was well under way. Photograph by Boland, courtesy of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU.

A Sad Monongah Memorial

I recall an unofficial, heartbreaking monument to the Monongah explosion from my days growing up there, an ever-growing pile of coal along a fence row at the edge of town. By the 1930's it had reached proportions of 12 to 15 feet high, about 200 feet long, and 25 to 30 feet wide. It contained countless tons of choice bituminous coal.

The colossal mound was built lump by lump by a wife who became deranged upon her husband's death in No.8. After the explosion, every day for nearly 40 years she made two or three trips to the mine, nearly a mile each way. Each time she brought back to her cottage four or five hand-picked pieces of coal in a burlap sack.

After her husband was killed, the widow and her sons somehow managed a living. Renzy Fazio of Monongah, whose family lived close by in 1907, remembers hearing that the woman said she was taking the coal because the company had taken her husband. Psychologically, the reasons were probably much more complicated than that.

When I was going to Thoburn Grade School, we students often attended Monongah High School football games at Traction Park. The route from the school took us directly past the widow's house. I remember seeing the coal pile many times, and I once saw her bringing a sackful of lumps from No.8.

The ever-growing mound of coal would seem sure-fire fare for newspaper feature writers. But for many years, in deference to feelings of the family, the unwritten policy of regional newspapers was not to touch the coal pile. I don't know of any photographs.

Indeed, even at this late date, after all the lady's descendants and relatives have left Monongah, and most of them are no longer alive, I believe there is some slight resentment of questions about the coal pile.

But for most Marion Countians the widow's sad monument is now a forgotten relic of the awful disaster of December 1907. After their mother passed away, the family disposed of the black mountain of Monongah coal. By then the dollar value was more than considerable, and they gave all the coal money to churches and schools.

—Eugene Wolfe

But when her husband's body finally was brought out, it was in such a bad state that burial had to be immediate. The new widow tearfully followed the wagon bearing her dead man into town for a coffin, and then on to the cemetery where he was put back into the earth. The whole sad business took little more than an hour.

By Saturday evening after the explosion on Friday morning, only 25 bodies had been brought outside. Hundreds remained inside, but no one knew just how many. In fact, there was never a completely accurate count of how many men were in the mines at the time of the blast.

Each miner who loaded coal had his "checks," round brass tags with his number stamped on them. When he shoveled a car full he put his tag on it so he would get credit for the coal when it reached outside, at the rate of 50 cents per long ton. From these checks the company determined there were more than 300 coal loaders in the two mines that morning. But the brass tags did not account for workers who sent no coal to the surface, including bosses, young boys, track workers, teamsters, pumpers, and operators of various pieces of mining machinery.

Although Fairmont Coal admitted it had no exact record of the number of men in the two mines, newspaper reporters on the scene could not help but notice that the company *did* have a precise count on the number of horses and mules inside at the time. Such stories contribute to the pervasive miner's lore that coal companies cared more for mules than men.

Be that as it may, the immediate reaction of Fairmont Coal Company executive C.W. Watson was a classic in putting the best face on a bad situation. He ignored the possibility of sparks from the many machines in the mine, as well as questions as to whether his company had taken all proper safety measures.

Instead, Watson made a statement worthy of today's best sharpsters. He said that he was "thoroughly convinced that the disaster in the two mines was caused by an explosion of coal dust," but that he "could not account for the ignition of the dust unless it had been through the careless use of an open lamp." He ignored the matters of permitting dust to accumulate in the first place.

For a time it was speculated that a runaway mine car caused the explosion. This was described in a *United Mine Workers Journal* 50th anniversary article in 1957. When a string of cars began to roll back to the mine entrance of No.6, 18-year-old Pat McDonnel dashed to the entrance to throw a switch to cut the power. Just before McDonnel reached the switch, No.6 exploded. He was knocked down and rolled by the blast.

McDonnel suffered severe bruises and carried a scar the rest of his life from a cut on the forehead. He eventually became Monongah's Chief of Police. I remember Pat McDonnel well, as a town fixture when I was going to school in Monongah in the 1920's and

Relatives wait for news at Monongah. Photographer unknown, courtesy of Ron Rittenhouse.

early 1930's. Mine experts and Fairmont Coal would in time officially declare that the runaway coal cars did not cause the great explosion.

It was rumored that in addition to coal dust and methane gas, mine explosives had added to the force of the detonation. Fairmont Coal, like most mining companies at the time, used dangerous black powder to shoot down the coal. Black powder was cheaper than safer explosives, although cost was a moot point to the company. The miners had to buy their own powder at prices set for profit by the company store. After the disaster, the use of black powder was banned in the Monongah mines, to the company's credit.

But at the time of the explosion, the Fairmont Coal Company's concern for mine safety at Monongah left much to be desired. The workforce was 75 percent foreign-born and non-English speaking, the most for any company operating in West Virginia at the time. To the County Coroner's jury, a company mine superintendent testified that the company had instructed the miners in mine safety. With a straight face he explained that each miner had been given a copy of the state mining laws to read!

The anxious and grieving crowds at the mine shafts came dangerously close to the riot stage as hysteria rose. Mine and local officials contained the situation, just short of having to call for the militia.

Five railroad carloads of coffins arrived in Monongah the day after the explosion. They were not enough. As the retrieval of bodies progressed, a morgue was set up in the new and unfinished bank building. Six undertakers with squads of assistants performed their grim tasks nonstop. Scores upon scores of bodies were then lined up in open coffins on Monongah's Main Street.

The anxious and grieving crowds at the mine shafts came dangerously close to the riot stage as hysteria rose.

There, a heart-wrenching and harrowing process began for the families of the dead. Bereft wives, children, parents, and friends identified their own as best they could for the official records, then made their personal arrangements.

On Wednesday, five days after the explosion, the scene had changed somewhat. Most of the bodies had been recovered. The mobs of idle sightseers had departed. The mine entrances were left to rescue workers and the small number of relatives whose men were still inside. A downpour of cruel winter rain fell steadily.

A special graveyard, soon filled, was laid out on a bleak hillside at nearby Thoburn community. Com-

pany houses flanked the burial ground. The cold rows of open graves in the sodden, half-frozen, rain-drenched, and snow-flecked West Virginia soil compounded the grief of those who had fled the warmth of the Mediterranean sun for a better life in America.

Later, the town built a recreational area named Traction Park near the disaster graveyard. As a child I saw the Monongah Miners baseball team play teams from other mining towns at Traction Park. Several of our players descended from men killed in the explosion. Their fathers lay to the right of first base.

The 361 casualties of Monongah's coal mine disaster left more than 1,000 widows and children. The Mannington Relief Committee was set up to assist them. The coal company distributed $17,500 to the relief fund and ultimately made an additional small settlement to individual survivors.

At least one party, the Austro-Hungarian consul, thought the Fairmont Coal Company had paid out trifling amounts to the survivors of immigrant miners. An official protest was entered through diplomatic channels.

Former Governor A. Brooks Fleming, Fairmont Coal Company lawyer, answered the consul with noticeable coolness, according to John Alexander Williams in his book, *West Virginia and the Captains of Industry*. Fleming carefully noted that the company had given the funds it distributed as "a gratuity or donation," and under no legal obligation. "The Company never for a moment considered it was legally liable," he stated. "I think the $2,000 distributed principally among 41 children and 20 widows would be quite a Christmas present."

Brooks Fleming was a Fairmonter. The Fairmont Coal Company had been founded by his wife's father, J.O. Watson, along with her brother, Clarence "Big Bud" Watson. Fleming was also a close friend to the three most powerful developers of West Virginia's natural resources: Johnson Camden, Henry Gassaway Davis, and Stephen B. Elkins.

Such men understood that coal production had to go on. Certainly the Monongah mines were too large and too profitable to be stopped by the explosion. In a short time they were cleaned up and reconstructed. A new army of miners reported to work. Coal again streamed out of both black cannon barrels. It would pour out of No.8 for another 50 years.

The town of Monongah got on with the business of

Disaster victims are lined up in open coffins on Monongah's Main Street, December 12, 1907. Photograph by Boland, courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU.

A light snow covered the ground as Polish and Italian cemeteries are prepared to accept more bodies, December 12, 1907. Photograph by Boland, courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU.

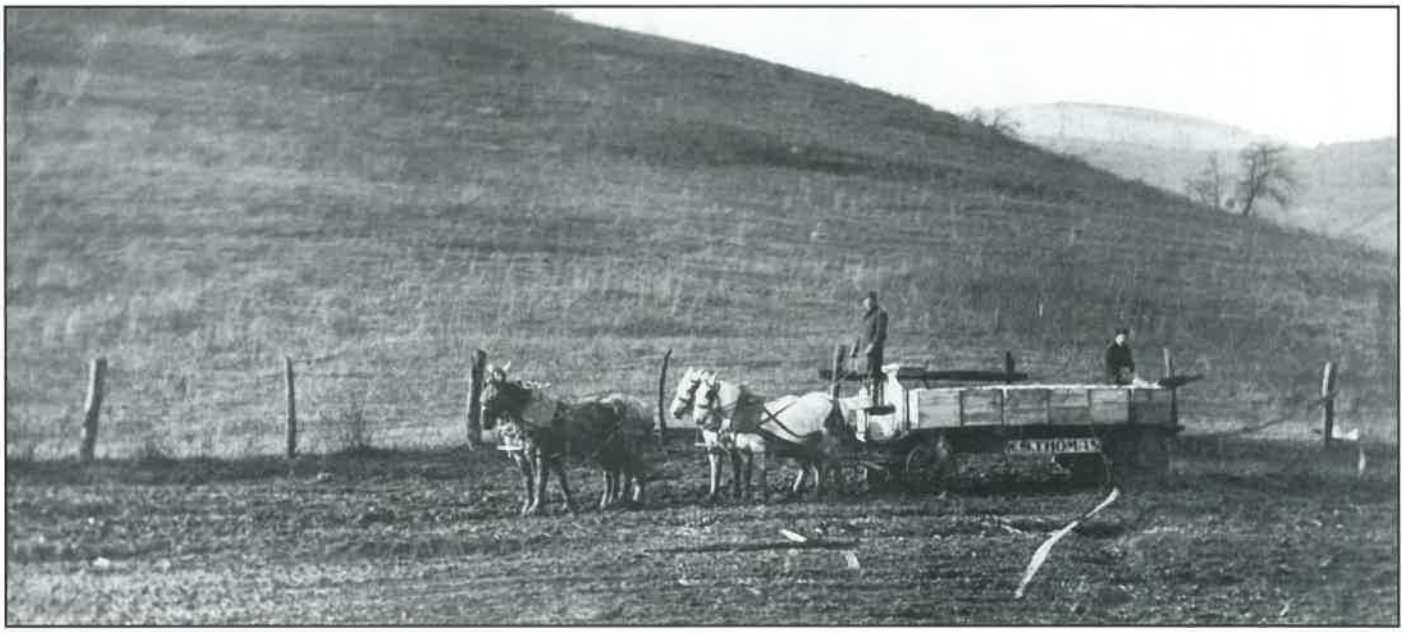
mixing the foreign born and natives into a strong American community. Many of the immigrants eventually quit the mines to become barbers, grocers, tailors, or haulers of freight, and they became involved in the civic affairs of our town. In time, a Miss Jones would teach school alongside a Miss Talerico.

The interurban streetcar line connected Monongah with the cities of Clarksburg and Fairmont, and coal towns in between. Fairmont, being the closer, was the place for serious shopping and entertainment when people were in the mood for that. *They Died in the Darkness*, Lacy Dillon's book about West Virginia mine disasters, notes that local stores were decorated for Christmas at the time of the explosion. But despite Governor Fleming's statement, there was little Christmas spirit at Monongah that year.

Fairmont was also the place where the profits from soft coal and hard lives built outlandish mansions for the owners of the mines.

I don't know how the people inside those showplaces felt. But the butter-and-egg farmers who had owned the land and coal in the first place and the transplanted sons and daughters of the old countries, and all their children and their children's children, never forgot Monongah's big explosion. They haven't yet, some still going to the graves of those who died inside that cold and hostile Allegheny mountainside.

EUGENE WOLFE was born in Monongah. He is a veteran of Pearl Harbor and the Pacific War, and a retired Navy speech and documentary film writer. He has published a volume of World War II poetry. He wrote this article for the Winter 1993 issue of GOLDENSEAL.



A horse-drawn wagon carries disaster victims to their final resting place. Photograph courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU.

"I Know Them All"

Monongah's Faithful Father Briggs

By Barbara Smith

Photographs by Mike Furbee

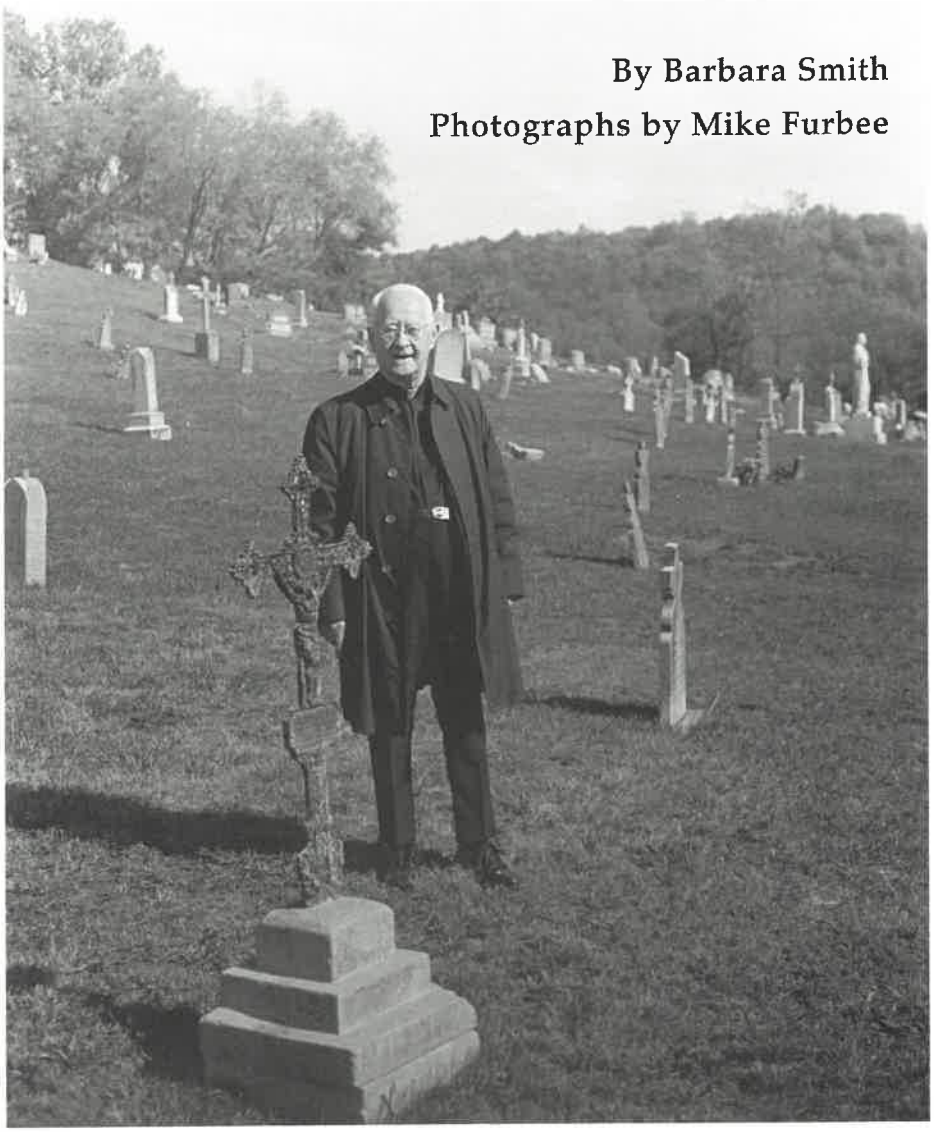
Father Everett Briggs remembers story after story about Monongah. "People tell me there were five churches, five barber shops, and five bars. Why, Monongah was much more important than Fairmont in those days," the priest says, referring to the days when this town served as the hub of coal production in West Virginia.

Father Briggs' black clerical garb is startling against the colorful background of St. Barbara's Memorial Nursing Home. He founded and opened this shelter in 1961, originally charging patients $3.50 per day.

He points out the shrubs and flowers he has planted to ornament the grounds. "The daffodils have done well this year. And these," he says pointing to obviously healthy bushes, "are Rose of Sharon just coming into their own. And do you know what these are called?" He chuckles and gestures toward the low-lying, yellow-green bushes. "They're called mopheads! I've never seen anything hold its color through the entire year the way these rascals do."

The mopheads and daffodils and Rose of Sharons ring a towering statue of St. Barbara on a large red brick pedestal. "It's made of Carrara marble," he says, "supposedly the best in the world.

"Do you know who she was?" His keen eyes narrow. "There's an interesting story about her connection with lightning. See that turret?" He points to a column near the foot of the statue. "Her father ordered that two windows be put into her room when the castle was being built. But then he went off and when he returned, he found three windows instead of two. He asked his daughter why she had the three windows, and she told him that they reminded her of the Holy Trinity."



Father Everett Briggs, at age 91, is an indefatigable patron of Monongah's fallen miners. Since 1956, he has been a local leader in memorializing the victims of West Virginia's worst mining disaster.

Father Briggs hesitates. "Now, the emperor at the time was that

St. Barbara's Memorial Nursing Home, located on U.S. 19 south of Monongah, was built as a memorial to the 1907 disaster victims.

mad man — Caligula, I think — who persecuted the Christians. And Barbara's father was so afraid of him that he killed Barbara — his own daughter — with a sword. And according to the story, as he lifted the sword, lightning struck it and he was killed, too. She's the patron saint of those who use explosives. She's the patron saint of miners."

The significance of his statement is itself explosive. The statue and the nursing home are memorials to those who died in the 1907 explosion of the No.8 mine and the adjoining No.6 mine. On the four sides of the pedestal on which Barbara rests are four black aluminum plaques on which have been laser-engraved, alphabetically, the names of those men.

Father Briggs, now 91 years of age, has devoted more than half his life to memorializing those who died in the disaster and ministering to their families and neighbors.

"Those are all the names I could find," Father Briggs says. "I searched for years to find that many. I got some from the families here, of course, and some from families back in Italy and some from visitors from out of state. And once, when I was touring Italy, I climbed out of the bus, and there in this tiny town was a monument to the men of the town who had died in the mine in Monongah, West Virginia. I wrote down those names, too, and they're now on our monument. In spite of all the searching we did, we know there were about 100 more whose bodies were unidentifiable, dismembered and so on. All we could do was add the statement on that last plaque: 'In memory of all the unknown... .'"

Anyone paying close attention to the plaques will notice that many of the family names — 22 of them — are repeated, three, four, five times. One name, DiSalvo, appears

St. Barbara, the patron saint of miners, stands on a brick pedestal bearing the names of the disaster victims. The pedestal encases the last ton of coal taken from the stricken mine.

12 times. According to Father Briggs, that name in Italian means "safety."

He points to the red brick pedestal. "Inside is the last ton of coal taken from the mine. We wanted to use it for the pedestal instead of the bricks, but it would have disintegrated so we broke it up and put it inside instead, and we left air holes," he says pointing to the bottom row of bricks, "to provide ventilation so that the coal would last as long as possible."

Where did the funds come from for this lovely nursing home, the beautiful grounds, the awesome statue, and its pedestal? "I raised it," the priest says modestly. "People gave a lot. The whole town gave. When I came in 1956, there wasn't a memorial of any kind anywhere in town — not so much as a fence post. Most of the victims of the disaster were Catholic, though, so I got to know most of the families, and I just decided something had to be done. So we did it."

Most of the miners involved in the disaster were recent European immigrants. Some estimates indicate that 80 per cent of them belonged to two Catholic churches in town — St. Stanislaus and, ironically, the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii.

Inside the nursing home are plaques honoring those who contributed to the project and credit is given for federal funding which augmented the gifts designated for the nursing home itself.

"When I came in 1956, there wasn't a memorial of any kind anywhere in town — not so much as a fence post. I just decided something had to be done."

What brought this giant of a small man to Monongah? "Well, I went to Japan in 1936 to build a church, and we did build it. But then the war came and I was accused of being a spy, so they imprisoned me. I went on a hunger strike to protest the way the military was treating the Christians, and I almost died. But I really wasn't interested in making a monument of myself. After almost two years I was repatriated. They took us out on a Japanese ship and dumped us in South Africa. Eventually we were picked up, and eventually I ended up in Los Angeles." In 1956, "the bishop asked me to come to Monongah for three years, so I came." He laughs. "It's been a long three years."

A monument to the unknown miners.

Climbing into the car, Father Briggs leads the way to Mt. Calvary Cemetery. As he walks among the gravestones, he tells stories about those buried beneath the stones. "I know them all," he says. "They're still alive to me." He points to a tipped stone beside a rotting tree stump, the stone marking the grave of Guiseppe DiMaria. The epitaph reads, "Born in Santa Croce, Italy, in 1875. Killed December 6, 1907, in No.8 explosion."

"If you look up from here on a diagonal line, you'll see the division of the cemetery into the Italian and Polish sections," Father Briggs suggests. "This wasn't done because of any religious dispute. It's just that the Polish people wanted

their families together, and the Italians wanted theirs. I used to be able to keep the place in order. I cut the grass myself for years and years. But I can't do that anymore, and the place is being vandalized." He points to another tipped gravestone. "I hate it, but I just can't keep up with it anymore. I come over here about once a month, though, just because, well, nobody it seems, is left to care for them. This is what has kept me here."

He crosses a narrow road whose ruts are still filled with coal dust. "Over here," he says, "is the Mohammedan Cemetery. This is where they buried some of the Muslim immigrants who were killed in the mine."

He has made many, many friends, some of them still living in Monongah and in St. Barbara's Memorial Nursing Home, all of them living in his heart.

He leads the way to a large area that has no grave markers. "This is called the New Cemetery. It belongs to the city. I spent two years measuring off eight to 10 foot sections and then sounding to determine where bodies had been buried. This is the cemetery for the unknowns, the bodies that couldn't be identified."

He points out a beautiful black marble monument placed in memory of Charles W. Morris and dedicated to all of the unknown victims. Its legend reads, "In these trenches lie an unknown number of mining heroes, some not old enough to know about life. Only God knows their names and ages. They have been gone for many years, but their courage is not forgotten. May we meet them in heaven one day." The base of the monument is surrounded by permanently embedded chunks of coal.

Back at the nursing home, under the watchful eye of St. Barbara, Father Briggs climbs out of the car. In spite of a long day, he is not yet going home. He goes into the building and onto the corridor that leads to the common room where he will say hello to some of the patients and offer a few prayers. He passes a wheelchair-bound old man who is coughing violently. Father Briggs pauses and reaches for a towel near the old man's hand. The priest lifts the towel and gently wipes the man's mouth. "There, there," he says. "You take it easy, my friend."

Everett Briggs has come a long way and a long time from his birthplace in Massachusetts. He has made many, many friends, some of them still living in Monongah and in St. Barbara's Memorial Nursing Home, all of them living in his heart.

Father Briggs shares a greeting with nursing home resident Worley Powell.

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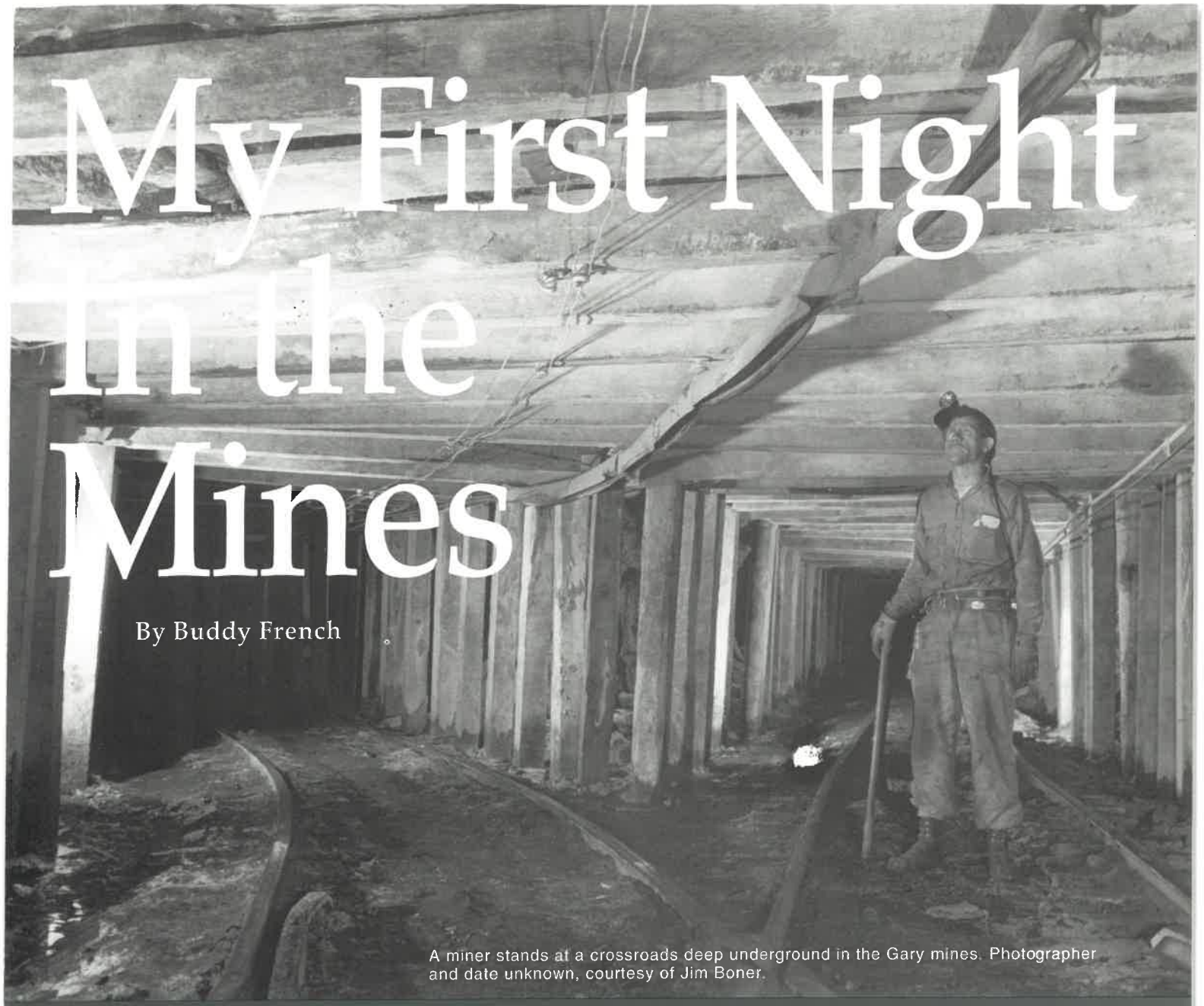
MIKE FURBEE is a freelance photographer from the Morgantown area.

My First Night in the Mines

By Buddy French



A miner stands at a crossroads deep underground in the Gary mines. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Jim Boner.

I guess because of my heritage, I was always fascinated by the coal mines. Even as a young boy I played near them. Many times I heard miners say, "Coal mining gets into your blood," or "Once a coal miner, always a coal miner."

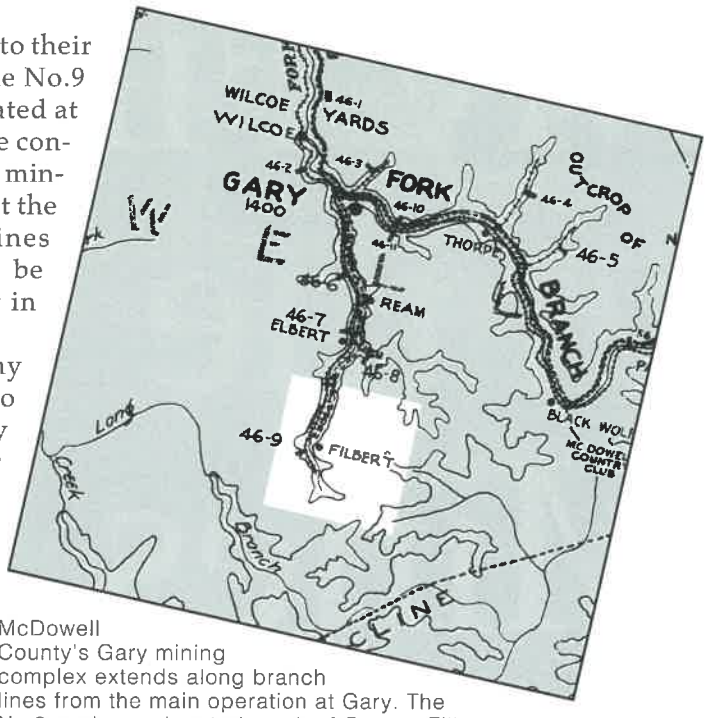
I know now that only by experience can one really understand what that means. On the surface, there is certainly nothing appealing or attractive about working in a coal mine for it is one of the hardest, dirtiest, and most dangerous jobs in the country. One must go deeper — no pun intended — to discover the real draw or lure that keeps a man in the mines.

The following story is an actual account of my first night on the job at Gary No.9. There may be many things about the second night or second week I do not remember, but the images in my memory of that first night will never be forgotten.

On a warm summer afternoon in August 1966, I wheeled my 1965 Comet Cyclone into the parking lot at the Gary No.9 mine. This was the moment I'd been waiting for after completing three months of a six-month training program at United States Steel Corporation's No.6 overhaul shop. The company had assigned me to work here in the repair shop on the evening shift. I wanted to believe they transferred me to the mine ahead of schedule because I'd done so well in my training. Actually, there was a high demand for coal and the company was willing to send me on early in hopes that one of the old-timers would take me under his wing and help bring me along. The No.9 mine had recently been re-opened after being shut down for several years, and the company was pushing hard to get it back into production.

United States Steel's Gary mining complex in McDowell County consisted of a large group of coal camps, each one identified by its mine number. They stretched along several miles of railroad branch lines radiating out from the main operation at Gary. These now-small coal camps have names like Alpheus, Thorpe, Elbert, Wilco, and Venus in addition to their mine numbers. The No.9 operation was located at Filbert. These were considered model coal mining communities at the time and the mines here were said to be some of the safest in the industry.

Author Buddy French in 1965.



McDowell County's Gary mining complex extends along branch lines from the main operation at Gary. The No.9 works are located south of Gary at Filbert. Map courtesy of the Eastern Regional Coal Archives.

After parking my car, I reached into the back seat for my hard hat, dinner bucket, and miner's belt. Attached to the belt was a self-rescuer — a device to breathe through for up to 30 minutes in case there was a fire and you were trapped in smoke. The belt also had a place to attach the large wet cell battery for the lamp mounted on your hard hat. I was given a round brass tag about the size of a half dollar, with the number 49 stamped on it. This was my check number and I had been instructed to attach it to my miner's belt with rivets and was soon to find out the chilling reason why.

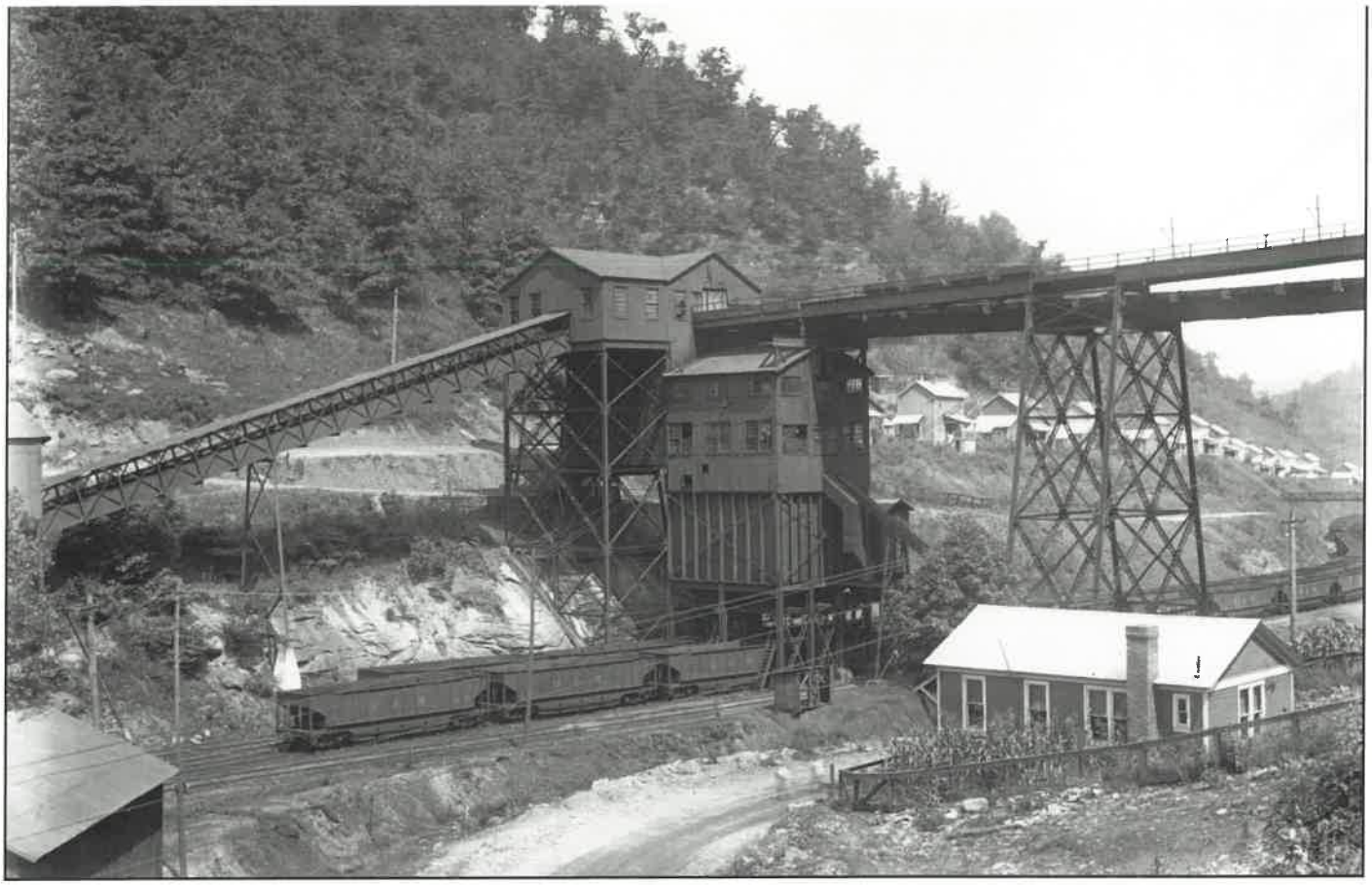
With all my gear in hand, I headed to the lamp house to pick up my battery lamp. At that point the anxiety began to build, for this was all new to me and I wasn't real sure what I was supposed to do. When I entered the lamp house, the first thing I saw was a long rack with row after row of battery lamps mounted in individual charging stations.

Suddenly someone shouted, "Hey! Are you one of the new employees?" "Yes," I replied as a short, heavy-set man with a wooden leg appeared from behind a small work bench. In a very proud tone, he announced that he took care of all the lights. He asked me what my check number was and I told him number 49. He reached to the rack and pulled out a battery lamp with a brass tag hanging underneath it. This tag also had the number 49 stamped on it like the one on my belt. He turned to the opposite wall where there was a long board with several rows of individually numbered small hooks.

He said, "Anytime you go to work, you must take your tag from under the light and hang it on the number 49 hook on the board. At the end of the shift, take the tag off the board and hang it back under the light."

I asked him why all that was necessary. He said, "If your tag is hanging on the board, the company would know that you were at work that day and if there was an explosion or fire in the mine, they could use the tag on your belt to identify your body, if necessary."

At that point, the butterfly fluttering around in my stomach suddenly turned into a monster with a six-foot wingspan. For a brief moment I thought, "What am I doing here?" I thanked the lamp house man and turned to the door with a feeling that a soldier might have as he approached the front lines of the battlefield. But then I told myself I didn't need to worry because



No.9 tipple with row houses visible behind. 1920's photograph from the Hornick Collection, courtesy of the Eastern Regional Coal Archives.

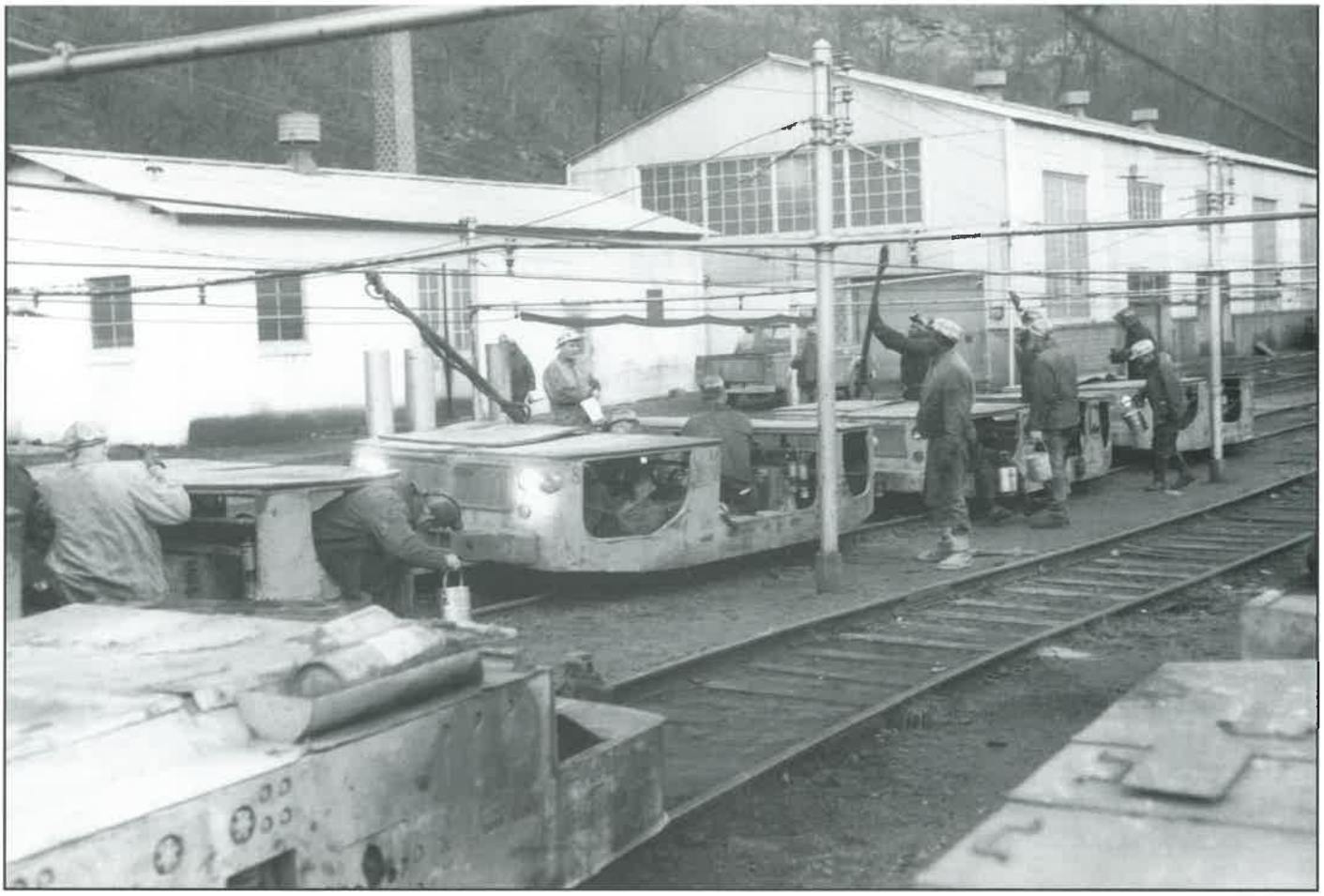
I had been assigned to work in the shop.

When I stepped outside, I took a moment to survey the mining complex. Directly in front of me was a railyard filled with coal cars. They were waiting to be dropped about 100 yards down the track to the tipple, to be loaded with coal. On the hill just above the railyard was the repair shop where I would be working as a mine equipment mechanic. Just to the left and slightly up the hill was a mine portal. It was known as Watson Heading Portal and entered a four-foot vein of coal called the Pocahontas No.3 seam, supposedly one of the richest veins of coal in the world.

An Eickhoff conveyor drive unit in the mine at Gary No.9. Behind this impressive machine is an even more impressive seam of coal, estimated to be about seven feet at this point. The Pocahontas Coalfields contained some of the richest coal reserves on earth. 1926 photograph from the Hornick Collection, courtesy of the Eastern Regional Coal Archives.

By now the monster in my stomach had turned back into a butterfly and I knew it was time for me to join the ever-increasing stream of men headed up the hillside to the shop. At the top of the incline were two sets of tracks with 300-volt trolley wires suspended over them. Having already been warned, I made sure to duck my head when I walked under them. The tracks led to the tipple and the trolley wires powered the electric locomotives that pulled the coal cars from the mines.

The shop was a modern-looking structure with five evenly spaced garage doors across the front. A track led up to each door so locomotives could be brought in for



Miners board a mantrip at the Gary No.10 mines. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Jim Boner.

service and repair. With the 4:00 shift change getting close, a large group of miners had gathered at the end of the building near the main line tracks where they would soon catch the mantrip that would take them deep into the mountain.

Not wanting to be late on my first day, I hurried toward the shop. When I entered the door, the place was buzzing with activity as miners went back and forth carrying supplies and getting last-minute instructions. I stopped one man long enough to ask where I could find Mr. Spencer, the man to whom I was to report. He pointed to the shop office door and said, "Over there."

A group of miners gather for a safety meeting. John Hornick, at far left, addresses the group. Author Buddy French remembers Hornick as his boss in the mines when he worked the "hoot owl" shift. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Jim Boner.

Although I didn't know him personally, I had seen Mr. Spencer before and didn't have any trouble recognizing him. He appeared preoccupied with two other bosses when I entered the office. As I stepped up to his desk, he gazed up at me through his prominent black-rim glasses. With little expression on his face, he spoke slowly with a voice that commanded attention and said, "Brother French, if you'll wait outside, we'll get you started after the shift change." I nodded in agreement and walked out of the office.

Knowing that it would be a while, I decided to step outside to watch for the mantrips. I saw the men as they waited for the first mantrip — or portal bus — to come out of the mountain. Their mood was very lighthearted. Storytelling, laughter, and cigarette smoke filled the air. They seemed to be speaking two different languages — English and profanity, with the latter being spoken the most frequently. There was

no visible fear or concern in their faces as they prepared to descend deep into the earth, because they were seasoned veterans and well aware of the perils of their occupation.

I watched a convoy of yellow portal buses emerge from the mine. With their headlights on, the buses slowly rolled up in front of the shop. Most of these portal buses were built for "low coal" by the Lee-Norris Company. The operator sat in an open compartment in the middle with enclosed passenger compartments on the front and rear of the bus. There was a side opening on each end in which three or four miners could enter and ride in a reclining position.

After the portal buses parked bumper to bumper, the miners began to crawl out. Their faces blackened with coal dust and round silver lunch buckets in hand, some went directly into the shop to get the cigarettes they had hidden, since it was against the law to smoke in the mines. But most of the men rushed down the incline toward the bathhouse, like someone on a mission.

Before the last man was out of sight, the evening shift crew had boarded the portal buses and headed into the mines to begin the mining process where the day shift crew had stopped. In just a matter of two or three minutes, all the commotion had ceased and I was left standing there alone.

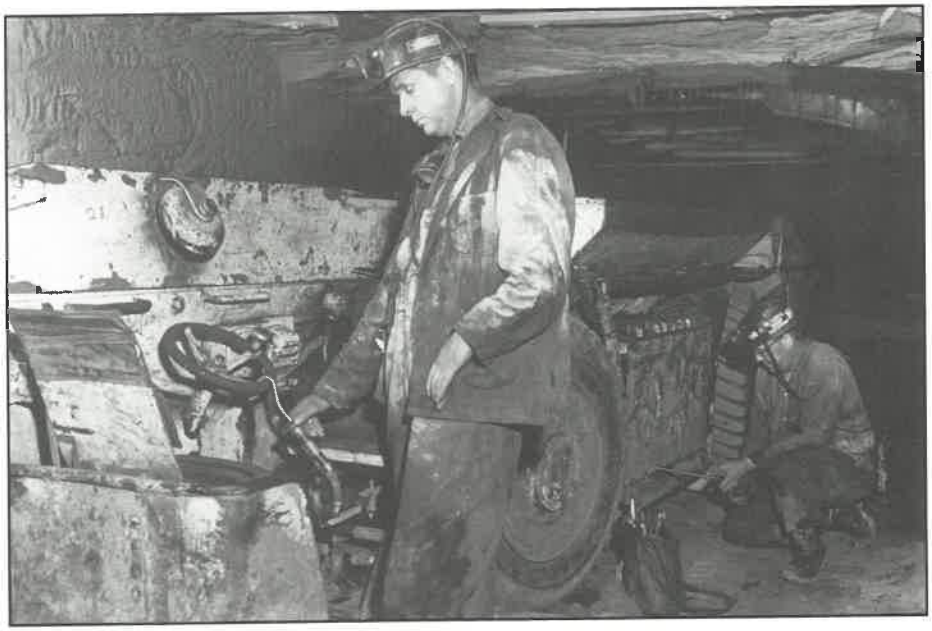
I remembered Mr. Spencer telling me that they would get me started in my job after the shift change, so I returned to the office. There were three other men with Mr. Spencer; looking at the names on their hard hats, I could see Davis, Burkett, and Dishman. The first two were bosses, and Dishman was a trainee mechanic like myself.

Besides being the general maintenance foreman of the No.9 mines, Mr. Spencer was a church deacon with a very straightforward, no frills personality but a man you learned to respect very quickly. After introducing me to everyone, he advised me that I would be working with brother Dishman in the shop and brother Joe Burkett, the evening shift maintenance foreman.

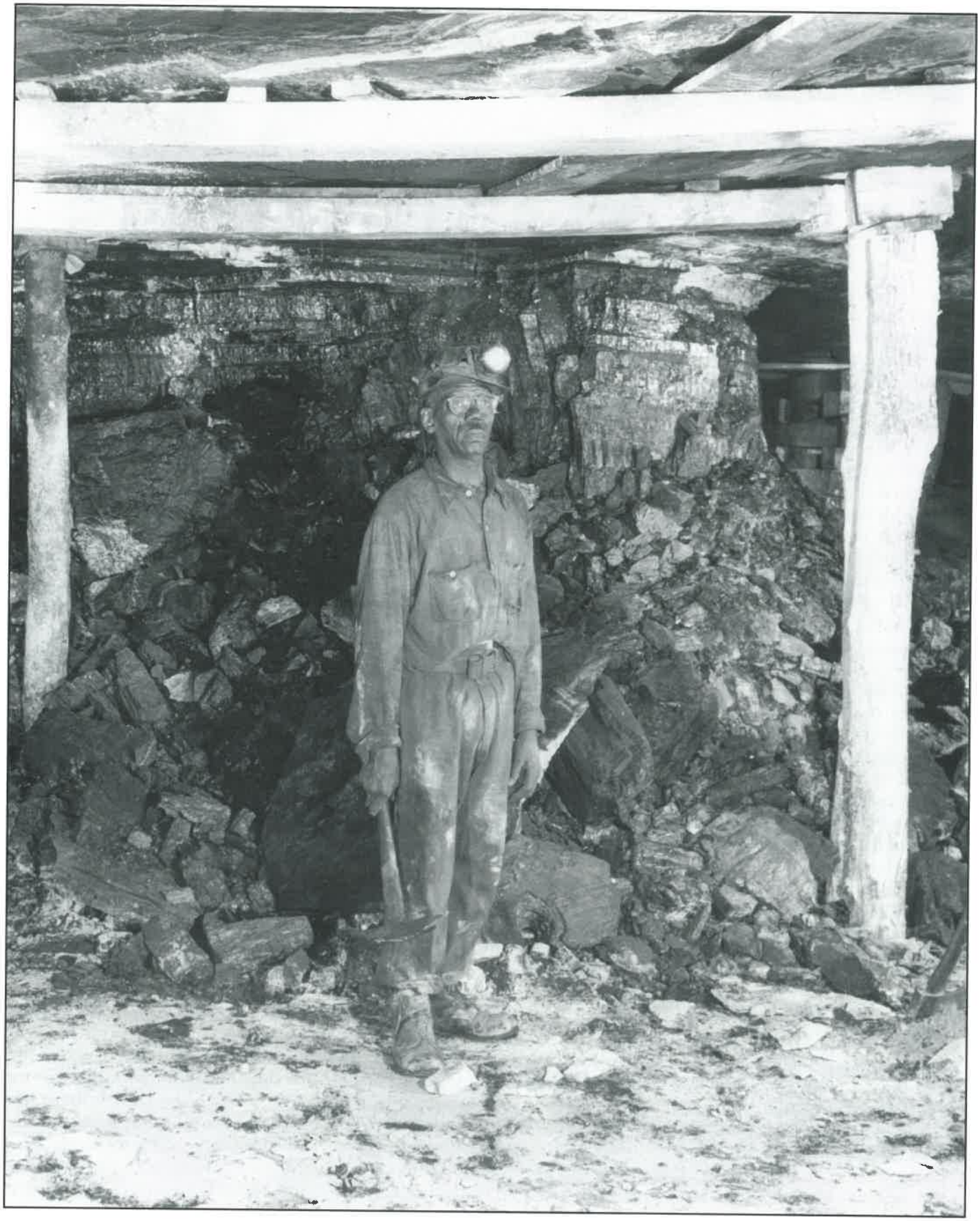
Mr. Burkett, who asked to be called Joe, took me on a tour of the shop where there were several different types of mine machinery in various stages of repair. He explained to me that there were currently three coal producing sections in the mines, one being the Hoot Owl section in the low coal of Watson Heading. It averaged about 48 inches in height. The other two were the No.9 East and Spice Creek sections on what was referred to as the East Side or high side. This mine was across the hollow and higher up on the mountainside. It was in the No.4 seam and averaged about eight to 10 feet in height. As we walked through the shop, Joe pointed out the mine phone which was used for communication to each working section within the mines. It looked like something out of an old 1930's movie with its hand crank. The phone system was like one big party line and each mine section would only answer to a certain number of rings.

Finally, I was assigned my first official job, helping Dishman put a set of brake shoes on a 13-ton Jeffery mine locomotive. These brake shoes were very heavy and awkward to handle. By the time we installed the third brake shoe, I had my third blood blister on my finger.

Dishman and I were soon to become good friends, although I can never remember us calling each other by anything other than our last names. As a matter of fact, just about everyone was referred to by last names. Dishman had been there only a couple of months, but he seemed like a veteran to me and was eager to help any way he could. I was amazed to find out there were no other mechanics at the entire mining complex on the evening shift. Ordinarily, each of the three working sections in the mines would have its own section mechanic, but with the mines just recently being re-opened, these jobs hadn't been filled. It was up to the two of us trainees to service and repair equipment in the shop and at a moment's notice, take off to one of the mine sections or tipple if there was a breakdown. Fortu-



Howard French, left, joins another mechanic in working on a Joy shuttle car at one of the Gary mines. Howard is the first cousin of our author's father. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Jim Boner.



A miner in one of the Gary mines. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Jim Boner.

nately, this first night there were no breakdowns.

At last it was 8:00 and time for supper. Joe invited us into the office to eat. As I sat there eating my sandwich I could feel the floor and walls vibrate as a locomotive with a trip of loaded coal cars passed the shop on its way to the tipple.

After eating, I decided to walk around a little and exited the rear of the shop through a large garage door. I stood outside wondering how I would spend all the money I was making now. Three dollars and thirty seven cents an hour, or $135 a week, was more than twice what I'd ever made before.

With supper over, the rest of the shift passed slowly and finally it was nearing midnight. It was time for the shift change and once again there was a flurry of activity as the miners made their way up the incline. Their powerful cap lights radiated piercing beams of light several hundred feet into the night air as they approached the top of the incline.

I was picking up my dinner bucket to leave when Joe came from the office and told me I would be doubling back tonight and working the third shift inside the mines at Spice Creek. He said I could work with the service crew greasing equipment since none of the sections mined coal on the third shift because they were down for equipment repair and service. So much for my only having to work in the shop.

Being told to work a double shift, rather than being asked, had taken me a bit by surprise. I found out later that most of the miners were so willing to work overtime for the "big" money that the management needed only to tell them when and where to go. The double shifts continued for the next three weeks without a break.

I soon found myself scrambling to put on my coveralls, belt, and light because I knew the mantrips would leave at 12:00 with or without me. Just as I crawled into the portal bus and hung the chain up across the opening, the dispatcher came back on the radio and said, "Go ahead to Spice Creek and call when you're in the clear." I could see the East Side Portal across the hollow. In order to get there, we would cross a bridge to the opposite hillside where we would enter the portal.

A mine foreman (or fireboss) checks (or sounds) the top. Note the white walls coated with limestone dust. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Jim Boner.

"Believe me, boy, you'll know when to run when the time comes."

After lying back in a reclining position, I felt a slight jerk and then the sound of the electric motor when we began to roll. As I turned my head, the powerful beam of my cap light went directly into the eyes of one of the three miners lying to my right and his pupils lit up with an eerie red glow like something from a horror movie. He instantly snapped at me, "Get that ---- light out of my eyes, boy! Don't you know any better than that?" The other miners all laughed as I found out very quickly that coal miners have very little trouble saying what's on their minds.

As the portal bus speed increased, so did the clatter sound of its wheels crossing the track joints; the occasional arc from the trolley wire lit up the night like a flash of lightning. When the East Side Portal came into view, I noticed the year 1908 inscribed on the concrete arch above the entrance.

By now, they all knew this was my first trip inside a mine because I began to ask questions like, "How do you know if the roof is about to cave in?" or, "What if there is an explosion or fire?" The black miner lying beside me said, "Believe me, boy, you'll know when to run when the time comes." He seemed to sense my anxiety and started talking to me in an effort to calm my fears, as the butterflies had begun to appear in my stomach again. I'll refer to him as Harrison because I don't recall his real name. He was probably 25 years my senior and his always-smiling face went well with his friendly personality.

When we entered the portal, I felt my pulse quicken. The air turned

A miner, cheeks bulging with tobacco, operates a shuttle car in the Gary mine. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Jim Boner.

suddenly cool with a distinctly damp and musty odor to it.

I leaned over to look out and the portal bus headlights illuminated the tunnel ahead for about 100 yards. It continued to go slightly uphill with no turns or curves as far as I could see. Large wooden timbers lined both sides of the track for extra roof support.

Everything was snow-white from the limestone dust or "rock dust" that had been sprayed on the ceiling, walls, and floor. Airborne coal dust is very explosive if ignited, and rock dust is not. Covering the coal dust with rock dust greatly reduces the chance of a dust explosion. I later found out that coal miners refer to the ceiling as the top or roof, and the mine walls are called the ribs.

As we continued deeper into the mine, the other miners in the portal bus seemed oblivious to our surroundings. To them it was like a carpool trip to the office, but for me it was a fascinating experience as I tried to shine my light back into the old workings of each side tunnel we passed.

After a while the portal bus began to slow and then stopped at a switch in the track. The operator climbed off and proceeded to throw the switch so it would divert us onto a track that made a 90-degree right-hand turn. After pulling the bus up just far enough to clear the switch, he returned it to its original position.

To them it was like a carpool trip to the office, but for me it was a fascinating experience.

Once we began to roll again, Harrison informed me that if we had continued straight, it would have taken us to No.9 East. By turning right, he said we were now headed to Spice Creek and would begin a long uphill grade to our final destination.

Finally, I felt the portal bus come to a stop and the operator called the dispatcher to tell him we were in the clear at Spice Creek. I quickly unhooked the chain across the side opening and crawled out. We had arrived at the end of the track and Harrison told me we would walk the last 100 feet or so up the heading to the area where the mining equipment was that I would be servicing.

But first we would go to the dinner hole. This was an area just past the end of the track designated as the eating place on the section. It was simply a wooden bench placed alongside the rib with extra roof support timbers around it and a hand-crank telephone like the one in the shop, mounted on a timber.

All the miners gathered around the dinner hole and placed their lunch buckets on the bench. Harrison turned to me and said, "There ain't no segregation in the coal mines, cause after you've worked in here a while, we is all black." With that remark they all burst into laughter, with Harrison laughing the hardest.

After the laughter finally subsided, one of the miners I heard referred to as Preacher stepped forward and said, "Let us pray." As everyone bowed their heads, he thanked God for our good health and our jobs and asked Him to watch over and protect us this night and then said, "Amen."

At that point, the third shift officially began. Some stuffed their mouth so full of chewing tobacco that it appeared they had a golf ball in their jaw as they paired off and proceeded up the heading to their different work areas.

Before I left the shop, Joe told me I would find two Joy shuttle cars and a Lee-Norris continuous mining machine. When I reached them, a couple of other miners had already started servicing one shuttle car. One of them handed me a grease gun and told me to grease every grease fitting I could find.

After I began to work, I found it more and more difficult to concentrate on what I was doing. There are few lights in the coal mine except your cap light. You can only see in the direction your cap light

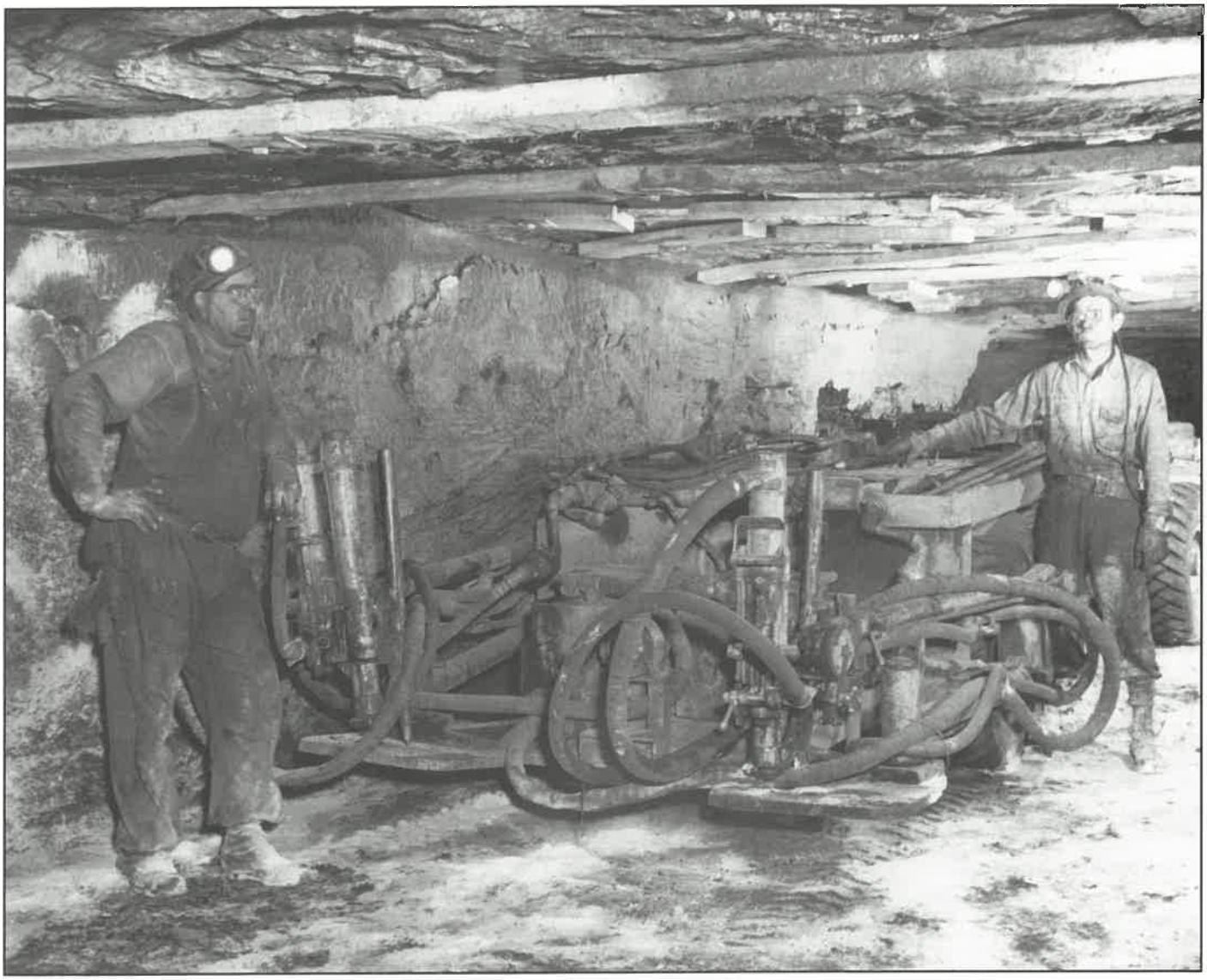
is pointed, and due to my overwhelming curiosity, I was constantly pointing my light around at everything except what I was working on. I couldn't suppress the nagging fear that something awful could happen at any moment. I still had vivid memories of reading about another area mine that blew up and killed 36 men a few years earlier.

Dishman told me to listen for any popping or cracking sounds coming from the top. He said this might be the only warning of an impending rock fall, but someone a couple of hundred feet up the heading above me had fired up a roof drill. This made it impossible to hear anything else because its air-operated drills made about the same noise a jackhammer makes busting up concrete on a city sidewalk. Now I was looking up every minute or so to see if there was any loose rock, or what a miner would refer to as "bad top," about to fall.

Fortunately when a couple of hours had passed, the tension began to ease and I felt much more relaxed, especially when they shut down the noisy roof drill. Now it seemed almost too quiet. All I heard was a couple of miners across from me talking and somebody up the heading above me shouting.

I picked up my grease gun to move to the other shuttle car when suddenly there was a terrifying explosion accompanied by a shock wave of air that made my eardrums feel like they would burst. In an instant, I realized what Harrison meant when he said, "You'll know when to run." It wasn't even a conscious decision but more like a reflex as I dropped the grease gun and ran as I had never run in my life.

I couldn't believe it. My worst nightmare was being realized on my first trip in the mine. By the time I hit full stride going down the steep heading, I felt like I was only touching the ground about every 10 feet. After a while, I glanced to my side and realized I



Two miners with an Acme Jumbo air-compressor roof drill. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Jim Boner.

was alone. When I finally managed to get my momentum stopped, my first thought was that they had all been killed. Once I came to my senses, I remembered there were two other miners within 10 feet of me and I was sure they could have made it out, also. As I looked up the track heading and saw no one else, I knew I would have to go back and see what happened.

At first, I advanced cautiously but the further I went, the more sense of urgency I felt. Finally, I reached the portal bus that I had so hastily passed on the way out. At that point, I began to hear laughter and the further I went the more hysterical it sounded. When I arrived at the area where I'd been working, there was smoke and dust still lingering in the air. Most of the crew had gathered there and I realized they were all looking and laughing at me.

An almost uncontrollable wave of anger suddenly swept over me when I thought I was the butt of a terrible joke. As I found out later, there was no joke. The roof drill I had heard for the past two hours had been drilling holes in the top. There, they placed dynamite charges in order to shoot down rock in an area where a conveyor belt structure was being built. The man I heard shouting was simply the shooter following federal mine law which says you must call out "fire" three times before setting off a shot of dynamite to give everyone ample warning. The rest of the crew gathered in my work area to wait for the smoke to clear, and found out that I left like a world-class sprinter when the shot went off. To say I was extremely embarrassed would be putting it mildly, but after a moment or two, I began to realize how funny it must have appeared to them and I couldn't help but join them in the laughter.

The rest of the night was pretty uneventful, but I think it was the longest night I have ever experienced in my life. When we boarded the portal bus to come out of the mine, I felt a sense of relief and exhilaration knowing this night was soon to be over. Inside the portal bus, the laughter turned to a roar when Harrison began to kid me again about what a great runner I was.

A miner drills a roof bolt hole. Photographer and date unknown, courtesy of Jim Boner.

By the time we emerged from the East Side Portal that August morning in 1966, I felt like I was in a dream and seeing things move in slow motion. I'd been going for over 24 hours without sleep. As we eased up in front of the shop, the day shift crew gathered alongside the tracks and seemed to be eagerly waiting for us to unload. Two or three portal buses from other sections pulled in behind us. As I crawled out, I realized these were the same faces I'd seen getting out of these buses the day before as I waited for my shift to begin.

I would take nothing for some of the memories and life lessons I gained there.

I will never forget the feeling of the warm rays of the morning sun when I walked down the incline to the lamp house. It was a welcome feeling after being in the mine all night where the temperature stayed a pretty constant 52 degrees and the dampness seemed to penetrate to the bone.

I felt a sense of pride knowing I'd endured that first night in a coal mine. There were many men that couldn't bring themselves to meet that challenge. I only worked a couple of years at Gary No.9 and have no regrets for leaving when I did, but I would take nothing for some of the memories and life lessons I gained there.

In July 1994, I returned to Gary No.9 to visit my memories. It was about two weeks short of being 28 years since I first worked there and was another typical hot and humid summer day. When I pulled into the area where the parking lot used to be, I realized the building that once contained the lamp house and mine offices was gone. Only a large concrete foundation marked the spot where it stood. The railroad

yard where the coal cars were stored was empty and the tracks had turned red with rust. The tipple, which had stood silent several years now, appeared suspended in time.

The No.9 mines shut down because of high production cost and a slackening demand for coal, not because all the coal had been mined out. When I reached the top of the hill and the shop came into view, it became apparent this mining complex would never again be anything but a memory of another time.

Over the years, these mines produced the wages for many a coal miner to buy his daughter a dollhouse at Christmas, a new family car, or a trip to Florida during miners vacation such as my father had done for our family in 1949. They also took their share of coal miners' lives. My own grandfather was one of those who was taken early in life when he was killed in a rock fall at the No.6 mine in 1936 when my dad was just a boy. The grim statistics of those lost lives have helped forge new mine safety laws which have saved countless others.

While walking back toward the shop, I wondered if there would be anyone left to visit their memories here after another 28 years had passed. I wondered if there would be anyone left to describe what it was really like to live and work in the coalfields during what I would call the Golden Years, for my generation is the last to be born of the coal camp culture of that era.

I stood at the corner of the shop, on the same spot where I had stood so many years before, watching the miners board the portal buses, waiting for that first shift to start. When I looked across the hollow to the East Side Portal, I thought of Preacher and us gathering at the dinner hole and him praying for our safety. I wondered what had happened to Harrison, for I never did see him again after that first night. Did he change jobs? Is he now 20 years in his grave? The friendliness he showed me and the permanent smile he seemed to wear on his face will be etched into my memory forever.

The graffiti written on the end of a parts bin in the shop is a fitting epitaph — "Gone, but not forgotten... No.9."

BUDDY FRENCH has lived in Virginia since 1987, but he says his heart will forever belong to the mountains of West Virginia. He was inspired to write this article after visiting the abandoned mine site at Gary No.9 in 1994. He dedicates the article to his grandparents, Thomas G. and Docie French. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The Watson Heading ventilation portal as it appears today. Photograph by Buddy French.

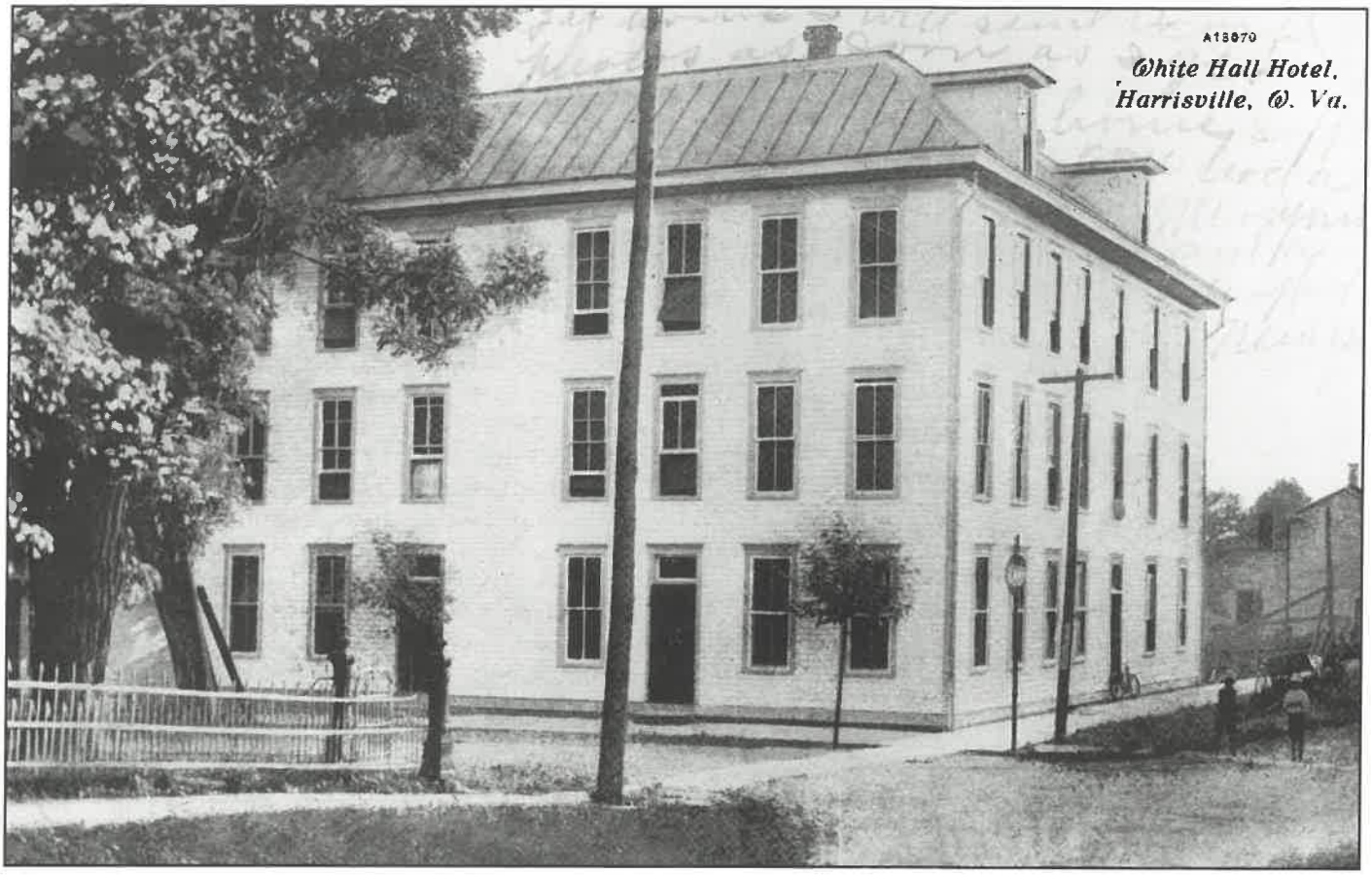
"A Home Away From Home"

Harrisville's Whitehall Hotel

By Mary Lucille DeBerry

Edna Reeves and Stella Britton go back a long way together. They still have vivid memories of the many years they spent living and working with each other, when their families owned and operated the Whitehall Hotel in Harrisville.

Edna Reeves, left, and Stella Britton, at right, today. Photographs by Michael Keller.



Harrisville's historic Whitehall Hotel was a local landmark for more than a century. 1910 postcard courtesy of Edith Hedge Baker.

"Family" is a word that surfaces again and again when talking about the Whitehall Hotel. For more than 100 years, the largest hotel in Ritchie County was operated by families who truly made their guests and residents feel at home. There was also an extended family of workers, residents, and "hotel children" for whom the Whitehall was an integral part of their daily lives.

The Reeves and Britton families owned the hotel together from 1929 until 1964. Just prior to that, from 1921 to 1929, Mr. and Mrs. William Reeves owned the Whitehall. A death in the family, however, affected their personal lives and business affairs. Their daughter Violet died giving birth to twin boys, and Mr. and Mrs. Reeves opted to move out of the hotel and help their son-in-law rear the boys. Violet's brother Tom and his wife Ava — together with Ava's sister Stella and her husband Horace Britton — purchased the business in 1929 and made this building their home.

The three-story hotel contained 20-some sleeping rooms — but no Room 13. The Reeves family lived on the second floor and the Brittons occupied a large first floor room, where they could hear the desk bell when guests arrived during the night and needed to register.

The three-story hotel contained 20-some sleeping rooms — but no Room 13.

Several hotel employees stayed in rooms on the second floor, including at various times a young Edith Hedge [see "Sweeter Than the Flowers: Edith Baker of King Knob," by Susan Goehring; Fall 1999], and, starting in 1934, Edna Carpenter.

Ava Reeves died suddenly in 1936, leaving behind two daughters: 13-year-old Avalene and young Doris Jo.

The former Edna Carpenter explains how she came to live with Ava's daughters. "I took over caring for the girls. Doris Jo was just a baby...only about two and a half years old when Ava died. I became Tom's hired girl, not the hotel's hired girl then, because he hired me to take care of his children and work in his wife's place."

Three and a half years later, Edna married Tom Reeves and became a mother to his children. By marriage she also became an aunt to Stella's children Barbara Ann and Kenneth Boyd. Edna and Tom's marriage lasted 43 years, until his death.

Edna was a cousin and childhood friend of Stella and Ava. She graduated from Harrisville High School in 1933 and worked in private homes before trying to find a job in Parkersburg. She explains, "This

Horace and Stella Britton, above. 1950's photograph by Hildred Lemley. Tom and Edna Reeves, below, in the 1940's.

was not long after the Depression and everyone was still in the midst of hard times."

Edna recalls, "When I come to the hotel, I didn't 'go' to work. I ate and slept and stayed there and helped with the work. ...And then they got so many customers, they just decided that for me to stay and they paid me. I got the whole sum of $4 a week plus room and board. That's about what anybody got for workin' in the stores or workin' anyplace. You could compare it to anything else except I wasn't an eight-hour worker! You worked from before daylight until way after dark. You worked until the work was done."

Edna helped clean, wash clothes, wash dishes, and cook. Ava looked after the kitchen, and Stella looked after the dining room and the cleaning. She stresses, though, that "everybody always did everything."

The husbands were instrumental in the daily operation, according to Edna. "Horace took care of the lobby. He was the proprietor and he took care of the customers. He checked the people out at eight and checked the people in who stayed at night."

During World War II when Horace worked in an Akron defense plant and again while he was sheriff from 1948 to 1952, Stella assumed those responsibilities [see "Mayberry in Harrisville: Keeping the Peace in Ritchie County," by Larry Bartlett; Spring 1995].

Through the years, Edna's husband Tom drove a truck for Dick Deem's oil company. He was also good at fixing things and cultivated a huge garden in the west end of town — raising corn, potatoes, pumpkins, and beans for use in the hotel kitchen.

Edna remembers that when she first went there, they raised hogs in the barn. Stella talks fondly of Old Bonnie, the cow who provided milk and rich Jersey cream for the dining room. Meat mostly came from a packing house in Parkersburg, and salesmen brought canned goods, bread, dry goods, and "green food" in winter.

Harrisville at the time was a quiet town with tree-lined streets. The courthouse was surrounded by law offices; the hotel was a place where visiting attorneys and others doing business in the county seat could eat and sleep. Besides guests who just stayed for a day or two, the Whitehall Hotel attracted workers — mostly men — who stayed in Ritchie County for weeks at a time while employed in the oil and gas fields or by the electric company, or who worked construction jobs. Teachers often boarded during the winter and some people lived there for years. Edna and Stella, usually with a helper or two, kept busy at the Whitehall Hotel.

"A typical day," says Edna, "would be that you got up about 4:30 of a morning and about 5:30 or 6:00, you begin getting lunches packed and food prepared for the breakfast. And then your customers begin to come for the breakfast and you take your orders and serve the meals and check out the people and begin the preparation of your noon meal and your evening meal.

Avalene (left) and Doris Jo Reeves, shown here at the Whitehall in 1941, grew up at the hotel. Avalene was known for her pies.

"And during this time, you are feeding your children and you're getting them ready to go to school. Part of the time," she says, "we had babies. We got the babies up and put them in the playpen in the living quarters right back of the kitchen.

"Usually, up to the last years, we not only had our own family but we often had other relatives," she recalls. Edna and Stella took care of Timmy and Helen Britton while Horace's brother and sister-in-law worked. Avalene's daughter Kitty Rae Poole grew up at the hotel; Barbara Ann's daughter Debra Lewis lived there when she was small. When Doris Jo worked at the courthouse, Edna and Stella babysat with her son Jeffrey and her daughter Jenifer. The older children considered the Whitehall Hotel to be a second home where they visited with family, or had friends in to visit. These visiting children quickly learned not to run and not to be noisy when they ventured into the dining room, lobby, or upstairs floors.

Edna continues to describe a typical day. "Also you were doing your cleaning, you were changing your beds, you were getting everything ready for the next day. You did the laundry and then you served your noon meal. You had certain hours that you served, usually from 11:30 to about 2:00. And in that length of time, we were called on by salesmen and you put in your orders. And we always had people that stopped in to visit us. They visited while we cooked and they visited while we cleaned and sometimes they helped you with the work."

"When I first went there, we didn't have any running water in the kitchen," Edna remembers. "We carried the water from a pump in the basement."

The dark basement, with dirt floor, low ceiling, and bare light bulb, served as the laundry room. Edna explains, "We did all the family washing and all the hotel washing and all the linens and all the bedclothes and blankets and everything. The washing was done in the basement on a hot plate that set on a great big cement round place with a gas burner in it. You set a tub on it and you boiled your clothes. You wrung your clothes on a wringer. And you carried all those bushels and bushels of sheets and hung 'em on a clothesline and dried 'em - all those sheets and pillow slips!"

The wash was hung outside in the yard or on the upper back porch.

The older children considered the Whitehall Hotel to be a second home.

In terrible weather, it was hung at the far end of the huge second floor bathroom. When dry, someone had to iron all the linens on a mangle.

"And you had some calamities," Edna says. "There was always something unexpected." The calamities ranged from the Red Cross bringing a homeless family who needed a comforting place to stay, to mishaps similar to those in any

Among the West Penn men who boarded for several months at the Whitehall Hotel in the 1940's were Ellery Guthrie, Mr. Hale, Buffalo Cassidy, and Delbert Cunningham.

family's day-to-day life.

Almost everyone associated with the hotel remembers when David McGregor's screams pierced the hallways. This minuscule elderly man in Room 7 climbed up into his Victorian wardrobe to retrieve something from the top shelf and the enormous piece of furniture toppled over, knocking him down to his bed and pinning him inside. Fortunately, he suffered no serious damage.

Stella recalls the time a man who regularly stayed in Number 12 was upset because his briefcase had stuck to the table and was ruined. One of the hired girls had generously coated the furniture with varnish instead of furniture polish. Stella says they "had the awfulest time in the world" removing that dusty, sticky substance from the furniture.

Not reading labels caused another memorable event which Edna describes. "Avalene always was so great to bake and she baked the best butterscotch pies. She was makin' the filling for these butterscotch pies in a great big skillet and she reached around to get her vanilla and she poured in how much vanilla she wanted in her butterscotch pie. But somebody had set a bottle of shampoo there and she put shampoo in. It just started raisin' up. That stuff foamed all over that hot plate, all over the floor. It was boilin' butterscotch and that shampoo in it. You never seen such a mess in all your life."

The typical day, calamities included, picked up additional momentum during boom times when the hotel was packed with workers building a big 20-inch pipeline, or after World War II during construc-

Wandering poet O.O. Eckels was a colorful character in Ritchie and Wood counties, and an occasional resident of the Whitehall Hotel. Photographer and date unknown.

Poet O.O. Eckels

By Larry Bartlett

West Virginia's wandering poet Ola Ota "O.O." Eckels (1878-1949) was often a guest at the Whitehall Hotel in Harrisville. Eckels was a former tombstone salesman who gained fame for his humorous verses during the 1920's and '30's. He enjoyed roaming through West Virginia and eastern Ohio, writing whimsical poetry about news headlines, daily life, and the "good old scouts" that he met along the way.

Ola, pronounced "Oly," disliked automobiles. He usually traveled by train or bus, although he claimed he would rather ride a horse. He preferred to travel the back roads and he loved the easy-going life in the Ritchie County towns of Pennsboro and Harrisville.

Former hotel co-owner Stella Britton recalls that Eckels would stroll into the Whitehall Hotel dressed in a rumpled, travel-stained suit. He always wore a picturesquely battered hat, tipped back in the style of his hero, Will Rogers.

"If you dared him to do it, he could make up a poem about a hat pin or a potted plant," says Stella. "He had a rhyme for everything."

Although Stella felt honored to have a poet in residence at the Whitehall Hotel, she was bothered by the fact that he drank liquor in his room. Eckels had a taste for whiskey, favoring moonshine in a Mason jar. He was especially fond of sipping whiskey with farmers and townfolk at the bygone Ritchie County Fair in Pennsboro. In his poem, "Ritchie County Fair 1929," he wrote:

"Jolly crowds of merrymakers
Will be wandering to and fro
O'er the broad enchanted acres,
Seeing every race and show;

And if you're feeling kind o' droopy,
It will cure you to be there
With the others, 'making whoopee'
At the Ritchie County Fair."

Eckels claimed Pennsboro as his "old home town," but he was actually born and raised on a farm near Parkersburg in Wood County.

He began writing poetry in early boyhood but didn't gain recognition until he was middle-aged. He wrote his best-known poem, "West Virginia," in 1925. In the poem, he responded to critics who mocked the Mountain State and its old-fashioned ways.

He wrote:

"I love these stately old mountains,
I love every rock, hill, and tree!
When I drink from thy health-giving
fountains,
I drink, West Virginia, to thee!"

He concluded the poem with a final blast at "flatland jokesters," saying:

tion of the Manufacturers Heat and Light natural gas compressor station at Goffs, or later when B&O Railroad men were working on the tunnels.

Edna describes what it was like when they built the big plant at Goffs. "We had so many people at that time that we had five men in some rooms. And we served at least 50 breakfasts, packed 40 lunches. For three years straight, we got up at 3:00 in the morning and went to bed at 11:00 at night. Sometimes Stella didn't get to bed at 11:00. That was every day, seven days a week. And when they'd run cement out there, they'd call in so many hundred sandwiches, so many pies, and we made the coffee and put it in milk cans and they'd tell you that in four or five hours they'd be there to get the stuff. You'd bake two or three big hams in that length of time and make all those sandwiches and they'd come in a truck and get the food."

The name White Hall — or Whitehall as it was spelled in later years — probably came about because of the white weatherboarded exterior. In the 1950's, though, to save painting costs and to conserve heating bills, the owners covered it with brown brick-like asbestos siding. At that time, they also enlarged the kitchen and remodeled the dining room. They added wall sconces for lighting, cloth chair-back covers and curtains, and small tables with starched white tablecloths — often accentuated with small vases of sweetpeas, other fresh flowers, or seasonal decorations.

The dining room was the site of civic club dinners and banquets. You didn't have to be an overnight

"But to you in states that are level,
Who care only for our pelf,
You-all can go to the devil!
This state will take care of itself."

The poem was enthusiastically endorsed by Governor E.F. Morgan, who often quoted the poem during public speeches. Ola Eckels soon became well-known in the state. His folksy verses were frequently broadcast by radio station WMMN in Fairmont, and occasionally by stations WWVA in Wheeling and WLW in Cincinnati. During his heyday, Eckels contributed poetry to big city and small town newspapers, including *The Times-Press* in Akron, Ohio, and *The Pennsboro News* in Ritchie County.

Eckels' poetry was probably best appreciated when he read it aloud. The poet pronounced his words like a true West Virginian, and his manner of speaking had an odd effect on his rhymes. For instance, Eckels rhymed "joy" with "Little Kanawha." On a printed page, the rhyme seems jangling. Then, one remembers that West Virginians of Eckels' generation pronounced Kanawha as "Kenawee," just as they said "Rurshee" for Russia.

Eckels' poetry brought him more fame than money. He complained that newspapers were eager to publish his work but reluctant to pay for it. He fretted about finances even as he received encouraging letters from Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Henry Ford, and Thomas Alva Edison. He wrote:

" 'Tis gratifying when the mail
Brings letters of appreciation,
But now and then a little 'kale'
Would surely meet my approbation."

Eckels' book *Sentimental, Humorous and Miscellaneous Poems* was published by the Fairmont Printing Company in 1930, apparently at the author's expense. The 141-page book contains photos of the poet and his beautiful daughter Evelyn Estella Eckels, for whom he naturally dedicated a poem called "Evelyn."

Ola's grand-nephew Jim Eckels grew up in Parkersburg and remembers meeting his charismatic great-uncle on several occasions. He reports that Evelyn moved to California and was last seen by the family in 1953. According to Jim, Ola is buried in an unmarked grave somewhere in Wood County. One wry relative commented on the appropriateness of this resting place by saying, "No one ever knew where Uncle Ola was while he was living. Why should it be any different now?"

Copies of *Sentimental, Humorous and Miscellaneous Poems* by O.O. Eckels are available in the Special Collections of the Marshall University Library, the Wise Library and the West Virginia Collection at WVU, and at the Archives and History Library in the Cultural Center.

Daughter Evelyn Estella Eckels, to whom Ola dedicated his book of poems. He wrote in a poem which bears her name:
"Evelyn's dignified and graceful,
Yet you'd have to travel miles,
Just to find another face full
Of such pleasant, winning smiles."
Photographer and date unknown.

LARRY BARTLETT is a Wood County native. He earned his master of fine arts degree at Tulane University in New Orleans and went on to work as a college instructor, reporter, cartoonist, and art director in New York City, New Orleans, and Colorado. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 1998.

Horace Britton, left, and longtime resident Dan Richards keep an eye on the lobby in this 1960's photograph.

guest to eat a regular meal there, but you did have to be family or somehow special to the family to eat at the family table right back of the kitchen. Bill Childers, the husband of Doris Jo Reeves, says, "When you'd really arrived, you could eat in the kitchen."

Edna remembers that back in the 1930's when the "drummers" came in big cars from Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and New York, they didn't want their black chauffeurs to eat in the public dining room. The Brittons and Reeves, however, welcomed the drivers at their family table. The chauffeurs also slept in the hotel, albeit on the third floor while their employers stayed on the second floor.

"The drummers," Edna explains, "were salesmen who sold shoes, hose, and food and everything. They were on the road and stayed for a week or two at a time. They came in good weather and sold a year's supply to the country storekeepers." The goods were then shipped to Harrisville by train and hauled by a team of horses or, later, by truck to the country stores.

The lobby was where all guests checked in. The usually peaceful and proper area was furnished with leather-upholstered chairs. A rounded registration desk stood near one of three entrances to the dining room. Diagonally from it was a floor-to-ceiling rounded counterpart enclosing a phone booth with a public — but not a pay — telephone, and a small sink where diners could wash their hands before meals.

Across the hall was the family parlor set aside for singing around the piano, courting, and celebrating special occasions. Hotel guests rarely used it but they could if they needed privacy.

Some guests made their homes at the Whitehall including two working men who lived there from 1948 to 1964. Orville "Shorty" Givens, a paying guest, operated a barber shop in the next block. Russell Hawkins, a familiar sight in his heavy wrap-around white apron, worked at the hotel and in several Harrisville homes. Even though Stella and Edna washed clothes for their families, Russell did the hotel laundry and some heavy cleaning during those years. Edna says, "He lived in Room 16. He had his room and board and he became one of the hotel family."

Other people making their homes there included several older residents. Of the women, most memorable was Mrs. "Birdie" Armstrong who, with snow-white hair piled high on her head and sparkling earrings, held forth like a queen in the lobby for 20 years. Elderly men representing different eras included Lee Hawkins (not related to Russell), former Justice of the Peace McGregor, former Holbrook post-

A registration book dating from 1948, the hotel sign, dinner bell, menus, and other cherished memorabilia now reside in the Harrisville home of Doris Jo and Bill Childers. These items — and many fond memories — are all that remain of the Whitehall Hotel. Photograph by Michael Keller.

master Dan Richards, and Ledrue Ward who died in his room of a heart attack soon after Tom had checked to be sure that he was all right. Blaine and Stark Radcliff, whom Tom affectionately called "Seedie and Corie — the apple brothers," were off-and-on residents for a long time.

Today, those residents would probably live in nursing homes. Then, they livened up the lobby with their stories and conversation and sometimes spirited debates.

Edna recalls one series of squabbles. "Blaine Radcliff was very religious and he was sanctified," she says. "I think it was Mr. Hawkins, that they ate together over in the corner at one of them little tables. And then they'd get into a fight over religion and then they wouldn't speak to each other, and one of 'em would eat on one side of the dining room and one of 'em eat on the other for a while. And then they'd get back together."

Occasionally a celebrity would appear, including Robert Wadlow, the tallest man in the world who advertised for the International Shoe Company. He had to ride in the backseat of a car with no top and could easily look over the hotel transoms.

Salesmen based in West Virginia included Jack Armstrong from Weston, who came to town every two weeks. He was the most memorable because the younger children were certain he was the "All-American Boy" and the older children would look at his signature in the register and confide secretly to their friends, "He isn't really the one we hear on the radio."

Stella says that some travelers between Clarksburg and Parkersburg made it a point to drive an extra five miles off U.S. 50 to stay overnight at the Whitehall Hotel.

Everyone, though, signed his or her name properly in the big registration book (six during the Britton and Reeves era) and paid between $2.00 and $3.50 a night — never higher, even in the 1960's.

Records were kept of incoming and outgoing funds. Social Security and taxes were paid, and about the time the Brittons and Reeves sold the hotel, they were beginning to make some money. Operating the Whitehall Hotel was definitely a business but the regular boarders and the steady stream of overnight guests and customers in the dining room all picked up on the caring family atmosphere.

"We were people helping people. That's the kind of hotel we had."

Edna says, "Nobody ever complained about anything," and nobody ever came there who wasn't happy.

Stella adds, "Well, I will say that the old Whitehall was a home away from home for people and we really made it a home and we liked the people that stayed there."

Barbara Ann Britton Lewis, who was born at the hotel, reflects the view of the "hotel children" when she says, "There were so many different kinds, types of people that would come, and my mother and Edna would welcome them with open arms. We all did. By being in an environment such as the hotel, I have more compassion with other people and their problems and their concerns than I would have if I had just been in my own sheltered home."

Edna summarizes her memories. "We were just people who loved people and we were just helping people. We were people helping people. That's the kind of hotel we had."

MARY LUCILLE DeBERRY has lived in Morgantown for 33 years, but she grew up in Harrisville next door to the Whitehall Hotel. She has written stories for GOLDENSEAL under all three editors: Tom Screven, Ken Sullivan, and John Lilly. Her most recent article for GOLDENSEAL appeared in Winter 1996.

Widows Stella Britton and Edna Reeves still live in Harrisville where they get together to reflect on their years at the Whitehall Hotel. Photograph by Michael Keller.

A Nicholas County Christmas

By Margaret Grose Winebrenner

Our author's grandparents, Margarette Elizabeth, at left, and Dixon Grose, at right with groundhog. Date unknown.

It was during the time of the Depression years of the 1930's my Grandad Grose passed away and Granma was too old to live by herself on the farm so far away from any of her family. When Granma went to live with my Aunt Rita and Uncle Guy in Baughman, she told my dad we could move from Richwood and live on the old homeplace. So we did.

Jobs were hard to get, but Dad had experience in sawmill work at Richwood and he finally got a job at Ely and Thomas Lumber Company. He really was a good lumber piler [see "Memories of Ely-Thomas Through the Eyes of a Child," by Margaret Grose Winebrenner; Winter 1997].

I don't remember which month we moved in, but the weather was still warm. I was only 5 years old at the time but I still remember when we got there. Granma and Aunt Rita must have known about the time we would be moving in because the table in the dining room was covered with a clean white cloth and was set with food on it when we arrived. I remember all those beautiful glass dishes full of jams and apple butter. I still have one of the dishes today. It's antique glass with little raised dots on the sides, and the top is scalloped at the edge on a three-leg pedestal bottom. I've treasured it since that day, along with the handmade little rag doll Granma sent to me one cold, snowy night after she found out Mama had been rolling up a diaper in the shape of a doll for me to sleep with.

The little old farmhouse was small for a large family — Mama and Dad, five brothers, one sister, and me. We had just two little bedrooms, but with two full-size beds in the living room, a couple of rocking chairs, and a sewing machine, we got along. There was no electricity. We carried our water from a spring near the house and had an outdoor toilet.

The kitchen was not very big; it had a large ceiling-to-floor built-in cupboard by the old rock chimney, a wood-burning cook stove, a cook table, a stand for the towel rack and wash pan, and a curtain to hide our coats in the corner by the door. Granma's old black bonnet hung there on a nail for many years after we moved in.

After I'd gotten a good bit older, my brother Paul and I were sitting by the window in the kitchen one night. A pane was broken out of the window and we had tacked a piece of cardboard over the missing glass pane. All at once that cardboard gave way and the old cow's head came in the window right in my lap. It scared me nearly to death and gave my brother a good laugh.

The old apple wood made blue flames and the corn cobs made a really hot fire.

Mama really loved holidays and especially Christmas. She cleaned the house from top to bottom getting ready for that day. I can well remember the distinct smell when she scrubbed the big wide poplar boards with hot Red Seal lye water

Author Margaret, right, and brother Bob at about the time their family moved into the old homeplace in the early 1930's.

and Procter & Gamble laundry soap. Then she built a roaring fire in the fireplace from apple wood and corn cobs — the old apple wood made blue flames and the corn cobs made a really hot fire. The steam coming up from where the floor was drying smelled so clean. And when it was dry, she would put the Papermill blankets down to make the nicest wool rugs which always looked so clean, even with our big family. They were wonderfully warm on our cold feet in winter.

Mama was the best cook: good brown beans with thick soup and corn bread and fried apples — boy, I'd like to taste some of that kind of food now. She always had a big dinner on Christmas along with all the extra treats. She always made a lot of sugar cookies all year long — by the big dishpans full — and stored them in five-pound coffee buckets with lids to keep them fresh. She always kept one bucket on top of the warming closet — it was so nice to have warm cookies anytime we wanted them.

At Christmas she made three different kinds of homemade candy: peanut butter fudge, chocolate fudge, and sea foam — that cream-colored candy dipped out on wax paper by the spoonful with a little curl on top with black walnuts and vanilla. It would absolutely melt in your mouth.

Our presents weren't expensive. One year I got two sets of doll dishes — tiny little delicate china tea sets. One was trimmed in pink and one was trimmed in blue. I never see any like that anymore. Paul would get firecrackers, maybe a pocket knife, Jew's harp, or marbles; small things but they made us happy. And, of course, we all got candy and an orange and a few English walnuts. I still can't understand why the little bag of candy we got at school or Sunday school always seemed to taste better than all the rest. I guess it was because we didn't get much before the Christmas season.

We didn't have much in the way of decorations: some well-worn red and green roping, a cardboard star covered with silver aluminum foil, walnuts or other little objects wrapped in colored foil with a string or fine wire to hang them on the tree, and sometimes colored paper chains put together with flour paste and decorated with crayons. Mama loved those old-time paper bells which you could unfold and clip the sides together to form a bell. We had one big one, and four smaller ones for each corner of the room which were hung at the ceiling on twisted red and green crepe paper garlands. We used ground pine and holly to make a decoration for the doorways.

But those little soft aluminum foil icicles for the tree were a must. They cost about 10 cents to 15 cents a box, but Mama always got new ones when she could. It was very homey when Paul put up the Christmas tree in the living room. I remember so well one particular

This glass dish and cheerful rag doll date back to a special time for our author.

Paul Grose astride his first car in the 1940's.

Margaret Grose Winebrenner today. Photograph by Michael Keller.

year, he got into one of his "it's-got-to-be-just-perfect" moods. He didn't just throw the icicles on — he placed them on one by one, a tedious and time-consuming job. Patience he really had. He draped the icicles close together across those limbs, each one exactly the same length like they had grown there. With every little air current, they caught the light of the fire in different colors and sparkled prettier than any electric-lighted tree I have ever seen since I was a little girl.

Paul always managed to put love into everything he did, even the tree. And how he used to put his arms around me and bury my face inside his coat in a blustery cold wind coming home from school so I could breathe. And even when I saw a black snake in the path and was so afraid I was holding my breath, he slapped my face so I would catch my breath and apologized many times so I would understand why he did it. He said he was afraid I'd die. And if I'm shedding tears, it's because these memories I write are so precious to me.

Our dad and mother passed away in 1978 and 1979, nine months apart. Dad was almost 91 and mother was 89. In October 1990, I went to Charleston to the hospital where Paul was very ill. He had a lung removed. On the night of the October 11, 1990, he took a turn for the worse, and all day on October 12 he grew steadily worse. Two or three times that day he talked to me. He said, "I saw Dad two or three times today but I couldn't get close to him." In a little while he called my name and said, "Marg, they're having a big party over there but I can't see to tell who they all are." Maybe they were trimming the tree for Christmas and were waiting for the expert to put the icicles on.

He was an expert at trimming the Christmas tree, an expert at pulling my loose tooth with a string on my tooth and one end tied to the door knob, an expert at teaching me to roll a hoop with a wire and teaching me how to catch horny heads and minnows and chubs on a bent pin with a hickory fishing pole. He was an expert at keeping me and himself well-equipped with a slingshot, and sharing his secret hiding place, and protecting me from black snakes and the wind, and the greatest expert at letting me know I was loved.

At around 6:30 on October 12, 1990, he got to that party and saw Dad. And they are all going to be there when I go, too, along with Mama and three other sweet, dear brothers. I just know it. I really do.

MARGARET GROSE WINEBRENNER was born at Saxman in Nicholas County in 1925. She is a lifelong resident of Nicholas County and currently resides in Summersville. Her article "Memories of Ely-Thomas Through the Eyes of a Child" appeared in our Winter 1997 issue.

Paul Grose embraces his parents, Hance and Bertha, in this 1962 photograph.

again when Mike Sturm asked Jennings to come to work at Louie Glass in Weston. "I was the assistant plant manager at Louie Glass for about two years," he remembers, "and then I went back in production. They make mostly a clear blown ware for their home parties, and that's all blown: paste blown and blown molded. I retired in 1989 from Louie Glass. Two or three years later, Bill Hogan wanted me to come down to Masterpiece Crystal and make paperweights for the gift shop (in Jane Lew), and that's where I'm still at."

I asked Jennings, of all the glass that he has made, what's the most fun to make? "The most fun, of course, is paperweights. I enjoy it. They're selling good. They sell them at Tamarack besides the salesroom at Jane Lew."

Jennings' five-flower airtrap paperweights are colorful, shapely, and exquisitely made. Though they all display his distinctive style, each individual weight is a unique blend of color, materials, and challenging techniques. Jennings estimates that he creates approximately 1,500 paperweights each year, totaling in the thousands over his career. Each of these weights is identified with his mark "JB" on the underside along with the last two digits of the year in a triangle.

Paperweights by Jennings Bonnell.

"I started to learn to make paperweights as I learned to make glass," Jennings recalls. "I think Jim Young

West Virginia Glass On Display

Examples of Jennings Bonnell and Johnnie Gentile's paperweights are part of a special display at the **West Virginia Museum of American Glass** in Weston. Included are several commemorative paperweights created by Bonnell with the museum's name in blue in the center, encased in clear glass.

In addition to paperweights, the museum features a variety of glass items from West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana.

The museum, at the corner of Main and 2nd streets, is open noon to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Admission is by donation.

For information, write to the museum, P.O. Box 574, Weston, WV 26452.

Oglebay Institute's Glass Museum at Carriage House Glass focuses exclusively on glass made in Wheeling. The museum at Oglebay Resort displays 3,000 works in glass by the five major companies in operation from 1820 to 1939. One of the more unusual pieces on display is a 5-foot-tall cut glass punch bowl that weighs 225 pounds.

The museum is open daily with extended hours during the holiday season. Holiday admission is $3.25 for adults and $1 for youth. For more information, call (304)243-4058.

The **Huntington Museum of Art** at 2033 McCoy Road has 4,000 pieces of glass in its collection, with the goal to showcase glass from the entire Ohio Valley.

Hours are 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday, and noon to 5:00 p.m. Sunday. The museum is closed to the public on Monday. Admission is by donation. For more information, call (304)529-2701.

Paperweights are among the West Virginia glass items on display at the **West Virginia State Museum** at the Cultural Center in Charleston. The exhibit titled "Of Fire and Sand: Glassmaking in West Virginia" features glass items made around the state.

The museum's hours are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Admission is free. For more information, call (304)558-0220, ext. 121.

Johnnie Gentile works on a paperweight. Photograph by Jean Sutherland Melvin, late 1960's.

there in Salem back in the 1930's made a few paperweights and then I got acquainted with Johnnie Gentile. I seen Johnnie work. I really learned a lot from Johnnie Gentile. He learned from his father Peter. He started a factory in Rochester, Pennsylvania — Fry Glass, I think that's the name of it — him and a fellow name of Fry. (Peter Gentile) came back to Morgantown, he worked with Morgantown Guild, made paperweights there of an evening when he got through work. Johnnie was a bit boy at Morgantown Guild. Then when they started their own glass factory, Johnnie went with his dad in Star City."

Johnnie Gentile, who still lives in Star City, is considered one of the leading authorities on glass paperweights, though he no longer makes weights. Johnnie is about the same age as Jennings but began making weights many years earlier, having learned from his legendary father. Among Johnnie's prized possessions is an extensive collection of Peter Gentile's art glass.

After learning from Johnnie Gentile and perfecting his own style and methods, Jennings then passed along the secrets of making glass paperweights to a new generation of glass workers. "I taught the paperweight-making to the guys at Louie because they saw me making them and some of them got interested and asked questions. The manager Mike Sturm really encouraged it. If it hadn't of been for Mike Sturm, there wouldn't have been any paperweights. If it hadn't of been for Mike Sturm, there wouldn't have been no Louie Glass. He kept the place a-going until Princess House bought it in 1971. He was still there when I retired. He was there up into the 1990's."

Jennings' students learned to make the five-flower airtrap paperweights at first. As they became more experienced, some of the men went further and developed other types of weights which are uniquely their own, while other men stuck to the basic weight. As Jennings helped his fellow glass workers to make paperweights, he suggested that they create marks on the end of carbon rods to document their creations. Most of these marks consist of the makers' initials.

Several of Jennings' former students still work at Louie Glass/ Princess House including George Brooks, Edwin Clark, Douglas Replogle, brothers Gary and Harold Riffle, Clarence Rucker, and brothers Fred and Mike Woofter.

Jennings helped four men who have left Princess House to set up their own glass factories. George Williams purchased an old Mason Glassware Company warehouse in Jane Lew and made it into The Glass Swan factory. Ron Hinkel makes a variety of weights today including free-form art weights. His Dying Art Glass factory is in Buckhannon.

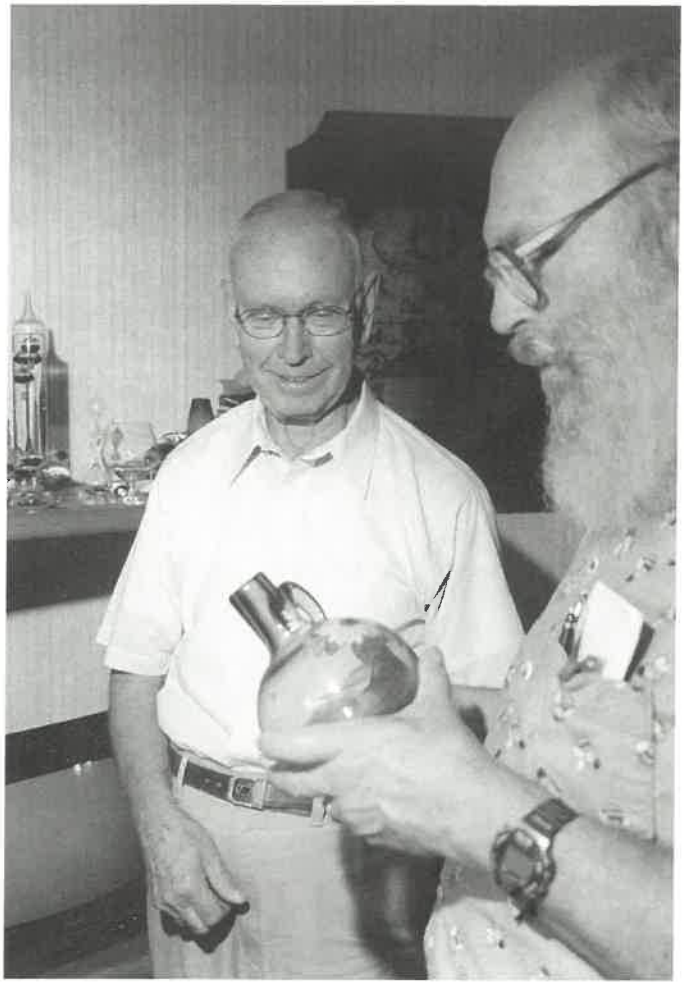
Ribbon-swirl paperweight with bubbles, by Johnnie Gentile.

Cliff Rock and Claudia Rexroad have a factory in Alum Bridge known as Willow Creek Glass. They make fruit, fish, and free-form paperweights which they enamel in natural colors. Christopher A. Smith makes a variety of types of glass as CAS Art Glass in Ellenboro. He concentrates on making thousands of blown glass Christmas tree ornaments.

I asked Jennings what he thought to be the most important thing he ever did in all his lifetime of making glass. "Why, I think the best thing I'm proud of is the job we done training the glass workers at Stamm's in Grafton. 'Cause they went down to Seneca Glass and kept them going. If it hadn't have been for the boys we trained in Grafton, Seneca would have gone out of business a long time before it did."

Then I asked him about the state of glass today. "Glass will survive. The big factories like Louie and West Virginia Specialty, they're a thing of the past. I don't think they'll ever be back like they were. There will always be a demand for handmade glass. There'll be little glass studios springing up all over the state. What George Williams, Chris Smith, Ron Hinkel, and Cliff Rock are doing is what is going to keep the glass going — what goes on with Mid-Atlantic and with Jim Davis and the glass workers over there in Ellenboro, including Draper Harden and Sammy L. Hogue who are getting to work on their own on Saturdays. It fascinates people. The state of glass in West Virginia is still good. It will survive."

I asked him if he had any further thoughts. "I'm feeling good, but the doctor told me working three days a week don't help me very much, told me I'd better slow down. So, I work two days a week and work longer hours."



Author James Mitchell coaxes a smile from Jennings as they discuss this hand-painted blown vase.

Tools of the trade. Most of what Jennings uses to make his beautiful paperweights will fit in one small carrying case and a bucket. The dies are seen at right, and the hand tools are in the tray at left.

Mrs. Mary Bonnell suggested that she'll make him quit work when he's 80, but that's next year and she agreed that she doesn't want him sitting there under her feet. So, it's a safe bet that more paperweights will be made by Jennings Bonnell in Jane Lew.

JAMES R. MITCHELL is the curator of The West Virginia State Museum at The Cultural Center in Charleston. Over the past 35 years, he has worked for state museums in Wisconsin, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, as well as private museums in Bennington, Vermont, and Niagara Falls, New York. His degrees are from the University of Wisconsin, University of Delaware, and Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania. He is a devoted glass enthusiast with an extensive personal collection, including paperweights. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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

The Students of Jennings Bonnell

Photo essay by Michael Keller

Glassmaker Jennings Bonnell has shared the secrets of making glass paperweights with a large number of younger West Virginia glassmakers. As you can see here, Jennings' students have learned well.

Each individual maker adds his or her own creative touch — as well as an identifying mark — to each weight. These marks, similar to cattle brands, often combine the initials of the artist with unique or stylized letters. Author James Mitchell provides us with a description of each maker's mark, indicated in parenthesis after each artist's name.

▲ **Tommy Goldsmith** ("TG") at left, known for somewhat larger five-flower weights; **Fred Woofter** ("Fw" with small "w" growing out of the lower bar of the "F") made this one-flower weight at center; **Harold Riffle** ("HR") made this five-flower weight at right.

▲ **Edwin Clark** (unsigned), top left, is a foreman for Princess House who makes weights with birds in addition to five-flower weights such as this; **Douglas Replogle** ("DR"), top right, makes glass apples and pumpkins in addition to five-flower weights; **Gary Riffle** ("GR"), bottom, makes five-flower weights such as this yellow one.

◀ **Roger Parker** ("RP") at left, makes larger five-flower weights which are proportionally wider than they are tall; **Ron Hinkle** ("RH," with a reverse "R" conjoined with the "H"), center, makes free-form weights in addition to the more traditional five-flower weight seen here; **George Brooks** ("GB") made this weight with green and white flowers on a green ground, at right.

"The state of glass in West Virginia is still good. It will survive."
—Jennings Bonnell

◀ **Bobby Cosner** ("BC" or "RC"), top left, "made a few weights," according to Jennings Bonnell, "but I never helped him"; **Mike Woofter** (conjoined "MW"), at right, makes weights with animals and butterflies, such as this, in addition to flowers; **George Williams** ("GW") bottom left, operates The Glass Swan factory in Jane Lew. He and Jennings collaborated on a few weights such as this ornate black, tan, and blue crimped weight.

▶ **Celso Lopez** (small "CL" in a circle, sometimes found on the upper portion of the weight), at left, began making weights in Mexico before coming to West Virginia. His distinctive creations include this diminutive crystal apple. **Darrell Fessler** ("DF") made relatively few weights, including this blue five-flower example at right.

◀ **Chris Smith** (etched "CAS" and date, if marked), at left, makes a variety of glass at CAS Art Glass in Ellenboro, including this small blue rod swirl weight. **John B. "Benny" Goodwin** (many unmarked — signed with an etched signature on the bottom, if at all) at center, made many weights, including this one-flower paperweight; **Cliff Rock** (etched signature on bottom) and partner Claudia Rexroad have Willow Creek Glass factory in Alum Bridge. Their innovative designs include the purple and amber swirl weight seen at right.

An African American Landmark in Fayette County

By Norman Jordan

Camp Washin

Camp Washington-Carver in Fayette County opened in 1942 as a 4-H camp for African Americans — the first of its kind in the nation. Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are from the Eastern Coal and Fuel Collection, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, photographers and dates unknown.

When I moved back to Ansted, Fayette County, in 1979, I realized that it would be hard for me to find suitable employment near my home that would utilize my skills and years of experience as a cultural worker. My most recent job had been as director of a traveling theater company. However, I had heard that the Department of Culture and History, as it was then known, was taking over the old Washington-Carver 4-H camp in Clifftop, just 15 minutes away. Their aim was to turn it into a mountain cultural arts center.

I had never attended the camp as

a camper, but I knew that it was the first 4-H camp for African Americans in the country. I had very vivid memories of going to the camp with Ansted residents to play baseball, swim, and have church picnics. Tom Banks, the caretaker at the camp for many years, was from Ansted and he often visited his relatives and friends in our small town. I remember my Dad taking him back to the camp a few times.

Sometimes Dad would take me and my brothers and sisters along, and as soon as the car stopped at the camp we would jump out and run around on the grounds and bounce up and down on the saw horse, slide down the sliding board, and — most of all — ride on the merry-go-round. This was a favorite activity with almost all of the young people who spent time at Carver.

Other vivid memories are of the smell of chlorine at the bathhouse and the swimming pool, as well as the happy sounds of swimmers splishing and splashing in the water and diving off the diving board.

I cherish my memories of the times that I spent at Camp Washington-Carver and I feel, as do hundreds of this state's African Americans, that the camp is an important historical landmark. It represents a time when the leaders of our state made serious attempts toward addressing the needs and concerns of the African American citizens.

The seeds for an African American 4-H facility were planted in 1928 when West Virginia University hired two African Americans to do extension work for the state's black population. Those two workers were James E. Banks and Lulu B. Moore of Alderson, Monroe County. They were the first to be hired to report on 4-H activities for African Americans in the state, and they worked out of West Virginia State College in Institute, Kanawha County.

At that time, 4-H clubs, which had evolved out of "corn and hog raising projects," were extremely popular in rural America. Club participants were involved with many different programs that emphasized education and personal grooming. Standard projects were nutrition and meal planning, bread making, farming chickens and hogs, flower and vegetable gardening, canning, quilting, lamp shade decoration, and first aid. [See "Head, Heart, Hands, and Health: The West Virginia 4-H Movement," by Michael Meador; Summer 1984.]

One of the main attractions to the 4-H experience, however, was its camping component. Although blacks had helped to start 4-H programs across the state, they did not have facilities to conduct their own camps. In a 1929 report, Banks and Moore stated that 4-H camps were held in 44 of the state's counties for whites but none for blacks. They made a plea for a "Negro 4-H Camp" similar to the white 4-H camp at Jackson's Mill.

Armed with these facts, Dr. John W. Davis, president of WVSC, sought permission from the State Board of Control and joint boards of education — white board of education and Negro board of education — to approach the legislature to appropriate funds to locate and purchase a tract of land for a black 4-H camp. According to Dr. Davis, "The outer walls of support for West Virginia State College will remain weak so long as 4-H work

gton-Carver

This merry-go-round was a popular attraction for kids at the camp, and a joyful memory for our author.

in the state among Negroes is weak. ...This reference deals particularly with the allotment of federal funds and the interpretation and application of federal laws which have to do with those funds."

Dr. Davis believed, as did most black leaders at that time, that not only were blacks being denied their fair share of funding under the "separate but equal" racial system, but that federal laws were being openly violated to keep African Americans from their rightful share of federal and state funds according to population size.

In a December 1936 letter to members of the State Board of Control, Dr. Davis explained the need for a 4-H camp with a swimming pool. "At present time," he stated, "there is but one organized and directed swimming pool in the state of West Virginia into which Negroes may go freely without molestation or arrest. This swimming pool is located in the Negro High School building at Clarksburg." The fact that the state's African American citizens were forced to swim in snake-infested creeks and dangerous rivers while white Americans were given swimming lessons in pools patrolled by lifeguards, had long been a sore issue in the black community.

Dr. John W. Davis spearheaded the efforts to establish Camp Washington-Carver. Photograph from the U.G. Carter Collection.

After almost a decade of struggle, African American leaders in West Virginia had something to be proud of when a bill was introduced to the regular session of the 43rd Legislature of West Virginia by Fleming Adolphus Jones, a black member of the House of Delegates from McDowell County. It read, "For the purpose of teaching Negro boys and girls the 4-H standards of living, and to inspire them to lift themselves toward these standards, and to discover and train Negro boys and girls for leadership, and for the purpose of teaching standards of excellence in agriculture, soil conservation, vocational agriculture, and home economics, a 4-H camp, institute, and state exhibit for Negroes is hereby established."

"A 4-H camp, institute, and state exhibit for Negroes is hereby established."

The bill passed: 70 yeas, 11 nays, and 13 absent or not voting. It was signed into law on March 9, 1937, by Governor Homer Adams Holt. Along with the passing of House Bill No.48 authorizing the establishment of the camp, the legislature also approved the request by WVSC to conduct extension work. WVSC had for many years pointed out that by being a land grant college they were entitled to that status by the U.S. Department of Agricultural.

Using the $25,000 that the state had appropriated for this project as seed money, Dr. Davis and his allies approached the federal government to secure New Deal funds for the camp. Their efforts paid off in early July 1939 when the federal government announced that a $114,000 WPA grant had been approved to aid in the construction of the 4-H camp. Word spread that West Virginia State College had amassed roughly $150,000 to purchase land for an African American 4-H camp, and Dr. Davis began to receive letters and phone calls from land owners around the state offering to sell their land to the state for the camp. Dr. Davis personally contacted all of the landowners and made trips to several counties to look at tracts of land.

When Dr. Davis first visited the Clifftop property, he fell in love with the beautiful scenery and serenity of the land. He spent many hours walking from one end of it to the other. In a long letter to president Walter R. Thurmond of the Board of Control, Davis described the Clifftop tract and invited the president to accompany him to evaluate his number one choice for construction of the 4-H complex.

After months of negotiations, a deed to approximately 583 acres was transferred from Mr. and Mrs. Charles and Kathryn Middleburg to the state of West Virginia with the agreement that the land would be used to build a lodge for the Negro 4-H camp. Designers and engineers created blueprints for the envisioned facilities, and work began on the construction of the camp.

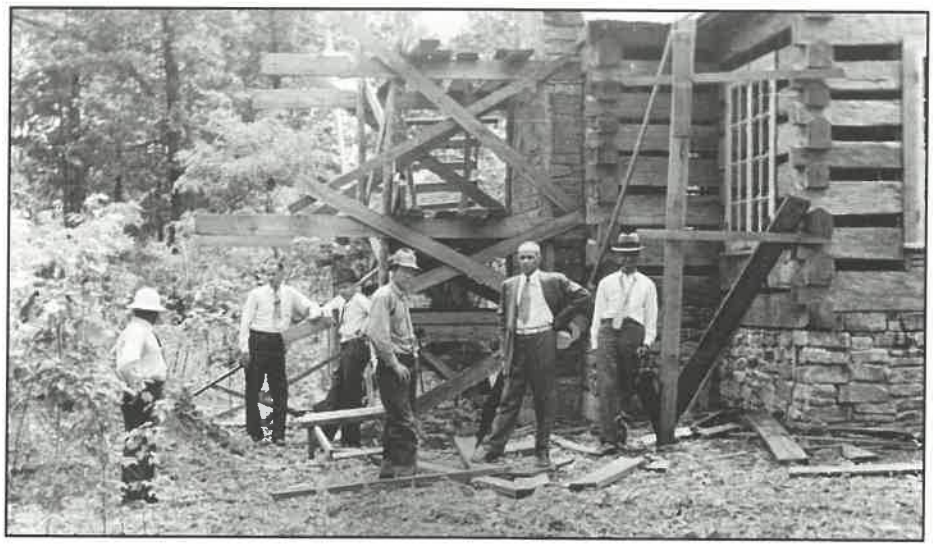
Building the camp involved several different work groups and immediately became a well-known project in the local labor market.

During the days of segregation, the need for a safe, clean, and well-supervised swimming pool for West Virginia's African American citizens was a potent argument for building the camp. This pool at Camp Washington-Carver got plenty of use. Photograph 1948.

The Civilian Conservation Corps built the road to the spot where the main complex was to be erected. After the CCC built the road and cleared roughly 65 acres of the land for the camp complex, WPA workers came in and dug the foundation and began to build the structures. Whites and blacks worked together on the project.

Small businesses — such as the team of expert stonecutters that was hired to quarry and lay rock for the chimneys and foundations of the buildings — and individuals — like the local man who was contracted to use his horses and mules to pull the large chestnut trees that lay scattered about on the land — reaped generous benefits from the WVSC endeavor. Staff and students at West Virginia State College participated in different phases of the construction.

One non-local group was prison laborers from Moundsville prison who provided the finishing touches, especially on windows, doors, and hardware. Woodrow Haney, the guard assigned to the prisoners, said in an interview that while he was working as a guard at Moundsville, U.S. Senator M.M. Neely approached him about being in charge of a convict work crew at Clifftop. He said to Haney, "We are gonna send a bunch of men out to Clifftop in Fayette County to finish a 4-H camp out there, the largest one in the world. I think you'd make a good man out there." Haney accepted the assignment and the next day boarded a bus with 27 inmates and drove to Clifftop.



In 1940, this cabin became the first building completed at the camp. Dr. John W. Davis is seen wearing a suit and tie. Photograph courtesy of West Virginia State College Archives.

In 1940, the first building was completed. It was the two-room guest cottage, constructed of native American chestnut. Also in 1940, the water tank and pond were finished. In 1942, the Great Chestnut Lodge, also called the Great Hall, was opened for use. Also in 1942, two frame dormitories were constructed and the swimming pool and bathhouse were finished. The grounds were spacious with a picnic pavilion, tennis courts, and ball playing fields.

Left: C.T. Hairston was the first camp director. Photograph from the *Biennial Report of the Bureau of Negro Welfare and Statistics, 1949-50*. The report notes that during the 1949-50 camping season, 67 different groups made use of the facility.

Below: Camps sponsored by the fuel industry brought countless youngsters to Camp Washington-Carver.

The dedication of the camp on July 26, 1942, was the most significant event to take place in the state's black history during the 1940's. Not only was this a great achievement for the state but also for the nation since this was the first state Negro 4-H camp to be built in America. One important group to attend the dedication was the staff of the newly formed extension workers at WVSC. Dr. John W. Davis asked all extension workers to attend for it would be this group who would provide a bridge for communities throughout the state to the activities at the camp.

West Virginia State College began using the facility before the construction was finished. "They had a bunch (campers) come in up there — the colored, you know — they came in before we left there," said former CCC worker Calvin McMillion. "They were just as nice as could be, some nice colored girls."

At that time, C.T. Hairston was director and Mrs. A.P. Hairston was camp secretary. They lived in the apartment over the front entrance to the Great Hall. The first floor of this large log building housed the assembly hall, the dining hall, and the kitchen. The back half of the second floor was divided into two dormitory-style rooms. A smaller log cabin some distance away was designated as the health center.

The late Emma Robinson who took groups to the camp from the New River Coal Company of Mount Hope said, "Well, when we would go up, we would go for a period — like one week and two weeks, I think those were the limited periods. And then we had to have girls camp and boys camp, because we didn't have space to arrange so we could have them together." Later a dormitory for boys was constructed some distance from the Great Hall.

In its peak years during the 1950's, the Negro 4-H Camp would

accommodate roughly 1,600 campers annually from around the state.

The routine of the daily schedule is described by John Seay, a former counselor and teacher from Beckley who worked on the staff at the camp for nearly 20 years. "First we would have breakfast," he explains. "After breakfast, we would clean up the cabins. At one particular camp I was nature study teacher, science and nature study." The camp's staff also included a music and drama teacher, an arts and crafts teacher, and instructors in swimming and health and first aid.

"After science," John Seay continues, "we would have recreation. After recreation we would go back in and I would take another group in science and nature study. By this time we would have an evening play. I was one of the teachers in sports. After sports it was time to clean up for supper. After supper it was free time. After free time we would have what they called vespers service. Sometimes I was in charge of that. After vespers service we would have campfire. After campfire we had snacks and then we retired and went to bed."

Besides the 4-H camps, a range of other activities took place at the camp including Boys and Girls State, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, mining encampments, home economics encampments, church camps, private camps, and other community camps. The buildings also served as a space for large meetings and gatherings for many groups and organizations from around the state. WVSC conducted staff and faculty training seminars and special classes on the site. They also held pre-season band and football conditioning sessions, military training for pilots, and ROTC maneuvers. Lectures and demonstrations by the telephone company, hospitals, mining companies, and other state and federal organizations would accompany those programs.

"For black people, the magnificent main lodge was like the Statue of Liberty for it represented the entrance to a free land."

In essence, the 4-H facility served as a junior college for the state's African American population. And because of prevailing Jim Crow laws, the swimming pool, baseball field, Chestnut Lodge, and the camp grounds were well-used for church picnics, reunions, and other civic activities.

An older former camper was quoted as saying, "For black people, the magnificent main lodge was like the Statue of Liberty for it represented the entrance to a free land. You could eat in the dining room, swim in the swimming pool. Jim Crow laws stopped at the gates, ... and that made it almost a holy place."

From 1942 to 1963, the Negro 4-H Camp was the primary non-school African American center for agriculture, mining, arts, and home economics education in our state. With the passing of the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision which outlawed segregation, all of the state's 4-H programs were transferred to Jackson's Mill by 1964. In 1957, West Virginia State College lost its land grant status

Nature study.

Arts and crafts.

Mealtime.

Rest period.

and, with it, its ability to conduct extension services. The hardest blow to WVSC's ability to administrate the facility came in 1972 when it was denied legislative appropriations for the camp.

Serious efforts by WVSC were made in 1973-'74 to revive the camp by attracting programs that crossed color lines. Doris Peaks, who worked in the kitchen during those years, says, "We had some groups that would come in and stay one or two or three weeks. We had groups, like the Methodists, that would come in different age groups like the senior and then the junior Methodist. We had the Beckley Child Care Center. We had groups from Chicago and the ROTC from WVSC. There was also a group of Head Start teacher trainees from Marshall University."

The most colorful event was the 2nd Annual John Henry Memorial Festival, featuring a Blues and Gospel Jubilee starring Taj Mahal, Uncle Homer Walker, Della Taylor, Eugene Redmond, Bob Thompson, Miss Naomi Jordan and the Family Affair, Lou Myers, and others. There were Sunday school encampments, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other integrated groups, but the efforts failed because those organizations did not have significant capital to support the complex's operating budget. In 1979, the camp was transferred to the Department of Culture and History to become a new rural cultural arts center. By this time it was known officially as Camp Washington-Carver in honor of historic black leaders Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver.

In 1980, Camp Washington-Carver was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The occasion was celebrated with a rededication ceremony by the Department of Culture and History, with Governor Jay Rockefeller giving the keynote address [see "Camp Washington-Carver Opens"; October-December 1980].

Camp Washington-Carver 2000

A number of public events are slated at Camp Washington-Carver for the coming year, presented by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. Here is the schedule:

May 6, July 8, August 26 — Family Theater Series

May 12-14 — Old-Time Wingding

June 17-25 — African American Heritage Arts Camp

July 15 — Doo-Wop Saturday Night

August 2-6 — Appalachian String Band Music Festival [see "Clifftop: Appalachian String Band Music Festival," by Danny Williams; Summer 1999].

For more information on the African American Heritage Arts Camp, call (304)558-0220, ext. 121. For additional information about the remaining events, call (304)438-3005.

Non-profit groups interested in information about renting the facilities at Camp Washington-Carver may also call (304)438-3005.

MICHAEL KELLER

Camp Washington-Carver today.

Shortly after that event, I made an appointment and met with Commissioner of the Department of Culture and History Norman Fagan, and Director of Arts and Humanities Jim Andrews to make them aware of my qualifications and desire to work at Camp Washington-Carver. Norman and Jim explained to me that they were in the rehabilitation phase of the camp's renewal, but urged me to keep in touch because they intended to carry out the mandate of the transfer agreement that they had made with West Virginia State College. The mandate stipulated that a strong African American component be a part of the camp's agenda. Norman also assured me that theatre would be a part of the programming. I left that meeting feeling very enthused and determined to try to obtain a position at the camp.

In the spring of 1984, I received a letter from Norman Fagan asking me to contact Bob Shreve at CWC if I was still interested in working there. Bob informed me that there was a seasonal position available in the programming department at the camp and that I could have the job if I wanted it. I accepted the job on the spot.

A youth arts camp would be instrumental in keeping alive the roots of the 4-H concept that resulted in the creation of the historic site.

As program assistant, my duties included collaborating with Bob and Norman in setting up a model program for annual summer seasons. After a series of meetings, we designed events that related to Fayette County, the state of West Virginia, and African American heritage. The main events were Homestyle Dinner Theater, Doo-Wop Saturday Night, "Carver Goes

Country," Appalachian Open Championships bluegrass music competition, Fayette County Old-Time Days, and Black Heritage Week Celebration. I served as the coordinator of the Black Heritage Week Celebration.

In 1986, I proposed that instead of just presenting a week of performing arts for the Black Heritage Week Celebration, we offer a youth arts camp. I felt that a camp would be instrumental in keeping alive the roots of the 4-H concept that resulted in the creation of the historic site. For our first encampment, we prepared for 80 participants but were happily surprised when 120 teenagers showed up and registered for the arts workshops. The young people were divided into groups of 25 and each group was rotated to workshop sessions in literature, theatre, music, dance, and photography. The success of the first encampment instantly established this as an annual event.

When not performing the duties of a program assistant, I was researching the history of the camp. I investigated files, manuscripts, records, and books located in the Cultural Center, and accompanied Fred Armstrong, acting director of the State Archives (now director of the Archives and History Section of the Division of Culture and History), in conducting oral interviews with people connected to the camp's past. Fred and I also met regularly with Sharon Mullins, director of exhibitions for the State Museum (now the director of the State Museum). The three of us designed an exhibit that showcased the history of CWC.

After exhausting the resources at the Cultural Center, a deal was worked out that allowed me to investigate the archives at West Virginia State College. At the end of my research, I had accumulated enough documents to fill four small boxes with materials relating to the history of the camp. In addition, I had added to the collection of photographs and artifacts that already existed in the State Archives and conducted several additional interviews.

On June 9, 1989, the "History of Camp Washington-Carver" exhibit opened to the public in the Great Chestnut Lodge. I worked for two more years at the Department of Culture and History before taking another job, but I continued to serve part-time as director of the one-week African American Arts and Heritage Camp until 1994.

The mention of the name "Camp Washington-Carver" or "Clifftop" still elicits strong memories within the state's African American communities, especially among our senior citizens. While many of those citizens are disappointed that there are no African Americans currently working there, they applaud the initial restorative efforts that have taken place at the facility since it was placed under the auspices of what is now the Division of Culture and History.

On Sunday, September 26, 1999, my wife Brucella and I, along with my mother-in-law Sarah Wiggins, attended the Native American Powwow at Camp Washington-Carver. I know that Lulu Moore, James Brooks, and John W. Davis would be glad to know that here on the grounds that they had helped to create, children and adults of all races are talking, laughing, learning, singing, dancing, eating, and having a good time.

Camp Washington-Carver has gone through several administrative as well as physical changes during its history and will no doubt continue to change in the future. But regardless of what it becomes, its roots will always represent a landmark for African American unity and achievement.

NORMAN JORDAN operates the African American Heritage Family Tree Museum in Ansted, and serves on several museum and history boards throughout the state. He holds a bachelor of fine arts degree from West Virginia University and a master of arts degree from Ohio State University. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Author Norman Jordan stands at right by the porch of the first structure completed at Camp Washington-Carver. Staff for the 1985 Black Heritage Festival include, clockwise from upper left, Marshall Petty, Ed Cabbell, Jordan, Sandra Milner, Elaine Blue, and Elizabeth Rogers. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Mountain Music Roundup

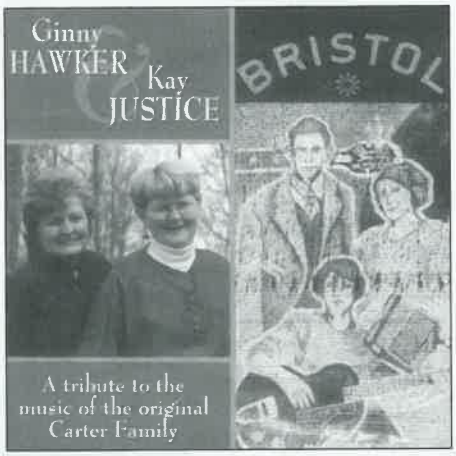
By Danny Williams

Back when language professors were inventing the study of folk music, they focused nearly all their attention on singing. Early folklorists looked at songs to learn about the history, language, and lifestyles of average people. It was quite a while before scholars began to take serious notice of instrumental folk music and the story that it, too, has to tell.

Now, it seems that perhaps we've gone too far in the other direction. At our festivals, concerts, workshops, and contests, singing is often ignored or pushed off to the side. It seems that there are six or eight traditional fiddle recordings released for every song collection these days.

To help remedy this situation, we're happy to devote most of this edition of "Mountain Music Roundup" to several great new CD's featuring some of our favorite musicians — musicians who happen to sing.

If you ask fans of real West Virginia music to name a favorite singer, you'd probably hear the name of Gilmer County's **Ginny Hawker** more than any other. On her newest CD, *Bristol*, she teams again with her longtime partner **Kay Justice** from Abingdon, Virginia, to salute the original Carter Family. What a great idea! The Carter Family, of course, brought old mountain songs into the modern world of radio and recordings beginning in the late



1920's, and their sound was permanently stamped on American country music from that point on.

After all these years, the Carter Family's legacy looms so large in part because their style and repertoire are so flexible. There's room for skilled, thoughtful, and inspired musicians like Ginny and Kay to make the music new again, as this CD demonstrates.

There must be 50 recorded versions of "On the Rock Where Moses Stood," but this one reminds us that it's a gospel song. Their version of "Broken Hearted Lover" is the only one we know which bears comparison with the Carters themselves. Ginny and Kay do a service by airing several relatively unknown Carter gems. Only the most avid Carter Family fans will have heard "I Never Loved But One," for instance, and they will treasure these old-time harmonies. On every song, these women let the story and the melody guide their singing, as did Sara, Maybelle, and A.P. Carter before them.

Ginny and Kay are ably accompanied here by a number of fine musicians including Tracy Schwarz and Mike Seeger, while GOLDENSEAL editor John Lilly supplies the liner notes. Ginny Hawker and Kay Justice's *Bristol* is a commercially distributed CD which can be ordered as Copper Creek CCCD-0176 from record stores. It is also available directly from Copper Creek for $13, plus $3 per order shipping and handling.

Their mailing address is P.O. Box 3161, Roanoke, VA 24015; they have a website at www.coppercreekrec.com.

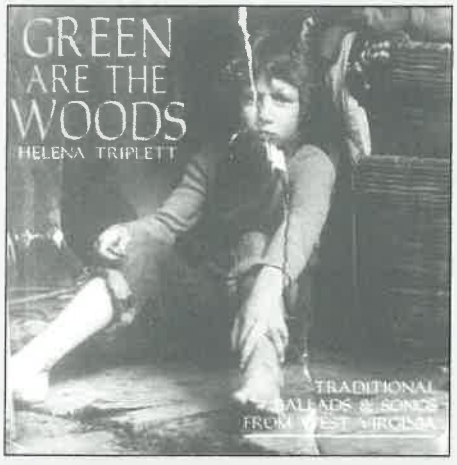
From what little information we have about the beginnings of our mountain vocal traditions, it looks like there was a strong preference for unaccompanied singing. That preference is brought powerfully into the present by the **Missing Person Soup Kitchen Gospel Quartet**, from Charleston. Bill and Becky Kimmons and Will Fanning apply polished, inventive vocal arrangements to a collection of wonderful old songs, and the result is a magical CD titled *Stirring It Up*.

The gospel material which fills most of this CD ranges from solemn hymns such as "Talk About Suffering" and "Daniel Prayed" to more modern, upbeat songs like "You Better Let That Liar Alone." *Stirring It Up* also

offers an eclectic blend of secular songs. Especially fun is the sassy Becky Kimmons composition, "I'd Rather Be Your No.3."

Will, Rebecca, and Bill serve this rich gumbo of songs flavored with sweet and spicy arrangements. Each piece is thoughtfully crafted, and many feature the multilayered and surprising sound reminiscent of barbershop quartets, swing ensembles such as Manhattan Transfer, or other great vocal harmony stylists. The three voices here are always going somewhere and doing something, and the combination is a treat. To order *Stirring it Up*, send $16, including shipping, to Missing Person, 550 Anderson Heights Road, Charleston, WV 25314.

Speaking of great old songs, **Helena Triplett** of Randolph County covers a wide range in her new CD, *Green Are the Woods*. Most of these songs feature Helena's voice alone, the way the old ones sang. She understands the power of these old songs, and all she needs to do is share them with us in her fine, simple style. On a few songs, Helena accompanies herself with her banjo, or gets her talented husband Jimmy Triplett to play some tasteful fiddle. The two also play a couple of haunting banjo or fiddle solos, but most of this CD is devoted to presenting an unaccompanied singing tradition which is centuries long and a world wide.



"Lady Gay" represents the oldest vocal tradition in the English language, while "The Vance Song" is a true American ballad: the story of a murder, trial, and execution from a century ago. "New England" is another take on the old idea of a young woman who dresses as a man in order to stay with her lover. "The Tailor in the Chest" is a gem from the still-active genre of marital humor. It's all here — love, faith, murder, Indians, pirates, and a talking pig. It's available for $15 including shipping from Helena Triplett, 232½ Elm Street, Elkins, WV 26241.

Many of our readers are already familiar with **Bob Heyer** from Wheeling, and they'll be happy to know that his new CD, *Close to the Heart*, sounds just like him. Bob is a fine guitar player — just listen to the opening of the first song, "Blue Ridge Mountain Blues" — and he shows on this CD that he can handle a banjo, too. But close to the heart, Bob is a singer, and he adapts his warm baritone to an impressive variety of styles. "I'm Getting Ready To Go" and "My Rough and Rowdy Ways" are upbeat, fun songs from the minstrel and early country music traditions. "Cora Is Gone" is an old standard love lament. The CD also includes several great gospel songs, a few familiar numbers from earlier in this century, a couple of blues standards, some Bob Heyer originals, and the most laid-back version of a Gene Autry song we've ever heard.

That sounds like a lot of material, but it just fits Bob. He obviously understands his own voice and selects music he can handle with ease and grace. *Close to the Heart* is available for $16, including shipping, from Table Rock Music, 501 National Road, Wheeling, WV 26003.

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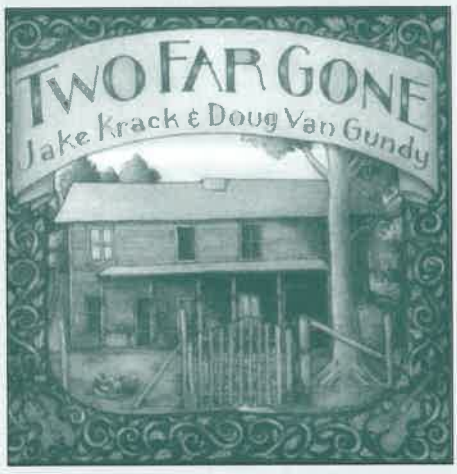
Still in the mood for more singing? The **Bing Brothers Band's** second CD, *Just For Spite*, mixes five strong vocal pieces in among some hot instrumentals. "Elkhorn Ridge" is an old mountain song which West Virginia listeners associate with the legendary Henry Reed. The other songs on the CD are from the more modern string-band era, celebrating life with upbeat rhythms and lively harmonies. When these guys sing that they're going to "Raise a Ruckus Tonight," we believe them.

That leaves two-thirds of the CD for the boys to carry us away with their instruments. Mike Bing's strong, tasteful mandolin picking leads the group through the ancient Hammons family tune "Falls of Richmond," and Clark Kessinger's raucous "Poca River Blues." Fiddler Roger Cooper shines on what are arguably the three best-known dance tunes in Appalachia: "Soldier's Joy," "Mississippi Sawyer," and "Arkansas Traveler." Mike takes turns with guitarist Danny Arthur in the haunting "Ducks on the Pond," and then teams with banjo player Tim Bing for a rare recording of "Houston." Larry Combs brings his powerful guitar style to "Martha Campbell's." Fans of the Bings expect some solo banjo from Tim, and this time he gives us "Sal's In the Garden" and "Calloway's." Mike Smith, one of the strongest bass players anywhere, stands behind the group and keeps everything moving. *Just For Spite* is a collection worthy of the name Bing Brothers. To fans of real music, that's high praise. The Bing Brothers' *Just for Spite* is available for $16, including shipping, from Mike Bing, Rt. 2 Box 128-M. Marlinton, WV 24954.

Dwight Diller adds to this vocal bonanza with his 1997 recording *Harvest*. This collection of 29 songs and tunes is split between new material and gems gleaned from Dwight's six cassettes. As always, Dwight sings plenty of gospel songs. He especially enjoys sharing favorites, like "Crying Holy Unto the Lord," "Come Thou Fount," "The Way of the Cross Leads Home," and "Standing On the Promises." Dwight sings the way he plays — simply and directly, from his heart to that of the listener.

Of course there's plenty of great banjo picking on this CD, too. Many of our favorites from the Diller cassettes are here, including Hammons family gems "Waynesboro" and "Big Scioto." Besides these older recordings, Dwight recorded 16 new pieces for this CD. The banjo solos "Jake Gillie" and "Callaway" alone are worth the price of the CD. A half-dozen or so other fine musicians add their fiddles, guitars, and voices to several of the selections on *Harvest*, but the CD is very much a Dwight Diller recording. To order *Harvest*, send $16, including shipping, to Yew Pine Music, P.O. Box 148, US 19 North, Hillsboro, WV 24946.

Now that we've placed our vocal traditions in the care of these fine singers, we turn to the



latest news from the fiddling front. Get two fiddles for the price of one CD with *Two Far Gone*, featuring **Jake Krack** from

Calhoun County and Marlinton's **Doug Van Gundy**. These two young musicians have made a point of learning the distinctive tunes and challenging techniques of our West Virginia masters. On this CD, they give us a fine feast of local favorites, like Edden Hammons' "Shaking Down the Acorns" and "Let's Hunt the Horses," Mose Coffman's rare "Turkey Creek," and other tunes from a roll call of our fiddling heroes — Lee Hammons, Harvey Sampson, Woody Simmons, Lester McCumbers, Burl Hammons, Wilson Douglas, James Hammons, Ernie Carpenter, and Oscar Wright.

If the names Jake Krack and Doug Van Gundy ring a bell, perhaps you've been watching too much TV — Jake and his fiddling mentors Melvin Wine and Lester McCumbers were recently seen nationally on a cable television news magazine show, while Doug Van Gundy created a national stir by winning big money on a network TV game show.

Jake and Doug love that old-time sound, and they know this material well enough to get loose with it, re-creating the great fun the old-timers must have found in these tunes. Listen to them tear into Edden Hammons' "Paddy on the Turnpike," and you'll understand why some people really want to play the fiddle. *Two Far Gone* is available for $15 from WiseKrack Records, HC 71 Box 87, Orma, WV 25268.

The fiddle isn't the only stringed instrument in the mountains anymore. **Lorraine Lee Hammond** uses her dulcimer to create some rare duets with **Gerry Milnes'** fiddle on their new CD, *Hell Up Coal Holler*. The dulcimer here holds the beat together with moving chord patterns, offers some nice harmony, flashes an occasional accent into the melody, and generally does everything that needs doing. Gerry's fiddling, well-known to most of our readers, seems more lively and inventive than ever with this new partner.

We're also grateful for Gerry's notes on the tunes. Many of our old instrumental tunes originally existed along with a story, and Gerry reminds us of this often-overlooked narrative tradition. *Hell Up Coal Holler* is commercially distributed as Shanachie 6040. (*Readers might recall a description of this highly recommended recording from our summer issue, page 21. —ed.*)

While these folks are putting out all this brand-new music, there are a number of old recordings that we are pleased to see updated. **Melvin Wine's** *Hannah at the Springhouse*, released on cassette a decade ago, is now available on CD from Augusta Heritage Recordings. Melvin, from Braxton County, is one of our most celebrated living musicians, and this CD shows him at his best. Whether he's playing one of his own rare tunes like "All Young" or bringing his unique sound to a familiar tune like "Boatsman," there's no one

Melvin Wine. Photograph by Michael Keller.

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like Melvin. He is one of the few West Virginia masters who has received some of the national recognition he so well deserves, and this CD reminds us of the reason. To order Melvin Wine's *Hannah at the Springhouse*, send $15, plus $3 shipping, to Augusta Heritage Recordings, Davis & Elkins College, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, WV 26241, or check their website at www.augustaheritage.com.

Frank George of Roane County is possibly the most widely influential figure in West Virginia traditional music today. One of

Frank George. Photograph by Rick Lee.

his most important recordings, the double-LP *Swope's Knobs*, is now available on a remastered CD from Roane Records. Most fans of our music know all about the recording from its LP incarnation — the fine guest fiddling of John Hilt, the inclusion of some John Summers material which did not fit onto Frank's first LP, and the only published recording of Frank's hammered dulcimer playing. It's a landmark recording, and we're grateful to David O'Dell of Roane Records for bringing it back. *Swope's Knobs* is available for $15 including shipping from Roane Records, P.O. Box 5294, West Logan, WV 25601; or log on to their website at www.fiddletunes.com.

Another historic recording now available is *The Edden Hammons Collection, Volume One*, from West Virginia University Press. **Edden Hammons** learned his music in the 1880's in the remote uplands of Pocahontas and Randolph counties, and became a local legend for both his masterful playing and his unique style and repertoire. In 1947, old Edden played his tunes into the homemade recording machine of a visiting professor. Those recordings, now housed in the archive of WVU, were mined for an LP about 15 years ago. This CD version of that album uses modern audio technology to clean up the scratchy old aluminum disc originals. The result is great music, and a rare look into our musical past. You may purchase *The Edden Hammons Collection, Volume One*, for $15.95 each, plus $3 shipping for any quantity from West Virginia University Press, P.O. Box 6295, Morgantown, WV 26506-6295.

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 folk arts specialist for the West Virginia Division of Culture and History and is a regular contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

("Mountain Music Roundup" is published annually by GOLDENSEAL as a service to our readers. We welcome recent or reissued recordings of West Virginia traditional folk music for possible inclusion in future editions. Please send recordings along with contact and ordering information to Editor, GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305. —ed.)

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Volume 25, 1999

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In the Subject category, articles are listed under their main topic, with many cross-referenced under alternate Subject headings. Each entry is followed by the seasonal designation of the issue, issue volume and number, and page number. Short notices, such as appear in the regular column, "Current Programs, Events, Publications," are not included in the index.

The index for the first three volumes of GOLDENSEAL appeared in the April-September 1978 issue, and the index for Volumes 4 and 5 in the January-March 1980 magazine. The index for each successive volume appears in the final issue of the calendar year.

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Road Trip IV a Success

We are glad to report that our recent bus tour was a big success! Road Trip IV took an intrepid group of travelers to GOLDENSEAL story sites in 11 counties, covering more than 370 miles over two beautiful days in early October. We hosted 35 magazine readers who, by all accounts, thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Highlights of the trip included a firsthand look at the impressive operations of the Winfield Locks and Dam, followed by a tour of neighboring Eleanor, a model homestead community named for Eleanor Roosevelt. We were treated royally by Mayor Johnny Harris and his staff, including some who offered compelling comments about life in this unique village.

1999 bus tour participants. Photograph by Cornelia Alexander.

Our lunch at the State Farm Museum was excellent, as was John Marra's presentation on local inventor Ben Gravely and the Gravely Tractor. Our evening at the Voices of the Mountain storytelling festival at Jackson's Mill was accentuated by special performances from award-winning liars Rich Knoblich and Bil Lepp.

After an informative morning at the historic sites at Jackson's Mill, we made our way to Camp Washington-Carver in Fayette County, where we enjoyed a meal of roast turkey and a program on the history of the camp by Norman Jordan.

After viewing the New River Gorge from the overlook at Hawk's Nest, our final stop was the Glen Ferris Inn for a riveting presentation by Jack Rogers about the building of the Hawk's Nest Tunnel and the associated tragedy. When we got caught in a traffic jam on the way home, editor and tour guide John Lilly broke out his guitar and obliged the group with some lively singing and yodeling.

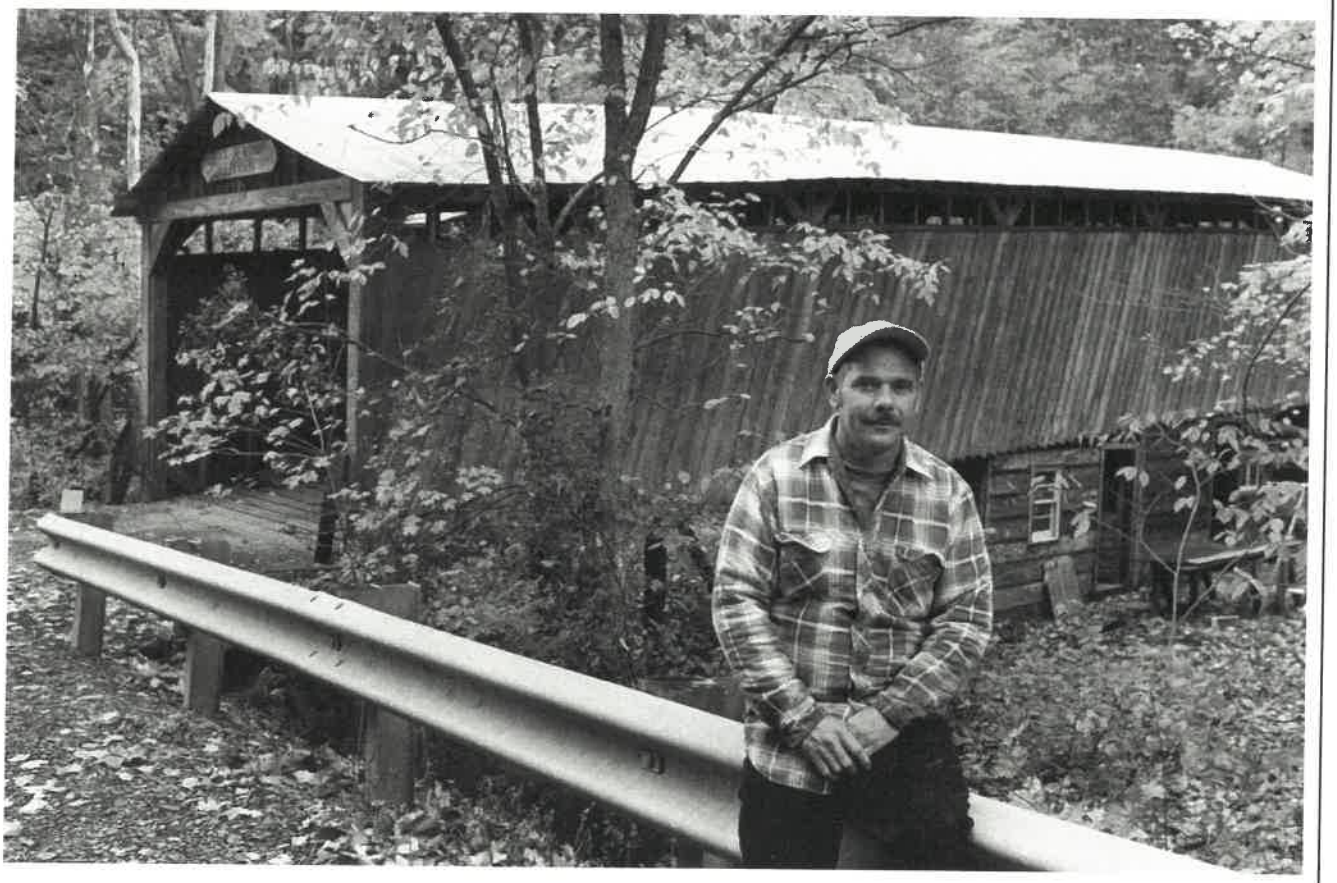
The trip was a rare opportunity for us to visit some very special places, in the company of some wonderful people. We are grateful to everyone who helped to make our 1999 bus trip so smooth, enjoyable, and enlightening. Please join us next year when we hope to visit the Northern Panhandle.

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- West Virginia Women - GOLDENSEAL Special Report
- Smallest Church
- Winning Liars
- Fairs & Festivals

PHOTO CURIOSITY



Benny Aronhalt and his covered bridge. Photograph by Carl Feather.

Hardly a day passes that some curious motorist doesn't stop to snap a photo of this unusual covered bridge in Mineral County, so we thought it would make an appropriate Photo Curiosity for this issue.

GOLDENSEAL has long been interested in West Virginia's historic covered bridges [see "Saved Again! Restoring the Barrackville Covered Bridge," by Mark Kemp-Rye; Fall 1999].

We are pleasantly surprised, however, to learn that this grand architectural tradition is being continued in the Mountain State.

Benny Aronhalt, shown here, built this bridge single-handedly using an 8-foot stepladder, a come-along, and a chain saw. He finished the project in 1995 and now uses his personal covered bridge — called Rock-n-Wood Heaven — to reach his home which lies across Harrison's Run off U.S. Route 50 at Harrison's Gap. Benny also uses the bridge for storage and has enclosed two small rooms beneath it as playrooms for his kids. He calls the rooms "troll houses."

The bridge is 16' wide and 68' long, and was built at a cost of approximately $4,000. It supports loads of up to eight tons. According to Benny Aronhalt, "I built it to last 100 years."

Benny Aronhalt's bridge is located about five miles south of Keyser, just east of where routes 50 and 972 split at New Creek.

Thanks to author and photographer Carl Feather for this photo and for introducing us to a representative of this new generation of West Virginia covered bridge builders. If you know of a contemporary covered bridge in West Virginia, please contact us at the GOLDENSEAL office.

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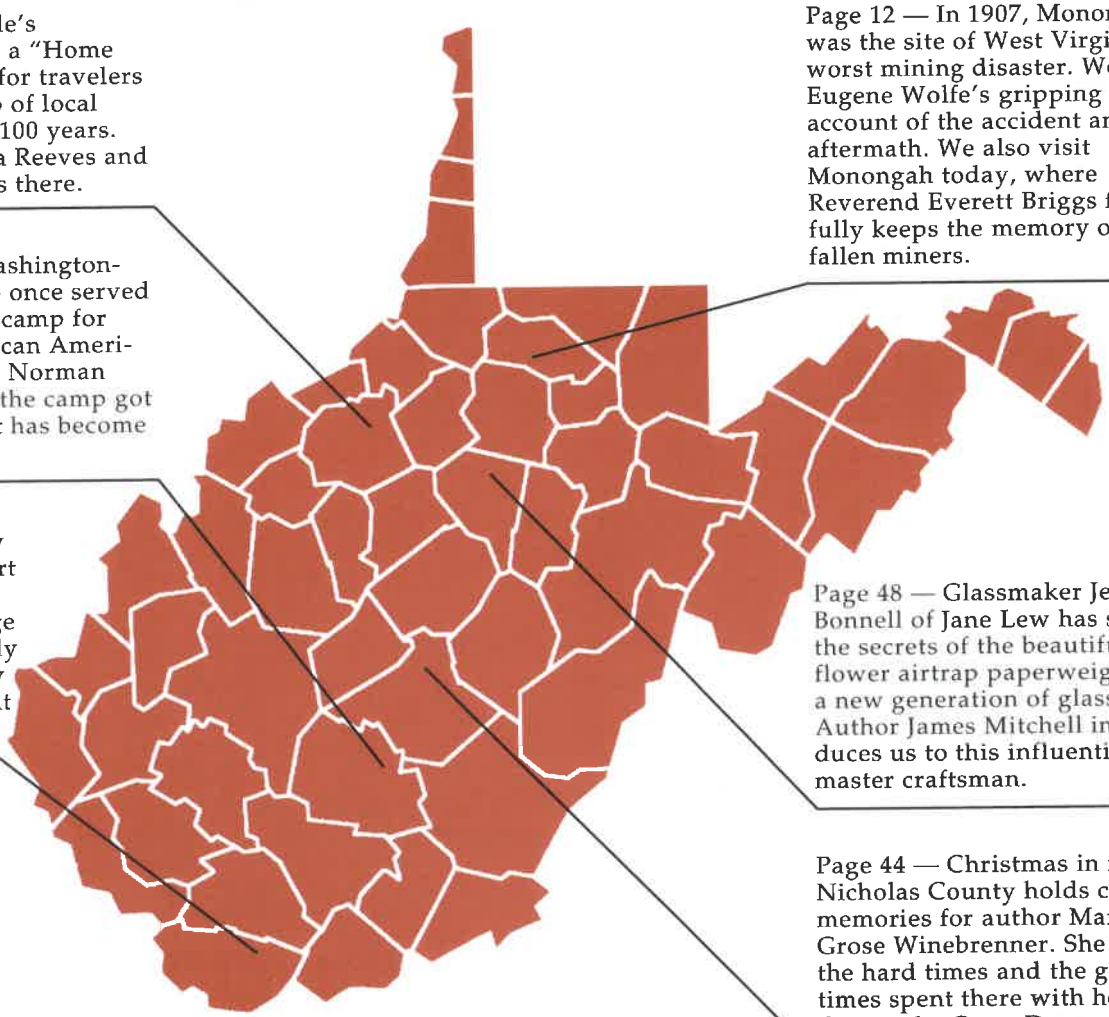
PERIODICALS

Inside Goldenseal

Page 36 — Harrisville's Whitehall Hotel was a "Home Away From Home" for travelers and a colorful group of local residents for nearly 100 years. Former owners Edna Reeves and Stella Britton take us there.

Page 56 — Camp Washington-Carver near Clifftop once served as a pioneering 4-H camp for West Virginia's African American citizens. Author Norman Jordan tells us how the camp got its start, and what it has become today.

Page 25 — The Gary No.9 works at Filbert proved to be a formidable challenge for coal miner Buddy French, who vividly recalls his first night in the mines.



Page 12 — In 1907, Monongah was the site of West Virginia's worst mining disaster. We revisit Eugene Wolfe's gripping 1993 account of the accident and its aftermath. We also visit Monongah today, where Reverend Everett Briggs faithfully keeps the memory of those fallen miners.

Page 48 — Glassmaker Jennings Bonnell of Jane Lew has shared the secrets of the beautiful five-flower airtrap paperweight with a new generation of glass artists. Author James Mitchell introduces us to this influential master craftsman.

Page 44 — Christmas in rural Nicholas County holds cherished memories for author Margaret Grose Winebrenner. She recounts the hard times and the good times spent there with her family during the Great Depression.

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