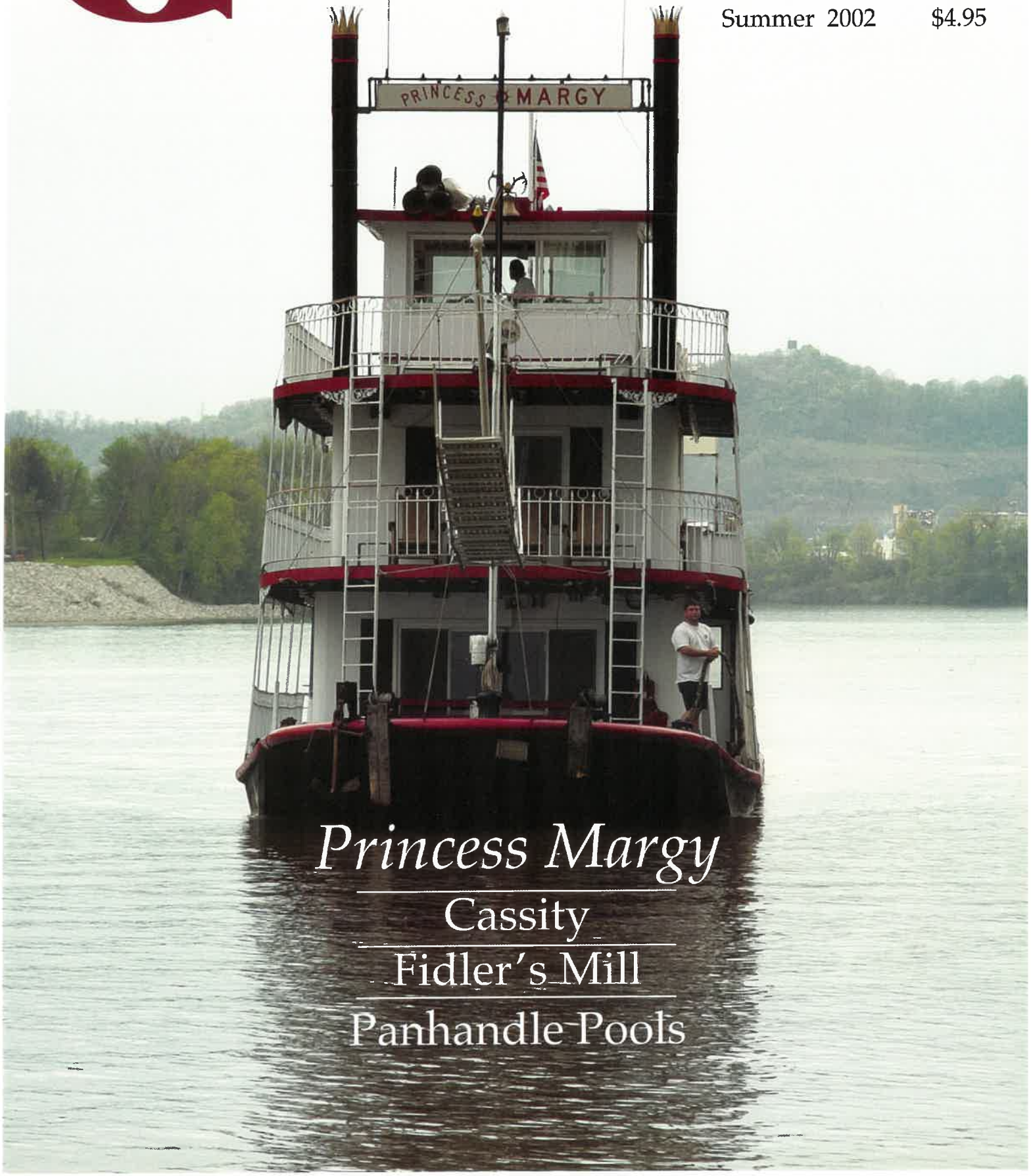
West Virginia Traditional Life
Goldenseal
Summer 2002 $4.95



Princess Margy

Cassity

Fidler's Mill

Panhandle Pools

From the Editor: It's In the Water

As time draws near for each issue of GOLDENSEAL to arrive in mailboxes, it pleases me when anxious readers inquire, "What's the next issue going to be about?" It's a sure sign that they're looking forward to their next magazine. When I tell them the answer — coal, coondogs, apples, trains, whatever — they usually seem fairly pleased, and maybe just a bit smug at having received some "inside info."

Well, the questions came up again this time around, and I was tongue-tied. It seemed to me that we had a good issue taking shape, but there was no obvious theme for the magazine, or so I thought at the time. Once designer Anne Strawn began to work her magic, however, the common element for this issue became quite apparent. Water. Starting with Michael Keller's powerful cover photograph of the *Princess Margy* sternwheeler, an aquatic theme flows through many of these stories.

Gordon Simmons put it in a nutshell [see "New Books Available"; page 67]. "Although West Virginia is undisputedly the Mountain State, we are also a state in which the history and lore of rivers figure prominently," Gordon writes in reference to some recent titles about West Virginia rivers. In the article, he goes on to review several new and worthy books about the New, Birch, Bluestone, Blackwater, and Mud rivers.

Our cover story about sternwheel captain Pete Grassie reveals the good times and challenges encountered by those who take on the "big water" of the Great Kanawha [see "Captain Pete Grassie and the *Princess Margy*," by Lisa Blake; page 10].

Fidler's Mill in Upshur County harnessed the power of the Little Kanawha River more than 180 years ago. The mill still serves as an anchor for the Arlington community, and efforts are underway to retrofit the old mill with the necessary hardware to use water-driven machinery there, once more [see "Fidler's Mill: Rediscovering an Upshur County Landmark," by Jeffery Harvey; page 18].

Katherine Jourdan's entertaining article about unusual and historic swimming pools in the Northern Panhandle begins by pointing out the dangers faced by young swimmers in the Ohio River, in the days before public swimming pools were common. Katherine goes on to point out how the community pool in Cameron, Marshall County, was designed not only as a recreation facility, but was also used as an emergency reservoir for local firefighters [see "Diving Into History: Pools of the Northern Panhandle"; page 24].

As I write these words, thousands of unfortunate people in southern West Virginia are digging out following the second devastating flood to hit them in less than a year. Our hearts go out to them, especially to the families who lost loved ones in this tragic disaster — one in which water played such a cruel role. Among the hardest hit areas are several towns that were featured in our stories about the southern coalfields in the Spring 2002 issue — Gary, Welch, Kimball, and Landgraff [see "Riding Route 52: The Old Coal Road," by Su Clausen-Wicker], as well as Coalwood [see "Historic Coalwood," by Stuart McGehee; Summer 2001].

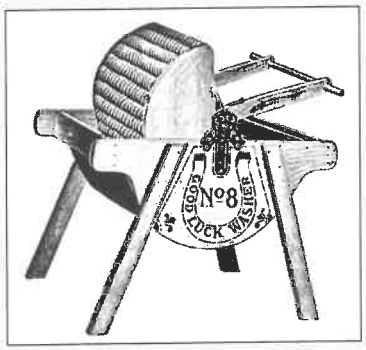
It's worth pointing out that the city of Williamson — and its world-famous Coal House — were spared serious damage thanks to their new flood wall and innovative flood gate system [see "'I Never Wanted to Live Anywhere Else': Wallace W. Farley of Williamson," by Robert Spence; Spring 2002]. Perhaps similar technological solutions can be found to address flood control problems in other communities around the state.

Understanding and celebrating life in West Virginia is what GOLDENSEAL is all about, and certainly appreciating our rivers — their beauty, their history, their potential for good or evil — is key to that understanding.

John Lilly

Volume 28, Number 2 **Goldenseal** Summer 2002

p. 10



p. 38

p. 44

On the cover: The *Princess Margy* sternwheeler on the Great Kanawha River near Dunbar. Photograph by Michael Keller. Our story begins on page 10.

2 Letters from Readers
5 GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes
6 Current Programs * Events * Publications

10 Captain Pete Grassie and the *Princess Margy*
By Lisa Blake

16 My First Boat
By Charles M. Morrison, Sr.

18 Fidler's Mill
Rediscovering an Upshur County Landmark
By Jeffery Harvey

24 Diving Into History
Pools of the Northern Panhandle
By Katherine M. Jourdan

30 Hollidays Cove Murder Mystery
By Mary Zwierzchowski

38 Life On the Road
Selling Hardware for Kane & Keyser
By Sharon Wilmoth Harsh

44 Back To the Future
Huntington's Heritage Farm Museum
By Jeanie Prince

50 A Home in Cassity
By Shirley Gower

56 Jake Currence of Cassity
Interview by Shirley Gower

58 Sweet Harmony in Pennsboro
By Torie Knight

64 Sandpaper
By Charles W. Caldwell

67 New Books Available
By Gordon Simmons

p. 24

p. 58

Published by the
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

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GOLDENSEAL (ISSN 0099-0159, USPS 013336) is published four times a year, in the spring, summer, fall, and winter. The magazine is distributed for $17 yearly. Manuscripts, photographs, and letters are welcome; return postage should accompany manuscripts and photographs.

All correspondence
should be addressed to:
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1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300

Phone (304)558-0220
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www.wvculture.org/goldenseal

Periodical postage paid at Charleston, West Virginia.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

The Division of Culture and History is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

Printed in West Virginia by
The Chapman Printing Company.

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Letters from Readers

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

Coal Heritage

March 22, 2002

Strange Creek, West Virginia
Editor:
I have been a subscriber of GOLDENSEAL for many years. Some of the issues are super ones, and the last one — Spring 2002 — is one of them. It's nice to read about the coal houses [see

The Williamson Coal House. Photograph by Michael Keller.

"Williamson's Coal House" and "The Other Coal House," by Belinda Anderson]. I have a small bear whittled out of coal that my daughter got me at Ripley long ago, and also a necklace.

Today is my birthday, and I'm 85. Spring is here, and we have over an inch of snow, which came last night. It's beautiful but cold, also. Keep up the good stories of the past.
Esther M. Adkins

Happy birthday, Mrs. Adkins. We wish you many more. Thanks for getting in touch with us. —ed.

March 13, 2002
Charleston, West Virginia
Via e-mail
Editor:
Golly, gee whiz. Just when I thought life was getting down to "narmil," here comes your magazine with the great article on Route 52 [see "Riding Route 52: The Old Coal Road," by Su Clauson-Wicker; Spring 2002]. Interestingly, I was reared just a few blocks from U.S. Route 52 near Charleston, South Carolina.

I was pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Welch from 1967-73, and enjoyed my association with those fine and interesting people. Welch was still prosperous in those days. The institutions were thriving, and the McDowell County National Bank was the place you could go to borrow money if you already had it, or held solid security firmly in hand. Once, I was told that I did not need a piano, and they would not lend me money to buy it!

In spite of some unpleasant aspects of life in the coalfields (dirt, smoke, and soot), I got to know many fine people. There were three hospitals then. International potluck suppers were sponsored by our church for all the "foreign" doctors who provided fine medical services. My friend Dr. John Cook tried to keep the modern Stevens Clinic going. Now it is slated to be a jail!

I could not read the accompanying Coal House article without remembering Frankie Hicks, the widow of Hassell T. Hicks, the building's architect. She was a dear friend and parishioner who was concerned that we let our daughter Anne, then 12, read *any*

book in the McDowell County Public Library, on whose board I served.

Thanks for this great magazine.
Lawton W. Posey

April 18, 2002
Centralia, Washington
Via e-mail
Editor:
Su Clauson-Wicker's interesting "Riding Route 52: The Old Coal Road" quotes historian Dr. Stuart McGehee in reference to the phrase "coal camp." He said, "We call them 'coal communities.' 'Camps' sounds pejorative."

We who grew up in these places in McDowell County call them coal camps with pride and without shame or apology. We have done so for as long as I can remember. I floated Dr. McGehee's quote on the Welch High School Web site, and no one who responded has ever heard of any reference to our old haunts as "coal communities."

That said, let me say I have enjoyed Dr. McGehee's articles over the years — in GOLDENSEAL and elsewhere.
Richard Ramella

Melvin Harris and Silas Green

March 20, 2002
Via e-mail
Editor:
I read Ross Ballard's story about Melvin Harris with interest [see "Doing Fine at 99: A Visit With Melvin Harris," by Ross Ballard II; Spring 2002]. What an enjoyable article! Mr. Harris has my best wishes and congratulations on a life well-lived.

The article briefly mentioned "Silas Green from New Orleans." I loved the Silas Green show and have looked unsuccessfully for memorabilia about his group for years. Silas Green from New Orleans was an African American traveling vaudeville show. I thought they were just great! They had a perfectly marvelous

Melvin Harris as a boy in McDowell County.

band, and they traveled by train. It was magical.

One summer morning, we would awaken to placards all over town, announcing their arrival. They dressed in bright, heavily ornamented marching-band costumes. When they arrived in town, they paraded up Main Street in St. Albans, accompanied by dozens of excited children.

My parents took me to their show several times. It was held in a tent in our town, and our party was usually the only white group there. What a show for the 1930's and '40's! Great showgirls, all very beautiful. It was the first time I ever saw "black lights," now common in nightclubs. I recall that the troupe sang and danced to "Singing in the Rain." When the lights went out abruptly, startling the audience, the girls' umbrellas and costumes all went to day-glo orange, green, and purple. It was a tremendous hit.

Good old Silas Green from New Orleans! What a great memory! If anyone has any information about the extent of their travels, or any poster I could copy or other souvenirs, I would be thrilled to hear from them.
Sinerely,
Cynthia Hamrick Scarlett

Thank you for a wonderful letter and a colorful description. If any of our readers have photographs, memorabilia, or other information about Silas Green and his entertaining tent show, please drop us a line here at the GOLDENSEAL office. We'll be happy to pass along the information. —ed.

Poling Store

March 17, 2002
Hagerstown, Maryland
Editor:
Thank you for publishing Newton's article about his father's country store [see "Growing Up in a Family Store," by Newton L. Poling; Spring 2002]. I'm sorry that he didn't live to see it in print, but he knew that it was coming in the spring issue. My children and I thank you for using it and for your plan to print other articles about country

Poling Store in Philippi, 1920.

stores. His being raised in a country store did much to make him the kind of dad and husband we all loved.

We have subscribed to GOLDENSEAL for many years because we enjoy the articles and also the pictures that you include. The pictures in our article were better than the originals.
Sincerely,
Virginia S. Poling

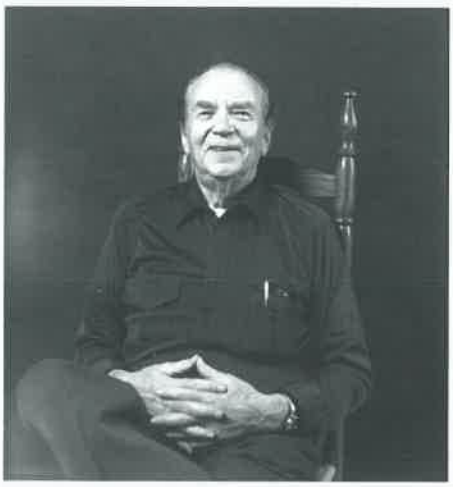
Buddy Starcher

March 20, 2002
Summersville, West Virginia
Editor:
On page eight of your Spring 2002 issue, I saw the article about the late Buddy Starcher [see "GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes"]. I personally knew Buddy when I was a small child. I remember my father got him a job in the coal mines in the mid-1930's, and he worked until he got enough money to begin his musical career. I believe he went to the state of Virginia.

The reason I'm writing this letter is because of the picture accompanying the article. I am sure that woman in the photo is one of my aunts — my mother's twin sister, Bert. She was with Buddy from about 1936 to 1940 or '41.

I know for sure she was with him in Portsmouth, Ohio, in January 1937. I was about eight years old at the time. My mother was concerned about her sister [because of the flood]. Although there was not electric power in the house, we had an old battery-operated radio. But the batteries was about exhausted, so Mom couldn't really keep up with the flood, though she found out some things.

Buddy used to visit at our house in 1935 or '36. My aunt Bert was a good singer and guitar player.
Sincerely,
Bill J. Johnson



Buddy Starcher. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Old-Time Dancing

March 25, 2002
Dallas, Texas
Via e-mail
Editor:
Thank you for the Spring 2002 photo and article about Henry Neylon, the 100-year-old flatfooter [see "Still Dancing at 100"]. At 55, I have been clogging here in Texas for almost 10 years. My husband worries that I am getting too old for such strenuous dancing, so I showed him your article! I plan to keep it in my clogging scrapbook for inspiration.
Cynthia Houck

March 26, 2002
Berkeley Springs, West Virginia
Via e-mail
Editor:
In the Spring 2002 issue on page 67 there is a caption for "old-time square dancing" [see "Vandalia Time!"]. It looks to me like that is Western square dancing. There are eight people in the square. In the old-time square dancing we did in Pocahontas County, there are only four to a square.

I started calling figures when I was 14 years old and still do from time to time. The Mormon Church in Hancock, Maryland, had me to call for their Harvest

Dancers at the 2001 Vandalia Gathering. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Festival several times. When we first started, the band had never played for this particular type of dance. I taught them some squares and got the music going. Everyone ended up dancing, ages five to 90, and the band stated that they had never seen anything like that in their life. There were five couples that were deaf and, at first, used a "signer" to learn. They never missed a step, and everyone had a good time.

I've always said that anyone who can't dance that old-time dance just didn't get off their backside.
Donald J. Sharp

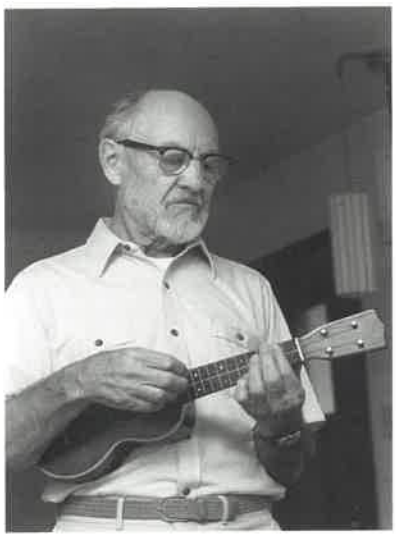
Thanks for those comments. For old-time dancing, it's hard to beat the West Virginia State Folk Festival in Glenville. Dances take place Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings in downtown Glenville on a large wooden dance floor, with live music and a variety of traditional callers. This year, the dates are June 20-22. I hope to see you there! —ed.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Film maker **Ellis Dungan** passed away at a retirement center in Bellaire, Ohio, on December 1, 2001. He was 92. Originally from Wheeling, Ellis moved to India and became internationally known as a movie producer, specializing in jungle adventure films. He relocated to Wheeling in the late 1950's, established his own production company, and made educational, promotional, and industrial films. His 1977 film, *For Liberty and Union,* is a historical drama about West Virginia statehood; his documentary movie, *Wheeling 1959 — Wheels of Progress,* considered a classic of the period, has recently been reissued on videotape. Ellis was the subject of a GOLDENSEAL story, "'Ready, Wheeling and Able': Movie Maker Ellis Dungan," by Barbara Diane Smik, which appeared in our Fall 1996 issue.

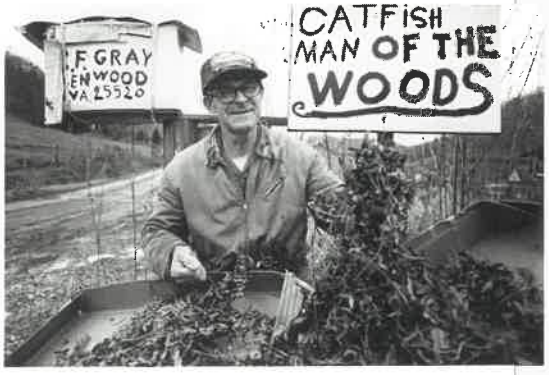
Ellis Dungan. Photographer unknown.

William Wallace Jones, better known to GOLDENSEAL readers and WWVA radio listeners as Silver Yodelin' Bill Jones, passed away on January 23, 2002, at 92 years of age. Born in Buffalo, New York, in May 1909, Bill moved to the Wheeling area with his parents six months later. He was an early entertainer on fledgling WWVA radio, first broadcasting there in 1927 — the year after the station signed on the air. Bill became a regular performer on the popular "WWVA Jamboree," and was considered the last living member of the original cast. After his radio career, Bill ran the Wheeling office of the Standard Register Company, and in 1960, formed his own business — W.W. Jones & Associates, a computer forms company. An article about him, "Silver Yodelin' Bill Jones," interview by Barbara Smik, appeared in the Winter 1991 issue of GOLDENSEAL.



Silver Yodelin' Bill Jones. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Clarence Frederick "Catfish" Gray of rural Mason County passed away on March 13, 2002. Catfish was known widely for his knowledge of herbs and herbal remedies, his rustic lifestyle, and his colorful personality. He appeared on national television, in numerous documentary films, and was featured in the GOLDENSEAL article, "Catfish: Portrait of an Herb Doctor," by Ted Green and Allen Bennett; July-September 1977. He was 84.



Catfish Gray. Photograph by Bob Drake.

Wager Bunner Shumaker of Fairmont was featured on the cover of our Summer 1993 issue, pictured at the altar with his new bride, the former Ernestine Tucker Shriver. They were married on May 1, 1993. The couple first courted during the early 1930's while Ernestine was a student nurse at Fairmont's Cook Hospital, but their romance was cut short by the school's strict rules prohibiting dating. Wager later moved to California where he worked as a compressor station operator, retiring in 1974. After a story about the hospital appeared in GOLDENSEAL [see "Young Nurses Long Ago; Fairmont's Cook Hospital Training School," by Raymond Alvarez; Winter 1992], the couple reunited, wed, and settled in Fairmont. Wager passed away on February 15, 2002, at age 90; he is survived by his wife Ernestine.

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.

Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike

"Voices of the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike" is a new audio series that tells the history of the famed trans-Appalachian road. The four-part series is based on more than 50 interviews and oral histories collected from families who lived along the turnpike, and from local historians. It describes centuries of use and development, ranging from the early days of the Indian trails, to the challenge of constructing a turnpike through the mountains in the early 1800's, through the Civil War and statehood, and into the 20th century.

The Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike linked the large plantations of Virginia with the frontier communities of western Virginia and, most importantly, to the Ohio River. The small towns and communities that dotted the route — Durbin, Huttonsville, Beverly, Buckhannon, Weston, Coxs Mills, and others — grew as a result of the road.

Producers Michael Kline and Carrie Nobel Kline, GOLDENSEAL contributors, were commissioned by the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike Alliance and the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation to create the recordings. The three-year project included more than 90 hours of interviews. The four parts are available as a set, or individually.

"Switchbacks and Wagon Tracks: Building the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike" tells of the decision to build the turnpike and provides details of life along the turnpike route prior to 1848.

"Holding Rugged Ground: The Civil War Along the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike" includes the Civil War and the birth of West Virginia.

"We'd All Be Millionaires If We Had It Now!: Reconstruction & Industrial Revolution Along the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike" describes West Virginia's early days as a state and early industrial development in the area including the logging boom, life in the logging camps, and the oil and gas boom.

"Model T's and Model Roads: The Bumpy Ride Into the Modern Era Along the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike" tells of the improvements made in the road to accommodate motor vehicles, the Great Depression, the Roosevelt era, and the New Deal programs.

The CD's sell for $15 each, or $50 for the set of four. The cassettes are $12 each, or $40 for the set of four. To purchase or for more information, write to Talking Across the Lines: Worldwide Conversations, P.O. Box 35, St. Mary's City, MD 20686; Web site www.folktalk.org, or call (301)737-7712.

West Virginia Day Celebrations

Activities around the state are planned to celebrate West Virginia's 139th birthday, which takes place officially on Thursday, June 20. The celebrations, however, begin the previous weekend and extend through the following weekend.

Kanawha State Forest offers a free West Virginia birthday concert at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 16, at the forest's swimming pool area. The concert will feature the Kanawha Valley Community Band under the direction of Lee McMillen. Those attending are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and a picnic meal. The event is sponsored by the Kanawha State Forest Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to making improvements in Kanawha State Forest. For information, call Shirley Switzer at (304)925-2771.

Blennerhassett Island in Parkersburg will celebrate West Virginia's birthday June 22-23. Activities include an antique engine show and arts and crafts. Hours are Saturday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday noon to 5 p.m. Birthday cake will be served at 2 p.m. on Sunday. For information and ticket prices, call (304)420-4800, or visit the Web site www.blennerhassett islandstatepark.com.

Canaan Valley Resort State Park will host a West Virginia birthday celebration on Saturday, June 22. The day will include a Civil War encampment and battle reenactment, West Virginia arts and

crafts, and square dancing. Hours are 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Admission is free. For information, call 1-800-CALL-WVA, or visit the Web site www.canaanresort.com.

Nellis Archives

The opening of the Nellis Archives and the rededication of the Nellis Community Church are scheduled for June 28 at 11 a.m. in Nellis.

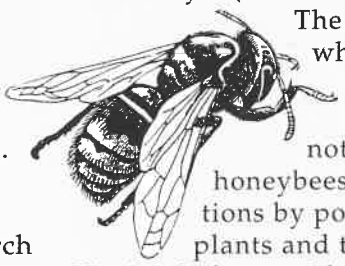
Nellis, Boone County, was a thriving coal camp built and operated by American Rolling Mill Company (ARMCO), a major Midwestern steel producer. It was the subject of a GOLDENSEAL story in Fall 1994 [see "Coal Camp: Remembering Life in Nellis," by Sylvia Kelemen Yost] and was featured on the cover of that issue.

In 1998, the Boone County Commission purchased the vacant Nellis Community Church and began making plans to restore the church. The renovated structure now houses the Nellis Archives and visitors' center. The visitors' center includes photographs, a register of all Nellis coal employees, coal company documents, and displays to help inform visitors about life in a coal community. For information, call (304)369-5175.

Alex and Evelyn Keleman in Nellis, 1930's. This photograph was featured on the cover of GOLDENSEAL's Fall 1994 issue.

Honeybee Named State Insect

The honeybee has been named the official state insect of West Virginia. It joins other West Virginia wildlife adopted as state symbols — the state bird (cardinal) in 1949, state animal (black bear) in 1973, state fish (brook trout) in 1973, and the state butterfly (monarch) in 1995.

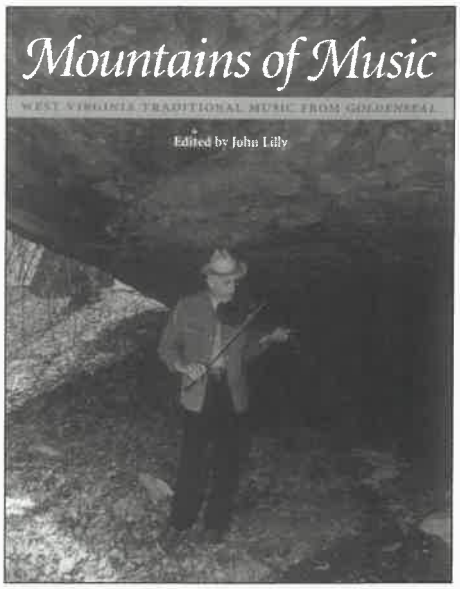


The resolution, which became effective March 7, noted the honeybees' contributions by pollinating plants and trees in West Virginia's forest-rich hills. It also recognized the expansion of the state's honey industry. In 2001, West Virginia produced approximately 1.2 million pounds of honey, with more than 1,300 beekeepers and 20 beekeeping organizations statewide.

The Department of Agriculture has two apiarists on staff; a beekeeping information packet is available upon request. For more information, call (304)558-2212.

African American Cultural Events

Family and descendants of Booker T. Washington will gather for a reunion June 20-23, at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Charleston. The reunion will include a public reception at the hotel at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, June 21. Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) was one of America's foremost black educators during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and lived in Malden, Kanawha County, for much of his



Mountains of Music: West Virginia Traditional Music from GOLDENSEAL gathers 25 years of stories about our state's rich musical heritage into one impressive volume.

Mountains of Music is the definitive title concerning this rare and beautiful music — and the fine people and mountain culture from which it comes.

The book is available from the GOLDENSEAL office for $21.95, plus $2 shipping per book; West Virginia residents please add 6% sales tax (total $25.26 per book including tax and shipping).

Add *Mountains of Music* to your book collection today!

I enclose $____ for____ copies of *Mountains of Music.*

-or-

Charge my

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Please make check or money order payable to GOLDENSEAL. Send to:

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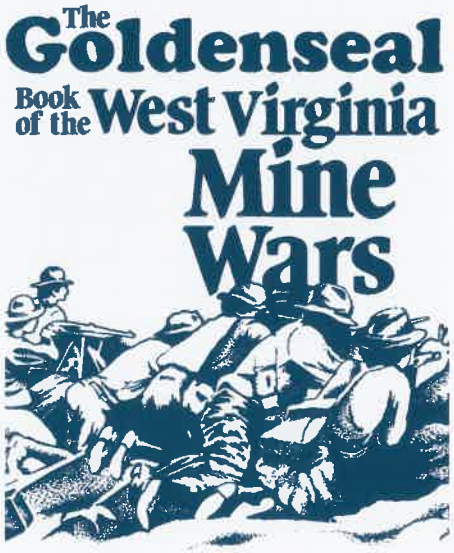

The West Virginia Mine Wars were a formative experience in our state's history and a landmark event in the history of American labor. GOLDENSEAL has published some of the best articles ever written on this subject. In 1991, former editor Ken Sullivan worked with Pictorial Histories Publishing Company to produce this compilation of 17 articles, including dozens of historic photos.

Now in its fourth printing, the book is revised and features new updated information. The large-format, 109-page paper bound book sells for $10.95 plus $2 per copy postage and handling. West Virgina residents please add 6% state tax (total $13.61 per book including tax and shipping).

I enclose $ ____ for ____ copies of *The Goldenseal Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars.*

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Charge my

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life [see "Visiting Historic Malden," by Colleen Anderson; Fall 2001].

The first Washington family reunion was held in Tuskegee, Alabama, in 1996. In recent years, the reunions have been held at various locations, following Washington's life and commemorating key events in his career. Participants at this year's reunion will walk from Charleston to Malden and will be given a tour of Malden. For information on the reunion, call Dave Barnett at (713)403-3039.

The annual African American Cultural and Heritage Festival will be held August 16-18, in several Jefferson County locations. Activities will include a Friday evening banquet, a Saturday parade and music festival, and Sunday religious services. For information and ticket prices, call Gladi Davenport at (304)263-1917, or e-mail davenportgl@msn.com.

A self-guided tour of Charles Town's African American historic sites is outlined in a free brochure titled "Black History Tour of Charles Town, West Virginia." The brochure includes an easy-to-follow map, directing visitors to 24 sites that have played major roles in the African American history of Charles Town, along with descriptions of the sites.

To obtain a copy of the brochure, write to the Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society, Inc., P.O. Box 569, Ranson, WV 25438, or call James Taylor at (304)725-7242.

Dr. Ancella R. Bickley was presented a History Hero award on February 28, one of 32 such awards given as part of the annual History Day activities at the Cultural Center. Ancella, a regular GOLDENSEAL contributor, was cited for her contributions in researching, interpreting, and preserving West Virginia history and heritage, particularly relating to the African American experience in our state. Congratulations, Ancella!

History Heroes are individuals nominated by historical societies

Dr. Ancella Bickley. Photograph by Michael Keller.

and other local history groups and are recognized for their years of dedication or significant contributions to preserving West Virginia history. For more information, call Fred Armstrong at (304)558-0230.

Hall of Fame

The West Virginia Country Music Hall of Fame near Berkeley Springs invites individuals to participate in the selection of this year's inductees. Voting began May 15 and concludes August 15. Nominations for the Living Category include Kathy Mattea, Doc Williams, Chickie Williams, Wilma Lee Cooper, and Brad Paisley. The Deceased Category includes Lee Moore, Buddy Starcher, Stoney Cooper, Sammy Moss, Paul Grapes, Gary Orto, Gus Thomas, Bud Armel, Johnny "T" Tripplett, and Glen Combs. The Disc Jockey Category nominations include Lee Moore, Gus

Thomas, Virgil Ruppenthal, Buddy Allen, and Craven Edwards.

Votes may be put in writing and mailed to Troubadour Lounge, Attention: Hall of Fame, Rt. 2 Box 2910, Berkeley Springs, WV 25411. The induction ceremony will take place on Sunday, September 1, as part of the annual Patsy Cline tribute.

The Hall of Fame was founded by Joltin' Jim McCoy [see "Joltin' Jim McCoy: Morgan County's Country Music Troubadour," by John Douglas; Spring 2002]. Jim is the owner and operator of the Troubadour Lounge. For information about the West Virginia Country Music Hall of Fame, call Jim McCoy at (304)258-9381, or visit the Web site www.Troubadourlounge.com.

Byrd Fiddles

Senator Robert C. Byrd's unique and characteristic fiddling has been preserved at the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center, in Washington, D.C. In the mid-1970's, Alan Jabbour, former Folklife Center director, recorded more than seven hours of Byrd's traditional fiddle music for the center's Archive of Folk Culture. James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress, presented Senator Byrd with new cassette copies of the original recordings in a ceremony last July.

Senator Robert C. Byrd, 1977. Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer, courtesy of the Library of Congress, American Folklife Center.

The recordings are available to visitors at the Library of Congress, who may listen to Senator Byrd's recordings on site. No appointment is necessary. For information about the recordings, write to the American Folklife Center, 101 Independence Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20540-4610; phone (202)707-5510, or e-mail folklife@loc.gov.

Summer Fun

Summersville's Music Park is the location of Music in the Mountains, four days of bluegrass and country music June 27-30. Among the 44 nationally recognized bands scheduled to appear are West Virginia groups the Everett Lilly Band, Allegheny Outback, and the Scott Brannon Band. Performances begin at 9 a.m. each day, with continuous music throughout the day, ending about midnight. This is the 22nd year of the event, which draws thousands of music fans from across the United States and several other countries. The event will take place rain or shine. For tickets or more information, call Edgar Kitchen at (304)872-3145.

The Appalachian String Band Music Festival will take place July 31-August 4 at Camp Washington-Carver, located at Clifftop in Fayette County [see "'Clifftop': Appalachian String Band Music Festival," by Danny Williams; Summer 1999]. Activities include contests, concerts, workshops, square dances, a hymn-sing, and nonstop jam sessions. Ninety-three-year-old fiddler Melvin Wine will be featured in Saturday's masters showcase [see "Melvin Wine," by Susan Leffler; Summer 1991].

For admission prices or other information, call Pat Cowdery at (304)558-0220 ext. 130, or e-mail pat.cowdery@wvculture.org. Information is also available at the Web site www.wvculture.org/stringband.

The preceding weekend, Camp Washington-Carver will host Balance and Spin, an all-volunteer dance weekend, scheduled July 26-29. There is an admission fee. For information, call Laura Davis at (304)574-1117, or e-mail llama@mountain.net.

The 6th annual Living History Days will be held August 3-4 on the grounds of the antique log house in Claysville, Mineral County. Demonstrations of heritage crafts include weaving, spinning, quilting, basketmaking, chair caning, beekeeping, and blacksmithing. The event also includes local musicians, a Civil War encampment, and an 1860's-style Sunday sermon at the historic Claysville church. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days, with free admission and parking. For information, call Linda Roleff at (304)788-5129.

Traveling the country roads of home — with a subscription to —
GOLDENSEAL
see page 72.

By Lisa Blake

Photographs by Michael Keller

Captain Pete Grassie and the *Princess Margy*

On a recent, crisp, October day, I had the pleasure of cruising the Kanawha River with Captain Pete Grassie aboard the *Princess Margy* sternwheeler. I had looked forward to this adventure with "Uncle Pete," as I have known him all my life, but the chilly wind and rain circled about us, and we were almost forced to cancel our journey up the river. However, to my delight, the wind subsided, and the sun made its appearance once again, allowing us to begin our round-trip trek between Dunbar and Charleston. Pete took his place in the captain's chair, and I began to think about his remarkable life.

Pete Grassie was born on November 8, 1920, near Pittsburgh, the third of six children. His father William S. Grassie was from Aberdeen, Scotland, and his mother Alice Elizabeth Kurtz was of German descent. Pete remembers moving to Charleston as a young boy. He came to Charleston with his mother, brothers, and sisters on the train, and his father came later in the family's truck. When Pete was 10, the family moved to Dunbar.

William Grassie owned a greenhouse in Dunbar named Kanawha Gardens. Pete and his brother Bill worked there five days a week after school, and 10 hours a day on Saturdays and Sundays. Pete left school after the ninth grade and went to work for his father full time. According to Pete, his pay was "three meals a day and a movie ticket once in a while".

Pete cherished his days off — every other Sunday — and normally spent that time swimming in the Kanawha River at the end of 22nd Street. Pete recalls that there was an old tree stump sticking out of the water a short distance from the bank. When a youngster could swim out and around that stump, they were considered to be part of the group. Pete remembers one time when he swung out over the river on a rope swing that he and his

The *Princess Margy* sternwheeler on the Great Kanawha River near Dunbar.

friends had made, and dropped into the river just as his father walked up. William didn't know that Pete could swim, and he thought that his son had fallen in and was about to drown. When William realized that Pete could swim and was doing fine, he just shook his head and walked back toward the house.

A good deal of Pete's free time during his early years was spent playing childhood games and getting into mischief with his friends. Pete tells one story about a neighborhood lady who was not too fond of the children playing around her corner, and called the police to come and get them. The policeman tried to scare the boys and told them that he was going to put them in the back of the police car. Pete chuckles as he tells me, "The first boy in opened up the door on the other side of the car and got out as the officer was putting in the next boy. Pretty soon, the officer realized that there were too many of us to deal with and let us go. We just picked another corner to play on after that."

Pete didn't have a bicycle as a boy, so he decided to build his own. He gathered parts from junk bicycles and from wherever he could find them. After a year, he finally had enough parts to assemble his

Captain Pete Grassie on board the *Princess Margy*.

Pete Grassie at age three in Charleston, already wearing a sailor's suit.

first bike, which Pete says was quite "rinky-dink." He got it all together, but was missing a front tire, which his father supplied. When his father saw the value of a bicycle — such as Pete being able to run errands more quickly — he bought Pete's sister a bike. His mother then bought Pete's brother a bike, as well. Poor Pete still had his dilapidated, homemade bike, but he will tell you that his was the fastest one on the block.

On his 14th birthday, Pete got his driver's license, and at age 15, he began to sell his father's fruits, vegetables, and flowers to local stores and fruit stands. At 18, he left home and worked several odd jobs, including one for a local machinist. He left for the Navy at age 20, and spent 41 months aboard the USS *Salem*.

Pete gained his sea legs in the Navy during World War II aboard the USS *Salem*. During his 41 months of service, he sailed more than 125,000 miles.

After the war, Pete returned to Dunbar and went to work for the same machinist he had worked for before joining the Navy. Pete soon met Margaret Inge, the bookkeeper at the business. They fell in love and were married in May 1946. Pete and Margaret settled in Dunbar. Pete recalls, "The first year we were married, we lived in about seven or eight places in Dunbar. People probably thought we were trying to dodge paying the rent." The birth of their first daughter Mary was followed by the birth of daughter Alice a few years later.

At about this time, Pete's father came to him and his brother and asked them if they knew how to weld. They both said no. William told them that he would buy a welding machine if they would learn how to weld so that they could get into the steel truss business, and build buildings. Pete soon learned how to weld and went into the fabricating business with another man in 1954. Pete says he learned a tremendous amount and eventually formed his own business on Ohio Avenue in Dunbar called Grassie Iron Works.

While his business was beginning to grow, Pete taught a sheet metal class at Stonewall Jackson High School from 1955 to 1957. Pete says he enjoyed teaching, but left to invest his time into starting his own business. Part of Pete's business involved making tractor parts for Gravely Tractors in Dunbar. [See "Ben Gravely's Garden Tractor," by John Marra; Summer 1997.]

In 1975, one of Pete's neighbors built a sternwheeler from an old hull he had located. Pete got to ride in it, enjoyed it quite a bit, and became interested in boats and river life. He started looking for a hull, but could not find anything to buy. The neighbor suggested that Pete just build his own hull and start from there. Pete told him that he didn't know how to build a boat, to which the neighbor responded, "There's only one way to find out how." This neighbor, it turns out, was Pete Denny, the owner of the famous *P.A. Denny* sternwheeler. Denny ended up teaching Pete many things about sternwheelers and river life.

"I always asked two engineers. If they didn't come up with the same answer, I would go with the one that was the easiest to do."

Pete started crawling in and out of boats in the area, looking at hulls and engine rooms. He decided that he would give it a try, and started building the boat on a vacant lot at Grassie Iron Works. If he ran into something that he wasn't sure about, he would ask an engineer. Pete says, "I always asked two engineers. If they didn't come up with the same answer, I would go with the one that was the easiest to do."

Pete patterned his running gear

Back home in Dunbar, Pete met and married the former Margaret Inge. The pair are seen here with daughters Alice, at left, and Mary in 1952.

after the *P.A. Denny*, but planned for his boat to be about two-thirds the size of the *P.A. Denny*. Pete created all of the plans for his boat, most of them just scratchy drawings on slips of paper because, he says, "I could see it all in my mind."

After 25 years of making decorative wrought-iron railing and tractor parts, Pete decided to retire and closed his business. Pete says, "I had nothing to sell but me, so I just closed her up."

Pete now had more free time and continued to work on his sternwheeler until 1980. He named it the *Princess Margy* after his wife Margaret. The *Princess Margy* is 81 feet long and 21 feet wide, with three decks, and is painted an inviting white and red. It is fully equipped with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a living room, kitchen, and washer and dryer.

When it was finished, house movers hauled the boat from Grassie Iron Works, across the Patrick Street bridge, to the riverbank at South Charleston. There, it was put in the water and floated to Dunbar. Pete remembers the excitement of seeing it hit the water for the first time. "It slid into the water and did just what it was supposed to do," he reminisces, proudly.

Pete participated in the Charleston Sternwheel Regatta for the first time as a boat owner in 1980. He immediately began spending his summers traveling from one regatta to another, living on the river. He has attended regattas in Ohio, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, but Pete says that the Charleston Regatta is always the biggest and best river festival he has attended. Pete is a member of the Great Kanawha River Navy, an organization that once ran the Charleston Sternwheel Regatta and took care of river activities and clean-up projects for the river.

The *Princess Margy* has had her share of heartache, however. In 1988, the boat was tied to a barge, which began to sink. Pete ran out the door of his home in time to see his boat sink midway to the second deck. When he was not able to get the *Princess Margy* raised immediately, the river rose, causing water to go into the pilothouse, almost to the very top of the boat.

The boat sank again exactly 10 years later. This time, though, they were able to raise the boat quickly, and the water didn't get quite as high into the boat. Pete, always optimistic, says, "There has been one good thing with [the sinkings]. Every time we've had to restore it,

A Lotta Regatta

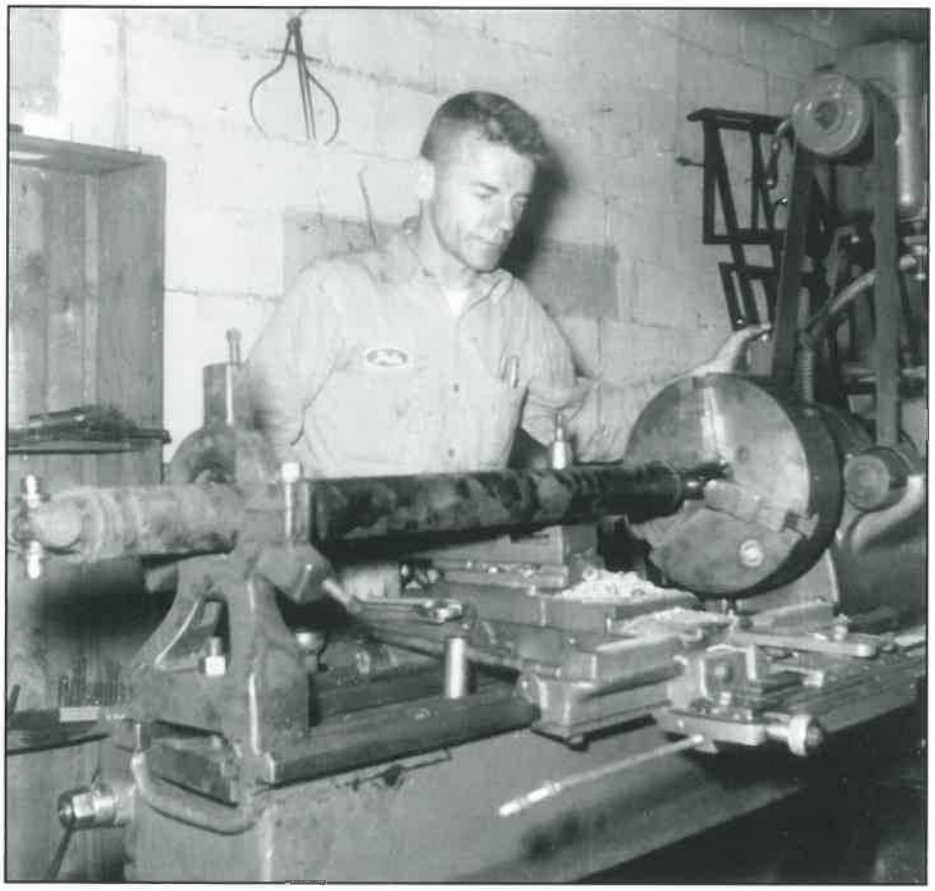
Sternwheelers by the score will gather on the Kanawha River this summer as the cities of St. Albans and Charleston hold their annual regattas.

St. Albans' Riverfest will be held July 4-7, with much of the action taking place near Roadside Park, located across from the St. Albans mall, between Route 60 and the Kanawha River. Organizers expect approximately 40 paddlewheel boats to participate, with races and other river activities planned throughout the four-day event. The American Sternwheel Association will hold its annual summer meeting in St. Albans on Saturday, July 6.

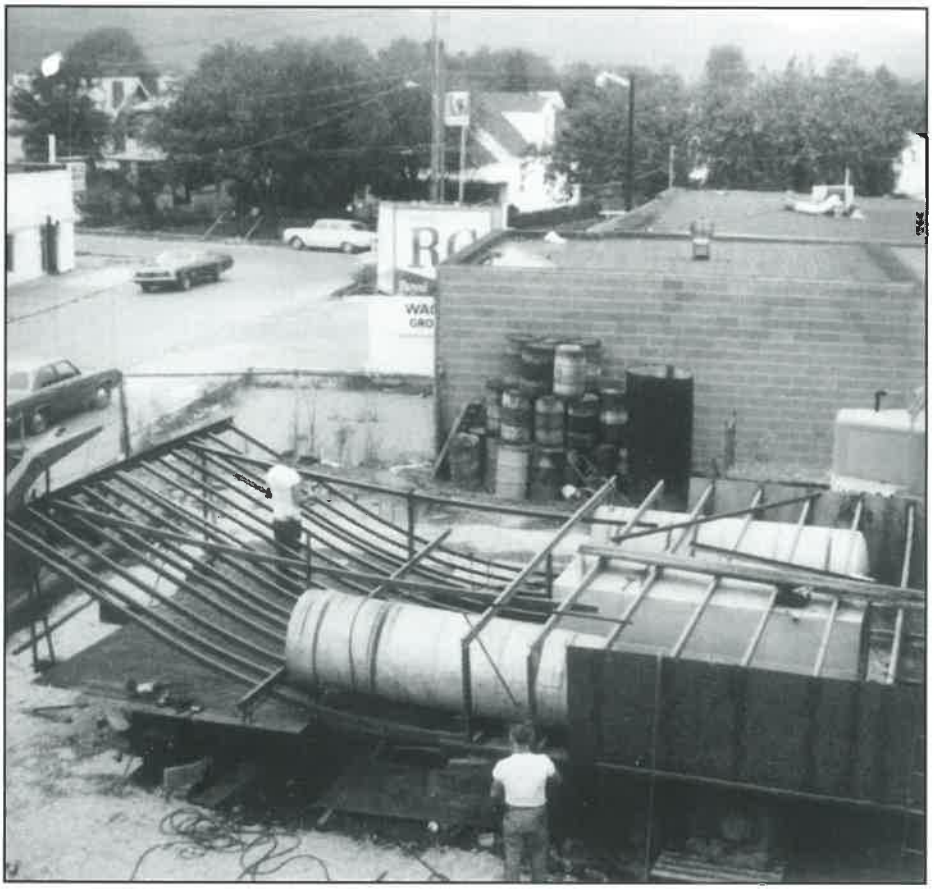
Riverfest also offers a range of land-based attractions such as a parade, craft fair, beauty pageant, fireworks, kids' activities, and live entertainment. For more information, call St. Albans City Hall at (304)727-2971, or check the Web site www.saintalbansriverfest.com.

Charleston's Sternwheel Regatta is considered one of the largest events of its kind in the region. The 2002 Sternwheel Regatta will take place August 29-September 2, filling the Kanawha River and downtown Charleston with boats, boat lovers, and a full schedule of activities.

Highlights this year will include the Grand Feature Parade on Saturday morning, the popular "Anything That Floats" race on Sunday afternoon, and a free concert by the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra followed by fireworks on Sunday evening. For a complete schedule or for more information, call Regatta President Sharon King at (304)343-5152, e-mail kingzorio @charter.net, or see Web site www.sternwheelregatta.com.



Left: Pete at a lathe in Grassie Iron Works on Ohio Street in Dunbar, working on a drive shaft. The business also produced decorative wrought-iron railings, as well as tractor parts for the nearby Gravely Tractor company. Date unknown.



Below: Building the hull of the ***Princess Margy*** at Grassie Iron Works during the late 1970's. The boat was launched in 1979.

we came out with a better boat." The boat is now roped to pilings on the riverbank, which allows the moorings to slide up and down with the flow of the water.

Pete says that life on the river isn't always easy. If the water is rough, a boat can be very vulnerable. You have to do what the river wants, at times, even if that means having to circle around in the water. Pete remembers one time when he was on the Ohio River when it was at flood stage. Debris in the water plugged up the heat exchanger and blew out the engine. They floated 10 miles down the river with the rough flood waters and hit the bank several times, unable to get a line on anything to tie on to. Finally, they saw a large, dead tree and were able to get a line on it from the stern of the boat. The bow of the boat, however, swung around in the swift water and dislodged the tree, and the boat continued down the rampant river, tugging the dead tree behind it. The men were eventually able to get the boat tied off and waited for the waters to calm. They called a friend and arranged to be towed to Louisville where they stayed and repaired the engine.

Pete has made many, many river friends over the years. These friends are more like family than friends. One of his friends recently made a side-wheeler boat and named it the *Cap'n Pete* in his honor. Pete says that "river rats" are a close-knit group of people who are always ready and willing to lend a hand to another boater in trouble.

In the late 1950's, my maternal grandparents Paul and Gretchen Sweeney became best friends with Pete and Margaret Grassie through

The *Princess Margy* is fitted with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a living room, kitchen, and washer and dryer. Pete is shown here, relaxing in the boat's living room with daughter Alice and her nephew Shawn Bailey. Alice Grassie is now the boat's owner, and Shawn is the pilot.

square dancing. Their children were like siblings to one another, and still have close ties today, almost 50 years later.

Pete says that he has seen many changes in Dunbar over the years. He says there are not that many more people, but there are many more houses. When he first moved to Dunbar, there were plenty of vacant lots where people had small gardens. Now, he says, there isn't a vacant lot anywhere. Pete guesses that more cars go by the intersection at 10th Street in five minutes these days than used to go by all day long when he was a boy.

Last year, Pete decided to sell the *Princess Margy* to his daughter Alice. She and her nephew Shawn Bailey, a licensed riverboat pilot, are keeping the boat seaworthy and keeping the vessel in the Grassie family. Pete still goes out on the boat every two to three weeks and attends the local regattas in Charleston and St. Albans.

His philosophy on life is simple: "Do the best you can with what you've got." Margaret Grassie recently passed away, but Pete is close with his children and their families. Alice Grassie says that she has learned many values from her father, such as respect, honesty, fairness, and the value of money. Pete's daughter Mary says that her father has taught her to accept each person for who they are, regardless of their race or physical condition. He always told her that you need to look at others as you would want them to look at you.

I can only agree with Alice and Mary. Uncle Pete has been an inspiration to me and a big part of my life ever since I can remember. The next time you go to the Charleston Sternwheel Regatta or the St. Albans Riverfest, look for the *Princess Margy*. For many years, a very special man, my Uncle Pete, has stood behind her wheel.

LISA BLAKE is a native of Kanawha County and a student at West Virginia State College, where she is completing a degree in elementary education. She wrote this story as a student project. It is her first published article.

A powerful and seaworthy vessel, the *Princess Margy* is strictly a pleasure craft for the Grassie family and their friends. It is seen here kicking up water during a recent outing.

My First Boat

By Charles M. Morrison, Sr.

I was the youngest of nine children who grew up on a small 27-acre farm near French Creek, Upshur County. We were poorer than church mice, but looking back, I would not have had it any other way. We had good times and bad times, but always savored the good, clean fun we had. As kids, we

Charles Morrison as a teenager in about 1961, around the time of his experiences piloting a flat-bottom boat on French Creek.

learned to entertain ourselves with playing tag, hide and seek, and fishing. We also had lots of chores that had to be done on the farm. It always seemed like there was something to do to keep us out of trouble.

When I was about 15 years old, all of my older brothers and sisters had left home, and the chores fell to my Dad and me. I recall the time that I went for a walk to the back end of the farm. There had been a lot of rain, and the French Creek stream had risen up over the banks. Just across the creek was a small laurel patch, and my eyes spotted something lodged in it that was never there before. To my surprise, it appeared to be a homemade flat-bottom boat. It was made from a 2" x 8" oak lumber and was approximately 12-feet long, counting the handles on each end. The boat was approximately four-feet in width with a sheet of tin nailed to the bottom that extended up the sloped back toward the handles.

I spent many hours rowing up and downstream when I had some spare time. It gave me hours of simple pleasure and fun.

After the French Creek high waters went down, I moved the boat into the water and drifted it downstream. Before moving the boat, I took an old board and made myself a paddle by roughly hand-sawing each side to the right shape and size. I must say, it didn't look the best, but it did the job.

I immediately saw that I needed to nail some boards close to the bottom of the boat to keep the tin from pulling loose. Then I found another board and nailed me a seat on the top. My next step was to attach a small chain to the front so that I could lock the boat up to make sure that it wouldn't drift away when heavy rains would come.

I spent many hours rowing up and downstream when I had some spare time. It gave me hours of simple pleasure and fun. In the fall and early winter, it worked perfectly for setting traps to catch muskrats, minks, and raccoons. You could set traps and leave very little scent, which meant that you caught more, plus it was easy to retrieve the animals and reset the traps. I would use the money from trapping to buy my schoolbooks, yearbooks, school shirts, and pants. It made me appreciate things much more when I bought them myself, and it taught me responsibility.

Sometimes I would have to take tar and patch the holes in the bottom of the boat to keep her seaworthy. When I would move the boat from downstream to an upstream location, several places were shallow, and it would drag on the rocks, damaging the bottom. I finally would wait until a hard rain came and the waters were up to move the boat so that it would not drag.

Two incidents involving the boat stick out in my mind. First of all was when a couple of boys slipped in and stole my boat. They took the screw loose that fastened the chain to the boat, and took it. I hadn't figured on that. They took it a half-mile downstream. Within a week, I located it thanks to a tip from some of my friends. Now to me, stealing my boat meant the same thing as war!

So on the old school bus, I cornered the two lads about stealing my boat. At first they denied it, but I told them where they had taken it and that others had squealed on them. I told them to either have it delivered back within one week, or they were going to get a thrashing. They finally admitted to swiping

French Creek, Upshur County, near the spot where Charles Morrison kept his makeshift boat.

it, and said they would have to haul it back in a truck. I informed them, "You took it, and it's your problem on how to get it back." I didn't care if they had to hand-carry it back. They had swiped it when the waters were up high after a hard rain and floated it the majority of the way. By now, the water had receded, and it would be almost impossible to bring it back the same way. But, if it was not back within a week, I was going to give them a thumping. I was built about like a beanpole, but I meant business when it came to my boat!

Well, needless to say, my boat arrived back to where I kept it tied within a week. I was good enough to invite them to come and use it if they ever wanted, but to let me know, and no more stealing! No one tried to steal it after that. I got a good lock and burred the threads on the bolt so it couldn't be unscrewed.

The second incident was sort of funny and embarrassing to me. I had been rowing and floating around when my older sister and her daughter came walking along the gravel road close to the creek. Since I felt myself to be a pretty good captain and navigator by this time, I asked my sister if she wanted me to ferry them across to our farm meadow. It would save them from walking quite a distance. My sister Windy and her daughter Susie took me up on my offer.

I pulled the boat up to the bank and told them to hop in. They got into the boat and moved toward the center. Everything was going along fine. As I backed the boat up and swung it around to cross the stream, they started moving toward the front of the boat to get off. Big mistake. One corner began to sink down and fill the boat with water. My sister started hollering, and her daughter was nigh screaming. Luckily, the water was only about waist deep. I grabbed Susie and carried her to the bank and then helped my sister to dry land. I finally pulled the boat to the bank and began to bail and dip the water out. Finally, she was seaworthy again, my sister and her daughter were safe and dry, and I eventually got over the injury to my pride.

I found out about two years later that my flat-bottom boat was nothing more than a molasses pan in which the raw juice from crushed cane stalk was kept until it was placed in a pan to boil it down into molasses. It had drifted about two-and-a-half miles downstream from my cousin Lewie Jeffery's farm.

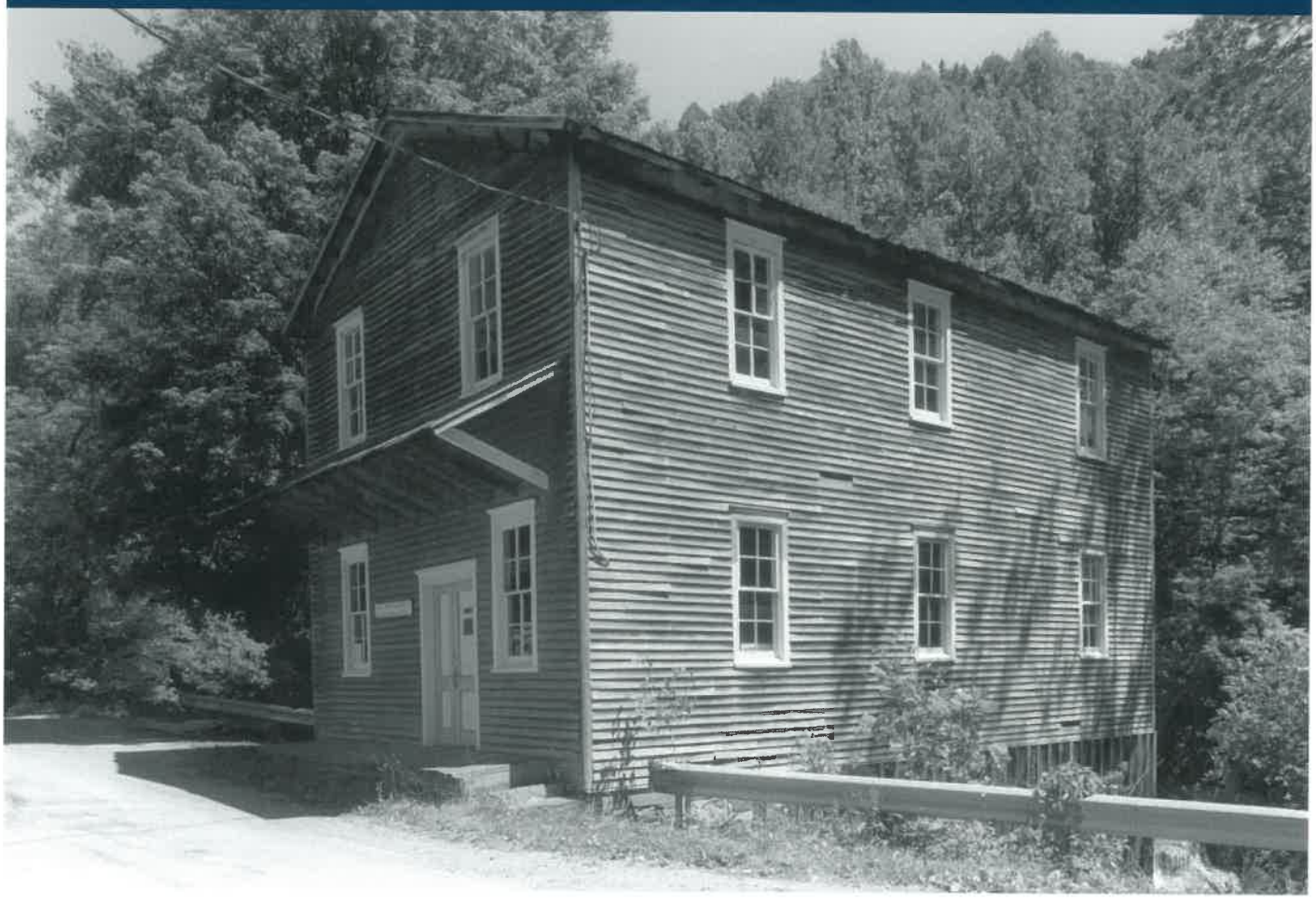
Funny, but I never thought about giving that old boat a name. Guess if I would have given her a name it would have been the "French Creek Queen." The old boat sure gave me a lot of good memories, and I had lots of fun with her. After I left home, I lost track of the old molasses-pan boat, but I think one of my other sisters' kids used it. Wherever it went, I hope that someone else got as much fun and pleasure from it as I did when I was a lad.

CHARLES M. MORRISON, SR., is a retired district office supervisor for the West Virginia Division of Highways. A native and resident of French Creek, he is a veteran of Vietnam, served in Army intelligence, and worked for the FBI. This is Charles' first published article.

Fidler's Mill

Rediscovering an Upshur County Landmark

By Jeffery Harvey



Fidler's Mill today. The mill has been a landmark in rural Upshur County for more than 180 years. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Fidler's Mill was the hub of community life in Arlington, Upshur County, for as long as anyone can remember. First built by Daniel Peck in 1821, the mill eventually became a community building, an economic center, a social hall, and the primary visual attraction of the area.

The original mill was a small structure built on four posts along the Little Kanawha River. The mill was then purchased by William Fidler in the 1840's along with the adjacent 200-acre farm, and it remained in the Fidler family for most of the next 140 years. William, using slave labor, enlarged the mill and built a dam a short distance upstream. A wooden mill race powered a saw mill, and a 20-foot overshot wheel was used to grind grain.

For the next century, farmers from Arlington, Rock Cave, French Creek, Gaines, and elsewhere would bring their corn and wheat to Fidler's Mill to be ground into flour, meal, buckwheat, and animal feed. They would gather at the mill, trading tales and socializing, while the Fidlers ground their lot.

Margaret Fidler Demastes, daughter of former mill operator Russell Fidler, still lives in nearby French Creek. She recalls that this grinding and visiting would take so long that sometimes her father would not get home until six or seven in the evening.

According to Margaret, grinding was an interesting and complicated process. "The grain or corn was dumped into a large wooden hopper," she explains, "then fell into the stone burrs for the grinding process. From there, it would run down to the basement through wooden shoots, then back up through more shoots to a higher level where the sifting was done. It would go through the sifting process through the sifting machine. They used silk from China to sift the flour or corn meal on that machine. Then, from there, it would go down through more shoots and into bags on the main floor as the finished product."

The mill was used for more than just grinding. In 1905, Hudson Fidler purchased the mill from E.G. Wilson, who owned the mill briefly during the early 1900's and had added a second story to the structure. Hudson, who was Margaret's grandfather, installed carding and picking machinery on the second floor to process wool gathered from local sheep.

According to Margaret, the wool was placed on a conveyor belt, then fell onto a large wooden wheel fitted with metal spikes. These spikes picked the wool apart. The newly picked, very soft wool was then blown out the other side of the wheel and onto the floor. The workers then placed the picked wool onto another conveyor belt that lead to the carding machine. Once on the carding machine, the wool was made into rolls or bats. The rolls were used for spinning yarn; the bats were used to fill quilts and comforters.

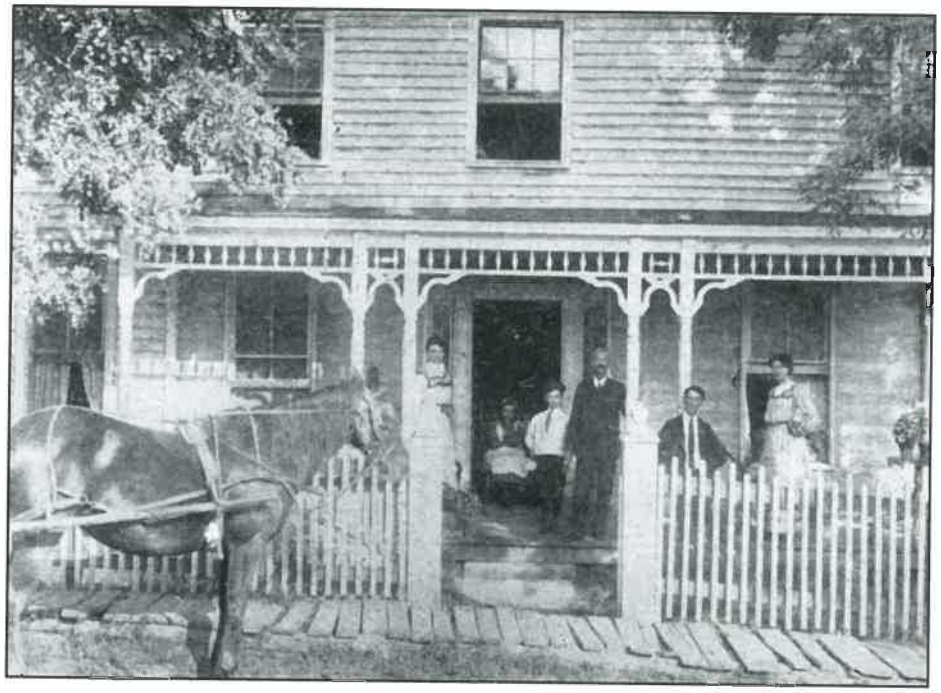
Margaret remembers helping her father Russell with the picking machine on Saturdays when she was off from school. "The only thing I could do to help my Dad was to keep the conveyor belt full of wool on the picker machine until all the wool had been put through," she says.

Workdays at the mill were long and hard, Margaret says. Constant heavy lifting was required, and the dangerous machines posed constant threats if you weren't careful. Everything had to be done quickly and correctly on the first attempt.

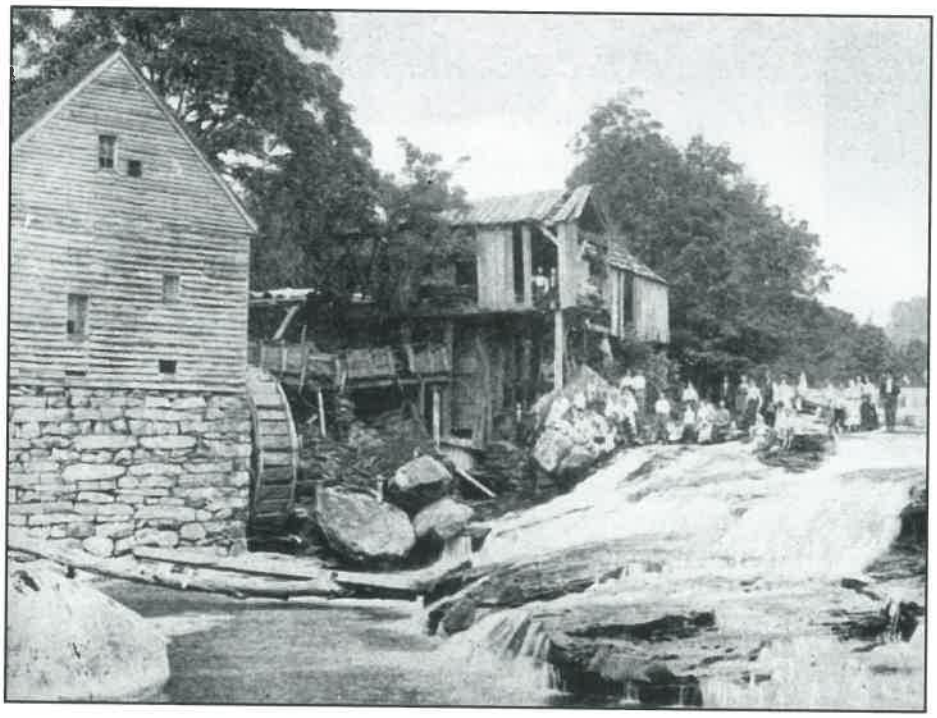
"I can still see my dad running from the mill up to the dam to open the floodgate that let the water run down the water race to start the mill," Margaret recalls. "Then, when he got the grinding and carding done, he would once again run back to the dam to close the gate to stop the water from running down the water race, and the mill would

Margaret Fidler Demastes of French Creek grew up near the mill. Her family owned and operated it for several generations. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Farmers from Arlington, Rock Cave, French Creek, Gaines, and elsewhere would bring their corn and wheat to Fidler's Mill to be ground into flour, meal, buckwheat, and animal feed.



William Fidler purchased the mill from Daniel Peck in 1847. Under his guidance — and using slave labor — it became a substantial structure and an important economic center for the community of Arlington, sawing lumber and grinding grain. Son William Martin Fidler is shown here with his family at their residence, above, date unknown. The mill is pictured, below, in about 1900, with a large crowd gathered in the Little Kanawha River. Both photographs are from the *History of Upshur County*.



shut down. He would do this several times a day as customers came and went."

In addition to being the economic center of Arlington, the mill was also used for a social hall, housing parties and events throughout the year. Each October, for instance, the youth of Arlington scheduled a Halloween party at the mill.

"Every Halloween," Margaret says, "the young people of the community would sweep and clean the mill and decorate it with fall leaves, pumpkins, and fodder shocks."

The Halloween parties were always popular, with the majority of the community attending. Although some party-goers came dressed in costumes, disguises were not required. According to Margaret, it was just as much fun trying to guess who was in each costume as it was actually wearing one. She recalls that older members of the community — some of whom rarely left home — often attended the parties in costumes and surprised all of the children there.

Aside from the costumes, dancing was the main event at these parties. Most of the time was spent square dancing, with round dancing between sets. Everyone in the community knew each other and most were friends, so there were plenty of dancing partners for all. Even if you did not know how to dance, someone would be there to teach you, Margaret says. She remembers one of her neighbors teaching her to round dance one year at a Halloween party.

In addition to large parties, the mill occasionally saw more rowdy evenings. At one time, boxing was a popular form of entertainment nationwide, and Margaret remembers seeing some of the neighborhood boys boxing in the mill on weekends.

Swimming has always been a popular pastime at the mill. "We learned to swim in a puddle below the mill," recalls Margaret. That shallow "puddle" was not deep enough for actual swimming, but children taught themselves the arm and leg motions, kicked the water, and splashed each other. Later, according to Margaret, these new swimmers graduated to a nearby swimming hole known as Slate Pencil Bank. Although that hole was not especially deep, either, it was deep enough for actual swimming, offering youngsters the chance to put all of the motions together, float, and move in the water.

Once a new swimmer mastered the craft at Slate Pencil Bank, they

ascended to the Blue Hole behind the Arlington Church, just upriver from the mill. There, Russell Fidler had tied a cable swing to a tree which extended out over the water; the swing kept swimmers entertained for hours. When she was younger, Margaret and other locals assembled at the mill and walked to the Blue Hole. Later, she did the same with her own children.

Margaret's relationship with Fidler's Mill goes well beyond the mill's status as the community focal point and social center. Many of her memories are intensely personal. Her family owned the mill from the 1840's until 1979, except for the years 1900-1904. Her great-great-grandfather, great-grandfather, grandfather, father, and brother each had a hand in operating it during that period. "We practically grew up there," she relates.

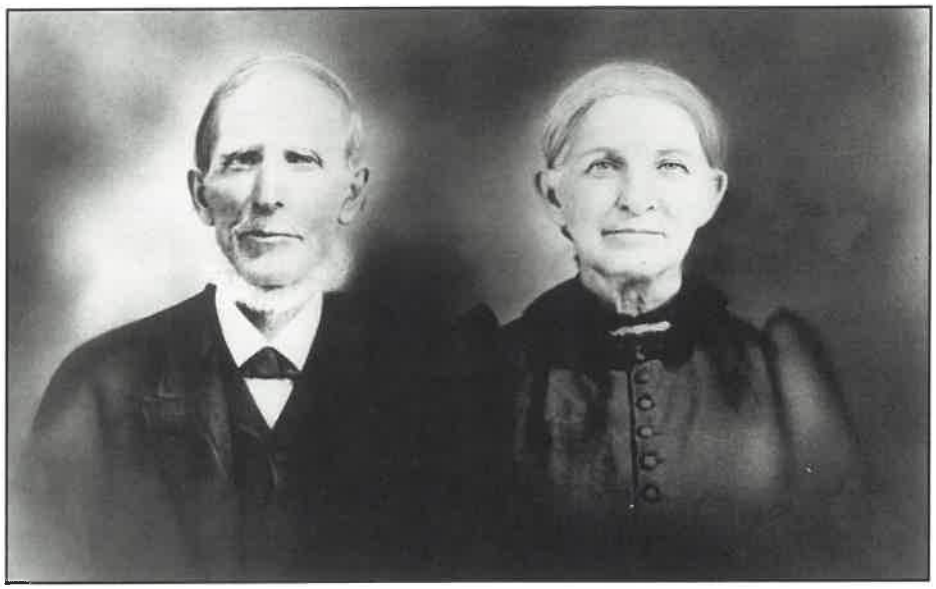
Margaret's family lived close by, and she and her sister Isabel frequented the mill as children. One of the girls' favorite pastimes was roller skating on the mill's floor. The sisters only had one pair of skates. "So," Margaret recalls, "we each just took one and skated on one foot." Margaret and Isabel skated at will, except for days when the mill was busy. "Mostly, our dad wouldn't allow us to skate when he was busy, or if a lot of men were in the mill," Margaret explains.

The girls set up a playhouse on the second floor during the summer months, when the wool machinery stood idle. "We had our playhouse on the second floor, and our play store and post office in the summer," she relates. "When we started back to school in the fall, our dad would box all our junk up and put it aside so it wouldn't be in his way when he got ready to do the carding."

The Fidlers set aside a room in the basement of the mill for storing apples. Every autumn, they would pick apples from Hudson Fidler's large orchard and store them in bins in the apple room, assuring the family of apples to eat and cook all winter, she explains. Sometimes, Russell Fidler peeled apples for Margaret while sitting on a swing that hung on the mill's porch. "I loved to go down to the mill and sit with Daddy," she says. "If my dad wasn't busy, he would peel apples for me to eat, or crack some walnuts or hickory nuts for me."

For Margaret, Fidler's Mill will always be a bustling grist mill on the Little Kanawha — a memory album of farmers, playhouses, and parties. Although the Fidlers owned it until 1979, the mill was changed forever in 1942. So, also, was life for the Fidler family.

"In 1942, a flood washed the dam out, and that was the end of the mill being used as it had always been," Margaret remembers. "Soon after that, my Dad went to Akron, Ohio, to work. He worked at



Hudson Fidler obtained the mill in 1905, after owner E.G. Wilson had added an extra story to the building. Hudson installed carding and picking machinery for processing wool, and operated the mill until 1931. Hudson is shown, above, with his wife Etta Fidler, date unknown. The mill is shown, below, between 1901 and 1905. Visible to the right of the mill are the sawmill, store, covered bridge, schoolhouse, and dam in Arlington. Photograph courtesy of Randy Fidler.

Young Margaret Fidler, seated at left, with her family. Father Russell and mother Jessie are at far left and far right, respectively; brother Tom and sister Isabel are seated at center and right. Date unknown.

Firestone Rubber Company until after World War II was over, then he came back home and bought a gasoline machine and did grinding for a few years [at the mill]. Then he sold it, and that was the last the mill was used, except for cutting hair." Russell Fidler was a barber in his spare time and used the mill as his barber shop until the building was sold to the Grafton Coal Company in 1979.

My grandma Wanda Robinson lived in a white, two-story house built by the Fidler family, located directly across Heaston Ridge Road from the mill. By the time my grandmother moved into the house in 1962, the mill was empty. It had deteriorated by the late 1970's, when I was first introduced to it as a young boy. Nevertheless, I was captivated by the mill. Though not an Arlington native, I became a frequent visitor there as I spent summer Sundays and vacations visiting my grandmother and exploring the mill and its surroundings.

Fidler's Mill and the Little Kanawha River serve as a link between my cousin Tiffany and me. She lived in Parkersburg, I lived in Buckhannon, and we only saw each other at Grandma's. Arlington is a small community, forcing us "city kids" to make our own entertainment. So, Tiffany and I would frequently go down to the mill in search of adventure. Sometimes, we would stand on the small porch of the mill, cup our hands around our eyes, and peer through the dirty windows into the mill. Even when squinting, we could only discern ghostly shapes inside and would spend hours formulating theories about what those shapes were and how they were used. I later discovered that the strange shapes that we saw were the hoppers used by the Fidlers in the milling and grinding operation.

Like many generations before us, Tiffany and I took advantage of the numerous swimming holes located behind the mill and up the Little Kanawha River. When I was a young child, I can remember watching out Grandma's front picture window on warm Sunday afternoons, seeing carloads of swimmers climbing down the steep slope beside the mill. The back side of the mill's foundation served as one of the edges to a deep swimming hole. By the time I was old enough to cross the road alone and watch or join the swimmers, the mill had become a collection of rotted siding and crumbling foundation stones. Some of the swimmers brought small stones up from the bottom of the river and threw them at the mill, sometimes breaking windows. These broken windows

Margaret remains very involved with the mill and with efforts to preserve and restore it. She is shown here inside the mill during a recent visit. Photograph by Michael Keller.

More than 150 years after the Fidler family first purchased the mill, it still stands in Arlington as a community legacy.

let in the elements and contributed to the run-down appearance of the mill at that time.

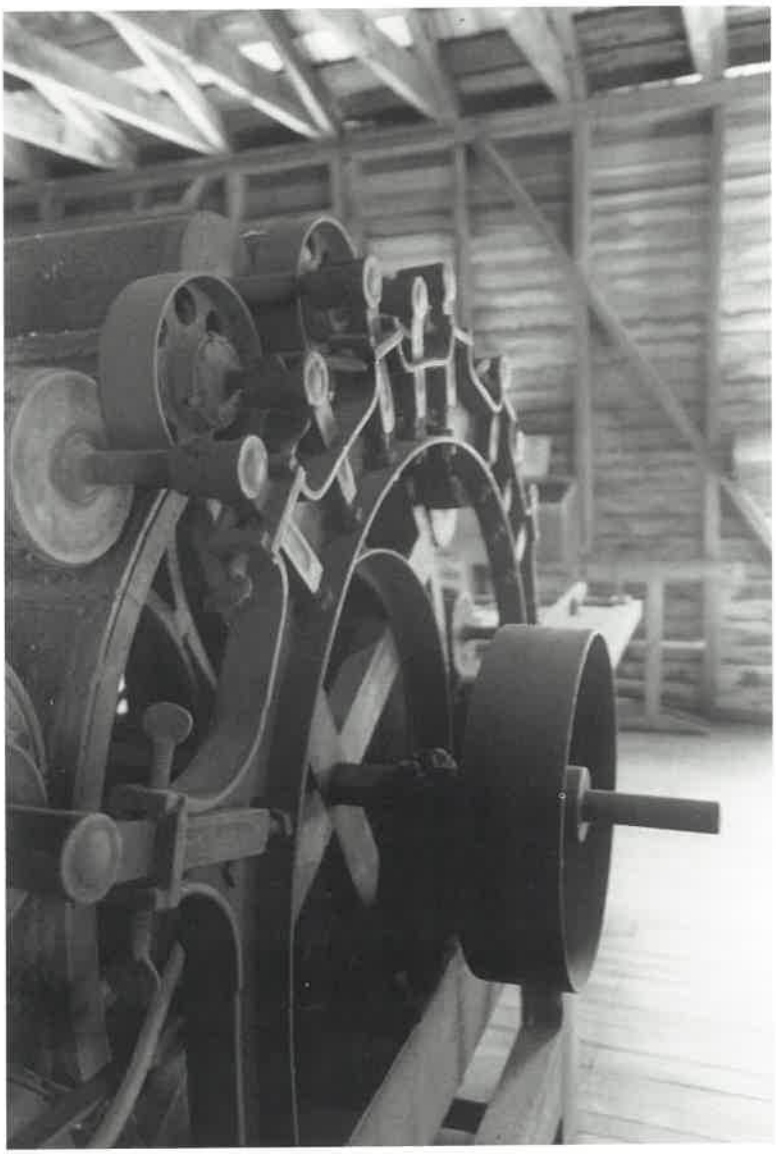
Grafton Coal, which purchased the mill in 1979, had planned to use Fidler's Mill as an office for its southern Upshur County mining operations until those operations, along with all mining in the Little Kanawha watershed, were shut down because of environmental concerns. The company held onto the mill until the mid-1980's, then expressed to the Upshur County Commission that it was interested in donating the mill to an organization that would preserve and restore it. The Southern Upshur Business Association (SUBA) took over responsibility for the mill at that time, and immediately began to develop plans to stabilize and repair the structure.

In 1988, members of SUBA and on-lookers gathered at the mill as a crane, borrowed from a local lumber company, raised the vertical water turbine that had been under water for nearly 40 years. This piece of equipment was beyond repair and was sold for scrap, but its recovery marked the beginning of a new era for the mill. Workers soon began putting up new siding and replacing the mill's broken windows. Once that was completed, facelift work, such as porch renovation and painting, began on the front of the building. Although restoration work slowed during the early 1990's, public interest in the mill and its future continued to grow.

In 1997, Fidler's Mill was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The following year, Friends of Fidler's Mill, Inc., a non-profit organization, was formed. This group undertook structural repairs and began restoring the internal workings of the mill. Recently, they installed a $10\frac{1}{2}$-foot exterior water wheel. They hope to connect the wheel to a functional drive shaft and other grinding equipment in the near future. Work is also underway to repair the roof, rewire the electrical system, complete a parking lot, and make other improvements such as installing video monitoring equipment for handicapped visitors.

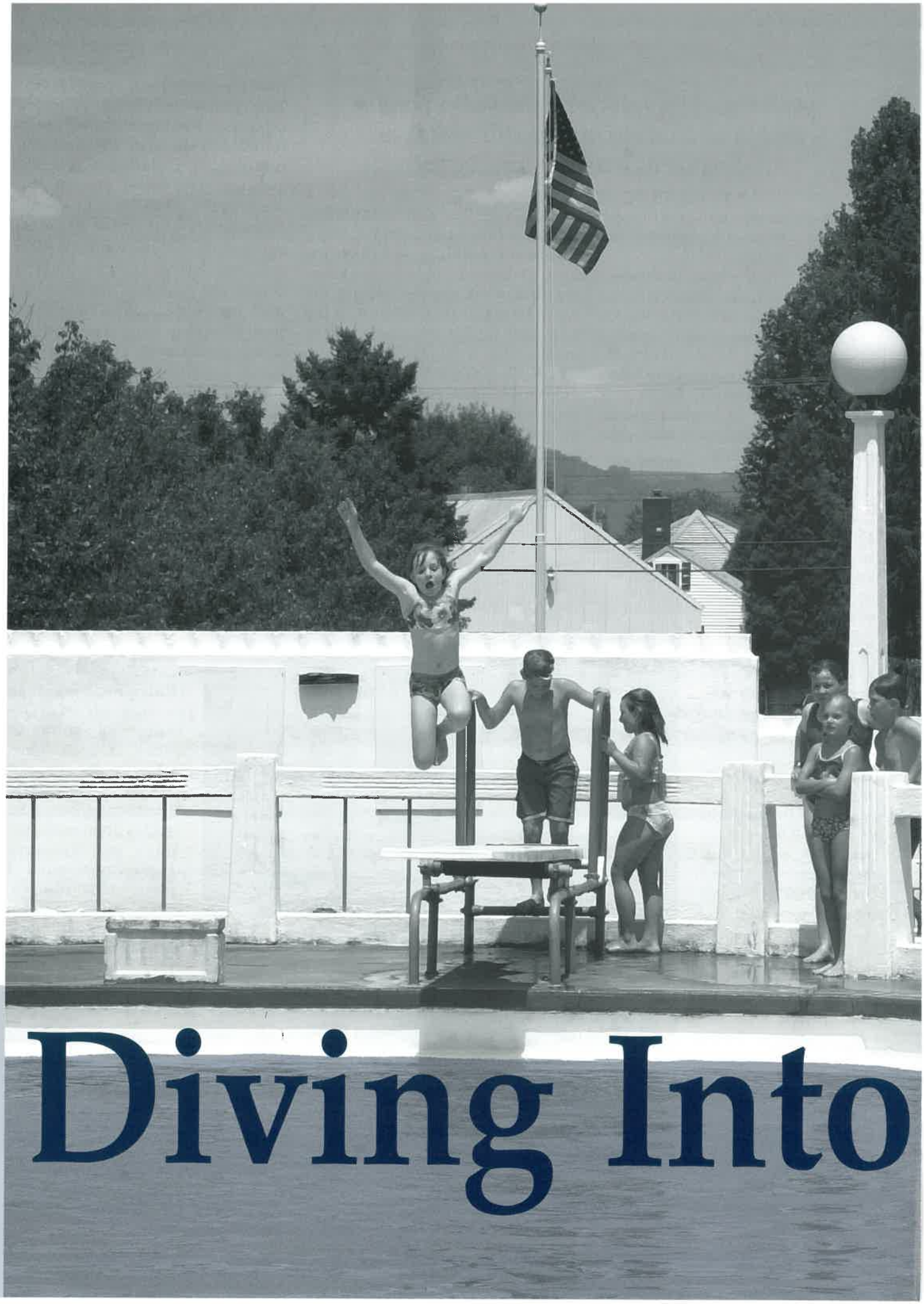
Fidler's Mill has been a place of hard work and raucous fun, and a source of lasting memories. More than 150 years after the Fidler family first purchased the mill, it still stands in Arlington as a community legacy.

Those wishing to visit the mill can do so between Memorial Day and Labor Day each summer. It is located on Heaston Ridge Road less than a mile off of State Route 20, south of Rock Cave, near where Route 20 crosses the Little Kanawha River. The mill is open on Saturdays and Sundays from noon until 4 p.m., or by reservation. Volunteers from the Friends of Fidler's Mill are available to give tours. For information, call (304)924-6887.



Carding machinery on the top floor of Fidler's Mill. Photograph by Michael Keller.

JEFFERY HARVEY is a native of Buckhannon and a graduate of West Virginia University, with a degree is English. He is a former reporter for the *Weston Democrat* and is currently employed as a technical writer. This is Jeffery's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



Diving Into

During the early years of the 20th century, the Ohio River offered a range of recreational activities and a respite from the summer heat for those living along its shore. It also brought an element of danger as mothers worried if their children might drown in the strong waters. So, public swimming pools were widely accepted in the Northern Panhandle counties of Wetzel, Marshall, Ohio, Brooke, and Hancock during the 1930's, when New Deal programs gave communities an opportunity to fund recreational projects and assist the unemployed.

Pools of the Northern Panhandle

Outdoor pools are usually thought of as rectangular, in-ground pools. Such is the case with the pool at Oglebay Park near Wheeling, constructed with federal money in the 1930's under the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

In Marshall County's small town of Cameron, however, the in-ground pool has a different look. The pool is in the shape of a semi-circle. A flat, straight edge of 150 feet extends along the rock-face wall on the west side of the lot. The sides of the pool gently slope down from the shallow curved edge toward the center of the flat edge, descending to a depth of 8 1/2 feet at its deepest point. Along the edge of the curved rim, there were once 12 red ornamental posts placed with metal flower urns on top. The ornamentation had scallops and fish heads. From the fish's mouths, water jets supplied a balanced flow of recirculated water. Today, red-and-white planters are placed along the pool's perimeter.

Diving boards are positioned on a small curved area which projects into the pool, midway along the flat edge, in the deep water. A curved fence in the pool, approximately 12 feet from the diving boards, separates the experienced and non-experienced swimmers.

At one time, a lifeguard chair was mounted on a pole centered in the curved area underneath a stepped umbrella, which had a pagoda-like appearance. Flood lights were mounted on this centered pole. Steps still lead down into a submarine-like room beneath the diving board area. This curved concrete room has five glass and Plexiglas portholes which provide a view into the pool. The designed function of this room was as an underwater lifeguard station. Lights from this room provided nighttime illumination in the pool.

Beyond the semi-circular rim of the pool is a depression reflecting the same curved shape. This depression was once filled with white sand from Lake Michigan and was used as a beach area. The sand had to be removed after a few seasons, however, because it was tracked into the pool and abraded the pipes of the filtration system.

History

By Katherine M. Jourdan

Left: Summer fun at the historic Bruce pool in New Martinsville, one of several historic swimming pools built in the Northern Panhandle during the late 1930's and early '40's that are still in use. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Entrance to the Cameron City Pool. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Although the design of Cameron's pool is certainly unique, to understand the desire by the city for a pool, one needs to go back to 1895 when fire raged for three days and consumed nearly 60 homes and businesses in the downtown area. Neighboring towns sent rescue teams and equipment by way of the B&O railroad, but a major train derailment delayed assistance.

The idea for the Cameron City Pool was conceived after another fire destroyed the G.C. Murphy 5&10 store on Main Street in January 1938. At that time, it was recognized that the city water supply and 180,000-gallon reservoir were insufficient. The new pool was intended to be used not only for recreation, therefore, but as a 235,000-gallon emergency fire protection reservoir.

Using a grant from the Public Works Administration (PWA), a special three-year levy was approved by the voters in 1938 to provide the city's share of the $14,000 in bonds which were issued. The total cost of the project was $25,000.

Sandra Kennedy of Cameron remembers that her grandfather William Harold Marling was the person who suggested the combination of pool and reservoir. "My grandfather was the superintendent for Patterson Gas Wells," she recalls, "and was the councilman who naturally was in charge of monitoring the water wells for the city. When the reservoir was con-

The unique design of the Cameron pool is evident in this photograph from about 1940. Note the sandy beach area around the curved perimeter, in use during the pool's early years. Photograph courtesy of Katherine Jourdan.

Cameron mayor Arch Cook, at center, and Newt Mickey pose for a picture during pool construction in May 1939. The unusual pole-mounted lifeguard stand and pagoda shelter are visible at left. Photograph courtesy of the Cameron Library.

sidered, my grandfather made the motion that instead of just a reservoir, the city should build a swimming pool that would not only be a water storage reservoir, but also provide recreation for adults and children."

The Cameron pool is built in a natural depression, or valley, with steep banks rising on three sides. The bathhouse and walls of earth on each side effectively seal the end of the valley. The bathhouse is south of the pool and has two levels. The lower level holds the filtration system for the pool, while the upper level has a central check-in with wire baskets for bathers' use. To each side are changing rooms for men and women, and two rear doors exit to the pool area.

A similar New Deal program was used to build the swimming pool in New Martinsville, known as the Robert L. Bruce Municipal Swimming Pool. Erected in 1941 by the WPA, the above-ground ovoid — or egg-shaped — pool is a smaller version of the design used in Weirton in 1934. Both pools have entrances with art deco designs.

Blueprints for both pools are by engineer Wesley Bintz of Lansing, Michigan. Bintz's plans include a check-in lobby, dressing rooms, and filtration room on the outside circle of the first level. Stairs lead up to a second-level pool area, with the pool located in the center of the structure. The architectural plans include designs for the ladders, diving boards, depth markers, and benches.

From the ground, each pool appears as a circular red-brick wall, approximately 12 feet in height, with concrete details painted white. The wall surface is divided into multiple bays that are divided by concrete posts. At every three bays, the dividing posts are extended and tapered upwards for approximately four feet with chamfer or beveled edges. At the top of each post is a globe lighting fixture.

On the interior of the Weirton pool, the doorway opens into a lobby with a wooden check-in counter being an original feature. Behind the counter are wooden plank shelves with original wire baskets for bathers to use. On the left side of the lobby is a stairway which once led to the spectator area, but which now has an outside entrance. Original furniture in the dressing rooms include double wooden benches with a center rack for hanging clothes. An original wringer for bathing suits is near the women's dressing room exit to remove excess water from suits and towels.

Instead of using a federal program, Weirton's pool was built entirely with funds from the David Weir estate. David, along with his brother Ernest Weir, built what became Weirton Steel Company. In his will of 1929, Weir stipulated that $25,000 be used "after conferring with the officials of the Weirton Steel Company, for a

The Cameron pool today. Photograph by Michael Keller.

The Robert L. Bruce Municipal Swimming Pool in New Martinsville, Wetzel County, opened in 1941. It features an ovoid — or egg-shaped — pool area and art deco design at the entrance, as shown here. Photograph courtesy of the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office, SHPO hereafter, 1993.

Margaret M. Weir Memorial," in honor of his mother. The memorial was to be in the form of a hospital, park, playground, library, or other property for the use of the public. At the dedication of the pool, Ernest Weir said that his brother had outlined nine principal improvements for the community before his death. The seventh project to be completed included the pool.

The park location on the hilltop called Marland Heights was laid out and constructed by Weirton Steel employees in 1934, and came to include the memorial pool, bandstand, shuffleboard courts, and a large rustic shelter. Part of the work on the shelter was done by local steelworkers who had been laid off during the Great Depression. The dedication of the Marland Heights park and pool in 1934 established it as a gathering place for the town's annual Fourth of July celebration, as well as the site for races and swimming competitions, picnics, and band concerts.

"My father was one of the first lifeguards," says Shari Pepper, a longtime Marland Heights resident. "In 1953, when we moved back to Marland Heights, it was 10 cents a day for a swim pass, or two dollars for a summer pass. My entire day centered around the pool. I would get up by 8 a.m. and by nine be at the pool for lessons. After lunch, I would change suits and swim until 5 p.m. Then after dinner, I went back to the park to watch the guys play tennis or attend private swim parties," she explains. "My birthday was during the summer, and I had several birthday parties at the pool. A lot of groups had picnics at the park, and my parents danced at the band shell. My age group had dance hops on the basketball courts." As Shari says, "The park was the place to hang out."

Maintained by Weirton Steel Company, the fortunes of the park have been a reflection of Weirton's financial health. The 1930's to '50's were boom years for the Weirton

The Bruce pool in New Martinsville today. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Right: Entrance to the Margaret M. Weir Memorial Pool in Weirton, Hancock County. Also visible are picnic shelters and other features of the surrounding Marland Heights Park. The park and the pool were built in 1934 using funds from the estate of steel baron David Weir, and labor from unemployed steelworkers. Photograph by Katherine Jourdan, early 1990's.

Below: The Margaret M. Weir Memorial Pool is a similar, but larger, version of the pool in New Martinsville. Like New Martinsville, it features an above-ground, egg-shaped pool area, and other unusual design details. This recent photograph is courtesy of SHPO.

Steel Company, and it had money to lavish on the city. "During the summer, Carl Hammill was the park superintendent," explaines Shari Pepper. Hammill, who was the Weirton High School athletic coach, kept the place immaculate and employed kids for summer jobs. Pepper says, "It was a good place to get a summer job. The lawns were continually raked. Hammill was highly regarded. He helped you, but earned your respect, too."

During the 1970's and '80's, however, the steel industry was floundering, and National Steel Corporation — Weirton's parent company — began to pull out of civic involvement, concentrating instead on business survival. Eventually, National Steel divested itself of Weirton Steel Division and handed over ownership to the employee-formed Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP). Ownership of the park and pool was transferred to the Board of Parks Recreational Commissioners in 1984. The Marland Heights Civic Association was then formed from a core group of people who had helped to raise funds to meet the operating budget that year. This group continues to raise funds and provides volunteer labor for pool and park maintenance.

All of these unique and historic pools welcome the support of those who value them for their importance to their communities — past, present, and future.

Time is beginning to take its toll on these outdoor structures. Local park and recreation boards have been instrumental in raising money or using allocated city funds for repairs and maintenance. Both the Cameron and Weirton pools have been listed to the National Register of Historic Places, which recognizes their place in history. Brooke County's Follansbee pool has already been razed. It was constructed by donations from city schools, churches, organizations, and individuals. Its cornerstone once read, "Built by the unemployed of Follansbee — 1932."

How will these pool structures survive? The continued patronage of local citizens and volunteer efforts to help with maintenance do reap high benefits. All of these unique and historic pools welcome the support of those who value them for their importance to their communities — past, present, and future.

They are open to the public during the warm summer months and beckon visitors to "dive into history," while they still can.

KATHERINE M. JOURDAN, a native of Indiana, recently completed eight years as the National Registry-Survey Coordinator for the State Historic Preservation Office. She earned a master's degree in historic preservation from Ball State University and worked as an architectural surveyor in Wheeling. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Spring 1991 issue.

Hollidays Cove Murder Mystery

By Mary Zwierzchowski

One of the darkest chapters in the history of Hollidays Cove is a chilling tale of a double murder which took place in 1887. After more than a century of public scrutiny, questions concerning the brutal crime continue to haunt this small Northern Panhandle town.

During the 1880's, Hollidays Cove was a peaceful farming village nestled near the banks of the Ohio River. With a population of about 250, it was noted for its abundant apple crops. A county line ran through the center of the village, dividing it north from south. Hancock County held jurisdiction north of the line, while Brooke County claimed the territory to the south. Years later, Hollidays Cove would become a part of the city of Weirton.

The story begins on a sunny spring morning, May 10, 1887. The Baker cottage sat silently at the edge of the orchard. Freshly washed clothes, hung out to dry the previous day, billowed in the wind. The window blinds were drawn, the house void of any sign of life.

It was 9:30 a.m., and Van Buren Baker had just arrived home following an overnight trip to Cross Creek Village in Pennsylvania. He stood at the entrance to the small white cottage, taking note of the unusual stillness. The front door was unlocked. He stepped inside and found the lifeless bodies of his wife Eliza and her mother Drucilla McWha slumped over, one atop the other, on the sitting room floor, drenched in a pool of blood. The gruesome discovery launched one of the most notorious murder trials ever held in the Northern Panhandle.

A coroner's inquest was organized the following day. Sessions were held in a one-room brick schoolhouse, located about where Cove School now stands. Van B. Baker was summoned to appear before Squire

Cove Presbyterian Church, where Eliza Baker and her mother Drucilla McWha attended church, and Van Baker taught Sunday school. Funeral services were held here for the two victims. Photograph from *Sesquicentennial 1790-1940*, date unknown.

a year later. Sickly from birth, little Robbie died the following January.

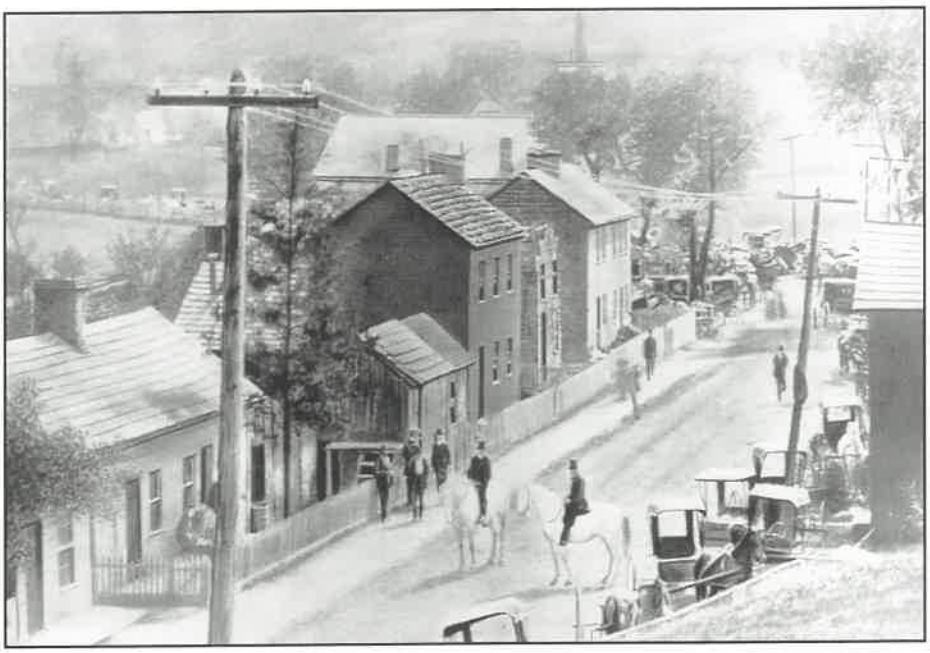
Some say that it was Baker's interest in the McWha family fortune that led him to wed the plain-looking Eliza. Nearly everyone in the Cove knew that Robert McWha had left his widow Drucilla well-fixed with $9,000 in government bonds and a considerable amount of property. As the only surviving heir, Eliza stood to inherit everything. After her son Robbie died, Eliza called upon Squire Brown to have a new will drawn up for herself. She left nearly all of her money and possessions to her nephew Robert McWha Lee, with the exception of $1,000 which went to her husband. Baker reportedly complained to neighbors about the "shabby treatment" he had received, stating on one ocassion, "They've cut me out of their wills. They are damned misers."

Sympathy for the bereaved Baker at the loss of his wife and mother-in-law lasted little more than a day as public opinion began to rail against him. Rumors were rampant that Baker had mistreated his first wife and was responsible for the death of one of his students. The local papers joined in to further magnify Baker's past sins.

At the conclusion of the two-day inquest, Baker knew that his arrest was imminent. Since the crime took place north of the county line, Hancock County held jurisdiction. On May 12, Constable Bartley Campbell, under orders from Sheriff Lindsay, handcuffed Baker who did nothing to resist. "Arrest me now," he said, "and I will soon burst this bubble." The prisoner was taken to New Cumberland on the Panhandle Railroad and was housed in the Hancock County jail. When the train stopped at Kings Creek station just north of the Cove, Baker could see that a large crowd had gathered. According to one eye-witness, "He was nearly scared to death right there, as if he thought the men working on the tracks with picks and shovels had come to lynch him."

That same day, the following telegram was sent to John R. Braddock in Wellsburg: "I am charged with murder. Come and prepare my defense. —Van B. Baker." Braddock and three other attorneys agreed to serve as Baker's counsel.

Back in Hollidays Cove, the grim task of arranging burial for the two victims got underway. Services were held at Cove Presbyterian Church, the same church where Baker had preached his fiery sermons. Squire William Lee and Alonzo Knox, riding white steeds, led the mile-long procession of horse-drawn carriages up a winding road toward Three Springs Cemetery. There on a hill above the Cove, the bodies



Funeral procession for Eliza Baker and Drucilla McWha. Photograph from *History of Weirton, West Virginia*, approximately May 14, 1887.

of the two women were laid to rest in the family plot.

The Van B. Baker murder trial opened July 10, 1887, at the Hancock County courthouse in New Cumberland with Judge George E. Boyd presiding. The courtroom was jammed with curious spectators. The temperature in the room hovered near 100 degrees. The scene outside the courthouse took on the appearance of a county fair as crowds came from miles around. They constructed crude scaffolds, placed ladders against the sides of buildings, climbed the rooftops, and hung from windowsills to catch a glimpse of the accused killer. According to attorney John Braddock, "It was common occurrence to have music and dancing in the jury room at night, and large crowds would gather about the courthouse to listen to the merrymaking."

In the view of many observers, Baker was presumed guilty from the start. By his own admission, the axe wielded against the two women belonged to him. Counsel for the prosecution made much of the fact that about a week or so before the murders, Baker had taken the axe down to George Knox's cobbler shop to have it sharpened "for some badly needed pruning." The only direct physical evidence linking Baker to the crime scene were stains that were found on the pants Baker wore on the day of the murders, which were identified by prosecution experts as "human blood." The coroner's report said that the time of death was on Monday afternoon. Yet, old man Sam Ralston testified that he saw Eliza in the orchard around 5:00 — long after Baker left for Cross Creek Village.

The Hancock County courthouse in New Cumberland was the site of the first Van Baker murder trial. The courthouse is shown here in a postcard view from 1911, courtesy of Andrea Anderson.

The case against Baker — filled with conflicting testimony and circumstantial evidence — continued to build in that stifling, hot courtroom for three, long sweltering weeks. The verdict, however, came quickly. The jury deliberated little more than an hour, yet remained sequestered overnight, "so as not to give the appearance of a hasty decision," as one juror later reported. Van B. Baker was pronounced guilty of murder in the first degree and received the mandatory sentence of death. Loud cheers went up in the courtroom as the verdict was announced.

Counsel for the defense immediately filed a motion for a new trial. An investigation into the conduct of the jury showed that one juror had been drunk most of the time, imbibing heavily during court proceedings. Another juror admitted later that, "If 40 witnesses were to swear they saw a man kill these women and it was not Baker, I still would have found Baker guilty."

A change of venue was granted, and the trial was moved to the little river town of Wellsburg, about 10 miles south of Hollidays Cove. In the Circuit Court of Brooke County, Van Buren Baker would stand once again and face his accusers. His life, once again, would hang in the balance.

Van B. Baker arrived at the Wellsburg train station under heavy guard. The same circus-like atmosphere that had prevailed in New Cumberland surfaced again as curiosity-seekers jammed the depot, eager to catch a glimpse of the prisoner. They followed close behind as he was hustled from the train and taken to the Brooke County jail, where he was confined for the duration of the trial.

The trial began October 9, 1888, with Judge John Jacob presiding. Once again the courtroom was packed with spectators. Unlike the sweltering summer of the previous year, crowds gathered in the street and on the courthouse steps in the cool comfort of autumn splendor. Inside the courthouse, the battle lines were drawn.

In opening remarks by prosecutor John McSweeny, the state set out to prove that Baker — angered because Eliza had cut him out of her will — killed his wife and mother-in-law to gain access to the McWha fortune. Baker knew the laws of the state — if Eliza had no will, then he would inherit the $9,000 in bonds and any other property passed on to her by Mrs. McWha. He burned Eliza's will in the kitchen stove, then dressed the two women in nightclothes to give the appearance that death had occurred in the night, McSweeny claimed.

The key to establishing Baker's guilt was the time of death. Dr. M.K. Morris had examined the bodies soon after their discovery. He reported that rigor mortis was setting in, and the blood from the victims' wounds

Whodunit?

This century-old Hollidays Cove murder case has been the focus of an on-going local controversy for many years. Events center on Van Buren Baker, a prominent Cove citizen who was accused and convicted of killing his wife Eliza Baker and mother-in-law Drucilla McWha in May 1887. He was brought twice to trial, the verdicts of which are still disputed today. Over time, stories related to the controversial case have become deeply rooted in the culture and history of this small riverside town.

Around 1900, Baker's defense attorney John Braddock wrote *A History of the Trial of Professor Van B. Baker*. His book gives a first-hand account of what has been called one of the greatest legal conflicts that ever occurred in the state of West Virginia. Braddock stood firm in his belief that his client was innocent.

Decades later, authors Mary Ferguson and David Javersak recorded events surrounding the highly publicized trials in the books *History of Hollidays Cove* and *A History of Weirton*. These accounts reflect testimony as presented by the prosecution, and believed by the jury, that Baker killed his wife and mother-in-law to gain access to the family fortune.

The verdict was challenged in 1986 when local writer Timothy Russell researched the case for his prize-winning short story "The 99-Year-Old Cove Mystery." In it, he raises questions concerning Baker's guilt. Still today, Russell believes that "Baker was railroaded for a crime that, in all probability, he did not commit."

In a more recent attempt to settle the dispute, Weirton author Mary Zwierzchowski sifted through antiquated court records, scanned countless pages of microfilmed newspapers, and reviewed the works of the four previous writers. Uncovering indisputable proof that Baker did or did not kill the two women, however, proved an insurmountable task. So, this chilling tale is presented here in GOLDENSEAL simply for what it is — a small part of Appalachian life at its best and human nature at its worst.

As for the answer to that perplexing question — who killed Eliza Baker and Drucilla McWha? — you be the judge.

In Weirton and Hollidays Cove, researchers and residents still debate the guilt or innocence of convicted murderer Van Baker. Here, author Mary Zwierzchowski (center), GOLDENSEAL contributor Pam Makricosta (left), and historian David Javersak discuss the case at the Mary H. Weir Public Library in Weirton. Behind them is a painting depicting the Baker/McWha funeral procession. It was painted by Mary Shakley Ferguson and is part of the collection of the Mary H. Weir Public Library. Photograph by Diane Rojak Bannister.

had coagulated. The doctor estimated that time of death had occurred between 1:00 and 3:00 on Monday afternoon.

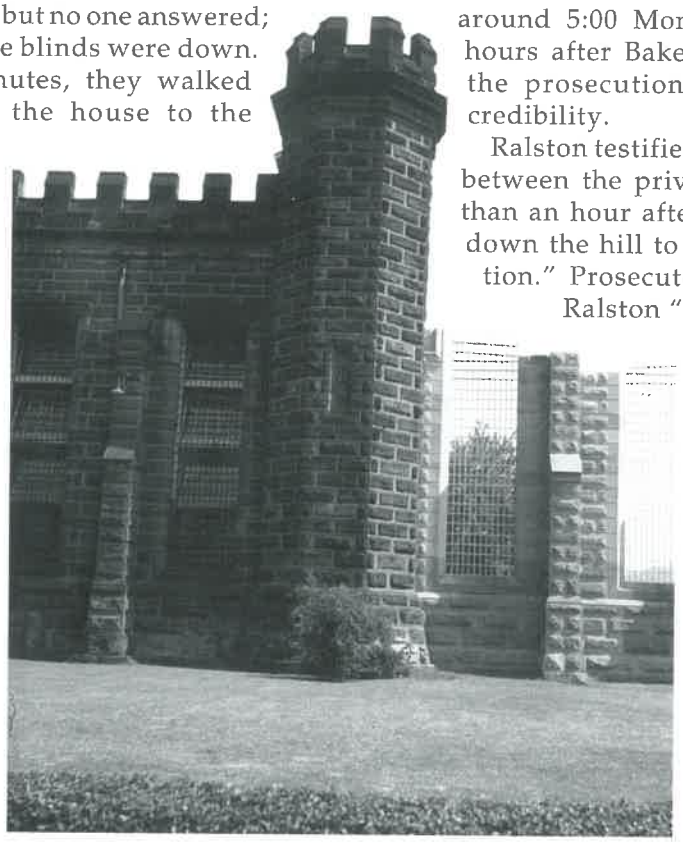
John Braddock, once again the chief counsel for the defense, challenged these findings by pointing to the fact that the thick pools of blood that had seeped under the kitchen stove and elsewhere were still in a fluid condition the following day.

To reinforce the state's contention that the two women were killed in the afternoon, prosecutor John Hutchinson brought up the matter of the Monday wash that had been left billowing in the wind the following day. He argued that such particular housekeepers would never have left their clothes hanging out overnight had death not intervened. But John Braddock called to the stand Baker's neighbor Mrs. Daniel McCloud, who recalled that on one other occasion the women had left their wash hanging out overnight because it had rained that day, and the clothes were still damp. Braddock then reminded the jury that a rainstorm had swept through the Cove at 4:30 Monday afternoon.

Assuming that death did occur on Monday afternoon, the most damaging testimony came from Mrs. Lucy Swearingen who said that she and Mrs. Brown called at the Baker house around 2:30. She rapped on

the front door several times but no one answered; she said she noticed that the blinds were down. After waiting several minutes, they walked around the east side of the house to the back entrance, where they had full view of the orchard with no one in sight. The kitchen door was unlatched. According to her testimony, Mrs. Swearingen pushed it open several inches and called out, "Eliza, it's me. Let me in." But the door was slammed back in her face. She turned to Mrs. Brown and said, "I guess they are at home, but do not want to see us."

When Baker took the stand, he stuck to his story that he and Eliza were in the orchard when Mrs. Swearingen and Mrs. Brown came to call. When they returned, Mrs. McWha told Eliza, "Someone was at the door, but I didn't answer. I figured it was those Paddies [Irishmen] again, come to rent the barn, and I wasn't fixed for company." Baker said he did not know if the windows were covered. But if they were, then he supposed the old woman must have done it.



The West Virginia State Penitentiary at Moundsville was the final stop for Van Baker, twice convicted for the murder of his wife and mother-in-law. He died at Moundsville of natural causes in 1893. Photograph courtesy of John Massie, date unknown.

The blue pants that Baker had worn on the day of the murders were entered into evidence. The clothing had been sent to a lab in Pittsburgh for microscopic and chemical testing and the stains near the knees and cuff were identified as "human blood." John Cook, another counsel for the defense, challenged the validity of the test by bringing up the testimony of Dr. Thomas McKennan of Wheeling. McKennan stated that no test — microscopic or chemical — could rightly distinguish human blood from animal blood. Cook reminded the jury that just one day before the murders, Baker and a friend bled a sick horse on the Commons. Baker held the horse's head as it bled freely and could have easily come in contact with the animal's blood. Cook also noted that Baker could have smeared his clothes with the victims' blood the day after the killings while attempting to lift the body of his dead wife.

Baker's attorneys relied heavily on the testimony of three witnesses — Samuel Ralston, Oliver Grimes, and young David Keaggy, Jr. They each said that they had seen at least one of the women in the orchard around 5:00 Monday afternoon, nearly two hours after Baker left for Cove Station. But the prosecution hammered away at their credibility.

Ralston testified, "I saw Mrs. Baker walking between the privy and the coal house more than an hour after I saw Mr. Baker hurrying down the hill to catch the train at Cove Station." Prosecutor Hutchinson labeled Sam Ralston "a cranky old man" who was "untrustworthy."

Regarding the testimony of Oliver Grimes, the state called to the stand an acquaintance of Grimes who said that he would not believe the man "even under oath."

As for the Keaggy boy, his testimony was overshadowed by what Fred Uphoff told the court. Uphoff said that he had driven Mrs. Keaggy and her son to the trial in New Cumberland and that he heard Mrs. Keaggy instruct the boy on what to say — that at 5:00, he saw Mrs. McWha go to the pump, take a drink of water, and return to the house. "If you do well," she promised, "I will buy you the finest suit to be had in all of Steubenville."

After three weeks of testimony from nearly 100 witnesses, no physical evidence linking Baker directly to the crime was produced, leaving the 12 jurors to base their decision on circumstantial evidence.

Closing arguments on both sides were eloquent, lengthy, and persuasive mixed with flourishes of Biblical and Shakespeaean quotes. The *Wellsburg Herald*, November 1888, commented on prosecutor John McSweeny's closing remarks: "McSweeny's powerful and logical argument was interwoven with gems of beauty and touching eloquence. ...The Irish orator, in his best form, delivers a speech of five-hour's duration, listened to by a crowd of people such as has never been in the Wellsburg courthouse before, who applaud him at the close."

The trial ended on Friday, November 3, and the case went to the jury. They deliberated through the night and well into the next day. At one point, jury foreman James Miller informed Judge Jacob that the jury had failed to agree. Four jurors had voted for acquittal, the remainder for conviction. The judge ordered them to retire once again and make another effort to come to terms.

At 4:30 Saturday afternoon, Miller handed the judge a folded piece of paper. The prisoner was removed from his cell and brought into the courtroom. Clerk Lazear read the contents: "We the jury find the prisoner Van B. Baker guilty as charged and fix his punishment at imprisonment for life."

Baker, who had remained calm throughout the trial, collapsed and fell to the floor when the verdict was read. He recovered shortly after and was escorted back to his cell. Later that evening, Baker was again put aboard a Panhandle train. He was transported 20 miles south to Wheeling and confined for a time in the Ohio County jail. Finally, in December 1889, Baker entered the West Virginia State Penitentiary at Moundsville to begin serving his life sentence.

But the story does not end there. On December 13, 1889, the editor of the *Wheeling Register* received a long letter of confession that contained minute details of the crime scene. The letter, postmarked Columbus, Ohio, read in part: "Baker did not do it. Myself and two other men done it. We went and rented a lot and saw they had money and went back in the evening. I went to a back door and knocked while the other two broke a front shutter and got in. We seen both women begin to undress. The woman opened the front door and then is when the two went in the room. The woman screamed and was struck with an iron bolt. The woman started to run out and was knocked down by same man just as she ran in the kitchen. Both women screamed but the first one the most. The same man hit her six or seven times and killed her. The other woman was hit six or seven times and killed. I seen an ax on the side of the shed and went out and got it and broke open the two trunks. I found $350 in bills and $8.74 in coins and a little piece of gold. We washed and wiped on the dresses and throwd everything into the tub of water. We went out the side gate and up the road above the station, and there I jumped a freight car and went to Pittsburgh. The man who struck the blows got killed in a railroad wreck about a year ago. Two of us are living yet and are both together. We are sorry for Baker for he is innocent." (signed) "Man Number One."

Baker's attorneys appealed his case to the Superior Court in Wheeling, but the decision of the Circuit Court was upheld.

Baker had been ruined in health, reputation, and pocket. The cost of his defense was $15,000. He became ill with tuberculosis and died four years later behind the cold, gray walls of prison, insisting upon his innocence to the end. Fearing that vile acts would be committed at his gravesite, he requested that his body be cremated.

In November 1935, the Baker homestead — for decades an object of curiosity and fear and shunned repeatedly by perspective tenants — came to its own end as a wrecking crew ripped apart the bloodstained floorboards and hammered away at the structure until it was brought down. The house was located on a terraced hill above Cove Road near the present site of Cove School.

The bodies of Eliza McWha Baker and Drucilla McWha were laid to rest in the family plot at Three Springs Cemetery. Their graves are marked by this tombstone. Photograph by Diane Rojak Bannister.

Hollidays Cove today is a busy industrial town, tucked within the boundaries of Weirton. In 1947, the Cove was incorporated into the city of Weirton, and the name Hollidays Cove disappeared from the map.

The only physical reminder of that horrifying day in 1887 is a single grave marker that stands on a wind-swept hill in Three Springs Cemetery. Darkened by time, the inscription reads: "Eliza McWha Baker — Wife of Van and Drucilla McWha — Wife of Robert."

MARY ZWIERZCHOWSKI is an assistant reference librarian at the Mary H. Weir Public Library in Weirton. She grew up near the old town of Cliftonville and is a graduate of West Virginia Northern Community College. Mary's articles have appeared in the *Weirton Daily Times*, the *Brooke County Review*, and the *Steubenville Herald Star*. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Winter 1998 issue.

Life On the Road

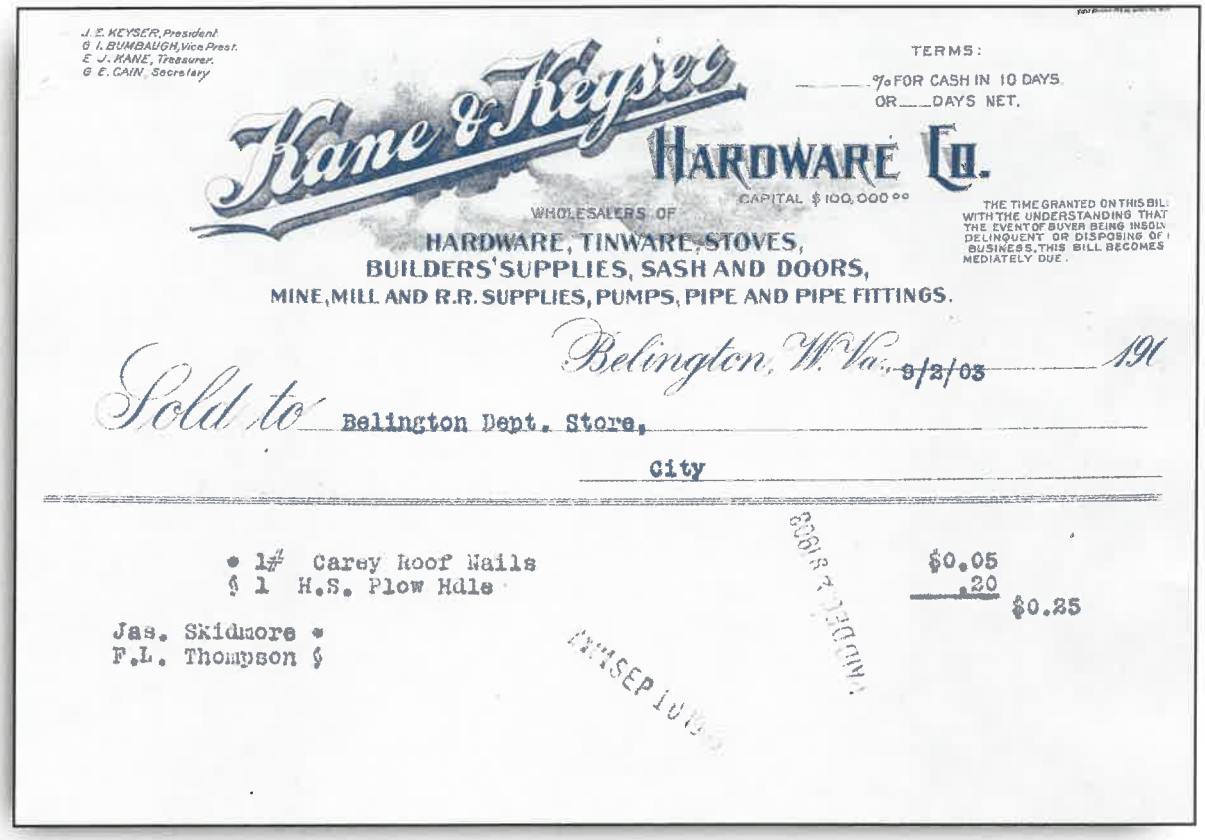
Selling Hardware for Kane & Keyser

By Sharon Wilmoth Harsh

Photographs by Joe Blankenship

Although retired salesmen Ira Wilmoth and Gene Dolly were separated in time by almost a half century from colleague Bradford Gall, the three men had a common bond. All three spent most of their professional careers as traveling salesmen with Kane & Keyser Hardware of Belington, and all three men learned to conduct

Retired salesmen Gene Dolly, at left, and Ira Wilmoth recall their days on the road for the Kane & Keyser Hardware Company of Belington. This 1988 promotional calendar was never used — the company closed up shop the previous year.



J. E. KEYSER, President
G. I. BUMBAUGH, Vice Pres't.
E. J. KANE, Treasurer.
G. E. CAIN, Secretary

Kane & Keyser HARDWARE Co.

TERMS:
____% FOR CASH IN 10 DAYS.
OR ____ DAYS NET.

CAPITAL $ 100,000.00

THE TIME GRANTED ON THIS BILL WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE EVENT OF BUYER BEING INSOLVENT, DELINQUENT OR DISPOSING OF BUSINESS, THIS BILL BECOMES IMMEDIATELY DUE.

WHOLESALERS OF
HARDWARE, TINWARE, STOVES,
BUILDERS' SUPPLIES, SASH AND DOORS,
MINE, MILL AND R.R. SUPPLIES, PUMPS, PIPE AND PIPE FITTINGS.

Belington, W. Va., 9/2/03 191

Sold to Belington Dept. Store,

City

1#	Carey Roof Nails	$0.05
1	H.S. Plow Hdle	.20
		$0.25

Jas. Skidmore
F.L. Thompson

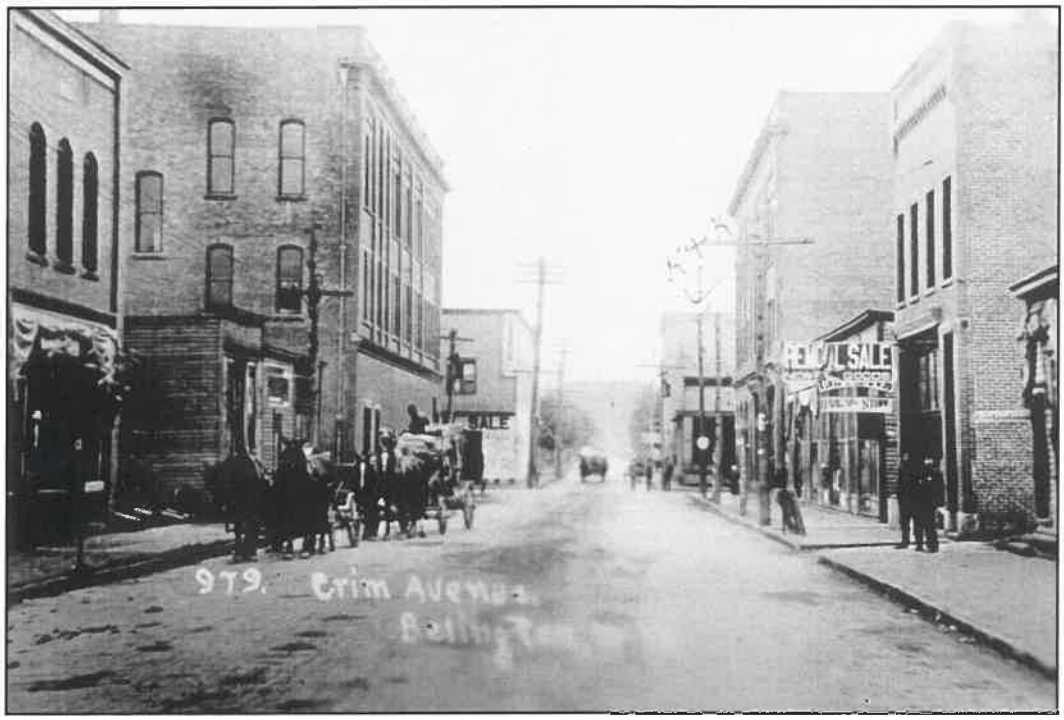
RECEIVED SEP 10 1903

RECEIVED DEC 2 1903

A bill of sale for roof nails and a plow handle purchased from Kane & Keyser in September 1903. The grand total of 25 cents was paid in full the following December.

commerce in the mountains and survive life on the road.

At the turn of the last century, conducting business in Appalachia usually meant offering a limited amount of merchandise to local customers. Edward James Kane and Jesse E. Keyser, however, knew that the world of commerce was changing and understood that a wealth of opportunities would be available in supplying a wide variety of merchandise to the expanding number of new businesses springing up throughout northern Appalachia. The men decided to take a visionary step and open a retail and wholesale hardware firm that would serve not only local, but regional businesses, as well.



Downtown Belington was a busy place during the early years of the 20th century. The Kane & Keyser Hardware store is located to the right of center in this 1909 photograph.

Their 1901 Certificate of Incorporation stated that they intended to "...buy, own, handle, barter, operate, manufacture and sell all kinds of hardware, tinware, stoves, building materials, paints, oils, roofing, blacksmith supplies, bolts, castings, steel, iron, wood, electrical supplies, mine and mill supplies, oil, gas and artesian well supplies, machinery, boilers, engines, pumps, cordage, rope, wire and wire lines, all kinds of pipe fittings, plumbers supplies, and all things customary in conducting a general wholesale and retail

Traveling salesman Bradford Gall, at left, began working on the road for Kane & Keyser during the horse-and-buggy days. He is shown here with friend George Teeter in 1963. Bradford passed away in 1967.

hardware business."

From the beginning, the company was successful. Stockholders purchased initial stock at $100 a share. Within two years, the number of shares of stock doubled, and the working capital of the company increased from $74,000 to $100,000. Within a short time, the company's inventory and business had expanded so much that a third floor was added to the main store facility located in downtown Belington.

The success and rapid expansion of the company made it necessary almost from the start to put salesmen on the road. Countless coal mines and timber operations had been established throughout the region, and at least six railroad companies carried passengers, coal, and timber to and from small towns throughout northern West Virginia. Belington, located in southern Barbour County, was an early hub for much of this activity, and within a short time, Kane & Keyser established a flourishing trade beyond the borders of town. The company's traveling salesmen became the critical link to these newly established business contacts.

Willis Bradford Gall was one of the early salesmen hired to go on the road for Kane & Keyser Hardware. Bradford Gall, or "Braddy," to his friends, was born in Barbour County on May 30, 1881. He lived in Belington his entire adult life and worked for Kane & Keyser Hardware for more than 30 years. When he died at age 86, his death certificate listed his occupation as retired salesman.

When Bradford Gall started working as a traveling salesman in the early 1900's, he would be away from home for a month at a time. "He would leave Belington on the train and go to Harman where he would rent a horse," recalls Eugene "Gene" Dolly who took over the sales territory when Bradford Gall retired. "Bradford would go to the logging camps up Dry Fork and Gandy, then go over into Seneca Rocks and call on customers on horseback. Sometimes he would stay in boardinghouses, but most of the time he stayed right in the logging camps. He would take the order for what they needed and then ride on to the next camp," Gene says.

Other salesmen did the same. "Every community had a livery station where the salesman could rent a horse and buggy," says Ira Wilmoth, another retired Kane & Keyser salesman who in later years served as an officer and custodian of company records. "The salesman who worked this territory went by horse and buggy to Durbin and Marlinton, and then over the

"Although the merchants would receive you very cordially, they did not have to buy one item from you. You had to have something to offer them. If you walked in with a blank mind, I guarantee you would walk out with a blank order."

Most of the people that Ira and Gene encountered on the road were wonderful, and the business associations they made with their customers lasted for years.

drove to Arbovale to meet with him. Elliot told him that he was closing his construction business and was going to work as a purchasing agent for a group of universities in the northeastern United States. "His first order that night," Ira recalls, "was one case of plastic storm-window kits for a house that they were converting into an office, six long-handled shovels, six axes, and six rakes. I set up the account for him that night," he says. "Little did I know then that the Associated Universities of Greenbank account would amount to thousands of dollars in merchandise sales as they opened the now-famous radio observatory." [See "Living In the Quiet Zone," by Belinda Anderson; Fall 2000.]

Ira says that one of the most unusual calls he ever made as a salesman on the road for Kane & Keyser Hardware happened about 40 years ago. The company had received a letter from a man wanting a salesman to call on him, as he had a large order to place. The letter was written on old, yellowed stationery and was given to Ira at a Saturday morning sales meeting. "Salesmen who work an established territory usually know the area like the back of their hand," says Ira, "and from his address, I didn't think it was a legitimate account. So I ignored it." A few weeks later when the company received a second letter from the man, Ira decided to include the stop when he was in that part of his territory. Following the directions given, Ira drove up the mountain where he found a dilapidated house that sported a homemade shingle out front. When no one answered the door, Ira turned to leave.

Just at that time, he spotted a stooped, elderly man accompanied by a pack of dogs coming up the road. "He reminded me of Rip Van Winkle," recalls Ira. "He had a long, white beard down to his waist with hair to match, and carried a long staff for support." The elderly man told Ira that he had a client who wanted to buy a large amount of tin roofing. Ira explained the different weights, styles, and prices of tin roofing. "At this point, the man was certainly dumbfounded," Ira recalls. "He replied that he would have to check with his client and let me know later. Well, later has never arrived." Ira says he later learned that this man had caused salesmen to come visit him from as far away as Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Pittsburgh.

Just another day in a life on the road.

SHARON WILMOTH HARSH, a native of Belington, is the daughter of retired Kane & Keyser salesman Ira Wilmoth. She holds a doctorate in education from West Virginia University and is the assistant superintendent of Monongalia County schools. She has written for the *Journal of the Allegheny Regional Ancestors* and authored a book about late 19th century schools. This is Sharon's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

JOE BLANKENSHIP is a native of Elkins and chief photographer for the Elkins *Inter-Mountain* newspaper. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Summer 2000 issue.

Ira and Gene on the streets of Belington. The sales catalog Ira totes weighs upwards of 25 pounds.

Back To the Future

Huntington's Heritage Farm Museum

By Jeanie Prince Photographs by Michael Keller

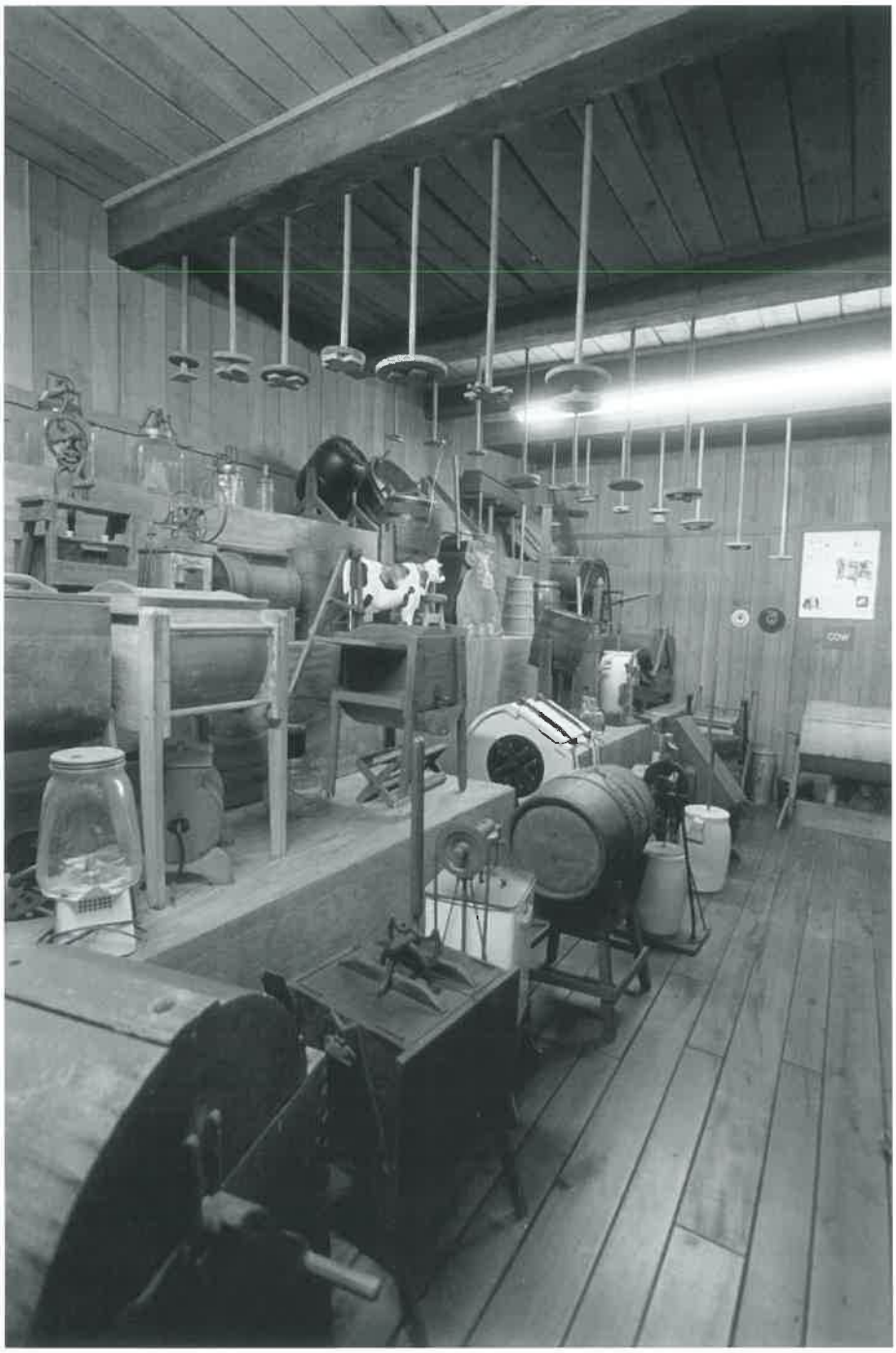
Opposite page: The Heritage Farm Museum & Village in Huntington includes 500 acres, 17 structures, and thousands of items on display. Visible here are the Applebutter Inn bed and breakfast on the right, log church, steam engine building, animal barn, and petting zoo.

Left: Owners Mike and Henriella Perry in the country store museum. The pair have been married since 1958.

Below: Mike demonstrates a hand-operated, pump-action Singer vacuum cleaner from the early 1900's.

Henriella and Mike Perry never spent time on a farm with grandparents, nor did any of their parents ever own a farm. Yet they live on one of the most interesting and unique farms in the state. The couple own and manage the Heritage Farm Museum & Village in West Huntington. A visit to the Perrys' 500-acre, Wayne County farm is like being transported back in time.

The village is filled with restored log cabins and barns, including the couple's log-built home, uniquely decorated with period furnishings. The items in the old general store are so authentic that browsers are almost disappointed when they find that they cannot purchase anything there. Household items, foods, kitchen tools, garden seeds, and old farming tools are just a few of the items on display in the general store. The store also has an impressive collection of antique vacuum cleaners that will leave you feeling very thankful for your electric-powered version at home!



This dairy display in the barn museum building features handmade dashers hung from the ceiling, a variety of churns and crocks, and two or three small cows.

The idea for the development of the historical village and museum began in several ways. Thirty years ago, Mike Perry was working long hours as an attorney. For relaxation, he played golf. Mike's wife Henriella became concerned that their two small children were not seeing enough of their father. "It was her suggestion that we try to do something as a family, and she asked in such a loving and sincere fashion that there was nothing to discuss," Mike recalls. "She was absolutely right!"

From that point on, the Perry family spent nearly every Saturday "junking" around the Huntington area, visiting estate sales, antique stores, and other places where they could find old, discarded, or collectable items. "We used the money I would have otherwise spent on golfing," Mike says. "It's amazing what we were able to buy for five dollars, 25 years ago. As the years went by, we increased our spending budget, assuming that, had I still been golfing, I would be spending more on that."

Mike also credits friend John Hankins as being instrumental in the early years of the museum's development. "John took me to an estate sale where I purchased some old braided rugs and an apple peeler." It was Hankins' encouragement, along with a visit to the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan, that caught Mike Perry's fascination with what he calls "the

Collecting historic washing machines was an early interest for Mike Perry; he has gathered more than 100 of them, to date. This display in the barn museum ranges from an 1865 wooden model to a 1930's electric Maytag.

evolution of products." One of the Perry village barns houses a collection of over 100 washing machines and related devices. "These machines clearly tell a story from how we washed clothes with homemade soap and a rock, to our present-day, push-button models," Mike says. "I like to show progress. Studying the past helps us appreciate the present and anticipate the future."

Although they have a fascination for the past, Mike and Henriella are perfectly content to be living in the present, using today's modern conveniences. "Henriella and I have no desire to go back to the 'good old days,'" he says. "Living was very difficult then, and the past was not as wonderful as it is often romanticized. Some of the problems they had in the past are similar to those we have today. The 1914 Los Angeles invention of the car anti-theft device is a good example."

"I like to show progress. Studying the past helps us appreciate the present and anticipate the future."

The Perry family includes two grown children who have homes on the farm, and one daughter living in Beckley. They work together on the farm, along with more than 150 volunteers who help with their annual festival. What motivates them to work so hard at preserving the past? There is a twinkle in Mike's eyes as he relates the purpose for the Heritage Farm Museum & Village. "Henriella and I believe that it is important to recognize and appreciate the courage and ingenuity of our Appalachian ancestors. Before many of our mountain ancestors had access to a general store," he points out, "necessity forced them to make or trade for the items they needed." Through the village and farm displays, the Perrys are able to highlight the characteristics of our Appalachian ancestors that helped them to survive everyday life and to cope with the many natural

The transportation museum features 14 vehicles, including this 1908 Sears horseless carriage, shown at right. Ordered from the Sears catalog, it was delivered in boxes and had to be assembled by the owner.

disasters that they faced.

As visitors tour the museum, the Perrys hope to elicit a reaction from them about our Appalachian ancestors. "We want people to say, 'Wow, I don't know how they did it. These people were fantastic!'" Mike says, adding, "An understanding of the past helps us realize how different the future is going to be." The display that shows the evolution of the kitchen over the past 150 years is a prime example. "Surely, men and women who lived 100 years ago could not imagine having a more modernized kitchen. The trick," Mike says, "is to realize the future will change just as dramatically."

The Perrys host a number of elementary school tours, hoping to instill in the children an appreciation for the drives and the goals that were held by early Appalachian settlers. Mike and Henriella believe that education is the key to preparing for the future. "We know that the computer and the Internet are only the beginning," Mike says. "Perhaps one of the young people who pass through our museum will invent something that will replace electricity or the jet engine."

"Perhaps one of the young people who pass through our museum will invent something that will replace electricity or the jet engine."

The Perrys' desire is that young people will understand the tenacity of early Appalachians. "Our pioneer ancestors worked together and helped one another without destroying each other's pride and dignity," Mike says. "We believe these same characteristics are needed to survive today."

Perhaps one of the most endearing aspects of the Heritage Farm Museum & Village is the way in which Mike Perry values the benefits he and his family have received from their involvement. "Junking and antiquing has enriched our lives and our marriage," he says. "Our children love it as

Left: Henriella in the carpenter shop, which displays pre-electric woodworking tools in one part of the barn museum. The barn museum building contains three floors of historic items. It is one of four structures at the site housing major displays.

Below: Mike at the Applebutter Inn — one of three inns on the property.

much as we do."

The Heritage Farm Museum and Village continues to be a work in progress. After 20 years in banking, Mike retired last year as chief executive officer for Bank One in West Virginia, where he oversaw the operation of 19 banks statewide. He is also a former interim president of Marshall University. He still keeps quite busy with community and state government, serving on approximately 25 boards. Mike explains that his upcoming weekend plans include acquiring some steam-powered items for a new village building. Henriella, unable to join him on this trip, will be entertaining yet another tour group at the farm.

The Heritage Farm Museum & Village first opened to the public for a one-day event in July 1995, which has now become an annual event. Each year since then, attendance for the one-day event has been over 2,000 people. This year, the event took place on May 4. The Heritage Farm Museum & Village is open to the public Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. Admission for adults is $6, children's admission is $5. Group tours are also available by reservation. For more information or directions to the museum and village, call (304)522-1244.

JEANIE PRINCE is a second-grade teacher at West Teays Elementary School in Putnam County. She is a graduate of West Virginia State College with a degree in education, and is currently enrolled at Marshall Graduate College. This article was written as a student project and is Jeanie's first published article.

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

A Home in

Kate Pastine Currence at home in Cassity, Randolph County. Kate has lived her entire life in this home. Photograph by Doug Chadwick.

Cassity means home to Kathryn "Kate" Pastine Currence. She has lived in the same house all of her 72 years. Kate and her husband Daultin are the house's only occupants today, but it was once home to the entire Pastine family including Kate's parents and her 10 siblings. It also served as a home away from home for countless boarders, and sheltered Kate and Daultin's own family as they grew up there. Kate's feelings go way beyond pride for this domicile and for the town of Cassity.

Located in Randolph County about 10 miles south of Ellamore, Cassity derives its name from that of landowner Peter Cassity. This small valley settlement overlooking the left fork of the Middle Fork River was once an important link in the working chain of the influential Moore-Keppel company. This company operated a large bandsaw mill and controlled its timber and coal operations from Ellamore for more than a half a century, with railroad, timber, and coal interests in Cassity.

Kate is sentimental about Cassity's past. During its history, there was a company store, boardinghouse, and power house here. It was in Cassity that the Moore-Keppel company mines were located, and the company railroad tracks ran right through the heart of town. A Cassity post office was first established May 1, 1901, with Charles Shahan as its postmaster. This office was closed in 1917, at which time Cassity residents' addresses were changed to Ellamore.

Cassity

By Shirley Gower

On July 2, 1926, a Cassity post office was re-established, sharing space with the Moore-Keppel company store. On October 8, 1965, Mrs. Edith Wolford was made acting postmistress. When the company store closed soon afterwards, the Cassity post office was relocated to Mrs. Wolford's home. This post office was discontinued on April 21, 1967, and Cassity mail is now addressed to Mabie, a nearby town.

Kate's father Tony Pastine arrived in America in 1905. He was born in Italy on April 2, 1887. Tony arrived at Ellis Island with a group of other young Italian men who had been selected by their government to come to America in order to find work. They came from large families who could not afford to keep all of their children. Like most of his group, Tony intended to make some money and then return home.

In Pittsburgh, Tony found employment in a restaurant. Joseph "Big Joe" Moore was a native Pennsylvanian who had entered the lumber business in West Virginia. He noticed Tony and asked if he'd like to come to West Virginia and build a railroad. Tony accepted this job offer and soon found himself in Ellamore. That was in 1906.

"Before he ever started working on a railroad, Dad was caretaker for the Moore family," Kate

Tony Pastine was born in Italy in 1887 and came to West Virginia as a young man. He is shown here in Cassity with grandson Charles Ward, date unknown.

Tony and Anna Pastine with 10 of their 11 children. Tony and Anna are seated. Standing immediately behind them, from the left, are daughters Leona, Clara, Virginia, Joan, and Kate. In the back row are sons Stanley, Charlie, Russell, Paul, and Richard. Louise is not pictured; photographer and date unknown. Of those pictured here, Kate, Joan, Paul, and Virginia still live in or near Cassity.

Kate Pastine as a young woman, standing in front of the coal tipple at Cassity, date unknown.

explains. "He carried wood and coal, gardened, and even diapered the Moore babies. His wage at this time was 50 cents an hour, and board."

In Ellamore, Tony met and married Anna Miller, a local girl of 16. Anna was born September 10, 1896. The couple lived initially in Adolph — also known as Lindale — in Randolph County, up the Middle Fork River a few miles from Cassity.

"They had six children before moving to this house in 1920," says Kate. Tony and Anna were eventually the parents of 11 children: five sons and six daughters. Stanley, the eldest, was followed by Charlie, Louise, Leona, Clara, Russell, Paul, Richard, Kate, Joan, and Virginia.

"This house, to begin with, had just two rooms," explains Kate. As the Pastine family grew, the house was enlarged to accommodate its increasing number of occupants. The rent was $6.50 per month.

Tony was foreman of the track gang, laying rail from the Howell place to Adolph. As his sons turned 16, they each became employees of the Moore-Keppel company and worked for their father on the track. "Stanley wasn't as strong as the other boys since he'd had polio. He started out as water boy, but finally became a track gang worker," Kate says.

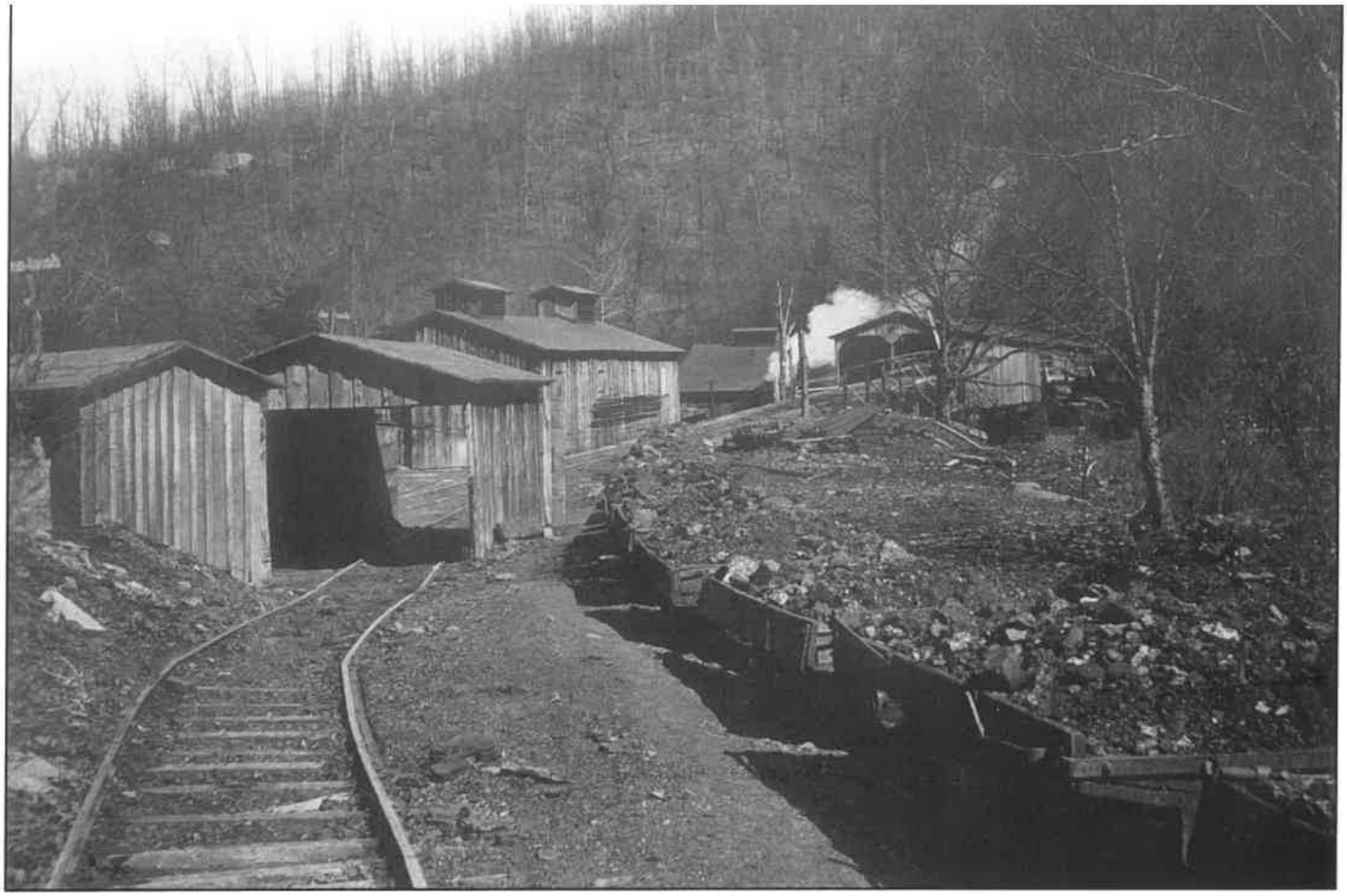
While Tony and the Pastine boys worked on the railroad, Anna and the girls were busy with their own chores. "Mom canned 300 quarts of blackberries each summer," Kate remembers. "Dad would go off on the railroad handcar and come back with washtubs clear full of berries. The berry shelf in that room yonder was always filled." Feeding a large household was a big job for Anna. "She'd make six loaves of bread that was all eaten at one meal," Kate says. "Each month, she'd use up eight 25-pound sacks of flour. It took a 25-pound box of spaghetti every month. It came in a big wooden box."

Kate and her sister Joan milked the cows. "We'd strain the milk and lower it in the well in the eight-pound lard bucket," Kate recalls. The cool water in the well kept the dairy products fresh.

Kate's future father-in-law was Wilson "Bandsaw" Currence, born at High Germany, Randolph County, on July 19, 1896. He and his wife Minnie were the parents of six boys and a girl. Wilson acquired the nickname Bandsaw when he and a partner cut 106 logs — estimated to be 43,000 board feet of lumber — in one 10-hour day. Bandsaw stayed in the boardinghouse at Cassity when he was sawing nearby. "Grandpap," as Kate refers to Bandsaw, "was a soft-hearted man," she says. "He told me he was going to give me one of his boys."

Cassity's boardinghouse was a large, two-story structure, managed by Columbus E. Moore and his wife Etta. On May 20, 1922, this building burned, tragically taking

Cutting timbers for roof supports in one of the Cassity underground mines are, from the left, Jackie Bauserman, Frank Guire, Russell Pastine, and Adolph Wegman. Date unknown.



The Three Forks Coal Company operated mines at Cassity from 1917 to 1966. This pre-1930 photograph shows loaded coal cars at right, and part of the original tipple at Cassity.

the lives of four of the Moore children. Charlie Daniels, a lumberman and boarder at the boardinghouse, saved a fifth youngster, who ran into his arms. Holding the child, Charlie fell backwards from an upstairs window. This fall rendered Charlie disabled thereafter. Train engineer Cecil Brown rushed to the fire with his whistle blowing and sprayed the inferno with water, helping to put out the fire.

"The four children who died in the fire were placed on our porch until the undertaker came for them," Kate says.

Bandsaw and Bill Snyder, who had been boarders at the now-destroyed building, began boarding at other camps in the area. When Kate was about six or seven years old, the men began boarding at the miners' boardinghouse, which was the only boardinghouse near their work area.

"At this house, they were tormented by bedbugs till they just couldn't stand it," laughs Kate. "They said they'd tore a piece of thick wallpaper from the wall, and the inside of the paper was black with the bugs."

This intolerable situation brought them to the door of Tony Pastine.

"Before he ever started working on a railroad, Dad was caretaker for the Moore family. He carried wood and coal, gardened, and even diapered the Moore babies."

"When Dad answered the door, Grandpap announced, 'By God, Tony, we're gonna stay here.' Dad told them, 'My God, boys, we don't have nothin' to eat here 'cept beans and taters.' They walked on in the house and said, 'Well, if that's what you eat, that's what we'll eat.'" Bandsaw and Bill did stay at the Pastines' house, overcoming any objections Tony might have had.

Soon after this, Big Joe Moore made arrangements with Tony to convert the Pastine home into a boardinghouse and had beds sent in a boxcar to the house.

"There were three beds in each of three rooms. Mom tacked thick paper over a bedroom door to separate the rooms. Once, while she was moving a bed to clean, she discovered a hole had been cut in the paper. Through this hole, [my brother] Paul had been passing Dad's homemade wine to Grandpap and the others in the room," Kate says, laughing.

Another boarder at the Pastine boardinghouse was Cecil Brown, railroad engineer on the company's Climax No. 3 steam engine. There was a switchback on the track behind the company store. After a day's work, Mr. Brown would back

Left: Paul Pastine in Cassity, 1942. Over his shoulder is the Three Forks Coal Company store. At right: Paul Pastine today. Recent photograph by Doug Chadwick.

his engine onto this track for the night. After eating his evening meal at the boardinghouse, he would return to his cab and spend the night keeping a fire in the engine and loader.

"Some of us kids would often go and visit with Mr. Brown in the cab of the engine, sometimes until bedtime," Kate says. "He ate his dinner at our boardinghouse and, soon after, went back to his engine."

The "frog pond," as everyone in Cassity called it, was where logs were dumped and stored until they could be transported to the sawmill. The logs were transported to Cassity by truck. Later, the loader operator removed the logs from the pond and loaded them onto a railroad flatcar, which was pulled by Climax No. 3 to the mill at Ellamore.

"The train would come up the river from Ellamore, stop to empty ashes, and water up," Kate recalls. "The engineer would always blow the train whistle at the frog pond. On the way down river, the whistle would blow at the Cassity trestle."

The Pastine children attended the Cassity School, which was about a mile's walk from their home. In addition to being an educational facility, the school was used as a community center and a place to hold social functions. "Radio stars like Grandpa Jones and the Blue Bonnett Girls would sometimes put on a show," Kate says with a smile.

The Moore-Keppel company was initially interested solely in manufacturing lumber, but it diversified into coal production because of their need for this fuel. The Climax steam engines, loaders, and skidders needed in the lumber operation all had ravenous appetites for coal. Consequently, No. 1 mine was opened to supply this fuel. The vast reserve of this high-quality Sewell coal led to the formation of a subsidiary company, the Three Forks Coal Company, in 1917.

Kate's brother Paul worked 25 years in the Cassity mines. He explains the way they extracted coal from the mine. "The cutter bar operated with a six- to nine-foot cutter blade," Paul says. "After cutting, the seam of coal was drilled, and sticks of dynamite were stuck in the holes and the fuses lit. After the explosion, miners placed the coal on the pan line. These lines averaged about 200 feet in length. Workers shoveled the coal onto the conveyor, which carried the coal into the head piece. From the head piece, coal was deposited into the mining cars that a motor car then pulled to the tipple. The mines were anywhere from 32 to 42 inches high.

bers. She also recalls Doc and Chickie Williams; Big Slim, the Lone Cowboy (Harry C. McAuliffe), and others. [See "Doc Williams: A Half Century At the 'Wheeling Jamboree,'" by Ivan Tribe; Spring 1987.]

"It was the biggest thrill in the world for us to be able to stand on the stage with them and sing," Carol believes.

Sometimes between shows, the girls would go back to their dressing room to read their Bibles. It was a "line" their manager had trouble believing, at least until he barged into their dressing room one night to check.

The trio became a quartet in the mid-1960's when Marge Talkington joined the group. Marge stands on the left in this 1960's photograph. To this day, the ladies always stand in the same order when they sing.

"Remember between the shows when we would go to the dressing room and put a chair up by the door?" Joanne asks her sister, who nods in agreement. "There were no locks on the doors, at least not in our dressing room. We took one of the bigger dressing rooms because there were three of us. There was a shower in our dressing room, too, but I don't even know if it worked. We never had to use it. We would take our skirts off between the shows so we wouldn't have to press them again. This one day, we were sitting there, with our feet up in the air, studying our Bible lesson for the next morning. And they thought we had a man in there, didn't they?" she asks her sister.

"Our manager couldn't get the door open because we had that big chair up in front of the door knob," Joanne continues, "and he thought we were hiding a man in there, or something. He pounded that door really hard, and we went and took that chair away. We had our tops on, but just our slips, and he thought that was a dead giveaway somebody was hid in there. He still didn't believe us and went over and pulled that curtain away from the shower. There was nobody in there, of course. But there we sat, with our feet up on that ledge where others would put makeup, but we didn't have any. One of us was reading out loud while the rest of us were reading along in our Bible. There we sat, three little hicks, reading our Bible lesson for the next morning," Joanne says. That was the last time their manager made the mistake of not trusting them.

The girls loved every minute of it and claim to have had as much fun as anybody who went to the "Jamboree."

But as time went on, their singing careers got bigger than they could handle. Joanne had an offer to go solo, an offer that only insulted the devoted trio member. "No way would I ever go solo," she says, noting that she sings best when her sister is by her side. The group also had an offer to go to Virginia to sing. It was at this time that Joanne's husband Dave came home from the Korean War.

"He didn't want his wife's name on somebody's shirt cuff," Joanne says.

"Of course, now he is our biggest fan," says Carol.

"He thinks we are the greatest singers in the world," Joanne adds.

The trio left the "Jamboree" in 1951 and took time off for "Joanne to have babies," Carol says. The girls spent a few years singing with different people around Pennsboro. Finally, Marge Talkington joined the trio in the mid-1960's, and they became the Pennsboro Ladies Quartet with Joanne, Carol, Margie Hess Connon Leggett, and Marge. They might have left the bright lights and concert stages behind, but with their new member and new name, they still had a lot of bookings at churches, festivals, funerals, and other gatherings in the Pennsboro area.

The Ritchie County community loved to hear the girls sing. Every time they went into Ross Brothers' store, they had to sing "Don't Fence Me In" before the owners would let

Joanne, at left, was two years old and Carol was one in this family snapshot from about 1933. Joanne is holding baby brother Ronald Gene.

them leave. The train watchmen in Pennsboro always put in a request for "Mockingbird Hill."

"We sang for five funerals in one week," Marge says.

"We'd sing for everybody that asked us," Joanne adds. The group never asked for any payment for their services.

In their quartet, Marge sings bass, Carol belts out the alto, Joanne sings lead or soprano, and Margie adds tenor. They rarely sing with accompaniment or sheet music. Joanne will start a song, and Margie, Carol, and Marge will sing harmony. Sometimes, Joanne will stop singing, and they'll continue. Then, she'll jump back in to see if they are still on key.

"We can still hear the harmony today as well as we ever did," Carol says.

"They can hear it," Joanne says, sounding amazed. "Sometimes I forget how good they can sing. I start a song, and they come in on their harmony, and I think, 'Oh, yeah!'"

After all of these years, Joanne still worries about where to start a song. "If I got it started too low, they really had to scrape around," she explains. They've been known to start a song over, but more often than that, Joanne has been known to elbow Carol and then raise the key.

The ladies cannot imagine life without music. "I can't even think of it. It wouldn't have been. Music is just a part of your life," Carol explains. "Mama could play a piano. Daddy could play a fiddle, banjo, or guitar. Both were good singers."

The girls have sung ever since they can remember. "I could hear harmony when I was five years old. It was unusual for little kids to do two-part harmony," Carol says. "We would sit out on the front porch and sing at night."

"We were poor growing up, so we sang to keep ourselves occupied," Joanne says. "When we did dishes each evening, one of us would wash and the other would dry. The one who dried would sing into the mop handle. That was a microphone, and we would just sing and sing and sing. Of course, nobody ever told us to shut up. They encouraged us."

The family didn't have a television or a car, so they just made up their own entertainment. They memorized all of the songs in the magazine *Hit Parade*. When the girls were only about five or six years old, they started getting bookings. They often sang for the Parent Teacher Association and at churches.

The four women have all experienced hardships throughout the years. They've dealt with lung cancer, with the death of spouses, with the murder of a grandson, with court trials, with adoptions, with divorces, and much more. They find peace with each other.

As teenagers, Carol and Joanne roped in Margie. One evening, while the three girls were walking home from church on the railroad tracks, Joanne and Carol were singing "Blue Moon." Margie piped in with harmony. It seemed as though their voices belonged together.

"We were in awe," Joanne and Carol recall.

They often practiced by sitting around the kitchen table. It's still their favorite way to sing. They've also

A sense of humor, dedication to family, and deep religious faith are characteristics of the ladies in the quartet. All of these elements are apparent in this snapshot of Joanne from 1965.

found prayer to be a staple in their relationship and in their singing. Even back in the "Wheeling Jamboree" days, they always prayed before they sang.

The four women have all experienced hardships throughout the years. They've dealt with lung cancer, with the death of spouses, with the murder of a grandson, with court trials, with adoptions, with divorces, and much more. They find peace with each other. During tough times, they start calling one another and asking for a getaway. Before long, the four are huddled around a table — either a kitchen table or a restaurant table. They cry together. They laugh together. And to alleviate all the stress of life, they sing together.

"I wouldn't change anything," Margie says. "We've had such a relationship with each other. We get together and talk quite often."

"It lifts your spirits," Carol believes.

"We've had wonderful lives," Joanne says. "There's been a lot of ups and downs, but a lot of ups. When the downs come, you get through them by thinking of the ups."

"God has blessed us," Carol agrees.

At ages ranging from 68 to 72, their skirts are just a little longer these days and their hair a little whiter. They sometimes jokingly call themselves the Old Ladies Quartet or even the Grandma Quartet. They also get more nervous than they used to. "At our age, you don't know what our voices will do," Margie explains.

Still, every Sunday morning the four join in the choir at First United Methodist Church. "After you have sung this many years, you don't want to quit. We still sing in the choir, and people probably look at us and think, 'Oh my goodness, are they still in the choir? Are they still living and trying to sing?'" Joanne jokes. "Sometimes I am amazed at how long we've been singing."

"We've been doing it 50 years. Fifty years is a long time," Carol says. "But the time has flown. I still want to skip down the street like I did when I was a cheerleader, but I can't skip anymore."

She gets a smile on her face as she recalls those years of singing — from the mop handle in the kitchen, to the "Wheeling Jamboree" stage, to the quartet in Ritchie County.

"Nobody has had any more fun than we have," Carol says.

TORIE KNIGHT grew up in Wirt County and attended West Virginia University in Parkersburg. Currently a reporter for the *Ritchie Gazette*, she previously wrote for the *Parkersburg News* and *The Clarksburg Exponent-Telegram*. Her stories have also been published in *Wonderful West Virginia*. Her most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Spring 2000 issue.

Marge, Carol, Joanne, and Margie still enjoy singing. They perform regularly with their quartet in the Pennsboro area, and sing in the choir at church every Sunday. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Sandpaper

By Charles W. Caldwell

My formative years were spent in a large, two-story frame house at the head of Perry Lane in Dog Town — or North Charleston, if you prefer — where I lived with my parents, my grandmother, and my brother Ben. The few other houses on Perry Lane were occupied, most of them by relatives. Those who weren't kinfolk had been there so long they seemed to be.

My father was determined to save the old house from years of neglect and the dampness of the hollow. It seemed as if I grew up working on it, duties with no beginning and no end — just something one had to do forever and ever.

Buddy Jackson lived not a stone's throw away in a small, gabled house. Buddy's father didn't make him work, so he came over to work for my father alongside my brother Ben and me. Unlike us, he thought it was fun.

One summer morning when I was nine and Buddy was eight, he showed up on the back porch. I was swinging and eating an apple, trying not to smell the odor of the sewage that ran into the creek. The creek always smelled in dry, hot weather. It was a fine morning, though, because Dad wasn't working on the house and making Ben and me help him.

"This here's sandpaper," Buddy began, instructing me without even saying hello. "This is rough," he explained, holding up a sheet of sandpaper as if it were a training aid. "This one's medium, and then you have your fine, and your very fine."

Author Charles Caldwell is at right in this photograph. His brother Ben is at center, and friend Buddy Jackson is at left, date unknown.

Of course, I had seen sandpaper. My dad used it to clean the ends of water pipes before painting and wrenching them together or to give a spark plug a little extra life. My dad usually had used, dirty little pieces of sandpaper. But these pieces were brand-new, unused whole sheets, and they were beautiful.

"Whatcha gonna do with 'em?" I asked.

"Dunno. We could sand somethin'."

"Or we could make somethin' really nice," I said excitedly, as I was attacked by an idea.

"Like what?"

"Wait here," I ordered. "I wanna show you somethin'." I ran upstairs to the room I shared with my brother and opened the chest full of old books. There on top was my round piece of convex glass and the *McCall's* magazine with Gail Russell's picture. That picture was my most prized possession because

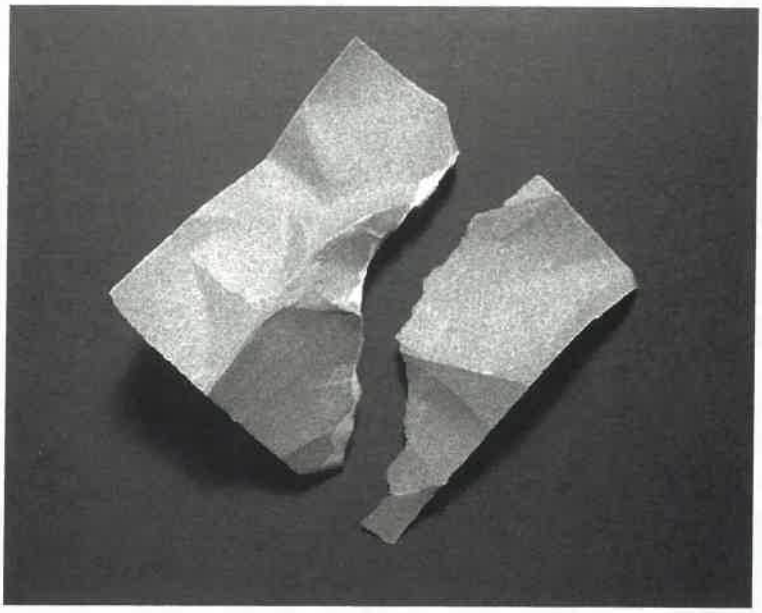
Gail Russell was the most beautiful woman in the world.

"We'll make a picture," I informed Buddy, as I showed him my treasures. "We'll need some glue. You got any glue?"

"Yeah!" My excitement was contagious.

"Well, go git it while I find a board."

Buddy returned from his house with the glue in a flash, and I located an old board. Buddy held the board while I sawed off a piece the right size.



Photograph by Michael Keller.

Starting with course sandpaper, we went to work — first one and then the other, the one not sanding telling the other how it ought to be done. The sanding continued with the course sandpaper until the board looked white and clean. Then, we attacked it with medium-grade sandpaper. At about the time we had done all we could with the medium sandpaper, we were called to lunch.

When I went back outside, Buddy was already rubbing away with the fine sandpaper. He had returned from lunch with some more expert knowledge from his father. Unlike my father, Buddy's father patiently taught him how to do all kinds of things involving guns and knives and tools, mostly things my brother and I seemed to know though no one bothered to teach us.

"Take a block of wood and wrap the sandpaper around it." He showed me how. "It's easier that way," he said.

He was right. It *was* easier and seemed to produce a smoother finish. It wasn't long before we had graduated to the final step — extra fine. The board was so smooth now that it felt like glass, corners and edges all rounded off. It glistened.

Starting with course sandpaper, we went to work — first one and then the other, the one not sanding telling the other how it ought to be done.

The sanding done, we carefully trimmed Gail's picture to fit, glued it to the board, and placed the convex glass on top. Beautiful Gail Russell, looking at us through the convex glass, with the yellow pine background as smooth as a waxed floor, had to be one of the loveliest things we'd ever seen. And we had created it.

"Wow," Buddy said with pride. "Let's show it to my mom." She said that she liked it, but we knew she would have said so, whether she did or not. Buddy's father said that he preferred a mountain scene or a picture of the ocean instead of Gail Russell. I knew better than to show it to my father. He would have admonished me for wasting so much of my time on something so frivolous.

"Let's sell it," Buddy suggested. "Then we'll make some more and sell them, too. We'll make lots of money." As much as I hated to part with Gail Russell, the idea appealed to me.

We called on my great-great aunt Susie, a spinster who lived 300 steps above Perry Lane in a log cabin.

"How much do you want for it, Billy?" Aunt Susie asked. ("Billy," that was me. Actually, it was Bill, but some older folks insisted on calling me Billy, which I didn't like much.) "I don't have no use for no movie star hanging in my house. It is sort of pretty, though." Aunt Susie was a rather sour and humorless busybody who tried to run everybody else's family because she had none of her own. But she was generous and caring. We weren't too young to know that her compliment "sort of pretty" was one of great immensity.

"Three dollars," Buddy said, but his answer connoted a question. I would have asked less, but didn't say anything.

"Well, that's a lot of money. Besides, I don't want no picture of no movie star. You'll have to sell it to somebody else."

We called on Aunt Judy who lived down by the road and had an enormous front yard with weeping

Movie star Gail Russell. Photographer and date unknown.

willow trees and lots of flowers. She was stronger and worked harder than most men. She cared for old ladies for money. When we offered to sell her Gail Russell, she just laughed.

The Bradshaws lived at the mouth of the hollow on Washington Street. There were two Bradshaw daughters, both very beautiful. There was also Eddie, their older brother, probably 20 or so. Eddie had suffered brain damage at birth, but only us kids seemed to realize that it just affected his motor abilities, not his brain. Eddie couldn't speak, read, or write, but we knew that he wasn't dumb.

If you didn't know Eddie, he was scary to look at. He had a long, horse face with horse mouth and teeth, slobber always running from his big jaws. His right arm and hand, as well as his right leg and foot, were atrophied and curled. He walked on the ends of the toes on his right foot with a limp-and-shuffle movement. He tried almost unceasingly — but in vain — to communicate his thoughts through grunts and groans. The noises he made, coupled with his appearance, were enough to convince almost anybody that he was crazy. But one had only to look upon his kind, laughing eyes to realize that he wasn't dangerous.

Eddie liked everybody, even those who laughed at him. He could do almost any kind of physical labor with considerable skill, using his strong left arm and hand to hold things and the gnarled, bent fingers of his right hand as feelers and guides. Eddie mowed grass and did other odd jobs for the neighbors, and always had a little money saved up.

Mrs. Bradshaw, a plump, pleasant lady who was kind to everyone, answered the door.

"We just wanted to show you the picture we made and to see if you'd like to buy it," I explained. She peered through Ben Franklin glasses at Gail Russell and was clearly unimpressed. Then, through the screen door, we saw Eddie appear behind her, laughing and gurgling. He took the picture of Gail Russell from Buddy's hand and looked at it. It was love at first sight. He stared at the lovely, sad-eyed girl for the longest time, making no grunts or groans, like in a trance. Then he let his mother know in no uncertain terms that he wanted to buy Gail Russell.

"Oh, Eddie, no." Mrs. Bradshaw tried to reason with him. "Don't waste your hard-earned money on something like this."

The more she tried to dissuade him, the louder he became. Mrs. Bradshaw attempted to close the door, blocking us from view and hoping that we would go away. But Eddie wouldn't let her close the door, and we were too close to making a sale to turn tail and run now. Besides, Eddie still had Gail Russell. Mrs. Bradshaw, much too kind to look upon two little boys with hatred, looked at us as if to ask, "How much is it?"

"Five bucks." Buddy snapped his answer without hesitation in his high voice. Eddie got the money from his mother and paid us. He was the very happy owner of Gail Russell, and we were happily five dollars richer.

Buddy and I split the fiver and immediately began work on the next picture. But we had no more convex glass and had to use an old window pane. We sanded with less enthusiasm and for much shorter periods of time. We couldn't sell the second picture no matter how hard we tried. Not even Eddie would buy it.

CHARLES W. CALDWELL grew up in North Charleston and graduated from West Virginia State College with a degree in political science and history. He earned a master's degree in public and health administration from the University of Southern California and is a retired CEO of the West Virginia Health Care Association. Charles now resides in New Port Richey, Florida. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

New Books Available

With a wealth of new works by today's prolific writers and a steady stream of important republished material, we seem to be experiencing something akin to an Appalachian literary renaissance in recent times. GOLDENSEAL is thankful to authors and publishers for keeping us informed of their new releases and for sending us review copies of their books.

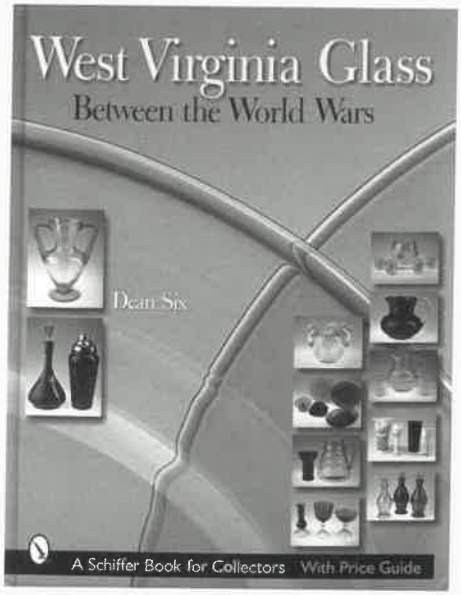
We are especially grateful to Gordon Simmons for helping us tackle this rising mountain of reading matter that has appeared in the GOLDENSEAL office over the past several months. Gordon is individual artist coordinator for the West Virginia Commission on the Arts, and has chaired the West Virginia Literature Roundtable for the West Virginia Library Association since 1997. He offers the following commentary. —ed.

Longtime West Virginia glass historian and Cairo resident Dean Six is the author of a new survey titled ***West Virginia Glass: Between the World Wars***, from Schiffer Publishing, Ltd. Twenty-three Mountain State producers of early 20th century glassware are included in this beautiful, large-format, hardcover volume, richly illustrated with color photographs. Each company is afforded its own section with examples of work produced along with reproductions of original advertising from the period, in many cases. Included in the book are well-known lines such as Blenko, Fenton, and Fostoria, as well as many lesser-known producers.

For example, several pages are devoted to Huntington Tumbler, including 16 color photographs of more than 75 separate pieces, plus reproductions of catalog covers and print advertisements. The author tells us that the company was founded in 1900 by Anthony Zihlman, gives us the range of the product line, how many people were employed, and the fact that they closed in 1932.

In the chapter on Alley Glass of Pennsboro, the background biography of Lawrence Alley reads like a concise history of the state's glass industry. The descriptive captions that accompany the photographs often include a price range, which is useful to collectors.

In addition to the companies mentioned above, there are sections devoted to Beaumont (Grafton), Bonita (Wheeling and elsewhere), Central Glass Works (Wheeling), Columbia (Fairmont), Dunbar, Hazel Atlas (Wheeling), Louie (Weston), Mid-Atlantic (Ellenboro), Monongah,



Morgantown, New Martinsville, Paden City, Seneca (Morgantown), Vitrolite (Parkersburg), Westite (Weston), Weston Glass, and West Virginia Specialty (Weston). [A number of these manufacturers have been featured in GOLDENSEAL articles over the years. For more information, see our on-line index at www.wvculture.org/goldenseal/gsindex.html.]

In the historical sketches written by Six at the beginning of each chapter, the connections between various firms and their founders and workers are noted. The result is a substantial account of the development and evolution of West Virginia glassmaking and an informative, attractive addition to any glass collector's reference library. ***West Virginia Glass: Between the World Wars*** is 160 pages in length, including 500 color illustrations, an index, and an author's introduction. The hardbound volume retails for $29.95, and is available from Schiffer Publishing, 4880 Lower Valley Road, Atglen, PA 19310; phone (610)593-1777, or e-mail schifferbk@aol.com.

Black coal miners have been the subject of some important scholarly treatment over the years. One of the first notable instances appears in David Alan Corbin's pioneering work, ***Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922***, published in 1981. This was followed in 1987 by Ronald L. Lewis' ***Black Coal Miners in America: Race, Class, and Community Conflict, 1780-1980*** and ***Coal, Class, and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915-32***, by Joe William Trotter, Jr.

Supplementing these academic studies with the stuff of everyday life, ***Black Days, Black Dust: The Memories of an African American***

Coal Miner, published in 2002 by the University of Tennessee Press, comes as a welcome addition to the literature. In this autobiographical account by miner Robert Armstead, as told to freelance writer Sharon L. Gardner of Fairmont, the gritty realities of coal camps and coal mines in northern West Virginia from the 1930's onward are conveyed in a realistic and detailed manner. [See "Memories of a Mining Family: Tony Armstead Recalls Four Generations," by Sharon L. Gardner; Winter 2000.]

Robert Armstead's father worked in the mines during the early hand-loading era — difficult days of low pay, long hours, and hazardous conditions. The son, however, entered the mines after unionization and mechanization had changed forever the nature of the industry. The extraordinary nature of those changes and the differences they made in people's lives form the theme of much of this book.

The realities of racial segregation — even as experienced in a work context arguably less egregious than some — serve as a reminder that an already difficult job could be made even more so for minorities within the workforce. The continual perseverance required to overcome such adversity is inspirational testimony to the everyday heroism of ordinary people.

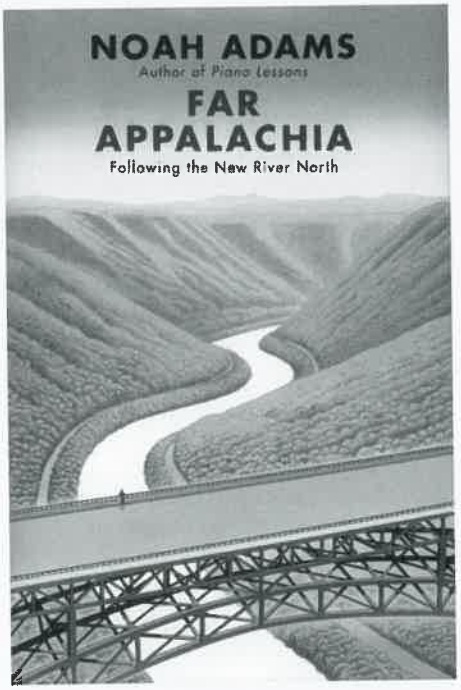
Bob Armstead in 1927 at age 16, the year he entered the mines.

In addition to detailing general conditions in the coalfields of northern West Virginia, ***Black Days, Black Dust*** covers Robert Armstead's own career in the mines. Starting out with a crew making roof supports, enduring mine closings and the subsequent moves to find work, Armstead's hard work and persistence eventually landed him positions as a machine operator, a foreman, and, ultimately, as a safety inspector. He retired in 1987, passing on the material of his memoir to Sharon Gardner prior to his death in 1998.

The 255-page book includes several black-and-white photographs, an index, a glossary of mining terms, and sources for further reading. It is published in both a cloth edition at $35 or paperback at $15 from the University of Tennessee Press; phone 1-800-621-2736.

While West Virginia is undisputedly the Mountain State, we are also a state in which the history and lore of rivers figure prominently. It is fitting, then, that there are so many books published that focus on our West Virginia waterways. There are several new and reissued books now available that deal in various ways with the New, Birch, Bluestone, Blackwater, and Mud rivers.

Far Appalachia: Following the New River North, by Noah Adams, longstanding co-host of National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," is a personal and literary travelogue, reminiscent of some of the earliest accounts of frontier exploration in our state. At times, the pristine



nature found by previous explorers still echoes in Adams' descriptions. More than a few times, however, the effects of our species on the river and its terrain are all too visible, as when the author recounts the building of the Hawks Nest Tunnel.

Adams begins his journey at the New River's North Carolina headwaters and traverses the entire length, ending at Gauley Bridge, spinning anecdotes about the people and places he encounters along the way. The overall effect of this book is one of great reverence for New River, its valley, and for those who live there. The 234-page hardcover edition, published by Delacorte Press, is $23.95 and is available at most bookstores.

River on the Rocks: The Birch River Story, by Braxton County native Skip Johnson, is both historical and naturalist in it's treatment. It tells how the Birch is formed by the joining of two streams in remote Webster County, and follows the river through its course geographically and through time beginning with the first settlers to the area in the late 1700's. Much of the history of

Webster, Nicholas, and Braxton counties ends up being told, including important chapters on logging in West Virginia. Liberally illustrated with black-and-white and color photographs, the book includes a detailed catalog of the flora and fauna to be found along the river's path. Skip Johnson's 394-page volume is his fourth published book. It is offered in hardcover for $22.50 from the author at 5180 Herold Road, Sutton, WV 26601, or through the Web site www.scenicbirchriver.com.

Mud River Tales: A Collection of Stories in Rhyme, by Lawrence Lyman Pauley, is a nostalgic text in verse about coming of age in Depression-era Hamlin, Boone County. A combination of history, folklore, and humor are presented in rhyming verse with illustrations by the author. Beyond the book's nostalgic appeal of the details of small-town life at the midpoint of the 20th century, there are also issues of meaning and moral guidance. The Mud River forms a backdrop for many of these personal tales. The 118-page, hardbound edition sells for $14.95 and is published by Discovery Press, 945 Fourth Avenue, Suite 200A, Huntington, WV 25701; phone (304)697-3236.

Two recent books focus attention on the Bluestone River. ***Clay Family Settlement on the Bluestone River***, by William Sanders, is a genealogical and historical study beginning in the 1780's, and following the settlement of the Bluestone area by the Clay, Farley, Shrewsbury, Belcher, and Bailey families. It begins with a local account of frontier warfare and continues with accounts of family history and migrations, with special attention paid to issues surrounding the tragic massacre of three Clay children in 1783. Also in this volume are rough notes from local researcher Darrell McPherson, "Courthouse Notes and Local Traditions Bearing on the Principal Settlement Families of the Bluestone River in Mercer County, West Virginia." Illustrated throughout with black-and-white photographs, maps, and charts, the book includes an extensive index of family and local names. The 175-page, large-format paperback is available for $18 from the author at 320 Courthouse Road, Princeton, WV 24740; phone (304)425-8125.

Construction of the Bluestone Dam, photographer and date unknown.

Bluestone Dam 50th Anniversary Commemorative Album: 1949-1999, by Stephen D. Trail, is an attractive, 144-page photographic collection produced to celebrate the construction of Bluestone Dam on New River, just below its confluence with the Bluestone, near Hinton. Also included in the book are brief historical, geographical, and geological texts. The large-format, hardcover book is priced at $51, including shipping and handling, available from Fox Print, 217 Ballange Street, Hinton, WV 25951.

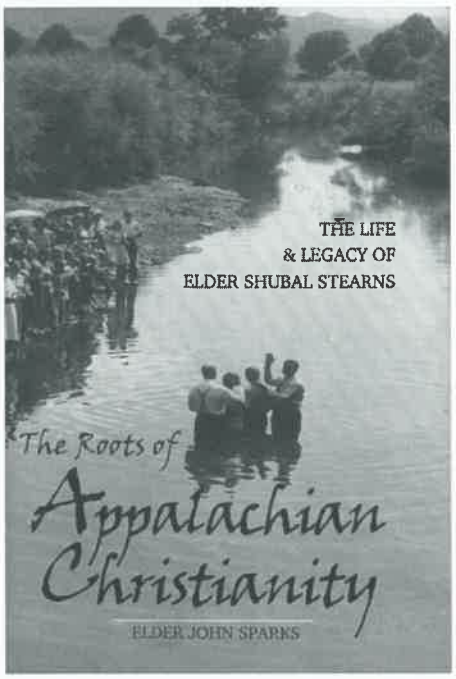
Blackwater Chronicle, by Philip Pendleton Kennedy, will be published later this year. It is a reprint of the classic, often humorous, travelogue of an 1851 expedition along the Blackwater to the North Branch of the Potomac River in what is now West Virginia. Included in the party of explorers was famed illustrator and writer David Hunter Strother. Originally published in 1853, the new edition will include an introduction by Timothy Sweet, detailing the book's historical and literary significance. For more information, contact West Virginia University Press, P.O. Box 6295, Morgantown, WV 26506; phone (304)293-8400.

A recent trend in books is the blending of regional history with biographical and autobiographical content. This mix of "people" and "place" is achieved in varying degrees by a number of new books set in our state and region.

At Home in the Heart of Appalachia, by John O'Brien, joins the growing list of impressive literary memoirs from the Mountain State. It goes beyond that to examine the elusive bonds of place and family. Born in Philadelphia, author O'Brien found it necessary to explore his father's attachment to West Virginia and to come to terms with broader issues of Appalachian identity in order to understand himself. In the process, he produces a moving account of the difficulties of a father-and-son relationship and a critical appraisal of our region's history and distinctiveness. Set in Pendleton County, ***At Home in the Heart of Appalachia*** is the most recent winner of the Weatherford Award, and is also a nominee for the Pulitzer Prize in nonfiction. Autographed copies of this 306-page, hardcover edition, published by Alfred A.

Knopf, are available for $26.50 from the author by writing to him at P.O. Box 148, Franklin, WV 26807.

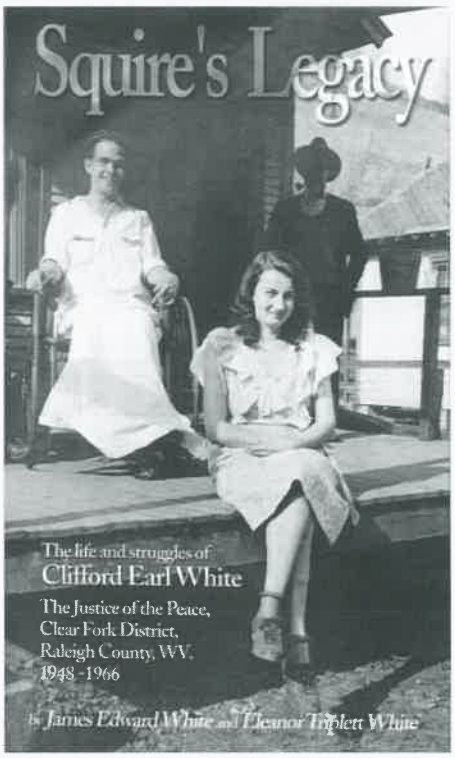
The Roots of Appalachian Christianity: The Life and Legacy of Elder Shubal Stearns, by Elder John Sparks, traces the influence of a relatively unknown 18th century evangelist on the development of the style and substance of rural religion in the Southern uplands. From the distinctive voice used in preaching and song to the intricacies of Protestant church history, author Elder John Sparks finds in the life of Stearns an explanation for many common elements found in Appalachian worship. Along the way, Sparks offers new insights on issues ranging from the Regulator and Whisky rebellions to the origins of the Primitive Baptists of West Virginia. This blend of biography and denominational and regional history is likely to inspire interest and debate beyond the confines of academia. The hardbound edition, 327 pages with bibliography and index, is available for $32.50 from the University Press of Kentucky, 663 South Limestone Street, Lexington, KY 40508; phone 1-800-839-6855.



War and Work: The Autobiography of Thurman I. Miller recounts the life of this Wyoming County native from his World War II experience in the Pacific theater to a job as a West Virginia coal miner. On the battlefield and in the coal camp, this is the story of one member of the "Greatest Generation" that can be summed up in the author's claim: "I count myself a very lucky man." Published by iUniverse.com for $18.95, this 236-page paperback book can be ordered from the author by writing to him in Helen, WV 25853; phone (304)774-0109.

Tall Tales But True is a collection of anecdotes gleaned from a lifetime in West Virginia by Raymond Daugherty. Born in Landgraff, McDowell County, the author has lived for the last five decades in Mathias, Hardy County. From his childhood to his experiences in the CCC camps, World War II, career, hunting, and fishing, the details of his life are mined for stories both vivid and humorous. The 134-page paper bound edition, now in its second printing, sells for $12, and may be ordered from Raymond Daugherty, Route 1 Box 125, Mathias, WV 26812; phone (304)897-5366.

Squire's Legacy: The Life and Struggles of Clifford Earl White; The Justice of the Peace, Clear Fork District, Raleigh County, WV 1948-1966 is written by James Edward White and Eleanor Triplett White. Both authors are former teachers and are now innkeepers at Pipestem. The 347 pages of family recollections and photographs document the hard times and resilient spirit of a coal miner injured during a slate fall who went on to political and social prominence in his rural West Virginia community. The paper bound book is published by iUniverse.com for $18.95, and



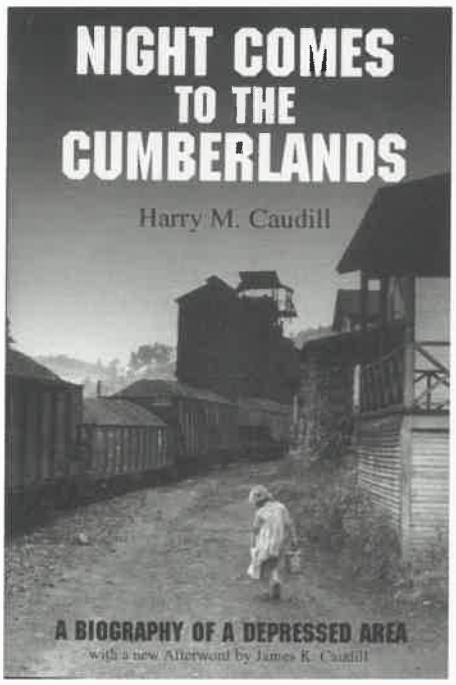
is available from Nostalgia Inn, P.O. Box 13, Pipestem, WV 25979; phone (304)466-0470.

Important historical studies of West Virginia and the southern Appalachian region continue to be published, both as newly written books and as reprints of now-classic texts.

The Rending of Virginia: A History, by Granville Davisson Hall, originally published in 1901, has long been regarded as a classic account of West Virginia's movement toward statehood as told from a pro-Unionist position. Hall, West Virginia's second secretary of state, played an instrumental role in the statehood process, recorded the constitutional convention proceedings, and preserved every printed document from the assembly. He combined this documentation with his own first-hand observations to create his original account of the birth of our state. This 2000 reprint from the University of Tennessee Press is enhanced with an introduction by John Edmund Stealey III, history

professor at Shepherd College. Recognizing that Hall was a key player in the very events he described, Stealey makes a strong case for the importance of "undetached history." The 622-page paperback edition sells for $38, and is available by calling 1-800-621-2736.

Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area, by Harry M. Caudill, originally published in 1963, is recognized as a path-breaking study of the cruel irony of the region's historical trajectory — a rich and beautiful place tragically scarred by continuous exploitation. The political, economic, and ecological issues raised in Caudill's analysis will strike readers today with the same force and relevance that they did nearly 40 years ago. The recent reprint from Kentucky's Jesse Stuart Foundation includes an afterword by the



author's son James K. Caudill, addressing the historical context and consequence of this essential book on Appalachia. Illustrated with black-and-white photographs, this 404-page paperback volume is priced at $15, and can be ordered from the publisher at P.O. Box 669, Ashland, KY 41105; phone (606)326-1667.

A History of Appalachia, by Richard B. Drake, published in 2001, stands as proof that new works in regional studies merit consideration alongside reprints of the classics. This is a one-volume, comprehensive treatment of our region written by a pioneering scholar in the study of Appalachia. Like Caudill, Drake analyzes the region's past and gives some indications — and hope — for the future. In many ways, this book makes an excellent companion volume for ***Night Comes to the Cumberlands***. The book is available in hardcover and is 292 pages in length with index, endnotes, and bibliography. It is available from the University Press of Kentucky and sells for $29.95. To order, contact the Press at 663 South Limestone Street, Lexington KY 40508; phone 1-800-839-6855.

Another important new book about our region comes from the pen of Appalachian State University historian John Alexander Williams. ***Appalachia: A History*** is Williams' sixth book; his previous works include ***West Virginia and the Captains of Industry*** and ***West Virginia: A History***, both published by West Virginia University Press. In his latest offering, Williams takes a broad view, analyzing the entire mountain region over the course of more than 500 years of human history. Like Williams' previous writings, ***Appalachia: A History*** is a blend of academia, oral history, personal observation, and colorful prose. The 398-page paper-bound book includes maps, tables, a bibliography, footnotes, index, and dozens of black-and-white illustrations. Published in 2002 by the University of North Carolina Press, it sells for $19.95 plus shipping and is available by calling 1-800-848-6224.

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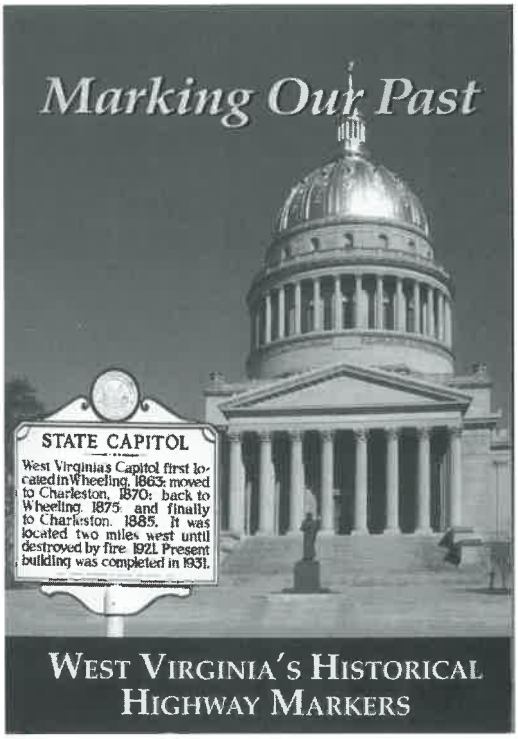
Historical Highway Marker Book

Nearly 1,000 historical highway markers dot West Virginia roadsides, drawing attention to prehistoric, historic, scenic, and geological points of interest in all 55 counties. Thanks to a new book from the State Archives and History section, a complete guide containing the full inscriptions of these markers is now available. *Marking Our Past: West Virginia's Historical Highway Markers* includes marker locations, a brief history of the marker program, and more than 100 photographs. Arranged alphabetically by county, the 182-page book includes popular sites such as the Wheeling Suspension Bridge, Hawks Nest Tunnel, and John Brown's Fort, along with many lesser-known stops such as George Washington's "Lost Colony" in Mason County and Ice Mountain in Hampshire County. Also included is an extensive 26-page index.



The book sells for $15, including tax, postage, and handling, with all proceeds from sales going to support the highway marker program. Send check or money order made out to West Virginia Archives and History to The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300; phone (304)558-0230, ext. 166.

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- Schools for the Deaf and Blind
- Lost Creek
- Long's Store
- Braxton County Monster

Vandalia Award to Bob Kessinger

Mandolinist extraordinaire Bob Kessinger is the most recent recipient of the prestigious Vandalia Award, given each year by the Division of Culture and History to honor outstanding contributions to the preservation of our state's folklife and traditional culture. He is the first mandolin player to receive the award.

Originally from the Charleston area, Bob makes his home near the community of Harmony, in rural Roane County. He has played old-time music nearly all of his 76 years, inspired by his father Everett Kessinger, uncle Clark Kessinger, and several fine musicians related to his grandmother Alice Mann. [See "The Kessinger Family," by Paul Gartner; Fall 1997.]

Surrounded by some of the top fiddlers in the country — and some of the most competitive — Bob grew up with a keen appreciation for the fine points of traditional music. After serving in World War II, Bob returned to the Kanawha Valley where he worked in the chemical industry, and played music on the radio for a time with a group called the Mountain Melody Boys.

In 1955, Bob became a minister in the Church of Christ, and preached in six states over the next 10 years. Also in 1955, Bob's son Robin Kessinger was born, followed in 1963 by son Dan. Bob soon passed his musical heritage and knowledge along to his sons, who grew to become champion multi-instrumentalists. Robin Kessinger is especially noted for his impressive guitar playing, while Dan excels on several instruments, including the fiddle. Together, Bob, Robin, and Dan perform and record as the Kessingers.

Bob Kessinger of Roane County, the most recent recipient of the prestigious Vandalia Award. Photograph by Michael Keller.

In addition to passing on his musical legacy to his family, Bob has been a tireless advocate for the preservation and promotion of West Virginia traditional music and cultural heritage. The much-deserved Vandalia Award was presented to Bob Kessinger by commissioner Nancy Herholdt on May 25, as part of the 2002 Vandalia Gathering. Congratulations, Bob!

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PERIODICALS

Inside Goldenseal

Page 30 — Hollidays Cove was the site of a shocking double murder in 1887. A local man was convicted of the crime, but the controversy surrounding the case lives on.

Page 24 — Cameron's semi-circular swimming pool in Marshall County is one of several unusual and historic pools still in use in the Northern Panhandle.

Page 58 — Sweet harmony can be found in Ritchie County, thanks to the Pennsboro Ladies Quartet.

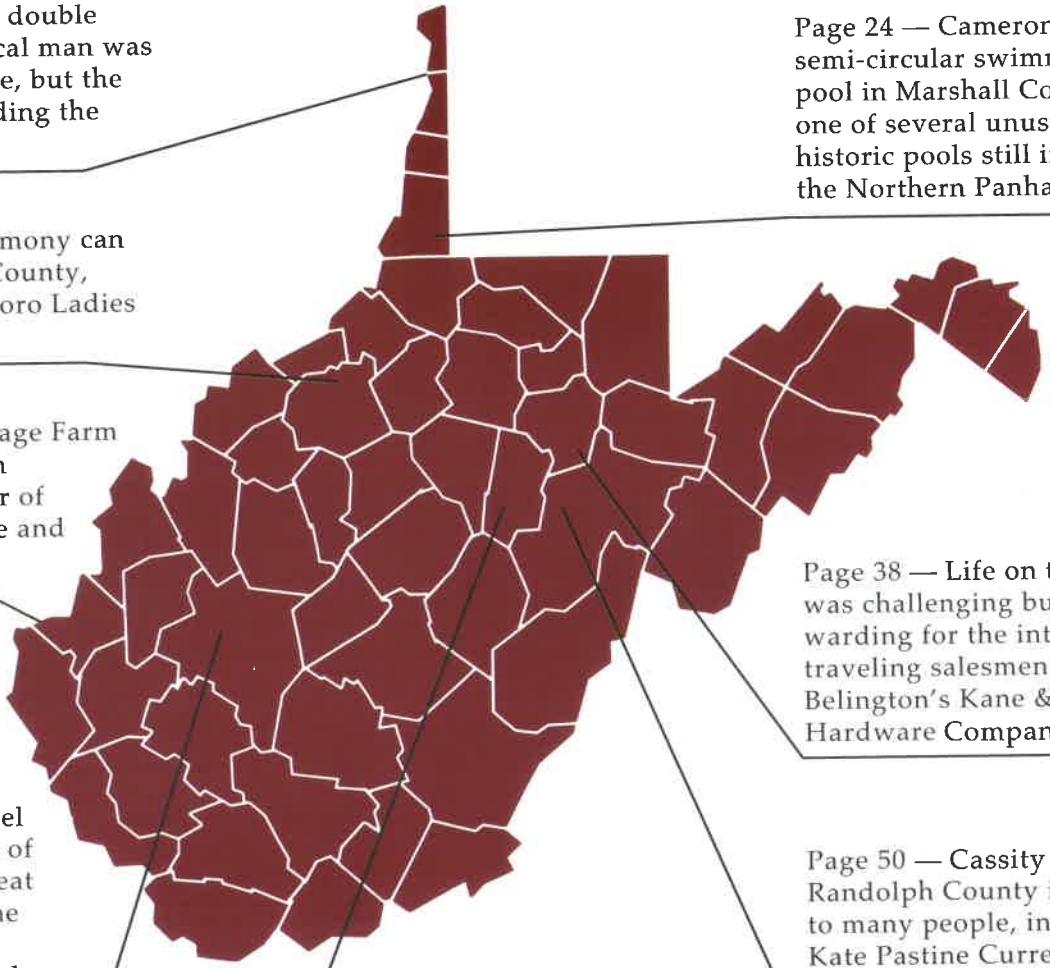
Page 44 — The Heritage Farm Museum & Village in Huntington is a labor of love for owners Mike and Henriella Perry.

Page 38 — Life on the road was challenging but rewarding for the intrepid traveling salesmen of Belington's Kane & Keyser Hardware Company.

Page 10 — Sternwheel captain Pete Grassie of Dunbar plies the Great Kanawha River in the *Princess Margy*, an impressive boat that he built himself.

Page 50 — Cassity in Randolph County is home to many people, including Kate Pastine Currence, who still lives in the same house where she was born.

Page 18 — Fidler's Mill in Arlington is an Upshur County landmark with a grand history, and a new lease on life.



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