

Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Spring 2003

\$4.95

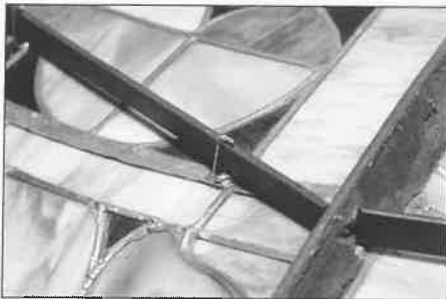


Folklife*Fairs*Festivals 2003

GOLDENSEAL's "Folklife*Fairs*Festivals" calendar is prepared three to six months in advance of publication. The information was accurate as far as we could determine at the time the magazine went to press. However, it is advisable to *check with the organization or event to make certain that the date or location has not been changed*. The phone numbers given are all within the West Virginia (304) area code. Information for events at West Virginia State Parks and other major festivals is also available by calling 1-800-CALL-WVA. This list is also posted on our Web site at www.wvculture.org/goldenseal.

March 13-20 Ireland (452-8962)	Irish Spring Festival	June 7 Romney (496-8002)	Herb & Arts Gathering Festival
March 14-16 Berkeley Springs (1-800-447-8797)	George Washington's Bathtub Celebration	June 7-8 Shinnston (592-0177)	Shinnston Rails-to-Trails Days
March 15-16 New Creek (788-5482)	Maple Festival	June 12-15 Matewan/Williamson/Delbarton (235-5240)	4th Annual Hatfield/McCoy Reunion
March 15-16 Pickens (924-5096)	W.Va. Maple Syrup Festival	June 13-14 New Cumberland (564-5385)	Hancock County Quilt Show
March 21-23 Pipestem (466-1800)	Appalachian Heritage Weekend	June 13-15 Harpers Ferry (1-800-624-0577)	32nd Annual Spring Mt. Heritage Art & Crafts Festival
March 21-23 Shepherdstown (263-2531)	Upper Potomac Spring Dulcimer Festival	June 13-15 Ronceverte (647-3825)	Ronceverte River Festival
April 12 Landmark Studio/Sutton (637-1334)	The Birthday Concert	June 14 Cairo (628-3321)	W.Va. Basket Festival
April 19 Lost Pavement (863-6342)	Antique Plowing Contest	June 14 Huntington (522-3180)	Juneteenth Celebration
April 25-27 Huntington (696-5990)	Dogwood Arts & Crafts Festival	June 17-21 Madison (369-9118)	W.Va. Coal Festival
April 25-27 Petersburg (257-2722)	Spring Mountain Festival	June 19-22 Glenville (462-8427)	W.Va. State Folk Festival
April 26 Richwood (846-6790)	Feast of the Ramson	June 20-22 West Huntington (525-1500)	Old Central City Days Festival
April 26 Mount Clare (622-3304)	Spring Fling	June 21 Mountwood Park/Parkersburg (489-1596)	Wood County Flywheel Festival
April 26 Elkins (636-2717)	International Ramp Cook-Off & Festival	June 26-29 Summersville (872-3145)	Bluegrass Festival
May 2-3 Kanawha State Forest (755-2990)	Frontier Gathering	June 27-29 Hillsboro (1-800-336-7009)	Little Levels Heritage Fair
May 3 Cairo (628-3321)	W.Va. Marble Festival	July 2-5 Cedar Lakes/Ripley (372-8159)	Mountain State Art & Craft Fair
May 3-4 Point Pleasant (675-5737)	Steam & Gas Engine Show	July 5-6 Point Pleasant (675-5737)	Pioneer Days
May 7-10 Blennerhassett Island/Parkersburg (420-4800)	Rendezvous on the River	July 10-12 Ellenboro (869-3780)	Ellenboro Glass Festival
May 8-11 Blackwater Falls/Davis (558-3370)	41st Wildflower Pilgrimage	July 10-13 Bridgeport (842-8240)	Benedum Festival
May 10 Webster (265-5549)	Mother's Day Founder Festival	July 10-13 Marlinton (1-800-336-7009)	Pioneer Days
May 11 Grafton (265-1589)	Observance of Mother's Day	July 11-13 Talcott (466-1729)	John Henry Days
May 14-18 Buckhannon (472-9036)	W.Va. Strawberry Festival	July 12-13 Arthurdale (864-3959)	New Deal Festival
May 14-18 Point Pleasant (675-5737)	Annual Bend Area Gospel Jubilee	July 16-19 Durbin (1-800-336-7009)	Durbin Days
May 15-18 Fairmont (363-2625)	Three Rivers Festival	July 25-27 Morgantown (291-6720)	Arts & River Festival
May 17-18 Moundsville (845-6200)	5th Annual Elizabethtown Festival	July 26-27 Cowen (226-3366)	Cowen Historic Railroad Festival
May 17-18 Buffalo (937-2755)	Heritage Days & Civil War Weekend	July 30-August 2 Camp Washington-Carver/Clifftop (438-3005)	Appalachian String Band Music Festival
May 23-25 Webster Springs (847-7666)	Woodchopping Festival	July 31-August 2 Nutter Fort (623-2381)	W.Va. Blackberry Festival
May 23-25 State Capitol Complex/Charleston (558-0162)	27th Vandalia Gathering	July 31-August 2 Spanishburg (425-1429)	Mercer County Bluestone Valley Fair
May 23-25 Fairmont (366-3819)	22nd Head-of-the-Mon-River Horseshoe Tournament	August 1-2 Meadow Bridge (484-7250)	Meadow Bridge Homecoming Festival
May 24-25 Martinsburg (367-1687)	West Virginia Wine & Arts Festival	August 1-3 Buckhannon (473-8104)	W.Va. Square, Round Dance & Clogging Convention
June 1 Charleston (776-1308)	Rhododendron Outdoor Arts & Crafts Festival	August 2-3 New Creek (788-5129)	Living History Days
June 5-7 Middlebourne (758-4266)	Heritage Festival	August 4-9 Mannington (986-1911)	Mannington District Fair
June 6-8 New Martinsville (455-1406)	River Heritage Days	August 8-10 Pinch (965-3084)	102nd Pinch Reunion
June 6-8 Weston (269-2210)	Weston Carp Festival		

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On the cover: The 18-foot-diameter stained glass dome in the Randolph County courthouse in Elkins, long hidden from view, has recently been uncovered and restored to its original beauty. Photograph of dome detail by Michael Keller. Our story begins on page 10.

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From the Editor

I just returned from eating my lunch in the capitol cafeteria. It's an interesting place at any time of the year, but especially so when the state legislature is in session. As I write this, the session is going great guns, and I'm happy to see it. It's good to know that our elected officials are hard at work, along with their staffs, the press, countless lobbyists, lawyers, visiting school children, and all those other people who join me for lunch every day.

When I introduce myself to these people and tell them what I do, I'm almost always greeted by a single question: Are you being hurt by these budget cuts? It's no secret that West Virginia is struggling to make ends meet. Everywhere, government officials and administrators are having to make the tough decisions about where they can afford to spend a few dollars, and where they need to trim.

The good news is that GOLDENSEAL is entirely self-sufficient financially, and has been for a number of years. We are very proud of the fact that you, our readers, think enough of our publication to faithfully subscribe and religiously renew, keeping us consistently in the black. Thank you, a thousand times over!

The bad news is that the same harsh realities that cause

budget shortfalls in state government can cause hard times for us, too, as family purse strings are tightened and non-essential items, such as magazines, are sometimes left out of the budget. Overall, our magazine sales have fallen by about 10% over the past few years. This is a real concern, but not an insurmountable problem.

Our traditional method of growth has always been through word of mouth and through the sale of gift subscriptions. Here's my idea: If only 10% of our readers would give one new gift subscription a year, we could easily make up those numbers. Better yet, if those gifts went to schools, libraries, retirement homes, doctors' offices, barber shops, or other high-traffic areas, we could begin to see a rise in new subscriptions as more and more interested people become exposed to GOLDENSEAL.

I'm no salesman, and what time I do have to "market" GOLDENSEAL must be squeezed in with the myriad other responsibilities that come along with the job of editor. That's why I'm turning to you. Won't you help us spread the word about this fine magazine? We'll all reap the benefits.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Lilly".

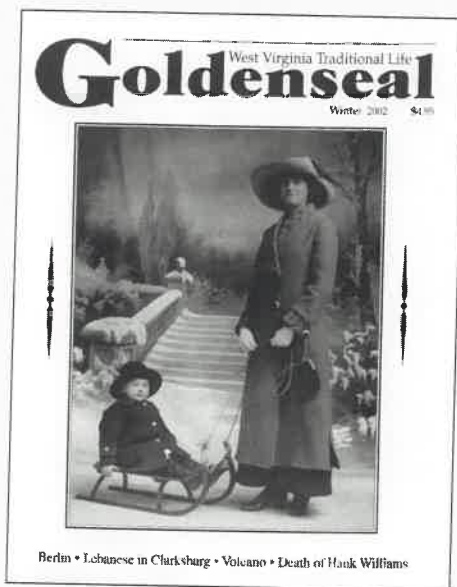
Letters from Readers

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.

Winter Issue

January 15, 2003
Charleston, West Virginia
Editor:

You certainly know how to make a grown man cry. Yes, your Winter 2002 issue evoked for me waves of nostalgia and pride, tinges of seasonal angst, and mostly, joy.



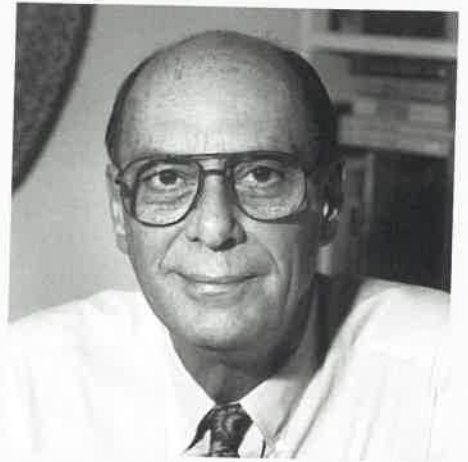
Intentionally or not, you crammed into this finer number more than a few of my favorite things. The original cover design was inspired by my infatuation then — and still — with all things of the 1930's, including periodicals' design, such as *Time*, *Fortune*, and all types of journals. On my arrival in West Virginia in 1971 from Alabama via New York City as an arts and crafts program worker, the landscape was filled with an angelic array of folks who largely were survivors of the Great Depression. Hasn't this time period always been a key focus for this magazine?

Accolades go to your remarkable hard work on cutting away at the well-known chaos surrounding the true life and death of fellow Alabamian Hank Williams [see "I Won't Be Home No More: The Death of Hank Williams," by Maura Kistler]. You, Ms. Kistler, and, as usual, Michael Keller have made a formidable contribution to the history of one of the 20th century's primary musicians, many say.

As for the most sensitively written article on Clarksburg's Michael family [see "Lebanese in the Land of Opportunity: The Michael Family of Clarksburg," by Mary Beth Stenger], just one of the state's several substantial communities of descendants from Lebanon, I can only hope that Ms. Stenger's debut article, this often-chilling account, will not be her last for GOLDENSEAL. The present-day parallels and implications of the Michael (or Sheehan!) century-old saga are very, very moving to this ever-more-firm pacifist. I wonder if I don't speak for all three of this magazine's editors to date by saying that we all have seriously aimed to foster and shed light upon multi-culturalism and ethnic diversity in a state where the term "melting pot" could have originated.

Gerald Milnes' gorgeous grave markers study is another feather in your cap [see "Carved in Stone: West Virginia Grave Markers"]. I can't laude enough his photography and text, and the successful printing quality.

I must briefly note a few of the names in the issue that mean the world to your ol' founder — Jabbour, Hayes, Jones, Lilly,



GOLDENSEAL founding editor Tom Screven. Photograph by Michael Keller, 1994.

Fleischhauer, Duke, Wine, Grubb.
Thanks many times over.

Sincerely,
Tom Screven
GOLDENSEAL Editor 1975-79

Thanks, Tom. Hats off to you, as well, for getting this big ball rolling. There is not a day — nor an issue — that goes by when our readers and I don't owe a huge debt of gratitude to you and to longtime editor Ken Sullivan. Thanks again for those kind words. —ed.

Hank Williams

January 13, 2003
Weirton, West Virginia
Editor:

Enclosed is an excerpt from yesterday's *USA Weekend*, giving attention to Hank Williams. There seems to be a discrepancy about where and how Hank's body was found dead in the back of his car. The *USA Weekend* says that his body was discovered when the car was stopped for speeding. There was no mention of this in your article, which says the police met them at the



Hank Williams. Photograph courtesy of Charleston Newspapers.

gas station in Oak Hill.

Whether you wish to delve into this technicality or not isn't very important. Hank will still be dead.

There is no better magazine than GOLDENSEAL. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Raymond Winter

Part of the legend of Hank Williams involves the wealth of contradictory stories still told about his death. Several published accounts have quoted a police officer from Rutledge, Tennessee, who claimed to have given Hank's driver a ticket sometime after midnight on January 1, 1953, and to have discovered the body in the back seat of the car.

To our knowledge, no record of this citation has ever been found. It is also unclear why a police officer, having reportedly discovered a dead body in a car, would have then sent the driver down the road with nothing more than a traffic ticket.

Whatever might have happened along the way, Hank Williams' body wasn't officially discovered or declared dead until he reached Oak Hill. It's a fascinating topic, and we appreciate your interest. Thanks for writing. —ed.

Crider's Store

December 26, 2002
Wardensville, West Virginia
Editor:

Your book is great. I read it cover to cover. The story of Mrs. Crider was so good [see "Crider's Store," by Bob Whitcomb; Winter 2002]. I've known them for years. She deserves the recognition.
Mrs. Hilda Ewing

January 2, 2003
Woodlawn, Virginia
Editor:

I hope other subscribers got as much enjoyment as I did when I read "Crider's Store," in the winter issue of GOLDENSEAL. Bob Whitcomb's article brought back memories of 60 years ago and my father's grocery store in Mullens.

As a lad of 12 years, I donned an apron, put a pencil over my ear, and began to learn my duties as a store "employee." I swept, stocked shelves, kept the pop cooler filled, clerked, and helped deliver groceries, feed, and hay. I worked after school and on Saturdays.

When I reached the age of 14, I began doing all the deliveries. The state patrol looked the other way when I drove by. He knew that I wasn't old enough to have a driver's permit, but he also knew that Daddy's health wasn't the best, and he needed my help. Sometimes, the customers weren't home, and I went into their kitchens and put perishable foods in their refrigerators or ice boxes.

When I reached 16 and got my driver's license, I went to Monroe County one day per week during the summer months. I had an established route where I called on farmers and their wives and bought whatever they had for sale — produce, live poultry, country hams, and bacon. You name it! All this "farm fresh" food was sold in the store.

At one stop, the children had a

pet lamb, which invariably went under the truck. Each week, the kids had to go under there and pull out the lamb before I could continue my route. Today when I drive through Monroe County, I recognize farms where I made my weekly purchases.

Daddy taught me to make ground beef and I made darned good pork sausage. I learned just the right amount of Old Plantation seasoning to add to make a delicious pork patty!

Some of our merchandise came in bulk, and I weighed and packaged it in paper pokes. Dry beans, sugar, and potatoes were among the foods that arrived in 100-pound sacks. Also, some of the sweets we sold had to be packaged. I particularly remember Daddy's favorite candy — opera creams — and my favorite — hard tack Christmas candy. Carbide for the miners' lamps came in 50-pound drums. Phew! What a smelly job it was scooping it out to be weighed at the time of purchase. Salt herring came in kegs and had to be fished out of the brine using a long-handled fork. Pickled pig's feet and "nickel pickles" came in five-gallon jars, and were



Sharon Mills slicing cheese at Crider's Store. Photograph by Bob Whitcomb.

sold by the piece. A large dill pickle was five cents, and half-a-pig's foot, 10 cents. Compare that with today's prices!

We sold pink and white iced cookies, which were displayed in large glass containers. The cookies were easily broken, and one enterprising and talented little fellow would give us a song and a dance for a bag of those damaged wafers. This lad went on to study music and became a high school band director.

I, too, went on to higher education. First, to West Virginia University, and then to the Medical College of Virginia, where I earned my degree in physical therapy. In 1993 after 38 years, I retired from my chosen profession. I believe the time I spent in that grocery store helped me to learn, and to meet and work with people. I developed a strong work ethic under Daddy's guidance.

Thanks for the memories,
Mr. Whitcomb.
Sincerely,
Curtis A. Clay

December 9, 2002
Kingwood, West Virginia
Editor:

Winter issue arrived yesterday, and my first fast pass revealed what appears to be a horrible error. See bottom picture on page 38. Bologna? No! No! That for sure is the old-fashioned long-horn cheese!

May you and your family enjoy the blessings of this wonderful time of year.
Sincerely,
E.D. Grande

Good eye! We called Sharon Mills, and she confirmed that she is, indeed, slicing cheddar cheese in that photograph. She does admit, however, that cheese and bologna do look a lot alike in black and white!
—ed.

Spaniards

November 9, 2002

Barcelona, Spain

Via e-mail

Editor:

I received GOLDENSEAL magazine two days ago. I have read with great delight all the articles. However, the most fascinating for me has been, "En las Montañas: Spaniards in Southern West Virginia," by Tom Hidalgo; Winter 2001. I have never suspected Spaniards went to West Virginia. Very good story.

I have laughed when I read they did *matanza* — butchering hogs to have feasts, celebrate, and make typical Spanish sausages like *chorizo* and *morcilla*. Mom and Dad told me they did *matanzas*, too, when they were kids. Now they are 55 years old. It seems it was a family gathering, and they did that once a year. It was a special day. They did that in the winter or fall and woke up very early — around four o'clock. The kids did not go to school on this day.

However, my parents did not use the word *matanza*. They called this day *matanca del porc* ("kill the hog") and the sausages they made are named *botifarra*. They choose different words to talk about the same thing because in Catalonia, the northeast area of Spain where I live, we have another language besides Spanish. It is Catalan, our native tongue. We are bilingual, although, in fact, my first language is Catalan.

Thanks again for being so nice with me. Thanks, also, for preserving traditional values and music.

Best wishes,
Gloria Roset

December 7, 2002

Via e-mail

Editor:

My mother, my sister, my sons, and I are members of *El Ateneo Espanol*, but since we live in



Spaniards at a picnic in southern West Virginia, in about 1940. Photographer unknown.

Kanawha and Putnam counties, we do not get to attend the meetings as often as we would like. The article that was in GOLDENSEAL tells about some of the Spanish mountaineers. It does not mention my family, but I know several people who are named in the article. My grandfather Jack Garcia — Joaquin Garcia de Oliver, back in the "Old Country" — was a coal miner.

The small mining town of Minden in Fayette County was a wonderful blend of people from many, many, many nations. These special people still meet once a year for the Minden Reunion. It is held on the Sunday before Labor Day each year.

Thank you for your interest in the rich and, for the most part, unknown cultural diversity of West Virginia.

Regards,
Dolores King



Spring brings daffodils and
West Virginia hills, when
you subscribe to
GOLDENSEAL
see page 72.

January 8, 2003
Vanceboro, Maine

Editor:

Nearly 50 years ago, our family visited Volcano [see "'I'm the One Who Stayed': Walter Taitt's 99 Years in Volcano," by Betty Leavengood; Winter 2002]. I was a student at Ohio University in 1954. One Saturday morning, we left Athens and headed for Wood County. Beyond Parkersburg, we turned off on a country road to Volcano. Our plan was to enjoy an outing and for me to complete an assignment for a photography class by taking pictures of geometric shapes.

When we arrived in Volcano, we saw scenes from the turn of the century — remnants of a once-busy oilfield. For my assignment, I photographed an old garage that had wide and weathered boards for a door, a large squat wooden oil tank with oil-stained bands and planks, and bull wheels. Many wooden bull wheels conveyed power by means of a continuous cable used to pump oil wells. The wheels would [cause] the cable to raise or lower, change direction, and finally power pumps at the well head. Small wheels were probably three to four feet in diameter; larger ones were six to eight feet.

My memory of those scenes is strong. Unusual sights, smells, and sounds surrounded us. Homemade uprights held slowly-turning wooden wheels. Sunlight striking old weathered wood created odd patches of color. A faint smell of crude oil permeated the area.

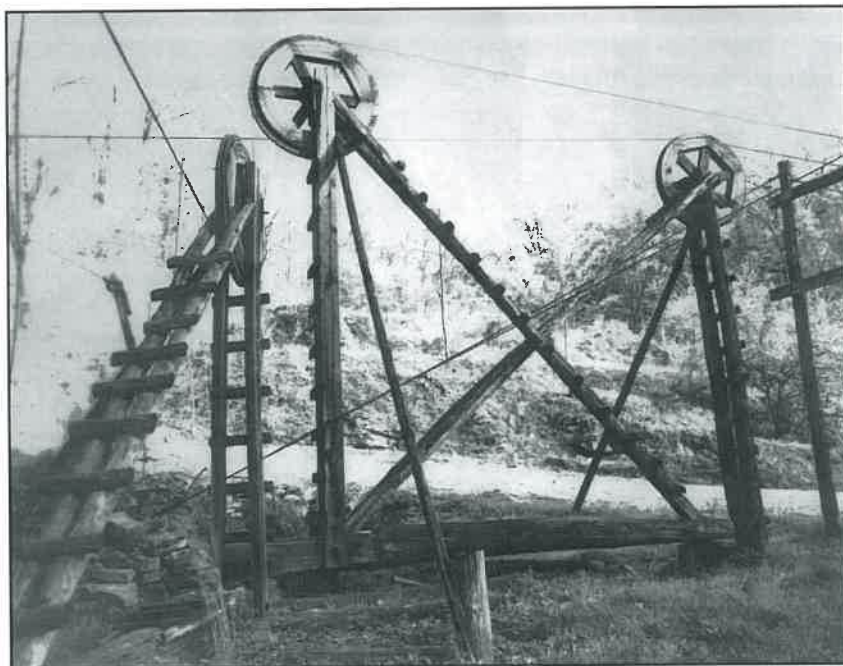
And the sounds were from another world. Groans, creaks, and squeals of metal cable on wooden wheels poured out of each junction. The weird notes and tones would have honored any mystery story.

We drove around Volcano and took photographs for several hours. Only once did we see a person in this area. The person, who I am sure was Mr. Walter Taitt, stopped to talk. He explained that only a single cable was needed to pump 25 producing wells, scattered over a large area. He was quite proud of the work done by the network of homemade rigs.

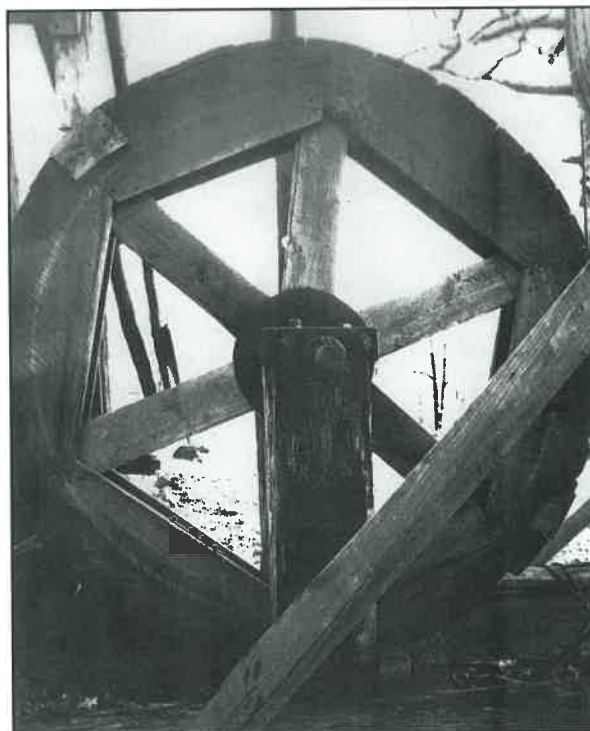
Perhaps these photographs will reproduce the harsh beauty of this historic site.

Borgon Tanner

Volcano



Above, cables and wooden oilfield apparatus in Volcano, Wood County. Below, bull wheel used in continuous-cable oil pumping system at Volcano. Photographs by Borgon Tanner, 1954.



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.



Meriwether Lewis, portrait by Charles Wilson Peale, circa 1807, courtesy of Independence National Historic Park.

Lewis & Clark Bicentennial

Western Virginia's unique role in the historic Lewis & Clark Expedition of 1804-06 will be marked by a series of events scheduled to take place throughout the Eastern Panhandle this March and April. In the spring of 1803, explorer Meriwether Lewis spent several weeks in Harpers Ferry, outfitting his expedition with guns and hardware, in preparation for the arduous journey ahead.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park will recognize this key role played by Jefferson County's easternmost town with a special three-day bicentennial celebration, March 28-30, at the park. Weekend plans call for live period music, panel discussions about the expedition with noted historians, and "living history" presentations by actor Dick

Cheatham as Meriwether Lewis and others. There is no additional charge for these activities beyond normal park admission. For further information, phone (304)535-6298, or visit www.nps.gov/hafe/lewis.

Other activities are scheduled to take place elsewhere in the region, including guided tours, historical re-enactments, lectures, and displays. For detailed information, call the Martinsburg-Berkeley County Convention and Visitors Bureau at (304)264-8801, or visit www.lewisandclarkwv.com.

New Deal

The first annual New Deal conference will take place May 13-15 at the West Virginia High Tech Center in White Hall, near Fairmont. The conference is intended to raise public awareness and appreciation for President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs in West Virginia, including the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Works



Mountains of Music

WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL MUSIC FROM GOLDENSEAL

Edited by John Lilly

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*.

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The Goldenseal Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars



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 Virginia residents please add 6% state tax (total \$13.61 per book including tax and shipping).

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Progress Administration (WPA), and the many initiatives undertaken in the state by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. [See "Happy to Have a Chance: The Founding of Eleanor," by Rick Wilson; Spring 1988, and "Arthurdale: The New Deal Comes to Preston County," by Kathleen Cullinan and Beth Spence; April-June 1981.]

The conference will get underway with an evening banquet, awards ceremony, and keynote address on Thursday, May 13. Activities will continue on Friday with a series of workshops, networking opportunities, and an open-mike session where former CCC members will share their experiences. Saturday will feature a bus trip to related historic sites in the state including Arthurdale, Grafton, and Camp Harrison where the group will visit a CCC museum located in a refurbished schoolhouse.

For further information about the New Deal conference, write to Dr. Robert Anderson, 31 Maple Lake Drive, Bridgeport, WV 26330.

A book about the history of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in West Virginia was published recently by author and historian Robert Anderson. *Written on the Land* is a richly illustrated account of daily life at many of the 67 CCC camps established in the state between 1933 and 1942. The 104-page, large format, paperbound book contains many rare photographs, excerpts from company newsletters, and reminiscences from former CCC enrollees. The book sells for \$19.95, plus \$4.50 tax and postage, and is available from Dr. Anderson at the address listed above.

New Films

Cal Price, the late editor of the *Pocahontas Times* newspaper in



Cal Price at The Greenbrier Hotel, early 1950's. Photograph by Cummins.

Marlinton, is the subject of a new film titled *An Evening With Cal Price*. The 62-minute video was released late last year by Patchwork Films of Lewisburg, and features actor Robert Conte, resident historian at The Greenbrier Hotel, performing in front of a live audience at the Marlinton Opera House, portraying Cal Price. The entertaining production combines words, music, and historical photographs to tell the story of the spirited editor of one of America's last handset local newspapers. Cal Price passed away in 1957 after 50 years as the editor of the *Pocahontas Times*; he was pictured on the cover of our Summer 1990 issue. [See "The *Pocahontas Times*," by Gibbs Kinderman; Summer 1990.]

An Evening With Cal Price sells for \$22.95, tax and shipping included. For information, call Patchwork Films at (304)645-4998, or visit www.patchworkfilms.com.

Smilin' Sid is a new film about Sid Hatfield, the controversial hero of the 1920 Matewan Massacre, who was later assassinated on the steps of the Logan County courthouse. [See "The Gunfight at Matewan: An Anniversary Speech," by Lon

Stained glass artists, whether restoring antique glass or creating new works of art, still work much as their forerunners have done for hundreds of years. From the raw materials to the tools and methods, little has changed regarding this ancient art.

The glass studio of Grace Obana and Joe Brown is a good example.

The Obana-Brown Stained Glass Company occupies one half of a small building located on a side street in Belington. The other half houses WB Sash & Window Company, owned and operated by friend and fellow glass-worker Roger Phillips.

Tiny, dark-haired, and dark-eyed, Grace may be found scratching a pattern onto a piece of hammered cathedral glass to prepare it for cutting. Or she may be outside helping to settle a window sash onto the back of Roger's truck. Joe, his sandy-colored ponytail tied back with a rubber band, may be cutting lead strips for Grace's piece. Or he may be cleaning an antique beveled-glass panel, restored and destined to be placed back in the entrance of a house in Parsons.

A few small, finished glass pieces propped up in the cluttered windows are the only external evidence of the complex operation going on in the Obana-Brown business. One outer door is marked "Office," but there is rarely anyone in that room. Grace and Joe are more likely to be found behind the door labeled "Shop." They are just as often found on the site of an intricate and demanding restoration project. The most recent of these has been to restore the beautiful stained glass dome inside the Randolph County courthouse in Elkins.

Grace and Joe have completed a number of high-profile restorations in the past few years, including the Barbour County courthouse in

Restoring the 18-foot-diameter stained glass dome in the Randolph County courthouse was a meticulous and dangerous job for Grace Obana, pictured above left, and partner Joe Brown. Here, Grace puts the final touches on the rebuilt centerpiece of the dome.



Original stained glass artwork in the window of the Obana-Brown Stained Glass Company studios in Belington.

Philippi and the First Baptist Church of Elkins. They seemed a natural choice then, when the Randolph County Commission decided to undertake a complete restoration of their historic but aging courthouse and its fragile stained glass artwork.

The centennial of the Randolph County courthouse was observed in early spring 2002. As the West Virginia Highlanders band bagpiped the audience into the auditorium, the need for renovations was obvious. The finish on the hard, wooden theater-type seats was scratched and fading. Water leaks had left streaks on the walls and the tile ceiling, and the vinyl tile flooring was chipped and faded. When someone mentioned that the building boasted a stained glass dome, few of the listeners could remember ever having seen it. As had happened in Barbour County, a suspended ceiling — or drop-ceiling — had been installed in the courtroom years before, obscuring

the dome from view.

"Most of the people in Randolph County wouldn't even believe there was a dome," Grace says. "But sure enough, we climbed up to check, and there it was — an inverted bowl, 18-feet across and four-and-a-half-feet deep. From what little we could tell, it had been built in eight sections with about 200 pieces of glass in each section. Joe later figured it out. There were, altogether, precisely 1,446 pieces."

During the next several weeks, Ed Devine, the overall restoration contractor, built a temporary workshop for Grace and Joe in the upper reaches of the courthouse. A custom-made ladder took the workers and their supplies from the second floor into the attic, and new pine stairs led them up onto platforms where the actual work of restoration took place. The dome itself was surrounded by a narrow catwalk. Ed also constructed a movable "pick board" to allow them access to the top of the dome.



Grace Obana and Joe Brown in their Belington shop. Grace is working on a church window, while Joe looks on.

The work was dangerous from beginning to end, even from the first moments of evaluation during the summer of 2002. "It was so dark up there," Grace says, "that we had to bring in portable lights." They had to shinny up diagonal steel girders between the tile ceiling of the courtroom and the roof of the courthouse, in order to find out how much work would need to be done on the dome.

"I was terrified," Grace says. "It was unbelievably filthy, but we had to find out whether the leading in the window was still solid. Fortunately, because the dome is housed under a solid roof and hasn't been exposed to the weather, it was. Otherwise, we would have had to remove the entire window, take it apart, and rebuild it from scratch. The other good thing was that the dome seemed to be stable, so we felt safe in repairing it in place."

Following the preliminary cleaning, one of the first jobs was to remove the centerpiece of the dome, which had been badly damaged and needed to be completely rebuilt. A round piece of acoustical tile had been used as a plug below the dome, so Joe and Ed removed the plug and laid planks

across a scaffolding for Grace to lie on while she worked on the centerpiece over her head.

Grace tells of a particularly dangerous moment when she was sitting on the pick board above the dome and started to drop a tool. She turned to grab it and nearly fell from the board, narrowly escaping a drop through the dome and onto the courtroom floor 35-feet below.

"A similar thing occurred in Barbour County," she says. "I was lying on a plank on top of the scaffolding. One of the workmen didn't know I was there and stepped on the end of the plank. The board tipped, and I came very close to falling off. I had to get down for several hours, and it was extremely hard to go back up the next time. I still shake when I think about it."

She notes that although stained glass restoration work is generally safe, it is extremely important to have tools secured — never carry

them loose. Another precaution is to clean tables and floors frequently because glass filings and scraps are slippery and, of course, sharp. "Those two incidents are very good examples of the principle that when you're working on glass projects, you must always move slowly and carefully," Grace warns.

"The belfry in the Randolph County building had been left open when it was constructed 100 years ago," Joe says. "It was finally boarded up in 1988. In the meantime, birds and bats and who-knows-what-all had been living in that nice, warm space. If you can imagine, the droppings were at least six-inches deep. We found skeletons and even what looked like ancient owl eggs. There was no way to clean out all that stuff except to put on dust masks and coveralls and shovel it out, using brooms and dustpans. To cement the dome to its steel frame, the original workmen used plaster with horsehair embedded in it. That had all dried out. We could pull it off with our fingers."

"After we did the initial sweeping," Grace continues, "we couldn't



The Randolph County courthouse in Elkins, built in 1902. Postcard view courtesy of West Virginia State Archives, date unknown.

get a shop vacuum cleaner up there, so we had to use a regular vacuum, emptying it constantly." And then the work really began.

"We had no idea how much of the glass had been broken, but a hole had been punched in the center-piece when a gas chandelier was put in to replace the original lighting fixtures," says Grace.

"When the tile ceiling was installed," Joe says, "they just rammed two-by-fours through the lower sections of the glass. And the reinforcement bars — the metal rebars — had corroded because of the acid in the bird droppings. Overall, we figure there was about 40 percent of the dome that was damaged or broken."

Because of the curve of the design, the original Carnegie Steel frame had been bent on huge machines. However, the eight sections of the dome itself had been created with flat pieces of glass, so a great deal of breakage occurred even while the dome was being built. "Those guys must have been in a hurry to get finished," Joe says. "They apparently ran out of flat rebar, which can be bent to fit a curve, so they used round rebar, which absolutely cannot be bent."

"You solder copper wire to the lead that joins the glass pieces together, and then you tie the copper wire to the rebars," he explains. "It's really tricky to tie it tight enough, but not too tight. Those guys tied it too tight, and of course, the glass cracked. They just left it that way. We're sure that's when some of the breakage occurred because many of the cracks were filled with ancient dirt. Those guys were probably very well intentioned. They were faced with what looked like an impossible task, and they didn't have the equipment they needed. It was like they'd been sent out into a blizzard wearing straw hats."

First, Grace and Joe removed one of the lower sections so that they could have access to the inside of the dome. As they cleaned, they

removed the badly broken pieces. "If there's just one simple crack," Joe explains, "we're allowed to put in a 'johnny' — a strip of lead that looks like it was there originally. If the glass is really shattered, we have to replace it. The American Stained Glass Association has strict rules about that."

The cleaning process was tedious. While one person vacuumed, the other used a stiff brush to loosen the dirt. When that step was com-

plete, Grace and Joe used a non-chlorine, non-ammonia solution to wash the glass. "We bought bags and bags of rags from Heart & Hand Ministries in Philippi," Grace says. "And after that, we used putty knives and blades and brass brushes."

Joe adds, "Whatever we do, we try to think of the next person who may have to work on the glass, be it in 10 years or 200. We want to make that person's work as easy as pos-



The courtroom of the Randolph County courthouse. This tall scaffold allows Grace and Joe access to the underside of the dome.



This elaborate temporary workshop was built above the courtroom for Grace and Joe to use during the dome restoration.

sible. That's why we never use epoxy to cement our glass. Tar, though, is the very worst."

Now it was time to find the glass to replace the broken pieces. "There were once over 500 glass companies in West Virginia," Grace says. "Glass was a pioneer industry in the state, and we're still known all over the world for the high quality of our products. Everyone who works in stained glass knows about the Blenko factory in Milton [see "'We're In For It': Early Days at Blenko Glass," by Rick Wilson; Fall 1987] and Fenton in Williamstown and the work of Seneca Glass in Morgantown [see "The Seneca Glass Company," by Martha Manning; Spring 1984], Fostoria in Moundsville. The list of companies that made West Virginia glass famous is very long. Unfortunately, there are only about 20 companies still in existence, so we didn't have to check all 500.

"We examined the broken pieces and decided to take samples to the Wissmach factory in Paden City," Grace continues. "They have been around for almost 100 years, and

they make both opalescent and clear cathedral glass, both of which we needed. [See "'Most Radiant Windows': West Virginia Stained Glass," by Martha Manning; Summer 1982.] Mark Feldmeier told us that the original glass may have been made by a company called Advance, but that they closed at least 10 years ago, so we couldn't go there. In the Wissmach store-room, we found one sheet of near-match for the green and white and purple opalescent that we needed, but it was only about nine square feet — not nearly enough. And there are no immediate plans to put that pattern back into production. We also went to Youghioghenny, but none of their glass came close."

"We didn't know what we were going to do when we couldn't find the glass match," Joe says. "If we used mismatched glass, it would look like a patch job. We suspect that some of the original glass was even tank wash, which is also called transitional or curio glass. It's just what's left over at the bottom of the tank, and it's poured

out without using any formula. Obviously, tank glass is completely irreplaceable."

"But the 'gods of glass' came to our rescue," Grace says, smiling. "I had worked for Talbott Glass here in Elkins for a while, years ago, and I had gotten to know Fred Weese really well. He was a glazier with Talbott and would take on any repair job — the only person around to do stained glass. Over the years, he had filled every nook and cranny of his shop with scraps, plus small mirrors and art objects he had created just for the fun of it — or maybe for someone who never picked them up. He even had a bunch of sample boxes, including one from Wissmach dated 1950. When Mr. Weese decided to retire in about 1999, he closed up his shop and wanted to get rid of all that glass, so he gave it to me."

Grace laughs. "I didn't even want it at that time, but I'm certainly glad I took it," she says. "I don't know how many times Fred has saved me, but this time was the most dramatic. Here we were, having gone everywhere we could

When the world thinks of West Virginia, it is perhaps glass — second only to coal — that comes to the minds of many people. Within the broad and long history of glass, the state can claim significant roles in producing stained and leaded glass windows and architectural elements.

From a purist view, there is a distinction between stained and leaded glass. Stained glass is actually hand painting applied to — or “stained” — onto the puzzle-like glass shapes, which are then fired for permanency and assembled to create the overall design. Leaded glass, on the other hand, is made by each individual piece being distinct in color, which, when joined and leaded, make the design. These distinctions are not generally made by most people, however, and all colored, multiple-glass windows or panels are commonly referred to as stained glass.

Stained and leaded glass attained their peak popularity in America between 1900 and 1920, when affluence and prosperity allowed the use of such colorful exuberance in architecture. West Virginia’s primary role was one of production, creating the glass that was used as the color pallet in the making of stained and leaded glass works.

Two of these glass factories remain active today, nearly a century later. Blenko Antique Art Company first appeared in West Virginia in Clarksburg and operated from 1911 until 1913, but founder William Blenko shortly returned to his native England. On his return to the state, he formed Eureka Art Glass Company in Milton, Cabell County, in 1921. This company became Blenko Glass Company in 1931. Blenko’s fame continues today as a producer of mouth-blown flat glass, prized for its strong and bright colors. Blenko glass is used in windows and leaded glass, as well as ornamental glass objects. [See “‘We’re In For It’: Early Days at Blenko Glass,” by Rick Wilson; Fall 1987.]

Paul Wissmach Glass Company opened in 1903 in Paden City, Tyler County, as Empire Glass. Since 1910, the company has operated as Wissmach. Their uncommon process for forming sheet glass, in which liquid-hot glass is passed between rollers onto a flat surface, is called casting. Different colors may be mixed in or a surface texture may be imparted at this early stage. Wissmach glass is sought for the textured surfaces rolled or cast onto some of its products, and for the slag glass — with a swirling mix of multiple colors — which has dazzled users for a century.

[See “‘Most Radiant Windows’: West Virginia Stained Glass,” by Martha Manning; Summer 1982.]

Some producers of colored sheet glass have long ago disappeared from the state. Clarksburg Opalescent Glass operated from about 1904 until 1917 in Clarksburg before becoming Kokomo Opalescent Glass and operating under that name from approximately 1918 until 1928. While the Clarksburg area remains a world-class producer of flat window glass today, all production from this community has been

colorless for decades. In Dunbar, the Dunbar Art Glass Company produced so-called art and cathedral glass from 1912 until 1915. Other West Virginia colored flat glass producers may have existed, but are not well-known.

Many West Virginia homes include stained glass windows, which were often ordered from retail catalogs. More elaborate buildings often utilized stained glass stu-

dios, engaged by the buildings’ architects, to create unique works. Whichever source supplied the finished product, however, the windows often contained glass crafted in West Virginia. Physical assembly of the windows was likely done beyond the Mountain State, though, as there were no known stained glass studios — the firms actually cutting and assembling the designs — from West Virginia during the boom period of the early 1900’s.

Pittsburgh was the site of some of the country’s most successful stained glass studios. West Virginia glass was incorporated with glass from English, German, and other American firms to make the designs. Pittsburgh had three leaded glass firms in 1879, nine in 1890, and a dozen by 1900.

The Great Depression dramatically slowed building in America, and especially impacted the use of optional embellishments such as stained and leaded glass. Excluding, perhaps, houses of worship and limited public buildings, the modern style of architecture that emerged after the Depression never returned to the widespread use of stained and leaded glass. Those older buildings that remain, however, reveal a legacy of early 20th century leaded and stained glass with strong ties to the Mountain State.

DEAN SIX is a Ritchie County native and a nationally recognized authority on glass history. He holds five degrees from West Virginia University, including a doctorate in law. Dean has published several books on the history of West Virginia glass and other subjects, and owns a number of small businesses in his home county. This is Dean’s first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Stained Glass in West Virginia A Brief History

By Dean Six



Grace Obana is an experienced stained glass artist who has learned to be cautious, especially when working in a precarious position, such as this. Here, she is stretched out on a board above the dome, 35-feet in the air, securing the centerpiece with small pieces of copper wire.

think of to match the broken glass from the dome, and one night I just decided to check Mr. Weese's stuff. And would you believe, there was a sheet of about 18 square feet — the rest of what we had to have." She shakes her head in wonder and adds, "Our deadline for completing the restoration was November 15. The 'glass gods' came through for us on November 1." Her dark eyes widen as she reports that Fred Weese died just last summer.

The work of cutting the replacement pieces took place primarily in the Obana-Brown studio in Belington. Grace also worked there on rebuilding the centerpiece, a process that resembled the building of a new work. In putting a panel together, the pieces are laid out on a "cartoon," which is a full-size, scale drawing of the design. Strips of lead called "comes" are laid between the pieces. The pieces are inserted into the channels of the lead strips, and then the lead is peeled back for cementing.

Cementing and cleaning the glass involve the use of

Joe Brown specializes in stained glass restoration. Here, he traces a pattern onto a piece of opalescent glass, for use in the Randolph County dome project.

a glazing compound mixed with linseed oil, turpentine, and appropriate coloring. That mixture is applied using a stiff brush to get into the channels of the lead. The edges of the lead are then crimped onto the glass using a bent putty knife. Dry Plaster of Paris or sawdust, or a mixture of the two, is sprinkled onto the glass to absorb the excess cement and oil — the "mud." After the mud is cleaned off, the glass is gone over for a final polish. The cement will set up within a few days, but it will take a year or more to cure completely.

"Usually the installation of the rebars is the last step in the restoration project," Joe says, "but because we had to remove the bottom section and because lead is flexible and non-supportive and because this is a curved dome, the rebars had to be put in place as we went along."

There were, however, two more processes to complete. The entire dome had to be bedded in Styrofoam and cement. "The Styrofoam," Joe explains, "is put in under the edge of the dome. It cushions the glass around the edges." He nods to confirm his information. "We finished it off as if it were to be exposed to the weather, and then I just replaced the plaster that had torn away from around the frame. That was the end of it."





The Pallottine mission in Richwood eventually grew to include Sacred Heart Hospital (background, center), Holy Family Church (front, center) and Holy Family School (left). This photograph was taken at Richwood in the 1950's.

frightened to go past the hospital and made detours, sometimes of miles, in order not to come in contact with the sisters."

The nuns nursed the sick, taught, cooked, washed, ironed, served, cleaned, and raised a garden under primitive conditions. They not only had to carry patients from the road to the hospital, but, because there was no elevator, patients had to be carried from floor to floor. The sisters' financial condition prohibited them from hiring others to do the work.

English had yet to be mastered by the sisters during the early years. So, during surgery, Father Hengers would stand in the doorway of the operating room and translate the doctors' orders to the sisters assisting in the operations.

The use of electricity in Richwood presented another problem. Since electricity was used by the local factories during the day, surgical procedures, ironing, and other activities at the hospital requiring electrical power were done at night. Despite these numerous hardships, the nuns persevered, and soon the hospital was functioning well.

The greatest trial for the sisters during their early years in Richwood, however, was the feeling of being completely cut off from their homeland of Germany from

1914 until 1920 because of World War I. The long years of silence came to an end, however, with the arrival of seven new sisters in 1920. During Easter week of 1921, 12 more came to Richwood. Most stayed, though some of the arrivals eventually continued on to Central America, while other newcomers were dispatched to teach in a school in Ohio where there was a settlement of Polish Catholics.

The Pallottine mission at Richwood flourished for more than three quarters of a century. The school remained open until 1968. Over the years, however, the number of sisters decreased, and it became more and more difficult to maintain an adequate number of lay professionals to staff the hospital. In 1988, after 76 years, the Pallottines reluctantly left Richwood — the "cradle" of their missionary work in America.

The year 1924 marked a new and important chapter in the Pallottines' work in West Virginia. The bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling, the Most Reverend John J. Swint,



Steep terrain and the lack of an elevator at Sacred Heart Hospital meant that patients either walked or were carried in and out of the building, or from floor to floor. This photograph shows patients exiting the hospital in the 1950's.



Saint Edward's Preparatory School for Boys in Huntington, shown here in 1923, before it was renovated for use as a hospital.

was familiar with the Pallottines' hospital at Richwood and asked the sisters to start a new hospital in Huntington. He offered them two brick buildings and five acres of land that had been Saint Edward's school for boys. Prior to that, it had been a Catholic orphanage. On June 9, 1924, two nuns arrived by train from Richwood to take possession

of the former boys' school, which was destined to become Saint Mary's Hospital.

On August 2, 1924, sisters Carola Jehle, Amalia Bauer, and Laurentia Kuhn — all trained nurses — departed Richwood for an all-day train trip to Huntington. They arrived exhausted by travel. Sister Carola was very ill from being

jolted about on the mountainous train ride. They were met at the station and taken by car to Saint Edward's.

At that time, most cars had running boards as standard equipment. As their luggage was loaded, a briefcase containing \$1,000 for the renovation work was accidentally left on the car's running board and disappeared. Upon their arrival at Saint Edward's, the missing money caused a panic for the nuns. At supper that evening, according to one account, the dejected sisters were cheered by the flight of a swallow through an open window. One sister noted that the swallow was "a bird of good omen." The next morning, a poor man found the briefcase with the money and brought it to the school. According to the account, the man left Saint Edward's nearly as poor as he had been the day before, for Sister Carola could only give him a reward of \$10, which was all that the sisters could spare.

That October, Sister Gerharda Mueller came to Saint Edward's to take charge of the kitchen. With no kitchen utensils and limited funds, Sister Gerharda set to work and soon had organized the beginnings of a kitchen. One day, Sister Gerharda found that she had no food for the sisters and no money to buy anything. She had been told that dandelions were good to eat. She was not familiar with this sturdy little plant with the golden blossoms, and she picked ordinary grass thinking it to be "greens." The sisters reportedly did not relish this bitter dish!

Four more Pallottines arrived in Huntington from Richwood in November 1924, and the staff for the new hospital



This 1928 photograph shows 24 Pallottine nuns, in front of the new Saint Mary's Hospital in Huntington. Sister Carola is seated, at center. Sister Gerharda, the cook, is seated third from the left; Sister Damiana is standing, fourth from the left.

to meet the love of his life and to father two children, who now work to better the health of West Virginians. Or perhaps he was returned so that he could carry the mail on the day he saw smoke rolling from a house and rushed in to find a man asleep in a chair, unaware of the potentially disastrous attic fire.

George has spent much of the past decade reflecting on his life and the lives of his family members, steadily tapping away at an old typewriter with his left index fin-

has produced hundreds of pages of typed commentary, along with photos and copies of old documents. "That's my life and my family's life," he says, tapping the thick album. "I wanted to write the history of my family so my kids will know what went on before they were born."

The son of Hungarian immigrants, George was born in a coal company house in Elbert, McDowell County, on August 25, 1920. Steve and Rozi Tajti Hajash

sions, our pockets were stuffed with one of Mom's homemade *pogacha* (a Hungarian concoction resembling hardtack, a heavy biscuit). When we became hungry, we just fished one out of our pockets and ate them with some of the berries we had just picked."

When he was a teenager, the family moved to Glen Morgan, where the Hajash boys were thrilled to be living near a dump. George writes, "We went through the dump, searching and finding scrap aluminum, brass, and copper.

A traveling junkman came by occasionally, and we sold our hoard for enough money to go to Beckley, have an ice-cream cone, and go the Palace Theater to see the exciting cowboy shows.

"We managed to buy a used bicycle for five dollars," he continues. "All of us learned to ride on that one bicycle. When the tires wore out, we wrapped two-inch rubber hose pipe, scrounged from the nearby dump, around the wheels. It bumped a little, but what the heck? We still enjoyed that bike till we wore it completely out."

In 1937, the family moved again, this time to Beckley. George graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in 1938. While still in school, he began work-

ing as a caddy at the Black Knight Country Club, earning 40 cents to carry a bag of clubs for nine holes. Then, he and one of his brothers started working as pinsetters at Elite Bowling Alleys. Later, George drove a truck and made deliveries for Modern Furniture. He also worked briefly in the Norfolk, Virginia, shipyards for the emerging war effort.

Two other brothers, John and Steve Hajash, worked with their



The Hajash family in Elbert, 1927. Seated, left to right, are Martin, Steve Sr., Mary, Rozi, Rose Mary, and George. Standing are Andy, Steve Jr., Joachim, John, and Nick.

ger, having lost pieces of other fingers to various woodworking accidents. "I was going to plane a piece of wood, and my fingers got in the way," he says, showing his hand. "But I didn't learn my lesson. A few years later, I did the same thing and got this one. Same machine. Took a big chunk off this one. Just nipped the front end of these. Cold weather, I can feel these things raising Cain."

Despite this impediment, George

raised a flock of children in those three rooms: Joachim "Yockey," Steve, John, Nicholas, George, Andrew, Martin, Rose Mary, Joseph, and Elizabeth. Two children did not survive infancy. Mary, born in 1925, died at age 11.

George savors his memories of growing up in Elbert, especially the summers filled with picking berries, hunting hazelnuts, and building swimming holes. George writes of those times, "While on these mis-



Elbert, McDowell County, in 1928. The white building with the awning is the United States Coal & Coke Company store. The large brick building at left housed a theater, barber shop, restaurant, post office, payroll office, pool room, bowling alley, and dance hall. The coal tippie is visible in the distance.

father in the mines. They brushed closely against tragedy on December 17, 1940, when an explosion at Raleigh No. 4 Mine killed seven miners. The Hajash men had worked that section the night before.

George was drafted into the U.S. Army in December 1942. He was eager to serve. "My brothers were all gone, and I was getting lonesome," he says. "I just couldn't stay around with everybody gone." He suffered from asthma, but, George says, he told the doctor examining him for induction, "If you hear any wheezing, just disregard it, and let me go on." First thing George knew, he was in Guadalcanal. "We were a searchlight and radar outfit," he continues, "tracking enemy aircraft with radar-operated lights."

An asthma attack led to one of George's closest calls in the Army. He'd been hospitalized near an airfield on Guadalcanal. "The first night I was in there," George recalls, "here come the [enemy] bombing us back. They were trying to get the field back. That's when one of the boys in one of the other beds grabbed hold of me and

dragged me out into a foxhole beside the airfield."

When George first returned from the service after the war, he helped a friend open a country club in McDowell County. "I went up and down those hollers visiting all the people I knew," he recalls. "Finally,



George Hajash in 1939, shortly after graduating from Woodrow Wilson High School in Beckley.

I came back to Beckley and decided I'd better go to work. The first job I got was driving the city bus. This was when you still couldn't buy a car yet, because of war shortages. A lot of people were riding buses. The first bus they put me on was an ex-school bus, and it was about 50-feet long," he says, laughing. "I never saw such a thing in my life. I said, 'I can't drive that thing.' But I did."

George's brother John used to joke with people, "Now don't you worry," he'd say, "that bus coming down that street looks like it ain't got no driver, but my brother George is driving." At five feet, three-and-a-half inches, George might have been short in stature, but he proved that he could drive just about any vehicle, including that monster bus.

"I didn't like that job," George says. "You got to meet the public, and the public makes you mad. One guy gets on and says, 'I don't have to pay. I'm a volunteer fireman.' I said, 'Like hell, you don't.' It was only a dime. He paid, but he didn't want to."

For a while, George drove an ice-cream truck. In his history, he writes about another close scrape with death, this time when he was out with Ernest Campbell, the other driver for Imperial Ice-Cream Company. George writes, "After serving business places in the Oak Hill area, we traveled to the company store at Long Branch. It was winter and very cold, so we had the heater on and the windows rolled up tight. We were laughing and joking about the girls that worked in the store. The store faced the railroad tracks, as most company stores did in the old days. Ernest was driving, and I sat on the right. As we started across the tracks, I looked to the right and said, 'Man! Train coming!' I opened the door and jumped to the side of the tracks. Ernest could tell by the sound of my voice that I was not kidding. He jammed the gas pedal down. The truck responded with a big burst of speed. However, it was not quite

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HÉT-CSILLAGOS MAGYAR SZÜLŐK

Ma meg 'csak' hat csillag lehet meg a Beckley, West Virginia-ban élő Hajash István.



Hajash András

testvérünket és feleségét, mert hat gyermekük van az Egyesült Államok munkerőjében. Ma meg 'csak' hat csillag lehet meg a Beckley, West Virginia-ban élő Hajash István.

A Hajash fiúk nagyobb része, akiket a háború nagyváltott, hogy háború legyen, már sokáig huszodik, akkor elmegejésként fogták fel a háborút, és a nevük is, és ma csak katonák is, és ma csak katonák is, és ma csak katonák is.



Hajash Miklós

egyiket sem akarták visszatartani, hogy eleget adtak már a háborúnak. Sőt. Jóges buszkeséggel készülnek rá, hogy a hetediket is odaadják a legközelebbi napok.

ban és ha a háború nagyváltott, hogy háború legyen, már sokáig huszodik, akkor elmegejésként fogták fel a háborút, és a nevük is, és ma csak katonák is, és ma csak katonák is.



Hajash Márton

üzemnégy éves. Hajash András tizenéves káplár és a Panama csatorna védelmére van kirendelve. Hajash Miklós, aki szintén káplár, ugyancsak a Panama csatornánál van, de ő a gyalogság.

hoz van beosztva Miklós nem várta, hogy háború legyen, már ottlón tagja volt a National Guardnak és egy-két katoná bolle.

Hajash Márton még csak 19 esztendő, de már egy éve szolgál a U. S. Navyben és ma már a tengereket járja.

István a Coast Guardnál teljesít szolgálatot, ahol már második osztályú matróz a rangja, bár csak hat hónapja csatlakozott fel a sereghez és a tengerral.

János a hadsereg repülő departmentjében szolgál jelenleg iskolázatlan. Californiában, mert tehetséges fiúnak tartották és a hadsereg kórházánál akarja.

Joachim csak egy év és hetet töltött a civil életben a jelenleg Kentuckynál van és a 'Kismis bakák' kórházánál, de akik ismerik, azt állítják, hogy egy-két órára aludt és lez belőle. A hetedik pedig az, akit

pár napon belül fognak behívni és minthogy Rose Mary és Elizabethen kívül ötten maradt.



Hajash István

adott meg János, aki 14 éves, jelen három negy esztendővel, nyolc esztendővel és az a család tagja, amire nemcsak Hajashék, de busák is lehet minden magyar ebben a háza-

A Hajash család — kapunk ötvenedik születésnapját — kezeli teletnek örömet mindig a



Hajash János

születésnapját, de akár mit is lehet, akkor is lehet születésnap, hogy a pe-

regben, természetesen, de akár mit is lehet, akkor is lehet születésnap, hogy a pe-



Hajash Joachim

gyerek, természetesen, de akár mit is lehet, akkor is lehet születésnap, hogy a pe-

The fighting Hajash brothers made national news during World War II. This front-page story appeared in the *Hungarian Miners' Journal*, published in Detroit, Michigan, on October 29, 1942.

enough. One of the Chesapeake & Ohio's biggest mallets (steam engines) caught the rear end of the truck and neatly sliced about three feet of the storage compartment off the truck. We were extremely lucky [to survive]."

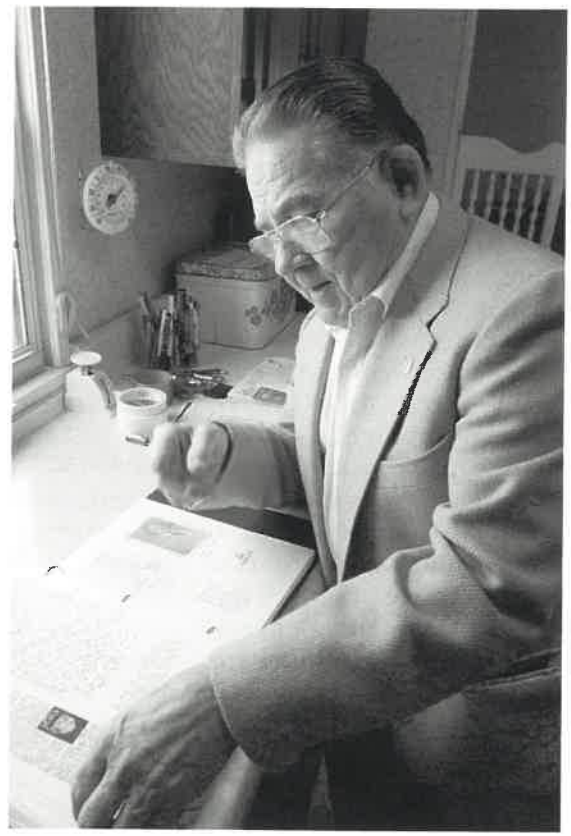
George then got a job driving a Tom's Peanuts truck. "I didn't like that, either," he says. "I ran into a couple of boys in a beer joint. They were Army veterans, too, and one of them said, 'I'll talk to my boss, and he'll give you a job driving a coal truck.'" George went to work for Manns Creek Coal Company. Later, he traded his car for a truck and hauled coal in his own vehicle.

George may not have cared for driving buses, but it was while riding as a passenger on a bus that he first met his future wife. "It's kind of funny, in a way," George says. "I was in a bus going uptown. It stopped to pick up this girl. And oh, you talk about snazzy — fancy

shoes and fancy clothes, pretty as a doll. I said, 'My God, who is that?' That's as far as that went. She sat down near the front of the bus, and I was pretty far back."

He had no notion that he'd ever meet her again, and certainly did not expect to run into her at his nephew's baptism. "The girl I was with, she was holding my brother Andrew's baby, and across from the baptismal font was this girl. She was holding another baby. I said to myself, 'There's the girl from the bus.' Boy, she

George Hajash has collected and written an extensive book of family history. He is shown here reviewing the history in the kitchen of his Beckley home. Photograph by Michael Keller.





After he returned from the service, George worked for several years driving trucks, buses, and other heavy vehicles. Here, he is shown on the job for Manns Creek Coal Company in the late 1940's.

was pretty. She was holding her sister's baby. Well, the girl I was with and she were friends. So, we got outside, and I got introduced to Nancy.

"The next day, we went on a double date. We went to a carnival. The two girls decided to go in the fortune teller's tent. They came out laughing and giggling. I never did find out what they were laughing about. The fortune teller may have told something about us young fellows, but she never did tell me," George recalls.

George married Nancy Briguglio in 1950. They borrowed the money for a \$8,100 prefabricated Gunnison home made by U.S. Steel, and settled on Mankin Avenue in Beckley. Their first child, Marlena Cosima, was born in 1953 at Raleigh General Hospital, followed by George Charles Francis in 1954.

One day, Nancy saw a newspaper article announcing the testing date for anyone interested in becoming a postal employee. George took the test and made one of the highest scores. He was hired in 1957. One day in 1960 when he was walking his route on Woodlawn Avenue, George looked across the street and saw smoke pouring out from the eaves of a house. "Rather than run over there, I knocked on the door of the house I was standing beside. The lady whose house it was, [she] was in this house, visiting," George says. "The two ladies came to the door, and I said, 'That house is on fire. Call the fire department.'

George married Nancy Briguglio in 1950. The couple raised two children. George is shown, at right, with daughter Marlena in 1953. Son George was born the following year.

"I went in the house with the lady, and her husband was asleep in the chair. I opened the door that leads upstairs, and there was a big wall of smoke. The fire was up in the attic. Bad wiring, I think." George does not embellish his account of the rescue. "The fire department came and put the fire out, and I went on about my mail route."

"Mailman Credited with Saving Life" was the headline in one newspaper account. The U.S. Post Office Department recognized George Hajash with a "Superior Accomplishment Award" for his heroism. George carried the mail for a total of 20 years before transferring to a job as clerk, retiring from the postal service in 1985.

In February 1986, George writes, "It seemed to me to be the beginning of the end of time." Nancy had been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. In May of that year, George had a heart attack, but his fore-

most concern was for Nancy, rarely leaving her side, even when she was hospitalized at one point for 72





While working for the postal service in March 1960, George came upon this burning house. He alerted the fire department, then entered the building and woke a man who was asleep in the house. George was later given an award for his heroism.

was in my class. The street that runs right up beside my son's office, Klaus Street. One of the Klaus boys got killed. We had good friends of our family that had one or two boys that didn't come back. That gives you a lot to think about."

At one point, George worked briefly at a factory in Detroit. He returned quickly to West Virginia. "I came back because I had no desire to go anywhere else," George says. "I've always loved West Virginia. It's got its faults, like any place has. But I've never had any feelings to go anywhere else." ❁

BELINDA ANDERSON is a native of Monroe County now living in Greenbrier County. She is a freelance writer and also teaches writing workshops. A former newspaper reporter, Belinda has written for publications including *Wonderful West Virginia* magazine and has authored a book of short stories titled *The Well Ain't Dry Yet*. Belinda is a regular GOLDENSEAL contributor whose most recent article appeared in our Spring 2002 issue.

days. George writes, "I slept in a chair so that I could be with her at all times. She said, 'George, hold my hand.' I did, for hours at a time."

Nancy died in 1988, but her presence is still very much felt in the Hajash home. A huge formal bridal portrait of Nancy in her white satin wedding gown hangs in the living room. "I'll break out in the middle of the day and start crying because I just walked by her picture," George says, his eyes wet. "I just cry when I think of her. She was so perfect."

Nancy had been a high school teacher, then was a secretary for the United Mine Workers, before meeting George. "She had a good education, which I didn't," George says. "I used to say, 'Why'd you marry me? I ain't worth two cents.' She gave me two cents and said, 'Yes, you are.'"

Nancy and George's biggest legacy is their family. Daughter Marlena became a dietitian, married, and had four children. Son Francis became a dentist and married two years ago. George's album is filled with pictures of his children and his grandchildren.

Despite the evidence of a rich family life, the war years remain vivid to George. Even the city streets remind him of the ultimate sacrifice made by so many in that conflict. "These streets in Beckley, a lot of them, after the war, were changed to names of boys that got killed. That little short block to my house, Kiser. That was Virgil Kiser; he



George Hajash with a portrait of his late wife Nancy. Photograph by Michael Keller.

The Fighting

They were headline grabbers, the seven Hajash brothers who served and returned safely from World War II.

"This Family is in Service," read the headline of one Los Angeles newspaper story. "Mark down Mrs. Rose Hajash of East Beckley as a woman who is determined to do her bit in her country's war program," the article began.

United in their mission, the siblings never served together. "My brothers, they were all over the world," says George Hajash, speaking from his home in Beckley. Andy was the first to serve, originally in Panama, then in Germany. The only brother injured during the war, Andy earned a Purple Heart and a

Bronze Star from the Army. Nick joined the Army National Guard before the war started, then went to Panama. Steve became Seaman second class in the Coast Guard. Martin, the youngest, lied about his age, joining the Navy at age 16. Martin became a machinist and was present at the liberation of the Philippines. John served mostly in Alaska with the Air Force. "He flew from Anchorage down that long chain of islands, the Aleutian Islands," George says. The eldest, Joachim, served his Army duty in Indiana and Florida. George was the last to be inducted, serving in the Pacific in an Army anti-aircraft artillery battalion. An eighth brother, Joseph, born in 1930, was too young to enlist.

What happened after the headlines? The Hajash brothers transformed the miracle of their survival into productive, useful lives. "We never attained great heights, but we did impress upon our children the importance of a good education," George



Andy Hajash, U.S. Army.



Steve Hajash, U.S. Coast Guard.



Nick Hajash, U.S. Army.



Martin Hajash, U.S. Navy.

2000.] Olive recalls, "Milroy was completely independent. He taught himself to be mobile. With his right hand, he would hold his right ankle and move his foot to push himself along. On his left knee, he wore a pad. As he grew older, he learned to fashion a more durable knee pad from an automobile tire. With belts, he strapped and secured the rounded part of the tire onto his knee. He was able to go almost anywhere that anyone else could."

Olive continues, "Milroy attended the Adkin's one-room school in Willis Hollow, or Willis Town, as local people call it. His transportation there was his horse. He would ride it to school. The animal returned home until it was time for classes to be over, then Milroy's father would bring him home."

When Milroy was a young man, he met a beautiful girl with golden hair, and was instantly and forever smitten. Her name was Sarah Myers. The courtship led to a proposal of marriage. Milroy dared not hope that Sary (as he and others called her) would agree to marry him, but he was truly happy when she accepted.

Olive recalls, "Sary often told me of their wedding day. It was on a Sunday, and it had been raining. Milroy always dressed up on Sundays in a white shirt, tie, and suit. This day, he was dressed especially neat. He was in the backyard when he accidentally fell into a mud puddle. The young groom was really angry that something like that could happen to him, but he went back into the house to change clothes.

"Sary was waiting to marry him, but he told her just before the ceremony, 'I think you could do better.' Sary looked at this gentle man," Olive says. "She was determined to spend all the days of her life with him, so she firmly told Milroy, 'You might not get married, but I am!' That day, Sarah Myers became Mrs. Milroy Grose."

Raymond and Nash Kious owned

Milroy bought Sarah a car and a truck for himself. He was able to drive by putting the accelerator gas feed on the steering wheel. He mounted two heavy sticks — one on the clutch and one to the brake — and put heavy padding on the ends. These padded ends fit against his stomach. This allowed him to have complete control of the vehicle.



Milroy Grose with wife Sarah on the porch of their home in Graydon, about 1950.

a general store in Graydon and gave Milroy enough land to build a nice home for himself and Sarah. Milroy modified the house slightly to make life easier for himself, such as placing the doorknobs lower than on most other doors. He also built a garage, out buildings, and a cellar with a room over it. On their land,

There, he put it on the train. Next, he took the incoming mail from the same train and brought it back to the Graydon post office.

My family lived near Sarah and Milroy. My older brother Danny McGuire, who now lives in Oak Hill, fondly remembers those times. "When I was six years old," Danny

Milroy would take no charity. His days started early in the morning. His first job was to deliver *The Charleston Gazette* newspaper to the areas of Lansing and Graydon, even on Sundays. After returning home, he drove the mail five miles from Graydon down Fayette Mountain Road to the Fayetteville train station.

Milroy modified the house slightly to make life easier for himself, such as placing the doorknobs lower than on most other doors.

the couple raised chickens, a cow, pigs, and a horse. They always raised a big vegetable garden. This was a source of fresh vegetables in the summer and canned ones in the winter.

says, "Milroy took me with him in his truck on his route from Graydon to Hopewell. I watched in wide-eyed awe as he drove his vehicle with so much skill and ease. When I returned home, I asked my father,



Log house in Willis Hollow, near Ansted, where Milroy was born in 1897.



Despite suffering from a severe physical disability, Milroy Grose led a full and productive life. He is shown here cutting wood, date unknown.

'Dad, how does he do that?' I remember when the postal people gave Milroy a truck with an automatic transmission. It made his jobs so much easier."

Milroy's day did not end after he delivered the newspapers and the mail. After lunch, Milroy would go to the sawmill to get big slabs of wood. He always had many orders for wood, as well as for coal. He would bring the wood home, cut it into firewood with a circular saw, and deliver it.

For a while, Olive lived with Sarah and Milroy. "I loved living there," Olive says. "I would help Sary with the cooking and cleaning. The only thing I didn't like was the fact that they got up before daylight every morning. Sary always fixed a huge breakfast."

Milroy usually had a hired man to help him with chores around the place. At one time, Sarah's brother Melvin Myers worked there. Olive

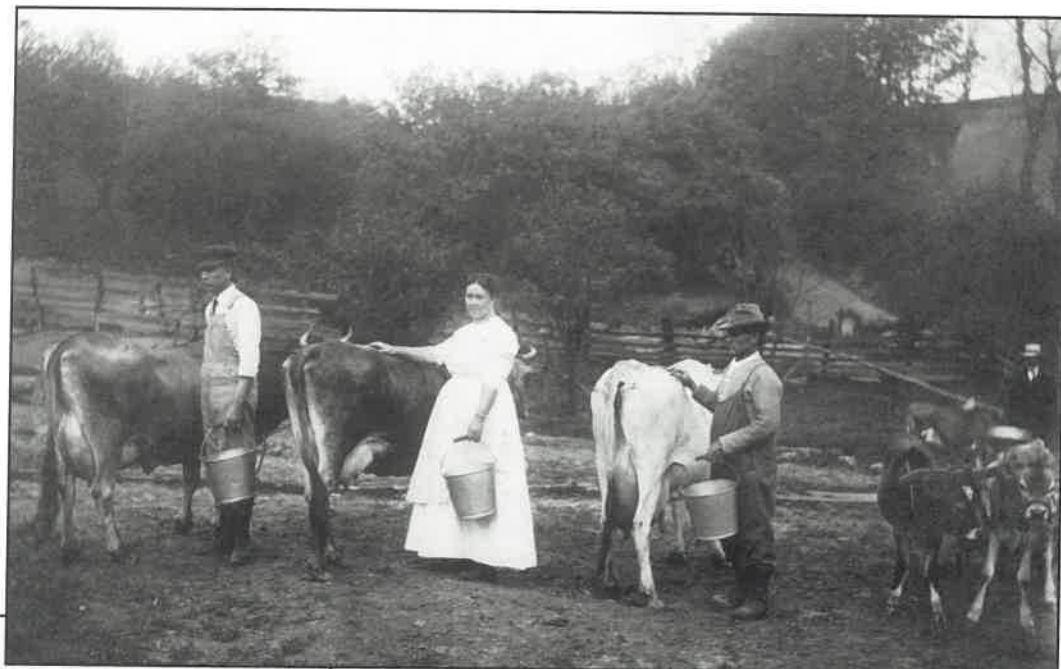
met Melvin, and the pair were married in Milroy and Sarah's home on Thursday, May 22, 1941, by Olive's father, the Reverend J.I. Workman. "Milroy and Sary were our witnesses," Olive recalls. "Sary cried. I had just turned 20 years old."

Milroy and Melvin were not only brothers-in-law, but also friends and a working team, Olive tells. One day, Milroy was working high up on the rafters in the garage. A neighbor, Mr. McGraw, came along and boldly asked Milroy how he planned to get down from the rafters. Milroy told him to watch. Melvin held out his arms, and Milroy dropped right down into them. "This is true," Olive says. "I know. I was there."

Milroy was an avid sportsman and loved to hunt and fish. One time, Olive and Sarah joined their husbands on a picnic and fishing trip to a place called Twenty Mile, which is just above Gauley Bridge. Olive recalls, "We built a campfire and put the coffee pot over the open fire to heat. Then we all went fishing. Milroy soon became impatient. The water was crystal clear, and we could see the fish, but no one got a nibble. Without thinking, Milroy dove into the stream. The only problem was that he couldn't swim. Sary jumped in after him — she couldn't swim either. It was up to Melvin to save them both, and he did. When all three were safe on the creek bank, Milroy was holding his fish in his hands."

"I watched as Milroy sat deep in thought, looking at the water," Olive continues. "He decided right then and there he *would* swim. Into the water he dove again. This time, he began to swim using only

Right: The Nuzum brothers preferred Jersey cows for their dairy herd. Pictured here, from the left, are Mr. Wilbur, Annie Ryan, George Nuzum, and Dave Nuzum, standing at far right.



Below: The Nuzum family of Shinn's Run, Harrison County, ran a successful dairy operation, general store, post office, blacksmith, and grist mill. This undated postcard shows the family home, at left, and the general store and post office, at right.



Pauline Nuzum Burns grew up on Shinn's Run in rural Harrison County. Born in 1904, she was raised at a time when nearly a third of the U.S. population farmed; her family farmed in a big way. Their 180-acre operation included a substantial dairy herd, along with a general store and numerous side interests.

Surrounded by pictures and memorabilia from her early days, Pauline spent the final years of her rich life in Loyaltown, California, with her daughter and son-in-law, Sue and John White. Before Pauline passed away in March 2001 at age 96, she shared memories and details of those simpler times with John, who was kind enough to write them down and share them with us. —ed.

While talking about the Nuzum clan, Pauline frequently referred to *The Nuzum Family History*, a genealogical study going back more than eight generations, beginning with the French Huguenots. By 1752, the first Nuzum family came to America. Fifty years later, members of the family moved to Marion County in western Virginia.

Pauline's grandparents Isaac and Lavina Nuzum homesteaded on 180 acres at the head of Shinn's Run, nine miles northeast of Clarksburg. Here, in 1873, a crude two-story hewn log structure was built and became the birthplace of Pauline's father James and his siblings. Later, a two-story frame house was constructed nearby. This is where Pauline was born.

"Mother wasn't down but a day or two, then she was back at work," Pauline said. As a girl, Pauline lived with her parents James and Ella Nuzum, three sisters, an older brother, and four uncles. Several live-in hired hands rounded out the household.

Life was never dull on the farm, Pauline told me. Rising at 4 a.m., each member of the family had his or her chores to complete before breakfast. There were livestock to be fed and watered, eggs to be collected,

cows to be milked, and cream to be separated and stored.

With 90 head of cattle — at least 40 of them being milked at any given time — there was plenty of work to go around. Four or five farmhands were required to hand-milk an average of 10 cows each, twice a day. When milking was completed, the fresh, raw milk was strained through muslin to remove impurities. It was then collected in 20-gallon cans and stored in cold water drawn from the spring.

After the milk had been cooled for 24 hours, the cream was separated, and some of the milk was poured into large barrel churns. The barrels were rotated until the fat turned into fine, yellow lumps of butter. The buttermilk, now separated from the butterfat, was drained out, with much of it being fed to the hogs. The remaining butter was washed, salted, and squeezed into one-pound wooden molds with the Nuzum Dairy logo molded right into the butter. Wrapped in either wax or parchment paper, the butter was ready for market. In addition to whole milk, buttermilk, and butter, Coscovalla cheese was handmade by Tona Rozina into fiddle-shaped balls and became one of the farm's notable products.

One day as we talked, Pauline recalled how her once-strong hands had grown weaker with age. She laughingly reflected that, as a young girl, she could out-milk the adults. "My hands were smaller and more supple," she said. "I had developed a good rhythm that didn't irritate the cow. [The cow] was more relaxed, which made it easier for me."

I commented that I had once

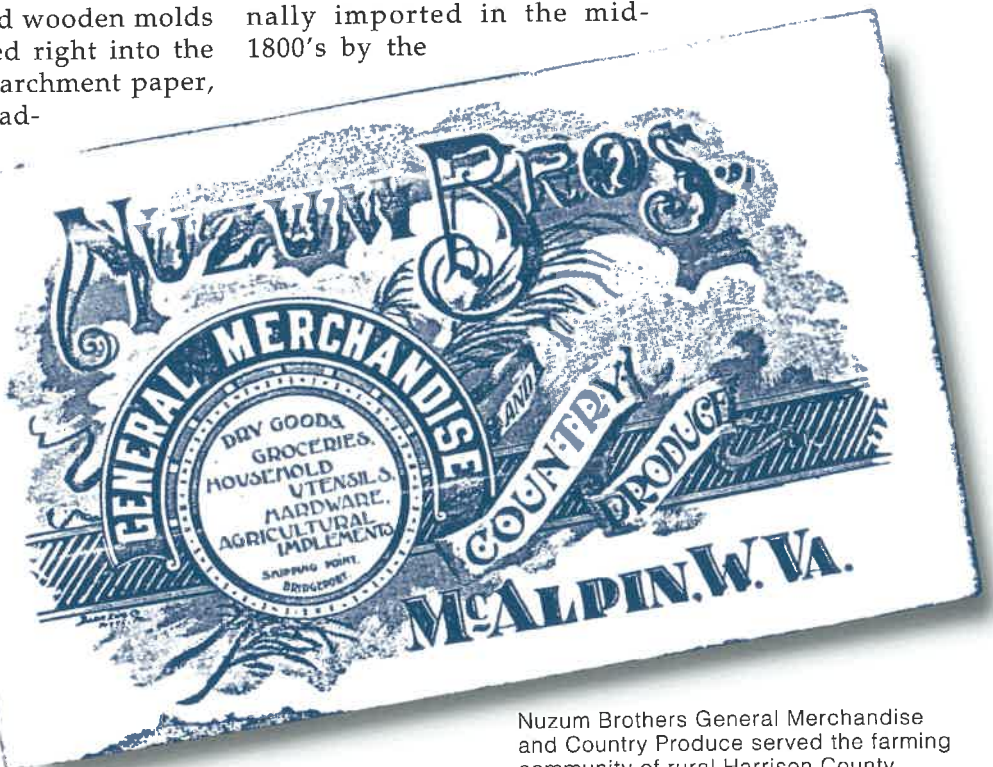
tried hand-milking without success. Pauline wrapped one hand around an outstretched finger on her other hand. She showed me how she first sealed the upper end of the udder with the thumb and forefinger, and then gently, but firmly, squeezed her fingers in sequence from top to bottom, forcing the existing milk in the udder through the teat. She had not forgotten.

Once each year, Pauline said, the local farmers gathered at the schoolhouse on Shinn's Run to meet with the state representative for the testing of their herds. Samples of milk were tested for quality and butterfat content. The Nuzum herd always tested highest. The Nuzum brothers took great pride in their Jerseys. Each cow and bull came from a

long line of prize-winning registered stock, originally imported in the mid-1800's by the



Pauline's father James Nuzum holds baby Bea on a calf at the family's Harrison County farm in about 1908. Pauline is at left, and brother Walter is at right, while Hazel appears poised to try and milk this fine young Jersey. She was probably disappointed.



Nuzum Brothers General Merchandise and Country Produce served the farming community of rural Harrison County during the early 1900's.

Nuzum's grandparents from the isle of Jersey — a small British island off the coast of France. The cattle were pampered and given the very best of care. Each cow had its own name and stall in the barn, and the lineage of each was proudly displayed and discussed with anyone who cared about the quality of milk and butterfat. Considering their heritage, it is not difficult to understand why the dairy records show that a seven-day production per cow, while "fresh," averaged better than 19 pounds of butter and more than 300 pounds of milk.

Along with this large dairy operation, the Nuzum family ran a general store, post office, smithy, and gristmill. Pigs, chickens, goats, plowing mules and riding horses, plus several pet dogs added to the farm

population. A few cats were kept around to enjoy the leftover milk and to keep the barn mice population down. In addition to livestock feed grown on the upper acreage, a garden and orchard produced all of the fruits and vegetables needed for the family and for market.

Owned and operated by the Nuzum brothers, the general store provided an essential service for the local farming community. Most everything a family needed could be found there, from fresh-ground peanut butter and homemade apple butter to plug tobacco. Women could find dry goods, groceries, fresh and canned produce, as well as pots and pans. Men could purchase an assortment of keg nails, hinges, kerosene lanterns and accessories, pipes, shovels, saws, and seed. Agricultural implements could be ordered from a catalog and shipped in. Candy was priced at a penny apiece. During cold weather, heat was provided by a potbelly stove, and the cracker barrel stood nearby for those needing a bit of nourishment while tending to business or sharing gossip.

Mail and newspapers were delivered weekly to the official U.S. post office, located in the store. Mail came

addressed General Delivery, McAlpin, West Virginia. The McAlpin post office served as a drop point for all incoming mail in the area, with delivery and pickup provided once a week.

The Nuzum family farm included a forge, and a full-time blacksmith was employed to repair farm equipment and harnesses, or to shoe horses. Pauline

especially remembered a blackman named Hugh Cox who worked many years for the Nuzums, until he married and eventually moved to Shinnston. Pauline recalled that Hugh was one of the best employees they ever had.

Saturdays were special days for Pauline. After loading the buckboard wagon with produce from the garden or cellar, fruit from the orchard, and dairy products

from the cooling house, she and her father would drive in-to Clarksburg where they peddled their farm products. Pauline proudly pointed to a large handbell in her room and exclaimed, "Pa and I let the townsfolk know we had arrived by ringing that bell. Whole milk and buttermilk was five cents a quart, and butter sold for 40 cents a pound. We never went home with unsold products."

Pauline continued, "After selling out, Pa visited several merchants and purchased wholesale those food and merchandise basics that stocked our store. A last stop before heading home was at the icehouse. Here, Pa picked up several 300-pound blocks of ice, and we took them home to be used in the cooling house. During the hot summer months, sawdust gotten from a nearby sawmill served as insulation around the ice to keep it from melting too quickly."

While her older sister Hazel was more inclined to help her mother inside the home, Pauline was the outdoor type. When given the choice of spending time learning to play the piano or doing outside work, Pauline didn't hesitate. She'd much rather drive the haying wagon during cutting time in the summer.



When she was a girl, Pauline claims to have been a pretty good milker. "I had developed a good rhythm that didn't irritate the cow," she said. Pauline is at left with a pail, sister Bea sits on top of this gentle animal, while Hazel Nuzum stands at right, smiling. This photograph is from about 1910.

Always the tomboy, she even tried smoking a corn-cob pipe behind the barn. "Too bitter," she explained.

During harvest season, a massive brass kettle was in constant use. Apples were made into apple butter. Peaches and apples were canned, and green tomatoes became relish. Whole apples were stored in wooden barrels, with each apple being wrapped in newsprint. These activities were labor-intensive and required the work of all the women in the household.

Pauline and her siblings attended a one-room schoolhouse located about a mile down Shinn's Run. In the fall and spring, they walked to school. With the snows of winter, a horse served as transportation. Pauline recalled that they used the *McGuffey's Readers*, with the older children

tutoring the younger ones. Slate boards were used to practice writing and math skills. During the winter months when the days were short, the older boys lit the wall-bracket kerosene lamps and kept the stove supplied with coal. This one-room school housed grades one through eight. Pauline said that since there were no rentals at that time, teachers stayed with various families throughout the year. Those youngsters going on to high school attended in Clarksburg and boarded with relatives or friends.

After school, Pauline and her sisters did chores until supper, then homework, Bible reading, and off to bed by 8 p.m. Kerosene lanterns illuminated the evening activities. Coal from an open-pit mine on their property provided cooking heat, and coal-fired grates in each room gave warmth in the wintertime. Coal was also used to heat the laundry wash water and water for Saturday night baths.

Except for an occasional sponge bath, an overall bath was scheduled for Saturday evening. Mama Nuzum began preparation by bringing out her largest wash tub and setting it near the kitchen stove. Water piped in from the spring was heated, and

bucket-by-bucket was emptied into the tub. Beginning with the youngest, each child was scrubbed with homemade lye soap until their skin tingled. As each successive family member took his or her turn in the tub, hot water was added, with the water becoming increasingly soapier. To rinse, a bucket of water (hopefully not taken directly from the tap) was poured over the head of each bather.

On Sundays, after light morning chores, the family went to church aboard the buckboard wagon. Church services were held in the schoolhouse. Without funds to pay a full-time preacher, lay members of the congregation brought the morning sermon. Once a month, the Baptist preacher from Bridgeport rode over by horseback on Friday, met with the church leadership on Satur-

day for business, and then preached on Sunday. Following the service, a dinner was set out. The women of the church, having spent much of their Saturday preparing dishes, made sure that the preacher had at least one good serving before anyone else could fill his or her plate. Along with sampling all the food, talk centered on crops, politics, and gossip, not necessarily in that order.

Pauline was always the inquisitive type (possibly nose-y, to some) about the goings-on along Shinn's Run, and the best way to stay informed, she claimed, was to eavesdrop on the party-line. There were more than a dozen families all using the same telephone line, and regardless of whose ring it was, Pauline would find herself curled up on the floor or in the nearest chair with the receiver glued to one ear. From births to injuries, favorite recipes to who's dating whom, all the latest news was shared. Nothing was secret on the party-line!

Recently, while we were discussing the operation of the farm's general store, Pauline pointed to a small weighing scale in her room. Manufactured of cast iron by Fairbanks Scale Company, this model was



Walter, Hazel, Pauline, and Bea Nuzum (left to right) sit bareback on this farm horse. In winter, the children rode a horse similar to this one to school on Shinn's Run.

Sonny"

the decades, although thanks to a recent interior paint job by the Hedricks' daughter Sandra Kay Bava, the walls are brighter than they have been in 35 years. An oiled wooden floor — worn smooth by more than six decades of local foot traffic — gives a homey, solid feel to the store. So do the rocking chair and straight-back wooden chair pulled up to the gas-powered space heater across from the counter. All that's missing is a checkerboard — Sonny says most people are too busy for a game these days.

The biggest change to the store from the days of Andrew's ownership is that Sonny doesn't sell gasoline — Andrew's main commodity. At one time, there were three pumps out front — two gasoline and one kerosene. Sonny had them removed in the early 1980's, however, after regulations on underground storage tanks were put into place. Sonny figured he'd never recoup the investment new tanks would have required.

Most of the customers just bark their orders and let Lorraine fetch it while they pester the owner.

All store accounts, from the neighborhood youngster laying down 50 cents for a roll of candy to the senior citizen making a payment on his charge account, are settled in the main, center room. Even the payroll for the store's four employees is paid out at the bread rack that doubles as a checkout counter.

Several rooms branch off of this hub of commerce. To the left of the front door is a dark, crowded room



Carl "Sonny" Hedrick and his wife Lorraine run a general store in Hendricks, Tucker County. Sonny conducts most of his business from this rocking chair.

dominated by a glass-and-oak cabinet that once displayed penny candy, but now contains sweets costing 50 times that of their pre-

decessors. Sonny says the room once held the service station's grease rack. He claimed it for retail space in 1951 and now stocks it with fishing supplies and automobile oil.

To the right is another room filled with household needs such as patent medicines and bug spray. This room was once his grandfather's bedroom.

The largest addition to the store is at the rear. A white meat case —

stocked with bags of cat food and 39-cent oranges — delineates the addition from the front room. The addition is more warehouse than retail store, accommodating everything from electrical parts and automotive oil filters to plaid flannel shirts and buckets of used door-knobs. To keep costs down, Lorraine only turns the lights on in this section when someone wants to browse the shelves. Most of the customers just bark their orders — "a 1/4-inch washer," "a 20-amp breaker" — and let Lorraine fetch it while they pester the owner.

Sonny conducts most of his business from the rocking chair. "Most of the people who come in here want to sit in this chair, but it's my wife's chair," Sonny says, a twinkle of mischief in his eye as he directs

the comment toward Lorraine. "She usually occupies this chair."

Like everything else in the store — except the antique brass cash register — the chair is for sale.

"This 300-pound woman came in here and sat down in it," Sonny says, setting me up for one of his stories. "And when she got up, the chair was stuck to her. I said, 'Just take it with you, lady, and I'll put it on your bill.'" The woman, says Sonny, managed to squirm out of it.

Sonny will invite you to pull up either the wooden chair or a metal soda-fountain stool and chew the fat. A few minutes into the conversation, he'll ask you if you want to buy the store. He might even offer to give it to you.

In fact, that's how he got into the business himself. "Granddad died in 1950, and he willed it to me," Sonny says. "He didn't give it to his own children, he willed it to me."

Sonny was the only child of Iva

Hedrick, one of Andrew and Virginia Catherine Hedrick's 10 children. Sonny says his father never claimed him, so that left Andrew to raise Sonny after his mother died in 1928. Andrew became a widower in 1934.

Andrew's sons never showed an interest in the store, Sonny says. While Sonny was still in high school, his grandfather suffered a hemorrhage and nearly died. Andrew asked one of his sons to help run the store while he recuperated, but the young man told his father he'd rather go hunting. Sonny took on the job instead.

Andrew was a versatile businessman whose enterprises in Hendricks included a restaurant on Railroad Avenue, a drugstore, and the combined gas station and general store. He also was a justice of the peace and, from 1941 to 1943, mayor.

"Granddad says, 'I never lost a penny in my life.' And the man says, 'Tell me how you do it?' And he says, 'I didn't sell anything.'"

He operated the store seven days a week, at least 12 hours a day, though his management style was noticeably informal. "Andrew had a son who worked for the snuff company, and he'd come out and tell him how to run the store," Sonny says. "He said, 'You can't operate this store without a cash register, Dad.' So, [Andrew] got his cigar box out and said, 'That's my cash register.' That's the way he done business.

"He didn't make a whole lot of big money," Sonny adds. "This guy from the big store came in here, and he says, 'Andy, did you lose any money in the produce business?' Granddad says, 'I never lost a penny in my life.' And the man says, 'Tell me how you do it?' And he says, 'I didn't sell anything.'"

Lorraine, who worked for An-



This antique brass cash register, salvaged from a defunct store in Hendricks, is one of the few items not offered for sale in Hedrick's store.



Grandfather and store owner Andrew Hedrick raised Sonny after Sonny's mother died in 1928. Andrew later willed the store to Sonny. Andrew Hedrick is pictured here, at left, standing in front of the store with friend John Zinnerman in 1938.

drew while Sonny was away during World War II, says the elder Hedrick did not have a lot of interest in shopkeeping. He preferred being out in the community and would often go away and leave Sonny in charge of the store when he was just 12 or 13 years old.

One way Andrew excused himself from running the store was by operating an unlicensed taxi service that shuttled railroaders to the movie theater and stores in Parsons.

Sonny had a 1935 Ford that Andrew pressed into service as a taxi when Sonny entered the Army in 1944. Lorraine says that Andrew would stuff six passengers in the car and haul them to Parsons for a quarter each, at their own risk. "He had a license, but he couldn't drive," Sonny says. "He drove in the middle of the road."

After the war ended, Andrew's

sideline job drew the ire of the licensed taxi cab company. "That got him in trouble because he didn't have no license to drive a taxi," Sonny says. "The other company that was in business was a licensed taxi cab. They sent him a letter and told him he had to get his car off the road. So, he wrote them back a letter and told them they were too late. He'd sold the car the night before for \$300-and-some, after it had been worn out."

Andrew always made it back from his taxi excursions in time for closing

at the store. That's when the checkboard and cards came out. "His old friends would come in here, and I'd see them sit in here and play cards until after midnight," Sonny says. "They had a big desk. That's where they sat around and cheated one another."

C.W. Harvey, who owned the largest store in Hendricks, C.W. Harvey & Company, headed over to Andrew Hedrick's after closing his store at 6 p.m. Dr. Ulysses Carwell, the town's druggist and resident physician, was another one of the five or six regulars who gathered for the games.

"He'd got one eye shot out, and he couldn't see too well," Sonny says of Carwell. "They'd cheat him a little bit."

Andrew and his cadre of card players were still gathering at the store when fate dealt the shop-

keeper a fatal hand in November 1950. At the time of his grandfather's death, Sonny was working 12 hours a day driving a bread truck. Once the property was transferred to him, he quit the driving job and concentrated on building up the store.

Sonny and Lorraine diversified the business from a general store and gas station to a department store that stocked fishing supplies and soft drinks for the tourists, boots and carbide for the miners, and groceries for the housewives. To help make ends meet, Sonny worked outside the store as a handyman.

This side job led Sonny to diversify the retail business. While he was doing a plumbing job one time, a homeowner mentioned his plans to buy carpet. Sonny found a distributor and started selling floor covering. In 1966, after a mobile home he owned caught on fire, Sonny had to purchase new cabinets and kitchen furniture. The distributor suggested Sonny get a second set for the store on speculation.

"The next thing I knew, I was in the furniture business," Sonny says. He began selling appliances in 1970,



Sonny Hedrick as a young man in 1942.



Sonny and Lorraine have spent most of their lives behind this counter. Since 1950, they have diversified and expanded the operation to include a floor-to-ceiling array of varied merchandise and services.

when he was granted a General Electric territory. Sonny got into that business by doing appliance installation work under a contract with the utility company. "If you'd buy an appliance, they'd wire them up for you, free of charge," he says.

He also got into furnaces, air conditioners, and hot-water tanks. Sonny once did all the work himself, but now has a staff of four men — David Heckler, son-in-law Pete Bava, and brothers Homer and Billy Carr — who keep busy doing deliveries, installations, and odd jobs in the Hendricks area.

Lorraine says Hedrick's Store today is as much a handyman service as it is a retail outlet. A waiting list two-pages long and taped to the store counter logs the various calls that need to be addressed. They range from digging a ditch with a backhoe and installing plumbing to fixing a storm door and diagnosing an air conditioner that blows only hot air. "It just keeps them hopping from one

thing to another," Lorraine says.

Sonny says the men stay busy because they are willing to do jobs most contractors won't touch — the simple home repairs that take only an hour or two. Coupled with the fact that much of the town's population are senior citizens, Sonny's handyman business addresses a real need.

Sonny's customers patronize him rather than a mass merchandiser because buying from Sonny is ingrained in the local culture.

The handyman and appliance businesses account for much of the merchandise in the back room. If one of Hedrick's servicemen needs a burner for a General Electric stove or a fuse box for a new installation, he can get it at Sonny's store.

Big-ticket items like stoves, refrigerators, and floor covering are sold out of a two-story frame building across the street from the main

store. Sonny says it was constructed in 1904 as a Knights of Pythias Lodge.

"They had a movie theater [there] in the 1940's," Sonny says, motioning to his building. "But they had to shut it down because it got too expensive for people to go. It cost 15 cents."

Sonny bought the building at an auction in the early 1950's. A third

building, once used by his grandfather as a restaurant, provides additional storage for his larger items. If a customer can't find what he's looking for in one of these three buildings, Sonny tracks down a distributor for it and places a special order.

"[If] people can't find what they're looking for in Parsons, someone will tell them to come up

here, because 'Sonny Hedrick has everything,'" Lorraine says.

The store's diverse stock reflects the region's culture and industry. Miners' belts — wide, heavy straps of leather with rings and hooks a miner would need for attaching his equipment — are offered along with carbide lanterns. Lorraine says she can even order calcium carbide for the lamps, although there's a minimum order of 50 pounds.

A wooden display rack on the counter contains medicinal products that our ancestors relied upon to relieve aching muscles, stop a cough, and ease a baby's teething pain. They include Porter's Liniment Salve, Balsam of Myrrh, and clove oil.

"If you ever cut your finger or something, you put that on, and you'll learn how to dance," Sonny says of the Balsam of Myrrh. "It will burn a little bit, but it helps it heal."

Sonny laments the fact that even his son — Carl Jr., a pharmacist in Buckhannon — can't get a source for Lightning Hot Drops, which were good for stomach ailments. "We had a few people around here who took them," Sonny says.

This diversification and willingness to accommodate the customer are two reasons why Hedrick's survives in a retail landscape where mass merchandisers like Wal-Mart and Kmart eat general stores like penny candy. Homer Carr, one of Sonny's workers, believes Sonny's customers patronize him rather than a mass merchandiser because buying from Sonny is ingrained in the local culture. "They don't know to buy from any other place," he says.

Homer Carr says Sonny and Lorraine have helped scores of people who were down on their luck. He and his brother are two of them. He says Sonny gave them jobs when the coal mines closed and put them out of work.

"I don't know what this town will do when they are gone," Homer says. "They've helped a lot of people."



Employees Homer Carr, left, and Pete Bava stand outside Hedrick's appliance showroom. The pair travel around the Hendricks area doing deliveries, appliance installations, and odd jobs for Sonny and Lorraine.

One of the ways the Hedricks assist people is by issuing credit. A senior citizen who runs out of groceries a week before their Social Security check arrives can get an order filled on credit at Hedrick's. And a single mother with no money

in the bank can get a refrigerator from Sonny on payments.

Issuing credit is a practice steeped in tradition. Sonny says he inherited a number of charge accounts along with the store. "My grandfather, the biggest charge account he



Sonny bought this building across the street from his store and uses it to house and display appliances and furniture. It was constructed as a Knights of Pythias Lodge in 1904, and later served as a movie theater.



Hedrick's Store stocks everything from Y2K scrub boards to remote controls and fishing lures.

had was \$58, and after a year or so, I even collected it," Sonny says.

There's no credit application, per se, but Lorraine does record some basic information. "I have to know who they are, what kind of work they are doing, and all that," she says. When a customer forgets to pay, Lorraine gets on the phone. "She's the hound dog," Sonny says. When Lorraine gets to the end of her patience, the magistrate pays the debtor a visit.

Sonny believes that customers were more conscientious about their debts back in his grandfather's day. Lorraine agrees. "Back when I was a kid," she says, "you wouldn't charge stuff and forget about paying for it, no way. We weren't brought up that way."

As with any retailer, Sonny and Lorraine suspect some merchandise walks out the door in pockets and under jackets. But Sonny says the store has never been robbed, and it's had only one break-in. The store's largest loss came from nature. In November 1985, a wall of water came roaring down the Blackwater Canyon and took out much of the town, including the warehouse where Sonny and Lorraine

stored their appliances. [See "Looking Back Ten Years Later: The Flood of '85," by Todd L. Newmark; Fall 1995]. "Thirty-thousand dollars worth of appliances, gone," Sonny says. "We didn't have no insurance on them. That was a big loss." Sonny says quitting wasn't an option. "I just got bigger," he says. "I

had to pay off the debt I owed, so I worked more."

Since his heart surgery in 1988, Sonny's role has become one of overseer when it comes to appliance deliveries, flooring installations, and other heavy work. But he still works more than full time. He and Lorraine open the store at 7 a.m. and close it at 5 p.m. The store is open six days a week, closed on Sundays.

Daughter Sandra Kay is gradually taking over the business, which she says feels "more like a home than a store." While Sandra Kay doesn't relish the thought of being the one to inherit a general store and handyman service, her parents have thus far been unsuccessful in finding a buyer. "She wants me to sell out, but I can't find no one who wants to buy it," Sonny says.

"We'll do it until we die, I guess," adds Lorraine. 🍁

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Daughter Sandra Kay Bava works alongside Sonny and Lorraine at the store. Here, they close out the books after another busy week.



Panoramic view of Hendricks in 1935. Photograph by West Virginia Photo Company, courtesy of West Virginia State Archives.

Looking Back on Hendricks

Once a boisterous boomtown, the Tucker County community of Hendricks can now best be described as a sleepy country village. Beneath this subdued appearance, however, lies a storied past.

Hendricks is located in a narrow valley at the foot of Backbone and McGowan mountains, at the confluence of the Blackwater and Dry Fork rivers. Despite this precarious setting, the town flourished between 1890 and 1920. According to the 1962 book titled *History of Tucker County, West Virginia*, by Homer Floyd Fansler, it reached a peak population of 640 in 1910.

The first permanent settler was Henry Fansler. He arrived in 1803, built a two-story cabin, farmed, and ran a grist mill before he passed away in 1843. The Fansler family name is still common in the area.

The first postmaster was Hugh Pleasant Collett. Jubilant over the 1884 election of Democratic president Grover Cleveland, Collett requested that the name of the post office be changed from Black Fork to Cleveland. This request was turned down; there was already a Cleveland in Webster County. Collett reportedly said, "If I can't have the best, I'll take the next best," and requested that the name be changed instead to Hendricks, in honor of Granddad says, 'I never lost a penny in my life.' And the man says, 'Tell me how you do it?' And he says, 'I didn't sell anything.'" newly elected vice-president Thomas A. Hendricks. This request was granted in 1885; Thomas Hendricks died later that year.

The first trains arrived in town in 1889, ushering in a new era of development and growth. The Dry Fork Railroad was built between Hendricks and Horton in



Hendricks post office. Date unknown, courtesy of West Virginia State Archives.

1893 and flourished for 42 years, hauling timber, freight, and passengers.

Hendricks soon became a bustling community with two banks, three hotels, seven restaurants, seven stores, an opera house, movie theater, bakery, jewelry store, drug store, photo gallery, millinery shop, two factories, two doctors, two barbers, two railroads, two schools, two bands, a railroad shop, and several churches. It also became a mecca for rambunctious lumberjacks and wood hicks who came into town looking for fun.

Floods, fires, and the shifting sands of time, however, spelled the decline of Hendricks, and little was left by the time the devastating 1985 flood roared through the valley. Still, recent census figures reveal a population of about 300 souls, and a few local die-hards like Sonny Hedrick and his family are determined to keep the community — and memory — of Hendricks alive.

Spinning Memories on Fowler Branch

By John "J.J." Ward

The house in which I was born, and where I lived for the first 17 years of my life, is located in Chapmanville, a village bisected by the Guyandotte River in the western portion of Logan County. We often joked about our river being the longest swimming pool in the country — 100 miles long.

My mother was born on Fowler Branch, a brook emptying into the Guyandotte. Almost everyone living on Fowler Branch at that time was a close, or distant, relative of mine.

When I was a boy, I often visited my Grandmother Lowe. Her maiden name was Fowler, and she lived on a farm located at the head of the holler. My father would load a sack of corn in my little red Radio Flyer wagon, and I would set out through town toward Uncle Joe Fowler's mill, which was on the way to my grandmother's farm. Frequently, the village's few sidewalks were cracked and thrust upward by the roots of huge elm trees, making for slow progress in places.

Once, while I sat resting on the wagon, a pretty little girl in a frilly, crinoline dress walked by and paused. "Hi, boy," she said. "How long have you had that wagon?" I mumbled an incoherent response with a tongue turned to flannel. It was the first time I noticed that girls could be, well, interesting. Shaken, I pressed on, obeying my mother's warning to avoid the railroad right-of-way and the parallel highway several hundred yards north.

My route went across the cinder-covered village square, located between the C&O railway station, the post office, and a cluster of sleepy businesses. Beyond the square, there were no more towering trees, and the sidewalk was relatively smooth. As mother had instructed, I stopped and looked both ways before I crossed State Route 10. In those days, a lazy dog could cross at high noon with little danger.



Drawing by John "J.J." Ward.

Beyond the road was a little wooden bridge over Fowler Branch. On the right was Pudd Whitman's old unpainted house without any porches. Uncle Pudd's boys, my second or third cousins, played on the town's baseball team. They always treated me special. Their mother had died years before.

A hundred yards upstream, the dirt road made a 90-degree turn to the right, between my Uncle Walter's place and Buck Fowler's house. Buck Fowler was another distant relative. The little-traveled road then made a 90-degree turn to the left. Above Uncle Walter's garden, the road wove along the easiest course through an open space to an unpainted wooden building on the right. That was Uncle Joe Fowler's mill.

I left the wagon with the sack of corn just inside the mill door. Uncle Joe — actually my great-uncle — was sweating from pulling on the grinder belt in a frustrated effort to start the stubborn gasoline motor. Machinery was a mystery to Uncle Joe. "Hi, Johnny," he said, wiping perspiration from his



*My father would load a sack of corn
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stuck his head through a window of the barn. It seemed to be grinning at my discomfiture.

The next place that I passed was the home of my Uncle T.G. Fowler. My grandmother, inspired by Biblical and historical names, had given my uncle a name nobody could pronounce, much less spell, so he went by the initials "T.G." At Uncle T.G.'s place, a dozen squawking geese bore down upon me. To a 10-year-old, their necks seemed to be six-feet long. At the very last second, they veered off to either side.

Although every house on Fowler Branch had one or more dogs, none ever barked. Hounds, all, exhausted from the hunt perhaps, they would open an eye to stare at me for a second, then go back to sleep.

Next, I had to climb over a huge gate — easier than opening it — where a half-dozen cows, standing like statues, stared at me as I carefully

made my way through the barnyard covered with plate-sized cow droppings. Alerted by all of the creatures, Grandmother would always be waiting to greet me by the gate.

My Grandmother was a widow. Her husband and eldest son had died from typhoid fever. Another son Napoleon, whom we called Uncle Poke, had survived fevers beyond 105 degrees for days and was never the same afterwards. He always went out to wash his hands in the little creek — Fowler Branch — before meals. My grandmother's house was made from "Lincoln logs" cut from her property, which extended to the top of the surrounding ridges. There was a great stone fireplace in the front room or parlor. She had an old Edison phonograph with cylinder records. I could never get enough of looking at the pictures that became three-dimensional through a special eyepiece. Most were scenes of American Doughboys in the trenches during World War I in France. A loom, now retired from service,

forehead with a red bandanna. "I expect you'll go up to see Margaret. Tell Drew to come down here and get this danged thing started." Margaret was my grandmother and Uncle Joe's sister. Drew was his only son Andrew, but Uncle Joe and Aunt Ettie always had one or two other relatives living with them. I left the corn with him and made my way up the hill.

Just beyond the mill, the road climbed up through a grove of trees. Wild grapevines grew from treetop to treetop and formed a green tunnel. I would always forget about the flock of Guinea fowl perched in the trees until their shrill cries sent shivers up my spine. Their outcry usually spooked turkeys feeding on the hillside above, and they flew noisily overhead to the other side of the holler. As always, Aunt Ettie would be standing in the kitchen door, smiling and holding out her hand with some treat. I relayed Uncle Joe's message to Drew, who was drinking coffee at the kitchen table, and continued on my way.

Beyond their house on the right, Uncle Joe's horse

was upstairs. But the old spinning wheel still commanded a place in the parlor.

At the time, on the radio — Grandmother never had one — a popular tune was “An Old Spinning Wheel in the Parlor.” The song had also been popular when the cylinder records were modern, and Grandmother still owned a copy. The poignant lyrics went, “There’s an old spinning wheel in the parlor,/ Spinning dreams of a long, long ago,/ Spinning dreams of an old fashioned garden,/ And a maid with her old fashioned beau./ It seems I can see her in the twilight,/ As the organ is pealing ‘Old Black Joe.’/ There’s an old spinning wheel in the parlor,/ Spinning dreams of a long, long ago.” As I played “The Old Spinning Wheel” record over and over, I could see Grandmother wiping tears away with her apron.

After smothering hugs at the gate, Grandmother repeatedly cautioned me to be careful crossing the road and the railroad tracks. Both seemed nothing compared to the staring cows, the long-necked geese, the laughing horse, and the squawking Guinea hens. Uncle Joe, his beard now white with cornmeal dust, had the sack of corn already milled and loaded in my wagon. He would hold out both closed hands and ask, “Which one?” There would be a nickel — a small fortune — in both, so whichever hand I guessed, I would always win.

Returning home, I paused at the same place on the sidewalk near the village square, but the

*Uncle Joe, his beard now white with
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pretty little girl in the frilly dress didn’t appear.

A half-century later, I returned to Chapmanville for a high school class reunion. I walked up Fowler Branch once again, along what was now a straight, blacktop road. Two or three of the former houses remained, but all the others had been replaced by new structures. There were a few gardens, tinier and tidier. The domestic animals and fowl were gone. Some, but not all, of the dogs now barked. The houses were bigger and brighter. Determining where the mill and my uncles’ houses had been proved to be impossible. A huge manufactured home now stood near the former site of my grandmother’s house.

Although a freeway now parallels that portion of State Route 10, traffic on it is much too thick for lazy dogs or boys with red wagons to think about crossing alone.

The passenger trains stopped coming decades ago, the depot is gone, and the little village square overgrown. Businesses followed the new highways. The vacant lots were all filled, and buildings overflowed up the hollers and hill-sides, the surrounding mountains unable to restrain the growth. Chapmanville is certainly bigger and maybe even better now, but the days of the little family farms are long gone. I’m delighted to have experienced that era, however, and like the old spinning wheel in grandmother’s parlor, I can still spin memories and “dreams of a long, long ago.”

JOHN “J.J.” WARD was born and raised in Chapmanville, Logan County, and is now retired and living in Arizona. He worked 10 years as a radio officer in the merchant marines, then traveled the world as a flight navigator and radio officer in the aviation industry. He is an experienced author whose work has appeared in more than 50 publications, including magazines such as *Wonderful West Virginia* and *Arizona Highways* and several West Virginia newspapers. This is J.J.’s first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.





The West Virginia Coon Hunters posed for this promotional photograph on October 14, 1927. Standing, from the left, are Fred Belcher, Clyde Meadows, Jim Brown, and Vernal Vest. Seated are Dutch Stewart, W.A. "Bone" Broyles, Regal Mooney, Fred Pendleton, and Joe Stephens.

Bristol sessions. Considered by some to mark the beginning of the modern country music recording industry, the Bristol sessions took place July 25 until August 5, 1927, in the mountain city of Bristol, straddling the Virginia and Tennessee state border. These sessions were conducted by Ralph Peer for the Victor Talking Machine Company and resulted in the discovery of several important artists, including Jimmie Rodgers (often called the "Father of Country Music"), the original Carter Family (often referred to as the "First Family of Country Music"), and others. The fact that Darel's father had partici-

pated in this seminal event was exciting news to Darel.

The news was tempered, however, by Darel's discovery that his father's name was incorrectly listed on the reissued recording as "W.A. Meadows." Darel was disappointed by this error and determined to set the record straight. In the process, he began a challenging — often frustrating — hunt for additional information and documentation about this nearly forgotten West Virginia string band.

The reissued recordings of the West Virginia Coon Hunters' sides from Bristol list the band personnel as "W.B. Boyles, fiddle; W.A.

Meadows, comments; other musicians undetermined." Victor released two lively numbers from the group — "Greasy String" and "Your Blue Eyes Run Me Crazy." The fiddling is clear, unadorned, and forthright on both numbers. Meadows' "comments" on "Greasy String" take the form of sparse interjections, in a spoken style commonly heard on string band recordings of the day. On "Your Blue Eyes Run Me Crazy," however, Meadows shows himself to be a strong and accomplished singer. The song is a variant of the traditional number also known as "Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss," "Western Coun-

try," "Susananna Gal," "Blue-Eyed Gal," and by other names.

Darel can pick out his father's voice in the recordings. "I heard him sing for years, and I'd recognize it anywhere," he says. Determining the presence and the identity of the remaining musicians, however, is a bit trickier. Darel has several aging, but clear, promotional photographs of the group taken October 14, 1927. In one photograph — the only one specifically labeled as the West Virginia Coon Hunters — there are a total of nine musicians. The young men in the photograph are dressed alike in clean, but plain, work clothes. They are all well-groomed, and each player is holding what appears to be a high-quality musical instrument. Included are three guitars, two fiddles, a mandolin, a banjo-mandolin, a tenor banjo, and a five-string banjo. The other photographs in the collection, apparently taken on the same day, show the same musicians in a variety of smaller groupings.

Notes on the backs of the photographs, in Clyde Meadows' handwriting, provide the names of the musicians. Fiddler W.A. "Bone"



Mercer County fiddler Fred Pendleton and mandolinist Vernal Vest. Pendleton was perhaps the most well-known musician in the group. He recorded extensively and remained active with his fiddling up into the 1970's.

Broyles appears in a number of the photographs, as does guitarist Clyde S. Meadows. The other fiddler shown is Fred Pendleton. The two additional guitarists are identified as Fred Belcher and Jim Brown. The mandolinist is identified as Vernal Vest; the banjo-mandolin is played by Regal Mooney, tenor banjo by Dutch Stewart, and five-string

banjo by Joe Stephens, according to the notes.

The group is listed as being from Bluefield, the home of Clyde Meadows. Fred Pendleton was well-known as a fiddler in nearby Princeton for many years. Darel has had little success in establishing the personal histories of the other musicians, but it is likely that the majority of the remaining band members lived in the Bluefield vicinity during the late 1920's, on one side or the other of the Virginia and West Virginia state line.

It is matter of speculation as to exactly how the West Virginia Coon Hunters found themselves in Bristol on August 5, 1927 — the final day of the famed session. It is interesting to note, however, that Blind Alfred Reed, also from Princeton and the only other West Virginia artist to participate in the Bristol sessions,

made his Bristol recordings earlier in the session — on July 28. [See "The Life of Blind Alfred Reed," by the Rounder Collective; January-March 1976.] Fiddler Fred Pendleton was well-acquainted with Alfred Reed and Reed's son Arville, and actually did some recording with the pair as the West Virginia Night Owls for Victor later

Hear It for Yourself

The West Virginia Coon Hunters' two Victor releases from the famed 1927 Bristol sessions have both been reissued.

"Greasy String," a lively instrumental with vocal "comments" by Clyde Meadows, is available from the Country Music Foundation on their impressive collection called *The Bristol Sessions*

(CMF011). In addition to the West Virginia Coon Hunters, it includes the earliest recordings of Jimmie Rodgers, the Carter Family, and 20 additional artists. It is available on CD or cassette tape by phoning 1-800-852-6437.

"Your Blue Eyes Run Me Crazy" features Clyde Meadows on vocals, "Bone" Broyles on fiddle, and a

driving rhythm section. It was reissued in 1999 by County Records in Volume Two of their *Old-Time Music of West Virginia* series (County CD-3519). For more information about this collection, see "Mountain Music Roundup," by Paul Gartner; Winter 2000. It is available on CD only by phoning (540)745-2001.

in 1927. It is quite possible that the Coon Hunters undertook the journey to Bristol after hearing positive reports from Blind Alfred Reed, though it is unclear why they took the trip without fiddler Pendleton. Ironically, Fred Pendleton was personally invited by Ralph Peer to come to Bristol for a follow-up session the next year. On November 3, 1928, Fred Pendleton recorded two sides for Victor with guitarist Clyde Meadows in Bristol — "The Last Farewell" and "The Young Rambler."

We are now able to put a few possible names and faces to these historic recordings.

Other details of the West Virginia Coon Hunters' brief 1927 recording career are equally sketchy. Although it is difficult to tell exactly how many instruments contributed to the group's driving rhythm, careful listening suggests that considerably fewer than the full group of nine musicians were involved in making these recordings. Who, then, did Ralph Peer record in Bristol as the West Virginia Coon Hunters?

Darel feels certain that his father played the guitar on the recordings in addition to singing and adding "comments." The recording of the song "Your Blue Eyes Run Me Crazy" features five-string banjo played in a clawhammer style. This fact, along with photographic evidence, suggests that Joe Stephens made the trip to Bristol, since he is the only member of the group shown with a five-string banjo in any of the pictures.

The recording of the tune "Greasy String," however, does not include a five-string banjo, but features at least one guitar and one or more strummed rhythm instruments. One of these instruments appears to have been a ukelele.

A particular photograph from Darel Meadows' collection stands



The West Virginia Coon Hunters, as they likely appeared at a recording session in Bristol, Tennessee, on August 5, 1927. Standing, from the left, are guitarists Fred Belcher and Clyde Meadows. Seated are fiddler W.A. "Bone" Broyles and banjo player Joe Stephens. It is possible that Vernal Vest recorded with the group, as well, playing the ukelele.

out as a possible portrait of the portion of the group that might have recorded in Bristol, 75 years ago. The photograph shows Bone Broyles on fiddle, Joe Stephens on banjo, and Fred Belcher and Clyde Meadows on guitars.

A recently published discography of Fred Pendleton's recordings reveals that a "L. Vernal Vest" played ukelele in Pendleton's West Virginia Melody Boys during the early 1930's. It is likely that this is the same Vernal Vest shown with a mandolin in the Coon Hunters'

1927 photographs, and that Vest also made the trip to Bristol and recorded at least one song with the group, playing the ukelele.

Clear as mud? Perhaps, but at least we are now able to put a few possible names and faces to these historic recordings. And, much to Darel Meadows' satisfaction, we are finally able to set the record straight regarding his father's correct name and Clyde S. Meadows' small, but very real, contribution to the recorded history of old-time country music. 🍁

2002 Liars Contest

Here are the winning lies from last year's State Liars Contest, held at the 26th annual Vandalia Gathering in Charleston. Congratulations to the winners !

Rich Knoblich (First Place) Ohio County

People ask me, "Hey, Rich, does it ever get boring up on the old homestead up on the mountain?"

No, man. I got neighbors. I got this one, he's a retired pirate captain. Now this pirate captain, he's the fella who figured out that your sails, you could just stretch them from the fore mast to the middle mast to the aft mast, and you'd have this huge canopy. Then you just catch the updraft, and it would lift your ship right up into the air. It would glide just like the hawks do on the air currents. Then you could sail the air currents just like you do the ocean currents.

Well, one day he took his ship — he called it the *Golden Opportunity*. He decided he needed some livestock for his farm, and he sailed it on over towards the Eastern Panhandle, and settled that ship right onto an open field. He then jumped ship and went on down into the town of Franklin to get himself some livestock.

Now, while he was gone, a caravan of trucks from one of the

local churches — the Church of the High Holy Hikers of the Heavenly Foot Massage — were going through the countryside looking to save souls, and they came across this pirate ship. Well, they got out and they pondered it, and they turned to their minister Aunt Marian. She looked at it, and she declared, "The Lord helps them who help themselves." So, they helped themselves to all that canvas off of the ship and threw it into the back of their pickup truck. They then went on down into the valley where the old logging camp was

located. There, with needles as sharp as their tongues and fingers as quick as their wits, they fashioned themselves a revival tent and began revivin' souls.

Meanwhile, the captain, he comes back to his ship, and it was



First-place winner Rich Knoblich retells his tale at the Vandalia awards ceremony. Photographs by Michael Keller.

quite obvious that marauding buccaneers had somehow taken away all of his sails. Well, he had bought himself three sheep. So, he got them back up onto the deck, and he corralled them at the one end. The sheep, they're baaing and they're bleating and they're making all kinds of noise, so he fed them the only thing he had. That was some refried bean burritos. Well, that kept them quiet, and that's when he got his idea what he was going to use for sails.

He went over to his sea chest and kicked it open, and he pulled out three pair of those extra-large old boxer shorts. The kind that his crew had given him at Christmas. You know those Christmas gag gifts? They show a picture of mistletoe over the back end of them. You give 'em to your boss. So, he took those, and he stretched that elastic across those spars from one mast to the next

mast to the next mast, and he had himself some sails.

Well, right about then, the gastrointestinal tracts of those sheep had been working on those refried bean burritos, and a breeze, shall we say, started to kick up. And that sailing ship, it lifted itself up. But the captain realized quickly that with the added weight of those sheep, he wouldn't have enough lift to get over the top of Cheat Mountain. So, he kicked open the hatch of the hole, grabbed a shovel, and started shoveling his Spanish gold doubloons over the side. Well, once he lost enough ballast, that ship, the *Golden Opportunity*, it just rose high into the air. Well, the captain, he grabbed the tiller with one hand, and he grabbed a bottle of fine Jamaican rum with the other, and he started steering a course for home.

Meanwhile, down in the valley,

Aunt Marian at the revival tent had just finished her sermon titled "Money Doesn't Grow on Trees." Showering down out of the sky come gold coins onto that tent, falling all around them. Aunt Marian looked at it, and she thought to herself, "Damn, I'm good."

The very next morning, I came out onto my front porch. And there in my front yard was that pirate ship. Now, the sheep, they were no longer passing gas. The captain, he was passed out and completely gassed. So the moral of my story — if you ever come out into your yard and there's a pirate ship, and the captain is three sheets to the wind, and it's rigged with three shorts for the wind, and it's powered by three sheep breaking wind, what you got there in front of you, folks, is the golden opportunity for a story.

Mark Howes (Second Place)

Upshur County

Got a neighbor named Frog Wilson. They named him Frog not because of the way he talks, but the way he walks. Well anyway, me and Frog, we decided we'd build us one of them hot-air balloons. So, we got a cast-iron bathtub and some hickory sticks. We sold our ginseng that we had dried and bought us some skins — beaver skins, muskrat skins — and we built ourselves a hot-air balloon. We took one of them 500-gallon propane tanks and strapped to it.

It was a good-looking outfit we had there, and everything was going fine. It was flying and everything. The anchor we got, we imported it. It was a five-ton boat anchor, but it worked pretty good.

Well, we was getting ready to go to the Woodchuck Dance at

Helvetia, and we was all dressed up in our blaze orange. Frog come over, and Frog said, "The wind's comin' up. You reckon we ought to lash that hot-air balloon down a little better, make sure it don't go nowhere?"

I said, "Sure."

So, we hops in it. Well, lo and behold, you know what a gale is? That's a strong, powerful wind that comes right before the hail. Well, we took off in that hot-air balloon in the gale.

We furrowed our garden, furrowed the neighbor's garden, went on up, come across the holler, found one of the largest sycamore trees I'd ever seen in my life. It was hollow. We hid



Mark Howes, second place, flashes a winning smile in the Green Room.

in that sycamore tree, came out of that sycamore tree, went over, went through a hail storm. That hail tore holes all over our balloon. Froggy's got a tub full of hail settin' there with him, and he's a-shaking. I had been catapulted up inside that balloon. Not only that, but there was a whole bunch of flying squirrels inside there, too.

We was fallin' so fast, I knew we was going to crash. I thought to myself, the only way I can fix this situation is to plumb all these

holes with flying squirrels. So, I whipped out my leatherman tool, and I thumbed through it till it come to "Mark Howes' Fix-It Tent." I didn't think the Humane Society would like it too well if I patched my tent up with live flying squirrels. So, I imagined the best thing for me to do was to just tie their legs and stretch them out over the holes.

It worked perfect. Once in a while, they'd flap up and let us come down slowly. So, me, Frog,

and the flying squirrels, we was makin' pretty good time a-comin' into Helvetia, back into that country where I knew where we was at. Well, we landed in Helvetia. I walked over and took my pocketknife, and I freed every one of them flying squirrels and put them in a feed sack. Took them back across the hill, turned them back into that sycamore tree, came back, and danced the first woodchuck dance with my lovely lady. And that's the truth.

Nancy Feather (Third Place) Preston County

I got me one of them 35-mm cameras for Christmas, and I just woke up one morning and decided I was going to be a photographer of nature. Well, I started submitting pictures to every magazine I could think of — all the national magazines and a couple of magazines here in West Virginia. I wasn't havin' very good luck. I was gettin' letters that would just have "No" written in great big letters. There was one magazine in West Virginia — I'm not going to tell you which one, because I don't want to cause any rivalry between those magazines — they used real nice words to me like, "We hope you have a real bright future," and, "We're wishing you luck in your photographic endeavors." They seemed real concerned about me, too, about the cost of film and developin'. They said maybe I ought to not waste so much money on that. You gotta kind of read between the lines. I think what they was actually sayin' was, "Keep on a-snappin'."

So, I thought I'd just go travelin' around West Virginia, findin' beautiful things to photograph everywhere I go. I was in Cathedral State Park, and they

got the biggest hemlock trees you have ever seen. Huge hemlock trees. They got these other trees, too. I could not get anybody, not a soul, who knew the name of these trees. Everybody I'd ask would tell me they was just poplar, so I'd take a bunch of pictures of 'em. I even asked the game warden, point-blank. I said, "Are these popular trees?"

And he said, "I guarantee you, those are real poplar."

Well, he was also tellin' me about this preacher that lives out there in the woods. He must be there all day long, every day, and he even set up his own pulpit. The warden said I might run into him out there in the woods. He said, "You might see jack-in-the-pulpit out there." I looked everywhere for him, but I never did see him.

Well, I thought I'd better get lookin' around the park. I had my kerosene lantern with me, just in case it got dark before I got back. I set it there on the footbridge and was pumpin' it up to make sure that it was going to be in good workin' order. I looked down into the creek, and it was just filled with trout. Every kind of trout you could imagine —

brown trout, gold trout, speckled trout, rainbow trout, brook trout, every kind of trout. And I thought, "Well, as my uncle always used to say, 'I'm just wishin' I could go fishin.''" I knew I couldn't fish in the park, but that didn't stop me from wadin' down in the water. So, I got down in there. I'd only taken a step or two, and the biggest crawdad you ever saw came out from under a rock. I mean, that thing had pinchers on it the size of Rhode Island, and he came at me. I thought he was tryin' to get me. He came backwards at me real fast, about scared me to death. I lost my footin', did a flip, went up in the air a couple of times. If I'd been at the Olympics, I think that might have been a perfect 10, if I could have just nailed that landin'. But I didn't. I fell flat on my backside in that creek. I landed right on top of one of them pretty rainbow trout, and well, let's just say he didn't look much like a trout no more. Maybe more like a flapjack.

I took another step or two, and my feet went slippin' and slidin' again. My fish went flyin' through the air, and I thought, "I am gettin' out of this creek before I plumb kill myself."

I decided I'd just walk around, go down a couple of these paths. That way, I'd get dried off and wouldn't have a chill after dark.

Well, as I was headin' back, I could smell the most wonderful smell you've ever smelled — this aroma wafting through the air. I didn't know what it was. I thought I was the only one in the park at that time of night. I guess that trout had just flew out of my hand and landed right on top of my lantern. It was cooked to a golden, crispy brown. Now, lucky for me, I just happened to have my three-in-one camping utensil with me — the one with the additional stainless-steel toothpick. I picked every bit of meat off those bones, and I was down to the last bite. I got ready to put the last scrumptious bite in my mouth, and this big spotlight shone on me. Why, for a second I thought I was on center stage at Radio City Music Hall, exceptin' there wasn't no music, and I ain't no Rockette. Then I heard this voice say, "Put your hands up, and drop your weapon."

"Are you talkin' to me? This weapon? My three-in-one combination camping utensil with the additional stainless steel toothpick?"

He said, "Drop your weapon."

I said, "Okay." I dropped it. Well, when I did, that stainless steel toothpick punctured a hole in the canister of my lantern, and that gas went sprayin' up. When it hit the flame, it just kinda set off a little mini-explosion and caught that footbridge on fire. The game warden was walkin' up, and he saw the flames and radioed for the fire department. I thought, "I'm going to get down in that creek and start splashin' with the water, tryin' to get this fire out before the fire department gets here."

Well, they showed up. I guess they didn't see me down there in the creek. They had two pumper trucks. They turned on both those hoses full-blast, all at once. They hit me in the back, sent me propellin' down that creek. The game warden thought I was tryin'

to escape. He jumped in front of the hoses, and he came propellin' after me. Said I was being charged with fishing without a license, fishing in an undesignated area, cookin' in an undesignated area, brandishing a weapon, and fleeing the scene of a crime.

I walked over to him to try and explain what happened, and I accidentally tripped on one of those tree roots that was stickin' up. I tried to catch myself, but he moved. All I could get a-hold of was his holster as I was fallin' down, and I pulled his pistol out of the holster. Accidentally, I swear, somehow I got my finger wrapped up in that trigger, and when my arm hit the ground, well, let's just say that the gun went off and shot the front tire out of the approaching sheriff's cruiser as he was drivin' up. Well, he thought there was a full assault. He radioed for every unit. He radioed for aerial backup, jumped out of the cruiser, stood behind the door with the gun, and all I could think was, "Where is that preacher when you need him?"

I told him, "It was an accident." All I could think of was, "I'm gettin' sent to the slammer. I'm being thrown in the hoosegow. I'm going up the river. I'm going to the big house. Johnny Cash, move over. San Quentin, here I come."

Well, they handcuffed me, took me to jail, and I got me one of them smooth-talkin' city lawyers. I went in front of that judge, and the judge said, "How do you plead?"

And I said, "This was all a misunderstandin'. This was an accident. My backside killed that fish, and that's how this all started."

Well, my lawyer thought he'd take over right about then. He said, "Your Honor, you can see my client ain't no criminal. She's just a brick shy of a load. She's

half-a-bubble off plumb. She ain't the sharpest tool in the shed. In summation, Your Honor, the lights are on, but they ain't nobody home."

So, thanks to his slick talkin', his style, his ability, his expertise, I done got myself vindicated, exonerated, and I'm once again free to roam the hills and the valleys of West Virginia, makin' beautiful pictures.

Lepp Book & CD

Bil Lepp and his brother Paul dominated the State Liars Contest for most of a decade. Bil now serves as the emcee of the event, works at the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, and performs widely (and wildly) across the country, telling his tall tales. For those who just can't seem to get enough of Bil and his unbelievable stories, the unrepentant lying minister has produced a new book and a CD recording.

Inept: Impaired: Overwhelmed is Bil's second book, and is published by Quarrier Press of Charleston. It includes 28 original stories, some of which will be familiar to faithful GOLD-ENSEAL readers as winning lies from the Vandalia Gathering. In addition, Bil has produced a recording of his storytelling called "Buck Meets the Monster Stick," released by August House Audio. The 51-minute-long CD includes five stories told by Bil, and features some of the Lepp brothers' most popular lies.

For more information or to purchase the book or CD, check Bil's Web site at www.buck-dog.com.

A Shared Heritage

When I first came to the Vandalia Gathering in 1999, my knowledge of traditional West Virginia culture was non-existent. I had never been especially interested in country music or rural folk music. Being brought up in New York City, my musical experiences were of a different nature. I knew a fair amount about classical music, but I had tended to ignore other forms of music as uninteresting.

The Vandalia Gathering was a revelation. As a photographer and cultural historian, I was fascinated with the feeling of community that permeated the gathering. I had read about folk music jam sessions and had seen a bit of that informal, spontaneous musical exchange in trips I had taken to Ireland, but never on the scale I witnessed at Vandalia. As I wandered around the grounds of the State Capitol Complex, I was struck by the sense of involvement that existed between the performers and the audience. I had my camera with me and began taking pictures. The photographs that I took during my first Vandalia were an attempt to capture in images that impression, so that my

images were not just of the performers on stage, but represented the entire experience.

When I looked at them, I was struck by the enthusiasm apparent in the faces of those who had come to the gathering. A window into a world that was foreign to me was opened, and I came away with a deep sense



Images of Vandalia

Photoessay by Michela Caudill

of respect for what I had heard and seen during those two days.

I returned to the Vandalia Gathering for a second time in May 2002, and hoped to see some of the same people whom I had encountered in 1999. Once again, there were crowds of musicians, dancers, drummers, and craftspeople, and I recognized some of the faces. Perhaps the thing that was most

A mandolin player, left, his hand a blur, picks a lively tune on the plaza of the Cultural Center, with the capitol dome reflected over his shoulder, 1999.

Folk dancers, right, in the Great Hall of the Cultural Center, 2002.

Bluegrass musicians, below, playing in the shade, 2002.





startling to me was the fact that almost all of the performers were amateurs. They earn their living by doing other things, but want to continue the traditions of music, storytelling, and dancing that have been in their families for generations. Again, my camera became a way for me to memorialize this experience.

The desire to maintain these traditions was evident in the involvement of young people and in the pleasure that everyone obviously took in sharing their lives and talents with each other and with those who came to listen and enjoy. Sincerity is in short supply in our modern world of shopping malls and fast food, yet it seemed in abundance everywhere I looked at Vandalia. Here, I found an appreciation of those things that had made life unique for the early settlers of West Virginia, yet continue to hold their value to the present day.

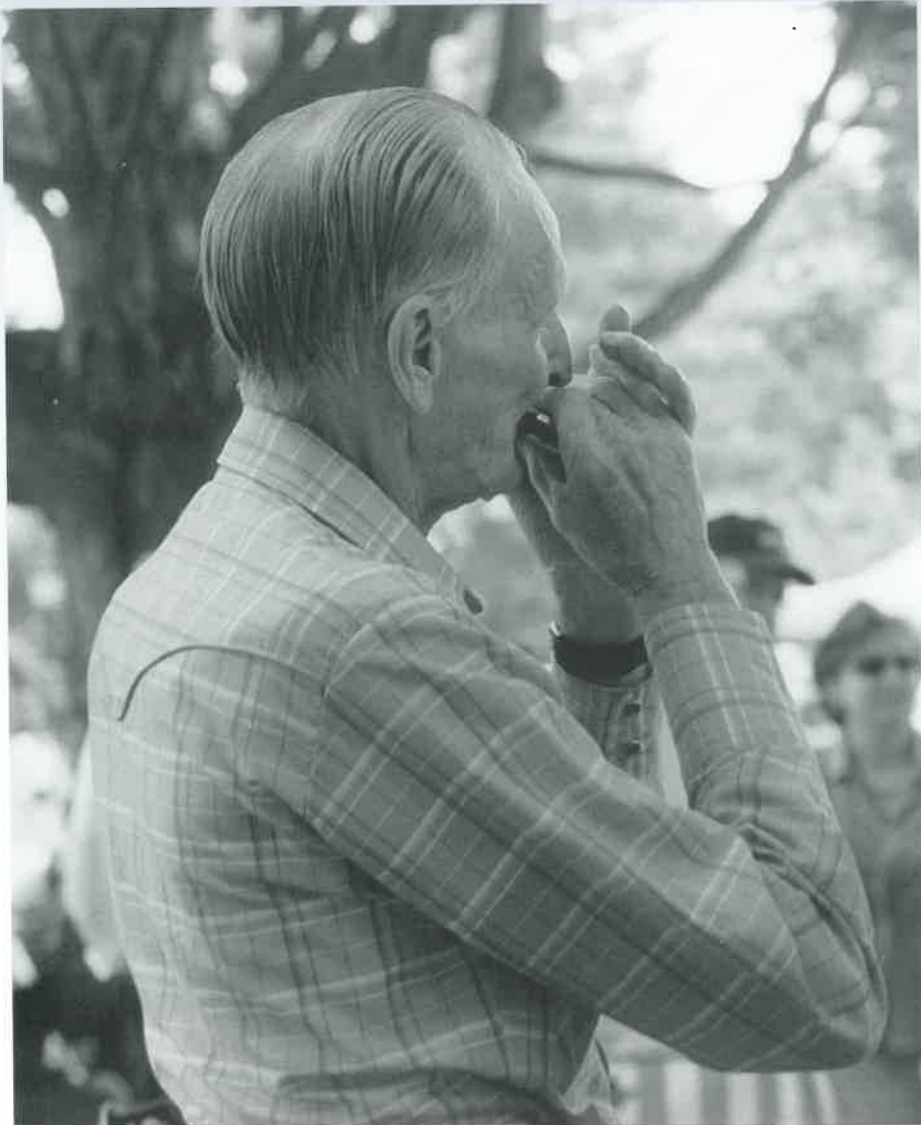
Through the music, dance, stories, and crafts at the Vandalia Gathering, we are all able to participate in a shared heritage. My photographs are a witness to that dedication and to all of the people involved in this collective endeavor.

Michela Caudill

MICHELA CAUDILL is a native of New York City, currently living in Baltimore. She holds a degree in history from Columbia University and a doctorate in European cultural history from The University of Cambridge. Her photography has been exhibited locally and regionally, and examples of her work are on display in both private and public collections. This is her first contribution to GOLD-ENSEAL.

Sally Hawkins, above, plays the hammered dulcimer, 2002.

This distinguished gentleman, at left, joins in one of the Vandalia jam session, playing the harmonica, 2002.





An impromptu hymn sing, above, gets underway beneath one of the majestic magnolia trees on the capitol grounds, 1999.



Chanting and drumming at the Native American area, 2002.

2002 Vandalia Winners

Vandalia Heritage Award —
Bob Kessinger, Harmony

Fiddle (age 60 and over)

- 1 — Elmer Rich, Westover
- 2 — Junior Spencer, Frankford
- 3 — Harold Burns, Yawkey
- 4 — Woody Simmons, Mill Creek
- 5 — Jerry Lewis, Nettle

Fiddle (under age 60)

- 1 — Jake Krack, Orma
- 2 — Dan Kessinger, St. Marys
- 3 — Billy Ward, Elkins
- 4 — Jenny Allinder, St. Albans
- 5 — Gerry Milnes, Elkins

Old-Time Banjo (age 60 and over)

- 1 — Bernard Cyrus, Fort Gay
- 2 — Ben Carr, Wilsie
- 3 — Charlie Loudermilk, Frankford
- 4 — Eugene Parsons, Orma
- 5 — Brooks Smith, Dunbar

Old-Time Banjo (under age 60)

- 1 — Tim Bing, Spencer
- 2 — David O'Dell, West Logan
- 3 — Andrew Dunlap, St. Albans
- 4 — Doug Van Gundy, Elkins
- 5 — Paul Gartner, Sod

Mandolin

- 1 — Mike Melton, Charleston
- 2 — Robert Shafer, Elkview
- 3 — Robin Kessinger, St. Albans
- 4 — Dan Kessinger, St. Marys
- 5 — John Putnam, Looneyville

Bluegrass Banjo

- 1 — Bruce Jones, Big Springs
- 2 — Butch Osborne, Parkersburg
- 3 — Jim Gabehart, Hamlin
- 4 — Brandon Green, Beckley
- 5 — Dave Douglas, Ivydale

Lap Dulcimer

- 1 — Alan Freeman, Renick
- 2 — David O'Dell, West Logan
- 3 — Dave Haas, Cross Lanes
- 4 — John Stike, South Charleston
- 5 — Timmy Gillenwater, Griffithsville

Flat-Pick Guitar

- 1 — Brandon Bentley, Sumerco
- 2 — Robin Kessinger, St. Albans
- 3 — Matt Lindsey, Dunbar
- 4 — Darel Meadows, Roanoke
- 5 — Matt Poff, St. Albans



A young guitarist awaits his turn to compete, 2002.

A drummer at the West Virginia Native American drumming circle, 2002.

Flatfoot Dancer Dorsel Harrison

On a very warm and sunny Memorial Day weekend in 1999, I stopped to watch the dancing taking place on the grounds of the West Virginia State Capitol Complex, during my first visit to the annual Vandalia Gathering. There, I saw a man dancing with a loose-limbed body and step that could have challenged Gene Kelly for grace and for the ease of his movements.

His sense of rhythm was amazing. As he danced, I thought of the precision footwork of the famous *Riverdance* company from Ireland, except that he moved with such ease. His body was elastic in its response to the music. This was my first introduction to traditional West Virginia flatfoot dancing. I did not feel that it was appropriate to interrupt the dancer and ask him his name, but I did take several pictures of him at that time.

When I returned to the Vandalia Gathering in May 2002, I hoped to meet the man who had danced so brilliantly. I was not disappointed. This time, I introduced myself and explained that I had taken photographs of him in 1999, which I offered to send to him. He told me that his name is Dorsel Harrison from Kenna, Jackson County, and that his dance is a form of clogging. I asked Mr. Harrison if he ever studied dance, and he told me that he has never had a lesson in his life. "I took after my mother," he said, "because she was a good dancer."



Mr. Harrison dances every week. Sometimes, he and his wife go to square dances together. At other times, he goes to other venues where he does what he calls flatfoot dancing, an individual, improvised style usually performed to live string band or bluegrass music. [See "Join Hands & Circle: Old-Time Dancing Alive and Well," by Mack Samples; Spring 1997.]

Mr. Harrison explained that rhythm is in his bones, and that dancing is one of the great pleasures of his life. I feel graced to have watched him dance and to have made his acquaintance.

—Michela Caudill

Dancer Dorsel Harrison, above, from Kenna, Jackson County, at Vandalia, 2002.

Dorsel shares his rhythm, left, and his enthusiasm with other Vandalia participants, 1999.

27th Annual Vandalia Gathering

May 23-25, 2003

State Capitol Complex

Charleston, West Virginia

Friday, May 23

7:00 p.m. Concert

Saturday, May 24

11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Heritage and
Native American Dancing

11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Contests, Performances
(Fiddle, Bluegrass Banjo, Mandolin)

12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Flatfooting

1:15 - 3:30 p.m. Old-Time Square Dancing

6:30 p.m. Awards Ceremony

7:30 p.m. Concert

Sunday, May 25

12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Heritage and
Native American Dancing

12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Contests, Performances
(Old-Time Banjo, Lap Dulcimer,
Flatpick Guitar)

12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. Flatfooting

1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Liars Contest

1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Old-Time Square Dancing

3:30 - 5:00 p.m. Gospel Workshop

5:00 p.m. Awards Ceremony

6:00 p.m. Gospel Concert

All events free and open to the public, schedule subject to change. For further information, call (304)558-0220, 558-0162, or visit www.wvculture.org/vandalia.



Above: Tuning up before the bluegrass banjo competition, 1999.

Right: Although electric instruments are rarely seen at Vandalia, this woman enjoys playing her bass and singing in a jam session, 2002.

Facing page, top: Two young participants take advantage of a free ride, 1999.

Facing page, bottom: Richard Dunlap with granddaughter Bridget Phillips at the end of a long but enjoyable day at the Vandalia Gathering, 2002.



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- ____ Spring 2000/West Virginia Women
- ____ Summer 2000/West Virginia Men
- ____ Fall 2000/Ellifritz Rock Museum
- ____ Winter 2000/Coondogs
- ____ Spring 2001/25th Vandalia
- ____ Summer 2001/Train Photography
- ____ Fall 2001/Apples, Apples, Apples
- ____ Winter 2001/Veterans Memorial
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Inside Goldenseal

Page 38 — The Nuzum family dairy in rural Harrison County provided fresh milk for the community, and a wealth of valuable lessons in life for young Pauline Nuzum Burns.

Page 34 — Milroy Grose Road in Fayette County is named in honor of a determined and beloved man from Graydon. Author Donna McGuire Tanner tells us his poignant story.

Page 18 — The Pallottine sisters of Huntington fulfill their mission in the mountains as nurses and teachers, as they have done throughout West Virginia since 1912. Author Joseph Platania introduces us to this group of dedicated women.

Page 44 — Sonny Hedrick's general store in Hendricks is one of the last remaining businesses in this Tucker County town. Author Carl Feather tells us why we should "Go See Sonny."

Page 10 — Restoring the beautiful stained glass dome in the 100-year-old Randolph County courthouse in Elkins was a tedious and often dangerous job for Belington glass artists Grace Obana and Joe Brown.

Page 26 — George Hajash of Beckley made news as one of seven brothers to serve during World War II and return safely to West Virginia. Author Belinda Anderson tells us what went on behind the headlines.

Page 52 — Childhood adventures on Fowler Branch near Chapmanville, Logan County, "ring a bell" for author J.J. Ward.

