West Virginia Traditional Life

Goldenseal

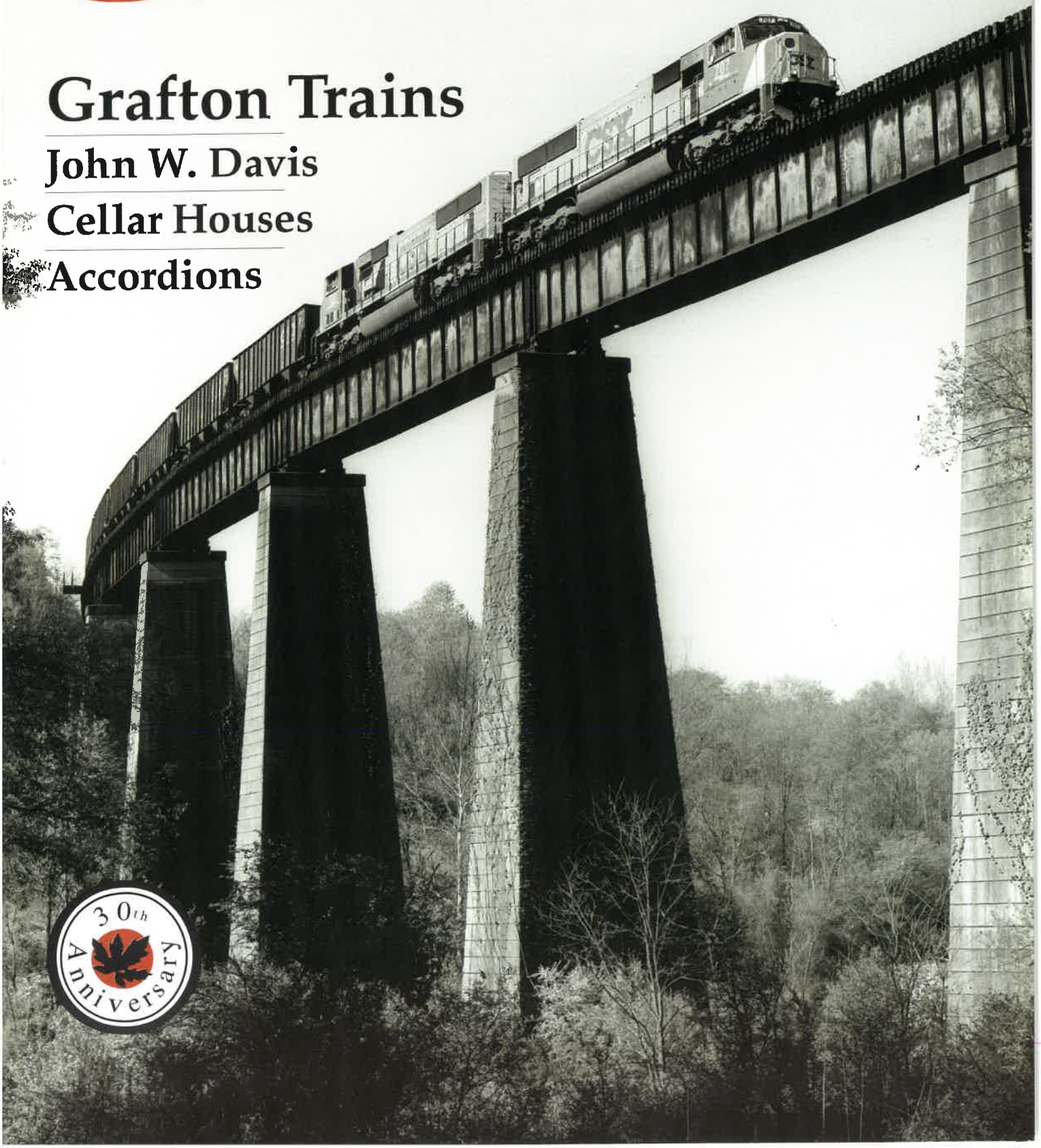
Fall 2004 $4.95

Grafton Trains

John W. Davis

Cellar Houses

Accordions



30th Anniversary

From the Editor: Give the Gift

Fall is traditionally the time of year when the largest number of GOLDENSEAL subscriptions come due for renewal. I usually conclude my fall editorial with a pep talk about renewals and a friendly reminder about gift subscriptions. Well, as my kids say, this is Opposite Day. So I'm going to start right off with the gifts.

If you have been following these pages in recent issues, you are aware that we introduced a contest earlier this year to encourage the giving of gift subscriptions. Whoever gives the most gift subscriptions or gift renewals by the end of 2004 will receive a complete bound collection of GOLDENSEAL magazines dating back to our first issue. Second place will receive our Deluxe Gift Package (20 back issues, our two books, and a selection of reprinted articles). Third place wins a complimentary three-year subscription.

Response to the contest — and my continued pleas for new gifts — has been encouraging, if not overwhelming. A few hearty souls have given generously, with the current front-runner tipping the scales at around 20 gifts. Thanks! There is still plenty of time left, however. As you begin looking at your holiday gift list, we hope that you will make this the year when you share your favorite magazine with your favorite people. They will appreciate it, we will appreciate it, and you will be helping to secure the future of this publication. Even if you don't plan to win the contest, every gift matters and every gift helps.

The math is pretty basic. If each subscriber gives one gift a year, our circulation will double. If only half of our subscribers give one gift a year, we'd gain several thousand new readers. Most everyone has a short list of people for whom they normally buy gifts — birthdays, anniversaries, Mother's Day, Father's Day, holidays. Isn't there at least one person on your list who would enjoy reading these stories, admiring these photographs, and connecting with their West Virginia heritage? Please consider it.

I have been trying to keep you updated about where we stand in terms of our circulation. The good news is that we have added 271 new readers since the summer issue. Welcome! Unfortunately, we have also lost a number of readers during that time, and as of this writing, the total circulation for this issue is down 120.

As I have mentioned before (many times), we are entirely self-supporting and rely completely on our readers to pay for the printing, postage, salaries, and the many other expenses related to publishing this fine magazine. Your tax dollars don't pay for it, neither does grant money, advertising revenue, lottery receipts, or someone's rich uncle in Bramwell. Just regular folks like you, who enjoy reading the magazine and willingly keep it afloat with their subscriptions and gifts.

We know these are difficult times for many people. Gas, milk, and medicine are outrageously expensive. Insurance premiums and copayments are through the roof, and are especially difficult for seniors on fixed incomes. A magazine subscription can seem like a real luxury when the wolf is at the door. With this in mind, I sincerely thank those subscribers who have been with us for many years. It always warms my heart when I hear from someone who has been receiving GOLDENSEAL for all 30 years. We thank you for your loyalty and continued support.

For many, however, the giving of gift subscriptions is a real and substantial way to invest in the future of this magazine. Financial help is not likely to come from the state — West Virginia's budget difficulties are ongoing. Not only would advertising dramatically change the flavor of GOLDENSEAL, but we would need to significantly increase our staff to sell ads and manage accounts, not to mention sacrificing the editorial content of the magazine to make room for the ad pages. As a government agency, we are not eligible to apply for most grant programs. As far as selling or renting our mailing list is concerned, well, it just goes against my grain.

The future, then, lies where it belongs — in your hands. Please help us grow GOLDENSEAL. Give the gift.

John Lilly

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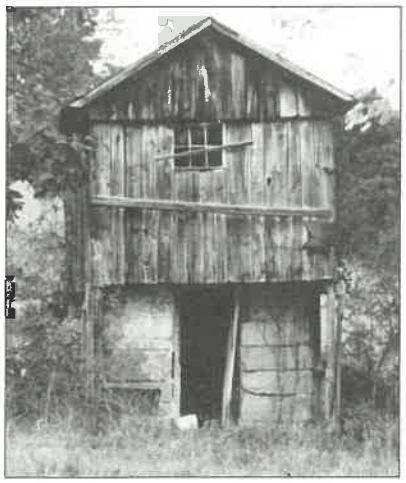
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On the cover: A loaded coal train bound for Grafton crosses the "65 Bridge" on May 4, 1998. Photograph by Jay Potter. Our article about Jay and his railroad photography begins on page 16.


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John Lilly
Editor

Gordon Simmons
Editorial Assistant

Cornelia Crews Alexander
Circulation Manager

A.C. Designs
Publication Design

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Correspondence to:
The Editor
GOLDENSEAL
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300

Phone (304)558-0220
e-mail goldenseal@wvculture.org
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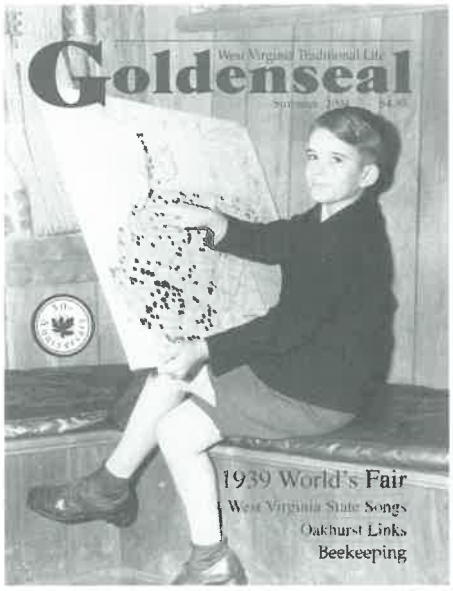
Letters from Readers

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

Summer Issue

July 9, 2004
Arcadia, Florida
Editor:
I served as pastor of the Montgomery Presbyterian Church in Fayette County from 1980-85. For several years, I have received GOLDENSEAL as a gift. I have enjoyed every issue of your publication, but the Summer 2004 issue touched me in some special ways.



My father and his sisters visited the 1939 New York World's Fair, and replicas of the trylon and perisphere graced the curio shelf in our family home in Knoxville, Tennessee, where I grew up. Dan Fleming's wonderful piece about the World's Fair brought back memories of the stories that I heard as a child [see "A West Virginia Boy at the New York World's Fair," by Dan B. Fleming, Jr.].

Fond memories of the years we spent in West Virginia include hearing John Denver sing in the Charleston Civic Center in the summer of 1980. Richard Ramella's story about "Country Roads" brought those memories back [see "When 'Country Roads' Began: Genesis of a Mountain State Favorite"].

Among the old 78 r.p.m. records in that Knoxville home were Louis Jordan's "Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens," "Caldonia," and "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby?" Ramella and Bill Archer brought back memories of rainy afternoons spent listening to music from the past [see "'Salt Pork, West Virginia': A Musical Mystery Solved"].

John Burnett reminded me of my childhood, fishing with my father in the lakes and streams of East Tennessee. And I have pictures of my two brothers and myself on Spot, the pony [see "Fishing in Berwind"].

Lawton Posey and I took chaplaincy training together in 1980-81 at St. Francis Hospital in Charleston, where he was later the Protestant chaplain, so his article reminded me of our time together. He was so young in those pictures [see "A City Preacher Comes to Pendleton County"].

In Betty Bowers Snyder's article, I found another old friend [see "'Across the Ocean in Philadelphia': My Early Years in Mineral County"]. The vagabond handyman she described, Leige, used to sit hunkered down against the wall of the restaurant that was my family's business in Knoxville. I recall him playing his harmonica with his slouch hat sitting beside him on the ground. When he'd get enough money, he'd come inside and order a big meal, but my father and his sisters would have fed him for free.

Though I have lived in Florida for 19 years, I am still a child of

Appalachia, born and bred in East Tennessee, and a "survivor" of five years in ministry in West Virginia. Every time I hear those haunting words, "Almost Heaven, West Virginia," I remember the good times and the good folks of the Mountain State.

Yours faithfully,
Ted Land

Hazel Dickens at Camp Virgil Tate, Kanawha County, 1975. Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer.

Hazel Dickens

July 2, 2004
Gibsonia, Pennsylvania
Editor:
Visiting with Hazel Dickens brought back so many memories of her for me [see "'West Virginia, My Home': A Visit with Hazel Dickens," by John Lilly; Summer 2004]. The last time I "had the honor" was many years ago when she performed near Pittsburgh. Hazel is good friends with my mother Mary Lipscomb Litman, so she stayed with her. What I remember most is her running in and out of the house quickly whenever she had to do or get something, because she was allergic to my mom's cats. I think we spent the entire visit on the front porch!

Hazel and my mother became friends when we moved to Elkins in the early '70's. My mother is one of 13 children and was born in Leadmine, Tucker County. Their experiences and lives followed similar paths, including living in Baltimore at one point.

The picture of Hazel from 1975 is how I always remember her. I recall many nights laying in my bed as a child in Elkins, while Hazel's voice would accompany my dreams, because Hazel always wanted to sing all night long.

Even though it has been more than 20 years since we moved from West Virginia, I still always answer any question of where I'm from by saying, "Tucker County, West Virginia."

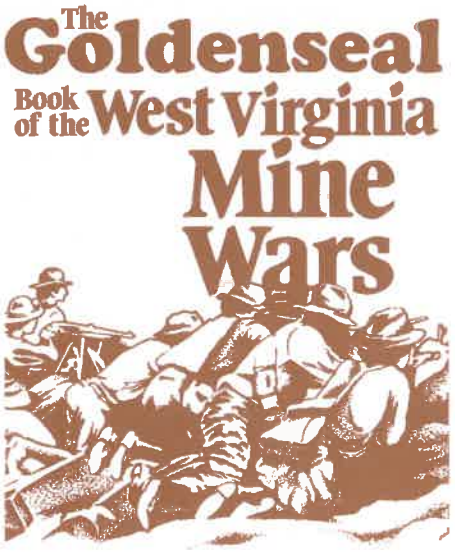
Thanks for the chance to sit a spell with Hazel.
Tracy Churchel

State Songs

June 12, 2004
Madison, Wisconsin
Editor:
Thank you for the excellent writing, which I enjoy in your magazine. I have read it for many years and have even contributed a story [see "Bob Adkins: Lincoln County Gas Man"; Summer 1992].

The story about the state songs in the Summer 2004 issue was especially interesting [see "West Virginia's Three State Songs," by Richard Ramella]. I have inquired of people from many states, and I have found no one who sang a state song every day at school as we did in Hamlin, Lincoln County, where I went to school in the 1930's and early '40's.

But we sang the second verse of "The West Virginia Hills" differently from what is described as the "official" version. Only the girls sang the second verse, and it was a great inspiration to us to understand that the poet was a woman. We sang:



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 updated information. The large-format, 109-page paperbound book sells for $10.95 plus $2 per copy postage and handling. West Virgina residents please add 6% state tax (total $13.61 per book including tax and shipping).

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

-or-

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Oh, the West Virginia hills,
Where my girlhood hours were spent,
Many times I wandered lonely
And the future tried to cast.
Many were my visions bright
Which the future ne'er fulfilled
But how sunny were my daydreams
On the West Virginia hills.

If you were the girl Mr. Garfield Pauley chose to sing the second verse as a solo, you blushed and hung your head. But you sang proudly, more or less on pitch.
Lenore McComas Coberly

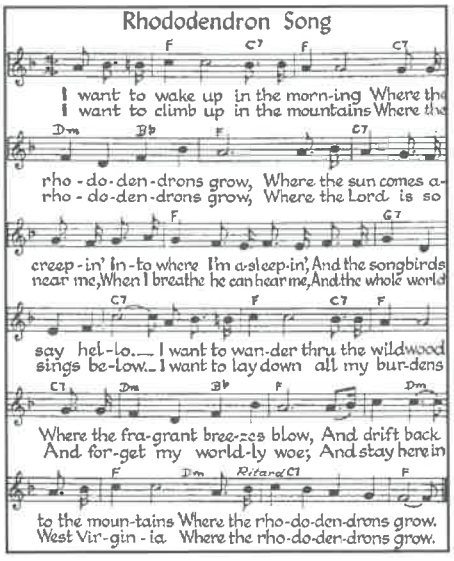
June 14, 2004
Lexington, Massachusetts
Editor:
Unofficially, the West Virginia song which is most firmly lodged in my heart and mind is the one that starts, "I want to wake up in the morning/ Where the rhododendrons grow."

Are there other verses? Could someone please send them along to me? I'd really appreciate it.

Thanks for a splendid journal of West Virginia's rich lore and history.

Most sincerely,
Sara Lee Bolyard Chase

Here it is, courtesy of West Virginia Sings: 4-H Club Song Book. *Thanks for writing. —ed.*



June 7, 2004
Dille, West Virginia
Editor:
I searched through GOLDENSEAL's Summer 2004 article "A State of Music: Songs of Hills and Home," by Richard Ramella, at least three times thinking I had overlooked a tribute to Billy Edd Wheeler's "Home to West Virginia," but alas, it wasn't there.

I have a 45 r.p.m. record of "Home to West Virginia" that is on a Wild, Wonderful West Virginia label, under United Artist Music. The song was the first I remember that made a reference to heaven being like West Virginia. Billy Edd ended the song in the same vein as Hank Snow's "I've Been Everywhere," by rattling off West Virginia towns as the song fades out.

I got the record free. It was a complimentary offer that accompanied a purchased six-pack of Royal Crown Cola. I'm not sure of the date of the recording, and there doesn't seem to be anything on the record label to suggest a date. I'm guessing it may have been in the late '60's. I'm sure someone can enlighten me.

Sincerely,
T.G. Griffith

Thank you for that note. We decided to go directly to the source and called Billy Edd Wheeler at his home in Swannanoa, North Carolina. Born in Whitesville, Boone County, in 1932, Billy Edd has had great success with songs he has written, such as "Jackson," "Coward of the County," "Coal Tattoo," and "High Flying Bird." He tells us that, in 1971, he was asked to write "Home to West Virginia" by K. Carl Little, director of the Travel Development Division for the state Department of Commerce, as a way to help promote interest in the state. Billy Edd was glad to do it — for free — and Royal Crown Cola picked up the tab. As Billy Edd recalls, only about 1,000 copies of that record were ever pressed, and most were sold exclusively at the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair in Ripley that summer.

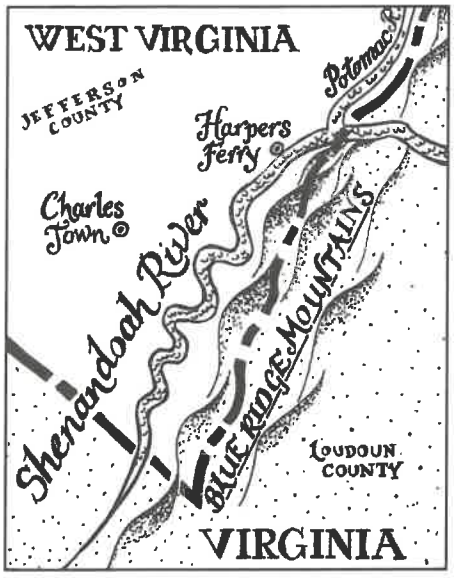
The popularity of John Denver's song "Take Me Home, Country Roads" during the summer and fall of 1971 eclipsed "Home to West Virginia," Billy Edd feels, though his song was well-received in its day. It's a hard song to sing, he admits, especially the rapid-fire ending with all of the town names. "I always needed cue cards," he says.

Thanks again for writing. We hope that you will hold on to that record — it looks like a collector's item. —ed.

Clarifications and Corrections

June 16, 2004
Mustoe, Virginia
Via e-mail
Editor:
I have enjoyed the latest issue of GOLDENSEAL, as I always do. It is probably my favorite magazine, easily one of the top three. This issue is plagued with an unusual number of spelling errors (at least three in one article), a couple of geographical bloopers, and one booboo that I am sure you will hear about numerous times.

The Blue Ridge Mountains and the Shenandoah River have a much stronger association with Virginia than West Virginia, so I have always regretted that the writers of "Take Me Home, Country Roads" did not select geographic features more clearly associated with West Virginia for their song. However, the song is geographically correct while the article is in error on both points. The Blue Ridge Mountains do not "elude the Mountain State by several miles." On the contrary, its summit forms the state line for about 15 miles between Jefferson County and Loudoun County, Virginia.



Map by Terry Lively.

The Shenandoah River does more than "touch Harpers Ferry," as it flows for about 18 miles across Jefferson County before joining the Potomac at Harpers Ferry. I have forgiven the songwriters since the Blue Ridge and the Shenandoah may well be the first West Virginia features one encounters if the country roads are taking one home from the big cities of the East Coast.

The booboo that really jumps out is the labeling of Pendleton County as Pocahontas County on the back cover. Ouch!

But keep up the otherwise great work!
John R. Sweet

Right on all counts. Excuse us while we wipe the egg from our face. We apologize to our readers, to the songwriters, and especially to the people of Jefferson County for our poor panhandle geography on the "Country Roads" matters.

We also apologize to the people of both Pendleton and Pocahontas counties for the misidentification. We realize that nobody's perfect, but we can do better than that. Thanks for calling this to our attention. —ed.

Photo Curiosity

June 20, 2004
Hillsboro, West Virginia
Editor:
The "Photo Curiosity" in your Summer 2004 issue [see inside back cover] shows a soldier in a basket made of sticks. I can explain — the basket is known as a fascine and was filled with earth to make field fortifications with.

Sincerely,
Mark Newman

Thanks for your note. According to Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, *a fascine is "a long bundle of sticks of wood bound together and used for such purposes as filling ditches and making revetments for riverbanks." Mystery solved, sort of! —ed.*


Unidentified soldier with fascine, photographer and date unknown.

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.

New Era School in Mineral Wells, Wood County.

One-Room School Tours

The New Era School, a restored one-room school in Mineral Wells, Wood County, is open for tours or visitors. On display at the school are original items such as period desks, a school bell, and a pot-bellied stove. Built in 1884, the school also includes photographs and information on the history of education in Wood County.

The New Era School is located next to the Mineral Wells Elementary School campus on State Route 14 South, two miles off I-77 Exit 170. Open on Tuesday afternoons from 12 to 3 p.m., admission to the school is free to the public. School groups and others may also visit by appointment by calling Esther Carroll at (304)863-3583.

Lewisburg Ghost Tours

Ghost tours of Lewisburg's historic district are offered on Fridays and Saturdays through October. Now in its 10th year, the tour begins at the General Lewis Inn. Other locations visited include the Old Stone Presbyterian graveyard, the oldest cemetery west of the Alleghenies, where visitors are treated to the legend of the Greenbrier Ghost, reputed to be the only recorded instance of a murder trial being resolved by testimony from beyond the grave. Also included is the John North Second House, with a Civil War-era haunted legend; and the John Wesley Church, built in 1820.

The cost of the tour is $10 for adults, and free for children under 7. For more information on the tour schedule, call John Luckton at (304)256-TOUR, or check the West Virginia Division of Tourism's Web site at www.callwva.com/hauntings.

Weston Hospital Tours

Guided tours through the former Weston State Hospital in Lewis County are available each weekend through the end of October. Constructed in the 19th century from native sandstone, the hospital is considered to be the largest hand-cut stone building in North America, with nine acres of floor space. For most of its existence, the gigantic structure served as a mental health facility and was originally known as the Trans-Allegheny Asylum for the Insane. Tours on Saturdays are at 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and on Sundays at 12:30 and 3:30 p.m. Cost for adults is $5, $4 for seniors, and $3 for those 12 and under.

The Weston State Hospital is also the new home of the Mountaineer Military Museum, with a collection that ranges from World War I to the present; and the West Virginia Toy Museum, holding more than 7,000 items, including antiques. For more information on tours or the museums, call (304)269-1123, or visit www.westonlandmark.com.

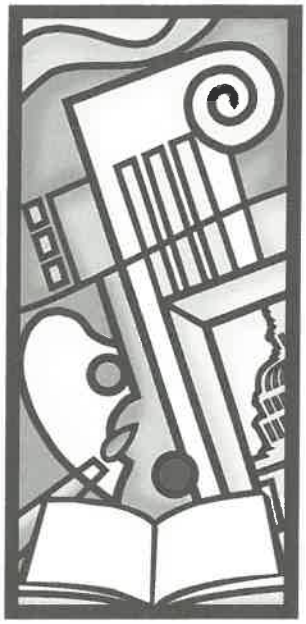
Fall Workshops

A variety of craft workshops are offered by mountainmade.com, a private nonprofit organization that sells crafts from West Virginia on-line, and operates a retail store in Thomas. Since August 2002, mountainmade.com has been offering craft training sessions to the public. Classes available in September and October include fiber arts, advanced knitting, advanced doll making, and beginning paper making. They range from one- to three-day sessions. Class sizes vary from 10 to 15, and costs vary from $7 to $35. To obtain a complete listing and description of

Instructor Tom Lynch, kneeling, with students in chairmaking workshop, sponsored by mountainmade.com.

classes or to register, call 1-877-686-6233 or visit www.mountainmade.com.

New Division Logo



The West Virginia Division of Culture and History, parent organization for GOLDENSEAL, has adopted a new logo, created by West Virginia designer/artist Mark Wolfe. Mark crafted a single image meant to identify the various functions within the agency. The History and Archives section is represented by an open book, the Commission on the Arts by a brush and palette, and the Historic Preservation office by a classical column. Other elements in the logo symbolize the Capitol and the hilly terrain of the state. The artistic inspiration for the logo was taken from the cubist work of Diego Rivera, exhibiting both unity and diversity.

Troy Body, newly appointed commissioner of Culture and History, introduced the logo on June 30.

Pine Bluff Fall Festival

The 16th annual Pine Bluff Fall Festival, featuring home-cooked food, craft artists, and country and gospel music, will be held October 1-2. The menu will include chicken and dumplings and 250 pies made from scratch. Other features of the event are a celebrity auction, a drawing for a free food basket, and a Christmas quilt raffle. Pine Bluff is located approximately eight miles from Shinnston on Bingamon Road in Harrison County; the annual festival has become the principal social event for the surrounding rural community. For more information, call Thelma Martin at (304)592-1189.

"Outsider" Art DVD

A new DVD from the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College examines the exceptional art of 10 West Virginia nontraditional artists. Titled "Inspired Folk: Outsider Art of West Virginia," the DVD was produced by Augusta folk arts coordinator Gerald Milnes. Folk artists and works included fall outside normal expectations about art and artists, such as the late Earl Ellifritz of Jefferson County, who created artifacts and sculpture using rocks and minerals [see "Beauty in Rocks: Earl Ellifritz and his Museum," by Carol Reece; Fall 2000]. Other artists featured include Reverend Herman Hayes of Putnam County, who carves intricate miniature figures from wood [see "Redeeming the Wood: Self-Taught Woodcarver Herman Hayes," by Colleen Anderson; Summer 1999] and Lana Shockey of Barbour County, who paints religious images.

The 57-minute DVD costs $25 plus $5.50 for shipping and handling, and is available from the Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, WV 26241, or by calling (304)637-1209. For more information, go to www.augustaheritage.com.

Southern Ghost Tales

Supernatural stories from the region are the subject of a new collection titled *Spooky South: Tales of Hauntings, Strange*

Here's My GOLDENSEAL Gift List!

Please add the following name(s) to the GOLDENSEAL mailing list. I enclose $17 for each subscription.

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[ ] I'm adding $5 extra per subscription (total $22). Please send the current issue along with the gift card!

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[ ] Add my name too! I enclose $17 for my own subscription.

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Happenings, and Other Local Lore, collected and retold by storyteller S.E. Schlosser and illustrated by Paul Hoffman. The book features 30 stories drawn from a dozen states, including folk tales from Preston, Raleigh, and Kanawha counties. Half of the selections in this book are ghost stories, with the rest being tales of witches and other dark forces, each entry accompanied by one of Hoffman's black-and-white scratchboard prints.

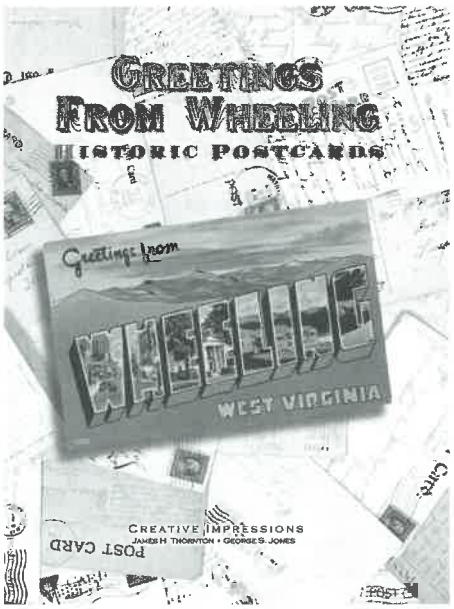
The 197-page paperbound book sells for $11.95, and is published by Globe Pequot Press. Information is available at www.GlobePequot.com; phone 1-800-962-0973.

Wheeling Area Books

Illustrated histories of Wheeling and the surrounding area are the subjects of three new book titles. In *Greetings from Wheeling*, by James H. Thornton and George S. Jones, more than 200 full-color reproductions of historical postcards are displayed, many dating from the early 20th century. The 106-page, large-format, paperbound book sells for $29.95, and is published by Creative Impressions, 114 14th Street, Wheeling, WV 26003; phone 1-888-232-9623. Information is available at www.cre8m.com.

Wheeling is also the subject of a new installment in Arcadia Publishing's "Images of America" series. *Wheeling*, by William A. Carney, Jr., and Brent Carney, is a collection of 200 historical black-and-white photographs, ranging in subject from the African American experience to sports and working life. The 127-page paperback volume draws largely on photographs from the early 20th century.

Also by Brent Carney, professor of history at Wheeling Jesuit University, and from the same publisher, is *Bethany College*, a 128-page, paperbound book in



similar format, in Arcadia's "Campus History Series." There are images drawn from the college's history, campus life, notable graduates, and other topics.

Each book sells for $19.99, and is available from Arcadia Publishers, 420 Wando Park Blvd., Mount Pleasant, SC 29464; phone 1-888-313-2665, or on-line at www.arcadiapublishing.com.

State Parks Books

Two new books on the state parks of West Virginia feature the work of Stephen J. Shaluta, Jr., a staff photographer for the West Virginia Division of Tourism. *Jewels in Our Crown: The State Parks of West Virginia* is a large-format, 130-page paperback, with text by GOLDENSEAL contributor Maureen Crockett. The book provides historical background, travel information, and natural descriptions of the 37 parks operated by the state, illustrated with black-and-white photographs. Some of the articles have previously appeared elsewhere, including in GOLDENSEAL [see "The Man Who Fed the Animals: Nap Holbrook and the Early Days at Watoga," by Maureen Crockett; Summer 1991]. The

book sells for $14.95.

A collection of full-color photographs by Shaluta make up *The State Parks of West Virginia*, a 60-page paperback that sells for $8.95. Both state park books are published by Quarrier Press and are available at bookstores, from Pictorial Histories Distribution, 1125 Central Avenue, Charleston, WV 25302; phone (304)342-1848, or on-line at www.wvbookco.com.

West Virginia 24/7

More than 500 color images make up the newly released West Virginia volume of the "America 24/7" book series titled *West Virginia 24/7*. This book features selections from 30 contributors, including photographers Chris Dorst, Jeff Fetty, and Steve Payne and surveys a variety of scenes taken throughout the state over a one-week period from May 12-18, 2003. It is designed to document contemporary life in the Mountain State. The series is the creation of Rick Smolan and David Elliot Cohen, previously known for their book titled *A Day in the Life of America*.

Published by DK Publishing in a large-format hardcover, the book is 144 pages and sells for $24.95. Copies can be purchased in bookstores or on-line at www.america24-7.com.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Gladys Broyles Larew of Hans Creek, Monroe County, passed away on May 10 at the age of 105. Gladys was the subject of a story in our Summer 1999 issue titled "'Good for the Soul': Gladys Larew at 100," by Virginia Steele. Born and raised in rural Monroe County, Gladys lived her entire life in the picturesque Hans Creek valley, except for a few years she spent attending school out of the area as a young woman. Gladys was exceptionally active throughout her life. She and her husband farmed and raised 10 children. Gladys wrote poetry, contributed to newspapers and magazines, handled horses, served as a midwife, camped, attended the State Fair, and danced well into her later years. She was honored in 1995 with the "Outstanding West Virginian" award by Governor Gaston Caperton.

Gladys Larew. Photograph by Doug Chadwick.

Berkley Ludwick "Lud" Freeman, originally from Lost Creek, Harrison County, died on May 2, two days short of his 81st birthday. Lud's father owned the J.B. Freeman Hardware Store in Lost Creek, and Lud worked there from an early age. From this vantage point, Lud not only learned the fine points of the hardware trade, but he also learned to assemble and disassemble most of the tools and gadgets that came through the store. He later had a long and successful career as an engineer, working primarily in the aerospace industry in southern California. Lud wrote two articles for GOLDENSEAL: "My Early Days in Lost Creek," Fall 2002; and "Mother and the Drunken Chickens," Spring 2004.

Patricia Jane "Patty" Norton, longtime Morgan County Health Nurse, passed away on June 3 in Slanesville. She was 90. Born in nearby Cumberland, Maryland, Patty obtain her R.N. degree in 1935 and married Jim Norton of Paw Paw in 1936. The pair lived near the Hampshire County community of Pin Oak, and Patty undertook a long career in rural health care, serving communities throughout the Eastern Panhandle. Following 21 years as Morgan County Health Nurse, Patty served an eight-county area with the West Virginia Department of Crippled Children Services, where she worked until her retirement in 1975. She was the subject of a story in our Winter 2003 issue titled "The Magnolia Nurse: Patty Norton of Morgan County," by author Helen Bradfield Shambaugh.

Patty Norton at Paw Paw in 1954.

Grafton's B&O Station

Revisiting a Railroad Treasure

By Bob Withers

I first saw the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad's Grafton station and hotel in the wee hours of a hot June morning in 1958. I was a 13-year-old rail buff from Huntington, and the B&O was my favorite railroad. My hometown was located near the end of a branchline, and I wanted to experience the B&O's mainline glories. So my mother and I were riding the *National Limited* to Baltimore for a firsthand look at the railroad's headquarters city. But I didn't have to go that far to find what I sought.

We pulled into Grafton at 12:51 a.m. — on time. I found out that while we were there, our streamlined diesels would be replaced by powerful freight engines for the grueling eastbound trip over the mountains. But I couldn't see their numbers. So I bounded to the front of our coach and asked our uniformed coach attendant, who was busy helping passengers board, to find out for me. The woman, obviously near retirement, looked a little surly at first. But she was not. She shouted to the conductor down on the station platform. He gave her the critical data, which I promptly recorded in my tablet.

At that moment, glancing out the car's Dutch door, I saw it — an elegant, three-story, 16,000-square-foot Beaux Arts passenger station. It had cost the railroad $125,000 when it was built literally into the hillside almost a half-century before. Huntington never had anything like this!

The station was shaped like a rectangle that ran parallel to the track, with smaller rectangles attached to each end. The basement housed the baggage, mail, and express rooms and could be entered only from the track side. The rest of the structure — with

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad passenger station has been a landmark in Grafton for the past 93 years. This recent photograph shows the West Main Street entrance, courtesy of Vandalia Heritage Foundation.

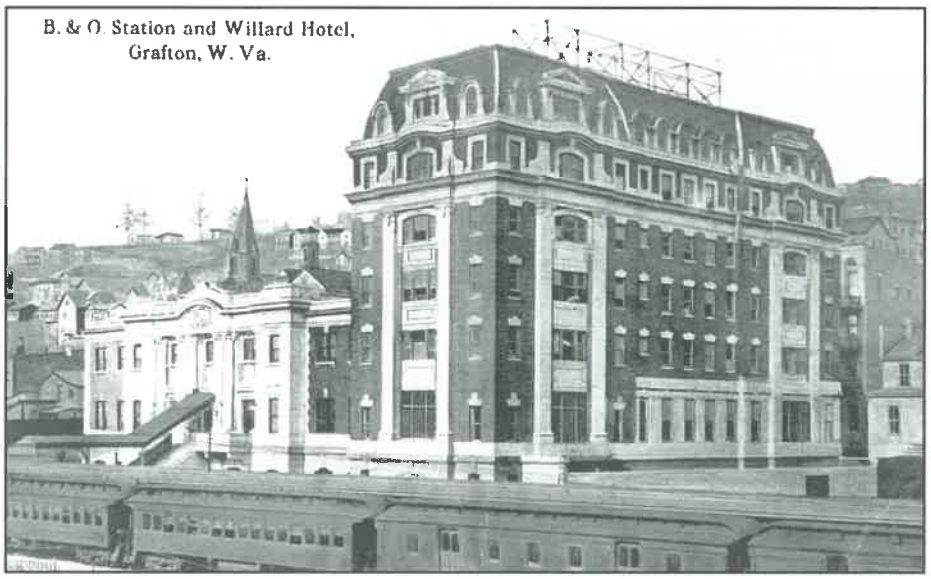
first-floor entrances from the plaza on West Main Street — came into view once a passenger disembarked from the train. That part of the building was done in terra cotta, with red brick insets and trim. A concrete oval near the roof was engraved with a flowery "B&O."

On the track side, passengers reached the first-floor waiting room — which I later learned was garnished with imitation marble columns and a triple ticket window protected by bronze grilles — via a concrete stairway covered by a ribbed copper roof trimmed on each side with cathedral-glass droplets encased in cast-iron frames. Truly, the building was a temple of transportation, the likes of which I had never seen before.

In the following years, I visited many other such temples: Washington's Union Station, Cincinnati's Union Terminal, New York's Grand Central and Pennsylvania stations. But I kept being drawn back to Grafton. Something — I didn't know what — was uniquely comforting about it.

I researched the station's history. It was the third such edifice to grace the town that owed its very existence to the B&O. By the time I was

Author Bob Withers, at age 16 in 1961, jokingly attempts to remove the B&O emblem from the front of a freight locomotive in front of the Grafton passenger station. Road foreman of engines W.T. McCahill looks on. Photograph by James B. Kelley.



Trackside view of the B&O station, at left, and Willard Hotel in Grafton. 1914 postcard courtesy of Terry E. Arbogast collection.

a teenager, the railroad and the Taylor County town had been inseparably linked for more than 100 years. The company had squeezed a huge classification yard into the narrow Three Forks Creek Valley at the point where the tumbling mountain stream emptied into the Tygart Valley River. Rail lines radiated out in four directions, and thousands of carloads of coal were harvested daily from the mines of northern West Virginia, brought to Grafton, and sorted by destination. In addition to this heavy industrial traffic, thousands of passengers streamed through Grafton each day, carried by a complex array of colorfully named trains. It was to accommodate this growing human traffic that the splendid station was built.

August 22, 1911, must have been a glorious day for Grafton. It was on that Tuesday that the magnificent station opened, and the town arranged a parade and several speeches to mark the occasion. Next to the station, the matching seven-story Willard Hotel — with its impressive restaurant, dining halls, ballroom, and barber shop — was going up, and scheduled to open a year later. The structures were labeled by the local press as "architectural centerpieces," "a crowning glory," and "the beginning of a new era." Grafton was, as one article put it, "awakening to a new spirit of pride and progress."

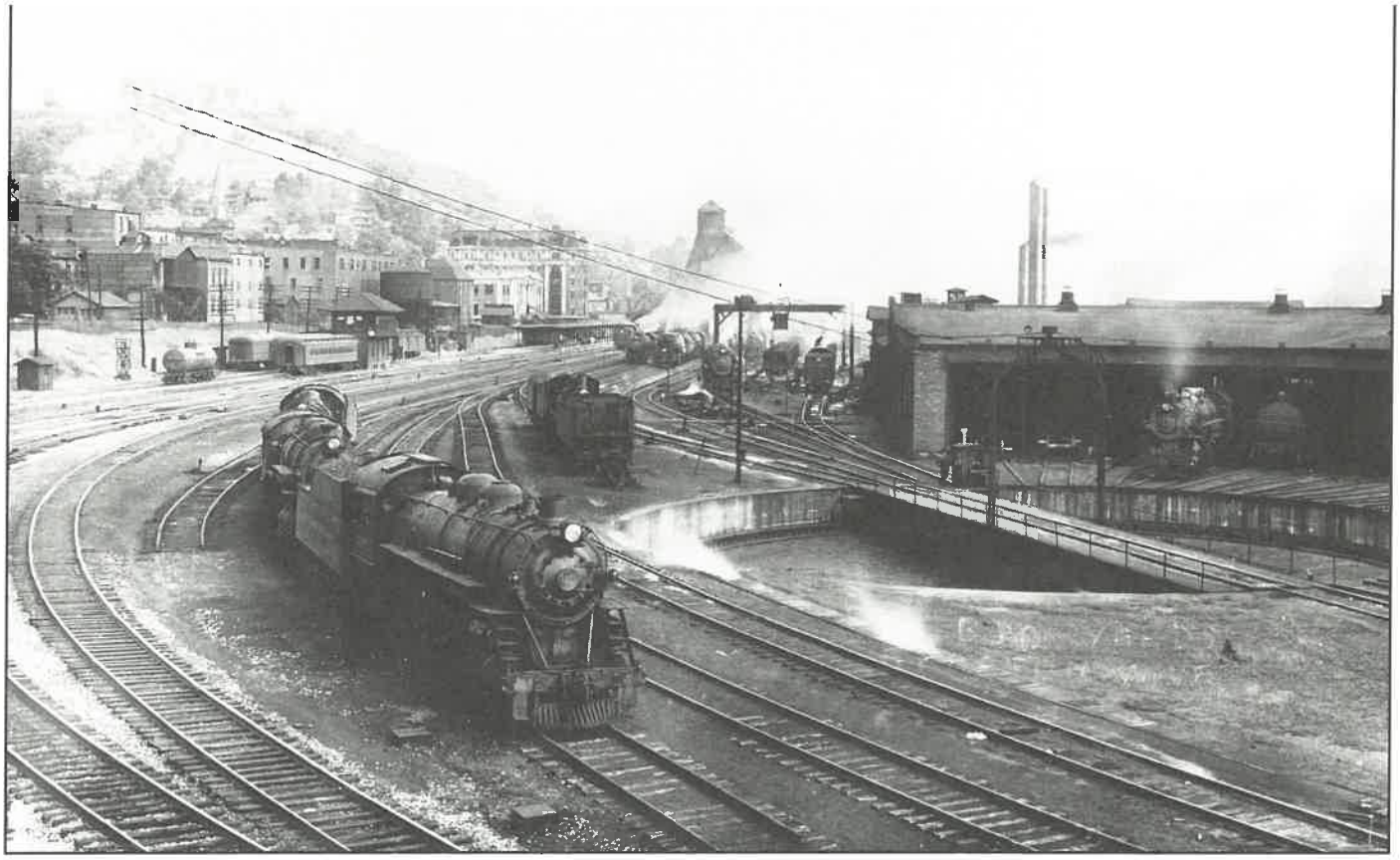
Figuring in this development was Colonel John T. McGraw, a prominent attorney and businessman. He provided the land for the palatial station and agreed to build the hotel, which he named for B&O president Daniel Willard, who, as McGraw put it, was "doing so much for Grafton."

On that happy day, businesses closed at 3 p.m. Bands, fraternal organizations, city leaders, civic bodies, and schoolchildren — one newspaper said 3,000 people — lined up at the courthouse, marched to West Grafton and back, and arrived at the station promptly at 4. The building, except for its business offices, was opened for inspection. Hundreds of visitors swarmed the waiting room, express and baggage rooms, and platforms.

"Formal exercises" on the plaza were timed to coincide with the arrival of No. 55, the *Daylight Train* from Baltimore, due at 5:10 p.m. Mr. Adolphus Rightmire, formerly of Grafton but then from Morgantown, was credited with buying the first ticket at the station, although his claim was disputed by men from Philadelphia and Clarksburg who called at the window at about the same time. Rightmire boarded No. 55's connection and headed toward Fairmont.

Within a decade or so after the station opened, passengers could board a coach or sleeper there for practically anywhere in America. By the late '20's and early '30's, trains carried Pullmans through

Dedication of the B&O station on August 22, 1911. Photograph courtesy of Danny Moore collection.



For more than 150 years, Grafton has been a hub of railroad activity. This undated postcard shows at least 10 steam engines, the turntable at right, the town of Grafton at left, and the station and hotel in the distance. Courtesy of Bob Withers.

Grafton for Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York to the east and Parkersburg, Cincinnati, and St. Louis to the west. Connecting lines brought several other sleepers through town, among them Pittsburgh-Elkins, Pittsburgh-Charleston, Clarksburg-Charleston, Jersey City-Wheeling, Jersey City-Fairmont, and Baltimore-Columbus.

The Great Depression cut deeply into B&O's passenger business, but World War II brought a comeback of unparalleled proportions. Rail passenger traffic quadrupled nationwide and presented special challenges everywhere, especially in Grafton. Every mainline passenger train ran in two sections, and hundreds of troop movements clogged already-crowded rights of way. Murphy's Law saw to it that few days passed without extra headaches, but Grafton's kind-hearted B&O people regularly saved the day. Recovered company memos give a few examples:

A furloughed soldier bound for Oakland, Maryland, on the *National Limited* had to get off at Grafton and wait for the *Diplomat* because the *National* didn't stop at Oakland. He left his ticket on the train, but an understanding conductor forwarded him without it. Another soldier on leave left an overcoat and gloves on the *National Limited* at Grafton; still another forgot his field jacket. A woman lost a pin; another left a brown Gladstone bag; a gentleman left behind his reading glasses. These items, and hundreds more, were diligently searched for — usually without success — as wires were sent back and forth.

C.B. Megill, traffic manager for a Westinghouse plant at Fairmont, complained in January 1943 that Railway Express Agency employees couldn't load a shipment of 32 radio tubes "vital to the war effort" onto the *Metropolitan Special's* express car because the conductor refused to delay departure by a minute or two. Division superintendent A.R. Carver, caught between a rock and a hard place, responded that the cars often were short a man or two, that the trains "carry military personnel and others engaged in defense work" who were "scheduled for definite connections," and that one or two minutes might not seem like much but several such stops could result in a missed connection. "It's necessary that this travel must be catered to at this time," he wrote, but promised to ask the express agent to give Megill's "stuff" top priority.

As time went by, I found myself becoming more acquainted with a precious railroad asset — the people who worked there. Eventually, I was welcomed into their inner sanctum in the station's second-floor offices. Division superintendents such as Bill Shaw and Ray Pomeroy took time out from their managerial headaches to answer my questions, give me discarded paperwork, and allow me to tour the yard — first with a kindly official to keep an eye on me and later on my own. Pomeroy once permitted me to ride in the locomotive of train No. 11, the westbound *Metropolitan Special,* to Parkersburg with engineer Rufus Rogers.

But the dispatchers — the fellows

who directed train movements — earned a special place in my heart. Few of the passengers who strode across the stylish waiting room ever dreamed of the pressure and perspiration being endured upstairs by the dispatchers as they issued their orders to all kinds of trains, in every type of adverse operating condition and weather, to get them over the road successfully without running into each other. Dispatchers had to know where trains would be several hours in advance, who were the best — and worst — engineers, how to change plans to meet any contingency at a moment's notice, and hold it all in their overworked minds even while some demanding boss looked over their shoulders. And yet many of them took time to befriend a young rail buff.

Dispatcher John Robinson at work in his upstairs office in the B&O passenger station at Grafton in 1965. Photograph by Bob Withers.

Take John Robinson, for example. One day, he excused himself and went up to the attic, where a trove of old records that a historian would die for lay under the dust, and bequeathed to me a couple of rare jewels from years gone by. On other occasions, he allowed me to talk to other employees on down the line via his company telephone or radio.

Or Brooks Pepper, who once saw that I was irritated at seeing a train on the massive Pleasant Creek Bridge, too far away for me to see the engine numbers. He read them off to me, but threw in a "cold one," a false number, to see if I would catch it. I did.

Or Jack Shields. I have sat quietly in the corner of his office for hours on end as he dictated train orders for crews on trains many miles away. He let me copy messages from official company documents and instructed me on his job procedures. Once, he took me to supper across the street, where he described a dispatcher's role as "playing chess with human lives."

By the spring of 1966, I had heard enough. I wanted to be a part of all this, so I applied to work for the summer as a brakeman. As an employee running into Grafton, I could now sleep between runs in the "rest house" — the old Willard Hotel itself — and not have to snooze between trains in the station's waiting room.

Dr. Robert McCune, Jr., examined me in his office across the stairwell from the ticket office, then gave me a slip to go to St. Mary's Hospital in Clarksburg for a back X-ray. I had hoped to be home that night, but if I rode No. 11 to Clarksburg, I would have to wait until the next day to catch another train toward home.

Not to worry. Conductor R.W. Smith, with whom I was visiting in the crew caller's office in the station's basement, came up with a solution. He and his engineer J.L. Dulancey allowed me to ride the locomotive of their *Timesaver* — a fast freight train running about an hour ahead of No. 11 — to Clarksburg, so I could get my X-ray and go home on No. 11. Dulancey stopped his train at Clarksburg just for me. I ran to the hospital, got my X-ray, and ran back to the station. No. 11 was already there, taking on mail, express, and a few passengers. I just made it, but I was on my way home.

By this time, the railroad passenger market had begun disintegrating. The carriers blamed the automobile, interstates, and jet planes. When Amtrak was established to take over most of the nation's shrinking passenger rail network, it omitted B&O's Washington-Cincinnati line from consideration. So it was that on Friday, April 30, 1971, B&O No. 12, the eastbound *Metropolitan*, left Grafton for the final time. Two diesels pulled the train out on time at 3:40 p.m., carrying but five cars: a sealed mail car; a working mail/baggage car; two coaches; and office car 900 occupied by Galen S. Harris, general manager of the B&O's Central Region.

Many more people rode the last trip than had been customary. Conductor K.B. Howard found that he couldn't sit down himself, and that hadn't happened for a long time. "If only for West Virginia, the railroad should have shown enough pride to have kept the train going for the passengers," flagman Andy Bennett said.

Among the passengers that day was 79-year-old retired conductor J.B. White, who boarded with his

four great-grandchildren at Clarksburg. "It's a blow to all of us," he said. "But it really isn't the same now as it used to be."

White remembered dancing in No. 12's baggage car to entertain a bunch of students. A conductor had put them up to asking him. "I don't remember how long I danced," he said. "But everybody had a big time."

Largely at the behest of congressman Harley O. Staggers, Amtrak restored service to Grafton with the Washington-Parkersburg *West Virginian* on September 7, 1971. Several names, schedules, and types of equipment were tried, including United Aircraft's Turbo Train, which was totally unsuited for mountain railroading. But nothing worked. A second "last" trip followed on May 5, 1973.

Amtrak tried once more, inaugurating the Washington-Cincinnati *Shenandoah* on October 31, 1976. Passengers used a small shelter on the platform outside instead of the old station's waiting room. As with the previous Amtrak service, they bought their tickets from the conductors. After adjusting the schedule a few times, Amtrak gave up for good, discontinuing the train on October 1, 1981 — Grafton's third "last" trip.

Clarence Hackett was the conductor on both of Amtrak's "last" trips. "It was a good way to go, if you're not in too much of a hurry," Hackett said. "Sure, ridership was poor, but a lot of people in the mountains are going to be in a bad way without it."

Somewhere during all of this, I realized what I had loved — and would miss — the most about the Grafton station. It wasn't the splendid architecture and graceful accents. It wasn't the complex train operations, as interesting as those were. It was the people who worked there, from that coach attendant — whose name I found out years later was Edna Comedy — to the superintendents, dispatchers, and crewmen who befriended a curious kid. The B&O somehow generated, and never lost, a down-home hospitality that didn't mind if you were just a teenager.

Local groups began working in 1994 to revitalize Grafton's business district, designating the hotel — which housed the public until the early '60's and railroad crews until November 1986 — and the station as centerpieces of the project. Their actions eventually began to bear fruit. B&O successor CSX Transportation conveyed both buildings and a vacant lot to the North Central West Virginia Community Action Association, Inc., on December 17, 1997, receiving $230,000 toward the cost of moving employees to a planned new yard office and a $100,000 tax credit permitted by the Neighborhood Investment Act. During a ceremony on May 4, 1998, CSXT vice-president Robert W. Shinn said the structures were a "wonderful reminder that Grafton is a special place," adding that the railroad had made the transfer as "a thank-you to the people of Grafton" for their "years with the railroad."

Railroaders moved to their new headquarters on December 15, 1998, and the station was vacant after 87 years. NCWVCAA transferred the buildings to the Vandalia Heritage Foundation in October 2001, which has begun fund-raising and renovation efforts. Plans call for the station to provide space for public receptions and meetings, a cafe, gift shop, museum, and rental offices. A business incubator is in mind for the hotel.

It appears likely that the story of Grafton's love affair with railroads will be told and retold for many generations to come. But the buildings' most lasting value will be to serve as a monument to the people who gave them their humanity and encouraged others to learn more about them and their chosen professions.

BOB WITHERS is a reporter and copy editor for the *Huntington Herald-Dispatch*. He is a journalism graduate from Marshall University, a Baptist minister, and a lifelong railroad enthusiast. He has written for a number of publications, including *Trains* magazine, and is a frequent GOLDENSEAL contributor. His most recent articles appeared in our Summer 2001 issue.

The B&O station and Willard Hotel at night. Both buildings are scheduled for renovation as part of a recent downtown revitalization effort in Grafton. Photograph 1997 by Jay Potter.

A loaded coal train bound for Grafton from Cowen on an unusually straight stretch of track on May 4, 1998. Jay took this photograph from a U.S. Route 119 highway overpass east of Pleasant Creek, between Grafton and Philippi.

Forever Trains

Railroad Photographer Jay Potter

By John Lilly

Photographs by Jay Potter

There are few things in this world Jay Potter appreciates more than a well-placed train, especially if the train is hauling West Virginia coal and is pulled by a CSXT diesel engine out of Grafton. For more than 40 years, Jay has been aiming his camera at West Virginia trains, engines, and railroad personnel — the last 18 years almost exclusively in Grafton. His pictures tell a story of industry, transportation, dedication, and subtle beauty seldom explored by photographers today.

Photographer Jay Potter, in his element at Grafton on April 30, 1999.

Jay's father was from Wheeling, his mother from Pennsylvania. Both of them were military officers, and the pair met in Pittsburgh during World War II. Jay was born in 1946 in Pennsylvania but grew up in Wheeling. "I've always thought of Wheeling as my hometown," he says during a recent interview in Charleston.

During the 1950's, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad was a commanding presence in and around Wheeling, and Jay became fascinated with the B&O. While still a boy, Jay recalls visiting the nearby Benwood Junction engine terminal with a friend, whose interest was in model railroading. While the friend was admiring the busy operation from a modeling standpoint, Jay says, "I was much more interested in the real thing."

Before long, Jay was visiting Benwood regularly, trying to learn as much as possible about the complex world of railroading. A number of B&O employees at Benwood responded to Jay's interest and generously shared their time with him. "I was between 14 and 16 [years old] at the time," Jay recalls, "and these were really the first adults who had ever explained to me what they did for a living."

When Jay began reading books and magazines about railroading, he noticed the remarkable railroad photography of Wheeling native John "J.J." Young, Jr. [see "Capturing Steam: Railroad Photographer J.J. Young," by Bob Withers; Summer 2001]. In 1960, Jay took his camera and began trying to emulate J.J. Young's work, going to sites depicted in Young's

The Willard Hotel is bracketed by two locomotives awaiting servicing in the Grafton yard. Since Jay does not use flash equipment, time exposure and available light combined to create this striking nighttime image on January 17, 2003.

photographs and attempting to shoot similar images. "His photographs basically provided me with a roadmap around the area," Jay says, "and also examples about how you went about taking photographs."

Though Jay and J.J. did not meet until many years later — Young was teaching photography in Binghamton, New York, at the time — the two corresponded, forming an important bond. Jay's style as a photographer, he says, is derived more from Young's work than from any other source. Today, both men live in Charleston and are close friends and associates.

Jay entered the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, in 1964. Following his 1968 graduation with an engineering degree, he served seven years as a naval officer, including 14 months on a gunboat in Vietnam. In 1975, he entered law school at WVU, graduated in 1978, and moved to Charleston, where he has practiced law ever since.

Forever drawn to trains, Jay still visited Wheeling and Benwood and continued to develop his talent as a railroad photographer. When the B&O shut down its Benwood Junction engine terminal in 1985, Jay looked for another place to ply his interests and chose Grafton. "By 1986," he says, "I had been taking pictures and talking with railroaders for 26 years in that general area [Wheeling]. Although I had never been to Grafton [as a photographer], I knew people who knew people in Grafton." Jay quickly gained the trust of Grafton railroad personnel, affording him remarkable access to the yard and equipment.

Staffers for the B&O — CSX Transportation (CSXT) after 1987 — appreciated Jay's knowledge of railroading and the respect he showed for the work that needed to be done at the rail yard. They also appreciated his adherence to basic railroad safety guidelines. Unlike many photographers, Jay does not use flash equipment, using only time exposure and available light. This is preferred from the workers' standpoint, who view unexpected bright flashes in the rail yard as a signal that something is wrong.

Jay is uncomfortable with flash equipment, as well, dating back to his Vietnam days. "From Vietnam," he says, "I had an aversion to any sort of bright lights at night. More often than not, a bright light at night was an unpleasant surprise. So the last thing I wanted to do was work around flash equipment."

Jay finds an unusually high level of concern for

Two tunnels — each named Kingwood Tunnel — on the steep Newburg grade between Hardman and Tunnelton in Preston County. The tunnel at left was built between 1849 and 1857. At 4,100 feet in length, it was the longest tunnel in North America at the time it was built. Between 1910 and 1912, the B&O built the 4,250-foot tunnel on the right, widening the passageway and decreasing the grade. Both tunnels remained in use until 1956, when the old tunnel was taken out of service; it was sealed in 1962. The eastbound train pictured here includes a sophisticated technical research car, visible in front of the rear engine. Jay took this photograph on March 24, 2004.

safety among railroad personnel. He says, "The railroaders, more thoroughly than any other group of people I've ever been with — except small-unit people in combat — look after one another constantly." He notes that if CSXT did not trust him to follow the same safety rules that its employees follow, he would not be allowed on its property, regardless of how good a photographer he was.

Admiration for CSXT and its workers is apparent in Jay's conversation, as well as in his work. He believes that these people are performing an important function under difficult circumstances without a great deal of recognition. "If I've learned one thing over the years," Jay says, "it's that photographing their work is much easier than actually doing their work."

Crew members Bill Schoonover, Gary Debar, Dave Land, and Andy Spring, left to right, posed for Jay's camera on January 11, 2002. These men were in town to attend a celebration marking the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the railroad in what became Grafton. The B&O herald on the Grafton passenger station is visible in the background.

Three locomotives on an empty coal train are reflected in the water near the confluence of the Tygart Valley River and Three Fork Creek, with a Grafton residential neighborhood visible on the hillside in the distance on July 18, 1997.

This admiration has led Jay to write several extensive articles about Grafton railroading, published in national magazines such as *Trains, Diesel Era, Railfan & Railroad,* and others during the past 13 years. These articles, and the striking photographs that accompany them, are designed to make people aware of the important contributions made by Grafton railroaders, Jay says.

"If I had to rate in order of importance the relationship I have with various groups," he says, "I would put the relationship I have with CSXT absolutely at the top of my list."

JOHN LILLY is the editor of GOLDENSEAL.

Locomotive 500 on the turntable in the Grafton yard on August 24, 2001. The following year, the railroad renamed this engine the "Spirit of Grafton" in recognition of the 150-year anniversary of railroading in the town.

An empty coal train, en route from Grafton to Cowen, passes through the small community of Webster, Taylor County, on April 17, 1998. Jay took this photograph from an adjacent highway bridge, showing a peaceful homestead sandwiched between two busy transportation corridors. "For the Grafton area, this is relatively distant from the railroad," Jay says, commenting on the proximity of the house to the rails.

Operator Joe Layman working the "third trick" — or night shift — in D Tower at Grafton, controlling the movement of trains passing through the yard at 4:00 a.m. on August 7, 1998. Joe is from Fairmont and is a fifth-generation railroader, tracing his family history back to the days when track was first laid in present-day Grafton in 1852.

Machinist Joe McKinney loads sand into a locomotive as part of routine servicing in the Grafton yard on August 8, 1998. The sand will be applied beneath the locomotive's wheels, helping the engine gain traction on steep grades or in adverse weather conditions.

and the Last Stand of Steam

By Cody A. Burdette

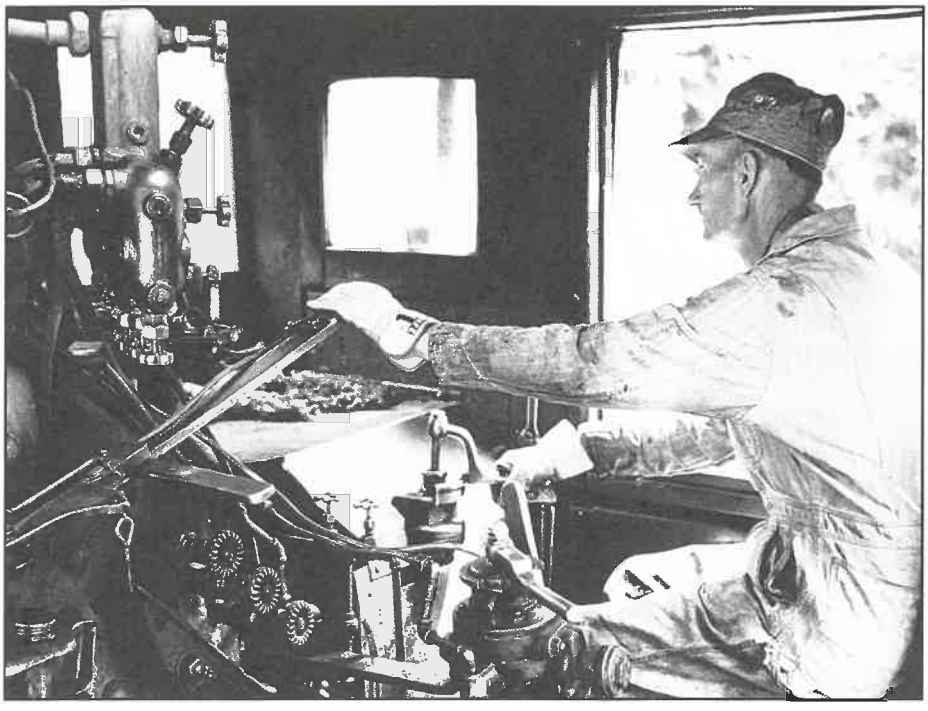
In the mid-1950's, all railroads in the United States were doing away with steam power. I was born in the late 1930's, so I got to see a lot of steam locomotives, and I got to ride in their cabs. My father Theodore Burdette was a lifelong railroad man and locomotive engineer. As steam disappeared on the major railroads, my father followed steam to a shortline railroad in Clay County, known as the Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad. It was here that we saw the last days of steam.

J.G. Bradley, one of the last old-time timber and coal barons, owned a 90,000-acre wilderness that was rich with coal and timber here in Clay County. This private empire was called the Elk River Coal & Lumber Company. The BC&G was part of this empire. Mr. Bradley and his young bride came to this remote area from Boston, Massachusetts, around 1898.

At the mouth of Buffalo Creek was the company town of Dundon, where the BC&G yards and repair shops were located. This was where Mr. Bradley's empire began. It extended 22 miles up Buffalo Creek, with many miles of branchline railroad leading off the mainline in search of timber and coal. Here at Dundon, there were three steam engines: the numbers 13, 14, and 4. They were of the 2-8-0 wheel arrangement, and they handled the heavy coal trains between the company mine at Widen and Dundon.

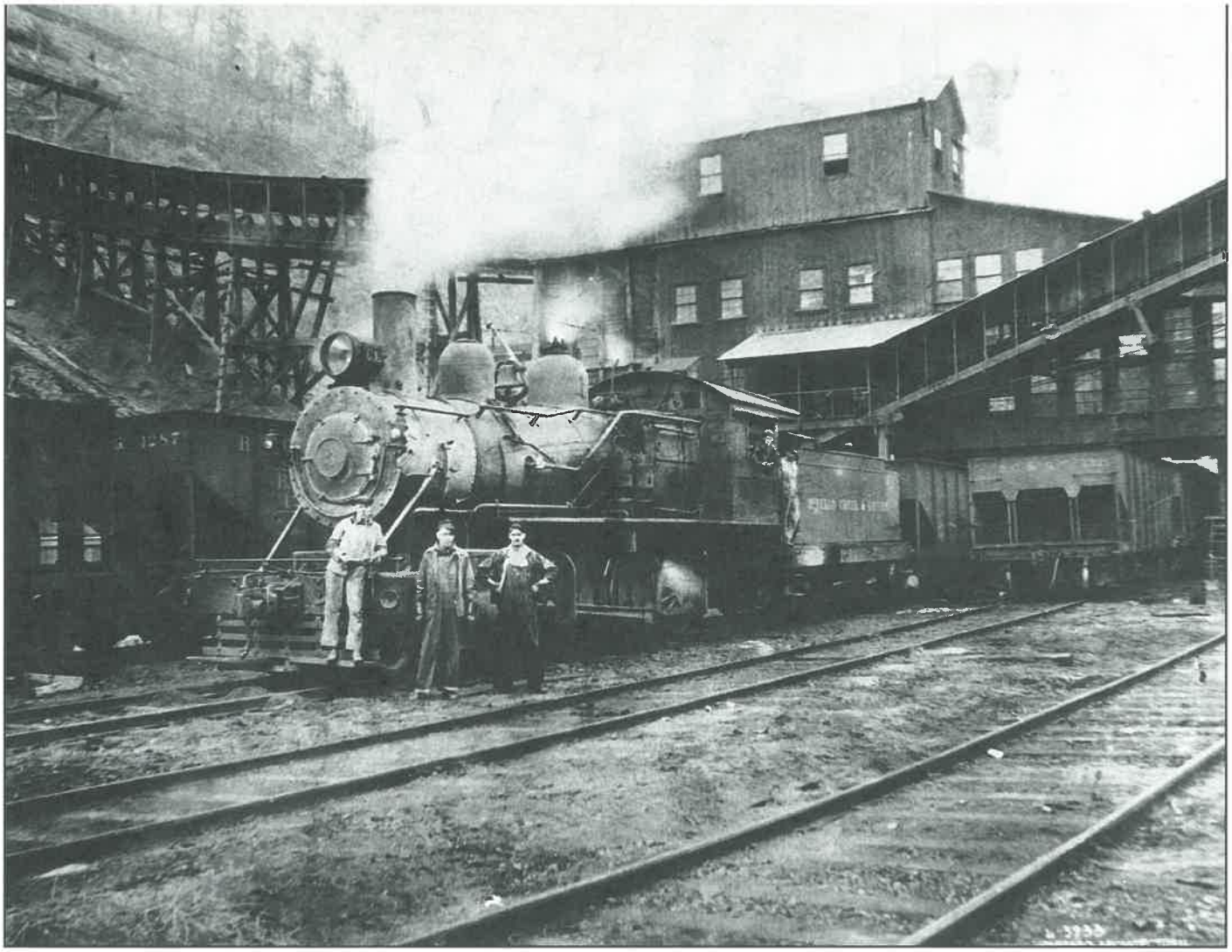
Ten miles farther up Buffalo Creek from Dundon was the company-owned sawmill town of Swandale, with its fleet of log engines. They were the No. 2 and No. 3 Climax locomotives and the numbers 12, 18, and 19 Shay locomotives. [See "Home to Swandale," by Cody A. Burdette; Spring 1992.]

Twelve miles farther up Buffalo Creek was the company-owned town of Widen, with its huge coal mine, which produced 60 cars of coal a day and 60 carloads each night. [See "Widen: The Town J.G.



Left: A loaded log train on Lilly Fork of Buffalo Creek, Clay County. Peering out the window at right is fireman Dale Nutter. Photographer and date unknown.

Right: Engineer Theodore Burdette, our author's father, at the controls of engine No. 19 on Lilly Fork. Photographer and date unknown.



Hauling coal for J.G. Bradley was an important part of the job for crew and equipment on the Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad. Here, a BC&G train takes on coal at the Elk River Coal company tipple at Widen. Photographer and date unknown.

Bradley Built," by Betty Cantrell, Grace Phillips, and Helen Reed; January-March 1977.]

There were three steam engines that worked the yard at Widen and hauled the waste, or gob as it is commonly called, away from the mine. They were of the 2-8-2 wheel arrangement and were numbers 10, 16, and 17. So here in the early 1950's, the stage was set for the last stand steam would make east of the Mississippi River.

My father was a log train engineer and ran the No. 3 Climax, as well as the No. 12 Shay. As a boy, I went many times with my father on the log train. By this time, all of Buffalo Creek above Swandale had been logged over. The company decided it would log Lilly Fork next. This big fork is two miles above Dundon and eight miles below Swandale. The track-laying gang began laying steel in Lilly Fork, and it took 12 miles of steel to reach the head of Lilly. Many more miles were laid in shorter hollows leading off the main Lilly. There were 22 creek crossings without bridges. When the rails reached the creek, they went down the creek bank, across the creek, and up the other side. This kept Dad busy, first braking the train, then releasing the brakes at just the right time and fording the sometimes-deep creek. Then he would jerk the throttle wide open to get the train up the creek bank and out of the creek.

On the climb up out of the creek, as the slack would run out on each log car that was loaded heavy with giant logs, the weight of the cars would seem to jerk the old Shay back toward the creek until finally the engine would be down to a crawl and almost stall before getting the train out of the creek. Then he had to close the throttle quickly and start braking for the next crossing. There were 12 miles of this roller coaster-type railroad on Lilly Fork.

In the dead of winter when the stream would be frozen solid, a section crew had to go ahead of the engine with picks and chop the rails free of ice or the engine would ride out on solid ice and derail. In summer, a flood in the stream would damage some of the creek crossings. It was quite a sight to see a crew of "gandy dancers" out in the middle of a creek crossing, driving spikes submerged under several inches of water.

This was the last of the big-time logging done with steam power, and hordes of railroad buffs and railroad historians flocked into the area with cameras and recording equipment. Dad let many of them

top shape right till the end.

I remember my last ride on the old log train. I was working in Charleston, but on weekend visits to my parents' home, my dad would keep me posted as to what was happening on the railroad. The company had bought a small diesel engine and was trying to do away with No. 19 and steam on the log train, but the diesel was too light. Dad had already had one run off in the woods, and several log cars were a total loss. Also, the creek crossings were taking their toll on the traction motors of the diesel. He told me if I wanted to ride behind steam one more time, I had better do it soon.

I arrived at Swandale one morning way before daylight to take my last ride. Much to my delight, there sat old No. 19 fired up, and Dad was getting her ready for the trip. It was cold, so I got up in the cab where it was warm. Soon we had our train made up and got our orders to proceed over the BC&G to Lilly Fork. My father was an artist with a steam whistle, and people who lived at track side knew by the whistle's moan that the man at the throttle was my father. He had not lost his touch, for this morning as we made our way down Buffalo Creek through the majestic and scenic hills, the melodious old whistle echoed off the rock cliffs. One old man who lived at Cresmont told me years later that he always enjoyed the way my dad blew for the road crossing at Cresmont. He said on a clear, cold winter night, the sound of the lonesome whistle moaning in the night would make the hair stand up on the back of his neck. I knew what he was talking about!

As we went up Lilly Fork this morning, the fall colors were at their height. The stream was clear and cold. There were new faces among the woods crews and also on the train, for most of the old men I knew had retired. Some had been killed in logging accidents. As we passed through one logged-out area and then another, I knew the end was in sight, and I was glad I had come this last time.

We got to the loading area without any trouble. I watched Dad do some work on No. 19 while the train was being loaded, and then we began the return trip. Just like so many times before, when we reached the mainline of the BC&G, Dad stepped down out of the engineer's seat and told me to take her for a while. That was the last time I ran a Shay locomotive pulling a log train. The end came not too long after this, not just to steam but to the whole company.

The mines at Widen shut down first, and they junked the three steam engines that were there. Next, Swandale shut down, and they junked the No. 18 and No. 12 Shays, also the No. 2 Climax. The No. 3 Climax went to a tourist railroad in California, and the No. 19 Shay went to a tourist railroad in Virginia. They kept the 13, 14, and No. 4 on the property for a while, hoping the company would reopen, but this did not happen. Slowly, one by one, the engines were sold either for junk or to tourist railroads. Today, Buffalo Creek is silent.

It has been 45 years since the last log train came out of Lilly Fork. This past year, while I was deer hunting on a cold November day on Lilly Fork, I came upon the old railroad grade. As I walked along, I began to see bits and pieces of a bygone era — a spike here, a bolt there, a pile of ashes where long ago a fireman had cleaned his fire before returning to Swandale. As I walked along, I began to let my mind wander back to those days when I rode the log train on this very grade. Suddenly, in the distance, I heard the faint cry of a steam whistle. Was it just the wind in the pines? Or do the winds of time still carry the melodious sounds of my dad's whistle? If you are ever on Lilly Fork walking the old grade, stop, stand real still, and listen real close. You may hear the ghost train, what the old-timers called the "Lilly Fork Special."

Author Cody Burdette at the controls of Shay engine No. 5 at Cass, some years after the BC&G shut down. Photographer and date unknown.

CODY A. BURDETTE grew up in Montgomery, Fayette County. He worked for the Elk River Coal & Lumber Company during the 1950's, and later worked as an automobile mechanic. He is now retired and lives in Sevierville, Tennessee. Cody's most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in our Fall 2003 issue.

Close Call at Altman

By Warren Vance

In 43 years of railroading, my most dramatic moment came when I was 18 years old.

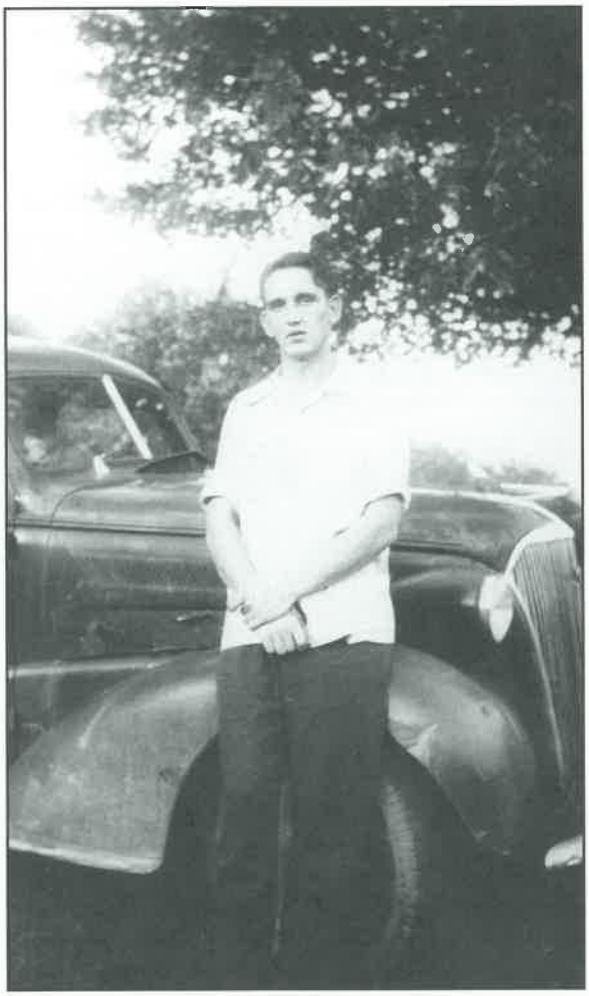
Over the years, I was closely involved with train movements as telegraph operator, train dispatcher, and trainmaster. Operators out on the line were required to have the necessary flagging equipment "available for immediate use in case of an emergency," as stated in the rules. On most railroads, this consisted of red and yellow flags, a supply of exploding track torpedoes that could be heard in the cab of a speeding locomotive, and fusees or flares. And in the old days, oil-burning lanterns with clear, yellow, and red globes were also used. To be caught by the trainmaster without these items would certainly result in a good chewing out, or you might have to sign for 10 "brownies." But how many times did an operator need to use this equipment due to some emergency? Not very many.

One day in 1947, however, I was glad I had the flagging equipment at hand. I was agent/operator at the small station of Altman, Boone County, on the Coal River subdivision of the Huntington division, Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad. Altman was in coal mining territory, 40 miles southwest of Charleston. The subdivision was a non-signaled branch line, where train movements were made under train order and timetable rules.

A two-car passenger train made a round trip over this subdivision daily, running east as No. 214 and west as No. 215. It also made side trips to two or three other short branch lines, operating with a different schedule number on each. Railroads assign even numbers to scheduled trains traveling north or east and odd numbers when moving south or west. So this small passenger train operated under four different numbers in less than six hours. It sounds complicated, but it really wasn't.

One of the side trips was over the Horse Creek subdivision, which branched off at Horse Creek Junction, a short distance east of Altman. On its timetable schedule, No. 214 was due at Altman at 9:22 a.m., and then continued to the end of the Coal River subdivision. On the return trip as No. 215, it was due back in Altman at 2:12 p.m. It then made a back-up move eastward again as No. 238 to Horse Creek Junction, delivering passengers and express to stops on the Horse Creek subdivision before returning westward as No. 239. It was due at Altman again at 3 p.m., leaving as No. 215 at 3:02 p.m.

Quite often, a train of empty coal cars running eastward as an extra would show up at Altman about the same time No. 215 was due to arrive. When this happened, the freight train would stop west of the station platform to allow No. 215 to arrive. As soon as the back-up move was made eastward as No. 238 en route to Horse Creek subdivision, the freight train would follow, getting by Horse Creek Junction before No. 239 was due on the return trip.



Author Warren Vance in 1947 at age 18, at about the time of his story. He is leaning against a 1937 Chevy near his home in West Hamlin. Photograph by Sharon Davis.

Due to the hillsides and the trees, I could not see the engine of an eastbound train until it was 15 or 20 car lengths west of the station. However, I was accustomed to this move and could hear the steam engines working. I knew when to expect to hear the engineer shut off the throttle and begin to let the train coast to a stop just west of the depot.

On this particular day, an extra eastbound train was approaching and was expected to stop west of the platform, as No. 215 was due to arrive in 15 or 20 minutes. I could hear the steam engine and kept listening for

An empty C&O coal train approaches the Altman station in Boone County in 1947. Photograph by Warren Vance.

the engineer to slack off on the throttle. But he just kept coming. Very quickly, I realized he was not preparing to stop and that a head-on collision with No. 215 was imminent if the freight train tried to go beyond Altman.

I grabbed a red flag and started running down the track toward the approaching train. In just a few seconds, the engine popped into view, and I started giving the engineer a very fast stop signal with the red flag. The engineer immediately shut off the throttle and started setting the air brakes. As the engine passed me, the brakeman and fireman leaned out the window, yelling, "What's wrong?"

I could hear the steam engine and kept listening for the engineer to slack off on the throttle. But he just kept coming. Very quickly, I realized he was not preparing to stop and that a head-on collision with No. 215 was imminent if the freight train tried to go beyond Altman.

I started giving them a back-up signal and tried to yell back that No. 215 was coming. But due to the noise of the locomotive, they couldn't understand me. When the train finally stopped, the engine had passed the depot by 30 or 40 car lengths and was out of sight due to the curvature of the track.

I started running toward the engine, and soon I saw the brakeman running back toward me. I yelled for him to get back to the engine and tell the engineer to back up west of the platform, as No. 215 was due in a very few minutes. The engineer hurriedly backed the train west of the station. Within five minutes, No. 215 showed up.

The crewmen very sheepishly came into the office and apologized for their mistake. They explained that crews handling these trains worked out of the large terminal at Russell, Kentucky, and it had been sometime since any of them had caught a run to this subdivision. They thought No. 215 stopped at Horse Creek Junction and made the side trip to Horse Creek subdivision from that point, rather than coming on to Altman before starting the back-up move. It was quite apparent that they hadn't read their timetables very closely.

In more than four decades of railroading, this was the first and only time I had to use flagging signals to stop a train to avoid an accident. I would guess that after the trainmaster and road foreman of engines got through with them over this incident, the crew paid more attention to what they were doing in the future.

WARREN VANCE was born on a farm near West Hamlin, Lincoln County, and went to work for the C&O as a telegraph operator in 1944, when he was 15 years old. After seven years with the C&O, he moved west and worked the next 36 years for the Atchison, Topeka & Sante Fe Railroad. Warren currently lives in Mesa, Arizona. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

John W. Davis, 1924 Democratic presidential candidate, standing at right, traveling down Main Street in Clarksburg on the morning of August 9, 1924. Standing at left is John C. Johnson, influential Bridgeport businessman and Davis' political mentor. Photograph copyright Rod Rogers collection.

John W. Davis and the 1924 Presidential Campaign

By Rod Rogers

As the minutes ticked away at the end of a beautiful spring day on April 13, 1873, Anna Kennedy Davis of Clarksburg gave birth to her first and only son, John William Davis. Anna had been reading Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. She was on the last volume of the monumental work and had been reading the last of the chapters quickly in her attempt to complete the volumes before giving birth. The last chapter in the last volume was never finished. She closed the book and sent for her husband, John James Davis.

The education of young John rested mainly on the shoulders of his mother. Everyone who knew Anna knew that education and study were her life. She was one of the first women in the United States to receive a college degree. In 1858, she had graduated from Baltimore Women's College, only the second institution in the country to confer degrees on women.

John was educated at home until the age of 10, at which time his mother started planning his formal education. John attended several private schools early in his childhood, such as the Clarksburg Female Seminary and Pantops Academy. He later attended Washington & Lee, where he received his law degree.

In 1910, against John's wishes, West Virginia Democratic party leaders nominated him for a seat in the U.S. House, representing the First District. That November, John W. Davis easily triumphed over opponent Charles E. Carrigan.

In the fall of 1913, President Woodrow Wilson appointed John W. Davis as Solicitor General of the United States, a position for which he was more than qualified. Davis himself stated, "I think the office of Solicitor General is the most attractive office within the gift of government for the man who loves the practice of law."

Both of Davis' parents died during his solicitor generalship. His father John J. died in 1916, Anna his mother in 1917. Both are buried in the family plot located at the Odd Fellows cemetery on Chestnut Street in Clarksburg.

Davis resigned his position as Solicitor General in 1918 to resume private practice, having earned the respect and affection of his associates. As Solicitor General, Davis argued more cases before the Supreme Court than anyone in the 20th century. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "There was never anybody more eloquent, more clear, more concise, or more logical than John W. Davis."

On September 6, 1918, John Davis was asked by Secretary of State Robert Lansing to accept the appointment of ambassador to Great Britain. He accepted. At the end of his tenure as ambassador, the *London Observer* stated on March 6, 1921: "Everyone who knew him and his work agreed that the United States had never had a more beloved representative at the Court of Saint James."

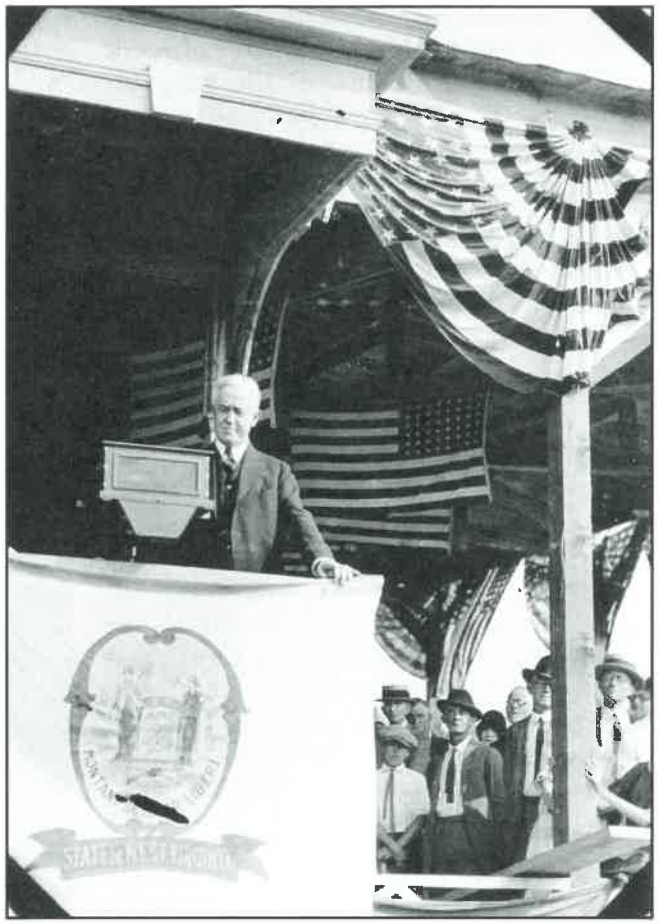
Before he resigned as ambassador, Davis' name was being floated by some West Virginians as a possible nominee for president in 1920. A *Clarksburg Exponent* newspaper headline on June 22, 1920, read, "Much Davis Sentiment At San Francisco," referring to the 1920 Democratic convention. Stephen Jackson and Clem Shaver chaired the Davis group at the convention. They even went so far as opening campaign headquarters near the convention at the Palace Hotel, financed by former state senator and mine owner Clarence A. Watson, who had donated $25,000. Davis was impressed, but sincerely wanted to return to private practice. As the convention deadlocked

A young John W. Davis at age seven, in 1880. Photograph courtesy of *The Life of John W. Davis*, by Theodore A. Huntley.

The Davis family of Clarksburg in 1907. Standing, left to right, are Lillie Davis Preston, Emma Davis, Nan Davis Richardson, John W. Davis, and John J.D. Preston. Seated are Hilary Richardson, Walter C. Preston, mother Anna K. Davis, father John J. Davis, and young Julia Davis. Photograph courtesy of *Lawyer's Lawyer: The Life of John W. Davis*, by William Harbaugh.

and the number of ballots went on, many felt that Davis was certain to be the nominee. However, on the 44th roll call, James Cox received the nomination. Davis actively campaigned for Cox and his young running mate Franklin D. Roosevelt in the fall of 1920.

In 1924, Davis' political momentum was increasing, and he was mentioned in several national publications as a possible candidate for president to oppose Republican incumbent Calvin Coolidge. A poll of 1,900 attorneys, politicians, businessmen, and labor leaders gave Davis 44%, well ahead of others mentioned as possible candidates. By spring, Davis had already agreed to a minimal campaign effort. In March, he authorized Louis Johnson to send campaign literature to Washington & Lee alumni.



Candidate Davis checks the podium and microphones on Sunday, August 10, 1924, prior to his Monday evening acceptance speech. Photograph copyright Rod Rogers collection.

On June 24, the Democratic convention formally opened in the old Madison Square Garden, as an oppressive heat wave enveloped New York City. Everyone thought this convention was going to be different than past conventions due to the fact that the proceedings would be broadcast nationwide by radio — a first. But the delegates and their alternates had no idea how different this convention would be. They would soon find out.

As the convention progressed, New York Governor Al Smith and former Treasury Secretary William McAdoo of California, the son-in-law of President Wilson, were the chief contenders for the nomination, but they were deadlocked. The convention found itself bitterly divided over a number of issues. These included Prohibition, the Ku Klux Klan, the League of Nations, and progressive economics. Neither the Smith nor the McAdoo side would release their delegates for fear of having to support the other. After 93 ballots, the two contenders finally agreed to withdraw.

Davis support soon grew. On the 103rd ballot, he was far from being nominated when the Texas delegation headed by Governor Pat N. Neff unexpectedly switched to Davis. Franklin Roosevelt followed by announcing that New York was casting 60 of its 90 votes for John W. Davis. The convention then rushed to support Davis. He was declared the Democratic nominee by acclamation. The motion carried at 3:25 Wednesday afternoon, July 9, the ninth day of balloting and the 15th day of the convention. Even though William Jennings Bryan adamantly opposed John Davis' nomination throughout the convention, his brother Nebraska Governor Charles Bryan was nominated as his vice-presidential running mate.

The convention of 1924 set several records. It was the first political convention ever broadcast nationwide on radio, was the longest political convention in history, and saw the most hot dogs and beer consumed. The convention lasted so long that a group of New York businessmen headed by William Randolph Hearst donated money to the delegates and their alternates to pay for their room and board. Some attendees even needed financial assistance for the travel cost home.

The fact that the convention was the longest in history meant absolutely nothing to the citizens of Clarksburg. All they knew was that a fellow West Virginian and Clarksburg native had been nominated for president. The town of Clarksburg erupted almost immediately. Thousands were involved in impromptu parades, parties, fireworks, and other celebrations far into the night. The following morning, Clarksburg found itself famous as the birthplace of John W. Davis. It was reported in several national publications that never before had a single town produced candidates for president (John W. Davis), U.S. Senate (Guy Goff), and governor (Howard Gore) during the same election year.

Word came that the formal notification would be held in Clarksburg on August 11. On July 12, just three days after the nomination, Samuel R. Bentley, president of the Clarksburg Chamber of Commerce, held a meeting with citizens interested in organizing the Davis Day celebrations. The group organized 21 different committees, including auto traffic, housing, tourist camps, music, pictures (both still and moving), and of course,

Approximately 50,000 people turned out to hear Democratic nominee John W. Davis deliver his acceptance speech on August 11, 1924, in Clarksburg. This never-before-published photograph shows the crowd at its peak, before a sudden rain storm intervened. Photograph copyright Rod Rogers collection.

finance. The B&O planned to run special trains from Washington, D.C. Monongahela Power ran thousands of feet of electric line into Goff Plaza to illuminate the historic speech. Seventy-five Boy Scouts would act as messengers wherever needed. The town was ready.

On Saturday morning August 9, the VIP's started arriving at the Clarksburg B&O station. At exactly 9:15 a.m., Davis' special train pulled into the station. Several local bands were playing to celebrate the arrival of their favorite son. As Davis disembarked, several dignitaries representing Clarksburg, including city manager Harrison B. Otis and Samuel R. Bentley, greeted him.

Davis stood in the back of his touring car and addressed the thousands in attendance, saying, "Just as in every crisis in my life, I have come back [home] for sympathy and for encouragement. I shall leave you strengthened for the task ahead."

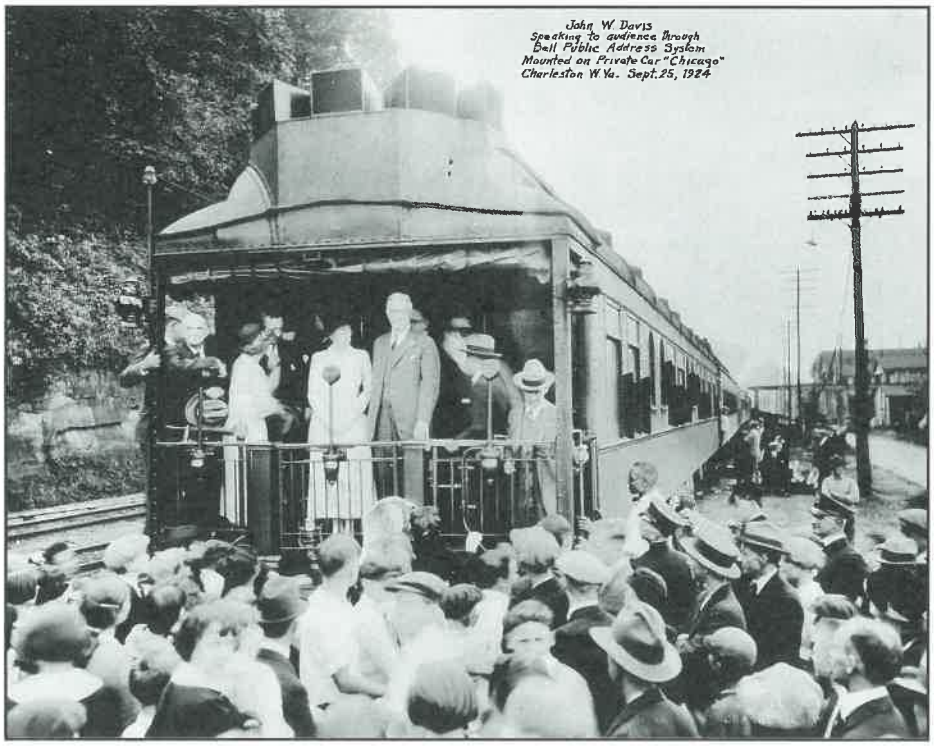
Davis traveled in the open car to the Davis residence, located on Lee Avenue. All along the way, well-wishers were lined elbow-to-elbow, six and seven deep.

At approximately 2:30 p.m., Davis and his entourage headed to Fairmont on a special traction car. There, Davis was greeted by approximately 10,000 well-wishers before returning to Clarksburg that evening.

On Sunday, August 10, the Davises attended church services at the Central Presbyterian Church. During the day, the constant arrival of dignitaries meant citizens and bands would gather to escort the new arrivals to their destinations. One of the challenging aspects of the Davis Day celebration was the limited availability of hotel rooms. The housing committee asked local citizens to call the committee if anyone had any extra bedrooms in their homes that they would be willing to allow an incoming VIP to use. The idea was a success. For example, Montana senator and Democratic convention chairman Thomas Walsh stayed at the home of George L. Duncan, 141 East Main Street, instead of a hotel.

Monday, August 11, finally arrived. Trains continued to arrive almost hourly. Every major national media company was in Clarksburg to report on Davis Day celebrations and the acceptance speech to be given that night in Goff Plaza. More than 15 newsreel companies had strategically located their cameras throughout the city. In addition to the newsreel companies, there were more than 100 newspapers represented for the event.

It was a very hectic day for the candidate. As VIP's arrived in Clarksburg, instead of checking



Following his nomination and acceptance, Davis embarked on a vigorous national campaign in pursuit of the White House. He is shown here speaking from the rear platform of a train in Charleston on September 25, 1924. Note the large public address system mounted on the car's roof. Photograph copyright Rod Rogers collection.

into hotels, many chose to visit Davis unannounced at his home. This created a problem, as Davis already had several meetings, interviews, and a parade scheduled, and of course, he wanted time to practice his speech prior to delivering it that evening. He fell behind schedule. At 11:00 a.m., he had scheduled a meeting with the National Democratic Committee at the Elks Building on Pike Street. He was over an hour late for that meeting alone.

Davis' schedule was running so far behind that campaign manager Clem Shaver advised Davis not to participate in the parade. It appears that Davis took his advice. Letters to the editors in local newspapers revealed that several people were more than a little upset that Davis did not appear in the Davis Day parade. Imagine driving to Clarksburg — no easy feat in 1924 — finding a place to stay, parking the car, standing for hours elbow-to-elbow in hot and humid conditions along the streets of Clarksburg in your finest apparel (probably made of heavy wool), only to find that Davis was not in the parade. This was just one of many poor decisions made by campaign manager Clem Shaver.

"Finally the climax to Clarksburg's greatest day had been reached," reported the *Daily Telegram* on August 12, 1924. "Never will the evening be repeated. A switch was turned, and the floodlights routed the approaching darkness for blocks around Goff Plaza. This took place just as the last orange stain showed on the western hills and dusk came slipping down a side street like a girl in gray slippers." This is the way it was reported by a young cub reporter by the name of Jennings Randolph.

It was a night to behold. Nearly 50,000 folks crammed into Goff Plaza on that hot August evening. KDKA radio had transported its equipment from Pittsburgh to broadcast the proceedings live nationwide. Never before had an acceptance speech been broadcast nationally. The Davis for President committee had hired the Zambelli Fireworks Company to illuminate the night sky at the conclusion of the speech. The crowd was there; everyone was ready. Davis was introduced.

As he made his way to the podium, large black clouds moved in overhead. As Davis began to speak, the clouds began to open on Davis. Louis Johnson held an umbrella over Davis as members of the crowd shouted for Davis to continue. In the background, the crew from KDKA radio could be heard trying

A small fraction of author Rod Rogers' collection of John W. Davis documents and memorabilia. Rod has been gathering these materials for more than 15 years and currently holds more than 1,100 items. Rod welcomes additional materials or inquiries at (304)623-0629 or via e-mail at rrrwva@aol.com. Photograph by Rod Rogers, copyright Rod Rogers collection.

to cover its gear with pieces of canvas before the rain hit the hot glass bulbs on its transmission equipment. Others in attendance were running to seek shelter.

At the same time, the technicians with the fireworks company, located on Pinnickinnick Hill overlooking the Davis site, were worried that if their fuses got wet, they would be unable to detonate the fireworks and would not get paid. So they started igniting the fireworks early, instead of waiting until the end of the speech as instructed. All of this created a scene of mass confusion as Davis maintained his calm and delivered his speech. Within 15 minutes from the end of the speech, the skies cleared.

The following morning, newspaper reviews of Davis' speech were kind. They stated that Davis delivered a beautiful and eloquent speech. However, some in attendance felt the speech was not moving, it lacked force, and it failed to convey a sense of mission. The same could have been said for the majority of his speeches during his campaign. Many felt most of Davis' speeches went over the heads of those in attendance.

Davis waged a noble though tiresome campaign, traveling throughout the country. He boldly condemned the Ku Klux Klan. According to William Harbaugh's biography, *Lawyer's Lawyer: The Life of John W. Davis*, "Many West Virginians believed that his anti-Klan statements cost him his native state."

On the evening of November 4, 1924, Davis sat listening to the election results, as the radio announcer reported that he had lost the presidency, his home state, and his home precinct. Davis appeared sad and remorseful. Nationally, the West Virginia Democrat had carried the South as a bloc, from Virginia to Texas, gathering 8,386,503 votes. His 29% of the popular vote had garnered 136 electoral votes, far short of Collidge's winning 382.

During the campaign, Davis had tried to draw Coolidge out into the open, but the president, who believed that he could not get into trouble if he didn't say anything, kept his silence. Due to this, Coolidge was referred to as "Silent Cal." Calvin Coolidge had assumed the presidency in 1923 following the death of Warren G. Harding. According to *The New York Times*, Coolidge's honest reputation helped to distance him from the scandals and corruption of the previous administration, and Republicans rallied to his support. The Democrats, in the meantime, remained divided.

After losing to Calvin Coolidge in the 1924 general election, John W. Davis went on to have a successful and celebrated career as a lawyer in New York. He is shown here in front of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., in the early 1950's. Davis passed away in 1955 at age 81. Photograph copyright Rod Rogers collection.

Richard S. Arnold asked Davis after the campaign, "Did you say anything ... you didn't believe?" "Oh yes," Davis replied. "I went around the country telling people I was going to be elected, and I knew I hadn't any more chance than a snowball in hell."

Even though Davis suffered a sound political defeat, at age 51, his professional career was far from over. His name was mentioned from time to time for public office, particularly a Supreme Court appointment, but he never sought a government position again. Instead, he settled into the life of a corporate New York lawyer. A list of his clients reads like a "Who's Who" of American business. He sat on the boards of many of America's giant corporations, including U.S. Rubber, AT&T, the National Bank of Commerce, and other national firms. He also became director of the Carnegie Endowment, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the influential Business Round Table.

Davis died on Thursday, March 24, 1955. More than 1,000 mourners attended his funeral. Among the most moving commentaries was an editorial in *The Washington Post*: "He was a gentleman in the sense that Confucius used that much-abused word — a superior man with a courtliness that came from a fine intellect and warm heart and a gentle manner. In whatever circle he moved, there was none other who seemed so fit to be at the head of the table. To that place his fellows instinctively beckoned him. Nobody can say what kind of a president he would have made, but one can say with confidence that John W. Davis had a sense of statesmanship."

ROD ROGERS was born in Clarksburg. He is corporate director of human resources at Swanson Industries in Morgantown. This is Rod's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Claude R. Linger

West Virginia's Other Presidential Candidate

By James Wilson Douglas

Every West Virginia Golden Horseshoe winner knows that the Mountain State was honored with one candidate for the nation's highest office, in the person of Clarksburg lawyer, John W. Davis. However, fewer scholars are aware that West Virginia fielded another contender for the White House 20 years later against popular Depression and wartime chief executive Franklin Delano Roosevelt. That candidate was Claude R. Linger of Burnsville, Braxton County.

Claude Linger was born on April 29, 1905, at Flatwoods, and he attended the public schools in Braxton and Harrison counties. He graduated from Burnsville High School in 1924, the same year John Davis lost to Coolidge. Claude at first decided he wanted to become an educator, so he enrolled in Glenville State Teachers College. With teacher pay being, in relative terms, as inadequate then as it is now, Claude abandoned his educational goal. Instead, he procured the entire state of West Virginia as his sales territory for Josten's school class rings and fraternity jewelry, from which he derived a good livelihood. Indeed, the 1937 *West Virginia Blue Book*, and the photograph from his legislature years, show a dapper, well-dressed, even vain Democrat with intelligent eyes that confirmed his prosperity, but at the same time, concealed his mischievous nature.

According to local retired banker Wallace H. Hefner, Jr., of Heaters, formerly of Burnsville, Claude Linger's campaign to unseat FDR was far from nominal or merely a means of making a political statement in the wake of the rigors of the New Deal. Claude was a bona fide politician. He was elected and re-elected to the West Virginia Legislature, serving in the House of Delegates from 1934 through 1937. As a teenager in Burnsville, Wally chauffeured Claude, because the latter did not like to drive after the flood of 1943, in which Linger damaged his automobile during rescue efforts. Hefner recollected that during his tenure in the legislature, Linger was one of the first to propose a severance tax on West Virginia natural resources and a whiskey tax dedicated to state educational purposes.

Claude R. Linger of Braxton County had a colorful political career, including a 1944 run for the presidency. This photograph from the 1935 *West Virginia Blue Book* shows Linger when he served in the House of Delegates, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

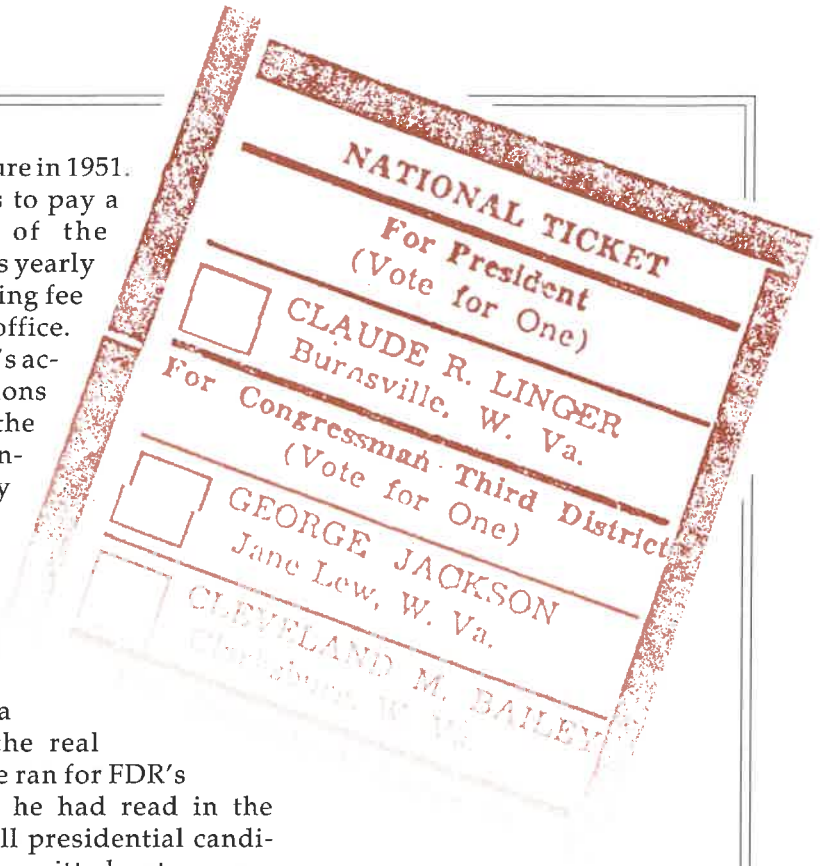
Realizing that name recognition

might pose some small obstacle to running against a well-known, three-term incumbent, Claude had signs made to be placed on both sides of his Chrysler proclaiming his candidacy, though he seldom drove outside of Braxton, Lewis, or Harrison counties. His catchy campaign slogan was "Linger Awhile for President." When he filed his preprimary election expense report, it contained one entry: three cents for postage to mail his certificate of candidacy.

West Virginia Secretary of State William S. O'Brien voiced his indignation to the Charleston news media regarding what he considered Claude's lack of good faith in seeking the White House, which, of course, permitted Linger to gain some much-needed publicity. Surprisingly, the 1944 *West Virginia Blue Book* reports that on May 9, 1944, Claude Linger received 59,282 votes in the Democratic presidential primary, which many political observers considered a very respectable showing for any "favorite son" candidate in the Mountain State.

Linger was quoted in the February 5, 1948, *Charleston Gazette* as stating that his presidential efforts were born of his frustration to get a bill through the House of Delegates in 1937, setting a "fairly heavy" filing fee for the right to appear as a candidate for president on the West Virginia primary election ballot. It was something of an incongruity, Linger felt, for a Braxton County constable candidate to be compelled to submit $5 for his candidacy, where no fee existed for those wanting to be president of this great land. Irrespective of his ultimate objective, Linger's 1944 exertions may have played a part in causing a corrective measure to be adopted by the state legislature in 1951. One now has to pay a percentage of the officeholder's yearly salary as a filing fee for that high office.

But Claude's actual motivations in entering the 1944 presidential race may have been more pragmatic. In his later years, Claude confessed to a friend that the real reason that he ran for FDR's job was that he had read in the papers that all presidential candidates were permitted extra gasoline and other rationed wartime commodity coupons not available to the general public, and that he especially needed the extra fuel allotment for his various business interests.



This sample ballot for the Democratic primary election on May 9, 1944, was published in the *Weston Democrat* on May 5. On this ballot, Linger appears to be running unopposed. He received 59,282 votes in a historic but losing effort.

His catchy campaign slogan was "Linger Awhile for President."

Despite having assured the voting public in February 1948 that he would not seek the Oval Office again, which probably came as a great relief to Harry S. Truman, Claude R. Linger never completely left local or state politics. Although he ran unsuccessfully for the House of Delegates in 1948, Linger did attend the 1952 Democratic national convention in Chicago as a member of the West Virginia delegation that helped nominate Adlai Stevenson. His last contest for a public office was in 1972, when he tried but failed to be elected to the Braxton County Commission. Claude died on July 22, 1975, chiefly remembered by Burnsville citizens not as a jocular, one-time presidential candidate who challenged FDR, but as a man who gave generously to the local Lion's Club, the Burnsville High School Alumni Association, aspiring but indigent students, and other worthy, charitable causes.

"I am the only person in Braxton County," Wally Hefner says with a grin and a twinkle in his eye, "who can say that they chauffeured around a presidential candidate."

JAMES WILSON DOUGLAS, a 1965 Golden Horseshoe winner from Clay County, practices law in Sutton. He is the son of the late Wilson Douglas, renowned Clay County fiddler and 1992 Vandalia Award recipient. This is James' first article in GOLDENSEAL.

Ritchie County Cellar Houses

Text and photographs by Katherine Roberts

Before there was refrigeration, there were cellars. These cool, dark chambers are found under homes, cut into hillsides, and banked into slopes. Many people in West Virginia have stored their meat, milk, butter, and vegetables in cellar houses — a traditional architectural form that is uniquely adapted to our hilly terrain.

Though cellar houses dot the landscape throughout West Virginia, they have a particularly strong presence in the northwestern part of the state. In Ritchie County, many older cellar houses are still well maintained and in use, and a few people have built new ones in recent years.

There are cellar houses in Ritchie County dating from the 1890's. At least one may date as far back as the 1840's. The cellar house at Floyd and Billie McGill's homeplace on Indian Creek near Harrisville is likely one of the oldest in the county. The exact date of the cellar house is not known, but it serves a two-story frame farmhouse that was built around 1840 by John Starr, one of Ritchie County's first permanent settlers.

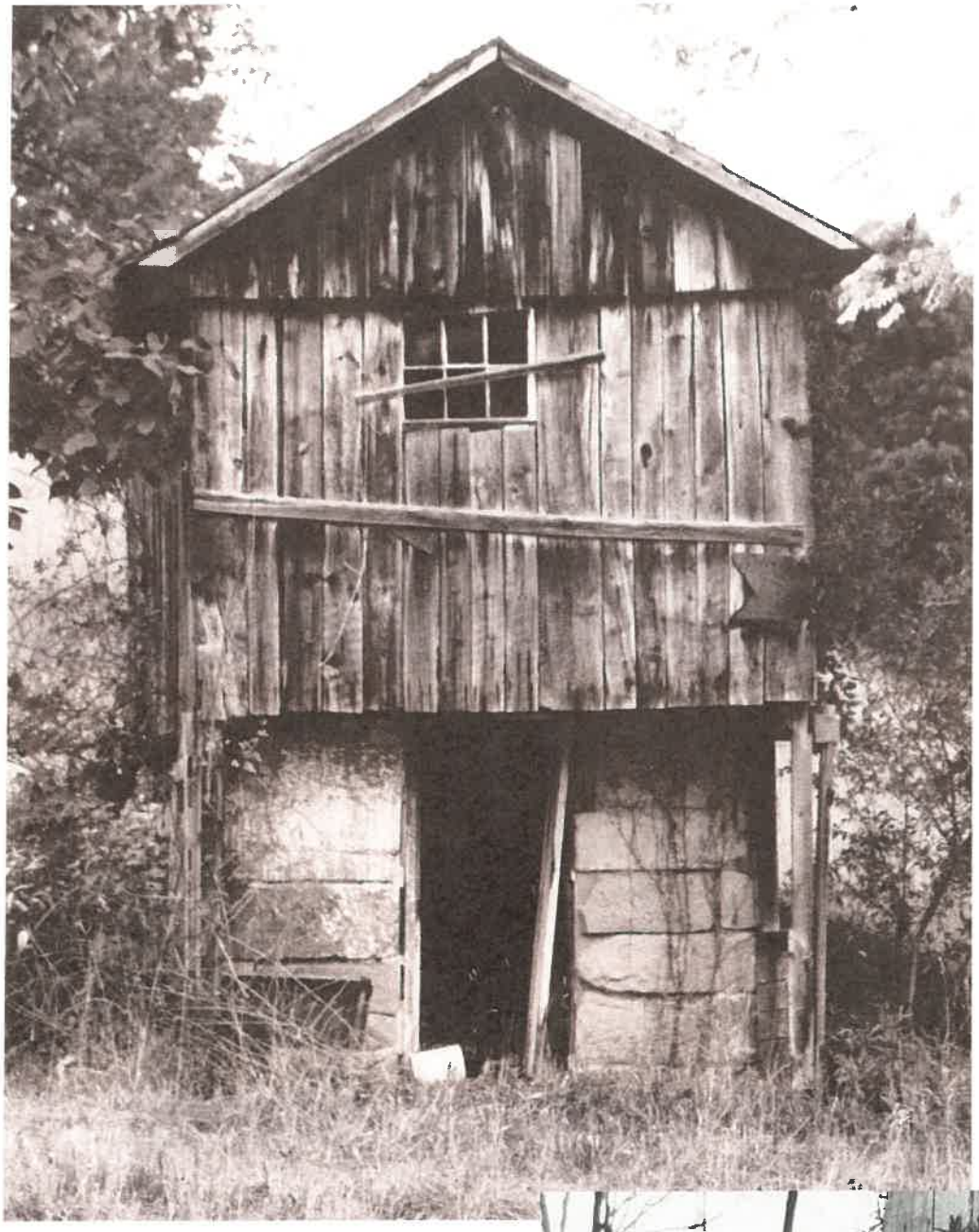
The sturdy 13' x 16' cellar house is built into a six-foot slope, about 20 paces to the northeast of the kitchen at the back of the house. The sandstone cellar blocks are laid up to a height of about six feet.

Like a lot of hand-cut stone, the blocks are 12 inches thick and tall, but vary in length from 10 to 62 inches. Inside, a row of deep, slatted bins lines one long wall, and a row of shelves over bins lines the other. On either side of the cellar door, two 12" x 20" openings covered with wrought-iron grates ventilate the interior. The cellar door is made of three layers of one-inch board sandwiched together. Upstairs, the windowless room is box framed and sided with unpainted vertical oak planks, finished at the gable ends with plain, snug-fitting fascia boards. The massive floorboards, 15" to 18" in width, rest on 2" x 6" joists. The structure is simple but sound.

A crumbling retaining wall of fieldstone flanks either side of the cellar front. While the wall's function is to prevent erosion, the stones fanning out along the slope draw attention to the way the building design fits with the gentle curves of the land. This is reinforced by the slight uphill climb from the cellar that is required to access the top.

The McGill family has continuously used the cellar house since Billie and Floyd moved there in 1950. At one time, Billie stocked the shelves with hundreds of quarts of canned vegetables and fruits. However, she has not kept a garden since 2001, when the deer ate everything she planted, she says. These days, she buys the apples and potatoes that rest in the cellar bins, as well as the tomatoes she uses to can her juice. They continue to use the upstairs portion of the cellar house for storing tools and horse tack.

The cellar house on the Broadwater homeplace just off Bunnel's Run follows a similar design and placement. Marcus M.



An abandoned cellar house near Cheveaux de Frise Road in rural Ritchie County. These two-story structures typically have a cut-stone or cement foundation built partially into a hillside or slope (sometimes called the "cellar"), under a small frame room (sometimes called the "cellar house"). In her article, our author uses the term "cellar house" to refer to the entire structure, top and bottom. Photograph by Danny Harbert.

Broadwater, whose English ancestors migrated to the region by way of western Maryland, built the 14' x 18' cellar house in 1890. Like the McGill structure, this cellar house is built into a slope near the kitchen and has a serviceable but unembellished top.

According to Marcus' grandson, the late Arnold Broadwater, Marcus Broadwater's family lived in the cellar house until he finished building their home. Arnold remembered his grandparents referring to the house top as a "granary" and that they kept a bin attached to the outside back portion of it, where they stored buckwheat and corn.

Arnold grew up at the homeplace, which he bought from his father in 1945. Though he and his siblings worked other jobs away from the county, they have continued to use the homeplace for hunting, gardening, and family reunions. Arnold's widow Zelma and daughter Marcia Shepherd, both of Clarksburg, still keep a large garden where Arnold, his parents, and his grandparents had one, right next to the cellar house.

These cellar houses often evoke fond memories of food, garden, and home. Paul Nutter, 62, Arnold's nephew, spent a lot of time at the Broadwater homeplace during the 1940's and '50's as a boy. He smiles when he talks about ducking into the cellar for cold buttermilk. They

Karen Wooddell at the McGill homeplace, near the cellar house walls that frightened her as a child. "That stone wall seemed like the perfect place for snakes to lay up," she says.

pulled it out of a stone trough filled with icy well water.

But cellar houses can also be places of mystery and trepidation. Many people remember the dank smells and the cool, damp feel of the floor and walls. Karen (McGill) Wooddell, 50, remembers being afraid to go near their cellar house. "That stone [retaining] wall seemed like a perfect place for snakes to lay up," she says with a shudder.

Embedded in the history of cellar houses is also the story of a local craft: stonemasonry. This was a skill many men cultivated in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Some who knew the craft used it occasionally to supplement other work. For others, it was a profession. The community of Hazelgreen, in the southwestern region of Ritchie County, was particularly famous for its professional stonemasons, and the area is thick with cut-stone cellar houses.

Cellar house built by Marcus M. Broadwater near Hannahdale, around 1890. Arnold Broadwater, Marcus' grandson, placed the greyhound on the outside to commemorate his 36 years of driving for the bus company.

Andrew Prather was one of the Hazelgreen stonemasons. He worked with others from the community, hand-cutting sandstone from local outcroppings and building foundations, bridges, retaining walls, and cellars throughout this region of the county. With the help of several local masons, Prather constructed a two-story stone house for his family in 1908. No one remembers for sure if the 12' x 18' cellar house just behind the kitchen was built at the same time or not. But the extra-long, hand-cut blocks and expert corner lapping bear Prather's craftsmanship.

While the basic craftsmanship of Prather's frame top matches the older models in soundness and serviceability, it is finished with an austere elegance typical of early 20th century cellar houses in the county. The top is covered with whitewashed weatherboarding, squared off with plain pilasters at each corner. A standing-seam metal roof caps the structure with a bright dignity. Many of the Hazelgreen cellar houses bear a similar quality, reaching beyond basic functional design to a level of stylistic refinement that complements the home.

E.E. Hinzman was another skillful stonemason in the Hazelgreen area. He built cellar houses in Spruce Creek, Bone Creek, and Alum Fork in the 1920's and '30's. His daughter Virginia (Hinzman) Drain, 84, remembers when her father built the impressive cellar house at their Alum Fork homeplace. Their family had been storing canned goods and perishables in a small root cellar dug into the hillside near the house. During a heavy rain, the root cellar collapsed, and Virginia recalls watching their milk and butter bobbing in the floodwaters. That was around 1924. After that, Hinzman, with the help of neighbor Sam Hickman, constructed a large, solid cellar house against the same hillside, but closer to the kitchen. Virginia's four brothers slept in the upstairs room, which is slightly larger than the cellar due to its four-foot cantilever over the cellar entrance. Down below, the family had a secure place to store food. Though Hinzman built the cellar completely above ground, the walls are approximately two feet thick, which made for a consistently cool temperature inside. "We put milk in a six-quart aluminum pan with another pan on top of it and set it on the [cellar] floor," Virginia says. "It would keep for about four to six days."

The community of Hazelgreen in the southwestern region of Ritchie County was particularly famous for its professional stonemasons, and the area is thick with cut-stone cellar houses.

Constantine "Connie" Mantini with accordion at his grocery store on Brockway Avenue in Morgantown, 1990. Photograph by Norman Julian.

cloth, and wiped the instrument clean of any smudges or the slightest hint of dust before affectionately setting it down. "Time to put the baby away," he said. He laid it gently to rest in its cradle-like container and closed the lid.

"When I grew up in a coal town, there was an accordion player on every block," says Mantini, who was born July 3, 1926. "At that time, the accordion was very popular." His dad Eugene played a small, button-box accordion. Listening to his father play and hearing next-door neighbor and accordion teacher Philip Marzullo, Connie became fascinated by the sound of the reeds.

The local miners were the ethnic people — Italian, Lithuanian, Slovakian, Slovenian. And the accordion, often as not, was their instrument of choice. "They all went for the accordion," Connie says.

Indeed, the scene of a lone accordion player performing on a porch or at a picnic or at a wedding was a familiar one. Accordionists were among the most popular and appreciated people at events in many ethnic communities in the Mountain State. You may or may have invited the mayor or the priest or the local politician, but you always invited the accordion player. Occasionally, you heard a violin or a mandolin, but the melancholy or happy refrains of an accordion emanated wherever people gathered.

"I like to make people happy," says Connie. "If they enjoy the music, it gives me a thrill. If they get bored, then I get bored." Rarely does he get bored.

"I must have been eight when I saw this little button-box accordion in the window of a pawn shop in my hometown of Mahnoy City, Pennsylvania. I came home and told my mom about it, and she told my dad when he came home from work at the coal mine. He took me to town, and I showed it to him in the window. We went inside. The pawn shop owner wanted $15 for it, but it was scorched a little bit, like it had been in a fire. My dad talked him into selling it to us for $7. It had two buttons on the left side and about 20 on the right side.

The Mantini family moved to Morgantown in the 1940's, when father Eugene Mantini opened a grocery store, pictured here in 1945. Connie later owned and operated the store, retiring in 1992. He and his wife still live in the upstairs apartment.

"I brought it home and started playing things by ear, simple melodies that were popular at the time. When you're a kid, you can't play too much complicated stuff. It is best to just keep it simple."

But his dad noticed the boy's enthusiasm and purchased an 80-bass piano accordion. Connie began taking lessons from Philip Marzullo, whom Connie calls "a great teacher, as well as a great accordionist." After a few years, Connie progressed to a 120-bass accordion, "because I needed the room to play to the maximum," he says.

His early attraction to the instrument grew into outright love. Connie's brother Johnnie took up the guitar about the same time, and the brothers began to play at school dances and minstrel shows.

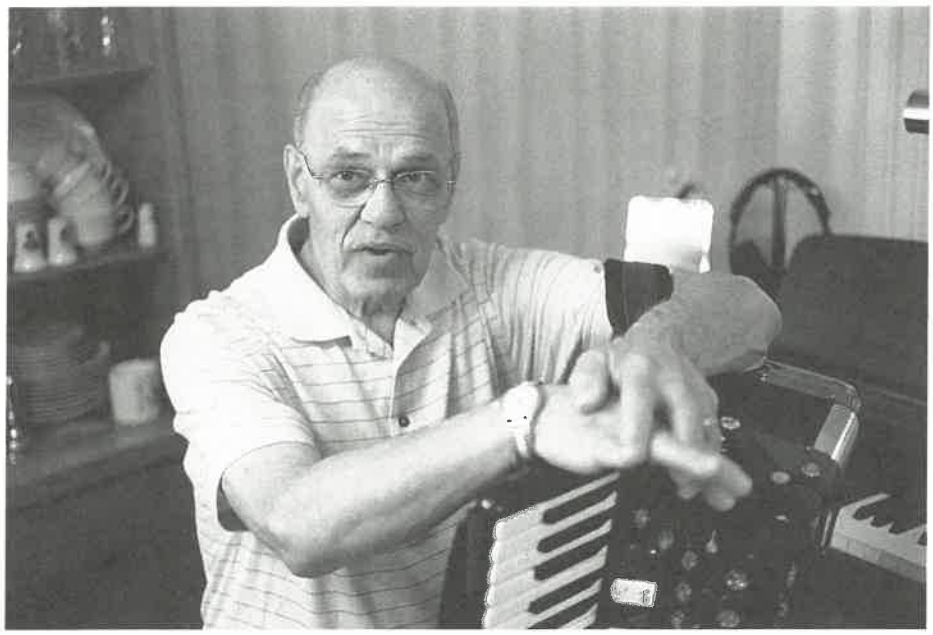
"There was a guy we called 'Sanzy,' who was a promoter," Connie recalls. "He'd take us around to baseball games in the 1930's, and we'd play. Sometimes, we had a violin player with us. There would be the three of us, and we'd play at beer gardens and park picnics. Sanzy would open up my accordion case, and people would toss money into it."

Connie with a German accordion in the barracks during his Army days.

Connie moved to Morgantown at age 14 to work at his father's new grocery business. "I'd practice before I went to school in the morning, when I came back at lunch, and after school in the evening," he says. "I played all the time, constantly. I'd experiment to see what I could do. Friends would gather on my front porch and listen. This was a great thrill."

In 1942, Connie worked with his brother and sister in the increasingly busy store. It became harder to find time to practice. "I didn't play from 1942 to 1945," he recalls. As World War II wore on, Mantini in 1945 became of military age and embarked for service via a troop train at Grafton for Camp Fannin, Texas.

"I had no idea my accordion skills would figure in my military duties," he says. "While training at



Connie Mantini today. "They loved to dance. People in coal towns are especially like that," he says. Photograph by Mark Crabtree.

Camp Fannin, I had some spare time during weekends. I wanted to start playing again, so I got my family to ship my accordion to me. We were an infantry company, and I was playing in the barracks, and a Special Services officer heard me and said, 'You are very good with that accordion.' I thanked him, and he asked if I wanted to get in the Special Services. I asked what would be expected of me.

"He said, 'All you will have to do is play the accordion for special musical functions, including being a solo accordionist at the local company shows and parties. You'll get exempted from things like KP.' This sounded great, and I accepted."

Later, Mantini formed a six-piece orchestra and played at the USO, playing every weekend at the Army base. "I played in each show," he says. "When we shipped overseas, I was able to check out an accordion. On that troop transport ship, I was the only one of 3,000 GI's who could play the accordion, and I played for them. During the voyage, I was able to pick up a half-dozen very good musicians, and we entertained the troops and ourselves.

"We were the first occupational force to relieve combat troops coming from Germany. I was in Germany for a year. There, I formed a trio that played for the troops doing occupation duty. George Piles played the guitar, and a German man played the drums. When the outfits started breaking up, I was assigned to the Third Armored Field Artillery. I was in the service two years, overseas a year and a half. I played accordion on a liberty ship coming home."

Back home in West Virginia, the brothers teamed up in their own orchestra that included Connie on accordion, Johnnie on bass guitar and singing, Ralph Bennett on guitar, Richard Akerson on drums, and Gino Barzanti on the saxophone and clarinet. Connie arranged music for his musicians.

Connie and wife Betty at a family picnic in 1956.

They played clubs in north-central West Virginia and western Pennsylvania from two to four times a week. Mantini starts listing them: "The Atomic Inn in Sabraton, the Dallas Pine Room near Morgantown, the Mannington Elks Club, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Moose and Eagles clubs in Morgantown and Fairmont, and at West Virginia University dances. West Virginians were great dancers during the period we played in that orchestra," he recalls. "Music and dancing has changed over the years. It's not like it used to be."

A lament for a more preferred way? It's not Connie's style to lament changes or disparage the other guy's choices, but it's plain from the performances he does now that

Connie Mantini posed for this portrait with his new accordion after returning from the service in 1950. Photograph by Johnnie Mantini, Connie's brother and a professional photographer in Morgantown for many years.

he prefers the popular and ethnic classics. "Those people were great, and those were great times," he says of his heyday. "They loved to dance. People in coal towns especially are like that."

Though he was still working in the family business, "I'd practice between customers," Connie says. When Mantini's parents died, Connie ran the grocery by himself, and it was harder to find time. In 1955, he married Betty Claudio of Star City, near Morgantown. "She became head cashier. We became partners in business and life. When time would permit, I'd practice and arrange music between customers, thanks to Betty."

Mantini has composed several songs for the accordion, including polkas, waltzes, and marches. He was playing the accordion at the Good Counsel Friary and Renewal Center in the Cheat Lake area of Morgantown when Chip Buck, band director at Westwood Middle School, heard him play an original composition titled "Marching Lively." He asked Mantini to write the music out. He then took Connie's sheet music and rearranged it for his 100-piece band of seventh- and eighth-grade students.

"Mr. Buck gave me the honor of directing my composition during the 2003 spring concert," Connie says. "This was the first time I ever directed a marching band." When Toni Caridi brought Mantini on the air for his *Metronews Statewide Sports Line* radio show, Caridi introduced Connie as "the greatest accordion player east of the Mississippi." Mantini, a man who responds to compliments, broke out in a broad smile at Caridi's characterization.

Mantini has his own personal list of "greats," who are accordionists he appreciates and has learned from. In addition to the late Phil Marzullo, these include Charlie Mangagni, Artie Dunn, and Myron Floren. "For style and expression, I always liked Dick Contino best," Connie says. "He played at the West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival at Clarksburg. He was great. He brought an exertion to the instrument that was unique."

Speaking of exertion, Mantini says that working the bellows on a 120-bass accordion keeps you in shape. "It gives you a good upper-body workout. It moves the blood around." Connie credits the accordion, in part, for his good health at age 78, after having undergone heart surgery five years ago for the same ail-

The Connie Mantini Orchestra at the Morgantown VFW in 1968. Standing, from the left, are Connie Mantini on accordion, Tommy DeAngelis on drums, and Johnnie Mantini on bass. Seated are guitarist Ralph Bennett and saxophone player Gino Barzanti. Photograph by Imogene Mantini.

Connie and wife Betty on the balcony of their Morgantown apartment. The former Betty Claudio married Connie Mantini in 1955. Photograph by Mark Crabtree.

ment that claimed the life of his brother in 2001.

Connie and Betty Mantini retired from the grocery business in 1992 and still live in the apartment above the store. If you drive by their Brockway Avenue apartment at many times of the day, you might hear the plaintive sounds of an accordion. Those tones now emanate from an instrument that may be one of the best in the world: Connie's own Sano Stereo 50 accordion.

"These were made in Italy," he says. "It is the best that is made. It is difficult to purchase such an instrument. It took me several years to find the quality accordion I now possess. Mine is slightly used. I bought it from a guy in New York. I have $2,500 in it, but I wouldn't take $5,000 for it.

"Some accordions may look attractive, but the best sounds from an accordion depend on the quality of the special bluish-steel reeds and the quality of hardwoods used in the sound chamber. There is an art to cutting the reeds, and the artists don't exist anymore," he says. "They had to cut the reeds by hand. The same thing with the wood. It had to be dried out and treated just so, by hand. Those artists are all gone.

"When Betty and I visited Italy five years ago, I only saw a few accordion players. I expected to hear accordions all over the place. I tried to rent one to play for our tour group, but nothing was available. They did not even know where I could purchase one. This is very sad for an accordionist."

Making beautiful sounds is what Connie Mantini is all about. He does that, he says, "by emphasizing music with melody and words you can remember." Connie regrets that the instrument is not as appreciated as it once was.

"I gave some of my tapes to Jack Wolfe of Clarksburg, a band director, and he played them for his students. He asked if they had ever heard an accordion, and no hands went up. If they heard it and saw it, they might begin to like it.

"The accordion is bulky and hard to play, and kids get discouraged. It's not an instrument you can pick up quickly. You have to work at it. It takes a lot of practice, a virtue so few of us obtain nowadays. But you can play it by yourself and enjoy it all of your life," he says. "Thank God for the people who continue to love the accordion."

NORMAN JULIAN is a columnist for the *Dominion Post* newspaper in Morgantown. He is a graduate of Victory High School in Clarksburg and West Virginia University. Norman is the author of four books with strong West Virginia connections, including the novel *Cheat* and *Legends: A History of West Virginia University Basketball*. His latest contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Fall 2000.

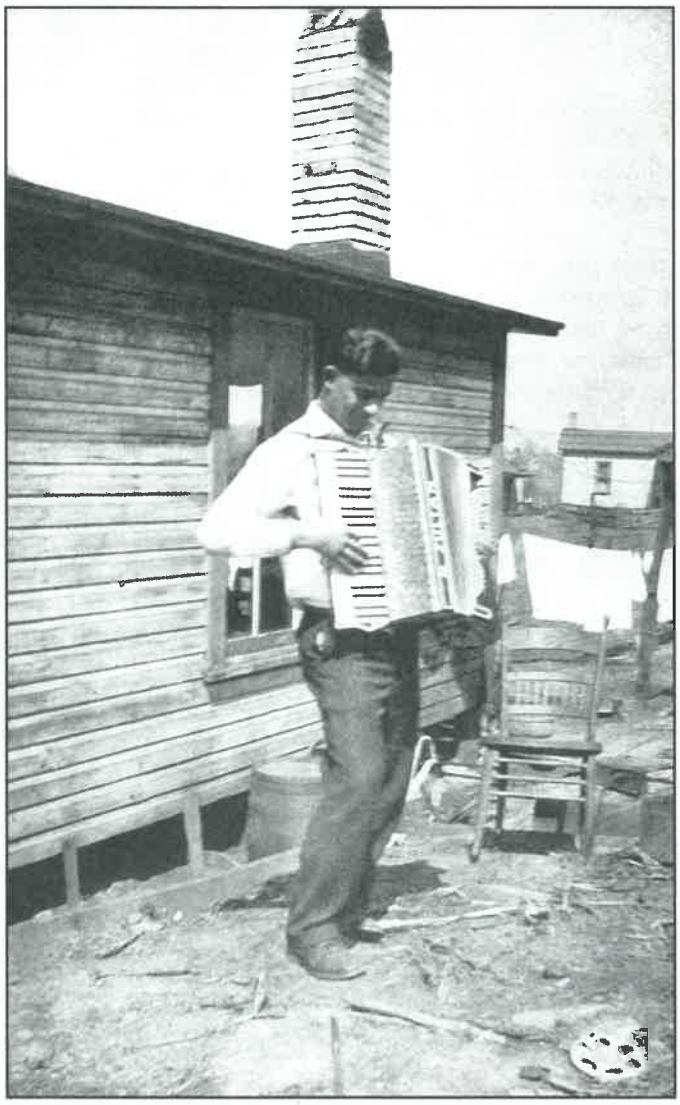
Connie entertains in Morgantown recently at the Village at Heritage Pointe. "Thank God for the people who continue to love the accordion," he says. Photograph by Mark Crabtree.

Accordion in My Genes

By Norman Julian

Why does the accordion not get more respect? It used to be a popular, cherished instrument. It is my favorite instrument, if for no other reason than one person using it can sound like a one-man band, and I was always a bit of a loner.

The accordion in my home was there before I was ever a notion in my parents' heads. It belonged to my dad Rocco Julian and was the best one he could buy on a coal miner's salary in the 1920's. Once I was out of the womb, the accordion's sound was one of the first — and most revered — sounds I remember. As a boy, I looked on in wonder as my dad would extract the mighty 120-bass instrument from its container and play something. I wouldn't call Dad an accomplished accordionist. His muscular, big-knuckled hands weren't made to handle the delicate runs. But he loved it, much as did his coal miner dad before him.



Rocco Julian, our author's father, with his 120-bass accordion in Kingmont, Marion County, in the 1920's.

Grandfather Sebastiano Giuliani played a smaller button-box accordion. Both men were born in Italy, and early on I thought the accordion purely an Italian instrument. It wasn't. It was invented in Germany. My mother, though born in Austria in an area that is now Slovenia, spoke German. It was a treat when, as an adult, I saw a picture of my great-uncle Jack Dillinger playing his button-box at a glassmakers union function at Buckhannon in 1911. It confirmed to me that I had inherited my love of the accordion from both sides of my family.

I found my way to an intimate relationship with the instrument only round about. When I was 10, my dad contracted with one of his friends, the late Clarksburg music teacher John Mazza, to give me lessons on the clarinet. Mr. Mazza was an excellent teacher and taught me to read music. I was not one of his outstanding student success stories, though. I wanted to devote my time to playing whatever ball was in season, not sitting in the house practicing.

About a year later, with the clarinet now put away in the closet, my grandmother gave me a Christmas gift that is a close cousin of the accordion. Playing that Hohner harmonica, I must have driven her big family to distraction. But I loved the sound of the reeds. I heard Dick Contino on the radio one time, playing "Lady of Spain" and performing his famous bellows shake. I thought being able to do that would be better than playing centerfield for the Yankees. Well, almost.

In high school one day while walking the block in downtown Clarksburg, I saw a 12-bass red-and-white accordion in the window of a music company. A sign offered to rent it and get six weeks of lessons from the accordion teacher Angelo Second. By then, Dad was not inclined to spend any more money on my musical misadventures, so I paid to get accordion instruction out of the money I made mowing lawns in my neighborhood. I don't recall how much that course cost, but the money was the best I ever spent.

Jack "Ignatz" Dillinger, our author's uncle, is seated with an accordion and a cigar at this 1911 glassworkers union event in Buckhannon. The sign reads "Members of AEGWU No. 97, Buckhannon, W.Va., Jackson Grove, July 18, 1911." Photographer unknown.

As an ethnic teenager in a predominately Anglo-Saxon community, I afflicted the neighbors for a couple of hours each day as I struggled to learn my new instrument. I was very surprised when, several years after I moved out of my dad's home, I met one of the neighbors who told me how much she enjoyed listening to me play the accordion. She said she missed my daily sessions. She might have been the exception.

Later, I took accordion lessons with the late James Warner of Morgantown, another expert teacher of both accordion and guitar. By that time, the instrument had made its way into some big-time bands, and popular versions of the classics had wide appeal. Accordionist Myron Floren became a featured star in Lawrence Welk's orchestra.

My dad liked to hear me play. One day, he brought home a piece of sheet music, "Dance of the Hours," by Amilcare Ponchielli. "I'll give you five dollars if you can play that," Dad said. Thereafter, he paid for my lessons.

When I had gotten passably proficient, Mr. Warner asked me to join a group of his young entertainers who performed in north-central West Virginia. I declined. I liked and respected him and hated to tell him I played strictly for my own entertainment and for that of my family and a few long-suffering friends. I would rather go two rounds in the ring with a heavyweight champ, with or without an ear-protecting helmet, than face life as a musical entertainer.

But I never ceased to love the instrument. By the 1950's and '60's, with the rise of Elvis and the Beatles, the once-popular instrument entered a decline in exposure, as did music that emphasized lyrics and melody. The accordion began to make a comeback in the 1990's, but it may never again reach the heights it reached a half-century ago.

The accordion brought to life the ethnic emotions of Italians, Germans, Mexicans, Poles, Cajuns, blacks, and others, expressed through a versatile and highly accommodating vehicle. Its sounds can elevate and delight. Have you ever seen a sad face at a polka party? But the accordion can express the melancholy feelings of the heart, as well. For various of these reasons, I expect the accordion is not without a future.

Author Norman Julian with his own beloved accordion, pictured recently at his home in Morgantown. Photograph by Mark Crabtree.

Echoes of a Mountain Preacher

Recalling Laban Richmond of Summers County

By John Eric West

Laban George Richmond was a circuit preacher. Born June 11, 1858, at Parker's Ridge, near Brooks in Summers County, Laban was one of eight children born to Jacob and Rachael Meadows Richmond. Most of his early life was spent at what was then known as Rich-

Laban Richmond standing at the gate to his Summers County home, date unknown. He was a farmer and an influential circuit preacher in Summers and Raleigh counties.

Not too long ago, spreading the Word in many parts of the Mountain State meant a country preacher mounting a horse and traveling a circuit, preaching to a different congregation every few days. Often times, the journey would last for several weeks. In today's terms, they would not cover that much distance, however if one takes a closer look, those country preachers on horseback had a more far-reaching influence than one might think.

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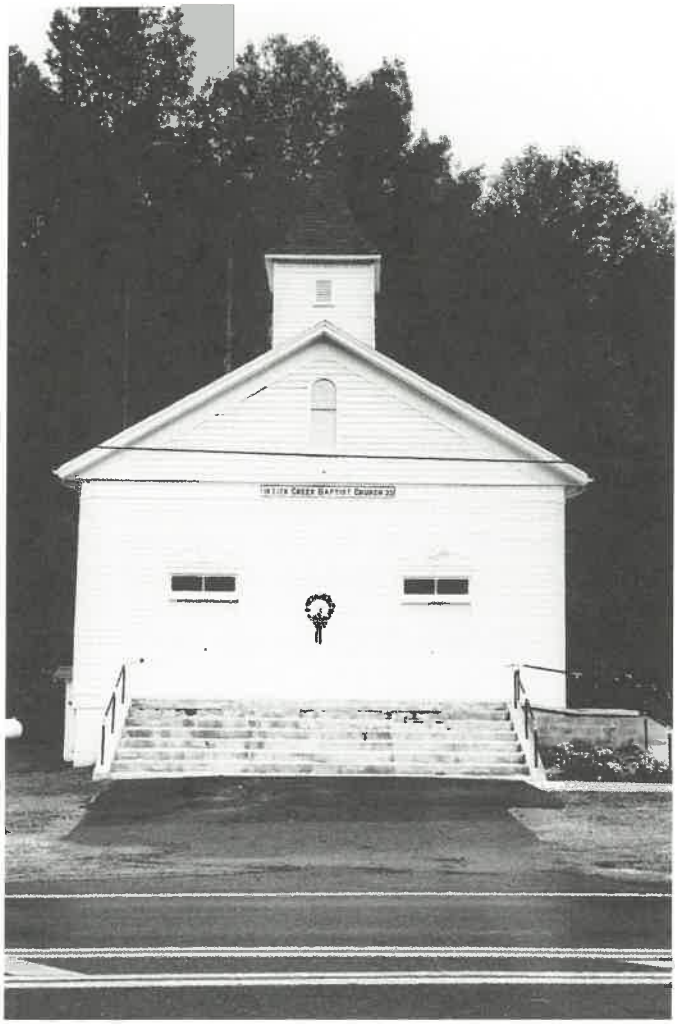
mond Falls, the present-day community of Sandstone. [See "'Respect That River': William Richmond and the Richmond Ferry," by Andy Yale; Winter 1984.]

This area was first settled in the early 1800's on the Raleigh County side of the New River, and a post office was established there in 1856, with the name Richmond Falls. After the formation of Summers County, the post office was moved across the river adjacent to a store run by John A. Richmond, grandson of the original settler. The post office served both sides of the river around Lick Creek, Laurel Creek, Chestnut Mountain, and Hump Mountain. Eventually, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad established a station at what was called New Richmond. Soon a problem arose for the C&O, as another community in Ohio also had the name New Richmond. So the C&O changed the name of the Summers County station to Sandstone; in 1915, the post office name was officially changed to Sandstone, as well.

It was in the mountains above this community where Laban Richmond spent the majority of his life. Days were spent working on the family farm and hand-hewing ties for the railroad. Grandson Bob Patterson of Meadow Bridge, Fayette County, remembers that the quality of Laban's railroad ties was so high that he became a preferred source for the railroad.

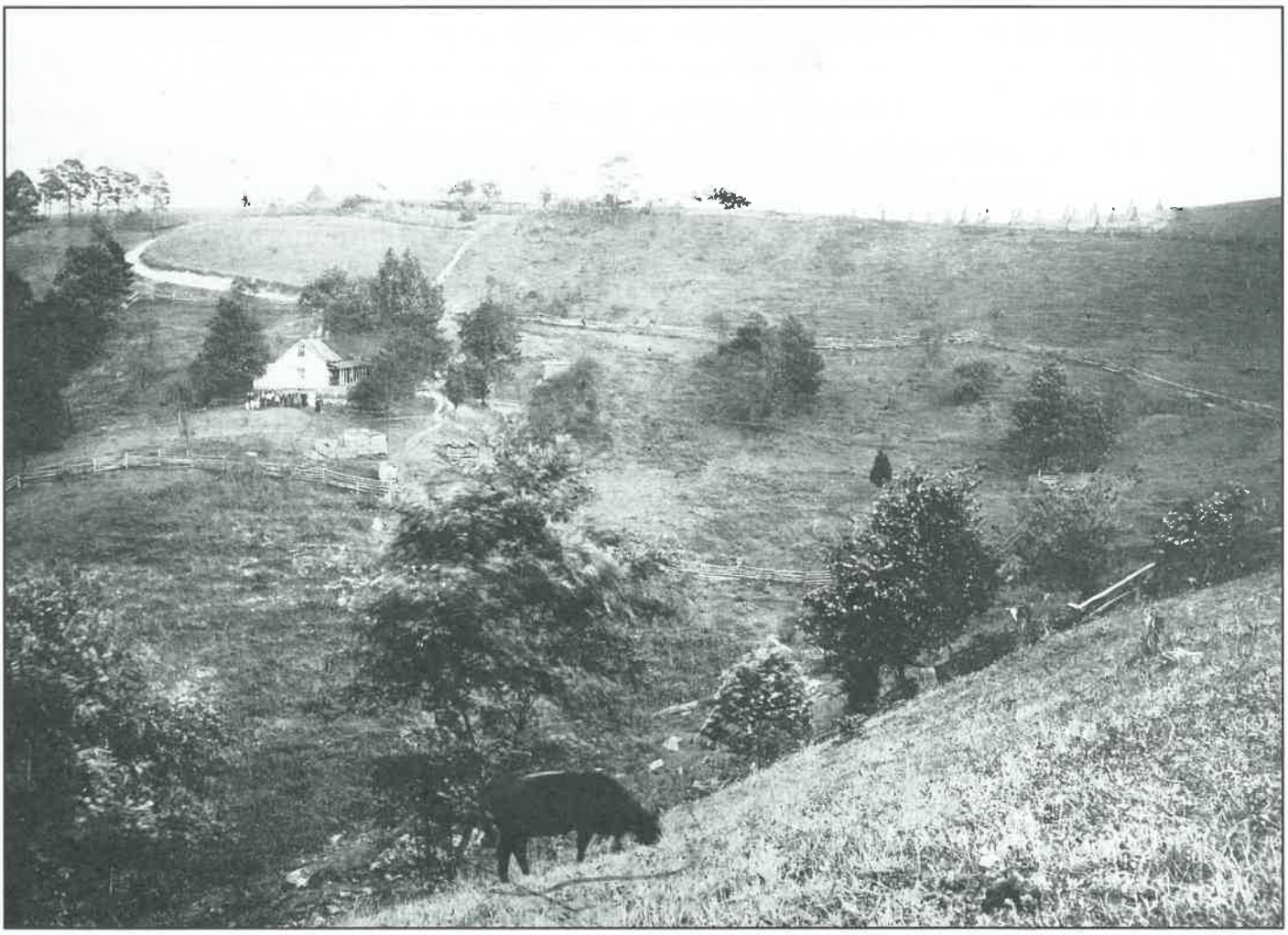
Farm work, however, left little time for education. One day in 1868, relatives came to spend time with the family. An aunt inquired if young Laban knew how to read and write. "No, ma'am," he responded. At that, the aunt's husband picked up his Bible and, at random, tore out a page. The page turned out to be the 35th chapter of the book of Isaiah. It was from this one page that Laban Richmond learned to read. Seven years later, Laban felt the call to preach, and would do so for the next 61 years, with the 35th chapter of Isaiah being his favorite text.



The Lick Creek Baptist Church, established in 1832, is shown at its present location near Green Sulphur Springs. Laban Richmond was preaching a revival here when he met his future wife Martha Ellen Bragg. The pair were wed in 1880.

As a young country preacher, Laban Richmond traveled up and down both sides of the New River, preaching in the small Baptist churches of Summers and Raleigh counties. It was on such a trip that Laban met his wife-to-be. During an early fall revival at the Lick Creek Baptist Church near Green Sulphur Springs, he met Martha Ellen Bragg. The revival lasted for three weeks. Each day, Laban would walk from a mountain above Sandstone to Lick Creek for the night's service. He and Martha began courting during the revival.

To Martha's great surprise, Laban offered a most unusual marriage proposal at the conclusion



The Laban Richmond farm on Sourwood Mountain, Summers County, about 1930. The family is gathered by the house at left, visible in the distance.

of the second week. Granddaughter Geraldine Crisp, who now lives in Richmond, Indiana, picks up the story. "Granddad told my grandmother, 'We're either going to have to get married or quit seeing each other, 'cause I can't afford to wear out my good shoes walking over here to see you.'" They were married the following week.

Born October 6, 1862, at Scarbro, Fayette County, Martha was the daughter of Michael and Rachael Hughart Bragg. Her father was a school teacher and owned a prosperous farm. Mr. Bragg was not happy with Martha's marriage to Laban, as he felt marrying a poor Baptist preacher was beneath her. Her father's anger led him to essentially write Martha out of his will by leaving her a single dollar. On his death bed, though, her father told the family to include Martha in the settling of the estate. After his death, Martha received a fair sum, allowing her and Laban to buy a farm on Sourwood Mountain in Summers County.

"In all those years, all he received in pay was a quarter and a roasting hen."

The marriage of Laban and Martha Richmond lasted more than 57 years and produced 11 children — six boys and five girls. Laban passed away during surgery February 17, 1938, at a Bluefield hospital.

Somehow, Laban seemed to know the date of his death years before he passed away. Granddaughter Phyllis West of Beckley recalls, "Mommy was a little girl, maybe seven or eight years old, and there was a fresh, heavy snow on. Mommy went outside with a large bowl and scooped up the snow. She went back in the house and poured some molasses over the snow to make a treat, and then she hid behind the big kitchen stove, because Grandmaw would fuss at her when she did this. Well, about the time she got behind the stove, Grandpaw came through the kitchen door into the house, and he stopped right in front of the stove. He said, 'Hmm. February 17, February 17. Well, I'll be.' Mommy said that stuck in her head. When he

died many years later on February 17, she recalled what she had heard as a little girl."

Since he received little formal education growing up, Laban was determined that his children would be knowledgeable and capable of speaking publically if called upon. Each night after supper, the family would gather around the fireplace, and each child was required to stand before the family to discuss a topic he or she had learned that day. Phyllis West laughs as she tells the story about one day when Laban's son Lonnie was called to speak before the family. "Uncle Lon wasn't prepared to speak," she says, "and he stood nervously before the family not knowing what to say. Grandpa said, 'Go ahead, son, we're waiting.' Well, Uncle Lon blurted out, 'Everyone on this here mountain has the itch, except you-uns!'"

There were tough times, too, like when Laban's young son Lacy was bedridden with a serious illness. Though the child was sick, work on the farm had to proceed. Laban was working in the far field and asked Martha to hang a white sheet on the line if Lacy took a turn for the worse. Sadly, the sheet appeared, and soon young Lacy passed away.

As did most men of his time, Laban spent his entire life supporting his family by farming. In more than six decades of preaching, Laban never was paid in cash for his services. "In all those years," relates Phyllis, "all he received in pay was a quarter and a roasting hen."

Paid or not, no one can dispute the effectiveness of Laban Richmond's ministry. He was an associate pastor at the Sandstone Missionary Baptist Church from 1909 until 1921, and was also the pastor at the Brooks Baptist Church for many years. He baptized countless believers in the waters of the New River or on Lick Creek. Laban Richmond was most noted for the revivals he would preach, going from church to church on horseback, preaching weeklong or two-weeklong revivals. "Mommy used to tell how her mother would be so heartbroken and lonely when Grandpaw would go out preaching revivals that she would take to the bed until he returned," relates granddaughter Joan Lowery of Spring Dale, Fayette County.

Among the many churches where he preached are the Lick Creek Baptist Church at Green Sulphur Springs; the Upland Baptist Church near Ramp and the Laurel Creek Baptist Church near Ramp, both in

Granddaughter Phyllis West of Beckley smiles as she recalls stories of Laban Richmond and his life. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Laban's daughter Beulah and her husband Summers Patterson are baptized in the New River in the 1940's. Preacher Birchfield is at left, assisted by deacon Clyde Burdette, Laban's grandson.

The Sandstone Missionary Baptist Church in Sandstone, Summers County. Laban Richmond was associate pastor at this church from 1909 until 1921.

Summers County; and the New Salem Baptist Church at Pluto in Raleigh County.

A funny thing happened while he was preaching a revival at the New Salem Baptist Church. "Grandpaw was staying with a family in the Richmond District while he was preaching at New Salem," tells grandson Bob Patterson. "The family was big. All the men were over six feet and 200 pounds, and I guess the women were big, too. Anyway, Grandpaw was a little man, standing maybe five-and-a-half-feet tall. Well, that family had built their kitchen table to fit them. That is, it was bigger than a normal kitchen table. When Grandpaw sat down to eat, he was about eye level with the edge of the table! So, the old man of the house had to get some bed pillows for Grandpaw to set on so he could see his plate!"

The effectiveness of Laban's ministry can not only be measured by the number of churches he pastored or the places he preached revivals, but also through the long-range influence he had. Three of Laban's grandsons, one grandson-in-law, and one great-grandson are all preachers. These descendants of Laban Richmond have preached and pastored in churches all over West Virginia and elsewhere.

Three gospel singing groups can be counted among his descendants, as well, including the Patterson Quartet and the Pattersons, including four of Laban's grandchildren by his daughter Beulah. Grandson Gary Burdette was a member of three prominent North Carolina gospel quartets.

There have also been countless Sunday school teachers descended from this country preacher. Others went on to found churches in southern West Virginia. Laban's son Will was among the trustees who founded the Sandstone Missionary Baptist Church on February 20, 1909.

Laban's youngest son Carl went on to found the Ramp Church of Christ in what was the old Payne School above Sandstone. "Dad and several of his brothers and sisters had gone to school there. In the early 1950's, somewhere around '52, Dad bought the old school to start the church," relates Laban's grandson Charles Richmond, who resides at Meadow Creek, Summers County. "Dad was the teacher there for many years, and now I do the teaching. We have a very small congregation," he adds.

The Laurel Branch Free Will Baptist Church was founded and literally built by Laban's youngest child Beulah, her husband Summers Patterson, and their son Bob. At Laurel Branch, Summers was a deacon and Sunday school superintendent, while Beulah taught Sunday school for many years. It was in one of those Sunday school classes that Laban's favorite chapter, Isaiah 35, had yet another impact. "Mommy assigned everyone to find a Bible passage they liked and to memorize it to be recited in a later class," says Phyllis. "So, I decided to memorize the entirety of Isaiah 35, being that it was Grandpaw's chapter. I will never forget the look

Grandson Bob Patterson of Hilltop, Fayette County. Photograph by Michael Keller.

The daughters of Laban and Martha Richmond during the 1920's. They are, from the left, Roxanna, Dora, and Beulah.

of pride in Mommy's face when she heard me recite the 35th chapter of Isaiah." Today, the congregation at Laurel Branch is made up mostly of descendants of Laban Richmond, including grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren.

Many preachers today talk of how they use all of the high-tech tools to spread the Word and minister to people thousands of miles away. However, one has to wonder if they have the impact of a simple mountain preacher from Summers County, riding on horseback from community to community, preaching and influencing countless people in their faith walk, not just over miles but over many generations. Laban Richmond's low-tech approach yielded much when one thinks of the number of people who heard him or his descendants step into the pulpit to preach, or stepped with them into cool waters to be baptized. Or those who sat in one of the churches founded by, or sat in Sunday school classes taught by, his spiritual descendants.

JOHN ERIC WEST, a native of Raleigh County, lives in Beckley. He is a graduate of the University of Tennessee and has studied at the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. John Eric is a project manager for a disaster-relief contractor. Laban Richmond was his great-grandfather. This is John Eric's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Laban and Martha Richmond are at the center in the back row of this family portrait taken at Sandstone in the 1930's. Many of these individuals and their descendants went on to found churches, preach, teach Sunday school, and sing gospel music.

Jack Dempsey Comes to Huntington

By Joseph Platania

A front-page story in the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch* for Friday morning, March 18, 1932, reports that former heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey arrived in town at 2 p.m. on Thursday, March 17. He checked into the Hotel Frederick, the city's premier downtown hotel, "greeted with a round of cheers by several hundred people who lined the street in front of the hotel."

The world heavyweight king from 1919 to 1926 was in town to fight two local heavyweights in two bouts of two rounds each in an exhibition match as part of his "comeback tour." Accompanied by his manager and his trainer, Dempsey came to Huntington from Clarksburg, where he had defeated two heavyweight fighters with two knockouts in an exhibition match there.

At the hotel's entrance, Dempsey was greeted by Huntington mayor George D. Bradshaw, police chief Ben Robinson, fight promoter Joe Stender, and *Herald-Dispatch* editor Jim Clendenin. The newspaper reports that when Dempsey's car rolled up in front of the hotel entrance, traffic was blocked all along 4th Avenue between 9th and 10th streets. "The trolleys were held up and it was necessary for police to clear the way," the article states.

Jack Dempsey was no stranger to West Virginia. Both of his parents were from Logan County, and they were married in Logan in 1879. The family later moved to Colorado, where William Harrison "Jack" Dempsey was born in 1895. When Jack was a teenager, the family moved back to Logan County, where Jack and his father worked in a coal mine. After several years, they returned to the West.

Huntington sportswriter Ernie Salvatore contends that Dempsey was proud of his West Virginia heritage and often returned to the state to visit his many relatives, to box exhibitions, and "to act as the star of a traveling medicine show." Salvatore adds that, in the southern coalfields, Dempsey was "claimed as a native son whose birth in Manassa, Colorado, was obviously a quirk of circumstance."

On Friday night, March 18, 1932, the former heavyweight champ was in Huntington to take care of business. Dempsey was signed to fight heavyweights Jack "K.O." Kearns and 19-year-old Billy Miles in a bout at Vanity Fair arena in downtown before a sellout crowd.

Miles, who lived in Huntington,

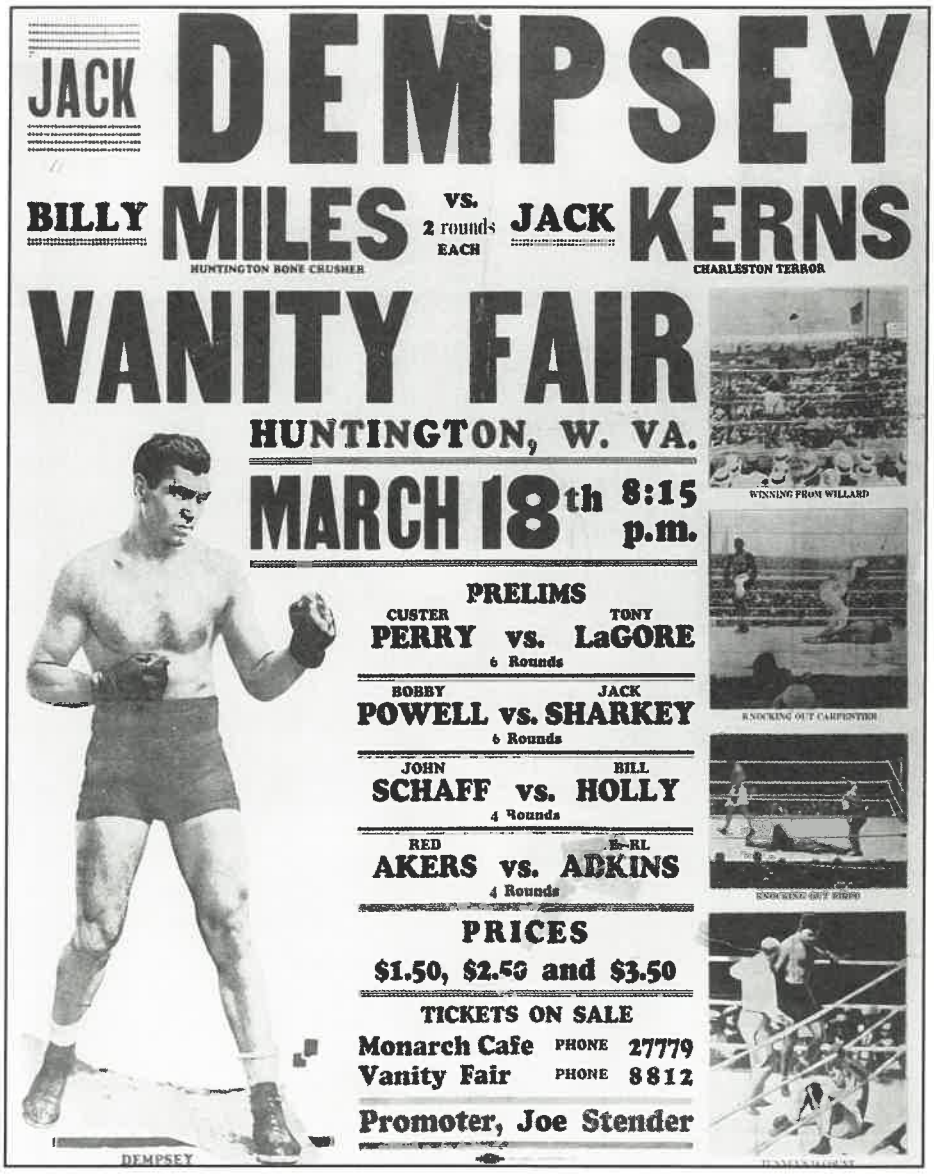
Prizefighter Jack Dempsey arrived in Huntington on March 17, 1932, for a pair of bouts the next day against two local challengers. Dempsey is shown here, at right, in front of the Frederick Hotel. At left is fight promoter Joe Stender. Huntington police chief Ben Robinson, mayor George D. Bradshaw, and *Herald-Dispatch* editor Jim Clendenin are also visible, left to right, standing between Stender and Dempsey.

and Kearns, who was from Charleston, were described as "ambitious young heavyweights." A newspaper article adds that "Miles and Kearns stand a chance of dragging down $500 in extra money if they slap Mr. Dempsey off his feet."

In order to ensure a sellout crowd, fight promoter Joe Stender put up a $500 bonus for either challenger if they knocked the ex-champ down, if not out. This incentive also ensured that the exhibition match would be a real fight. Miles reportedly accepted Stender's offer and was quoted as promising that he would show Dempsey "'a thing or two,'" says Ernie Salvatore. By fight night, it became Billy Miles' boast that he'd "knock Jack kicking" and collect the $500.

Miles, originally from Bayonne, New Jersey, was, according to Salvatore, "an above-average heavyweight with real power in either hand." Miles' bravado statement was duly reported by the press, and Dempsey knew of the young fighter's boast.

The 1929 stock market crash had cost Dempsey $3 million in investments, states Salvatore. In order to recover his losses, the ex-champ agreed to make the exhibition tour. The tour began in Reno, Nevada, on August 17, 1931; by March 1932, he was ready to meet his 95th and 96th opponents in Huntington. Salvatore adds that only two more stops were left on the tour before the famous "Manassa Mauler" would hang up his gloves for good.



Fight poster from March 18, 1932, pitting former heavyweight champ Jack Dempsey against Billy Miles (the "Huntington Bone Crusher") and Jack Kearns (the "Charleston Terror"). Kearns' name was apparently misspelled on the poster. Dempsey prevailed in both fights, in what a local sportswriter called "one of the most unusual nights in Huntington sports history." Poster courtesy of Joe Shanklin.

It took Dempsey two minutes and 40 seconds "to stretch Miles on the canvas," according to Duke Ridgley of the *Herald-Dispatch*, adding that Miles was "on the floor five times before a merciful towel fluttered into the ring from his corner in token of surrender."

Kearns lasted the full two rounds, approximately six minutes, against Dempsey before a TKO was declared. Ridgely adds that "a colorful throng of 5,000," including "many of Dempsey's blood relations and boyhood friends, roared their tribute to a 'native son' when the Old Manassa Mauler took his bow."

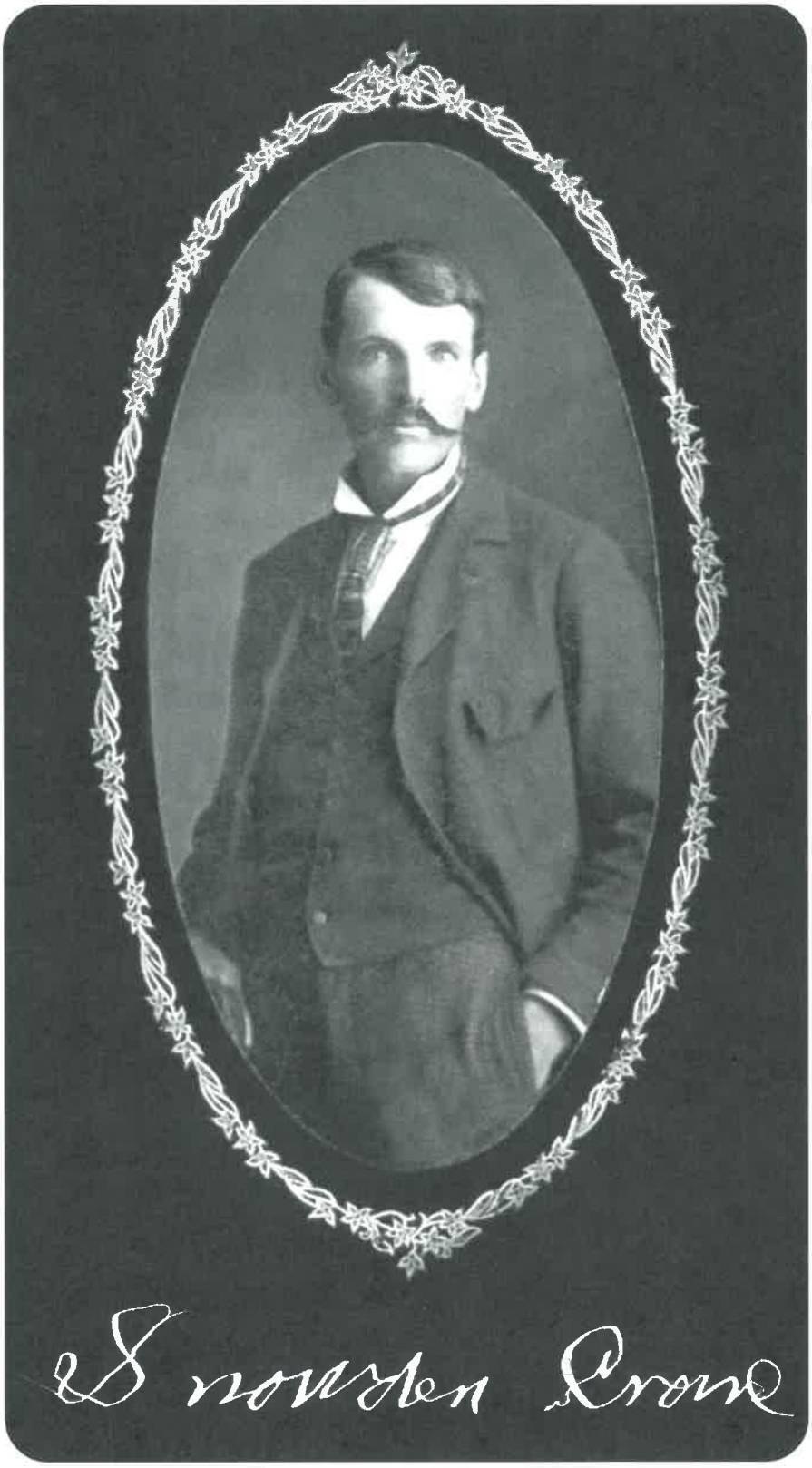
Ridgley reports that the boxing match, which included two preliminary bouts with fighters from Huntington, Charleston, and Williamson, "drew a $12,000 gate," which set "an all-time attendance record for a fight in West Virginia's largest city." Seats for the fight had been advertised for $1.50, $2.50, and $3.50 each.

According to Ernie Salvatore, fighter Billy Miles later denied that he said that he'd "knock Jack kicking" and that Miles didn't take Stender's $500 bonus offer seriously. Salvatore describes the Depression-era fight as "one of the most unusual nights in Huntington sports history."

JOSEPH PLATANIA, a Huntington native, is a freelance writer whose work has been published in the *Huntington Quarterly* and other publications. Joseph is a regular contributor to GOLDENSEAL whose most recent contribution appeared in our Spring 2003 issue.

The Murder

By Charles Cohenour



It was Wednesday evening, November 23, 1927, the day before Thanksgiving. On Laurel Creek Mountain, in a rural area of Greenbrier County now known as Orient Hill, families gathered, eagerly anticipating the upcoming feast. Among them, the 69-year-old recluse Snowden Crane shuffled homeward, carrying a sack on his back, until he was out of sight. The contents of the sack, much like the man and his life, were never fully known and remain a mystery to this day. No one could have imagined that this would be the last time Snowden would be seen alive or that his death would bring their small, sleepy community into the limelight.

Snowden L. Crane was born in a one-room log home on the western summit of Laurel Creek Mountain on November 15, 1858, the fourth child of Benjamin

Snowden Crane as a dapper young man, date unknown. He was born in 1858 on Laurel Creek Mountain in Greenbrier County. In later years, he became a recluse, dressed in disheveled clothing, and was thought to have kept large sums of money buried around his property. He was the victim of a murder on November 23, 1927.

# of Snowden Crane

SNOWDEN CRANE MURDERED.
On last Wednesday night, Nov. 3, 1927, Snowden Crane was murdered about two miles southeast of Bellburn, on Laurel Mountain. Mr. Crane was an old bachelor—sixty years of age—and lived alone on his farm. While he was very much of a recluse he was well known all over the Western end of Greenbrier county, and was an honest and industrious citizen.

and Hanna McClung Crane. The family home was built by Snowden's father in the mid-1800's on land he inherited from his father Joseph. Information concerning Snowden's formative years is scarce, but records establish that he could read and write. When Benjamin Crane passed away, his land was divided between Snowden and his elder brother Cyrus. The east side of Laurel Creek Mountain went to Snowden, the west side to Cyrus.

"I can remember seeing him. He was a good-sized man. He wore old arctics [buckled boots] and an old brownish-looking outfit. He always walked everywhere, and he always carried a walking stick. He had a beard and long hair, which was kinda salt-and-pepper. He was very shy," remembers 97-year-old Prudence Piercy.

Lackie Crane Banton remembers, "Snowden would collect his chicken eggs in a straw basket and go over to Leslie [a small community near Orient Hill] to sell them."

Snowden lived alone and kept to himself, staying in the same general area as members of his immediate family, including his sister Melledella, his brother Cyrus, and several nieces and nephews. While it was said that he had few friends and rarely talked to anyone other than his family, that was not the case. Snowden was well known in the western end of Greenbrier County. He was deemed an honest and industrious citizen and was respected by those who knew him. An astute businessman, he kept records of his transactions and required collateral on loans to friends and family alike.

Snowden owned more than 300 acres. A large proportion of it was in timber, a valuable commodity at the time. His land also held a large reserve of coal. Over the years, Snowden was said to have turned down many offers to buy or lease his land. At the time, Snowden was considered to be wealthy. The probate records at the Greenbrier County Circuit Court show that his total estate was appraised at $28,418 — a sizable sum for that era. It was estimated that of this amount, $27,000 was actually the value of the land.

Rumors circulated that Snowden did not believe in banks and that he kept large amounts of money buried on his property. Even after his death, these rumors continued. The *Greenbrier Independent* printed numerous articles about Snowden's murder and the subsequent trials of his accused killers. In an article printed the day after his death, the newspaper stated:

"The story is told that a year ago a neighbor approached him [Crane] at his home for a loan of money which he agreed to make, and that upon the suggestion that he might give a check, he declared that he

Snowden's parents Benjamin Franklin Crane, above, and Hannah McClung Crane, dates unknown.

Arthena Crane Redden, left, and Lackie Crane Banton at Orient Hill, Greenbrier County, in 1989. Snowden Crane was their granduncle. Photograph by Margaret Redden Golden.

had nothing to do with checks, told the neighbor to remain at the house, departed, and was gone some time, when he returned with the money, a considerable sum. It was also said that he disposed of some timber not long ago, for which he received considerable money, and the knowledge of this and the likelihood that it was secreted about the premises perhaps led to his murder."

The story that Snowden kept his money buried on his property, however, has been questioned for two reasons. First, in August 1909, Snowden was the victim of an armed robbery, in which the robbers made off with "one $10 bill, one $5 bill, and $1 in small change." Such an experience might have discouraged him from keeping significant amounts of cash around his house or property. In addition, court and probate records show that at the time of his death, Snowden had active accounts at the Bank of Rupert, the Bank of Quinnwood, the Bank of Rainelle, and the Bank of East Rainelle, and that he frequently wrote checks.

Snowden's murder was not the first murder to take place in the Laurel Creek Mountain area. Andrew Folger had been murdered sometime earlier. The suspects in Folger's murder were brothers Chase and Clark Brown. The court had issued two subpoenas in the case: one to Snowden Crane and another to his neighbor J.O. Davis (a.k.a. O.B. Davis). It was in that capacity that Greenbrier County Deputy Sheriff J.L. Campbell called on Mr. Davis on November 24, 1927.

During their conversation that day, Davis told Deputy Sheriff Campbell that he was uneasy about Snowden Crane's welfare. One of Davis' children mentioned that Snowden's livestock and chickens were still penned up, and no one had seen Snowden all day. With this information in hand, Deputy Sheriff Campbell, along with a member of the Davis family, went to Snowden's home. The front door was locked but the back door slightly ajar. Deputy Campbell made the decision to enter Snowden's home and found a relatively new shotgun lying on the floor, broken. Snowden's bedding was turned down. Attached to the side rail of the bed was a long piece of heavy rope. The rope was tied on each side of the rail, with one loose end thrown across the floor. Mingled among the bedding were several small pieces of rope that had been knotted in loops. These loops appeared to have been cut. A glance at the kitchen table revealed two soiled dinner plates with some uneaten food on them.

This evidence suggested that whoever had been in the home was there as Snowden's guest or guests, and that whoever murdered Snowden had eaten his food either before or after the murder had taken place. The West Virginia State Police were immediately notified, and a search for Snowden was planned. Early Friday morning, November 25, 1927, a number of people, including some of Snowden's relatives, began the search. George W. George, who lived a mile or so from Snowden Crane's home, had reported seeing a light on the hill above the house

Cyrus Crane, Snowden's older brother, and wife Nancy, date unknown.

the previous Wednesday night. George was sure that was where Snowden would be found.

Around 9:00 a.m. that same day, Dewey Young and Mr. Hinkle, members of the search party, found the body of Snowden Crane on the hill, opposite from where Mr. George reported seeing the light. Snowden's body was found about 400 yards from his home, covered with logs and leaves. Snowden's hands and feet appeared to have sustained serious burns, as if seared by hot irons. His body showed signs that he had been tied very tightly, as the imprints of the ropes were plainly visible on his legs. In addition, a cord remained tied to one wrist and a strip of leather was tied around one ankle. Further examination of his body revealed a bullet hole in his head, along with indications that he had been struck in the head with some type of heavy object.

CRANE MURDER UNSOLVED
A BIT OF ROMANCE REVEALED

The Snowden Crane murder mystery at Bellburn remains without solution. State and county officials have been unable to fix responsibility for the murder.

A forgotten and almost unknown chapter in the life of the aged recluse came to light with the finding among his papers of an insurance policy payable to his daughter. Although born on the same farm where he was killed, he spent a few years as a young man as a teacher in Virginia.

Squire Cary McClung was notified, and a coroner's inquest was held on that same day. The local newspaper published the results of the inquest, which revealed that "[Snowden] had come to his death from a gunshot wound at the hands of a person or persons unknown."

At the conclusion of the inquest, Snowden's body was turned over to Wallace and Wallace, undertakers, in Rainelle. Newspaper accounts reported that Dr. J.E. Coleman and Dr. Bird had performed the autopsy on Snowden's body. They determined that the skull had been fractured in two places in addition to the hole from the pistol or rifle shot. The cause of death was officially listed as a blow to the head, with the bullet wound considered secondary. Trial records indicate that the weapon used in Snowden's murder was a .32-caliber Harrison & Richardson revolver. Fred L. Bozeman, a firearms expert in New York City, conducted ballistics tests on the revolver and, in a letter to the prosecutor, he concluded that "the bullets taken from the body show only five grooves and are exactly, by caliper and micrometer measurements, identical with the rifling in the Harrison & Richardson pistol you have in your possession."

"This is undoubtedly the blackest crime ever committed in this county."

Funeral services for Snowden were held on Sunday, February 12, 1929, at the Crane Church near Snowden's home, located where the Orient Hill Baptist Church presently stands. The Reverend Leslie Bowling, Snowden's favorite preacher, conducted the services. It was estimated that more than 4,000 people were present at the services, including all of Crane's known relatives. Whether they came out of respect or curiosity is subject to conjecture. Snowden's body was laid to rest in the family cemetery on the Crane farm, beside his father and his mother. The pallbearers were all old friends, and all were bachelors. During the time that his body lay in state, it was estimated that more than 25,000 people viewed it and paid their respects to him, though it is unclear why the burial was delayed for such an extended period.

Snowden's murder caused a stir and generated a great deal of excitement among the people of Greenbrier County. The *Greenbrier Independent* wrote, "This is undoubtedly the blackest crime ever committed in this county, and it is to be hoped that the murderer or murderers will soon be brought to justice and given their just desserts." The Greenbrier County Circuit Court offered a reward of $500 for the arrest and conviction of those involved in the murder of Snowden Crane. There were, unfortunately, no suspects and no arrests for many months. "My dad was very upset about the murder. He was angry," remembers Prudence Piercy. Mrs. Piercy's father was William Starr Crane, a first cousin to Snowden.

The first potential break in the case came sometime in early 1928, when Lottie Adkins wrote a letter to the Greenbrier County prosecutor. In this letter, she suggested she could furnish vital information about Snowden's murder. The prosecutor immediately wrote Adkins, asking her to come in and discuss this information with him the next time she was in town. Un-

fortunately, Ms. Adkins never came in, and by all appearances, the prosecutor never followed up on this important lead. The West Virginia State Police continued to investigate Snowden's murder, unaware of Ms. Adkins' letter.

Then, in the summer of 1928, several arrests were made in the case. Among those arrested and charged were Andy Cade, Nellie Mays, John and Hubert Allen, Cody Allen, Ed Woodzell, and James Hayes. All were indicted for Snowden's murder and held over for trial.

Prudence Crane Piercy of Williamsburg, Greenbrier County, age 97, is one of the few people today who still recalls Snowden Crane. Her father was Snowden's first cousin. Photograph by Charles Cohenour.

Two detectives, D.C. Simmons and J.C. McWhorter of the Smith Detective Agency of Charleston, were hired by the attorneys of James Hayes. The detectives located Lottie Adkins, who was held on a $500 bond as a material witness. She provided information to James Hayes' attorneys, who in turn presented it the grand jury in the hopes of exonerating their client. This new information did not sway the grand jury, however, and James Hayes stood trial for the murder of Snowden Crane.

Several individuals who had firsthand knowledge of the actions of the accused provided facts and opinions to the grand jury. Cody Allen and Andy Cade, who testified against James Hayes and Ed Woodzell, gave the most damaging testimony. Based on court testimony and subsequent newspaper accounts, these appear to be the events that led to the murder of Snowden Crane:

On Tuesday night, November 22, 1927, several conspirators met at Nellie Mays' shanty, which was located near Snowden Crane's home. At the time, Cody Allen was living with Ms. Mays. During the evening, there was a great deal of discussion about Snowden's buried money. Those present decided to confront Snowden in an attempt to make him reveal its whereabouts.

Speculation continues as to the reason for Snowden's murder.

Around 4:00 p.m. on November 23, as planned, Nellie Mays went to Snowden's home to have supper with him. Her intent was to tell him she had nothing to eat at home and to convince him to let her stay the night. Between 5:00 and 9:00 p.m., Ed Woodzell, James Hayes, and an unknown man named George went to Snowden's home. Cody Allen stood outside as a guard but did not witness the murder. The men used flashlights to enter the home. They knocked Snowden down and tied him to the bed. But Snowden was a strong man, and in the desperate struggle, he managed to get loose. Someone knocked him down again, using Snowden's own shotgun, which he kept near his bed. The conspirators tied him to one of his chairs using rope they found in his home. One member of the group took a carbide lamp and tortured Snowden by burning his feet, toes, and hands, causing him to scream repeatedly. Allen later testified he heard Snowden groan and scream several times.

At approximately 2:00 a.m., according to Cody Allen, Hayes picked up the shotgun and hit Snowden over the head twice. Soon after, Snowden cried out, and Woodzell drew a revolver and shot him in the back of the head. Snowden immediately slumped forward. Three of the men, Woodzell, Hayes, and the unknown man named George, wrapped Snowden's head in some cloth, untied the body, carried him from the home, and buried his body on the hill. The group then came back and ransacked the house before leaving.

It was never determined whether Snowden revealed the location of his buried money.

From all published accounts, it is obvious that the arrests and subsequent trials were unusual, not only in the attention they attracted but also in the manner that the trials were conducted. They were held at odd times of the day, some scheduled on Saturdays, and another in a rare session of night court. Even the preliminary hearing drew a crowd.

It was never determined who actually struck the fatal blow with

the shotgun that ended Snowden's life or who fired the shot, as none of the accused ever admitted their own active participation in the murder.

The Honorable Summers H. Sharp was the trial and sentencing judge in all of the cases. On December 6, 1928, Cody Allen entered a guilty plea to first-degree murder in the Greenbrier County Circuit Court and was sentenced to 99 years in the West Virginia State Penitentiary. Ed Woodzell was tried and found guilty of first-degree murder. The jury recommended mercy, and he was sentenced to life in prison. Andy Cade was tried for the murder; in an unexpected turn, the jury found him guilty of voluntary manslaughter. Records did not indicate his exact sentence.

James Hayes, after being extradited from Kentucky, was tried in July 1928. The jury could not reach a verdict, and a mistrial was declared. On Friday, May 2, 1929, the retrial of Hayes began. Two days later, the all-male jury found Hayes guilty of second-degree murder; on May 15, 1929, he was sentenced to 18 years in the West Virginia State Penitentiary. Hayes made an appeal to the West Virginia Supreme Court, but the conviction was upheld.

Charges against defendants Nellie Mays, John Allen, and Hubert Allen were dropped, possibly in exchange for their cooperation and testimony in the other trials.

Speculation continues as to the reason for Snowden's murder. It may have been greed, brought on by the tales of buried money. It is also possible that Snowden was killed to prevent him from testifying in the Andrew Folger murder case. Following the death of Snowden Crane, the Greenbrier County prosecutor dismissed the charges against the Brown brothers, citing the death of witness Crane as the reason. It is unclear what information Crane was thought to have had in that case, but according to court records, Snowden had been called to testify before the grand jury. When he failed to appear, Snowden was fined $100 and sentenced to one year in jail for contempt of court. Snowden eventually appeared before the grand jury, gave testimony, and paid the $100. There is no record that he served any of his assigned one-year sentence. Following his murder, speculation about a possible motive was fueled by the revelation that one of the convicted killers, James Hayes, was related to the defendants in the Fogler case, Chase and Clark Brown.

The final disbursement of Snowden's estate would normally have been the end to this sad story. But investigation into the murder of Snowden Crane has revealed many fascinating facts about this unfortunate individual. Snowden was not the "old bachelor," "hermit," or "recluse" that the locals knew. There was also the Snowden Crane that most of his immediate family knew. There was the young and handsome Snowden Crane, known only to a special few, the young man who parted his dark, wavy hair on the right side and possessed dark, wide-set, brooding, and piercing eyes and sported a handlebar moustache, typical of the time period.

He was well educated. In fact, as a young man, Snowden Crane spent a few years as a teacher in Virginia, where he courted and won the heart of a young woman. The marriage, however, proved to be an unhappy one, and they parted ways, with Snowden returning to his family and his beloved Laurel Creek Mountain home.

An even bigger revelation is the fact that this marriage produced a daughter. A search through his belongings reportedly revealed an insurance policy naming the daughter as beneficiary. The quiet man, handsome in his youth, never forgot the child who remained with his wife in Virginia, and whose name may have been lost to history.

This deteriorated wooden sign for the Crane family cemetery at Orient Hill is all that remains to mark the final resting place of Snowden Crane. Photograph by Margaret Redden Golden.

CHARLES COHENOUR, a distant cousin of Snowden Crane, was born and raised in Rupert, Greenbrier County. He worked 21 years as a police officer and is currently a judicial administrative assistant in Fairfax County, Virginia. He is coauthor of *The Cranes of Greenbrier County*, published by the West Virginia Historical Society. This is Charles' first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

West Virginia Back Roads

Text and photographs
by Carl E. Feather

Old Glory on Haystack Hill

I got my first view of it as I headed west on Route 72, about a mile past Red Creek in Tucker County.

Perched atop what appeared to be a near-perfect knoll, flying high above farm, meadow, and forest — a solitary American flag. It was flying in the middle of nowhere, although as I approached the knoll, I could see that the silhouetted specks in the distance were beef cattle and a lone, egg-shaped tree.

Such an anomaly deserved investigation. I turned into the driveway of the farm I guessed to be associated with the knoll, and my inclination proved correct. It was the home and farm of David "Eddie" and Carol White. Their house is a modest one-story that, on this day in late September, was getting a gray-vinyl facelift.

I was greeted by Carol, who was supervising the siding work, and at least four dogs. Annie, a blue heeler, and Patches, a black-and-white border collie, were the friendliest of the barking quartet. Patches was chewing on a bone, and Annie was rolling on something lifeless. She got up to greet me and snapped up her furry plaything like a rich man retrieving his wallet from the floor of a soup kitchen.

David "Eddie" White of Hendricks, Tucker County, stands next to a flag he flies above his farm on Haystack Hill. The flag is attached to a pole, supported by the remains of a post that once held the neighbor's television antenna.

I explained to Carol my interest in the flag flying at the apex of this knoll, and she told me I'm not alone. A lot of folks who travel this road stop to gawk at the flag and snap pictures. Carol told me the flag was planted there by her husband, who was at work but would be happy to take me up there on his four-wheeler if I'd care to come back Saturday morning.

Fascinated by the lone flag of freedom keeping a watch over the mountains of Tucker County, I made a date to return, already imagining in my mind the story of a veteran who, after the 9/11 attacks, planted a flag on his

Eddie White, a retired coal miner, farms land along Route 72 in Tucker County. He spends about $50 a year to maintain his flag on Haystack Hill.

mountaintop in staunch defiance to any terrorist who'd dare think of crashing a jetliner into Tucker County.

As it turns out, Eddie, who never served in the armed forces and had planted the flag long before September 11, 2001, had a much more pragmatic tale to share when I met him two days later.

"My neighbor had an antenna up there, and he didn't need it anymore after those satellite dishes came out," Eddie tells me, as we sat in his living room on a cool, rainy Saturday morning. "So he took it down, and he left the pole standing up there. I went up there and put a flag up."

"We kind of laughed at him," Carol admits. "But he took it up there and put it up."

The flag, which measures a mere 3'x5', flies atop a metal pole that Eddie secures to the original locust post with baling wire. That's so he can easily gain access to the flag, which he has to replace about every three to four months.

"The wind beats the end of it to pieces," says Eddie, a retired coal miner who now works as a set-up man for a manufactured housing firm.

It costs the Whites about $50 a year to keep Old Glory flying on Haystack Hill, the name locals give the knob. Eddie, who is 69, does it in part out of patriotism and in part out of the satisfaction of being caretaker of what has become a local landmark. His neighbors over at Flanagan Hill can see it, as can those who farm the valley below. The flag provides a reference point, both physical and emotional, for troubled days.

Eddie tells me he'd eventually like to illuminate the flag at night, but the distance from the house to flagpole — probably a half mile — is prohibitive. "I got a notion to put one of those wind things up there, but I haven't done it," he tells me. "And I was going to put 'In God We Trust" on the hillside, spell it out with a bunch of flat rocks." That hasn't happened, either.

The rain stopped, and Eddie got his four-wheeler out of the garage. He invited me to climb on behind him for the short but steep ride up the knob. Patches and Annie zigzagged in front of the vehicle as we followed the well-worn road, ending on a plateau barely large enough to accommodate the ATV, Old Glory, Eddie, and me.

The view was astounding. Mountains, farms, valleys, houses, forests, and meadows stretched beyond this tiny parcel of real estate, some 4,000 feet above sea level. It felt as if the top of my noggin was brushing against the bellies of the clouds. And there, in the middle of it all was Old Glory, tethered to a locust post, flapping and dancing no less proudly than when it was raised on Iwo Jima or the World Trade Center rubble.

Eddie posed with the flag for a few pictures. Several of the 30 cattle that graze on these 82 acres moseyed by. Before we left, Eddie pointed out some of the mountains and landmarks visible from this vantage point. Allegheny and part of Middle Mountain are to the southeast, Green Mountain to the southwest. To the north is what locals call Pointy Knob, 4,145 feet above sea level. Just to the east of that is a rock outcrop they call Chimney Rock. On a clear day, you can almost see to Laneville and Parsons, but the mountain peaks get in the way.

I reminded Eddie that he's a rich man to own this hill and the view it offers. And he agrees, except for the cold wind that comes with it. "I like it here, yeah," he says. "But I'd like to live over toward Petersburg. It's a little warmer over there than it is here."

CARL E. FEATHER lives in northeast Ohio, but has family roots in Preston and Tucker counties. His book *Mountain People in a Flat Land* is published by the Ohio University Press. Carl is the owner of Feather Multimedia, a freelance photography and writing business. He has been lifestyles editor at the *Ashtabula Star-Beacon* since 1991. Carl is a regular contributor to GOLDENSEAL.

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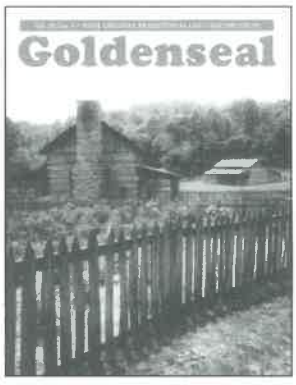

Spring 1996
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- Banjo Player Brooks Smith

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- Old Sweet Springs
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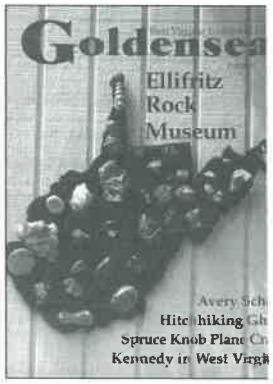
- Otsego
- Green Bank Observatory

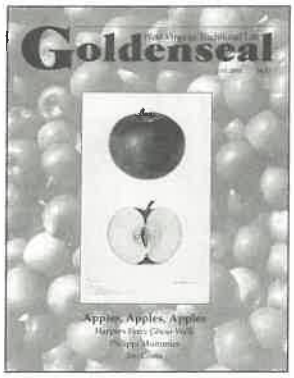
Winter 2000
- Coondogs
- Woodturner Paul Weinberger
- Slovenes in Richwood
- Parthenia Edmonds
- Armstead Mining Family



Spring 2001
- 25th Vandalia
- Quiltmaker Mabel Moore
- Bill & Mary Moats
- Don Bosco Agricultural School
- Fiddler Red Henline

Summer 2001
- Train Photography
- Coalwood
- Singers Bill & Hazel Westfall
- Pinch Reunion
- Glassmaker Danton Caussin

Fall 2001
- Apples, Apples, Apples
- Harpers Ferry Ghost Walk
- Philippi Mummies
- Jim Costa
- Malden's Norton House



Winter 2001
- Veterans Memorial
- USS *West Virginia*
- WSAZ Radio
- Spaniards in Beckley
- Black CCC Camp

Spring 2002
- Williamson Coal House
- Riding Route 52
- Filming *Stage Struck*
- Joltin' Jim McCoy
- Good Hope Church

Summer 2002
- *Princess Margy* Sternwheeler
- Fidler's Mill
- Panhandle Swimming Pools
- Cassity
- Heritage Farm Museum

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- Flatwoods Monster
- Deaf and Blind Schools
- Long's Store
- Lost Creek
- Preacher Denver Hill

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- Lebanese in Clarksburg
- Death of Hank Williams
- Gravedigger Dallas Dunn
- Volcano

Spring 2003
- Stained Glass Dome
- Pallottine Sisters
- George Hajash
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- Wedding of the Bluefields
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- Odd Fellows Home
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- Ikie's Tomb
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Rutherford Receives Vandalia Award

McDowell County guitarist and songwriter Carl Rutherford was presented the 2004 Vandalia Award on May 29 as part of the annual Vandalia Gathering at the State Capitol Complex. A regular Vandalia participant, Rutherford is recognized for his unique open-tuned, fingerstyle guitar playing, reminiscent of many earlier players from southern West Virginia, including the late Frank Hutchison.

Vandalia Award recipient Carl Rutherford. Photograph by Michael Keller.

A former coal miner, Carl is an award-winning songwriter, known especially for his heartfelt musical reflections on the harsh realities of coal mining life. He has also written and recorded numerous religious and honky-tonk songs, as well as lively instrumentals.

In addition to performing, Carl is the founder of the McDowell County Mountain Music Association and has worked in conjunction with Big Creek People in Action. He was the subject of a story in GOLDENSEAL in our Fall 1994 issue, titled "Carl Rutherford: Music From the Coalfields," by Jim McGee.

The Vandalia Award, West Virginia's highest folklife honor, recognizes a lifetime contribution to West Virginia and its traditional culture. It has been given each year since 1981.

Congratulation, Carl!

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

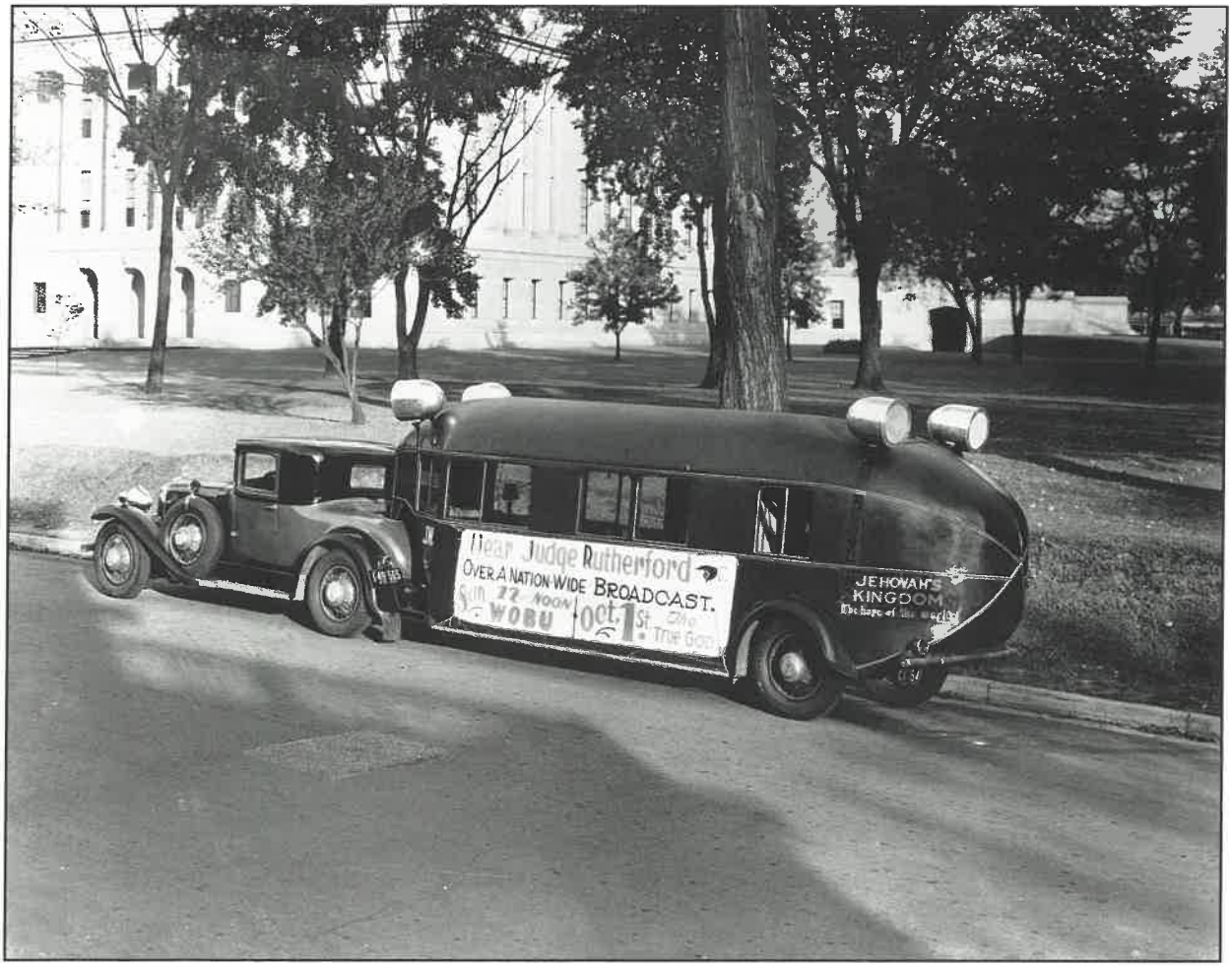
- Toymaker Dick Schnacke
- Sagebrush Round-Up
- McDowell County Postcards
- Ambler Ridge

PHOTO CURIOSITY

Who was Judge Rutherford and where did he get such a stylish set of wheels? This wonderful photograph comes to us courtesy of George Bragg. It was taken in early fall near the State Capitol along Duffy Street, now a pedestrian walkway between the Capitol and the Cultural Center. The shadow of the Governor's Mansion is visible in the foreground. The license plates indicate that the year was 1933. WOBU was a very popular Charleston radio station, now known as WCHS.

Judge Rutherford was apparently an early radio evangelist whose broadcasts were heard in the Charleston area. His eye-catching trailer has plenty of unique features, as does his snappy, two-toned car. Note the rearview mirror attached to the spare tire on the driver's side.

If you recall Judge Rutherford or can enlighten us about his impressive ride, please let us know at the GOLDENSEAL office.



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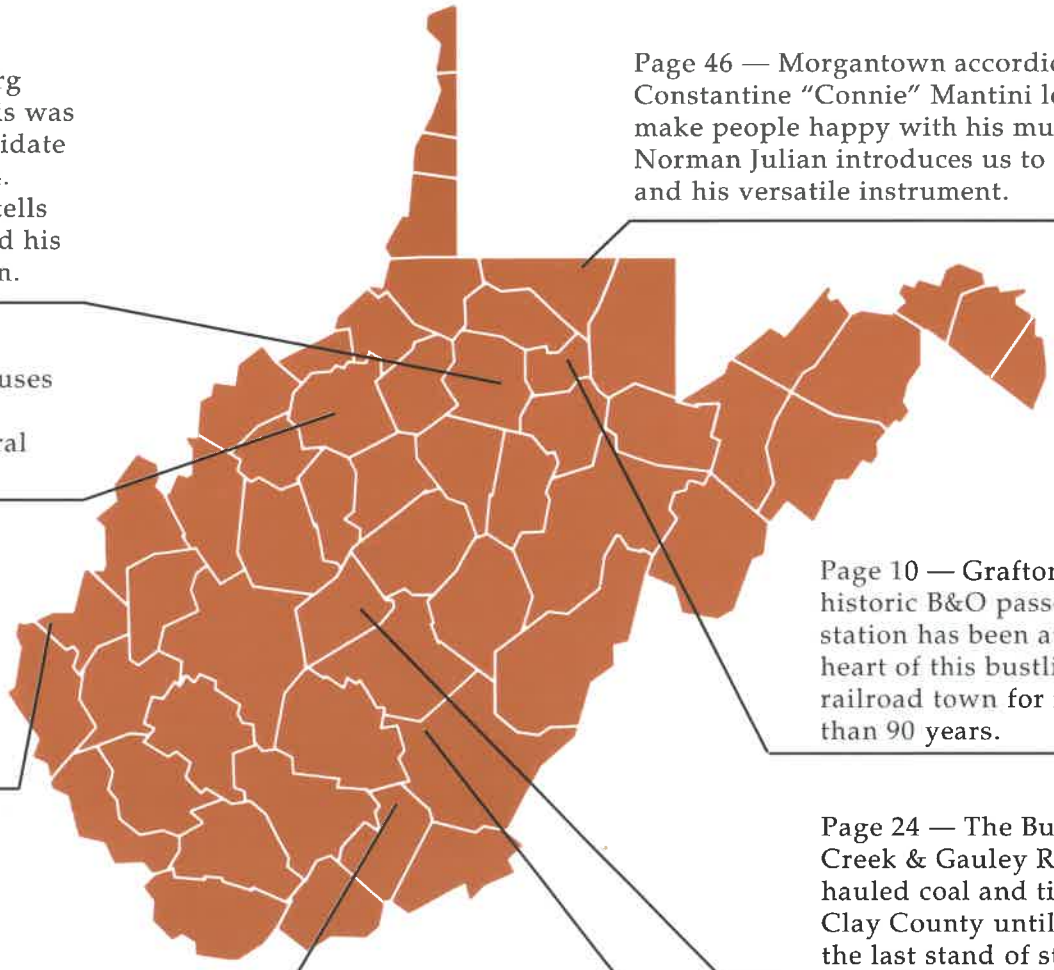

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