
Goldenseal
West Virginia Traditional Life
Winter 2004
$4.95
30th Anniversary
Folk Toys
Sagebrush Round-up
McDowell County Postcards
Woman's Improvement League

From the Editor: Celebrations

Happy holidays from all of us at GOLDENSEAL! Circulation manager Cornelia Alexander and editorial assistant Gordon Simmons join me, along with Culture and History photographer Michael Keller, State Archives photo technician Ed Hicks, and designer Anne Strawn, in wishing you the best this season has to offer.

We also wish ourselves a happy birthday, as we mark the close of our 30th year of publication. Special recognition goes out to founding editor Tom Screven and longtime editor Ken Sullivan, who tended and grew GOLDENSEAL for 20-some years before I came on board. Both of these talented gentlemen poured their souls into this publication, and their work still inspires and challenges me. They have also remained close allies to the magazine and have lent their encouragement, advice, and assistance on numerous occasions. Thanks, guys!

Mostly, though, we wish to thank you, our readers. It is your continued interest, input, and financial support that keeps us going. As you know, your subscriptions, gifts, and renewals pay the bills around here. Times are tight, but we have made it through another year, thanks to you. That alone is reason to celebrate.

Another important expression of your support is the many letters we receive, some of which find their way, in part, into our "Letters from Readers" section [see page 2]. I think this issue contains our largest number and most compelling collection of letters to date. We hear from a former governor, the conductor of the WVU choir, retired railroaders, a country music journalist, a college professor, and more than a few homesick Mountaineers. And that's only a fraction of the mail we have received in recent weeks, offering comments, insight, suggestions, and critique. We sure enjoy hearing from you and are glad to share your comments with other readers, as space permits. Keep those cards and letters coming!

Probably our biggest reason to celebrate, however, is the traditional culture and fascinating history we share here in West Virginia. Take this issue, for example:

Our cover story about Dick Schnacke tells the unlikely tale of a successful engineer in the aluminum industry who chucked it all 40 years ago to make folk toys, and built a thriving cottage industry [see page 10].

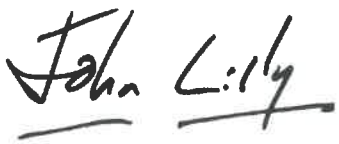
McDowell County reveals its colorful history through a look at a baker's dozen of beautiful historical postcards from that coal-rich, yet hard-hit, region [see page 18].

Ninety-four-year-old Marie Robinette is the last known surviving eyewitness to the infamous Matewan Massacre. She shows us where it all happened and leads us on a lively tour of this storied Mingo County town [see page 24].

The Sagebrush Round-up near Fairmont is a local institution, and the worthy successor to one of West Virginia's premier radio shows of the 1930's and '40's [see page 32]. We also meet country music pioneer Little John Graham and inspiring gospel music songwriter Dorsey Wiseman [see pages 42 and 48].

The Charleston Woman's Improvement League is in a league of its own, offering community service, sisterhood, and social opportunities for Charleston black women for more than a century [see page 54].

After 30 years, 118 issues, more than 1,000 articles, and who-knows-how-many photographs, the story of the Mountain State is still emerging within these pages. No other state has a comparable publication. Period. Thank you for helping us celebrate.



P.S. Don't forget — December 31 is the deadline for our 30th anniversary gift-subscription contest. First place will receive a complete bound collection of GOLDENSEAL magazines, dating back to 1975. Second place will receive our Deluxe Gift Pack of back issues, books, and article reprints. Third place will receive a free three-year subscription. Give the gift of GOLDENSEAL and win!

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p. 54

On the cover: Handmade folk toys from the Mountain Craft Shop in Proctor, Wetzel County. Our story about toymaker Dick Schnacke begins on page 10. Photograph by Michael Keller.

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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.

Grafton Trains

September 17, 2004
Hacienda Heights, California
Via e-mail
Editor:
Just received my Fall 2004 issue. What a great train issue! I could not believe it when I saw all those train stories. The picture on page 16 with CSX 718 pulling a load of coal is really nice [see "Forever Trains: Railroad Photographer Jay Potter," by John Lilly]. I was born and raised in Fairmont and have been away too long. Thanks for the memories.
Jack Wise

CSX engine 718 with load of coal near Grafton. Photograph by Jay Potter, 1998.

September 25, 2004
Charleston, West Virginia
Editor:
Thank you for the magnificent article about Grafton trains. [See "Grafton's B&O Station: Revisiting a Railroad Treasure," by Bob Withers.] Reading the article recalled many pleasant memories of visiting my grandmother in Grafton. My grandfather John Cassell was yardmaster in the handsome station. My mother Grace Cassell Colebank, my brother, and I would leave the train from Fairmont and walk up the hill to my grandmother's house.

My family came from Germany, and my folks were an active and happy part of a large German population in Grafton.

I am thrilled that they are restoring the station. I hope to attend the dedication, if my daughters can take me. I'm 92 and using a cane. Thank you, Mr. Lilly. Keep going! I'm renewing subscriptions for several members of my family, and of course, my own.
Sincerely,
Mary L. Brand

September 14, 2004
Golden, Colorado
Editor:
You really outdid yourself in the magazine's Fall 2004 edition. I grew up during the 1920's and '30's in Grafton, where my ancestor Aaron Luzader, son of a Sephardic Jew and Revolutionary War veteran, settled between 1790 and 1800, becoming the first [permanent] occupant of land in what is now Grafton.

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad dominated our community's economic and social life, and a railroad culture existed that colored our perception of the world.

Like many of the town's men, my father-in-law Charles Bolyard, his brother Luther, and two sons Dana and Kenneth were

railroaders, as was my godfather William Lawhorn. Grafton prospered when the railroad prospered, and declined with it.
John F. Luzader

Buffalo Creek & Gauley

September 6, 2004
Charleston, West Virginia
Editor:
The article, "BC&G and the Last Stand of Steam," by Cody Burdette in the Fall 2004 issue really stirred my memories. In the late '50's, I worked for a small trucking company here, and we

BC&G engine on Lilly Fork in Clay County. Photographer and date unknown.

occasionally picked up shipments of bulk oil and grease products on the south side and delivered them to Swandale and Dundon.

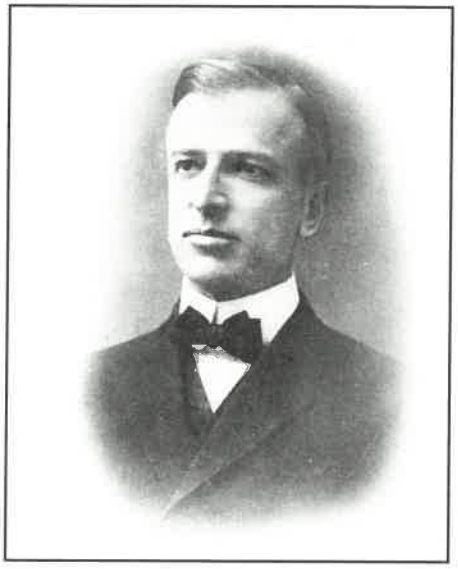
It was a joy to go there, hoping to see the old engines! It wasn't always easy, though. One bad winter, another driver took a small tractor-trailer there. After unloading, he couldn't get the empty trailer out and had to leave it there for about a month, till it thawed out.

Thanks for a fine publication, and keep up the good works!
Sincerely,
Ed King

Presidential Candidates

October 5, 2004
Elkins, West Virginia
Editor:
Congratulations on the splendid Fall 2004 edition of GOLDENSEAL. I especially enjoyed the article on John W. Davis [see "John W. Davis and the 1924 Presidential Campaign," by Rod Rogers]. I also liked the one titled "Charles R. Linger: West Virginia's Other Presidential Candidate," by James Wilson Douglas.

A far more important "other presidential candidate" was U.S. Senator Howard Sutherland of Elkins, whose name was placed in nomination at the 1920 Republican National Convention, four years before John W. Davis was nominated at the 1924 Democratic Convention. Sutherland had defeated the famous General Leonard Wood and two lesser-known rivals in the West Virginia primary. On the first ballot at the convention, he received all the votes of the West Virginia delegates and one vote from Missouri (his native state). He received some votes on the next five or six ballots, but, in the end,



U.S. Senator Howard Sutherland (R-WV). Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, photographer and date unknown.

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the West Virginia delegation switched to Senator Warren G. Harding of Ohio, who was nominated and elected.

Sutherland was the first West Virginian to run for president. He was also the first West Virginian to be elected to the U.S. Senate by popular vote. Previous senators had been chosen by the State Legislature. He served one term, but was defeated for re-election in 1922.

Sutherland had come to Elkins in 1893 as an agent for the Davis and Elkins coal, railroad, and timber interests. In 1903, he entered business for himself and became very successful in insurance, lumber, railroad, and banking. His son, Lieutenant General Richard Sutherland, served as Chief of Staff to General Douglas MacArthur during World War II.

Best wishes for your continued success with GOLDENSEAL.
Sincerely,
Thomas R. Ross
Professor Emeritus
Davis & Elkins College

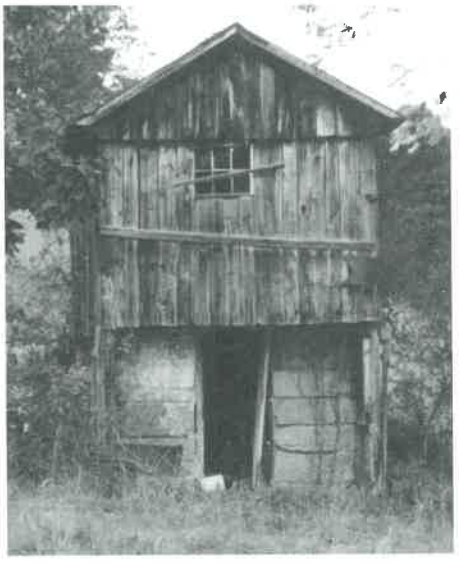
Thanks for your note, Professor, and for the additional information. While we're on the subject, staff at the State Archives and History office inform us that 1924 saw yet another West Virginia presidential candidate. John Zahnd, a Wetzel County native, was the national candidate of the Independent Party that year, opposing John W. Davis and Calvin Coolidge. We welcome any further information about this candidate, or other presidential candidates from West Virginia. —ed.

Cellar Houses

September 14, 2004
Point Pleasant, West Virginia
Editor:
I was very pleased to see the article about Ritchie County cellar houses in the Fall 2004 issue [see "Ritchie County Cellar Houses," by Katherine Roberts]. It reminded me of the cellar at my grandfather's farm on Rocky Branch, Walton, Roane County. That cellar was of hewn stone at the ground level and was less than 20 feet from the kitchen door. The second-story entrance was also at ground level near the driveway on the opposite side. The top was rough-sawn lumber, weathered to a silvery gray.

My favorite memory of the cellar was the wonderful purple grapes that grew from near the stone foundation clear to the top of the second story. Every fall we would help gather the grapes, using a tall ladder to get every single cluster. Then my aunt and my mother would perform their canning and preserving magic and create the most luscious grape juice, so thick and rich that my mother would add water to keep my brother from getting sick by drinking too much. I had no idea that grapes were grown in fields on arbors until much later in my life.

I heard the old farmhouse burned several years after the farm was sold, and the cellar house burned, too, at the same time.
Sincerely,
Koneda L. Devrick



Abandoned cellar house in Ritchie County. Photograph by Danny Harbert.

American Flint Glass Workers' Union (AFGWU) gathering in Buckhannon, 1911. Photographer unknown.

Accordions

September 13, 2004
Huntington, West Virginia
Editor:
I have read most of the articles already in the Fall 2004 issue, which you just sent me. They are all interesting, and I enjoy them very much.

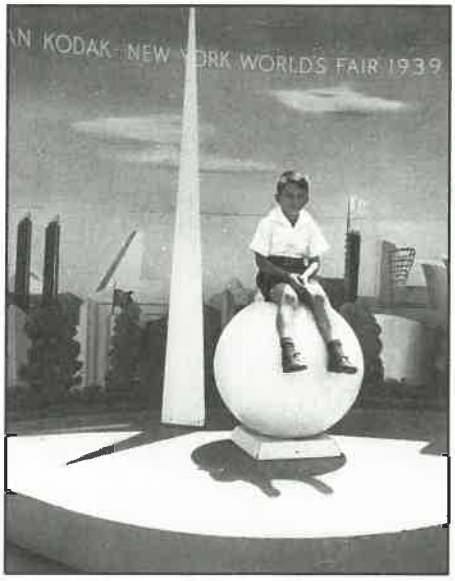
One of the articles I read, "Accordion in My Genes," by Norm Julian, has an error in it that you might like to know about. The caption of the large picture on page 53 says, in part, "Members of AEGWU ... ." This should read "Members of AFGWU ... ." The letters stand for "American Flint Glass Workers' Union." My father became a member of the union in 1916, when he first came to this country from Sweden, and remained a member of the union and president of his own glass company, Scandia Glass Works, until he passed away in 1980.
Sincerely,
Thomas O. Bergquist

Jack Dempsey

October 5, 2004
Sour Lake, Texas
Editor:
In the last issue of GOLDENSEAL, I enjoyed reading the article concerning Jack Dempsey [see "Jack Dempsey Comes to Huntington," by Joseph Platania]. I am an ancestor of his. I never met him but visited his hometown, Logan. I was born and reared in Fayette County, birth date November 13, 1917.
Othelia Dempsey Rippetoe

World's Fair

August 15, 2004
Charleston, West Virginia
Editor:
The Summer 2004 issue of GOLDENSEAL published an excellent article by Dan B. Fleming, Jr., titled "A West Virginia Boy at the New York World's Fair." Written from the experiences of a young lad from St. Marys, Dan presents a personal view of the fair and explains what West Virginia wanted to accomplish with its investment. Governor Homer A. Holt was a visionary leader and wanted to project the state's image beyond the Depression years to a more promising future.



Dan B. Fleming, Jr., at the 1939 New York World's Fair. Photographer unknown.

I arrived in St. Marys in August 1943, as a high school teacher. I joined the Kiwanis Club and there soon became acquainted with Senator Dan B. Fleming, Sr., a prominent business and civic leader in the community. A year later, I was elected to the House of Delegates, and the senator became somewhat of a mentor for me, even though we were in different political parties.

In the fall of 1960, Dan Jr. was teaching in the Marietta, Ohio, high school, where he sponsored a mock national political convention, followed by a mock national election. He invited me to address the mock convention to relate my [real-life] experiences as temporary chairman of the 1960 Republican National Convention.

Dan Jr.'s successful career has taken him out of West Virginia, but he obviously maintains a keen interest in his home state. His article confirms that interest, and is a valuable contribution to the historical literature of West Virginia. GOLDENSEAL deserves great credit for its publication.
Sincerely,
Cecil H. Underwood
Governor (1957-61/1997-2001)

State Songs

July 14, 2004
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Editor:
We have received the Summer 2004 issue of GOLDENSEAL and were delighted to read the history of the state song, "The West Virginia Hills." [See "West Virginia's Three State Songs," by Richard Ramella.] Our grandfa-

ther was the 11-year-old boy who helped his uncle with the music in the chorus. We all have Uncle Henry Everett Engle's songbooks, and have sung all the songs many times down through the years. We also have enlarged pictures of the chimney, left standing on the old homeplace. These were given to us by the late Jeanette Cunningham, a Tanner resident and longtime Gilmer County schoolteacher. She studied the Engle [family] history, and was instrumental in erecting a historical marker on State Route 5, west of Glenville, and [another] near Third Run, leading to Tanner and the homestead of Uncle

Photo Curiosity

Vehicle and trailer near the State Capitol in Charleston, 1933. "Judge" J.F. Rutherford was president of the Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses) from 1916-1942. Courtesy of George Bragg, photographer unknown.

September 9, 2004
Burlington, West Virginia
Via e-mail
Editor:
In regard to the photo on the inside back cover of Fall 2004 issue [see "Photo Curiosity"]. I can't help with information on Judge Rutherford, but as a previous owner of a Willys Knight and former member of the Willys Knight-Overland club for several years, I recognized the car as a 1929-30 Willys Knight Great Six. There were three cars in 1929 that had the peaked headlights. They were LaSalle, Cadillac, and Willys Knight, but only Willys Knight had the distinctive hub caps with a knight on a horse and the round hood ornament. The wheels and hub caps on the trailer match the ones on the automobiles, solving the problem of carrying an extra spare tire. The 1929 Willys Knight was a large, beautiful car, designed by the famous car designer Amos Northrupp.
Yours truly,
Ed Weaver

September 27, 2004
Buffalo, New York
Via e-mail
Editor:
Inside back cover of the Fall 2004 issue — Joseph Rutherford was the second president of the Watchtower Society from 1916 until his death in 1942.

If you would like to know everything you ever wanted to know (and probably a lot more) about him, put his name in a search engine on the Internet.
Don Cameron

Right you are. The Internet is swimming with fact and opinion about this influential and controversial figure. Born in Missouri in 1869, Joseph Franklin Rutherford was a lawyer, who gained the nickname "Judge" early in his career by serving as a substitute judge on a few occasions when a presiding judge was unavailable. He became involved with the Watchtower Society in 1894 and became its second president in 1916.

"Advertise, advertise, advertise the King and His Kingdom" was said to be the rallying cry of Judge Rutherford, who led the religious organization until his death in San Diego in 1942. During his tenure, he wrote and spoke prolifically and vehemently, espousing the tenets of his faith, decrying the evils of the world, and criticizing other denominations and religions.

He was convicted in 1918 of sedition for opposing the war effort, and served a year in prison before the verdict was overturned. He was cited for contempt of court on at least three occasions and was known as a fiery and persuasive speaker, both in the courtroom and from the pulpit.

Rutherford is credited with transforming the Watchtower Society from a staid, obscure Bible-study group into a zealous evangelical organization. In 1931, he renamed the group Jehovah's Witnesses, and, when our photo was taken at the West Virginia State Capitol in 1933, was apparently touring the country, engaged in a radio ministry.

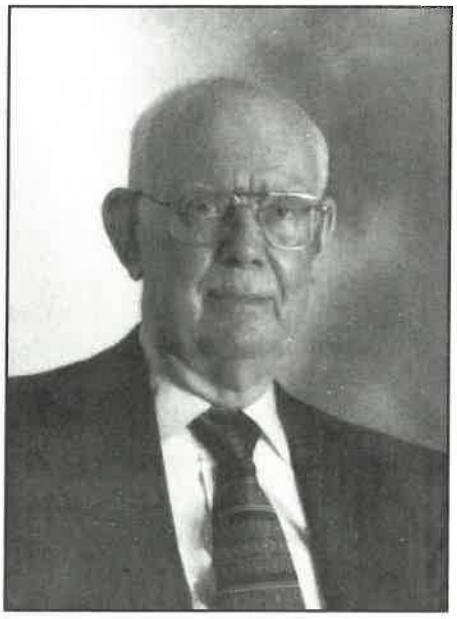
Thanks to all of those who responded to this fascinating "Photo Curiosity." —ed.

Everett. In the family, he was known by his middle name, Everett.

There are a few corrections we would like to make. Our grandfather's name was Opha Thurman Engle, not Orpha, as was written. The organ that Mr. Collins has belonged to our grandfather, and was never used by his uncle. Uncle Everett's homestead was not on or near the Collins home. It is located near the Mount Liberty church at Tanner. Finally, we can in no way verify that the rocking chair in the picture on page 19 was ever in the possession of Henry Everett Engle.

Thank you for the very excellent GOLDENSEAL. And thank you for your kind cooperation in allowing us to correct these errors.
Janet Kelley/Engle family

July 16, 2004
Morgantown, West Virginia
Editor:
I enjoyed your articles in the summer issue on West Virginia songs and composers. I found the stories chronicling the history behind the three state songs and numerous other compositions



E.W. James, Jr. Photographer and date unknown.

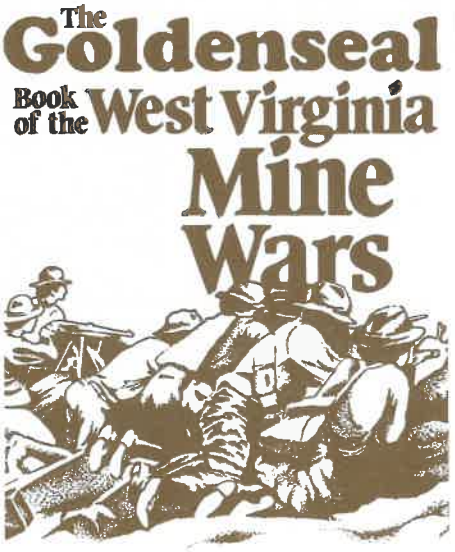
celebrating the Mountain State both informative and insightful.

I would like to call your attention to one musical piece equally deserving of mention — "My Home Among the Hills," by the late E.W. James, Jr. This beautiful choral number was part of a play James helped write in 1963 in observance of West Virginia's centennial. The song is now a part of the repertoire of several choral groups across the state, including the West Virginia University Choir.

Since [my] coming to WVU nine years ago, my choirs have enjoyed singing "My Home Among the Hills." Whenever we travel to a West Virginia high school, the singing of this song in "community" with the high school choir is a highlight of our visit. We are regularly asked to sing this song at the many university functions for which we perform each year, including commencement. As the choir travels both nationally and internationally, "My Home Among the Hills" is the song we most often perform to represent the majestic beauty of our home state.

A Clarksburg native, E.W. James, Jr., was president for many years of the James & Law Company — a Clarksburg bookstore his father helped found. He was also active in politics and served as mayor of Clarksburg from 1957-61.

James' first love, however, was music. He composed choral works for the Clarksburg madrigal group he directed for many years and religious anthems for his church. "My Home Among the Hills" was his crowning musical achievement, a short choral piece with a haunting melody that choral groups will be singing for years to come. Thank you for allowing me to point this out.
Sincerely,
Kathleen Shannon
Conductor, WVU Choir



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).

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Hank Williams

August 6, 2004
Nashville, Tennessee
Via e-mail
Editor:
My belated but sincere thanks to GOLDENSEAL for its superb layout on the death of Hank Williams [see "'I Won't Be Home No More': The Death of Hank Williams," by Maura Kistler; Winter 2002]. As a native of Elkview and a longtime writer on country music — first for *Billboard* magazine and now for CMT.com — I particularly appreciated the care and detailed research that went into reconstructing the events surrounding William's death. The illustrations rolled back time.

The one thing I noticed missing from the GOLDENSEAL article was a mention of a man who pioneered the idea of an Oak Hill memorial to Williams. His name is Herb Pauley. He is a former magistrate for Kanawha County and, in the interest of full disclosure, my first cousin. Herb wrote to me in 1990, when I was country music editor for *Billboard*, and asked that I tell about the proposed memorial project in my column for the magazine, which I did. Working with Ramona Cerra, then a member of the House of Delegates from Kanawha County, Herb succeeded in getting a bill passed in the State Legislature in 1991 that authorized the creation of a Hank Williams memorial and statue. Surely, he deserves our acknowledgment and gratitude. Now retired, Herb lives in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where he is active in local charities.
Edward Morris

Renewal Mailbag

September 28, 2004
Mathias, West Virginia
Editor:
Thank you so much for such an informative and interesting magazine that covers my beloved state of West Virginia. It's been my home for over 50 years. My roots go deep from generations before me. There's no place like home in wild, wonderful West Virginia.
Angilee Whetzel

September 30, 2004
Moundsville, West Virginia
Editor:
Thank you so much for such a nice magazine. We are 81 and 87 and really enjoy your magazine.
Wanda Myers

September 12, 2004
Pleasant Hill, California
Editor:
It pained me to read that your circulation for GOLDENSEAL was low. So I would like to give a one-year gift subscription to someone who is not familiar with the magazine.
Carlton B. Webb

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! We need all the help we can get. —ed.

September 15, 2004
Marmet, West Virginia
Editor:
Been receiving your magazine for several years now, and enjoy it beyond expectation. You and the entire staff are to be commended — highly! Thank you.
J.E. Crowder

September 15, 2004
Fort Springs, West Virginia
Editor:
I really enjoy GOLDENSEAL. The only thing is, it doesn't last long enough. When I get it, I don't stop till I read ever word — one day, and maybe into the night, then I am through. It's so easy to read. The reason I am ordering only one year is I'll be 90 years old December 12. I am fine, so far, healthwise. But living alone out in the boondocks, that could change. Just hope not.

Thank you so very much.
Bertha Trainer

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Bonnie Cadle Hartley of Leon, Mason County, passed away on August 9. She was born in Ravenswood in 1901, attended Marshall College (now Marshall University), and taught school in Mason and Putnam counties. After she married Dawson Hartley, the pair moved to Boomer, Kanawha County, where he worked in the chemical industry. After his retirement, they moved back to Mason County, where they resettled on old family land. Bonnie remained active with her church and community throughout her later years, as told in the article "'I've Enjoyed It All': Bonnie Cadle Hartley Recalls 103 Years," by Olive Smith Stone in our Spring 2004 issue.

Bonnie Cadle Hartley. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Lon K. Savage, historian, editor, speaker, and author, passed away July 29 at his home in Salem, Virginia. He was 75. A native of Charleston, Lon wrote the popular Mine Wars history, *Thunder in the Mountains: The West Virginia Mine War 1920-21*, published in 1985. In 1989, Lon was a guest speaker at Matewan, Mingo County, at a commemoration of the infamous 1920 Matewan Massacre. Portions of that address formed the basis for the Summer 1991 GOLDENSEAL article, "The Gunfight at Matewan: An Anniversary Speech," by Lon Savage.

Bonnie Withrow Porter of West Hamlin, age 89, passed away in Florida on September 11. Bonnie was originally from Eskdale, Kanawha County, born in 1914. Following the death of her father, Bonnie and four of her siblings were taken to the Odd Fellows Home in Elkins, where Bonnie lived for eight years. Her pleasant memories of life at the Home were featured in a story in our Fall 2003 issue titled "'So Charitable a Mission': The Odd Fellows Home in Elkins," by Karen Stalnaker.

Paul Pannell. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Paul Pannell of St. Albans, renowned piano tuner and technician, passed away on September 2 at age 87. Paul tuned pianos throughout West Virginia for popular entertainers, governors, colleges, universities, churches, and families. Born in Indiana, he and his family moved to Fayette County when he was eight years old. Paul became disillusioned by the hardships of coal mining and moved to Charleston as a young man, where he worked at a variety of difficult jobs, finally landing a position at Withrow Music. It was here that he got started working with pianos, eventually becoming a master technician. He was featured in our Spring 1993 issue, in an article titled "A Life in Time: Piano Man Paul Pannell," by Tina J. Caroli.

Margaret Grose Winebrenner. Photograph by Michael Keller.

Margaret Grose Winebrenner, a lifelong resident of Nicholas County, passed away August 6. Margaret was born in the town of Saxman in 1925 and spent her childhood years in lumber camps, as her father and brothers worked for the lumber mills. Margaret shared personal recollections of those times in two GOLDENSEAL stories: "Memories of Ely-Thomas Through the Eyes of a Child"; Winter 1997 and "A Nicholas County Christmas"; Winter 1999. "We may have been what most folks would call poor," she wrote, "but we really were rich because we learned through tough times and we had love." Margaret Winebrenner was 78.

By Catherine Moore

Photographs by Michael Keller

Whimmydiddles

A Visit with Toymaker Dick Schnacke

Toymaker Dick Schnacke at his home on American Ridge near New Martinsville, in rural Wetzel County. Dick built the grandfather clock, at left, in about 1990. He fitted it with a face, arms, and a wristwatch, he says, so it could tell the time.

As we bounce down a wrinkled, one-lane road in northern Wetzel County, Dick Schnacke is reminded of one of the many eccentric ideas he has had over the years to create fun in day-to-day life. "You know those bumps on the side of the road?" he says. "Rumble strips, I think they're called. Well, I've always thought it would be great if you could make them play a song. They could play 'The West Virginia Hills!'"

As he enters the Mountain Craft Shop, Schnacke, a tall slender man of 85 with bright blue eyes, breathes deeply and says, "It's like a little piece of heaven. Just like it used to

be, but better. It's so familiar to me." Dick built this business more than 40 years ago. At one time, he employed 15 people and produced upwards of 45,000 toys a year.

Dick and the new owners of the Mountain Craft Shop, Ellie and Steve Conlon, demonstrate their wares, which include puzzles, games, tricks, dolls, noisemakers, finger puppets, flying toys, shooting toys, animated toys,

and FlipperDingers

and others that don't seem to fit comfortably in any category.

One of the first toys Schnacke started producing was the Whimmydiddle (also known as the Hooey Stick or Gee-Haw) — a hardwood twig with notches carved into the wood near the end. On the tip, there is a smaller, propeller-like stick mounted with a nail. When you run a piece of wood over the notches, the propeller gets going and spins, as if by magic. Rub it a different way, and the propeller reverses. One branch can yield multiple Whimmydiddles, if you want to try a double- or triple-ended variation. Legend says that the Whimmydiddle is also a lie-detector.

Then there's the FlipperDinger, another Mountain Craft classic. This toy consists of a hollow wooden pipe through which you blow air, in a maddening effort to hook a very light corn-pith ball to a wire hoop mounted above the end. Experts like Schnacke can perform the trick without too much effort, but those unacquainted will be surprised at how challenging it can be. Unhooking the little ball is even more difficult.

There's also the Do-Nothing Machine, which, unless you know something about physics, seems to do just what it says quite effectively. One day at a craft fair in Ripley, though, two scientists from West Virginia University spied the toy and Schnacke overheard them compare the toy to elliptical trammels and mention that they might be able to make an engine out of the design. A year or so later, Schnacke heard that they actually had built the four-cylinder engine, put it in a car, and initiated road tests.

Even the names of the toys are beautifully crafted: Mountain Bolo, Musical Marble Tree, Exploding Outhouse, Moon Winder, Skyhook, Hoop Snake, and Limber Jack. This is the poetry of folk toys.

The son of a civil engineer who designed railroad bridges, Dick Schnacke grew up in Topeka, Kansas, during the Great Depression. He made folk toys to amuse himself, though the clever creations weren't known by that name at the time. Making toys wasn't about American heritage or tradition, it was just a way to have fun, Dick tells me. It never entered the young boy's mind that he would one day turn the frivolous gizmos into his life's work.

"I made some simple toys at that time, didn't know really what I was doing," he says. "But kids did things like that.

Dick demonstrates the challenging FlipperDinger at the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair near Ripley in about 1975. He is wearing a Whimmydiddle tucked into his hat. Photographer unknown.

A few of the hundreds of toys on display at the Mountain Craft Shop in Proctor. Dick started this business more than 40 years ago and recently sold it to neighbors Steve and Ellie Conlon. Dick stays active in the shop as an adviser.

The older ones would teach the younger ones usually. I taught my brothers. It was just a part of being a boy, I guess, in that day. I would look for novel items. And find them, too, though I never realized in those days what a big subject it was. You'd make them for yourself, see, or you'd make them for your child, or an older child would make them for a younger child. They passed around. It was word of mouth."

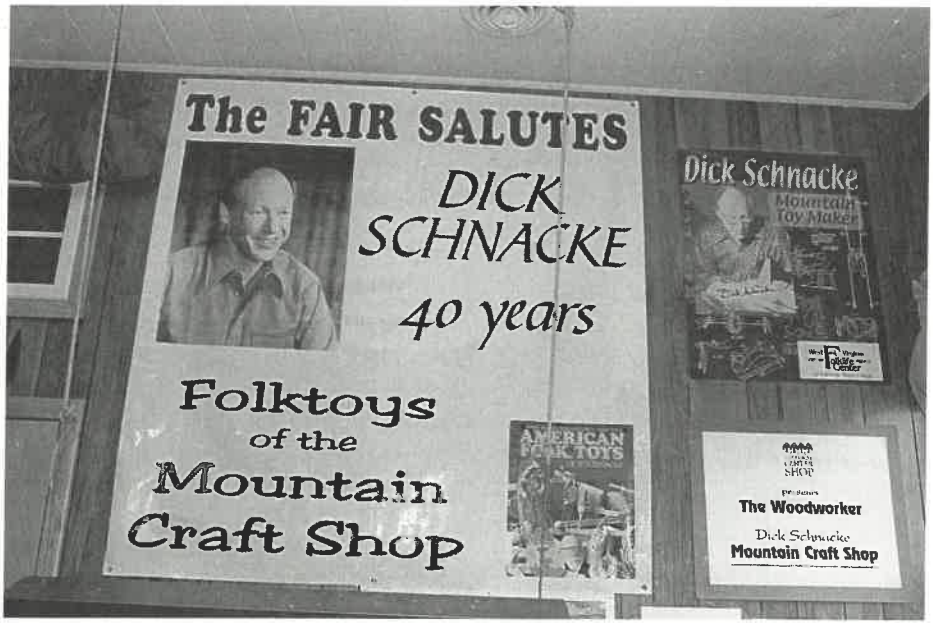
Dick worked summers for the Santa Fe railroad in his youth, a job that allowed him to see a large portion of the western United States. He attended Iowa State University and awed engineering recruiters from the aluminum industry by jumping over one interviewer's head on three separate occasions. A track-and-field star, Schnacke could have gone to the Olympics if it had not been cancelled twice because of World War II.

Schnacke met his wife Jeanne at Iowa State, and they were married in 1943. The couple moved a number of times during the early years of their marriage, and each of their four children was born in a different state: New York, Washington, Ohio, and West Virginia. When Dick first came to West Virginia in 1956, it was to help build an aluminum plant near New Martinsville. He liked the place right away. "It's not boring country here," says the boy from Topeka.

But how did someone involved in a practical, technology-driven profession such as engineering become a leading expert in the production of folk toys? It all started back in the early 1960's, Dick tells me, when West Virginia was gearing up for its 1963 centennial celebration. Quite a few special projects were in the works around the state. One of the most prominent and enduring of those early initiatives has proven to be the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair at Cedar Lakes Conference Center near Ripley.

An undertaking of the Commerce Department, the fair was meant to boost West Virginia's economy and develop tourism in the state by promoting locally made arts and crafts. [See "*Hearth & Fair*: Don Page and the Roots of GOLDENSEAL," by John Lilly; Spring 2004.] Dick was brought in to help organize the first fair and became instrumental in the event's overall operation and success. Schnacke's role was so key that fair organizers observed Dick Schnacke Day a few

Trained as an engineer, Dick dedicated himself full time to folk toys in the early 1960's. Here, he tends to some paperwork in the 1970's, using a drafting table as a desk. Photograph by Tom Screven.



Dick Schnacke was instrumental in organizing the first Mountain State Art & Craft Fair in 1963 and remained involved with the fair for most of the next four decades. In 2003, the fair was dedicated in his honor. This sign, commemorating that event, is on display at Dick's home.

years ago, and, in 2003, dedicated the entire fair to Dick. The toymaker was delighted when he arrived at Cedar Lakes Conference Center last year and spied a huge banner at the gates, printed with the words, "The Fair Salutes Dick Schnacke." Dick now proudly displays the banner in his studio, along with his many other awards and honors.

"A lot of the planning for that first fair was done right here in New Martinsville, in the old grade school," Dick says. "I tried to come up with all the people in the area here who would be interested, as exhibitors. That was the big question: Can we find enough people?"

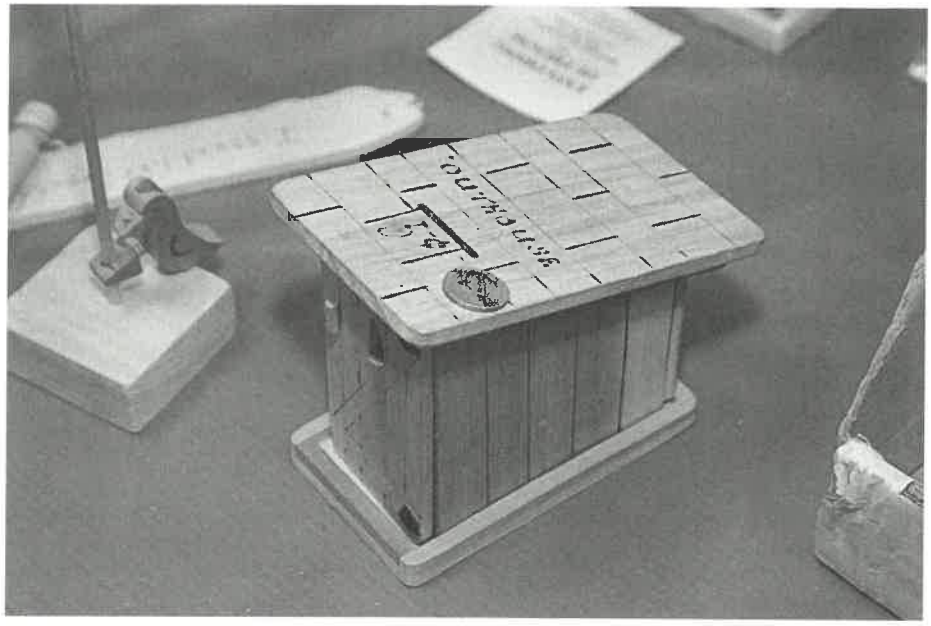
Dick was recruited as an organizer because of his involvement in the county school board, and because he had been dabbling in arts and crafts himself. He and his wife had started a craft store in New Martinsville in 1962, and Dick used the connections he made while operating the shop to find artisans to participate in the fair. Though this first shop only lasted about a year, the associations Dick made during that time served him well. "We discovered a lot of things that people in Charleston in the various departments didn't even know existed," he says. Statewide, Schnacke and the other organizers eventually found 45 exhibitors for the 1963 fair.

Schnacke himself was one of the artists who participated in the first fair. At that time, he was creating paintings, and that's what he went to the fair to sell. But he soon discovered that visitors were more interested in having fun than scrutinizing abstract paintings. It was at this point that he was awakened to his new calling as a toymaker.

"I put in a whole day down there trying to sell paintings, and I didn't get one sale," Dick recalls. "So I went out in the woods, and I started cutting sticks and picking up pebbles and stones and things and oddities out of the woods. I brought them back, and my son Gary and I worked making Whimmydiddles and little animated figures and things. And I painted faces on stones. And they started selling.

"I only sold $60 worth, but at least that was something. Well, the next year, I tripled it to $180. And then I tripled that the next year. And for three or four years, I tripled it each year. I'd project and say, boy, in 10 years, I'm going to be really big if I could keep doing that."

Dick's growing success selling toys during the early years of the Art & Craft Fair, his brief experience running a craft shop in downtown New Martinsville, and a long and violent strike at the aluminum plant eventually led to a life-changing decision. Dick decided to leave his job at the plant for the production of



The ever-popular Exploding Outhouse toy.

A display case full of toys at Dick Schnacke's Mountain Craft Shop in Proctor, 1980. Photographer unknown. For information about the Mountain Craft Shop, call (304)455-3570.

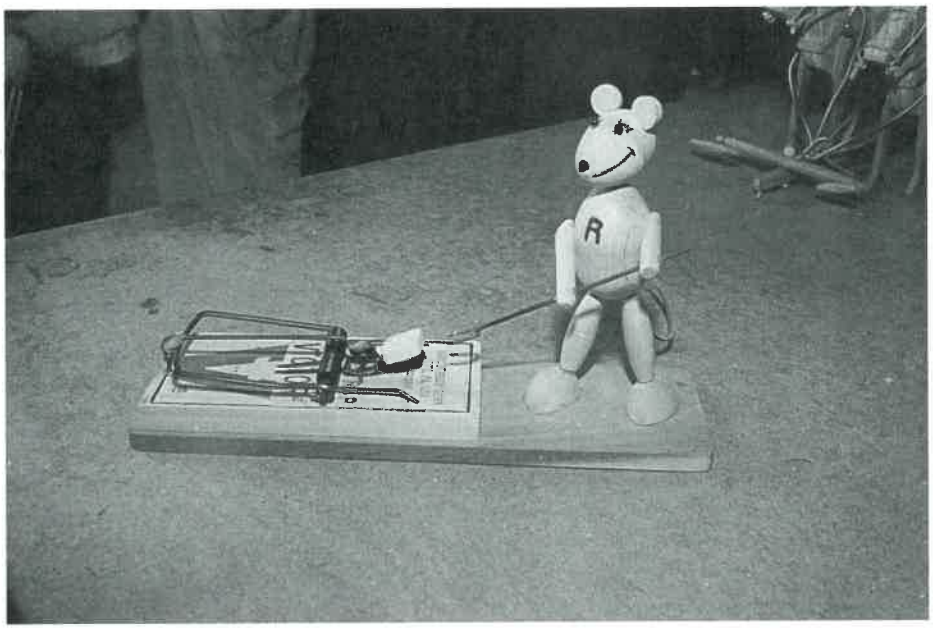
Whimmydiddles and FlipperDingers.

Schnacke opened his folk-toy shop in the countryside at Proctor, near New Martinsville, in 1963. However, both the building and his house were soon destroyed by a landslide. Discouraged but not outdone, he and his family rebuilt at the present site of their home on American Ridge, living for two years in the shop while their house was being constructed. The Schnacke family now included four children: Rick, Gary, Annette, and Nancy.

The business grew. Store owners who saw Schnacke at fairs asked him if he would accept wholesale orders. He said he would sure try. Pretty soon, it became obvious that Schnacke could not handle the thousands of orders he was receiving from stores and museums by himself. That's when he began collaborating with friends and neighbors, transforming the Mountain Craft Shop from a one-man operation into a true cottage industry.

Schnacke would make a sketch or a crude model of a toy and present it to someone in the area, who would, in turn, produce large quantities of the item. Each person had their specialty. Sometimes, even whole families would turn from farming to handwork for their livelihood when they heard the wages Schnacke would pay. In this way, Schnacke was not only able to fill the orders that were pouring into his shop, but he was also contributing significantly to

Dick Schnacke became a leading authority on American folk toys and was a popular figure at fairs and festivals across the region throughout the 1960's, '70's, and '80's. He is shown here with his wares and a few young customers at the 1984 Vandalia Gathering in Charleston.



"Victor Velveeta." The "R" stands for "rat," Dick says. This whimsical creation is not an active toy, he explains, but was built just for laughs.

the local economy.

"I would try to work with anybody who ever came in the door," Dick says. "And they would come in and say, 'You're working with other people on my ridge. What can I do?'

"Well, I'd say, 'What can you do?'

"Well, they'd say, 'I really don't have any skill, but I'll try anything.'

"I'd say, 'Well, if you don't have skill, do you have tools?'

"'No.'

"'Could you get them?'

"'Well, only as I could buy them from the profits, if I make any.'

"And I'd say, 'Well, let's try this or that.' And we'd finally find something they could do. It would be their choice all the time. We didn't say, 'You gotta do this.' I'd say to them, 'What do you think, now that you've seen our line?' Some people would say, 'Oh, I know just what you need!'

"Some of them were incredulous that we would pay for needlework, for instance. They'd say, 'I'll make you a quilt for $100. How much would you pay for a little doll?'

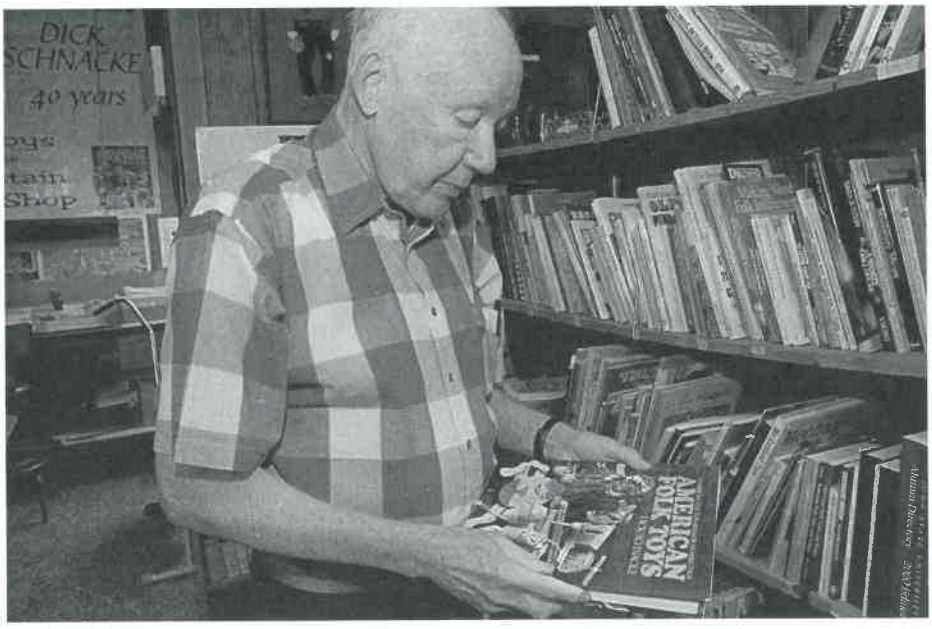
"And I'd say, 'Oh, about $5.'

"'You're kidding?! I could make those all day, better than that!' So they'd quit making quilts, and they'd make the doll. Yeah, that was an unusual time, that you could find people who would really want to do things like that."

One family, the Postlethwaits, have worked with the Mountain Craft Shop for generations. The late Pete Postlethwait's children and his children's children have all had a role in the business. "It turned out to be a lifelong thing for his family," Dick says. "They were ingenious. They could think of new variations that I never thought of. They had rented their farm all their life. One of the things Pete did when he made some money making toys was he decided to buy the place. One day, I saw nailed up on the wooden barn a big FlipperDinger. Underneath was a sign that said, handwritten, 'This toy bought this farm.' It almost brought tears to my eyes when I saw that thing nailed up there like that."

Schnacke's persistence and ingenuity have made him a success, and his willingness to pull himself up by his own bootstraps has had a lot to do with it, too. An example is the story of how Dick published his first book, *American Folk Toys*, a classic guide to building folk toys, which has sold more than 100,000 copies and is still in print today.

In the late 1960's, Schnacke was visiting New York City for a toy show sponsored by the state Commerce Department. During his spare time, Dick had been working on a draft of a book about folk toys, and, before he left for New York, he slipped the penciled draft into his pocket in the hopes of finding an interested publisher. During some time off from the show, Dick visited Brentano's bookstore and



Dick's book *American Folk Toys* has sold more than 100,000 copies since it was first published in 1973. Dick is shown here, holding a personal copy from his home library.

walked the aisles in search of a good line of books. He spotted some published by G.P. Putnam's Sons, which he thought were outstanding. Dick noted that they were headquartered just up the street and took off on foot to see what he could arrange. He had three toys with him: the Whimmydiddle, the FlipperDinger, and the Bull-Roarer.

"When I got there," he says, "there was a receptionist. And she said, 'What do you want?'

"And I said, 'I want to talk to the editor or somebody about publishing a book.'

"And she said, 'Do you have a manuscript?'

"And I said, 'Yeah,' and pulled out a handwritten one.

"The lady said, 'Well, we don't do that kind of a book.' And she's doing everything to try and chase me away, and I wouldn't be chased, see.

"I pulled out the Whimmydiddle, and I said, 'Well, this book is about this. Have you ever seen one of these?' And I rubbed the little stick, and the propeller rotated.

"And she said, 'Well, that's really interesting. But, no, we don't do that kind of thing.'

"And I said, 'Well, how 'bout this?' And I blew in the blowpipe, the little ball went up, and hooked it.

"And she said, 'Well, that's interesting, too, but we just don't do that.'

"And I pulled out the Bull-Roarer and made a huge noise right there in the office, and people come running. 'What is that? Is that the fire alarm?!'

"And she said, 'I'll tell you what. I'll get an assistant editor to come out there, and you can talk to him.'

"So he came out and said, 'What do you want?'

"And I said, 'Well, it's about this manuscript.'

"'Oh, well, that's no good. I mean, that's pencil. You don't present things like that! We don't do that kind of stuff.'

"So I went through the same routine. 'How 'bout the Whimmydiddle? The Flipper-Dinger? The Bull-Roarer?' And, of course, it made a noise, and more people came out. The place was filling up with visitors coming in off their job to see what was going on.

And so he said, 'Well, I'll get my boss.' His boss was Harvey Ginsberg, and he became my editor, though I didn't know it then. And he tried to chase me away, too!"

Officially retired, Dick Schnacke isn't slowing down by any means. "I almost feel like I didn't even get a start yet. I still ask myself, what are you going to do when you grow up?" he says, chuckling.

Dick and Jeanne Schnacke at home, flashing playful smiles.

About two years ago, Schnacke sold the folk-toy business to his neighbors, Steve and Ellie Conlon, owners of Thistle Dew Farm, the second-largest honey producer in the state. You may have seen Steve at one West Virginia fair or another, happily sporting his notorious "Bee Beard." The couple now runs both businesses from their headquarters and showroom in Proctor, just up the road from Schnacke's house. Half of the sunny yellow showroom is reserved for toys, and half for honey and bees' wax products. "On the surface, a marriage between honey and toys seems strange, but really they're both agricultural products," says Steve, referring to the fact that nearly all of the folk toys on display are made from a variety of locally harvested woods.

In addition to acting as an informal adviser to the Conlons, Dick is still involved in the Arts and Crafts Guild of West Virginia, which he helped to start, and other community organizations. Schnacke is also planning to publish two more books about folk toys: one for children and one that will serve as a complete guide. It will be everything Schnacke has ever known about the origins and production of folk toys, Dick says. The significance of such a project is not lost on Schnacke or his family. "My wife is saying that it's the most important thing in my life I can do," he notes. "So it won't be lost."

CATHERINE MOORE is a native of Charleston, currently completing a degree in literature at Harvard College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Catherine is a graduate of George Washington High School, where she was editor of the school newspaper. Her writing has appeared in *The Charleston Gazette* and other publications. This is Catherine's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

"I Am in a Swell Place Now"

By Jean Battlo

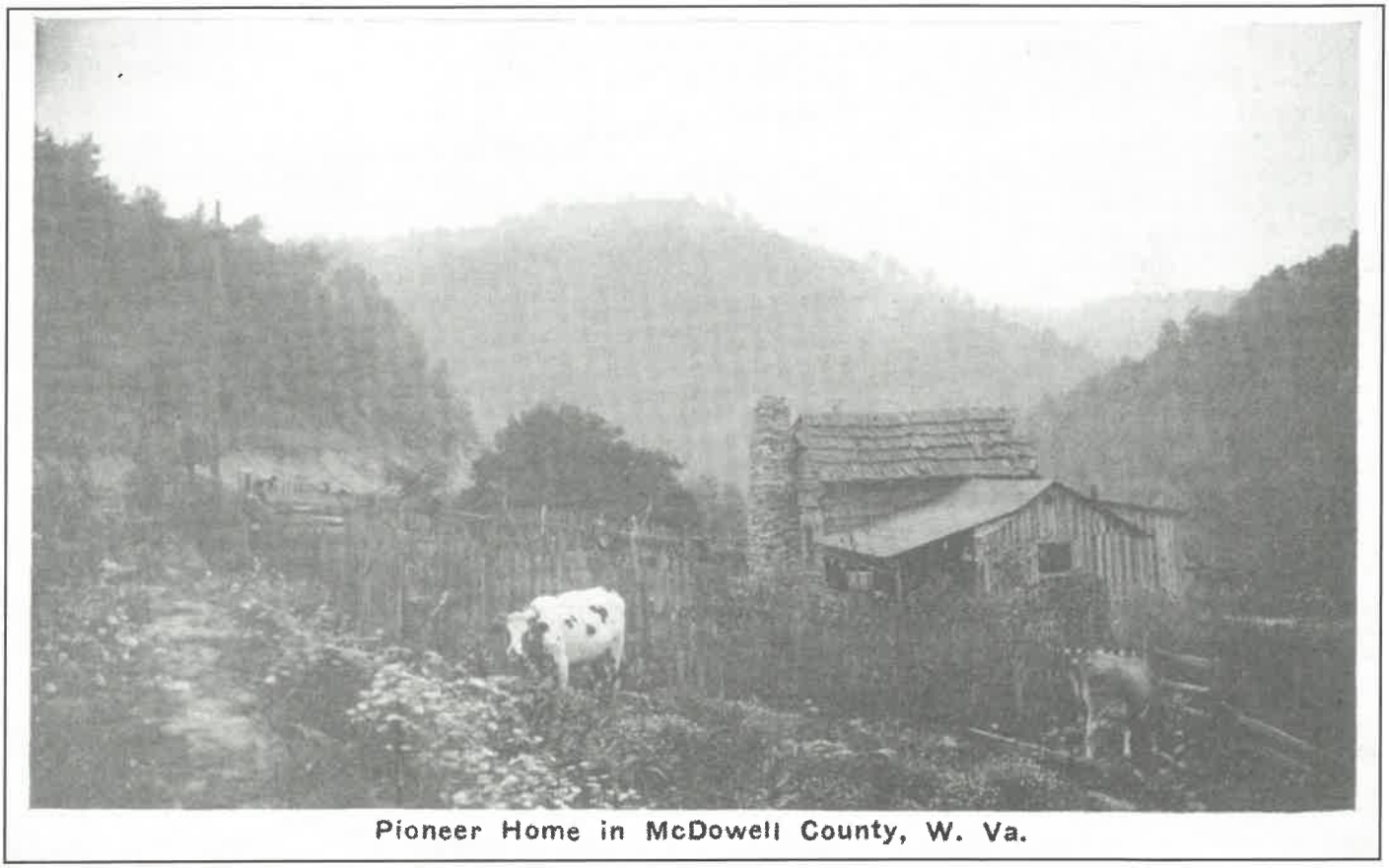
Early McDowell County Postcards

An intriguing parallel exists between the early days of postcards and the rise of the coal industry in McDowell County. At the end of the 19th century, the lucrative Pocahontas coal seam was just being ignited. Meanwhile, Congress passed legislation in May 1898 allowing private companies to sell and mail postcards for the penny rate previously sold only by the postal department. Just as tipples mushroomed throughout the southern coalfields, so, too, new national postcard companies seemed to appear overnight: Valentine & Sons, Lubrie & Elkins, American Post Card Company, and Tuck. Affluence fired by coal led to the formation of several local companies over the years, as well, including Bluefield Post Card (Salem, Virginia), Welch Publishing Company, and, later, the Adelphia Publishing Company.

The most popular postcards were called view cards and featured either paintings or photos of an area, streets, or significant buildings. Initially used to send as souvenirs showing the recipient a view of the area, these cards later became the collectors' mainstay for nostalgic purposes and historical studies.

In few regions is that more the case than in McDowell County, where the floods of 2001-02 have led to the demolition of many hometowns and countless memories.

Real Photo cards began as unretouched black-and-white cards or sepia tones, printed on photographic paper. These are preferred by collectors and historians because they are not altered and are often one-of-a-kind. Other early cards were more artistic, utilizing lithography, hand lettering, or aesthetically enhanced painting. Well-known artists such as Ellen H. Clapsaddle, Bernard Well, and H.B. Griggs & Schumacher worked in the industry, and their popularity was largely responsible for the $200 million profit from postcards in the first decade of the 20th century. These beautiful cards are the best representation of the Golden Era in McDowell County history.

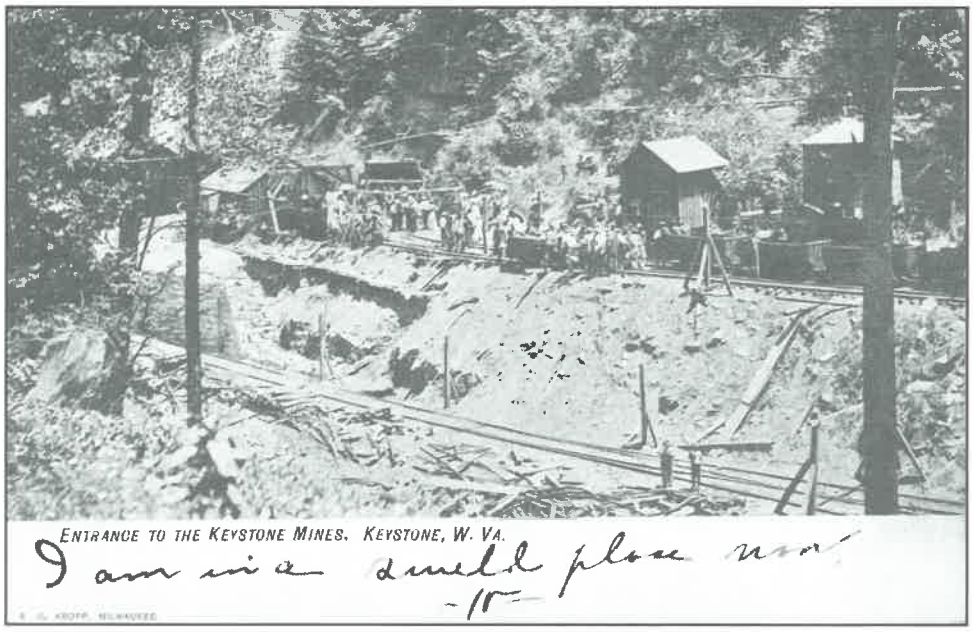


Pioneer Home in McDowell County, W. Va.

POSTCARDS COURTESY OF PAT DAMRON

"Pioneer Home in McDowell County" Given the texture of this card and its limited resolution, it might be assumed that it was printed between 1895-1905, though its postmark is dated 1930. This is an early example of a Real Photo card. Though the specific location of this farm scene has not been identified, this card exemplifies a homestead typical of those of the earliest mountain settlers. The clapboard-style house was found throughout the Appalachian and Allegheny ranges. Just beyond the cabin and domestic animals, a small orchard and garden are visible, more common in McDowell County in the days before the arrival of King Coal. The Kennedy family on Estep Ridge established one of the most prosperous of the county's orchards.

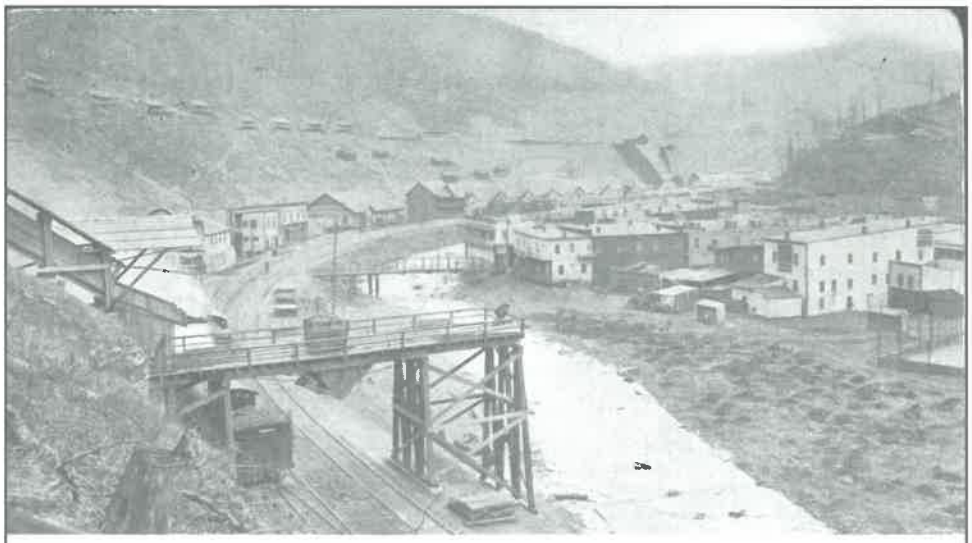
"Coke Manufacturing Scene, Near Bluefield, W.Va." This 1907 card depicts hard times in the mines, specifically for those workers charged with tending the coke ovens. Ovens similar to these were scattered throughout McDowell County, though this particular unidentified scene might have taken place in neighboring Mercer County. Beehive coke ovens were developed very early in coal mining history, chiefly in Alabama, the southern capital of the American steel industry. Their purpose was to turn coal into coke for use in the iron and steel industry. Ovens, such as those shown here, still riddle the mountainsides along U.S. Route 52, the main artery of the McDowell County coalfields. [See "Riding Route 52: The Old Coal Road," by Su Clauson-Wicker; Spring 2002.]



ENTRANCE TO THE KEYSTONE MINES. KEYSTONE, W. VA.

I am in a swell place now

-15-



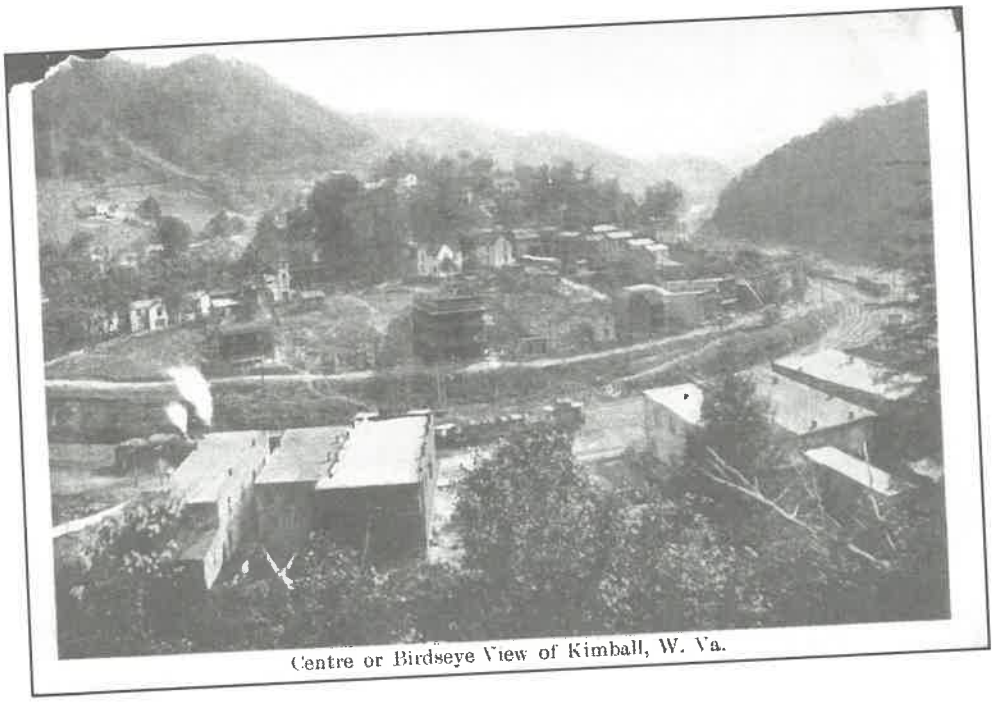
Coaling Station, Keystone, W. Va.

"Entrance to the Keystone Mines, Keystone, W.Va." This 1904 black-and-white Real Photo card at **left** includes the inscription, "I am in a swell place now." The sentiment might seem unusual, considering the often-negative portrayals of the miner's life, but large numbers of immigrants from around the world, as well as many native settlers from the region, were apparently satisfied, at first, with the steady work. The "coal rush" of the late 19th and early 20th centuries made places like Keystone comparable, on a much smaller scale, with the California Gold Rush — a "little San Francisco," with all the agony and ecstasy such a comparison implies. The influx of laborers made the notorious Cinder Bottom region of Keystone the "Little Tenderloin" of southern West Virginia. [See "Cinder Bottom: A Coalfield Red-Light District," by Jean Battlo; Summer 1994.]

Though the Cinder Bottom district made Keystone the "sin town" of the county, Keystone's history developed along quite a different motif. Keystone pioneer Reverend J.V. Whittico made the town central to the region's African American leadership. The Whitticos founded the earliest newspaper, *McDowell Times*, with headquarters in Keystone, where it became the cornerstone of news for local African Americans. Whittico was also instrumental in establishing the Negro Presbyterian Church, the first of its kind in the state. The town grew with the coal industry, and the coaling station and railroad tracks were prominent features, as seen in this 1908 postcard at **left**.

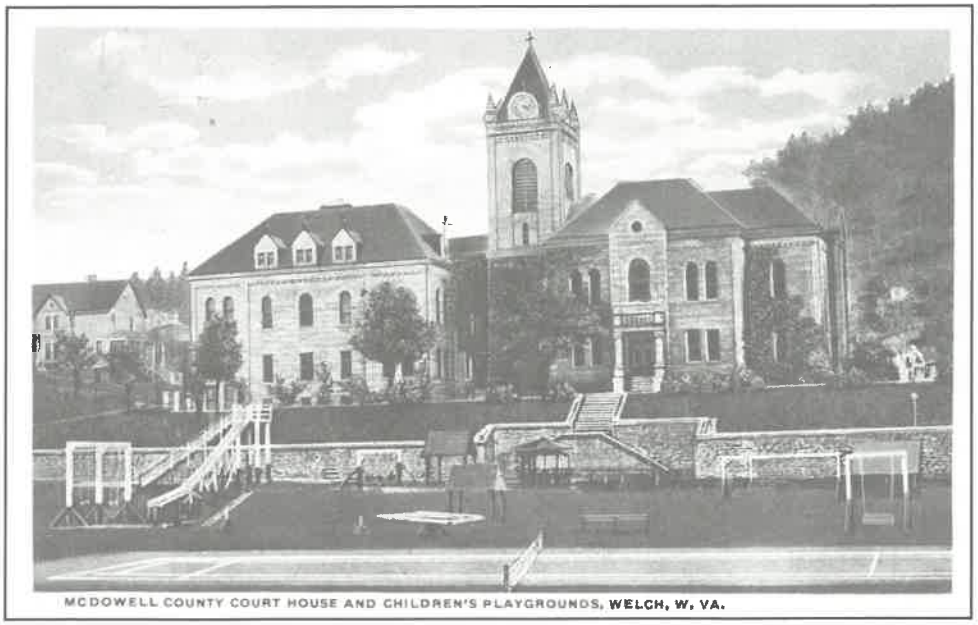
The busy streets of Keystone, as shown in this postcard from about 1910, **below left**, were the site of several of the county's most prosperous stores. In September 1919, Elkhorn Valley Grocery began a wholesale food distribution company that became one of the largest in the state. Reflective of ethnic clusters created by incoming miners, Biaggio Lanza opened a grocery store that imported merchandise from Italy and served the growing Italian population. Budnick's Department Store and Painter Furniture were established during these years and served the county for half a century.

These businesses paled in the history of the town, however, as Cinder Bottom walked shamelessly into the annals of McDowell County history. This notorious red-light district became so well known that, during WWII, some soldiers claimed they were able to locate tiny hometowns for other Americans by describing their distance from Keystone.



"Centre or Birdseye View of Kimball, W.Va." The spelling of "centre" might be indicative of increased European influences in the coalfields, as well as the increased international popularity of the postcard industry at the close of its golden decade. Kimball is distinctive for having been built on rails, rather than coal. Named for Norfolk & Western Railroad president Fredrick J. Kimball, the iron horse roared barely 20 feet from the main street, as shown here in this 1909 view. The turn-of-the-century food store, the West Virginia Grocery, is at the bottom left of this card. David Houston's coal and coke company, as well as Koppers Coal Company and other successful operations at nearby Tidewater and Vivian, added more wealth to this busy railroad shipping "centre." [See "'Lavoro e Casa': Memories of an Italian Mining Family," by Jean Battlo; Spring 1999.]

"United Supply Co., Department Store and Drug Store, Gary, W.Va." In the Golden Era, the town of Gary was arguably the best known of the McDowell County towns not located on Route 52. Beginning with the laying of the N&W tracks from Welch up Tug Fork to accommodate U.S. Coal & Coke Company traffic, 12 coal plants were constructed in the area from 1902-09. Gary was named for Judge Elbert H. Gary, architect for U.S. Steel; a nearby town is called Elbert. The store, seen here in a 1930 postcard view, is exemplary of company stores at the time, with a drug store connected to a large department store, which generally sold everything from clothing to furniture and appliances and, in some cases, groceries. The miner and his family would use his salaried scrip to shop in the company store. [See "Gary: A First-Class Operation," by Stuart McGehee; Fall 1988.]

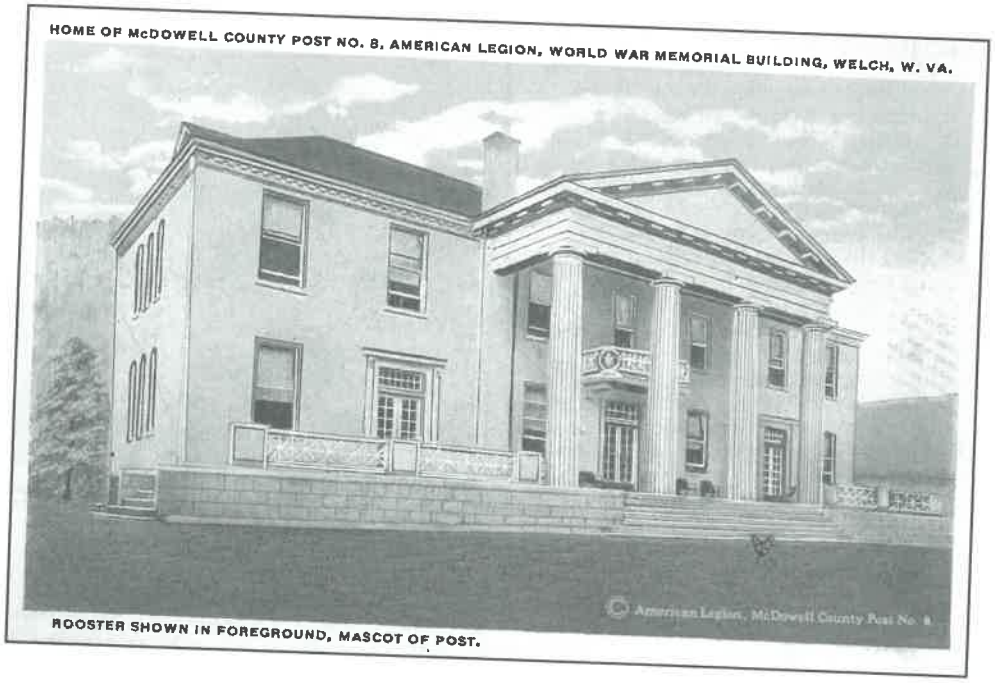


"McDowell County Court House and Children's Playground, Welch, W.Va." When the state of Virginia created McDowell County in 1858, the town of Perryville (now English) was designated as the county seat. After a considerable battle spanning more than 30 years, Welch became the county seat in 1892, even though it contained only 10 houses at the time. The town was incorporated in 1894 and grew quickly. Isaiah Welch, namesake and president of the Welch Land & Development Company, donated land for the county courthouse, which opened for business on May 27, 1895. The courthouse annex and new jail, visible at left in this undated linen postcard, were added in 1908. The two most notorious events that occurred on this site were the hanging for murder of John Hardy on January 19, 1894 [see "John Hardy: The Man and the Song," by Richard Ramella; Spring 1992], and the assassination of Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers on the courthouse steps on August 1, 1921.

WYOMING STREET, LOOKING NORTH, WELCH, W. VA.

"Wyoming Street, Looking North, Welch, W.Va." Welch rebuilt quickly, following a devastating flood in 1901. This 1910 postcard depicts the growing town, with a population at that time approaching 2,000. Of special interest here is the Ellwood Hotel, visible at right. Most students of the West Virginia Mine Wars suggest this as the hotel where Sid and Jessie Hatfield and Ed and Sallie Chambers checked in on August 1, 1921. Leaving the lobby, the quartet would have gone less than a block north to the courthouse, where tragedy awaited.

Boasting a proud military heritage — Welch is on record as having one of the longest continuous Veterans Day parades in the United States — McDowell County became the first in the nation to dedicate a memorial building to veterans of the World War when this monument was completed in the early 1920's in Welch. Six years later, a separate-but-equal memorial for African American war veterans was established in nearby Kimball. The World War Memorial Building in Welch burned in 1960; plans are underway to renovate the gutted memorial building in Kimball.

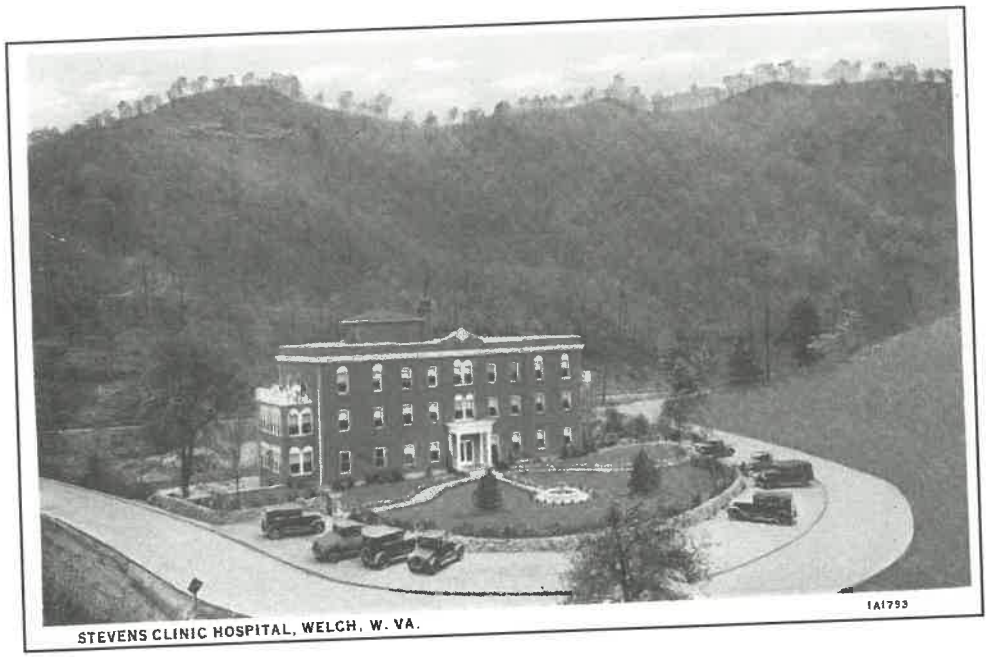

HOME OF McDOWELL COUNTY POST NO. 8, AMERICAN LEGION, WORLD WAR MEMORIAL BUILDING, WELCH, W. VA.

ROOSTER SHOWN IN FOREGROUND, MASCOT OF POST.


DOR SERVICE STATION ON ROUTE 52, WELCH, W. VA. 4A-H1995

"Dor Service Station on Route 52, Welch, W.Va." The hub of the town on the corner of McDowell and Elkhorn streets, the Dor Building and automobile dealership was a local landmark. This sheltered service station on the street level makes a definitive image for a county on the way up.

JEAN BATTLO was born in Kimball, McDowell County, where she still resides. She is a teacher, poet, and playwright and has had works produced by professional and community theater companies. Jean is the author of several published works, including *Appalachian Gothic Tales*. Her latest contribution to GOLDENSEAL appeared in Spring 1999.



"Stevens Clinic Hospital, Welch, W.Va." In 1899, the West Virginia State Legislature passed an act providing for three hospitals, with the primary purpose of caring for victims of the increasing number of industrial accidents, principally in the coal mines. The one in Welch was Miners Hospital Number #1. Prosperity brought two more hospitals to Welch: the more commercial Grace Hospital and, later, Stevens Clinic, which opened April 1, 1930, and is shown here in an undated linen postcard view. Miners #1, for years known as Welch Emergency, is now called Welch Community Hospital — the only hospital still open in the county. Grace Hospital has been demolished, and there are ongoing efforts to turn the old Stevens Clinic into varying economic venues.

The glint of the Golden Era in McDowell County, and among the reasons that Welch was sometimes nicknamed "little New York City," was the popular Carter Hotel. A local newspaper boasted, "Hotel Carter Promotes Welfare of Welch By Its High-Class Service." With fronts on McDowell and Bank streets, the tan-brick building with sandstone sills had five stories and 100 rooms, 60 with baths. It opened April 1, 1924, and was the destination of choice for the wealthy, famous, and powerful when they arrived in town to visit. The hotel lobby, shown here, became the social core of Welch and could hold its gleaming candle up with any such lights, as long as the gold from King Coal still gleamed in the nation's coal bins.

New McDowell County History

Author Jean Battlo has recently produced an expansive history of McDowell County, titled *Pictorial History of McDowell County 1858-1958: From Rural Farms to Coal Kingdom*. As the title suggests, the book is richly illustrated, including more than 60 color images of vintage McDowell County postcards.

The 557-page, large-format, paperbound book from McClain Printing was published in 2003. It is the second book on this subject from Battlo, whose *McDowell County in West Virginia and American History* was published in 1998. The new volume includes an overview of the county's early days, its ascendency as a coal producing region, and eventual economic decline.

It is of particular interest to current and former residents, who will recognize many of the individuals and local scenes depicted in the hundreds of photographs included in its pages. The book also reprints several articles Battlo previously published in GOLDENSEAL about the region and its people.

Pictorial History of McDowell County 1858-1958 sells for $45, plus shipping, and is available from McClain Printing Company, P.O. Box 403, Parsons, WV 26287; phone 1-800-654-7179, or visit www.mcclainprinting.com.

Eyewitness

Marie Cooley Robinette, age 94, has lived in the vicinity of Matewan, Mingo County, all of her life. At age 10, she was an eyewitness to the infamous gun battle that took place on May 19, 1920, known today as the Matewan Massacre. Marie is shown here near the site of the incident.

Marie Robinette of Matewan

By Dallas H. Jude

Photographs by Michael Keller

When Marie Cooley, a 10-year-old girl at the time, left her home on the cloudy, dreary afternoon of May 19, 1920, to go to the grocery store for the family's evening meal, she never dreamed she would find herself in the midst of one of the most infamous gun battles in American history.

The Matewan Massacre occurred as a result of the early conflict between miners and coal operators. In 1920, coal companies in the Matewan area were evicting striking miners from their company-owned homes. The coal operators hired the Bluefield-based Baldwin-Felts detective agency to help with the evictions. On May 19, several Baldwin-Felts detectives evicted six families from their homes at Stone Mountain Coal Company, a short distance from Matewan. After the evictions, the detectives returned to Matewan and planned to catch the 5:00 train to return to Bluefield.

Marie Cooley Robinette, a lifelong resident of the Matewan area in Mingo County, is quite a lady. At 94 years of age, she is intelligent, enjoys good health, drives her own car, and is a champion cornbread maker. Marie is thought to be the last surviving eyewitness to the Matewan Massacre of 1920. A daughter and wife of railroad workers, she has also been witness to the difficult struggles of the early railroad workers who built and maintained the Norfolk & Western Railroad as they opened up the southern coalfields. Today, Marie is witness to the effort by the town of Matewan to revitalize its declining economy by creating a thriving tourism industry.

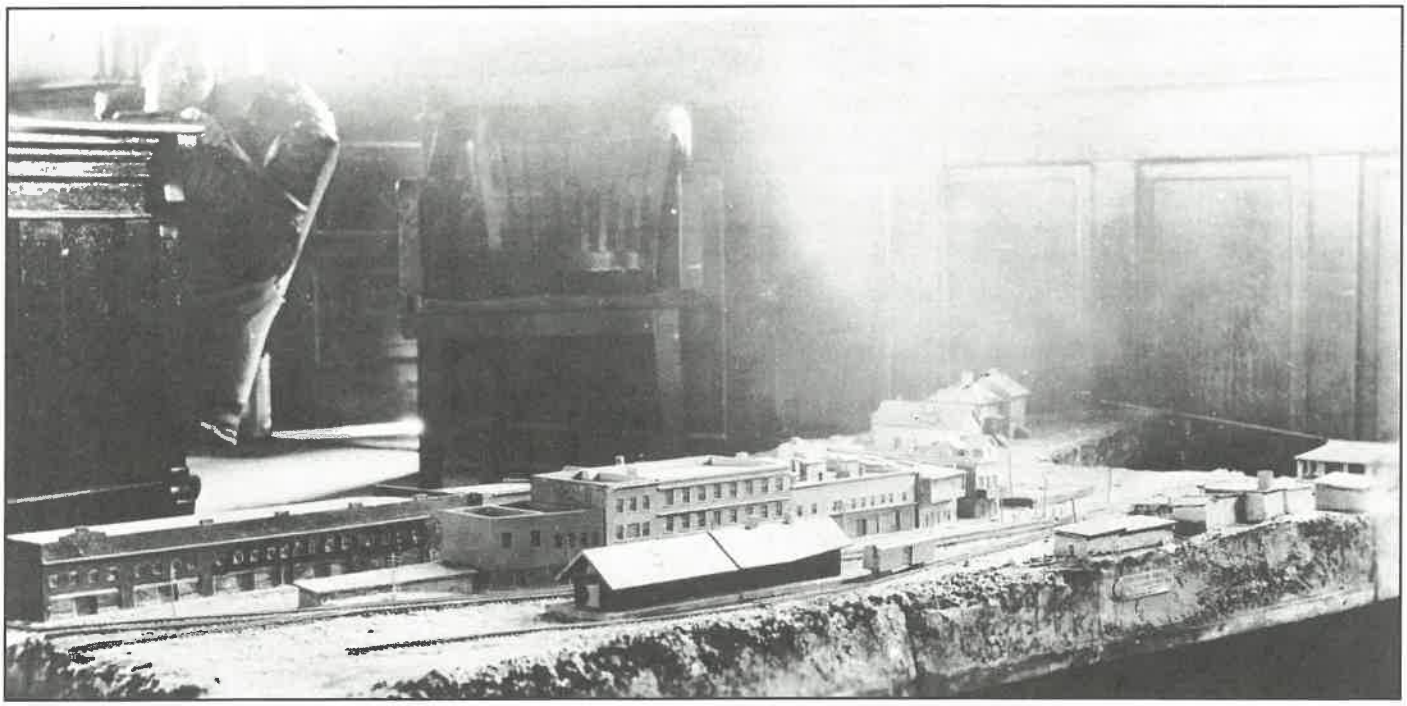
Shortly before the train arrived, shooting broke out. Ten people were killed, including seven of the Baldwin-Felts detectives. Marie vividly recalls the events that took place there 84 years ago:

"On my way to the grocery store, I observed that an unusually large number of people were in town that day with numerous small groups talking in low, excited tones. Many of the people were strangers to me, and many of them were carrying cases that I later learned contained firearms.

"As a 10-year-old girl, these things didn't have much meaning to me. I went into the grocery store, which was owned and operated by C.C. Testerman, who was the mayor of Matewan. Testerman would be one of the 10 people killed in Matewan that day. I had been in this store many times in the past, and I recall Mayor Testerman being a nice, kind, friendly man. After leaving the store, I walked by the old Matewan railroad depot.

"When I got just a few feet past the railroad depot, the shooting began. It seemed as though bullets were flying everywhere. I could hear the bullets whizzing by me. One of the bullets hit the railroad ties just a foot or so in front of me. The shooting lasted quite a while. Many shots were fired initially, with the shooting becoming more sporadic after a few minutes. I still recall how scared I was, and I remember running on home as fast as I could.

"Being a witness to this tragic event has had an adverse effect on my life. I was greatly affected by both fear and sadness. I was most saddened by the death of the young Clarence 'Tot' Tinsley. Like me, he was an innocent bystander and was one of the 10 people shot down that day. I can still feel the sadness that



This scale model of downtown Matewan was used in the trial of Sid Hatfield and 22 other defendants, tried in March 1921 on charges stemming from the gunfight. Seated at left is Judge R.D. Bailey. Photograph courtesy of West Virginia State Archives, Paul McAllister Collection.

was felt by his family and other Matewan-area people at the death of this young 16-year-old boy. I often think of how devastating this must have been to his mother. From an early age on, I have always felt that only by the grace of God was I spared that day.

"Down through the years, many people who were in Matewan that day, [who] saw firsthand the events, have passed away. They say that I am now the last known eyewitness to this tragic event. I do not feel anything special about this, but I am very thankful that God has allowed me to live and enjoy good health these many years.

"During the years I grew up and well into my older age, not much was ever said about the Matewan Massacre. It was seldom discussed in the Matewan area, and, until recently, nothing was ever taught about this event in Matewan-area schools. Very few people ever knew over the years that I was an eyewitness to those events." [See "The Gunfight at Matewan: An Anniversary Speech, by Lon K. Savage; Summer 1991, also in the GOLDENSEAL *Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars*; see page 45.]

Bullet holes are still visible in the side of this building, as Marie points out. Ten people were killed in the confrontation; Marie is the last known surviving witness.

When I talk to Marie about her early life, she tells me that railroading is in her blood. "Both my daddy and husband were career railroad section workers," she says. Although much has been written about the difficult life of the Appalachian coal miner, less has been written about the thousands of mountain railroad workers. "I'm here to tell you that life for the southern coalfield railroad workers was no piece of cake," Marie says.

Marie was born along the N&W rail line in 1910. Her father, the late William Cooley, spent his working life as a railroad worker and as a section foreman for the N&W. When Marie was 17, she married George Robinette, who spent his working life as a section hand on the N&W.

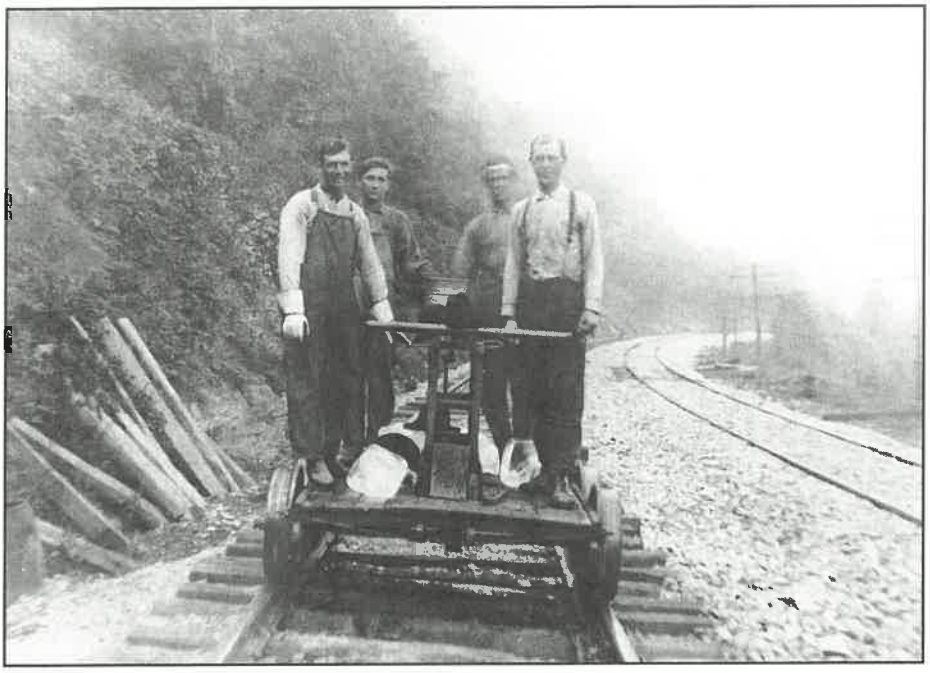
Matewan is located in one of the most rugged areas of West Virginia, and the N&W lines passing through there were very difficult to build and maintain. Nearly 5,000 workers were employed to build the main line that runs roughly parallel to the Tug River, separating West Virginia and Kentucky. It required 60 bridges and eight mountain tunnels — truly an amazing engineering and construction feat.

"My daddy and my husband George both spent their life working on the main line or the spur tracks, which ran up the hollows to the various coal mines in the Matewan area," Marie says. The pay for the railroad workers at the time was not as good as the pay for the coal miners. When George and Marie were married in 1927, he was making $2.80 per day as a railroad worker. However, railroad workers had certain advantages over the coal miners. Their work was steady, and workers didn't have to worry about layoffs or strikes, like the miners often faced. They also managed to escape the violence that the miners faced from time to time, along with the high prices of the coal company stores, where most miners were forced to buy their groceries at highly inflated prices.

Work for the railroad section worker was very difficult, Marie continues. "Most of the work that my daddy, George, and the other workers did was back-breaking work done by hand under the hot sun in the summer and harsh, wet cold of the winter."

The N&W, much like the coal companies, provided its workers with cheap houses, or shanties. These were very small, primitive structures with two or three rooms. In 1917, William Cooley was transferred to Rawl, located just a few miles below Matewan. It was here that Marie met and married her husband George.

"George and I could very little afford a fancy wedding," Marie recalls. "When my father allowed me to marry George, he came to my home on a Saturday evening, and together we walked three miles up



Like the lives of many people in southern West Virginia, Marie's life is closely tied to the rails. Addison Robinette, Marie's father-in-law, was a section hand for the Norfolk & Western Railroad, as were her father and husband. Addison Robinette is shown here, front right, hauling blocks of ice on a handcar between Iaeger and Wilmore, McDowell County. Photographer and date unknown.

a hollow to the home of a preacher, where we got married. I remember that George gave the preacher $5 to marry us. This was quite a bit of money in those days, and it was almost two days pay for a section worker."

After the wedding, the couple returned to her parents' home and spent the next two months waiting for a railroad home to become vacant. They were excited when a home finally became available. It was a small, two-room shanty located just a few feet from the main rail line. It was hot in the summer, cold in the winter, and stayed dirty from the great amount of coal dust that blew off the railroad cars as they passed by. Often, after doing the laundry and hanging it outside to dry, Marie would have to do it again because of the coal dust blowing off the trains, she recalls.

"In the beginning, the noise from the train whistles kept us up half the night," she says. "I always thought that it was done by the train engineers out of fun, because they knew we had just been married and moved in. The rooms in the shanty were very small. We used one room for a bedroom and the other for a kitchen and sitting room. Each railroad shanty had a round railroad stove. We used the stove for both cooking and heating the home. The stove never had an oven, but George bought a device that you could attach to the stovepipe and use for an oven. It was in this device that I made homemade biscuits every morning, and on the top of the stove, I made coffee and fried eggs for breakfast.

"During the day, I would prepare a big kettle of pinto beans for the evening meal. Pinto beans require several hours of cooking. This worked out just fine in the winter, but during the hot days of summer, it was quite a problem because of the heat. Our only air conditioning was to open the door or windows. To go along with the pinto beans, each evening I would fry a pan of potatoes and fix a pan of cornbread and a pot of coffee. Cornbread, beans, and fried potatoes was the typical meal that just about every miner's and railroader's wife prepared each day. I always said that if I had a dollar for every pot of beans I have cooked in my 94 years, I would feel as though I had hit the lottery."

Many people who were out of work would pass by Marie's home and ask for food. Hoboes would ride the railcars from town to town

Marie's family, two years before she was born. Father William Cooley is seated at right, mother Rosa May Ellen Cooley is standing. Sister Lucille is at left, and baby Julie Ann is seated in a rocking chair. Photograph 1908, photographer unknown.

looking for work, and George instructed Marie to feed these people when they knocked on their door. "I never had much to give them, but I never turned anyone away," Marie says. "I recall adding a few beans to each pot and making the pan of cornbread just a little bigger, so that I would have something to give to those who came by hungry. As I look back to those years, it gives me a good feeling of happiness that I did this.

"I've been making cornbread for more than 80 years, and more often than not, I make it from scratch. I have a good friend, Arlene Hatfield, who lives on the outskirts of Matewan. When I visit her, she always talks me into making a big pan of cornbread. Her brothers often stop by to get a piece of the cornbread, and they all refer to me as the area's champion cornbread maker."

George Robinette, Marie's husband, in about 1920.

While they were living in the two-room shanty at Rawl, Marie gave birth to the first of their five children, all of whom were born at home. When it was time for their first child to be born, George walked to Williamson, about five miles away, to get the doctor. The doctor was one of the few people in the area who had a car, and although the roads were rough and primitive, the doctor arrived in time to deliver a beautiful little girl.

For many years, the N&W provided a great service to the people of southern West Virginia, Marie recalls. About the only way local people could travel during the early years of their married life was by walking or riding the trains. There was a train that came through Matewan during the early morning hours, traveling west to Williamson. In the evening, there was an eastbound train that traveled back to Matewan and the other small towns along the Tug River. These trains picked up and let off passengers, mail, and supplies. Many people rode the train to work or to school.

"As a railroad worker, George could get a pass that would allow us to ride the train free," Marie says. "We seldom did this, because we never had much money to spend when we went anywhere. I have never traveled but a few miles from Matewan in my life. After my daughters were married and living in Columbus, Ohio, they took me up there to see their homes. This, and a trip to my son's home in Norfolk, Virginia, were the only times I have been away from the Matewan area in my 94 years."

Drinking whiskey was a big problem in the coalfields in Marie's early years, she says. Because of the dangerous work in the mines and the lack of recreation to be found in the Matewan area, a lot of people turned to drinking, she feels. Her father used to bring moonshine whiskey home in his lunch pail. One of his favorite drinking partners was the Matewan chief of police.

"My husband George was a steady drinker until the day he swore off drinking," Marie says. "In those days, it was hard not to drink, even if you didn't want to, because so many friends would come by and beg you to take a drink with them. During these days, a man's word was his bond. If a person swore to do something, he would most likely keep his word. Many men would go to a judge or magistrate and swear off drinking for a certain period of time. The theory was that a person's desire to be true to his sworn word was stronger than his desire to drink. It worked for many people, and if a person knew a drinking buddy had sworn off, he would not beg him to drink with him. George swore off drinking for life and never drank alcohol again. This was a great day for me, and it brought much happiness to our lives."

Railroad workers and coal miners have lived side by side, attended the same churches, attended the same schools, and have shared many of the same dreams and disappointments through the years. Both have had to be tough to survive. "My husband George

always said that tough times make tough people," Marie says. "I know this is true, because in my 94 years in the Matewan area, I have known many tough people."

The coal camps near Matewan made the town very strong economically during the 1940's and early '50's. During the World War II period, the coal mines in the Matewan area produced millions of tons of coal for the war effort, operating three shifts a day, six days a week. A bus company brought hundreds of people into Matewan every day. On weekends, Matewan became so crowded that it took on the appearance of a frontier town, and there was hardly room to walk on the sidewalks.

"These years also saw better times and working conditions for the railroaders," Marie recalls. "George and I were able to buy a home, a car, and educate our five children. During this time, I worked as a nurse's aide at the old Matewan hospital, and later, as a healthcare giver for individuals. This extra income allowed us to live a better life."

Mechanization of the coalfields, cheap oil imports, the depletion of coal reserves, and the arrival of large shopping centers within easy driving distance contributed to the economic decline of Matewan. Added to these problems was catastrophic flooding during the 1950's, '60's, and '70's. The flood of 1977 destroyed Matewan High School, most of Matewan's homes, and several of its businesses. A major fire swept through downtown Matewan on Christmas morning in 1992.

Marie and George were living about a mile south of Matewan when the flood destroyed their home and all of their belongings in 1977. Like many area residents, they took up residence in a mobile home, where they lived comfortably until George passed away in 1994.

Now on the National Register of Historic Places and designated a National Historic Landmark, downtown Matewan is working to establish itself as a heritage tourism destination.

Today, Matewan is making a determined effort to survive by creating a sound and thriving tourism industry. The federal government has built a flood wall to protect the town from future floods. In 1993, downtown Matewan was placed in the National Register of Historic Places, and, in 1997, a portion of downtown was designated a National Historic Landmark, making it eligible to receive grants from both the state and federal governments.

A recently built replica of the old N&W train depot is being used as the Matewan Redevelopment Center office as well as a tourist attraction, displaying many historical artifacts dealing with Matewan and the area's early development.

Marie lives with her son Bill in the Blackberry City area, located just a few miles from Matewan. In addition to her husband George, two of her five children have passed away. Two years ago, Marie appeared in downtown Matewan for a re-enactment of the Matewan Massacre. She was introduced to the large crowd and received a warm Matewan welcome. After watching the reenactment, Marie told me that she is hopeful that Matewan can emerge once again as a thriving little town, as it was in the early part of her life.

DALLAS H. JUDE is a lifelong resident of Matewan and has known Marie Robinette all of his life. He attended Concord College and received his master's degree in education from Eastern Kentucky University. Dallas is a retired school teacher and a former assistant principal at Matewan High School. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Marie Robinette at her son's home in Blackberry City, just south of Matewan.

Chapmanville's first theater, at right, was initially built as a feed store. It became a theater in the late 1930's.

The First Picture Show in Chapmanville

By John JJ Ward

In the 1930's, Chapmanville High School provided most of the rare entertainments for this part of Logan County. There were occasional amateur school programs, class plays, plus traveling musical groups. Then we got a real — sort of — theater.

Businessman Hubert Ferrell had built a modest structure for a feed store on the northwest corner of the Chapmanville crossroads, across State Route 10 from the high school. However, the Great Depression lingered, and the district's small, hilly farms raised most of their own feed. The new business floundered.

Then onto the scene came Charles Darling Hager of Madison to lease Ferrell's cheese-box-shaped structure for the town's first theater. Hager, known to all as "Darby," could squeeze a profit from places where most business people feared to tread. Inside the cavernous structure, Darby installed a modest stage with a silver screen and rows of folding wooden seats that had seen long service elsewhere. The floor was level — not slanted up toward the rear, theater-style — thus requiring some neck stretching if a taller patron occupied a seat in front of you.

There were no neon lights or other ornamentations on the structure's unpainted, false front. The building had no insulation, and the lone, feeble rotating fan that moved the air about during the warm season providing little more than a soothing sound.

The first picture shown was *Down in Arkansas*, starring El Vira and the Weaver Brothers. My brother Fred became Darby's projectionist while his twin sister Freda sold tickets. Younger brother Dorsey Gene was the janitor. Fred was paid $3 per night, with nine cents deducted for Social Security — income tax came some years later. His girlfriend got a free ticket and a complimentary box of popcorn.

During this period, to stimulate attendance, theaters around the country had commonly implemented a raffle system called Bank Night. Movie-goers registered, and their names were placed in a huge drum from which one was drawn once a week, with great ceremony, between movie features. If the individual whose name was drawn was present, or had attended during that date, he or she won the dollar amount. If not, the prize grew by a specified amount for the next week's drawing, and so forth, until there was a winner.

Darby modified the system cleverly to water down the odds of having a winner. He paid a local man a penny each for 1,000 names of district residents — a big task considering the area's minuscule population density. So what if some names came from tombstones? It merely

cut the odds of having to pay a winner. Juvenile or half-fare ticket purchasers were eligible for the prize only if they paid an extra nickel. Few did.

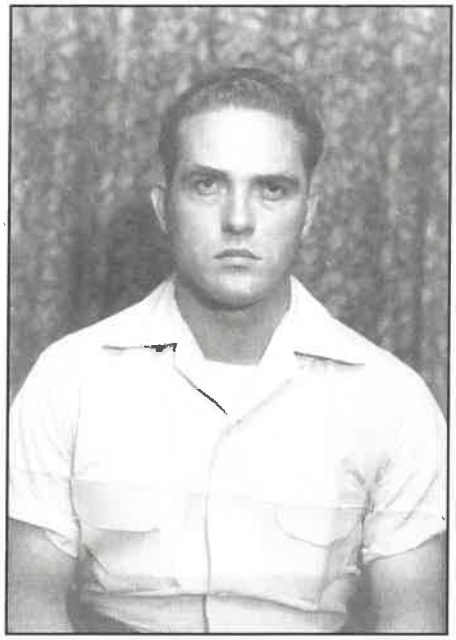
On the initial drawing, the name called was my first cousin Artimus Lowe, who was away attending a hairdressing school at the time. The next week, it was Sadie Craddock, a local widow, who had never gone to a movie in her entire life. Next was Frank Richards, then working at a defense plant in another state. And so on.

Ultimately, however, the unlikely happened. Darby read the name of Frank Brown, who was present. But he correctly said that Brown had come in on a half-fare ticket without paying the extra five cents, thus was ineligible — Darby had a sharp mind for such details. Within a week, the theater and the adjacent building housing the Students Grill burned to the ground.

This was only a minor setback for Darby. He arranged to show his movies in the high school gymnasium/auditorium for more than a year — the school got a small percentage of the receipts. The only projectors that Darby could afford were veterans of many seasons. One night, when the film jammed, the hot carbon arch light set the film on fire. It was a minor thing, easily extinguished. Amplified on the screen, however, it made the entire building appear to be burning. Perhaps remembering the fate of the original theater, the audience was inspired to exit in record time. Luckily, no one was seriously injured.

In those days, "B" pictures that cost $15 were the only ones that small operations like Darby's could afford. On some nights, the total receipts barely exceeded that amount. Often, in order to squeeze out a profit, theater owners would surreptitiously show them in more than one theater — Darby had eight theaters scattered over Logan and Boone counties.

Showing a rented film in more than one place was called "bicycling," a term coming from a system wherein a boy on a bicycle was hired to move the same film between two or more theaters. The practice wasn't as bad as it sounds, inasmuch as theaters with a single evening show, such as Chapmanville's, could only run the film once, while bigger houses were open from noon to 10 p.m. and would run it a number of times for the same cost. In order to compete, many operators such as Darby almost had to show the film in more than one place. This was Hollywood's Golden Era, and bicycling notwithstanding, the film companies' profits soared.



Projectionist Fred Ward, our author's brother, in 1945.

Ticket seller, Freda Ward, Fred's twin, at left, with a friend in front of Chapmanville High School, date unknown.

Even after World War II when a competitor built a more ornate theater nearby and sometimes managed to show a first-run movie, Darby managed to get the bulk of fans with his cheaper "B" films. Once, when the new theater showed *Gone with the Wind*, Darby got the far greater number with a Tarzan movie.

By then, brother Fred has moved on and the former janitor, younger brother Dorsey Gene, was now the projectionist. Sometime later, when Fred needed a federal security clearance, an investigator sought out Darby, his longtime employer.

"I'm with the FBI," the man said, showing his official identification badge.

"I didn't bicycle them pictures," Darby proclaimed loudly.

Bicycling or not, Darby brought the first picture show to Chapmanville and other small mountain communities and kept them going until the theater system succumbed to the competition of TV and other home entertainments.

As a result of intestinal cancer, Darby Hager had an early, then-uncommon, colostomy, and without complaint, he functioned well for decades. But, finally, in his late 60's, he succumbed to his old malady. The small theaters died at about the same time. Now, U.S. Route 119 — Corridor G — goes directly over the location where the old theater building once stood.

JOHN JJ WARD was born and raised in Chapmanville, Logan County, and is now retired and living in Arizona. His work has appeared in more than 50 publications and newspapers, including the Spring 2003 GOLDENSEAL.

"Seventh

Text and photographs by
Carl E. Feather

The Sagebrush Round-up takes place every Saturday night in this music hall, located on Bunner Ridge near Fairmont.

Saturday Night at the Sagebrush Round-up

High atop Bunner Ridge, six miles east of I-79's roar and a half-century removed from its pioneering namesake, Fairmont's Sagebrush Round-up music hall provides a haven for West Virginia's practitioners and listeners of Appalachian, country, and bluegrass music.

Heaven"

Rex Ward is one of the entertainers at the Sagebrush Round-up. "There is so much music history on this stage, you wouldn't believe it," Rex says.

This cavernous metal building is a place of remembrances. In the center of the music hall's 60-foot-wide stage is a rectangle of hardwood flooring imbued with country music history. It came from the stage of the Fairmont Armory, which stood on Jackson Street and was home to the original "Sagebrush Roundup" radio show from 1938 to 1948. [Roundup spelled as one word — ed.] It's a small piece of flooring, only 10x30 feet, yet it was enough to get Rex "no-relation-to-Montgomery" Ward shuffling down memory lane.

"I saw Grandpa Jones bake biscuits on that stage," says Rex, an octogenarian who was playing in the house band — the Stagecoach Band — in the summer of 2003. "This, to me, is seventh heaven. It is on par with the 'Grand Ole Opry.' There is so much music history on this stage, you wouldn't believe it."

Rex plays stage left, in the shadow of a railroad crossing sign, complete with lights that are activated whenever an act plays a railroad song. The lights honor the late Casey Reese, who sang many a railroad song on that stage before riding the Glory Train home in 2000.

The stage backdrop is that of a front porch, the kind of porch the Hard Cider Band played on when Paul and Donald Hayhurst were growing up down the road from the Round-up's present location.

"They just played square dances. They were back-porch entertainers," says Paul, whose father Blaine and uncle Glenn played in the Hard Cider Band along with Virgil Toothman, Vernon Heiskell, and Oscar Butcher. "They used to play all the old fiddle tunes: 'Mississippi Sawyer,' 'Soldier's Joy,' 'Ragtime Annie,' 'Redwing.'

"Mom said I'd lay in the cradle and cry from the noise, in tune with them, I guess," Paul says of those Hard Cider Band jam sessions.

In the back corner of the 17,000-square-foot hall — near the Country Store where Bob Cunningham sells T-shirts, CD's, and cassettes — is a livingroom setting like one any visitor to a Fairmont-area home would have encountered 75 years ago. There's a hickory rocking chair, a fireplace, and a clock on the mantle. And hanging on the wall are a fiddle, banjo, and guitar.

The average visitor, however, is unlikely to see the patch of armory stage, the instruments high on the back-corner wall, or understand the significance of the railroad lights. They come for the music and camaraderie; for the 75-cent hot dogs; and the lemon, chocolate, butterscotch, and coconut-cream pies. And, if they are more than 70 years old, they come for the memories of the original "Sagebrush Roundup."

They come for the music and camaraderie; for the 75-cent hot dogs; and the lemon, chocolate, butterscotch, and coconut-cream pies. And, if they are more than 70 years old, they come for the memories of the original "Sagebrush Roundup."

Virgil Anderson of Grafton waits for the music to start at the Sagebrush Round-up on a recent Saturday night. Local advertisers purchase space on the front of the building, while smokers and others use the bench.

The "Roundup" and the acts that paraded across its stage are still a topic of discussion when old-timers pull up a bench under the hand-stenciled advertising signs taped to the wall of the current Round-up's front porch [Round-up now spelled with a hyphen. —ed.]. They talk about Grandpa (Marshall Louis) Jones, "The Kentucky Yodeler," who went on to become a "Grand Ole Opry" star and legend in country music. And Little Jimmy Dickens, the Raleigh County native who, although standing only 4 feet 11 inches, dwarfed many "Sagebrush Roundup" acts in fame.

"As a boy about 11 years old, it was a thrill for me to go to the 'Roundup,'" recalls Bill Eisentrout, a Round-up board member. "Little Jimmy wasn't much bigger than I was."

They remember Cowboy Loye (Donald Pack), a Nashville, Tennessee, native who learned the old cowboy songs at Baker Ranch in Nebraska before landing in Fairmont in 1937. They still talk about Uncle Rufe Armstrong, his Coon Hunters, and his wife, Norma Francis, better known as "Petunia." They recall the "Old Pardner" Murrell Poor and his Tradin' Post Gang, Curley Mitchell and his Ploughboys, the Buskirk Family, the Franklin Brothers, the Blue Bonnet Girls, Hank the Cowhand (David Stanford), and Jake Taylor & the Railsplitters.

John Graham of Bridgeport played on this venerated stage. For a brief period in early 1939, Graham shared the stage with the Old Pardner himself as Graham played guitar and sang in Poor's Tradin' Post Gang. After Poor's tragic death, Graham hooked up with Budge & Fudge Mayse, and, in 1941, with Cherokee Sue, who became his wife.

"We played the 'Roundup' practically every Saturday night," John recalls. "We'd usually play a fiddle tune, sing a song, maybe five or six songs." [See "Little John Graham and Cherokee Sue: A Radio Love Story," by Carl E. Feather; page 42.]

The original "Roundup" was a product of radio station WMMN in Fairmont, a stronghold of live country music throughout the late 1930's and 1940's. The concept for the Saturday-evening live-audience show was similar to what WWVA had done with its "Wheeling Jamboree" for more than five years prior to the December 10, 1938, debut of the "Sagebrush Roundup." [See "Doc Williams: A Half Century at the 'Wheeling Jamboree,'" by Ivan Tribe; Spring 1987.]

The "Roundup" stage was stocked with WMMN regulars, but on any given Saturday night, only half the staff would perform. This gave performers the opportunity to make more profitable live appearances at other venues within the WMMN market area. The station charged an admission, which was shared with the artists who performed that evening. The show started at 8 p.m. and was broadcast for an hour.

The quality of the performances on the "Roundup" was on par with just about any other live-audience radio program of that era.

"They played until 9:00, and then they moved the chairs out, and they would square dance in there," recalls Bob Cunningham, who went to the original "Roundup" as a young man.

"You'd have so many people who would come out to watch, there would not be anywhere for them to sit," recalls Dellslow musician Bill Murray, who played and sang on the original "Sagebrush Roundup" stage with the Mountain State Melody Boys. "[The audience] would stand outside and watch through the windows," he says. [See "Bill Murray: A Round-up

The original "Sagebrush Roundup" radio show began in 1938, broadcast over WMMN radio in Fairmont. This picture of the "Roundup" cast was taken in September 1940, at the Fairmont Armory. Photographer unknown.

Original," by Carl E. Feather; page 38.]

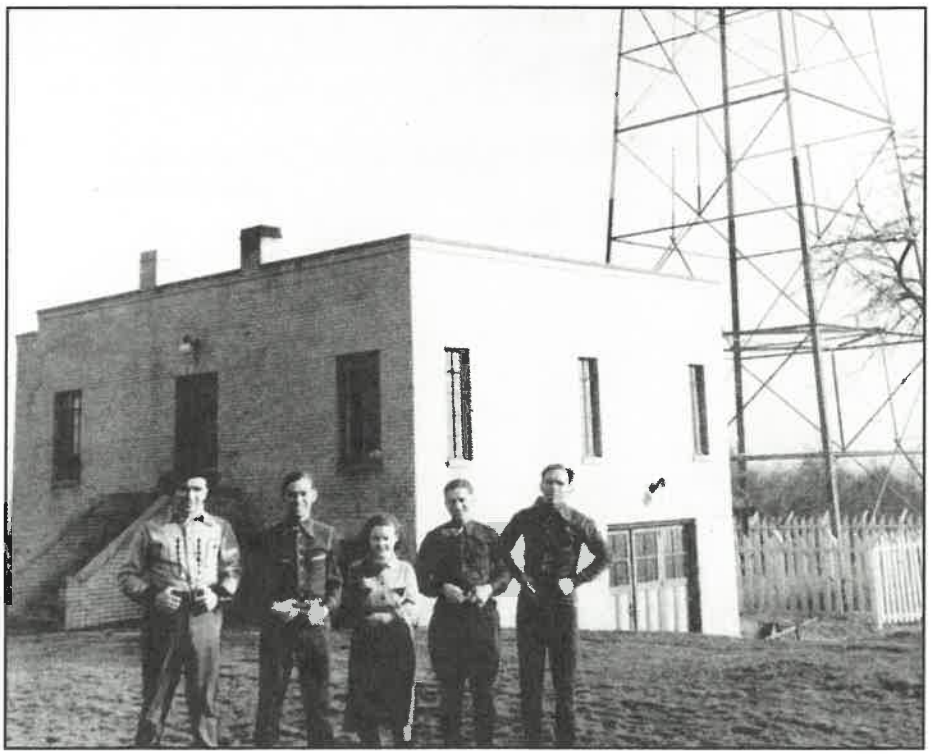
The quality of the performances on the "Roundup" was on par with just about any other live-audience radio program of that era, according to author Ivan Tribe in his book *Mountaineer Jamboree: Country Music in West Virginia*. In 1941, Tribe notes, the CBS radio network auditioned the show for possible nationwide broadcast. Although the show did not make the cut, the mere fact it was considered for audition was seen as significant.

The "Roundup" enjoyed only a few strong years, however. World War II was a factor in its demise, says Paul Hayhurst. Many of the region's men went off to war. Those who stayed behind, such as Paul's father, ended up working six days a week and didn't have time or energy to devote to a live show. Gasoline rationing kept audience members at home, and attendance at the "Roundup" fell significantly.

After the war, the popularity and widespread availability of recorded "hillbilly" music reduced interest in live regional shows. This and other cultural changes spelled the downfall of many opry-style shows across the country; the original "Sagebrush Roundup" rode off into the sunset on October 2, 1948.

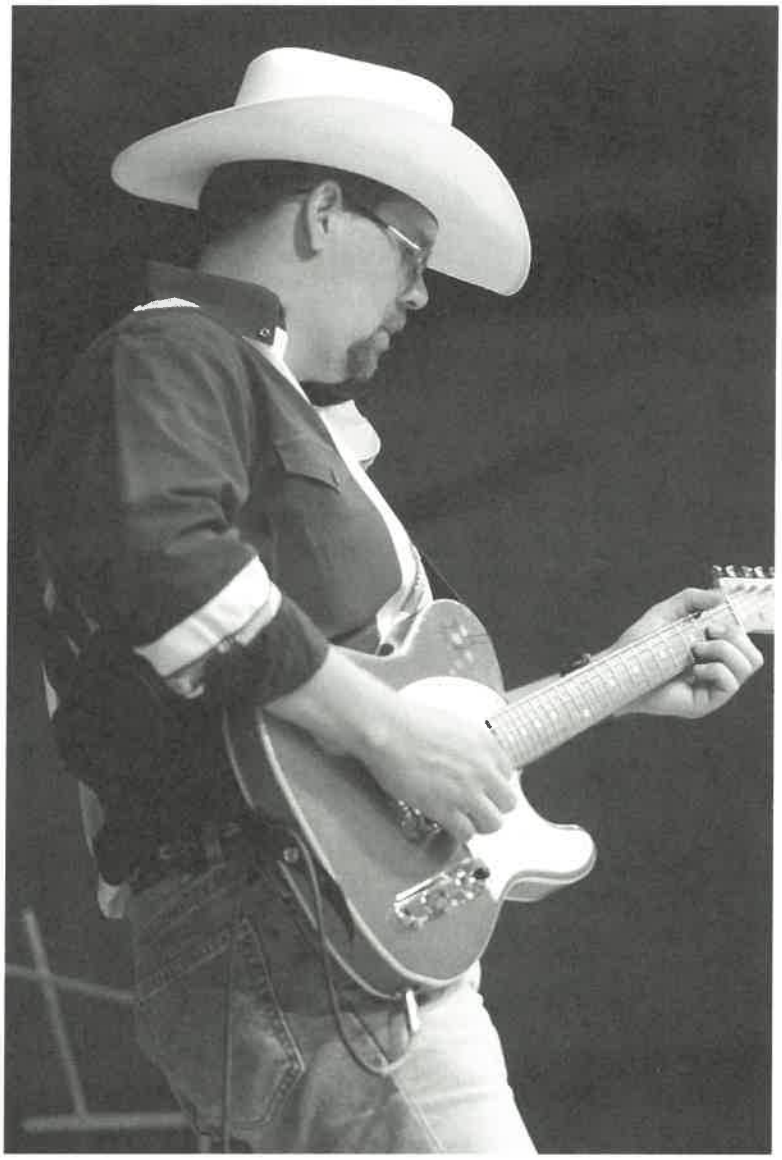
The practice of musicians getting together on a front porch and playing for family and friends, however, continued throughout the Fairmont region. Buddy Priest, one of the "cans" in the West Virginia Six Pack band, says that's how the Round-up got its revival in the early 1980's.

"The jam sessions started in the early 1980's as a place for the older people to go on Saturday nights



Jake Taylor and the Railsplitters at the WMMN transmitter in Monongah, 1940. Jake Taylor is second from the left. Photographer unknown.

A few of the popular country music acts who appeared on the WMMN "Sagebrush Roundup" between 1938 and 1948. (Above left) Smiling Tommy Cantrell & Fiddlin' Leo Herron with the Blue Bonnet Girls (Sylvia and Florence Curry); (above right) Little Jimmy Dickens; (below left) the Franklin Brothers (left to right: Bill, Delmus, and Clyde); (below right) Grandpa Jones and his Grandsons (left to right: Pete Rensler, Louis Marshall "Grandpa" Jones, and Loren "Banjo Biff" Bledsoe). Photographers and dates unknown.



Guitarist Buddy Priest, a member of the West Virginia Six Pack band.

that was not a bar atmosphere and anybody that could play could be a part of," says Buddy, whose uncle, the late Floyd Priest, was a member of the Green Valley Pioneers.

The Pioneers, Paul Crane, the Vandergrift Brothers, Stormy Young, and other Fairmont-area musicians were among those who started the Saturday-night jam sessions in the Winfield Community Building near Fairmont. In 1981, the musicians held what would become an annual spring music festival at the park. Only 40 or 50 people attended that first show, but within a few years, the attendance was in the hundreds, and the show was expanded to three days. Regular Saturday-night shows were held, as well, with 400 to 700 people attending and up to 60 entertainers participating. Many of the old-time "Roundup" stars dusted off their instruments and returned to the stage.

Paul Hayhurst says the renewed interest led to the formation of the Winfield District Country Music Association in 1984. (Winfield is a voting district in Marion County.) In 1991, the name was changed to the Country Music Association of West Virginia. A board of nine volunteer directors was established to oversee the association and its activities. Paul says of the nine members on the board, none is a musician. They are people who thoroughly enjoy listening to country music and want to see it preserved, promoted, and prosper in the state of West Virginia.

Paul got involved in the association via his familial connection to Bunner Ridge. "I got family buried in the Bunner Cemetery," says Paul. "I came up to see the building and to see what their plans were, and the guy said they needed a hand. I've been here ever since."

Many of the old-time "Roundup" stars dusted off their instruments and returned to the stage.

One of the board's first actions was to give the show a name. Paul presented the Sagebrush Round-up idea to the board. They researched it and discovered that WMMN had never registered it with the state, and the name was available.

"People still remembered that show, and I think it was a boost for us," Paul says. "In Fairmont, everybody remembered the 'Sagebrush Roundup.'"

Using the community park for their activities created controversy, however. So by 1987, it was evident that the group was going to have to build its own facility with better parking and year-around functionality. Jack "Hardrock" Bunner, whose family is the ridge's namesake, agreed to donate four acres to the association for the purpose of building a music hall.

Paul says the group started with an outside stage and pavilion that they used until the summer of 1993. A crew of 10 to 15 volunteers cut and sawed the logs for the project and erected the structure. Next came a concession building with a dining hall and seating for 100 patrons. That building still stands below the music hall, and the first Saturday of the month, April through October, a fund-raising dinner is held there before the show. Paul says the Salisbury steak and roast beef dinners are served from 4 to 7 p.m. and cost just $6 a person.

"We got some really good cooks around here," Paul says with the smile of a man who knows good eating

when he tastes it.

The metal building housing the Round-up was erected in the summer of 1993. Once part of the Volkswagen manufacturing facility in New Stanton, Pennsylvania, it was dismantled and hauled to Bunner Ridge on two flatbed trailers. "And without a blueprint, we set it up," Paul says.

The association paid $10,000 for the 170x100-foot building, which was erected by volunteers. Paul says some patrons felt so strongly about the Round-up and its role in preserving local country music, they extended personal loans so the building could be purchased, delivered, and erected on a concrete pad. Others gave flat-out donations to make the new home possible. A $25,000 grant from the state for a mandated sewage-treatment project helped immensely, Paul says.

The Round-up held its first show in the new building October 23, 1993. The building has been in continuous use since then, with shows held every Saturday night from 6 to 11 p.m. The only exception is around Christmas, when the Round-up shuts down for a couple

Bill Murray

A Round-up Original

By Carl E. Feather

When Dellslow resident Bill Murray takes to the Sagebrush Round-up stage to perform with Bill Murray & Friends, he is continuing a personal tradition that spans more than 70 years.

Bill Murray, born in 1915, is the eldest Sagebrush Round-up musician and the only regularly scheduled one to have played the "Roundup" when it was a radio show held in the Fairmont Armory. Nowadays, this veteran guitar picker and vocalist is joined by Granny Blosser and the Stagecoach Band for an hour-long gospel show that gets under way 7:30 p.m. the fourth Saturday of every month.

He grew up in the Dellslow area, Monongalia County, and began playing a guitar at the age of nine. A fiddle-playing neighbor, "Dad" Grant Fisher, was his mentor. "I just picked it up and took off with it," Bill says. "Fisher and I got together, and I learned to play the guitar."

Bill was the youngest of 12 children in the Murray family. His father Arthur, a miner at Osage, was killed when Bill was just three years old. "There was no welfare back then, and my mom had to raise us,

Bill Murray is the only regular performer at the Sagebrush Round-up who also appeared at the original "Roundup" at the Fairmont Armory. He is shown here at his home in Dellslow, Monongalia County. Photograph by Carl E. Feather.

weeks leading up to the holiday. They return on New Year's Eve, with a party and evening of entertainment. Each guest brings a covered dish to pass at the no-alcohol event.

"You talk about good eating," says Jim Thornburg, secretary of the association. "There's some eating that night."

Thornburg says even bad weather doesn't close the Round-up, despite the twisting, narrow road that must be traveled to get there. "The only time we close down is when it's so bad we can't park them," Jim says.

Twice a year, the Round-up brings in a well-known country music act for a weekend festival of music. The festivals are held the third weekend in June and second weekend in September. Paul says the largest attendance ever noted at the Round-up was during the Jim Ed Brown concert in 2002, when 1,440 paid. Other big-name performers who have played on the stage include Bobby Bare, Helen Cornelius, Bill Anderson, Billy Walker, Little Jimmy Dickens, and Doc Williams.

"People really go for the old-time performers," says Jim. "And, to be

working for 50 cents a day," he says.

Those kinds of wages left little money for luxuries like a guitar, but Bill found ways to earn enough pocket change to purchase a $6 Regal guitar from a mail-order catalog.

"We picked blackberries, huckleberries," Bill says. The berries sold for 10 to 15 cents a gallon. "That was the way we had to make a living then," he says.

When Grant Fisher formed the Mountain State Melody Boys in the early 1930's, he invited Bill to join. Other members included Bob Thomas on mandolin, Delmar Murray on guitar, Flip Cow on guitar, George Leach on banjo, and Gordon Bishop on bass.

"Except he didn't have a bass at that time," Bill says. "He played a jug for a bass."

It was a tight-knit group whose members watched out for each other. "We all stuck together. It was just the same as a family," he says. "There was no drinking and no smoking allowed."

Their first gig was on WMMN in Fairmont, a Saturday night program that didn't pay them a dime. None of the members had transportation to the station, so they hired a friend, Phil Noose, to haul them to the studio.

"Phil had an old Chrysler, and we'd all pitch in enough money to buy the gas to take us up there," Bill says. "Now how much do think gas was back then? Nine cents a gallon!"

The payoff for the band was when they could land a job playing for a reunion or other event, sometimes as a result of their radio appearances. "We got paid, maybe $1.50 apiece," Bill recalls.

Their act played a lot of gospel, bluegrass, and "old-time fiddle and banjo picking. We just mixed it up,"

"It's just an enjoyment that brings back memories when I go to Bunner Ridge to play," Bill says.

Bill says. They played the "Sagebrush Roundup," but he doesn't recall getting paid for their performances. Other venues Bill recalls the Melody Boys playing included the Metropolitan theaters in Morgantown and Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

Going professional wasn't an option. "As a young boy coming up as I was — your dad being dead and no one else to feed the family — you had to go to work," he says. His first paying job was as a water boy to a road gang. He received a basket with some fruit in it. Bill later worked a variety of jobs: carpenter, blacksmith, barber, welder — "anything to make a living," he says. But his long-term career was in coal mining. Bill spent 60 years in the industry, all of them above ground in the equipment maintenance and repair area.

The Mountain State Melody Boys managed to stick together through the Great Depression and World War II, but fell apart in 1946 as other obligations took precedence. Bill, who married and had six children, eventually put his guitar away for 35 years and concentrated on making a living.

After his first wife Rachel died in 1999, Bill picked up his guitar and started playing again. "It just comes back to you," he says. "You make some blunders, but it all comes back to you."

Bill says playing on the Bunner Ridge stage brings back memories of long-gone musicians like "Old Mose" Gordon Bishop, who did a blackface act; Cap, Andy, and Flip, with whom Bill played on several occasions [see "Cap, Andy and Flip: Mountain State Radio Trio," by Ivan M. Tribe; Winter 1989]; announcer Lorain Gainer; and Roy Myers, the armless musician who could roll and light a cigarette, play the guitar, and sign autographs with this toes. Their ghosts are on the stage of the Round-up.

"It's just an enjoyment that brings back memories when I go to Bunner Ridge to play," Bill says.

Looking back on his years at the old Fairmont Armory "Roundup," Bill says the best part was probably the attention that being a musician on the popular show attracted. The worst part was not having the money to capitalize on that fame.

"The girls would wait for you outside, and when you came out, they'd want you to go for a little ride, but you didn't have a car," Bill says with a laugh.

Paul Hayhurst, left, president of the Country Music Association of West Virginia, and Jim Thornburg, secretary. They are two of the energetic volunteers who helped build this building and present the Sagebrush Round-up every Saturday night. Plans are underway to open a West Virginia Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum here.

honest with you, they are the only ones we can afford to bring in."

Paul says they bring in well-known talent to raise awareness of the Round-up and generate income. Even so, the ticket prices are modest. For the September 2003 visit by Jesse McReynolds and the Virginia Boys, an adult paid $10 at the gate, $7 advance. The ticket was good for both shows, and music started at 1 p.m. and went until 11 that night.

The association's board has likewise kept admission low for the regular Saturday night shows. It costs just $3 for an adult to sit in on five hours of entertainment. "It used to be $2, but after 9/11, our liability insurance went up, and we had to raise it $1," Paul says.

"We provide a showcase for country music and a place for a family to come for an inexpensive night out," adds Bill Eisentrout.

In keeping with the association's mission of encouraging new talent, the first hour of the evening is open stage. Paul says virtually no one is turned away.

"You can still get up there and have your 15 minutes of fame in the spotlight," says Buddy Priest, who got his own start playing music on the ridge in 1987. His West Virginia Six Pack band plays throughout the region, but Priest has a monthly standing date on the Round-up stage, as well.

Dave Liller is master of ceremonies for the show, which officially gets under way at 7 p.m. "Welcome to the Sagebrush Round-up, the area's biggest, best, and oldest country music show," says Liller in opening the show. "We're going to start out with the Stagecoach Band."

There's a round of applause as Ron "Rooster" Moorehouse steps to the microphone and begins singing:

"Come on along,
Everybody come along,
Come where the stars are shining bright.
Get onboard,
Everybody come along,
We're going to have us a good time tonight."

Moorehouse drives 125 miles every Saturday from

The Stagecoach Band is the house band for the Sagebrush Round-up. Standing, left to right, are Sam Manno, Rex Ward, Jim Clise, Lawrence Tolley, and Bill Janoske. Seated are Lisa Janoske, Darrell Carpenter, and Donald Hayhurst.

Raymond Carter, age 84, waltzes with his daughter-in-law, Sue Carter, of Grafton, at the Round-up.

his home in Marietta, Ohio, to play in the band. "When I first came in this building, it was like I'd walked into heaven," he says. "It was just such a wholesome atmosphere."

None of the band members or acts is compensated. Occasionally, those who come from outside the state or otherwise long distances are given a little gas money. Artists have the chance to raise a little change by selling their tapes and CD's in the Round-up gift shop.

A three-member committee selects the talent and creates the schedule, which is advertised in the region's media the week before the show. The music is a mix of country, bluegrass, and gospel. A special all-bluegrass night is held on the fifth Saturday of the month.

Paul says the association's current thrust is to build its West Virginia Country Music Hall of Fame Museum next to the Round-up auditorium. "We already got a lot of memorabilia collected," he says. Much of the museum and exhibit construction are already underway.

Association membership has fallen from a high of 300 to about 60 members, despite annual dues of only $6 (non-voting members get by with $3). But on any given Saturday night, 200 to 300 country music fans make the trip up Bunner Ridge for music, food, camaraderie, and memories.

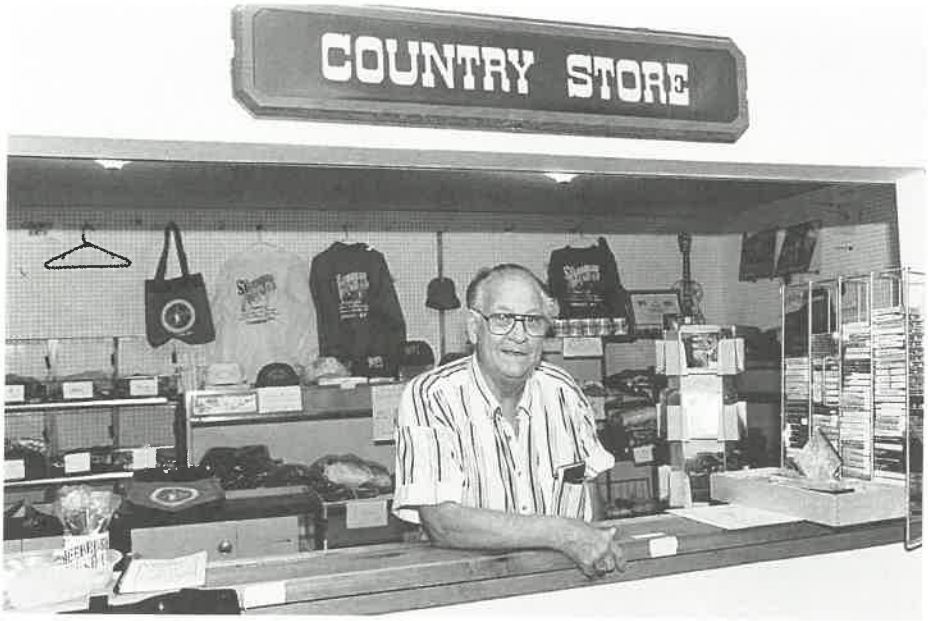
They are a dedicated bunch, like Bill and Lisa Janoske of Oakland, Maryland, who drive over every Saturday night to play in the house band. Or Henry and Mary Lewis of Friendsville, Maryland, who usually come over three Saturdays a month to listen and dance to the variety of country music.

The most dedicated one of the lot, however, may be the fellow who faithfully opens the Country Store every Saturday evening and spends his evening in that cubbyhole — Bob Cunningham.

"I love country music, and I've never gotten away from it," he says. "I'm so dedicated to it, they could bring my casket right in and hold my funeral service here."

The Sagebrush Round-up is located north of Fairmont, six miles east of I-79 off exit 139. Head east on County Route 33 (Bunner Ridge Road) and follow the signs. Shows are held every Saturday night with new talent at 6, and the regular show at 7 p.m. For more information, call (304)363-4864.

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 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.



Bob Cunningham operates the gift shop at the Sagebrush Round-up. He's so dedicated, he says, he'd like to have his funeral held here.

Little John Graham and Cherokee Sue

A Radio Love Story

By Carl E. Feather

Little John Graham and Cherokee Sue in Fairmont, 1943.

June 22, 1941, was a sweltering day in Buckhannon's Green Valley Park. Several of the 14,000 people who came to the park that afternoon fainted from the heat while waiting for the 4 p.m. wedding ceremony of "Little" John Graham and Harriet "Cherokee Sue" Dieckerhoff.

For several weeks prior to the wedding, WMMN — the Fairmont radio station where John and Sue were country music performers and

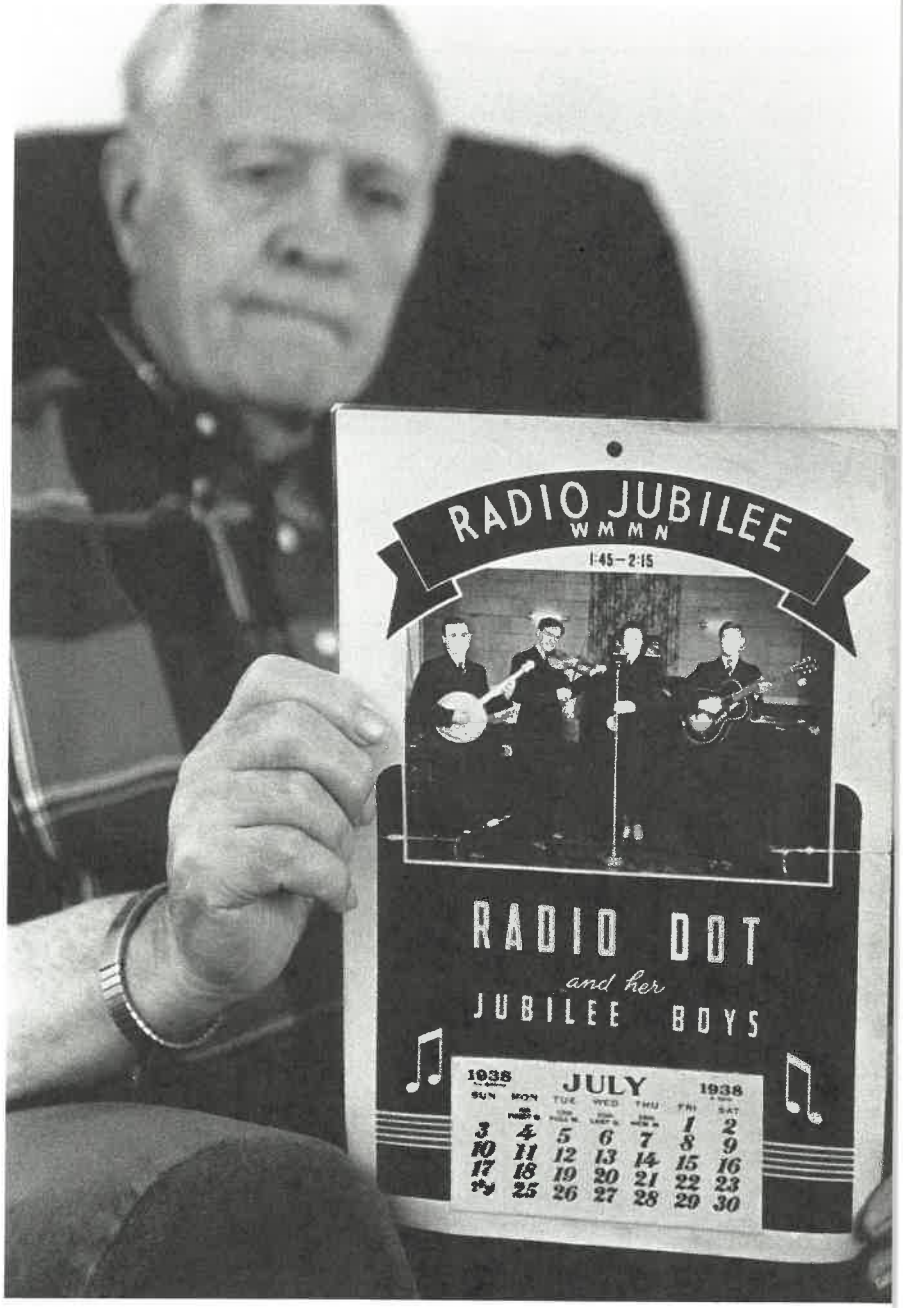
disc jockeys — promoted the wedding as an entertainment attraction. Recognizing the opportunity to make some money for the station as well as for the bride and groom, the station pulled together a show from their roster of performers, charged an admission, and claimed one-third of the take for itself.

"Sue and I was pretty popular, especially Sue," recalls John Graham of Bridgeport, now a youthful 84. "The price was 20 cents a person to get in. Sue and I got $702.53 that day. We went down the next day and bought a new Chevrolet for $900. And boy, it was one of the best ones, too."

In addition to the cash, John and Sue were supplied with just about everything a newlywed couple could have needed, thanks to the generosity of the many sponsors who advertised on WMMN. "We had everything given to us, everything except the rings," John says. "I could have had the rings, too, but I said, 'No, I'm buying the rings.' I paid $80 for the set of rings, and that was a pretty fair set of rings back in 1941. But all our clothes and everything else was given to us."

The couple set up housekeeping on Jackson Street in Fairmont, a short distance from the armory and radio station where they worked. John had a solo morning show and a 4 p.m. show with Sue. They also played the "Sagebrush Roundup," a live-audience show broadcast on Saturday nights. [See "'Seventh Heaven': Saturday Night at the Sagebrush Round-up," by Carl E. Feather; page 32.]

John, a vocalist and guitar player, began his rise to radio fame just a few hundred yards south of the Mason-Dixon line on a mountaintop farm in northern Monongalia County. The mail came out of Brave, Pennsylvania, but the family farm was a mile into West Virginia. Born February 10, 1920, John was the fourth child of John and Eva Graham. He was the only one of the couple's seven children who showed any inclination toward music.



Dorothy "Radio Dot" Henderson hired John to be in her band in 1937. Pictured in this 1938 promotional calendar are, from the left, Fred Wells, Big John Stockdale, Dot, and Little John Graham. Photograph by Carl E. Feather.

"I sang," he says. "Mother would send me to the basement. My gosh, she'd get tired of hearing me sing. I'd go down there anyway, because it would ring better. You could hear it a little better in the basement."

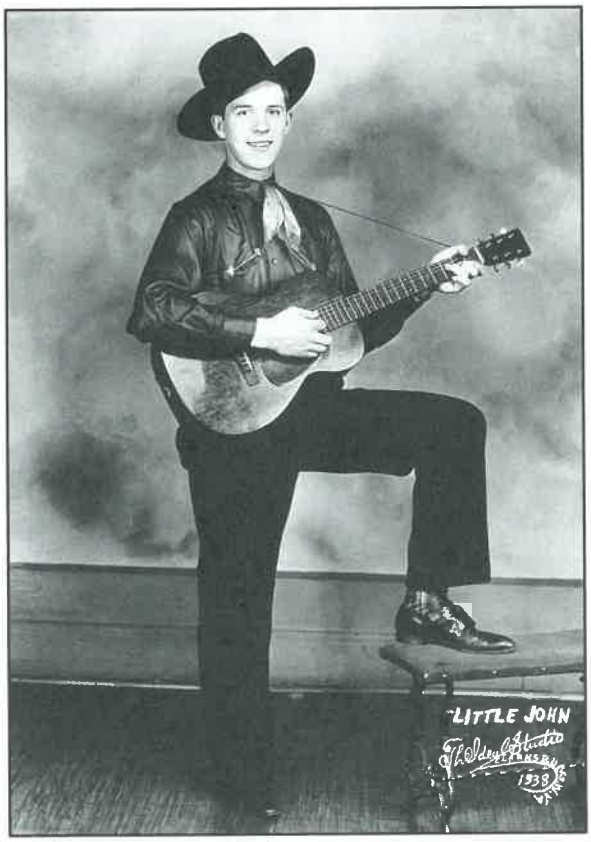
John learned about music by associating with other musicians in the community. "I'd see a guitar and see other people playing, and I'd say, 'How about you showing me that chord?' I was very eager, and they would show me," he says.

"Big" John Stockdale, a neighbor who played the fiddle and guitar, took a special interest in John. Three years older, Big John became Little John's mentor.

"I remember it so well," Graham recalls. "He saw my dad and said, 'Can your son come up and play music with me? We'll play music, listen to the "Grand Ole Opry," and I'll bring him back Sunday.' Dad said, 'If John wants to, he can go.'

"So he comes down on a horse, and I got my guitar and got on the back of that horse and went up there. And we played music that night. And he brought me back the next day."

John figures he was about 16 when he and Stockdale first got together. It was Dorothy Henderson, "Radio Dot," who brought Graham and Stockdale down from



An 18-year-old John Graham in one of his first promotional portraits. Photograph 1938 by The Ideal Studio, Clarksburg.

the mountain and into Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, to "practice, practice, and practice," says John. Freddie Wells, another Brave musician, completed the quartet with his banjo playing. The group called itself Big John, Little John, Freddie, and Radio Dot, although Little John Graham was actually taller than Big John Stockdale. John Graham says it was Dot's idea to call him Little John, and although he objected, the name stuck.

Hymns and story songs were the group's mainstay. "The songs they sing today, a lot of them don't say anything, and you can't understand the words," John says. "But I sung hymns and story-like songs. That's what most people did back then."

When the quartet, now known as Radio Dot and Her Jubilee Boys, was ready for the big time, Dorothy took them to WMMN for an audition. The station was a haven for live country performers and had a large audience that extended up into the Northern Panhandle and as far east as Winchester, Virginia. [See "Miles Meant Nothing for WMMN," by Debby Sonis Jackson; Winter 1989.]

"We just loved what we were doing," John recalls. "We went over to Fairmont to the radio station to audition, and 'Foxy Wolfe' [Howard Hopkins], the program director, says, 'Well, we don't have any time right now, but we'll call you when we get some time.'

"Cowboy Loye [Loye Donald Pack] was there, and he was buying an hour and 15 minutes on there every day. He was almost the boss in 1937, a man that would buy an hour and 15 minutes. Cowboy says, 'You got time. Put them on.' And we went on. That's the way it was."

For John, the youngest member of the group, the decision to go on the air meant dropping out of high school at the age of 17. "My daddy didn't want me to do that at all," John says. "I said, 'Dad, I want to make a buck.' I don't know if it would have been better if I'd gotten the other two years of high school or not."

John moved to Fairmont where he got a room on Jackson Street for $2 a week. "I could eat for a quarter, and for 35 cents, I could get a good meal," he says.

John went on the air with Radio Dot in August 1937. There was no salary; the performers raised an income by generating inquiries about products and services they promoted on the show. Having at least one musician with the gift of gab and a persuasive radio voice was essential to the economic viability of the group. That duty fell upon Dot. "She didn't play an instrument," says John. "But she was a good singer and announcer."

As the group entered its second year of performing on the radio, the other members noticed that Dot was getting further financially than they were.

The Tradin' Post Gang in 1939. From the left, they are Murrell Poor, John Graham, Howard "Big-Eared Zip" Binnix, and Jimmie Smith (seated).

John Graham today at his home in Bridgeport. Photograph by Carl E. Feather.

"Twenty dollars a week, that's what Dot paid us. We played shows all over, and they were charging 25 cents at the door then," John says. "We were having big crowds, but she'd put us on $20-a-week salary. That's why I quit her."

By this time, John had established a friendship with Murrell Poor, the "Old Pardner," who had come to WMMN in 1937. "I was telling Murrell about Dot not splitting even with us boys, and he said, 'You want a job?' And I said yes. I quit Dot that night, and she offered me $35 a week to stay. But I said, 'Dot, you did me wrong once. You're not going to do it again.'"

Murrell made a spot for John in his Tradin' Post Gang. The Old Pardner was immensely popular with WMMN audiences. "Murrell was one of the best announcers on WMMN," John says. "He played a tipple. It was made by the Martin company. I'd never seen a tipple; it looked like a ukulele. Murrell played that and did a lot of readings."

John's time with Murrell was tragically short. At around 11 p.m. on May 29, 1939, the Tradin' Post Gang was returning from a job in Mill Creek when their car went out of control on the highway between Philippi and Fairmont. Murrell's head hit the pavement as the car rolled over, fracturing the Old Pardner's skull. The horror of that dark night haunts John to this day. John escaped from the back seat by kicking out the door. Murrell was taken to a Philippi hospital, where he soon died.

The Tradin' Post Gang broke up after Murrell's death. John went back to school briefly, but quickly found work in a new group with Budge & Fudge, the Mayse brothers, from Buddy Starcher's hometown of Sutton. Starcher had given Paul Mayse the name of "Fudge" to rhyme with his brother's actual name. The fourth member of the group was "Cherokee Sue," an import from Warren, Ohio.

An athletic woman fond of swimming, horseback riding, boating, and motorcycle racing, Sue arrived in Fairmont in the fall of 1940. John says his future wife came down from Warren with her sisters and their manager Joe Edison and got a job on WMMN. She was a vocalist with a special knack for announcing and selling products. She had coal-black hair and was one-quarter Cherokee. Sue developed a following among the youngsters, who were fascinated by her Native American heritage.

"I just fell in love with her," says John, who was two years her senior. "That's just the way it was. I'd seen prettier girls, but none nicer than Sue."

Eight months after meeting, John and Sue were wed at the Green Valley Park ceremony in Buckhannon. John says neither he nor Sue had any money, and they were in full agreement with the station making a publicity stunt out of their wedding.

"I went in and told Foxy Wolfe that we wanted to get married and to let us get married on the ['Sagebrush Roundup'] stage," John says. "And he asked me, 'What are you trying to do, capitalize on your wedding?' And I said, 'Put it any way you want, but we don't have a thing, and we're going to get married.'"

John says all of the WMMN acts were there: Budge & Fudge, the Buskirk Family, Hank the Cowhand. The Reverend F.L. Radcliff of the United Brethren Church of Adrian performed the half-hour ceremony. Norma Francis Armstrong, known to WMMN radio audiences as Uncle Rufe's wife "Petunia," was matron of honor. Sue's sister Mary was bridesmaid. Best man was Paul Mayse.

WMMN kiddy-club program stars Joan and Gladys Clonch of Clarksburg were Sue's trainbearers. Sue's gown included a white silk jersey with a long lace train. She wore a coronet in her hair and a corsage of gardenias.

A draft notice in 1942 sent John packing for the European Theater. John still remembers the day he left Sue behind at the bus station in Fairmont.

"She was acting pretty good, then I looked back and saw her crying," he says. "People holler about not wanting to go to the service, but the thing that bothered me was leaving Sue. I was for my country as much as any person, but I didn't want to leave Sue."

Sue visited John while he was serving at a post on

The wedding of Little John Graham and Cherokee Sue attracted a paying audience of 14,000 at Buckhannon's Green Valley Park on June 22, 1941. The proceeds helped the couple buy a new car and set up housekeeping.

the Mojave Desert, and from that visit came their son John in 1944. Daughter Susan was born in 1948.

John served in a field ordnance company during the war. His captain encouraged him and other musically inclined soldiers to sing and play their instruments as a morale booster. John traveled through France with his trusty Martin guitar, which he sold to a fellow soldier for $55 while waiting to board the boat to come back to the United States.

Back in Fairmont, Sue and John resumed their careers on WMMN, staying there until the summer of 1947, when WPDX, a new Clarksburg station, went on the air. The new station presented a serious challenge to WMMN and attracted many of that station's top talent. "We were on the inaugural broadcast, the first day it went on the air: August 18, 1947," John says.

Budge & Fudge joined the couple on WPDX, and the group became known as the West Virginia Hillfolks. John had a 15-minute solo program, Sue did a one-hour disc jockey show, and they did a 15-minute hymn program together at 4 p.m. John says Sue was his ticket to get on the air.

"They wouldn't have hired me by myself," he says. "I went along with Sue. Sue was a saleswoman on top of it, and I wasn't. Sue would say, 'Now we're going to talk about [a product]. You want to get up and talk about it?' And it just wouldn't come out right, and I'd end up saying, 'Sue, you do it.'

"We sold everything. She had Coco-Wheats, she had White Cross Insurance. If the station got a card in [from a listener], she would get a dollar, and the station would get five dollars. She had a beauty shop that advertised. My gosh, she had a dozen different sponsors."

On one unusually good day, the station received 5,000 letters, each one containing a box top and quarter in response to a Coco-Wheats belt-buckle offer.

Despite Sue's popularity in the Clarksburg market, the lure of a bigger radio presence and the possibility of more money pulled the couple away in 1950. They moved to the big time, WWVA in Wheeling, where John shed his conservative suit-and-tie garb for a custom-made cowboy outfit that cost him $135. "I never liked that outfit," he says. "It was wool, and it was hot."

Their time in Wheeling was short lived — three months. "They paid us a salary, and it just wasn't livable," John says. "We weren't known there. So we came back to WPDX, because we were known in this territory."

Demand for live shows dropped off during the 1950's, as recorded music replaced live performers, and the melancholy story songs gave way to rockabilly. Sue continued to work as a disc jockey and

The Graham family at Christmas 1951. With John and Sue are son John, Jr., and daughter Susan.

did some early television work, as well, on Clarksburg's WBOY. Garden Fresh Markets sponsored her show. "It was just a show where she played music on TV," John recalls. "She would come in and give a commercial. She did that about a year, then she got sick and had to pull out.

"I'll never forget it," John says. "She was down to St. Mary's Hospital, and they called me and said, 'We think Sue is pregnant.' Then we come home a day or two, and they wanted Sue to come back [to the hospital]. They said, 'No, Sue's not pregnant. She has an ovarian tumor.'"

Sue died in 1967. She was buried in Floral Hills Memory Gardens, Quiet Dell, just below the grave of Budge Mayse, who had died in February of that year.

John put his guitar away after Sue got sick.

"I just had no desire for it then," John says. "My next-door neighbor was a plumber, and he said, 'John, why don't you go and plumb with me?' And I said, 'Okay. I'll go and try it.' And you know, I found out I could do a few things for myself. I worked for him for about three years, then I started my own business. I had a good business. I had a wonderful business. I had three guys working for me, two trucks and a little pickup truck, and a secretary."

John's radio fame and reputation helped him to build his plumbing business, which he sold in 1980. But the business, Graham & Simon Plumbing, still makes use of the familiar John Graham name.

John now enjoys a comfortable retirement that includes singing in churches, at local jam sessions and music gatherings, and at the annual Singing in the Hills of his songwriter friend Dorsey Wiseman in Mabie. [See "'Sounds of Home': Songwriter Dorsey Wiseman," by Carl E. Feather; page 48.] John remarried in December 1970 to Adaline, a nurse.

Paul Mayse died in January 1971 and is buried next to his brother. John says he will be buried next to Sue, and "the West Virginia Hillfolks will once again be reunited on a cemetery hill in Quiet Dell," he says.

Looking back on his life, John feels the best years were those when he and Sue were first married and at the peak of their popularity on the radio. All in all, it was a good life, he says.

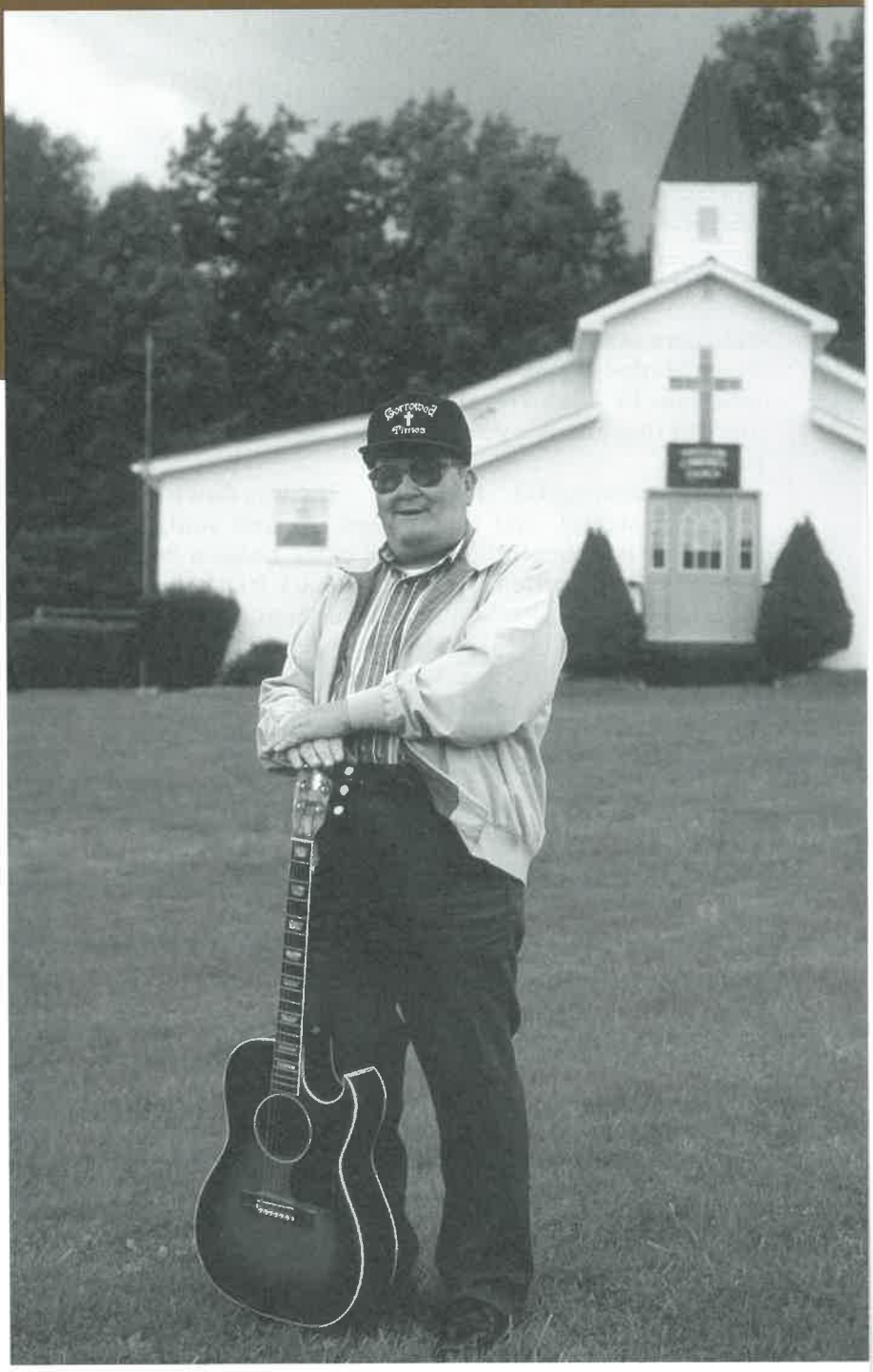
"When I got married to Sue, I was doing what I wanted to do," he says. "I never made very good money in country music, but I enjoyed it. That was the main thing."

John with a custom-made cowboy suit, dating from his brief stay at WWVA radio, Wheeling, in 1950. He soon returned to the Clarksburg/Bridgeport area, where he has remained, happily. Photograph by Carl E. Feather.

"Sounds of Home"

Text and photographs by Carl E. Feather

Songwriter Dorsey Wiseman



Several years ago, Dorsey Wiseman was walking through the Meadowbrook Mall in Clarksburg when he heard a woman play a familiar song on a piano outside a jewelry store. He approached the musician after she finished the song and asked her if she knew the song's name. She had no idea, but said she loved the music. Dorsey told her that the song she'd been playing was known as the "Lonesome Fiddle Waltz," and she was looking at the composer.

The Mabie native has been writing music since the 1960's, and his songs have made their way into the repertoire of many Mountain State gospel and country singers. Bridgeport musician John Graham frequently sings Dorsey's composition "When I Count My Blessings, the Best One Is You," a song Dorsey wrote to honor his wife Tippy.

Sutton daughter-mother duo Carolyn Connor and Missy Connor Scarbro perform several of Dorsey's tunes at their concerts, including his signature song "Beacon Light." Several other groups have expressed an interest in recording more of his gospel music, says Dorsey.

Dorsey's music also is played and celebrated

Songwriter Dorsey Wiseman with his guitar, standing in front of the Harrison Community Church in Mabie, Randolph County.

at the annual Singing in the Hills music gathering, started by Dorsey in 1974. The three-day gospel sing is held the second full weekend in August in the pavilion at Harrison Community Church, which rises on a hill above Dorsey's modest, white-block house on the road between Mabie and Cassity, in rural Randolph County.

Singing in the Hills was but an afterglow on a chilly Monday in late September when I first met Dorsey. The sky had alternately spat rain and broken into splotches of sunshine all afternoon. Between showers, we walked out to his grape arbor, where Dorsey snipped a couple of bunches of plump, sweet Concords from the vines and shared them with me.

As we walked across the road to the church, Dorsey told me how his father and several neighbors collected money to buy materials to construct the building, which they finished in 1957. His family gave the land to the church, built on the spot where his grandmother once had her garden.

Dorsey says the church was paid for in full when they drove the last nail in it, and it remains so to this day. "It has never owed five cents to anybody," he says of the independent congregation.

This arbor, this church, this house, this land, are imbued with memories and Wiseman history, established in this part of the country in 1916. Dorsey was born October 13, 1937, in Grafton. His parents Ben and Lanora moved back to the Wiseman homestead in Mabie when Dorsey was just a year old. In 1943, Dorsey's father built the house where Dorsey now lives and cleared the land all around and behind the house — land that was used for pasture.

Ben Wiseman spent 35 years in coal mines, then finished out his working days as a state highway employee. "He got into a bees' nest while working, got stung, and had two heart attacks," Dorsey says of his father's demise.

The youngest of four children, Dorsey sang as soon as he started talking. "I can't remember a time when I wasn't singing," he says. "My mother was the main reason for that. She taught all of us how to sing, and I've been singing all my life."

"Everybody on the mountain here played music of some kind. You just watched it to learn."

He also credits his mother for making him and his sisters — Lena, June, and Margaret — comfortable in front of a microphone.

"My mother would set a broom in front of us like a microphone stand, and that's how we got started," he says. Dorsey's mother loved music and played the piano at church. Like many other budding Appalachian musicians of the 1940's, Dorsey was inspired to play by "old-timers" who lived in the community.

"Everybody on the mountain here played music of some kind," he says. "You just watched it to learn."

His other teachers were the Saturday-night radio broadcasts of the "Grand Ole Opry" and local live radio shows.

"I used to listen to Hank Williams' songs, the Sons of the Pioneers, western music," he says. He also listened to Little John Graham and Cherokee Sue on Fairmont radio station WMMN, although he and Graham would not meet personally until the early 1990's. [See "Little John Graham and Cherokee Sue: A Radio Love Story," by Carl E. Feather; page 42.]

Dorsey chose the guitar as his instrument. "My father gave me a calf, and I raised it to a baby beef that could be sold at auction," Dorsey says. "I got $129.50 out of it. I bought a Gibson guitar off Keys' Music in Elkins. It was $139, and I lacked $10, and they trusted me for it."

Having his own guitar provided Dorsey with a ticket to perform. He sang in churches, schools, and on WDNE radio in Elkins. "I don't remember when I first sang on

Dorsey sings one of his songs at a music gathering in Ravenna, Ohio, in November 2003. Accompanying him are, from the left, Ray Sponagle, David Hamilton, Nelson Boosel, and Jimmy Metz.

Dorsey at his home in Mabie.

WDNE, but I was young, young, young," he says.

"He was a good singer, he sure was," recalls Mary Martin of Richmond, Virginia, who grew up at Mill Creek and recalls hearing Dorsey sing at her church. She says Dorsey probably could have become a professional, if he'd wanted to pursue it.

Despite his success in the Elkins music scene, Dorsey packed his guitar and headed off to the Army just two weeks following his graduation from high school in 1956. He ended up at Fort Knox, Kentucky, where he made friends with two other musicians: mandolin player Chuck Elmore and upright bass player Dave Brown. They formed the Fort Knox Trio and played bluegrass at venues on the post, plus the Lincoln Jamboree at Hodginsville, Kentucky, and, occasionally, at the Kentucky Jamboree. The trio emulated the Osborne Brothers in both style and content.

The weekend gigs paid each member of the trio about $20. "I drew $65 a month Army pay, and I made $80 a month playing music," he says. Unfortunately, the trio lasted only a year. It ended when Dave Brown headed back to North Carolina, and Elmore got in trouble for wrecking the general's new automobile.

Dorsey says he was not writing his own songs at that time; the muse came after he was discharged. From the Army, he came back to Mabie and tried to scratch out a living by building wooden cabinets at a Beverly factory.

He teamed up there with two other local musicians: Jimmie and Loren "Lodi" Currence of Cassity, who found a spot on WBOY television in Clarksburg. They had a twice-weekly bluegrass show on the TV station, as well as personal appearances in theaters and at other events. "In my opinion, the Currence Brothers was the best bluegrass band there's been around here in a long time," Dorsey says. [See "'The Spark to Play Music': Interview with Jimmie and Loren, the Currence Brothers," by Jack Waugh and Michael Kline, July-September 1980, also in the book *Mountains of Music: West Virginia Traditional Music from* GOLDENSEAL; see page 7.]

Dorsey began writing songs at about this time. His first song, "To Vietnam," was recorded by the Currence Brothers. Other early songs included "Roll On, You Lonesome Train" and "Big Sandy."

Dorsey says he can write about only what he hears and feels. Accordingly, his Christian faith and

In the early 1950's, Dorsey got his start in music by performing around the Elkins area. He is shown here at an appearance in Elkins at the 2003 Mountain State Forest Festival with singers Missy Connor Scarbro, at left, and Carolyn Connor, both of Sutton.

love of the mountains shine through his songs. His "Carolina Lonely" could well serve as a state song for that entity, and "Springtime in Virginia" pays homage to the mountains and their innate beauty. "When I Count My Blessings, the Best One Is You" expresses Dorsey's love for his wife.

"I write from life," Dorsey says.

"He writes about real-life things in a real manner, in a way that is so rare," says Marvin Clark of Beverly, Ohio. "He paints pictures with his music. Everything he sings paints a picture." Clark, patriarch of the Marvin Clark Family gospel group, has recorded Dorsey's "Beacon Light."

"Beacon Light" was inspired by a light tower on Rich Mountain that is visible from the front porch of Dorsey's house. Dorsey's father instructed him many years ago to look for the tower if he ever got lost while hunting in the woods.

"That has lived true for me and others by following that light," he says. "The light I follow today is from Mount Calvary."

Dorsey's song "Look What I Got for All Those Years" is a worker's midlife lament written from personal experience:

"I'm too old for hiring,
And I'm too young for retiring.
Looking down a road that seems to go nowhere.
I'm staring out the window,
Not sure of the way I should go.
And look at all I got for all those years."

He wrote "Old Times" with the help of son Benjamin, who drowned in the Mahoning River near Youngstown, Ohio, at the age of 15. Dorsey recalls his son as a talented musician who could play a country piano like Floyd Cramer. "We were writing songs right then. I like to say he helped me write," he says. Dorsey breaks into a haunting unaccompanied rendition of "Old Times":

"An old friend stopped by today,
Just to pass the time away.
We talked about days and years gone by,
About all our friends and loved ones gone on before.
How we wished it could be,
Just like old times."

In 1959, Dorsey married Harriet George, who was given the nickname of "Tippy" in childhood because she walked on her tiptoes. The couple had four children — daughters Kimberly (Underwood) and Cheryl (Town), and sons Timothy and Benjamin. Dorsey's $1.05-an-hour salary at the factory and moonlighting income from singing couldn't provide for the needs of his family. "You couldn't make a living on that. You just couldn't make it," he says.

While Dorsey feels he could have made a living at music, it would have meant going on the road and leaving his family behind. "I had a choice to make: go into music big time or stay at home and take care of my wife and children," he says. "I felt I owed it to my family to stay home and raise my children."

Like many young West Virginians of his generation, Dorsey followed the path north to the factories of northeast Ohio in search of better pay. Two of his sisters and their husbands had headed north in the late 1950's, to work at Packard Electric in Warren. Dorsey and Tippy followed their trail in March 1964, immediately after Dorsey finished his commitment to the Army Reserve. In Ohio, Dorsey soon found work as a welder and layout man for a structural steel company.

"Four dollars an hour," he says. "That was big money, compared to what I got in West Virginia."

Dorsey brought north the Gibson guitar that had served him so well during his Army days, as well as his music and faith. He had found the Lord at an early age, thanks to the spiritual guidance he received at the Methodist Church down the hill in Mabie.

This LP was Dorsey's first recording, made with his sisters June and Margaret while they were all living in Ohio in the 1970's. "Sounds of Home," by The Wisemans, included two of Dorsey's original songs.

Singing in the Hills takes place the second weekend in August each year at the pavilion of Harrison Community Church. Dorsey started this gospel music gathering in 1974. This photograph is from the 2003 event.

"We would walk from here to the church every morning, walk back home, and walk to church and back again every Sunday night. I've been living for the Lord ever since I was six or seven years old. It's paid off for me," he says.

Dorsey's faith and music converged in Ohio, where he wrote songs that he attributed to divine inspiration. "I'm really not the writer. I'm just the penman," he says of his songs.

In northeast Ohio, Dorsey teamed up with his sisters June and Margaret to make his first album, titled "The Wisemans: Sounds of Home," on Marbone Records. The long out-of-print album contained two of Dorsey's original songs: the title cut and "My Cup Runneth Over with His Love."

In the 1960's and '70's, northeast Ohio became a hotbed of country and bluegrass music, as various Appalachian migrants redefined their community around the fiddle, banjo, Dobro, and mandolin. Dorsey worked with a number of these mountain-rooted bluegrass groups in the region, including the Butler Brothers, Family Pride, and the West Virginia Travelers — the bluegrass band of Sutton native John Douglas.

Like many migrants from the hills, Dorsey frequently made the eight-hour trek back to his mountain home on weekends, vacations, and holidays. It was while he was on one of those visits back home that Dorsey received the inspiration to start Singing in the Hills. The instructions came while he was sitting in the pavilion of the Harrison Community Church.

"I got a determination in my mind I'm going to write that song and finish it. And when I get it done, it will be a pretty song."

"God told me to have it," he says. "He put it in my heart to have a sing there. God said, 'Here is where I want you to start it.'"

Back in Ohio, Dorsey experienced a long string of lay-offs that left him discouraged and tired. "Eight places shut down on me," he says. "The last one, the Mexicans came in and took the dies right off the machine I was working on. They laid us off and took all our jobs and moved them Mexico. I said, I might as well go back home and take care of Mom and Dad."

But hard times followed them back to Mabie, where they returned in the spring of 1993. While working at a sawmill, a grinding wheel blew apart and cut through nerves, muscles, and veins in Dorsey's left leg near the groin. A long, painful recovery followed.

Three years after that injury, in September 1996, Dorsey was involved in a traffic crash with a tractor-trailer, demolishing his vehicle. Thanks to the seat belts they were wearing, Dorsey and his passenger, granddaughter Elizabeth Barron, survived. But less than two months after the accident, Dorsey discovered a lump on his rib cage where the seat belt had impacted his body.

The lump turned out to be multiple myeloma, an aggressive cancer of the bone marrow. He sought treatment at the Cleveland Clinic, where doctors gave him a poor prognosis. The only hope they could give him was an experimental treatment, which Dorsey agreed to try.

Dorsey underwent 21 months of experimental chemotherapy. Partway through the treatment, doctors discovered that the drug was damaging his heart, and Dorsey underwent a five-bypass surgery. He went into remission for a while, but the cancer came back with a vengeance. At one point in 2001, he had cancer in 85 percent of his bone marrow, and his kidneys shut down. The doctor told his wife to make funeral and burial arrangements, but Dorsey believed God had something else for him to do.

"I went into complete remission," he says.

But the cancer returned, this time in his jaw. Doctors removed his left

Since being diagnosed with cancer in 1996, Dorsey has made more than 100 trips to the Cleveland Clinic for treatment. Here, he shares photographs with nurse Janice Reed and Dr. Mohamad Hussein.

jawbone and, in the spring of 2003, fashioned a new one using a bone from his lower leg. "They wrote on my hospital chart that I have a deformed jaw," he says. "But I don't have a deformed jaw, I have a reformed jaw. I used to put my foot in my mouth, now I got my whole leg in there," he says, with typical humor.

The cancer returned with full force in the summer of 2004, and once again Dorsey drew near to death's door. But yet another experimental treatment and a round of fervent prayers brought Dorsey healing just in time for him to preside at the 30th anniversary of Singing in the Hills.

"We've been here praying for him, and God's really been touching him," says Dorsey's friend and prayer partner from Coalton, Jerry Marco. "God's got a job for him to do. He's a good witness for the Lord."

While Dorsey has beat bone cancer for an incredible eight years, a feat that amazes his oncologist, the chemotherapy has damaged the nerves in his fingers so he no longer can play the guitar. It has also destroyed most of his hearing.

"My hearing keeps going down and down," Dorsey says. "But they can't take the music out of my mind."

Wherever he goes, Dorsey wears a black ball cap that says "Borrowed Times" on it. He uses it as an opener to tell people about how God spared his life so he could carry on a ministry of comfort and encouragement to other cancer patients.

During a 10-day stay in the clinic last summer, Dorsey held a revival in the cancer ward as he visited and uplifted patients in the final stages of their cancer.

"Now God's got me out of the music business, and He's got me into testifying," Dorsey says. "But the music is still a big part of my life."

Dorsey and Tippy have made more than 100 trips from Mabie to the Cleveland Clinic since he was diagnosed with the cancer. The travel, chemotherapy, and complications have kept him from writing songs these past eight years, but Dorsey says it is his desire to work with musicians like Marvin Clark to get his songs down on paper and perhaps write a few new ones based upon the many trials he's been through with the cancer.

He says one song in particularly keeps rolling over and over in his mind.

"I'm going to call it 'The Mountain Lullaby,'" he says. "I got a determination in my mind I'm going to write that song and finish it. And when I get it done, it will be a pretty song."

"Borrowed Times" reads the message on Dorsey's hat. Always a religious man, Dorsey feels he has been called to a special mission through his recent cancer experience.

"Lifting as We Climb"

By Ancella R. Bickley

Photographs by Michael Keller

Mrs. Thelma McDaniel, age 92, is the oldest member of the Charleston Woman's Improvement League, a black women's service organization founded in 1898. Mrs. McDaniel is shown here at the group's clubhouse on East Washington Street in Charleston.

"It was known in our community as a fine organization, and I was elated to be invited to join it," reminisces Mrs. Thelma McDaniel, a member of the black women's club, the Charleston Woman's Improvement League, for more than 50 years.

Still housed in their own clubhouse, a former residence on the corner of Jacobs and East Washington streets located between downtown and the Capitol Complex on Charleston's East End, the League owes its existence to nine black women, who came together more than 100 years ago to begin a club. The roll call of that gathering reads as a testimony to prominent black females of Charleston in the late-19th century: Mattie V. Lee, Fannie Cobb Carter, Blanche Jefferies Tyler, Nan Lou Stephenson, Mary Kimbrough, Mary L. Clark, Ammie

Members of the Charleston Woman's Improvement League in 1928. From the left, they are, seated, Mary Clark, Rebecca Bullard, Flora Webster Brooks, Ruth S. Norman, Jane Spaulding, Karolyn Franklin, Florence Gordan, Leota Claire, Nancy Carper, and Ethel Davis; standing in the second row are, from the left, Mary Kimbrough, Cornelia Wright, Lucenda Sanders, Hattie Clark, Vera Ford Powell, Carrie James Crichlow, E.A. McGhee, Lizzie Hopkins, Maude Wanzer, Inez Hall, Josephine Moore, Mary Carper Gray, and Ida Page; standing in the back row, from the left, are Flora Gardner, Nan Lou Stephenson, Sarah Bullard, Nina C. Gamble, Amy Hopkins, and Maude Clark Peters. Photograph courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, WVSA hereafter.

Hopkins, Sarah Bullard, and Rebecca Bullard.

The singular term "woman's" was used in the early naming of the organization for a reason. It is believed that, through this usage, members sought to emphasize not just group involvement, but the individual obligation that each woman had to personal and civic improvement.

The Charleston organization adopted the motto "Lifting as We Climb," as did other black women's clubs that were taking root in various parts of the country at that time. This motto came from their federation, the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). Established in 1896, the NACW was the first organization to unite black people on a national level. The motto encapsulated the concept that members' responsibilities as black club women extended beyond themselves; it suggested that as they advanced, they should help other black people to do likewise.

Although members of the black women's clubs were generally drawn from a skilled professional population, the all-female organizations provided opportunities for leadership that were not always available in the larger community. Within the Charleston Woman's Improvement League, the women themselves presided, decided upon their membership, and planned their programming and their civic and social involvements.

From its beginning in 1898, the Charleston Woman's Improvement League built an impressive record as a social outlet for its

League founder and first president Mrs. Blanche Jeffries Tyler. Photograph courtesy of WVSA, date unknown.

Cultural enrichment activities offered by the League included a performance by these "Cinderella Dancers." They are, from the left, Haralene Guest, Jo Ann Davis, and Marcha Cole. Photograph courtesy of WVSA, date unknown.

members and as a valued community service organization. Service activities during its first 40 years included buying beds for black hospital patients; aiding school children by supplying items such as milk, glasses, and shoes; contributing to the Red Cross, the Community Chest, the NAACP, a day nursery, and the Mattie V. Lee Home (a residence and support facility for black women in Charleston); sponsoring cultural activities such as lectures and dramatic and artistic presentations; and encouraging education through scholarships. In order to determine future social service needs for the black population, the League also helped to establish an inventory of the agencies and facilities available to the black community.

One dramatic program sponsored by the League in later years had particular significance for the Charleston community. In conjunction with the Kanawha Players, the League presented "Great Gittin' Up Mornin'," an award-winning play by black Charleston playwright, the late Ann Kathryn Flagg.

The Charleston Woman's Improvement League has never been a huge group. While membership was not anticipated to go beyond 50, "we never had quite that number," recalls Mrs. McDaniel, president of the League for many years.

"In my time, we usually had between 35 and 40 members. We met once a month," she remembers. "Before we had the clubhouse, we usually met in churches. We always had some sort of program, often a speaker. The hostesses for the meeting would select the speaker and plan the refreshments."

In the early years, the League maintained membership in the NACW, as did other black women's clubs in the state. "I wasn't a member of the Charleston group," says Mrs. Katherine Atwater of Boomer. "I belonged to the Montgomery Woman's Improvement League, [formed in 1903]. But we were all a part of the NACW, and we used to hold a statewide meeting annually. There were about six clubs," she remembers. "Among them were ours in Montgomery, one in Omar, one in Huntington, and the League in Charleston."

"Mrs. Spaulding was the president of the state association," Mrs. Atwater says, recalling the service of a woman remembered by many as a very dynamic leader. A member of the Charleston Woman's

The mortgage-burning ceremony at the clubhouse in 1958. From the left are Mary Kimbrough, Viola Cosby, Amy Hopkins, and Gertrude Jackson. Photograph courtesy of WVSA.

Ms. Jo Ellen Flagg of Charleston, a recent past-president of the League.

Improvement League, Mrs. Spaulding was its president for a time and led the movement to buy the clubhouse on Washington Street. Jane Morrow Spaulding was a social worker who had moved to Charleston in 1918 with her husband Dr. Albert Spaulding. In 1940, while she was president of the League, the daring notion of purchasing a clubhouse was put into effect. Unable to buy the property in its own name, the League did so in Mrs. Spaulding's name, with her husband signing the notes. Later, the property was transferred to the League, thus becoming what was, in all probability, the only clubhouse owned by a black women's organization in the state. In 1958, the League's ownership of the property became complete when the final mortgage payment was made and celebrated with a mortgage-burning ceremony.

In the minds of some, the purchase and maintenance of the clubhouse remains among the most important achievements of the League, though it was not done without sacrifice on the part of the members. "They once sold coffee in order to help with expenses," says Ms. Jo Ellen Flagg, one of the recent presidents of the organization.

Similarly, Mrs. Daisy Alston, who also served as one of the League's presidents, recalls the financial demands of supporting the clubhouse. "We often had to make repairs," she remembers. "We had to put a roof on several times."

In the days of segregated public facilities, the clubhouse became a particularly important asset for Charleston black people. Not only was it used by the League for its own meetings and activities, but, for a nominal fee, it was rented by others in the community for public meetings, luncheons, dinners, and private gatherings, such as weddings, receptions, family reunions, and so on. The modest rental fees helped to offset the costs of operating the facility.

Other important activities at the clubhouse were those centered around youth. Norman Jones recalls attending League-sponsored dances there as a youth. Mrs. McDaniel speaks eloquently of the Polly Pigtails and League Teens, two organizations that the League sponsored for girls. "I started the Polly Pigtails," Mrs. McDaniel says. "I had a six-year-old daughter, and I wanted some social outlet for her and other young girls. We met one Saturday a month."

Janice Davis Young, now a library technical assistant in the archives at West Virginia State University, has fond memories of her time in the Polly Pigtails. "I was Miss Polly Pigtail one year," she says. "We sold tickets, and I won. I was a member of the club when I was in the third through sixth grades. I grew up in Orchard Manor, and we went to meetings at the League clubhouse on Saturday, once a month. Mrs. Thelma McDaniel was in charge. We had snacks at the meetings and played games and learned deportment — sort of pro-

Janice Davis Young was a member of the Polly Pigtails as a girl and served as Miss Polly Pigtails one year. "We sold tickets, and I won," she says.

Thelma McDaniel prepares for a trip to the 1964 New York World's Fair with Polly Pigtails members, left to right, Cheryl Barkett, Connie Davis, and Brenda Sales. Photograph courtesy of WVSA.

fessional skills, such as etiquette and how to walk [properly]. I remember that, one Saturday, we were dressed up and went walking down Capitol Street. They also had a charm school for us. A representative from [a cosmetic company] came and talked to us, and we went down to Stone & Thomas Department Store and learned how to put make-up on.

"They took us on trips," Janice continues. "We went to Cincinnati to the zoo, to Detroit to see how cars were made, and to the World's Fair in New York. And they didn't charge us anything. The women did it," she says. "They were like second mothers to us."

Other early members of the League are also well remembered in Charleston. Among them are Mrs. Fannie Cobb Carter and Mrs. Ruth Stephenson Norman. "Miss Fannie," as she was familiarly known, was one of the founding members of the organization. A premier educator, she helped to begin the education department at West Virginia State College (now West Virginia State University), was a faculty member at Nannie Burroughs' school for black girls in Washington, D.C., and was seen as a mentor by many of Charleston's younger black teachers of her time, some of whom were also League members.

By joining the Woman's Improvement League, Mrs. Ruth Stephenson Norman became a second-generation member, following in the footsteps of her mother Nan Lou Stephenson, another one of the group's founders. A teacher at Garnet, the all-black high school that once served Charleston residents, and later at the Charleston Job Corps, Mrs. Norman was the embodiment of the League's motto, "Lifting as We Climb."

The opportunity that the League provided for members to get together with other black women, to join them in sisterhood and community service, and to engage with them in social activities, is treasured by Mrs. Daisy Alston. Mrs. Alston, who lives in Chesapeake, joined the organization nearly a half century ago. She has served as the League's president and as its historian.

"I don't get to meetings much anymore," she notes, "but I pay my dues." Mrs. Alston became a member of the League in about 1958, just after the Brown v. Board of Education decision and before the activism of the 1960's.

"We held 'Meet the Candidates' programs and encouraged the community to participate and to vote,"

Mrs. Daisy Alston of Chesapeake, age 91, has been a member of the League since 1958. "I don't get to meetings much anymore," she says, "but I pay my dues."

Janice Davis Young, Mrs. Thelma McDaniel, and current League president Mrs. Mary Snow enjoy a few moments together at the clubhouse. Sisterhood, community service, and social activities are important aspects of League membership for these women.

she says. "We maintained our youth-based programs, we supported the NAACP and the Mattie V. Lee Home, and we sustained our efforts in helping to meet the social service needs of the black population in Charleston. As a part of our public programming, we also continued to bring speakers, artists, dramatic productions, and so on to the local community," Mrs. Alston adds.

She recalls that the connection with the national organization (renamed in 1957 the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs) had dropped away by the time that she became a member of the League. But, she says, "I relished the opportunity to network with women of like interests within the state." Among others still living in Charleston who also served as League president is Mrs. Betty O. Tate.

In 1998, with Ms. Jo Ellen Flagg as its president, the League celebrated its 100th anniversary by saluting 100 black women of the Charleston area who, in Ms. Flagg's words, had "given of their time and talent to serve their community, church, neighborhood, family, and friends." In concluding her anniversary commentary concerning the women being honored, Ms. Flagg noted, "These are women who, although are not League members, embody our motto 'Lifting as We Climb.'"

Speaker at this occasion was Dr. Maureen A. McDaniel — the six-year-old girl who inspired her mother to begin the Polly Pigtails. Dr. McDaniel is a professor of art history at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia.

Recently renamed the Charleston Women's Improvement League, the organization is currently under the leadership of Mrs. Mary Snow. It is the only remaining black women's club of the early group begun in West Virginia so many years ago.

The Washington Street clubhouse is still a visible reminder of the Charleston Women's Improvement League. It is an important part of the organization's history and of the city's black past, yet its future is uncertain. Some members feel that it will not be long until the building disappears. "It tears me apart to think that we will lose it," Mrs. McDaniel says. "It has meant so much to us. Not only to the League, but to all of black Charleston. It is the only part of the past that black people still have on that street."

ANCELLA R. BICKLEY holds a doctorate in education from West Virginia University, is a former professor at WVU and West Virginia State University, and a former administrator at WVSU. She is the author or co-author of several books and articles about West Virginia black history and a frequent GOLDENSEAL contributor. Ancella's most recent story appeared in our Winter 2003 issue.

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

The Charleston Women's Improvement League clubhouse has been home to this black women's organization for more than half a century.

West Virginia Back Roads

Text and photographs
by Carl E. Feather

Friendly Glass, Glowing Memories

Louise Carr does an admirable job of living up to the character trait implied by the name of her Tyler County hometown.

Louise owns and operates a little glassware and gift shop on State Route 2 in the small town of Friendly, just south of where the Southern Baptists meet and across the highway from the United Methodists. Carr's Glass & Gift Shop has been a fixture here since 1977. According to Louise's recollections, that's longer than Friendly's other two businesses — a convenience store/gas station and doll shop — have been around.

An assortment of abandoned public, commercial, and residential structures, bearing the patina of neglected, graying wood, suggest this town once possessed a thriving economy. Likewise, Louise's whitewashed block building and its large plate-glass window hint of a more prosperous prior life. It has but two rooms: a large, open back section, where men in blue work clothes once earned a mechanic's wage by the light of 60-watt trouble lamps; and a front room with a tin ceiling, where repair bills were tallied, cans of oil sold, and small talk exchanged while motorists waited for their freshly tuned vehicles to emerge from the rear.

Louise Carr of Friendly, Tyler County, surrounded by glass items for sale at Carr's Glass & Gift Shop. Louise and her late husband Eugene started this business in 1977.

Louise sells glassware in these rooms — not the made-in-China kind of kitsch that floods most flea market tables, but the amber, dark-blue, orange, green, and crystal-clear masterpieces that once came from the red glow of West Virginia's glass furnaces. Some of the glassware still has the original factory stickers on it: Fenton, Viking, Westmoreland. Others have been identified by Louise and duly noted on handwritten white labels.

Louise can tell you the history of just about any Northern Panhandle glassware manufacturer and its product lines. She learned about glassware from her husband Eugene. After serving in the Seabees during World War II, Eugene got a job at L.G. Wright Glassware in New Martinsville. He was a traveling salesman for the glassware distributor, a job that took him away from home several weeks at a time. His

Louise welcomes a visitor to her shop. Located in a former automotive garage building on State Route 2, it is one of three remaining businesses in the town of Friendly.

first heart attack, in 1956, ended his career on the road. The couple and their six children moved back to Tyler County and the family farm, where, with the help of neighbors, they made a living raising beef cattle.

When the former garage building became available in 1974, the couple decided to purchase it and sell overstock West Virginia and Pennsylvania glassware.

"We stocked it with glass, and we've been here ever since," Louise says, with a soft smile that immediately makes every person who comes through the door feel welcome to browse.

The couple spent many days working side-by-side in the business: traveling the region purchasing glass overstock from factories and distributors, displaying it in their shop, keeping it clean, and, hopefully, bidding it farewell as it became a cherished reminder of that occasion when it was first discovered by the collector or received as a gift.

Early in their venture, Louise and Eugene approached Weston's Louie Glass about purchasing stock. "The plant manager told us they had sold out to Princess House, and [the new owner] didn't want the old stock. He offered it to us, but we would have to furnish our own cartons, pack all of it ourselves, and move it," Louise says. "We had just enough money to settle things, so that's what we done."

Louise still has about one-third of the stock she and Eugene acquired on that trip. Some of it remains packed in liquor boxes stashed under tables in the back room. The pilsner glasses, goblets, ice-tea glasses, and hand-blown items from Louie are part of the overall mix that includes Hobnail Milk Glass by Fenton, etched paperweights and medallion glass by Imperial, crackle glass by Blenko, and Viking's richly colored vases and specialty pieces. Mixed in with the glassware are more traditional flea market fare, such as framed pictures and candles.

Louise smiles softly as she recalls memorable incidents and customers from the past, back when Eugene was still alive, before the stroke that sent him to the hospital, then the nursing home and, finally, a little cottage on the country property of their daughter Anna Cooper.

"All six of our kids and their husbands and wives worked shifts to take care of him," Louise says. "They did that for four months."

The last three months were the most difficult, but the Carr children stood by their father.

Eugene died Thanksgiving Day 2003. They had been married 52 years. Between his illness and the grieving process, the store was closed for nearly a year. There was no question in Louise's mind that the store should re-open once spring arrived.

"I was kind of glad to get back in here," she says. "I know that's what he would of wanted me to do."

Louise keeps a photograph of her husband, herself, and one of their daughters near the cash register. It was taken on the occasion of Eugene's 60th high school class reunion. Like the glassware glowing in the front window of her shop, every person in the photograph is beaming with the joy of the moment.

"It's been fun," Louise says, the mist of memories sparkling in her friendly eyes.

Carr's Glass & Gift Shop is located on Route 2, Friendly. It is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day except Sunday throughout the year, unless the weather is inclement.

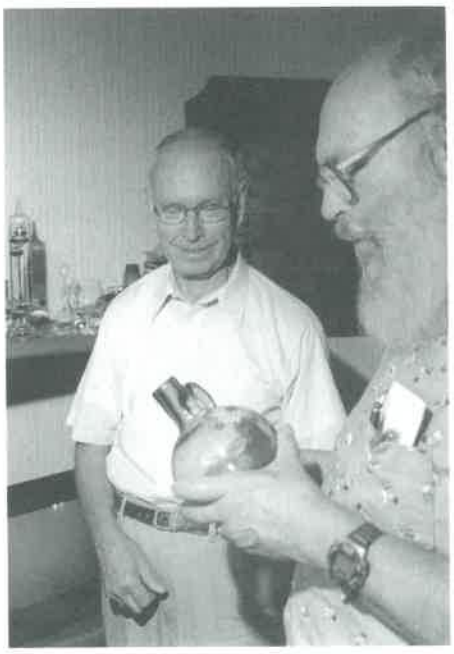
Current Programs • Events • Publications

GOLDENSEAL announcements are published as a service, as space permits. They are not paid advertisements, and items are screened according to the likely interests of our readers. We welcome event announcements and review copies of books and recordings, but cannot guarantee publication.

Holiday Activities

The Cultural Center celebrates the spirit of the season with several holiday activities planned in the coming weeks.

On Wednesday, December 8, Jim Mitchell, curator of the West Virginia State Museum, will deliver a lecture titled "Antiques as Holiday Gifts." Jim is an expert on old and collectable items, particularly early West Virginia glassware. He authored the story "Sharing the Weight: A Visit with Glassmaker Jennings Bunnell" in our Winter 1999 issue. The lecture will take place in the West Virginia State Theater, beginning at 7 p.m. Admission is free.



Jim Mitchell, at right, with glass vase. Photograph by Michael Keller.

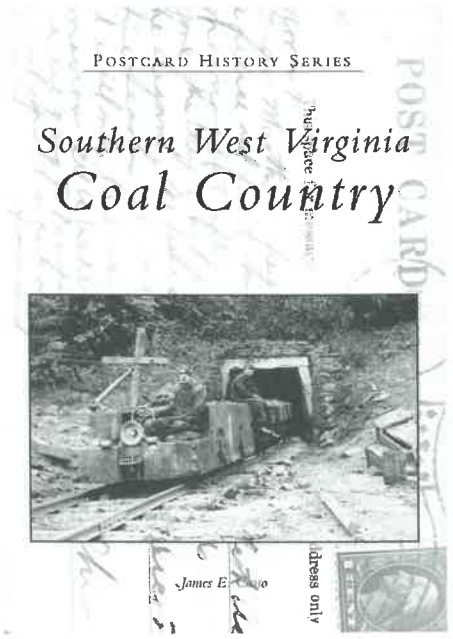
A holiday concert featuring Charleston pianist Bob Thompson will take place in the State Theater on Thursday, December 16, beginning at 8 p.m. The concert is titled "Joy to the World" and is sponsored by West Virginia Public Broadcasting. Advance tickets are available for $15.50, plus handling, by calling 1-800-594-8499.

Free noontime concerts will be offered in the Great Hall of the Cultural Center during the week of December 6-10, featuring various styles of music, ranging from contemporary folk to rock, soul, choral, and bluegrass. Free films will be shown in the State Theater on December 11, 18, and 27-30, at 1 and 4 p.m. For more information about these activities, call (304)558-0162 or visit www.wvculture.org.

New Coal Books

Three new books look at West Virginia's coal heritage from different angles.

A Guide to Historic Coal Towns of the Big Sandy River Valley is, as the name implies, a look at communities on both sides of the river that separates West Virginia and Kentucky, and its tributaries. Rather than providing a historical perspective, however, the book offers a contemporary look at these surviving towns, arranged by the highways that serve them. West Virginia areas included are Wayne, Mingo, McDowell, and Logan counties. The book also provides a brief overview of the coal industry, its history, and many of the social realities that accompanied it in this region. The 350-page paperbound book is written by George D. Torok, and is published by the University of Tennessee Press. It is available for $25.95, plus shipping, by calling 1-800-621-2736, or visit www.utpress.org.



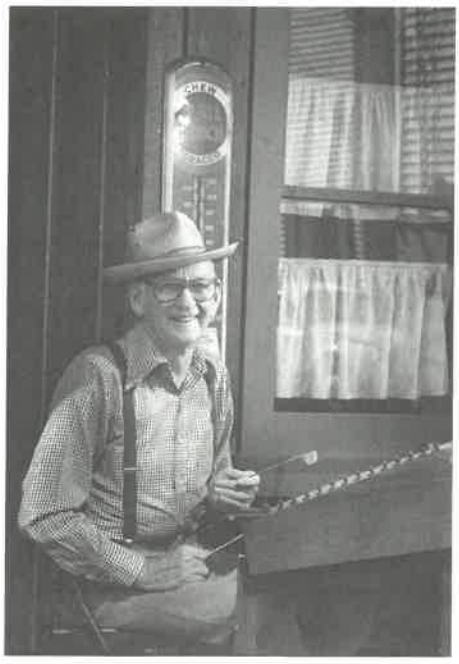
Hundreds of vintage postcards are featured in a new volume from Arcadia Publishing, titled *Southern West Virginia Coal Country*, by author and GOLDENSEAL contributor James Casto. The 128-page book is part of Arcadia's Postcard History Series, and includes views from the southern half of the state, dating from the first half of the 20th century. While many of these images reveal the area's coal heritage, the book also includes a variety of urban scenes from cities as far north as Lewisburg, Charleston, and Huntington. *Southern West Virginia Coal Country* sells for $19.99, plus shipping, and is available by calling 1-888-313-2665 or on-line at www.arcadiapublishing.com.

[See "'I Am in a Swell Place Now': Early McDowell County Postcards," by Jean Battlo; page 18.]

Growing Up in Bloody Mingo, West Virginia, by Andrew Chafin, is a personal reminiscence of the author's childhood years during the 1950's. A distant relative of patriarch Devil Anse Hatfield, Chafin relates humorous and poignant tales, mixed with social and political commentary on life in coal country. The 126-page paperbound book is published by Heritage Books. It sells for $23, plus shipping, and is available by calling 1-800-876-6103, or on-line at www.heritagebooks.com.

Worley Gardner Festival

The memory of Morgantown musician Worley Gardner will be celebrated at the 27th annual Gardner Winter Music Festival, scheduled February 25-26 at South Middle School in Morgantown. Worley was known as a pioneering hammered dulcimer player, an inspiring teacher and dance caller, and an avid promoter of local history. He was the subject of a GOLDENSEAL story in our Summer 1992 issue, titled "Worley Gardner: Mountain Music, Dance, and Dulcimers," by Mark Crabtree.



Worley Gardner with hammered dulcimer. Photograph by Mark Crabtree

For more information about the Gardner Winter Music Festival, call (304)292-0482 or visit www.gwmf.org.

Hampshire 250

West Virginia's oldest county celebrates its 250th year in 2004, as Hampshire County looks back on two-and-a-half centuries of local heritage. Various activities have taken place throughout this year to mark this anniversary, including several ambitious publishing and recording projects.

A new county history book, titled *Hampshire County, West Virginia: 1754-2004*, chronicles key chapters from the county's past in a 262-page, large format, hardbound edition. Produced by the Hampshire County 250th Anniversary Committee and edited by Roberta R. Munske and Wilmer L. Kerns, the book includes the work of dozens of local and regional authors and features well-written and concise entries on topics ranging from Native American history, Hampshire County forts, and George Washington to chairmaking, geology, animals, and ecology. The book sells for $29.95, plus shipping, and is available from the Hampshire County CVB, 91 South High Street, Romney, WV 26757; phone (304)822-7221 or visit www.hampshire250.org.

In addition, a new recording and booklet concerning Hampshire County traditional music are also available. The two-CD set and 23-page booklet, both titled "All Smiles Tonight," celebrate generations of local music and highlight a range of performers from the region. A review is included in "Mountain Music Roundup" on page 64.

Fairmont Postcard Book

More than 100 postcards have been reproduced in the new publication, *Greetings from Fairmont: A Century of the City's Post Cards*, by Raymond Alvarez. The book provides a brief history of Fairmont as illustrated through postcards, along with information about the evolution of the postcard industry. It is based on an educational CD ROM presentation completed by the author in 2002. Some of this material appeared in the article "The View from Fairmont: A Century in Postcards," by Raymond Alvarez; Winter 2003.

The 64-page booklet sells for $5, plus postage, from the author via e-mail at mralva@earthlink.net.

Announcements Welcome

Planning a public event or heritage activity? Don't forget to send press materials to GOLDENSEAL so we can let our readers know. Please keep in mind that our deadlines are three to five months in advance of the date of the event.

Event date	*Deadline*
March-May	January 15
June-August	April 15
September-November	July 15
December-February	October 15

Send press releases to GOLDENSEAL, The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305.

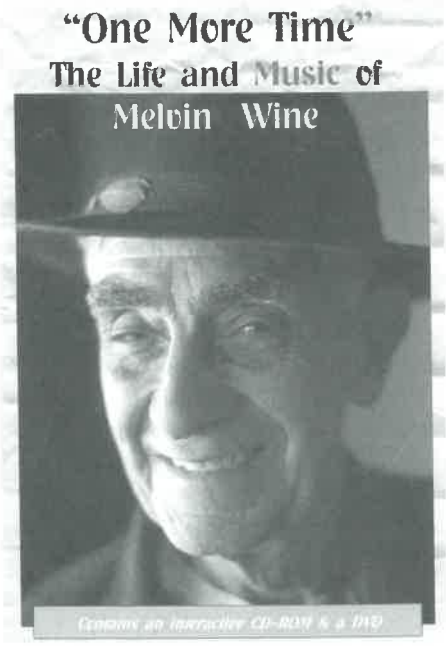
Mountain Music Roundup

By John Lilly

A wealth of retrospective recordings released this past year feature some of the guiding lights of West Virginia traditional music, who have gone on. At the same time, several new recordings by living artists assure us that the circle will, indeed, remain unbroken.

Melvin Wine has been mentioned in these pages many times. The revered Braxton County fiddler was the only person to be featured twice on the cover of GOLDENSEAL — Summer 1991 and Spring 1999. He was the first recipient of the coveted Vandalia Award (1981), received the National Heritage Fellowship (1991), and was the subject of a feature story in our Summer 1991 edition, titled "Melvin Wine," by Susan Leffler. Before he passed away in March 2003 at age 93, Melvin released several fine recordings, was the subject of at least one movie, and had a book written about him. What more could be said?

Well, plenty, as it turns out, thanks to a ground-breaking CD-ROM/DVD release from the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College, titled "'One More Time': The Life and Music of Melvin Wine." This high-tech exploration of Melvin's life began several years before his death, as researchers paid many visits to his home near Copen, recording and video taping conversations with him and preserving fiddle tunes, played by Melvin in his haunting, riveting style.

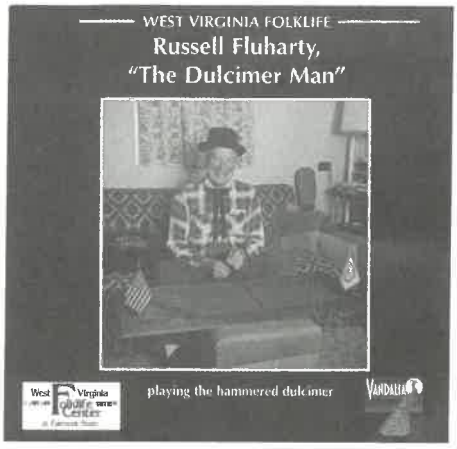


The CD-ROM includes scores of anecdotes, family stories, jokes, and reminiscences as told by Melvin in his own words. They are arranged by topics, such as Early Days, Religious Life, Work, etc., and offer a cherished opportunity to visit once more with Melvin, seated in his living room, spinning tales. The CD-ROM also includes audio recordings of more than 200 fiddle tunes from Melvin's vast repertoire, many of them accompanied by video clips, showing Melvin's bowing and fingering techniques. A "slide show" of still photographs revisits many scenes from Melvin's life and community.

The accompanying DVD includes four films or videos of Melvin. The first is *Melvin Wine: Old-Time Music Maker*, originally released in 1993 by filmmaker Bob Boles. Also included is a visit with Melvin on his front porch, an informal performance by Melvin at the local Copen Community Center, and Melvin's final appearance on stage at the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins, presumably in the fall of 2002.

Producers Jimmy Triplett and Marylin Palmer-Richards, and executive producers Gerald Milnes and Margo Blevin, are to be congratulated for a deep, heartwarming tribute to a true West Virginia treasure. While some of the technology might be new and challenging to certain readers (and editors!), those with reasonably modern computers and at least one person in the house who knows how to use them will get many hours of enjoyment out of this package. More importantly, they will gain a fuller appreciation of the life and legacy of Melvin Wine. "'One More Time': The Life and Music of Melvin Wine" contains two computer disks and sells for $30. It is available on-line at www.augustaheritage.com, or phone (304)637-1209.

Russell Fluharty of Marion County was instrumental in the rebirth of interest in the hammered dulcimer during the late 20th century, and a new CD and book document his music and life. Born near Mannington in 1906, Russell received the Vandalia Award in 1986. He was the subject of a GOLDENSEAL story, "Russell Fluharty: The Dulcimer Man," by Ken Sullivan,



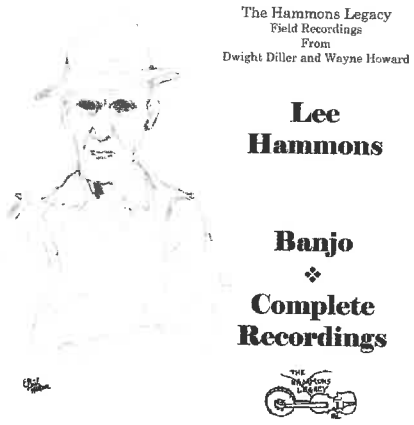
in Winter 1986. When he passed away in 1989, he left behind many students, a large volume of notebooks and artwork, and a few recordings.

A 1970 LP recording of Russell has now been reissued on CD by the West Virginia Folklife Center at Fairmont State University. "West Virginia Folklife featuring Russell Fluharty, 'The Dulcimer Man,'" contains 18 instrumental tracks of traditional and old-time music played on the solo hammered dulcimer. Well-known numbers, such as "When You and I Were Young, Maggie," "Turkey in the Straw," and "Skip to My Lou" are included, along with Fluharty originals, "Dulcimer Jig" and "Mohans Run Rag." The playing is relaxed and understated, allowing Russell's love of these old melodies and the complex tone of the instrument to take center stage. This CD is a welcome documentation of Fluharty's playing for those already familiar with his music, and a fine introduction to the man and his instrument for new listeners.

A biography of Russell Fluharty has also been released by Fairmont State Press, titled *The Dulcimer Man: The Russell Fluharty Story*. Written by his daughter, the late Twila Dawn Fluharty, and based on 60 years of memoirs and notes kept by her father, the 181-page paperbound book offers details from Russell's family life, his musical experiences, and community involvement. It includes a listing of personal appearances from the 1930's through the 1980's, a bibliography, and many illustrations.

The Russell Fluharty book ($20) and CD ($15) are available from the West Virginia Folklife Center at Fairmont State, 1201 Locust Avenue, Fairmont, WV 26554; phone (304)367-4403.

A third West Virginia musical icon whose work is being lovingly documented is the late **Lee Hammons** of Pocahontas County. Born in the 1880's (exact date uncertain), Lee lived the life of a rugged mountaineer, providing for 10 children while working in timber, coal, and other demanding jobs. In his early days, Lee was a proficient and active musician, but gave up music in 1923. Forty-six years later, he returned to playing, at least in part at the urging of visiting younger musicians, who sought out Lee and other members of the now-famous Hammons family. Lee Hammons passed away in 1980.



"Lee Hammons: Complete Banjo" is a new CD release that includes an amazing 56 tracks of mostly solo banjo music, played in the clear, archaic style associated with members of this extended and musically rich family. The recordings were made between 1969 and 1980 by Dwight Diller and Wayne Howard as field recordings and portray Lee's banjo style and repertoire in an informal home setting. The recordings have been digitally remastered, but retain the casual feel and "unscrubbed" nature of the personal visits that created them. Some of the tunes — "Cripple Creek," "Pretty Polly," "Walking in the Parlor" — are titled and documented, with several versions of the same tune being included. Others are untitled or are simply fragments of tunes, garnered from the reels of home recordings the two young men made during their many visits.

"Lee Hammons: Complete Banjo" is the first in an expected series of CD releases, focusing on the music of the Hammons family and produced by a volunteer group that calls itself the Hammons Legacy Team. To purchase a copy, or for more information, go to www.dwightdiller.com or call (304)653-8885.

Three recently released CD's from Ken Davidson and his Triagle-far Records bring back out-of-print titles from the old Kanawha Records label. "Elzics Farewell: Old-Time Songs and Tunes from Clay County, West Virginia," features the fiddle, banjo, and singing of legends **French Carpenter** and **Jenes Cottrell**. Originally released on LP in about 1964, this collection includes some of the most influential traditional music performances of the past 40 years. Titles, such as "Camp Chase," "Wild Horse," "Yew Piney Mountain," "Gospel Plow," "Elzics Farewell," and "Old Christmas Morning," were rare at the time, but are now common repertoire for many West Virginia old-time bands and musicians. And for good reason. This important recording belongs in the home of

anyone interested in the roots of traditional music from central West Virginia.

"Billy Cox: The Dixie Songbird" is a re-issue of another 1960's Kanawha Records LP, featuring the singing, guitar, and harmonica playing of Cox, once a popular songwriter and recording artist. Born in Kanawha County in 1897, **Billy Cox** became a radio entertainer in Charleston. He went on to make 147 records

between 1933 and the 1940's for various labels, many under his own name and 60 with duet partner Cliff Hobbs. The 17 tracks offered here were recorded in the 1960's, after Ken Davidson discovered a broke and discouraged Cox living in poverty in North Charleston. Receiving financial aid from the Grand Ole Opry trust fund, Davidson returned Cox to the studio and recorded him singing a representative selection of his typically unpredictable material. Songs range from humorous ("Dang My Pop-Eyed Soul") to mournful ("Wino's Last Prayer") to topical ("Franklin D. Roosevelt's Back Again"). Many of these songs were written by Cox, including his best-known number, "(My) Filipino Baby."

Fiddler **Robert "Georgia Slim" Rutland** was a respected musician at several West Virginia radio stations in the early 1930's. Born in Georgia in 1916, he played as a young man with Frank Dudgeon, Buddy Starcher, Lee Moore, and Harmie Smith in the Mountain State, before moving on to Tennessee, Oklahoma, and Texas. A new CD, titled "Raw Fiddle," re-releases a 1960 LP of Rutland playing 12 unaccompanied fiddle tunes, including "Done Gone," "Black Berry Blossoms," "Over the Waves," and "Mocking Bird."

These three new CD's sell for $14.95 each, plus $2 postage, and are available from Tri-agle-far Records, P.O. Box 4112, Dayton, OH 45401; phone (937)781-0093.

"All Smiles Tonight" is the title of a new recording celebrating heritage music of Hampshire County [see "Current Programs*Events*Publications," page 62]. This impressive two-CD set includes more than 50 musicians and bands, playing 62 tunes and songs. With one or two exceptions, these recordings represent the work of living musicians, still active in the area. Their styles range from traditional and contemporary folk and bluegrass to Black gospel, blues, and ragtime. It was recorded and edited by GOLDENSEAL contributors Michael and Carrie

Kline and offers a snapshot of this historic region and its musical life today.

A companion booklet is also available, written by Michael Kline. The 23-page booklet provides photographs of the performers, as well as analysis and commentary about the music and its role in the life of Hampshire Countians through the years. The booklet sells for $10, the CD for $20, or both for $28, plus $4 postage. They are available from Hampshire County CVB, 91 South High Street, Romney, WV 26757; phone (304)822-7221.

Ginny Hawker and **Tracy Schwarz** of Gilmer County are two of the most visible and respected traditional singers and musicians in the state today. Their new CD, titled "Draw Closer," shows the pair singing duets, solos, and trios, accompanied by guitar, mandolin, fiddle, and bass, as fine as you are likely to hear. Ginny's voice is especially well suited to lonesome mountain ballads and unaccompanied Primitive Baptist hymns, though she and Tracy both shine as their voices blend on Carter Family numbers and other harmony songs from the early days of country music. "Draw Closer" is a varied collection, tied together by an excellent choice of material and the powerful, sincere delivery of these two mountain talents. Released on Rounder Records, it is available on-line at www.rounder.com.

JOHN LILLY is the editor of GOLDENSEAL.

Goldenseal Index

Volume 30, 2004

Articles that appeared in Volume 30 are listed in the index below under the categories of Subject, Author, Photographer, and Location.

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

The index for the first three volumes of GOLDENSEAL appears in the April-September 1978 issue; the index for Volumes 4 and 5 is in the January-March 1980 magazine. The index for each successive volume appears in the final issue of each calendar year. The cumulative index is available on our Web site at www.wvculture.org/goldenseal/gsindex.html.

Subject

Author

Photographer

Location

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION REQUIRED BY 39 U.S.C. 3685 FOR GOLDENSEAL: WEST VIRGINIA TRADITIONAL LIFE (U.S.P.S. No. 013336), Filing date October 1, 2003, published quarterly, at The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Number of issues published annually: 4. Annual subscription price: $17. The general business offices of the publisher are located at The Cultural Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. John Lilly is the contact person at (304)558-0220.

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The average number of copies of each issue during the preceding 12 months are:
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Net press run:
B) Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 15,304
1)Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541
2) Paid In-County Subscriptions -0-
3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution 1,174
4) Other Classes mailed Through the USPS -0-
C) Total paid and/or Requested Circulation: 16,478
D) Free Distribution by Mail:
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2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541 -0-
3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS -0-
E) Free Distribution Outside the Mail -0-
F) Total Free Distribution -0-
G) Total Distribution 16,478
H) Copies Not Distributed
(Office Use) 1,395
(Returns) 1,002
I) Total 18,875
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 100%

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A) Total no. of copies 18,500
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3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution 1,101
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John Lilly, Editor

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Take advantage of this special offer during our 30th anniversary year.
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- Boatbuilding
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- Mountain State Women
- Blackville Pottery
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Fall 2000
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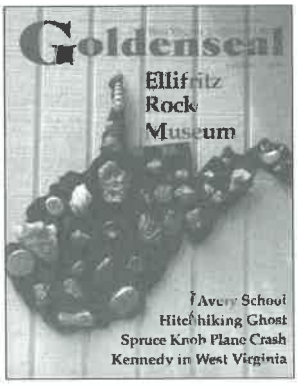
- 1960 Kennedy Campaign
- Singing Doorkeepers
- Otsego
- Green Bank Observatory



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- Slovenes in Richwood
- PartheniaEdmonds
- Armstead Mining Family

Spring 2001
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- 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
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- Malden's Norton House

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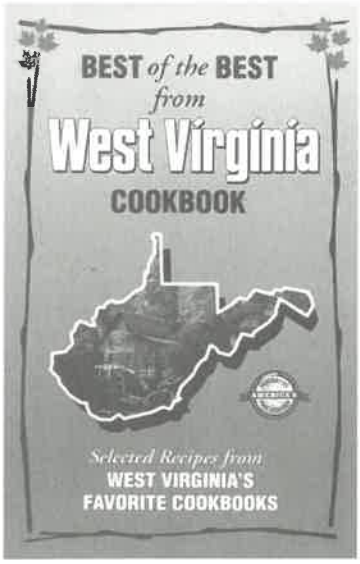
New Cookbook Available

Holidays mean food, and West Virginia offers some of the finest food around, according to a new cookbook of selected recipes from around the state.



Best of the Best from West Virginia Cookbook is a recent collection of regional dishes assembled and edited by Gwen McKee and Barbara Moseley, part of the "Best of the Best State Cookbook Series" from Quail Ridge Press.

What makes this book unique is the impressive catalog of small, local, and self-published cookbooks the editors assembled in gathering their recipes. Fifty-eight of these books are listed, along with their covers, ordering information, and brief descriptions, providing a tremendous reference guide for those interested in collecting state cookbooks, or simply adding to their kitchen libraries. Included are titles such as *Bootstraps and Biscuits*, by Anna Lee Terry [see "Making Jam from Sour Grapes: Anna Lee Terry and Her Mountain Cookbook," by Mary Rodd Furbee; Winter 1997]; *Gypsy, West Virginia, 100th Anniversary Cookbook*; *Pocahontas County Hunter's Cookbook*; *United Methodist Ministers' Wives Cook Book*, and many others.

The book is spiced up with little-known facts and trivia about the Mountain State and photographs of state landmarks, including the famous Coal House in Williamson, the State Capitol in Charleston, the New River Gorge Bridge in Fayette County, Seneca Rocks, and other sites.

The book includes approximately 500 recipes, a detailed index, and information about other books in the "Best of the Best State Cookbook Series."

Best of the Best from West Virginia Cookbook sells for $16.95 and is available at local bookstores, or by phoning 1-800-343-1583; on-line at www.quailridge.com.

Goldenseal

Coming Next Issue...

- Newell Basketball
- Myers Remedy Company
- 1932 Paint Creek Flood
- Felton Dairy

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

Fall 2002
- Flatwoods Monster
- Deaf and Blind Schools
- Long's Store
- Lost Creek
- Preacher Denver Hill

Winter 2002
- Berlin, Lewis County
- Lebanese in Clarksburg
- Death of Hank Williams
- Gravedigger Dallas Dunn
- Volcano

Spring 2003
- Stained Glass Dome
- Pallottine Sisters
- George Hajash
- West Virginia Coon Hunters String Band
- Nuzum Dairy Farm

Summer 2003
- General Charles R. Fox
- Wedding of the Bluefields
- Norwalk Underslung Automobile
- Bulltown
- Country Store Opry

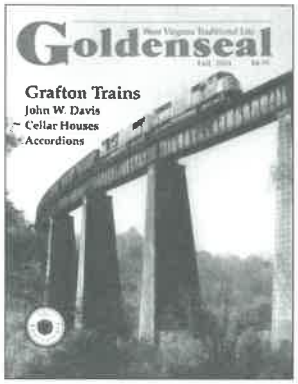
Fall 2003
- Artist Boyd Boggs
- Odd Fellows Home
- Laying Track in Nicholas County
- Ikie's Tomb
- Bill Dysard

Winter 2003
- Weaver Dorothy Thompson
- Fairmont Postcards
- Fountain Hobby Center
- Old Central City
- Lafadie Belle Whittico

Spring 2004
-Mack Samples
-Weirton Bus Crash
-*Hearth & Fair*
-Lester & Linda McCumbers
-*Wetzel Republican*

Summer 2004
-1939 World's Fair
-West Virginia State Songs
-Oakhurst Links
-Beekeeping
-Pendleton County Preacher

Fall 2004
-Grafton Trains
-Candidate John W. Davis
-Ritchie County Root Cellars
-Snowdon Crane Murder
-Accordions



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___ Summer 2001/Train Photography
___ Fall 2001/Apples, Apples, Apples
___ Winter 2001/Veterans Memorial
___ Spring 2002/Coal Heritage
___ Summer 2002/*Princess Margy* Sternwheeler
___ Fall 2002/Flatwoods Monster
___ Winter 2002/Berlin, Lewis County
___ Spring 2003/Stained Glass Dome
___ Summer 2003/General Charles R. Fox
___ Fall 2003/Artist Boyd Boggs
___ Winter 2003/Weaver Dorothy Thompson
___ Spring 2004/Mack Samples
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PHOTO CURIOSITY

Whatzit? We found this curious object among some old files in the GOLDENSEAL office, tucked away behind some pictures of folk art that appeared in our January-March 1979 issue, taken by folklorist Elaine Eff.

We asked Culture and History photographer Michael Keller to enlarge this image from the original contact sheet, and Mike's keen eye noticed, on a separate photo, the words, "Desined [sic] — Built by Leland Feamster." We checked the handy GOLDENSEAL index and, sure enough, found an article titled "One Piece at a Time: The Small World of Leland Feamster," by Andy Yale; Spring 1985.

As it turns out, Leland Feamster had a gift for making these mechanical gizmos and devoted a good deal of his time and resources to their creation. Andy Yale described Leland as a "tinkerer and a practical dreamer." According to the article, Leland lived around Alderson, near the Greenbrier and Summers county line. His father was a jeweler, and Leland was brought up in the watchmaker's trade. He later got into the car business and had a dealership for more than 20 years.

It is possible that Leland's showroom was the site of Elaine Eff's late-1970's photograph.

With parts gathered from junkyards, flea markets, hobby shops, and record stores, Leland spent from one to three months building each of his unique contraptions. Once completed, they flashed, twirled, bobbed, and played music, sometimes utilizing several electric motors at once to operate the various functions. By 1984, Leland estimated that he had built 150 different ones and had opened his own shop — The Small World — to display them.

Whatever happened to Leland Feamster? If you recall this fascinating individual or his merry mechanical marvels, let us know at the GOLDENSEAL office.

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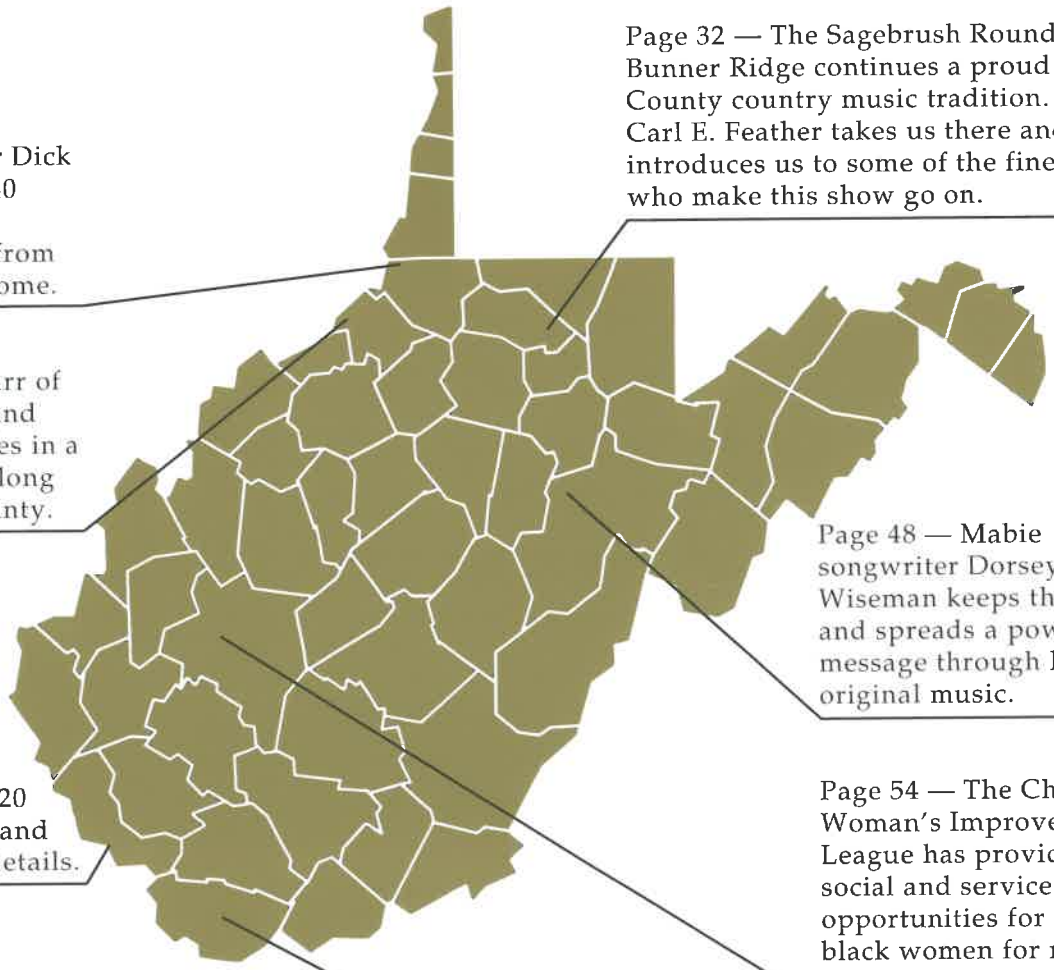
Inside Goldenseal



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