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Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Winter 2017 $5.95

Silver Bridge

This 84-foot monument at Tu-Endie-Wei State Park honors the Virginia Militia soldiers who fought in the 1774 Battle of Point Pleasant. Many of these soldiers are buried in the park, as are the remains of pioneer Anne Bailey and Cornstalk, the Shawnee leader at the battle. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

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Winter 2017

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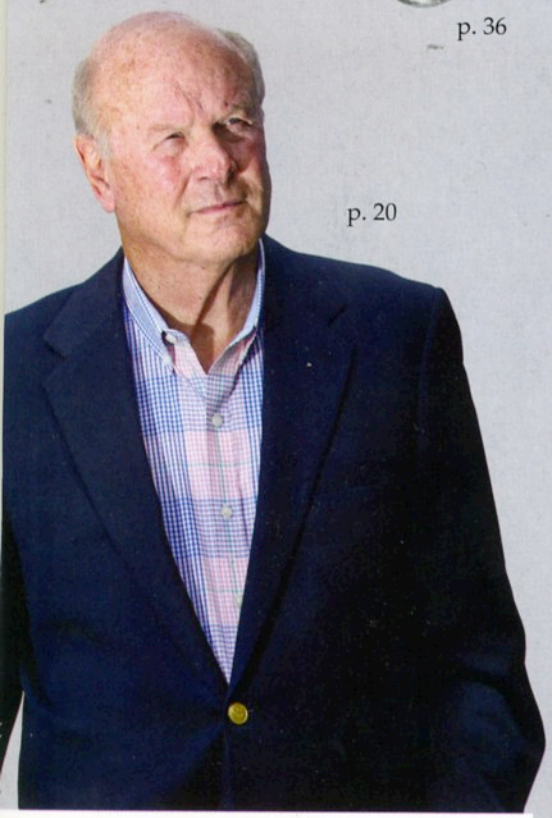

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On the cover: Recovery crews hoist the wreckage of the Silver Bridge from the Ohio River at Point Pleasant, December 1967. Courtesy of the Point Pleasant River Museum & Learning Center.

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Published by the
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From the Editor

Silver Bridge. Farmington. The Marshall plane crash. Buffalo Creek. Willow Island.

All in just over a decade. And there were others: Hominy Falls, Blacksville, the 1977 floods, just to mention a few.

These disasters were set against a turbulent backdrop: civil unrest, Watergate, violent coal strikes, deadly protests over textbooks, long gas lines, high inflation, and vanishing jobs, not to mention the constant fear of the world ending in a mushroom cloud. Also, nearly 2,000 West Virginians died in Vietnam, at a rate nearly 43 percent higher than the rest of the nation.

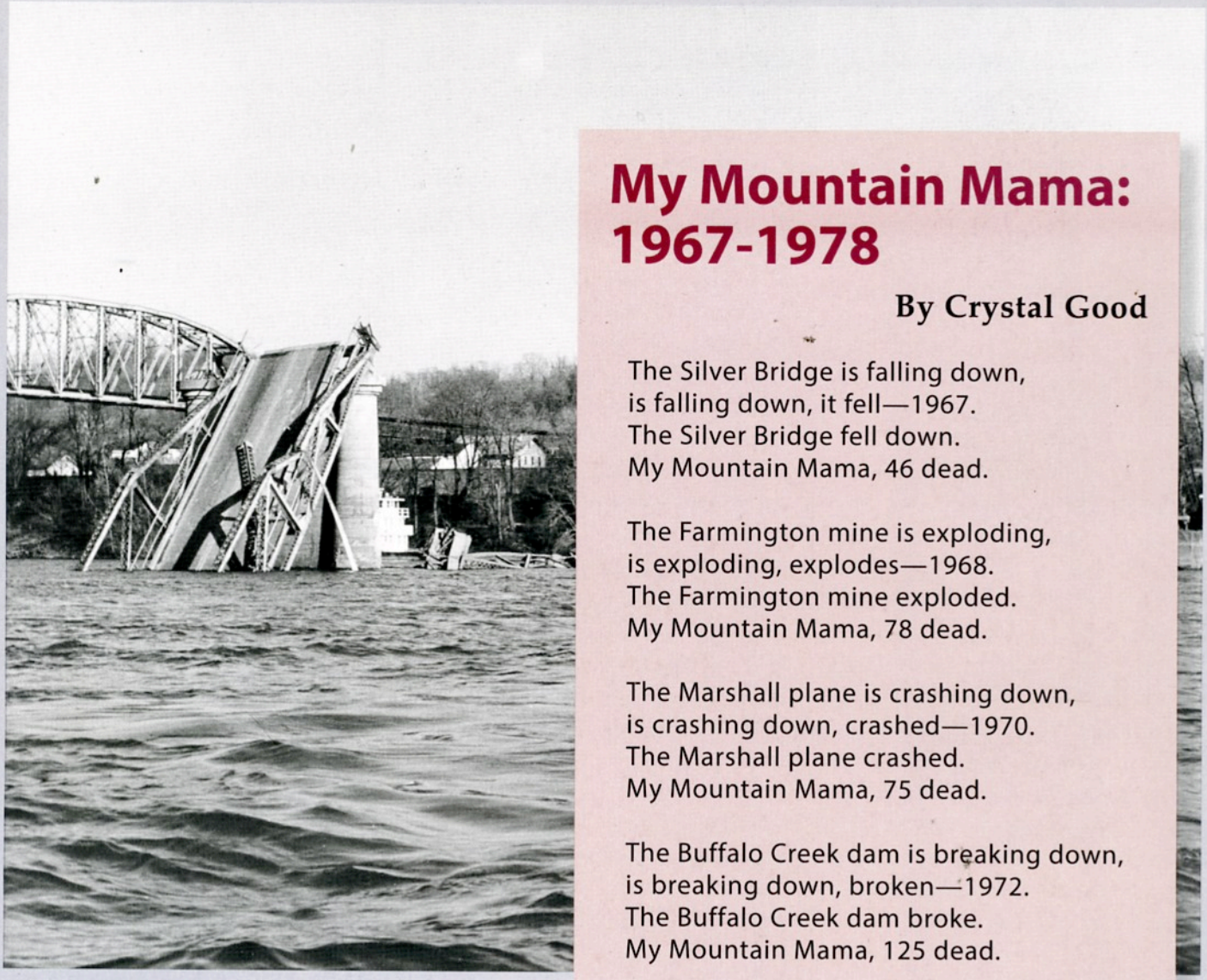
All of this was a big part of my childhood—and anyone else's who grew up in West Virginia during the '60s and '70s. Clearly, though, things were a far sight better than they were for the generation before me. But, from listening to my parents and others who sacrificed during the Great Depression and World War II, they seemed to have much more of one sentiment that my generation has struggled with—hope.

Why? In part, they weren't surrounded by negative news all the time. Despite living through one of the hardest times in U.S. history, they seemed to have a level of optimism my generation mostly lacks. They had hope the Depression would eventually end and hope the Allies would win the war. It was instilled into them.

Growing up as a child in the '60s and '70s, I watched every night as Walter Cronkite told us the way it was—the bad with the good. West Virginia didn't make the national news very often, but when we did, it was never good. This hasn't changed much. As we're constantly reminded, West Virginia is perennially 50th in about everything and a common butt of jokes. Long ago, those of us who grew up here developed thicker skins to endure the putdowns. But the negative news, particularly when lives are lost, cannot be shrugged off like a bad one-liner from a comedian. And ignoring our problems, like the recent prescription drug epidemic, just compounds them.

Some of our state's disasters, like Silver Bridge and the Marshall plane crash, can be attributed to innocent, although tragic, human error that would have been virtually impossible to anticipate. Others, like Farmington, Buffalo Creek, Willow Island, and now the drug epidemic, have been entirely preventable. In each case, people and institutions—including some we entrust to protect us—knowingly looked away. From birth, we've been taught to learn from our mistakes, but, to paraphrase Bob Dylan, how many times have we turned our heads to pretend that we just don't see?

The first half of this issue is unquestionably sad. The story of the Silver Bridge is one of



The Silver Bridge after its collapse. Photo by Herb Clagg courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Maurice Hamill Collection.

My Mountain Mama: 1967-1978

By Crystal Good

The Silver Bridge is falling down,
is falling down, it fell—1967.
The Silver Bridge fell down.
My Mountain Mama, 46 dead.

The Farmington mine is exploding,
is exploding, explodes—1968.
The Farmington mine exploded.
My Mountain Mama, 78 dead.

The Marshall plane is crashing down,
is crashing down, crashed—1970.
The Marshall plane crashed.
My Mountain Mama, 75 dead.

The Buffalo Creek dam is breaking down,
is breaking down, broken—1972.
The Buffalo Creek dam broke.
My Mountain Mama, 125 dead.

The Willow Island scaffolding is collapsing
is collapsing, collapsed—1978.
The Willow Island scaffolding collapsed.
My Mountain Mama, 51 dead.

implausible grief and "what ifs?" Devastation has never been a stranger to West Virginia. In fact, it's one of the central themes in our history. But, as Crystal Good observes sorrowfully in her poem, the Silver Bridge was the first in a series of tragedies in West Virginia that were literally unimaginable and among the worst of their kind in American history.

In the coming years, we'll commemorate each of these events. Our purpose isn't to wallow in negativity but to honor those who perished and those who survived. It's also to remind us that we're West Virginians. As we stressed in our issue about the 2016 floods, West Virginians find a way to survive. And we do so because we've learned it the hard way. We mourn, we hug our families and friends, and then we persevere. That may come as a newsflash to much of the nation, but down deep, even in our darkest hour, we really do have hope. That's the West Virginia way.

Stan Bumgardner

Letters from Readers

GOLDENSEAL welcomes letters of general interest from readers. Our address is The Culture Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300. We cannot guarantee publication of all letters. Published letters may be edited for brevity, clarity, or style.

Samuel A. J. Cockayne

September 11, 2017
Moundsville, West Virginia
Editor:

We want to thank you for featuring the Cockayne Farmstead in your Summer edition of GOLDENSEAL. The 10-page coverage of Cockayne was wonderful. We also thank you for the section on Sam Cockayne, who left the farmhouse and its wonderful collection of 19th- and early 20th-century family artifacts to the Town of Glen Dale. That piece brought life to Sam, who many people knew only as that little old man who worked painstakingly in his yard but retreated to his house whenever anyone approached.

I just ask for one correction. That two-page section on Sam was attributed entirely to me but was actually based on the great work of Bill Knuth, who deserves the lion's share of the credit. Again, thanks so much for such excellent coverage of Cockayne.

Sincerely,
Nila Chaddock
Cockayne Committee
Chairperson
Marshall County
Historical Society

See's Motel

September 24, 2017
Wardensville, West Virginia
Editor:

The Summer issue of GOLDENSEAL included an article about See's Motel in Wardensville. Please note that See's Motel no longer exists. My husband and I purchased the property in early 2017 and, after a complete renovation, reopened the motel as the Firefly Inn in July 2017. You can visit our website at www.fireflyinnwv.com for photos, details, and, of course, reservations.

Sincerely,
Sally & Chris Weaver
Proprietors, Firefly Inn

West Virginia University

October 5, 2017
Morgantown, West Virginia
Editor:

I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed the Fall issue of GOLDENSEAL and how deeply appreciative I am of its contents. We will be able to use this issue for some time to come to tell the story of the University. In any event, I am grateful for your thoughtful work and for the attention you bring to the University.

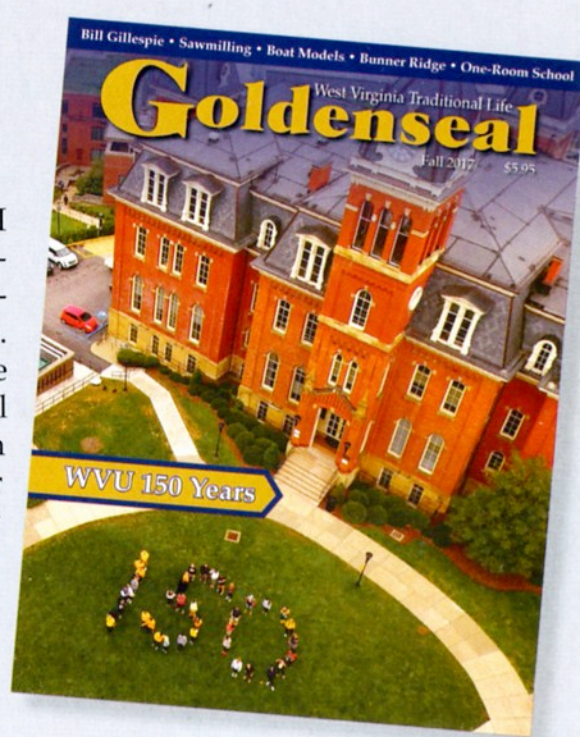
Cordially,
E. Gordon Gee
President, West Virginia
University

Fall Issue

October 12, 2017
Via e-mail

Congratulations on your Fall 2017 issue of GOLDENSEAL. I thoroughly enjoyed the local color of every article. I did not grow up in West Virginia, but in Marietta, Ohio, just across the river. I have always had many relatives in your state, especially in St. Marys and Harrisville. As a child, I had a chance to explore and experience a number of towns and rural areas, as we spent wonderful times visiting family. I have been a subscriber for several years. Thank you for all your work in getting out this magazine.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Ohlson



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An index to all GOLDENSEAL articles (1975-2017) can be found online at www.wvculture.org/goldenseal/gsindex.html

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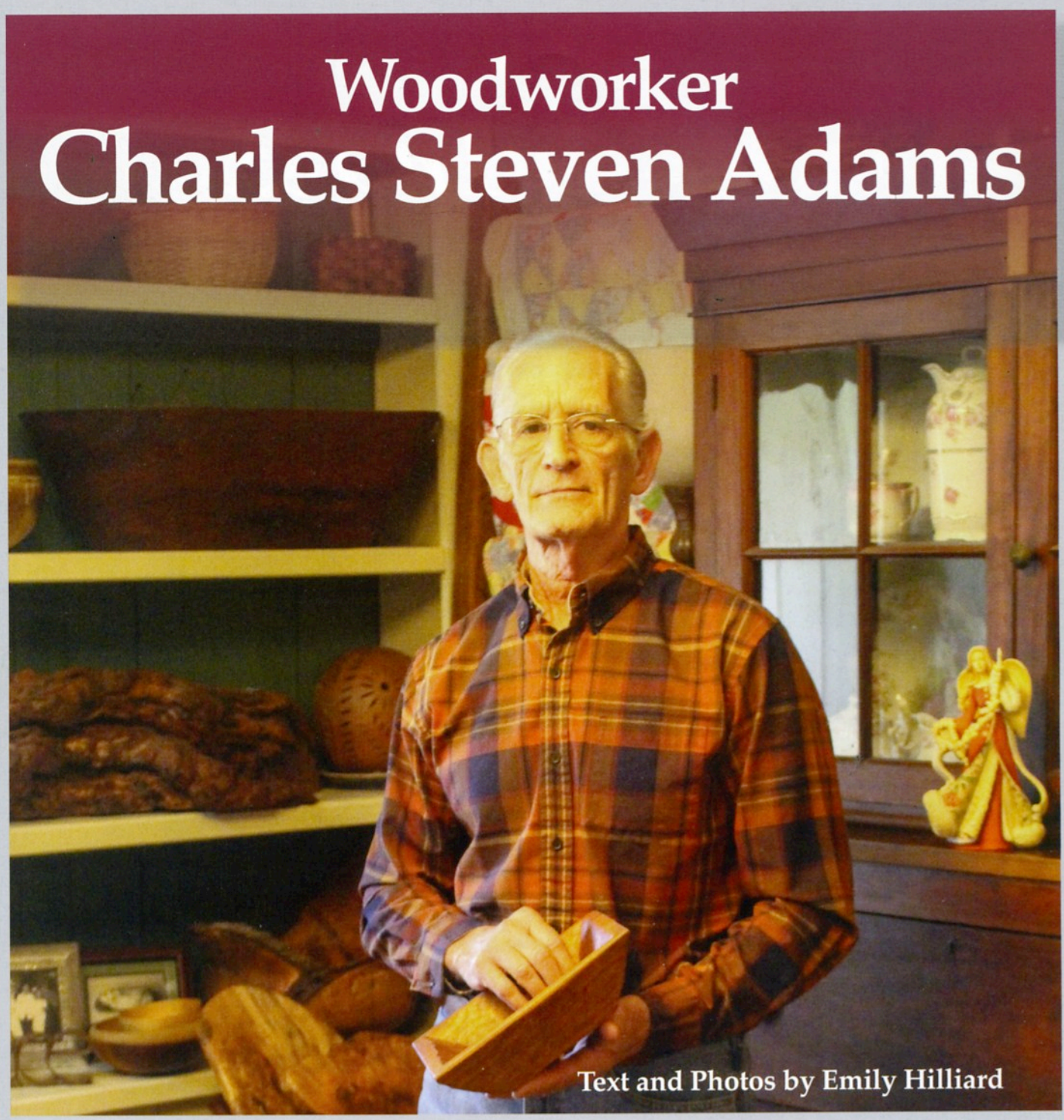
I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Stan Bumgardner, Editor

Woodworker
Charles Steven Adams



Text and Photos by Emily Hilliard

Charles Steven "Steve" Adams spent almost 40 years as a social worker dealing, as he says, "with people and their problems." When he was in his mid-50s and nearing retirement, Steve started carving wooden bowls—now his primary pursuit.

"It's kind of nice to make something that's tangible," he says, "after having worked for 36 years with intangibles. It's nice to be able to pass on pieces of your work to friends and relatives and also make part of a living from it."

In 1995, Steve ordered a small hand adze from a tool catalog and made his first hand-hewn wooden bowls, inspired by Tennessee wood carver Rip Mann: "I watched him for several years—used to make fun of him behind his back, saying, 'Anybody can put a hole in a piece

of wood and call it a bowl!' But after I started making a few, I realized there's a bit more to it than that."

And indeed there is. Steve's bowls generally begin with him felling a cherry, walnut, or maple tree or harvesting the wood from a downed log. With a trailer, winch, and another pair of hands (his wife, Jan, and son often help), he loads the logs and hauls them to a local sawyer who cuts the wood into eight-foot slabs of whatever thickness the tree will allow. The bowl carving itself requires only two tools—a hand adze and a scorer—along with sandpaper to smooth the lip.

Steve enjoys the simplicity of the craft, and he speaks of it almost as if it's a meditative practice: "It teaches you patience because the wood will only allow you to go to certain extremes," he comments. "It allows you to think about other things while your hand's busy. . . . That's the nice thing about making bowls—you're basically only limited by the size of the tree and your imagination."

He makes two types—a form bowl, with a defined shape, and a freestyle bowl, which is more obviously a product of his imagination and creativity. He works with the imperfections and grain of the wood. Those eccentricities are what make each bowl a unique object, resonant of the individual tree and creation process.

"You're basically only limited by the size of the tree and your imagination."

"Sometimes, I'll start one way, and the wood will disagree with me, and it ends up going the other way," he says, laughing. "Oftentimes, with a form bowl, it ends up being freestyle if I get a crack. . . . Wood allows you a little bit of margin for error, and I need it!"

Steve's adzes are custom-made by local metalworker Glen Horr, who operates out of his Berkeley Springs workshop. While the solitary aspect of wood carving is part of the draw, Steve also appreciates the community of craftspeople it connects him to. "Each one of these places I go to," he notes, "are small businessmen working with wood in one capacity or another, and that's important to me."

Many of his customers comment that the bowls are too pretty to use, but Steve stresses that they're intended to be daily kitchenware. In fact, using them regularly helps preserve them.

"I make quite a few dough bowls," he says, "which is what people used to let their bread rise in. They did not crack because the oils from the butter kept [them] lubricated. They only cracked when people quit making bread and the dough bowls dried out. You'll see a lot of dough bowls now that are cracked just simply because they haven't been oiled."

In early Colonial America, treenware—wooden tableware—was standard. While metal and pottery were too expensive for the masses, most colonists and early American settlers had axes and could create their own wooden bowls, plates, tankards, and utensils.

At 75, Steve says he is "at the tail end of my experience with wood." But he hopes that his hand-hewn bowls will become heirlooms passed down by his family, friends, and customers. He also hosts workshops in his Martinsburg home so others may learn the craft and share their bowls with their own families.

Though Steve may see his woodworking as distinctly different from his career as a social worker, his craft connects him to a broader social network of the past, present, and future generations. He muses, "I love wood. I love the feel of it. I love the smell of it. I love the grain and the figuring, and I like the idea that I'm making something that possibly will go on after I'm dead."

To find out more about Steve Adams' work, visit charlessteve-nadams.com/.

EMILY HILLIARD is West Virginia's first official state folklorist with the West Virginia Folklife Program at the West Virginia Humanities Council. She writes a regular column for GOLDENSEAL. Learn more about the West Virginia Folklife Program at wvfolklife.org.

Photo by Herb Clagg. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives (hereafter WVSA), Maurice Hamill Collection.

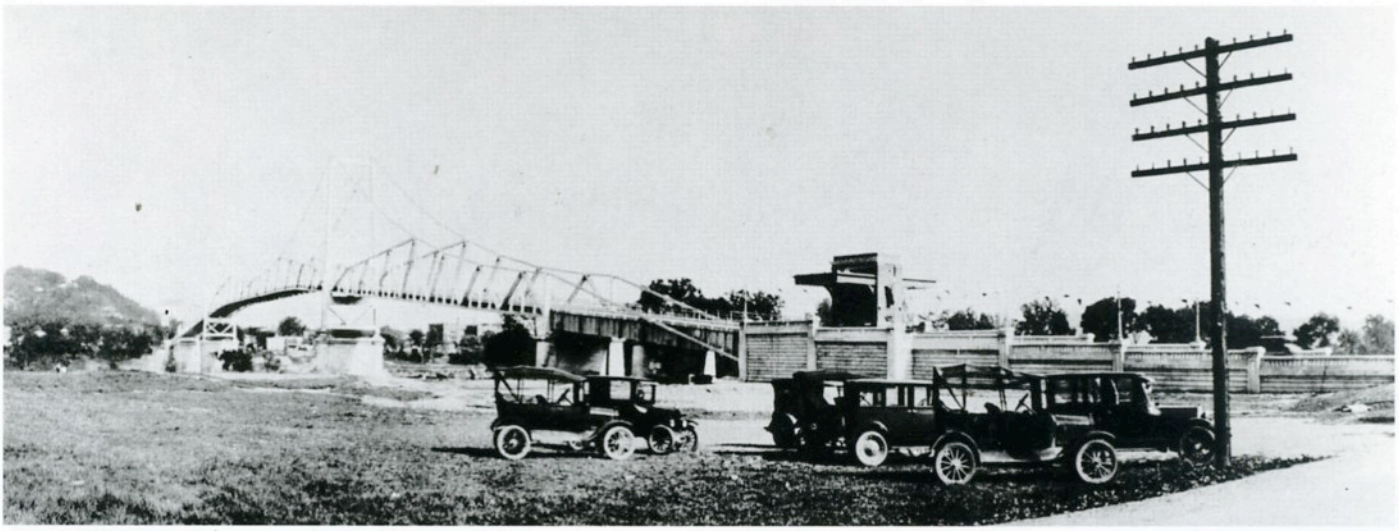
The Silver Bridge Disaster

By Stan Bumgardner

Memorial Day, May 30, 1928, a crowd of more than 10,000 poured into Point Pleasant to dedicate a new state-of-the-art suspension bridge. For a brief time, the crowd more than tripled the population of this historic Mason County city. A sudden cloudburst, though, scattered the spectators and prematurely ended the celebration. It was a dark omen for the bridge and Point Pleasant.

The Silver Bridge was initially a private enterprise, built in the Roaring Twenties in Gallia County, Ohio, for about $1 million. The two-lane toll bridge (the state acquired it in 1941, and tolls were removed a decade later) was nearly a half-mile long. Its longest span, across the central channel of the Ohio River, was 700 feet; two 380-foot anchor spans connected the main span to the entrance ramps on the West Virginia and Ohio shores. A coat of glimmering aluminum paint gave the bridge an almost futuristic appearance. The Silver Bridge was a symbol of hope, and the people of Point Pleasant were rightly proud of it.

The bridge linked Point Pleasant on the West Virginia side with Kanauga, Ohio. More broadly, it made Point Pleasant a central hub in a highway system linking Columbus, Ohio, with Charleston and points farther south. Promoting its potential



This photo was taken on the day of the Silver Bridge dedication, which included speeches by Governor Howard Gore and U.S. Senator Matthew Neely, a parade of historical characters from Point Pleasant history, skydivers, and fireworks to honor "the beautiful river's most beautiful bridge." Courtesy of the WVSA, Maurice Hamill Collection.

for business and travel, local leaders nicknamed the Silver Bridge the "Gateway to the South."

Its innovative design was a first in the United States. According to the *Engineering News-Record* magazine, the bridge's most distinct feature was the "use of heat-treated eyebar chains, portions of which form parts of the top chords of the stiffening trusses."

The steel eyebar chains stabilized the suspension bridge through vertical bars connected to the deck. Each eyebar was linked to a parallel sister eyebar and carried an equal amount of load. This was also its fatal design flaw: the lack of a backup system in case any single eyebar failed. By contrast, most other modern suspension bridges, like the Brooklyn Bridge, were designed to withstand the loss of a single cable, or even several.

Over the years, a stress corrosion crack formed in eyebar 330, as it would be identified in the National Transportation Safety Board report. Inspections by the State Road Commission—one as late as December 6, 1967—missed the escalating problem because, according to the report, it was "inaccessible to visual inspection." As eyebar 330 slowly corroded over time, another change was happening. Automobiles were getting much heavier, and the mounting traffic jams on the bridge were adding unforeseen stress on the eyebars.

It was about 4:58 p.m., during bumper-to-bumper rush-hour traffic, on Friday, December 15, 1967. People were heading home from work or Christmas shopping and ready to enjoy the weekend. The crack in eyebar 330, only about 1/8-inch deep, reached critical mass and snapped, shifting the weight load to its sister eyebar, which slipped off its pin. The broken eyebar chain set in motion a rapid and catastrophic domino effect that brought down the bridge's two rocker towers.

The central and anchor spans collapsed in less than a minute. One eyewitness said the bridge "folded like a deck of cards." Another noted that it "didn't just fall in the river. It sort of slithered like a snake, then it buckled, and cars began falling off sideways." Another person observed that it looked like the "eyebars were clapping hands."

The sound was frightful. Some compared it to a loud gunshot or a jet plane taking off. While the eyewitnesses saw and heard things in a slightly different way, they all sensed that something horrific had just happened. And, to this day, every person who was in the vicinity on December 15, 1967, can tell you exactly where they were and what they were doing when the bridge fell.

Ruth Fout was working at a business on Sixth Street in Point Pleasant, just down the block from the entrance ramp.

This photo shows the stunning devastation on the Ohio side of the river in the wake of the Silver Bridge collapse. Paul Hayman's red-and-black Pontiac is remarkably intact because it was partially blocked from the collapsing eyebar chain by the McLean semi. Paul Hayman and his wife, Barbara, miraculously survived the fall. Courtesy of the Point Pleasant River Museum & Learning Center.

"When we were getting our coats on about 5:00 to go home," she recalls. "We heard a loud noise, and all the power went off. Right afterward, my supervisor's husband rushed in and said, 'The bridge just fell.'"

At that moment, 37 vehicles were on the Silver Bridge. All but six plunged into the frigid Ohio River or onto the riverbank in Kanauga, Ohio.

Decades later, Point Pleasant resident Robert Rimmey described to the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch* what he experienced at that moment: "I heard a loud crack, and I thought it was a post that used to be there on the sidewalk where I was sitting. I turned around, and I saw the bridge swaying, and the whole thing fell."

Minutes later, he helped state trooper Rudy O'Dell pull Charlene Wood, a young expecting mother who worked at a Point Pleasant hair salon, from the precipice of the shattered bridge. She later recalled, "As I was approaching the bridge, the light changed. When it went to green, I started over the bridge, and there was a terrible shaking of the bridge. My father was a riverboat captain and had talked about barges hitting the bridge and the pier, so when I heard that, I automatically put my car in reverse. By the time I got my car stopped, mine was on the very edge where it broke off."

The next thing Charlene knew, live power lines were on top of her 1967 Pontiac, and she was being helped from the car. That was the last thing she remembered from that evening. Charlene would remain traumatized by the incident, but her story is one of the rare positives because she survived and, four months later, gave

Rescue workers originally used car headlights and flashlights to search in the darkness for survivors. Later, floodlights were brought in as emergency crews looked through the twisted wreckage. Courtesy of the WVSA, Ottie Adkins Collection.

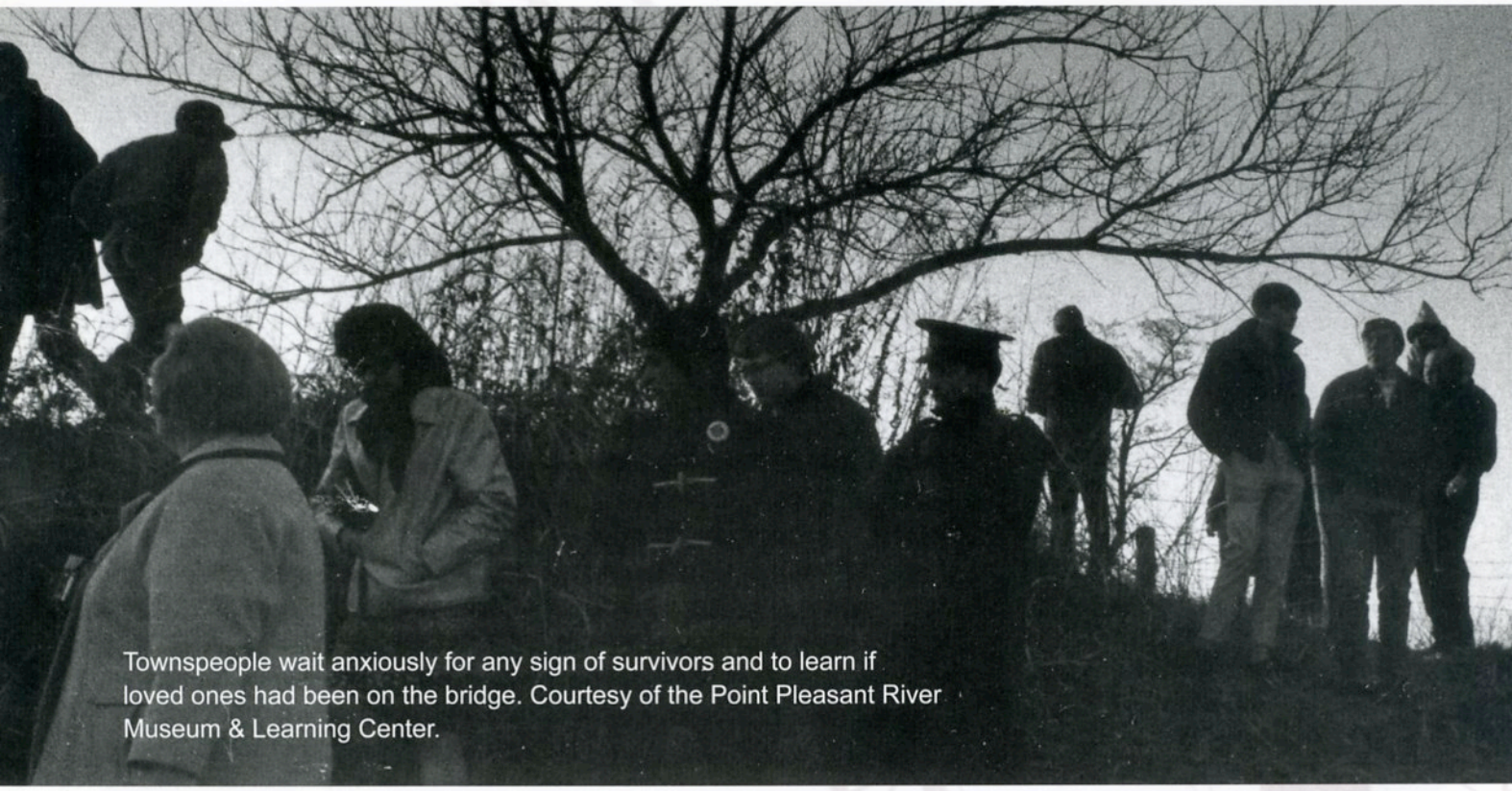
birth to healthy twins. She later reflected, "The Lord left me here for that. I'm sure of it."

A worker at City Ice & Fuel dispatched a rescue boat and, with coworkers, state troopers, local policemen and firemen, fellow residents, and passers-by, started searching for survivors. Ultimately, 21 people who were on some part of the bridge lived.

One was Bill Needham, a 27-year-old truck driver from North Carolina, who suddenly found himself submerged in the 43-degree water. "Now I know what it's like to drown," he revealed. "I expected to die." Somehow, he "noticed a little crack in the window and finally forced it down—I managed to grab a box and hang on." His trucking partner, Robert Towe, was napping in the sleeping berth of the truck and died.

Another trucker from North Carolina, Bill Edmondson, lost his partner as well but somehow made it out alive. He related the following story from his hospital room: "I was starting down the Ohio side of the bridge when it suddenly started falling sideways. I didn't hear any noise or anything. When I got in the water, I got hold of a seat, and that was all that kept me up until they pulled me out." Edmondson had been in the water for at least 10 minutes.

Howard Boggs, age 24, of Vinton, Ohio, also endured the fall but lost both his wife, 18-year-old Marjorie, and 17-month-old daughter, Kristy. They'd been visiting with family on the West Virginia side. Marjorie, who was driving their 1965 Chevy sedan, felt the bridge begin to shake. An instant before the collapse, she looked at Howard and asked, "What would we do if this thing were to break up?" The next thing Howard knew,



Townspeople wait anxiously for any sign of survivors and to learn if loved ones had been on the bridge. Courtesy of the Point Pleasant River Museum & Learning Center.

The "Hi" Carpenter Bridge

The Silver Bridge had a sister bridge some 75 miles upstream on the Ohio River. The Clarksburg-Columbus Short Route Bridge at St. Marys in Pleasants County was dedicated on October 25, 1928, five months after the Silver Bridge. Like the Silver Bridge, it was constructed with the same eyebar design.

In September 1967, the St. Marys bridge was renamed for Hiram "Hi" Carpenter (1880-1970), a local businessman and former president of the company that built the bridge. On December 18, 1967—three days after the Silver Bridge Disaster—the State Road Commission closed the "Hi" Carpenter Bridge temporarily to study its integrity. Two months later, it reopened to traffic but was closed permanently at the end of 1968 due to the "possibility of stress corrosion cracks" in the eyebars.

The "Hi" Carpenter Bridge was demolished in 1971. The new "Hi" Carpenter Memorial Bridge was dedicated on November 19, 1977, one-third of a mile downstream from the former bridge.

he was pushing himself off the bottom channel of the Ohio and kicking desperately to reach the surface. Rescuers pulled him onto a boat, but there were no signs of the car or his family. It was weeks before the bodies of Marjorie and Kristy were found.

As the evening wore on, five dead bodies were found, but this number was clearly low due to the brutal search conditions. Eventually, the death toll would reach 46. All but five of the victims lived relatively close by in West Virginia or Ohio.

There are so many tragic stories from that night. Thomas Allen Cantrell, an employee for the Ohio Publishing Company in Gallipolis, had recently put in his notice and was headed to California to be a professional cartoonist. That Friday was his last day on the job. He'd just dropped off his last load of

newspapers in Point Pleasant and was returning home across the bridge. He was killed in the collapse.

The hours after the disaster were especially anxious. Divers used scuba gear to look for survivors, but it was nearly impossible due to the pitch-black conditions. The search was called off at 10:00 Friday night and resumed the next day.

Residents of Point Pleasant and nearby communities frantically tried to find out who had been on the bridge. In the end, virtually everybody for miles around would lose a relative, lifelong friend, neighbor, coworker, or fellow church member. Most knew several victims. One by one, more bodies were found, 44 in all, with two never turning up.

That night was just the beginning of five decades of nightmares for the people of Point Pleasant, Gallipolis, and other nearby communities. "In many ways," Ruth Fout reflects, "the aftermath was even worse."

For instance, two bodies weren't recovered for two months. Because of that, the insurance company refused to pay the family, which was struggling through hard times, emotionally and financially. Ruth notes, "It was an especially difficult time for the families, coming only 10 days before Christmas."

Steve Darst of Point Pleasant lost several coworkers from the local Goodyear plant. In an interview with the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch* four decades later, he noted the disaster's long-term emotional effects on families. "It ruined Christmas for a long time," he said. "There was always that in the background. You don't like to see things like that, but you don't have control over it so you have to put up with what life throws at you."

And Point Pleasant itself has also struggled since the disaster. President Lyndon Johnson promised the town a replacement bridge, and Governors Hulett Smith and Arch Moore saw it through. The Silver Memorial Bridge was opened in 1969, two years to the day after the Silver Bridge collapse. But the new four-lane bridge across the Ohio was built at Henderson, a mile downstream, where it connected directly with Route 35. "Before the disaster," Ruth says, "there was hardly an empty building in town. Eventually, almost every business closed."

Rescue workers remove dead bodies from the disaster site. Courtesy of the WVSA, Ottie Adkins Collection.

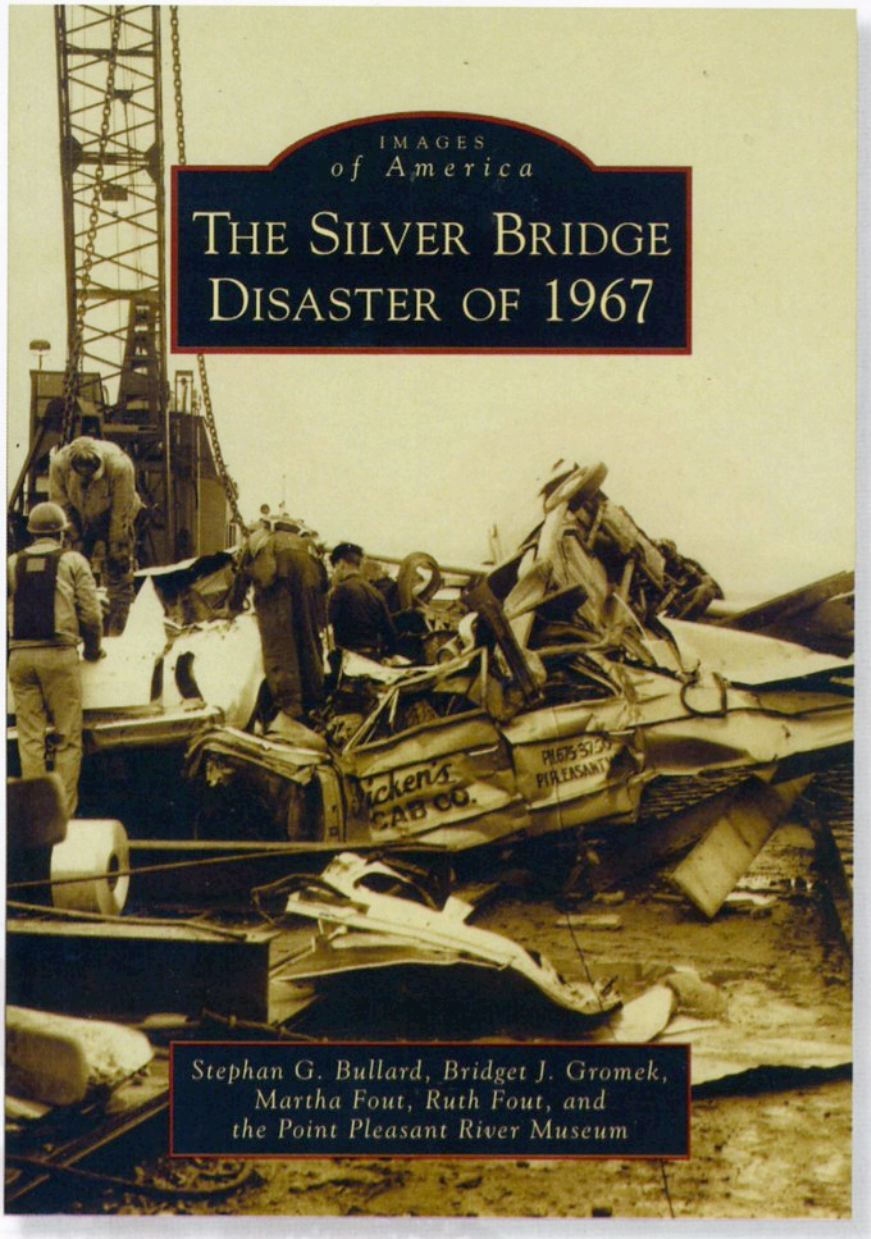
The Silver Bridge collapse was one of the deadliest bridge disasters in U.S. history. It called into question the integrity of all bridges throughout the country.

In its final report on the collapse, released in 1971, the National Transportation Safety Board recommended that the U.S. Department of Transportation identify bridges that might have been built with questionable construction materials, apply federal bridge safety standards to all highway bridges, and replace outdated bridges. Today, while standards for construction, weight loads, and inspections are stricter than they were in 1967, there are still an estimated 150,000 "structurally deficient" or "functionally obsolete" bridges in operation in the United States.

Deadliest Bridge Disasters in U.S. History

Deaths	Bridge	Location	Year
114	Hyatt Regency Walkway	Kansas City, Missouri	1981
111	Dry Creek Railroad Bridge	Eden, Colorado	1904
92	Ashtabula River Railroad Bridge	Ashtabula, Ohio	1876
47	Big Bayou Canot Railroad Bridge	near Mobile, Alabama	1993
46	Truesdell Bridge	Dixon, Illinois	1873
46	Silver Bridge	Point Pleasant, West Virginia	1967
42	Springbrook Railroad Bridge	Mishawaka-South Bend, Indiana	1859
42	Cypress Street Viaduct	Oakland, California	1989

Note: Anywhere from four to 100+ people died on the Cimarron River Rail Crossing in Dover, Oklahoma Territory, in 1904.



The Silver Bridge Disaster of 1967—by Stephan G. Bullard, Bridget J. Gromek, Martha Fout, Ruth Fout, and the Point Pleasant River Museum—traces the construction, history, and collapse of the bridge through more than 100 images, many of which were previously unpublished. One remarkably moving chapter is dedicated to stories and photos of the victims. The book is available at the museum and area bookstores, or it can be purchased online from Arcadia Publishing.

Point Pleasant's proud residents, though, have never given up. In fact, there's a palpable sense of strength. These days, Point Pleasant looks and feels like a quintessential small river town. There are businesses and museums, historic houses, a state park, and beautiful river vistas. [See "Point Pleasant: A Photo Essay" by Steve Brightwell, on page 26.]

One of the town's gems is the Point Pleasant River Museum & Learning Center—West Virginia's largest river museum. A half century after the Silver Bridge collapse, a growing number of young people come to see the museum's exhibits about the bridge and to find out more about the ancestors they lost—many of whom they never got a chance to meet.

Martha Fout, who operates the facility with museum founder Jack Fowler and her sister Ruth, notes that one boy made a specific trip to the museum with his family because his grandfather was killed on the bridge.

Martha, Ruth, and Jack have become friends with many family members of the victims. Ruth observes that the museum gives the family members closure, "like going to a cemetery."

"You hear all their stories," Martha adds. "You really become involved emotionally with every person you meet."

This aerial photo shows downtown Point Pleasant as it appeared in 1967 shortly before the disaster. The Silver Bridge is in the background on the left. The old Kanawha & Michigan railroad bridge, built in 1919, is on the right. The city would never be the same again. Courtesy of the WVSA, Ottie Adkins Collection.

So, in a very tragic way, the Silver Bridge Disaster has forged together a strong extended family of survivors, friends, and relatives of the victims.

December 15, 1967, was the darkest day in the history of Point Pleasant. The people who lived through it try to move beyond the pall that's hovered over Point Pleasant for most of their lives. Some have left for good, others return on occasion, and others have chosen to stay because Point Pleasant is their home. The city isn't just a part of them; in many ways, it defines who they are.

A loving family cherishes and preserves the memories of those who've gone before. Point Pleasant, in this and many other ways, is a big family, mourning as a community while trying to move on, day by day, from an unthinkable tragedy.

GOLDENSEAL has published two articles about the disaster in the past: "Songs of the Silver Bridge" by Ivan M. Tribe (October-December 1979) and "Nightmare at Point Pleasant" by Jane M. Kraina (Winter 1995).

STAN BUMGARDNER is editor of GOLDENSEAL.

The 46 Victims

(ages follow names)

Point Pleasant (W.Va.) Residents

Hilda Gertrude Byus, 30
*Kathy Byus, 10 **
Kimberly Lynn Byus, 2
Alma Louise Duff, 46
James Franklin Meadows, 32
James Timothy "Timmy" Meadows, 3
Leo Otto "Doc" Sanders, 43
Denzil Ray Taylor, 35
Glenna Mae Taylor, 23
*Maxine "Maxie" Turner, 31 **
Victor "Vic" William Turner, 58
Marvin Lendy Wamsley, 39
Lillian Eleanor Wedge, 51
Paul Dencil Wedge, 54
James Alfred White, 40

Gallipolis Ferry (W.Va.) Residents

Melvin Aaron Cantrell, 40
Cecil C. Counts, 48
Nora Isabelle Nibert, 45
Darius E. Northup, 53

Gallipolis (Ohio) Residents

E. Albert Adler, Jr., 31
Thomas Allen Cantrell, 26
Donna Jean Casey, 27
Horace Donald Cremeans, 49
Bobby Lee Head, 35
Alva Bernard Lane, 54
Thomas "Bus" Howard Lee, 55
James Richard Maxwell, 20
Frederick Dean Miller, 27
Ronnie Gene Moore, 23
Ronald Robert Sims, 36

Other Ohio Residents

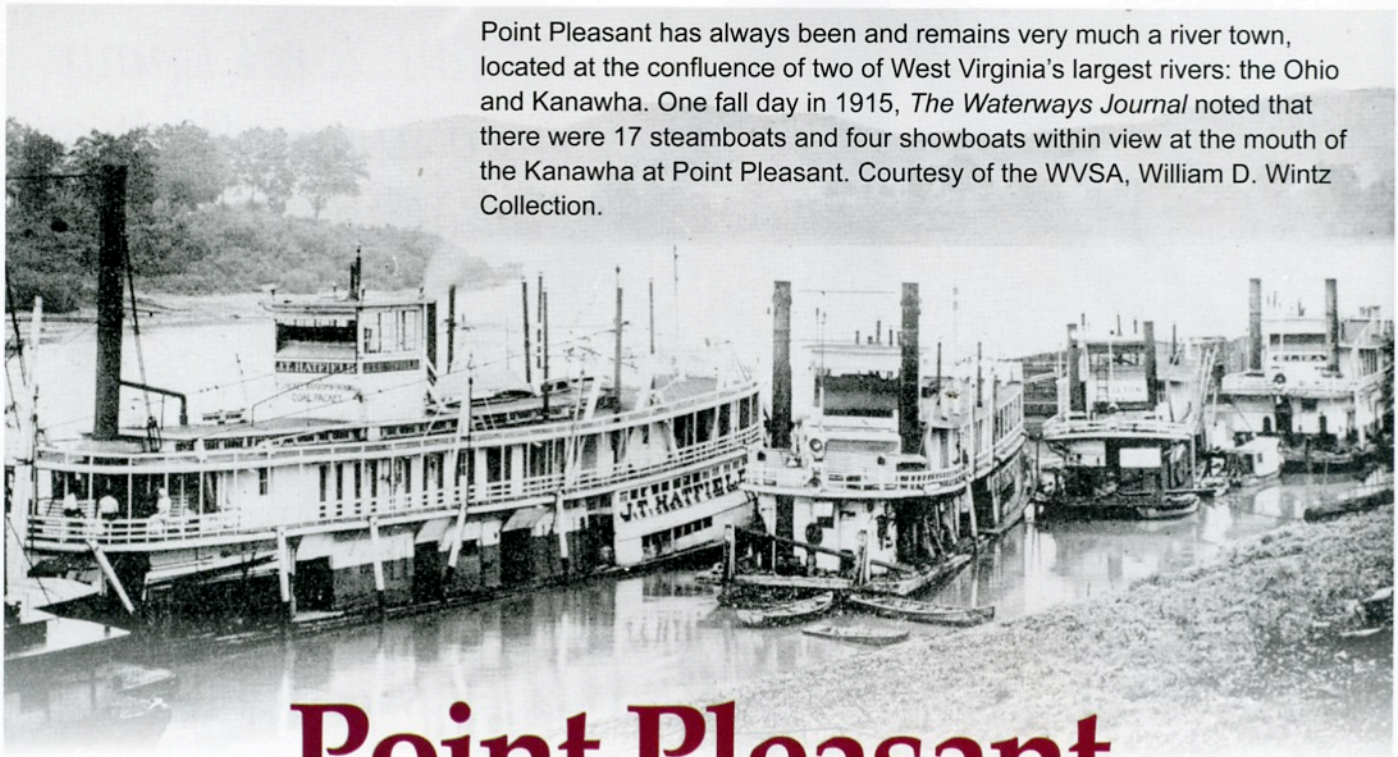
Kristy Ann Boggs, Vinton, 1
Marjorie S. Boggs, Vinton, 18
Alonzo "Lonnie" Luther Darst, Cheshire, 30
James William Hawkins, Westerville, 33
Forrest Raymond Higley, Bidwell, 26
Darlene Kay Mayes, Kanauga, 13
Gerald McManus, South Point, 51
James Otto Pullen, Middleport, 48
Charles "Charlie" Thomas Smith, Bidwell, 65
Oma Letha Smith, Bidwell, 65
Maxine E. Sturgeon, Kanauga, 33

Residents of Other States

Julius Oliver Bennett, Walnut Cove, N.C., 31
Leo Blackman, Richmond, Va., 57
Harold David Cundiff, Winston-Salem, N.C., 37
Gene Harold Mabe, Jamestown, N.C., 25
Robert Eugene Towe, Cana, Va., 33

**Body never recovered*

In 1902, artist Joseph Faris of Wheeling sketched this depiction of the 1774 Battle of Point Pleasant. The Virginia militia are charging from the right, and the Shawnee are retreating on the left. Courtesy of the WVSA.



Point Pleasant has always been and remains very much a river town, located at the confluence of two of West Virginia's largest rivers: the Ohio and Kanawha. One fall day in 1915, *The Waterways Journal* noted that there were 17 steamboats and four showboats within view at the mouth of the Kanawha at Point Pleasant. Courtesy of the WVSA, William D. Wintz Collection.

Point Pleasant

Like most river communities in West Virginia, Point Pleasant's prehistory dates back some 12,000 years with the arrival of Paleo-Indians. Located at the confluence of the Ohio and Great Kanawha rivers, it was explored by Europeans decades before the first settlers arrived—in 1749, Frenchman Celoron de Blainville buried a lead plate here to claim the Ohio Valley for France.

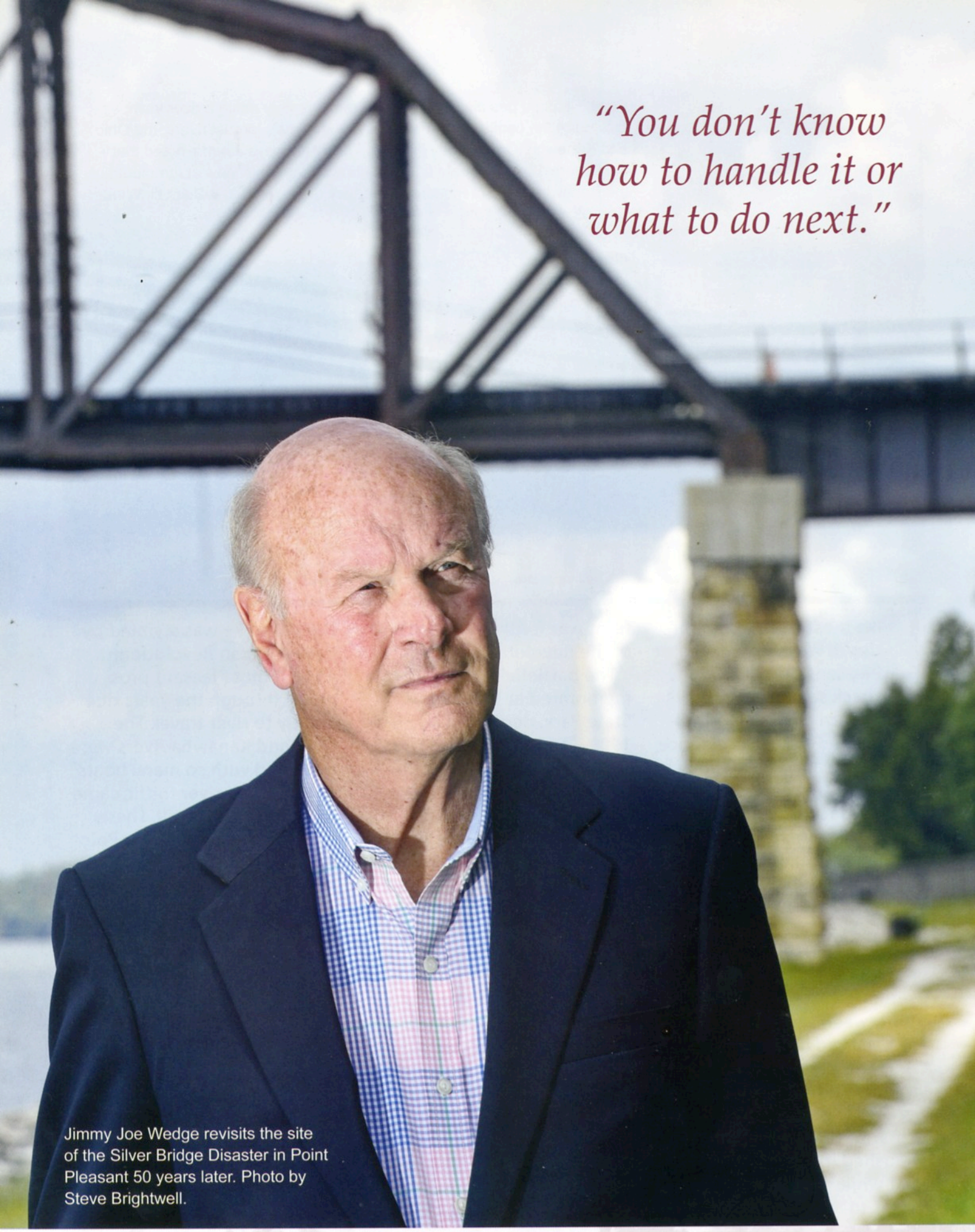
On October 10, 1774, one of the most important battles ever fought in Colonial America between settlers and Indians occurred in Point Pleasant. While the skirmish between Virginia militia and Shawnee warriors was essentially a draw militarily, the subsequent treaty pushed Indian tribes farther west while allowing American troops to avoid a dreaded two-front war for the first two years of the Revolutionary War.

The battlefield is now commemorated at Tu-Endie-Wei State Park, dedicated in 1909—a year after Congress declared Point Pleasant the first battle of the Revolutionary War. Future historians would quibble about this designation—since the battle happened six months before the war began—but the park and the honor brought important recognition to the site.

Point Pleasant's fortunes might have been different if land speculators, backed by Benjamin Franklin, had followed through on plans for a 14th British colony. Vandalia, as it was to be known, would have comprised much of present West Virginia and northeastern Kentucky, with its capital at Point Pleasant, but their scheme was stymied by the American Revolution.

Still, Point Pleasant prospered through the years due largely to river travel. The Ohio and Kanawha rivers were crammed with so many boats at times that river traffic came to a virtual standstill. These river jams were good for Point Pleasant's business, though, as hotels, restaurants, saloons, and virtually every other kind of business lined the city's downtown.

What the river gives, it can also take away. Point Pleasant has been decimated by floods over the years. Between 1883 and 1950—a period of 67 years—the city was flooded 75 times. In both 1913 and 1937, the Ohio River crested at some 22 feet above flood stage. A floodwall has protected the city since 1950.



"You don't know how to handle it or what to do next."

Jimmy Joe Wedge revisits the site of the Silver Bridge Disaster in Point Pleasant 50 years later. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

Jimmy Joe Wedge Memories of the Silver Bridge Disaster

By Stan Bumgardner

Jimmy Joe Wedge was born in Fostoria, Ohio, in 1942. Early in life, he and his family moved to Point Pleasant. It was a bit of a homecoming for his father, Paul, a native of Mud Sock in Jackson County.

Point Pleasant was a bustling town during World War II. The U.S. government built an ordnance work north of town to make TNT. Older plants run by Sylvania and Quality Manufacturing also got a boost during the defense buildup.

But the town's primary lifeblood during the war years was Marietta Manufacturing. Originally founded in Marietta, Ohio, in 1853, the company moved to Point Pleasant and started operations in 1916, making stoves, capstans, and other equipment for steamboats. During World War II, Marietta dramatically ramped up production, hiring some 3,000 workers (nearly doubling Point Pleasant's population during the war). By the war's end, Marietta had cranked out 53 large tugs and 16 mine planters for the Army and four net tenders for the Navy.

Paul Wedge got one of those 3,000 jobs, eventually becoming an expert boilermaker. He later became a professional labor organizer.

"He was a union man," Jimmy says. "For instance, we weren't allowed to shop at the A&P because it was built with non-union labor."

Jimmy's mother, Lillian, was a stay-at-home mom, living with six others in a three-bedroom house—with one bathroom. Like most moms, she had her hands full all the time. Lillian would get up before the crack of dawn, drink two pots of coffee, and do everything that needed to be done to get Beverly "Toodles," Denny, Dick, Betsy, and Jimmy off to school on time—Jimmy doesn't ever remember going to school with wrinkled clothes. And Lillian not only raised her own children but also played a patient host to a constant flow of stayover guests.

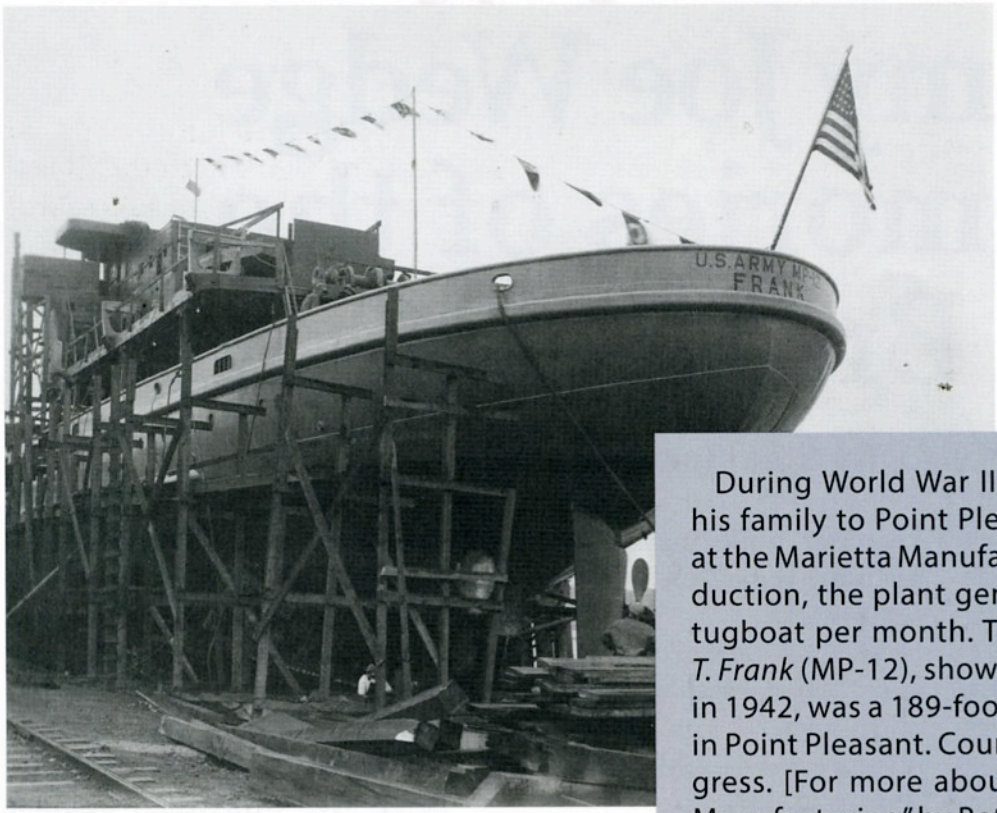
The family saying, Jimmy notes, was, "How would Lill handle this?"

Jimmy graduated from Point Pleasant High School in 1960 and went to West Virginia University, where he earned a spot on the freshman basketball team. He got married and moved back to Point Pleasant for a chance at his dream job: coaching basketball at his alma mater. During the 1966-67 season, he was an assistant coach. The next season, he was named head coach, and his first home game was scheduled against Ripley High School—for the evening of December 15, 1967.

In recent years, Paul had been spending most of his time in Kansas City, where he was a vice president for the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers. He'd made the long trip east from Kansas City to West Virginia to see his son's first home game as head coach.

Jimmy and his family will never know all the details of December 15, 1967. The best they can figure, his parents had gone to eat at Bob Evans Restaurant—the original, one-and-only Bob Evans back then—in Rio Grande, Ohio, only miles from Point Pleasant. After dinner, they were returning across the Silver Bridge for the game, hauling a Christmas tree in tow. That's when the bridge collapsed.

At the moment of the disaster, Jimmy was in his apartment 10



During World War II, Paul Wedge moved with his family to Point Pleasant, where he got a job at the Marietta Manufacturing plant. At peak production, the plant generated an average of one tugboat per month. The *Brigadier General Royal T. Frank* (MP-12), shown here under construction in 1942, was a 189-foot Army mine planter made in Point Pleasant. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. [For more about the plant, see "Marietta Manufacturing" by Betty Rivard (Summer 2014).]

blocks away. His first son was less than a year old.

"I heard a big snap," Jimmy remembers, "like someone cracking a whip."

He knew Marietta Manufacturing (which was still in business on a much smaller scale) made a lot of noise moving large sheets of steel, but this was something different—something he'd never quite heard before. Jimmy soon heard police sirens, lots of them. Preparing for the game, his first instinct wasn't about the bridge; rather, he was worried that earlier rains might cause travel problems for the Ripley squad. So, he drove downtown to check on the water level.

"I'm driving down Main Street and look to my left down Sixth Street. I can't see the river because of the floodwall, but I can't see the bridge, either. It was getting dark, but I still should've seen it. I turned at the next cross street, which cut through the floodwall, and immediately see that the bridge is gone."

"I saw tractor trailers floating down the river. A woman was on top of one of them and screaming."

Despite being shaken up, Jimmy went to the school to get ready for the game. As his team took the court, he noticed his parents weren't in the crowd.

"It seems obvious looking back, but, at that moment, I still didn't have any clue my parents were on the bridge."

One of his assistants, Jim White, was absent, too. Jimmy tried to rationalize away the human tragedy unfolding before him. He reckoned the bridge collapse had caused a massive traffic jam on both sides of the river and that his parents and assistant coach were simply stuck in traffic.

The game went on as scheduled, and Point Pleasant beat Ripley. After the game, Jimmy and his buddies went back downtown and climbed up the floodwall for a better view of the rescue efforts. With each passing moment, Jimmy's heart sank more deeply. His sister had stopped by his parents' house. She found Lillian's purse—a likely sign they'd never returned from dinner.

The bodies of Paul and Lillian Wedge were recovered days later, as was Paul's purple-

Lillian and Paul Wedge. Courtesy of Jimmy Joe Wedge.

and-gray Oldsmobile company car. Paul was 54, and Lillian was 51. The official study of the disaster determined that the Wedges' car had been near the middle of the bridge when it collapsed.

Much of what happened is still a blur to Jimmy. He thinks it was Andy Wilson, head of the local civil defense, who broke the news to him, but he's not exactly sure. What's more important to Jimmy is the "actual effect of what happened next."

Jimmy's life, like that of everyone in Point Pleasant, would never be the same again. The tragedy tormented him for years; some of the emotions have never gone away. Thinking back on the overwhelming grief, he reflects, "You don't know how to handle it or what to do next."

He struggled for years to come to terms with the disaster. He started a successful real estate company and, in the late 1970s, was elected to the House of Delegates. He stepped down from the legislature to become mayor of Point Pleasant in 1981 and served for six years. In the late 1990s, he worked as an assistant to Governor Cecil Underwood before going back to real estate full-time.

Almost daily, though, he can still picture the woman screaming on top of the floating truck cab. He also misses Jim White; dozens of friends, classmates, and acquaintances; and, more than anyone, his parents. In a case of survivor's grief, Jimmy wonders why those 46 particular people just happened to be on the Silver Bridge at 4:58 on December 15, 1967. And he feels for those who experienced that gruesome night 50 years ago but still survived: "They have to live with that the rest of their lives."

With each coming anniversary of the disaster, there will be fewer and fewer who remember it firsthand. We owe it to those who died, and those who survived, to remember each and every one of the lives lost on the Silver Bridge.

The auditorium at Point Pleasant Junior and Senior High School is now named in memory of Paul and Lillian Wedge.

The Resilience of West Virginians

By Karin Fuller

What didn't kill us made us stronger, and that's ultimately the epilogue to the Silver Bridge Disaster.

Even for those of us who didn't grow up in the Point Pleasant area, the Silver Bridge collapse had a subtle but significant impact. For one, it made an entire generation fearful of bridges. How many of us who were children in the '60s or '70s were instructed by our parents to roll down our car windows while crossing bridges? Or to practice holding our breath just in case? It prompted some adults to drive faster when crossing rivers; others started carrying hammers so they could break out their car windows—again, just in case.

When the Silver Bridge collapsed on December 15, 1967, life changed for more than the 46 motorists and passengers who lost their lives that day. It changed for those who survived it.

Many details of the tragedy have been shared time and again over the years, sometimes by those who managed to turn away from the bridge at the last minute because of an item forgotten at home or by those who stopped to get gas and heard the bridge give way.

In the 50 years since the bridge collapse, authors, filmmakers, journalists, and websites have shared the stories of survivors and those of family members who lost loved ones. The tragic story of the Silver Bridge Disaster is unique in our history, but, in a broader sense, it's a familiar one to West Virginians. Time after time, we've pulled one another up to get through tragedies, and then dusted ourselves off and risen back up. It's our history, our heritage. We are a people of great tragedies, but also a people of strength and resilience. And we love and take care of our neighbors.

Many of the workers on a cold fuel dock near the Silver Bridge witnessed its collapse. Two of those workers, Bill McCormick and Odell Hysell, raced to their boats and headed straight toward the carnage of twisted bridge and sinking cars and trucks.

"When we went out, we saw two men hanging onto their truck and debris. I tried to pull in one, and Odell tried to pull in another," McCormick said in a 1992 Associated Press interview. "It was very cold. In fact, the last fellow we pulled in, a (towboat) captain for the Ohio River Company, said that if we hadn't gotten there when we did, he couldn't have held on."

The many published accounts about the bridge collapse and those impacted by the event reveal the caring and resilient nature of our state's residents. It's impossible to deny.

At the inaugural Silver Bridge Memorial Christmas tree lighting in Point Pleasant in 2015, former mayor Jimmy Joe Wedge helped preside over the ceremony. He lost both of his parents in the disaster. He later became mayor of the same town where much of his personal sorrow began. The same ceremony featured Chayston Handley, an elementary school student from nearby Leon and a cancer survivor. His own little body represents the fight and determination that are repeatedly evident in our state's residents.

As a symbol of this community's strength, Jimmy Joe and Chayston lit the memorial

The faces of the rescue workers tell the tragic story of the Silver Bridge Disaster. In such a small community, everybody knew somebody who'd been on the bridge. Despite the grief that hung over Point Pleasant, the people pulled together to help their friends and neighbors. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Ottie Adkins Collection.

Christmas tree and its 46-point star. The number 46 is never far from anyone's memory in Point Pleasant.

There were some positives that resulted from the disaster, such as the federal government mandating the inspection of bridges.

"You need a catastrophic failure prior to gaining everybody's attention," said bridge designer Lisle Williams in a 1992 Associated Press interview. The Silver Bridge collapse was somewhat of a wake-up call for the American transportation infrastructure, prompting federal regulations requiring bridge inspections every two years.

We're a state that rises from the ashes, as we've done many times—as we have after mine wars and explosions, decades of economic depression during which out-of-state interests swiftly abandoned the people and communities that had once enriched them, more floods than we can count, and horrors like the Silver Bridge collapse and the Marshall plane crash. While each new blow might wobble our knees a little, we soon have our feet solidly beneath us again.

We, as West Virginians, aren't only still standing, we're creating new businesses and improving our infrastructure. Journalist Eric Eyre recently won a Pulitzer Prize for addressing the opioid problem. Our residents and organizations, like Create WV and WV Leadership, are working to make our state a place where people can earn a decent living while enjoying a high quality of life and proudly raising their families.

It's said that storms make trees grow deeper roots. But when the roots are deep, there's no reason to fear the wind. It's comforting to know that whatever the wind might blow our state's way, we've shown we can take it. And come out stronger on the other side.

KARIN FULLER's stories have appeared in *Ladies' Home Journal, Family Circle, Woman's World,* and *Appalachian Heritage,* among others. Her newspaper columns appear weekly in the Huntington *Herald-Dispatch* and Clarksburg *Exponent-Telegram.* In her spare time, she enjoys refinishing antiques and building ray guns.

Point Pleasant
A Photo Essay

Text and photos by Steve Brightwell

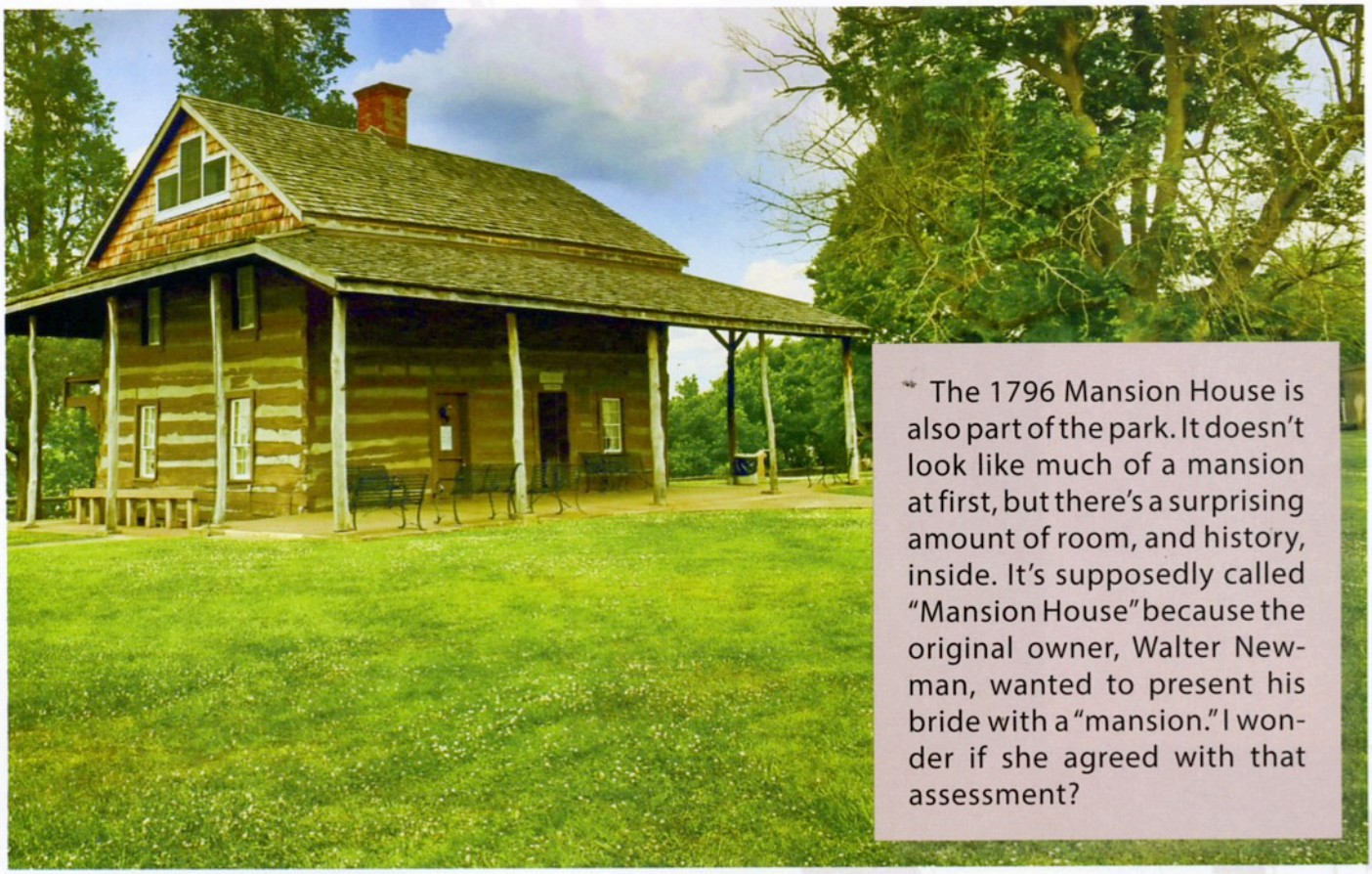
It's a typical late summer day—a blazing sun followed by an afternoon gusher. Only my third time in Point Pleasant, I'm struck by how much history is tucked into this quaint river town.

In many ways, Point Pleasant looks like Main Street USA. There's an antique shop, Bible bookstore, a Mexican restaurant, a jewelry store, an H&R Block, a prom-and-bridal shop, an art gallery, banks, insurance firms, a post office, an old theater, a very modern-looking county courthouse, and even a U.S. Navy Poster Museum.

As soon as you arrive, you're greeted by these wonderful old houses on Main Street. This one was built in 1865 by John Warth English, a future state supreme court justice. His wife, Fanny, was a direct descendant of Charles Lewis, a Virginia militia leader killed at the 1774 Battle of Point Pleasant. Everything here is so connected.

The 1774 battle is commemorated at Tu-Endie-Wei, an old term (possibly Wyandot) translated as "place between two waters" or "where two waters meet"—in this case, the Ohio and Great Kanawha rivers. Locals say it's been called that longer than anyone can remember, before the area was ever known as Point Pleasant.

An 84-foot granite obelisk dominates the park. It was dedicated in 1909 to the Virginia militia who fought the Shawnee here in 1774. The original inscription shows its age, not in looks but in words, saluting the Virginians while disparaging the Indians. A smaller obelisk off to the side marks the burial remains of Shawnee leader Cornstalk, near where he and his son were murdered in 1777.



The 1796 Mansion House is also part of the park. It doesn't look like much of a mansion at first, but there's a surprising amount of room, and history, inside. It's supposedly called "Mansion House" because the original owner, Walter Newman, wanted to present his bride with a "mansion." I wonder if she agreed with that assessment?

The inside of the Mansion House could be in a museum about museums. Many of the displays look to be at least 100 years, making it feel like the cool types of museums I visited as a kid. The artifacts are fascinating, and all the labels seem to be handwritten or typed on an actual typewriter.

You can exit the park along the river trail, a hiking and biking path that runs between the city's floodwall and the Ohio River. The 65-foot-tall floodwall, built in 1950, figuratively cut off this river town from West Virginia's largest river for decades. But, Point Pleasant has totally revitalized the area by building a park, with an amphitheater, boat docks, and a walking/biking trail.

The most unusual thing about the trail is the artwork, including a series of stainless-steel statues by the late Bob Roach, best known for his Mothman statue a few blocks away. By contrast, the figures he crafted for the trail are historical in nature—Lord Dunmore, Colonel Andrew Lewis, Daniel Boone, "Mad Anne" Bailey, and this one of Cornstalk.

Robert Dafford of Lafayette, Louisiana, painted the amazing mural on the floodwall, tracing Point Pleasant's prehistory and frontier history from left to right. It's fascinating because you don't have this perspective of Point Pleasant anymore.

Back to Main Street and on to the Point Pleasant River Museum & Learning Center. If you're not a big kid at heart, like me, you will be by the time you leave this place. Located across from Tu-Endie-Wei, it's a treasure trove of river history, focusing on the great ships that plied the local waters. It's chock full of river-related artifacts, and there's an impressive exhibit on the Silver Bridge Disaster.

A place on Main Street that really catches my eye is the Lowe Inn. It was built in the early 20th century as the Spencer Hotel and, since 1990, has been owned by Rush and Mary Ruth Finley. Strolling into the opulent lobby, I'm just blown away. You get a sense for how much money flowed through Point Pleasant a century ago. The Finleys have kept this historical vibe, maintaining the hotel's old Tiffany windows, Ralph Lauren sofa, and one-of-a-kind fireplace. They also display local artwork and host catered meals in their banquet room.

If you visit Point Pleasant, it's impossible to escape the ubiquitous Mothman phenomenon. The memorabilia is everywhere. An annual festival attracts thousands, who stand in line to get their photos taken with Bob Roach's now-iconic Mothman statue and visit "The World's Only Mothman Museum."

Like many small towns, Point Pleasant has clearly struggled for a while. The Mothman has become kind of an economic engine for the community. However, some people who lived through the Silver Bridge Disaster are clearly conflicted about it. I think they genuinely appreciate the tourists who come for the Mothman, but they closely protect the legacies of those who died on the Silver Bridge.

There are two memorials dedicated to the victims of the Silver Bridge. The older one is in a little park at Main and Sixth streets—where the bridge entrance ramp used to be. It's moving to see all the victims' names on brick pavers on the sidewalk. Unfortunately, some are fading badly, a somber metaphor for our vanishing memories of history.

The newer memorial is along the river trail, right where the bridge collapsed. As I get older, it's harder for me to come to a site like this where so many lives were lost and so many other lives were changed forever. Since 9/11, all tragedies seem more real and personal to me because I put individual faces with the events more than I used to.

It's surreal walking around Point Pleasant, taking everything in and thinking about what happened here 50 years ago. There's so much history, and everything is nearby. The 1774 battlefield and Silver Bridge site are within a stone's throw of the downtown and old residential sections. The people here have lived such a close existence, celebrating the good times and mourning the bad, the definition of what a small town should be.

STEVE BRIGHTWELL is the photographer for the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. A native of Beckley, he's been a professional photographer for 27 years. Steve's passion for history came alive when he became staff photographer for The Greenbrier resort in the late 1990s. He then served as photographer for Governor Cecil Underwood and for the West Virginia Legislature.

This group photo of state prohibition officers, taken in 1925 or 1926, includes Bill Christy and L. Watkins Taylor (the two kneeling on the left) and Gus Simmons (far right). The others are unidentified. Courtesy of Nancy Simmons.

The *Revenooers*

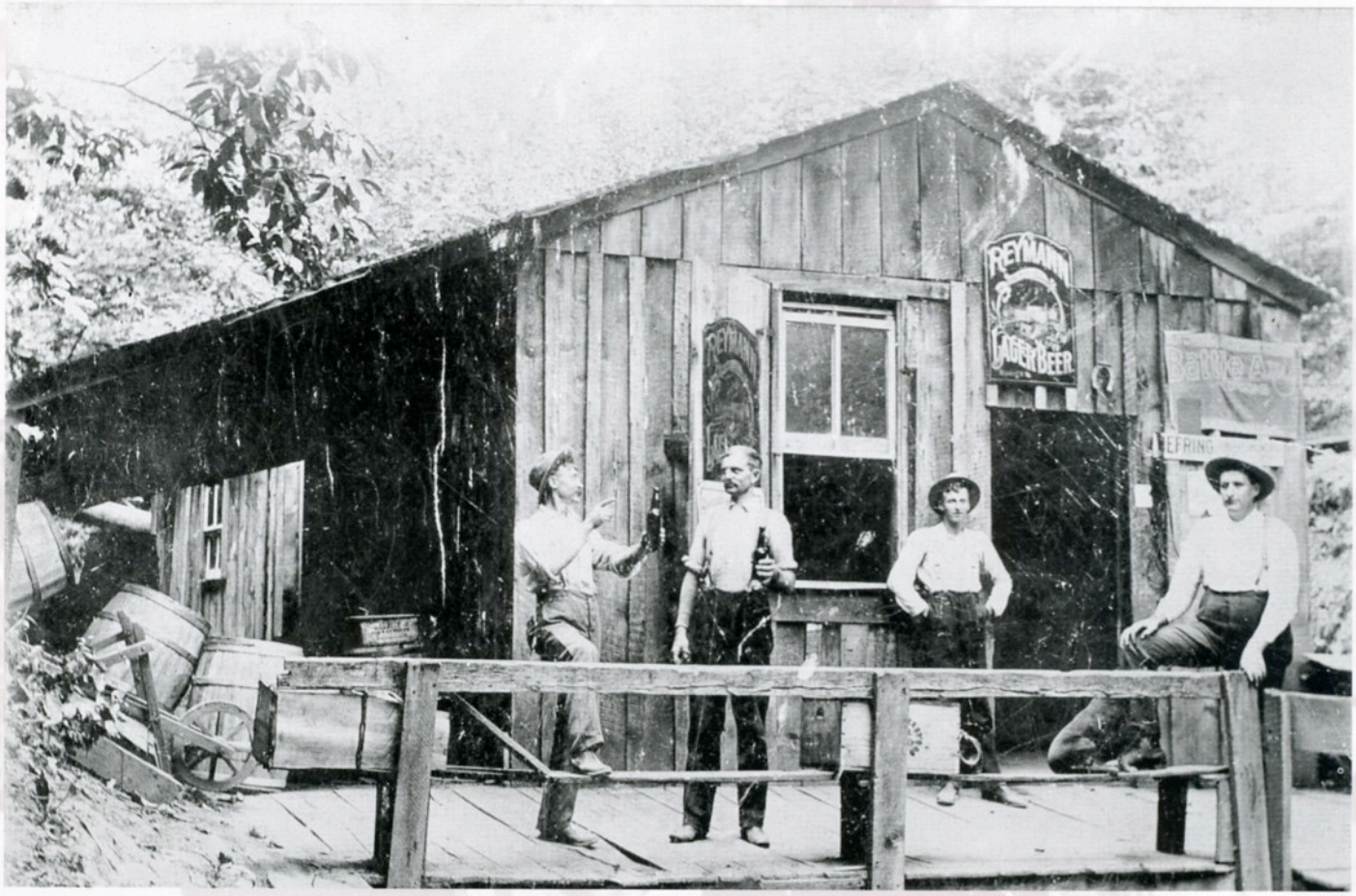
Enforcing Prohibition in West Virginia

By Merle T. Cole

Temperance, broadly speaking, is the practice of avoiding alcohol. It can range from partial to complete abstinence. As a personal practice, some find it admirable to a point, while others believe it's wrong for *anyone* to imbibe. This latter group of activists actually succeeded in making the sale or consumption of alcohol illegal in West Virginia for 18 years.

Prohibition came to West Virginia before it went national. In November 1912, voters ratified an amendment to the state constitution. Of 237,548 votes cast, 69.4 percent favored the amendment. Only three counties voted against it: Hardy, McDowell, and Ohio. The legislature passed an enforcement act proposed by Delegate Ellis Yost of Monongalia County. The amendment and the Yost Law both became effective on July 1, 1914. Thus, West Virginia went *dry* almost six years before the nation did.

The Yost Law gave state Tax Commissioner Fred O. Blue an extra hat to wear as state prohibition commissioner, responsible for enforcing prohibition, devising regulations, issuing permits, and inspecting for compliance. The Bureau of Prohibition, under Blue, was



Speakeasies typically evoke images of urban underground saloons and flappers from the 1920s. Here's a speakeasy, West Virginia style, near the town of Shirley in Tyler County in the early 1900s. Note the signs for Reymann Lager of Wheeling. Reymann was the largest brewery in the state until prohibition shut it down in 1914. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives (hereafter WVSA), Ruth U. Wright Collection.

headed by a chief deputy commissioner, initially Castella F. Rathbone, then J. Walter Bee.

Blue pushed enforcement aggressively. In 1917, he won a U.S. Supreme Court decision (*Clark Distilling Co.* v. *Western Maryland Railway*), which upheld West Virginia's right to prohibit liquor traffic within its borders, even if the alcohol originated from a wet state. Faced with whiskey runners transporting booze into the state, Blue ordered his prohibition agents to police the borders with adjoining wet states and intercept any illegal train contraband. Predictably, the criminals began referring to his prohibition agents as "Blue Men."

In March 1917, Walter S. Hallanan followed Blue as tax commissioner and won two key cases in the West Virginia Supreme Court. In *State* v. *Thompson*, the court overturned the actions of a justice of the peace who had suspended the sentence of a convicted self-confessed violator. In *State* v. *Cyrus*, the court awarded a writ of mandamus compelling the Wayne County sheriff to perform his prohibition duties. Sheriff H. H. Cyrus allegedly had permitted a convicted felon to live in a suite of rooms at a hotel in the county seat, drive about at will, get drunk, and commit other offenses.

Hallanan continued the fight against out-of-state whiskey runners. But he had to devote an increasing share of his meager resources to suppressing production and distribution of moonshine liquor within West Virginia. That mission came to dominate the agency's workload, particularly after the national prohibition of alcohol went into effect in 1920.

Blue and Hallanan had complained that prohibition enforcement was unduly distract-

Many arrested for violating the Yost Law were African Americans, like Phil Johnston (front right) of Marion County. Moonshining was a common, and lucrative business in many black communities. Black moonshiners catered to various ethnicities and races, including many wealthy and politically connected white customers. Courtesy of the WVSA, Elizabeth Windsor Collection.

State leaders liked to promote the successes of the Yost Law. The president of a "successful coal company" wrote to the tax commissioner conveying this anecdote, which also hints at an underlying anti-immigration motivation behind some of the prohibition movement:

"About a week ago, two or three of our foreign miners came to the office and said that now that their whiskey was taken away from them, they had nothing to do in the evenings; and wanted to know if we would not *[sic]* start a night school so they could learn to read and write our language."

According to the company president, the night school for foreign-born miners became a rousing success.

ing them from their broader responsibilities as tax commissioner. Both urged that the function be split off into a separate department. That action was finally taken when the legislature created a Department of Prohibition, effective October 1, 1921. William G. Brown, educator, lawyer, and prosecuting attorney of Nicholas County, was appointed commissioner by Governor Ephraim Morgan. With one break, he served in this role until the agency was abolished in 1932.

"'In another generation, liquor will have disappeared, not merely from our politics, but from our memories," said Commissioner Brown. "The very words associated with it will drop out of our vocabulary, and a new race of young men and women will have grown up to whom these words will have no significance. No other people in the world have set for themselves so great and noble an undertaking."

The state prohibition law cast a wide net. It began by defining *liquor* to "embrace all malt, vinous or spirituous liquors, wine, porter, ale, beer, or any other intoxicating drink, mixture or preparation of like nature. All malt or brewed drinks, whether intoxicating or not, are deemed

"'In another generation, liquor will have disappeared, not merely from our politics, but from our memories."
– Prohibition Commissioner
William G. Brown

This captured truck was cleverly converted by bootleggers to conceal and haul whiskey. Date and location unknown. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Police Archives.

malt liquors and all liquids, preparations and mixtures which will produce intoxication, and all beverages containing as much as one-half of one per centum of alcohol by volume shall be deemed spirituous liquors."

A first offense for selling, keeping, storing, or soliciting the sale of liquor was a misdemeanor with a fine of $100-$500 (about $2,450-$12,200 today) and a two-to-six-month prison term. A second offense was a felony, penalized by one to five years in the state penitentiary.

It was declared unlawful to "own, operate, maintain or [possess] any apparatus for the manufacture of intoxicating liquors, commonly known as a 'moonshine still.'" It didn't matter if the still was kept "in any desert, secret or solitary place" or in a "building, dwelling, house or other place." Keeping a still was a felony offense, punishable by two to five years in the penitentiary. Possession of mash—the initial stage of breaking down the starch in corn or grains into sugar—was a misdemeanor, punishable by fine and imprisonment. To be expected, it was unlawful to give liquor to a minor, but it was equally illegal to serve it to "a person of intemperate habits or one who is addicted to the use of any narcotic drug."

The state prohibition law left little wiggle room to courts or contesting parties. For one, it was illegal to suspend any sentence administered based on the Yost Law. A specific provision allowed jurors to be drawn from other counties if an impartial jury could not be empaneled in the county where the crime had been committed. The clear objective was to ensure "the actual punishment of convicted offenders by literal imprisonment in jails, labor on the public roads and collection of fines and costs."

The commissioner could prosecute any county, district, or municipal officer for failing to

Women's Christian Temperance Union volunteers offer samples of "non-alcoholic fruit juices" as an alternative to liquor. Date and location unknown. Courtesy of the WVSA, Bollinger Collection.

Prohibition: A Short History

By Merle T. Cole

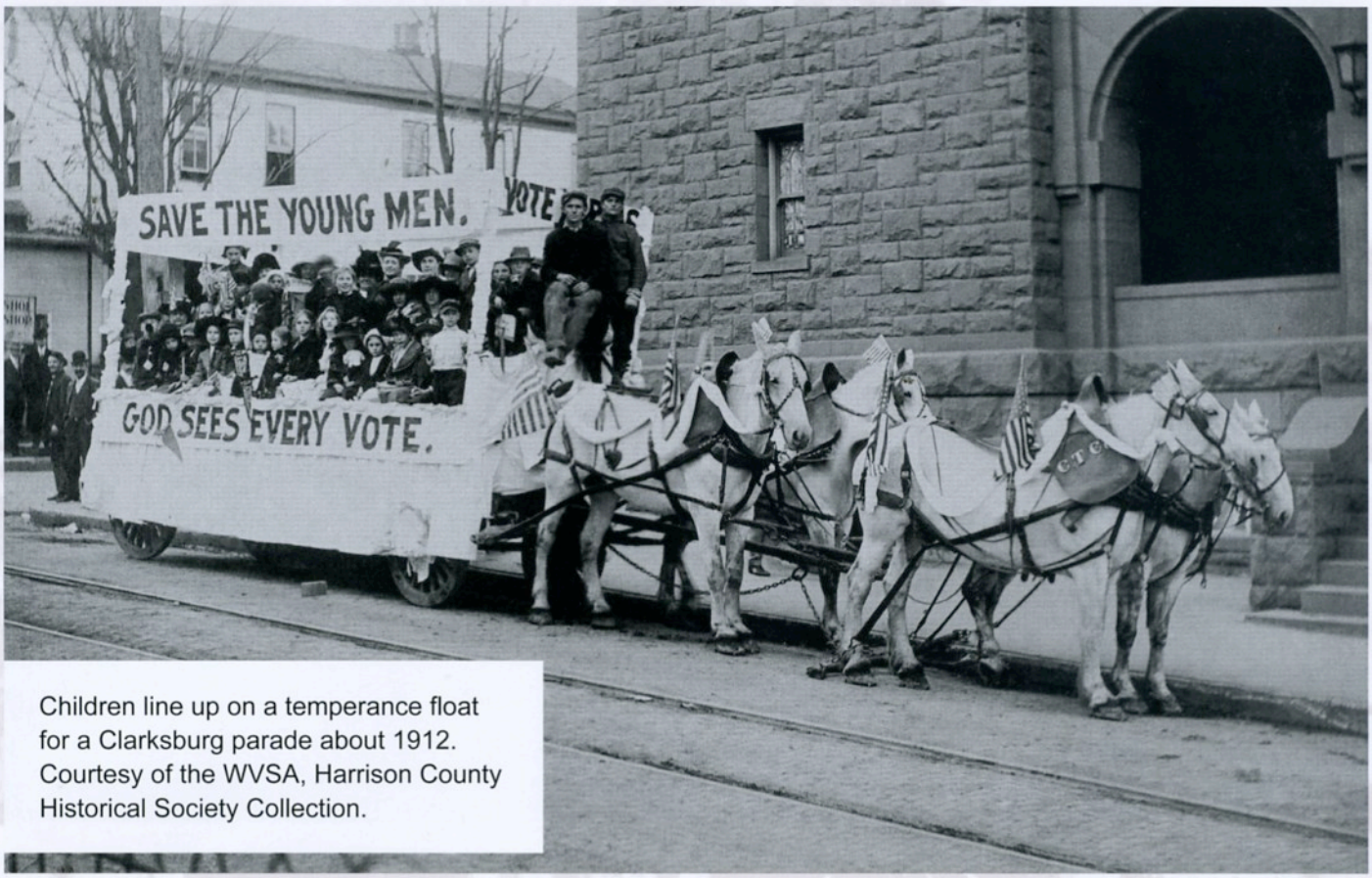
A national drive for prohibition in the United States began as early as the 1820s. The American Temperance Society was formed in 1826 and, in just over a decade, boasted nearly 1.3 million members nationwide. It and similar groups brought social and political pressures to bear.

Adherents of temperance movements tended to embrace other progressive political and religious ideas, such as abolishing slavery; banning tobacco use; curtailing prostitution; advocating for women's suffrage, education, and legal and working rights; ending child labor; improving public health and sanitation; and supporting international peace.

Two leading organizations of the late 19th century were the Women's Christian Temperance Union, founded in 1873, and the Anti-Saloon League, created 20 years later. The League and the Prohibition Party, founded in 1869, were established specifically to be political pressure groups. Both played significant roles. The League quickly came to the fore as the prime lobbyist for prohibition, and the Prohibition Party has the distinction of being America's longest-lived third party and was the first to give women full delegate rights at its conventions.

Maine became the first dry state in 1851, but the movement backslid during the Civil War, as soldiers imbibed quite freely, and both sides relied heavily on alcohol taxes for revenue. But in the 1870s, the temperance forces vigorously renewed their offensive.

At times, the groups made for strange bedfellows. Medical and religious institutions were joined by eugenicists, the Ku Klux Klan, business



Children line up on a temperance float for a Clarksburg parade about 1912. Courtesy of the WVSA, Harrison County Historical Society Collection.

leaders, labor radicals, and conservatives and liberals of all stripes. Some activists associated demon alcohol with the rise in immigration and, at prohibition rallies, carried signs condemning newly arrived Americans—Irish and Italians were common targets.

Some of the prohibitionists' tactics were quite creative. For instance, there was a proliferation of "temperance fountains," where citizens could get safe drinking water as an alternative to alcohol—public sanitation standards were still comparatively primitive. Activists also started newspapers, crusaded in theaters, and opened temperance halls and "coffee palaces" as alternatives to saloons. The Women's Christian Temperance Union created "scientific temperance instruction" courses for schools and colleges. There was even a short-lived (1893-1908) American Temperance University in Harriman, Tennessee.

Yielding to the unremitting demands of the Anti-Saloon League, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and their compatriots, Congress passed the 18th Amendment on December 18, 1917. It was ratified by the necessary three-fourths of states on January 16, 1919, and became effective one year later.

West Virginia was ahead of much of the nation in terms of prohibition. Our state nearly went dry in 1883, when a prohibition amendment was passed by the house of Delegates but died in the Senate. Five years later, a similar amendment was put on the ballot, but voters defeated it by nearly 35,000 votes.

Still, individual counties were going dry; by 1910, 37 of the state's 55 counties prohibited the use or distribution of alcohol in some form. When a prohibition amendment again went to the people in 1912, West Virginians approved it by nearly 100,000 votes. Prohibition went into effect July 1, 1914, and was rigidly enforced, with exceptions for some medicinal and religious purposes—and, of course, those who made and/or drank it against the law.

Men jailed on prohibition charges were often assigned to work on public road projects. These McDowell County prisoners are grading a new highway along Elkhorn Creek between Welch and Kimball. Courtesy of *West Virginia Geological Survey: Wyoming and McDowell Counties*, 1915.

uphold any provision of the prohibition law. To accomplish its mission, the enforcement unit possessed "all the powers now vested in the prosecuting attorneys, attorney general, sheriffs, constables and police officers of the State," including the use of a posse.

Wherever its placement within the state bureaucracy, the prohibition unit was surprisingly small by today's standards. At maximum strength (1920-21), the staff was only 20: a chief deputy, a law assistant, a clerk, and 17 field agents. And the staff shrank after the unit became a separate governmental department, topping out in 1929 with 15: the commissioner, four office clerks, and 10 field agents.

Keeping the staff size low, however, was intentional. In the prohibition law, legislators had recognized that the "most direct, practical and economical way of enforcement" was through justices of the peace and mayors. Most actual enforcement work was performed by the West Virginia State Police, county sheriffs, city police officers, and local constables. The primary role of state prohibition field agents was to advise and direct local officers.

As in today's war against the drug scourge, state prohibition officers frequently worked with federal agents and local officers in multijurisdictional task forces. For example, on July 11, 1927, state agents Gus Simmons, Ell Watkins, and Sampson Lester attempted to destroy a still some six miles southeast of Pineville in Wyoming County. The moonshiners knew the agents were coming and laid a deadly ambush. Simmons was killed in the first exchange. Lester was wounded, but he and Watkins escaped and summoned aid. The posse that rounded up Simmons' killers consisted of state police, deputy sheriffs, and a party of state prohibition agents. The latter was personally led from Charleston by Prohibition Commissioner Ross G. Wells, a Pleasants County attorney who had succeeded Brown and served from 1926 to 1929; Brown was reappointed to the post in 1929.

Based on available records, it seems the state police, rather than state prohibition agents, carried out most of the enforcement during this period, seizing 591 stills, making 6,167 prohibition arrests, and generating nearly $250,000 in fines (some $3.6 million today).

This raiding party had just captured a still near Jumping Branch in Summers County about 1926 or 1927. Pictured are (left-right) F. F. Boggs, Jack Bragg, Henry Hatcher, and Gus Simmons—not long before he was killed in another raid. Courtesy of Nancy Simmons.

West Virginia Prohibition Officer Line of Duty Deaths

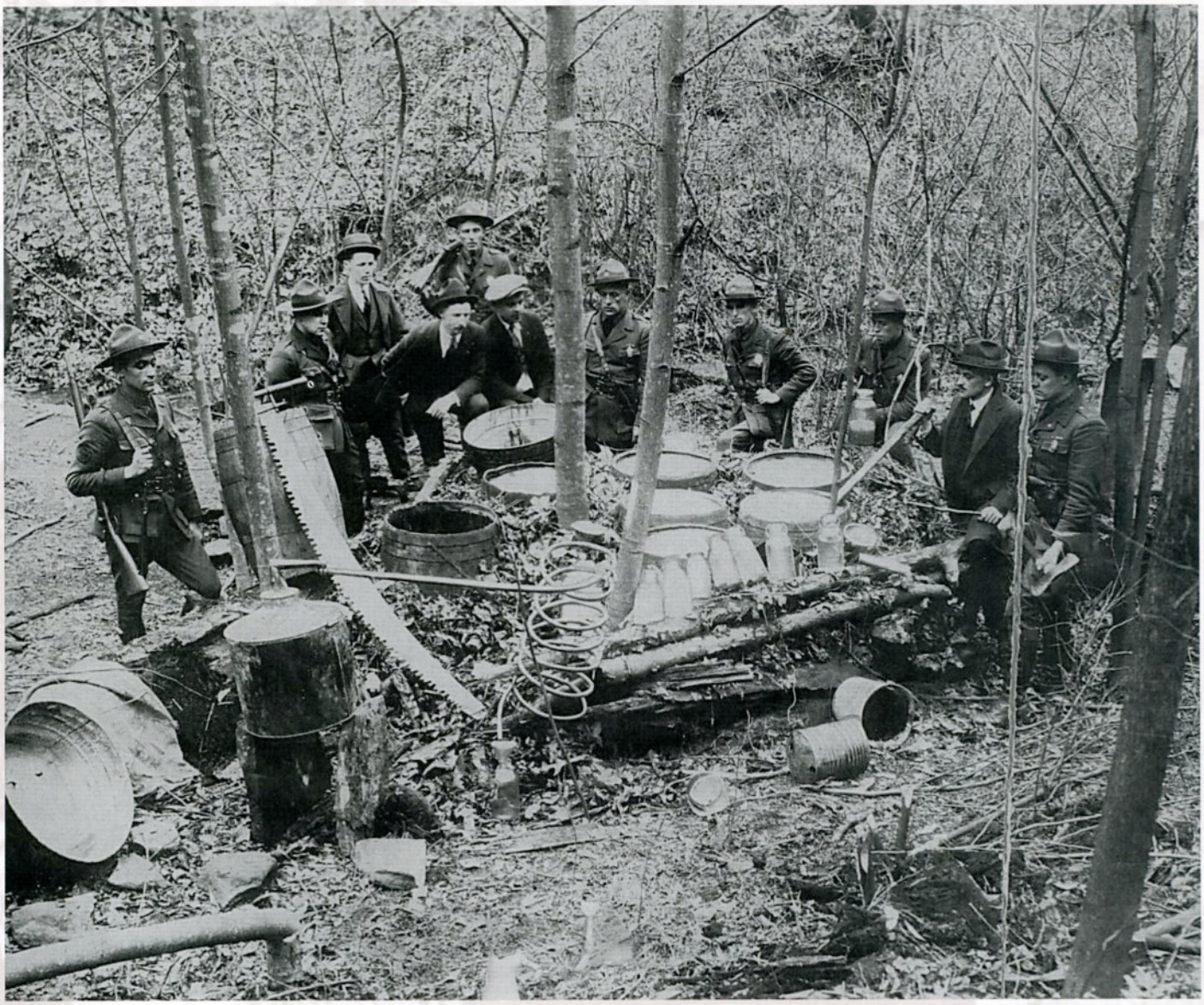
Name	Date	County
Will Farley	August 11, 1919	Logan
William Meade	February 12, 1922	Wayne
Lew Matty	July 15, 1922	Summers
Thomas E. Rutherford	February 25, 1923	Wyoming
Mose Elswick	September 23, 1923	Kanawha
Walter E. Blake	October 28, 1923	Kanawha
Leander M. Cook	November 15, 1924	Boone
David "George" Ball	June 20, 1925	Cabell
Gus Simmons	July 11, 1927	Wyoming
Everett Adams	July 27, 1927	Logan
Edward Hensley	August 16, 1927	Logan
Ell Watkins	June 27, 1932	McDowell

The Department of Prohibition counted the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) among its major "auxiliaries" in the war on illicit liquor. The state WCTU president was Lenna Lowe Yost, wife of the delegate who'd introduced the enforcement law; she was also one of West Virginia's leading advocates for women's suffrage. Other allies included the Anti-Saloon League, and churches, Sunday schools, and public schools throughout the state.

The enforcement of prohibition exacted a heavy price. A 1929 article in the Charleston *Daily Mail* reported on a federal study of prohibition-enforcement-related deaths. In West Virginia, "at least four federal officers, 10 state agents, four state policemen and nine alleged violators of the federal prohibition statutes" had been killed since the beginning of federal prohibition in 1920. That number, however, was considered low, perhaps by half, because West Virginia didn't keep formal records on the people killed *by* agents.

During the Department of Prohibition's short existence, 12 West Virginia prohibition agents were killed on duty—all from gunfire. One death was listed as "friendly fire" due to an uncoordinated federal and state raid on a still site near Huntington. That same raid also claimed the life of a federal officer. By comparison, the West Virginia State Police has suffered 41 line-of-duty deaths since it was created in 1919—half of those have been from accidents, mostly motorcycle, automobile, or aircraft crashes. Also of note, all of these state prohibition agents were killed in southern West Virginia—south of the Kanawha River.

With the onset of the Great Depression, West Virginia joined other states in cutting back on prohibition enforcement to save money. The 1931 legislature hotly debated whether to terminate the department entirely and transfer its enforcement mission to the state police. The bill passed the house but failed in the senate, giving the department a brief reprieve but



State prohibition agents and state police raid a still at an undisclosed location in the woods of West Virginia in the 1920s. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Police Archives.

with a slashed budget and only two full-time agents on board.

In July 1932, Governor William Conley called the legislature into special session to fix a major budget shortfall. The Republican governor requested a tax on tobacco and other so-called luxuries to pay off the deficit. But the legislature, controlled by Democrats, resisted any new taxes, opting instead to cut spending further. This time around, both the house and senate agreed to abolish the Department of Prohibition to save money. Conley promptly vetoed the measure as being unconstitutional, but the legislature overrode his veto. The department closed its doors on November 3, 1932, and its licensing function was transferred to the state tax commissioner's office.

Nationally, prohibition was coming to an end as well. Prohibition had spawned an enormously lucrative illegal liquor industry, with associated violence, corruption, and widespread disrespect for law in general. Dry advocates increasingly became disenchanted with the growth of organized crime, heavy court workloads, and overcrowded jails. In a time of increasing economic distress, prohibition had also hurt states financially due to the loss of liquor tax revenues. Others argued that

State trooper W. S. Webb funnels off illegal moonshine into jugs, likely during the 1920s. Another trooper, J. S. Flowers, assists and stands guard in the background. Photo by Frank Wilkin of the *Charleston Gazette*, courtesy of the WVSA, Frank Wilkin Collection.

prohibition suppressed individual liberty. Labor leader Samuel L. Gompers famously observed that the 18th Amendment was the only amendment to the U.S. Constitution to *diminish*, rather than extend, personal freedom.

This growing dissatisfaction resulted in ratification of the 21st Amendment, which nullified the 18th Amendment, on December 5, 1933. West Virginia was the 15th state to ratify it—and the first located primarily south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Still, a surprising 46.2 percent of West Virginia voters *opposed* rescinding it. Prohibition repeal finally became effective nationwide on March 1, 1935.

Some West Virginia counties elected to remain dry after prohibition ended. Today, several towns and parts of counties, including all of Calhoun, still prohibit the sale of wine and liquor by the bottle, although they can be purchased in bars and restaurants. Beer is available statewide.

MERLE T. COLE was born and raised in Beaver, Raleigh County. His interest in the West Virginia State Police began when he wrote a term paper for Dr. Paul D. Stewart's state and local government course at Marshall University in 1965. Since that time, Merle has authored 13 publications related to the state police's history. This is his third contribution to GOLDENSEAL. His previous articles appeared in our Summer 2016 issue.

Publicity photo of Bill Browning from the 1950s. All images courtesy of Doris Browning.

Bill Browning

By Paul Gartner

Bill Browning, the writer of "Dark Hollow"—a beloved song among bluegrass and Grateful Dead fans around the world—is largely unknown.

Though other musicians who shared a stage with Bill went on to greater acclaim, his professional career lasted only five years before he quit to help raise his family. He did, however, know the satisfaction of watching one of his songs climb the record charts. With two verses and a chorus, "Dark Hollow" is concise, and tells of longing for a lost or distant love.

"Dark Hollow" is now a standard in the bluegrass songbook. "It is one of those songs that took on with the people, and they just love it,' said John "Buckwheat" Green, a Putnam County native and professional bluegrass musician. "There's been 1,000 bluegrass bands do it, and they still do it."

Bill's approach to songwriting and performing was straightforward. "When there's national sadness, country-and-western music comes to the top," said Bill. "People don't want to hear no put-on."

His original recordings are still in demand. "I don't know how many countries I get royalties from," says Doris Browning, his widow. Original copies of the 45 record—released by a small, independent, country label in Cleveland—can be found for sale on eBay.

Ironically, one of the great bluegrass songs ever didn't start out as a bluegrass song. "Rockabilly was really his thing," Doris remembers. "'Dark Hollow' has kind of a bluegrass sound. He didn't mean for it to be bluegrass, but it turned out that way. It's now like a bluegrass national anthem."

Doris Johnson Browning was raised in Hurricane, on a farm that's buried under Interstate 64 today. "I worked with my dad out in the fields, every day," Doris says. "I worked all day baling straw, carrying bales, and stacking them. I was strong, I'll tell you."

Dark Hollow

By Bill Browning

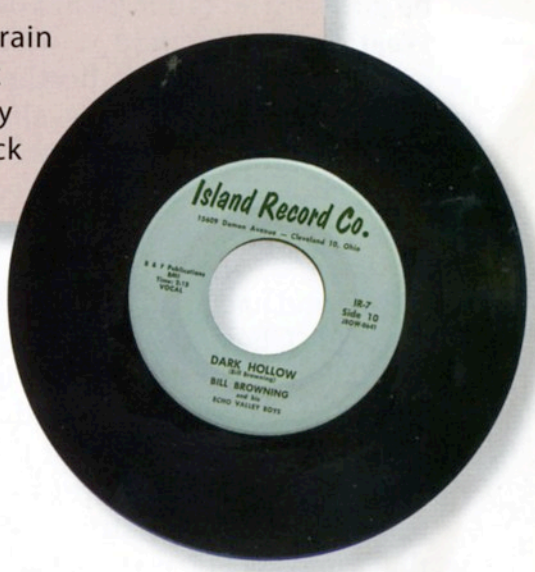
VERSES

I'd rather be in some dark hollow
Where the sun don't never shine
Than to be at home alone just knowin' that she's gone
That would cause me to lose my mind

I'd rather be in some dark hollow
Where the sun don't never shine
Than to be in some big city
In a small room with her on my mind

CHORUS

So blow your whistle, freight train
Take me far on down the track
I'm goin' away, I'm leavin' today
I'm goin' but I ain't coming back



She still lives in the brick home she shared with Bill, on a busy highway near Hurricane. It's just up the road from the building that used to house the recording studio they operated. Family photos and a wedding picture grace the living room walls. Bill's guitar is in a back room. Plastic-wrapped vinyl gospel records from their music labels line a bookshelf.

Bill Browning was born May 16, 1931, in Wayne County, to Haskell and Elsie Browning. His father was a coal miner. Bill was raised in Kanawha County, on Dry Ridge, outside St. Albans. There was music at home, and his dad bought him a guitar when he was 13.

He played music with neighbors. Doris recollects, "Then he got with an older man, Lou West, and they had a little country band." Bill's brother Carlos (1933-2011) was also in this band, The Kanawha Valley Boys, which performed from late 1947 until sometime in 1950.

The band had a show on WTIP radio in Charleston. The station, which went on the air in 1946, broadcast from a studio over Scott's Drug Store at the corner of Capitol and Fife (now Brawley Walkway) streets. At that time, WTIP was perhaps best known for its early morning country music show, "The Kanawha Valley Jamboree," hosted by Sleepy Jeffers. [For more about Jeffers, see "The Buddy Starcher & Sleepy Jeffers Shows" by Ivan M. Tribe (Spring 2013)].

Doris Johnson Browning and Bill Browning, somewhere on the road in the 1950s.

"He was playing in a little schoolhouse over at Scott Depot when I met him" Doris said. She can still recite the exact date: Friday, January 13, 1950. Doris and Bill were wed two months later, March 12, 1950.

After Bill's military service was over in 1955, he and Doris moved to Cleveland. While working as a truck driver there, he formed The Echo Valley Boys and was emcee at The Circle Theater at 10208 Euclid Avenue. The theater frequently featured black musicians as well as "The Hillbilly Jamboree" with established and up-and-coming country acts. Elvis Presley played there in 1955, along with Roy Acuff, Johnny & Jack, and Dottie West, among many others.

The Circle Theater offered just the musical stew that created rockabilly, which drew on rhythm-and-blues and hillbilly music. And The Echo Valley Boys were the house musicians that backed up these touring acts.

"About all of Nashville came through there," Doris says. "We met Johnny Cash there. We bought his dinner one night."

Bill met a man named Frank J. Videmsek. "They got to talking about starting a record company," Doris remembers. "Bill convinced him, and [Videmsek] went down and put

1957 flyer for Bill's new 45 on Island Records in Cleveland.

$20,000 in an account for Island Records."

In April 1957, Bill signed with Island, and his first 45 was released that June with two of his compositions: "Ramblin' Man" with "Washing Machine Boogie" on the flip side.

"If you just gave him an idea, he would write you a song and put a tune to it," Doris recalls. For instance, "Washing Machine Boogie" was inspired by the driving rhythm of the washer in their Cleveland apartment building. Some of Bill's other early rockabilly songs were "Sinful Woman," "Breaking Hearts," "Let The Bible Be Your Guide," and "Borned with the Blues."

A good song deals with situations a listener can relate to, Bill told the Charleston *Daily Mail* in 1971. People listen to music to forget their problems, he said. Bill wrote his first song in 1953, after the death of his father.

"Every song is at least some part inspirational and some part true," Bill told the *Daily Mail*.

His first 45 was followed by four more releases on Island, then "Dark Hollow" in 1959. Jimmie Skinner recorded "Dark Hollow" that same year, reaching seventh on the country-and-western charts. Luke Gordon's version, also in 1959, was a bluegrass-meets-Hank Williams arrangement, with very prominent Dobro, fiddle, and mandolin. Gordon's record made it to number 13. Both men recorded for Starday, a national label with wider distribution and promotion than independent labels.

By this time, Bill was recording for Starday, too, and was a regular on the Wheeling Jamboree, the star-packed variety show broadcast every Saturday night from that city's Capitol Theatre. One night at the Jamboree, the Osborne Brothers, future bluegrass stars of their own, congratulated Bill on his hit song, but he didn't know anything about it. Doris remembers, "They said, 'Man, haven't you heard? You are going right up the line!'"

Radio and chart success was followed by live appearances with The Echo Valley Boys across New England and Can-

Bill performs with his band The Echo Valley Boys at the Lone Star Ranch in Reeds Ferry, New Hampshire, in the late 1950s. Thanks to other West Virginia natives, like the Lilly Brothers and Don Stover, New England was a bluegrass hotbed at the time. The Lone Star Ranch, in operation from 1938 to 1983, was a must-stopover during country music tours in New England.

ada. One show, billed as "The Greatest Jamboree Ever Staged in New England," was held at the Ocean Park Auditorium in New London, Connecticut, on August 28, 1958. Ralph and Carter Stanley were also on the show.

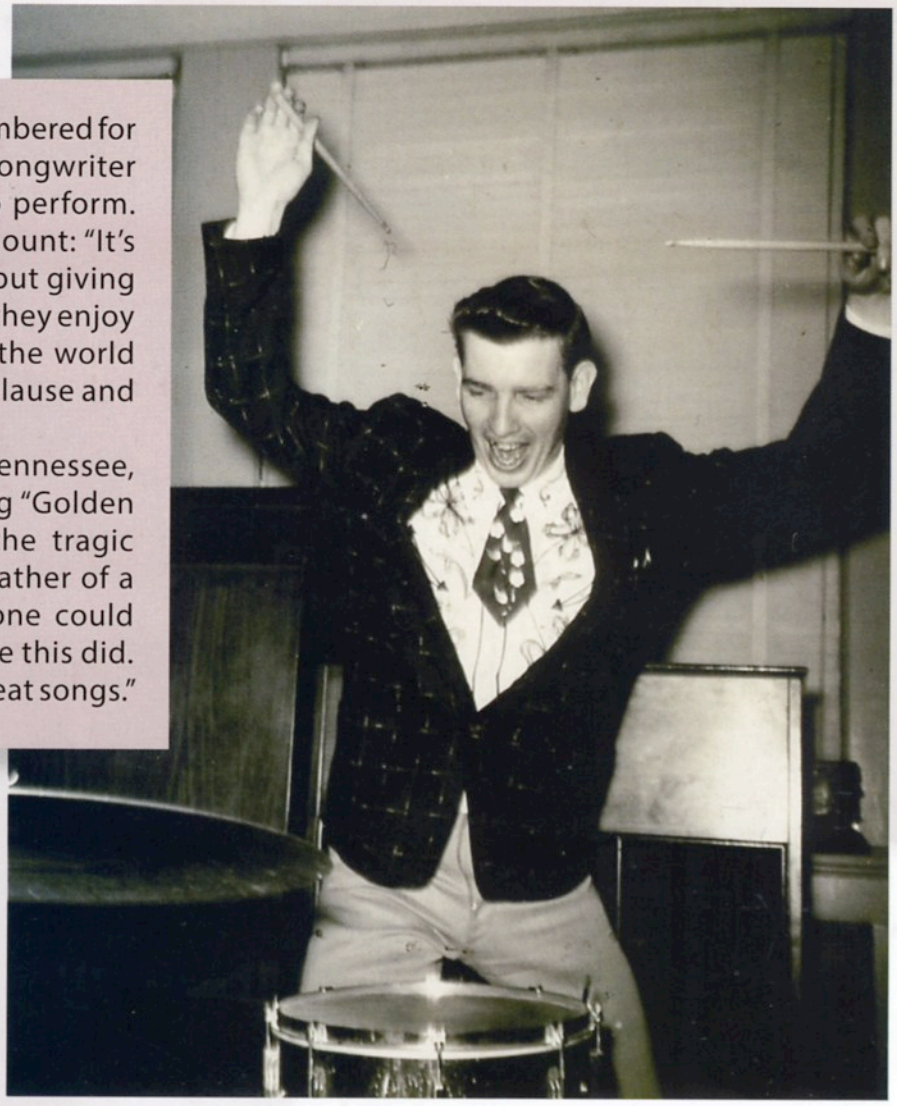
There were a few more performances after that, but Bill had an automobile accident in Canada in 1960 and left touring. He came back to West Virginia, got a job driving trucks for Chemical Tank Lines in Charleston, and raised four children with Doris: Billy Chris, Angela, Deanna, and Susanne.

By the 1970s, "Dark Hollow" would be popular again. In 1969, bluegrass legend Ralph Stanley recorded it on his first album after his brother's death. Two years later, Larry Sparks and The Lonesome Ramblers led off their *Ramblin' Bluegrass* album with it. In 1973, The Grateful Dead released *Bear's Choice,* featuring a 1970 live recording of "Dark Hollow"; the Dead again performed the song in 1980 as part of an acoustic opening set. Multi-instrumentalist David Bromberg included it on his 1975 album *Midnight on the Water,* and that same year, the Seldom Scene released it as part of the classic *Live at the Cellar Door* album.

Still working full-time as a truck driver, Bill never totally left music behind. In the mid-1960s, he began recording and releasing 45s of himself and other local musicians on the Marbone Record label out of Hurricane. This later morphed into Midway Recording, a studio and music publishing business. And he put together a new band, The Dark Hollow Boys, featuring Hazel Paul and Doris as backup singers, with

While Bill Browning is best remembered for his work behind the scenes as a songwriter and music producer, he loved to perform. The audience for him was paramount: "It's not how much money you have, but giving yourself to the people. And when they enjoy it, there's not enough money in the world to pay you like the amount of applause and gratitude you get."

One listener from Decaturville, Tennessee, wrote to say how much Bill's song "Golden Toys" had meant to her, after the tragic death of a neighbor, the young father of a five-year-old boy: "I wish everyone could have a song to fit the occasion like this did. God bless you and keep writing great songs."



Bill was a born entertainer. It was all natural and extended into his free time. Doris recalls having to take over the steering wheel on occasion so Bill and his bandmates could wrestle in their touring car. Bill's shown here in Wheeling on May 16, 1959, celebrating his 28th birthday in high fashion.

Burt Croft on banjo and Carlos Browning on bass.

"That was who Bill was playing with when I met him," Doris said. "We made all our stage costumes. Bill's was trimmed in leather, but ours was made out of curtains," she says jokingly. "I painted all our boots the same color."

This homemade approach worked in the studio as well. Bill ran the electric wiring for the equipment, while Doris made the curtains. Together, they installed fiberglass sound insulation boards for the walls and covered them with burlap. Doris also ran the studio while Bill was driving his truck. Their studio produced albums by local greats, like blues singer/guitarist C. C. Richardson of Charleston, and helped inspire the next generation of musicians.

It was around this time that Buckwheat Green introduced himself to Bill. Buckwheat would go on to play professionally with Lonesome River Band, West Virginia Gentlemen, Laurel Mountain Boys, and others. In the 1970s, the budding songwriter and instrumentalist was just out of high school when he knocked on Bill's door.

The older musician made a big impression.

"I had heard a lot of stories about his travels," Buckwheat recalls. "I just walked in there and said, 'I wrote a song.' He said, 'Let's hear it.' I got the guitar out and played three lines. He said, 'Come on in here.' He made me a tape and didn't charge me a thing. I started pretty much living there after school. Three or four years later, I was playing with the West Virginia Gentlemen, and we recorded on his Alta label.

Among the bands that Bill and Doris recorded at Midway in the 1970s was The Calvarymen, based originally out of Logan. The gospel group's lineup in the early '70s featured (left-right) Bernard Cook, Squire and Virgil Parsons, Conrad Cook, and Jim Humphreys. Squire Parsons, a Roane County native, would later become a gospel superstar, best known for his classic "Sweet Beulah Land." This was a promotional photo for The Calvarymen's 1972 album *Camp Meeting Songs*, released on the Brownings' Marbone label.

Bill and Doris operated their Midway Recording Studio out of this building on Teays Valley Road near Hurricane. They built the studio interior and assembled this nice two-track recording system virtually from scratch.

We did a 45, and it did pretty good locally."

The studio was professional quality and "quite a deal," Buckwheat remembers. "I think it started as an eight track, with one-inch tape. He had studio-quality microphones. In the beginning, he was the studio engineer," meaning he supervised the recordings and ran the equipment. "After three or four years, he hired Paul Alderman to be engineer." Paul became a partner in the studio.

Touring gospel groups were regulars at Midway. Some, Green says, "were right popular." Many of these albums were released on Bill's new Alta label. He also designed the covers and wrote the liner notes for these and his own recordings, while Doris handled the promotion.

Bill was pleased with the renewed local interest in his own music and that of others. "It does me good to see people in this valley accept something that was part of their heritage," he said.

During this time, Bill was diagnosed with cancer. Studio work helped take his mind off his health problems, Doris says. One summer day in the mid-1970s, Bill's old friends, Sonny and Bobby Osborne, were playing at a festival in St. Albans.

"I went early and was talking to Sonny," Buckwheat says. "They wanted to go see Bill."

The veteran musicians sat in Bill's studio talking and laughing for a couple of hours. One road story followed another, like this one. Years before, both bands were working the same circuit of shows. Bill's car had broken down beside

In the 1960s, Bill (left) put together a new band, The Dark Hollow Boys, featuring Burt Croft, Bill's brother Carlos, Doris Browning (center), and Hazel Paul (right).

the highway. Sonny and Bobby roared past, waving and flashing their headlights, but not stopping to help. Bill remembered being a little angry but got his car up and running. He was driving to the show to give them a piece of his mind, when there sat the Osbornes, on the side of the road, with car trouble. Bill returned the favor and blew his horn as he drove past. Sitting there in his studio some 20 years later, they laughed heartily, recalling those times.

"That was a good day," reflects Buckwheat. "This was a year or so before Bill died."

Bill Browning died at age 45 on January 23, 1977, and was buried at Mount Moriah Baptist Church—located, quite fittingly, up a hollow in Putnam County. His widow, Doris, still lives in their home just down the road from the old Midway Recording Studio.

PAUL GARTNER moved to West Virginia from Ohio in 1977 and lives in Lincoln County. A multi-instrumentalist, he has won the Vandalia Gathering old-time banjo competition. He performs with his band, Born Old, and edits copy at the Charleston *Gazette-Mail*. His most recent contribution to GOLDENSEAL was a tribute to musician David Morris and the Mountain Music Roundup in our Winter 2016 issue.

After playing with Jerry Garcia and David Nelson in the Black Mountain Boys, Eric Thompson headed to New York City and joined the New York Ramblers. This photo, taken in 1964, shows the band warming up for the 1964 Union Grove Fiddlers Convention. Their star-studded lineup included Gene Lowinger on fiddle, Fred Weisz on bass, Winnie Winston on banjo, Eric Thompson on guitar, and David Grisman on mandolin. Photo by Bob Yellin, courtesy of Eric Thompson.

"Dark Hollow"

By Eric Thompson

While "Dark Hollow" is a classic bluegrass song, many know it from the Grateful Dead's acoustic performances in 1970 and 1980. But the Dead's association with the song actually predates the band. Eric Thompson played with future Grateful Dead singer and lead guitarist Jerry Garcia in the Black Mountain Boys and Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions in the early 1960s. Recently, he spoke with GOLDENSEAL about the first time he, Garcia, and other musician friends heard "Dark Hollow." –ed.

To put it in perspective, in '63, our little group in Palo Alto, California, was totally obsessed with bluegrass. A bunch of us were hanging out then—Jerry Garcia, David Nelson, Rick Shubb, Sandy Rothman. We were connected with musicians in New York and Boston, and we were all sharing the reel-to-reel tapes of live shows that we were making. We were just in awe of the things that were happening!

This was a pivotal time in Bill Monroe's career. He'd just started playing more urban gigs and on college campuses. The Blue Grass Boys' gig at New York University was the first with Del McCoury in the band. Del joined the band playing banjo but was soon switched to guitar when Monroe hired Bill "Brad" Keith to take the banjo slot. Keith was from Boston and had developed a new, innovative chromatic style that was turning heads. We heard this amazing version of the band here in California, and also got tapes of it from the East Coast.

Monroe always gave his lead singer a solo slot early in a show. Del usually sang "Dark Hollow." We were completely taken with it, and learned it right away. It became a favorite—it was Del's performance that got us going.

ERIC THOMPSON continues to perform regularly, often with his wife, Suzy. He's also been an instructor at the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins.

The Case of the Traveling Dress

Some eight decades later, 90-year-old Phyllis Marks can still wear the "traveling dress" of her youth. Courtesy of Crystal Miller.

By Phyllis Marks

"Poverty has never been a stranger to West Virginia or the Appalachian region. It's been a way of life for some for much too long. During the Great Depression, a young lady was lucky if she had two lovely Sunday dresses in her closet. This true story, told by my grandmother Phyllis Marks, embodies that time period and shows the resourcefulness of our mountain heritage."

– Crystal Miller, Phyllis' granddaughter

My older sister, Anna Laura Thompson (Layfield, at the time), and Mildred Garrett Furr were the best of friends throughout school. They spent a lot of time together discussing, I'm sure, their hopes and dreams, high school gossip, friends, boys, and, of course, clothes, as most young ladies do.

So it came about that a particular Sunday dress from Sears, Roebuck & Company had caught the eye of these two young ladies. It was predominantly white in color, with little blue and purple flowers, cut below the knees, with a white collar decorated by a red tie. As Mildred's family had a lot more money than our mother did, her parents had the means to bless her with the much-coveted dress.

Anna Laura and I were raised by a single mother back in the Depression and before there was any type of government assistance for those less fortunate. My father had passed away due to brittle bone disease before I could really ever remember him; therefore, my mother had to concentrate on just putting food on the table.

And so it was that Mildred wore the dress for a while, until she got tired of it, and was blessed with another Sunday dress that caught her eye. She passed the original dress on to my sister. Unfortunately, my sister tried it on and found her frame to be more pleasingly plump than the dress would allow, so she bestowed it upon me.

PHYLLIS MARKS is a West Virginia treasure. The Gilmer County native is one of our state's finest and most-authentic old-time singers. As Gerald Milnes wrote about her in our Spring 2015 issue, "Phyllis is the last active ballad singer I know of in the state who learned by heart from traditional sources in the traditional way." Phyllis Marks turned 90 this past June, and this is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Phyllis Marks performs at the West Virginia State Folk Festival in Glenville about 2014. Photo by Gerald Milnes.

I was quite happy with the gift and wore the dress at least a year or more, before I was given another dress by someone else. The dress was still in good shape, still vibrant in color, and quite lovely to look upon, so I passed it on to my sister-in-law Fern. I believe she wore it a while and then gave it to my niece Beulah, who wore it a while before giving it to her sister-in-law Sandy Bee.

Several months passed before Sandy's mother, Opal, called me and said she had a real pretty dress down at her house. She said that if I could wear it, I could have it. As clothes, particularly pretty Sunday dresses, were hard to come by, I expeditiously made my way to Opal's house and was shocked to see a familiar sight, the dress.

I accepted the gift—never saying a word to Opal about it—and started wearing it again to church on Sundays. Looking me up and down, several of the women at church said, "Hmmmm . . . Someone else has a dress just like that, but we can't think of who it is." I never let on.

I wore the dress again for a while before finally giving it to my niece Faynelle. After that, I lost track of it until, one day, a person was giving away a box of clothes. I had a hunch the traveling dress was in that box. I found it, hung it up, and gave the rest of the clothes away. I figured that dress had traveled long enough, and it was time to come home.

It amazes me today how clothes are so easy to come by. We can easily spend hundreds on a new wardrobe every year or give away clothes with the price tags still attached. Nevertheless, this story is a reminder that we should appreciate what God has blessed us with and how truly our blessings can come full circle when we choose to bless others.

Fayette County inventor Dira Stout Sr., with his model of a Heisler geared locomotive, submitted with his paperwork to the U.S. Patent Office in 1918. Courtesy of Dira Stout Jr.

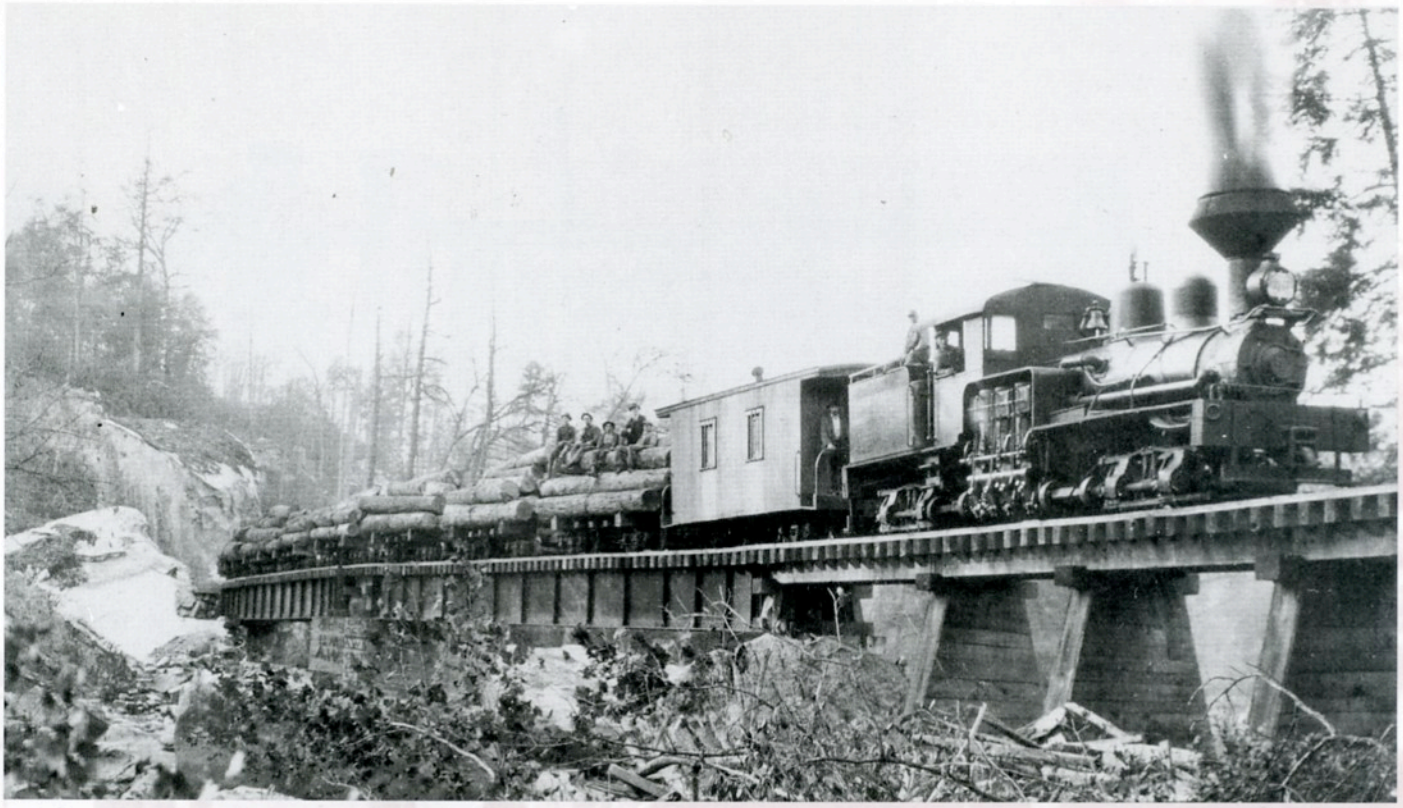
Dira Stout Sr.
Steam Locomotive Prodigy

By Alan Byer

Dira Stout Jr. knew that his father and namesake was a talented machinist and mechanic, but he understood neither the true extent of his abilities nor his accomplishments—until after Dira Sr. departed this life on February 18, 1988.

Following the funeral and burial, Dira was cleaning out his father's workshop in King George, Virginia, when he discovered an ancient-looking toolbox beneath a workbench. He opened the lid and, under some tools, found five sheets of paper folded together. Though silverfish had left the paper tattered and full of holes, he could just make out the words "UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE" near the top of one page, along with his father's name in one corner and a long number in the other.

On a hunch, Dira asked a computer-savvy granddaughter to research the matter. Pretty soon, she had an answer. His father had been granted a patent 70 years earlier for improvements to Heisler geared steam locomotives. Dira talked to his



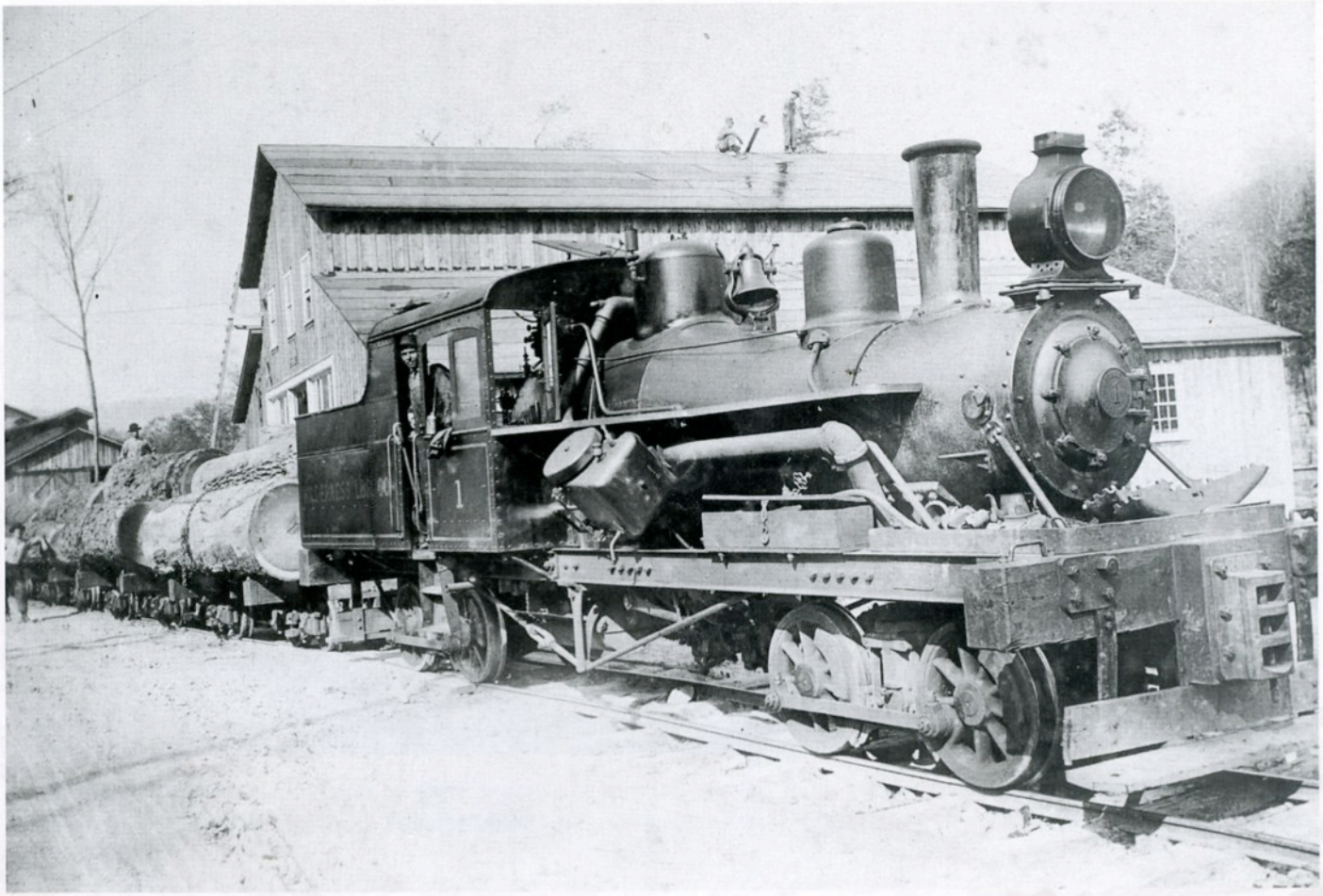
At one time or another, Dira Stout Sr. likely repaired this Wilderness Lumber Shay engine, shown here pulling a log train across Meadow River about 1918. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives (hereafter WVSA), Janet Childers Collection.

siblings, and they were just as surprised as he was; their father had kept this remarkable accomplishment secret as long as they'd known him.

Dira Stout Sr. was born July 16, 1893, in New Milton, Doddridge County. He was an orphan by age seven and, for the next decade, was raised by grandparents, aunts, and uncles on his mother's side, all with the last name McIe (pronounced MACKee). Though he attended school through fifth grade, he missed many days to help with planting, tending, and harvesting crops; according to Dira Jr., his father probably had more of a third-grade education. When Dira Sr. was 16, he made his way 120 miles due south to Landisburg, Fayette County, where he found work cutting timber for the Sewell Lumber Company for 70 cents a day. Every morning, he'd walk about two-and-a-half miles from the camp to the timber-cutting site in the woods carrying a crosscut saw and a double-bit axe. At the end of the workday, he'd retrace his steps back to camp.

Before long, he found more rewarding work in the mill and as an extra-board locomotive engineer for the company's narrow-gauge railroad (three feet between the rails instead of the standard gauge, four-feet, eight-and-a-half inches.) On log trains, he moved empty cars into the woods and loaded cars back to the mill; on freight trains, he took finished timber products downgrade to Sewell at the foot of the New River Gorge—to connect with the Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Railway—and supplies and empties back up to Landisburg.

When Dira Sr. started, the company operated Climax and Shay geared locomotives and two old rod locomotives built by Baldwin Locomotive Works. Sewell Lumber and its successor, Babcock Coal and Lumber, maintained their own locomotive shops in Landisburg and nearby Clifftop. Before long, Dira was working full-time as an engineer and as a mechanic in the repair shop, where he, and his employer, discovered his natural aptitude for repairing steam locomotives. Dira learned quickly, so much so that his abilities soon surpassed those



This engine, Wilderness Lumber's Heisler #1, inspired Dira Stout's first patent. The locomotive is shown here about 1918 in front of the company store at Nallen, with engineer Henry Butcher at the helm. Courtesy of the WVSA, Harman G. Young II and Janet Childers collections.

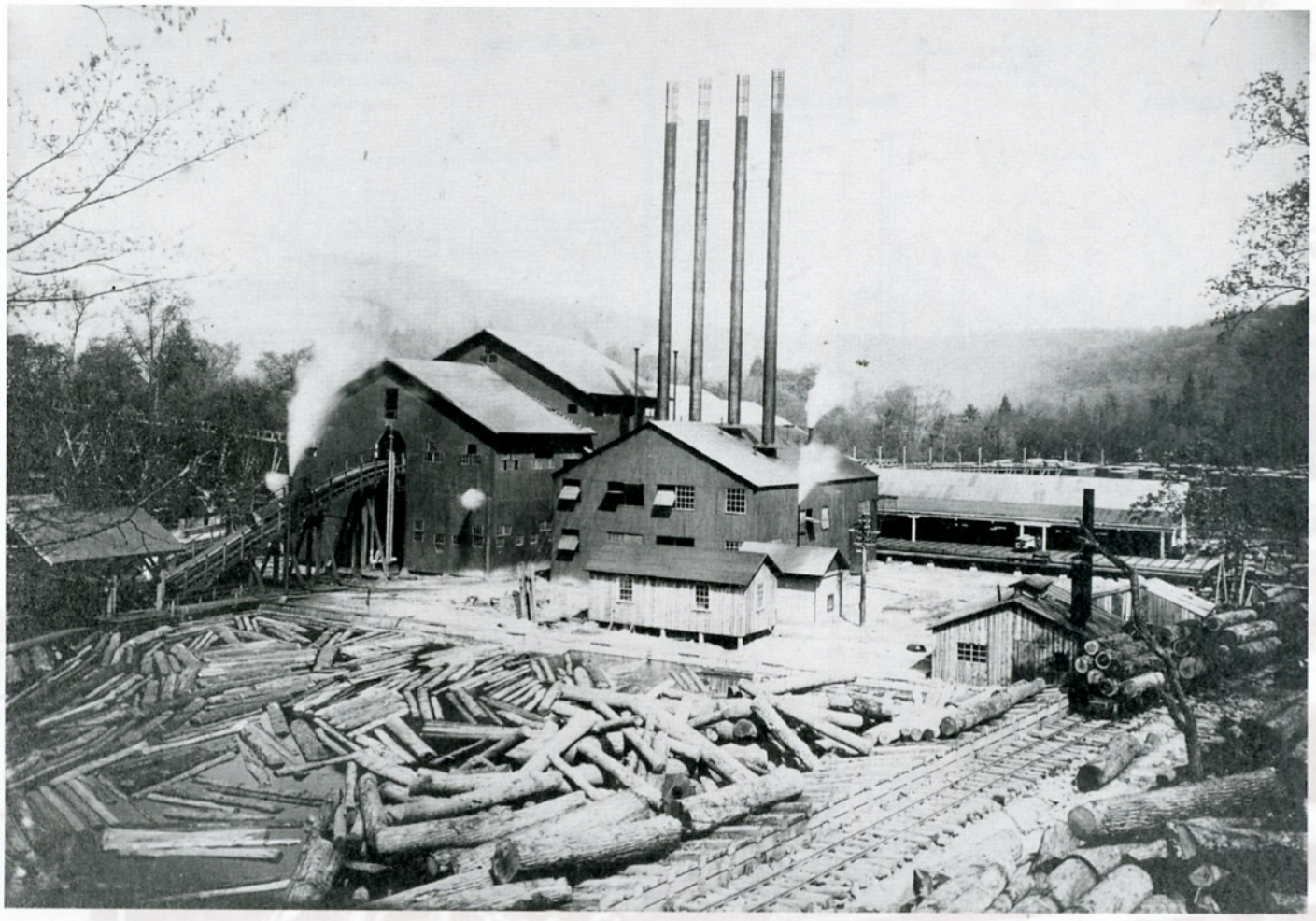
of everyone else in the shop. He became the go-to mechanic whenever his coworkers had trouble completing a task.

Dira was a young man in his prime, and, before long, the daughter of a neighbor and fellow employee caught his eye. Winifrede "Winnie" Zickafoose and Dira became sweethearts and, before long, were married at the home of Dira's Uncle John in Diana, Webster County. Dira was 19 years old.

Soon, Dira was running the Landisburg shop, though he made no more money for the added responsibility. He knew he could do better and, with a growing family to support, started looking for a better job. Wilderness Lumber Company operated five geared locomotives, four Shays and one Heisler, to supply logs to its mill in nearby Nallen, which straddles the Fayette-Nicholas county line. Wilderness hired Dira as an engineer and shop mechanic, and he moved his wife and young family some 12 miles to Nallen.

Dira knew a lot about Shays from his years in Landisburg, but he'd never experienced a Heisler, like his new employer's locomotive #1. He soon preferred the Heisler to Wilderness Lumber's four Shays. According to Dira Jr., his father thought it outpulled its Shay brethren of similar size and required less-frequent maintenance and servicing. However, Dira Sr. did recognize one shortcoming: #1 would lose power on the sharpest turns and steepest grades, when the power-train would reach the limits of its flexibility. That, in turn, caused the gears to jam together (bind) and placed stress on the fixed cylinders and drive components, threatening to force them out of alignment.

In his spare time, Dira Sr. studied the Heisler mechanism and envisioned a design modi-

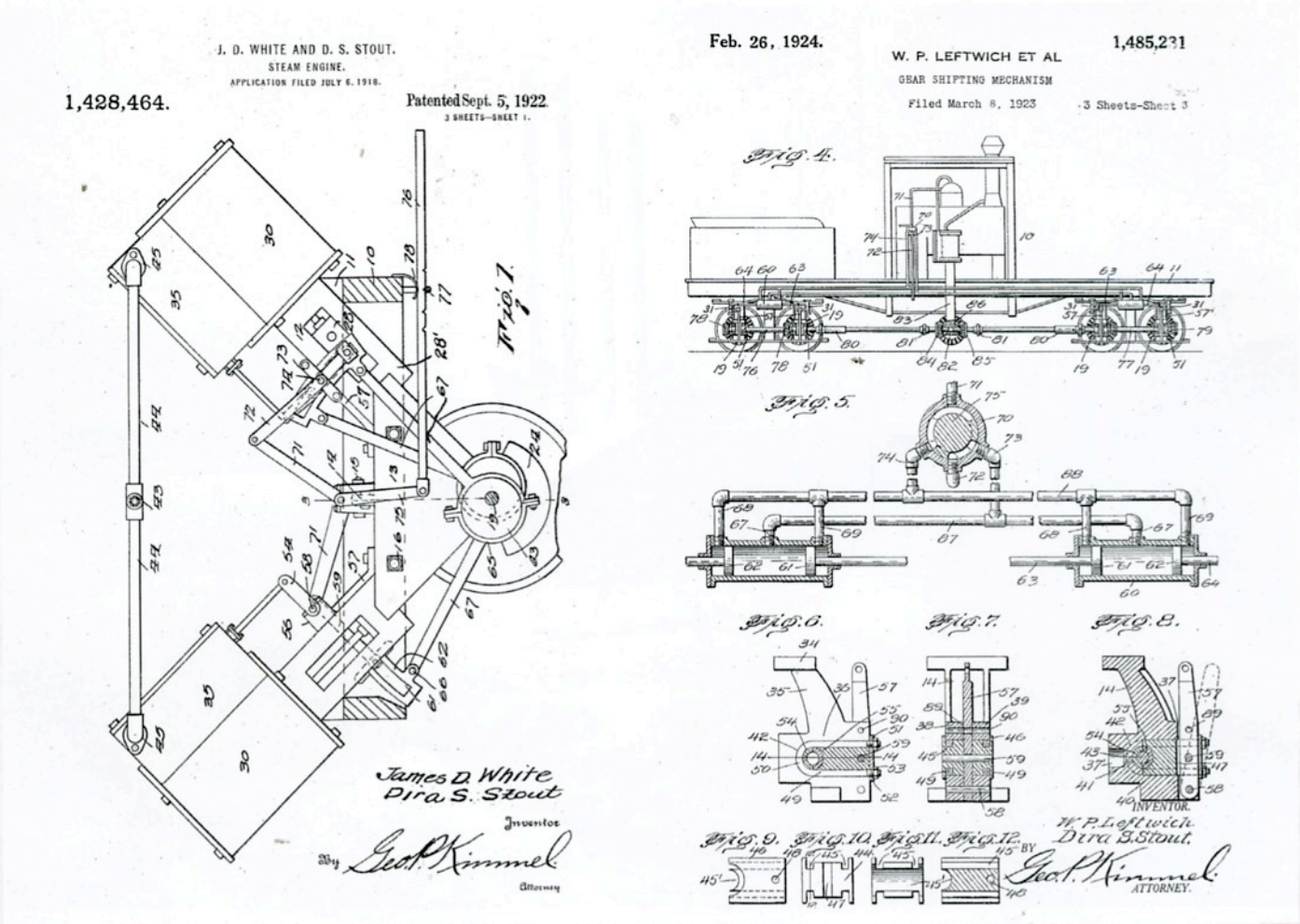


The Wilderness Lumber Company mill at Nallen, no date. Courtesy of the WVSA, Harman G. Young II Collection.

fication to remedy the power loss. Using stove pipe, scrap steel from the shop, and parts he cast from low-melting-point metal on his family's cookstove, Dira built a working model of Heisler #1 to illustrate his proposed modifications. He enlisted draftsman/engineer James D. White to express his ideas in drawings and text, and the two hired a lawyer to apply for a patent. On July 6, 1918, they submitted their application along with detailed engineering drawings and the Heisler model to the U.S. Patent Office. A little more than four years later, Dira found a letter in his mailbox. The Patent Office had granted him and White patent number 1428464 on September 5, 1922.

Dira continued to work on Heisler improvements, trying to design a lighter, more flexible power truck (the framework holding every two-axle, four-wheel set). According to Dira Jr., his father constructed new-design power trucks for his Heisler model and sent one to a cousin who lived in Washington, D.C. The cousin promised to submit a patent application for the design in Dira's name, but that was the last his father heard about it. His cousin either didn't follow through or registered the patent in his own name.

After completing his Heisler patent, Dira identified a similar problem afflicting Shays: on the steepest grades and sharpest turns, the power train gears would jam together and cause the locomotive to lose power. He enlisted another draftsman/engineer, William Leftwich, and they started working on a radical new design: a gearshift mechanism for Shays. This would allow the engineer to move the gears apart when they started to jam and prevent any loss of power. They hired a lawyer, and, on March 8, 1923,



These original patent drawings show Dira's attention to detail. The one on the left was for his Heisler modifications, patented in 1922; the one on the right outlined his improved Shay gearshift mechanism, patented in 1924. Courtesy of Dira Stout Jr.

Dira mailed a patent application and detailed engineering drawings to the U.S. Patent Office. He and Leftwich were granted patent number 1485231 on February 26, 1924.

We don't know if Dira Sr. ever made any money from his patents. Some have speculated, though, that Heisler may have incorporated elements of his first patent into the design of later locomotives.

In 1930, Dira started on another model, a conventional steam locomotive with a 2-6-2 wheel arrangement (two unpowered lead wheels, six powered wheels, and two unpowered trailing wheels). However, he was working five-and-a-half days a week and helping raise six children, so he had little spare time for this more complicated model—not until much later.

Dira purchased 150 acres near Nallen in 1932 and moved his family into a house he built himself. He cleared some 30 acres, where he planted an orchard, a large garden, and crops for his family; he also constructed a barn and outbuildings.

Wilderness Lumber stopped using geared locomotives in the woods in 1934, choosing instead to cut near the tracks of the Nicholas, Fayette & Greenbrier Railroad, which passed through Nallen and connected to the C&O mainline in the New River Gorge. Wilderness used a small standard-gauge conventional steam locomotive to pull loaded log cars to the Nallen mill. Dira continued as shop superintendent but needed fewer employees to repair and maintain one conventional locomotive and a small fleet of standard-gauge log cars. Wilderness Lumber's output, and workforce, declined as the supply of logs dwindled.

Dira Stout Jr. poses with his father's original Heisler model, now on display at the C&O Historical Society Museum. Photo by our author.

World War II was soon under way, and Dira learned that the Navy was looking for skilled railroaders for Dahlgren Naval Base in Virginia. He moved to Dahlgren in 1942, and his family joined him the next year.

In 1946, Wilderness sold out to Mower Lumber, which had purchased the mill at Cass in Pocahontas County three years earlier. After the Nallen mill changed hands several more times, it sawed its last log in 1961. Little remains today.

Dira Stout Sr. worked another 26 years at Dahlgren on conventional steam locomotives, diesels, cranes, and freight and passenger cars. Before retiring, he completed his second model steam locomotive, which he'd started in 1930. As a final step, he lettered the locomotive tender "D&W Special," for either Dahlgren and Wilderness or Dira and Winnie. Citing his father's abiding love for his mother, Dira Jr. favors the latter.

After Dira Sr. retired, he and Winnie moved to King George, eight miles from Dahlgren and enjoyed another two decades together. Dira Stout Sr. passed away in 1988 at age 94; he and his beloved wife had been married more than 73 years. Winnie followed four years later in 1992 at age 96.

Before Dira Sr. died, he'd given the model of his rod locomotive to Dira Jr. and the Heisler model to another son, Robert. In 2012, the brothers reunited the models and donated them, along with a handwritten biography and other information to the Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Society in Clifton Forge, Virginia.

More than a century ago, a young man—a teenager, really—Dira Stout Sr. brought an almost unheard-of innate mechanical ability to the virgin timberlands of Fayette County. Though some of the towns he lived in, the companies he worked for, and the locomotives he worked on are gone, his story lives on thanks to his sons. May we all be so fortunate!

Our author would like to acknowledge the assistance of Dira Stout Jr., who enthusiastically provided information and images for this article.

ALAN BYER is a South Charleston native who earned an English degree from West Virginia University. His writing has appeared in *Trains, Wonderful West Virginia, Railway Age, West Virginia Hillbilly*, and *The Log Train*. This is his fourth contribution to GOLDENSEAL, the most recent being "Swiss Family Balli: The Movie" in Winter 2015.

Shay locomotive, near Cass, 1959. Photo by Roy B. Clarkson. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Mountain State Logging & Railroad Association Collection.

Steam Locomotives in the West Virginia Woods

By Alan Byer

From the 1880s to 1930s, lumber companies built some 3,700 miles of temporary railroads in West Virginia to haul out virgin timber. Logging railroads laid light rails over uneven roadbeds, up and down steep grades, around sharp curves, and across rivers and streams on spindly wooden trestles.

At first, the lumber companies employed conventional steam locomotives, which used steel rods to transmit power from horizontal steam cylinders to driving wheels mounted in a fixed frame. They soon learned, though, that these weren't suited to the rough-and-tumble conditions in West Virginia's mountains. Geared locomotives, which use geared power trains instead of rods to transmit power to the wheels, would allow lumber companies to access virgin forests in the most rugged parts of West Virginia.

The most common geared locomotives in the West Virginia woods were Shays, Climaxes, and Heislers.

Shay

Ephraim Shay, who owned a sawmill in Michigan, recognized the shortcomings of conventional locomotives for logging railroads. In the 1870s, he started working on an alternative that used gears, instead of rods, to transmit power. Lima Locomotive Works of Ohio built a prototype for Shay in 1880 and, two years later, started producing what would become known as the Shay locomotive.

Even after competitors, primarily Climax and Heisler, entered the geared locomotive market, Shays were still the most popular. At least 219 Shays operated in West Virginia; the last and one of the largest, Western Maryland Railway #6, survives on the Cass Scenic Railroad in Pocahontas County.

Shay locomotives usually are equipped with three cylinders mounted vertically on the right side of the boiler, which is offset to the left of center to compensate for the cylinders' weight. A flexible power shaft runs the length of the right side of the locomotive and powers gears on every right-side wheel.

Climax

In the early 1890s, Climax Manufacturing Company (later Climax Locomotive Works), based in Corry, Pennsylvania, purchased a geared locomotive design patented by Rush S. Battles and improvements to that design by Charles D. Scott. By the time Climax closed in 1928, it had built more than 1,000 locomotives, of which some 210 would burnish West Virginia rails.

Climax locomotives feature

Today, Pocahontas County is home to all three major types of geared locomotives: Shays operate at the Cass Scenic Railroad, a Heisler powers the Durbin Rocket just up the Greenbrier River, and two Climax locomotives are under repair at Cass. When either Climax returns to operation, West Virginia could become the only state where all three types are operating. Considering the importance of geared locomotives in our history, that does seem fitting.

Climax locomotive at Durbin. Photo by our author.

two cylinders mounted at about 30-degree angles parallel to each side of the boiler. These cylinders turn a crankshaft under the frame, which turns flexible shafts that run the length of the locomotive under the center of the frame. Gears on these shafts power gears on every axle.

Heisler

Charles L. Heisler built a prototype for a third type of geared locomotive in 1891 and patented his design the following year. Stearns Manufacturing (later Heisler Locomotive Works) of Erie, Pennsylvania, built Heisler locomotives from 1894 to 1941. During that time, they produced more than 645 locomotives; of these, West Virginia companies purchased 13, including the last one built, which is stored today at Durbin, Pocahontas County.

Heisler locomotives also feature two cylinders, but these are mounted in a 45-degree V configuration angling under the boiler. These cylinders turn a crankshaft connected to flexible shafts running under the center of the locomotive. Gears on the shafts power gears on the outer axle of every two-axle set. Side rods transfer power from outer-axle wheels to inner-axle wheels on both sides of the locomotive.

Heisler locomotive at Cass. Photo by our author.

Clara and Harold Swecker, 1930s.
Courtesy of DeAnn Jones.

The Swecks' Circle Tour

By Borgon Tanner

In 1956, while working in Elkins and before finding a house to rent, I stayed at Swecks' Motel and Restaurant a few miles south of Elkins in Randolph County. Harold and Clara Swecker were genial hosts, and Clara's great cooking kept the restaurant busy from morning to evening.

One evening, after other diners had left the restaurant, three of us began talking about the mountains around Elkins. With animated gestures and much laughter, they told me the following story. They said it was one of the highlights of their lives.

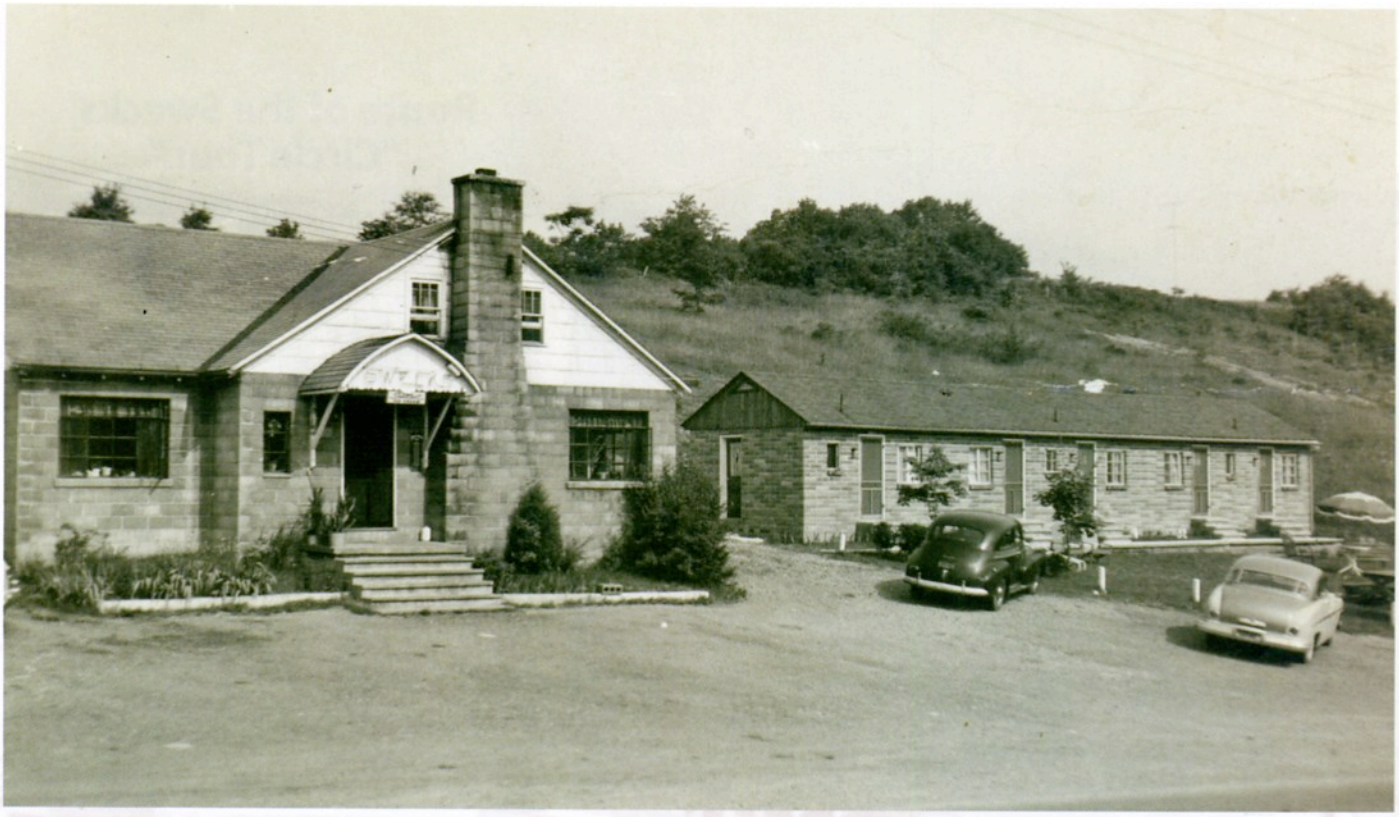
During the early 1940s, when World War II was raging and before the Sweckers had opened the motel and restaurant, they lived in Bemis, a small community on Shavers Fork of Cheat River. Harold Swecker was a miner there. The work was satisfactory, and the pay was good, but Bemis lacked many conveniences. Wedged among the mountains, the river, and the Western Maryland Railroad tracks, the village consisted primarily of the mine, the miners' houses, and a railroad station. There was little to do.

A steep, narrow, winding road led up to Glady—a way to the outside world. As the crow flies, it was a short distance, but the vertical distance was 324 feet. And Glady was scarcely larger than Bemis.

Even if a person was fortunate enough to own a car during the war, restrictions on tires, gas, and speed made driving difficult. And in winter weather, highway travel was out of the question. In a nutshell, Bemis was an isolated village in a remote valley.

But the Swecks, as they referred to themselves, needed a vacation. Winter was approaching, and soon, Bemis would be even more isolated. Where could they go for a few days, buy needed supplies for the winter, relax, and enjoy themselves?

Train travel was the only practical way. Bemis was served by the Western Maryland Rail-



The Swecks' Motel and Restaurant on Route 219 near Elkins was operated by Harold and Clara Swecker. The business was owned by Clara and her sister-in-law Texie Swecker. Courtesy of Robert C. Whetsell.

way via a freight train with passenger accommodations, known as a mixed freight. The Western Maryland made one roundtrip daily between Elkins and Durbin. The Swecks could catch this train midafternoon and be in Elkins about an hour later. But Elkins in wartime had its drawbacks: boarding houses were crowded, and many stores lacked essential items. Surely, there was some place else they could visit without spending a lot of money.

Through the war years, there was considerable rail traffic through Bemis. In an isolated community served by rail, people get to know train and engine crews. At Bemis, crews picked up train orders, unloaded freight at the station, and switched cars at the mine. Steam locomotives, still in use at that time, stopped at Bemis to take on water. Crews also paused by the Swecks' house to get one of Clara's delicious pies, so they were good friends with the couple.

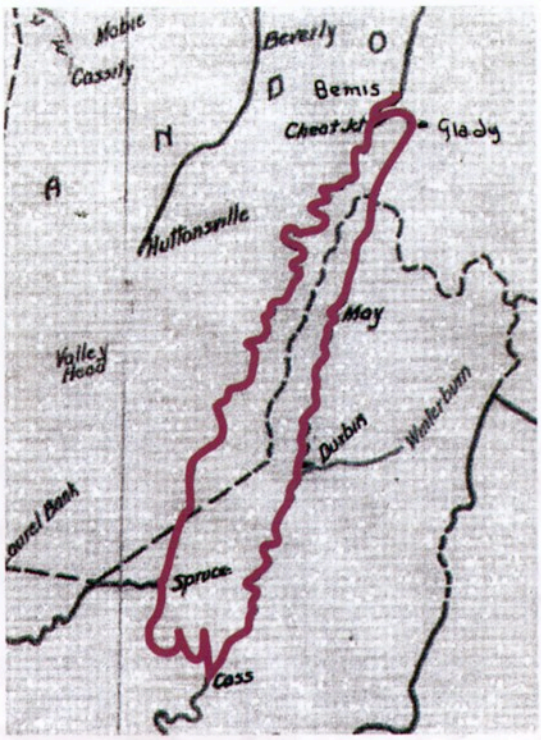
After much thought, a few visits to the telegraph office, and several telephone calls, the Swecks made a plan. They would make a weekend trip to Cass, stay with friends there, and shop at the large company store.

Early one Saturday morning, a Western Maryland freight bound for Spruce arrived at Bemis. While the fireman was taking on water, and the conductor and engineer were at the station picking up orders, a few quiet words were exchanged. The fireman finished, the engineer whistled for the flagman, and the train moved ahead slowly. When the caboose approached the station, the train slowed to a stop. Quickly, the conductor and the Swecks climbed aboard the caboose. From the rear platform, the conductor waved a "highball," and the train headed for Spruce. The Swecks' long-awaited vacation had begun.

While the train labored upgrade, the Swecks relaxed in the caboose and talked to the conductor and flagman about hunting, fishing, and lumbering. About halfway to Spruce, the flagman made a fresh pot of coffee on the coal stove. This and generous slices of an apple pie Clara had brought along sustained them past Cheat Bridge and most of the way to

The small town of Bemis in Randolph County, as it appeared in 1920. Courtesy of Steve Bodkins.

Route of the Swecks' "Circle Tour."



Spruce. As they ate at a small worktable, Clara realized that many trainmen considered their caboose a traveling home.

Three-and-a-half hours later, and 1,262 feet higher, they arrived at Spruce. The temperature was cold even though it was a sunny day. Spruce, formerly a logging town, was now a Western Maryland terminal for crews running to both Elkins and Webster Springs. At 3,853 feet above sea level, Spruce was probably the highest community in the state.

The Swecks thanked the conductor and flagman for the comfortable ride and hurried over to the telegraph office to inquire about the next stage in their journey. There was still an interchange track between Spruce and Old Spruce near the base of Bald Knob. Shay locomotives made at least two trips a day to interchange cars at Spruce.

Spruce was even more isolated than Bemis. Rail travel was the only way in or out. Our travelers knew that for years, residents had been getting rides down to Cass in Shay locomotives and were sure the privilege would be extended to them. At the station, they learned that a logging engine would be along in two hours or so. The telegraph operator informed the Shay engineer that two passengers wanted a ride to Cass.

The Swecks waited at a nearby house. (At one time, Spruce had a population of more than 300). They knew several railroad families, and the time passed quickly while they talked and ate a noon meal. Later, they heard the Shay come into Spruce. They said their good-byes and invited everyone to visit them in Bemis. They went over and climbed aboard the Shay; the fireman's seat was offered to Clara.

About a mile and a half of logging road separated Spruce from Old Spruce at the base of Bald Knob. A few miles beyond, near the 4,000-foot level, they were at the upper switchback above Cass. Soon, they made the well-known descent through the switchbacks, dropping rapidly downgrade off the mountainside. A short time later, they were in Cass, having dropped down 1,545 feet in only a few miles.

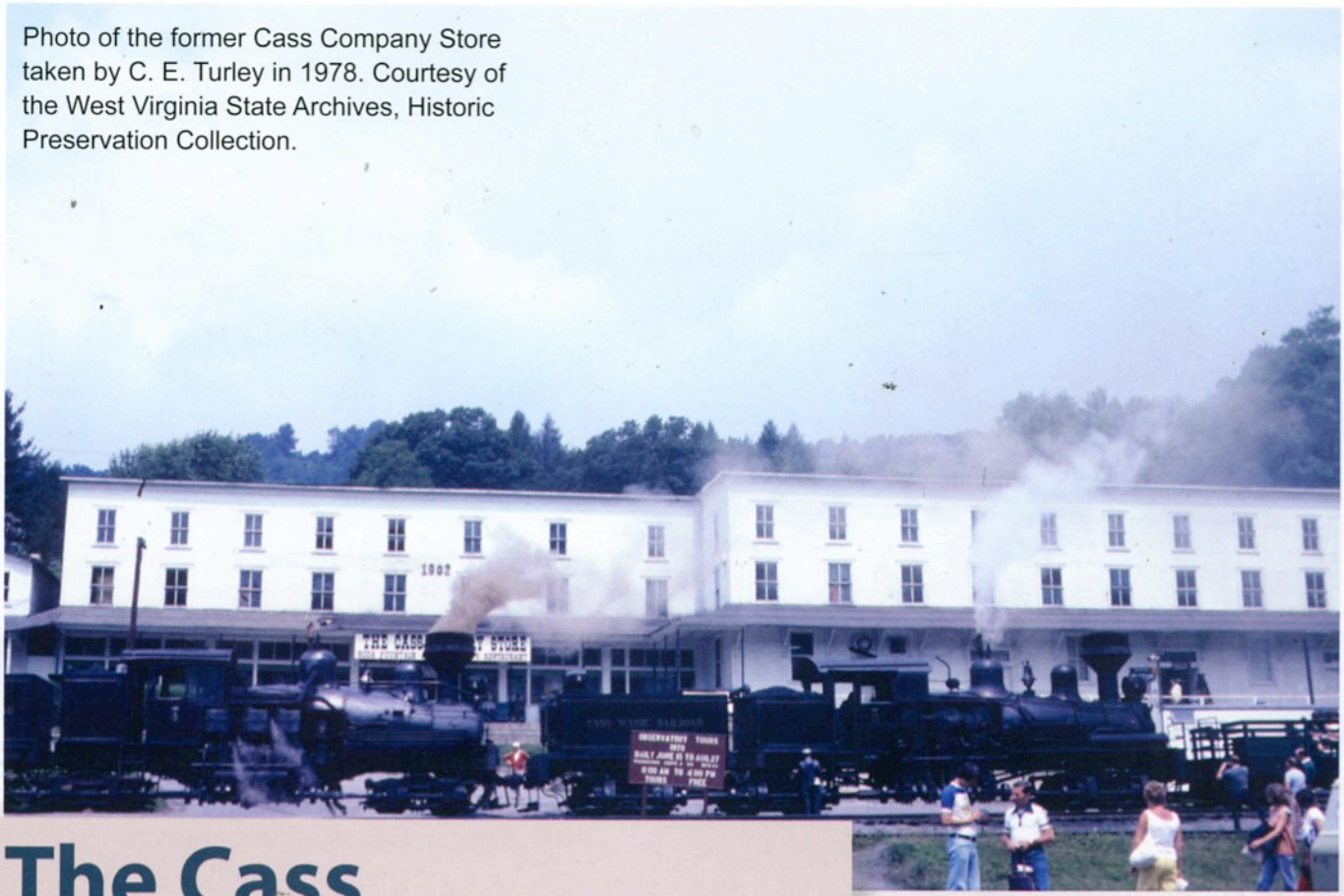


Photo of the former Cass Company Store taken by C. E. Turley in 1978. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Historic Preservation Collection.

The Cass Company Store

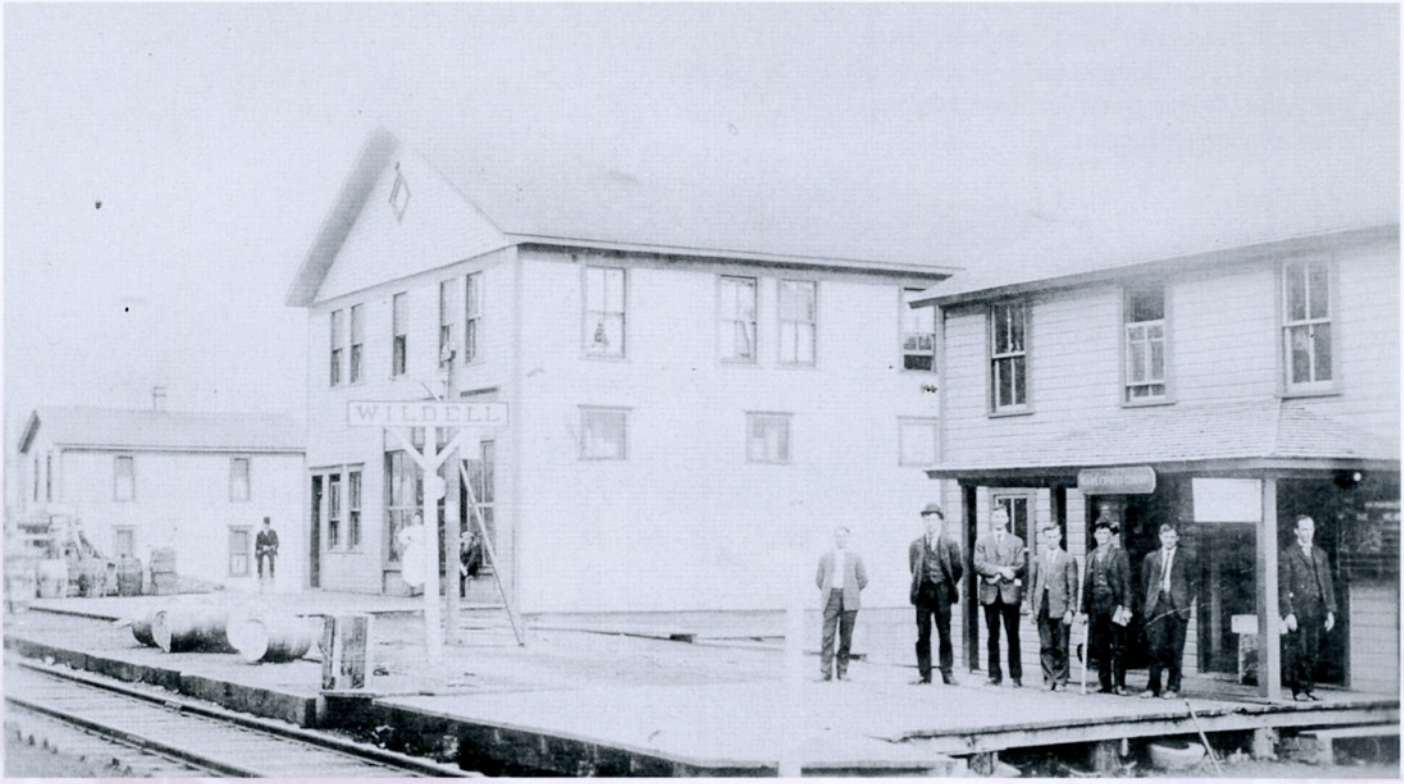
By Borgon Tanner

The best description of the store at Cass comes from Roy B. Clarkson in his book *Tumult on the Mountains*: "The company store (which was a two-story building 300 feet long and 60 feet wide), officially known as the Pocahontas Supply Company, supplied to neighboring farmers as well as the men who worked for the Company. Such staples as canned goods, salt, feed, fertilizers, nails, fencing, matches, and loggers' boots were bought by the carload. As many as four carloads of condensed milk were purchased at one time. This store is reported to have done over a million dollars of business annually for many years."

Another local author, W. E. Blackhurst, in *Men and a Mighty Mountain*, lists distinct sections of the store. There was a jewelry store and repair shop, a dry goods department that could clothe the entire family, a hardware section that could supply any household need, a complete drugstore, and a convenient soda fountain. There was a fully stocked grocery store, and, on the second floor, a furniture department, where everything from carpets to ceiling lights could be found.

The Swecks thanked the engineer and fireman for their ride and then hurried to find old friends in town. They were greeted with open arms and invited to stay for a week. Warmed by their enthusiastic welcome, the Swecks laughingly said the first thing they wanted to do was clean up, get a bite to eat, and then go to the company store while it was still early. (Knowledgeable people did their shopping early in Cass on Saturday evenings to avoid raucous late-night activities.)

For people living in a small, isolated community in the mountains, the company store was a marvel, and during the war years, a marvel was hard to find or believe. Overwhelmed by the size and variety of goods



After traveling along the West Fork of the Greenbrier River, the Sweckers passed through Wildell near the Pocahontas-Randolph county line. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, David Strahin Collection.

in the store, the Swecks toured all the departments on the first floor and then settled down for some serious shopping. They bought personal items and gifts to take with them and purchased bulky items, such as food and hardware, which could be sent by baggage car to Bemis. They spent several hours going from one department to the next and, like many, debated whether they could afford all they were buying.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening. After the excitement of reaching Cass by late afternoon, meeting old acquaintances and shopping at the company store, the Swecks were tired. They went back to their friends' house, had a late snack, and went to bed.

Sunday was a day of rest. The Swecks slept late and then went to church. A large Sunday dinner followed back at the house. By now, our travelers were relaxed and certainly well fed. Sunday night, they went to church again.

Monday morning, they made a final visit to the company store, purchased a few more items, and arranged to have other bulky goods shipped to them before Christmas. Back at their friends' house, an early lunch was ready because the C&O train was due to leave after noon.

Festooned with bundles, bags, and boxes, the Swecks made their way to the station. With mixed emotions, they thanked their friends for their hospitality and boarded the train north. Less than an hour later, they arrived in Durbin—and the end of the C&O branch line up the Greenbrier River. They crowded into the station to wait on the Western Maryland mixed freight back to Bemis.

A short time later, with much help from the Western Maryland crew, they boarded the train. Since they were well known to the crew, amusing comments filled the air: "Bought the store out, did ya?" "Didn't know people in Bemis made that much money. The Swecks just laughed.

They traveled up the last miles of the West Fork of the Greenbrier, through the high divide above Wildell at the Pocahontas-Randolph county line, and then downgrade to Glady. After a brief stop, they went down a steeper grade, through a tunnel, around the slope of a mountain, past the upper junction of the old Greenbrier, Cheat & Elk Rail-

After traveling about 100 miles through incredibly steep terrain, the Sweckers returned home to Bemis, completing their "circle tour." Courtesy of Steve Bodkins.

road, down around the loop, over the 90-degree crossing of the line to Spruce, and then to the lower switch at Cheat Junction.

A short distance away was the main line. When they pulled out, the Swecks beamed with pride. They'd just completed their Circle Tour.

Three miles below was Bemis station. With the help of the joking conductor and brakeman, they managed to get off the train with all their bundles intact. Standing in the late fall sunshine, they told everyone about their railroad adventure to Cass.

They'd traveled 41½ miles from Bemis to Spruce in a Western Maryland freight caboose, 8½ miles from Spruce to Cass in the cab of a Shay, 14 miles from Cass to Durbin on the C&O, and, finally, 28 miles from Durbin to Bemis on a Western Maryland mixed freight train. The roundtrip of nearly 100 miles was through some of West Virginia's most mountainous terrain. The Swecks were tired, and almost broke, but absolutely satisfied with their three-day vacation. Now, well supplied with goods and pleasant memories, they could face the winter ahead with contentment.

The Swecks' Circle Tour was unique and wouldn't have been possible in the 1940s without good friends who worked on the rails. Today, it wouldn't be possible at all—at least not how Harold and Clara did it. About 1960, the Western Maryland abandoned the old connecting line between Spruce and old Spruce. The loop was broken further in November 1985, when deadly floods hit that part of the state and cut off the C&O line north and south of Cass permanently. In 1992, though, outside rail service to Cass was restored when the old connecting line between Spruce and Old Spruce was reopened. So, at least a portion of the Swecks' Circle Tour is now intact.

The Swecks opened their motel and restaurant on Route 219 just south of Elkins in 1948. For 36 years, it would be a favorite of travelers in that area. It closed in 1984, when the highway was widened to five lanes. Harold passed away in 1990 at age 84, and Clara lived to the ripe-old age of 93, dying in 2007.

Our author would like to send many thanks to Glenn and Judy Weddle, "pioneer travelers" who provided him with the rail history of Cass in the last 50 years.

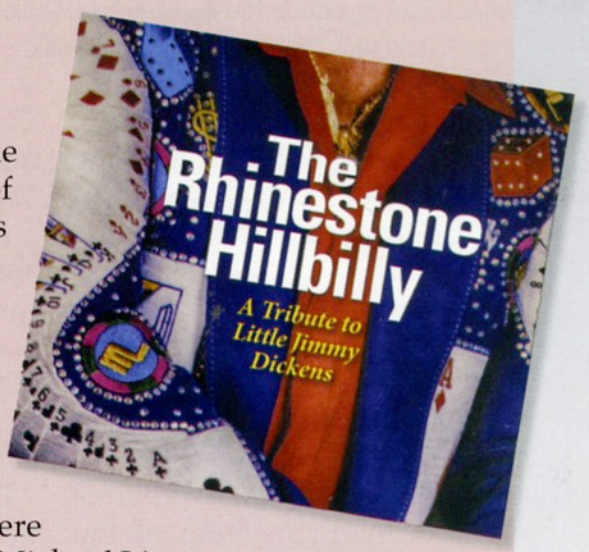
BORGON TANNER is a freelance writer, photographer, and historian with family roots in Harrison and Wetzel counties. This is his seventh contribution to GOLDENSEAL. His most recent article was in the Summer 2014 issue.

Mountain Music Roundup

By Paul Gartner

Here's a look at some of the recordings by West Virginia musicians released in the last year.

Various artists / West Virginia Music Hall of Fame
The Rhinestone Hillbilly: A Tribute to Little Jimmy Dickens



Little Jimmy Dickens (1920-2015) was inducted into the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame in 2007. The native of Bolt, Raleigh County, and legendary country music star is honored here with 16 songs he made famous over a long career. This recording features Charlie McCoy, Tim O'Brien, Mollie O'Brien, Julie Adams, Larry Groce, Kim McAbee, The Carpenter Ants, Todd Burge, Landau Eugene Murphy Jr., and Ann Magnuson, among many others.

James Price delivers the classic "When Your House is Not a Home," written by Roger Miller. Dickens' classic recitation "Raggedy Ann" gets a contemporary treatment here with fellow Raleigh County native Bill Withers on vocals; Michael Lipton on guitars, mbira, and programming; and Don Dixon on bass, programming, and trombones. Kathy Mattea contributes "A-Sleepin' at the Foot of the Bed." A gem of a B-side, "They've Stole My Steel Guitar," features Russ Hicks, and former GOLDENSEAL editor John Lilly sings "Out of Business."

No look at Dickens' music could omit "Hillbilly Fever," sung by Mayf Nutter. Where the original is known for its twin-guitar attack, here we have Billy Boggs on Mandocaster and Lipton on guitar.

For my ears, there are two standouts. "We Could" with Connie Smith will break your heart. And while there was never any doubt, the Grand Ole Opry veteran still has the goods. And string wizards Hicks and Robert Shafer, on pedal steel and guitar, raise the roof on "Raisin' the Dickens." This CD sounds like a labor of love for all concerned.

A well-written booklet by Tristram Lozaw and Lipton give an overview of Dickens' life and recording career. Turn it up! The *Rhinestone Hillbilly* is available at www.wvmusichall-offame.com and other online sites.

Tim O'Brien
Where the River Meets the Road

To continue the tribute theme, Wheeling native Tim O'Brien has assembled a stellar group of sidemen for this homage to the musicians and songwriters of West Virginia. Among the songs are "Grandma's Hands" by Bill Withers, gospel number "Friday, Sunday's Coming" by John Lilly, and "When the Mist Clears Away" by Larry Groce.

The lineup features Stuart Duncan on fiddle and mandolin, Noam Pikelny on banjo, Chris Scruggs on guitar, Mike Bub on bass, and Bobby Wood on piano.

A fine interpreter of songs, O'Brien is also a great songwriter. Here he presents "Guardian Angel," a moving song of love and loss about an older sister who died at six years old, when O'Brien was just two. His faint memory of her merges with that of a guardian angel print he remembers hanging on the wall.

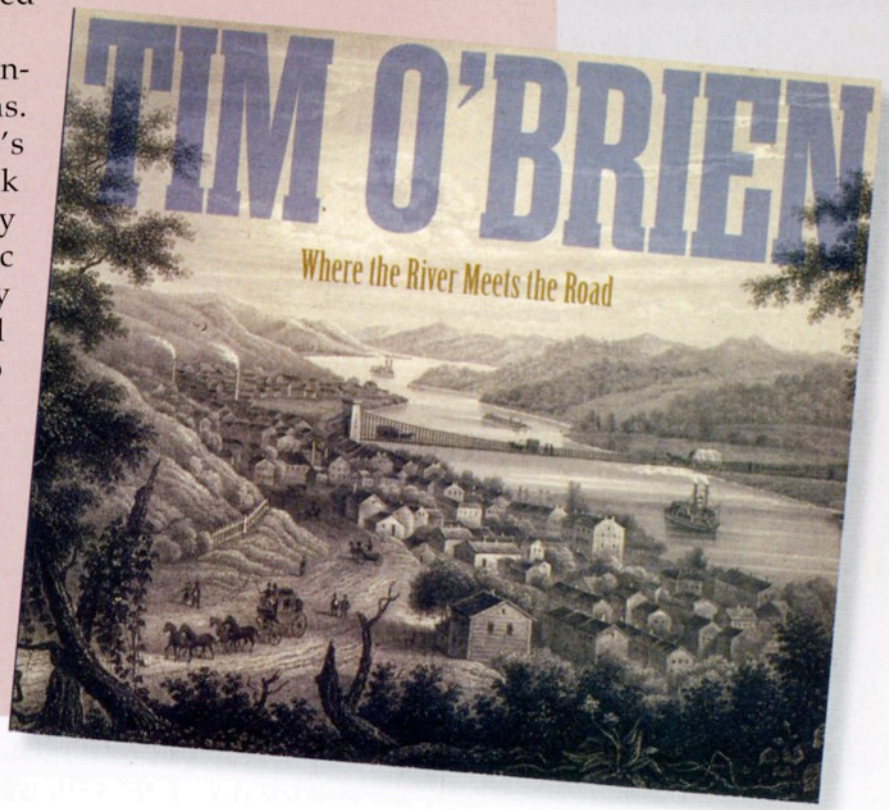
Don't know much about her
There's not much to know
Just six years of living and she had to go
My parents they grieved, somehow they moved on
And I grew up knowing my sister was gone

His stirring vocal adds to the heartfelt lyrics.

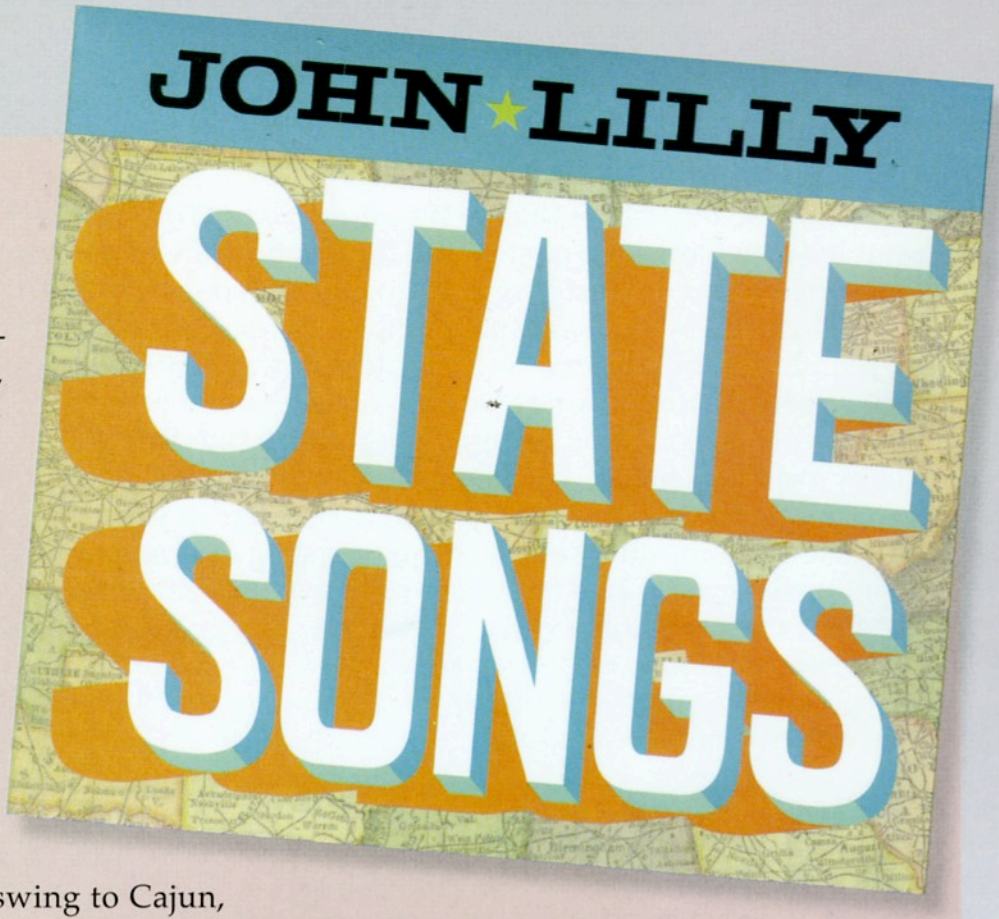
O'Brien's skilled fiddling is front and center on the instrumental "Queen of the Earth and Child of the Skies" by legendary Pocahontas County fiddler Edden Hammons. The addition of cello backup lends a classical feel to this most dignified traditional air.

"My Old Brown Coat and Me" honors WWVA mainstay Doc Williams. The Bailes Brothers' "Drunkard's Grave" re-creates that honky-tonk sound with a great groove. "Windy Mountain" is a bluegrass classic from Mingo County native Curly Ray Cline, with fine fiddling and banjo by Duncan and Pikelny. No West Virginia collection would be complete without Hazel Dickens, and O'Brien has chosen her classic "Few Old Memories."

Great selections, great musicians. This CD is a keeper. *Where the River Meets the Road* is available from various online sites.



John Lilly
State Songs



John Lilly's latest recording is an ambitious project, with 12 songs. All but one is an original, and each pays tribute to a different state. It was recorded and produced in West Virginia, Maryland, Texas, Virginia, Tennessee, and Louisiana.

In addition to taking listeners on a geographic and, at times, sentimental journey, Lilly knows his recorded music history. He's comfortable in a variety of styles: from Texas swing to Cajun, string band, '20s jazz, classic country, and flat-out rockers.

"Nothing Short of Texas" echoes Bob Wills Texas Playboys with a dance-hall beat and lush string section. "In My Dreams of Oregon," with wonderful vocal harmonies by Brennen Leigh, echoes the great brother duos, such as the Delmores or Everlys. "M-I-S-S-I-S-S-I-P-P-I" has a big-band feel, with horn solos and backup singers. "New Arizona Waltz" has more great harmony singing. "In Kentucky" has a two-step beat with a small-jazz-combo sound and wraps up with a nice yodel. "Gotta Go to North Dakota" features the shredding slide guitar of Sonny Landreth. And Lilly rocks out with a touch of Buddy Holly: "b-b-bye-bye, baby, goodbye." Next up is "Ohio," with lyrics reminiscent of traditional songs about wayward youth:

I said goodbye to old Ohio on a cloudy day
More than 20 years ago when I went astray
I ran around with a bandit crowd, wore a coat of black
Now the moon and stars are up above, devil is down below
Everything I ever loved is back in Ohio

Throw in the backing string band, which moves at a good clip, and maybe we have a future string band standard.

"Roaming through Wyoming" has more great harmonies and an arrangement worthy of the Sons of the Pioneers, and "Yvette, the Crawfish Queen" is a Cajun romp with accordion, triangle, and super fiddle playing. "Goodbye to Idaho" features Lilly alone with his guitar. The sole non-original is Lilly's arrangement of "West Virginia Hills," with a full band, a horn section, and backup singers.

State Songs has nice cover art and packaging from Julie Belcher at Pioneer House. Very danceable music, folks. It's available from johnlillymusic.com and other online sites.

Kanawha Tradition
From the Country

Fiddler Bobby Taylor and banjo player Kim Johnson are joined here by Jesse Pearson on guitar and David O'Dell on bass. All four are steeped in West Virginia traditional music.

Taylor carries on Clark Kessinger's fiddling legacy, while bassist (and multi-instrumentalist) O'Dell learned much of his music from Frank George of Roane County. Johnson's clawhammer banjo used to back up the fiddling of the late Wilson Douglas of Clay County and Lester McCumbers of Calhoun County. Guitarist Pearson is also a fiddler and plays with Johnson in The Modock Rounders.

There are 16 tunes in all, some square-dance standards, and a few out-of-the-way numbers. Standouts are a wonderful "Billy in the Lowland" in G from the repertoire of Henry Reed and the signature West Virginia tune "Yew Piney Mountain," with Johnson meeting every bend of this crooked tune on her banjo.

A book could be written on Taylor's bowing. His "Liberty," "Polly Put the Kettle On," and bow jumps on "Redbird" are not to be missed. This recording is another good document of a nationally known and much respected fiddler.

From the Country is available for $15 postage paid from Kim Johnson, P.O. Box 333, Dunbar, WV 25064. It can also be purchased from cdbaby.com.

Jenny Allinder and Jim Mullins
Twin Sisters

This recording from repeat Vandalia contest champions fiddler Jenny Allinder and guitarist (and multi-instrumentalist) Jim Mullins features fiddle tunes (mostly from West Virginia, but recast in different keys). In that vein, the guitar uses non-standard tunings, such as DADGAD and others. It lends a contemporary Celtic feel that seems old yet remains forward looking.

An Allinder original, "Rachel's Own," opens with some lovely guitar playing; the fiddle is lilting and lyrical. The title tune, "Twin Sisters," is in the key of A rather than the usual D, and the pair build upon the melody with wonderful variations and expressive tone. "Spotted Pony" takes the listener on another imaginative, melodic journey.

Ably produced by Bud Carroll at Trackside in Barboursville, *Twin Sisters* has beautiful cover art with a pen-and-ink drawing by Allinder and well-written liner notes by Mullins.

It's available by emailing cybreakle@hotmail.com with "CD Order" in the subject line or from kunaki.com.

If you have a new West Virginia-related recording, feel free to send a copy to GOLDENSEAL, The Culture Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E., Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Please note that only selected recordings will be reviewed in the publication.

A Dentist at the Pinnacle

Text and Photos by Carl E. Feather

It's dusk. Haze hangs over the Ohio River, which slithers between distant mountains like a wide serpent going into its den. I have an amazing view of the legendary waterway and its urban child, Wheeling, from Section A of Mount Wood Cemetery. The view makes me particularly grateful to still be on this side of the grass.

This old graveyard, with some burials dating back 200 years, is entrenched on Wheeling Hill, where Ebenezer Zane surveyed the landscape and declared this place a land of promise. The valley, yes, but this hill is reserved for those whose promised land lies just beyond the sunset.

To enter the cemetery, you pass a sign that cautions, "Restricted Area Authorized Personnel Only." I assume, by virtue of being a mortal, I'm authorized to enter, and so I make my way up the patched road of sorrow toward the summit, past crumbling fractured headstones and the stumps of oak trees and mausoleums.

Mount Wood is an example of what was a national movement in the mid-19th century: the rural cemetery. Replacing the crowded urban-church graveyards, rural cemeteries featured carefully planned lots interacting with the natural beauty of the setting. The rural cemetery thus became a place to mourn and to find comfort, to listen to both the sermons in stone and the songbirds in the boughs.

"The flowers are beginning to bloom beautifully and the shrubbery is showing forth its sweetest livery of green," stated a *Wheeling Intelligencer* article from 1866. "In the evening, when the sun has gone down, and when the air is cool and pleasant, you can wander amid the tombs of Mt. Wood Cemetery and examine the monuments which mark the spot where different bodies are interred, or you can stand in the grounds and obtain a most excellent landscape view."

Little has changed in the ensuing century and a half, but Mount Wood has a tired and battered look this March evening. For all the planning and planting, everything feels crowded, stilted, and exhausted.

Around the lower perimeter is the old Jewish section. The concrete rectangles that mark these graves lean toward the distant serpent, as if pulled by the river's supreme authority over this land. Graves are packed together so tightly one suspects the entire cemetery would slide into the river should just one corpse be raised at the final trumpet.

Above the Jewish graves rise the gaunt oaks. No doubt some of them were among the 110 planted in 1933 in collaboration with nearby Oglebay Park. It's unreasonable to expect even the mighty oak to withstand the buffeting winds, lightning,

Historic Mount Wood Cemetery stands watch above the Ohio River at Wheeling.

and erosion of this exposed face. The living deciduous cell, no matter how noble, cannot survive in a place where stone erodes and concrete gives way to the forces of gravity, ice, and time.

On the summit, however, the sense of security is stronger amid the towering obelisks, white bronze markers, marble stones, and mausoleums. The trees are more numerous here, as are the graves of Wheeling's most affluent, famous, and celebrated citizens.

Such distinguished company with which I stand: Eliza Hughes, the first female doctor to practice medicine in what is now West Virginia; Colonel Joseph Thoburn, a member of the First West Virginia Infantry mortally wounded at the Battle of Cedar Creek; Noah Linsly, founder of Wheeling's Linsly Military Institute; Edward Norton, an early city leader.

The most intriguing burial, by virtue of his epitaph, is Dr. Simon Hullihen. Rare is the person who lives in such a way that his fellow citizens publicly declare his death "a public calamity." One of the four base panels on his marble obelisk reads, "Eminent as a Surgeon the wide fame of his bold original genius was everywhere blended with gratitude for his benefactions."

The stone, however, goes into no detail of what great deeds Hullihen (1810-1857) performed. The Wheeling Hall of Fame, though, calls attention to his "bold, creative, inventive work" that made "tremendous contributions to mankind."

Dentistry, prior to Hullihen's day, wasn't considered a profession, and specialization was tantamount to quackery; yet, in 1843, he received an honorary degree from recently founded Baltimore College of Dental Surgery. Before his death at age 46, Hullihen had performed more than 1,100 operations in an era when "neither anesthesia nor asepsis were in use." His pioneering surgical methods gave patients

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The first Jewish congregation in present West Virginia was organized in Wheeling in 1849 under Rabbi Mayer Mannheim. After his sudden death that same year, the Congregation Leshem Shomayim purchased land adjoining Mount Wood for the city's Hebrew Cemetery. The rabbi was the first burial in that section, which is now part of Mount Wood .

with cleft palates, crossed eyes, and damaged lips and noses new leases on life.

Because he was developing the specialty as he went along, Hullihen invented many of his own instruments, some of which remain in use today. Rightfully, he's been called the "Father of Oral Surgery."

The growth of industry in a bustling riverfront city brought with it many horrendous industrial accidents that required advanced medical care, but community leaders didn't initially heed Hullihen's calls for a hospital. It wasn't until 1850, when Hullihen combined forces with Richard V. Whelan, bishop of the newly formed Diocese of Wheeling, that Wheeling chartered its first hospital—now the oldest in West Virginia.

Worthy, indeed, is Hullihen of this gravestone and the accolades of his city.

The haze becomes dusk. A veil falls upon the city and creates an illusion of downriver lights burning more brightly than before. The air at the lower elevation gives me a chill, making my old tooth ache. I must remember to see the dentist soon.

CARL E. FEATHER is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Ashtabula County, Ohio. He has family roots in Tucker and Preston counties and is the author of the book *Mountain People in a Flat Land*. Carl has been a longtime GOLDENSEAL contributor, dating back to his first article in our Summer 1987 issue.

This gravestone at the summit of Wheeling's Mount Wood Cemetery marks the final resting place of Dr. Simon Hullihen (1810-1857), the "Father of Oral Surgery" in the United States. Photo by Carl E. Feather.

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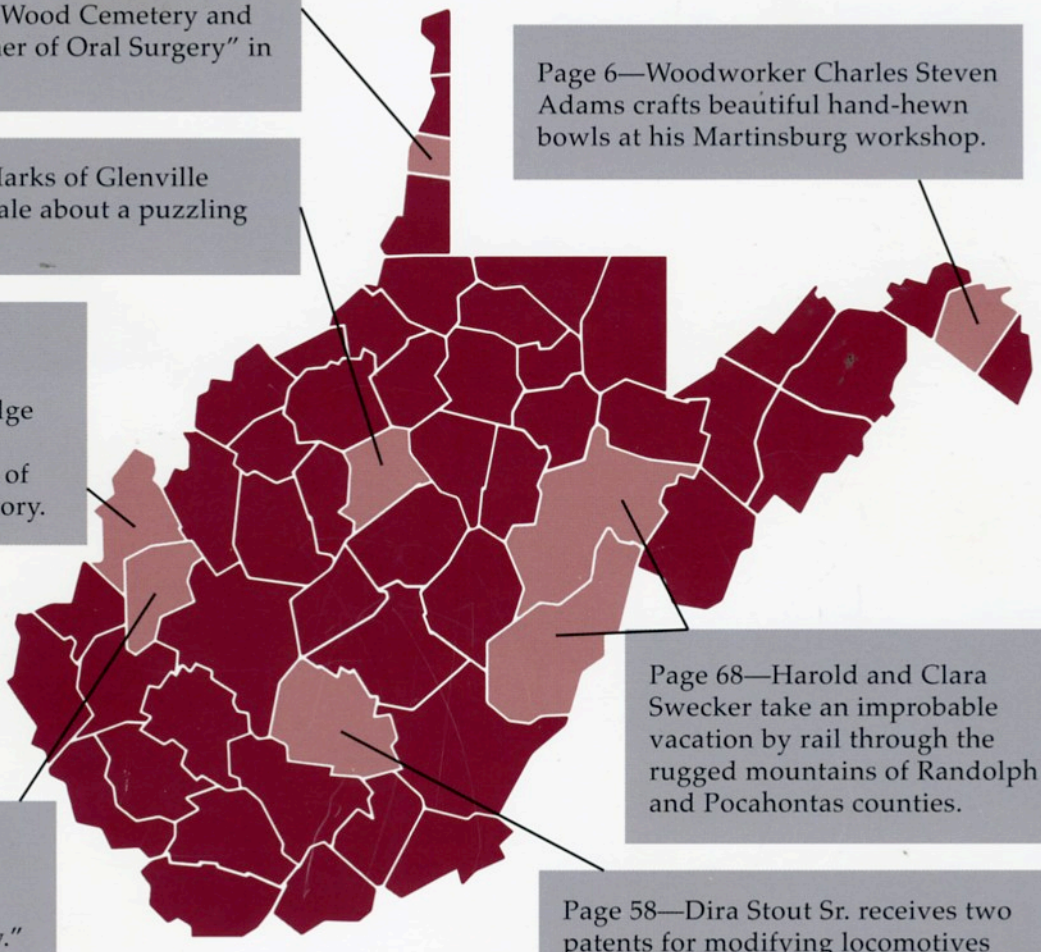

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