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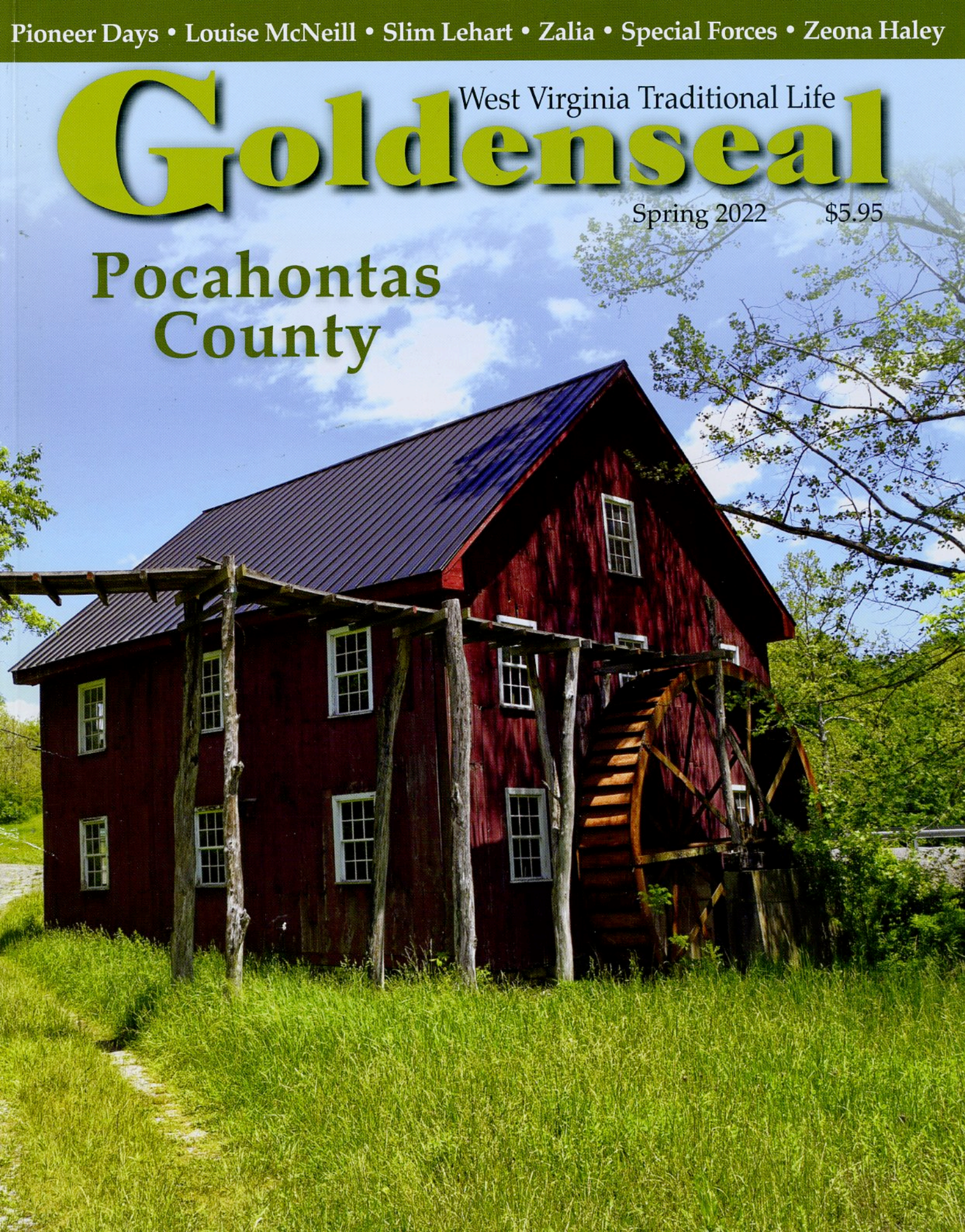
Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Spring 2022 $5.95

Pocahontas County



A winter wonderland in Pocahontas County, December 2021. Photo by Neal Krakover.

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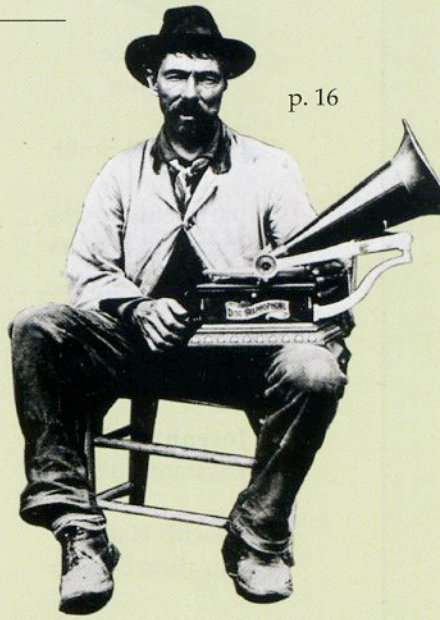

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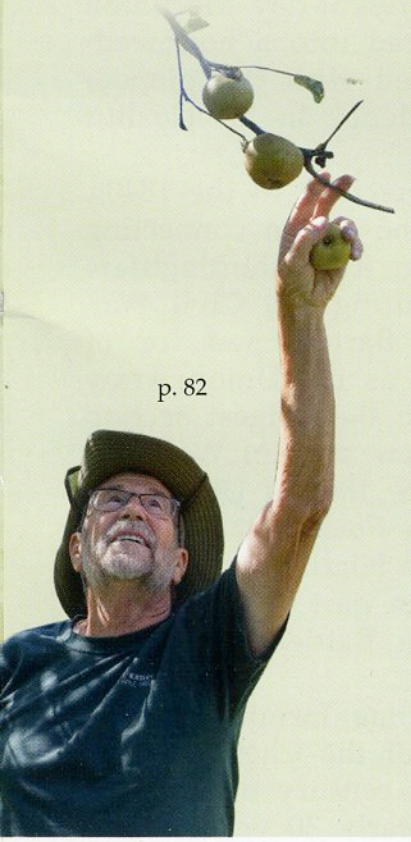

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On the cover: The McNeel Mill at Mill Point, Pocahontas County. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

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From the Editor

I love how each county in West Virginia has its own personality, and most have cultural distinctions within them. Much of this magazine is dedicated to Pocahontas County, which is celebrating its 200th birthday this year. It was created by the Virginia General Assembly on December 21, 1821. This year will be filled with bicentennial activities of all sorts [see p. 50].

Pocahontas is our third largest county (941 square miles) but eighth least populated (just under 8,000 residents). Due to its mountainous terrain, it occupies 4% of our state's landmass but less than one-half of 1% of our population; yet, it's made an oversized contribution to our history and culture.

It's often called the Birthplace of Rivers since eight major waterways start there: the Cherry, Elk, Cranberry, Gauley, Greenbrier, Shavers Fork of the Cheat, Tygart Valley, and Williams rivers. Its story dates to prehistoric times and was among the earliest settled by pioneers west of the eastern panhandle. Jacob Marlin and Stephen Sewell are considered the first white settlers to build a cabin there, taking up residence at present-day Marlinton in 1749. After a dispute, Sewell moved into a hollowed-out sycamore tree, not to be confused with the pioneer Pringle Brothers, who took up residence in an Upshur County sycamore.

Pocahontas began to flourish commercially in the 1840s, when a turnpike was built through the region connecting Staunton, Virginia, with Parkersburg. This thoroughfare made it a target for both armies during the Civil War. The 1861 battles of Cheat Mountain, Bartow, and Top of Allegheny were regionally important as the Union Army seized control of what would become the longest section of border between Virginia and the new state of West Virginia two years later. On November 6, 1863, a Union victory at Droop Mountain in southern Pocahontas pushed Confederate forces from the Allegheny Highlands for good and ensured the county would remain part of the Mountain State. In 1928, Droop Mountain Battlefield became our first state park.

Pocahontas has always been a prime farming region, with ideal grazing land. The arrival of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway at the turn of the 20th century opened the county up to industrialization. For nearly 30 years, Pocahontas produced vast amounts of lumber that helped build

The Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Museum in Hillsboro. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

the growing nation—while also stripping our state of ancient virgin forests. Cass Scenic Railroad, one of the most unique state parks in the nation, preserves this railroading and logging history. So does the *Durbin Rocket* excursion train.

In the wake of the deforestation, forest fires tore through Pocahontas County. During the Great Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) introduced modern fire-control measures, constructing several fire towers that still stand. The CCC also created Seneca State Forest, the Edray Fish Hatchery, and the facilities at Watoga State Park—among the most impressive CCC works in the nation. The Monongahela National Forest deserves major credit for bringing Pocahontas back to its natural luscious glory. It maintains the Cranberry Glades Botanical Area, the largest area of bogs in West Virginia, with plants and trees not seen south of Canada. Equally remarkable are the gorgeous Beartown State Park and Cal Price State Forest.

Snowshoe Mountain is ranked among the finest skiing resorts in the Eastern United States. And Pocahontas is home to the National Radio Astronomy Observatory at Green Bank—site of the world's largest fully steerable radio telescope—looking for signs of intelligent life throughout the known universe.

For a county with such a small population, Pocahontas has made tremendous cultural contributions to the world. Pearl S. Buck, the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, was born in Hillsboro. Her birthplace museum is well worth a trip. Another of our state's finest authors, Louise McNeill, also hailed from Pocahontas. In this issue, we're honored to bring you one of her previously unpublished stories. We also feature a poem by Kirk Judd, who carries on McNeill's lyrical tradition.

This issue isn't a comprehensive history of Pocahontas County. Rather, we've tried to give you a little essence of it through some personal stories of the people and places. It's a breathtaking place to visit. For those who haven't been, please put this on your vacation to-do list, go for just a day trip, or take in some of this year's bicentennial activities and all the beauty that is Pocahontas County.

—Stan Bumgardner

Crandall Creek of Moundsville (Marshall County). Courtesy of the band.

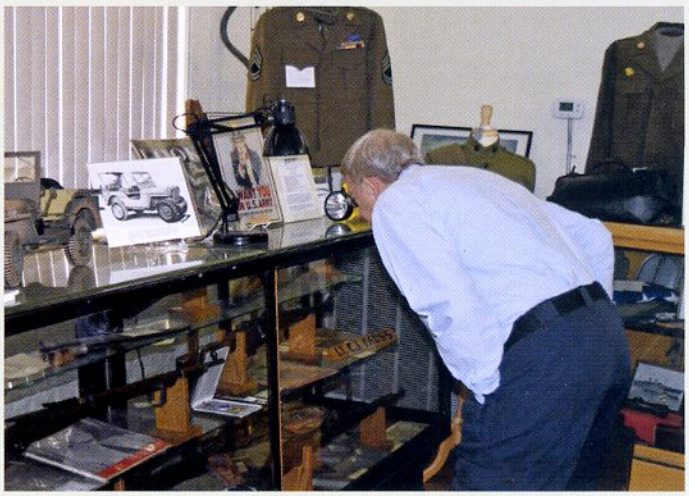
Musicians Nominated for Major Awards

A couple of musicians who first made names for themselves in West Virginia have recently received some major accolades. Abby Latocha, who sings with the Moundsville-based Crandall Creek, was nominated for the 2021 International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) Momentum Vocalist of the Year. The award recognizes up-and-coming bluegrass musicians. Abby and Crandall Creek are rightfully attracting national attention. "I was honestly so surprised to have been nominated, and I see this as a blessing, whether I win or not," Abby said. The band, formed in 2015, also features Jerry Andrews, Kathy Wigman Lesnock, Dustin Terpenning, Hanna Livingston, and Mason Atha. In 2021, Crandall Creek funded a $1,000 scholarship for an aspiring bluegrass musician through the IBMA Foundation and the band's Bluegrass Music Endeavors Foundation. The band also is wrapping up work on its third album, *Handprints on the Glass*.

Although he's originally from Lawrence County, Kentucky, Tyler Childers played so much in the Huntington-Charleston area during his early career that we like to claim him as one of our own. In 2018, he won Emerging Artist of the Year at the Americana Awards. In 2020, he was nominated for a Grammy for Best Country Solo Performance. Now, he's nominated for the 2022 Best Folk Album Grammy for *Long Violent History*. All profits from this album—with a cover photo by Morgan County's Lisa Elmaleh—go to the Hickman Holler Appalachian Relief Fund, which promotes awareness of and financial support for philanthropic efforts in Appalachia. *–ed.*

A Hidden Hinton Treasure

Text and photo by Sara Bragg Aikin



The small brown-and-white sign on Hinton's main thoroughfare could easily be missed by those passing through this historic Summers County railroad town. The curious who take a side trip two blocks off Temple Street to the Veterans Memorial Museum. of Southern West Virginia soon realize, however, that they've stumbled upon a hidden treasure. Knowledgeable guides and a surprising diversity of artifacts help visitors experience a humbling recognition of our state's rich military heritage.

Don't be misled by the museum's name and location. Its exhibits aren't confined to a particular geographic area. Indeed, as one of West Virginia's first military museums, it showcases an extensive collection that can't be fully processed in one visit.

Even regular visitors can be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of museum offerings, ranging from frontier days and the Revolutionary War through the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Many items were donated by families of veterans. Full-dress uniforms, personal letters to home, medals of valor, and even dreaded death notifications are poignant reminders of their sacrifices.

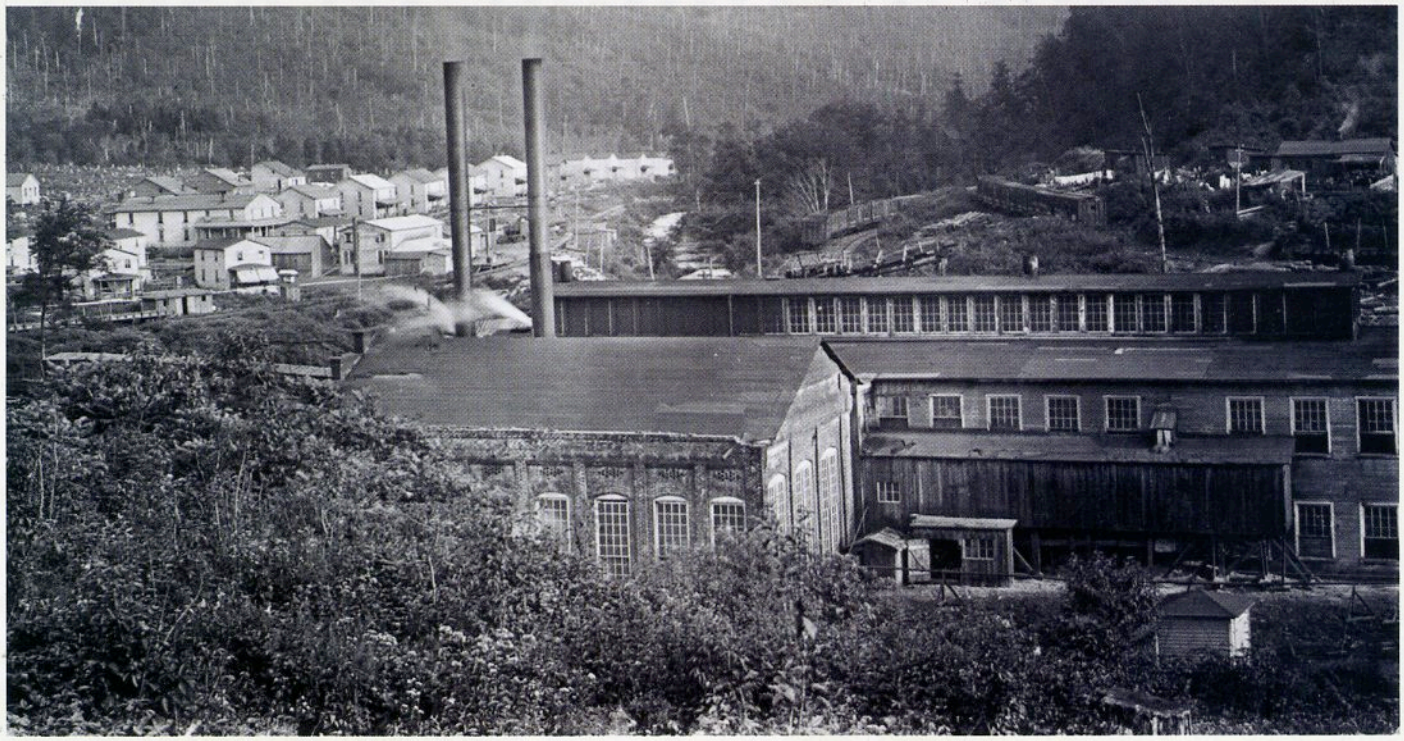
Museum tours are led by local vets whose stories, explanations, and personal accounts bring the displays to life. During a recent tour, one guide pointed out an original woolen uniform while describing the nearly incomprehensible conditions that Civil War soldiers endured. Another vet (one of the oldest volunteers) recounted his World War II experiences.

The museum's collections include some unique pieces, such as Gen. Douglas MacArthur's footlocker. Also on display is a Jeep used during the Korean War. In addition, the museum offers heart-wrenching photos, maps, and vintage magazines and newspapers.

The museum was established in 1995 through the efforts of Carl Edwards, who was captured as a prisoner of war during World War II. After his death, cofounder and board president Bill Phillips assumed operations. Like his predecessor, Bill (a U.S. Air Force veteran who also worked 30 years with the American Red Cross) devoted much of his later years to collecting, cataloging, and preserving the facility's irreplaceable contents. Bill's death in 2019, followed by the death of board vice president Mike McClure, created a critical void. Tim Wheeler subsequently was selected to assume leadership. Tim and a small board of directors and the local community are seeking grants and donations to help with essential repairs to ensure this invaluable collection remains a resource and inspiration for years to come.

If you're traveling on I-64 between Beckley and Lewisburg and have some extra time, please take a quick detour to Hinton and check out the museum at 423 Ballengee Street. It's open Saturdays from noon to 4:00 p.m., May through November, or by appointment. Admission is free, and group tours can be arranged. For more information, call 304-466-4443 or 681-238-0944.

SARA BRAGG AIKIN's love of words was fostered by a family of readers and through her career of more than 35 years at an education research-and-development corporation in Charleston. Now retired, Sara relishes the time she can spend sharing her perspectives on life, faith, and her beloved Mountain State. This is her second contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



The town of Spruce, with the mill in the foreground, about 1914. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Sylvia Myers Collection.

All Spruced Up and Nowhere to Go

By Elizabeth Satterfield

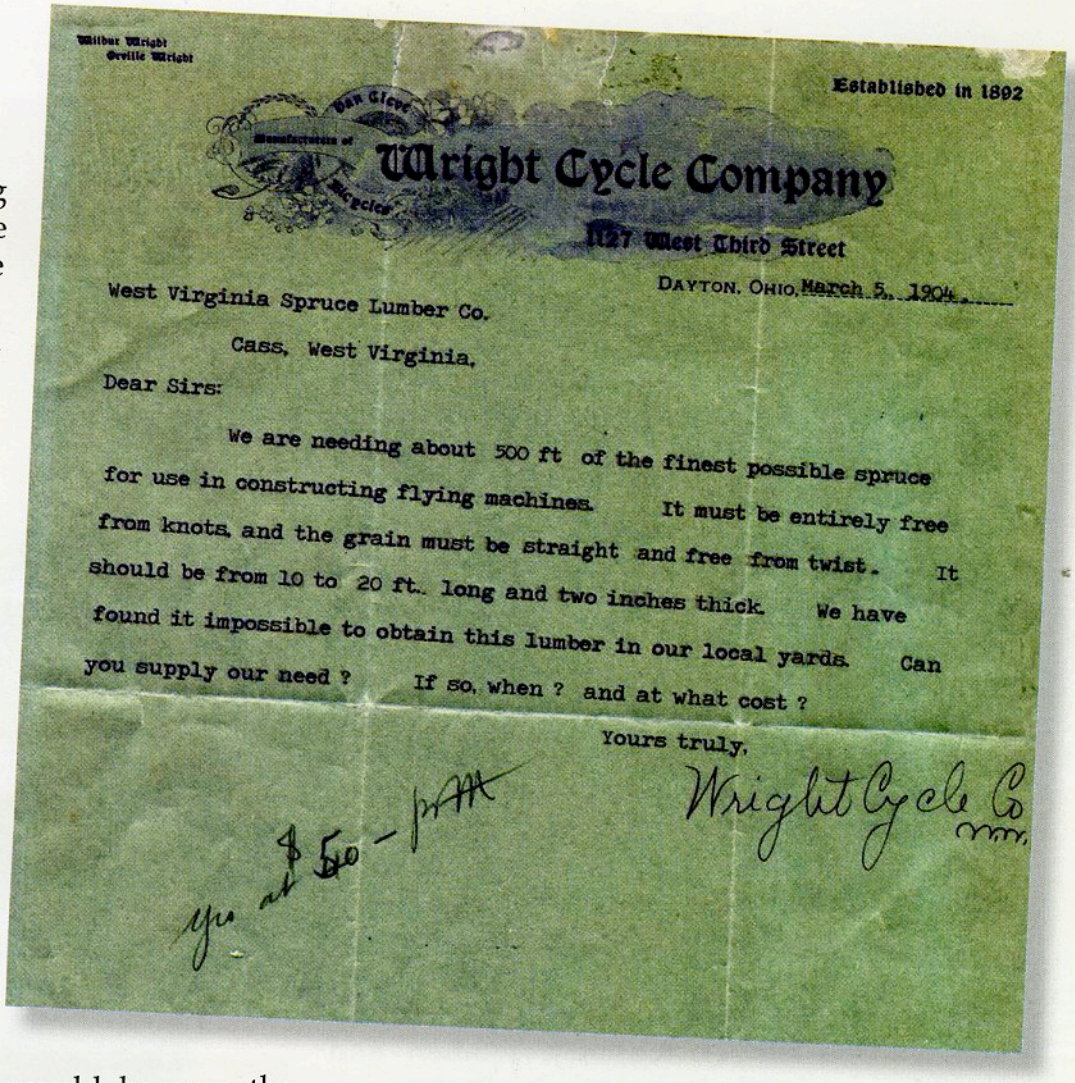
You could say the town of Spruce (Pocahontas County) is off the beaten path; in fact, it's hardly on any path at all. Since its founding in 1904, humans have accessed Spruce only by foot, horse, or rail. A century ago, folks would have stepped off a passenger car attached to a Shay logging train and been greeted by neat rows of white company houses, a large debarking mill along Shavers Fork of the Cheat River, and hillsides covered with red spruce trees. Strolling through town on an elevated boardwalk, residents picked up their groceries and mail at the company store, children ran to the schoolhouse, and millhands and loggers grabbed a hot meal and bathed at the hotel.

Though still accessible by foot and rail only, Spruce today is much different than it was in the early 20th century. Not a single structure still stands—just a concrete slab and a few ruins along Shavers Fork. Now a stop for the excursion train *Cheat Mountain Salamander,* wooden picnic tables sit atop the manmade grassy hill that covers the land where homes and a schoolhouse once stood. A half-dozen interpretive signs dot the landscape, the only hint that a lively town once stood here.

Spruce began like many West Virginia towns—with industry. Small-scale logging in the region started in the 1880s, accelerating as the turn of the century loomed ahead. The West Virginia Pulp & Paper Company (WVP&P), a New York-based corporation founded by professional papermaker William Luke, purchased 67,619 acres in Pocahontas County to support its pulp mill operations. The stands of timber on Cheat Mountain contained plentiful red spruce, ideal for

pulpwood for making paper. It was this spruce forest from which Spruce derived its name.

Before logging could begin, the WVP&P needed to construct rail lines into the dense woods and steep hillsides. Swaths of trees were felled, and the logs were squared, covered with creosote, and used as railroad ties. Once the Greenbrier Division of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway was completed, the WVP&P established logging camps along Shavers Fork in 1901 and 1902 under its subsidiary, the West Virginia Spruce Lumber Company. Camp #5 would become the town of Spruce in early 1905.



Wilbur Wright
Orville Wright

Established in 1892

Wright Cycle Company

127 West Third Street

DAYTON, OHIO, March 5, 1904.

West Virginia Spruce Lumber Co.

Cass, West Virginia.

Dear Sirs:

We are needing about 500 ft of the finest possible spruce for use in constructing flying machines. It must be entirely free from knots and the grain must be straight and free from twist. It should be from 10 to 20 ft. long and two inches thick. We have found it impossible to obtain this lumber in our local yards. Can you supply our need? If so, when? and at what cost?

Yours truly,

Wright Cycle Co

you at $50 - per M

In 1904, the Spruce Lumber Co. supplied Pocahontas County red spruce for one of the Wright Brothers' early "flying machines." Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Pocahontas Supply Co. Collection, and the Mountain State Railroad & Logging Historical Association.

Before Spruce was founded, pulpwood was shipped directly to a paper mill in Covington, Virginia; however, debarking the trees and burning the bark at the facility created ash that damaged the paper quality. To eliminate this issue, the WVP&P opened a *rossing*, or debarking, plant at Spruce. The logs and bark then made their way in open boxcars to Cass for processing. When the company realized that cinders from the locomotive fell on the wood, again damaging paper quality, the WVP&P quickly switched to closed boxcars.

Constructed in 1905 for $50,000, the 20-acre rossing mill had at least 18 bark-peeling machines. Through the pulpwood industry around Spruce, 480 men found employment. In a large pond adjacent to the mill, logs were "soaked . . . for several weeks as bark loosened, and accumulated sand and grit was gradually removed." Due to its high elevation—nearly 3,900 feet above sea level—Spruce received heavy snowfalls (six or seven feet some winters) and frosts, even in summer. Temperatures frequently dipped to -15°F, so the log pond was steam-heated to prevent freezing.

Once a crude lumber camp, Spruce became a company mill town like Cass but on a smaller scale. Once the highest-elevated town east of the Mississippi River, Spruce had numerous homes, a company store with a post office, a school, a hotel with 40 rooms, and the rossing mill. At one time, more than 300 souls called this isolated place home. Spruce's hotel—complete with electricity and running water—

hosted woodhicks (a more common term than lumberjacks in our state) and train crews at "all hours of the day and night" for nearly 30 years.

A variety of housing options existed in Spruce, from detached two-story homes to duplexes to shanties. White families lived in large, whitewashed homes in town, connected by a boardwalk, while immigrants and Black workers lived in small shanties on the outskirts of town. Despite their meager housing, Italian families have fond memories of a "large bread oven in which they baked bread to sell, as well as cabbage patches," and Austrians were known for their deep-fried fruit pies. The WVP&P preferred to hire Austrian immigrants—due to their supposed "hearty, cheerful, and content nature"—for pulpwood operations and Italians for rail construction.

Although we typically think only about men in the timber industry, women and children made their homes in Spruce, as well. Wanda Sharp remembered going barefoot the "first day of May" and swimming in a hole under the Shay bridge on the first day of June. In the winter, the pond froze over, and youngsters would ice skate or sled ride. Virgil Broughton cherished his wintertime memories when "we'd go upstairs and jump out the window into the snow 'cause it would get four-, five-, six-feet deep" or play in the heated sand pile used for engines.

A two-room schoolhouse opened in 1906 and served grades 1-8 until the town was abandoned in 1950. The first teacher, Lanabelle Gillespie, arrived in 1906, followed by many others. Student Leo Weese remembered "about every teacher they got in there—they couldn't take the pressure—they had to leave." Teachers came and went, many dissuaded by the rough crowd, the isolation, and the modest pay—just $62 per month in 1948, when the average monthly income was four times higher. One of the last teachers was a Mr. Bell; a former student recalled that "we all liked him, but he just didn't have any control over us, so we made his life miserable." They would tip over the outhouse, climb up the fire tower and refuse to come down, and fill the water cooler with "craw crabs, lizards, tadpoles, and frog eggs."

Although meat was served in the company dining halls, it was too expensive for many households. Wanda remembered that

Incline on the West Virginia Pulp & Paper Company Logging Railroad near Spruce. Courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center [WVRHC].

Hiking through History

By Elizabeth Satterfield

It was a perfect day for a hike—sunny but not too hot in the mountains of Pocahontas County. It was June 5, 2021, and a small group gathered on the front porch at the Cass Company Store, ready to set out for Spruce. Some had traveled quite a distance—from Charleston, Morgantown, Maryland, and Ohio—while others were locals. All were eager to see the remote site where Spruce once sat. Starting at the trailhead, our caravan drove up a curvy mountain, through land that's now Snowshoe Resort's ski area, and down a bumpy dirt road that ended at a creek bed.

Gingerly crossing Shavers Fork, I led our ascent to Spruce. The hike wasn't hard, just a mile up an overgrown access road alongside railroad tracks. Cresting a slight hill, our group was rewarded with an unencumbered view of the near-wild plateau where Spruce once sat. We toured the site over the course of an hour, discussing its century-long history and the few remnants left of the town.

her family "hardly ever had meat on the table. Once in a great while, Mother would kill a chicken. If we had meat, it was wild meat, such as deer, squirrel, turkey, groundhog, and coon." She recalled that her father went fishing but used a jar of carbide to blow up the fish, which was illegal and not very sporting. Another Spruce resident, Tom Boughton, remembered catching 60 brook trout in a single day.

Subsistence farming was very common. Many families kept chickens and milk cows, grew gardens, and gathered berries and ramps. The Sharp family raised hogs to supplement their winter diet. Wanda remembered playing cowboy one day: "I jumped on that old pig's back and grabbed its ears. It took off running to [its pen], the pig went in, and I went off. I landed in the mud and hog manure. . . . That was the end of my cowboy days!"

Some locals, including Richard Sparks, sometimes went into Spruce to sell extra produce and chickens. He packed his dog like a mule and walked along the railroad tracks, although he sometimes jumped on

A boardinghouse in Spruce, 1906. Courtesy of the WVRHC.

a logging train to save himself the hike. Once, he rode the train when he had butter to sell. The train didn't stop in Spruce as usual, so he jumped off, and a fellow rider tossed him the butter: "I missed it, and it hit the side . . . and got cinder all over it, so . . . I went to the millpond and tried to wash that butter off. You might know I didn't sell any of it, although I tried."

A few families, like Johnny Sharp's, made moonshine whiskey and homebrew to get by. He recalled, "Living was tight. My brothers would cut kindling wood. . . . My mother would take in any washing money that she could get and wash for people . . . but that doesn't go very far, so we'd make our five-gallon of homebrew and sell it 25 cents a quart." They took secret paths and rigged their work up in pine trees. The Sharps sold their hooch but also made homebrew and moonshine for their own consumption. Ed Broughton recalled making homemade wine: "You'd just throw raisins in there, a bunch of old grapes—anything that would ferment—leave it and let it work. And it was good homebrew, too!"

Anything families couldn't produce themselves, they'd purchase at the company store. Food came into Spruce the same way as people and logs: on the railroad. The Pocahontas County Supply Company, operated by the WVP&P, had its main store in Cass and branches in Spruce, Cheat Bridge, Laurel Bank, and Bemis. The Cass store had an impressive inventory, but Spruce just stocked essential foodstuffs and household items, transported solely by rail.

Laborers worked long hard days, averaging 66 hours per week. Most had Sundays off; that's when recreation usually occurred. Unlike other company towns, such as Cass, there was no permanent church or minister in Spruce. The small schoolhouse sometimes became a temporary church on Sunday mornings if Cass' Presbyterian preacher paid a visit. On Sunday afternoons, young men might be found playing horseshoes or a ballgame. Families often gathered for picnics after church. Bonfires, storytelling, and music occupied the evenings.

Despite a general family atmosphere, debauchery and more illicit types of recreation did exist. Young single men patron-

ized saloons, indulged in gambling, or entertained prostitutes on weekends in Cass. Though neither vice nor the law were "formally institutionalized at Spruce," men were known to gamble, play poker, and drink moonshine in the dispatcher's office. Pat Dugan remembered that the town was self-governed, and issues were dealt with internally: "You never hear nothing, never see nothing or know nothing. No matter what . . . you didn't ask no questions."

A violent event occurred in 1908: nine Italian immigrants "stormed the company office, clubbed a clerk to death, and wounded a company official." Eight were caught immediately and sentenced to 18 years in prison. For several months, the ninth hid out in the mountains, "where Italian workers had been feeding him at night with food from the dining hall." Because the murdered clerk was a county native, the event sparked "an avalanche of hostility" toward Italian immigrants.

Intense logging completely denuded West Virginia's hillsides by 1920. When the forests were no more, the WVP&P abandoned Spruce in 1925. The Western Maryland Railroad purchased the Greenbrier, Cheat and Elk Railroad, along with Spruce, in 1927. After the Western Maryland took over, the town was greatly diminished, with just a few houses, a boardinghouse, an office, and a school. The remaining structures were cannibalized to repair the other homes. The railroad retained Spruce as a midpoint terminal, helper service, and repair shop, usually keeping 6 to 10 Shay locomotives in use at a time. But as the timber industry waned, many of these hardworking Shays were sold or scrapped.

Occasionally, Mower Lumber Company—WVP&P's successor—used Spruce as an interchange point during its second cutting of timber after World War II. Mower brought the industry into the modern era with new technology and replaced the old camp style with units built on flatcars, which were easy to move by rail. This second wind of the timber industry was short-lived. In 1950, after diesel trains became the norm, the Western Maryland relocated its shop from Spruce to Laurel Bank. Operations shut down in 1960, rendering the town extinct. A few folks remained before the company "burned the rest of the houses down."

Since 1960, Spruce has existed only in memory. The site has slowly returned to wilderness, and most of the land is now part of the Monongahela National Forest. In the 1980s, the state reconnected the rail line between Spruce and Cass Scenic Railroad State Park. This project drastically altered the landscape, creating a manmade hill and swamp where the town once sat. Thanks to conservation efforts, Spruce's denuded hillsides have been reclaimed and transformed. Spruce is now a serene secret—tucked in the hills of Pocahontas County—waiting to be discovered again.

Additional Resources

For more about logging, you'll want to read George Deike's *Logging South Cheat: The History of the Showshoe Lands* and Roy Clarkson's books *Tumult on the Mountains* and *On Beyond Leatherbark: The Cass Saga*. *Riders of the Flood* is an excellent fictionalized account of logging in Pocahontas County by W. E. Blackhurst. For a look at railroading, William P. McNeel's *The Durbin Route: The Greenbrier Division of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway* is a great resource. Also check out the fine work the Mountain State Railroad & Logging Historical Association has done over the years: **www.msrlha.org**. And you can read more about Cass and logging in our Summer 1987, Summer 1989, Summer 2000, and Spring 2012 issues. *–ed.*

ELIZABETH SATTERFIELD is a West Virginia native and recent graduate of WVU, with master's degrees in Public History and Public Administration. She's the curator and education director at Arthurdale Heritage—site of the nation's first New Deal Homestead project—in Preston County. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

"History is still alive in Pocahontas County"

Sharp's Country Store

Text and photos by Jennifer Mihal

Even though GOLDENSEAL has covered Sharp's Country Store in the past [Spring 1988 and Summer 2011], it's rather unthinkable to write about Pocahontas County's cultural heritage without including something about it here. I first discovered it just a couple years ago, when I was a graduate student in WVU's Public History program. My fellow students and I had spent three days in Pocahontas County, researching projects for the upcoming bicentennial. Elizabeth Satterfield and I were headed north back to Morgantown on U.S. 219. As we dropped into a valley five miles south of Snowshoe, we were greeted by the most amazing find: this small country store and a covered bridge. Perhaps it was the gravity-fed gas pumps or the old soda ad on the side of the building; we couldn't help but stop. Before we even entered, we knew we'd stumbled onto a historic gem. The other students had taken a different way home, so Elizabeth and I were giddy, knowing we'd hit the historic motherlode. It was all ours to explore, but we didn't anticipate just how much history it held.

The store was closed, but the owner had seen us stop and came out of his home to greet us. We introduced ourselves and told him we were in search of local history projects for the bicentennial. "We have some history here," he smiled, but it wasn't until he opened the door that we fully understood what his smile really meant.

If you want to understand the history of any area, the first step is to ask the lo-

cals. The keepers of history are the self-appointed protectors of their hometown's and families' histories. There's always someone who collects the pictures, stories, artifacts, and folklore—often, these folks make up the core of local historical societies and museums. The Sharp family, which is full of those *someones*, has been keeping the history of Pocahontas County and West Virginia for generations.

The store's been a fixture in Slaty Fork for more than 130 years. It traces its humble beginnings to 1884, when enterprising 12-year-old Luther David Sharp, known as L. D., first began selling furs, ink, and scarves out of his mother's bedroom. Today, the store is owned and managed by L. D.'s great-grandson Tom Shipley. Along with locally crafted items, fruits, and vegetables, the store is packed with artwork and antiques available for purchase. But it's not what the store sells that makes it a necessary stop; it's the history that oozes from every corner of the property.

The current store is the fourth manifestation on the family farm. The first makeshift store operated out of L. D.'s parents' home. The second was a small wooden structure just beside the home. The third iteration was created when L. D. built a larger store around the existing smaller one. It wasn't until the new larger store was completed that he dismantled the smaller one inside, carrying it bit by bit through the front doors. This third version might have been the last one had it not been for a new roadway. In the 1920s, state officials abandoned the old road near the family home on the other side of the valley and constructed a new one along the Seneca Trail. In 1926, the state finished U.S. 219, prompting L. D. to build a store closer to the new road. That's the one visitors are welcomed in today. The remnants of the original family home and store can be seen on the hillside across from the current location.

Also on the property is a family cemetery, family home, WPA-constructed outhouse, covered bridge, and log cabin—the home of Mr. Shipley's great-great-great-grandparents. Family history says Gen. Robert E. Lee visited this home during his ill-fated western Virginia campaign in the first year of the Civil War. Lee supposedly stopped by to apologize because Confederate soldiers had been using the farm's fencing as firewood. What makes this family story even more compelling are the original copper-wire recordings of Mr. Shipley's great-grandparents discussing the event. The fact they not only made the recordings but saved them demonstrates how important history is to this family.

The store and free museum are full of interesting objects. When L. D. built the current store back in 1926, he covered the face of it in seashells so locals who'd never had a chance to travel could enjoy something tropical. The seashell face frames two large display windows, which are chock-full of antiques, taxidermized animals, and local artifacts that hint at what can be found inside. Entering the store is like stepping back in time—from the tin ceiling to the original display cases, shelving, and cash register. The Sharp family kept everything in the store's long history: candy boxes, horse harness displays, farm tools, medicine jars, the list goes on and on. Among the unusual artifacts is a large stuffed golden eagle that once resided in a bank building in nearby Durbin. The eagle, mounted with its 6'3" wingspread, became a feature of the store in the 1930s, when the bank failed due to the Great Depression.

On the back wall is the first phone ever installed in Slaty Fork. (The second was in the family home behind the store.) L. D. and nine other farmers pooled their resources to get it installed. They even had to make and erect the telephone poles. Each paid $10 a year for the upkeep. L. D. wasn't sure what to do with it initially

since he had little time for idle conversation and a lack of other phones in the vicinity. So, he'd use the party line to call up Mr. Moore from Moore's store in Edray, and they'd practice singing their harmonies for Sunday's church service.

The store also has Slaty Fork's original post office. L. D. was the first postmaster and continued as such until the current post office was built next door on property provided by the Sharps.

Tom has continued the tradition of collecting interesting artifacts. One such item is the original Jesse Owens Award once housed at the National Track and Field Hall of Fame in Indianapolis (the hall was founded, interestingly enough, in Charleston in 1974 but had to relocate due to lack of support). The original trophy was replaced in the 1990s, when it was changed to feature both men and women athletes. It happened to be in a storage unit Tom bought at auction. How the trophy ended up in the unit is anybody's guess. But it's no longer lost to history and will remain on display in the store until such time as the hall of fame wants it back.

That's what the keepers of history do. They collect and protect history, and their most favorite thing is to share that history. I recently checked in with Tom to see how the store is doing and how he's made it through the pandemic. The store was closed for a while, like many other businesses, but opened again on Memorial Day 2021. He shared a story about some recent visitors: "A family comes into the store. An older gentleman says, 'I am Elmer David Workman. My father, Elmer, used to come in here and buy all of his beekeeping materials.' L. D. Sharp was famous for his White Lynn honey from the basswood tree. Elmer

said this was in the late 1950s, early '60s—the last time they were here. So, I showed him the old beehives in my museum then back to the log home of my great-great-great grandparents, where I was happy to show him the old *bee gum* hives that they used. A large gum tree section was hollowed out by fire, then broomsticks were poked through holes on the side. Three little entrance holes were formed at the base, and the queen placed inside. The bees would hang their hive from the crossmembers of the broomsticks. A chestnut-wood slanted roof was placed on top—lift up the roof for access to the hive. [Elmer] David then shared some history of his family from over at Watoga State Park, where his family homeplace still stands. History is still alive in Pocahontas County! As David left, I said, 'Don't wait another 60 years to come back to the store!'"

Sharp's Country Store is located at 35087 Seneca Trail in Slaty Fork. It's open Tuesdays-Saturdays, 10-6. For more info, call 304-572-3547 or visit **sharpscountrystore.com**.

For the moment, the store and museum are in Tom's trusty hands, and he's always more than willing to share the many stories and artifacts with anyone who's interested. He hopes to hand the reins down to a younger member of the family when he becomes too old to be its keeper. "History is still alive in Pocahontas County," and the Sharp Family Store and Free Museum is doing its part to ensure that continues.

JENNIFER MIHAL graduated from WVU in May 2021 with a master's in Public History and a certification in Cultural Resource Management. She's currently working on several research projects as she endeavors to become one of those *someones* who preserves local history. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Fiddlers at the Pocahontas County Fair, 1926. Courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center [WVRHC].

Rhythm of the Forest

Logging as Remembered in Song

By Kristen Bailey

The West Virginia hills hold a remarkable history. The stories of a resilient people who've battled to preserve their own legacy in the face of massive industrial changes have been told on many levels. As Pocahontas County celebrates its bicentennial, the plaintive call of the fiddle reminds those who visit and those who remain that powerful rhythms have shaped and reshaped the forests and rivers of one of our state's crown jewels.

The beginning of industrial logging in the Mountain State coincided with the arrival of railroads and a construction boom driven by the Industrial Revolution. Post-Civil War depletion of timber resources in New England prompted capitalists to seek out new sources of lumber to meet the nation's westward expansion and urban growth. Major logging operations recognized the value of West Virginia's great spruce and hardwoods, concentrated in places such

as Pocahontas County. With new industrial machinery and railroad technology—particularly geared steam locomotives such as the Shay, Climax, and Heisler—the timber industry forever altered the landscape. Moving resources out of the Allegheny Highlands meant a shift in the traditional pre-boom economy that had worked so well for subsistence farmers, who settled here in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Logging had long been an ancillary way for farmers to supplement their agricultural pursuits, and spring log drives often resulted in precious cash that could be invested in additional acreage or supplies. While farming and small-scale logging didn't create vast wealth for most, it did offer settlers a way to sustain the independence they deeply valued.

Academic studies and works of popular fiction have been written about this history and the stark reality of how extractive industries have swept valuable resources from the hands of our residents. Historians such as Ronald Lewis and John Alexander Williams have noted that West Virginia's early leaders—desperately seeking money for the fledgling state—eagerly encouraged the harvesting of our mineral and timber resources. W. E. Blackhurst and other West Virginia authors wrote fictional accounts of the logging industry from within, providing a local perspective on the fascinating characters who kept the timber world humming. Both approaches highlight how places such as Pocahontas County saw their valuable resources exported from the region to reap large profits for out-of-state interests.

But another history remains to be told: the mark made by the logger, not only as he swung his axe during the day but in the songs he performed in camps when the day was done. West Virginia's musical legacy is broad. The tunes of accomplished old-time and folk musicians can't be cut down and taken away from us. Occupational music, particularly in the form of protest songs, has been a staple of coal mining communities. Songs like "Which Side Are You On" (which originated in Kentucky) have pulled miners and other hard-working laborers together in times of trouble [see Paul Gartner's article, Summer 2021]. Sometimes, music has been used to establish a rhythm to work, such as railroad songs or sailor sea shanties. The music that emerged from our timber camps has received sparse attention. Because most of their waking hours were spent in the forest and many couldn't read or write, precious few loggers put their thoughts and feelings down on paper.

Fortunately, 20th-century folk musicologists gathered some of this material directly from the sources. The West Virginia & Regional History Center at WVU maintains a treasure trove in the form of the Louis Watson Chappell Collection. Chappell (1890 – 1981) joined WVU's History Department in 1921 and quickly became fixated with Mountain State folk songs. He traveled around the state documenting music and lyrics. His primary purpose was to connect West Virginia folk songs with Anglo-Saxon origins; while many did in fact originate in the British Isles, he seemingly overlooked the influence of African-Americans and later immigrants on this music. Nevertheless, his material gives us a glimpse into the lives of loggers and helps us better understand certain bygone ways of life. In the case of the logging songs he collected, the timber industry clearly left a deep cultural imprint on our state.

Songs, by their very nature, are a unique cultural remnant because the specific music we remember—and choose to play or sing—illustrates something that's important to us. And it's not just the songs we remember but the specific lyrics we choose to sing, the instruments we play, and little nuances, such as a distinct rhythm or fiddle bowing. In the case of logging songs, the rhythm of the forest, the hum of the sawblades,

Timber-cutting crew on Cheat Mountain, Camp 14, Pocahontas County, 1910. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Meadow River Lumber Collection.

and the percussion of the Shay engines and railroad wheels frequently drove the beat. The industrial harvesting of timber meant not only an influx of new machinery, logging railroads, and business practices but also a vibrant, though temporary, shift in population. A chorus of new voices had joined the rhythm of the forest.

"Come all you brave shanty boys, wherever you may be" (from "Shanty Boys") doesn't reference sea shanties but rather the ramshackle houses loggers lived in. Its lyrics tap into the dreams, emotions, and worries these men carried with them from camp to camp. "Shanty Boys" appears in many places across the United States. It's sometimes referred to as "Gerry's Rock," or "The Jam on Jerry's Rock," which tells us it was adapted from place to place as transient loggers sung it proudly. The lyrics also document a piece of tragic history, recounting a log drive down an unnamed river: "Was on one Sunday morning, in the springtime of the year / The logs was piled up mountain high; we could not keep them clear." Other versions continue with occupational warnings: "I'd have you boys be on your guard for the dam will soon give way" (from "The Jam on Jerry's Rock"). But it also recounts the qualities of bravery and physical dexterity valued among loggers and tries to provide for the sweetheart of a dead foreman, "Young Monroe." Standing in as *everyman*, "Young Monroe" was a model of character, work ethic, and camaraderie, which resonated through Pocahontas County timber communities.

Some farm families worried that the promise of cash in the timber industry might cost them their greatest asset: community labor. The song "Stay on the Farm Boys" illustrates that farming communities recognized the allure of a quick dollar but begged young men to cling to their traditional values: "The farm is surest and safest / Though the profits come in rather slow /

White and African-American railroad section crew, likely near Cass, no date. Courtesy of the WVRHC.

You're free as air of the mountain, / And the monarch of all you survey." Invoking a connection to the hills, songs like these reminded young men that a dollar sometimes comes at the steep price of surrendering their farm-family values.

Not only did corporations bring in new equipment to harvest timber, they imported new laborers, who'd alter the region's social composition. The communities that grew up around the timber industry didn't always share high opinions of loggers. The transient nature of the work prompted locals to see logging not only as a temporary wage job but also as an industry that brought unknown—and often rambunctious—men into the region.

It wasn't just the loggers' well-known carousing that made locals skittish. Before the Civil War, most people who lived here were of Scots-Irish or German descent. During this post-Civil War industrial boom, West Virginia became a veritable melting pot of ethnicities, including African-Americans from the South and immigrants from Eastern Europe. Like the coal, steel, glass, and pottery industries, timbering offered an opportunity for newly arrived and native West Virginians to earn wages. Perhaps the most common ground they all found was music.

While the tunes Chappell recorded reflected loggers' bravery, some showed contempt for these new West Virginians, who often were just passing through on their way to the next job. Some songs warned young women about the transience and untrustworthiness of the woodhick: "Come all you young ladies take warning from this / Don't place your affections on a logger so free," or simply about the potential for grave danger and loss: "A logger's life is a dreary life / It robs poor girls of their heart's delight / It causes them to weep and mourn / For the loss of time love never can return" (from "One

Timber/Timbre

By Kristen Bailey

WVU's Public History Department—through generous funding from the West Virginia Humanities Council and the WVU Humanities Center—displayed the exhibit *Timber/Timbre: Falling Trees and Rising Voices—Music and Logging in West Virginia, 1880-1930* at Cass Scenic Railroad State Park and the McClintic Library in Marlinton in 2021.

Dr. Melissa Bingmann, director of Public History, sponsored the project, which was led by Watts Museum Curator Danielle Petrak and me, with strong support from Elizabeth Satterfield (who's now curator and education director at Arthurdale Heritage). Based on several semesters of research by multiple WVU graduate students, *Timber/Timbre* highlights the cultural and particularly the musical impacts of the timber industry on the Allegheny Highlands and Greenbrier River Valley regions. The connection that West Virginians have to the land and their forests rings out in songs such as "West Virginia Farmer," "Yew Piney Mountain," and "The Lumberjack." Song collectors of the 1920s-1940s provided us with a wealth of primary-source material. The lyrics convey the world of industrial timbering directly from those who lived through those times.

The *Timber/Timbre* exhibit can be viewed online through WVU Library's Omeka platform: **https://omekas.lib.wvu.edu/home/s/timber/page/home**.

Additional support for the exhibit was provided by the Pocahontas Bicentennial Committee, the Pocahontas County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, and Pocahontas County Libraries.

Morning in May" and "A Logger's Life"). The dramatic exploits that inspired tales of brave workers leaping from log to log on makeshift rafts held a different meaning for parents of young daughters, who recognized that young widows or girls who lost their hearts to a transient timber worker might long suffer from their encounters in the forest.

While industrial logging machinery increasingly fell silent in the Allegheny Highlands after the timber boom period (1880 to 1930, by which time most of the virgin timber had been harvested), the music of the camps lived on, reminding us how West Virginians value our relationships to the land and with one another. Each time these songs are performed—whether on the back porch, at popular venues like the Pocahontas County Opera House in Marlinton, or at music events hosted by groups such as Allegheny Echoes, the Augusta Heritage Center, the state Folk Festival, or the state Department of Arts, Culture & History—we're hearing the rhythms of peoples' lives and the rhythms of the forest. It's the cadence of history.

KRISTEN BAILEY is a fourth-year Ph.D. candidate in the WVU Department of History, where she studies 19th-century U.S. history. Her research focuses on the intersection of capitalism and politics during our Statehood Movement. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

(Left-right) "Big Mouth" Pete Hammonds, Old Pete Hammonds, and Dick Hammonds—Old Pete's brother—at the mouth of Big Beechy, Middle Fork of Williams River. Photo by Bob Colebank of Pocahontas County, 1900. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Burnsville Public Library Collection.

Music Traditions in Pocahontas

Pocahontas County has been a source for much of our oldest-documented traditional music. In 1947, WVU folklorist Louis Chappell recorded the great fiddler Edden Hammons; these tunes were later released on albums and CDs. Edden's kin—namely Maggie, Pete, Parker, Sherman, Burl, and Lee Hammons—were a fount of traditional music, history, and tall tales, documented by folks such as Dwight Diller (our 2019 Vandalia Award recipient), Carl Fleischhauer, and Alan Jabbour in the 1970s. Today, Allegheny Echoes, headquartered in Marlinton, sponsors programs to preserve and pass along these old-time traditions, as do musicians such as Dwight, the Bing Brothers, Mike Burns, Terry Richardson, Richard Hefner & the Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys, and Trevor Hammons—Lee's great-grandson. *–ed.*

In the Cabin

By Kirk Judd

Sherman Hammons, 1970s. Photo by Bosco Takaki.

Out here
the moisture in the air
freezes
right in front of your eyes.
It sparkles all around you
in the astonishing light
of the full chrome moon
and lifts you
up
and
up
into the unimaginable stars.

From here
you see
through those frozen ivory sparks
the blacksnake road,
the sword-glint of Big Laurel
twisting under dark patches of
pine,
an owl
slicing over shimmering fields
fading into the silent heart of
night.

From here
somehow
you see.

In the cabin
the fire burnin'
Dave fiddlin'
the bottle hangin' between hands,
Now just a spoonful boys . . .
The worn wood curve of the cane
dark-stained from the oil
of the old man's hand.

Sherman laughing,
his crackling eyes
choreographing
fire-dancing, diamond notes
shot from Tim's vibrant banjo,
Mike's breathless mandolin.
Crystalline-iced windows
by stuttering lamps
mirroring the scene
back onto itself
in sheets of silver
and shafts of flickering light.

This will stay.

From here
somehow
you see,
this,
all this,
will stay.

You turn,
open the door,
in the cabin
Dave fiddles,
the fire
burns.

The author wrote this poem many years ago after taking part in an exchange of music and cultural knowledge with Sherman Hammons and the Bing Brothers on the Williams River in Pocahontas County.

KIRK JUDD is one of our state's finest spoken-word poets [see Spring 2020]. He's authored the books *Field of Vision* (Aegina, 1986), *Tao-Billy* (Trillium, 1996), and *My People Was Music* (Mountain State, 2014). He's also a cofounder of Allegheny Echoes and has been instrumental in preserving the Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Museum in Hillsboro. This is his second contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Photo by Alison Flegel Safrit. All photos courtesy of our author unless noted otherwise.

The Burner Homeplace

The Cass Home of Allen Craig Burner

By Louise Burner

Major floods on the Greenbrier River occur regularly, including notable damage near Cass in 1898, 1901, 1908, 1913, 1915, 1917, 1928, 1932, 1936, and 1954. Recent floods hit in 1967, 1985, and 1996. Several times, fires decimated the closely built wooden homes and commercial buildings in Brooklyn, the Cass business district, but each time, they were rebuilt. Through flood and fire, though, the Burner Homeplace in East Cass has endured, making it the oldest standing house in the Cass Historic District.

> *"The flood opened our fences but did not take any rails off. The water poured in at the gate here in front of the house; had river in the yard."*
>
> (Virginia Burner to her son Allen E. Burner, August 19, 1898)

In spite of nature's determination to take back the river plain, the unimposing white house built in 1885 by Allen Craig Burner stands straight, strong, and determined to hang onto its roots and legacy. Much of the building's strength comes from the structure itself. Sitting on the original 10x12-inch chestnut beams, the house isn't going anywhere. It stands even when the river fills the flood plain that is East Cass. The house is a prime example of the architecture of the time, built with balloon framing, where the wall studs begin on the first floor and continue all the way to the roof. The original siding and floors are red spruce, all materials being brought across the Wagon Road that wound over Little Mountain from Green Bank. Every room had a chimney for

a fireplace or stove, and later, all existing electricity and plumbing were added. Allen Craig Burner and his wife, Virginia Clark Burner, lived here from 1885 until sometime after his death in 1905, and the building remains in the Burner family to this day.

After two years of restoration work, the Burner Homeplace Museum and Fine Art Gallery hosted an *Open-Air Market* in September 2018 and opened officially on Memorial Day weekend 2019 with an open house, local artists, and live music. Then, due to the pandemic, it was closed through 2020 but opened again to the public in June 2021.

Visitors often include those interested in railroad history, the town of Cass, and the lumber industry. Many are family members—the descendants of Revolutionary War veteran Abraham Burner—who arrived in present-day Bartow in 1782. They come to find their place in the sprawling family tree.

Eugene Lee Burner, Allen Craig's grandson, began his extensive research into our family history in the 1960s. He collected a mountain of genealogy charts; photos; census records; birth, marriage, and death certificates; Revolutionary and Civil War records; and news clippings—all awaiting the next sleuth. May Blackhurst Freeland compiled this history into the book *A Blackhurst Came to Burner-land* (1993). The collection's most intriguing items were two shoeboxes of old letters, poems, and postcards. Written mostly in pencil and folded too many times, the letters are dated from 1873 to the 1920s. Eugene transcribed, printed, and saved them. These letters inspired me and Alison Flegel Safrit—respectively, the great-granddaughter and great-great-granddaughter of Allen and Virginia—to restore and open the homeplace to the public.

The rich soil of the oft-flooded bottomland ensures that the house is surrounded by lush grasses, wildflowers, and common and exotic trees and bushes; visitors can spot white-tailed deer, possums, groundhogs, squirrels, birds, and the occasional bear heading for the river. The house itself seems alive and pulsing with the echo of footsteps, laughter, and tears. Visitors and family members have donated or loaned artifacts, photos, and additional letters that add to the story. Family trees are on display, and any additions or corrections are encouraged—pens and stickers are always nearby.

Pocahontas County history often is told from the point-of-view of the railroad and lumber businesses. The Burner Homeplace shares the history of early Cass through the eyes and pens of the people who lived in the bullseye of these seismic changes. Our people were strong by necessity and lucky to live under the sturdy timbers of this house.

Allen Craig Burner, the third son of George and Sarah Warwick Burner, inherited more than 2,000 acres of mountain and valley woodland near Arbovale, much of it now occupied by the Green Bank Observatory. After losing a disputed court decision

George Burner, the Patriarch

Allen C. Burner's father, George (born in 1794), was the sixth of seven sons of Abraham and Mary Hull Burner, pioneers in what is now Pocahontas County. He served on the newly formed county court in March 1822 and as a delegate to the Virginia General Assembly in 1825-26 and 1840-41. His wife, Sarah Warwick, died in December 1840 while George was in Richmond. His second wife, Margaret Poague, raised his eight children. For "aiding and abetting the enemy"—Confederate forces—during the October 1861 Battle of Greenbrier Bridge, in which his farmhouse was burned, Burner was held as a civilian prisoner at Camp Chase in Columbus, Ohio. After his release, his health never recovered, and he died on July 17, 1874.

In this view of Cass' residential section in the early 1900s, note the similarity of the company houses and the deforested hillside from timbering. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Meadow River Lumber Collection.

in 1885, he moved his family to Leatherbark near a reliable spring on a 90-acre plot, purchased from Charles Z. J. Curry years before Cass came into being.

At the end of the 19th century, only three farms existed in the isolated valley near the confluence of Leatherbark Creek, Deer Creek, and the Greenbrier River. When the water was low enough, the river could be forded near the present-day bridge. West Virginia Pulp & Paper had been taking logs down the river when the water level was appropriate—which wasn't often enough—and wanted to process the logs closer to the source. In 1889, it purchased the property on the west side of the river that would become the site of the company town and sawmill.

The A. C. Burner home stood among peach and apple trees, and the town of Cass grew in all directions around it. First came the immigrant workers, who built the railroad up the Greenbrier River and into the mountains. Then came the lumber and railroad crew camps, the town with company houses, a company store, a jail, churches, a hospital, and finally a school. The town was incorporated on August 15, 1902.

The first passenger trains began arriving in Cass in 1901, which assured continuing prosperity and growth. On March 19, 1901, Virginia Burner saw the town's first passenger train just as she was writing to her son: "O . . . just now the cars have come; such nice coaches. I count thirty-two windows on this side." A month lat-

Virginia and Allen Craig Burner, who built the homestead in 1885.

er, she wrote that "those midnight arrivals are lovely." Apparently, she could see the train and perhaps the station from her home. Now, there are too many trees blocking the view.

The Burners watched the town of Cass and the lumber business grow rapidly around them into a community full of immigrant and African-American workers, single young lumbermen, entrepreneurs of all types, as well as workers' families, and they personally experienced the upheaval that kind of whirlwind creates. They were pulled into the growth and opportunities, the changes (some good and some bad), the violence, and the complexities of the time. All this excitement was a boon to the family, and a community began to grow. Allen and his sons sold off lots for businesses and single-family homes, filling up the area of East Cass from the ford and early bridge down to the mouth of Deer Creek.

In a letter dated April 13, 1901, Virginia mused, "Several houses have gone up in Cass." And then on May 2, she again wrote, "Many houses going up. Going to build 40 houses right across from the kitchen."

Boarders took advantage of the Burners' hospitality, particularly before hotel rooms were available. Company executives, including Emory P. Shaffer and Samuel Slaymaker, boarded with the Burners while they were building the railroad and mill. Traveling attorneys, businessmen, and teachers also boarded here. "Suppose Slaymaker has left us," Virginia noted on March 19, 1901. Another gentleman, Mr. Ralston, "is going

to board till the weather is good, I think. He doesn't like to be on Cheat [Mountain] while the weather is bad." She soon wrote of a schoolteacher "on her way to the top of Allegheny." Virginia cooked for the guests, and the income—including her fees as a midwife—had to have been appreciated. .

Allen was in failing health the last years of his life, and Virginia and sons Elmer and C. L. C. continued to support the family by farming and by building businesses and homes on the Burner land. The sons also served as councilmen and constables for the newly founded town of Cass.

Letters kept Virginia in touch with her children who lived away. The youngest son, Allen Eugene, worked in other sawmills and later attended WVU and medical school in Maryland. The oldest daughter, Lula, married the Rev. Harry Blackhurst in Minneapolis before moving her family back to Cass. Emma, a teacher in the county, boarded near the school she was assigned to each year. As referenced in many letters, she often came home by wagon or train for the weekend and then headed back on Sunday evening.

Educated at a women's college in Staunton, Virginia—near her childhood home—Virginia Clark Burner valued education and encouraged her family to learn. Family members often wrote and shared poems, offering critiques on their merits. Some of these have survived, revealing their cultural interests, attitudes toward current events, and strong religious faith. These letters and poems offer a unique view of Cass history through the eyes of the families who lived here before and during the rise of the lumber business. In particular, Virginia's colorful and thoughtful pen described the lives of people in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in this rural valley, set deep in the Allegheny Mountains.

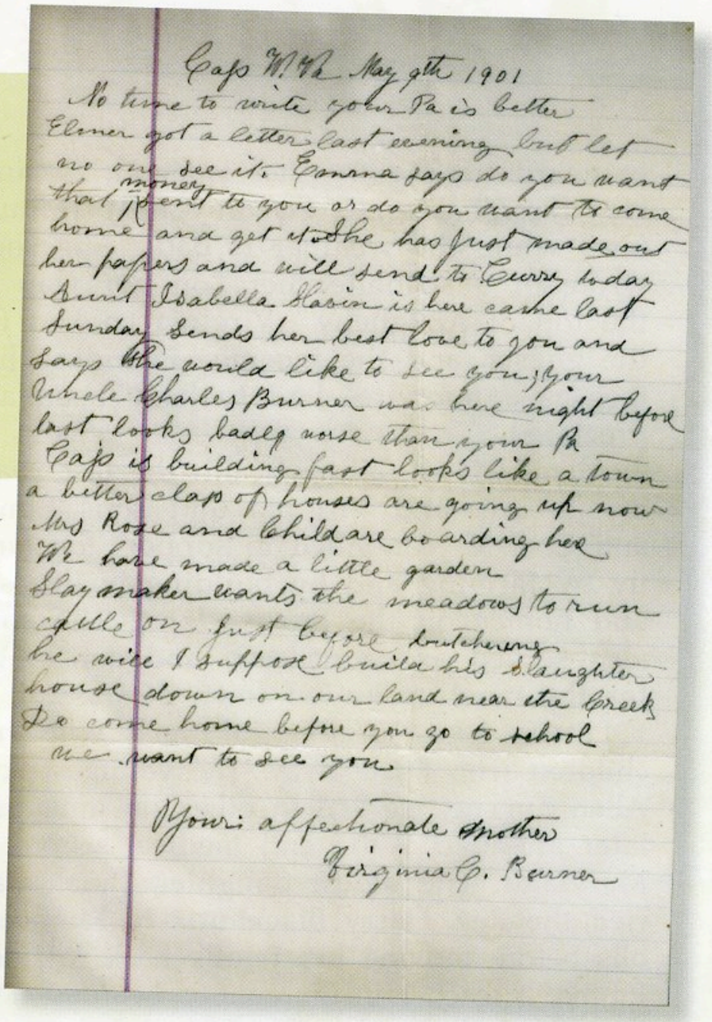
The writers commented on world events, including the Spanish-American War; World War I; outbreaks of illnesses, such as diphtheria, smallpox, and measles; and news of the people around them: marriages, breakups, births, and deaths. The most interesting letters reveal their opinions and dispense advice, showcasing their humor and insights.

One example is a story Virginia shared in 1903 about a surprise late-night visitor to the homeplace when her husband was very ill: "Last night I had quite a scare. Twelve o'clock your Pa wakened me and told me someone was in the kitchen. I thought likely it might be a dog or cat, so I started to see, but thought best to speak first. I did not make a light. I told your Pa to watch out the window, when I spoke, to see if anyone would run out. So, I only went to the dining room and asked, 'Is anybody in the kitchen?' You could imagine my feelings if you had ever been a woman and had a helpless man for a husband, when someone answered, 'What does ye want?' Well, I did not tell him. I just began calling for Elmer, calling out, 'Police, Police!' but none of these things, as St. Paul said, seemed to move him. Then I took to my heels in my night gown, with no shoes on my feet, and ran to Cooper's, and pounded against the restaurant door, and called for Mr. Ware. He knew my voice and came down the stairs. Said he would hunt Elmer. Elmer, Bud, Ware, and some mill hands from Gay's Hotel came down and found an Italian Boss sitting in the kitchen with his pocket book on his lap and a revolver. Elmer took him to the lockup. Cooper's women folk gave me shoes and stockings and a dress and shawl, and Bud came and brought me home. But your Pa was still not excited. He told Elmer the man was drunk crazy. He had a hundred and ten dollars when Elmer took the pistol from him."

On February 5, 1901, she wrote to her son, "Your Pa is sitting up in bed with a hot iron to his feet, and thinks he is much worse than I am. Though I think I am bad, I don't lose all my fun."

The Days of Letter Writing

The Burner family members wrote letters to one another almost daily, much like we text or call today. The surviving letters have been passed from one attic to another over the years and now reside again in the house where many of them were written. Transcripts and interesting excerpts of the letters are a connecting thread throughout the Burner Homeplace Museum. –Louise Burner


Cass W.Va May 9th 1901
No time to write your Pa is better
Elmer got a letter last evening but let
no one see it. Emma says do you want
that money sent to you or do you want to come
home and get it. She has just made out
her papers and will send to Curry today
Aunt Isabella Slavin is here came last
Sunday. Sends her best love to you and
says She would like to see you, your
Uncle Charles Burner was here night before
last looks badly worse than your Pa
Cass is building fast looks like a town
a better class of houses are going up now
Mrs Rose and Child are boarding here
We have made a little garden
Slaymaker wants the meadows to run
cattle on just before butchering
he will I suppose build his slaughter
house down on our land near the Creek
Do come home before you go to school
we want to see you
Your affectionate Mother
Virginia C. Burner

She often dispensed advice more directly, such as this 1904 letter to her son Allen at college: "I'm sorry you have to wear glasses. I think if you would take physic[s], and then rest your eyes, you would come out all right. . . . Take broken doses of salts every day for a while. My eyes gave out when I went to school, and my parents made me walk home for dinner. That cured my head, and I quit looking so much on my reader, and my eyes recruited."

And, of course, Virginia wrote about the town's many disasters. One occasion was in 1908, when she described a fire that destroyed several family homes in East Cass, followed by a flood that very same night when the river's ice went out: "We had quite an experience last Saturday morning. I heard the engine making a mournful song, and Emma got up and raised the curtain. I never opened my eyes until Emma began, 'Oh, Ma.' (I thought I had left the dishrag or tablecloth on the bed, or had done some awful things). 'Cass is burning.' That was after one o'clock, and it proved to be Mary and Joe Tyson's house. Just before five o'clock the engine sounded the alarm again. That time the dam broke and let loads of ice down. [Mr.] Nethkin had his ice house full of ice when the flood came, but the logs swept right through the building and knocked things to pieces. The big mill was greatly damaged by the flood; the company is repairing it now."

Many of the buildings in East Cass survived these periodic disasters and outlived the region's boom time, but the flood of November 4, 1985, drastically changed all of that. The commercial buildings not carried down the river were soon razed. Nearly two feet of river water filtered into the lower floor of the Burner Homeplace and soaked the bottom of a homemade cathedral window quilt. Other homes further downriver were completely inundated, many ruined beyond repair. But the home Allen C. Burner built 100 years earlier again stood its ground, waiting to begin a second century. Today, as visitors stand on the sturdy floors of the homeplace, the words of these hard-working, strong-willed people resonate as voices from another time. ❦

LOUISE BURNER is a lifelong educator and writer living on Burner Hill above Cass. A Morgantown native and WVU graduate, she's retired from a 40-plus-year career as an English teacher and literacy specialist. She enjoys her time with family, creates jewelry, sews, and continues researching family history while managing the Burner Homeplace Museum. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Flooding has been a regular occurence in Cass. Here, flooding damages African-American shanties in East Cass, no date. Courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Center.

The nonprofit Burner Homeplace preserves the area's history and supports community arts through educational experiences. Its board appreciates the tireless volunteers, gracious donations, and history and arts grants and support from Pocahontas Preservation, Green Bank Artist Cooperative, and the Pocahontas County Visitors Bureau, Historical Landmarks Commission, Artisan Cooperative, Arts Council, and Parks and Recreation Commission. The homeplace hosts art lessons, yoga classes, and festivals. A little library (sponsored by the Seneca Woodlands Women's Club) is located in the parking lot.

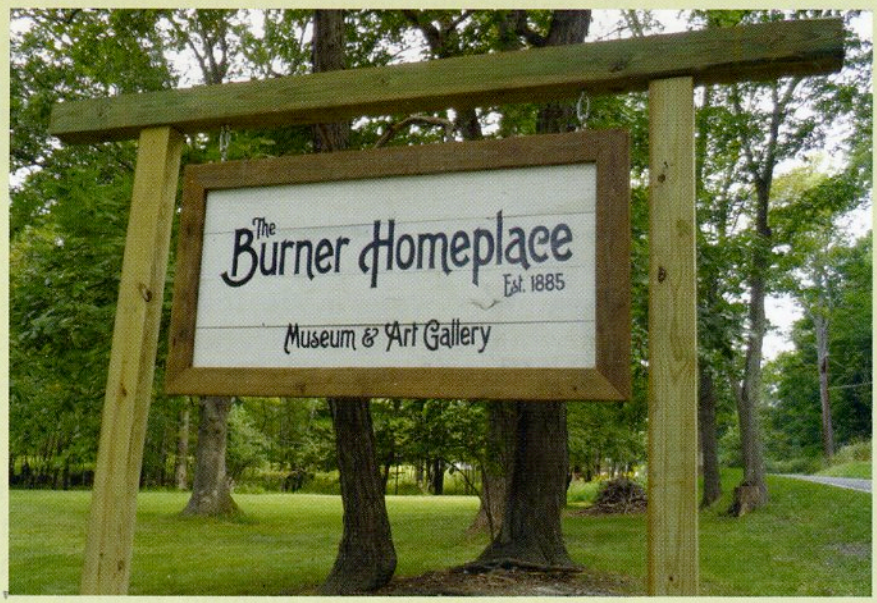


Photo by Alison Flegel Safrit.

The Burner Homeplace Fine Art Gallery—owned and operated by Alison Safrit—features woodwork, paintings, ceramic jewelry, photography, stained glass, illustrations, and Alison's pottery. The 2022 season will feature a clay teaching studio, made possible through a grant and financial assistance from the state Department of Arts, Culture & History's Commission on the Arts.

For more information, please visit **www.BurnerHomeplace.com**.

A Disappointment

By Virginia Clark Burner

Not very long since, being tempted to roam,
I left my dear mother and sought a new home.
A place that my fancy had pictured so bright
With many amusements the heart to delight
Where pleasure and business harmoniously blend
And thanks to the bountiful Giver ascend.

But lately I've learned that gay fancy is vain,
Will gorgeously picture a home that is plain.
Will deck it with roses and make it appear
Inviting and cheerful when lonely and drear.
And thus my abode was not found quite so bright
As that which vain fancy had painted so bright.

The skies that above me were radiant blue
By gathering clouds are now hidden from view.
The flowers which bloomed in that vision are dead
The evergreen leaves all their verdure have shed.
As frost on the forest which in the sun gleamed
So vanished the pleasure of which I had dreamed.

And memory brings o're me the years of the past
When bright days of boyhood were flying so fast.
Those days were made lovely by pleasure and mirth
Yet while they were fleeting I knew not their worth
And when I recall the surroundings of home
I wonder why fate ever caused me to roam.

Perhaps in my trouble God's purpose is this
To make me look forward to more lasting bliss,
And seek for a home on the evergreen shore
Where weeping and sighing forever are o're.
If so let me yield to the Being so wise,
Whose rod of correction I must not despise.

Louise McNeill

By Stan Bumgardner

The style and rhythm of former state Poet Laureate Louise McNeill's words ring out like old-time music from her native Pocahontas County. Gibbs Kinderman puts it much better: "Her poems are ballads in the old sense—better read or sung than ingested silently off a flat page."

McNeill (1911 – 1993)—who sometimes went by her married name, Pease—often wrote about the area where she grew up as well as many other subjects. Her work captured the personal emotions that traditional histories usually miss. Personally, it's taken me much of my life to realize that emotions are at the heart of all history, which makes McNeill one of our most readable historians—of people, places, events, and scenes.

Her first major book, *Gauley Mountain* (1939), was a remarkable collection of historical poems, with a foreword by Stephen Vincent Benét. In the *West Virginia Encyclopedia*, current Poet Laureate Marc Harshman observed, "Much is rightly made of its vivid portrayal of character and folkways. Although reminiscent of Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*, her portrayals show a greater depth and poignancy. Additionally, *Gauley Mountain* reveals McNeill as a poet with great technical skill, able to create a masterful range of imagery and rhythm. In all of her work, not only *Gauley Mountain*, she created a wide range of characters, especially rich with the details of life lived in rural Appalachia. McNeill was often hailed for her unflinching acceptance of local speech and dialect into the overall construction of her rhythmic poetry."

In 1991, longtime *Mountain Stage* host Larry Groce put more than a dozen of these poems to music. With recitations by poet Irene McKinney and others, *Gauley Mountain* was aired as a radio production on Public Broadcasting.

Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

Perhaps McNeill's most personal words were in her memoir, *Milkweed Ladies* (1988), when she recalled the "night the world changed." She was sitting in her room at New York's Commodore Hotel in August 1945 when she heard an atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. The moment profoundly shook her while eliciting memories of her childhood Pocahontas County farm and the tenuous nature of nature itself: "It wasn't joy that died, or faith, or resolution; for all these come back. It was something else, something deep and earth-given that died that night in the Commodore. Never again would I be able to say with such infinite certainty that the earth would always green in the springtime, and the purple hepaticas come to bloom on my woodland rock. For these, the earth and its seasons, had always been my certainty—going beyond death, beyond the death of all my people, even beyond the death of the farm; the sun in the morning, the darkness at night, the certain roll of the seasons, the 'old blue misties' sweeping out of the north."

STAN BUMGARDNER is the editor of GOLDENSEAL.

GOLDENSEAL published three pieces by McNeill during her lifetime: *"The Milkweed Ladies"* [Fall 1988], "The Gauley Mail" [Fall 1989], and "Spring Cleaning" [Spring 1993].

The Whimmy-Diddle

By Louise McNeill
Original artwork by Jacob Hall

We want to send out a special "thank you" to Gibbs Kinderman for making this previously unpublished story available to GOLDENSEAL.

Pud and I knew that Ricky was at something out there in the granary loft. He'd been at it now for two weeks—ever since the day after school was out. Pud and I were picking wild strawberries to earn money for our tickets to the Fair, and the yellow transparents were ripe, the groundhogs getting fat, but every evening after supper, instead of taking us ground-hogging over in the orchard, Rick would fade away by himself out toward the granary, taking Mom's good hammer from the kitchen drawer; then we'd hear him pounding out there till it was good dusk.

All day, we had to be out in the field helping Dad replant the corn. There was no chance for Pud and me to climb up in the loft. Then, after supper, off Ricky would go and not say "dog." We went out, following him and climbed up the ladder, pushed the trap door, but he had the knob turned on the inside, and when he heard us pushing, he got quiet and wouldn't answer us when we called. We giggled and I said way loud, "I bet he's making a *prepetual* motion like Grandpa Ritter's." But no answer, so we climbed down. Never a sound from up there. And when he came in the night, he walked bent over and his eyes—secret—making as if they could look around corners.

That was my brother, Ricky—keeping everything to himself. Always quiet. Maybe because of his eyes. He was short sighted. Dad wouldn't let him play baseball for fear of breaking his glasses. Quiet and patient, too, Mom said. Like when down at the river, Pud and I would be wading and skipping rocks or hunting out water snakes to kill, but Rick'd be standing all day by the Sankey Hole, fishing for a bass he'd seen there last Sunday. And now he was at something up there in the loft.

We went and knocked on the door again, telling him Dad had come from town and brought chocolate drops. But he wouldn't open. We ran around the granary giggling and jumping on our legs. "He's got something," Pud said. His eyes were round as dollars. "A treasure, I bet, and he's hiding it."

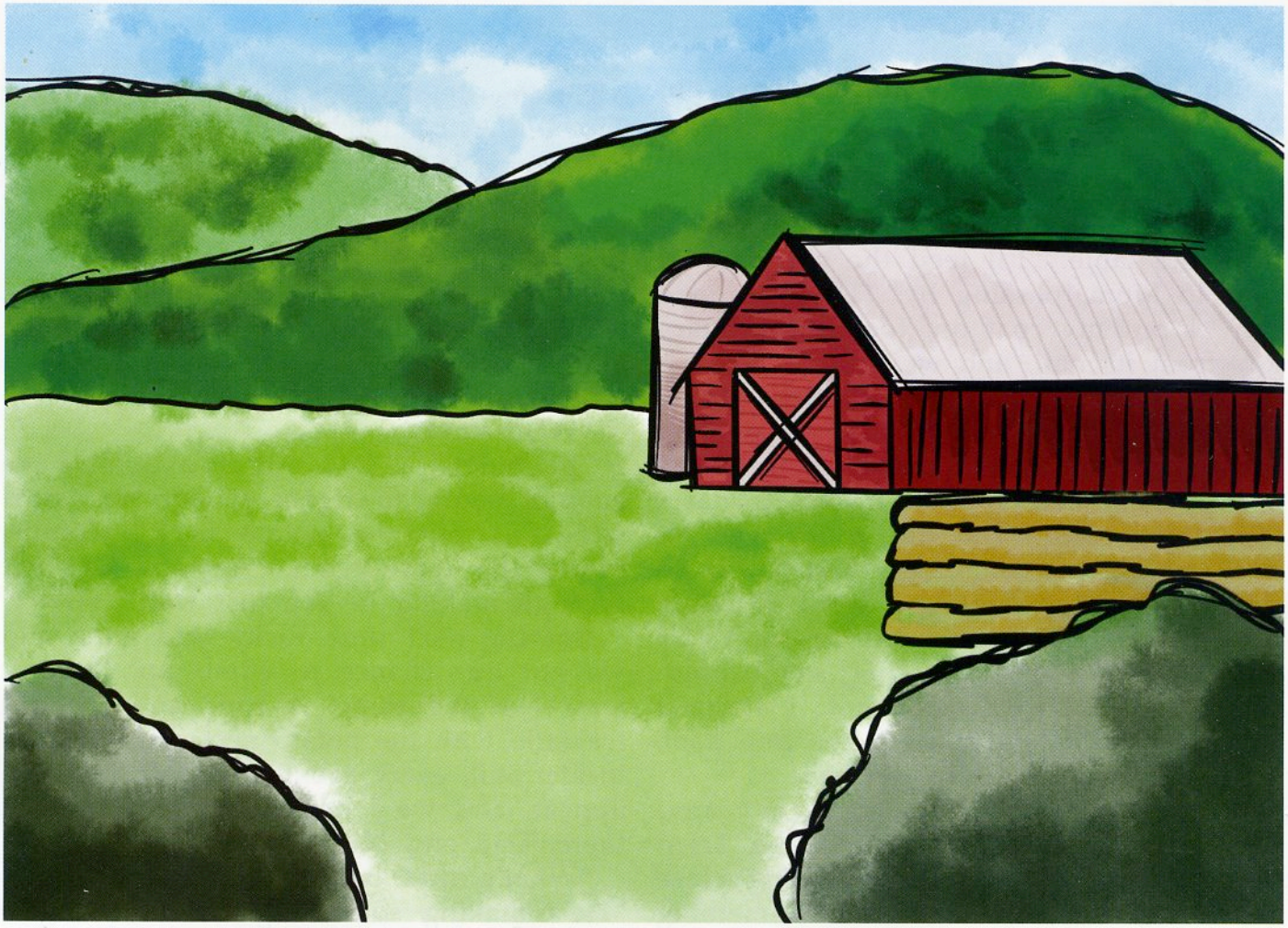
"No," I said, for Pud was only seven. "There you go again. There's no such thing as pirates. He's making something. I saw him sneaking a handful of nails out of Dad's box."

"I'll sneak him," Pud said, and we ran around the granary and crawled in the iron weeds under the apple tree—crawling on our knees along back of the granary wall so we could peek up between the logs where the chinkin' was out. We crawled and hunkered down by the corner. There was a thudding sound up above. Thud—Thud—regular. "Listen—" I whispered and stuck my eye against the hole.

"I can't see," Pud whined. "The floor's in the way."

"Shu-u. Listen. He thinks he's smart—pounding so big. He's only three years older than I am, and besides, Mom says I write plainer than he does."

"Shu-u," Pud grabbed me. "He's a-coming down. There's his foot."



And there were Ricky's bare feet backing down the loft ladder. Then he stood below, looking around the bin room and wiping the spider webs out of his hair. "He's looking for something," I whispered. And then we saw Ricky walk over to the old sack where Mom kept the chicken feathers saved, and he hunkered down quiet, pulled out a big wad of feathers, and took them—climbing one-handed back into the loft.

"Chicken feathers!" Pud gulped and fell over into the weeds.

"What's he going to do with—," but I had an idea, and I kept quiet. Chicken feathers. Old feathers. I kept thinking about them after I was asleep that night. It drove me crazy. Chicken feathers. Then, as I lay there, it began to rain—slow like in summer. Chicken feathers. Old Domineck feathers Mom had saved to make Cousin Melly a pair of pillows. And it puzzled me. Different from the time Ricky had made the water wheel, different from the time he'd made Mom the apple drier out of Grandma's collection of hat pins. Feathers. And as the rain rained, I thought of everything: tar and feathers, Indian head gears, arrows. I beat the pillow with my fists till the feathers came flying out and went in my mouth till I had to sputter.

But next morning, it was raining still, so we couldn't go the field, and Mom said to Ricky that she was out of cinnamon. She wanted to bake a big apple pie and, as soon as breakfast was over, for Ricky to take this dime, put on his coat, and go to the store. Rick nodded, but his eyes looked worried—like there was dust on his specks. Pud and I looked at each other over our oatmeal dishes. Then we began to eat fast. But Ricky was fooling around with his spoon and took a long time to

finish. Then he couldn't find his coat, but Mom found it on the peg. "Hurry back," she said, and he put the dime in his pocket and went sloshing down the road. Then I looked at Pud, and we slid out from behind the table. "I'll feed the chickens," I said to Mom, passing by. "That's a good girl." I put my coat on, took the granary key from its nail, and we went out across the lot, jumping over the puddles, and to the granary door. Then I stood quiet—Pud breathing right behind me—and unlocked the padlock and slipped it off its hasp. "Shu-u," I said. The bin room was all dark and musty smelling. "Shu-u. I'll go first." I grabbed holt and went climbing up, my feet scraping on the top of Pud's hair where he was crowding me behind. "What's your hurry?" I asked. I stopped sudden, gave an up push on the trap door, and pulled myself over the gap.

At first, I thought there wasn't anything. Just dark up there and the dried apples swinging, the rain lapping close above my head, but then I saw something yellow over in the corner and went reaching out my hand careful. A piece of new hay rope, and it was fastened through a hook up on the rafters and then came down and through a horse collar ring stapled onto the wall. Then the rope handle hung loose and had a wood handle on it and on the other end—I pulled the rope, and it began to swing—on the other end was hanging Grandma's brass teakettle. "Look," I gasped. "There's Grandma's teakettle."

"What's it for?"

"We'll just see," I said and pulled again. The teakettle swung. I grabbed and stopped it, peeked in. And there, down in the bottom was a nest of chicken feathers with a big cobbler seed potato lying in the nest like an egg.

"It's nothing but an old potato," Pud whined. "You said he was making something big."

whimmy-diddle \'(h)wim-mē 'di-del \ noun: A nameless contraption or imaginary object. (*Dictionary of Southern Appalachian English*, ed. by Michael B. Montgomery & Jennifer K. N. Heinmiller, 2005)

"Well," I said. "Look. Look at this rope and this rig he's built to swing it. It's a kind of machine."

"What kind?"

"Be quiet," I said. "If you don't have enough sense to figure it out for yourself—." I put the potato back carefully, swung the kettle again. "Anyway, he's not through making it. You just wait."

But the next time Ricky was gone and we got our chance to climb up, there it was—just the same. A rope and the old teakettle with the potato nest stuffed down inside. Still, every evening, Rick would disappear, and we'd hear him pounding out there. Dad and Mom heard him too.

"What's that boy at now?" Dad said. "He's making something out in the granary."

"An invention," Mom said. "Like Grandpa Ritter and his perpetual motion. He takes after the Ritters."

"What's a *prepetual* motion?" Pud asked.

"A machine that never stops."

"But this one stops," I said. "It's nothing but a piece of rope and Grandma's teakettle hanging on it, and inside, there's some old chicken feathers and an old potato."

"What?" Mom puckered her face. "Whatever in the world?" She looked at Dad.

He put his hands up in the air. "A potato?"

"Maybe it's not finished yet," Mom said. "But he don't pound as much as he did. He can't be working on it all year."

It was July—raspberries to pick. Between corn hoeing and hay hauling, Pud and I went up on the Flats to pick so we could buy us hot dogs at the Fair. But Rick didn't have to worry about the Fair. He'd already

got his Fair money last Christmas—trapping skunks and skinning them. Caught one all black one and had $7.35 put away in his shoebox. Enough to buy an all-day ticket and hot dogs besides—pop, cotton candy, and, if he wanted, ride the Ferris wheel all day. But Pud and I didn't even have the dollar bills Uncle Brown had given us for Christmas. We'd spent them buying gum drops in the morning before school, and now—if we ate any hot dogs at the Fair—we had to go up on the Flats and pick raspberries. It was hot, too, and the sweat bees stinging us—while all Ricky had to do was hide up there in the loft. Not even pounding now. Just a thud or two, then for hours, quiet up there.

Even during hay hauling, he was still at it, after supper and Sunday mornings. "What's that boy doing now?" Dad asked. "I never hear him." For Dad and Mom were getting some curious too, and one day, I met Dad climbing down the ladder. "You seen my monkey wrench?" he asked, looking all around on the ladder rungs.

"It's in the woodshed," I said. "On the chopping block."

Then, one night when Ricky came in on the porch, Dad knocked out his pipe and said, "What you doing out there, Son? Making something new?"

Pud and I sat on the porch swing and hugged our knees—waiting, but Ricky just looked corner-wise at Dad and grinned.

"Yah, a Whimmy-Diddle to grind smoke on." Then, he went on into the house. But not grinning as he passed us by—his face set and white, worrying.

"Maybe he can't get it to work," I said hopefully. "He's been putting groundhog grease on to oil the hooks."

"Um—" Dad said. "Groundhog grease? And the potato?"

"It's all dried up now," I said. "Wrinkled—it didn't even sprout."

Then it was August—the week before the Fair. The jar flies were singing in the trees, and up in the hot loft, the wasp nests falling down. Fair time, and Pud and I counted our money. Rick counted his up again just to be sure. I had a new white dress and canvas slippers. Pud, a sailor suit. But Ricky—he was growing so fast, Mom said—had better wear his old short pants and save up so he could have a long pair to wear to school. So, she let the hems down till they struck him just above the knee, and he had the white shirt Cousin Ben had outgrown, and Dad bought him a new pair of galluses. So, that morning, when we got dressed, he looked fine. Well, we all did. Pud and me all in white, and Ricky in blue and white with a green necktie. My hair curled, and theirs slicked back with water. Then Mom told us to sit down in chairs and wait while she packed the lunch and dressed herself. Then Dad came rolling up to the door in his old car. He had his hat jerked down sassy over one eye and was tooting a tune on the horn.

As we waited in the line of cars at the ticket gate, I stuck my head out and I saw the Ferris wheel rolling up toward the sky. Then, as we paid for our tickets and I rolled my 75 cents back in my handkerchief, I smelled the hot dogs and onions, hobby horses, hamburgers, and balloons. I sat close to Ricky, looking up at him. I knew he had six dollars and a half in his pants' pocket, and I reached out to straighten his tie. But he pushed my hand away and said "Aw."

Dad pulled the old car into a row at the tracks. We all got out, looked around, and brushed ourselves.

"I want to look at the canned fruit exhibit," Mom said to Dad. He nodded. "Well, guess I'll stroll up the barns and take a look at Newt Kisner's prize sheep."

I stood close to Ricky and held Pud's hand tight for fear Mom would drag me with her to look at the jars and crochet stuff, but she turned and said, "Don't let Pud get separated from you. And only *one* bottle of pop." Then Dad looked at us, took out his pocketbook. He flapped it open. "Well, maybe you all could use a little extra spondulicks." He passed the pieces 'round. Pud and me a quarter and Ricky fifty cents.

"We'll meet back here at the car for our picnic," Mom said. "Don't go in the gypsy tent or ride those whirling airplanes." Then Dad took her arm and they went off toward the Agriculture Building.

The calliope was starting to play. I grabbed Pud and began to run after Ricky. He was already going down the track fence, crawling under a tent rope into the Carnival Ring. "Run!" I said. "Come on. There goes Ricky." But just as we were catching up, he turned on us. "Don't tag me around all day. Here." And he counted two dimes into my hand. "Go and get you an ice cream cone, and that's all you're getting." Then he put his money back, snapped his galluses at us, and stalked away.

"All right," I said. "Smartie." I took Pud and went toward the Grand Stand. The calliope was playing for the hobby horses, and we walked in tune. Everything was heaty and dusty. The crowds pushing us and laughing. We laughing. The air all golden and smelling of hot dog grease.

First, we bought our cones, then two hot dogs, and, eating them, we walked clear up the Midway and back. Past the gambling booths, where the men were shooting guns and balls for prizes, past the mo-

torcycle Dare Devils, the Fat Woman, and the girls who danced, and a place called "PEEK and TELL." Then, coming out of the tent, we see Uncle Brown and his girl, Nettie Kisner. "Well, well—look who's here." Uncle Brown's breath smelled like he'd been taking medicine, and he laughed a lot. "Takin' in the Fair, Puddin'?" And he walked with us up the Midway and bought us tickets, set us up on the Merry-Go-Round.

We were riding around high, the calliope playing, when I looked out to see if anybody was watching how like a cowgirl, I sat my horse, but I looked, and there across, I saw Ricky, stepping up to one of the gambling tents, his hand in his money pocket. I nearly fell off. It was Ricky all right. His face set and white, his glasses big on his eyes, he was standing there buying a gambling ticket, then stepping back to wait with a row of men.

And the first man, a big red-faced fellow, was stepping up to the counter and drawing back to throw a ball.

My pony was dying down under me, and when the music stopped, I jerked Pud off his horse. The pony man let us out of the gate. "Watch your step, Sister," he said, and we crawled under some ropes, me pushing Pud ahead of me in between the legs of a tall man, and when we got there and craned our necks, we could see into the stall. There were a lot of Kewpie Dolls and glass dogs, sets of dishes, and stuff on the shelves, and the Carnival Man, a dark fellow with white teeth, was handing out the balls. He handed three to Ricky and three to all the others—only the others were men—big men with rolled-up sleeves and armbands. I shivered and almost called out to Rick, but he wasn't hearing or seeing anything. His eyes big-round in his face, he just looked at the next man—yellow shirted—step up to the counter and fling the balls. Thud. Thud. The yellow man rang in two, but he missed the last. Plink. The ball skittered along a tray where the Carnival Man caught it, winked his eye, reached up, and pulled a rope he was holding in his other hand.

A rope. Then this idea percolated into me. "Look." I nudged Pud. "Look. It's a Whimmy-Diddle. They're throwing the ball in it." And there it was. A red rope running through some golden rings and, on the end of it, this here red swinging basket with a little round hole in the top. When the white-toothed man grinned and pulled the rope, the rope moved, the basket swung across in front of a green silk curtain, and as it swings—Thud—in goes the ball.

"It's Ricky's rig," I said. "A Whimmy-Diddle."

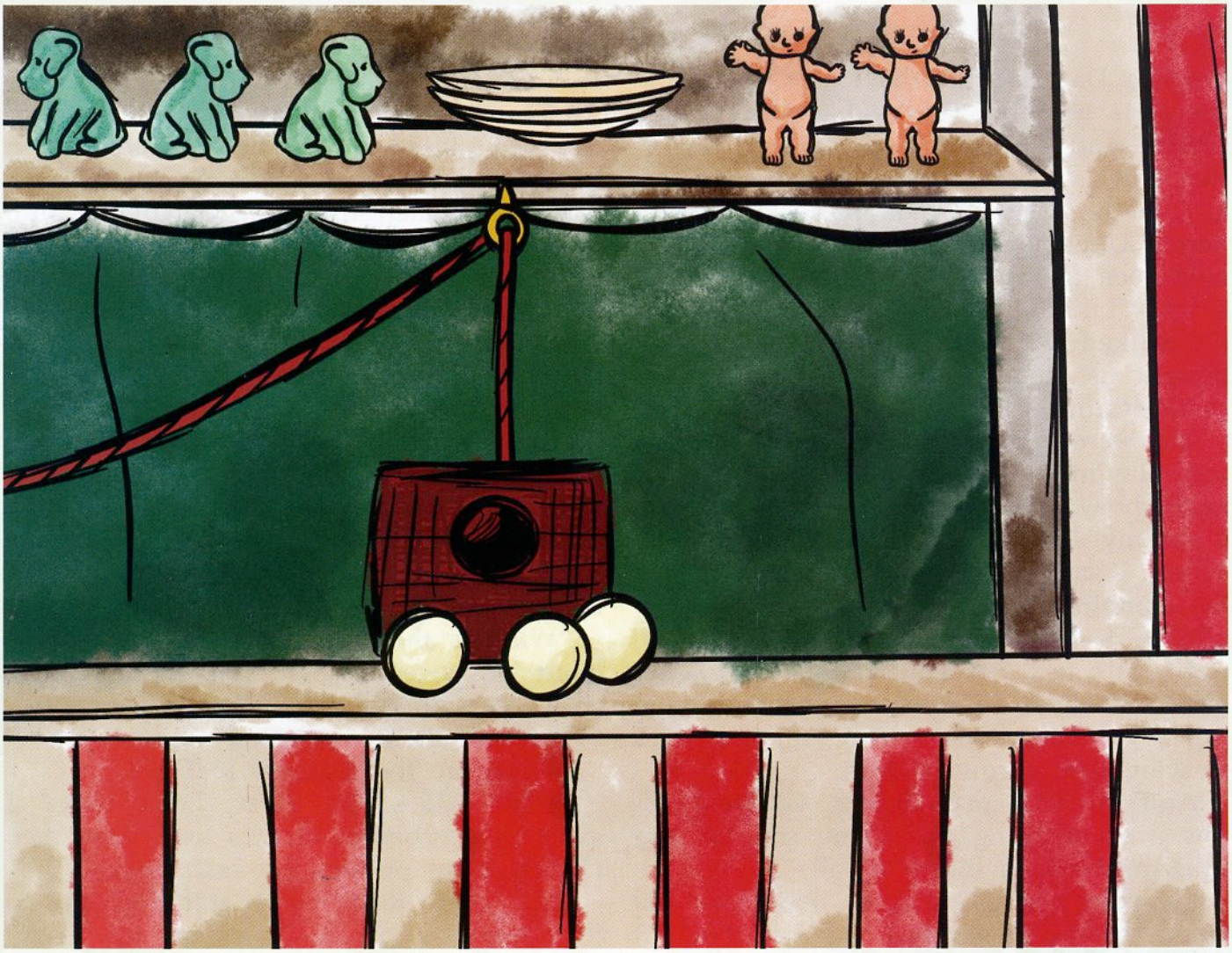
"Where's the teakettle?" Pud asked; his hand was sweating sticky in mine.

"There's no teakettle, Silly," I whispered. "Who said there was? Don't talk so loud."

"What are the feathers for?"

"Who said—. Be quiet. Look now," I said. "It's a-coming Ricky's turn. That man missed. Stop pulling my sash loose."

And then Ricky was standing up to the pitcher's place. "Rack'em up, Kid." All the men were grinning and nudging around. "Lay'em in now, Shortie." But Rick didn't grin. He was spitting on his throwing hand like he was a man, squaring himself around—his knobbly knees sticking out of his short pants like a plucked young rooster, and the skin turning blue. He set his feet *so* in the dust, and, as he turned, he saw us there. Just a flicker in his eyes, then his brows drawing down, and he gripped the ball. "Rack'em up now, Squirt," and the Carnival Man pulled the rope, the rope swung, the red basket moved across the curtain. Thud. Another. Thud. Rick's face was panting red. Thud. Wham. The third one went in. "Look it. I'll be damned," the men said. They ticked their tongues. "I'll be damned. Beginner's luck." And the Carnival Man was grinning different and taking one of the pink boxes



off of the shelf. "Here you are, Junior," he said, and handed it down to my brother, Ricky—a big pink Kewpie Doll with eyes that would wink.

"Not bad, Kid," and one of the men clapped him on the shoulder and said, "Must pitch a little baseball—eh?"

Rick looked up at the man, his glasses sort of shining in the sun. "Baseball?" he said. "Yah, I pitch a little—." Then he turned his head sidewise, spit into the dust, and came walking over our way, holding out the box, the doll. "Here, you kids," he said like he'd never seen us before from Adam. "Take it. It's yours." And the Kewpie Doll was lying in my arms, gentle, and its eyes winking up at me. "Oh, Ricky—Ricky," I said, my eyes thanking and spilling over. "Ricky—the feathers—? Why?" Then his eyes blinked at me, and he said low, "Automatic silencer." He grinned. "Curiosity killed a cat."

He straddled around and stood again in the ticket line, his hand easy on his money pocket.

"Trying her another whirl, Kid?" the Carnival Man asked, his teeth sort of tight. "Beginner's luck, you know—," he sickly grinned.

But Ricky just flipped a new quarter on the board. "Well, a man can't win every time," Rick said, and stood casual—looking up at the shelf like he was picking Mom out the rosebud meat platter.

And I noticed that where he stood among the men, there was a wide place. And his feet planted steady in the dust. My Brother, Richard.

Pioneer Days
1973-1975

In 1967, the Pocahontas County seat of Marlinton began hosting Pioneer Days on the second full weekend of July. We thought you might enjoy these photos of the event from the 1970s, all courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Commerce Department Collection. *We would like to thank the many folks on Facebook who helped us identify people in these photos. –ed.*

(Right-left) Margie White (crocheting), Mary Moore Jackson, Mona Sharp (on the quilting hoop), and possibly Ann Hamrick, 1973. Photo by Gerald S. Ratliff.

Unidentified child at the Civil War encampment, 1975. Photo by Rob Gay.

(Left-right) Woody Simmons, Wayne Erbsen, and Richard Hefner, 1975. Photo by Rob Gay.

Ira Mullins of Clay County entertains the crowd, 1973. Photo by Gerald S. Ratliff.

Square dancers from Dunmore, 1974, including (2nd to 4th from left): Teresa Nottingham Hammond, Bill Lovelace, and James Carpenter; Mark Beverage is at far right. Photo by Tom Evans.

(Right-left) Carl DePoy, Euva Taylor DePoy, and "Edna," who's unidentified, 1975. Photo by Rob Gay.

Ena Beverage of Clover Lick spins and cards wool, 1974. Photo by Tom Evans.

Seated (left-right) are Charles Albert Sidney Hickman, Mary Evans, Jane Evans, with Martha Evans in her lap; Kenneth Evans is in the back, 1974. The horses are Dolly and Bunny. Photo by Tom Evans.

Sled-pulling contest, 1974. Photo by Tom Evans.

Fiddler Sherman Hammons, 1975. Photo by Rob Gay.

Edgell Bailey (far right) and his band, 1975. Photo by Rob Gay.

(Left-right) Walter Hyson and Kenny Godwin, 1975. Photo by Rob Gay.

Two unidentified musicians jam with banjo player Jack Ramsey (in the back), 1974. Photo by Tom Evans.

Linda Buzzard Friel Coleman and her son Monte Friel, 1974. Photo by Tom Evans.

Sam Barlow of the Marlinton Presbyterian Church barbecues chicken, 1973. Photo by Gerald S. Ratliff.

Unidentified farriers, 1975. Photo by Rob Gay.

An unidentified woman (possibly named Blankenship) recanes a chair, 1973. Photo by Gerald S. Ratliff.

The Pocahontas County Bicentennial Celebration

In December, Pocahontas County kicked off its yearlong bicentennial at Huntersville (the original county seat) with a mock bill signing of the act that formed the county. Some of the upcoming bicentennial activities are listed here; however, please check **celebratepocahontas200.com** as new events will be added.

Dramas

The Ballad of Cass will be presented at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. on July 16 and 23 and at 2 p.m. on July 17 and 24, 2022. The play was written by Missy McCollam, adapted from an earlier play by former Cass resident and playwright Nicolette Maleckar, based on stories written by author W. E. Blackhurst. This outdoor promenade will be staged at different sites in Cass. Small groups of viewers can observe and participate in short vignettes that depict the town at the turn of the 20th century. The play focuses on the social upheaval brought about by the arrival of the railroad and timber industries as well as the resilience and spirit of the residents. This immersive experience concludes with a lemonade social at the Cass Community Center.

Time Capsules

The Van Reenan, Lantz, Kimble, and Wallace & Wallace funeral homes have donated and distributed time capsules throughout the county. Each is filled with items relevant to that location. So far, capsules have been placed in Huntersville, at the county courthouse in Marlinton, and at Dunmore in honor of Pocahontas County High School's 50th anniversary—with more sites to be announced. The goal is for the capsules to be opened in 50 years for the county's 250th anniversary.

Bicentennial Quilts

Two bicentennial quilts—containing reproduction fabrics and pieced together by local quilters—will be part of a traveling exhibit.

Eight Rivers Bicentennial Trout Community Art Project

Pocahontas is known for its one-of-a-kind fishing, so local artists have decorated eight large trout sculptures, representing the county as the birthplace of eight rivers. The trout icons will be in Cass, Durbin, Green Bank, Snowshoe, Huntersville, Hillsboro, and two in Marlinton, including one at the courthouse.

Pocahontas County History in Schools

A series of guest speakers will circuit through Pocahontas County High School during the yearlong celebration, presenting the county's history to students of all ages.

Pocahontas County Historical Museum

The Pocahontas County Historical Society Museum in Marlinton displays artifacts from prehistory to the present. Exhibits include tools, spinning wheels and looms, logging and railroad items, doll collections, music boxes, and much more. Visitors can also stroll the grounds and explore the Kee Cabin, a two-story hand-hewn structure built in the 1830s on Kee Flats, south of Marlinton. The museum, located at 17890 Seneca Trail, was opened on June 5, 1963, during our state's Centennial. Present at the dedication were Nobel Prize-winning author Pearl S. Buck and Governor Wally Barron. For information, visit **pocahontashistorical.org**.

Pearl S. Buck *History Alive* Performances

Missy McCollam of Beverly will give two performances as author Pearl S. Buck. Born in Hillsboro to missionary parents, Buck grew up in China but never forgot her West Virginia roots. She received the Pulitzer Prize for her 1931 novel *The Good Earth*. She was the first American woman ever awarded the honor and, in 1938, became the first woman to earn the Nobel Prize for Literature. She was also a humanitarian and social activist who was deeply concerned about the welfare of children worldwide. The performances, sponsored by the Levels Depot of Hillsboro and the West Virginia Humanities Council, will be given at the Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Museum in Hillsboro on June 25 and September 10 at 2 p.m. Venues throughout the state are welcome to book their own Pearl S. Buck performances by emailing Missy McCollam at missy@theoldbrick.org.

The 2021 Vandalia Gathering

(Left-right) Vandalia Award recipients Eric Armstrong, Emily Miller, and Seth Young—representing the Augusta Heritage Center; William I. "Bill" Hairston; Ron Stollings; and Patricia Cowdery. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

In 2020, the annual Vandalia Gathering—our state's celebration of traditional arts, music, dance, stories, crafts, and food—was canceled for the first time since it began in 1977, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, as the nation began to open back up again, a small-scale version was held at the Capitol Complex.

In place of the usual three-day gathering was an afternoon outdoor concert on the Saturday before Memorial Day. The performers included dance caller Lou Maiuri and the Appalachian Cloggers and music by Kanawha Tradition, featuring Bobby Taylor, Kim Johnson, and Cody Jordan; the T-Mart Rounders, with Jesse Milnes, Becky Hill, and Emily Miller; and the Mountain Stage house band.

It was officially the shortest and coldest (about 50 degrees) Vandalia on record, but a nice crowd showed up to enjoy the festivities. Pending another COVID surge, a full-fledged Vandalia is planned for May 27-29, 2022. Watch the Vandalia Facebook page and website for updates.

Since the event didn't occur in 2020, four Vandalia Awards—our state's highest folklife honor—were presented at the 2021 event. These groups and individuals embody the spirit of our state's folk heritage and have made lifetime contributions to West Virginia and our traditional culture.

Augusta Heritage Center

Since 1973, the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins (Randolph County) has facilitated cultural education through immersive and experiential workshops in music, craft, dance, foodways, and folklore. Augusta elevates traditional folkways, particularly those of the underserved communities of Appalachia and beyond. Dances, concerts, festivals, film screenings, cultural sessions, and other public events connect communities of learners and enthusiasts with master artists and culture-bearers year-round. Throughout its history, Augusta has nurtured a community of artists who share their talents and values in a cooperative, supportive environment.

W. I. "Bill" Hairston

W. I. "Bill" Hairston of Charleston (Kanawha County) is a storyteller, old-time musician, teacher, and pastor. Originally from Alabama, Bill and his family moved to St. Albans in 1960 when he was 11. Through his storytelling, Hairston combines the rich heritage of Appalachian and African-American culture. He's participated in every Vandalia Gathering since its inception and is coordinator of the event's Liar's Contest. He's a member of the West Virginia Storytelling Guild, the Kentucky Storytelling Association, the Ohio Storytelling Network, and the National Association of Black Storytellers. He also serves as the West Virginia liaison to the National Storytelling Network. For more about Bill, see Emily Hilliard's article about him in our Spring 2021 issue.

Ron Stollings

Dr. Ron Stollings of Madison (Boone County) grew up immersed in old-time music and culture. He's honored that tradition by coordinating opportunities that feature local musicians. He received the Governor's Arts Folk Arts award in 2010 for his dedication to preserving old-time music and for his continued support of the Vandalia Gathering and the Appalachian String Band Music Festival.

Patricia Cowdery

Patricia "Pat" Cowdery of Elkview (Kanawha County) spent 31 years coordinating festivals and programs that incorporate all art forms and our traditional cultural heritage, including the Vandalia Gathering and the Appalachian String Band Music Festival at Clifftop—in addition to other programs at Camp Washington-Carver (Fayette County). She used her education and experience to develop programs, craft shows, and educational workshops, often blending together the traditional music, crafts, food, and gardening of West Virginia and Appalachia.

Part of the 2021 Quilts and Wall Hangings exhibit at the Culture Center. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

Quilts and Wall Hangings 2021

Before the 2021 Vandalia concert, winners of the annual juried exhibition of quilts and wall hangings were announced. This event, like Vandalia, is sponsored by the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture & History. The awards marked the opening of the annual *Quilts and Wall Hangings* exhibit, which was on display through the summer in the Great Hall of the Culture Center on the Capitol Complex.

The exhibit featured 49 works representing the talents of West Virginians from 17 counties. "Quilt making is one of West Virginia's oldest and most treasured art forms," said Charles Morris, museums director. "This annual display is a favorite for many West Virginians and for quilters and quilt lovers from around the country. It is one of our most popular displays."

The winners were selected by Edith Dyke-Conley, a quilter, teacher, and judge from Toledo, Ohio.

The 2022 *Quilts and Wall Hangings* exhibit will be on display at the Culture Center, Memorial Day weekend until Labor Day.

Mixed / Other Quilt and Best of Show: *This Old Barn* by Linda Vaughan of Caldwell (Greenbrier County).

Applique Quilt: *Little Brown Bird* by Carol Miller of Bruceton Mills (Preston County).

Pieced: *Eldon* by Kimberly Roberts of Nettie (Nicholas County).

Wall Hanging: *Chenault* by Amy Pabst of LeRoy (Roane County).

Slim Lehart
"The Wheeling Cat"

By Ivan M. Tribe and Jake Bapst

In January 1970, the *Jamboree*, the venerable Saturday night live country music barn dance from 50,000-watt WWVA entered a new era. The program had been broadcast from various locales after the Virginia Theatre on 12th Street was demolished in 1962—the Virginia, which opened in 1908, was once our state's largest. Some locals thought the program had outlived its day since many similar programs—including the oldest, the *National Barn Dance* from WLS Chicago, the *Old Dominion Barn Dance* from WRVA Richmond, and the *Tennessee Barn Dance* from WNOX Knoxville—had become defunct. However, announcers John Corrigan and Lee Sutton and veteran performer Doc Williams held out for continuation. The management hired bluegrass legend Mac Wiseman as director in 1965, and he brought in some new artists and moved the show from the small Rex Theater to the Exhibition Center on Wheeling Island. He introduced a monthly guest-star system that caused overflow crowds. Wiseman's contract ended in 1970 after moving the program to the Capitol Theatre, Wheeling's downtown showpiece. The new management hired additional regular artists.

All photos courtesy of our authors unless noted otherwise.

After the move to the Capitol, the first new talent brought on board was a Mountain State native with plenty of experience as a part-time performer in both the local area and central Tennessee. Taking the name "Slim Lehart," he quickly became known as the dynamic "Wheeling Cat" and displayed a great deal of stage charisma. Richard Edmund Hartley hailed from nearby Marshall County, where he was born on June 25, 1935. Like many country singers, he'd grown up on a farm doing agricultural labor, but not necessarily liking it.

Learning to play and sing country songs in his spare moments proved to be a healthy pastime. Slim purchased the Doc Williams Guitar Course and started playing square dances with his family band. He remembers first singing at an area school, performing the popular novelty country song "Cigareetes, Whusky, and Wild, Wild Women" along with the old favorite "Little Brown Jug." When he completed eighth grade at the local two-room Mt. Hope school, he entered high school at Cameron but quit after a few months to go to work, cutting glass and doing some landscaping.

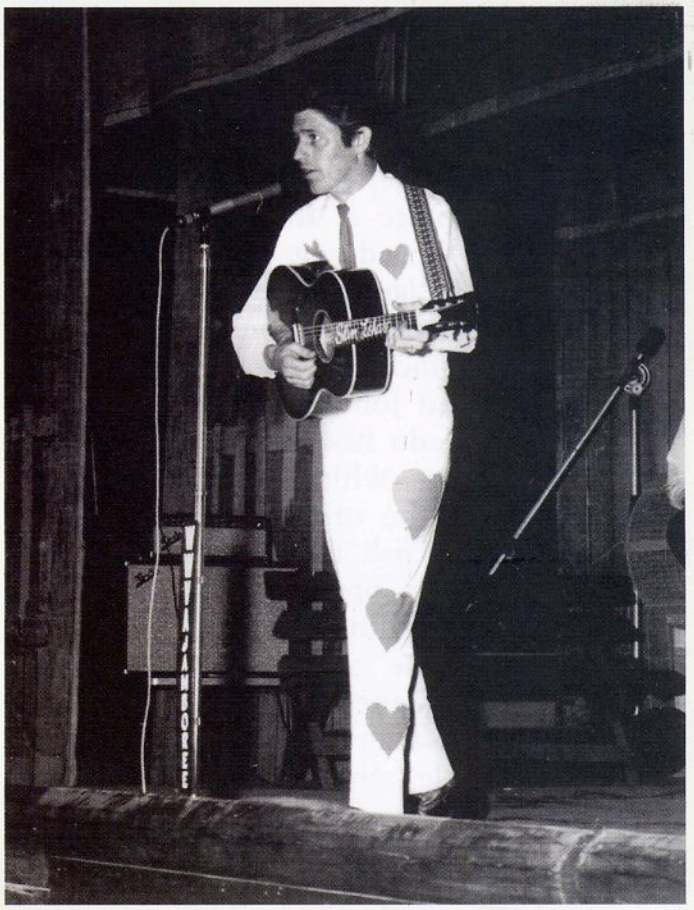
By early 1953, the Korean War was grabbing headlines, and Slim's older brother was in the Signal Corps. As friends were being conscripted, Slim enlisted in the Navy, hoping to become a diesel mechanic. His dad signed for him, and he went to Bainbridge, Maryland, in March for basic training. However, instead of becoming a diesel mechanic, he specialized as a boiler technician.

He was assigned to a refurbished World War II vessel, the USS *Randolph*. On a tour of the Mediterranean, he saw several noted ports and enjoyed watching bikini-clad women along the French Riviera. While at sea, he played his guitar and fiddle to entertain fellow crew members. When the *Randolph* returned to the United States, the young sailor encountered almost as much adventure as he would have had in combat. The ship sailed into Hurricane Edna, and Slim found himself in the middle of it. Asked if he was scared, he replied, "I had too much to do and didn't have time."

Slim remained in the Navy for two more years, even as his life was taking another turn. He'd struck up a close friendship with a girl from the home area named Shirley Barnhart. They were married on October 9, 1954, a union that lasted 22 years and resulted in four children. Meanwhile, he went back to naval duty, serving until June 1956. He remained in the Reserves until 1961.

Back in civilian life, Slim worked a variety of jobs in the mid-Ohio Valley with varying degrees of success. He also spent some years in middle Tennessee. He continued to play country music part time and became known on stage as "Slim Lehart," reversing the syllables in his surname, Hartley, a suggestion from his brother Westley. He led a band called Slim Lehart and the Country Boys and wrote the song "The Wheeling Cat."

Two incidents highlighted Slim's musical work during the mid-1960s. The first took place at the Rex, where Slim got his debut on the *Jamboree* in 1965 during a brief visit back home. Bob Finnegan, a friend who was also a WWVA DJ and *Jamboree* emcee, arranged for Slim to make a guest appearance on the program. Although Slim was hardly a bluegrass-style vocalist, Charlie Moore, Bill Napier, and the Dixie Partners served as his backup band. A photo captures the event, with Napier—who used to play with the Stanley Brothers—prominently featured on banjo and Moore playing acoustical guitar behind him, with an unidentified bass man (perhaps Henry Dockery). After Wiseman took over the *Jamboree* and moved it to Wheeling Island, Slim didn't play the program much for a few years as he and Mac didn't often see eye-to-eye on business matters. However, with the move back to the Capitol and Mac's impending departure in May 1970, Lehart, now a Mountain State resident again, was contracted as a *Jamboree* regular.



Slim Lehart performs on the WWVA *Jamboree*.

The second event occurred in Nashville in 1966, prior to Slim's return to West Virginia. The crown jewel of his Nashville experience took place at the Ernest Tubb Record Shop on Broadway, where he played on the *Midnight Jamboree* the same night as Johnny Cash. Cash had been ill and wanted to go on first since his energy was limited. Slim agreed, and Johnny actually borrowed Slim's guitar to do his numbers. Lehart followed him, after which both men signed autographs for the other. As Slim tells it, he had Johnny Cash for his "opening act!"

The early '70s proved to be the high point of the Wheeling Cat's career. He often served as the opener because of his dynamic performances. As Slim put it in a recent conversation, he tried to offer the audience a little more than just standing on stage and singing. He often came out on the walkway over the orchestra pit (the symphony wasn't performing there by this time) and tossed roses into the front rows. He concedes borrowing most of these tactics from a young Nashville artist of British Columbia origin named Ray Griff (1940 – 2016), who enjoyed several mid-level hits beginning in 1967; Griff wrote and recorded "It Rains Just the Same in Missouri," which became a favorite for Mac Wiseman in later years. Slim believes he holds the all-time record as the *Jamboree* opening act since "The Wheeling Cat" nearly always brought the house down.

Lest one get the idea that "The Wheeling Cat" was the only number in Slim's song bag, he had several well-known ones. His own favorite was called "Love Loses Power," and he was a bit disappointed his record company chose to push another number, "Sunshine in My Soul." Although "Sunshine" wasn't bad, we tend to agree with Slim. Another favorite, "Sidewalks of Chicago," was a Merle Haggard number from 1970. Slim changed a few words and made it his own. The song is about a derelict wino who roams the streets of the Windy City. His mother back home writes him daily, not realizing his address is at a mission home. In the original lyrics, Haggard sang, "Would you believe the kids in Harland High School voted me most likely to succeed?" Slim changed it slightly, singing, "Would you believe the kids in Cameron High School voted me *least* likely to succeed?" He also recorded many country standards of the '60s, '70s, and '80s—all appearing on small labels such as Jam[boree], B-W, and Deneba. Sales were relatively poor, a fate met by many *Jamboree* artists and a carryover from the early days when WWVA management frowned on their regulars recording at all.

Slim continued to work the *Jamboree* often through the '70s and '80s, although less frequently in later decades. As time went by, he played personal shows largely in Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio, and northern West Virginia. Sometimes, he worked with other *Jamboree* performers of his era and a few times with young staff musician (and fellow Marshall County native) Brad Paisley, who ultimately became a superstar. Slim did some shows as far south as Florida, northward as far as Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, and in southeastern Canada, where *Jamboree* artists were often recognized on a near par with *Grand Ole Opry* acts (WWVA's signal was stronger there than WSM's was). He also continued to do construction and other jobs, confining his musical work to weekends.

Slim's wife experienced numerous health problems in the early '70s, which took a toll; they grew apart, divorcing in 1976. Three years later, he married Barbara Ellen Vacheresse. Eventually, she began singing duets with him. The second Lehart marriage lasted for four decades until Barbara's death in 2019, which has left a large void in his life. He's seldom played out in public since her passing.

Slim has accumulated his share of honors. He lists his major highlights as get-

Slim sings one for the crowd at the dedication of his star in front of the Captiol Theatre, November 2014. Courtesy of *The Intelligencer*, Wheeling.

ting his star on the sidewalk in front of the Capitol Theatre along with such *Jamboree* legends as Hawkshaw Hawkins, Wilma Lee & Stoney Cooper, Doc & Chickie Williams, and Big Slim. Slim Lehart was the first name added after the original 50 in 1983; some were also placed inside the lobby. He lit the fire at the Capitol's mortgage-burning ceremony. Governor Earl Ray Tomblin named him a Distinguished Mountaineer on June 15, 2012. Three years later, Andrew McKenzie, then mayor of Wheeling, declared a Slim Lehart Day.

In 1994, Slim was elected to and served a six-year term as a Marshall County commissioner, although the experience left him a bit disillusioned with politics. Always community centered, he belongs to the American Legion, VFW, Painters Union, Eagles, Masonic Lodge, and Scottish Rite. In July 2020, he gave a program for the Marshall County Historical Society relating highlights of his life and singing a few songs. Slim was interviewed by local historian Roseanna Keller for a book about area veterans. As

Slim bows down and kisses the stage of the Capitol Theatre after his star was dedicated, November 2014. Courtesy of *The Intelligencer*, Wheeling.

he recalls, during the interview, she inquired about the guitar in the corner. He explained that he'd had it for 60 years and added some of his customary humor: "If this old guitar could talk, I'd have to burn it!"

Living in quiet retirement in Wheeling at age 86, Slim held a little get-together in the front yard of his home on June 10, 2021; WTRF-TV news covered it and termed him a "living legend." He sang a few songs with the support of some old *Jamboree* buddies, such as Roger Hoard. Other WWVA veterans dropped by for the party: Joann Davis, Buddy Griffin, Karen McKenzie, and Poochie Williams. Everyone there hopes he will host another reunion in 2022. Whether he does or not has yet to be determined, but looking back over the past 60 years, he takes a great degree of pleasure knowing he'll always be "The Wheeling Cat."

The authors would like to thank Roseanna Keller and our longtime friendships with Jamboree *veterans Buddy Griffin and the Williams Sisters for their contributions to this article.*

IVAN TRIBE is the professor emeritus of history at the University of Rio Grande and Rio Grande Community College in Ohio. He's the author of *Mountaineer Jamboree: Country Music in West Virginia* (1984), *West Virginia's Traditional Country Music* (2015), *University of Rio Grande and Rio Grande Community College* (2017), *Beryl Halley: The Life and Follies of a Ziegfeld Beauty 1898 - 1988* (2019), and *The Jamboree in Wheeling* (2020), written in collaboration with Jake Bapst. This is Ivan's 12th contribution to GOLDENSEAL. JAKE BAPST is a retired administrator / instructor from the University of Rio Grande / Rio Grande Community College, where he serves as volunteer archivist. This is his first contribution to the magazine.

Howard Teets
Carrying His Music in His Heart

Text and photo by Candy Thompson

Music is a way to express joy, sadness, and hope. It's a way to share stories of life experiences, and, for Howard Teets, it's always helped bring structure to his life.

He grew up in a small coal company house in Preston County. His father, Alva, worked long hard hours in the mines, while his mother, Erma, did household chores all day. She sang like a nightingale and could play the harp beautifully. She was his original music inspiration.

Back then, most musical instruments in coal towns were homemade. They used pots and pans, washboards, hand tools, and eating utensils.

On Sunday mornings, young Howard would head out to church with his family. They'd play and sing at various churches. He says he wasn't nervous: "It was a way of expressing our faith to others." His favorite songs still today are old-time hymns.

Howard can play the spoons, two-sided harmonica, guitar, jaw harp, and handsaw. And he can demonstrate several songbird sounds. He never learned to read music, saying that it "comes from your soul. You have to know where your soul stands to play good music."

He explains how different-sized spoons make different sounds. For instance, smaller ones make higher pitches. You also can change the sound by playing them back-to-back or front-to-back or by tapping them on different body parts, such as the legs, knees, or arms.

As he plays a few songs on various instruments, you can sense his strong heartfelt emotions in every beat. He sings the words with deep passion. He plays me the first song he ever learned: "The Letter Etched in Black," written by Hattie Nevada in 1897. As he explains, the only way to inform families that a loved one had passed back then was to mail them a letter. In this song, the "letter was etched in black."

Even though he's 95 years young, he can still wiggle his fingers and move them swiftly to perform with ease. He can even play the harmonica and either the guitar or spoons at the same time with great harmony.

He served in the Navy in World War II; over the years, he's lived in various places and played in churches in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Ohio, to name just a few. But his heart finally led him back to the small town of Rowlesburg.

Nowadays, you can find him push-mowing his yard, working in his small garden, and tinkering around in his buildings. He enjoys a walk downtown once in a while. He's the oldest man in the community. The mayor gave him a cane once, but Howard says he doesn't need it, declaring, "The mayor needs it worse than I do."

If you stop by and ask him, he'll play you a tune and tell you heartwarming stories of long ago about growing up in the hills of West Virginia.

CANDY THOMPSON is a sixth-generation resident of Preston County. She's a U.S. Army veteran, member of the Cheat River Chapter DAR, and member of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. She is happily married to her husband, Larry, and enjoys baking, working her flower beds, photography, and writing. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The community of Zalia on the Ohio River. The old train station is just right of center, and the ferry landing is on the far left. All photos courtesy of our author.

Zalia

Rediscovering a Lost Community in Hancock County

By Tom Zielinsky

Hancock County is rich with industrial history, especially brick making and sewer-pipe production. It was considered the "Brick Capital of the United States" from 1840 to 1910. Centered around the town of New Cumberland, two brickyard communities are still remembered but no longer exist: Rockyside to the north [see Spring 2019], Zalia to the south.

In 1830, clay was discovered near the mouth of Holberts Run, one mile south of New Cumberland. Just past there, the narrow County Road stretched along the base of a very steep hill. It'd later become part of Route 2, connecting New Cumberland and Weirton. This 1½-mile section between Holberts Run and slightly past Rainey Hill Road would become the community of Zalia.

The area around New Cumberland all the way to Chester in 1830 was part of Brooke County, Virginia. Hancock separated from Brooke in 1848—still part of Virginia until West Virginia statehood in 1863. Records from this period were sent to Richmond, and some apparently never made it to their destination for safe keeping or were lost over time. But what we have uncovered is now recorded and preserved.

James Porter and Thomas and William Freeman dug clay for more than two years before starting their own brickyard in 1832—the first of what would be seven facilities in the area. By 1844, all the land south of New Cumberland to the mouth of Kings Creek near present-day Weirton was occupied by six brickyards and a clay company. But more brickyards were needed to feed the demand of a growing region, so eight additional yards were built north of New Cumberland.

A few families already lived in the Holberts Run area, but as the brickyards sprung into existence, more homes were needed for workers. However, the first order of business was to form a church. The first Methodist Protestant Church of Zalia—known as the Union Chapel of Freeman's Landing—was established in 1835. Services were held in a brick schoolhouse until 1857, when a standalone church was built. Both structures were located on County Road, a couple hundred feet from Rainey Hill Road.

The area changed names a number of times before Zalia was chosen: first, as Freeman's Landing, for Thomas and William Freeman; several years later, as Anderson or Anderson's Landing; and then Penrith. Finally, Zalia was recognized as the official name in 1911; although, in 1935, the area temporarily became East Toronto before reverting back to Zalia.

The name was coined for the Pan-Handle Rail Road's train station. The railroad was built through this area in 1885, reaching New Cumberland in 1887 and Chester by 1900. Unfortunately, historical documents don't provide any clues as to who came up with the name Zalia or why it was selected. We can speculate based on several interesting facts. For one, the names Zalia and Penrith were used synonymously at times. Zalia is a girl's name of Hebrew origin, meaning "born of royalty." Zalia is a rare name, given to only 2,600 people worldwide, mostly from France. Penrith, on the other hand, is a boy's name of Anglo-Saxon origin and was once the capital of the ancient kingdom of Cumbria, England. It was likely derived from the Celtic words "Pen Rith," meaning "red town." So, was it possibly called Penrith because of the red glow from the brick kilns? The inspiration for the Zalia name, though, remains a complete mystery.

Zalia, the train station, was located ½-mile south of Rainey Hill Road in the Anderson Brothers brickyard, which later became the McElfresh Clay Company. After McElfresh closed and the plant was dismantled, the train station was relocated about a mile to the north—at the northern point of where the Sligo Brickworks was once located and very near the ferry landing, which connected Zalia with Toronto, Ohio. The Toronto ferry landing is still operational today and can be seen from Zalia. The Ohio River had several ferry crossings before bridges connected the states. They were important for shipping and receiving goods and for carrying passengers back and forth. In addition, folks in the Zalia region traveled over to Toronto to shop or see a doctor.

In 1896, the West Virginia Geological Survey chose Zalia as a location for an elevation marker (used by surveyors and engineers). The original bronze marker was destroyed or stolen. A new one—placed in 1920 in a different spot in a concrete pillar, approximately ¾ miles north—is still there today, directly across the river from Toronto on old County Road.

Zalia was transformed several times. In the beginning, when the brickyards were originally established, almost all the buildings were erected very close to the Ohio River. A few houses were built just south of Holberts Run and several close to Rainey Hill Road. Since the hill was so steep, homes couldn't be built on the hillside portion of the road, except for one spot just wide enough for a gas station, which

The Davis house in Zalia had a general store attached (on the left). The chimney in the background on the left was part of the Sligo Brickyard.

opened in the 1940s. Past Rainey Hill, the land opened up, offering relatively flat places to build on either side.

After each change, Zalia's landscape changed dramatically. Buildings and homes along the railroad tracks by the river were removed without a trace. The brickyards built between the 1830s and 1850s were redone with newer beehive-style kilns in the 1870s and 1880s. As the yards were sold and repurchased, some were converted to make sewer pipe. McElfresh Clay abandoned brick and sewer pipe and began making earthenware pottery for a short time before switching back to clay production for outbound shipments.

Around 1920, new businesses and family homes started going up, beginning Zalia's transformation into primarily a residential community. By the mid-20th century, Zalia had a church and school, three general stores, a one-pump gas station, and a popular bar / dancehall (still open in the mid-1960s)—the ferry was always hopping with people from Toronto on fun-filled Saturday nights. This once-little mining community was home to nearly 300 people.

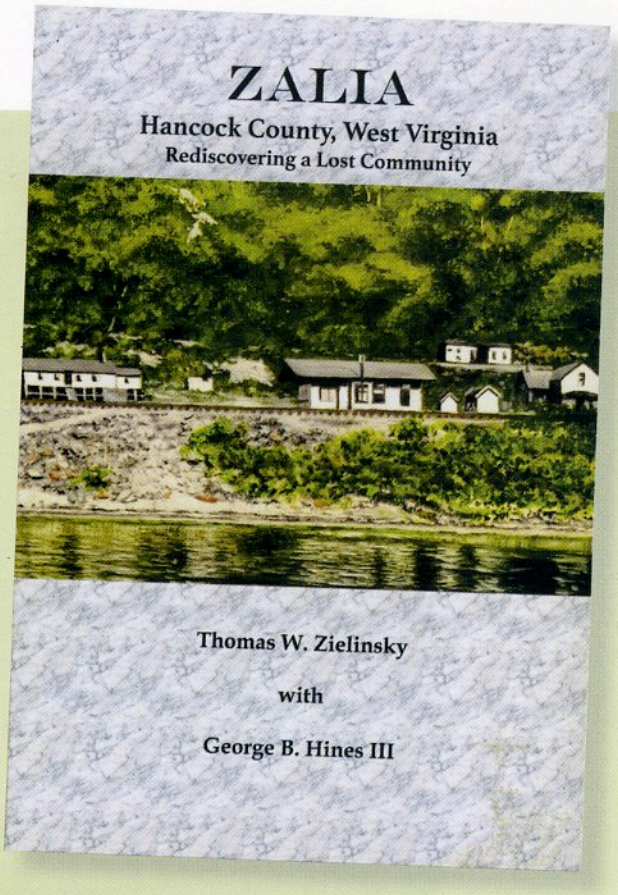
The landscape was transformed one final time in 1950, when the state Department of Highways began building the new Route 2. It ran parallel to old County Road and bypassed Zalia. Despite the loss of traffic, the community thrived until the 1960s, when just about everyone left, moving to either Weirton or New Cumberland. In a relatively short time, Zalia's buildings crumbled under their own weight and disappeared. The only one left was the gas station with an attached apartment, tucked snugly against the hillside. It was renovated and turned

(Left-right) Eli "Wash" Beatty, William Beatty, and Shirl Beatty in front of the gas station at Zalia.

into a restaurant and bar, Club 207, known for its cold beer, great cheeseburgers, and live dance bands every Saturday night. At best, it survived five years before closing. When it was eventually taken apart, the last remnant of Zalia disappeared.

There was a stark contrast between Zalia and Rockyside. Both mining communities were started about 40 years apart. Rockyside sat atop a high hill overlooking the massive brickyards that lined the Ohio River below. Nearly 300 people lived in either brick-duplex or wooden homes with no conveniences such as running water or indoor plumbing; electricity came in 1920. The closest general store was nearly two miles away in New Cumberland. It had no ferry service, and the closest train station was in the center of New Cumberland, 2¼ miles away. Its one-room school closed in 1920, forcing the children to walk to school in New Cumberland. It also had a Catholic church.

Like Rockyside, Zalia was home to nearly 300 people, who lived in mostly wooden homes with brick foundations. It had three general stores (Wash Beatty's, Davis', and Duvall's), a gas station, and Sam Hamill's bar / dancehall. Zalia had electricity and phone service but no running water or indoor plumbing. The community also had a one-room school, which closed in 1925, after which children were bussed to Weirton. Residents were within walking distance of both a ferry and train services, which gave them access to shopping in larger towns. They even had a baseball team. Plus, Zalia's Methodist Protestant Church lasted more than 100 years. With these amenities, Zalia survived in one form or another into the late 1960s, some 15 years after Rockyside was left abandoned.



Zalia—Hancock County, West Virginia: Rediscovering a Lost Community by Thomas Zielinsky and George B. Hines III is the second of a two-book set about Rockyside and Zalia. Jim Watson based the painting for the book cover on the only known photo of the Zalia train station (the original is on display at the Swaney Memorial Library in New Cumberland). The book looks back at over 140 years of brick making, tells stories of this lost town, captures what life was like in an era of struggle and hardship, and introduces readers to some of the families who worked and contributed to the success of this little town. It contains over 80 photos and illustrations and can be purchased from TZielinsky Publishing LLC, 340 Country Club Blvd., Weirton, WV 26062. The book on Rockyside is also available from this same address.

TOM ZIELINSKY was born in Steubenville, Ohio, and raised in New Cumberland. After 33 years of service, he retired in 2003 as Senior Director of Information Strategy for Weirton Steel and retired again in 2013 as technology director for the Hancock County Commission. He has degrees in electronic engineering and computer science and earned an MBA from Franciscan University of Steubenville. In addition to his book on Zalia, he's the author of two others: *The Final Days of Weirton Steel (2010)* and *Rockyside, A Forgotten Mining Community* (2017). He resides in Weirton with his wife, Patty. They have four children, 10 grandchildren, and one great-grandson. This is his second contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

West Virginia Army National Guard Trooper Smith (left) and an unidentified sergeant consult their map in the field. All images courtesy of Special Forces Association Chapter 68. The author would like to thank Maj. Robert V. Luther, III, of that chapter for supplying photos and also Bob Bragg, Randall Schmidle, Tom Workman, and Brady Woodard for identifying various personnel.

"Shades of Fidel Castro! Guerrilla Warfare is Coming to Raleigh County!"

By Merle T. Cole

With these words, Beckley's *Raleigh Register* of January 12, 1959, ballyhooed the news that Special Forces units would soon be home stationed in Beckley.

Nationally, Special Forces first came into existence on June 11, 1952, when the U.S. Army activated 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)—or SFG(A)—at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with forward-operating teams based at Bad Tolz in West Germany. The mission, patterned after World War II's Office of Strategic Services (OSS), was to train Eastern European refugees in the none-too-gentle art of guerrilla warfare. If Warsaw Pact forces ever invaded the West and turned the Cold War hot, these men would have been parachuted behind Soviet lines to organize hard-hitting guerrilla bands. In theory, they would have disrupt-

ed and delayed the invaders, tying down vital combat power in (hopefully unproductive) anti-guerrilla campaigns. Military intelligence estimated that a potential pool of 370,000 men in the Soviet Union and its satellites were dissatisfied with their communist rulers.

Special Forces grew slowly during its first decade; only two more SFG(A)s were on board before John F. Kennedy became president in 1961. JFK was a "special warfare" advocate, and by the time of his assassination in 1963, the Army had raised four more SFG(A)s. Kennedy also approved the *Green Beret* as a hard-won badge of distinction and reversed an earlier ban by the Army high command on the "foreign looking" headgear.

In fiscal year 1960, the Army expanded Special Forces into Reserve Components: Army National Guard and Army Reserve. The idea was "to tap into the civilian talents of airborne-trained veterans." The National Guard Bureau authorized 80 operational detachments, with roughly 1,000 officers and men in West Virginia, Alabama, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Utah—selected because each state "had plenty of rugged country to teach the special teams the basics of guerrilla warfare." At the same time, 30 operational detachments were authorized for the Army Reserve.

On January 11, 1959, state adjutant general Brig. Gen. William E. Blake announced a major reorganization of the West Virginia Army National Guard at a meeting of business leaders, politicians, and Guard officers at the Beckley Elks Club. A new 87-man Special Forces Operational Detachment (SFOD) was activated in Beckley, commanded by insurance executive Maj. William F. Watts, who Blake praised as well qualified, "having had a long and distinguished career as a paratrooper" and "special training in demolitions and guerrilla warfare."

Watts had enlisted in the Army in 1942, completed officer candidate school, and seen combat in New Guinea, Bougainville, Leyte, and Luzon during World War II. He'd worked with guerrilla forces for six months in the Philippines and ended the war advising a Chinese infantry division. Watts had joined our state's Army National Guard in 1949 as commander of an infantry company at Beckley. He was transferred to state headquarters in Charleston in 1953 and promoted to major the following year. As the state's senior Special Forces officer, he commanded a new 62-man SFOD in Huntington. Aside from the added challenges and prestige, Watts could look forward to a bonus: his

Special Forces Terms

The early organizational terms can be confusing. They were inherited from the OSS rather than the traditional Army. Operational detachments supported and controlled guerrilla bands in a theater of operations. Although their official titles were *detachments*, most soldiers called them *teams*.

The smallest (an FA) was made up of a captain (CO), lieutenant (executive officer), and 13 enlisted men highly skilled in intelligence, operations planning, medical care, weaponry, demolitions, and radio operation. An FA could build and direct a guerrilla regiment of up to 1,500 men. FA detachments were the most numerous and soon entered popular culture as "A Teams."

FBs, FCs, and FDs were staff units that planned and supported FA teams operating in the field with guerrilla bands. The FD detachment—at group headquarters—controlled activities in two or more countries; FC teams controlled two or more FB teams in a single country; and an FB controlled two or more FA teams within designated areas of a "denied" country. The administrative team (AA) ran Special Forces Operational Bases (SFOB) in friendly territory to support deployed FA teams. AA teams performed mess, supply, records, armorer, and related "enabler" functions. –Merle T. Cole

State Adjutant General Gene Hal Williams congratulates Staff Sgt. John G. Shaver, West Virginia Army National Guard Soldier of the Year, May 22, 1962.

On October 15, 2021, a bronze plaque commemorating the birthplace of the West Virginia Army National Guard Special Forces was dedicated at the Beckley-Raleigh County Convention Center. It was donated by the Raleigh County Historical Society and Special Forces Association Chapter 68 in Kenova.

new position was ranked for a lieutenant colonel.

The state Army National Guard's two Green Beret units were officially born on March 1, 1959. An armored cavalry squadron headquarters in Beckley was redesignated the 101st SFOD FC, with six FA teams assigned. Simultaneously, the 102nd SFOD FB, with four FA teams—the smallest unit—was formed in Huntington by consolidating a field artillery battery and medical detachment. Seven months later, on October 12, 1959, the National Guard Bureau added two new units based in Charleston: the 170th SFOD FD and 166th Special Forces Administrative Detachment-AA. Maj. Watts became commander of the 170th, shifting the weight of the state's program from Beckley to Charleston.

To get the new units up and running, Watts first selected qualified—or at least capable—guardsmen. Not every soldier made the cut. Watts described the type of man he sought: "I would want him on my side in a street fight and also as a week-end guest in my home to attend church on Sunday morning." Special Forces, he elaborated, "calls for the smartest, toughest, most versatile soldiers on earth."

The *Raleigh Register* extoled the Special Forces soldier as "a strong physical specimen and a qualified paratrooper. Besides supreme courage and self-confidence, he must have vast tactical know-how and consummate skill with just about every weapon and demolition method known. Above all, he must be an accomplished and tactful instructor." The National Guard Bureau's 1961 annual report defined these requirements and the avenues for fulfilling them: "The combat mission of Special Forces is a unique one: to infiltrate by land, sea, and air into hostile areas and to organize, equip, train, and direct indigenous forces in the conduct of guerrilla warfare."

Many guardsmen attended the Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg. They then went on to specialty training in demolitions, weapons, communications, or medicine and were cross-trained outside their

West Virginia Green Berets prepare for a practice parachute jump. (2nd to 5th from left): Capt. Donald Roberts, 1st Sgt. Louie Torlone, M. Sgt. Gene Lemaster, and 1st Lt. Brady Woodard. The others are unidentified.

specialty. They also trained in the swampy areas of Georgia and Florida; in mountainous cold-weather terrain; at the parachute school at Fort Benning, Georgia; and in hand-to-hand combat, silent killing, Morse Code, skiing, underwater demolitions, and evasion and escape. They had to learn the local customs, geography, history, and often languages of areas where they might be deployed.

Getting guardsmen parachute-qualified was largely just a matter of sending them to Fort Benning. But meeting the other qualifications was daunting. In 1959, fewer than 10% of the original Army National Guard soldiers were Special Forces qualified. So, their first annual field training at Forts Bragg and Benning concentrated on the most necessary skills and foreign-language proficiency. Units from West Virginia, Utah, North Carolina, and Alabama were trained by 7th SFG(A) soldiers at Fort Bragg in July 1959. Locally, operational detachments were qualified through committee training and six additional weekend assemblies per year. The approach paid off. By 1962, West Virginia Green Berets were being cited as "highly respected" by their counterparts in the 7th SFG(A).

In April 1959, Watts requested use of the vacant Camp Prince Army Engineer test station on the New River as a headquarters and training site for the 101st SFOD; the Army had established Camp Prince (Fayette County) in 1950 to train soldiers in setting up bridges across swift-moving rivers. Training up to that point had been in Beckley's cramped Park Avenue armory and consist-

Guerrilla Warfare Went to Our Heads!

By Merle T. Cole

In 1966, my friend Terry Handley of Skelton (Raleigh County) and I—ROTC cadets at Marshall University—got caught up in the guerrilla warfare craze. One fall weekend while home from school, we conducted a mock raid on the C&O bridge over the New River at Prince. Leaving Saturday morning, we covered some nine miles through the precipitous Piney Creek gorge, arriving on site after dark. We sprang into action, attaching "plastic explosives" (Styrofoam blocks, actually) to the bridge trusses and using real *fuze* lighters from an ROTC field exercise to "ignite" the charges. Mission accomplished!

After pulling back and downing a hasty meal, our team started the long, weary return in nearly pitch blackness. I don't remember much about the trek other than thinking it'd *never* end. And the climb up the steep gorge walls at the end seemed almost vertical. One good thing—there wasn't any place to stop and call it quits. We had to keep going to get out of that damn gorge! Eventually, we did and spent most of Sunday sleeping soundly. We learned later we were in good company: the Beckley Special Forces detachment often used the Prince vicinity for weekend maneuvers, too.

ed mainly of lectures on guerrilla warfare. Camp Prince offered naturally rugged terrain ideal for the training. Unfortunately, the Army Department denied Watts' request.

In mid-August 1959, Watts introduced monthly weekend exercises. The 101st SFOD staged an operation from Grandview State Park—about 10 miles northeast of Beckley—against Camp Prince. The soldiers simulated blowing up the highway and railroad bridges across the New River and conducted reconnaissance of the former engineer test station and the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Railway's Quinnimont center. A different form of training occurred at the armory in November 1959, when an Oak Hill civilian artist taught the guardsmen how to sketch, including perspective drawing, which helped them depict mission terrain and targets.

A major improvement came in October 1961, when the 101st SFOD relocated from Park Avenue to the newly constructed, spacious armory-civic center just off the U.S. 19/21 bypass in Beckley. Then, in 1963, Camp Dawson (Preston County) was designated as one of three Army National Guard Special Forces training centers. Army Reserve 2nd SFG(A) detachments from neighboring Ohio frequently trained there alongside Army National Guard Green Berets.

But the state Army National Guard soon fell victim to the recurring curse of the Reserve Component Special Forces program—"organizational turbulence" in the form of frequent realignments, expansions, and consolidations. On May 1, 1961, the state's previously separate operational detachments were realigned into the 16th SFG(A), with Watts as the first commander. (He won his silver oak leaves on March 4, 1960.) The 170th SFOD in Charleston became home to the Headquarters Company, the 101st SFOD at Beckley became Company A, and Huntington's 102nd SFOD became Company B. The group's third company was assigned to the North Carolina Army National Guard. For the first time, a command structure involving Special Forces units from multiple states came into being.

Maj. Odi Casali, an armored cavalry squadron operations officer, was appointed to command Company A; Watts was officially promoted to lieutenant-colonel on May 20, 1961. In civilian life, Casali was a department manager for Biggs-Johnston-Withrow commercial printers and had also managed Beckley Newspapers' printing department. He'd previously served as an infantry officer, attaining the rank of full colonel in World War II.

Company B, SFG(A) marches in a parade in downtown Huntington, September 1963, led by Staff Sgt. John G. Shaver (carrying the guidon on the left) and Maj. Charles A. Muth. In the first row, Maj. Guy Fleck is at the far right. In the second row, Capt. Gary Bunn is third from the right.

The changes kept coming. On March 1, 1962, Company A was transferred from Beckley to Charleston, further concentrating the 16th SFG(A) elements in the capital. Just a year later, Beckley lost all its Special Forces troops, the result of a major nationwide Army National Guard Special Forces expansion. By the end of 1963, there were more than 2,500 Green Berets distributed among three group headquarters and 13 companies as cross-state command structures became increasingly common. The 16th SFG(A)'s Company B was transferred from Huntington to the Maryland Army National Guard on May 1, 1963; Company A went from Beckley to Huntington; and Beckley's ODBs and ODAs were inactivated. Thus, the Green Berets disappeared from Beckley for more than 13 years.

Soon, our state's Special Forces found themselves subordinate to another state's command. In 1972, the old ODC, ODB, and ODA designations were eliminated and replaced by more conventional sounding units: battalions, support battalions, new companies, and operational detachments. This caused yet another nationwide reshuffling, yielding a net increase of 25 units. In West Virginia, Company F, 19th SFG(A), at Charleston became Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment of the 2nd Battalion, 19th SFG(A). The Huntington element became Company B, 2nd Battalion. Two new Army National Guard units were authorized under 2nd Battalion—Company A at Charleston and Company C at Camp Dawson.

On January 1, 1976, Company A was transferred to Beckley from Charleston, at-

The Bereaved Green Beret

By Merle T. Cole

Lt. Col. Watts retired from the West Virginia Army National Guard in July 1962. Tragically, he died by suicide from a self-inflicted gunshot wound on February 6, 1976. The Charleston *Gazette* reported that "Watts' body was found in a basement garage in his home. The same garage played a role in the deaths of [his four children] 21 years ago." In November 1955, he'd been idling in his car in the garage listening to a football game. "He did so to avoid disturbing other members of his family," the *Gazette* noted. "Fumes from the auto drifted into the house, asphyxiating [the children] and seriously injuring Mr. Watts." The colonel's former house still stands in Beckley.

Lt. Col. William F. Watts (left) chats with Adjutant General Williams at Camp Dawson in Preston County.

tracting considerable local press coverage. The 80-man unit was commanded by Capt. Allen E. Tackett of Miami on Cabin Creek (Kanawha County). He was general superintendent of the Cedar Coal Company and a Golden Gloves boxing champion for six years. He'd enlisted in the Army National Guard Special Forces as a private and rose through the ranks to become group commander. He went on to become the state's longest-serving adjutant general (1995 – 2011).

Capt. Tackett's Green Berets trained in Florida with Army Rangers, supported training by the Puerto Rico National Guard, conducted survival training at Camp Dawson, and used an area near Little Beaver State Park as a parachute drop zone. The Raleigh County Memorial Airport supported Special Forces training as a landing field for West Virginia Air National Guard C-130s.

In summer 1976, the Company A men "marched from the armory to Grandview State Park, where they rappelled from Turkey Spur and went swimming in New River." Ironically, this spot was only a short distance upstream from the old Camp Prince site Maj. Watts had desperately sought back in 1959.

But the happy reunion with Beckley proved short-lived. Just over three years later, Reserve Component strength suffered another wrenching contraction. In 1979, the musical chairs transferred Company A to the Rhode Island Army National Guard. No Special Forces unit has been stationed in Beckley since.

MERLE T. COLE was born and reared in Raleigh County, graduated from Marshall University, and worked for various federal agencies before retiring to his native county. His most notable service was as director of the USDA Agricultural Research Service Research Position Evaluation Staff and as a commissioned officer in the Maryland National State Guard. Merle is widely recognized for preserving the history of West Virginia law enforcement and military organizations, resulting in his selection as a Fellow of the Company of Military Historians and recipient of the distinguished National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Historic Preservation Medal. He's made numerous contributions to GOLDENSEAL, most recently in our Summer 2021 issue.

Zeona Haley and Me

By Sherry Hill

In 1966, I transferred to West Virginia State College (now University) at Institute (Kanawha County) to finish my education degree. Newly married, I lived nearby and commuted. Many fine professors encouraged me to delve into every facet of learning, and Mrs. Zeona Haley was one of the best.

At that time, most of the historically Black college's administrators and faculty—including Mrs. Haley—were African-American, while many of us commuters were white. Did I feel misplaced? No, not in any way for I'd been raised to despise prejudice and to understand that people are people. At State, I met students of different races, many of whom I'm still friends with to this day. The faculty made me "reach for the stars," which drove me to work hard and succeed. I thought to myself, "Who'd want to attend a college that set low expectations?"

I always looked forward to my classes and especially Mrs. Haley's for she was a gentle soul who inspired me. She started teaching there about 1950; her low-key tough exterior intimidated some students. The message I got from her, though, was that sometimes, you have to use firm kindness as a classroom teacher. Over and over, I saw that in her techniques. This lovely, well-educated, classy woman commanded attention. The workload was hard, but it was done with ease. She made learning not only fun but interesting, which I tried to carry over into my own teaching.

The biggest reward in her class was a high-tea party held one evening a month. She'd bring a gorgeous tea set with hot tea, cookies, and scones set on paper doilies. I sat there enthralled while devouring the treats. Never before had any of my professors invited me to high tea—nor would they in the future. That's just part of what made her unique.

She never spoke of her family. I assumed she was a widow, yet she wore no wedding band. I later discovered she was divorced; her former husband, Simon, would die in the Martinsburg VA Hospital in 1973. I was curious about her earlier life but never asked about it nor would I affront her with such a question. Sometimes, the things we wonder about are answered completely out of the blue. In this case, I'd find out a lot about her, but it'd take something that would jolt the nation.

My time in her class passed too quickly; soon, I graduated and became an elementary teacher, using what I'd learned from her: firm kindness and other techniques. I never went back to see Mrs. Haley, even though she lived in Institute for years after retiring in the mid-1970s. But I did call off and on, inquiring how she was doing and telling her what a help her class had been to me. Our conversations were brief but uplifting.

One call in 1976 was the most memorable. I'd just read the bestseller *Roots: A Saga of an American Family* by Alex Haley. Like everyone who read it, I was shocked to the very core at the horrific account of slavery, of African families ripped apart and taken across the ocean to be sold and bought by whites, only to suffer more atrocities. What I'd learned about slavery before had been glossed over. I suddenly felt like my history textbooks had been nothing but one huge lie.

The book haunted me, and there on the cover was this familiar surname. After seeing Alex Haley interviewed on TV, I recognized something familiar in his speech and mannerisms. I just had to call Mrs. Haley

and ask. Graciously and in her low-key way, she told me Alex had been her stepson since he was 12 years old. She married Alex's then-widowed father, Simon, a fellow college professor at Alabama A&M, in 1932. Together, they had a daughter, Lois, who was raised with her stepbrothers Alex, George, and Julius.

I could tell she sensed my intuition. I told her how proud she must be. Our conversation varied from that to the book, which, in addition to portraying the evils of slavery was about finding your *own* roots.

Our call didn't last long. I could tell Mrs. Haley didn't want to expound much on her stepson or his book, and I didn't share what she'd told me. Nearly a year passed, and, in the last week of January 1977, a record viewing world watched the ABC miniseries *Roots*. It turned the world upside down with shock and anger but also started a boom to tell history through genealogy, which began flourishing like never before and has never slowed up. Like many who watched *Roots*, I was bound and determined to find my own. It started with a call to my mom, who'd phoned me nightly after each episode. She already had some of our family history, but like me, she quickly became obsessed with finding more and more. More would come alright, but it would take a lot of time and questions, producing some mind-blowing results.

The day after the final episode, I again called Mrs. Haley. Although she was still her usual friendly, unassuming self, she seemed more guarded. I sensed that she'd been bombarded with calls. Not wanting to jeopardize our friendship, I told her how much the miniseries had influenced me, wished her well, and hoped we'd talk again soon. Mostly, I told her how proud I was of her for raising Alex and noted he had many of her attributes.

Alex Haley won the Pulitzer Prize for his book but later came under fire for plagiarizing parts, which he admitted to. His stepmother's quest for honesty hadn't been for naught since he did own up to it. Regardless, he'd spun a tale of his family's roots that forever changed how slavery is perceived and how important it is to know about one's ancestors. His book and the miniseries forever changed my life as I'm still uncovering relatives, family myths, and secrets that may stay just that.

West Virginia State College (now University) Professor Zeona Haley, 1969. Courtesy of *The Arch*.

I never got to meet Alex Haley, but I came pretty close by being a student of his wonderful, endearing stepmother for one unforgettable semester. Regrettably, that phone conversation in 1977 was my last with her. After she retired, I lost track of her. I hope she had some happy times with her daughter and stepsons, continued the high teas with touches of elegance, and knew that her "firm kindness" had carried a long way with me and other teachers.

If Alex Haley were alive today, I'm sure he'd be in shock to see daily commercials for DNA testing, which didn't exist in 1976. Come to think of it, neither did the Web and all of its genealogy sources. One of those sites, Find a Grave, clued me in to one final piece of Zeona Haley's story: she passed away in Glen Burnie, Maryland, in 1998 at age 94.

Zeona and Alex Haley, you both changed me in different ways, which is a good thing. For that, I'm forever grateful.

SHERRY HILL is an author, artist, and retired teacher. She's written numerous newspaper articles, mostly historical or autobiographical, and 18 Kindle books. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

30 Years with the West Virginia Board of Medicine

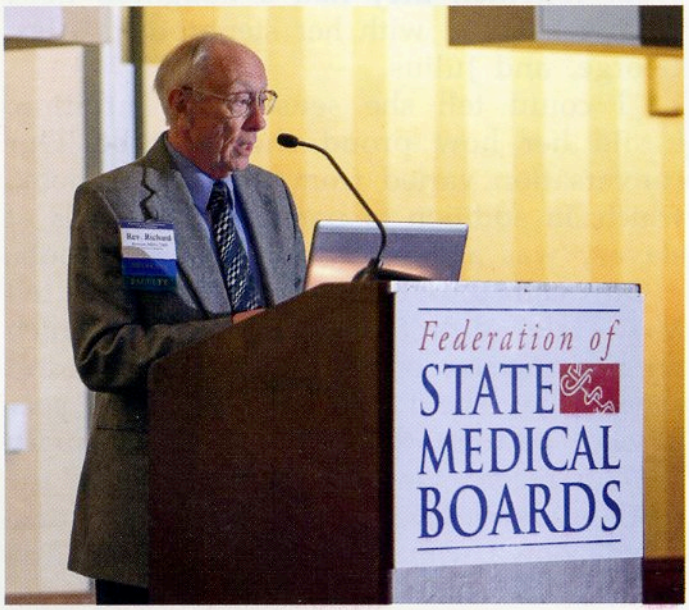
By O. Richard Bowyer

A brief telephone call in 1981 from Governor Jay Rockefeller led me on an intriguing journey that lasted more than 30 years. He asked me to fill a vacancy on the state Board of Medicine for a public, or citizen, member. I served the remaining year on that term and eventually from July 1981 to February 1994, July 1998 to October 2007, and December 2008 to February 2019. Seven different governors appointed me. I served on various committees and as board president from 2010 through 2014—the only non-physician ever to do so.

The legislature established the Board of Health in 1881; because my long tenure began in 1981, some believe I was on it from the beginning. In 2009, the board became an independent agency, although it was still governed by state code.

West Virginia played a key national role in establishing the rights of state boards to regulate physicians. In 1889, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously in *Dent* v. *West Virginia* that our state Board of Health could regulate and discipline allopathic physicians (MDs) and osteopathic physicians (DOs). In this case, the board had disciplined Dr. Frank Dent, a doctor in Newburg (Preston County), for not meeting state licensure training requirements. After continuing his practice, Dent was arrested in 1883 and took his case to the West Virginia Supreme Court on the grounds that a state couldn't interfere with the right to practice a lawful trade. The U.S. Supreme Court decision against him six years later upheld West Virginia's right to enforce a truly restrictive licensing law for physicians. It was the first state to do so.

When I joined the board, it comprised nine physicians, the director of Health,



The Rev. Richard Bowyer addresses the Federation of State Medical Boards, which awarded him a lifetime achievement award in 2014.

two podiatrists, and two public members. Later, a third public member was added; across the years, additional changes have been made. The position of physician assistant (PA) wasn't validated by the legislature until 1983. Originally, these individuals had served in the military, but Duke University and Alderson-Broaddus College (Barbour County) developed the first degree programs for PAs in 1967 and 1968, respectively. At first, many physicians didn't welcome PAs, but as training became more refined and widely accepted, the legislature created a PA position on the board—a second was added in 2017.

Serving on the board was one of the most interesting, and likely important, experiences of my life. At my first meeting in 1981, I made a motion to strongly discipline a doctor but lost in court. However, due to legal proceedings and other factors,

he eventually lost his license in an action totally unrelated to the initial charges.

During my first several years, the board met six times annually at the state Medical Director's office on the Capitol Complex. Until 2013, one requirement for licensure was to appear before a board member for a brief interview and subsequent recommendation. Initially, that merely involved showing one's medical degree and evidence of passing specific tests, including an English-proficiency exam for those trained outside the United States. Physicians were brought in, documents were checked, and a vote was taken on licensure. Usually, the member sitting nearest the door ended up seeing most of the credentials. Once acknowledged, the new licensee was expected to leave rather promptly. Occasionally, someone would linger and make extended comments, prompting the chairman to say, "You've got your license, doctor. You had better leave now before we reconsider."

In the mid-1980s, the board moved to Chesterfield Avenue in Charleston, sharing office space with the West Virginia Medical Institute, just across the right-field wall of the former Watt Powell Park. As board members arrived for one meeting, we were shocked to find the parking lot patrolled by three state troopers. After identifying ourselves, we entered to find another trooper. Someone had made an anonymous threat against us, so the troopers were called just in case. Fortunately, nothing came of the matter.

Many years later, there was an extended encounter with a particularly aggressive doctor who we'd disciplined more than once. Rather than acquiring legal counsel—as most do—he represented himself and actually burned up a fax machine sending scores of documents to the board. Anticipating his arrival, arrangements were made to have a Kanawha County sheriff's deputy posted outside the room. When the doctor finally appeared, he was given the rules, which limit presentations to five minutes and restrict handouts and debate with members. He became loud and aggressive and refused to stop. The deputy had to escort the doctor out.

On rare occasions, it's necessary for the board to protect the public and perhaps the physician by issuing what's called a Summary Suspension. Because this action is so drastic and urgent, time is carefully allocated, and a quorum must be present. Once, when a quorum was in doubt, the governor sent the state airplane to fly two of us from Morgantown to Charleston and back.

At one time, the board had to approve whether certain "off-shore schools" were acceptable training grounds for licensure; fortunately, that requirement disappeared. Mostly in humor, some of us would ask to inspect those schools located in the Caribbean. That never happened.

Another time, a category of Temporary Permit Doctors was created due to a shortage of qualified physicians. These doctors were trained in another country and had failed to pass at least one phase of the required clinical exam; some had failed a dozen or more times but, due to our desperate need for doctors, were allowed to practice under the supervision of a licensed doctor. To assure adequate quality, the Temporary Permit was eventually abolished, although some were "grandfathered" in.

That transition caused one of the board's most interesting incidents. A group of physicians with permits collaborated with a prominent legislator. He introduced a bill allowing those who'd fallen only a few points short on the exam and who'd served in West Virginia for a stated number of years to be granted a license. Of course, they were being permitted to practice here only because they couldn't meet the requirements in any other state. Shortly after the legislation was implemented, it was discovered that these Temporary Permit doctors had bribed the delegate to take their case

Over the years, the state Board of Health has taken on various tasks, from fighting epidemics such as smallpox to quarantining people with communicable diseases. One of its major roles has been to inform the public about hygiene issues. In its annual report from 1913-14, it published this photo of 27 double-occupancy outhouses—with the waste disposed directly into an unidentified stream—serving at least 54 families. As a result of this system, 90% of the children sampled in this community were infected with some form of infection.

to the legislature. He was subsequently removed from office.

The license interview could be held anywhere, and generally, the doctor or PA would arrange to meet at a board member's office or home. My first potential licensee was a surgeon. As I reviewed his credentials and signed the form, I thought, "Wow, can I really be authorizing a person to do surgery on folks in West Virginia?" However, the license wouldn't be activated until the full board had voted, and the burden on applicants was significant, including traveling at their own expense and on their own time.

In 1983, the board hired its first executive director, Ron Walton, who served until 2005. I had the privilege to serve on the search committee for both of his successors: Robert Knittle (2005-16) and Mark Spangler (2017-present). The Attorney General's Office initially provided legal services, but as we got more organized and active, we contracted with a Charleston law firm. In 1986, we finally hired our first staff attorney, Deborah Rodecker. As the culture became more litigious and care for due process was more scrutinized, it was important to separate the roles of general counsel and prosecutor. In 1999, we hired a second part-time attorney to avoid any possible conflicts of interest; 14 different attorneys filled the position until it became full time in 2013. In 1993, we established the position of paralegal / investigator—separated into two full-time positions in 2008. In 2016, we hired a second investigator and a second full-time attorney.

Some of the more interesting incidents occurred early in my tenure—before we had strong, competent, and fully staffed committees. In those days, when a complaint was filed, it was common for the board president to turn to one of his peers and say, "On your way home, why don't you visit Dr. X and see what's going on?" Thankfully, that practice ended once we had an executive director and more structured, effective committees.

Several years ago, an obstetrician-gynecologist was called before the board to discuss a complaint filed against him. His attitude was, in a word, obnoxious. One board member stood up, looked at him, and said, "Doctor, you must have made an A+ in arrogance in medical school." Because the board's essential function is "to protect the public," full investigations are critical. Doctors should be treated fairly, but the public is always the board's first concern. One part of the application process inquires about some 15 or 16 possible problems or issues, including treatment for alcohol or substance abuse, malpractice judgments or settlements, actions taken or pending in other jurisdictions, mandated child support, and others. The applicant has to sign this form in the presence of a member and certify that the answers are accurate. Occasionally, someone wouldn't

A Board of Health meeting in the 1960s. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Gov. Barron Negative Collection.

answer honestly. In my experience, the board was as likely to discipline a person as seriously for a fraudulent answer as it was for whatever the person was trying to cover up. The board members sincerely respect the medical profession and don't appreciate those who might dishonor it and thus pose a harm to patients.

Prior to the creation of West Virginia's nationally recognized Physician Health Program, the Complaints Committee dealt with medical professionals with alcohol or drug problems. It was painful to confront people who had to put their medical practices on hold while receiving treatment for at least two years, followed by rigid requirements such as attending 300 AA or NA meetings a year, having proper counseling, and working under a board-approved supervisor. During that two-year span, the person had to appear twice a year before the committee. All would show up, but some very reluctantly. It wasn't unusual for people not to meet the 300-meetings-a-year demand because of the travel requirements or lost time from their practice. More than once while chairing the committee, I had to ask, "Doctor, do you want to keep your license?" Occasionally, at the end of the two years, someone would say to us, "I want to thank the board for what you have done. You saved my life, my marriage, and my practice."

I saw many significant, positive outcomes for those being disciplined. The more difficult cases were those who'd provided excellent service for decades but who'd, for various reasons, lost some of their abilities or committed improper actions, often involving prescriptions. At times, those people had to relinquish their licenses and accept additional penalties. Those were tearful situations. But, across the years, it was an exciting journey. The dedicated work of the board and our staff assures me that the practice of medicine in West Virginia is in good and capable hands.

The Rev. O. RICHARD BOWYER is a native of Huntington. He graduated from Marshall University, holds an M.Div. and Th.M. from Duke University, and a Doctor of Humane Letters from Fairmont State University. After 50 years in active service, he retired as a United Methodist Minister. He served churches in West Virginia and was campus minister for the Wesley Foundation at Fairmont State for 43 years. In 2014, he was presented the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Federation of State Medical Boards. This is his second contribution to GOLDENSEAL; his first appeared in our issue about the Farmington Mine Disaster [Fall 2018].

A Heart for Heirloom

Retired Pocahontas Principal Preserves Old Apple Varieties

Text and photos by Carl E. Feather

Charles "William" Young admits that his front yard, which faces east on Route 92 in the Pocahontas County hamlet of Frost, is one of the worst places for an apple orchard.

"Frost. What does that tell you?" he says. "We get them earlier and later than most other places. If I was to have an orchard, I would not pick Frost, West Virginia, for it."

The location works, nevertheless, because Bill propagates and sells apple trees, not the fruit. His Allendale Nursery specializes in heirloom apple varieties, some of which are so obscure Bill has yet to find them in published sources.

He's lived on this 30-acre mountainside tract since 1972, when he and his late wife, Carole, built their home here. At the time, Bill was just a few years into his three-decade-long career as principal of Green Bank Elementary-Middle School, a job he retired from in 2000.

The job was a seed that grew into an orchard. "It was one of those things that I did at school," he tells me. "I collected apples and made cider for the students."

The image of a school administrator pressing apples and serving fresh cider to students probably runs counter to most readers' memories of their principals. But Bill had a philosophy that "there is a time to learn and a time to have fun," and he figured out that Halloween could be both. Unfortunately, the macabre element destroyed the potential for learning.

"We celebrated Halloween," he recalls. "But we were literally scaring the kids. I liked the idea of dressing up, but I didn't like scaring kids."

He turned to his staff for ideas, and they came up with the concept of a heritage event that retained Halloween's autumnal elements. They called it "Harvest Day." Held on the last Friday of October, the event introduced students to their Appalachian heritage through displays, demonstrations, presentations, and activities. Bill chose cider making for his contribution. "I knew some farmers that still had these old orchards. I mean, we're talking really old apple varieties that I was using in my cider," he says. "And every year that I went back, there were fewer trees from which to get apples."

Disturbed by the loss of these old varieties, Bill took a course in grafting from Carlos Manning, a Beckley-area resident who's been hailed as a "savior" of heirloom apples [see Fall 2001]. "Carlos did a grafting workshop near Sugar Grove in Pendleton County," Bill says. "I came away from that with a product. I had tried to learn how to graft by reading, but I needed the hands-on experience."

That was back in the late 1990s, and his work has taken off from there and grown into an orchard of donors. Bill does scion grafting—taking a first-year growth cutting from a donor tree and grafting it to rootstock. Only a small amount of the first-year

Allendale Nursey owner Bill Young holds two of the hundreds of apple varieties he raises: a Green Pippin (left) and a Twenty-Ounce Red (right). Bill doesn't spray his apple trees or fruit, which makes them appear more real (and tastier) than ones you find in most supermarkets.

growth is needed, usually about 1½ inches. The recipient rootstock produces a tree that has the characteristics of the donor. Buds also can be grafted, but Bill prefers the scion method to "keep the trees going."

Once he learned the technique that could take the heirlooms into a new generation, Bill returned to his sources for material.

"I went to the old orchard of [the late] Albert Wilfong, who owned a farm at Stony Bottom," Bill says. "I took cuttings from 24 varieties of apples." He also collected scions from other orchards where he'd sourced cider apples for the school project. In most cases, he did two grafts from each tree; that way, he'd have a backup in case disease or deer claimed one of them. As the number of trees grew, the effort transitioned from a pastime into a retirement business of selling what he rescued.

"I wanted to keep these trees going," Bill says. "My intention was not to go into it as a business . . . but, once I started doing this, I realized this was something others would be interested in buying."

More than two decades after the grafts were made from the Wilfong orchard, these original donor trees still provide scions for Bill's grafting work and offspring for nursery customers. Several trees from that original collection retain their original nomenclature, such as "Albert No. 18," the name Bill assigned to it when he collected the wood. For many others, he's found a close enough match that he's confident to pin a name to the offspring: Ben Davis, Baldwin, Golden Delicious, Roxbury Russet—nearly 250 in all, and still collecting. The tree continues to go by its source name / number until it bears fruit. At that point,

Bill combs through the literature in search of possible matches to recognized varieties.

His bible for this work is *Apples: A Catalog of International Varieties* by Bill's distant cousin Thomas Burford of Monroe, Virginia. After visiting Tom with several boxes of apples, Bill was able to identify a good number of his trees. But the "volunteer" trees, which come up from seed rather than grafting, often defy classification. Unlike grafted trees, which assume the donor's characteristics, volunteers have a mixed lineage that all depends on the source of the pollen that contributed genetic material.

"It will be related to [the tree from which the apple came] but may not be true to it," Bill says.

He keeps meticulous records of each tree's lineage and can direct you to the orchard or farm where he collected the grandparent of the tree he's selling you. "I map every tree from which I take a cutting," Bill says. The mapping places both the original tree and the offspring in their respective locations.

He uses a cold-hardy rootstock of Russian origin. Most of the trees he grows for propagating scion wood and producing apples for his own use are standard stock; they will eventually require a ladder to harvest fruit from the upper reaches. He uses semi-dwarf and standard for those he sells to the public and encourages standard unless space is an issue. "People around here don't want a small tree," he says.

His orchards are on steep hills in front of and to the south of his house; the nursery is along Route 92 at the bottom of the hill. Orchard trees are planted in rows and in triangular patterns, so there's at least 25 feet between them.

Visitors will notice a wide path through the middle of his orchard below the house.

"When our kids were growing up, that was the sledding hill," he says. "We had a four-wheel-drive truck, and I'd pull them up the driveway. By the time I got down the hill in the truck, they'd be down on their sleds. Do you know how long kids will sled ride if they don't have to walk up the hill? I still keep the sled-riding hill, and I [sled on] it occasionally."

Aside from the occasional frosty thrill ride, the property is home to Allendale Nursery, named after a farm his late wife's family owned in Eastern Maryland. His business came into being around 2005 and now offers more than 100 named varieties, with thousands of grafted trees growing in the nursery. Most of his sales are to buyers within an hour's drive of the orchard. The trees he sells are taller and thicker than most mail-order ones, making shipping prohibitive, but he'll ship young "whips" that haven't developed limbs. He's even been known to deliver trees if he happens to be driving in that direction.

Two of his most popular trees are the similarly named Yellow Transparent and Transparent Yellow. Both come on early in the season and are favored for making applesauce. Many of his customers for these varieties recall their grandmothers using the staple apple. And, if one of those old trees or some other fruit variety still grows on family property, Bill can perpetuate its heritage and flavors through custom grafting. He says "one of the joys" of his work is connecting tree buyers to varieties they associate with their childhoods.

He does his grafting indoors during January and February; he keeps the newly grafted trees in his basement for a week. From there, they go to his root cellar until signs of spring are evident. Then, he moves them outside, where they start their growth, evidence of the graft's success. The youngster is then planted in the nursery, where it'll spend the next two to three years before it's ready for a new home on a farm or lawn. Bill prefers to dig and sell trees from the nursery in November and December, after they're dormant. He'll sell in the

Bill Young checks the status of his late-harvest Roxbury Russet apples. Believed to be the oldest apple variety planted in the colonies, the apple has a high sugar content, making it ideal for hard-cider producers.

Late-season Winesap apples hang in the orchard. Winesaps, which also date to American colonial times, are sweet with a tangy finish similar to wine.

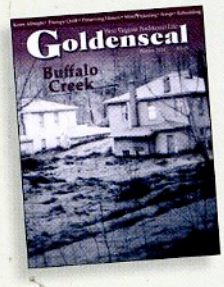
spring but insists that fall is the best time to plant.

When he's not grafting or fulfilling orders, Bill stays busy with pruning, mowing, cultivating, and accounting. He's assisted by his wife, Cristina, a Romanian immigrant to this country. Twice a year, they travel back to Romania, giving him a break from the work of growing the tastes and textures of Pocahontas County's apple heritage.

While retirement took the former principal and teacher out of the school, it's not taken the educator out of him. He patiently explores each potential buyer's expectations for the apples they want to grow. Lacking a "tasting room," where all the varieties could be sampled, Bill says this interview process is important. Does the buyer want an apple for fresh eating or baking? How important is disease resistance? Will the fruit be used immediately or be expected to store well? What are the growing conditions and season length? Is a firm or soft flesh desired? Tart or sweet? Will it be used for fresh cider or hard?

When the cider is to be fermented, the apples' sugar content plays an important role in selection, which brought Bill to

Bill and Cristina Young check the apples remaining to be harvested in early October 2021. Most apples from his heirloom trees will eventually become cider.



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what he considers one of his most historically important apples: the Roxbury Russet. As its name suggests, the small apple has a very textured skin, similar to that of an Asian pear. What it lacks in appearance and size, it makes up for in acid and sugar content, which are sought by hard-cider makers. It also has a great heritage, dating back nearly 400 years in the colonies.

"It was the first named variety in the United States, and it's believed to have originally been planted in Roxbury, Massachusetts," he says. "It has stood the test of time."

The varieties he grows have expanded as he's listened to customer requests, although he won't grow any under patent.

"I started primarily with the heritage, heirloom apples, then I started adding newer varieties, such as Jonagold. Then I started to have clients who wanted certain varieties for hard cider," he says.

Thus, his work came back to where it started, his 40-year-old cider press, where many of the apples from the Allendale trees end up. He typically blends 20 varieties when making the beverage.

"A cider apple is, to me, any apple," he says. "My cider is made as a present that I give away because people enjoy drinking it." That includes the youngsters at the Green Bank school, where he stills volunteers for the Harvest Day he helped start.

Bill says his goal is to have each tree producing apples so when visitors come to the orchard, they can walk the rows and sample the fruit before placing their tree order. One thing they would have to recognize, however, is the apples that grow on these trees aren't like the ones in supermarkets, which come from trees bombarded by chemical sprays that enhance their size and appearance. Like anything with a heritage, there are always a few well-earned blemishes and misshapen characters in the lot, but their stories and flavor more than make up for these "defects." Likewise, keeping them alive is a difficult and financially challenging pursuit driven by passion rather than profit.

"This isn't a business you make a lot of money at," he says. "I do it because I have a heart for it."

CARL E. FEATHER is a longtime contributor to GOLDENSEAL. He and his wife, Ruth, live in Bruceton Mills (Preston County). Check out his blog at thefeathercottage.com for videos, stories, and photos from his beloved West Virginia.

Roxbury Russets hang from one of the hundreds of heirloom apple trees at the Allendale Nursery on Route 92 in Frost (Pocahontas County).

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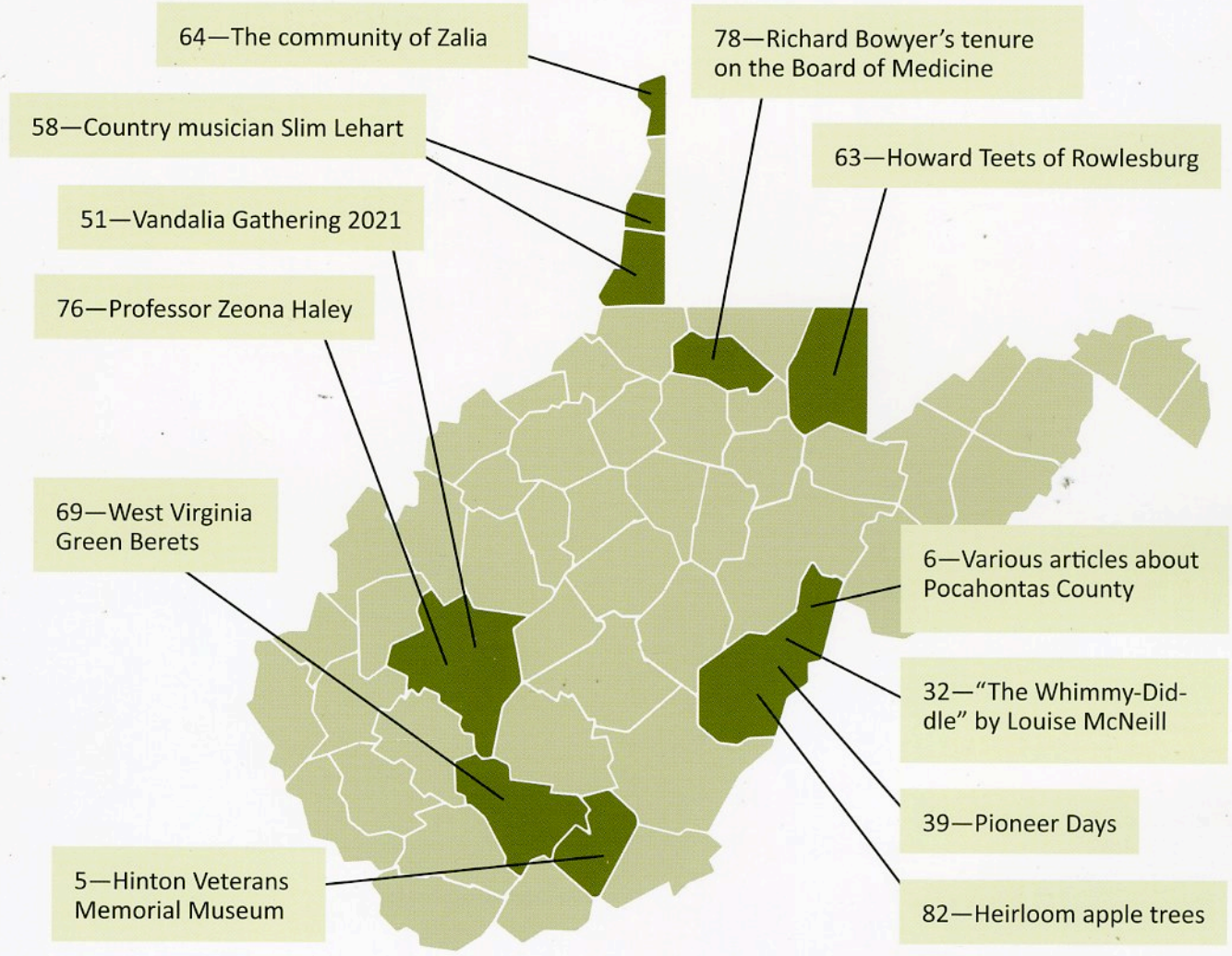

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