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Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Fall 2022 $5.95

Honoring Past & Present

The Spencer Family Cemetery, Marshall County. The Spencer Cemetery was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 12, 2012. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

Volume 48, Number 3

Goldenseal

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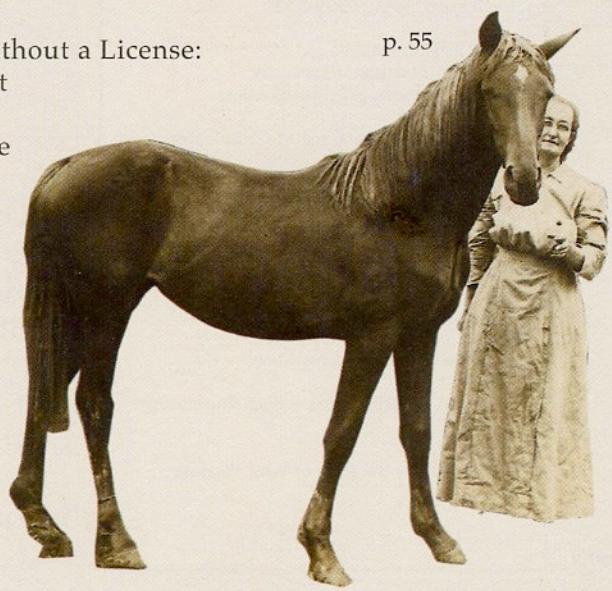

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On the cover: The Grave of Jacob and Mary Coffman.
Photo by Gerald Milnes.

Published by the
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

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GOLDENSEAL (ISSN 0099-0159, USPS 013336) is published four times a year, in the spring, summer, fall, and winter. The magazine is distributed for $20 yearly. GOLDENSEAL welcomes the submissions of manuscripts, photographs, and letters. Please see Contributor Guidelines at www.wvculture.org/goldenseal.

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Periodical postage paid at Charleston, West Virginia.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GOLDENSEAL, The Culture Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305-0300.

The Department of Arts, Culture and History is an Equal Opportunity/ Affirmative Action Employer.

Printed by MPB Print & Sign Superstore

From the Editor

Last time in this space, I wrote about my favorite childhood vacation, in 1979. Part of that trip revolved around the search for my great-grandfather Jim May's grave somewhere in Pendleton County. In June 1904, he lost his life in a drunken shootout, leaving my mother's family embarrassed by his legacy and completely uninterested in anything about him, including his final resting place. The *Pendleton County Grave Register Vol. 1* had recently been published; with its annotations, it's still one of the best of its kind. Based on the general information about the cemetery's location (like so many family graveyards), my father and I spent two unsuccessful days trying to track it down.

Over the last 43 years, I've made other futile attempts to find my genealogical white whale. In April, my wife, Amy, and I headed up that way again for what I'd billed as a relaxing weekend in the mountains. Although I'd mentioned Jim May's grave before (Ok, repeatedly), she never fully understood my level of obsession until we got closer and closer to those mountains I love so much. Before the trip, longtime GOLDENSEAL contributor Michael Evans Snyder did some historical snooping for me and hooked me up with a fellow he goes to church with, Lsyle Brown, a history buff from Pendleton County. Lsyle, it turns out, enjoys a historical adventure as much as I do. He, Amy, and I piled into his ATV and drove up an old narrow logging road along Big Run, near Circleville, where my grandmother Leslie came into this world on April 21, 1901. At times, it felt like we were scaling a vertical cliff, or maybe the world's steepest roller coaster. So much for Amy's relaxing weekend, but she was a great sport about it all. While Lsyle's ATV chugged along, his border-collie-mix Lucy led the way and scampered right up the mountain. It was like this six-month-old pup instinctively knew where Jim May was laid to rest—something that had alluded me for better than four decades.

Thanks to Lsyle, Lucy, Mike, and Amy, I found Jim May's grave that day in a small cemetery on top of that mountain—43 years after starting my search. Coincidentally, it was on April 21, his daughter's (my grandmother's) 121st birthday. Leslie was my mother Rena's mom. Neither had any interest in Jim May's final resting spot. Plus, my mother never took much interest in old graveyards. Thinking about her departed loved ones made her sad, which, having lost both my parents now, I can certainly grasp. But she also thought the idea of poking around cemeter-

Our editor at his great grandfather's gravesite. Photo by Amy Bumgardner.

ies was a little creepy—the stuff of nightmares and horror movies.

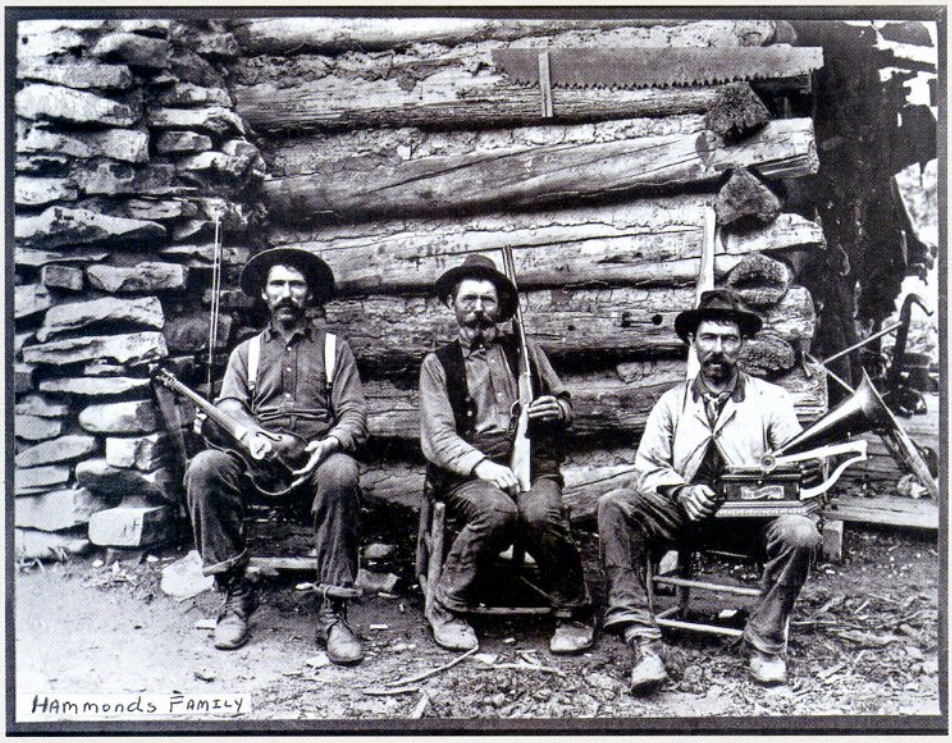
My father, on the other hand, saw them as outdoor history museums. He taught me that to find the oldest stones (typically), look for the highest ground or the oldest tree. He showed me that cemeteries themselves have their own stories to tell. So, I made up stories about them in my mind. I'd look around at the names, birth and death dates, and relatives buried nearby and then piece together those made-up stories. I'd always try to find the oldest person or the family with the most generations. At an early age, I noticed how many children died very young and often within days of one another. I realized that if I'd lived 100 years ago, I likely wouldn't have survived until adulthood. That was a heavy but important lesson to learn at a young age. As COVID-19 began unfolding in 2020, I couldn't help but think of our ancestors who lived with the constant acceptance, not necessarily fear, that every day could be their last. As Dwight Diller of Pocahontas County noted at this year's Vandalia Gathering, "For people on the frontier, each day was like living through a pandemic because even a bad tooth could kill you."

Tromping around those cemeteries with my father, I picked up on another lesson: those graves represent actual people who, in one way or another, shaped their own world and influenced the one we live in today. There's no disconnect between history and the present. Just like in the Bible, someone begat someone who begat someone else and on and on until we arrived. Cemeteries are history books about where we came from. On the other hand, most famous people in my actual history books had little or no direct effect on me or the world I live in.

In our Fall 2019 issue, Margaret Brennan talked about Wheeling's efforts to preserve old cemeteries—what she called our "spirit places." I love that phrase. By visiting and taking care of our spirit places, we preserve our heritage while honoring folks who would have been otherwise long forgotten. This edition of the magazine looks at different aspects of West Virginia cemeteries and the cycle of life. I don't see them as morbid topics; rather, this issue is more about honoring those who came before and better appreciating how we're all connected, past and present.

—Stan Bumgardner

Letter to the Editor



From L-R Pete Hammons, Paris Hammons, and Neal Hammons. Photo courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Burnsville Public Library Collection.

Dear Editor,

I enjoyed the section of the Spring 2022 issue devoted to Pocahontas County on the occasion of its 200th birthday. The range of sites and features in the county are indeed wonderful and engaging. It was great to see the photo of members of the Hammons family on p. 21. But my notes from visits to the family in the late 1960s and early 1970s provide different identifications for the three men. During a visit to brother and sister Burl Hammons and Maggie Hammons Parker at their home near Marlinton, I copied their print of the photo. Burl and Maggie named the men as three brothers: Pete Hammons (born ca. 1860-61), Paris Hammons (born ca. 1856), and Neal (Cornelius) Hammonds (born 1862). (After Neal moved to Randolph County, he and his family spelled the surname Hammonds.) Burl and Maggie were Paris' children, and I am inclined to take their word for it. But even family members can get mixed up, so it would be helpful to hear from others too.

At the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress in the 1980s, we received a recent copy of another print of the photo from Robert Cooper. His letter also identifies the photographer who made the 6 ½- x 8½-inch glass negative as Bob "Captain" Colebank, but Cooper reported that Colebank was a resident of Sutton (Braxton County). Cooper quoted O. L. "Hink" Holcomb of Sutton as reporting that Colebank and Lory A. Holcomb were avid deer hunters who often sought out the Hammonses as hunting guides. Hink told Cooper that, for this photograph, either Colebank or Lory Holcomb brought a phonograph and recordings of fiddle music with them to the Williams River, and the phonograph was included in this picture.

Sincerely,
Carl Fleischhauer
Port Republic, Md.

The Power of Storytelling in Midwifery

An Apprenticeship Showcase with Angy Nixon & Christine Weirick

By Jennie Williams

On April 19, 2022, birth workers, student midwives, and their friends and supporters filled the historic MacFarland-Hubbard house in Charleston to attend "The Power of Storytelling in Midwifery," hosted by the West Virginia Folklife Program. The event celebrated Certified Nurse Midwife Angy Nixon of Putnam County and her apprentice Christine Weirick of Fayette County who participated in the 2020-21 West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program. Christine had already been teaching childbirth education as a professional doula and served as a guide through pregnancy, birth, and early parenthood for her clients. Since the start of their apprenticeship, Christine has furthered her progress toward certification and practiced the encompassing care that a midwife is equipped to provide, all while documenting stories she encountered while working with families.

I began with a question I imagined would have a straight-forward answer: "What is a midwife?" As our conversation continued, it became clear that a "midwife" is a multifaceted profession. Midwives practice reproductive and pelvic health care. A midwife may be trained through a formalized university education or a more traditional community-based apprenticeship model. However, certification for licensed midwives is regulated differently in each state, leading to barriers to enter the profession. With "a midwife in almost every row," as Angy noted, our discussion extended beyond the three of us, and we exchanged stories, expertise, and critical discussions of the practice and access to health care services.

Angy and Christine stressed the importance of individual autonomy and that it takes birth planning during prenatal care to educate families on their options—avoiding potential trauma during pregnancy or birth that could carry into parenthood.

You can watch **"The Power of Storytelling in Midwifery"** on the West Virginia Folklife Program YouTube and Facebook pages. Follow @WVfolklife on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and visit wvfolklife.org to learn more about the Apprenticeship Program.

"At the end of the day, you can't control birth," Christine acknowledges, "but it's really important that we preserve [the birthing parent's] ability to govern how their bodies navigate birth. We do what we can."

Midwives monitor pregnancies for complications, and unless there's a need for medical intervention, midwives work as a team to support the birthing parent, treating the birth as the special life-altering event it is rather than as an emergency. "It feels a lot like an honor a lot of the time, being witness to some of that transformation that happens in people's lives," Angy says. "And welcoming a new baby is definitely one of the biggest life-changing events that people have to choose from."

Christine described the "tender" moments of what it was like when she gave birth at home. "When the midwives arrived, it was like my house turned into a beehive. There was just so much activity. Their students were preparing my home for after my baby arrived, and the midwives were monitoring me and monitoring my baby, but I was still free to move around. There was just so much excitement. The love in the room was palpable."

During her apprenticeship, Christine documented similar moments with families who were willing to share their experiences. "We live now in a society where

Angy Nixon (Right) with Apprentice Christine Weirick. Photo by Jennie Williams.

we don't witness birth until we experience it ourselves," Christine explains. "So, stories are really how we collect a lot of our experiences and decide how to move forward with our own care."

Storytelling is an essential expressive tradition to the practice of midwifery. It occurs when midwives teach their students by passing on stories of their experiences and the wisdom they've inherited from generations of midwives before them, between clients who tell their birth stories or recommend the midwives who caught their babies, and between midwives and their clients as they build trust over time through pregnancy and early parenthood, among other examples. If we think about the stories we remember and the ways we express them, they reflect our worldviews. In other words, the stories we inherit and share shape our opinions, perspectives, values, and how we live our lives. People's birth experiences become part of their stories, which they'll carry for the rest of their lives and likely share with others, which will then impact how their friends, family, and children navigate birthing options.

The West Virginia Folklife Program, a project of the West Virginia Humanities Council, is supported in part by the Folk & Traditional Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program, also supported by the NEA, offers a stipend to West Virginia master traditional artists or tradition bearers working with qualified apprentices on a year-long in-depth apprenticeship in their cultural expression or traditional art form. The goal is to transmit techniques and artistry of these forms as well as their histories and traditions.

L-R Jennie Williams, Christine Weirick, and Angy Nixon. Photo by Michael Keller.

Attendees at the showcase shared personal and generations-old family and community stories about birthing experiences. Some anecdotes reflected traumatic experiences of medical interventions and racial disparities in medical settings. The midwives noted that a shared cultural background between the care provider and the client leads to safer birth outcomes, especially for Black communities, and they discussed the need for diverse representation in their professional field and the importance of training more Black midwives. They also discussed integrating gender spectrum inclusive language in their practices, considering that non-binary-identifying clients could struggle with body dysmorphia issues while pregnant. This community of midwives in West Virginia understands how critical it is for their clients to be heard and understood.

Midwifery itself is often misunderstood and stigmatized due in part to how it's overlooked as a viable birthing option as well as how it's misrepresented in mainstream media and culture. Publicly sharing stories about birth experiences under the care of midwives can help reverse this stigma and improve policies that regulate the practice. Congratulations to Angy and Christine for continuing this important Appalachian tradition and for sharing their stories and expertise.

JENNIE WILLIAMS is our state folklorist with the West Virginia Folklife Program. She writes a regular column for GOLDENSEAL. You can contact her at williams@wvhumanities.org or 304-346-8500.

Celtic Cross

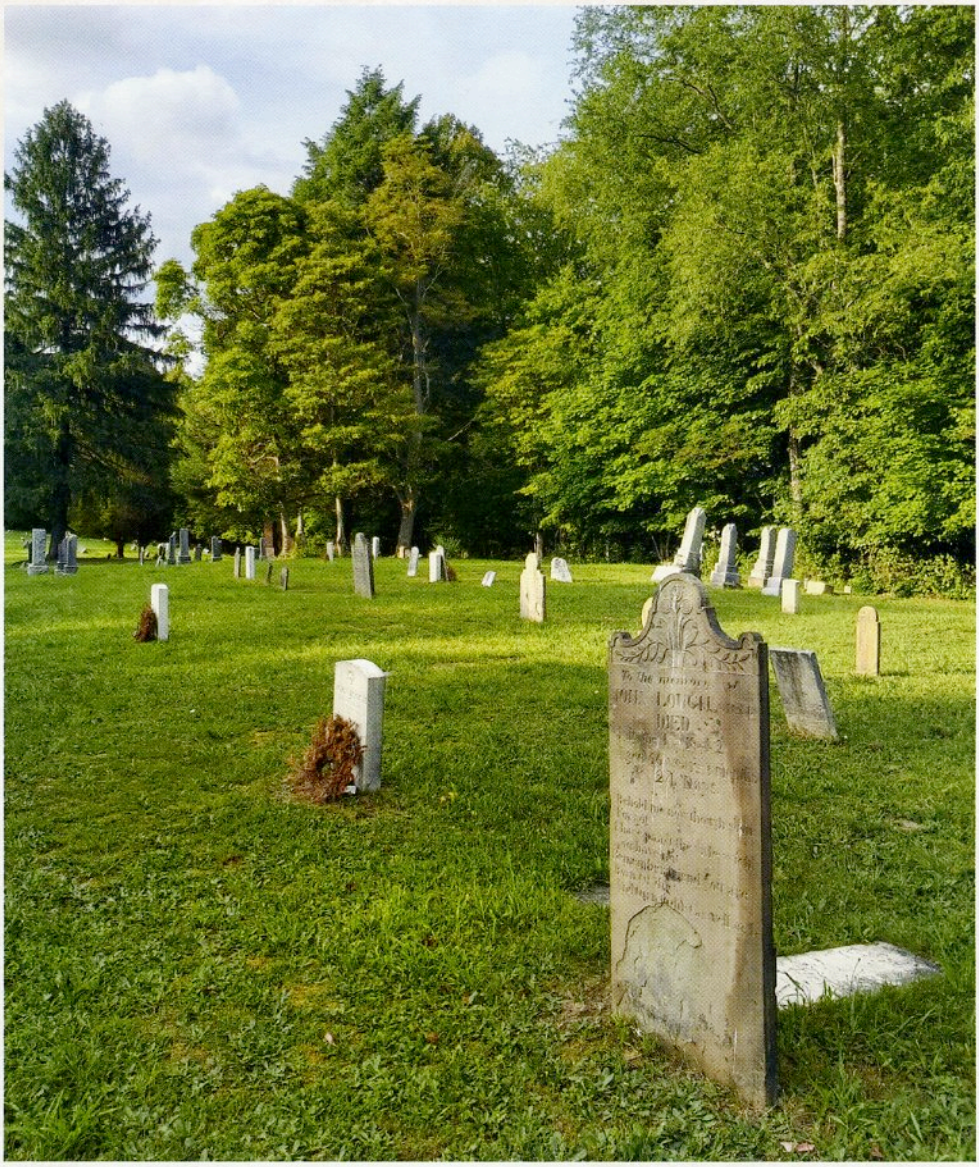
By Randy Safford

This is an excerpt from the author's An Act of Remembrance & Other Mostly True Historical West Virginia Stories *(Morgantown: Populore, 2021).*

There is something most appealing about burying a soul on an untraveled hillside that looks westward as it descends to a valley anchored by a broad majestic river. From there, the shadows cross the river, touching the willow and the massive sycamore on the other side, and steadily stroll to the far left. High above the wooded hills stand warm-looking trees and a faint pink sky in the fading sun. Not a human structure exists to break the continual peacefulness of the land. The grave itself is sheltered by three mature red maples, which provide, beyond brilliant color, myriad branches for a nest of cardinals that fly in an endless pattern across the rise. It almost seems as if the breezes alternate from the ridgeline down to the valley and then return moistened with mist from the rapidly flowing river. The only sounds are from the gentle wind flowing through the branches and the commotion of the cardinals with the approach of other wings.

RANDY SAFFORD was raised in Indiana by parents with West Virginia roots. He earned degrees from Anderson University and Creighton University. He describes himself as a "spiritual seeker" at this phase of life. He converted to Catholicism, enrolled in seminary at Catholic University, and was ordained as a priest. After a time, he felt called in a different direction, left the priesthood, and enrolled in a nursing program in North Carolina. Randy's now retired after 25 years as a psychiatric nurse. He had visited West Virginia often for genealogical research and developed an interest in regional history and lore. He and his wife, Mary Charlotte, live in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Celtic Cross located in East Bank (Kanawha County). Photo by Steve Brightwell.



Burnt Meetinghouse Cemetery. All Photos courtesy of the author.

Burnt Meetinghouse Cemetery
A Portal into Harmony Grove

By Mary Linscheid

West Virginia cemeteries contain not only the remains of the dearly departed but also the histories and sentiments of their communities.

Burnt Meetinghouse Cemetery in Harmony Grove (Monongalia County) is no exception. Established in 1760, this small hilltop cemetery has been the final resting place for our earliest pioneers and continues to hold burials for the more recently deceased. I have strong family ties to the area—my Great-Great-Uncle John Camp owned the nearby land and was the cemetery caretaker—and many of my other ancestors can be found in Burnt. Other families take up large portions of the grounds

Headstone of Stephen Gilbert.

as well. The headstones, plant life, and folktales of Burnt Meetinghouse Cemetery offer hints about the community's beliefs and possible insight into the attitudes of the people here today.

The headstone styles and symbols vary depending on the time period, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and even wealth of the family, giving us an idea of how these people lived. Several 19th-century stones are German in style, reflecting our area's many German immigrants and their descendants; these graves are often adorned with symbols, such as the six-pointed star on Stephen Gilbert's headstone. According to Bob Swisher, who wrote about the cemetery for *Appalachian Journal* in 1978, these "symbols have their origin in ancient Teutonic his-

Concrete headstone with hand drawn flowers.

tory, but their profound meanings [had] been forgotten by the eighteenth century, and early American artists used them only for decoration." Thus, it's possible the designer of Gilbert's stone included the star for decorative purposes only. As historian and folklorist Gerry Milnes has noted, however, many German-Americans believed these symbols warded away witches and evil spirits.

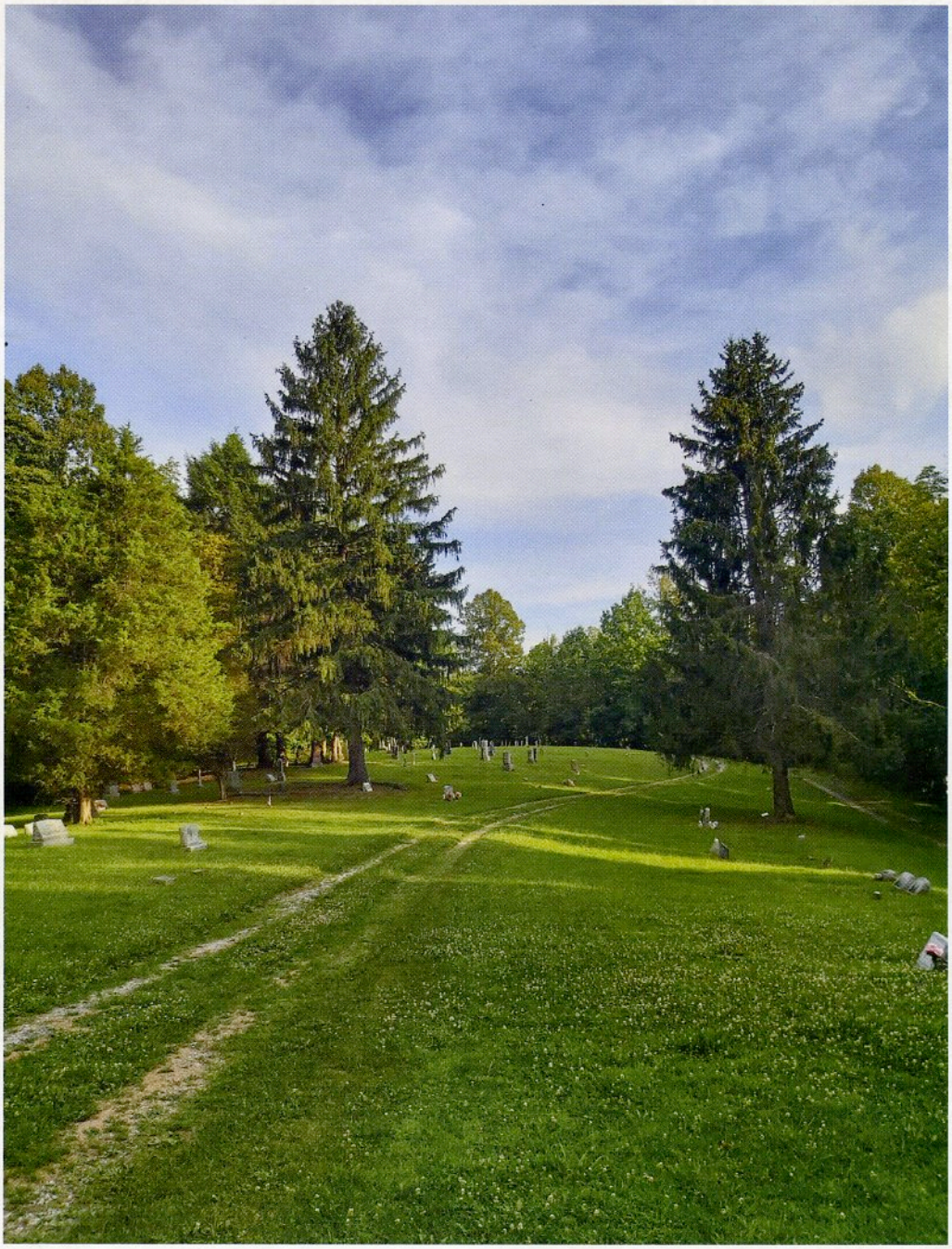
While Gilbert's headstone is carefully carved from local sandstone, others are crafted from more makeshift materials. Three almost identical headstones are made of concrete and decorated with hand-drawn flowers. The modern funeral markers inlaid in the concrete all list the same death year: 1988. Presumably, all three seemingly unrelated people died in the same incident. It could be that the unexpectedness of their deaths explains their improvised headstones, possibly made by a loved one. These are just a few examples of how the physical objects in a cemetery can suggest stories of the community.

Similar to headstones, the plant life in West Virginia cemeteries also serves a deeper purpose than mere aesthetics. Often, loved ones place trees and flowers around graves. As Rachel Black notes, "The vast majority . . . symbolize eternal life. Others represent everlasting love, achievement or completion (in life) and peace." Burnt Meetinghouse Cemetery has an interesting array of plant life: towering evergreens and cedar trees, daffodils, tulips, vinca, and yuccas. The yucca plant is the most curious because it's a cactus and not native

Yucca Plant beside Catharine Camp's headstone.

to Appalachia, yet it's the one most commonly found in cemeteries around here. A yucca can live hundreds of years, so it symbolizes eternal life. It's often planted to honor motherhood and to keep evil spirits away. A yucca next to my ancestor Catharine Camp's headstone was probably planted for those very reasons. As a result, the plant life in Burnt not only provides a look into the spiritual and religious beliefs of my ancestors but also testifies to those of this community.

More fascinating than the symbols, though, are the stories. A community member has told me legend has it the actual Burnt Church that used to stand there got its name after being burned down by the KKK in the late 1800s. They also tell of a hanging tree that used to stand near the front of the cemetery, and that's where our local Headless Horseman (a common character in Appalachian folklore) lost his head and still searches for it. Whether or not these stories are true,



A view of Burnt Meetinghouse Cemetery.

they reveal the community's sentiments regarding the historical events, folktales, and witchery.

Burnt Meetinghouse Cemetery, now 262 years old, is a vital part of our history. Its headstones, plant life, and folktales preserve stories about Harmony Grove's traditions. For every question they answer, a hundred more spring up. One can't fully know a community through its cemetery alone, but our graveyard offers a glimpse into the history that led to present-day Harmony Grove. The past needs the context of the present, and the present needs the context of the past to see any community in its fullest light.

MARY LINSCHEID, an English major at WVU, has spent her entire life on her family farm in Harmony Grove, WV. As a musician and writer, she explores Appalachian connections to place, including in her recent EP, A Place to Grow Old.

The Coffman cemetery in the morning mist. All Photos courtesy of the author.

The Mystery Stone Carver of Southern West Virginia

By Gerald Milnes

In 1995, I was visiting Lewisburg (Greenbrier County) and wandered into the cemetery at the Old Stone Presbyterian Church (1796). I'm drawn to old cemeteries for various reasons, often through my interest in folk art. I consider graveyards and tombstones somewhat-permanent works of art. Sometimes they reflect the economic status of those buried there or the ethnicity of the diseased and / or gravestone maker. They might hold a variety of cultural clues, indicate social and occupational practices, or suggest a cause of death.

In that last vein, I came upon a forgotten soul, Mary Gibson, who "died of an apoplectic fit." Glancing up, I was approaching an area that contained several yellowish markers with more than a standard artistic

Tympanum of headstone found in the "Old Lebanon Seceder Cemetery" at Pickaway, Monroe County. Note, this is a private cemetery the author had permission to visit.

appearance. Many of these unique stones, their form and coloration identifiable from a distance, exhibited a discoidal shape that included a round tympanum (at the top of the stone) replete with various stylized artistic designs. The assorted decorative features contrasted with some more stark-looking surrounding markers, and I soon surmised these were the work of a gifted folk artist—in this case, a stone carver.

Since 1966, when a popular book about unique New England gravestones came out, there's been more interest in cemetery markers, their ethnic influences, and their regional differences. That movement spawned a national interest group: the Association for Gravestone Studies. Today, one of the most popular tools for genealogists is the online "Find a Grave Index," which enables people to search specific names within cemeteries and often view the stones. However, the photography usually does not do the stones any justice.

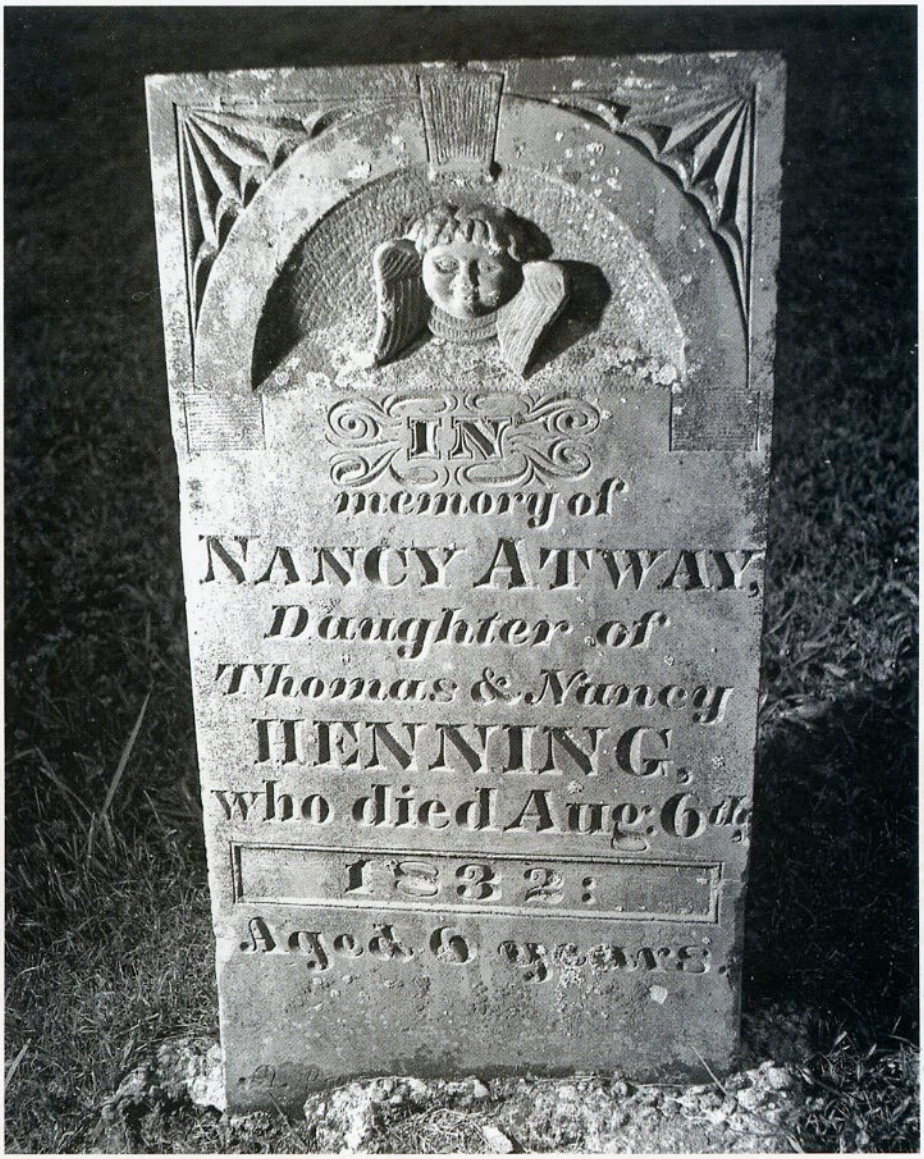
I had been casually photographing gravestones for many years, but after discovering these in Lewisburg, I knew it was time to

Acorn motif, Green Hill Cemetery, Monroe County.

get more serious. I took some photos that day with a 35-mm camera but shortly returned with my Hasselblad medium format and shot the stones in black and white with a remote flash (connected with a 15-foot cord) directed almost parallel to the stones—putting the carving in relief.

This was before high-resolution digital photography, which can give you immediate gratification, or at least tell you to reshoot the subject. That day, I had to take my chances. I carried my film rolls home to Elkins, processed them in a darkroom, and chemically produced the images to discover if my methods had worked. I was happy with the results; although, I do like the convenience of using digital these days.

Many markers in the Old Stone Church cemetery exhibit artistic value. However, one especially caught my interest and attention that day. It displays a three-dimensional winged cherub on a stone, marking the death of a young child, Nancy Atway Henning, six years old. Unlike other markers indicative of this carver, it contains what appears to be a maker's name. However, some obliterating cement, once used to stabilize the stone, partially hid the whole name. Reflecting on the signature, I believe the artist considered this stone and



Grave of Nancy Atway Henning, Lewisburg, Greenbrier County.

its three-dimensional carving to be his finest work. As such, he signed his name as a proud artist would a painting.

Later, I found other stones by this same artist, based on similar artwork, lettering, form, and designs. They are in cemeteries over three southeastern West Virginia counties, but this is the only signed one I have located. His biggest concentration of work is in southern Greenbrier County—from Lewisburg south—and stones also appear in Monroe and in Summers counties in towns such as Alderson, Sinks Grove, Pickaway, Union, and Johnson's Crossroad.

Toni Ogden, curator and education director for the Greenbrier Historical Society, has noticed these stones, too. She positively identified the "A. Potter" signature. All my efforts to discover the identity, the workplace, the descendants of, or anything to do with this artist have been in vain. After searching several weekly newspapers printed in Greenbrier and Monroe counties in the 1830s, '40s, and '50s, I can find no advertisements for A. Potter's work. Toni hasn't found anything more than the person's surname and first initial on the Lewisburg stone.

My friend, historian Jim Costa, who directed me to several stones by this same

Grave of Martha Arbuckle Bell, Lewisburg, Greenbrier County.

maker, tried to discern the craftsperson's identity through tax lists and censuses. While some stone carvers are identified, none are named Potter. Jim introduced me to the old Coffman Cemetery near Ronceverte, where about 40 of these stones reside. He also remembered seeing some in the Gwinn Cemetery in Green Sulphur Springs and a solitary stone in Gap Mills. In all, I've found about 200 stones I think can be attributed to this stone carver, or at least to one workshop with a consistent artistic style. Was it one carver or more? Was it more than one generation? The stones that appear to be Potter's work range from 1807 to the 1870s. This seems to indicate more than one working lifetime. The ones dated in the 1830s, '40s, and '50s look to be the most significant in terms of artistry. Some stones with only a common rectangular outline still exhibit beautiful lettering but have limited decorative carvings. However, they are from the same geological material, and the lettering is indicative of the same carver, or at least the same workshop.

The stones all have a yellowish cast and are made from siltstone, a common sedimentary stone around the area. The stones vary from nearly as hard as sandstone to soft enough to be carved with a knife. Some have held up very well, while others have succumbed to time and weather. Some hilltop stones at the Greenhill Cemetery in Union (Monroe County) appear

Headstone of Lyda Coffman. The base shows damage inflicted by a weed eater.

to have suffered from wind erosion. The greatest threat to these stones in modern times, sadly, appears to be grass trimmers. Some beautiful examples of these markers are severely chewed up around the bases, where weed eaters have taken a toll and eaten into the siltstone. An old stone in the Coffman Cemetery to the memory of Lyda, wife of John Coffman, dated 1842, is terribly damaged around its base, leaving some lettering unreadable. The top part indicates she "departed this LIFE Dcr THE 10th 1842." Could mismatched capitalization tell us something of the carver's education level? Official records list her name as "Lydia." Could the carver have just misspelled it? At the bottom, it probably adds, "In the 32nd year of her life," but most of that phrase is now destroyed. The remarkable four-pointed star atop a sunburst design on the tympanum is just one of many original designs.

Whoever conceived and carved these stones had an artistic eye and rarely repeated a motif. There's little in the way of consistent cultural clues. I've seen a couple examples of oak leaves and acorns associated with a few specific traditions. I've found hearts—both normal and stylized—as well as tulips and the tree of life, often linked to German tradition. There are also various leaves of unclassified species and roped edges around the tops of the tympanums. One common attribute is a streaked design in square corners. It's unusual to have so

Grave of Sarah Curry, Pickaway, Monroe County.

many intricate works of art unsigned, which poses another possibility. Could this carver or these carvers have been slaves? Could African traditions of spirit worship relate in any way to the shell designs and naturalistic symbolism found here?

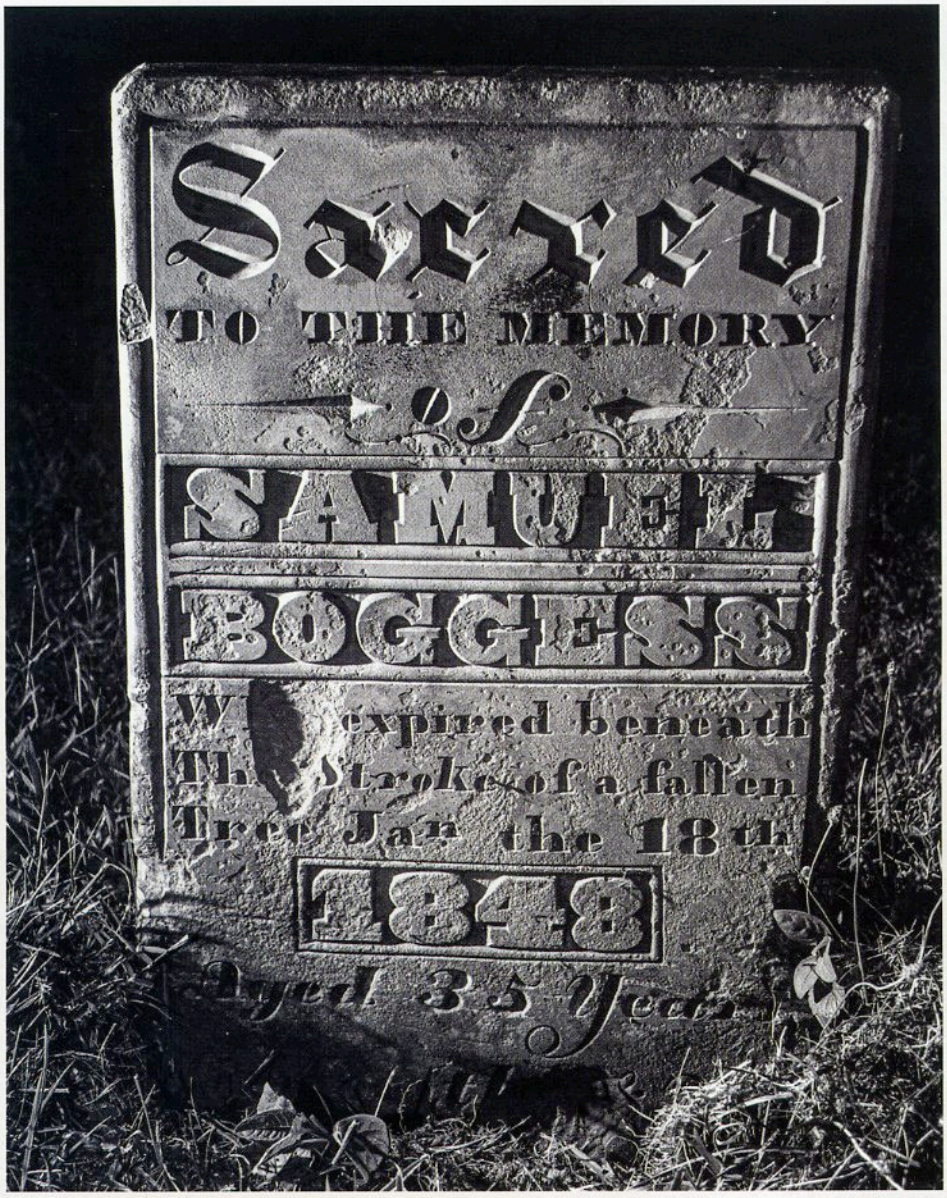
It's easy to read too much into what exists. There's no indication of any consistent ethnicity—all the symbolism is varied and doesn't necessarily match the ethnic identity of the deceased, at least based on the surnames. As expected in this region and time period, the surnames are mostly German and Scots-Irish, as well as some decidedly English. One very plain stone, but with lettering that's possibly this carver's work, is in Latin. Some of the symbols have traditional meanings. A remarkable rendering of the tree of life, for instance, on one very weathered stone has significance in many cultures, especially German. Tulips were considered "holy lilies" to German religious mystics and often show up in Germanic folk art. Hearts are common in that genre, as well. These markers also feature many sunbursts and their shell-like designs—symbols meaningful across various groups throughout time.

Some footstones duplicate the stylized decorative features of the headstones. Most face east—a common placement—reflecting the Biblical direction from which the resur-

Tree of life symbol on weathered headstone.

rection will occur. Where these stones exist, other common graveyard traditions are common, such as evergreen trees like yews or cedars, representing everlasting life. "Sacred to the memory" is the predominant inscription on these stones. Wives may be designated as "consorts." On a rather plain stone, Elizabeth Bailey is listed as the "Relict," rather than wife, of Major Robert Bailey. This seemingly unflattering label usually indicates the "remnant of a species" but was used commonly in the 19th century to indicate the person was widowed. On a couple stones, mistakes were apparently made, so the original name or date was chiseled out and replaced with a corrective piece of stone.

One plainly carved example in the Johnson Crossroads Cemetery states the deceased, Samuel Boggess, "Expired Beneath The Stroke of a fallen Tree." Can we assume Boggess was logging at the time of the mishap? This was well before the onset of commercial logging, as it's dated 1848,



Headstone of Samuel Boggess.

but trees were cut for log houses or simply to clear land. The Boggess stone is one of the carver's simpler efforts artistically, perhaps reflecting the socioeconomic status of the departed, but the lettering style makes it unmistakably related to the more artistic work nearby.

My findings surely do not cover the full range and number of this mystery carver's stones. The West Virginia tradition of family cemeteries—sometimes long forgotten in obscure and unoccupied areas—leave open the distinct possibility that more stones will be discovered. Most were produced prior to the Neoclassical, Romantic and Gothic Revival movements of the mid-to-latter 19th century, during which some gravestones—especially of the rich—became quite elaborate, with classic symbolism such as draped urns, weeping willows, and shaking hands.

Interestingly, these early artistic stones also don't exhibit typical religious symbols, such as crosses, the gates of heaven, anchors, the Madonna, angels, hands shaking, or hands with fingers pointing upward. Nor do we find Latin idioms like INRE (for Jesus of Nazareth, King of Jews), or IHS (the first three letters of Jesus' name in the Greek alphabet). The quite common biblical dove with an olive branch, or any

Nancy Henning's Gravestone.

variety of birds or animals, is nonexistent, but plant life is ubiquitous. Masonic symbols, such as the square and compass, don't show up. No standard characteristic initials, like RIP (rest in peace), appear. The most-defining characteristics are the original and varied naturalistic elements. But these stones were carved before the floral symbols of the Victorian era were in vogue, or at least before they reached rural Appalachia.

These distinct designs—so atypical for the time—make me even more curious about the maker. Symbols may be an international language, but these carved images appear to reside within a personal aesthetic. Sally M. Daingerfield's marker, at the Old Stone Church, is typical of the carver's columned design, with a sculpted tympanum and streaked cornering. Nancy Henning's stone (1845) bears a variation of an inscription I've located elsewhere in our state:

Look ye strangers passing by
As you are so once was I
As I am now so you must be

Grave of Adaline Sydenstricker, found in the Coffman Cemetery, Greenbrier County.

Prepare for death and follow me

Several epitaphs seem original and personal, as is the one for Adaline Sydenstricker in the Coffman Cemetery, who died in 1850 at age 8:

Death took this sweet flower from its parents embrace

To plant it beyond the blue sky

And now with a beauty death cannot efface

It blooms in the garden on high

Another stone (1855) in this same cemetery refers to Jacob and Mary Coffman's infant child. It reminds us of the fragileness of life and the harsh realities of infant mortality in the mid-19th century. The exact date of death appears to be 14 days after the date of birth. Efforts to stabilize it with a concrete base has concealed some of its information. The exact date of birth was important to people of early German ethnicity because they were very attuned to astrologic thinking; many German Bibles of the period even indicate the exact minute of birth. This reliance on astrologic principles among early Germans is generally still found today—for instance, in looking for the right signs to plant crops or watching the moon's waxing and waning to guide work chores. The moon and stars sometimes appear on the grave markers of early Scots-Irish settlers, but they aren't con-

Mystery Carver A. Potter's signature.

nected to astrology. Being mostly Presbyterians and Baptist Calvinists, they ascribed to predestination and gave no thought to altering the courses of their lives. They believed, though, that the alignment of stars and constellations did portend what was in store for them.

I call the gravestones I've discussed here "Potter stones" as they can surely be identified with the one signed by the mystery carver. They give little indication as to the carver's ethnicity. Nor do most reflect distinct religious inclinations of the deceased. As such, these artistic expressions seem to be tied more to personal creativity than to the typical cultural or religious traditions of this period.

So, I'm left with more questions than answers. These stones sometimes give clues as to the economic well-being of the deceased. Their epitaphs sometimes exhibit affectionate poetry, grief, or death warnings. With the one exception, they give no indication who created this work. It's important to appreciate and celebrate artistic excellence, even in settings such as graveyards. These stones represent an era of gravestone art that existed before the advent of commercially manufactured markers, which brought this form of creativity to a standstill. To me, these old stones are much more attractive and interesting than the severe granite blocks of today, and the artist(s) should be recognized. My hope is that a GOLDENSEAL reader will be able to provide some genealogical clues as to the maker or makers of this work.

GERALD MILNES is the retired Folk Arts Coordinator at the Augusta Heritage Center of Davis & Elkins College. An author, musician, and folklorist, he makes his home in Elkins. He has written more than 20 articles for GOLDENSEAL and was the 2013 recipient of the Vandalia Award. His most recent contribution was in the Winter 2019 issue.

Honoring Our Heritage

By Jonah Whiteaker

My grandfather Forrest Thomas is 71 years old. He spends time in retirement maintaining and restoring small, family cemeteries near his home in Jackson County. Our family has roots in this county going back seven generations. Most of our ancestors are buried in small family plots or local church cemeteries that are not well maintained. Like many West Virginians, our family visits these cemeteries throughout the year, but some of them are hard to get to and are not taken care of. When Forrest retired, he turned his attention to restoring these cemeteries.

When he was growing up, Forrest and others would help dig graves and set gravestones for deceased relatives. When his grandmother died, he helped dig her grave and used a tractor to set the tombstone. It was so heavy that two people had to stand on front of the tractor to keep it from tipping over while setting the stone. Throughout his life, he was taught to honor his ancestors by visiting them in their final resting places.

He told me, "I was always taught that cemeteries are sacred places. That's where the saints are buried; they should be treated with reverence. When you visit, you are there to show your respects. You don't step on graves, and you make sure the graves are well taken care of and presented well so others can visit and see that your ancestors are respected and loved."

When a rural cemetery is not well maintained, it can get grown over with brush, and the tombstones are sometimes even flipped on their sides. My grandfather doesn't like seeing this. On a dirt road off Aplin Ridge is the Thomas family cemetery, where Elias A. Thomas—my great-great-great-great-grandfather—is buried. Elias was a Union soldier and a justice of the peace. His marble tombstone was weathered, worn, and crooked. Since Forrest believes that "people's final resting places deserve respect," he decided to fix up the grave. He got help from a monument company to straighten the heavy stone and did research on how to fix the gravestone. Forrest used chemicals to clean up the marble and used a tool to retrace the engravings on it so they could be read. Family members were pleased with the results. One noted, "It makes you feel good. It makes you feel like you are doing something that should be done."

Forrest has worked for many hours on six different local cemeteries in the last few years. These projects require hard labor, like removing brush and shrubs, and careful work, like cleaning and restoring historical monuments. One of these was the Old Sinaiville Cemetery, which had been dormant with no maintenance in years. This cemetery needed a lot of maintenance around the fence because it had collapsed. Someone's cows had gotten in through the fence, torn up the graveyard, and knocked over most of the tombstones, some of which had tumbled over the hillside. After he repaired the fence, he leveled out about 30 tilted and sinking tombstones. He learned how to do this through trial and error. Sometimes, if the tombstones are small enough, he can pick them up and set them upright. Other times, he uses hydraulic jacks to raise them. Some of the granite tombstones can weigh over 600 pounds.

Forrest estimates that he has restored 75 to 100 tombstones but says he "still has a lot more to go." He does this backbreaking work because it's rewarding. He says, "My goal is to teach grandsons to do this work. I want to instill a sense of responsibility in them to care for their forefathers' graves."

Jonah Whiteaker and his grandfather, Forrest Thomas at the Thomas family cemetery. Aplin Ridge, Jackson County. Photo by Edwin Whitaker.

After learning more about why my grandfather does this work, I've decided to spend next summer working with him so that I can learn how to take care of gravestones for myself. Visiting my ancestors' gravestones is a tradition in West Virginia, and I will teach my own children how to do it someday.

JONAH WHITEAKER wrote this article for his eighth-grade West Virginia Studies class at Charleston Catholic Middle School. It's his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

A Dose of Mortality

By Robert Jeffries

Although it doesn't hold true for everyone, I believe a man gets a dose of mortality at a point in his life. As I've moved through boyhood to manhood, I've noticed that for many men, it's when their father, or father figure, passes away.

My father was the driving force for hunting in my life. He grew up pretty much right in the middle of our state: Lewis County. There was nothing he liked more than to hear the hounds bay at a coon in the night or to feel the crispness of a cold, frosty November morning on the first day of buck season. He passed in August 2020. We interred him in a cemetery central to where we'd always hunted. Although he stopped hunting several years ago due to health reasons, he made it a point to drive over the mountain to see how my sons and I were doing each hunting season. Even in his later years, when he could no longer drive, he'd pester my mother or one of his grandchildren to drive him. Sitting at his funeral, I was faced with the fact that this would be the first year I'd go hunting without him in this physical world.

While we never owned our own land for hunting, we were fortunate to rent a narrow strip of property on which we sat against trees or, in later years, occupied tree stands. The people who owned it had run an old general store for many years—I could hardly look over the counter when I first visited. Rent for the hunting spot went up in price somewhere along the way, from cords of wood to cash, but it didn't matter, and it wasn't much.

A few days before my father's service, I stopped by the woman's house who owned the property. Her husband had passed the previous year and was a friend of my father's. I asked if she'd rented out the land yet, and she hadn't. When I asked her price, she said it was whatever I wanted to pay. We agreed on the same amount as always. I noted that I might not be back with the money for a couple of weeks and that if anyone else showed up in the interim wanting to rent it, I'd understand. She said she wasn't interested in renting it to anyone else. Somehow, that made me feel warm inside.

Dawn on the first day of rifle season found me where I normally position myself: same tree and climbing stand, always facing south. Among the various reasons to face south, the main one was that it provided the safest shooting lanes, especially now with more dwellings around than there used to be. A cold NNW wind was blowing, and the trees swayed a bit. The wind chill hovered around freezing; nothing much moved. I'm always humbly in awe of those wee hours just before dawn as the world wakes up as if I'm not there. I still relish this treat even after all these years. A few does moved through, and a small basket six-point hung out deeper in the woods to the southwest. I marked him as a good deer for my son's first buck. The day dragged onto twilight with little other movement and lots of time to think, mostly about staying warm and getting a nice shower later.

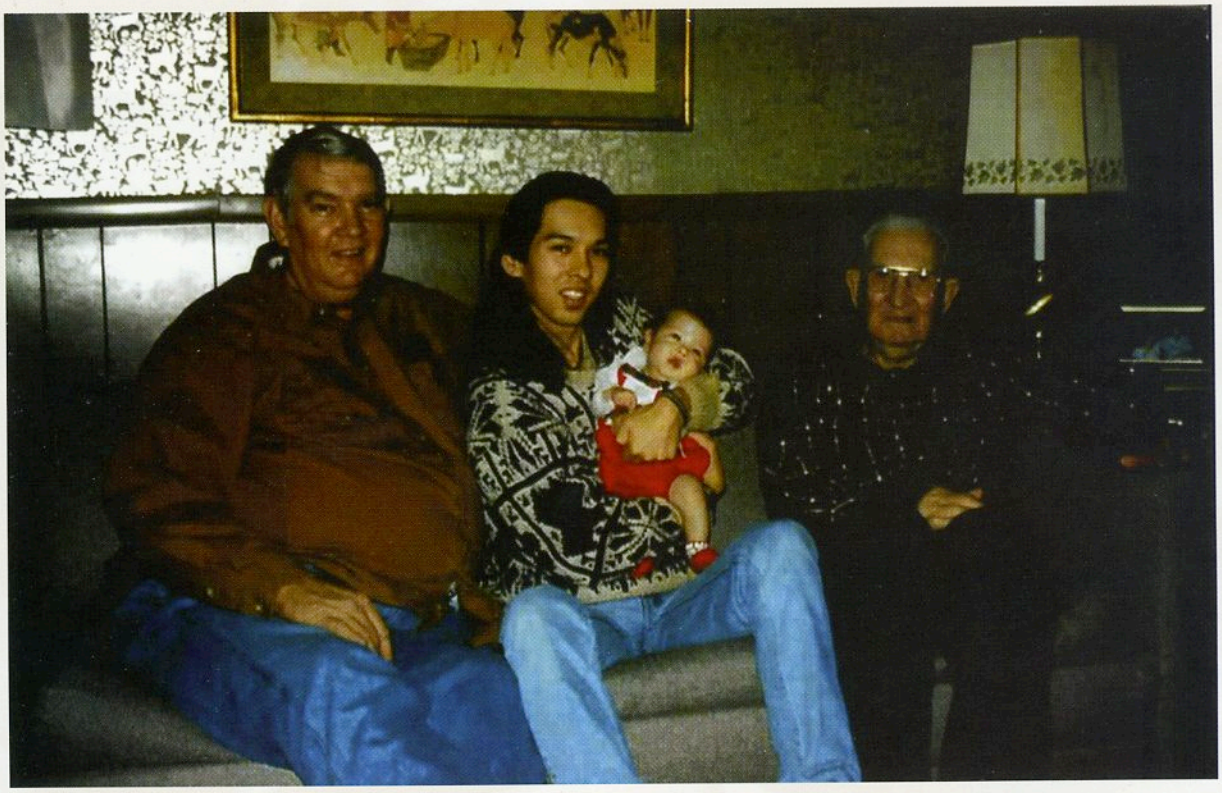
While the lives of my father, myself, and my sons are different in many ways, I've tried to hand down to them the fabric and essence of being out here so the legacy of what it all means gets passed along. Tuesday morning, I ended up on the other end of the property with my youngest son populating the stand I normally haunt. The second stand, which I'd set up the Saturday before the season opened, just seemed in the wrong place, so

L-R The Author's father as a child with his brothers and their father. Oil Creek, Lewis County. All photos courtesy of our author.

I chose a spot of ground to sit down and wait. I wasn't completely convinced whether I was hunting or just going through the motions. The little six-point of yesterday walked up on me about midmorning as I lounged around daydreaming in the warm sunrise. He didn't snort. We just stared at each other from about 40 yards away before he turned his head, flipped his tail, and walked northward.

As I shared lunch with my son, he said he hadn't seen the little six-point, or much of anything else, but he can be restless and impatient in that stand. He headed home because he had to work that afternoon. I wasn't ready to get back into the stand just yet. I unloaded the .270 I was carrying and stopped to admire it for a bit. I'll always remember the conversation Dad and I had over the phone about that gun. He'd called me at work one day many years ago to tell me he'd found a lefthanded .270 on the used rack at a local shop and wanted to know if I was interested. I didn't have the heart to tell him I lacked the money for that sort of thing back then, so I said, "Let me think on it a bit." We said our goodbyes, hung up, and, despite my assurances to him, I didn't think much more about it.

A week or so later, I got a call from Dad. We spoke about the normal things, and then the conversation turned to that .270. "Are you going to buy that rifle or not?" he asked. After hearing about the make, model, condition, and price, I finally said, "As much as it sounds like

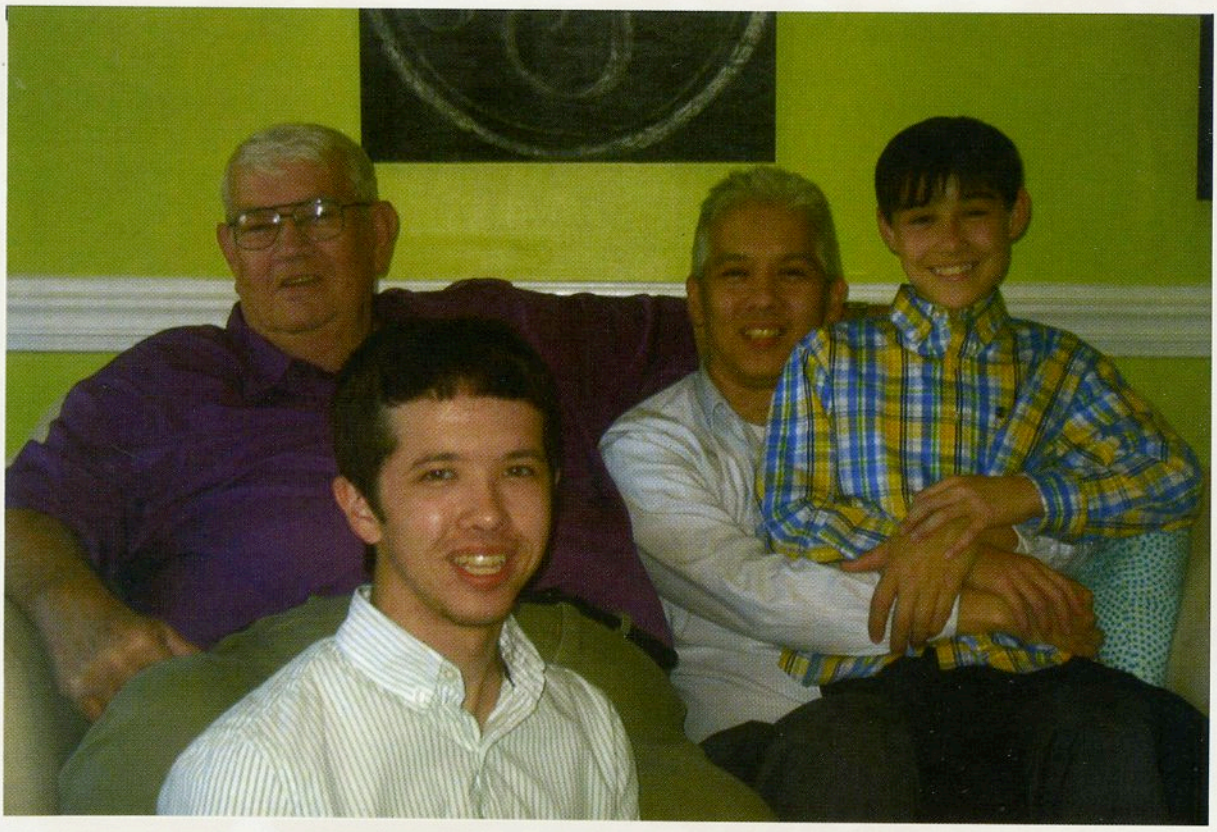


Robert Jeffries (middle) holding his oldest son, seated between his father and grandfather.

an awesome gun, I'm not sure I have the cash lying around for that right now." After a short pause, he replied, "Well, don't worry about it because I bought it. You just buy the scope, and we'll call it even."

That day in the woods—my first hunt without him—I gently placed the .270 in the old soft-sided gun case, just like Dad always taught me, and then zipped it up. I drove over to the cemetery and wandered to the plot where we'd laid Dad to rest. As I approached his grave, a group of does jumped up. They'd been bedded down just inside the wood line, no more than 25 yards away. They stood for a moment as we stared at one another before prancing away deeper into a stand of pines behind the church. In the past, I always thought it was ridiculous for someone to talk to a piece of granite or a mound of dirt; however, that day, I found myself talking to Dad. I told him that I missed him and that we were taking care of Mom. I told him the hunting was slow. Finally, I poured a sip of coffee and turned to walk away, my heart neither light nor heavy.

I was back in the tree stand at 2:30 p.m. and waited with little expectation as this little strip of property had produced only one nice buck in all the years we'd leased it. The sun traveled slowly toward the western horizon and the witching hour was drawing near. Deep into the woods to the southwest, I noted some odd movement in the brush between some trees. It turned out to be a couple of does walking northward, the one in the rear stopping at the last moment before crossing into a stand of pines and looking back at the same six-point I'd seen that morning. I shook my head and watched him intently for the next half hour as he picked his way across the open woods to the pines where the does had vanished. His tail had just disappeared into the pines when another group of does came in from the south and meandered around the area in front of my stand. Deeper into the gathering gloom and weeds, I saw movement directly in front of me. Tangles of stunted



The author seated (right) with his father, and two sons.

trees obscured my view, but I had a feeling. After he twisted his neck slightly, I could make out one long tine of his left antler. With several sets of eyes in front of me, I carefully set up and waited. As if guided, he made his way into a clearing no more than 50 yards in front of me. I chose my spot, squeezed the trigger, and off he went, but not very far. He acted as if he hadn't been hit. I said under my breath, "There's no way I missed that." The last word was barely out of my mouth when he began to stagger and went back the way he came. A few seconds later, I heard a *thump* as he dropped just out of sight. It was full twilight by the time I got to him. He was a decent eight-point. I unloaded my rifle, leaned it against a tree next to him, and sat down by his rump.

I looked up at the sky to the west, through the sparse canopy of pines and naked hardwoods. The clouds opened a little, and I could see stars glittering in the velvet night above. I sat there for a while, thinking of times I'd spent in these woods and places around it. My very first hunt was on a cold and snowy pre-dawn morning as I followed Dad across a windswept field, where, in the distance, a gray fox played in the snow. Later, my first deer drive, my first harvested deer and, finally, my first buck—milestones that brought proud smiles to my father's beaming face. I recalled the guidance I'd received and the respect I'd earned from the people Dad and I used to hunt with.

Even though the temperatures were dropping around me and I began to see my breath, I didn't seem to feel it much. While I can't really put my finger on it, I feel as if I passed another sort of milestone that day.

ROBERT JEFFRIES grew up in the Eastern Panhandle of WV but also spent a good bit of time at his grandfather's family farm in Lewis County. Jeffries day job is in the electronics business. An outdoorsman, he enjoys hunting, hiking, and is an avid fly fisherman. When not actively pursuing outdoor activities with his wife, he is enjoying the peace of rural VA on the banks of the Shenandoah River. This is his first published piece, and his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Close-up of headstone found in the Lutheran Cemetery. All photos courtesy of Steve Brightwell.

Looking across at Christ Reformed United Church of Christ.

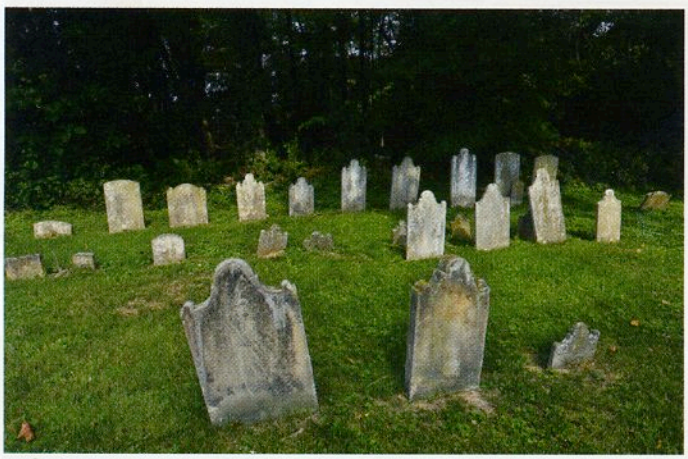
Shepherdstown's Historic Lutheran Cemetery

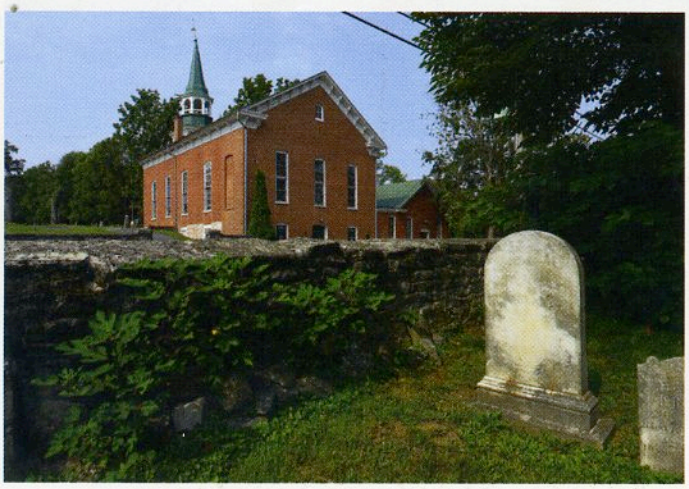
Up in the Eastern panhandle you will find Shepherdstown (Jefferson County), touted for being the oldest incorporated town in the state (a title shared with Romney, Hampshire County). With a population of around 1,800, the town is known best these days as a college town and tourist attraction. In fact, most of Shepherdstown is designated as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. Shepherdstown has a vast and storied history, which has left it with numerous cemeteries dating back as early as the 1600s. One such graveyard belongs to the Christ Reformed United Church of Christ located on East German Street. Christ Reformed celebrated its 275 landmark anniversary earlier this year in May of 2022. A lot can happen in 275 years. As noted in several articles found in this issue, there is so much knowledge to be found by exploring the cemeteries in our communities. One example of that is the heavy German influence that can be observed in the cemetery of Christ Reformed. Many of the early settlers of this area were German – so much so that the main street in town is named German Street. The following pictures were taken by our Department photographer Stephen Brightwell, and tell a visual story of that history.

Weathered with age, these stones tell the joys and woes of our ancestors.

The sign denoting the older section of the cemetery.

The Graves of the Sigler family dating from the 1850s.





Crowned gravestones like the ones pictured here were a common design feature of early 19th century gravemarkers. Early headstones usually featured an arched or rounded top. This was meant to represent the door, or archway that the deceased would pass through to gain their heavenly reward.

Billy Cox. Photo Courtesy of Tony Russell.

"The Death of Frank Bowen"
A Homicide and a Ballad

By Ivan M. Tribe and Jacob L. Bapst

In the early summer of 1929, a leading West Coast newspaper wrote a full-page summary of a series of events that had been reported in national papers for nearly two months. The headline read, "A Murdered Man's Body in the Back Seat beside the Smiling Bride." Although the article seems embellished somewhat, on the whole, it's true. The biggest exception is that the *corpus delecti* was probably in the front seat.

The story behind the grim homicide took place following incidents on the morning of May 8, 1929. Millard Morrison, 23, of Elizabeth, New Jersey, accompanied by two newlyweds, Walter Wilmot, 21, and Violet, his 14-year- old bride of 16 days, stopped for breakfast at a small service station / restaurant on Lens Creek Road at Hernshaw, several miles southeast of Charleston. They noticed that Frank Bowen, the owner-operator, had just counted out $240 in cash and was preparing to deposit it in Charleston. Returning to Morrison's vehicle, they quickly developed a plan. They drove back less than half a mile toward Charleston and stopped their car.

Bowen soon came driving along. Feigning car trouble, they flagged him down, asked him for aid, and climbed into his Dodge. Within a minute or two, Morrison, in the back seat, pulled a pistol and fired a fatal shot into the back of Bowen's head. Willmot took control of the car, covered Bowen's body with an overcoat, and drove back to their auto, where young Violet awaited. They picked her and their possessions up and drove back toward Charleston, apparently looking for a spot to dispose of Bowen's body. One of them remarked that if they dumped it in Kanawha River, it might not surface for three days, by which time they'd be long gone. They also considered hiding it somewhere along Lens Creek Road.

But their plan soon hit a snag. Motorcycle policeman Albert L. Youell spotted the car near the Kanawha City Bridge driving somewhat over the speed limit. He followed it for a bit and finally stopped them. He then encountered the surprise of a lifetime. In a 1959 interview with Charleston reporter Sol Padlibsky, Youell recalled, "I asked the young guy in the front seat for his driver's license." When he saw the name on the license was Frank Bowen with an address of "Lens Creek Mountain," he knew something was wrong.

Youell had been on the job for only a few days, but since Bowen's business was a frequent stop along his patrol, he knew that neither Morrison nor Willmot was the friendly proprietor of the place. Asked what was under the overcoat (or blanket, depending on the version), he was told it was a drunk they were trying to sober up. This raised further doubts in Youell's mind as he saw no signs of breathing. After asking the occupants to get out, he found three pistols and a pair of handcuffs—and the body of Frank Bowen. He then took the threesome to the police station.

The Charleston *Daily Mail* reported that Bowen "was acting in the role of Good Samaritan for a tourist party from New Jersey. He was alleged to have been shot down at the wheel of his automobile taking the two men to a filling station for gasoline after their own automobile had become disabled. As a result of the murder shortly before noon Wednesday, Millard Morrison, 24, and Walter E. Willmot,

Grave of Frank Bowen. Photo by Stan Bumgardner.

21, both of Elizabeth, N.J., are being held in the county jail on charges of murder, and Willmott's 14-year-old wife Violet is being held as a witness."

The homicide drama continued. On Saturday, the *Hinton Daily News* updated the story: "Alarmed at reports a mob was forming to attack the county jail at Charleston . . . authorities placed a heavy guard over Willard [*sic*] Morrison . . . and Mr. and Mrs. Walter E. Willmott, tourists from Elizabethton [*sic*], N.J., who were said by police to have confessed to the slaying of Frank Bowen, Hernshaw, W.Va. restaurant man. The three decided to 'get' Bowen, according to Willmott's confession, when they saw him place a roll of money in his pocket. His body was found . . . under an overcoat. Mrs. Willmott is only 14."

The mob apparently dispersed, and Kanawha County authorities wasted little time. A special grand jury indicted both men, but Violet Wilmot was released as they believed that she'd remained in Morrison's car when the crime was committed. The trial jury was seated by the end of May. Morrison was tried and convicted first. In Wilmot's trial, his 14-year-old bride testified as a witness on behalf of her husband. She argued that Morrison had committed the crime and that Wilmot had opposed stealing the car. Her testimony failed to impress the jury, which returned a guilty verdict after less than an hour of deliberation. The judge sentenced them to hang at the state penitentiary in Moundsville on September 13, 1929.

The lengthy recap article in *The San Francisco Examiner* reported that before coming to West Virginia, Morrison had robbed his uncle's house and had been shot in the leg and caught by another uncle. Interested in making a hasty exit from the Garden State, he'd stopped to ask his newly married friends, the Wilmots, if they'd like to accompany him. They consented, packed a few bags, and took off for parts west, holding up a couple local stores for about $50 before departing New Jersey. The *Examiner* editorialized that young Violet, an eighth grader, "was full of the most advanced ideas about young girls being 'free moral agents' to live their lives in their own way." She may have had some second thoughts on that topic considering what transpired.

Meanwhile, Violet made another effort to save her husband. According to a New Jersey newspaper, she hitchhiked to Moundsville to plea for his life. Instead, she was arrested as a vagrant and tossed into the local jail. Released, she apparently resigned herself to Walter's fate, corresponded with him, and made one final visit. As was the custom of the time, news media concentrated much of their pre-execution reporting on the final meals of the doomed. In addition to the West Virginia press, the hanging received coverage in such papers as the *Brooklyn Eagle and Cincinnati Enquirer.* As for the grieving widow, she returned to New Jersey, remarried in 1934, and passed from the pages of history.

After the two defendants were incarcerated, but likely prior to their trials and executions, a ballad was written about the incident. It was recorded and perhaps written by Billy Cox (1897 – 1968), who'd been singing songs and playing his harmonica and guitar on WOBU (later WCHS) radio for a year or so. Sometimes, he was absent from his broadcast time (by most accounts, including his own, Cox was somewhat irresponsible), so station owner Walter Fredericks arranged for him to make recordings for the Gennett label in Richmond, Indiana, that could be played when he was unavailable. Cox's first session was in July 1929, comprising mostly covers of Jimmie Rodgers songs. Exceptions included his original number "Moonshine in the Hills" and a rewrite of an older song—reset in Jackson County—about bucolic snuff dippers (Charlesto-

The Death of Frank Bowen

Come all of you dear people, and listen while I tell.
A sad and heartfelt story, of which you all know well
Was early in the springtime, 'twas in the month of May,
The birds were singing sweetly, and everything was gay.

A tourist man was travelin' from a distant Clarksburg town,
By the way of Charleston, on Lens Creek Road was found,
Upon this lonely mountain, a filling station stands,
Where tourists ever traveled, were lent a helping hand.

Frank Bowen was its owner, a noble hearted man,
Who played a Good Samaritan, to help his fellow man,
But Bowen left his dear ones upon that fatal day,
To motor to the city, on business so they say.

Two men were waiting for him, they flagged his car that day,
To ask them for a favor, to help them on their way,
Into his car he took them, they asked for a ride,
So Martin [Morrison] rode behind him, and Willmot by his side.

They rode along in silence, amidst the dark and gloom,
A shot from Martin's pistol, put Bowen in the tomb,
He leaves to mourn in sorrow, his lovin' friends so true,
And to his wife and children, he had to bid adieu,

People all take warning, prepare to meet thy God,
For he is surely coming according to his word,
Oh, give your heart to Jesus, repent from every sin,
And at the crown of judgment, your crown of life will win.

nians apparently saw themselves as quite urbane compared to the rural county to their north).

At Cox's second session for Gennett in October 1929, he recorded seven more issued numbers, including "The Death of Frank Bowen." The tune and rhyme scheme were borrowed from an eastern Kentucky ballad, "The Rowan County Crew." The lyrics followed a typical murder ballad pattern: painting a pleasant picture, followed by tragedy, and concluding with a warning.

The mistaking of Morrison's name for Martin in the lyrics may be because the aggressor in "The Rowan County Crew" was named John Martin, or it may simply have been a mistake. Otherwise, except for some other minor fallacies, such as the men being from Clarksburg, the lyrics are accurate. It's somewhat surprising that nothing is included about the trial or execution since they took place prior to the recording, but perhaps the song was already completed and the writer—Cox or another—didn't feel like going back and adding another verse or two. At any rate, the number was released in January 1930 on Gennett 7052. For some reason, Gennett didn't issue it on one

Two Face Hangman's Noose

Walter Willmot, left, was sentenced yesterday to hang Friday, September 13, with Millard Morrison, right, for the murder of Frank Bowen on May 8. Mrs. Willmot, 14, center, honeymooning on the death drive through West Virginia, left yesterday for her home at Elizabeth, N. J., after being held as material witness.

News Clipping announcing the sentence (death by hanging) of Wilmot and Morrison.

of its subsidiary labels, such as Champion and Supertone, which may account for its scarcity. Reportedly, the only known copy in existence today is owned by a collector in California.

As for Billy Cox, he continued to record until 1940. From 1936, he was accompanied on disc by Cliff Hobbs (1916 – 1961) from Cedar Grove (Kanawha County). Two of his songs, the original "Sparkling Brown Eyes" and his re-composition "Filipino Baby" (originally a Spanish-American War song) became country standards. In part due to his reckless lifestyle, Cox sank into relative poverty and died on December 10, 1968. He'd recorded a comeback long-play album the previous year but died before he could benefit from it.

Thirty years after Bowen's death, a column in a local paper recalled the incident. A. L. Youell—then 69—ran a newsstand in downtown Charleston. After the trial, he'd dropped police work and moved to Greenbrier County but later served as police chief in Cedar Grove. Among other recollections, he said, "What made me so . . . mad was that two strangers could kill a man like Bowen after he tried to help them." After another 60-plus years, Frank Bowen's death may largely be forgotten, but the news of the time and the obscure ballad that commemorated it deserves a better fate.

IVAN TRIBE is an emeritus faculty member 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 Ziegfeld Beauty 1898-1988* (2019), and *The Jamboree in Wheeling* (2020), written in collaboration with Jake Bapst. This is Ivan's 13th 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 second contribution to the magazine.

Then and Now
Campbell's Creek

By Todd A. Hanson

Do you ever look at an old building or just a setting you pass by every day and wonder, "What did this place look like 70 or 100 years ago?" I grew up a six-generation native of Campbell's Creek, a tributary of the Kanawha River about five miles east of Charleston. With third-great-grandparents buried all up and down the hollow, it seemed as if the prior generations all knew each other in the area. In my case, some of my local school teachers were also our Sunday School teachers. Many of my friend's grandpas worked in the mines with my grandpa, and our parents grew up and graduated high school together. When we acknowledged someone, we generally knew their brothers and sisters as well as their aunts and uncles. Looking back, it was as if we lived in Mayberry from *The Andy Griffith Show*. Oblivious to the dangers of the outside world, life as a child seemed secure, safe, and carefree. We could depend on almost anybody around for help if needed.

Although we may romanticize our developmental years, those bygone days had their own challenges and problems; however, we generally choose to remember the best of times, especially those moments spent with loved ones who are no longer with us. As with every generation before, I'm quick to point out the differences in life back then compared to today. Little things, such as playing outside until dark, chasing lightning bugs, and visiting with neighbors on the porch. No shopping malls, fast-food restaurants, or convenience stores. Service-station attendants pumped your gas and checked your oil. TV, if you had one, was limited to three networks that all signed off at midnight. Cell phones were unheard of, but one can only imagine the "social media" conducted over old party-line telephones!

The place from my childhood that contains the best-preserved windows into the past is Port Amherst, one of the longest-running industrial sites in the Kanawha Valley. This commercial railyard and river terminal between the mouth of Campbell's Creek and Malden is the corporate headquarters of Amherst Madison LLC. It's occupied the property since 1950 and continues to be an industrial leader in the diverse fields of inland river commerce, construction, and marine repair. Amherst and its subsidiaries maintain the traditions begun by the Dana Brothers in 1865 and the Hatfield Campbell Creek Coal Company (1924 – 1950) on this same site.

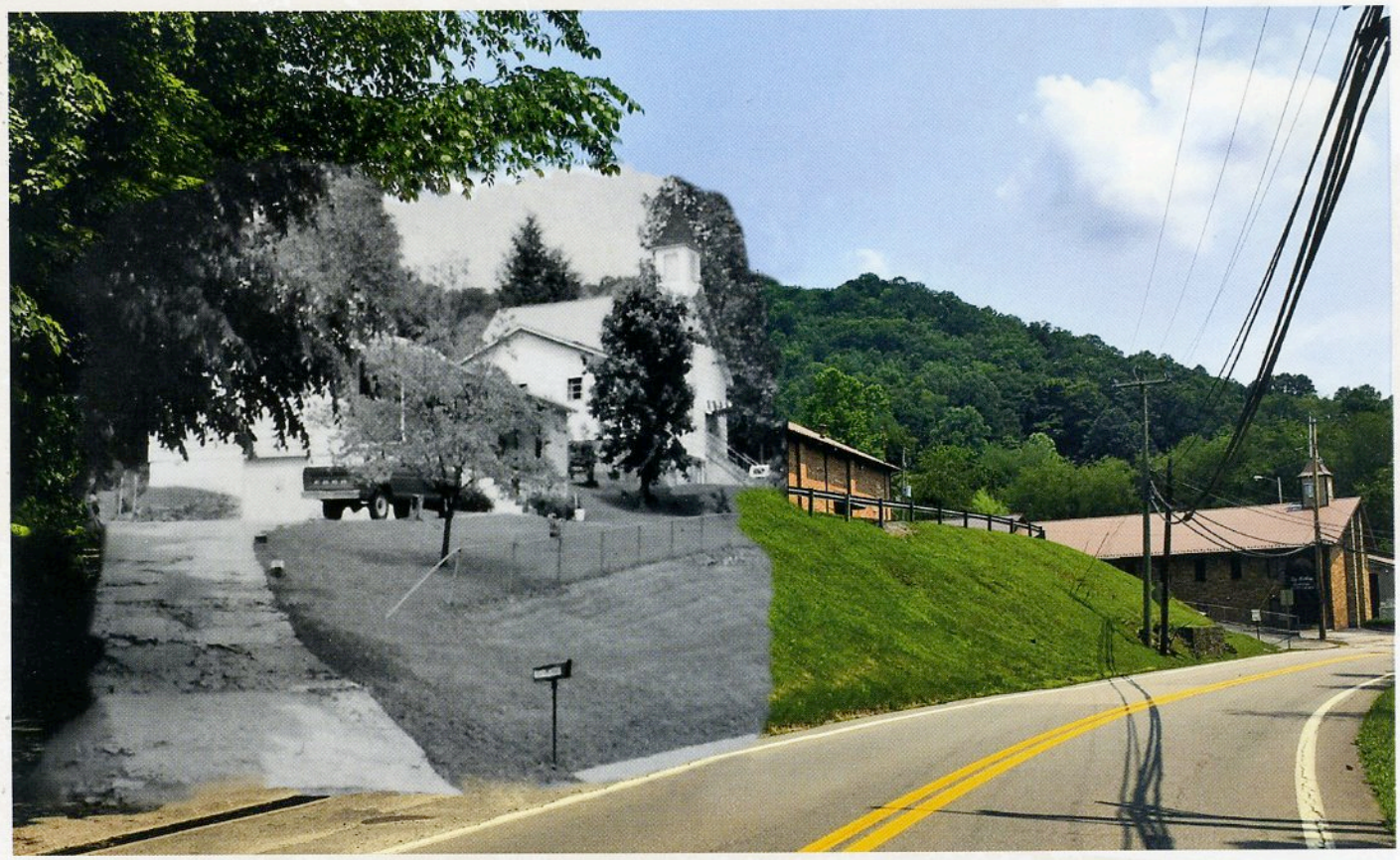
Over the years, all three of these companies mined coal, ran a short-line railroad, and operated a fleet of towboats and barges, allowing them to deliver goods to customers without the use of any outside service. Coal mined here was distributed to western markets, north to the Great Lakes, and south to the Gulf of Mexico. To maintain their assets, the companies operated a lumber mill, a carpenter shop, a foundry, a machine shop, a fabrication shop, railroad maintenance facilities, a railyard, a river tipple, and harbor and marine ways at this terminal. All types of mining equipment, railcars, river barges, and even steamboats were once constructed here.

As the industrial climate continues to change, so does Amherst Madison. Al-

Campbell's Creek Railroad Company's General Electric SW9 diesel locomotive #13 at the Port Amherst railyard faces east towards George's Creek about 1958. The logo on the cab was designed by Ira Weeks. The camel, copied from the Camel brand cigarette, stands along a stream with the letters "R. R." circled by a thick black line; the inside joke here is that most natives pronounce Campbell's Creek as "Camel's Creek." This locomotive was purchased new in 1953. Courtesy of our author.

though coal is still being mined on Campbell's Creek, the region has become less dependent on the industry for survival. The river, on the other hand, has been the lifeblood of the valley since the earliest settlers and has provided the opportunities for this company to flourish. Under outstanding leadership and foresight, Amherst has become a leader in the inland waterways industry. Today, Amherst Madison offers its clients the means to transfer bulk material with towing and fleeting services, all manner of marine vessel repair at their dry dock facilities at Gallipolis, Ohio, and crane-mounted flat barges for a variety of construction, dredging, pipeline crossing, and riverbank stabilization projects.

While my memory, stretched to its fullest extent, reaches only the late 1960s, my imagination carries me back much further, having listened to local elders talk about how things used to be at the height of coal production. During my playful childhood adventures, I explored the former mining sites and coal town ruins and walked the former railroad right-a-way because, as kids, we weren't allowed on the hard road. I wish I could have seen this area in its heyday, with passenger trains plying back and forth, mining and manufacturing boom-



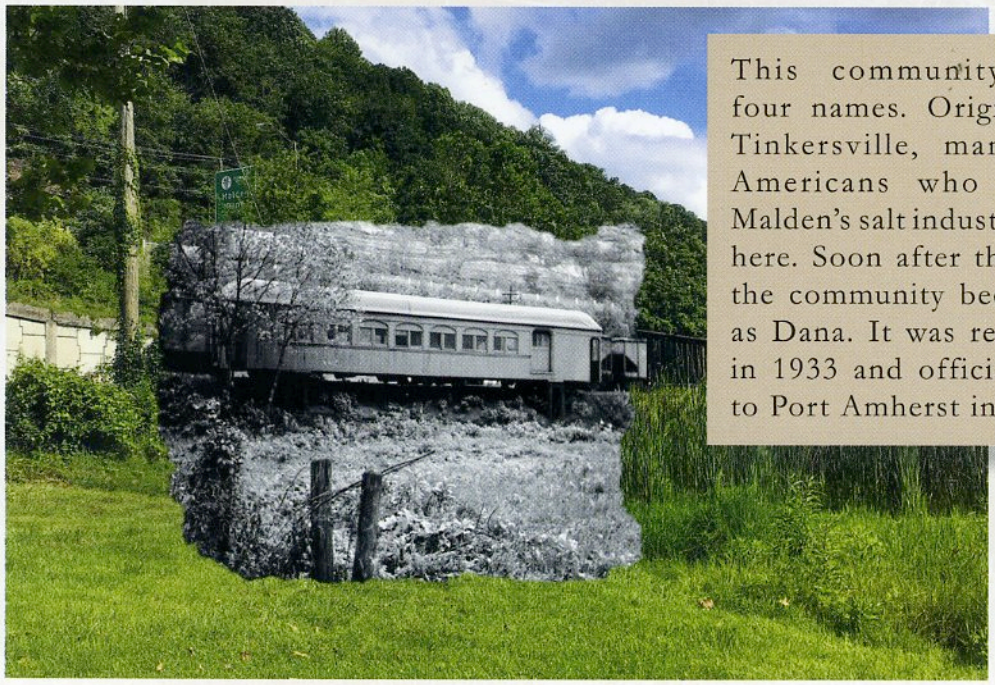
This 1986 photo is superimposed on the site of the Big Bottom Missionary Baptist Church (organized 1912) at Tad. The original church building was erected in 1916 and served until 1984, when worship services were moved to the partially completed new building next to the road. The old church on the hill served as an activity building until 1989, when it was torn down and replaced with a new modern brick structure. A parking lot now occupies the homeplace of this writer. Courtesy of our author.

ing, graceful paddlewheel riverboats pushing their loads, and the lonesome screams of steam whistles echoing throughout the creek and river valley. We'll never see the age-old community landmarks, such as the company store, ever again. The trains no longer run here; trucks carry what little coal is still being mined. Time has surpassed their usefulness in this modern society, and another generation has moved in.

This photo essay overlays historic photos of "then" with contemporary images of "now" taken from the same locations. Some are not precise re-creations because vegetation has engulfed the entire scene; in other places, the scars of strip mining, gas well drill sites, pipelines, timber work, and mine reclamation have altered the whole landscape. New homes, roadways, and bridges obscure other remnants of the past. It saddens me that so many of our historic structures are entirely gone except for the memories of those who once lived and labored there decades ago. While much of our history is lost to time, unnoticed, or unrecorded, one can become dismayed and marred by the history. But I like to imagine the continuity of history—how memories and photos of the past connect with the present. Not knowing what tomorrow might bring, these photos help me better appreciate the history that's still with us, even if just in memories.

TODD A. HANSON is a sixth generation native of Campbell's Creek. He's the author of Campbells Creek—A Portrait of a Coal Mining Community. His articles and photographs have appeared in Wonderful West Virginia, West Virginia Hillbilly, Blue Ridge Country, and elsewhere. This is his 4th contribution to GOLDENSEAL. His most recent article appeared in our Fall 2017 issue.

The mainline of the Campbell's Creek Railroad followed the hollow to Putney in the 1930s. This is where the mainline intersected Amherst Drive (the entrance to Port Amherst) and Piedmont Road, looking up Campbell's Creek at Thoroughfare Gap. The concrete abutment covered in vines on the left is all that remains of the original U.S. Route 60 bridge that directed traffic over the rails toward Charleston. Courtesy of Bob Calderwood.



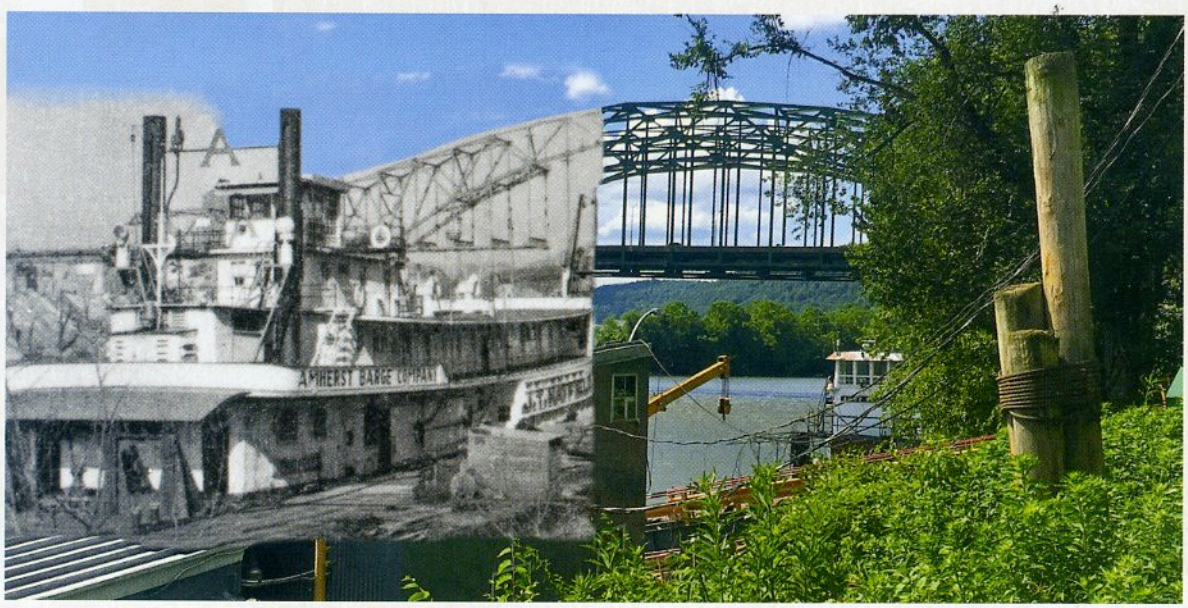
This community has had four names. Originally called Tinkersville, many African-Americans who worked in Malden's salt industry once lived here. Soon after the Civil War, the community became known as Dana. It was renamed Reed in 1933 and officially changed to Port Amherst in 1956.

The Campbell's Creek Railroad Company's former combination passenger / freight coach (shown here about 1952) was used for many years as a storage shed at Reed (now Port Amherst) following the discontinuance of passenger service on December 29, 1950. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Railroad Museum.

The Dana Brothers built this general operations office for the Hatfield Campbell Creek Coal and Railroad companies at Dana (now Port Amherst) in the 1870s, if not earlier. The oldest building left on the property, it's by the riverbank near the present Amherst Madison corporation main office building. Pictured from about 1947 are (left-right) Harvey Louderback, Edith Wriggle, J. T. Odell, Kathleen Buckley, and Jess L. Coen. Courtesy of Jess L. Coen.

This pleasant view of Charleston's old C&O Railway bridge just below the mouth of Elk River was a violent scene on August 15, 1940. That day, the Hatfield Campbell Creek Coal's sternwheeler *Henry C. Yeiser Jr.* succumbed to raging floodwaters and crashed against the southside pier. Fortunately, the sternwheeler *J. F. Butts* (in the background of the historic photo) was rescued unharmed. The fleet had been moored at the Reed Terminal when it was cut loose by a runaway barge. Courtesy of the Kenton Public Library of Covington, Kentucky.

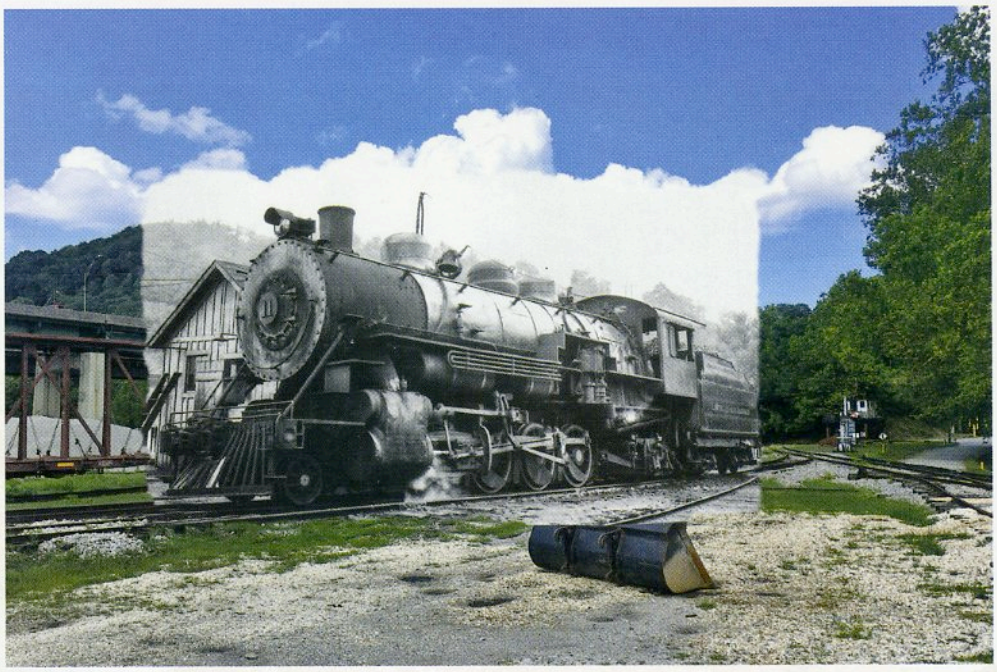
The current Dollar General Store at Coal Fork rests on the earlier site of independent grocer Bob Purdue's IGA, built originally by E. I. "Ned" Bowles in 1947. Ned started his grocery on the back of this lot in a building he'd constructed from discarded wooden coal barges. The building shown here (about 1987) later housed Gregory's Key Market, where Bob had worked as a meat cutter before buying the store. The 1947 building and Bob's business were lost to a fire on February 17, 2002. Courtesy of our author.



The steam-powered towboat *J. T. Hatfield* is shown here about 1953 moored at Amherst Barge Company's Reed Terminal. It was named for the founder of the Hatfield Coal Company (1865 – 1938). In 1953, when this subsidiary of Amherst Coal was formed, the new West Virginia Turnpike bridge was still under construction. It's now known as the Yeager Bridge in honor of aviation pioneer Brig. Gen. Chuck Yeager. Courtesy of Amherst Madison.

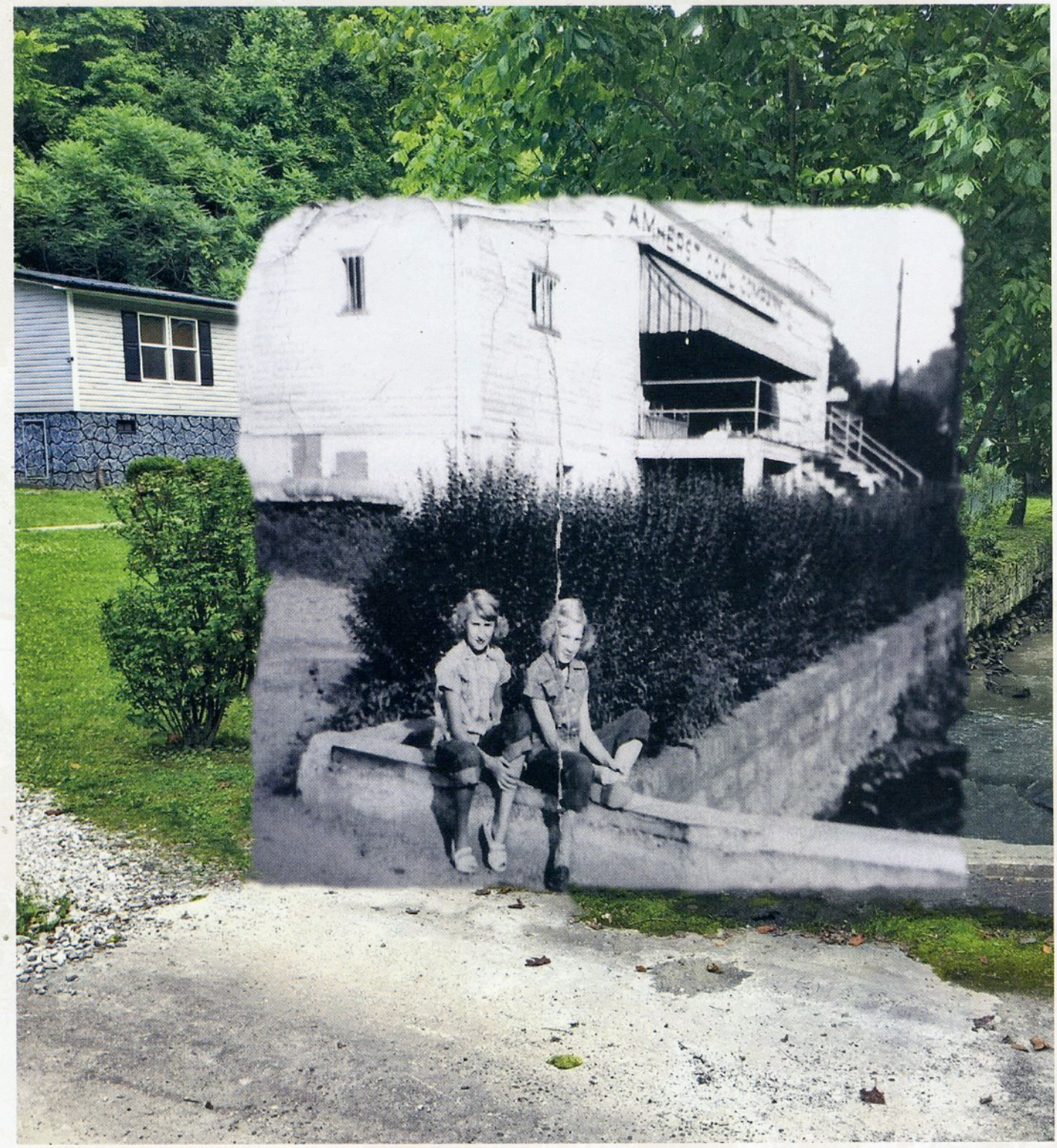
The towboat fleet of the Amherst Barge Company is moored at Port Amherst about 1956: (left-right) the *Laura J.*, *Dorothy*, *Emma No. 3, J. T. Hatfield*, and *Herbert E. Jones*. The *Ellen Hatfield* can be seen to the far right, she was inoperable at the time of this photograph. This terminal continues to serve the company's Kanawha River fleet today. Amherst Madison now operates more than 30 towboats on the inland waterway system. Its motor vessels range from 200 to 5,600 horsepower, including sternwheelers for shallow-draft operations. Courtesy of Amherst Madison.

Iron Duke works the Campbell's Creek Coal harbor at Dana (now Port Amherst) in the 1920s. This vessel was built at the Dana marine ways and commissioned into service in January 1913. The river tipple was replaced by the Hatfield interest in the early 1930s, as was the *Iron Duke* by a new boat of the same name in 1935. Amherst Madison continues to operate this Kanawha River terminal today. A fourth boat (built in 1964) now carries the name *Iron Duke*. Courtesy of the University of Wisconsin La Crosse Steamboat Collection.

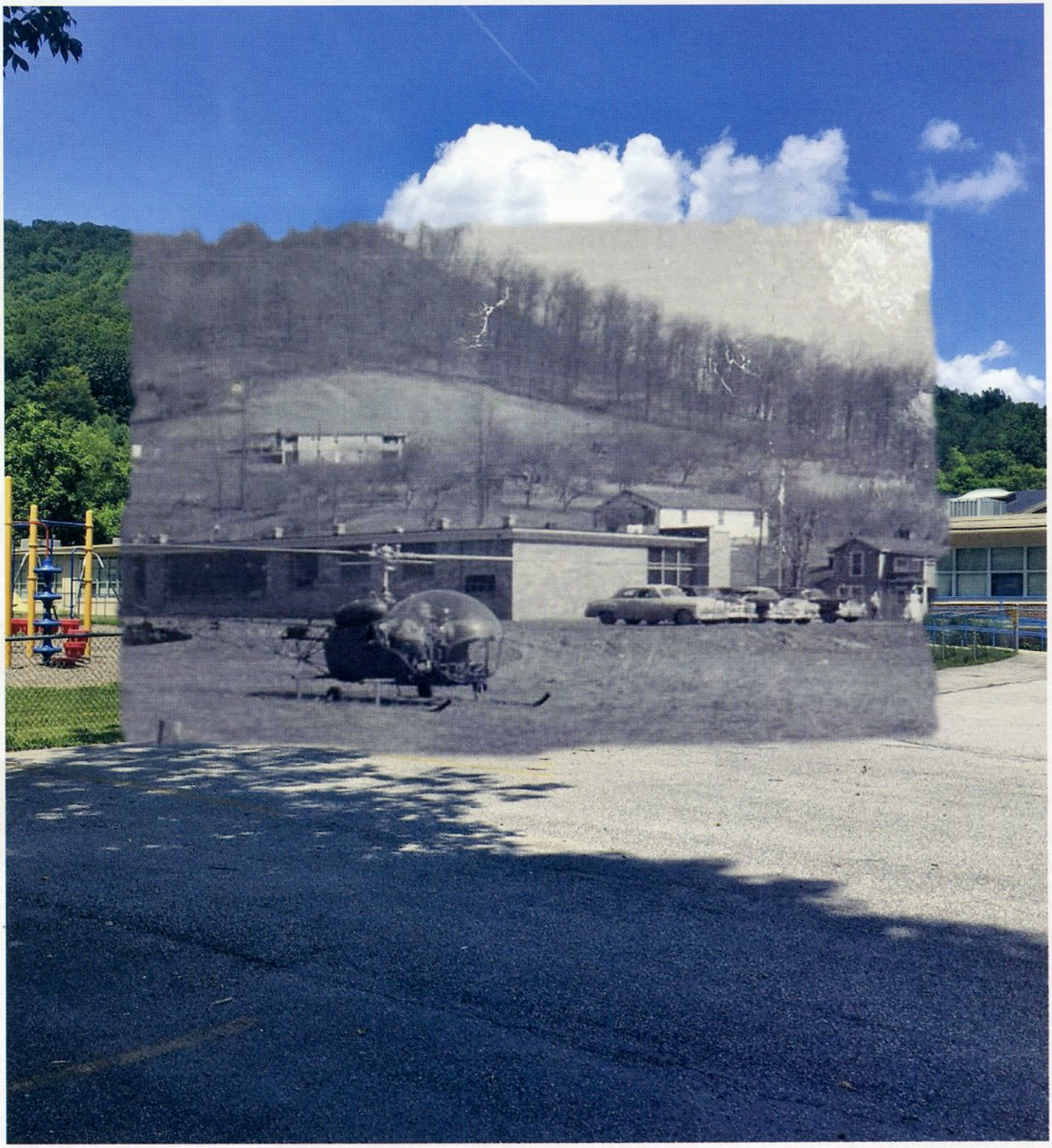


The former Campbell's Creek Railroad maintenance facilities and yard at Port Amherst still provide a variety of railcar repair services. This class M-4 steam engine was built by Philadelphia's Baldwin Locomotive Works in December 1923 for the Greenbrier & Eastern Railroad and sold to the Campbell's Creek Railroad in October 1934. She made the final passenger run on this track on December 29, 1950. Courtesy of our author.

Campbell's Creek Coal's store (shown here in 1986) at Port Amherst was built around 1880. It served not only general mercantile but also served as a U.S. post office and company railroad depot. Perhaps most importantly, it was the hub of this community's activity for more than 100 years. It was demolished in 1991 to make room for the current U.S. Route 60 bridge and Campbell's Creek roadway exchange—and relocation of some railroad tracks. Courtesy of our author.



In the background of this 1950s photo is the company store that served Rensford from 1936 until 1958. Two unidentified young ladies are seated on the bridge used by the company delivery truck. The foot bridge that once led to the store remains today. This building stood abandoned for several years following the closure of the mines. Sometime in the early 1970s, vandals burned this grand old building to the ground. Courtesy of Carl Midkiff.



Campbell's Creek Elementary School opened in 1954 (shortly before this photo was taken), consolidating several one- and two-room schools on the upper portion of the creek. During the 1963 state Centennial, it was renamed Mary Ingles Elementary in honor of the settler taken captive by Shawnee Indians during a frontier raid on Drapers Meadow, Virginia, in 1755. She eventually escaped and made a miraculous journey home by following the river. She reported that the Shawnee stopped at Great Buffalo Lick, near the mouth of Campbell's Creek, to make salt. Photo courtesy of Leonard Ulbrich.

Revolving "ripper" head of a continuous mining machine. All photos courtesy of the author.

The 1955 Coal Mine . . . and Its Lessons

By Bill Mahoney

As a boy, I was already focused on coal.

I lived with my family in Coalwood (McDowell County), where the primary task was to safely mine and ship coal. People were allowed to live in Coalwood—known as a "model coal town"—only if a family member was somehow connected to the mine. The reward was good pay, housing, and services. This meant that these southern West Virginians talked and dreamed about coal. Teachers, office workers, doctors, and, of course, miners were all there for the coal company.

George Lafayette Carter (1857 – 1936) obtained almost 20,000 acres of land and founded Coalwood in the early 1900s, with a vision of delivering coal from deep in the ground to the world. In the late 1940s, it became the Olga Coal Company, owned by Youngstown Sheet and Tube.

In the mid-1950s, I was a ninth grader at the Coalwood School. My mother was a teacher. My dad was an outside foreman at the coal preparation plant, where coal was cleaned, sized, and shipped. I was considering life as a coal miner, even though my parents wanted me to go to college and

M.L. "Spud" Mahoney, (1925-1969) Coalwood Mine, McDowell County.

have a different career. I was tall and gangly, often stumbling over my own feet and enduring comments about my 6'3" frame being too tall to mine coal.

One day, the ninth-grade boys were invited to go down into the mine. It was time, so they said, for our wet noses to learn a little bit about the real world. We were very excited and looked forward to that day in April 1955 when we could show off our muscles and smarts. We were scheduled to get the day off from school just to learn about coal mining first-hand.

The time arrived quickly. It was a warm and clear spring day. I wore jeans and a long-sleeved dark pullover shirt. Daddy always came home dirty after working at the mine, so I figured I would too. We boys met in the mine office, beside the tipple, at the top of the mine shaft. It was 9 a.m. and time for instructions. No girls were allowed. Based on old superstitions, which largely continued into the 1970s, women supposedly brought bad luck in mines.

We were given hard hats and spent a few minutes adjusting our headbands. We each received a mine check—a 2" coin-shaped piece of brass with a number on it. "Remember your number," the miner leading us said. "Put the brass circle on the attendance board. If there is an accident, the brass pieces will reveal who is still in the mine."

What? Accident? A murmur stirred. This turned into a shiver and finally a nervous group laugh. Deep down inside, we all knew an accident was possible.

"One other thing," the leader said. "It gets pretty dusty in the mine. You should chew some chewing gum to keep your mouth moist and clean. If you prefer, you can try some chewing tobacco. Both are available for you. I'll tell you when you should put either in your mouth."

We quickly forgot the mention of an accident and decided on the chewing tobacco. We were, after all, ninth graders.

There were about 30 of us. We were soon escorted to an elevator, known as the cage, which took us in three loads down the mine shaft deep into the earth where the action was. We tried to be brave, with frightened smiles, as we loaded into the cage. Then, it suddenly dropped, beginning its rapid fall. I latched onto the person beside me. We rode nervously for most of a minute, descending several hundred feet, finally banging to a stop at the bottom of the shaft.

Temperature in the deep mine was about the same year-round. It was comfortably

Coalwood mine tipple c. 1950.

cool, damp, and dusty. The leader said, "This is the time for chewing gum or chewing tobacco." So, we obliged and opened our mouths wide, inserting the tobacco. I heard some choking.

We were in a cavernous room where the company serviced the mining equipment, such as mantrip cars that moved men through tunnels throughout the mine. Also, there were contoured low-slung coal cars for bringing freshly mined coal to the coal elevator, which then brought it to the surface. And there were a couple of continuous miners, the newest invention for removing coal from the thick or thin coal seams; these machines could cut and load more coal in a fraction of the time that hand-loading miners could. We gawked with our tobacco-filled jaws hanging open.

Then we went in the mantrips to the mine face, where miners used coal-dust-laden equipment to extricate coal from the mountain's veins. This was hard, dirty work. Lights from the equipment revealed a continuous mining machine with carbon-tipped bits on a rotating steel drum that tore into the coal. There was quite a clamor. We stood in awe.

As we watched, the sound of throwing up could be detected along with the equipment noise. The lead miner told us to climb back into the mantrips. It was time to go.

One by one we boys lost our chewed tobacco over the sides of the mantrips. By the time we got back to the cage, nearly all of us were greenish and sickly. We'd learned a big-time lesson for life: stay away from chewing tobacco.

That night at supper, Mom noticed I wasn't eating. She said, "You just don't look good."

"I'm okay," I said as I pushed myself from the supper table and found the stairs to my room. Daddy probably knew what had happened during the day but didn't say. I never again wanted any chewing tobacco.

We also learned a lot about the mine, its purpose, processes, and environment—enough so that I ended any thought of becoming one of those rough, tough West Virginia coal miners I idolized so much.

BILL MAHONEY is the son of Virginia and Merrell (Spud) Mahoney—respectively, a teacher and a miner for about 35 years, in Coalwood. Bill's parents retired to Kentucky in the late 1960s. Bill resides with his family in Greenville, N.C. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

U.S. Government Lock No. 5
A River Village and a Little Post Office

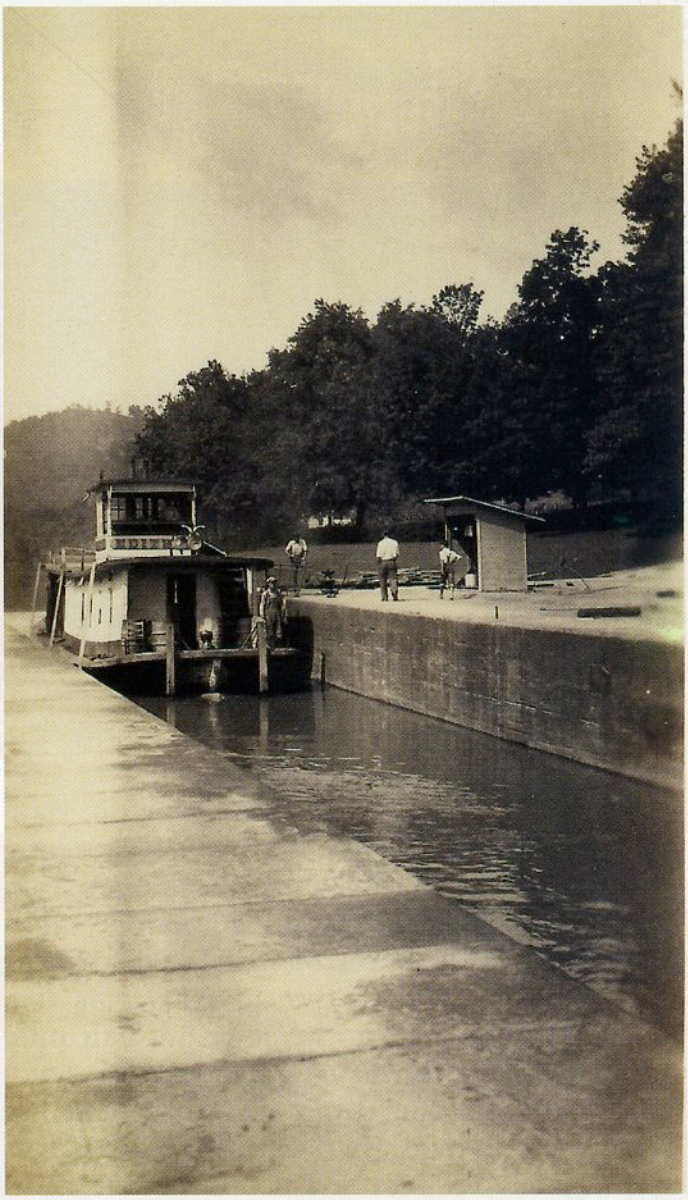
By Patricia Wilkins

Fifteen years ago, my sister Nellie and I found boxes of our grandparents' and great–grandparents' papers in the attic of our family home. We sorted through deeds, photos, and post office documents from the F. L. Owens farm at Government Lock No. 5 on the Little Kanawha River, and letters and journals from John Patton Clarke's farm at Burning Springs (Wirt County), the home of our great–great–grandparents.

Our grandfather, Ivan Clarke Owens, was born and raised on the family farm in a village named after him. Our mother lived there in the early 1930s, before all three generations of the Owens family left the lock in the midst of the Great Depression, never to return. Over the years, our mother didn't tell us much about the lock, and we never visited the former family property because it was privately owned. Finding the family papers, though, made us want to know more about the farm and our ancestors' lives.

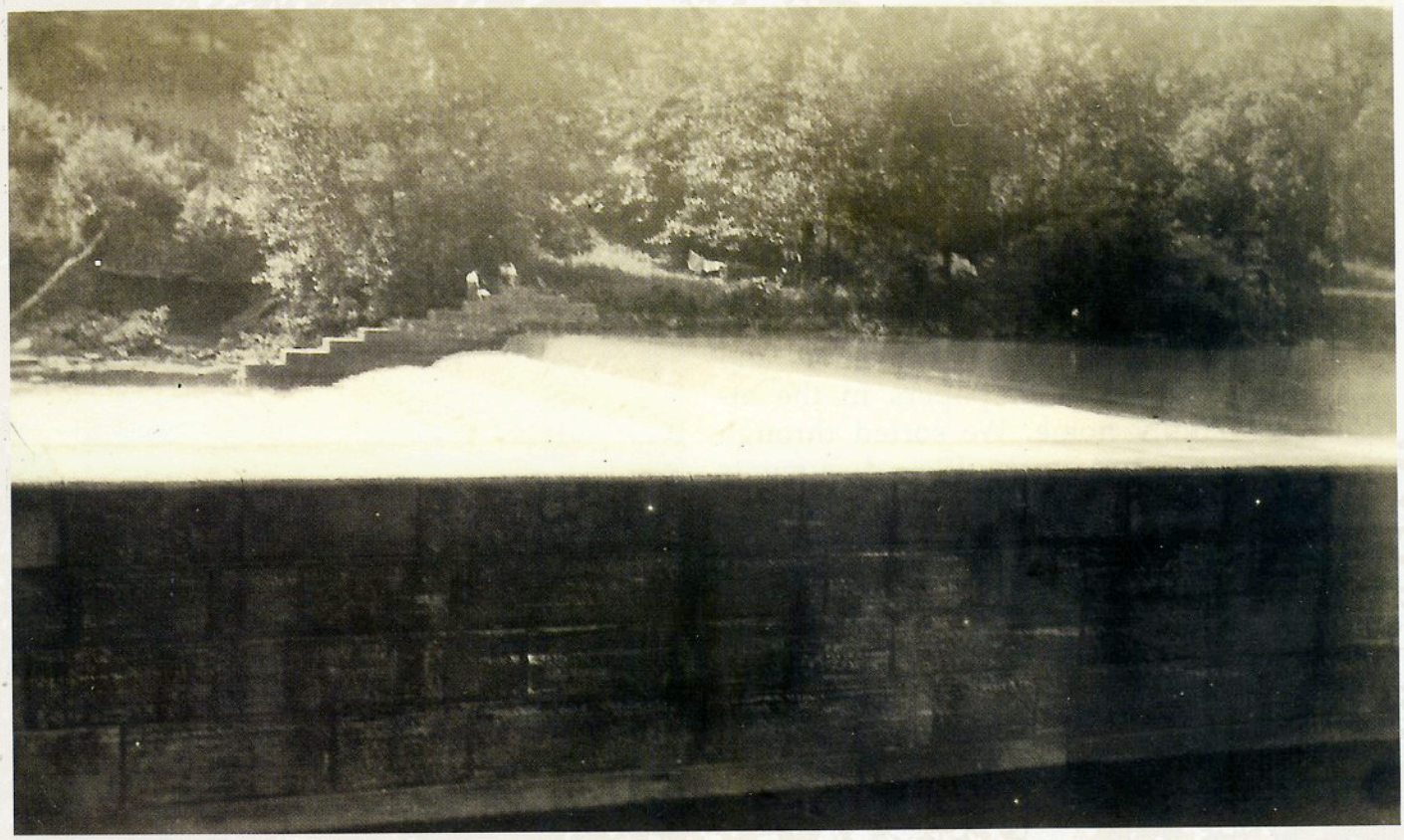
In 1874, the Little Kanawha Navigation Company completed a series of locks and dams on the lower 40 miles of the Little Kanawha River, allowing boats to travel upriver (for a toll) from Parkersburg to several miles above Burning Springs. The river became the highway for farm goods, freight, passengers, and nearby villages.

Over the years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers performed surveys and removed obstructions from the river. In 1880, the federal River and Harbors Act appropriated money for "building an additional lock and dam" to extend slackwater navigation another 12 miles upriver. In 1882, the government acquired land adjacent to Vincent Run for the project.



The Edith H. Mailboat going through Lock No. 5, early 1900s. All photos courtesy of the Owens and Clark family history collection unless otherwise stated.

About that time, F. L. Owens purchased acreage at the mouth of Vincent Run from J. C. Rathbone, a pioneer in our state's oil industry. F. L. got on with the business of raising wheat, corn, sheep, and cattle on his



At government Lock and Dam No. 5 looking across at the east bank.

tract, which was just a stone's throw above the proposed government lock and dam.

Col. William E. Merrill, known as the "father of Ohio River improvements," designed Lock No. 5 as a timber-crib dam and stone-masonry lock with a 150-foot-long by 28-foot-wide lock chamber. Construction began in 1884. Coarse-grained native sandstone were moved on barges by contractor John F. King. One of the quarries was five miles downriver; another was a half-mile below the lock, on Col. T. W. Moore's land.

Due to weather problems and funding delays, work continued for years. A Corps of Engineers report indicated "a lock-tender's dwelling, a cottage of four rooms, cellar, and attic," was ready for occupancy in 1889. The project was still under construction when F. L., a widower, asked John Patton Clarke for his daughter's hand in marriage. On January 29, 1890, the Rev. George "Faithful" Burdett officiated at the wedding in the Wirt County seat of Elizabeth. Jane Patton "Pattie" Clarke Owens moved about a mile upriver from the Clarke farm at Burning Springs and set up housekeeping at the Owens farm on Vincent Run.

U.S. Government Lock No. 5 opened to navigation on December 2, 1891, extending four-foot slackwater to Creston and, in high water, to Glenville (Gilmer County). Charles Edward Cline of the Corps of Engineers was hired as foreman and lockmaster, but business was quickly booming, requiring the government to employ an additional lock tender and begin building an additional house in 1893. Albert Lee Ball was engaged as assistant lockmaster in 1896 and stayed on for six years. John Randolph Owens, William Curtis Basnett, and George Addison "Ad" Wilson were among the lockmasters who served at No. 5 over the next 30 years.

In 1898, there was great rejoicing at the lock over the birth of Ivan Clarke, the first and only child of F. L. and Pattie. By that time, Pattie had established a "crossroads" grocery behind their house, selling most

The Owen's home and grocery at the back of house at Lock No. 5.

anything from dress goods to kerosene for oil lamps. She had 18 stands of honeybees, which she cared for herself, and traded flour, sugar, and salt for farmers' eggs.

Transportation companies made regular freight and passenger runs, and, as Larry Sypolt wrote in this magazine in Summer 1994, "Goods needed for everyday life could easily be brought up from Parkersburg, and those produced upriver could be taken back for sale. More lockages are shown for the upper locks than with Parkersburg, indicating that there was a brisk trade between towns along the river."

The Corps of Engineers determined that river commerce was divided into two sections: Burnsville (Braxton County) to Lock No. 5 and Glenville to Parkersburg. When the river's upper reaches were at a good rafting stage, boats made pleasure excursions to Glenville, Leaf Bank, Sand Fork, and the lock itself. Weather and water levels permitting, some boats from Parkersburg made overnight Saturday-Sunday excursions to Creston and Grantsville (Calhoun County), stopping at each landing along the way, picking up 100 or more merrymakers by the time they reached their destination.

Local newspapers played an important role in keeping river folk connected with one another. Showboats and special excursions were advertised in the paper, and railroad and boat timetables and passenger fares were published weekly. If the mail was delayed, readers turned to the paper to see if a boat had hit a snag and sunk or was hung up at either end of the river, waiting for water levels to return to normal.

Records of the Corps of Engineers show "navigation was suspended through Lock No. 5 for many days owing to high water, ice, and low water due to drought and the leaky condition of the dams belonging to the navigation company below."

In 1905, after a decade of negotiations between the Corps of Engineers and the Little Kanawha Navigation Company and its

stockholders, the federal government purchased Locks and Dams Nos. 1-4 and made extensive repairs. Around that time, F. L. and Pattie Owens entertained the idea of opening a post office at their grocery. Their son, Ivan, described the application process in a letter to his daughter in the 1970s:

Since the nearest post office was at least three miles away, the lockmaster at No. 5, Mr. Charles E. Cline, persuaded my dad to apply for a post office for the people of the community. All in all, there were ten families of about forty people in this little community.

So about the turn of the present century, application was made to Washington to establish a post office at the earliest convenience. In a short time, the application was approved, and Dad was asked to submit a name for the new office. The name he suggested escapes me, but because there were several others of the same name, his choice was not approved, and he was asked to submit another. After much deliberation, the old lockmaster said, 'Call it Ivan, West Virginia,' for the only boy in the Owens family. In 1905, I was about seven years old.

Anyway, the name was accepted, and in a short time a new fourth-class post office was open for business on March 30, 1905. While Dad was named the postmaster, he didn't have the time, so mother was sworn in as principal assistant and her sister, Belle, was sworn in as an assistant.

There was always a problem of getting the mail delivered to the office. Some years previous to this time, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad established a branch line from Parkersburg, up the Little Kanawha River, which was planned to reach the coalfields in the northern section of West Virginia. Approximately thirty miles of the road were completed, but for some unknown reason the road ended at Palestine, with an extra mile taking it to a little place called Owensport. At that point, a small gasoline sternwheeler was contracted to deliver the mail to points upriver ending at Creston. It made two trips daily to Owensport and back carrying passengers, and the morning run brought the mail, meeting the train at Owensport.

The Little Kanawha Railroad Company completed its branch line from the mouth of the river in Parkersburg to Palestine (Wirt County) in 1898. The railroad maintained a warehouse at the terminus, one mile above Lock No. 4, where transfers were made between boats and rail cars. Years later, the name of the terminal was changed from Palestine Transfer to Owensport.

In October 1898, the postal service established steamboat route No. 16100 from Creston to Palestine Transfer and back, daily except Sundays. The post office awarded contracts to the lowest bidder to carry the mail; David S. Hopkins, a former postmaster at Sanoma, secured the first contract. Hopkins, of Reedy Ripple, agreed to travel six times a week, including service between the wharf and post office, until 1899.

Parkersburg's I. K. Dye, general traffic agent for the Little Kanawha Railroad, was awarded mail contracts from 1899 to 1905 for the Creston to Palestine run. Boatmen Gordon Cooper, James B. Huffman, John H. Righter, I. S. Wright, F. W. Parsons, and George A. Merrill secured the subsequent four-year mail contracts: 1905-33.

Historian and former state Attorney General Howard B. Lee wrote that the railroad "operated a small gasoline-propelled boat" between Creston and Owensport and that "the first boat in the trade was the *Leone*, but after a few years, it was succeeded by the *Edith H.*"

The success of the *Leone* brought a fleet of sister boats in the years that followed. In 1903, 16 gas-powered boats were plying the Little Kanawha, and by 1913, as many as 80 gas boats operated for commerce and pleasure between the mouth and upper reaches of the river.

Postmistress Pattie Owens at Lock No. 5.

As the number of small gas boats increased, the earnings of the Little Kanawha Railroad decreased. Confronted by financial challenges, the company was in receivership by 1901; the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad became its operating agent in 1908.

With floods of sometimes a 30-foot rise, droughts with low water, and ice that froze and then broke up on the river, the irregular mail service became a nuisance to folks along the Little Kanawha. Mail could be held up for days or longer when the river was impassable. When stream conditions kept the regular boat system from running, the post office had to pay extra for temporary overland mail service.

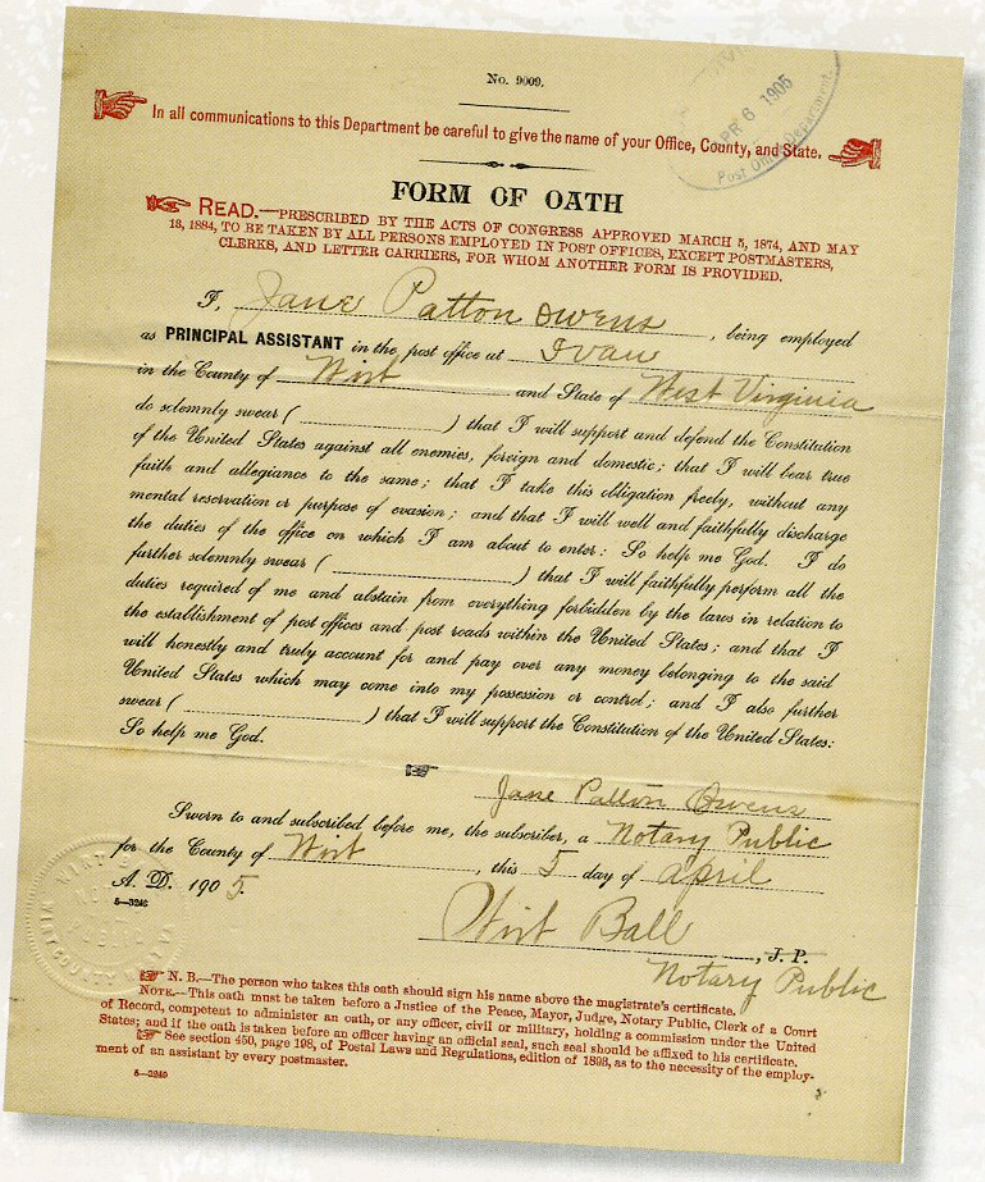
The adoption of rural free delivery and arrival of parcel post in 1913 changed customer expectations about mail and packages. The Rural Post "Good" Roads Act of 1916 improved back roads in America and laid the foundation for each state to have its own highway agency.

The U.S. Postal Service advertised bids for "star route" service bids for Ivan in 1932. The proposals submitted were known as "celerity, certainty and security" bids. According to *The United States Postal Service: An American History,* "Postal clerks shortened the phrase to three asterisks or stars (***). The bids became known as star bids, and the routes became known as star routes."

Star route service No. 16654 was established in 1933, and Virgil M. Wilson was contracted to travel overland from Ivan to Halls Corner and back three times a week to deliver and collect mail and to sell stamps.

The Little Kanawha Railroad was abandoned in 1933, and the Army Corps of Engineers stated there would be "no fur-

Jane Patton "Pattie" Owens, Principal Assistance Form of Oath. Dated April 1905.



No. 9009.

In all communications to this Department be careful to give the name of your Office, County, and State.

APR 6 1905 Post Office Department

FORM OF OATH

READ.—PRESCRIBED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS APPROVED MARCH 3, 1874, AND MAY 18, 1884, TO BE TAKEN BY ALL PERSONS EMPLOYED IN POST OFFICES, EXCEPT POSTMASTERS, CLERKS, AND LETTER CARRIERS, FOR WHOM ANOTHER FORM IS PROVIDED.

I, Jane Patton Owens, being employed as PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT in the post office at Ivan in the County of Nicholas and State of West Virginia do solemnly swear (affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter: So help me God. I do further solemnly swear (affirm) that I will faithfully perform all the duties required of me and abstain from everything forbidden by the laws in relation to the establishment of post offices and post roads within the United States; and that I will honestly and truly account for and pay over any money belonging to the said United States which may come into my possession or control; and I also further swear (affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States: So help me God.

Jane Patton Owens

Sworn to and subscribed before me, the subscriber, a Notary Public for the County of Nicholas, this 5 day of April A. D. 1905.

Nicholas County Public Seal

Nicholas Ball, J. P.
Notary Public

5—3246

☞ N. B.—The person who takes this oath should sign his name above the magistrate's certificate.

NOTE.—This oath must be taken before a Justice of the Peace, Mayor, Judge, Notary Public, Clerk of a Court of Record, competent to administer an oath, or any officer, civil or military, holding a commission under the United States; and if the oath is taken before an officer having an official seal, such seal should be affixed to his certificate.

☞ See section 450, page 198, of Postal Laws and Regulations, edition of 1893, as to the necessity of the employment of an assistant by every postmaster.

5—3246

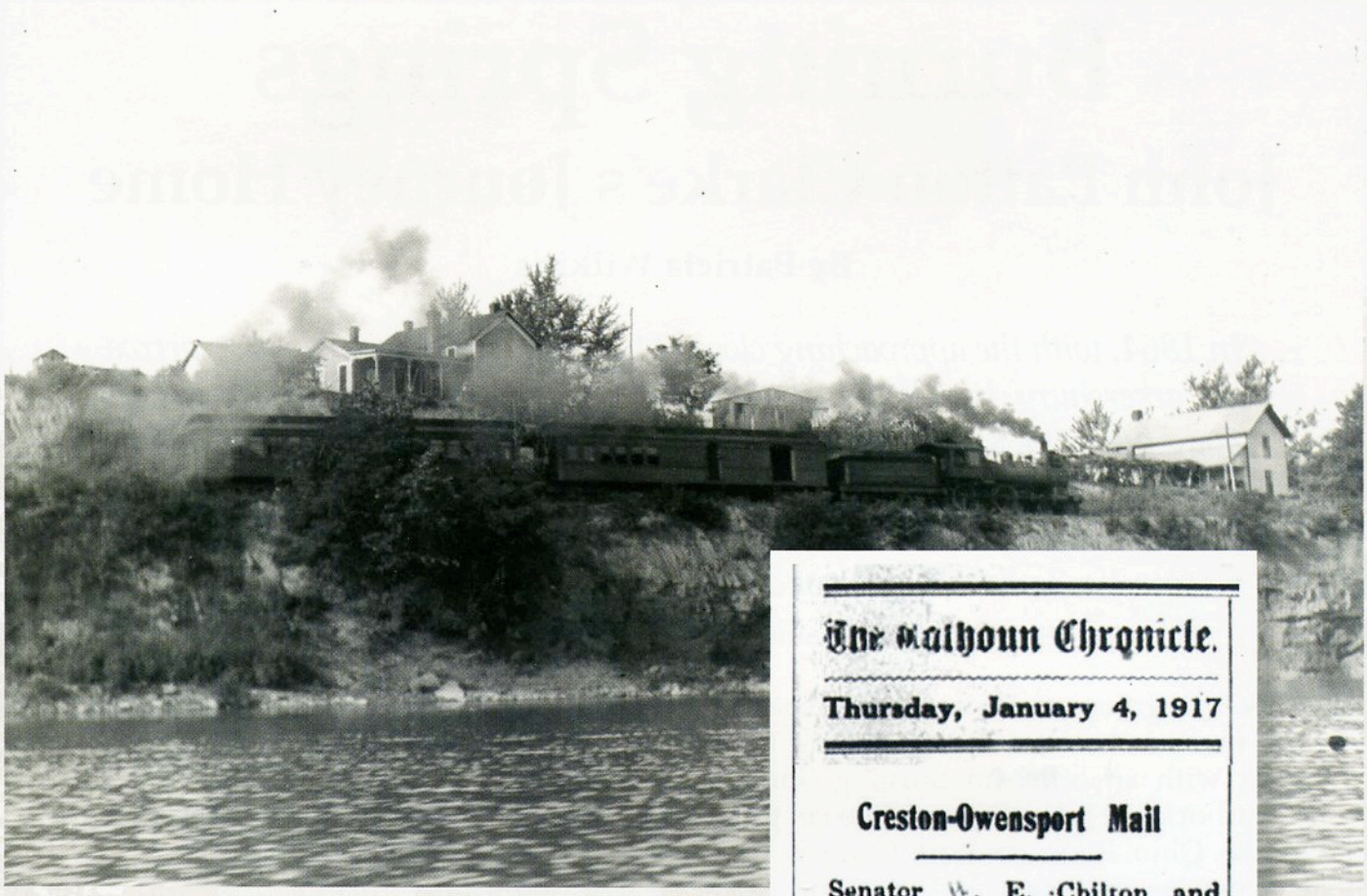
ther improvement" of the Little Kanawha for navigation. The flourishing river traffic that had brought booming communities to its banks diminished over time.

On June 18, 1936, both the star route and the fourth-class post office at Ivan were discontinued. Ivan Owens recalled, "The office existed for perhaps thirty years, but by that time many people had left the community, and it was no longer needed. My mother sent me a 'last day' card telling me of the close."

Sypolt described the dramatic transportation: "When one travels the Little Kanawha today, it is hard to imagine that boats of over 100 feet in length traveled that river. With the Corps of Engineers' decision to allow the river to reclaim its natural course, there is little evidence today that such a robust period in the river's history ever existed."

In 1951, the federal government suspended operation and maintenance of Lock No. 5. The dam was breached, and the big gates were removed from the lock chambers. In 1960, the adjacent real estate and buildings were sold to two private individuals. The Owens' home, across Vincent Run from the lock houses, was sold in 1946 and changed hands a couple times. A decade ago, my sister and I found the current owners by chance, and they invited us to visit Lock Five Farm at Ivan.

A path tracing our ancestors' footsteps took us down to the river, where we en-



Little Kanawha Railway. Owensport, Wirt County.

countered two magnificent, weathered, sandstone masonry walls. The construction of the lock chamber was an amazing feat of engineering, and its preservation a tribute to the workmanship and the sacrifice of those who labored here more than a century ago.

It was peaceful as we stood on a sandbar looking downriver for a glimpse of the past——when time was measured by the mail boats' arrival. The bustling riverboat era is a memory now, while the Little Kanawha River continues to flow, at her leisure, to the mighty Ohio.

PATTI WILKINS is originally from Parkersburg, now living in north Georgia. She's the author of *Sisters of the Soil: West Virginia Land Girls on the World War II Farm Front* (McClain, 2017), based on an article she wrote for GOLDENSEAL [Summer 2015]. This is her second contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The Calhoun Chronicle.

Thursday, January 4, 1917

Creston-Owensport Mail

Senator W. E. Chilton and Postmaster F. S. Hathaway have succeeded in getting the postoffice department at Washington to allow extra compensation for carrying the the mail from Owensport overland to Creston when the regular boat system is kept from running by ice.

The regular allowance for carrying the mail between those places is $2.23 round trip. The new order allows $2.23 each way when mail between Creston and Owensport must go overland. It is thought that mail heretofore usually held up at these places for several days when the river is impassible will go forward with more celerity because of the new order.

"Creston to Owensport Mail," The Calhoun Chronicle, 04 Jan. 1917, Chronicling America / Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress. Photo used with permission from Bill Bailey.

Burning Springs

John Patton Clarke's Journey Home

By Patricia Wilkins

"In 1864, with the approaching close of the war, oil hunters began to arrive at Parkersburg, impelled by the thirst for riches, which might be obtained along the Little Kanawha. In 1865, there was a revival of the development and consequent excitement of five years before. Operations extended along a northwest line from Burning Springs through Wirt, Wood, and Pleasants counties to the Ohio River on the anticlinal called the 'Oil Break.'"

—James Morton Callahan

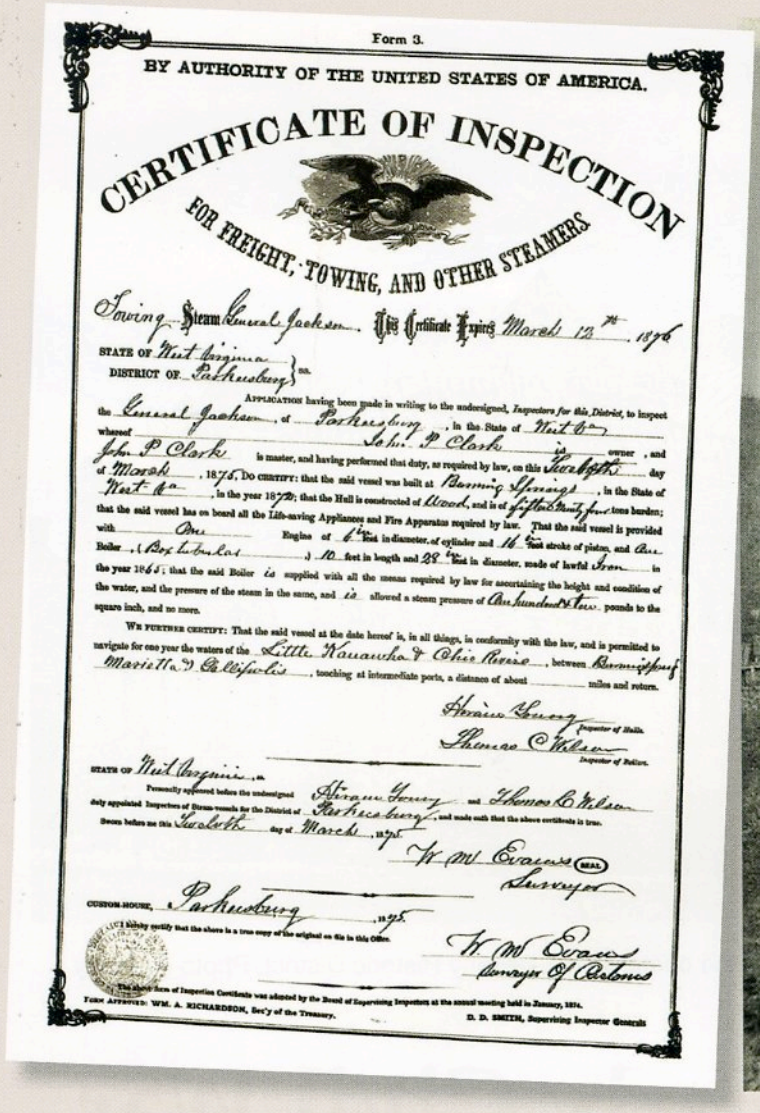
In 1865, a group of Pennsylvania speculators formed the Wirt Oil & Mining Company, with an office in Burning Springs. They authorized John Patton Clarke to go down the Ohio River to Wirt County, complete a survey and map, and supervise their interests. In February, Clarke wrote in his journal: "On board a riverboat, *Bayard*, for trip down river to Parkersburg. Fare $3.50. Snowing. Boat very crowded. Had to sit up nearly all night. Arrived in Parkersburg at four a.m. Went to the station and bought tickets, two for a dollar. Left station on foot about eight o'clock and walked to Newark for dinner. Crossed the [Little] Kanawha River to Elizabeth town, the county seat of Wirt County. Left Elizabeth in the morning, ten cents for crossing river. Eight miles to Petty farm—have to walk, boots large and stiff with skin all worn off at ankles."

Dave McKain and Bernie Allen mentioned J. P. Clarke in their book *Where it All Began: The Story of the People and Places Where the Oil & Gas Industry Began—West Virginia and Southeastern Ohio*: "The Wirt Oil & Mining Co. purchased the property next to the Rathbones on the west side of the 'break' along the Little Kanawha next to Nettle Run. While this property was just a few hundred yards from the 'Eternal Center,' it was just a few hundred yards too far, for the land was better for raising sheep than for oil purposes. John Patton Clarke and the Wirt Oil & Mining Co. became members of the 'Dry Hole Club.'"

The company broke up, but Clarke stayed on in Wirt County, working as a surveyor for Standard Oil and marrying Nancy Jane Graham, with whom he had eight children: Elizabeth, Jane, Martha, Isabella, James, John, Lessie, and George. His son, George Rodgers Clarke, said, "He worked for several years and created quite a sum from his labors, but the company being then in its infancy had not the surplus to pay him the money so gave him a tract of 300 acres bordering the Little Kanawha River a mile and a half below Burning Springs."

The land was fertile, and Clarke had tenants cultivate the farm. He sold produce and hauled goods in the oil field. He planted about five acres of apple trees, and the farm became a community gathering place for "wheat threshing, corn husking, wood splitting, log rolling and the big event of the year, 'The Harvest Home.'"

J. P. Clarke purchased a small steamboat, the *General Jackson*. His son, George, wrote, "Father was Captain, owner, manager and



Form 3.

BY AUTHORITY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

CERTIFICATE OF INSPECTION

FOR FREIGHT, TOWING, AND OTHER STEAMERS

Towing Steam Vessel General Jackson. This Certificate Expires March 12th 1876

STATE OF West Virginia }
DISTRICT OF Parkersburg } ss.

APPLICATION having been made in writing to the undersigned, Inspectors for this District, to inspect the General Jackson, of Parkersburg, in the State of West Va. whereof John P. Clark is owner, and John P. Clark is master, and having performed that duty, as required by law, on this twelfth day of March, 1875, DO CERTIFY: that the said vessel was built at Burning Springs, in the State of West Va. in the year 1872; that the Hull is constructed of Wood, and is of [illegible] tons burden; that the said vessel has on board all the Life-saving Appliances and Fire Apparatus required by law. That the said vessel is provided with One Engine of 6 inches in diameter of cylinder and 16 inches stroke of piston, and One Boiler of Box Tubular 30 feet in length and 28 inches in diameter, made of lawful Iron in the year 1865; that the said Boiler is supplied with all the means required by law for ascertaining the height and condition of the water, and the pressure of the steam in the same, and is allowed a steam pressure of One hundred & ten pounds to the square inch, and no more.

WE FURTHER CERTIFY: That the said vessel at the date hereof is, in all things, in conformity with the law, and is permitted to navigate for one year the waters of the Little Kanawha & Ohio Rivers, between Burning Springs Marietta & Pittsburgh, touching at intermediate ports, a distance of about _____ miles and return.

Hiram Young Inspector of Hulls.
Thomas C. Wilson Inspector of Boilers.

STATE OF West Virginia, ss.
Personally appeared before the undersigned Hiram Young and Thomas C. Wilson duly appointed Inspectors of Steam vessels for the District of Parkersburg, and made oath that the above certificate is true.
Sworn before me this twelfth day of March, 1875.

W. M. Evans SEAL
Surveyor

CUSTOM-HOUSE, Parkersburg, 1875.

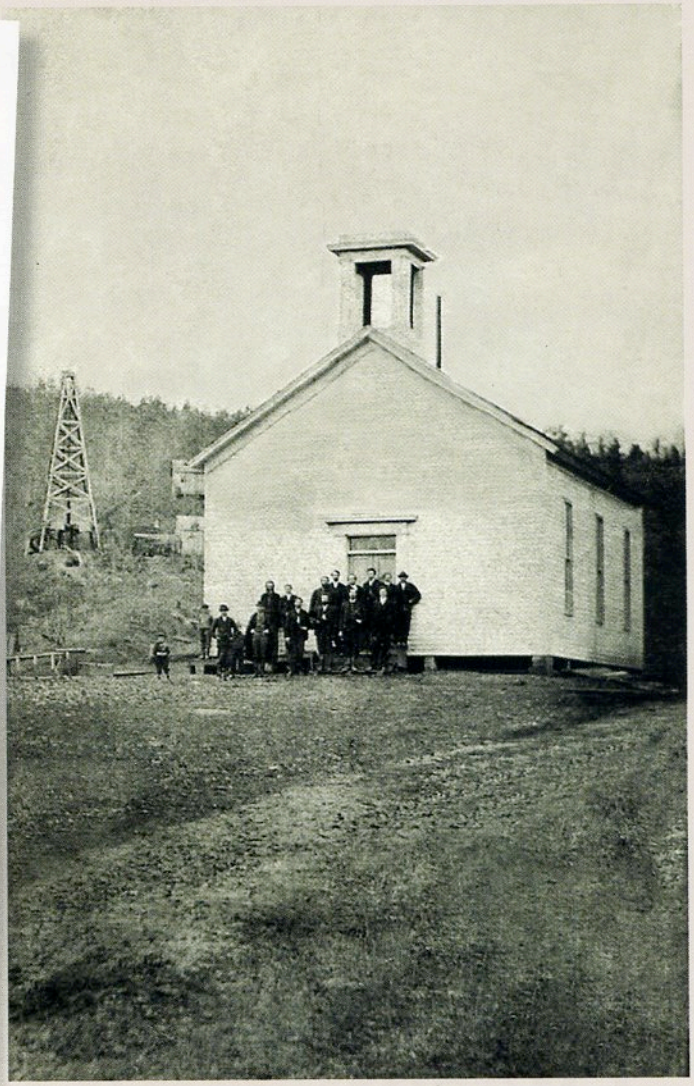
I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the original on file in this Office.

W. M. Evans
Surveyor of Customs

The above form of Inspection Certificate was adopted by the Board of Supervising Inspectors at the annual meeting held in January, 1874.

FORM APPROVED: WM. A. RICHARDSON, Sec'y of the Treasury. D. D. SMITH, Supervising Inspector General

The General Jackson Certificate of Inspection. Dated March 12, 1876



Unidentified church at Burning Springs, Wirt county.

pilot on it as it ran from Burning Springs to Parkersburg triweekly, a distance of forty-two miles by water. On special days he made excursion trips to points of interest down the river. On these trips he had large crowds and would place a flat covered boat in front and allow the people to use the light fantastic toe to the melodious strains of some ancient violin. At first[,] on account of insufficient amount of water[,] the boat could run only about five months of the year. But locks and dams began to be completed, and the *Jackson* was one of the first boats through the new locks."

In 1867, the Little Kanawha Navigation Company began work on four locks that would open in 1874. As Larry Sypolt wrote, "Boats could travel from Parkersburg upriver past Palestine, the location of Lock No. 4. These were private locks and the company took a toll" [see Summer 1994].

"In December 1875 a great accident befell the *General Jackson*," George Rodgers Clarke wrote. "It was burned one night while lying at the wharf at Burning Springs. No one was on it[,] and it is not known how the fire ignited. But this ended father's naval career and established the name for him of Captain Clarke, which he was called by everybody as long as he lived."

John Patton Clarke formed lifelong friendships along that river and lived out his days managing his farm at Clarke's Landing on the Little Kanawha.

The Beverly Heritage Center, Randolph County, located in the center of the Beverly Historic District. Photo courtesy of The Beverly Heritage Center.

Discovering Early Civil War Graffiti in Beverly

By Christopher Mielke

When the Beverly Heritage Center in Randolph County was shut down in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I took the chance to document all the known Civil War graffiti in our historic town. Years before historians such as Donald Rice and Randy Allan had revealed graffiti in several buildings in town. Our search in 2020 identified over 453 inscriptions and drawings across nine different buildings; seven buildings had graffiti spanning the entire duration of the war. There were many amazing finds: drawings of churches, farmsteads, cannons, horses, names, and dates from various soldiers and others who passed through the Tygart Valley from 1861 to 1865.

In a historic town, though, there's always more to uncover. In the process of renovating the Montgomery Hart / Andrew Collett House, Mr. Shourds of Cardamone Historical was taking down wallpaper in an upstairs room. "We had finished supporting the floor downstairs and were waiting on some of our crew," Shourds recalls. "Some AmeriCorps colleagues and I who

Framed Civil War graffiti inscriptions found at the David Goff House. Photo by the author.

were part of the National Civilian Community Corps started removing decades of old wallpaper. We were curious to see what the plaster was like underneath, but we noticed that there were some markings on the wall. I told them to stop to have a better look, and there it was—all sorts of names of people from centuries ago. We were very careful after finding all that. We didn't want to damage anything that might be historical." This discovery led to one of the earliest graffiti inscriptions related to the Civil War.

Nurses, farmers, officers, and even a magician all made their mark on the walls of Beverly during the Civil War. But the first piece comes from Lewis Hooke, who wrote his name, his place of origin ("Rockingham County, VA"), and the date— "July 14 / '61." This was just three days after the nearby Battle of Rich Mountain, when Beverly was overrun with wounded and captured soldiers. Hunter Lesser, author of *Rebels at the Gate* and *The First Campaign,* notes that Rich Mountain was a defining moment for not only the nation but for the future state of West Virginia: "The Federal Victory at Rich Mountain helped secure this area for the Union; this in turn safeguarded the Wheeling Convention and the movement for West Virginia Statehood."

Hooke wrote his name in the Hart / Collett House, which was built onto a log fort that dated to the late 1700s. At present, about eight names have been found on the walls of that one room. Later, someone identified the allegiances of those people. Hooke had the word "Rebel" next to his name in parentheses. It turns out he was a Confederate soldier who surrendered after Rich Mountain and wrote that inscription while imprisoned as a POW in Beverly. He was paroled the next day and sent home, according to Lesser.

Christopher Mills (Left) and the author. Photo by Larry Matt Hatton.

Several women wrote their names on the walls of the David Goff House when that building was used as the Union hospital. I was told to my face that women in the 19th century wouldn't have written their names on any walls. In the downstairs, a woman just wrote "Elizabeth O. Brown." Upstairs, another identified herself as "Nurse of this ward" while also identifying her hometown as Zanesville (Ohio). In another Beverly building, the residence of Stonewall Jackson's sister Laura Jackson Arnold (1826 – 1911) has an inscription from Mary Loyd, her charwoman who was listed in the 1870 Beverly census as being illiterate. We think of women's roles in Civil War times as being homebound. "But this graffiti shows independence and freedom of movement," notes Phyllis Baxter, President of Historic Beverly Preservation. "Women taking action in the great events of their time."

Plenty of other stories come to life in the search for the men and women who left their mark on the walls. Moses H. Metcalf of the 86th Ohio Infantry was only a teenager when the Civil War broke out. In the 1860 Census, his occupation is listed as "magician." Some men wrote their home addresses on the walls. A Mr. Wallace lived on Delaware Street in Indianapolis. A Mr. Neubert lived on Fourth Street in Pittsburgh. One gentleman who wrote his name here in December 1861 was later treated as a deserter; he entered the Civil War as a corporal and ended as a private. The graffiti represents names from West Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Maryland, and other states.

The most fascinating elements are the types of images. Most who wrote on the walls in Beverly were bored soldiers, using buildings that had been quickly aban-

A close up of the Civil War graffiti found in Beverly. Photo by the author.

doned by Confederate-sympathizing owners. As such, many drawings feature military or patriotic themes. Buildings with strong Union ties feature eagles with "E pluribus Unum" in word bubbles as well as a banner with the stars and stripes. Dr. Spencer Kuchle, an AmeriCorps member at the Randolph County Museum at that time, observes, "These drawings illustrate the ways in which we double-down on our beliefs when we feel threatened."

The drawings often take on a satirical bent. Former Virginia governor and Confederate general Henry Wise was depicted as retreating on the back of a crocodile. In the upstairs of the Blackman-Bosworth Building (currently the Randolph County Museum), Abraham Lincoln is shown in profile facing the viewer's left, while Jefferson Davis is depicted as a horned demon figure. Lincoln is labeled "Honest Ole' Abe," while Davis is given a pseudo-Latin genus name, suggesting he was some strange new species. This drawing likely dates from the time the building was used as a commissary. Dr. Kuchle's assessment is that "satire and parody were used by both sides during the Civil War. The soldiers who drew Lincoln and Davis not only wanted to mark their presence in the face of an uncertain future but also to engage in a form of political 'trash talk.'"

Many of the drawings reflect everyday reality and idealized fantasy worlds. More than a few elaborately coiffured ladies appear, as well as many farmsteads and churches in idyllic, rustic milieus. In the upstairs of the Bushrod Crawford Building

(Gen. George McClellan's headquarters and later a morgue for the hospital), two soldiers are depicted in miniature portraits.

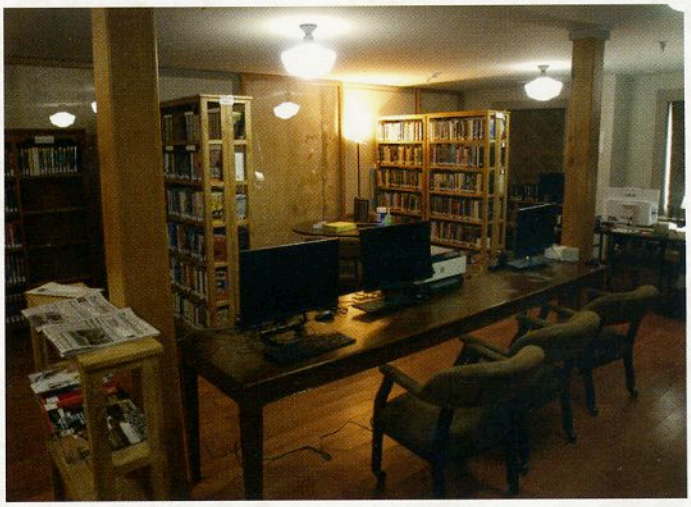
A couple humorous instances show a side of graffiti common in both ancient and modern times—the human body. For instance, in the upstairs of the Blackman-Bosworth Store, a drawing of a nude man's backside was clearly rubbed away at a later date—possibly because of his close proximity to one of the town's churches.

The renewed interest in Beverly as the site of early Civil War graffiti comes into play because the Beverly Heritage Center—located in the original 1808 county courthouse—is allowing three of its upstairs rooms to serve as the town's first library. The largest of these has graffiti dating back to 1814 and the 1820s. The names from those early years likely reflect local citizens who were called to serve on jury duty.

"The plan is to have the large room with the graffiti as our general collection and reading room with computers and laptops for the patrons," explains Stephanie Murphy, who was head of the Elkins-Randolph County Public Library System in 2020. "The two smaller rooms will be a children's library and a local history and genealogy reading room." In the new library space, the exposed graffiti will be covered with UV-filtering acrylic so it's visible to the public but protected from light, humidity, and physical damage.

Last spring [2021], the center gave an online lesson plan to the local elementary school, giving students access to all sorts of photos of the graffiti. A livestream was broadcast on the center's Facebook page, providing a slideshow of these otherwise inaccessible images. Due to so much interest in the graffiti, the center is planning to offer Hard Hat Tours of buildings not typically open to the public, letting people see these historic writings one by one.

The next step will be to have the graffiti professionally conserved. Christopher Mills, an architectural conservator experienced with Civil War graffiti, offered an informal assessment in late 2019. The goal is to perform the restoration in tandem with a public workshop about the dos and don'ts of cleaning around historic graffiti without destroying it.

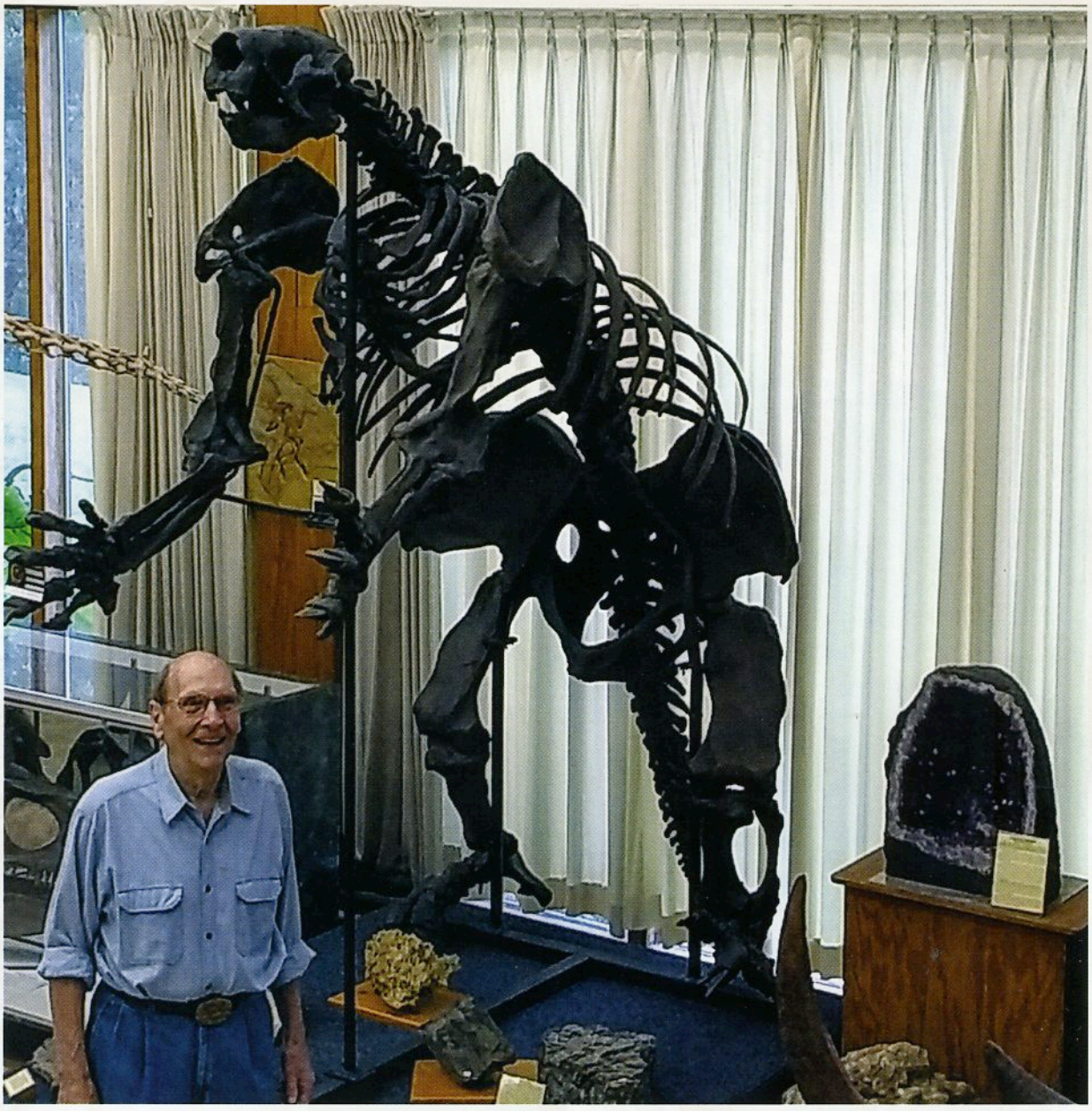


The Beverly Heritage Center library interior, now open to the public. Photo by Ben Duvall-Irwin.

The ultimate challenge remains striking a balance between accessibility and preservation. "We want people to discover the graffiti for themselves, but we also want to make sure it's protected," notes Phyllis. "For any historical artifact, there is the challenge of how to share history for people to experience it, without damaging it."

Looking at these names and scribbles from over 150 years ago makes me feel incredibly connected to the past. These weren't hot shots or elites or people sitting back. All of these names were connected to everyday people just trying to stay alive and keep their heads on in a world turned completely upside down. I think we can all sympathize with that.

CHRISTOPHER MIELKE is the Executive Director of the Beverly Heritage Center in Beverly, West Virginia. He received his PhD in Medieval Studies from Central European University in 2017. From 2017–2018, he was a Visiting Assistant Professor at Al-Quds Bard College for Arts and Sciences in East Jerusalem. In 2021, his book, *The Archaeology & Material Culture of Queenship in Medieval Hungary, 1000-1395*, was published with Palgrave Macmillan.



Our author, Edwin D. Michael, with the reconstructed skeleton of a giant ground sloth, at West Virginia Geological & Economic Survey's Museum of Geology and Natural History. Photo by Jane C. Michael.

An Early Mountaineer

By Edwin Daryl Michael

I discovered the mysterious bone in 1950. It obviously wasn't a normal bone but appeared fossilized. For 70 years, I had no idea what kind it was.

My family and I lived in the Levi Shinn house, along Route 19, at that time. Constructed in 1778, it was located about one mile south of Shinnston (Harrison County). I was six years old when we first moved into the log house, the oldest standing structure in northcentral West Virginia [Fall 2005]. Other than five small black-and-white

Dr. Michael with the fossilized vertebra in front of a large boulder containing numerous fossils at WV Geological & Economic Survey, Mont Chateau, Monongalia County. Photo by Jane C. Michael.

Brownie camera photos, I have only one memento from those years: that fossil—the one I called a *dinosaur* bone as a child. The lessons it would teach offer a tale about discovering the past.

The tale began in April 1950, as winter gave way to spring. A late cold spell blanketed the fields around the log house with frost. It was a normal Saturday morning, and Dad had gone to work at our family plumbing shop [see Spring 2020]. We heated the big old log house with coal and typically kept a continuous fire burning in the 10-foot-wide fireplace, situated in the middle of the home. Dad bought one or two truckloads of coal every winter, but we'd carried the last remaining lumps—most of them the size of a man's fist—into the house a week earlier. Dad vowed not to buy another load of coal until October.

I complained about the cold that Saturday morning, so my mother suggested I gather enough coal to build a fire. Dozens of overloaded coal trucks passed our house daily, and lumps of coal littered the roadside. Donning boots, a coat, a toboggan, and gloves, I retrieved our metal coal bucket from the back porch and headed for the road. I had half-filled my bucket when I spotted a strange lump, slightly over two inches in length. It was glossy black and looked like coal. However, as soon as I picked it up, I realized it was an animal bone.

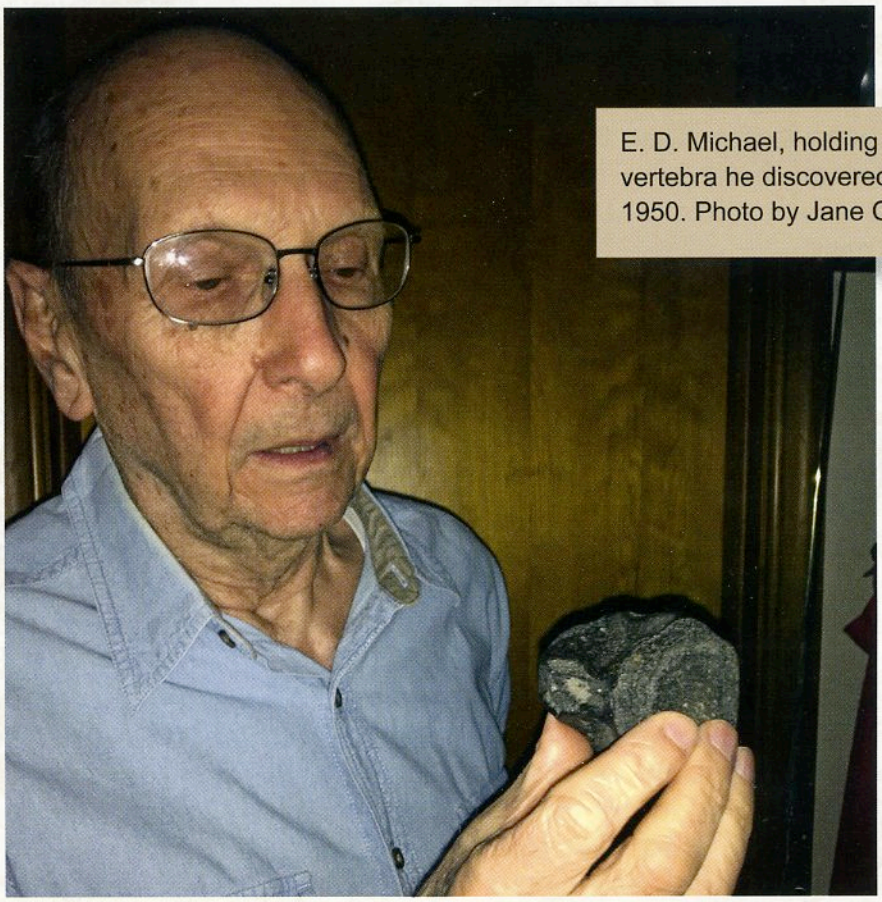
I'd helped butcher hogs and cattle and seen the backbones of pigs, sheep, and cattle, plus those of rabbits and squirrels. I knew a backbone when I saw one. The black lump I picked up that day was undoubtedly a backbone, but it seemed to be made of coal, not bone. It was black, not grayish-white like a weathered bone. It was in near pristine condition, other than the small projections typical of a vertebra being broken off. I hurried home with my find, excitedly showed it to my mother and, later that day, to my father. Both agreed it was an animal's backbone but were puzzled by its coal-like appearance.

Next, I shared it with my seventh-grade class at Shinnston Grade School on "show and tell" day, but neither the students nor teacher seemed too excited. My family and I lived in the Shinn House for nearly 10 years. I walked along the road hundreds of more times, going to and from the grade school and Shinnston High School, to Shinnston High Football Field, and to visit my friends Johnny and Teddy Brennan. After that April discovery, my eyes always scanned the roadside for more discoveries, but I never found another fossilized bone

My family moved to New Martinsville (Wetzel County) in 1953, and I hauled the fossilized bone in a box along with my growing collection of other treasures: arrowheads and various animal skulls and teeth. We lived in three different houses in the Ohio River town, yet I never lost the fossil bone. My parents built a house outside town in 1975, and the bone again moved with us, thanks to my mother—bless her soul. It found its way, in the 1980s, to my own house in Morgantown.

For reasons that now escape me, I never attempted to have it identified. However, in 2020, while housebound due to COVID-19, I revisited the long-standing mystery and contacted paleontologists at the Bureau of Land Management, Carnegie Natural Museum in Pittsburgh, Houston Museum of Natural Science, Raleigh Natural History Museum, Royal Ontario Museum, University of Michigan, Smithsonian, West Virginia University, West Virginia Geological Survey, and several others.

The fossil's worn condition made it difficult to identify. Two paleontologists concluded it was the lumbar backbone of a cetacean (whale or dolphin). However, no marine mammal fossils have been reported for West Virginia. While a shallow sea once covered what's now West Virginia



E. D. Michael, holding the fossilized vertebra he discovered near Shinnston in 1950. Photo by Jane C. Michael

during the Paleozoic Era (about 230 to 570 million years ago), it was long gone by the time cetaceans first appeared on Earth. The only way my fossil could have been from a cetacean is if a human had carried it from the East Coast to Harrison County; numerous such vertebrae have been discovered in the Calvert Cliffs along the Chesapeake Bay.

One paleontologist theorized the fossil was the tailbone (caudal vertebra) of a giant ground sloth: a rhinoceros-sized mammal that roamed this region 10,000-15,000 years ago. An adult ground sloth stood 10 feet tall at the shoulder, weighed as much as a ton, and lugged around a bulky tail. However, a leading authority on that subject concluded it was not a sloth. The only fossilized ground sloth bones in our state were discovered in a Monroe County cave in 1797; interestingly, Thomas Jefferson acquired and wrote about that specific fossil. Bones of the giant ground sloth, known formally now as Megalonyx jeffersonii, were recognized as our official state fossil in 2008.

Two paleontologists eventually identified my fossil as the tailbone of a mastodon. These elephant-sized mammals roamed the hills of what's now northern West Virginia at the same time giant ground sloths were present. The skeletal remains of more than a dozen mastodons have been discovered in West Virginia.

During the last Ice Age, which ended about 12,000 years ago, much of northern North America was covered with glaciers and a massive ice sheet (nearly two miles thick in places). South of the looming glacier's icy border were tundra-like grasslands and extensive fir-spruce stands, which supported numerous large mammals (megafauna) capable of withstanding Artic-like weather. The stark edge where glaciers met tundra reached no further south than present-day Pittsburgh in this section of the continent. The hills of what would become Harrison County most likely supported mastodons, gi-

ant ground sloths, saber-toothed cats, giant cave bears, and numerous other enormous thick-coated mammals.

Much mystery, with no clear answers, still surrounds my fossilized bone. Neither mastodons nor sloths nor whales lived at the time our massive coal beds formed, and so the fossil would not have been associated with a coal seam. If it originated here, the fossil would have had to rest for at least 10,000 years in the sediments positioned above Harrison County's coal seams. The edges of the mineralized tailbone show wear that most likely resulted from repeated stream tumbling. How it ended up mixed in with a load of coal—if, in fact, it actually did—is unknown.

The color of a fossil depends on what specific minerals replaced the bone. During the fossilization process, minerals seep into bones, filling in microscopic gaps. In time, the original material breaks down, dissolves, and disappears. The resulting fossil contains very little organic matter; instead, it is composed of hardened minerals. For instance, phosphates produce black fossils.

Is there, somewhere in Harrison County, a fossilized skeleton from which this one small bone was separated – if an entire skeleton ever existed there? Humans coexisted with mastodons and ground sloths for a relatively brief geologic time period prior to the extinction of these huge fur-coated mammals in North America. Humans killed them for food and other uses, and some paleontologists believe their extinction was due to overhunting; however, most likely drowned in flash floods or from falling through the ice of rivers or lakes as the temperature warmed.

The tail of a mastodon or sloth could have separated from the carcass or skeleton thousands of years ago, and the single, caudal vertebra might have been carried many miles by flowing waters. It's also possible that humans severed the tail following the animal's death, hauled it several miles, and eventually grilled it over a fire, tossing the remaining bones after dining.

Many of us possibly own clues into mysteries of our state's past. People with knowledge of fossilized bones discovered in our state are invited to contact me or Ray Garton, museum curator of the West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey in Morgantown: 304-594-2331.

EDWIN DARYL MICHAEL, a native of Plum Run near Mannington, holds a Ph.D. in wildlife ecology from Texas A&M University. He taught at WVU until his retirement in 1997. He's the author of more than 100 published works, including the books *A Valley Called Canaan: 1885-2002, Shadow of the Alleghenies, Death Visits Canaan, The Last Appalachian Wolf, The Missing Hand: A Plum Run Mystery*, and *Coyotes of Canaan*. This is his seventh contribution to GOLDENSEAL, most recently in Spring 2021.

Why You Can't Practice Medicine Without a License: West Virginia and the Supreme Court

By John M. Harris Jr.

The issue before the U.S. Supreme Court was whether Dr. Frank M. Dent of Newberg (Preston County) needed a license to practice medicine. He'd apprenticed with his father, Dr. William Dent, and started seeing patients on his own in 1876, which was perfectly legal. Like most other states, West Virginia didn't have a physician licensing law until the legislature passed one of the first ones in the country in 1881. Frank kept doing what he'd always done, but it didn't work. The secretary of West Virginia's new Board of Health had him arrested for not having a license in November 1882. Now Frank's case had reached the highest court [for more about the boards of Health and Medicine, see Spring 2022].

Noted Grafton lawyer Marmaduke Dent represented his cousin, Frank, and had good reason to think they would win. A lackluster chief justice presided over the U.S. Supreme Court when *Dent v. West Virginia* entered the docket in 1887. The leading associate justice, Stephen Field, was a friend of underdogs such as Frank, and, to bring the point home, Marmaduke made sure to quote Field's decisions to his fellow justices. Attorney Dent's argument was that cousin Frank had been in lawful practice for six years and that the Board of Health wasn't a judicial body and, therefore, could not deprive him of his property. Specifically, he argued that Frank hadn't been allowed his due process, guaranteed by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, passed in 1868.

Marmaduke Dent was the first graduate of West Virginia University and later a judge on the West Virginia Court of Appeals, but he lost this case, and worse, Justice Field wrote the decision telling him why he was wrong. As such, *Dent v. West Virginia* (issued in 1889) became the precedent for professional licensure in every state. How did West Virginia, a relatively new and rural state with few physicians and no medical school, come to play such a pivotal role in American medicine and constitutional law?

There were two stubborn Mountaineers involved. Along with Marmaduke Dent, the other was Dr. James E. Reeves, the older brother of Ann Reeves Jarvis, who was the inspiration for Mother's Day [see Spring 2017]. James helped with Ann's Mother's Work Clubs during the Civil War and then later organized the state medical society. A plaque at the door of the West Virginia State Medical Association in Charleston honors Dr. James E. Reeves today.

Reeves was, without doubt, the father of public health in West Virginia. A genuinely brilliant physician and national public health leader, he wrote and enforced West Virginia's 1881 Board of Health Act, which the *Dent* case upheld in 1889. Because of his work with the legislation, medical historian James Mohr said the statute should have been named "The Reeves Act."

Reeves, Ann, and their family moved from Culpeper County, Virginia, to Philippi (Barbour County, Virginia—before our statehood) in 1845. He was raised in a stern Methodist household, studied medicine under local physician Elam Talbott for a year, spent another year with Dr. Jacob Neff in New Market, Virginia, took four months of classes at Hampden-Sydney, and then opened a practice in Philippi in 1851, just in time for a typhoid outbreak related to construction of Philippi's covered bridge. He didn't need a diploma or a license to

Frank Mortimer Dent's Drugstore, Newberg, Preston County. Dent (pictured center with cane), never licensed to practice medicine, was the holder of a fraudulent diploma. Photo courtesy of Sue Hersman.

practice. Like most states, Virginia didn't have a licensing law. Anyone could hang up a shingle.

Despite Barbour County's remoteness in the 1850s, Reeves managed to make a national name for himself. He wrote a book about typhoid fever in western Virginia (1859), which the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* praised: "We have been much pleased by the perusal of this work." He moved his family to Fairmont in 1860 after getting a medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

Reeves helped organize the Medical Society of West Virginia in 1867 and then relocated to Wheeling, the booming and environmentally challenged state capital. He tried to clean up the town's sanitation problems, and the city council elected him Wheeling's first permanent health officer in 1869. In 1872, he wrote a popular book, *The Health and Wealth of the City of Wheeling*, praising his town while telling readers how to live safely and healthfully. A copy of the book was placed in the cornerstone of the new capitol building in Wheeling in 1876.

Marmaduke Herbert Dent (1849-1909). Photo courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Center, WVU Libraries.

Right Caption: James Edmund Reeves (1829-1896). Photo courtesy of Joan Webb.

Reeves was ahead of his time in arguing for smallpox vaccination and urban hygiene, and his energy and intellect brought him into contact with many of the country's public health leaders. He became one of the founding members of the American Public Health Association in 1872 and its president in 1885, the only West Virginian to hold that position. Both Wheeling papers, the *Intelligencer* and *Register*, Republican and Democrat, lauded his work. He also was politically astute, representing Wheeling's fifth ward on the city council from 1877 to 1881. Along the way, he formed personal and political connections with West Virginia's resurgent Democrats.

The concept of medical licensure was a hard sell in 1880. Many argued, with some justification, that licensure was nothing more than one group of physicians—regulars (allopaths), such as Reeves—chasing their competitors out of business. Patients were happy with their homeopath, their midwife, their botanical practitioner, or their bottle of cure-all. And they had a point. Reeves considered these other practitioners quacks because they lacked scientific knowledge, but most of his own 19th-century therapies offered little more.

The difference was that Reeves, like some other public health physicians, knew that medicines didn't do much. There were a few drugs, such as opium and quinine, that everyone knew about, and well-trained surgeons were doing wonders with anesthesia. But Reeves had little faith in most medicines. To him, the secret for dealing with major illnesses of the time—typhoid, con-

sumption (tuberculosis), malaria, yellow fever, measles, and the like—was prevention. And prevention meant sanitation.

At the time, West Virginia, like most other states, had no quarantine provisions, no animal inspections, no vital records, and no medical licensure law. Almost anyone could set up a slaughterhouse and send the runoff wherever they wanted or, for that matter, practice medicine. In 1877, Illinois had passed the first state health board law in the country that also included physician licensure, and Reeves wanted to emulate that law in West Virginia.

He argued that medical licensure was a public health issue. Better-trained doctors would support the public's health by knowing how to prevent diseases and, if that failed, understanding how to treat them. The Chicago *Tribune* had opposed the Illinois licensure law, but the Wheeling *Intelligencer* respected Reeves and editorialized, "No man has a right to practice medicine who has not qualified himself for his duties by a reasonable course of study."

Reeves helped draft the new law and, after very few changes, Governor Jacob Jackson signed, "An Act to establish a state board of health, and regulating the practice of medicine and surgery" into law in March 1881. The unique feature of our state law was that its health board was composed entirely of physicians. Not surprisingly, Reeves became secretary, the board's chief executive officer. The Illinois board secretary proclaimed that Reeves' law "was better than any other State in this Union."

It was a professional coup and could have been used to run the board's medical competitors out of state, which is pretty much what happened elsewhere. The Illinois board boasted about the number of doctors it had chased into Ohio. Numerous medical historians have documented how later physicians took over state licensing boards and used them to harass homeopaths, osteopaths, and other competing practitioners.

But this wasn't what Reeves intended, and it didn't occur in West Virginia while he was in charge. He spent most of his four years on the board worrying about public health issues such as smallpox, cattle fever, and hog cholera. To him, the licensure law was fair and not hard to meet. All one needed for a license certificate was to produce a proof of practice for at least 10 years, pass a board-administered exam, or present a diploma from a reputable medical college of any type. If, for instance, a homeopath wanted a license, he (the first woman wasn't licensed to be a doctor in our state until 1886) could either document 10 years of practice, present a diploma from one of several recognized homeopathic colleges, or take a test that covered medical science and homeopathic therapies. Reeves' board licensed almost every West Virginia physician who applied in its first six months and received only one complaint that year.

Licensure matters were almost nonexistent for Reeves during his time on the board, except for two other issues in his second year. Both involved the Dent family. Arthur Dent was Marmaduke's stepbrother and a physician in Weston (Lewis County). When the law passed, Arthur went across the Ohio River and got a diploma from the Columbus Medical College without attending classes. Columbus was a reputable school, but this looked suspicious to Reeves. His health board refused to recognize the diploma because Arthur hadn't attended classes. Rather than take an exam, Arthur Dent left town and moved to wide-open Ohio, where he practiced for 18 years.

Then, Frank Dent surfaced. Frank and his physician father, William, lived in Newberg, and Frank's situation was shady from the beginning. He'd apprenticed with his father and started his own practice in 1876. When Reeves' law passed in 1881, William asked for two certificates based on his 10 years of practice: one for himself and one

for "M. Dent," presumably his aged physician father, also named Marmaduke. In 1882, Reeves inquired why Frank was practicing without a certificate. William replied that Frank was terribly ill and confined to bed. He couldn't locate the prior certificate for "M. Dent" and asked Reeves to be kind enough to send a replacement made out to "F. M. Dent." Thoroughly perplexed, Reeves then got a note from a Newberg physician clarifying that M. Dent was the ailing grandfather and F. M. Dent his unlicensed grandson, who was apparently quite healthy and busy seeing patients.

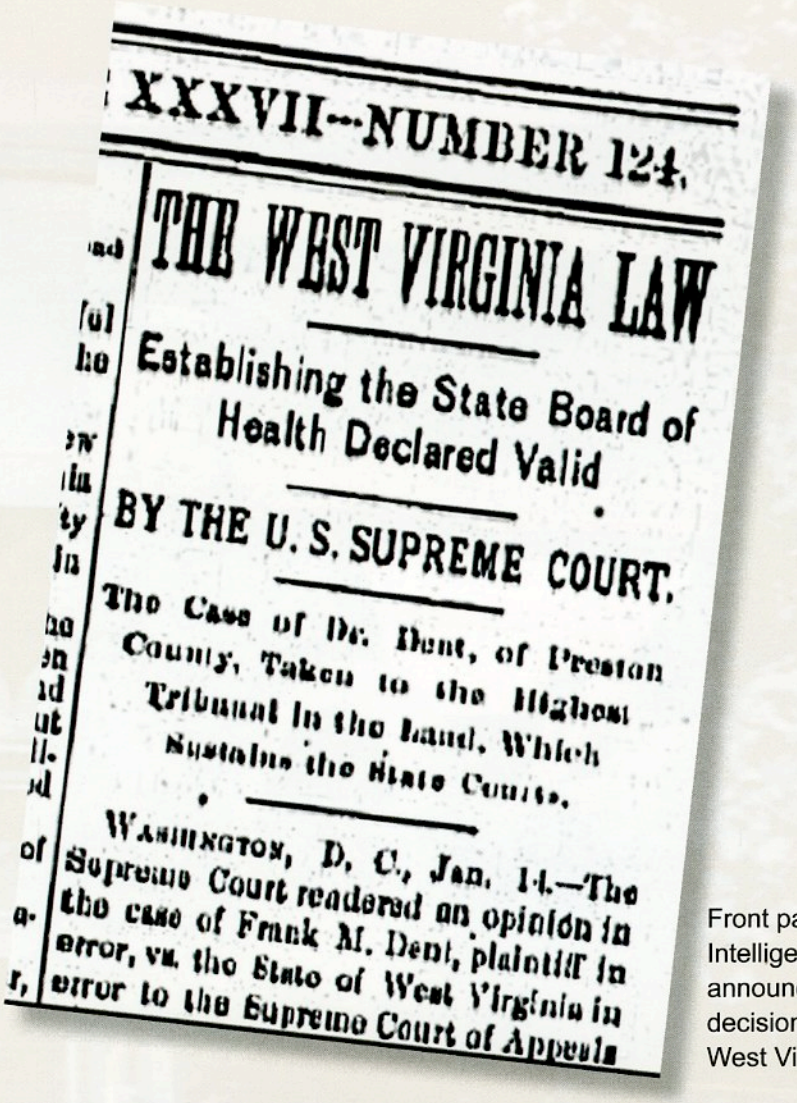
At the same time, Frank wrote to Reeves on his father's stationary that William had made a mistake, confusing grandfather and grandson, but that Frank had a legitimate diploma, which he'd furnished to the state board. He neglected to tell Reeves that the diploma was from a well-known diploma mill and that the local board had rejected it. When Reeves finally put the pieces together in October 1882, he had Frank arrested for practicing without a license—the only such arrest during his time on the board.

The Dent family considered Reeves' actions a personal vendetta and enlisted attorney Marmaduke to the fight. They never argued that Frank's bogus diploma was legitimate. Instead, Marmaduke was determined to get rid of Reeves and his law. He circulated a petition claiming that the law's only purpose was "to furnish the 'charlatan' who lobbied it through the legislature [a] means of subsistence." Marmaduke took Frank's case to the West Virginia Court of Appeals, claiming that the Board of Health law violated the Magna Carta and almost every similar document that protected a citizen's right to pursue a lawful trade.

Marmaduke Dent may not have known that one of the justices, Samuel Woods from Philippi, was Reeves' lifelong friend. The court rejected all of Dent's arguments in 1884. Afterwards, Reeves took his own swipe at Dent, calling him "an obscure lawyer, but with large pretensions."

Arthur Melville Dent (1948-1900). Photo courtesy of West Virginia and Regional History Center, WVU Libraries.

Marmaduke trimmed down his constitutional argument to the 14th Amendment and sent it to the U.S. Supreme Court, where Fields closed the books on it in 1889. In the meantime, Reeves left the health board in 1885 and, two years later, moved to Chattanooga, where the air was far less smoky and the winters warmer than in Wheeling. There, he became a nationally renowned pathologist. When the 1889 Supreme Court decision came down, it was big news in Wheeling but hardly noticed in Chattanooga or anywhere else. The *Medical News* in Philadelphia seemed surprised by the verdict and wondered if it would now allow West Virginia to eliminate its quackish imposters, without ever mentioning Reeves.



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THE WEST VIRGINIA LAW

Establishing the State Board of Health Declared Valid

BY THE U. S. SUPREME COURT.

The Case of Dr. Dent, of Preston County, Taken to the Highest Tribunal in the Land, Which Sustains the State Courts.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Jan. 14.—The Supreme Court rendered an opinion in the case of Frank M. Dent, plaintiff in error, vs. the State of West Virginia in error to the Supreme Court of Appeals

Front page of the Wheeling Intelligencer, January 15, 1889, announcing the Supreme Court's decision in the case of Dent v. West Virginia.

In the court's decision, Justice Field agreed with Marmaduke Dent that every citizen had a right "to follow any lawful calling, business or profession he may choose." But then, he stipulated that states also have the right to protect citizens from the ignorance of others so long as they did it fairly. Frank Dent had several reasonable options at his disposal but chose not to pursue them. Thus, the West Virginia law was ruled constitutional and appropriate.

Dent v. West Virginia broadened each state's role in protecting the public, even though legal scholars argued about it for the next 15 years. But, by the early 20th century, the matter was settled. Physicians gained far more control over their profession than they'd had before Dent, and the case became a precedent for an almost infinite number of questions around state authority. A California court, for example, cited *Dent* in a 2016 child support case (*Riley v. Knowles*) and a Nevada court cited *Dent* in a 2017 challenge to the Nevada State Bar (*Freire v. Sullivan*).

Few West Virginians today know the name of James Reeves, the father of public health in our state. After considerable lobbying, Wheeling resident Kate Quinn successfully got him inducted into the Wheeling Hall of Fame in 2011—the city's 105th inductee—115 years after his death. He is still not in the West Virginia Public Health Hall of Fame.

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John (left) and brother Tom Rowan of Monongalia County. All photos courtesy of the author.

Same Time Next Saturday

The Woodturning Rowan Brothers Create Decorative Bowls

By Carl E. Feather

John Rowan expects his brother Tom to show up at his workshop in Monongalia County right around 9 a.m. most every Saturday.

It's been that way for nearly 30 years, ever since the brothers got an itch to do some practical woodworking—making furniture for their homes in a simple garage workshop. Today, their work is performed in John's unmarked, dedicated 22-by-44-foot workshop across the driveway from his home.

"We thought we'd never fill this building," Tom says. "Now, it is overflowing."

Decorative hardwood bowls have replaced furniture as the shop's output. They estimate their inventory of turned pieces, stored in a separate building, at nearly 1,000, all awaiting buyers. And roughly the same number of pieces have been sold.

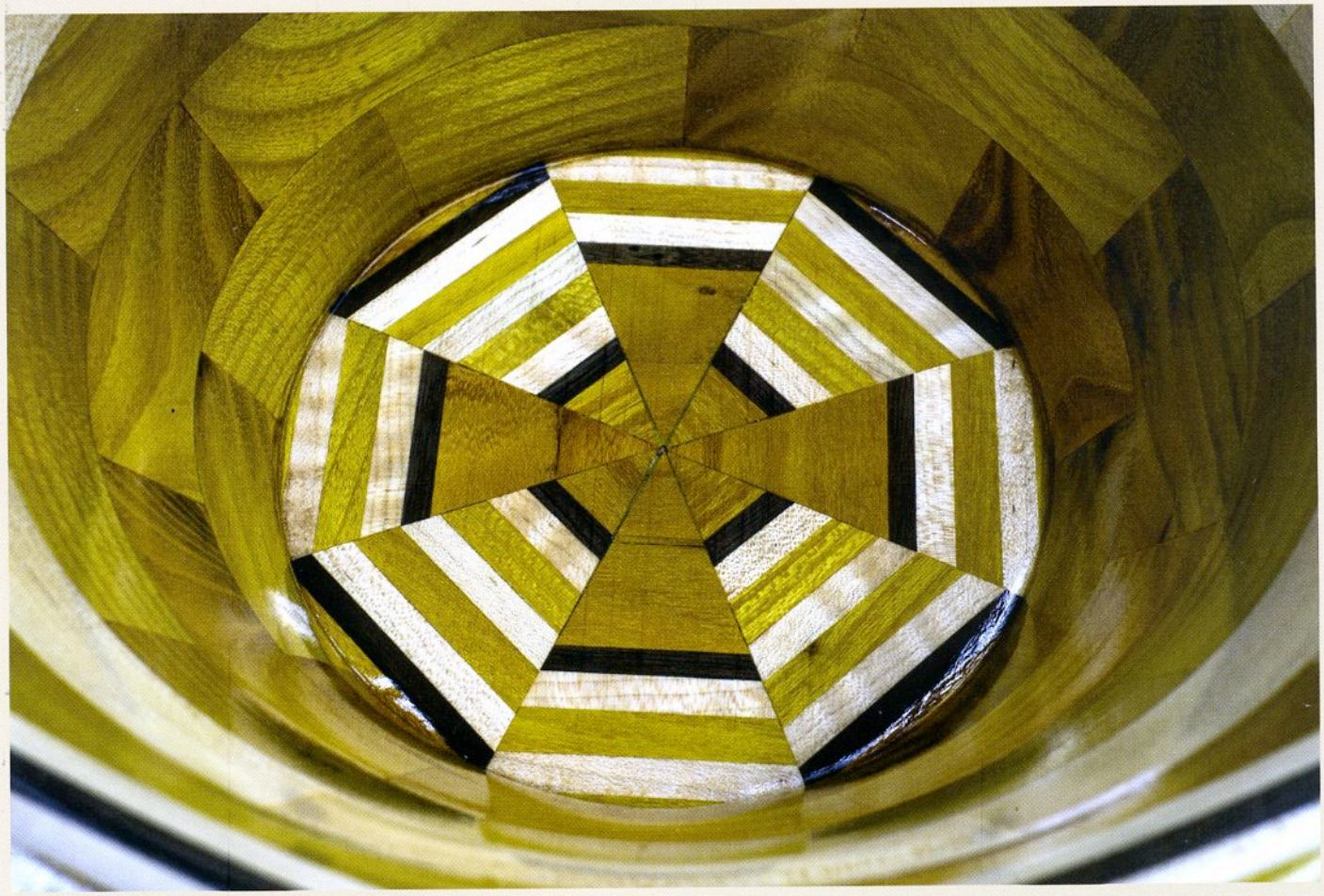
This unique bowl is made from Black Poplar, a rare coloration of that hardwood.

While some woodturners produce thin-walled, light-weight bowls turned from a single block of wood, John and Tom specialize in robust, multi-species, thick bowls that are more art than function, commanding a place of high honor in the owner's home. The bowls can weigh in at 20-plus pounds each, and their walls are often an inch or two thick. The largest bowl they've turned was 40 inches in diameter.

Looking at the complexity of their work and the hours that go into one piece, their standing Saturday workday is fully justified, along with the time they put into the shop throughout the week. Tom, a coal miner for 32 years, is retired and lives a short drive from their jointly owned and operated shop and puts in extra hours during the week.

"My wife calls it play time," says John, who retired from "Shorty Anderson's" auto mechanics shop at the end of 2020 so he could devote more time to the JTR (John & Tom Rowan) Wood effort. "And, I say, 'Sure. I play every day.'"

Their "play" begins with selecting the raw wood from regional hardwood harvesters. Their preference is Appalachian hardwoods that grew on the mountainsides surrounding the workshop. There is a furtive element to their primary wood source—the lumberman is a loner and uninterested in expanding his business to



A supply of rare Osage orange wood was worked into a bowl by Tom and John Rowan of JTR Wood. Maple and walnut complement the yellow wood in this 12-inch bowl.

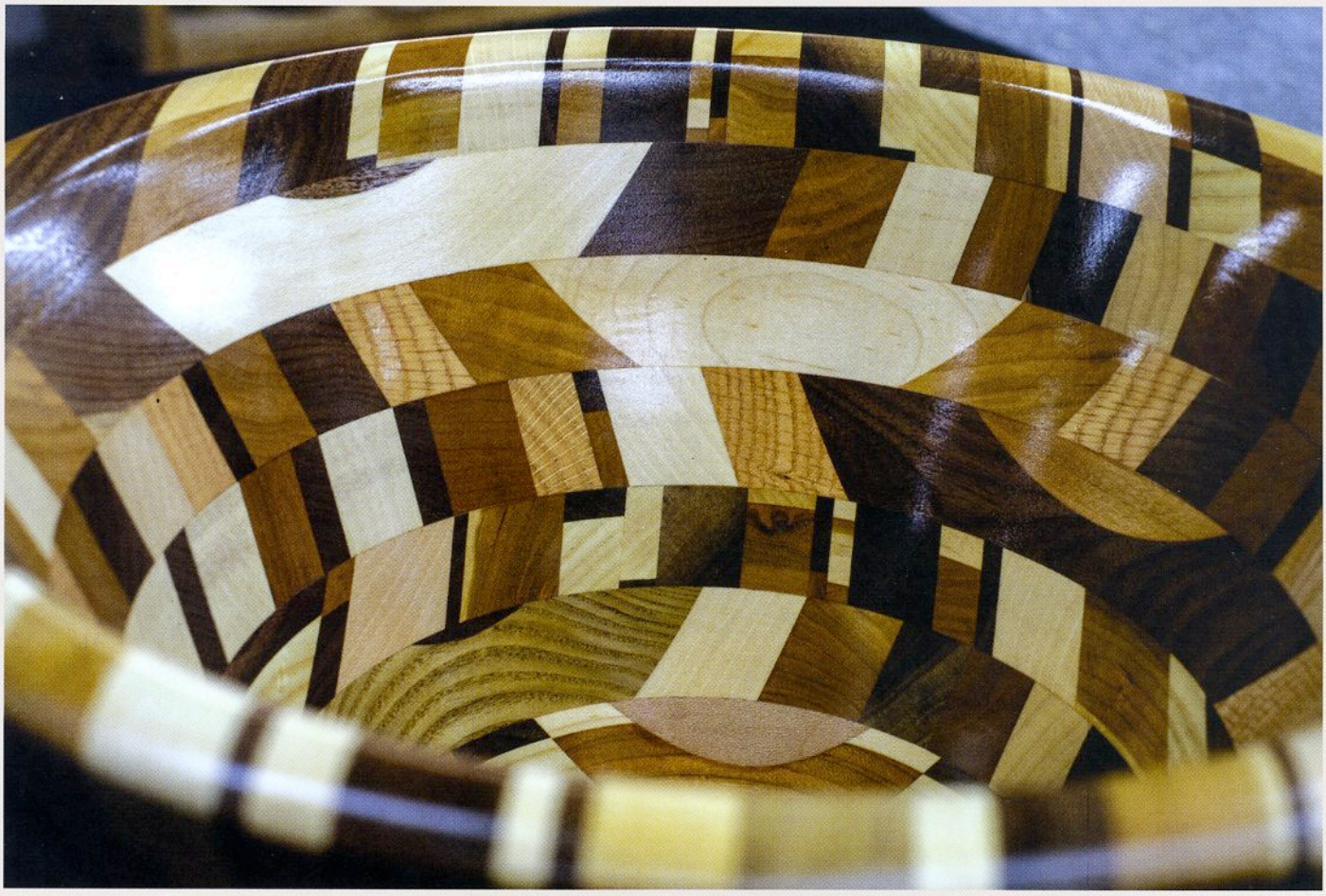
additional contacts. Tom and John enjoy favored status, and whenever an unusual log or species comes through, the lumberman calls them.

For instance, their inventory includes a poplar bowl with a distinct black appearance. Tom explains that while poplar can take on a variety of shades, they'd never seen a black poplar log. They have a bowl to prove its existence. One of their 12-inch bowls uses rare Osage orange lumber. Uncommon woods such as sassafras, sycamore, and mahogany are paired with the hardwood staples: maple, walnut, cherry, and oak.

They never have to wait on that unusual log or burl to show up through their supplier, however. "We have a stock of about 1,500 square feet of hardwood lumber," Tom says of their ready supply.

The JTR operation is as secretive as the source of its wood. Only a handful of friends and trusted acquaintances have stepped inside the woodshop the brothers started building from the ground up in 1992. Equipped with just about any kind of wood-working lathe, saws, and small tools a woodturner / cabinetmaker could want, on the exterior the shop looks like any other garage, a cloak of confidentiality necessary to protect their investments in tools and finished products.

With selling venues shut down during the pandemic, the men turned their attention to building up stock and designing / building a new dust-collection system. Each powered tool is tied into the system, which pulls the contaminated air from the tool's dust chutes, sends it through a system of filters, and returns it to the room. Filtering



Nearly 200 individual pieces of various hardwoods went into this bowl designed and turned by Tom and John Rowan. Sassafras, walnut, maple, cherry and oak—mainstays of the Appalachian hardwood forest—were used.

and recycling the air saves substantially on heating-and-cooling costs. Further, two dehumidifiers maintain the working environment between 25 and 30 percent humidity, which keeps the wood at an optimum moisture content.

This dream workshop and the art that emerges from it reach back decades to Star City's Suncrest Junior High and Morgantown High, where both John and Tom took woodshop classes starting in seventh grade.

"It was 1952," recalls Tom of his first time in the Suncrest woodshop class. He says the other "industrial arts" options were machine shop and welding, but he went with wood. As it turned out, Tom and his high school instructor, whose name he recalls as Mr. Tennant, became good friends and were involved in a small business arrangement.

"[A few of the students] would build stuff," Tom says. "He would put the finish on it and sell it. We weren't getting much money from it."

"We learned a lot in woodshop," John says. Tom and John revisited their adolescent interests when they started tinkering with woodworking individually and as a team in their adult years.

"John lived beside us for a while, and we started tinkering around in his garage," Tom says. The men soon found themselves getting custom orders for hardwood picture frames, toy chests, curio cabinets, and other furniture. "About anything you could do with a piece of wood," Tom says.

That work eventually led to construction of their workshop in 1994. But their focus literally took a turn when the brothers started looking at all the scrap pieces

The Brothers do not name their bowls, but they refer to the ones with a circular pattern embedded in them as "droop bowls". Rectangular blocks of wood were cut at an angle to create the circular shape.

of hardwood generated during furniture making.

"We would throw these pieces of wood away, and we said, 'Let's make something out of all that scrap,'" Tom says.

The first "something," a bowl turned from a chunk of walnut in 2008, is unremarkable in its artistry and craftsmanship, but the brothers keep it as a reminder of how far they've come. From that very humble start, Tom and John developed their system of making bowls built from stacked, glued rings of hardwood pieces cut at exacting angles and glued together under pressure.

"This took a couple of years to get where we got to where we are now," Tom says. "We have our own system for making these. [Each ring] has eight pieces. That's 16 cuts. If you are off by a half-degree, with 16 of them, they don't fit. We played with that a long time to where we could cut these pieces accurately."

Their woodshop is also a research-and-development center as they develop construction / turning techniques and hone those that hold the most promise for generating distinct works. One product of this experimentation is the "droop bowl," which features circular designs. Tom says the secret to producing a circle from rectangular blocks of wood rests in the angle at which the rings are cut once the pieces are glued together.

An average bowl is built from five layers of rings; each ring can have one or more species of wood in it, thus giving the turner options for creating patterns on each ring. A powered miter saw, customized to the task by Tom, makes the angled ring components. With his years of experience, Tom can cut the pieces for one ring in about five

John Rowan at work.

minutes. The completed rings are stacked, aligned, and glued to a solid base.

They typically select contrasting woods but build most bowls around oak, maple, and cherry, stalwarts of the Appalachian forest. Sycamore sometimes replaces maple as a light, contrasting element for the strong rectangular and circular patterns in the rings. Curly woods often command entire rings, as do the rare curly burls cherished by woodturners. The bottom ring of the bowl often features intricate patterns of triangles coming to a point at the base.

John handles the task of turning the bowls. "[Tom] builds, I turn," John says. "We both can do either job. But his imagination runs better than mine, so I let him go with it."

Because the blank is built of rings, there is less material to cut away on the lathes than there would be with a solid piece of wood. John uses a metal lathe to expedite the interior work even further. John explains that the vibrations from the turning chisels hitting the bumps inside the blanks are too intense for the wood lathes; the metal lathe handles it much more efficiently. Once the roughness is brought under control on the metal lathe, the piece is moved onto one of two Canadian-built general lathes for turning.

A bowl made of only maple celebrates the beauty of the wood as well as its story. The black traces result from the log being exposed to the elements for a prolonged amount of time after harvesting.

A lacquer finish has been standard on the Rowan bowls, but the craftsmen lament the state of today's finishes and are exploring alternatives. Getting even coverage on smooth surfaces without runs is a challenge, and they are experimenting with epoxy options. Likewise, they've started to incorporate rings of epoxy into their bowl designs.

They also have branched out into other turned products, including flower vases and urns. The latter market is lucrative because of the emotional connection to their contents and buyers wanting to give their loved one's cremains a beautiful, unique home.

Although the bowls started out as "just something to do," their sales have provided an income stream for investing in better tools and the workshop structure. Their smaller bowls are priced in the $100 to $300 range, depending upon the rarity of the wood, complexity of the design, and time involved in producing it. Larger bowls can fetch from $500 to $1000 when the product catches the eye of a willing buyer.

Like many artisans, the brothers could have retired from their art years ago if all the "Be-Backers"—shoppers who praise their work and promise to return before a

John Rowan at work turning a bowl built by his brother Tom Rowan.

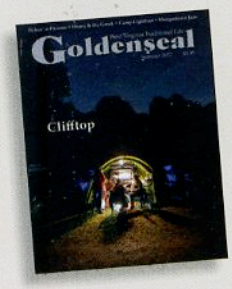
festival ends—actually followed through on their promised transactions. As it is, carrying an inventory, paying for booth space, and the expenses of living on the road keep profits low. It takes a truck to haul the dozens of bowls, tables, shelves, and support items for a show, and when sales for a three-day event cover only the gasoline and vendor fees, the brothers drop that venue from their calendars.

Experience has taught them that their pieces sell best where the venue includes alcohol, such as wine and beer festivals. Alcohol has a way of lifting inhibitions, especially when it comes to using credit and debit cards. The other essential is to have educated buyers with an eye toward the arts and the cash / credit to invest in them. Accordingly, they've narrowed their selling to the Autumn Glory, and Art and Wine festivals in Deep Creek, Maryland, and the Mountaineer Week Craft Show in Morgantown.

A video of the brothers at work in their shop can be viewed on Youtube.com at the following link: *https://youtu.be/EC0-WYNA9RI*

They're investigating online sales, but there's the constant tension of having to balance the fun of designing and creating with the chores of maintaining a website, marketing it, and shipping purchases. Another option is to add a showroom / sales area to the workshop. But Tom and John would prefer to focus on creating the next stunning bowl from the colors, patterns, grains, and quirks residing beneath the bark of West Virginia's hardwood forests.

A simple mark on the bottom of each bowl, JTR, identifies their work, but they don't date it or attribute it to an individual



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Tom Rowan (left) and brother John Rowan in their shop.

artist or turner. They work as a single unit, one which, by all indications, will end with their demise; there's no succession plan for their artistry and hobby. They have no understudies, and neither brother is interested in teaching other woodworkers their methods, although they have received requests to do so. And neither has children or grandchildren with an interest in investing the years of work it takes to attain the level of woodworking skills these artisans have achieved since their first day of woodshop class back in junior high six decades ago.

"We learned a lot in woodshop," John says.

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.

Tom Rowan carefully aligns the rings that he built from pieces of hardwood. The rings will be glued together to create the blank for turning a bowl.

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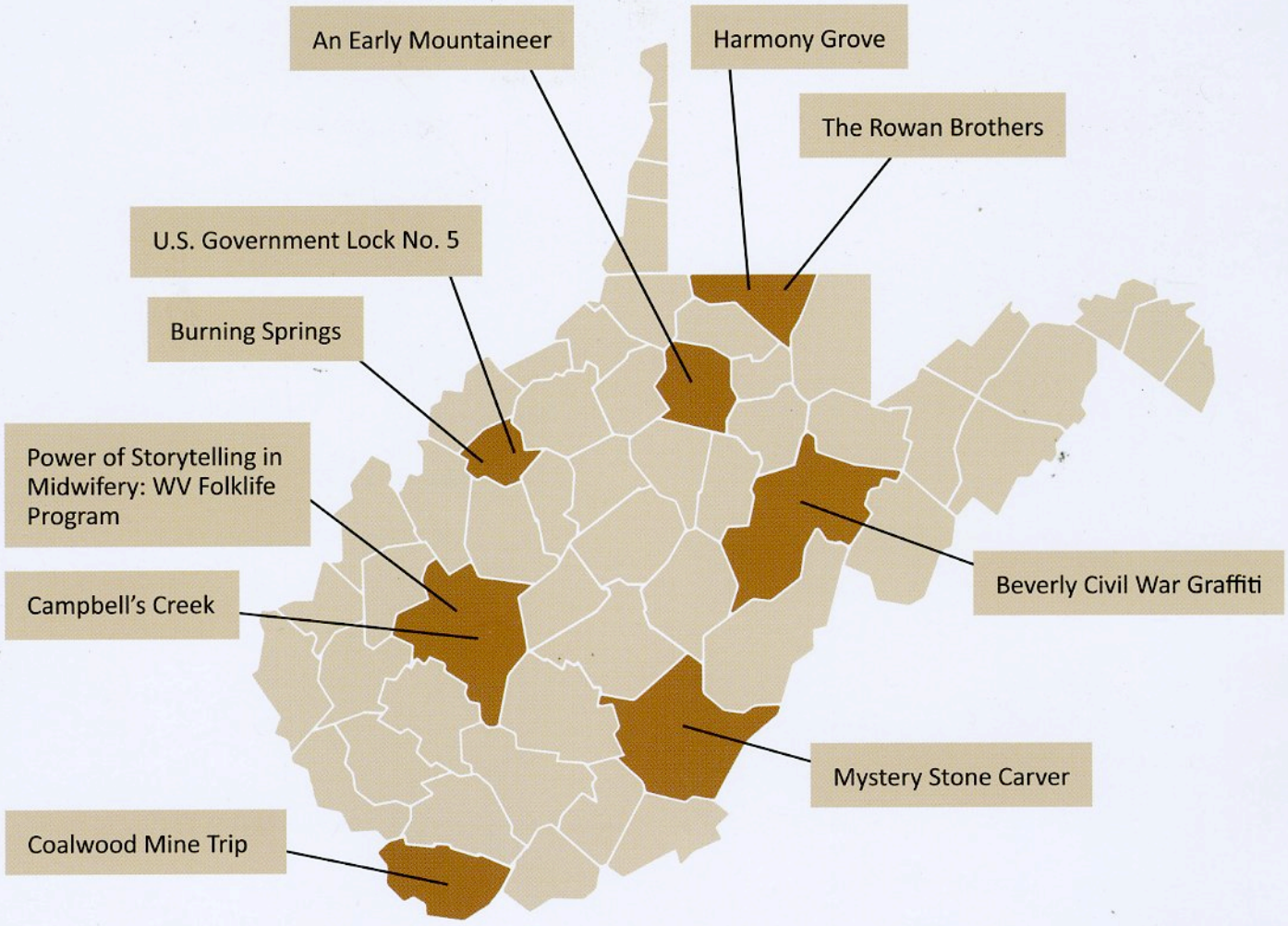

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