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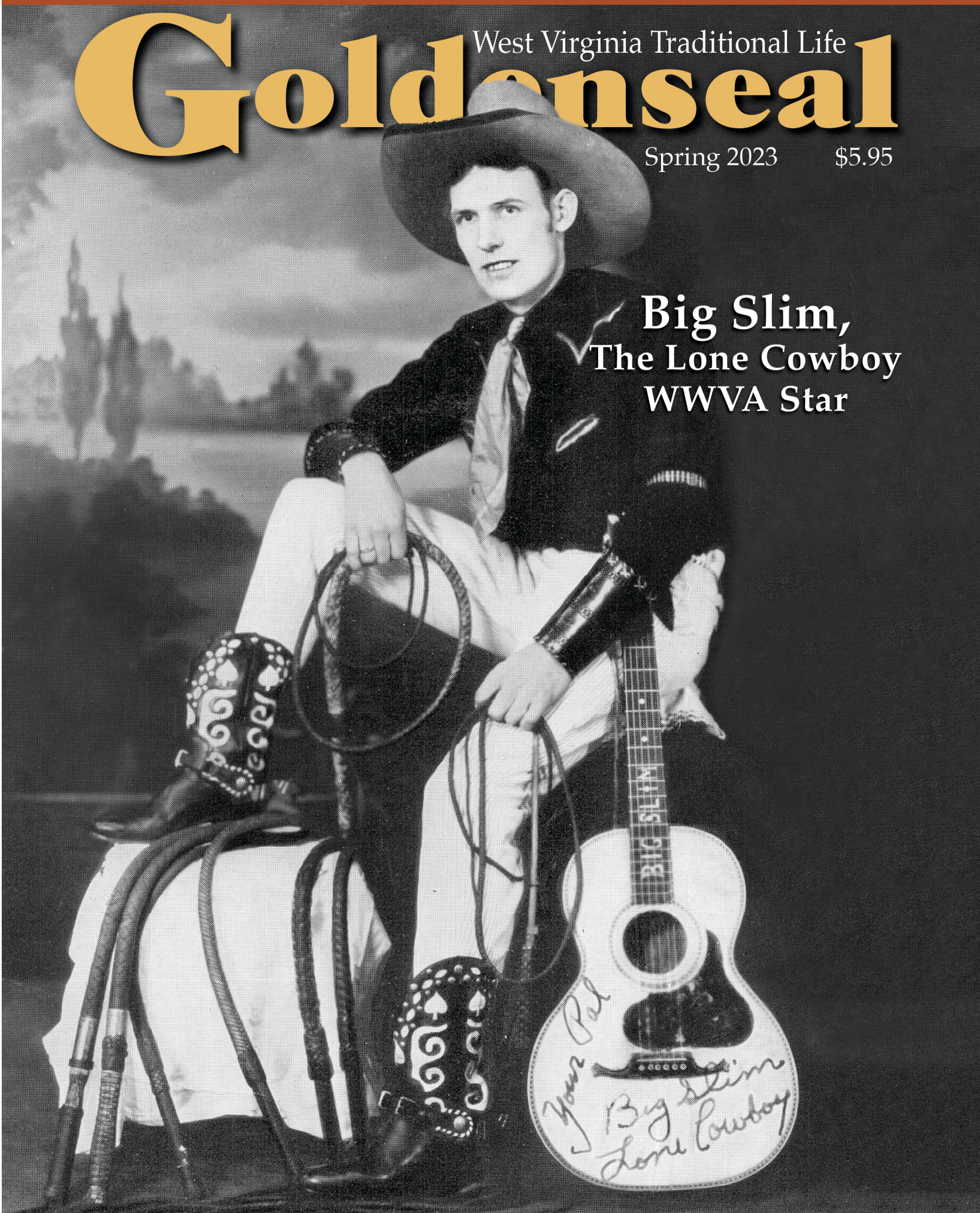
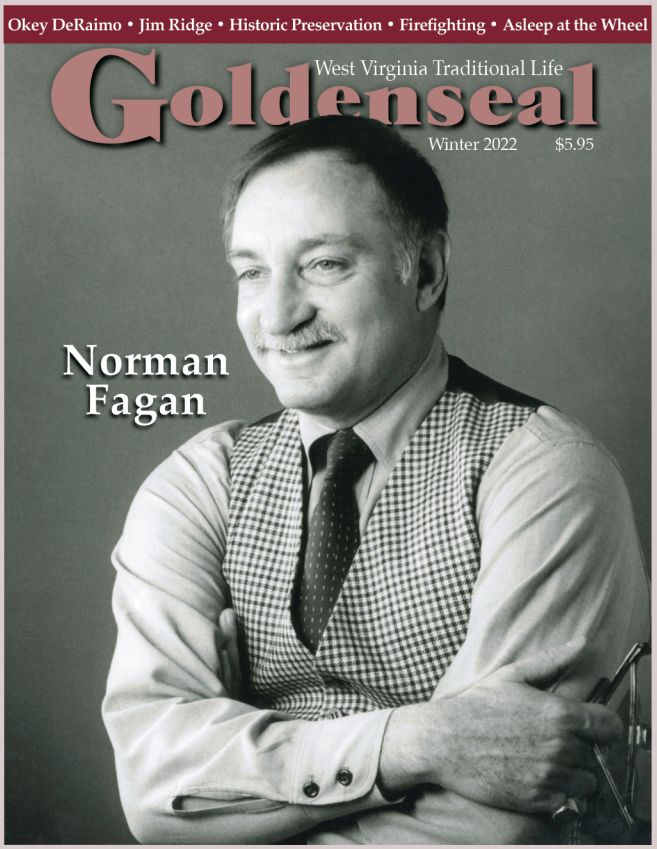


Big Slim, The Lone Cowboy WWVA Star

Goldenseal Spring 2023 Volume 49, Number 1

Big Slim • Dr. Alice Randall • Eanes Shoe Repair • Marshall Track • Margaret Elizabeth Dickey • Camp Horseshoe Quilt Retreat



Our cover photo of Norm Fagan in the Winter 2022 issue, as well as the photos on pages 22, 29, and 30, are by Michael Keller, the Culture Center's former chief photographer. - ed.



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On the cover: Big Slim, late 1930s, possibly prior to his Jamboree affiliation. Ivan Tribe Collection.

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From the Editor

Dandelions and Their Many Uses

By Laiken Blankenship

After the somewhat bleakness of the winter months, the first signs of spring can feel like a breath of fresh air. The gray dampness, snow, and rain blanket the earth for what can feel like endless months. Though a necessary season of rest, I always watch for those first few blooms with such anticipation—spring beauties, morels, forsythia, daffodils, and, of course—dandelions. To some, dandelions may seem a nuisance, but for me, it's a reminder of the cyclicity of nature, new beginnings, and the hardiness and resilience of our plantlife. I have fond memories of early springs in my youth when my grandmother, JaneLee Butler Boyd, would make dandelion jelly. I was surprised that a jelly could be made out of what is considered by most to be an invasive weed.

This spurred a common interest my grandmother and I shared of medicinal plants, folklore, and herbal remedies. For my 13th birthday she gifted me my own copy of *Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants in Wild (and Not So Wild) Places* by "Wildman" Steve Brill with Evelyn Dean. She also started a journal of her own remedies for me to continue to add my own discoveries to—a treasured belonging of mine. Back in 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic, I found myself at spring with some free time on my hands, and began to notice all of the dandelions in the green space around the apartment we lived in at the time. I decided it was time I tried my own hand at making dandelion jelly, only after searching the journal my grandmother had made for me I found there was no dandelion jelly recipe within the pages! Having lost my grandmother in 2009, I had no way of getting the recipe straight from the source.

After scouring my books, I was surprised I could not find a recipe anywhere for dandelion jelly! Luckily, today there is a wealth of knowledge easily accessible on the internet. After some research, and consulting with a friend of mine who had made it before, I had put together a



DANDELION JELLY

INGREDIENTS:
3 CUPS PACKED FRESH DANDELION BLOSSOMS (ABOUT 4 OZ)
4 CUPS WATER
4 CUPS SUGAR
1 BOX LESS SUGAR RECIPES PECTIN
2 TBS LEMON JUICE
6 1/2 PINT JARS WITH LIDS AND RINGS

DIRECTIONS:
1.) HARVEST BLOSSOMS AND SPLIT THE YELLOW BLOOMS FROM THE GREEN TOPS. THE GOAL HERE IS TO LEAVE NO GREENS, THEY WILL IMPART A BITTER FLAVOR.

2.) IN A MEDIUM SAUCEPAN, BRING WATER TO A BOIL. ADD 1/2 OF BLOSSOMS, STIR, COVER. TURN OFF THE HEAT AND STEEP FOR 20 MINUTES. USING A FINE MESH STRAINER, STRAIN OUT AND GENTLY PUSH ON THE BLOSSOMS TO REMOVE LIQUID. ADD THE SAME DANDELION LIQUID BACK TO THE SAUCEPAN AND RETURN TO A BOIL. ADD REMAINING BLOSSOMS. COVER, TURN OFF HEAT, AND STEEP FOR 20 MINUTES. STRAIN BLOSSOMS, PRESSING TO REMOVE LIQUID.

3.) MEASURE STEEPING LIQUID TO 3 CUPS; ADD SUGAR, PECTIN, AND LEMON JUICE AND BRING TO A BOIL, STIRRING UNTIL SUGAR DISSOLVES. BOIL FOR ONE MINUTE, THEN SKIM OFF FOAM WITH A WOODEN SPOON.

4.) POUR INTO HOT STERILIZED JARS LEAVING 1/4 INCH HEADSPACE. PROCESS 10 MINUTES IN A BOILING WATER CANNER.

recipe that I thought would do nicely and was ready to begin harvesting my dandelions. When foraging for dandelions or other wild plants it is important to be aware of your surroundings and make sure the area you are foraging is not treated with pesticides or other harmful chemicals. If you don't have much green space near your home, check out nearby parks or public land. Please forage responsibly, and if you are uncertain about the rules or regulations of an area, check with your local wildlife authority or forest service office.

As it turns out, dandelions are useful for other things as well. The tender young greens can be used as salad greens, or for wilted "lettuce" and the roots can be dried, ground up, and used for a tea that is similar in flavor to coffee I've heard—never tried that one myself. Of course, you can also steep the blossoms for a tea, which is basically the base ingredient for this jelly recipe. I have also heard of dandelion mead or wine recipes, though given the work it takes for the four ounces of yellow blossoms unmarred by green for this recipe, I can only imagine the dedication it takes to gather enough for one of those recipes. Dandelion fritters are also a popular recipe in the springtime, the young blossom heads are dipped in a batter and fried up golden brown, they have a mild semi-sweet taste, though the older blossoms can get a little bitter.

All in all, I was well pleased with how the dandelion jelly recipe turned out, and it has become an annual ritual/tradition—and cracking open that jar of spring in the depths of winter is like a ray of sunshine on toast. Since that first time making it on my own, it has become a tradition of mine. Each spring as I watch for the dandelions to begin to sprout, I reflect on the memories I have of her and hope she is smiling down. I like to think she would approve of my recipe.

Laiken J. Blankenship

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I saw Pete Ottaviano's article in the Summer 2023 issue about the Lewisburg Drive-In. It was built by my Grandfather and Grandmother in the early 60's. My grandfather passed away in 1969. During the 70's they rented it to Danny Warden. His father had the Crab Orchard Drive-In at Beckley, and his brother had a drive-in in Pineville and Pipestem.

In the late 70's Danny moved to Bristol, TN and bought his uncle's Twin City Drive-In, which he still operates to this day. He then let his brother Larry Warden operate the Lewisburg Drive-In. He operated it until the late 80's and then closed it and moved to Rural Retreat, VA and operated that drive-in.

I grew up in Frankford (Greenbrier County) but every weekend I was down there working at the drive-in. Yes, I lived in the house under the movie screen with my Grandmother. The screen was built first, and the house was built on the screen. My Grandmother and Grandfather had a farm between Frankford and Renick and wanted to move closer to work. They moved into the house in '63 or '64. I know I was very young but do still remember when they lived on the farm.

I worked at the Lewisburg Drive-In every weekend in the 70's while I was in school. I moved to Rocky Mount, VA in 1980 and operated my own drive-in for 5 years before moving on to construction. I worked overseas for 20 years on major construction projects. In 2020, I finally retired and moved back to heaven (Greenbrier Valley). We live at our family home here in Frankford. If you were at WVSOM in the 80s you might know a friend of mine—Lorenzo Pence.



Lewisburg Drive-In

This place still has many memories for me. I feel it structured my life since I started work so young. I guess I can say that there was no place like that Drive-In. Oh, and Lorenzo and Tina were there many times.

Garf Simmons,
Frankford, WV

Cedar Lakes Conference Center Upcoming Workshops

Cedar Lakes Conference Center in Ripley (Jackson County) is home to the Mountain State Art & Craft Fair, which has taken place on the grounds since 1963. The facility was established to bring together young and old alike; to provide a quality environment that nurtures creative learning.

Cedar Lakes, with combined efforts of Program Coordinator Jennifer Groves, Director Holli Vaneter, and other helpful staff is working hard to expand all their Art and Craft programs—especially the workshops that they offer throughout the year. Just like the artisans who exhibit at the fair, these workshops are intended to represent some form of traditional or contemporary Appalachian arts and crafts.

Instruction for: Quilting, basketry, rug hooking, tinsmithing, wood carving, woodturning, stained glass, painting, blacksmithing, needle felting, photography, writing and music such as fiddle, ukulele, psaltery and dulcimer are offered throughout the year.

The workshops and seminars are offered with special package costs that include instruction, meals, and lodging. The deadline for registration is two weeks before each event starts.

To learn more about pricing, accommodations, and additional workshops please visit: http://www.cedarlakes.com/craft-workshops/ or call Jennifer Groves at (304) 372-7860 ext. 408.



Cedar Lakes Entrance. Photo Courtesy of Jackson County Development Authority.

Below is a look at their upcoming schedule:

March 5—10 (Week)
Ribbed Baskets—Debbie Martzall
Bowed Psaltery—Tish Westman

March 12—17 (Week)
Old Time Fiddle—Dave Bing
Basketry and Penny Rugs—Elaine Sinclair
Woodturning—Harry Newman

April 16—21 (Week)
Focus on Learning: Digital Photography in West Virginia—Ron Gaskins
Needle Felting—Debbie Martzall
Woodcarving—Bob Barris
Quilting Retreat: Monet's Garden Party—Judy Lilly
Sensory & Specific Creative Writing Workshop—Colleen Anderson
Basketry and Penny Rugs—Elaine Sinclair
Blacksmithing; Make a Tool to Make a Tool—Michael Young
Woodturning—Larry Weese
Stained Glass—Stephanie Danz

April 21—23 (Weekend)
Quilting with Judy: Seasonal Table Topper
Acrylic: Bold and Free—Vivian Ripley
Woodturning: Pen Class—Harry Newman
Ukulele—Tish Westman

May 7—12 (Week)
West Virginia Music 12th Annual Bowed Psaltery Symphony (May 11th)—Tish Westman and Friends
Watercolor—Jerre Watkins
Stained Glass—Stephanie Danz

May 19—21 (Weekend)
Beginning Blacksmithing: Bottle Openers—Michael Young
Woodturning—Larry Weese
Exposing the Mysteries of Photography—Martin Unrue

June 4—9 (Week)
Woodturning—Larry Weese
Watercolors—Debbie Lester

2022-2023 West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program Participants

By Jennie Williams

The West Virginia Folklife Program, a project of the West Virginia Humanities Council, has announced the participants of the 2022-2023 West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program. In its third round, the program supports seven apprenticeship pairs from across the Mountain State who are studying and practicing traditions including soul food cooking, fiddle repair, and mushroom foraging. The Folklife Apprenticeship Program offers $3,000 to recognize and honor West Virginia traditional artists or tradition bearers working with qualified apprentices on a year-long in-depth apprenticeship in their cultural expression or traditional art form. Apprentices are supported with $500 to pay for starting expenses such as necessary tools and materials. These folklife apprenticeships facilitate the transmission of cultural knowledge, artistic techniques, stories, and traditional practices.

Sharon Briggs of Paw Paw (Hampshire County) is leading an apprenticeship in mushroom foraging with Anthony Murray of Capon Bridge. Sharon, a full-time farmer and mycologist, owns and operates Peasant's Parcel Mushroom Farm and Mycology Lab. She has been foraging and mapping mushroom locations in the Eastern Panhandle and Potomac Highlands for over 20 years. When Anthony moved to the area, Sharon began to teach him how to identify and forage for mushrooms. He has been interested in mushroom hunting ever since. Anthony also helps Sharon on the farm and operates an apiary there.

Chris Haddox is leading an apprenticeship in fiddle repair with Mary Linscheid (see Fall 2022), both of whom live in Morgantown (Monongalia County). A longtime musician, Chris studied luthiery from West Virginia instrument builders Bob Smakula and Gilbert Stiles, both of whom he apprenticed through the West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program formerly supported by the Augusta Heritage Center. Mary is a multi-instrumentalist, song-writer, poet, and gardener whose art is inspired by Appalachians' connection with their homeland. Mary is excited to learn fiddle repair because the practice empowers her to fix her own fiddles and those of the community, which helps to ensure the continuation of local music-making.

Joe Herrmann of Paw Paw (Hampshire County) is leading an apprenticeship in clawhammer banjo with Dakota Karper of Capon Bridge. Joe is a founding member of the Critton Hollow String Band and has taught old-time music to many students. Dakota has been playing old-time fiddle for over 20 years and currently tours with the band Hemlock & Hickory. In 2019, she opened a traditional roots music school in Capon Bridge called The Cat and The Fiddle. Joe and Dakota apprenticed together previously in 2004 when Dakota was 11 years old through the Augusta Heritage Center's former West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program, and again in 2020 to study old-time fiddle with the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program.

Bil Lepp of South Charleston (Kanawha County) is leading an apprenticeship in Appalachian storytelling with James Froemel of Maidsville in Monongalia County. Bil has been writing and telling stories on stage for over 30 years. He became a full-time touring professional teller by 2003 after performing at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee in 2000.



Annick Odom learns regional West Virginia old-time fiddle tunes from Gerry Milnes at his home in Elkins (Randolph County) on January 22, 2023. Photo by Jennie Williams

Bil is a five-time champion, and James a three-time champion, of the West Virginia Liars contest. James is also an accomplished storyteller and actor, having performed at multiple festivals and schools. They have both participated in the West Virginia Storytellers Guild.

Enrica McMillon of Elkins in Randolph County is leading an apprenticeship with Barbara Weaner of Montrose in Tucker County to study fiber arts. They will specifically study fiber processing, dyeing with natural dyes sourced from locally harvested plants, and spinning fibers using a variety of tools for knitting and weaving. Enrica grew up in Helvetia, during a time when traditional practices of the 19th century were not still commonly taught. Enrica learned spinning, dyeing, and weaving at a young age from both of her grandmothers

The West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program is administered by the West Virginia Folklife Program at the West Virginia Humanities Council in Charleston and is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Follow @WVfolklife on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and visit wvfolklife.org to learn more about the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program.

and has since utilized this knowledge as a foundation for her artwork. Enrica also researches large antique wheels traditionally used in West Virginia and has created a database of over 6,000. Barbara first learned to spin under Enrica's teaching in 1980. Over the years, Enrica and Barbara have both been active members of the Mountain Weaver's Guild in Elkins.

Gerry Milnes of Elkins (Randolph County) is leading an apprenticeship in old-time West Virginia fiddle tunes and techniques with Annick Odom of Morgantown (Monongalia County). Gerry is a documentarian, teacher, writer, and award-winning musician. He started documenting traditional musicians and singers in Webster, Braxton, and Nicholas Counties in 1976. For 25 years, Gerry traveled widely as the Augusta Heritage Center's Folk Art Coordinator, presenting old-time musicians at festivals throughout the country and producing traditional West Virginia Music recordings and films of West Virginia folklife. Annick is a Belgian-American musician born and raised in West Virginia. While she grew up playing classical violin, Annick is now a professional performer-composer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist with a strong interest in learning about the fiddle traditions of her home state.

Xavier Oglesby is leading an apprenticeship in soul food cooking with his niece Brooklynn Oglesby, both of whom live in Beckley (Raleigh County). Xavier teaches young people how to cook and prepares



Anthony Murray of Hampshire County holding a Lion's Mane mushroom, 2019. Photo by Sharon Briggs

food for community events. He credits his knowledge of recipes and love of cooking to four generations of family members including his mother, father, and grandmothers. In the Black community, food traditions are often celebrated at church dinners, parties, and picnics. Xavier and Brooklynn are excited to work together so that this cooking tradition will remain in their family and in their community. In 2018, Xavier participated in the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program as an apprentice to Doris Fields (aka Lady D) of Beckley to learn and carry on the tradition of blues and Black gospel music.

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.

Big Slim—The Lone Cowboy
A *WWVA Jamboree* Legend

By Jacob L. Bapst and Ivan M. Tribe



Big Slim's Happy Ranch Gang, ca. 1943, Top Row from Left, Big Slim, Blue Eyed Hazel, Johnny Hill, kneeling, Toby Stroud, Ray "Quarantine" Brown. Barbara Smik Collection.

Dedicated in memory of Barbara Smik, aka Peeper Williams

In its seventy-two year history as one of the leading "barn-dance" programs in the "golden age of radio", a few performers on the *WWVA Jamboree* attained legendary status. Foremost among them was the couple, Doc and Chickie Williams, whose lives and careers have been well documented. Among the half-dozen or so others stands Big Slim, the Lone Cowboy. Surprisingly little has been written about this figure and some of it is contradictory. What follows is an effort to separate fact, fiction, and legend.

Big Slim was born in Mercer County, West Virginia, by his claim near the foot of East River Mountain. The day was May 9, although the year varies from 1899 to 1905! The most likely year seems 1903 as that date is on his World War II draft card. His parents were John C. (1879-1946) and Minnie Aliff who married in 1901. His name



Big Slim and Royal Flash, late 1940s. Barbara Smik Collection

at birth was probably Hamilton Christopher Aliff and he is so listed at age eight living in his father's household in Ward 5 of the city of Bluefield in the 1910 Census. He was the oldest of four children with a brother and two younger sisters. His mother seems to have died not long afterward. In later years Slim often used the name Harry C. McAuliffe (spelling varies), but in 1910 the surname Aliff would appear correct.

Not long afterward, the motherless youth, having completed the fourth grade, seems to have succumbed to the romance of the Far West perhaps accompanied by his father. In addition to dealing in horses and cattle, Aliff worked as a performer in rodeos and Wild West shows (according to one story he had known Tom Mix). Vari-

ous stories, probably not all true, place him as a trail hand in Rock Springs, Wyoming, working on the railroad and driving mules for the army in World War I. Photos show him bulldogging steers in a Montana rodeo in 1917 and also as a rodeo participant in 1923 and 1924. There seems to be no doubt that he became an expert at handling and training horses and mules; he was also a quality trick rider and trained others in the equestrian arts.

In the early 1920s, Aliff journeyed back East and at some point married Martha Louise Dolby who was probably two years younger than he. His first children were a son, H. C. Junior in 1925 (nicknamed Billy), and a daughter Phyllis Rae in 1927 (nicknamed Bootsie). Later about 1931, they had a second son, John Roy. Martha seems not to have cared for the wide open spaces and the family of four returned to the Pittsburgh area late in the decade.

Although one story places Slim at KDKA in Pittsburgh in 1920, that is likely untrue. Much more likely is his comment from a 1939 songbook, "then to radio in 1929 of which I am very proud." He may have entered radio as a solo performer or as a member of a group known as Dick Hartman's Tennessee Ramblers. This band initially was formed about 1928 by two West Virginia natives, Dick Hartman (1898-1962) and Harry Blair (1912-1986). Later Aliff and North Carolina native Cecil Campbell (1911-1989) joined. A focus of activity appears to have been a barber shop operated by Campbell's brother Ed. They apparently worked on local radio, most likely KQV. Hartman is said to have given Aliff his radio name of Big Slim, the Lone Cowboy. Most of the Tennessee Rambler group relocated first to WHEC Rochester, New York, and in 1934 to Charlotte, North Carolina where they were sponsored by Crazy Water Crystals. Big Slim, however, remained in Pittsburgh and formed his own band.

The 1930 Census shows Hamilton Aliff residing with his family at 7 Young Street in Stowe working as an auto mechanic. He was probably playing music only part-time for the next few years. On April 1, 1931, Big Slim and his Lone Star Rangers introduced a new radio program on KQV and by December also had a program on WWSW. This pattern seems to hold through December 1936.



Big Slim, WWVA Jamboree, ca. 1940. John Morris Collection.

On the 17th of that month "Big Slim"Aliff was in a New York studio cutting four discs for the Decca Corporation. He recorded "Footprints in the Snow" nine years prior to Bill Monroe's recording the song. What seemed to have been his "big break" soon turned into a nightmare. Returning home on the 20th, he found his wife and a boarder exchanging, "affectionate glances" (at a minimum). Slim grabbed a hunting knife, stabbed the man, and hit him over the head. A newspaper headline read, "Radio Hill-Billy Knifes Love Rival."

The jail warden announced that if Slim remained incarcerated on Christmas, he would feature him singing, yodeling, and doing "rope tricks" at the jail's "holiday show." What transpired on the 25th is not recorded, but Big Slim began serving a stretch in the Allegheny County Workhouse on March 19, 1937, perhaps for six months.

Luck can change, however, and in December 1937 Doc Williams, who had known Slim at KQV, needed a replacement for his temporarily injured comedian "Rawhide" Fincher. According to daughter Barbara, Doc always believed in second chances. Slim filled in for Rawhide beginning on Christmas and when he returned Slim remained at WWVA as a solo artist, more or less for the rest of his life. While he might go on extended tours, the Lone Cowboy found a home in Wheeling where he endured as a popular performer on both the *Jamboree* and the day-time programs that persisted until the mid-1950s

Slim not only gained a degree of stature at WWVA as a popular singer but also expanded his activity with horses and mules. He added trick riding to his outdoor shows in the summer and sometimes on a smaller scale at indoor ones. He did rope tricks and a whip act. He also took on pupils, among them band members such as young fiddler Toby Stroud and Johnny Hill (aka John Oshak) who played a variety of instruments. However, a teenage blond-haired girl from just across the river at Bridgeport, Ohio named Hazel Hawley became not only his star pupil and secretary, but also a highly skilled equestrian artist under the name "Blue-Eyed Hazel" and was also known as "Mrs. Big Slim."

Hazel probably began training with Slim in the spring of 1938 and by 1941 had attained sufficient ability to be photographed standing on her head atop a moving steed. Hank Snow saw her performing and reported that she would lean down from a galloping horse and pick up a handkerchief with her mouth. She could apparently sing a bit and Slim could take a cigarette from her lips with a bullwhip at about eighteen feet distance (a feat which demonstrated confidence, courage and steady nerves). Hazel also participated in an act called a "death drag," but provided no details. Show advertisements from 1942 to 1945 demonstrate that she was a key feature in his presentations. Slim and Martha apparently divorced in 1940 at which time she and the children resided in Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania. Within the next year she remarried and had moved to Norfolk, Virginia.

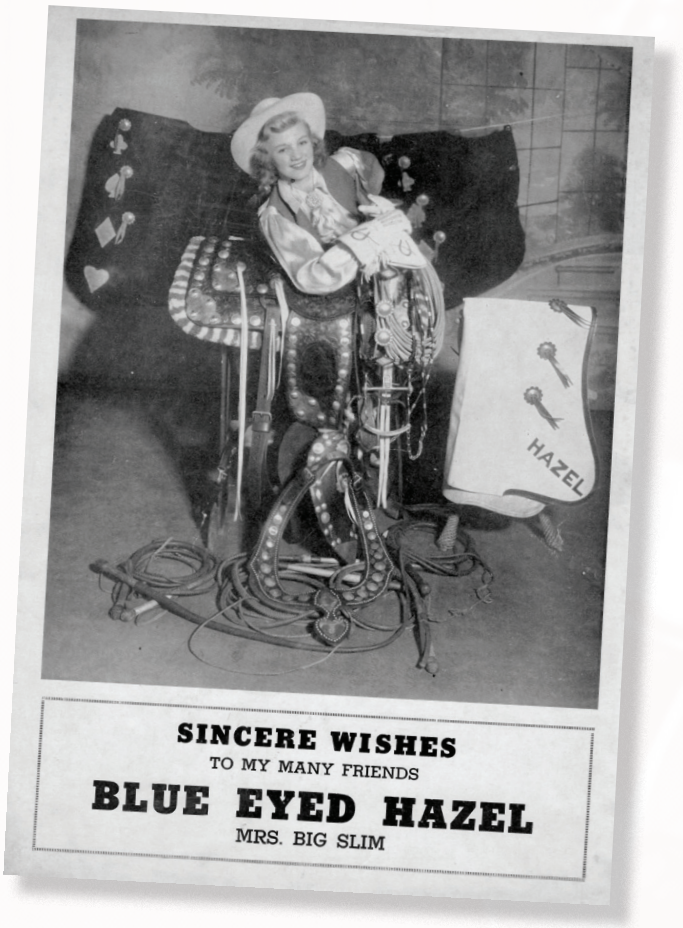


Big Slim and Royal Flash take a bow late 1940s. Barbara Smik Collection.

Slim had started a correspondence with Canadian artist Hank Snow as early as 1943 and Snow had recorded three of his compositions by 1944 on the Bluebird label.



Big Slim's Happy Ranch Gang c. 1942. Top: Big Slim, Toby Stroud, Johnny Hill. Seated: Ray "Quarantine" Brown. John Morris Collection.



Hazel Hawley aka Blue Eyed Hazel, ca. 1943. Barbara Smik Collection.

Hank wanted to get his music into the American market. The "Singing Ranger" visited Slim and Hazel in 1944 and Slim got Hank a six month contract at WWVA and the *Jamboree* beginning in January 1945.

Hank bought a trained horse named Shawnee. Hank and Slim began to plan a cross-Canada tour for summer 1946.

Preparation for the tour as well as expenses for the equipment became rather involved to say the least. Slim told Hank what he needed since it would include a horse show with some mules, riders, band members (which included Earl Langford, later a *Jamboree* star in his own right under the name Roy Scott), portable seating and movable electric lighting as well as trucks transporting all this paraphernalia. Fortunately Snow's record label RCA Canada came across with a $4,000 loan and he borrowed the remainder from banks. The group traveled by caravan. Hank Snow described in his autobiography: "Sometimes Big Slim riding his classy show horse, Golden Flash, Hazel and I would lead a parade with our three spotted horses" and, "our colorful outfits and with Hazel's golden hair flying in the breeze we looked high class in any parade."

For the first three or four weeks all went well until "one day Slim decided he had to go back to Wheeling." Hazel, Slim, their horses, mules, and one of the girl duet singers all left after one more performance. Slim termed it "serious matters," but provided no details. Apparently he and Hazel's union ended soon afterward. Little is known about her after that, but it seems likely that she went to Cleveland and subsequently remarried. Luckily for Hank

Snow, his tour continued successfully even with the loss of his star performer.

Big Slim continued his career at the *Jamboree*. In 1947, he recorded some songs on Buddy Starcher's short-lived Dixie label. This session included his revival of two nearly forgotten traditional western ballads, "Billy Venero" and "Patanio, the Pride of the Plains." He also worked extensively with young Hawkshaw Hawkins as he had earlier done with Snow. For a time in 1949, he did a daytime radio program at newer station WPIT in Pittsburgh. Slim also found another trick rider, singing partner, and wife.

Beatrice Leona Bernard (or Benard) (1927-1990), graduated from nearby Triadelphia High School and sang on the *Jamboree*. On July 14, 1948, she married Big Slim on stage at Shorty Fincher's Golden Oaks Park (entertainer weddings on stage were not uncommon in this period), near Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. If not already, she soon became known as Bebe Bernard, the "Annie Oakley of West Virginia." Later they had a son, Kenneth, who by 1957 was performing on stage with his parents. In 1949, Slim also recorded some songs on the Page label of Johnstown, Pennsylvania that included his best known original, "Sunny Side of the Mountain," and relevant to his main radio base, "Wheeling Boogie."

Big Slim's career work continued through the fifties as before. He cut four numbers for Audiosonic about 1956. In 1957, he had some health problems and newspapers reported his retirement from the *Jamboree*. But he was soon back at the Virginia Theater again as before. Hillbilly Park near Newark, Ohio celebrated "Big Slim Day" on September 22, 1957 where he, Bebe and Little Kenny were stars of the show. He had made an annual appearance there a dozen times in as many years. Slim also toured throughout the Northeast and adjacent parts of Canada, seemingly as popular as ever.



Big Slim on stage at Jamboree from Arc Album Cover, 1960s. Ivan Tribe Collection.

By the early 1960s, Big Slim's health was in decline but he continued to work the road and the *Jamboree* as conditions allowed. Somewhere along the line, he and Bebe separated, but apparently stayed married (Bebe Aliff remarried in 1969). About 1962, Royal Flash, his prized Arabian stallion, died and he gave up horses. In 1962, he cut a five-song EP of Jimmie Rodgers songs for the Essgee label (named for WWVA announcer and vocalist Lee Sutton and Hardrock Gunter). But his major recorded legacy took place north of the border in Toronto, Canada where he recorded three long-play albums for Arc. Some of these albums found their way into the US via the WWVA-connected Mac Wiseman Record Shop and later via cassette through Doc Williams Country Store. Overall, these 32 songs are a fair representation of his recorded songs.

By the mid-1960s, while in Wheeling, Slim dwelled in a duplex apartment by

himself on Wheeling Island owned by the parents of current *Wheeling Jamboree* CEO Dave Heath who was a boy at the time. Dave remembers him as rather stoic and reserved around him, but could sometimes talk for hours around the kitchen table with his dad, or sing duets with his mother. With the *Jamboree* then broadcast live from the Rex Theater, Slim appeared now and then, but his age was apparently showing as demonstrated in a 1964 photo where he was backed by the Vandergrift Brothers and another on an Arc album cover In the spring of 1966, he went on another Canadian tour that would prove to be his last.

Big Slim became ill during this junket and one of his fellow performers brought him to Waterloo, New York where he was hospitalized for a few months until his passing on October 13, 1966. Among his visitors were old friend and protégé Hank Snow (who reportedly paid most of his funeral expenses), daughter Phyllis from California, and a granddaughter Denise (a k a "Angel") who remained in upstate New York to work as a go-go dancer. There were probably others. His demise was widely reported in newspapers, but as in life his estimated age varied from 61 to 70. His funeral and burial in Greenwood Cemetery took place in Wheeling. Dave Heath recalls that his mother sorted Slim's belongings and some of his family picked them up. Whoever placed his tombstone used only the name, "Big Slim the Lone Cowboy WWVA Star." It had been a long hard ride from the Wyoming-Montana plains, but he ultimately found rest in the place where his legend was made, not far from the *World's Original Jamboree.*

Acknowledgements:

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Big Slim, WWVA Jamboree, 1946 probably his best known likeness. Ivan Tribe Collection.

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 14th 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 third contribution to the magazine.



1953 Marshall Track Team.

Marshall Track

By Rod O'Donnell

On March 13, 1912, Marshall University competed in the first intercollegiate track meet in school history. This would mark the beginning of a program that was led by a number of coaches, was a member of several conferences, and had many ups and downs. In the early days, these leaders were usually professors who donated their time.This would continue until the late 1960's, when full time track coaches were finally hired. This is the story of the athletes and coaches who dedicated their lives to the sport of track and field on that Huntington campus.

That initial meet in 1912, was held on the West Virginia Wesleyan campus. It was organized by Harry Stansburry, the future innovative athletic director at West Virginia University. One hundred athletes from the host school, Fairmont Normal, Glenville Normal, Broaddus Institute, WVU, and Marshall met in Buckhannon for the historic event. The Mountaineers, with 44 points, were victorious, followed by their counterparts from Huntington, who scored 26 points. The runner up team saw Harry Young (50, 100 yards) and George Lyon (pole vault) capture gold medals, while John Archer (hammer), "Cy" Young (880) and Lyon (high jump) took home runner up silver medals.

The following year, J. M. Legato coached the team that was composed of 14 men.

In addition to several inter school meets, the major contest of the season was an 84-28 setback to their rivals from Morgantown. The season culminated with the interclass championship that was described in the *Mi-*



The 1924 Marshall Men's Track Team.

rabillia, the school yearbook at the time, as a "special event of commencement."

As would be the pattern throughout the early years, the track program would be discontinued and restarted many times. During the 1923 season, the team of 22 athletes, captained by Herman Berry, competed in both intra squad meets and a dual meet with Marietta College that ended in a tie with each team scoring 65 ½ points. The following year, Marshall pulled out a 69-62 victory over the Pioneers, and in 1925, the team finished with a 2-1 record by defeating Marietta and Muskingum, but losing to Bluefield.

The campus saw a renewal of the program in the spring of 1928. Head coach, Trusty Tallman, led the team to a second place finish in the newly formed West Virginia Conference. Legendary brothers, Ray and "Kit" McCoy were the leaders. Ray would go on to guide Huntington High to eight state track championships and two first place state finishes in cross-country, between 1938 and 1987.

After several lackluster years in the Buckeye Conference, things were about to change. In 1947, with new membership in the Ohio Valley Conference, Otto "Swede" Gullickson took over the team. He had built a nationally recognized intramural program on the campus and would use his dynamic personality and tremendous work ethic to revive the moribund track program into a winner. Only two years after becoming the head coach, he led his team to a runner-up finish in the OVC. George Thabit scored 14 points in the meet; however things only got better. In 1950 and 1951, Marshall College (as it was then known) captured back-to-back OVC championships. The cast of athletes who were responsible for this historic accomplishment were Marvin Meredith (100), George Thabit (hurdles, high jump, pole vault), Bob Sharp (high jump), Fred Moore (400), Velois Keefer (800, mile), Jim Can-



1949 Marshall Track Team.

terbury (800, mile), Ward Wright (shot, discus), and Ray Campbell (discus). The Men of Marshall provided the school great recognition and did so with honor and pride.

Two years following the second championship, Marshall joined the Mid-American Conference and remained there till 1969. During those years, the track coach's position was filled by many men who were focused on the task of maintaining a competitive program, but who dealt with under funding and the poorest facilities in the conference. Jack Shaw was one of those who struggled during his brief tenure in Huntington, but went on to lead Western Michigan University to many MAC Championships in track and cross-country; he would develop 56 All-Americans, and would be named Coach of the Year 12 times. Another coach who briefly led the team was Bob Saunders, considered by many to be one of the greatest coaches in any sport in Marshall history; his teams won multiple Southern Conference titles in swimming.

In 1973, Don Williams was hired as the Thundering Herd's new coach. He not only guided his athletes to many victories and nine school records, but he was instrumental in securing funding for the school's first on-campus facility. Without his diligence, Marshall teams would have continued to use the sub-standard track at the A. D. Lewis Community Center that was located nearly two miles from the campus. Many times, both at this facility and at Fairfield Stadium, 300 high school and junior high athletes would be sharing their practice time with their collegiate counterparts, causing a "chaotic situation", as was stated by Coaches Saunders and Williams.

In 1974 with the new "Tartan Track," as it was known, Andy Nameth, a former assistant football coach, was named the new leader of the program. Under Coach Nameth's guidance, the initial Hall of Fame Relay was begun. It became a stalwart meet and was a regular stop for many teams on their way south to compete during annual spring breaks. The eight-lane track and stadium that featured lighting, a scoreboard, and seating for 3,000 was later named for Delegate Walter "Lefty" Rollins who played a major role in the legislature to secure the funding necessary for building a "first



Carl Lee (left), who went on to join the NFL, pictured with the author.

class facility."

In 1975, at twenty-seven years old this author was named to the head coaching position when Nameth left for an administrative job in Lawrence County (Ohio) schools.

The program continued to expand and improve during my tenure. In the next 10 years many exciting things occurred, including: 1) Hosting the West Virginia State Track Meet in 1978 and 1979; 2) Becoming the home of the Hershey National Youth Championship in 1979 and 1980, featuring over 500 athletes, ages 10-15, from 50 states, thus attracting national attention to the city and the university; 3) Hosting the annual dual meet between WVU and Marshall, with the winner capturing the "Old Coal Bucket" as the reward; 4) Hosting the first indoor home meet in the newly-constructed Henderson Center; 5) Hosting two Southern Conference Championship meets, in front of packed stands: 6) Welcoming the annual "Ray McCoy Invitational" and many other high school meets; 7) Winning the school's first Southern Conference Championship in any sport when the 1977 cross-country team brought home the trophy.

Additionally, between 1975 and 1986, the Marshall program saw its first three NCAA Division I qualifiers achieve the goal of competing at the highest level–Joe Sassler (Ashtabula, Ohio), David Kline (St. Albans, WV), and Kim Nutter (Parkersburg, WV) earned the honor in the 400, the 10,000, and cross-country, respectively.

Despite the obvious growth and success of the men's track program, in 1982, Athletic Director Lynn Snyder formed a committee to evaluate the possibility of eliminating track and field; fortunately, this did not occur. This author, as the head coach, made a presentation to the committee and it was pointed out that 30 athletes divided four scholarships to help pay for their education. The vast majority of the young men admitted to the fact that they would not have attended Marshall had it not been for the opportunity to compete as members of the track team. These major facts, along with several others, gave the review group evidence that the program should not be dropped, which resulted in the decision to continue the sport for another 21 years. Snyder soon left the athletic director's position for Oregon State University, where he oversaw the discontinuation of their storied track program.

My tenure ended in 1986, when I left to take the head coaching position at Kent State University. The lure of a program that offered more scholarships, additional head coaches, and higher pay were reasons for my reluctant decision to leave a program that had provided many great memories, rewarding experiences, and the opportunity to coach the finest student-athletes that



L-R: John Gonzaus of Gahanna, OH and Carl Lee of South Charleston.

any coach could ever hope for. It made for a bittersweet ending.

Dennis Brachna, a former Marshall assistant, and the head coach at Southern Conference rival The Citadel, was named to head the program in 1986. He would continue the success when his 1986 team captured the conference championship in cross-country. The '88 team featured cornerback Reggie Giles who starred in three sports and continued the tradition of football players who contributed to the track team during their years at Marshall. A few of these many athletes included Bob Pruett, Carl Lee, Chris Parker, Mike Natale, Bill Yanossy, Ray McCoy, George Queen, Jermaine Swafford, Dan Wells, "Cy" Young, Wilson Lathan, Ron Darby, Garland Barnhart, Mike Bailey, Randy Moss, and many more. Brachna's team's highest conference finish was runner up.

Jeff Small would become the last head track coach at Marshall when he took over the program in 1995. Success came quickly in the Southern Conference Championship meet as Small was named Coach of the Year for indoor track in both 1996 and 1997. During the latter year, in its final season of competition in the Southern Conference, they captured the only indoor crown in school history, edging Appalachian State by 10 points, in Johnson City, TN, home of East Tennessee University. Led by future NFL star Randy Moss's victory in the 200 meters, the Herd left the Southern Conference on a high note. They returned to the Mid-American Conference the following year. Competition among the twelve schools in the MAC was fierce. An 8th place finish was the highest that Small's team would finish in the outdoor championship when they scored 43 points. Casey Batey, without question, was the outstanding performer during the program's final years. Not only did the Milton, WV, native win titles in the 1500 and steeplechase, setting school records in both events, but he became the fifth national qualifier in the history of the program.

Unfortunately, he would be the last of a great group of distance runners in Marshall history. He was honored to join national qualifiers Kim Nutter, Dave Kline, and John Dotson who was a four-time All-Conference performer in cross-country and the Southern Conference Champion in the 1500 and 800. The '77 and '86 Southern Conference championship teams in the fall sport, the 1978 team that placed six runners in the top 14 in the conference championship meet, with NCAA power East Tennessee taking eight places.



A member of the 1978 Marshall Track Team.

On April 25, 2003, the headline in the *Parthenon* read, "Men's Track Victim of Cuts". At 5:22 p.m., on May 17, the 4 x 400 relay ended, and the 2003 MAC Track and Field Championship concluded. This was the last meet that Marshall University men's track would ever compete in. The Thundering Herd thinclads did not place in the event and finished in last place in the team standings. They had scored 13 points, by placing 4th in the 4 x 100 relay, 7th in the 400 hurdles (Nimal Bailey), 8th in the 400 (Phil Jones), 6th in the long jump, and 7th in the hammer (Zach Helm.)

After 91 years of ups and downs, in an era that saw young men and their respective coaches represent Marshall University in a first class manner, the sport ended. Very few states do not field Division

These highly successful Marshall University graduates were members of the track and field program during their college careers. A questionnaire was sent to each of them, asking them to provide current information, including answering the question whether they would have attended Marshall had they not been recruited as an athlete. 71% answered, "No."

Space will not allow us to list all of their names, but as the reader can see, the success of these young men is very impressive, which is a tribute to the university and the athletic/track and field program (not an exhaustive list):

-Wayne Basconi – Attorney
- Casey Batey- Graphic Design
-Ed Berry – Teacher/Coach
-Larry Butcher – Teacher/Coach
-Jim Bischoff – Company Owner
-Gary Cheslock – Corporate Sales Executive
-John Dotson – Pastor
-Jerry Dotson – Teacher/Coach
-Chris Gibson – Ph. D.
-John Gonzales – Attorney
-Mark Groves – Bank Executive
-Scott Hines – Physician
-Joe Johns – Attorney/Correspondent (CNN)
-David Kline – Insurance Agent
-Carl Lee – NFL player/H.S. Coach
-Shawn McWhorter – Justice System
-Mike Natale – Company Owner
-Kim Nutter – Military
-Joe Ottaviano – Physician
-Chris Parsons – Teacher/Coach
-Phil Parsons – Insurance Agent
-Verland Perry – Physical Therapist
-Rick Reddecliff – Lt. Colonel – USAF
-Jeff Rutherford – Company Executive
-Joe Sassler – Pharmaceutical Sales
-Brent Saunders – Attorney/Hospital CEO
-David Shaffer - Educator
-David Tabor – Company Executive
-Greg Wagner – Local Company Owner
-Tad Walden – CEO Television Company
-Rich Watts – Geologist
-Dan Wells – Financial Senior VP
-Robert Whitehead – Physician



1969 Unidentified Marshall Track team member prepares to pole vault.

These outstanding track athletes are members of the Marshall University Athletic Hall of Fame. Several also competed in football and/or basketball, noted by an asterisk.

*Garland Barnhart
Casey Batey
Jim Canterbury
*Jim Davidson
John Dotson
*Reggie Giles
*Doug Greenlee
Joe Johns
Dave Kline
*Carl Lee
*Wilson Lathan
*Ray McCoy
Shawn McWhorter
Kim Nutter
*Chris Parker
*Bobby Pruitt
Joe Sassler
*Jermaine Swafford
Dave Tabor
Richard Watts
*Dan Wells
*Bill Yanossy
Cy Young

I track teams; unfortunately, West Virginia is among that small group. No longer would Marshall be represented by many of the finest ambassadors that the school ever produced. That is a tragedy. No longer will tears swell in the eyes of officials, like the late Doc Hale, who told this author that was the case as he drove on 5th Avenue, looked to the left, and saw the Lefty Rollins track being demolished in 2008, to be replaced by new buildings and an intramural field on the site.

For this author, discontinuation of the program has left a void that will never be repaired; however, ten years in Huntington, and the association with many truly outstanding student-athletes provide memories that are priceless, and for that I am forever grateful.

Addendum:

On October 19, 2022, the Marshall University Board of Governors approved the reinstatement of men's indoor and outdoor track, beginning immediately. The program will compete in eight indoor and seven outdoor meets in the 2022-23 school year. Athletic Director Christian Spears, Board Chairman Patrick Farrell, and University President Brad Smith are to be commended for this positive decision that will not only benefit Marshall, but will provide student-athletes from across the state of West Virginia the opportunity to compete in the state's only Division 1 track and field program.

ROD O'DONNELL has coached track and field for 52 years, including 10 years at Marshall University (1975-1985). This is his first article for GOLDENSEAL.



Feed sack quilt of long ago made by May Ball and salvaged by the author's wife. All photos courtesy of the author.

From Feed Sacks to Fashion

By David Ball

Those of us who had the pleasure of growing up in West Virginia, and especially rural Barbour County in the 1950s, still remember the pretty feed sacks. That's right, feed sacks that held food for pigs and cows and chickens and all of the other animals found on the little farms. I feel safe in saying that every country store and the larger ones like Southern States in Philippi sold animal feed in print sacks. Those sacks were made of good quality cotton material and used for numerous utility purposes on the farm like drying off a newborn calf, gathering walnuts, harvesting potatoes, or carrying a young piglet home to raise for next year's meat and—certainly—they were used for making an assortment of clothes. It was before the advent of plastic bags and bottles that now litter our roads and streams and countryside, hanging in trees like holiday ornaments. It was before TV Dinners, polyester, computers, and space travel, but it was also a time when community folks looked out for each other and a dollar would buy five gallons of gas.

As a young lad in rural Moatsville, I remember when sacks were fashioned into dresses, blouses, shirts, and pillowcases as well as sheets, aprons, and wonderful quilts. It was also common to see those bags transformed into tablecloths used to cover the food after a Sunday dinner. In the years following WWII many young ladies learned to sew and make their own garments out of feed sacks. My cousin, Joetta Poe, was one of those that learned

how to turn sacks into dresses and she said, "The material was not only pretty but it was tough as steel and lasted for years. Would you believe that I still have a pattern for feed sack aprons?" My Mother made numerous items out of them, not only for herself and her children, but also the neighbors. I can still see her working with her old Singer treadle sewing machine as she turned pig feed sacks into something useful and beautiful.

Carl F. Nestor is a Native Son of Barbour County and still exploring life well into his nine decades. He once owned a farm supply store in Nestorville that was initially established by his Grandfather Haller and his Great Uncle Joseph in early 1900 as a mill to make flour, cornmeal, and animal feed. He said as a young boy he remembered seeing a lineup of horse drawn wagons and a few old trucks loaded with grain waiting to be ground. It was quite an operation in those days that benefited a lot of people and had hard work written all over it. I asked Carl to go back to the years when he had the store and tell me about the heyday of feed sacks. He recalls, "Yes, feed sacks were a real commodity and I always ordered my feed in print bags because the ladies demanded it. The feed came in one hundred pound bags and cost thirty cents more per bag, but it was worth it." He continues, "Most of my feed was supplied by International Milling Company located in Ohio and the minimum order was forty tons which was one rail car that was delivered monthly in Belington and I split the order with the Belington Farm Service Store." HARKO was another supplier based in Pennsylvania that he used and they also delivered feed to Barbour County by rail.

Mr. Nestor said he had several customers, but there were three or four main customers that had small dairies and they used a lot of feed to boost milk production. They would sell their print sacks back to him



Machine used by author's mother to turn feed sacks into just about anything made with cloth.

for twenty cents each, and then he would sell them to the ladies for twenty-five to forty cents each depending on the condition of the bag. The retail cost for a hundred pound bag of feed at that time was about three dollars and fifty cents. If we think about the simplistic cycle of those feed sacks, we quickly see the real value in how a single product benefited so many people. Those print bags helped clothe a lot of folks in Barbour County and the quilts kept many families in Clemtown, Arden, and Nestorville warm—and it was all made in America.

I remember the stack of empty bags at Mr. Nestor's feed store and how the ladies sorted through them to find matching colors, checking the material for defects or "mouse holes." We must remember those bags saw some pretty harsh handling and the ladies made sure they got their quarter's worth of material. After all, it would be seen again in a different form by friends at church and school so they wanted to look their best. Although the days of selecting a sack of chicken feed based on the print color at Gall's Store in Moatsville and carrying it home by horseback are gone, many remnants of those bags still remain in the form of quilts that were crafted long ago.



Author's wife, Henrietta, and Carl F. Nestor who sold the print feed bags at his feed store in Nestorville, WV, well over sixty years ago.

My wife is a dedicated quilter and she has rescued several old quilts that were made with sack material manufactured before either of us were born. We prize the one my Mom made and gave to me when I left home to make my own way many years ago. The people of West Virginia have always had a strong desire to do their best with limited resources, and the treasures they crafted from those sacks will always be a testament to their character. Today quilters and other craft persons are always on the prowl for the original printed feed bags of the period, as well as items made during the timeframe when animal feed came in beautiful cotton bags and the customer got to choose the color for their next sewing project. Quilters can spot feed sack material at a great distance and you can be assured that they appreciate the history, good quality, and beauty of those old print bags that filled so many distinct roles.

Although circumstances change and economics cause people to relocate, they always hope that progress will reign supreme. The wonderful memories of great people in our youth from the little villages across West Virginia will never become obsolete or lost in time. It was a time in our history that helped make us who we are, and I will always be grateful to our mentors. The days of the treadle sewing machine and clothes fashioned out of printed feed sacks from little country stores may be in the rearview mirror of our lives, but we can celebrate our heritage and embrace the future with the same excitement as the days when West Virginians saw more than just a bag of feed—they saw pride and satisfaction in creating something useful and beautiful. Sadly, most of them are no longer making stitches but—their legacy lives on as our treasure and we say, "Thank You."

DAVID BALL and his wife, Henrietta, moved back to their roots on Laurel Mountain in Barbour County after retiring where he authored two books of short stories about growing up in that place known as "Almost Heaven but Not Quite." He says Moatsville may no longer be on the map but it will always be in his heart. He continues to write stories about country life in the villages of West Virginia. This is his third contribution to GOLDENSEAL [see Summer 2017 and Winter 2020].

Notions

By Laura Treacy Bentley

You might have noticed a shy high school girl
in the back of a fancy department store
where the red carpet ended at *Notions.*
Her waist-length hair was coiled into a French twist
to make her look more professional,
and she saved each paycheck for college.

Dressed in well-loved hand-me-downs
and ill-fitting shoes from Pic-Way that crippled
her feet by shift's end, she sold German-made
manicure sets with pastel petit point embroidered leather,
plush padded clothes hangers, cards of delicate ivory buttons,
spools of satin ribbon, and travel kits,

complete with fluffy pink boudoir hats
to cover women's brush rollers while they slept
between silk sheets. The mysterious mezzanine
loomed above her where it cost a dime to use the toilet
and linger in a balcony room steeped in rustling shopping bags,
secret conversations, and rising cigarette smoke.

Around the corner near *Notions*, the elevator pinged
its bright hello each time the doors opened and closed.
It carried mute customers who stared transfixed
at the numbers above the shuttered doors. From budget clothes,
and white goods in the basement, the elevator
floated to its next stop until the **1** would light.

Here on either side of that stretch of red carpet
were fancy perfumes, cosmetics, costume jewelry,
and leather handbags inside polished display cases.
The Ladies' Department was located on **2**, Juniors on **3**,
and the Children's on **4**, complete with Boy Scout uniforms,
caps, and badges, plus all things Blue Bird and Brownie.

Echoing wooden floors greeted customers on **5**,
filled with fine china, silverware, and sparkling crystal.
On its final stop on **6**, the Ohio River beckoned
beyond the tall windows while women waited
to make payments on their charge accounts.

If a purchase was made five floors below in *Notions*,
the high school girl wrote out a receipt and sealed
the money inside a brass pneumatic tube that sucked it up
to some mysterious planet with filtered river views.
In a burst of compressed air,
the tube would soon rattle its return
with the exact change tucked inside.

The girl who stood at the back of the store
underneath the smoky mezzanine
learned to cater to the whims of well-heeled women
who flew to exotic places like Florida after Christmas
and returned with winter tans and coral jewelry
and a curious notion

to buy more notions
from the pale girl in *Notions*.

LAURA TREACY BENTLEY is a poet and novelist from Huntington, West Virginia. The setting of the poem above is the Anderson-Newcomb store in Huntington which has now been converted into Marshall University's College of Art and Design. Laura's work has been internationally published in The New York Quarterly, Art Times, The Southern Poetry Anthology, Poetry Ireland, The Stinging Fly, and Crannóg, among others, and was featured on A Prairie Home Companion, Poetry Daily, O Magazine, and Publishers Weekly. She is the author of a poetry and photography chapbook, Looking for Ireland: An Irish-Appalachian Pilgrimage, a psychological thriller set in Ireland, The Silver Tattoo, a short story prequel, Night Terrors, a poetry collection, Lake Effect, and her first picture book, Sir Grace and the Big Blizzard.

Fairmont Normal's First Female Principal:
Margaret Elizabeth Dickey

By M. Raymond Alvarez

One of West Virginia's earliest priorities as a new state involved the question of how to establish a system of free schools. Rev. William Ryland White, appointed as the first state superintendent of schools, knew that a thorough and efficient public education system could only follow after establishment of Normal Schools and institutions of learning in order to produce well-trained teachers. "Normal school" is a historical term for an institution educating future teachers in the 'norms' of pedagogy and curriculum. Prior to the 1860s, most schools west of the Alleghenies had been started as private academies. White had served as principal of the Male and Female Academy established in 1956 by the Methodist Protestant Church in Fairmont, where he had also served as minister

By 1865, Fairmont citizens formed "The Regency of the West Virginia Normal School," and secured a charter, thus transitioning the Male and Female Academy to a higher purpose. Property was purchased in 1866 for a new building to be 'fit up for school purposes.' By 1867 the State Legislature provided five thousand dollars to complete the building on Quincy Street, but required two thousand in local funds *and* that they include a public school as well. White's vision for the state was underway.

On March 4, 1868, the official transfer of the Normal School's ownership to the State designated it an official branch of Marshall College. As one of the very first state institutions of higher learning, it was renamed Fairmont Normal School with White as its first principal. He contacted Dr. James Wickersham, Pennsylvania State Superintendent of Public Instruction and



Elizabeth Dickey c.1869.

founder of the first teacher training school in the state, and asked him for teacher recommendations. Among those Dr. Wickersham recommended was Margaret Elizabeth Dickey, who had been teaching in Media, PA. Miss Dickey accepted White's offer in 1869. At the time, Fairmont was a village with approximately 600 residents and a partially completed school building. However, progressive ideas were happening in education. Dickey had no first-hand knowledge of the area—it was a brave step for a young woman in the post-Civil War era.

Years later, she reflected on her arrival by train in a 1917 journal:

"It was in May 1869, about four o'clock in the morning that I arrived in Fairmont, coming from a small town some twelve miles distant from Philadelphia. I had been teaching in the graded school, but was assigned to accept a position in the Normal School of Fairmont. Dr. W.R. White, principal of Fairmont Normal, had written me that Dr. J. P. Wickersham and Prof. Edward Brooks had recommended me to him. I had been a pupil under these famous educators and their good words had great weight with me. A young man, Walter Boydston, escorted me to his mother's [boarding house] *where I found a most kindly home. I had some long, long thoughts and not a few doubts about the wisdom of the choice I had made as I walked up Bridge Hill and turned onto Main Street to that home just opposite the Normal building. The foggy morning and all-night travel contributed much to the furthering of doubt."*

Adding to her dismay was the fact that neither highly advanced curriculum nor well equipped facilities existed at her new position. However, White found plenty of work for Miss Dickey. Since the Quincy Street building was not quite completed, she and the two other women recommended by Dr. Wickersham were assigned rooms in a building known as the old Shot Tower, located about a block away. She notes in her journal that White cautioned his young teachers "*in very polite terms not to be emphatic in our expressions of opinions lest we give offense since we were estimated as foreigners—Yankees."* Despite these cautions, Miss Dickey stated that not one unjust expression ever reached her ears. *"The citizens of Fairmont were most kind, most cordial in their treatment of the foreign teachers. So the year passed in harmony and good feeling in and out of the school."* Dickey soon realized that the public school was 'not very well graded.' However, she shared White's vision for a curriculum with 'model teaching' practices for its students hoping to become teachers. Unfortunately, the children being taught and their student teachers, as well as the teachers of the teachers were housed in various locations at the time. It was a great challenge. After a summer recess in 1869, the other two teachers decided not to return for the fall term. *"I alone, of the trio, returned in September,"* Dickey wrote. Despite these setbacks, she thought highly of White describing him as, "*an excellent instructor, a Christian Gentleman*," she admired his teaching and *"his beautiful enunciation of the English Language; his simplicity and charm of manner was very beautiful, and his fine character devoted to the uplifting of all who came under his instruction."*

Soon, White had secured the services of two new teachers: Miss Francis Boice of the Millersville Normal and Miss Osborne from the Trenton Normal. They joined Miss Dickey as both the Public (graded 1-12) and Normal School occupied the completed building at the top of Quincy Street. For better organization and classroom management, Miss Dickey suggested dividing students into three grades: primary, secondary, and Normal. With Miss Boice and Miss Osborne teaching grades 1-12, Miss Dickey focused on the Normal students, instructing classes in Algebra and Geometry for the future teachers. *"I have a vivid memory of the pupils of those classes—bright, keen young men whom it was a pleasure to lead,"* she wrote. *"Some very successful teachers who began their work resulted from instruction received in this school."*

In April 1870, she resigned her position to enter upon a course of study in higher mathematics and Latin back at Millersville. She did not plan to return to Fairmont, but after a summer devoted to study, a letter came from ex-Governor Pierpont, who served as president of the executive board of Fairmont Normal, notifying her that she was appointed as first assistant, or vice principal, under Professor Gilchrist, who succeeded William Ryland White as princi-



Photo provided by Janet Hutchison shows Rufus and Elizabeth at their home in Chester County, PA around 1905. Col. Fleming died in 1910. Elizabeth died on July 7, 1925

pal. At Pierpont's urging, she decided to return to Fairmont."*Professor Gilchrist was an enthusiastic, resourceful leader and inspiration for zealous work. The schools were greatly increased in interest and development during that year; my workday was entirely in the Normal Department as we called it. There was laid under Prof Gilchrist's administration, the foundations of future growth."* The Normal continued to progress and a new wing fronting Madison Street was under construction.

In her role as first assistant, Miss Dickey continued to add quality curriculum for the next eight years. She taught English Literature, General History, German and Didactics. James Blair was selected as principal in 1872. Miss Dickey noted in her journal, *"Here beginneth the real growth of the school as a Normal School. In the second conference that Dr. Blair had with his teachers, he said for the school to succeed and continue to grow, we must begin this year to build up alumni."* The honor of being the first stone in the foundation of our alumni building fell upon Buckhannon native Hyer D. Clark, Blair's choice for the beginning of the alumni association. Miss Dickey noted that from this time forward, the School '*grew and waxed strong*.' Dr. Blair spent the largest part of each vacation traveling throughout the state recruiting young teachers to come to the Fairmont Normal. Upon Dr. Blair's death in 1878, Miss Dickey was appointed acting principal. In 1879, she was officially named as Principal and served in this role until 1882.

"The years came and went—interest and growth ever increasing within the Normal School and a steadily growing belief that in spite of all opposition, in spite of our poverty and unpopularity with the powers over us, Normal Schools of W. Va. were not born to die. One day in our most discouraging years



From left, Dr. Beth Newcome, Fairmont State President Mirta Martin, Janet Hutchison and her son Nathaniel Joachim and husband Robert Joachim, Dr. Raymond Alvarez and Charley Hively, Fairmont State Library.

so far as pecuniary support of the school was concerned, a leading lawyer of the Fairmont Bar accosted me with these remarks: You are making a great mistake in wasting time, labor and skills in trying to build up a Normal School in this state. Far better to go back to Virginia's old practice of letting those who were able pay for educational advantages whenever they wished and giving support from the public to those worthy of being helped." Obviously, this did not discourage her work. She concluded in her journal that *"W.Va will never be able to extinguish the light now shining on her hills and valleys. Hopeless for years, the youth of this generation recognize the necessity of preparing a better class of teachers for the public schools."*

These words reflected her passion for education, which also was important to the Dickey family. Her grandfather, David Dickey started Hopewell Academy near Oxford, Pa. in the 1830s. It was one of Chester County's better-known, private, college preparatory schools. Her father, Jesse C. Dickey, served as principal. Elizabeth's cousin, John Miller Dickey, a Princeton-trained Presbyterian Minister married to a Quaker, started Lincoln University, originally named the Ashmun Institute in 1853, which became the first degree granting historically black university in the US.

Elizabeth married Fairmont native, Colonel Rufus Edward Fleming, who had served 5 years with the Union army, ending with the 6th W. VA Volunteer Cavalry. Marriage changed a few things including the ability to continue in her position. Initially, Margaret Dickey Fleming resumed her 'first assistant' role to the new principal, Ulysses S. Fleming. By 1884, she had to resign due to her forthcoming pregnancy. Her daughter Katherine was born in 1885. Soon after, she and Col. Dickey relocated to her home in Chester County, PA.

Though she was no longer working in the sector, she continued to be fondly remembered by students and the Alumni. Her Alma Mater, Millersville Normal School, noted the following in their 1906 "Normal Journal":

"Mrs. R. E. Fleming, '66, both as Miss Dickey and after her marriage, was the honored and efficient Principal of the State Normal School in Fairmont, WV. She had the distinction of being the only woman principal of a state normal school in the United States. Last year, the Alumni presented a handsome oil painting of Mrs. Fleming to their alma mater, marking their appreciation not only with the gift but also



A close up of Elizabeth's memorabilia on display at Fairmont University. Photo provided by the author.

with the presence of the most distinguished men in the state."

Elizabeth died on July 7, 1925 in New London, PA. In 1994, the Administration building at Fairmont State College (now Fairmont State University) was included on the National Registry of Historic Places. After renovation, the "hall of presidents" was added to the main floor featuring oil paintings of all the principals starting with Rev. White. All but one—Elizabeth Dickey.

Sadly, other than the Millersville Alumni publication in 1906, Elizabeth has received no honor in recognizing her status as the first woman to head a state normal school. This accolade typically goes to Miss Anna Brackett who became the first female principal of a secondary school (St. Louis Normal School) in 1863, which at the time was operated by the St. Louis Board of Education. Ms. Brackett resigned in 1872. A primary difference is that the St. Louis school was well developed at the time Miss Brackett assumed leadership, while Elizabeth Dickey was involved with changing the structure of teaching training in West Virginia, when political support for higher education never quite had resources in those early years. Yet she helped continue Dr. White's vision of quality education and training for teachers, thereby helping to build the solid foundation upon which Fairmont State University rests today.

When Dr. Mirta Martin became the president of Fairmont State in 2018, she attended my community lecture on the history of Fairmont Normal School. After the presentation, I told her that I had noticed the absence of Miss Dickey's portrait among the male principals, many of whom served shorter terms than she. Dr. Martin was interested in correcting this and asked me to see if I could find the whereabouts of the "painting" presented by the Alumni in 1905. My thoughts were that when the campus was relocated from Fairmont Avenue to its third campus on Locust Avenue, the painting did not make the transition. However, I did find a tribute to Miss Dickey in the 1913 Mound Yearbook where she was recognized by the students as one of the early principals. The original painting, however, could not be located—yet.

Working with Janet L. Dotterer, Archives & Special Collections, McNairy Library at Millersville University, we found that she



The exhibition honoring Margaret Elizabeth Dickey currently on display at Fairmont University. Photo provided by the author.

was indeed the first female principal of a state normal school in the United States. Dr. Joel Dugan, art professor, created an oil painting based on the 1913 Mound photo of Miss Dickey in the late 1860s. Dr. Martin had it placed in the "Hall of Presidents" following the 'unveiling' at the May 2019 commencement where Elizabeth Dickey-Fleming was finally recognized and honored.

In the fall of 2020, I received an email from Janet Hutchison of Burke, Virginia. She was the great granddaughter of Elizabeth Dickey-Fleming. Her family had seen an article on the research I had done, and believed she knew the location of the 1905 painting of Elizabeth. They also had original documents from Dickey, wherein she talked of her time at Fairmont. We began communicating and sharing information.

The portrait was in Philadelphia, where another family member, Elizabeth Gregory, had kept it. Janet confirmed my theory was that the painting did not make the transition from the Fairmont Avenue Campus to the new campus. Janet thought that the painting was given to Rufus' sisters (Flemings) in Fairmont. When her father was a young child, he remembered driving to Fairmont with his father where they obtained the painting and transported it to the Philadelphia area where it remained for the next 100 years. In the fall of 2020, Janet informed me that the family agreed the painting should be returned to Fairmont State University.

On April 18, 2021, the original portrait was presented by the Hutchisons in memory of Elizabeth's grandchildren James Melville Hutchison, Elizabeth Hutchison Buermann and Kaye Hutchison Clarke. The portrait is now displayed in the Ruth Anne Musick Library. In addition to the portrait, an exhibit commemorating the life and legacy of Ms. Dickey was designed by Alvarez, with assistance from Dr. Beth Newcome, curator of the Fairmont State Masquers Historic Costume Collection. Elizabeth Dickey-Fleming's contribution to West Virginia's goals for teacher education and training is now recognized.

M. RAYMOND ALVAREZ, a Marion County native, holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from WVU and a doctorate in healthcare from Central Michigan University. He is a professor at Fairmont State University and serves as both Marion County and City of Fairmont Historian. This is his 18th contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Bernie's Rooster

By Ellen Lambert

A story I like to tell to all that will really hear and really listen, is about life and one of its many consequences. We had a neighbor by the name of Bernie. Bernie raised many different types of poultry. He had different types of chickens (which Bernie hatched out from their egg state); turkeys; ducks; geese. I had dubbed his place the "foul farm". He failed to see the humor in this sobriquet. One day he brought me a sack full of extra eggs and sat down in the kitchen to 'set a spell'. I responded to his gift by bragging on how good his eggs were i.e. yolks stood up well, good color, etc. and he was glad to hear praise about his product.

One of these days when he brought me a 'poke' full of extra eggs he sat down there in the kitchen to 'set a spell' and he told me about the time when he was about five years old. They had a beautiful, sturdy, clean chicken yard out back. He enjoyed going into the chicken yard with his mother while she did her chores and picking up one of the hens to pet and stick his fingers into their chest feathers to feel those soft downy feathers. I can remember the delight in his eyes, the grin on his face and his flexing of his fingers as he recalled the memory of the soft down of the hens.

There was a large, proud, yellow cock of the walk named Rooster in that yard that considered himself the master of the yard and would not tolerate any roughhousing in HIS yard. He was constantly patrolling to spot any infraction to his domain. Even the family dog would not make eye contact with Rooster! Outside the fence all animals were afraid of Rooster—no raccoon dared try to climb the fence, let alone try to dig under. Apparently, the message had traveled to all potential animals that had an eye on a meal of chicken or eggs. This included snakes, 'possums, and hawks. Rooster ran a tight ship all right, ready to peck any intruder and plus those girls were ready to run to him when he "talked" to them. They would respond with a soft cackling murmur and run to his beck and call. Nothing dared touch that fence or Rooster was upon them, and this applied to a five year old boy without his mother's protecting presence, who admired those lovely soft hens.

After sneaking into the chicken yard one day Bernie was holding a favorite hen when Rooster lost his patience and flogged Bernie unmercifully, chasing him out of the yard. Of course, Bernie ran to his mother. She tended his wounds and in trying to comfort her son she explained to him that all the hens belonged to Rooster. Rooster's job was trying to protect 'his girls' and the yard, and it would be best for Bernie to stay out of the yard and away from Rooster's girls.

One day Mother was in the yard to gather the eggs, feed, and refill the chicken waterer. Mother was rather heavy-set with voluminous skirts. It was as she stood up from filling the waterer that Rooster had felt that he needed to check the procedure out, and there he was— UNDER her skirt where he was TRAPPED when she straightened up. In his anguish to get out of this trap he dug with his claws, beak and talons into the inside of her upper and inner legs leaving them torn, shredded and bleeding. It took weeks for her to recover and the farm's chores did not get done beside the expense of hiring help for the children, farm, and home.

Bernie did not remember seeing Rooster again after this incident, but he did notice that the chicken yard had gone to ruin.



A Bantam Rooster struts the chicken yard, on the lookout for would be intruders.

Raccoons dug or climbed their way in, snakes and 'possums stole eggs, the dog got in to lay in the sunny yard knowing there would be no repercussions, the chicken hawks circled, the hens were worried, and production of eggs went down.

In later years Bernie dwelled upon this. That rooster seemed to be mean but was he actually just doing his job? Do we sometimes have a boss, husband, wife, or neighbor that we will rail against because of their picky ways? Perhaps so. Perhaps we needed to be prodded. But there is no doubt that Rooster was missed once he was gone. The fence was a valuable deterrent but the varmints tore it asunder. Rooster and his constant threat kept a peaceful beautiful chicken yard. Can we extract a lesson from this?

I once worked for a head nurse that was strong willed, strong minded, and swift to be on top of any brewing problem. Most respected her methods, routines, procedures and system whether we liked it or not. It was a tight, well run ship. One where we worked together under her watchful eye and, once we understood the requirements and routine, we were proud to say we worked there.

Should we reconsider the value of fences, walls and the overbearing of 'roosters'? Are we all like varmints that want to get in the yard for our own ego or for free food? I wonder?

When family or friends complain of someone being bossy, 'nosy' or a 'busybody' in their office or elsewhere, perhaps a reminder of Bernie's Rooster might help rethink the perils of the chicken yard AND the value of a strong fence and a patrolling rooster.

ELLEN LAMBERT was reared by her maternal grandparents in Grafton in the 1940s. They instilled in her the love of history and genealogy. Local activities also left her with fond memories of the B&O terminal in its "finest hour", but family history has outweighed all others. This is Ellen's third contribution to GOLDENSEAL [see Spring 2020, and Winter 2018].

Steered Right to Aurora

Serendipity Brought National Geographic Society Photographer to Preston County

By Carl E. Feather

Go down the Shoemaker-Cole Road, that dusty byway in Preston County that links Aurora to Eglon, and West Virginia to Germany. Pause at that point amid hemlocks and rail fence, where the single lane curves uphill and leftward, where the narrow shadow of a lone oak tree descends yonder hillside. On this winter afternoon in 1935, the moment is perfect for a photograph.

Volkmar Kurt Wentzel, 20, raises his Voigtländer camera, peers into its ground glass and composes therein the pertinent elements. The shutter blinks, exposing the 6-by-9 centimeters piece of black-and-white film that his father, Fritz Gustav Wentzel, a photo chemist, possibly had a hand in formulating. That night, in a chilly pumphouse on the opposite side of the Northwestern Turnpike, Volkmar successively immerses the film in developer, stop bath and fixer, then washes the processed negative in spring water.

A print struck from the negative hangs in the dining room of the Aurora house that Volkmar and his wife Viola designed. Built by Terra Alta carpenter Elmer Strawser, the house stands on the 13.5-acre parcel purchased by Volkmar in March 1937 from Mr. and Mrs. Roy Teets of Eglon. His high school graduation gift of $135 from his father funded the investment. "I helped survey this parcel of land and was struck by the beauty of this piece of unique mountain forest—the swiftly winding stream, the stately hemlock trees, the abundant ferns and rhododendrons," Volkmar stated in correspondence with me in September 2004. "Simply, I fell in love with the place."

Nearly 80 years after Volkmar fell in love with this place, on a rainy morning in late October 2021, Viola Wentzel welcomed me into the rustic residence. It is thousands of miles from Viola's native Germany, yet as close as she can get to that familiar landscape without crossing the Atlantic. "I came here because it looked exactly like home," Viola tells me. "My children (who have been to Germany) say it looks like West Virginia there. The geography is pretty much the same."

The story of how the Wentzel name became woven into the fabric of the Aurora Community is one of fortuitous serendipity for both the characters and community. It begins in Binghamton, N.Y., in 1934, when Volkmar and a friend set out for Rio, on what they called a "Good Will Tour."

Eight years earlier, Volkmar's parents and their four sons emigrated to escape the massive unemployment, financial hardships and political turmoil that plagued Germany after World War I. Relief from the hardships of Germany were short-lived as Volkmar's mother died in 1932. "This was a terrible blow for my father, now alone with four teenage boys to take care of, along with his demanding job and the writing of several books," Volkmar told me in correspondence. By February 1935, the situation at home "became quite impossible," and Volkmar and a friend, Bill Buckley, decided to sell all their boyhood artifacts, hike to Brazil and promote "good will" along the trek. Outfitted with khaki shorts, riding breeches and tall boots to protect them against jun-



Viola Wentzel, widow of Volkmar Kurt Wentzel, holds a print of the scene her husband photographed while staying in Aurora, Preston County, during the mid-1930s. Volkmar eventually purchased the land he photographed on that snowy day, and he and his wife built the home there in which she is standing for this photograph, January 2022.

gle snakes, the young men departed Binghamton wearing backpacks bearing "New York to Rio" in 3-inch red letters.

Three days of hitchhiking got them as far as Washington, D.C., where the cold, hungry, and tired explorers parted ways after a miserable night in a flophouse. "I soon fell asleep and when I awoke, I heard Bill pounding away at something with his high-top boots," Volkmar wrote. Bill declared, "This place is full of cockroaches" as he squashed the "southern-style" 3-inch roaches. His mind infested with the memory of the cockroaches, Bill decided the next

morning to go home to his mother. Standing in front of the old State and War Department building, the adventurers divided their finances, leaving Volkmar with $70. He never heard from Bill again.

Volkmar ditched his backpack and lined up in front of the newspaper's window to read *Washington Post* classified ads, in which he found a room at 716 Jackson Place, NW, on Lafayette Square. New Deal lawyer Tommy "the Cork" Corcoran had his law office on the first floor; the second-level tenants provided Volkmar with the link to Aurora. During The Depression work was difficult to find and intermittent for many writers and artists. Several of those involved in the new Municipal Center construction project in D.C. decided to sit out their furlough time in the Youghiogheny Forest in southeastern Preston County. "The countryside reminded them of home," Volkmar said, referring to the artists' eastern European roots. "Through Eric Menke I met this group, who offered me a job for $2.50 per week to take care of their small studios and piece of property." And that is how Volkmar Wentzel came to Aurora.

The community consisted of a tavern, a log-cabin lodge in the forest, and several studio buildings. "They were of various styles and sizes, with some Bauhaus influence here and there," Wentzel recalled. "They served the purpose of the artists and writers who occupied them."

Volkmar was right at home in both landscape and human company. Menke was born in Frankfurt, Germany, and educated in architecture at Yale. He was working as the Municipal Center architect. "He was very erudite with a somewhat explosive temperament," Volkmar recalled. "His universal mind delved into everything." Other members of this artists community at Aurora included painters, engineers, woodcarvers, authors, psychiatrists, and musicians from the likes of Latvia, Russia, Scotland, and England.

Surrounded by this international cast of thinkers and artists, as well as the rugged landscape reminiscent of Germany, Volkmar embraced his Appalachian "Rio." But he soon discovered that he could not exist on a $2.50 weekly salary. Rather than give him a raise, Menke suggested Volkmar make extra money taking and selling photographs with the Voigtländer camera that his father had gifted him. An old pump house built by Reeves was repurposed as a darkroom; Volkmar obtained the film, chemicals, and other supplies he needed to develop and print his film in nearby Oakland. "I'd have to wait until some of the Washington people would come up so I'd have a way to get to Oakland," he recalled. "Or, if (Aurora residents) Gene and Bessie Shoemaker were going into town with their produce, I'd ride with them in their horse and carriage." The pump house had no electrical service and, because of its multiple light leaks, he was forced to work at night. Viola says Volkmar was fond of telling the story of reaching into the rafters of the building and grabbing something hanging from the ceiling—that something turned out to be one of the black snakes common in this forest!

Volkmar focused his lens upon the landscape, from the mushrooms and ferns of the forest floor to the mountain peaks dotted with livestock. He printed postcards of these scenes and sold them in the Reeves' tavern. He also did portraits of Eglon and Aurora farm families. Like Volkmar, they were strapped for cash and bartered produce for prints. "I'd get a bushel of potatoes and some onions, and I'd live for weeks on end on potato soup," he said. "I traded buckwheat flour, maple syrup, potatoes and eggs, and that's how I survived. The people there were terribly nice to me."

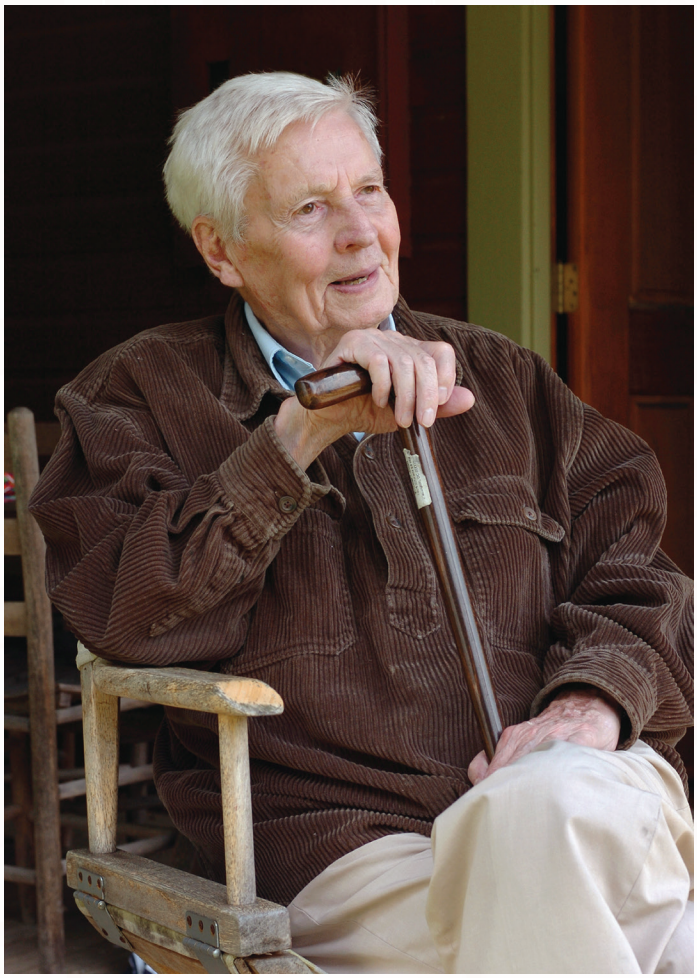
A sale of three landscape postcards was the turning point in his status from amateur to professional photographer. The buyer was Eleanor Roosevelt, who was en route

to the New Deal project, Arthurdale, in Preston County. While Volkmar was not at the tavern to witness the sale or meet the First Lady, her simple act encouraged him to pursue a career in photography. "It was a real ego booster," he told me. "I decided to go back to D.C. and see if I could get a job with a photography outfit." Although he had attended classes at Aurora High School, Volkmar was still short of the education he needed to get a high school diploma when he went to D.C. and applied for a darkroom technician's job at Underwood and Underwood Portrait Studios and News Agency. "My little bit of West Virginia darkroom experience all of sudden was important," he said. The job, which paid $12.50 a week, involved mixing large crocks of photographic developers and fixers. He labored in the basement, "a hell-hole of a place. It was a sweatshop," he said.

Clarence Jackson, a news photographer at Underwood and Underwood, took Volkmar under his wing. Impressed with Volkmar's work behind the lens, his employer provided Volkmar with a worn Speed Graphic camera and Crown tripod to hone his craft. Confined to the darkroom by day, Volkmar was largely limited to nighttime photography. "I was enchanted by the ethereal images revealed by the witchery of the night," Volkmar wrote in the preface to his book, Washington by Night. "Floodlights etched familiar landmarks against the velvet sky. The Capitol, the Washington Monument, and the Lincoln Memorial glowed as if from within. I made many pictures in the heavy atmosphere of damp and foggy nights, when diffused light reduces scenes to their simplest elements."

After walking the city by night, making trial-and-error exposures, Volkmar developed his negatives at Underwood and Underwood. He printed a few of them on the studio's best portrait paper and submitted them to the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain in 1936. When the prints were returned to him later that year, several bore gold-prize stickers. On a whim, while walking back to his garret from the post office, the prints under an arm, Volkmar stopped by the offices of the National Geographic Society and asked for a tour. His request granted, Volkmar was stricken with envy. "I thought, 'If I could just wipe the floor here, I'd be happy,'" he said. In yet another stroke of good fortune that fateful day, the employee told Volkmar he was planning to leave his job and there would be an opening. Volkmar made the society's personnel office his last stop, where he ran into a brick wall—the personnel director.

"She said, 'We only take very highly qualified people,'" Volkmar recalled. "I was already at the door, ready to leave, when I remembered the package of pictures un-



The author photographed Volkmar Wentzel at his farm, the old Shoemaker place, in Aurora during a visit in 2004.

der my arm and asked if she would like to look at them. She wasn't so much interested in the pictures as she was the golden stickers from where they had hung in the salons of Europe." He was interviewed and offered a photo lab position, to which he reported January 2, 1937. "It was a dream come true for me," he recalled. "I couldn't get there early enough in the morning. I loved it so much." A few months into the job, serendipity smiled on him again. Photographer B. Anthony Stewart, who had been illustrating a story about West Virginia, was reassigned to Europe. Volkmar, familiar with the state from having lived in Aurora, was given the assignment of completing Mountain State photography. "The first place I went back to was (Aurora), because I knew the area," he said.

Among his images that were published in the August 1940 issue of National Geographic is "Stemple Ridge folk," a group of ladies working their names into a friendship quilt, a gift for a departing neighbor. Carefully posed, yet coming across as spontaneous, the image was captured on cut-sheet Kodachrome film and lighted with incandescent photofloods. The quilt that the women were working on is owned by the Aurora Historical Society and displayed in its museum, along with the names of those in the images and other quilting memorabilia from the community. From Stemple Ridge, Volkmar traveled to Seneca Rocks, the china and glassware factories of the northern panhandle, a Richwood clothespin factory, Wheeling steel mills and a gas well in Charleston. The state and its people left a lifelong impression on the young photographer. Years later Viola would write of his love for the state in *Odysseys and Photographs: Four National Geographic Field Men*. "He loved its windswept highlands and deep valleys. He photographed farmers, miners, quilting parties, applesauce-making, quaint traditions, hardship, courage, and poverty," she wrote. "Here began a lifelong love affair with this beautiful mountain state and its people."

"The more I saw of it, the more I loved the country and its people," Volkmar told me in 2004. During his career with NGS, Volkmar was photographer for nearly three dozen stories and wrote and photographed 10 stories, including "Washington, D.C.: The Nation's Capital by Night" (April 1940) and "History Awakens at Harpers Ferry" (March 1957). He served in the photographic division of the Army Air Corps during World War II, and when he returned to the NGS, his editor sent him a telegraph with a two-word assignment: "Do India." It was on that assignment that his ingenuity, curiosity, craftsmanship, and artistry were both taxed and revealed. He carried 18 suitcases of equipment across the subcontinent and transitioning nation. His transportation was an old, hand-cranked war ambulance purchased for $600. He had the words "National Geographic Photo Survey of India" painted on the side in English, Urdu and Hindi. Volkmar knew the value of being able to attract a crowd and eventually put them at ease in front of a camera.

With his fair blond hair, pitch-black eyes, and dimples that appeared with each smile, he also attracted Viola. They first met over lunch at the German Embassy, Washington, D.C., in 1963. As she got to know this man who was more than 25 years her senior, she learned that he had met her father, German Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger, in 1949 while on assignment and when Kiesinger was a member of parliament. She also learned about his property in Aurora. "He always said, 'I have a piece of land that looks very much like where you lived in Germany,'" Viola says. She first saw it during an early fall blizzard. "We walked down a narrow lane off Route 50 to Bessie and Jean Shoemaker's farm, where Volkmar had stayed often as a teenager. The stormy sky had opened a little, and blue long shadows lay on the



An exhibit of photographs by Volkmar Wentzel hangs in the Aurora Historical Society building in Aurora. The exhibit, which features the National Geographic photographers' images of the Aurora area, was assembled to help save the community building.

snow-covered fields. A lonely wind-swept oak watched the valley below, a single narrow path of human footsteps wound its way through the drifts. I knew I had come home. This is where I belonged," she wrote in a memoir.

The man who introduced Viola and Volkmar had told her that he was 37 years old, and she had no reason to doubt that because "he looked very young." Prior to proposing, Volkmar revealed the significant age difference. "He said, 'I would like to marry you, but I have to tell you, I am actually 48, not 37,'" she recalls. They were married in a civil ceremony in Washington, D.C., on March 4, 1964. From there, Viola rushed off to Germany, where the church wedding was held April 8. In October 1972, Elmer Strawser began work on their farmhouse. He used wormy chestnut from old barns, native stone, and hewn beams that manifest the barn-inspired design envisioned by its owners.

Both she and Volkmar were heavily invested in their Washington, D.C. connections and could not abandon the city for their home in Aurora. Nevertheless, they continued to acquire land along Shoemaker Road as it became available. That included a purchase of the Shoemaker farm and its farmhouse, which was built in 1868 and suffering from years of neglect. "Though everyone recommended we tear it down, we decided to renovate," Volkmar explained, "It took us four years to restore the place, dig out a caved-in dirt basement, install electricity and running water, and to bring it back to the charm of a Victorian farmhouse." They also purchased the Gnegy farmhouse and restored it. In all, there are more than 90 acres of farmland and forest in their Aurora holdings. Some of it is devoted to cattle farming, all of it is a favorite destination for the three children and eight grandchildren who return often—each child has a house they can use during their visits. Viola's father visited Aurora in the summer for 16 years and felt right at home in the landscape.

The Aurora property finally became Viola's primary residence in 2013, when she sold out in Washington. She is involved in

the community and is treasurer of the Aurora Project, of which she served as president for 12 years. Her son, Dr. Peter Wentzel and his wife, Dr. Mary Gainer, live in Morgantown; he has a practice in Grafton, she in Rowlesburg and Newburg. "My son is here almost every weekend," she says. "He grew up with all the local boys here, so when I need help, they know who I am when I call and say, 'This is Peter's mom.'" Their daughters, Ceclia and Christina, live in New York, are degreed in medicine, and visit the farm frequently. All three children reflect the mantra of their father, who did not obtain a college degree but was "very well read," says Viola. "He'd drive the children to school in the morning, and he always reminded them 'knowledge is power.'"

Volkmar retired from the NGS after 48 years of service but remained involved in photography, including documenting the landscape and people of West Virginia. He printed images spanning his 50 years of photographing the Aurora/Eglon community, and they are exhibited at the Aurora Historical Society's museum on Route 50. His darkroom is housed in Aurora's former general store building, operated as part of the Aurora Project.

One of his greatest achievements occurred following retirement—rescuing and creating a framework for the preservation of thousands of negatives and slides from the early days of the NGS. In her biography of Volkmar, published in *Odysseys and Photographs*, Viola recounts how he rescued some 3,000 negatives and a few other rare originals that the NGS had culled as part of its Project Negative. That led to the establishment of the Melville Bell Grosvenor Image Library to preserve the NGS photographic assets; he was the society's first archivist.

"Shortly before his death Volkmar told me, 'I don't want to be known for my photography but for my efforts to preserve the National Geographic archive that documented our changing world for nearly a hundred years,'" Viola wrote in Odysseys and Photographs, "My husband was a modest man, and I was a very lucky wife." The collection of Volkmar's personal work, which is not controlled by the NGS, is held by the family. Consisting of more than 30,000 images, the collection is protected in a climate-controlled facility. A small sampling of his work is online at https://volkmarkurtwentzel.com



Viola Wentzel relaxes in the home that she and her late husband Volkmar designed and had built for them in Aurora's hemlock forest. She is joined by her canine companion, Bobo.

Volkmar Wentzel died in May 2006, from a blood clot resulting from a broken leg sustained from a fall in his Washington home. His passing was marked by the major media, but the formal obituaries missed the serendipity of this amazing life and the German-born man who loved and adopted West Virginia as his homeland. In our interview in 2004, he wrapped it up this way: "It all worked out just fine, thanks to that German architect. He steered me right."

CARL F 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.

Reeves' Tavern

The tavern that was the hub of the Youghiogheny Forest Colony was built in 1930 for Frank and Lottie Reeves. Frank was a prominent oil geologist from Fairmont and had connections to the Washington, D.C., artists and professionals who comprised what became known as the Youghiogheny Forest Colony.

The colony was located east of Aurora, along U.S. Route 50, also known as the George Washington Highway. The tavern, a bed-and-breakfast operation, stood at the southwest corner of the highway and Shoemaker-Cole Road. Frank owned 100 acres in the forest and built a lodge on the north side of the road, as well as a dozen or so cottages. The blight was decimating the chestnut species throughout the Alleghenies, providing builders with a final opportunity to construct durable structures from this versatile wood. Construction provided work for local men, including the late Fern Jamison, who, writing in an article for the Aurora Historical Society, said the tavern had a main room with a huge fireplace, three bedrooms and a bath. Fern was a Preston County school teacher who had lived in the tavern during the 1930s and in one of the Youghiogheny cabins since the 1940s. She wrote that Frank Reeves named the tavern "Cabin Lodge."

The colony was an eclectic mix of artists, writers, architects, musicians, psychiatrists, dermatologists and at least one carver-sculptor, Joe Goethe, who carved figures from walnut logs and would go on to make a name for himself in the California art world. Dr. Philip Graven, a psychiatrist from D.C., had a very successful practice in Washington but enjoyed the Youghiogheny Forest as a retreat for himself, his wife Velda, and his two Rolls Royce automobiles—the forest provided a convenient place to conceal the vehicles. Even a Lutheran pastor, Felix Robinson, found the eclectic mix of intellectuals and artists to his liking. Robinson was a prolific writer of regional history and published many of his articles in the *Tableland Trails* periodical he also edited.

Lottie Reeves came from a middle-class German family in Hamburg. She was in charge of the tavern and its employees, mostly farm girls from the Aurora and Eglon countryside. Colony resident Volkmar Wentzel, in correspondence with the author, recalled Lottie as "somewhat nosey," a trait that played out in her habit of intercepting the mail and eavesdropping on the Aurora party line. "She was a generous and good person," Volkmar recalled. "Her German Christmas parties in the Tavern will be long remembered."

My late great aunt, Wilma Feather Rembold, worked at the tavern in its early years; she was born in 1914 and recalled being 16 when she and friend Pearl Snyder were hired to do "everything." She worked there for two summers. "We cooked, we cleaned," she said. "We killed chickens, we dressed them. We baked." She drew the line at hauling in the heavy chunks of firewood for the massive stone fireplace, however. "I said, 'I'm not doing this," to which her supervisor, Mr. Hobden, told her, "You'll do it, or you're done." Wilma says she stood her ground, and Hobden, an Englishman, told her, "I just wanted to see if you girls would be dumb enough to carry in those big chunks of firewood," Wilma recalled.

The workday was 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days a week. They received $3 a week, plus room and board—the latter amounted to a room in an old farmhouse that lacked running water and curtains; the girls hung their clothing over the windows. Guests occasionally left them a quarter tip. Many of them were from Washington, D.C., and came to the mountaintop retreat to escape the heat and humidity. "People from Washington, it was a treat for them to come up here and stay," Wilma says. "That dining room would be full."

Wilma says she and Pearl would be so tired at the end of the day, they would wash dishes while standing barefooted in buckets of water that soothed their sore feet. "But we had to get it done, it was just the two of us doing it," she recalled. Perhaps the most unusual task assigned to the girls was making and bottling root beer in the kitchen. One batch evidently had too much yeast. "It went pop, pop, pop," Wilma recalls. "All the tops blew off the bottles. We lost just about all of this home brew. Boy, it really blew them up. What a mess that kitchen was in. We sure had a mess to clean up."

The tavern property was handed down to William Reeves, grandson of Frank and Lottie. It was destroyed by fire on January 18, 1994. Reeves rebuilt on the site, utilizing the tavern's stone chimney for the construction of a new post-and-beam residence.



Some folks gathered for a jam in the shade at the Vandalia Gathering. All photos courtesy of Steve Brightwell.

Vandalia Time!

By Laiken Blankenship

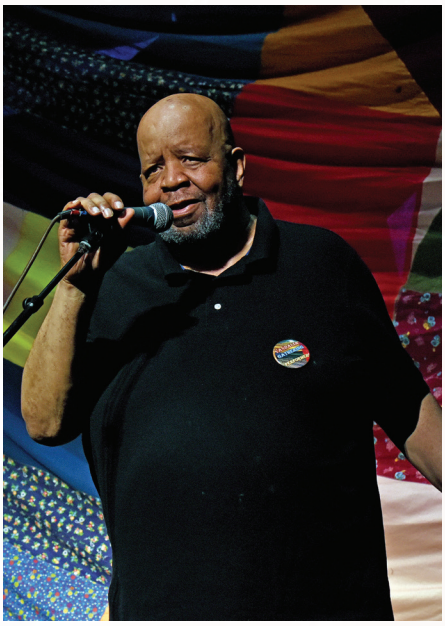
The annual Vandalia Gathering is a free celebration of the traditional arts, music, dance, stories, crafts and foods of West Virginia. The Culture Center and State Capitol Complex grounds host this expanding family-style gathering each year on **Memorial Day weekend**. The unique blending of ethnic and cultural heritage combines an atmosphere as comfortable as a family reunion with the excitement of a state fair. The statewide folk festival, named for the proposed 14th colony, pays tribute to the state's ethnic heritage through a variety of exhibitions and programs.

Each year visitors come to enjoy old-time fiddle and banjo competitions, as well as bluegrass banjo, flatpick guitar, mandolin, and dulcimer competitions. The Friday and Saturday evening concerts feature some of the best old-time and traditional musicians WV has to offer! The crowd favorite "Liar's Contest" takes place in the theater each year on Sunday afternoon. Add to this highland dance and flatfoot demonstrations, rotating WV performers on the outdoor stages, the square dance stage, over 30 talented WV artisans selling and demonstrating their craft, and the children's tent with crafts and storytelling—it is bound to be fun for visitors of all ages!

The Vandalia Gathering was created in 1977 by the WV Department of Arts, Culture & History (then the Department of Culture & History.) in a joint effort by Commissioner Norm Fagan, with assistance from the Morris Brothers and other WV musicians and artisans. See Winter 2022 for more on Norm Fagan and the beginning years of the Culture Center.



The 2022 youth old-time fiddle competition winners: 1st place Kaylee Polk, Red House (right), 2nd place Liam Farley, Chapmanville (left), and 3rd place Annabel Dacks, of Morgantown (middle).



2021 Vandalia Award Winner W.I. Bill Hairston emcees at the 2022 Vandalia Gathering



Johhny Staats, Roger Bryant, and Robert Shafer take a pause from pickin for a quick picture together



WV native, Chance McCoy performs on Stage at the 2022 Vandalia Gathering Saturday evening concert



Bagpiper Don Dransfield and the Appalachian Lassies lead the parade to kick off the festivities on Saturday.



Fiddle student Virginia Vale, of Huntington, pictured with her instructor WV Fiddler Tessa Dillon (right) at the Gathering in 2022.



An upright bass cools off in the shade.



The dance stage stays lively at Vandalia with a steady rotation of WV dance bands and square dance callers.



A view of some of the Artisan vendors that can be found each year at Vandalia, Summer Hollow Pottery is in the foreground



Biggest Liar (1st place and Goldenseal magazine's Golden Shovel award) – Kally Hall, Hurricane.



Members of Mountain Stage pictured with the Vandalia Award, awarded to their organization from L-R_ Bob Thompson, Adam Harris, Larry Groce, Julie Adams, Ron Sowell, and Steve Hill.



Stan Bumgardner (left) and Ken Sullivan, former editors of GOLDENSEAL, hold the Vandalia Award, awarded to GOLDENSEAL MAGAZINE the magazine of West Virginia's traditional life since 1975.



Panorama of quilt display in the Great Hall.

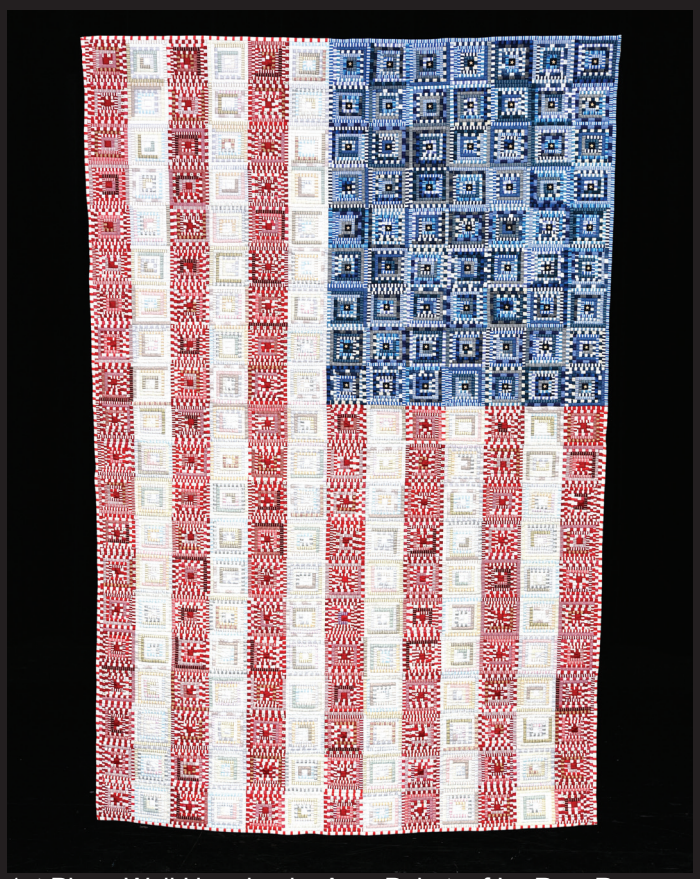
The National Association of Certified Quilt Judges (NACQJ) was created in October of 2015 and represents a group of quilt judges who were certified by the former National Quilting Association. They hail from California to Rhode Island, from Texas to Minnesota, and all places in between. Certified judges believe in fairness, objectivity, a positive approach, and a broad and very deep knowledge of quilting techniques, color, design, and history. These qualities allow all quiltmakers to receive a consistent, meaningful critique as well as recognition of skill and achievement for the ribbon winners.

The 2022 Juried Quilt and Wall Hangings Exhibition kicked off The 45th Annual Vandalia Gathering Friday evening. The Quilt Exhibition featured 62 creative quilts and wall hangings representing the talents of West Virginians from 19 counties. There were 43 quilts and 19 wall hangings in the exhibition, which was on display through September. This year's judge was Linda Luggen, of Cincinnati, OH. Linda, like each year's juror, is a NACQJ certified quilt judge. There are four categories that are judged each year: Pieced, Mixed/Other, Applique, and Wall Hangings. Each category is awarded first, second, and third place, with an overall best of show selected from the first place winners. To learn more about the Annual Juried Quilt and Wall Hangings Exhibition, please reach out to the Exhibits Coordinator at the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture & History (304) 558-0220 ext. 175.

The West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History has a mission to identify, preserve, protect, promote and present the ideas, arts and artifacts of West Virginia's heritage and the Vandalia Gathering and Annual Juried Quilt and Wall Hanging Exhibition are just two examples of the work that is put into promoting and preserving the heritage of West Virginia.



1st Place Applique by Carol A. Miller of Bruceton Mills, Preston County, Hand Quilted.



1st Place Wall Hanging by Amy Pabst, of Le Roy, Roane County.



1st Place Pieced _ NACQJ Award of Merit by Nancy A. Swisher, of Fairmont, Marion County.



1st Place Best of Show Mixed Other by Linda Dotson Vaughan of Caldwell, Greenbrier County.

The Unique Weberwood Neighborhood

By Richard Hartman

When driving through the South Charleston neighborhood of Weberwood you first notice the well-maintained midcentury homes and landscaping. You probably don't notice what is not there. One thing is missing, something so ubiquitous in virtually every other neighborhood in America—power poles—with their electric lines running from pole to pole to the houses; their lines crisscrossing the sky above you.

Unique to West Virginia and most of the United States, this almost seventy-year old neighborhood was designed by the original residents to include underground electrical utilities. We live with an unrestricted view of our mature oaks, maples, and spruces reaching into an open sky. The other unique quality of the Weberwood community is that the original residents envisioned, designed, and developed their own neighborhood. None had experience with housing development or designing one from the ground up. Each family selected its own architecture for their home. Many, if not most post-war housing suburbs were developer planned, developer designed and populated by homes of similar, if not virtually identical designs. In Weberwood the architectural variety is throughout—California Ranch, Split-level, Colonial, Cape Cod, Mid

Century Modern, Bungalow, Craftsman, and mixtures of other designs. Whatever the original residents wanted, within reason, was approved by a committee of the lot owners.

After World War II the Union Carbide Technical Center in South Charleston employed over 3,000 people at its peak and included over 300 Ph.D. 's. It was the largest of Carbide's tech centers and represented over half the company's engineering work.

Housing near the urban area of the chemical plants was scarce and what was



Present entrance to Weberwood. Photo courtesy of the author.

available was too small for the post war Baby Boom families employed by Carbide and other plants. Also affecting the quality of life was the dirt and pollution caused by the many chemical and industrial operations in and around Charleston and South Charleston. Russell L. Poteet, department head of the Crotonaldehyde Unit at Carbide had an idea to buy some land away from these problems and build a home. Talking with his friends he soon learned that other "Carbiders" felt the same.

The idea grew until many Carbide engineers and some from other plants joined to purchase almost 90 acres of land from the Weber family, who operated a dairy farm in the ridge and valley area between the end of Montrose Drive in South Charleston and Churchill Circle in Charleston. An organization meeting took place in early 1947, attended by almost 150 persons who signed on and paid their $10 fee to detail the proposals. In August, 1948, the Weberwood Development Company was chartered. The interested families would eventually become stockholders and vote in a board president and other officers, which became known as the Committee, none of which were expe-



July 4th Parade 1966. Weberwood Volunteer Fire Department truck. Photo courtesy of Kurt Entsiminger.

rienced in housing development. A former Carbide designer, who was working for the Hayne Engineering Company was hired to create a draft layout of the housing plots, largely following the existing contours of the Weber property. One hundred and five lots were plotted to be offered at an average cost of $2,490 ($30,000 in 2021 costs). While this doesn't sound like much, understand that these upper level "Carbiders" annual salary was between $5,000 to $10,000 during this period. At a November, 1947 stockholders' meeting the selection of lots was determined by a lottery.

There were 70 families represented. The Committee members were given first choice of their preferred lots. There was no objection given the tremendous amount of work for which the Committee had been responsible. Afterwards there were several trades among participants. There were still 35 lots open for future purchase. On weekends stockholders were encouraged to wander the property and study the lots they chose. Occasional encounters with the Weber's bull, still occupying an adjacent field, made the visits more than interesting. Access to the property from Churchill Circle was easy but from Montrose it required a steep drop to Joplin Creek followed by an even steeper climb into the property. Such an entrance still exists today, only paved. Costs were escalating and an additional fee of $25 was called from the stockholders to finalize the legal requirements to begin site construction.

Committees were established to address various aspects of the project; Architectural, Sewerage, Road, and others. Individual lot owners had several local architects to consult with on home designs. Howard Johe, a local architect who had studied under Frank Lloyd Wright designed several of the Weberwood homes; including this author's Weberwood home. Most designed their own homes, with approval of the Architecture Committee, who sought to avoid anything too "way out" or not in keeping with the scale of the neighborhood. Road names were chosen to sound British, lending an

air of dignity. The Grishaber Land Company developing homes along Gordon Drive adjacent to the Weberwood project suggested a roadway link at the end of Stratford Road. Personality conflicts between the two developers resulted in no agreement and the two neighborhoods are still only connected by a sidewalk rather than a road. One other conflict was the telephone company's refusal to offer a reasonable price for underground lines. The compromise resulted in telephone poles and lines running through the woods behind each house ensuring the unobstructed view throughout Weberwood.

The first homes began to rise in 1951. Temporary septic tanks and overhead electrical service allowed for construction while sewer and electric service took longer to negotiate and install. New members from Carbide and Westvaco Chemical joined the project until only ten lots were left unsold. With homes going up at a rapid pace the need for fire service was discussed. Since Weberwood was not a part of either South Charleston or Charleston the Weberwood Volunteer Fire Department was chartered in August 1951. The group purchased a used truck and converted it into a fire truck with a large water tank. Temporary housing for the truck was found until a fire station was built in 1957 on Windham Road to serve the community. Since the neighborhood husbands were off to work each day the Weberwood women formed the first all-woman first responder's crew.

Each was trained on driving the fire truck and how to hook up and lay out the fire hoses. They would drive the truck to the scene and attend to the crisis until the men arrived from the plants. Jean Mercer, a resident since 1966 when she and her husband built their house on one of the only two remaining lots, was a member of the women's fire brigade. "We had to know how to drive a stick shift in the hilly neighborhood." The fire station building is still there, now serving as a storage space



Marguerite Walker, one of the Women's First Responders. Date Unknown. Photo courtesy of Hank Walker.

for Windemere Pool. The residents felt that a pool was needed for all the children living in the neighborhood. Windermere Pool was a separate legal entity created to construct, operate and maintain a pool. On September 13, 1954 property located just outside of Weberwood along Windham Road was purchased for the pool. By the close of 1955 Weberwood was a fully developed enclave of engineering and supervisory employees of Union Carbide, Westvaco, and other professionals.

The residents created several common activities for their community. The annual July 4th parade was led by the fire truck and children riding their bikes and tricycles carrying flags. Any of the kids who had musical instruments would meet at the pool 15 minutes before the start for a



Twelfth Night Bonfire, Late 50s. Photo courtesy of Christy Best.

hasty and too short practice of only three numbers. As a young boy, Kurt Entsminger played the trumpet and recalled one of the songs played was "On, Wisconsin", the University of Wisconsin Badgers' fight song, for reasons unclear. Another attendee and long-time resident remembered the ad hoc band was "enthusiastic, if not harmonious." Refreshments were offered as the parade reached the end of Stratford Road. Another community activity was Twelfth Night when families could pile their spent Christmas Trees on the pool parking lot beside the fire station for a winter bonfire. Songs were sung and food and drink available in the fire station. On the Saturday before Labor Day, at the Windham Road cul-de-sac was a neighborhood square dance. All of these activities bonded the Weberwood residents already united by their working life and remarkable efforts at forging a new community through their pioneering energies.

In 1973 the residents voted to approve annexation into the City of South Charleston. The Volunteer Fire Department was dissolved. Today the original homeowners are gone, the parade has ceased and the bonfire has gone out. Still, neighbors meet and talk in yards and in the street. Most of us know the names of the neighborhood dogs and those on the other end of the leash. I can knock on the door of all of the twenty-some houses on my street and be invited in. We wave at each other when we drive by. We still live under an open sky and in many other ways we still feel unique.

RICHARD HARTMAN is a retired Adjunct History Professor at West Virginia State University. This is his second article published in Goldenseal. (Fall 2005)

Dr. Alice L. Randall, MD

By John Hopper

True heroes are hard to find these days, but these West Virginia hills have produced their fair share.

The ones that most often come to mind are: Chuck Yeager, Homer Hickam, Jerry West, Pearl S. Buck, Little Jimmy Dickens, Kathy Mattea, and John Forbes Nash. I chose these out of over 50 names for their contributions to aerospace, science, sports excellence, literature, musical inspiration, coal mining awareness and exploitation, and one Nobel Award Winner in Mathematics. But there is another unsung hero from right here in the Kanawha Valley that you most likely have never heard of; Dr. Alice Louisa Randall. Dr. Randall was West Virginia's "Coal Miner's Daughter", Mountaineer Physician, and Missionary. This is her story.

Alice was born in Kent, England on June 7, 1896. Her father, George Randall, immigrated to America and was joined by his family in 1905. Alice was 12 years old. Alice's first influence to be a missionary came to her when she was still a little girl. It was back in England, in the village of Green Street Green, Kent, in a little Baptist church. The Baptists of England always had a strong missionary program that stretched from the British Isles across the world. Young Alice, sitting with her legs dangling from the family pew, listened to the missionaries, home on furlough, tell their stories of their work—impressionable as she certainly must have been—she looked into the weather-beaten faces of these ambassadors of God, and said in her child's heart, "I will serve."

The Randall family settled in Cabin Creek (Kanawha County). George Randall was employed there as a coal miner. Alice attended school for three months in Cabin Creek until she was forced to go to work at the demand of her father. Alice worked in Charleston performing domestic duties. Now in Charleston, alone and shy, she continued her schooling while working. In 1913, in the Kanawha County School system, Alice met Miss Eleanor L. Hopper, her eighth grade teacher. Miss Hopper saw great promise when she looked in the eyes of this little English girl. Miss Hopper became Alice's second biggest influencer as her mentor and financial supporter. Miss Hopper supported her all through high school and beyond. When Alice's family moved to Tennessee, she continued working in Charleston and preparing to later attend Denison University, in Granville, Ohio.

A third great influence in Dr. Randall's life was Judge and Mrs. Alexander of Charleston, West Virginia. During high school and after short periods of employment in several area homes, Alice found her way to the home of the Alexanders. With the Alexanders, she was able to earn her board and keep by minding the children and performing household chores when not in school. Alice was treated as a welcomed member of the family. She found peace in their home and was able to find her true self, the confidence, and the security she needed as a young single woman. Upon finishing high School, She enrolled at Denison University in Granville, OH.

Dr. Leroy Dakin, a young minister, entered her life as her fourth major influence. Alice continued her studies at Denison and afterwards to medical school, she was troubled by intellectual doubts that threatened to cripple her enthusiasm and diminish her determination that a missionary's career was her calling. She returned to Charleston and the Baptist Temple on vacation and sought out Dr. Dakin. Although he could not always satisfy her intellectual needs, he was able to fulfill her spiritual needs.

His parting words to her were, "Don't give up. See it through. Keep on keeping on!"

Alice graduated from Denison in 1923, and continued her education at Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH before transferring to The Medical College of Virginia in Richmond. There she received her medical degree in 1928. Then completed her Medical internship at the Saint Margaret's Hospital in Pittsburgh, PA, for another year.

In 1929, now "Doctor" Alice L. Randall, she made her first trip to India. She served for 13 years in the American Baptist Mission Hospital as Chief of Staff in Gauhati, Assam, India. It was there that she fulfilled her childhood dream of becoming a missionary. At the hospital she served as everything from surgeon to bottle washer as well as trainer of local native women to be public health nurses. Under her supervision, the patient bed capacity increased from 25 to 125.

During the Asiatic campaigns of WWII, hundreds of wounded American and British soldiers came to know, love, and respect Dr. Randall while they were being treated at her hospital located in the foothills of the Himalayas between India and Burma. For her work during WWII, she received several citations, including two medals from King George of England and the Kaiser-I-Hind award from the Government of India. The Kaiser-I-Hind Medal for Public Service in India was a medal awarded by the Emperor of India between 1900 and 1947, to any person who distinguished herself (or himself) by important and useful service in the advancement of the public interest in India.

Dr. Randall retired from this post in 1947 and returned home briefly only to return to Madura, India, for two years. She was stationed in the Women's and Children's Hospital. Dr. Randall was the only white M.D. on staff and worked with many well trained local doctors. Her posting there



Dr. Alice Randall Circa 1923.

was relatively quiet, yet busy. In 1951, she suffered a slight stroke, retired from missionary work, and returned to the United States. In the US, she went to New York to begin training in Cytology. Cytology is a branch of biology that deals with an individual cell and its function and is important in determining malignancy. She studied with a noted Cornell University doctor and gained further training in Brooklyn and Boston hospitals. Following this training she returned to Charleston.

In 1954, she established an office in Charleston to further her cytology research. Dr. Randall was the only full-time cytologist in West Virginia. Through cytology, cancer can be detected early and can be cured in a high percentage of patients. Her lab was located in the Memorial Hospital, now a member of the Charleston Area Medical Center (CAMC) network. The lab bore the name of "Alice Randall Memorial Cytology Laboratory".

Dr. Randall's path to United States citizenship was complicated. She completed

her first citizenship papers in 1918. However being out of the state and then as a missionary doctor in India required reapplication several times. In 1951, now back in the United States, she stated "I am going to acclimate myself to the states and try to secure what I will cherish most, my rights as a citizen of the United States." After her 33 year quest, she was awarded her citizenship.

Dr. Randall continued her research until her death at age 60, Jan 21, 1957. I am sure there are many more silent heroes here in West Virginia and around the country. They must not be forgotten and need to be recognized for their contributions. Dr. Randall was and is one of those silent heroes.



Alice Randall

On September 29, 2019, Dr. Alice L. Randall was remembered and celebrated by the Charleston Baptist Temple's Baptist Women's Day program with a presentation on her life and work. From a sermon by Dr Eugene Austin in 1949, he asked "What makes a missionary?" Dr. Austin concluded that sermon by answering this question. "And so, good friends, this is the answer to the question which we posed at the beginning. Like all great truths the answer we have discovered is simple. What made Alice Randall devote her life to healing of disease? What made her become one of the finest surgeons that America has ever sent to the Orient and dedicate her life to poverty and sainthood? What gave her the determination to follow her destiny…the answer is clear, the witness of missionaries upon the life of a little girl, the influence of a Christian home, the unswerving willpower of a Christian teacher and the quiet confidence of a pastor who really believed in people!"

She did not give up. She did see it through. She did make a difference.

JOHN HOPPER was born in Nitro (Kanawha County) in 1946. Hopper says he is "not a writer, just a guy who writes." After taking an interest in his family history, he began collecting and cataloging family photos and letters which led him to start writing. It was documents from his Aunt Eleanor L. Hopper about her friend Dr. Alice Randall that sparked the idea for this article. Hopper attended Nitro High School, Concord College, enlisted in the US Air Force and was stationed in Denver, CO. He has a BS in business from Concord College and an MBA from the University of Northern Colorado.



Saving Soles in Southern West Virginia

By Brady Eanes

If you grew up in the early and middle decades of the twentieth century, then you are likely among those who can easily identify the combined smells of leather, rubber, and glue as inside of a shoe repair shop. It is a potent, yet pleasant, sensory memory that you may be experiencing as you read this. Just about every community during the first half of the 1900s had a shoe shop. Towns in West Virginia and the southernmost county of McDowell were no exception. That was a time when things were manufactured or made to last. Fixing the old was cheaper and preferable to buying new. And that was especially necessary during the brutal depression years.

Though West Virginians and fellow Appalachians were often mockingly portrayed as chronically barefoot individuals, shoes were as indispensable to us as any American; and never more so than if you were employed in one of our many coal mines. Thus, the local shoe repair shop in the coalfields provided a service as essential as any other business around. In Roderfield, West Virginia, Joe Eanes and Eanes Shoe Repair filled this need for miles around.

Joe was born on the top of Iron Mountain in Virginia, an area where Grayson, Smyth, and Wythe counties converge near the small community of Camp. On that January 29, 1900, William McKinley was President of the United States and shared the same birthdate as James and Molly Eanes's newborn. Therefore, Joe's parents named their third son Joseph McKinley Eanes.

Having dropped out of school after third grade to help his sharecropper father feed their growing family, Joe worked the fields, took odd jobs, and hunted wild game to put food on the table. After his teens, Joe decided to follow his eldest sister and her husband into West Virginia seeking a job as a coal miner with steady wages so he could send financial help back home.

He found employment at Weyanoke in Mercer County, near the county seat of Princeton. The pay was sufficient, but the work was not that steady at a time when miners were trying to unionize. (Interestingly, his namesake, William McKinley had invaded that very area with a detachment of Union forces in 1862, along with another Federal officer destined to also become a U.S. President, Rutherford B. Hayes.)

When word spread across the mountains from neighboring McDowell County that Henry Ford was hiring and paying well at his coal mines operating as Fordson Coal Company near Davy, Joe made the decision to board a Norfolk & Western passenger train in nearby Bluefield and take his chances in the neighboring county of McDowell. He carried one cardboard suitcase and his guitar. Little did he know that he



The Tug River Crooks, one of the several bands Joe played in. Front row, left to right, Henry Allen, Ora Hawkins, Joe Eanes. Back row, Charlie Hawkins and Hobert Hawkins.

was riding into the rest of his life in the deep hollows between the steep mountains along the ancient Tug River.

Joe quickly gained employment and worked several more years earning a reputation as a competent and effective driller. Manually using a Fort Wayne drill, he made holes that were packed with explosives, and coal was blasted from seams to make hand-loading easier.

But, after suffering some injuries in the pre-union mines, he decided to work for a friend that he'd made in the town of Davy who owned a shoe repair shop. Henry Allen was a muscular giant of a man with a gentle soul. Here Joe honed the craft that he had learned from his father which was to serve him and his future family until 1983.

While working in the mines and Henry Allen's shoe shop, Joe, with some fellow musicians, formed several different bands through the years. On weekends, if somebody volunteered their home in Mohegan, Davy, Pando, or Twin Branch their living room would be cleared of furniture and string music would commence with dancing and courting. Being fans of Blind Riley Puckett, Gid Tanner, Clayton McMichen, J. E. Mainer, the Carolina Night Hawks, the Skilletlickers, and his personal favorite, Jimmie Rodgers, the groups liked to reference these bands in their own band name. Changing members resulted in changing band names over the years: The West Virginia Skilletlickers, The Mohegan Night Hawks, and The Tug River Crooks just to name a few. They often played on local radio stations in Welch and Bluefield.

With his guitar and good looks, Joe was not without young female admirers. But one lady in particular captured his attention. They courted off and on for a while, and in March of 1933 Gladys Prichard and Joe were married in Davy. They moved eight miles down the Tug River to the busy community of Roderfield, where they rented a small glazed brick house not far from the

main Norfolk &Western railroad line. Joe bought a used stitcher and a used finisher (shoe repair machines) and set up Eanes Shoe Repair in one of the front rooms of their home. The move to Roderfield was made to keep from being in competition with his good friend Henry Allen in Davy. However, Henry soon had to give up his vocation due to health reasons leaving his hometown without a shoe shop.

With the Great Depression in full swing, Joe and Gladys began their life, his business, and their family. In July of 1934, their son, Ronnie, was born. Two years later, in June of 1936, Jimmy was born. I followed eleven years later. More family to feed meant more work was needed. So, with a cloth or burlap feed sack over his broad shoulders, Joe would walk along the railroad tracks to Davy picking up shoes from people to repair. The next evening, he would walk back to return the shoes and pick up more. That, plus walk-in customers kept him busy and earned enough money to weather the hard times facing all Americans.

The little shoe shop quickly became a social gathering spot where Joe became known as a talented cobbler and a welcoming host to those just wanting to hang out or catch up on the news of the country and the world from the radio that played continually during shop hours. World Series times were especially popular at the little shop. The years of World War Two brought many to Joe's shop to learn the latest updates of the progress against the fascist Axis powers.

By 1941, Joe had decided to purchase a piece of land and build a home. He had saved enough money to buy a lot just out the road that had previously been the site of a garage. He borrowed four hundred dollars and built a two-story house on the front of the lot where the garage had once stood. Again, the left front room became the new Eanes Shoe Repair Shop.



Joe Eanes displaying some of his Blue Ribbon leather crafts.

The shop room had a work bench and counter that ran front to back which divided the room almost in half. A handmade wooden bench lined the wall to the right for customers to sit if waiting for their shoes. The behemoth shoe repair machines were against the left wall leaving a narrow space for one person to maneuver front to back. At the far end of the counter was a pot-bellied stove with just enough room to walk between it and the back wall. The floor was made of oiled wooden planks. It had to be swept daily after a green sweeping compound was spread to absorb dirt and oil. Sheets of the Welch Daily News and the Bluefield Daily Telegraph were spread on the floor for patrons to rest their sock-feet while getting their shoes fixed.

Customers entering the shop would usually find Joe working behind the bench on one of two lasts used to hold shoes being repaired. One was used while standing and the other while sitting. Both were permanently attached to the floor. The low one was fixed, but the higher one swiveled for more access to a shoe. Various lasts to accommodate shoe sizes could be used on either stand.

Being in the heart of the coalfields, miners made up a good portion of the shoe shop's business. Most miners would beat the coal dust and mud off their boots before bringing them into the shop. Still, the black coal dust would fall aplenty when boots were fitted with new heels, soles, or ripped seams were stitched up. If a miner worked in low coal seams, the toes of his boots would wear off often resulting in the loss of the inner steel toe. That necessitated opening the remaining leather covering and inserting a new piece of metal, then recovering it with new leather. An alternative was to attach an external steel toe.

Regular footwear jobs ranged from just a shine, a new pair of laces, heels, and half or full soles to all of these upgrades. Some patrons preferred leather soles for their dress shoes, but the rubber soles were cheaper and actually lasted longer. Once a new pair of shoes were "broken in", repairing them meant that one could avoid going through that sometimes painful ordeal again. Some shoes, Joe repaired multiple times as long as the upper leather remained functional.

Besides customers from around the community, others came from the far reaches of the county, and some even traveled from surrounding counties and across the bordering state line. Every so often a package would arrive from as far away as California with a pair of shoes needing repairs.

Joe was a tender-hearted person. He thought of what he did as a service to his fellow man. Much of his work was sorely undercharged or done for free. Many jobs done on "credit" remained forever unpaid. Known to never refuse when approached for help, he was a soft touch for a dollar here and there for food even though he knew it would be spent on something else. He did what he could to help anyone in need. That especially included people with a physical handicap which required specialized work on their shoes. Many people with such a need came from miles away because Joe could build up a shoe to allow both legs to appear equal length, insert wedges at just the right thickness and angle to straighten a lop-sided gait, or repair useless or worn straps on leg braces. Such work could have been done at specialty locations, but for exorbitant prices. Joe usually did the service for cost of material or for free because of his immense empathy for those less blessed.

In a book entitled *Murmurs from the Heart of Appalachia,* people share their memories of growing up in Roderfield and the surrounding communities. Many contributors have vivid recollections of the smell of leather in Joe's shoe shop. That's because in addition to leather soles, he kept rolls of tanned cow hides to make leather goods. His craftsmanship with leather was as legendary as his work with shoes. His goods included dress belts, ladies purses and pocketbooks, billfolds, pistol holsters, police belts, miners' belts, pouches for miners' batteries and anemometers, sandals, horse bridles and halters, watch bands, and much more. Humbly, he kept numerous blue ribbons won at fairs and shows in a chest of drawers in his bedroom. If you find someone today who has possession of some of Joe's leathercrafts, they are highly unlikely to part with them for any reason.

A physically active man, Joe regularly took his sons hiking in the surrounding mountains on late summer evenings and Sunday afternoons, sometimes looking for berries to be made into pies or searching for a Christmas tree, but mostly just to be in nature. He dug up and turned half of his back yard with a mattock and a shovel and planted a garden every year. He boxed with his boys and tossed baseball with them. He punched a hanging sawdust filled canvas bag, did push-ups, and lifted cement filled coffee cans to maintain



Joe Eanes and his future wife Gladys Prichard at Twin Branch, West Virginia.



Joe Eanes at work in his shoe shop in Roderfield, McDowell County.

his lean physique. But, it all ended at the age of 81 when he fell while carrying two buckets of coal and suffered compression fractures in his back. That constant pain plus the progression of Parkinson's forced the closure of Eanes Shoe Repair in 1983 after fifty years of faithful six-days-a-week service.

It was well that money meant little to Joe because he seldom had more that was necessary to provide the basics for his family. The third grade dropout did, however, see all three of his sons off to college. One became a college professor; one a newspaper owner, editor, and publisher; and one a public school educator and administrator.

His sons are immensely proud of their dad and what he did from his little shop to help his neighbors. But, they are more proud of how he lived. His was a humble life of compassion, service, and simplicity. He never took a vacation. The only time his shop closed during the day was when he frequently obliged grieving families as a pallbearer. Gospel tracts tacked to the walls were liberally available for anyone to take. In rare spare times, Joe could be found propped up on the shop porch bannister or the customer bench reading his worn, page smudged, note-filled Bible.

His quiet exemplary life was such that, after more than eighty-seven years, it is quite possible that he was partially responsible for aiding in the salvage of a few *souls* as well as saving inestimable shoe *soles*.

BRADY EANES is the youngest of three sons born to Joe and Gladys Eanes. He was born, raised, and educated in McDowell County. His formative years were spent at his father's knees in the small shoe repair shop in Roderfield. Eanes, a 1965 graduate of Welch High School spent 40 years in the education system of his home county. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



Camp Horseshoe Quilt Retreat

By Nancy S. Hoffman

It was a cold and blustery day, nearing the end of January, when our family dog, Lady B, and I walked down the lane to our mailbox. After arriving at the mailbox and pulling down the lid, there to my astonishment was a letter with the return address—Horseshoe Quilt Retreat! The trip from the mailbox back up to our warm house did not even bring a shiver because my mind was not on the weather. Rather, my mind was racing in wonderment as to what the packet and contents may reveal—the details of the 2021 Camp Horseshoe Quilt Retreat!

Camp Horseshoe was first opened in 1940 as a lease arrangement with the United States Forest Service (USFS). The camp is located in Tucker County, West Virginia, a wonderful idyllic area of the Monongahela National Forest. It extends over the north central highlands of the state, straddling many of the region's highest peaks.

Camp Horseshoe operates under the leadership of three very dedicated local people who live in Tucker County. These three leaders with a vision for entrepreneurship, leadership, and teaching goals oversee the daily activities of the camp. Those activities include an entrepreneurship summit, leadership summit, four adventure camps, reunions, weddings, and—quilt retreats.

Mr. David Cooper, the Director, attended the camp programs as a young man in the 7th Grade. He was so inspired by his mentors that he pursued an MA from Montreat College and returned to Camp Horseshoe as the Director. Mr. Cooper can be found anywhere on the campus of Camp Horseshoe lending a helping hand.



David Cooper, Camp Horseshoe Director.

The Assistant Director is Emily Huguenin. Emily's duties include facility management, grant writing, program development and assisting the quilters with any needs. She performs walk-throughs during the day to assist the workers to see what needs to be done and to make sure programs are going smoothly.



Emily Huguenin, Camp Horseshoe Assistant Director.

The Heritage Arts Director at Camp Horseshoe is Mary Smith. It is this kind,

industrious lady who is credited with a pioneer spirit for the need and execution of the present-day Horseshoe Quilt Retreat. Inspiration led Mary to attend two other Leadership Camps to get a sense of their programs and found those programs to be similar to Camp Horseshoe's in-progress activities. She also attended quilt retreats in the state of Indiana. There she found what she was searching for—examples to further shape her plans for Camp Horseshoe Quilt Retreats. So, with this introduction, the following may be just what interested quilters are wanting to know.

The cover letter, from Mary Smith, was titled, "Come Join Us!" The contents revealed the week would be filled with small and large projects. Maybe even a few surprises along the way. "It's been a LONG year so let's have some sewing fun. Make sure your machine is in good working order, start gathering your fabric, and pack your bags. Remember it's your retreat to do just as you want with no obligations other than to yourself. Leave all your worries behind for just a few days of sewing fun," the letter stated.

After the quilter completes and returns the registration form they are sent the schedule, instructions, supply list for projects, and what to bring list for the quilting week. Completed registrations are processed in the order they are received. A completed registration form includes: a deposit of $50; your signature for charge; photo; choices for housing—a cabin, the McManus Building, stay at home and commute daily; choices of classes/patterns; and your choices for sewing preferences—Lodge or Library.

Once the registration form has been received, it will be processed and then you will receive in the mail a confirmation letter announcing your assignments for lodging and sewing stations. Along with this letter, you will receive a "quilter's sewing basket" supply list. This list includes a practical sewing list of usual supplies you will need for the entire retreat. In addition, this packet will include directions for yardage, cutting and construction of your projects. Some projects you have signed up for may include extra fabric. For this you may bring along with you the needed fabric or you may want to stop along your way to Quilt Camp at a quilt shop to make the necessary purchases.

On 219 South of Oakland there are two Quilt Shops. One is "Lenora's Fabrics" and the other is "Yoder's Fabrics". Both shops carry varieties of beautiful fabrics. Also, Karin Rodeheaver at Bayard, West Virginia has a lovely line of fabrics in her shop. At Camp Horseshoe Quilt Retreat, Debra Davis of Quilts N' More, Victor, West Virginia, has for several years provided for "Quilters' Pleasures" a beautiful display of fabrics to be purchased. At our Fall 2021 retreat, Debbie Stevens of Parsons, West Virginia, also had a variety of beautiful fabrics for sale.

So, if you forgot to bring extra fabric, no need to panic. A solution is at hand! The Quilt Retreat offers other activities in addition to the workshops to entice quilters and fundraise for the retreat. Silent auctions, quilt block giveaways, and fat quarter exchanges are all regular occurrences!

The silent auctions are fundraisers for the Camp. Retreat attendees are invited to participate by filling a decorated box with quilting items that any quilter may admire, and would be useful to any level of quilter. These boxes go to the highest bidder. Fundraisers have assisted in the purchase of a kitchen range, electric cords, computer, beds, sweepers, wall heaters, and etc.

Quilters always want to be sure to participate in the "Quilt Block Give Away". For each retreat there is a different pattern used to make a 12 1/2 inch block. Instructions are given for the color to use and participants are asked to please do their best work on the blocks, bring one or two blocks, and put their name into the drawing for each block made. This is an awe-

some way to make a quilt. The winners, depending upon the number of blocks entered, have a chance to make a complete quilt.

Fat Quarter Exchange! This activity enables quilters to bring to the retreat as many fat quarters (a piece of fabric usually 18 x 22 inches) as they would like and enter them into a basket. The quilter also takes out as many fat quarters as she entered. This allows the participants to collect a variety of choices that they may not otherwise have in their stash!

The quilt retreat is not necessarily geared to the particular classes and patterns outlined by the retreat organizers. Quilters may, if they wish, bring projects they would like to work on of their own choosing. Many times, you will notice quilters working on something entirely different. This adds inspiration to the event. It is in these situations that we can also learn about new patterns, skills, and techniques while building lasting relationships. It was from a quilter new to me that I learned how to be more accurate in matching seams—the trick is to make sure you first feel the seams with your fingers and then pin the seam in place. Presto! Seams are aligned!

Thinking of lasting relationships, it has been my privilege to interview several of the retreat attendees. These interviews have produced a main theme that I would title "Quilt Fever". One of the quilters, Frances Harper, has been coming to the retreats for many years. That kind lady can find an answer to a request for a particular pattern used in previous retreats, know where to find Mary Smith, the Heritage Arts Director, or just have the solution for any situation in the spur of the moment! Frances is a Tucker County resident. And...she comes through with a smile!

Another quilter, Margaret Stemple, has attended most of the Camp Horseshoe Quilt Retreats. She missed a retreat in the past year because she found out she had been exposed to Covid, so she did not hesitate to opt out. Margaret has a kind of "sparkle" to her personality that is infectious! She just exudes enthusiasm, kindness, and generosity in sharing her skills and knowledge. She displays a real interest in the progress of her friends' projects as well!



Mary Smith, Heritage Arts Director

Another feature of the quilt retreat is the free table. The free table holds items that have been donated from quilter's stashes. This includes fabric, UFO's (Unfinished Objects), patterns, books, batting, seasonal decorations and anything else useful but no longer wanted. The saying, "Someone else's 'trash' is my 'treasure'" surely holds true! It is amazing how a little ingenuity can change a project!

Quilters do not lack for a balanced diet of great food at Camp Horseshoe Dining Hall. In fact, the cooks are genuine about sharing their recipes and food is not partaken without "Grace". As the appointed time approaches for a meal, quilters will hear a loud sounding bell. Following that sound, it will be exactly ten minutes until meal time. The walk from the quilting stations to and from the dining hall affords quilters exercise, the sound of birds and squirrels chirping, and a chance to make new friendships. Once all folks are gathered in the dining room, any announcements are made, devotions are presented, and "Grace" follows. Friday evening's meal is always a banquet! Many quilters bring

Anyone who would like more information, or is interested in attending the Camp Horseshoe Quilt Retreat may reach out to Mary Smith, Heritage Arts Director, at *mary@ylaleads.org*. The 2023 Fall Quilting Retreat is scheduled to take place September 12-16.

their treasured baked goods from home to be shared in the kitchen area of The Lodge. This feature of the Quilt Retreat affords quilters the opportunity to showcase baking skills and to trade recipes—just another means of fellowship and making lasting friendships. At the 2021 Fall Quilt Retreat there were some restrictions, due to Covid, in which home baked goods needed to be placed in single use containers.

Following the Friday evening banquet meal, everyone re-assembles in The Lodge for "Show and Tell" which allows quilters to showcase their projects, either finished or in progress. What a feature! Quilters are so proud to display and describe their projects. You should be in attendance and watch the expressions of the instructors! It is truly amazing. After "Show and Tell", the remaining quilters return to their sewing machines to continue sewing. Then Camp Horseshoe Director, Mr. David Cooper may appear and lead everyone in camp songs. Quite often, quilters arise from their machines and perform a "two step", or you may even find a quilter dancing with a broom!

Saturday will find quilters hurrying to work a while longer on their quilting projects, making more fabric purchases, and trying to hide a falling tear! It has been a relaxing, memorable, and grand few days spent just sewing! There have been approximately twenty interviews for this article. Summation of those interviews reveals the most popular descriptive word—friendship! It is no wonder we have tears running down our face as we leave this lovely place.

The following poem, entitled "How Much Piecin' a Quilt is Like Livin' a Life", written by Eliza Calvert Hall, from *Aunt Jane of Kentucky*, sums up the mind of many quilters.



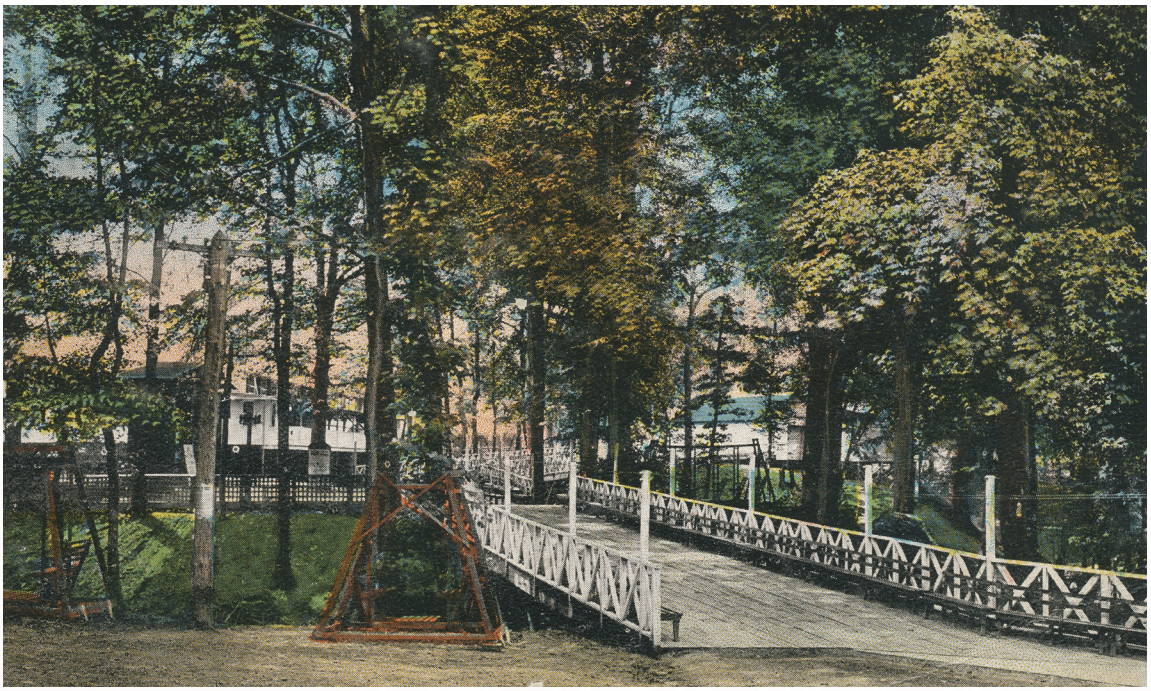
Debra DeWitt (left) and Sandra Adkins working together on Debra's Firefly frenzy quilt top.

"How much piecin' a quilt is like livin' a life! Many a time I've set and listened to Parson Page preachin' about predestination and free will, and I've said to myself, 'If I could jest git up there in the pulpit with one of my quilts, I could make life a heap plainer than Parson's makin' it with his big words.' You see, to make a quilt you start out with jest so much caliker' you don't go to the store and pick it out and buy it, but the neighbors give you a piece here and there, and you'll find you have a piece left over every time you've cut out a dress, and you jest take whatever happens to come. That's the predestination. But when it comes to cuttin' out the quilt, why, you're free to choose your own pattern. You give the same kind of pieces to two persons and one'll make a 'Nine-Patch' and the other one'll make a 'Wild-goose-Chase' and so there'll be two quilts made of the same kind of pieces but jest as different as can be. That's the way of livin'. The Lord sends us the pieces; we can cut 'em out and put 'em together pretty much to suit ourselves. There's a heap more in the cuttin' out and the sewin' than there is in the caliker."

NANCY HOFFMAN is a third generation pioneer and lifelong resident of Preston County, retired health information management administrator, and graduate of West Virginia University, with a bachelors in General Studies. This is her fourth contribution to GOLDENSEAL, see Winter 2018, and Spring 2021.

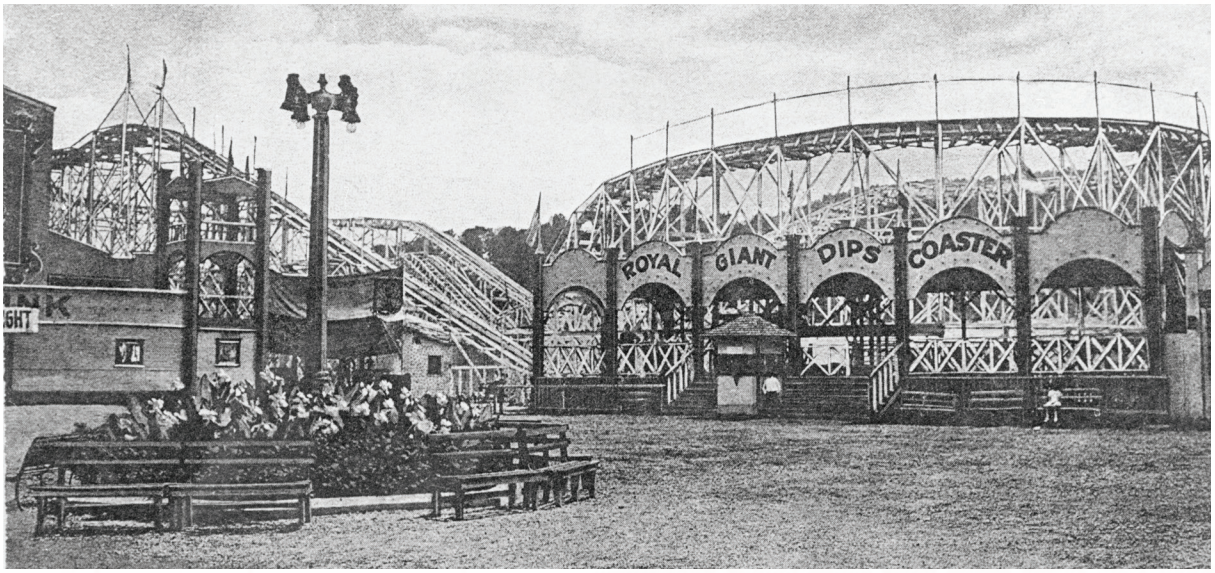
Luna Park
Past, Present, and Future

By Hanna Vriendt



Bridge in Luna Park, Charleston, West Virginia, n.d., Postcard by Curt Teich, Archives Collection, Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

Luna Park was constructed in 1912, by J.B. Crowley. The Park sat on the North bank of the Kanawha river and today, it is known as the West Side of Charleston. Luna Park in West Virginia was one of many established around the world by Fredrick Ingersoll. Ingersoll was the creator of the world's first chain of amusement parks. He opened up about 44 Luna Parks around the world. Ingersoll borrowed the name from the Luna Park on Coney Island in New York, which was built by two entrepreneurs named Fredrick Thompson and Elmer Scipio Dundy (otherwise known as "Skip" Dundy.) Sadly, Ingersoll committed suicide in 1927. Consequently, most of the Luna Parks closed down, though the name continued to be used. Today, the term "Lunapark" or "Luna Park" is a synonym for amusement park in several languages including Indo-European languages. West Virginia's Luna Park was very popular during its heyday in the early 20th century. It brought in as many as 10,000 to 15,000 people on the weekend by almost every transportation method available such as streetcars, boats, ect. Admission was only fifteen cents and it was one dime to ride the Royal Giant Dip wooden roller coaster. The park also included a merry-go-round, dance hall, zoo, and boxing ring. The main attraction was the swimming pool. It was unique since it was constructed out of lumber and tin sheets. The pool was 45x100 feet and held 200,000 gallons of water. The shallowest part was three feet, while the deep end was eight feet. The park often offered special entertainment which included hot air balloon rides, outdoor movies, and trapeze



Roller Coaster at Luna Park, Charleston, West Virginia, n.d., Richard Andre Collection, Photo courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives

artists. Given the time period, Luna Park did have racial restrictions in place, while it employed people of color, it was only open to white people. Even though the park brought in thousands of people, it was only open for a short period of time. Luna Park operated from 1912 to 1923. Sadly, on May 4, 1923, the park closed due to a freak accident. The pool was being repaired and the use of a blowtorch caused the pool to catch on fire. The skating rink, dance hall, and eventually, the wooden roller coaster were the next structures to perish. Once the rollercoaster began to burn there was nothing the fire department could do to salvage the park. The fire had managed to spread to the ammunition stored in the shooting gallery.

By the time the fire stopped, Luna Park had been reduced to ash. The Park was gone and the damage would have cost too much to rebuild. The Luna Park Land Company divided the land into 95 lots for houses. Sadly, the deeds had a restriction that said they weren't allowed to be sold to people of color. Some of the houses were built by West Virginia's first licensed African-American architect, John C. Norman Sr. He was also the seventh licensed architect in West Virginia. "Certification for architects just began in West Virginia the year that he registered," according to Lori Brannon, the Neighborhood Planner for the City of Charleston, West Virginia.

At the time, race was not kept on record, but it is believed that he was the first licensed African-American architect in West Virginia. Mr. Norman was born in 1892 in New Jersey. He eventually made his way to Charleston upon coming home from the army, after serving in World War I. He married Ruth Stephenson. They had one son John C. Norman Jr. who went on to be a well known pioneer in cardiovascular surgery. John C. Norman developed beautiful houses for the new subdivision. He did so knowing that he couldn't live in the neighborhood because of the restrictions in the deeds. Norman designed many buildings in the Charleston area including his own home which still stands today at 1118 Second Ave. Norman also designed five houses in the 300 block of Park Avenue. Most of the houses in the neighborhood were built around the mid 1920's to early 1930's.

The neighborhood today is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the city of Charleston. The neighborhood is about 60% female and 40% male with around 43% Black, 30% White, and 22% Multi-ethnici-



Crowds wait around refreshment stands and pavilion next to roller coaster in Luna Park. Photo courtesy of the West Virginia and Regional History Center, WVU Libraries.

ty. The Luna Park neighborhood is a great example of the small house movement that occurred between the World Wars. The neighborhood is a mixture of various architectural styles and is a superb example of the popular architecture at the time. The different styles include 94 bungalows, 66 american foursquare, 25 colonial revival, and 16 tudor revival; all together there 395 houses. The neighborhood contains 444 contributing buildings and 547 total buildings.

The Luna Park neighborhood was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2012 by the National Park Service. Luna Park Historic District is Charleston's newest historic district, making it one of seven in the City of Charleston. The neighborhood is currently working diligently alongside the City of Charleston to raise awareness of the district's unique history through gateway signage, interpretive panels, and historic street sign toppers. The funding for the street toppers and gateway signs comes from a grant recently received from the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation. The Interpretive panels are being funded by a grant through the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office. Luna Park has evolved throughout the years. It was first an amusement park segregated for white people only and has now become one of Charleston's most racially diverse communities. Dr. Billy Joe Peyton, Chairman of the Charleston Historic Landmarks Commission, stated that "It's a vibrant neighborhood, with lovely architecture, a unique history, and a very diverse population."

HANNAH VRIENDT wrote this article for her eighth-grade West Virginia Studies class at Charleston Catholic Middle School. It is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Neither Snow Nor Rain:
A West Virginia Mail Carrier's Story

By Nancy Edwards Buell

A year ago I received a packet of unidentified photos from a cousin in Georgia. She knew I was interested in family history and wondered if I knew who the subjects were. Some were family and some not, but one photo in particular had been sent to my uncle. The Picture was of a man on horseback by a mailbox in the wintertime. On the back was a notation that revealed this man was Frank Sowards, it turned out Frank worked the same mail route (1917-1950) as my Uncle who worked the route for ten years starting in 1966. That led me to investigate Rural Free Delivery a little more. The first rural Americans to receive mail at home were West Virginians.

The idea of rural free delivery for farmers and others who lived far from cities and towns began with the administrations of Presidents Harrison and Cleveland. Rural Free Delivery actually began on October 1, 1896, in Jefferson County. The Postmaster General who started the program was William Wilson from Charles Town. There were five carriers- Harry Gibson, Frank Young, John Lucas, Keyes Strider, and Melvin Strider. Harry Gibson retired in 1919 and was succeeded by Vesta Watters Jones, the first woman mail carrier in West Virginia and one of the first in the United States. Gibson delivered mail by horseback but Jones used a Model T Ford. She stayed on the job until 1961.

My Uncle, Franklin Thompson, applied for the Culloden mail carrier job in 1966. He was a returned WWII veteran with one arm. He took the Civil Service exam and with his disability rating was the leading candidate for appointment. He drove a postal dispatcher jeep with a right-hand drive over a route that went through three counties, Cabell, Putnam, and Lincoln. It was over 30 miles in distance. He drove with his left arm and did all of the work of delivering the mail with that one arm. In 1970 during the Johnson administration, there was a Postal Reorganization Act. It established that newspapers could be mailed at a very cheap rate. This was to promote news organizations and encourage an informed citizenry. It was also mandated to



Frank Sowards delivering mail c. February 1943, at the mailbox of Frank Burns.



A swinging bridge over Trace Fork Creek near Lillie's road. The author and her husband are pictured on the steps.

be a non-profit organization. This greatly increased advertising material in the mail. I lived on the farm next to his and can remember the stories he told about the post office, and people on his route. I can remember Franklin's wife using Bag Balm to massage the soreness out of his arm in the evening from all the lifting he had to do.

One time Franklin entertained us with a sweet story from the Culloden Post Office. It seems that in days past the mail came by the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad through Culloden. There was a mail carrier arm built by the side of the tracks. The train slowed down and a bag with the mail was extended and caught by the stationary arm. One time a postal patron sent a bucket of molasses to a relative in Culloden and as the catch was made the lid came off. Everything received a covering of molasses! All of the mail had to be cleaned before it could be delivered. They never forgot that story.



Wilson Franklin Thompson

The unofficial motto of the Postal Service is "Neither sun, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." This motto comes from a long time ago (around 500 BC) written by Herodotus, a Greek historian. He described a system of mounted postal carriers who served with great dedication. I think my uncle never took a day off ex-



At the home of Lillie Burns, 1975. The author's family inspects the hand dug well where all of Lillie's water came from.

cept for scheduled vacations and occasional sick days for over 10 years. His concern for the customers on his route led him to go above and beyond what was required of a mail carrier.

Lillie Burns, a woman on his route, lived in Lincoln County. She lived alone in a house built by her parents located on a side road across Trace Fork about a half mile away. She had no car or phone. She had neighbors on the main road and the mail carrier, my uncle, who she became friends with. Her mailbox must have been the largest size available because it was used to hold many things; groceries, chicken feed, etc. She would walk from her home across a swinging bridge and sit on a big rock in the shade near the mailbox and wait for the carrier to come. Uncle Franklin was so trusted that people gave him their checks to cash. He would complete his mail route, go to the bank, cash the checks and drive the route again to deliver the money. He also carried postal supplies such as stamps and envelopes and at Christmas, the mailboxes held gifts for him from his appreciative customers.

The old Culloden Post Office burned in the 1990s and a new one was built near the elementary school. The one rural route is now three. Uncle Franklin was born, lived, and died not far from the old Culloden Post Office. I have moved away but still have many memories to share about growing up in West Virginia.

NANCY EDWARDS BUELL grew up in West Virginia and has many fond memories of the State where her roots still run deep. She is the historian of her family.This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

My Family's Business

By Mateo Lao

The Cup was a restaurant in Madison (Boone County). It was owned by my great grandmother, Margaret Sharps. Its official name was the Madison refreshment Center, but everyone called it The Cup. The name was given because people called it the Custard Cup and eventually it was shortened to just The Cup. The restaurant was frequently visited by the students of Scott High School which was just nearby. The restaurant sold hot dogs, hamburgers, sodas and would also sell the "best milkshakes ever" according to my grandparents. When my grandma made us some of those milkshakes I could see what they meant. At the time, a woman owning a business by herself was very uncommon, but she did a great job at running the small restaurant. She owned the restaurant for most of her life and was stubborn about selling it to someone when she retired.

When she sold it, she wanted to keep the business in the family, so she sold it to my great aunt, Rema. After owning the restaurant for about 30 years, she has had hundreds of stories which have been passed down for generations. Everyone who went to the restaurant loved my great-grandmother and she genuinely cared for all of them. The Cup was a popular gathering place where the students of Scott High School would socialize. Many of the students came over before school started and almost all of them ate lunch there. Margaret always hired two or three women from the community to work about 4 hours a day to help get food ready for the busy lunch hour, serve, and clean up. She also hired about three students and made my grandmother and her brothers help serve lunch.

She always had someone to help clean up the outside at the end of the day. Students who worked at The Cup were usually popular at the high school. Many of the students were elected to high positions in the school such as, student body class officers, prom queens, and homecoming queens. Margaret insisted that everyone that she hired be polite and friendly. It was quite an honor to be able to work there. The pay for your employment at lunch hour was being able to eat your lunch for free. They usually worked about 40-45 minutes and then had about fifteen minutes to eat before going back to the school. My grandmother says, "It was very busy, but so worth it!" All of the kids who came to eat at The Cup loved Margaret, or as they called her—Mrs. Sharps.

Margaret was always fair with everyone and always had a big smile and a kind word. She genuinely cared about the students and handed out good advice regularly. She was a cherished friend to many students. Even the staff at the high school, which was right across the street, respected her and the way she treated the students. They had an unspoken understanding that she wouldn't ever condone kids skipping class and hanging out there or breaking the rules. If anyone tried, she would call the school and tell them that the student was there. She would've done the very same thing if it was my grandmother or one of her brothers.

The principal and all school staff knew that Margaret was always going to try and do the right thing. She always worked with the school to make sure that the students had what they needed. Sometimes she bought them shoes, uniforms, or paid fees for kids who wanted to play sports or do some activity, but couldn't afford to pay for themselves. She treated people with kindness and respect. My grandmother says, "She was respected by all!"

The Cup was no stranger to fights. At one point, fights would break out almost every day. My grandmother says that Mar-



The author's great grandmother, Margaret Sharps. All photos courtesy of the author.



The Madison Refreshment Center, known as "The Cup."

garet used to break up fights by standing on a stool and beginning to hit people with her broom, yelling at them to leave. Since she hired many students already, she hired the football players to throw people out if they started fighting. Fights dropped completely soon after and everyone who walked into the Cup knew not to cause trouble.

Some of the students she hired were African American. In the 1960's and 70's racism was a huge issue in America. One time, a customer called one of the students a slur and Margaret was enraged. She grabbed the man's money and his food and threw it at him and the man was banned from the restaurant. After that day, Margaret became more aware of racism and raised all of her children and grandchildren to be kind to everyone.

When I asked my Grandma and Great Uncle what they remembered about the Cup this is what they said. "The Cup was an old wooden building that was certainly nothing fancy. Everything was wood and was handmade." At the end of the school year, every year Margaret would make my grandma and her siblings work the whole summer cleaning, painting and restocking the restaurant. They would close the store for most of the summer working to make the restaurant great. During the school year, Margaret and my great grandpa would work on food preparations for the next day. Working that restaurant was no easy job. My grandma said, "I used to underestimate how much time it took my parents to run that small business. They made a very decent income from the restaurant, but they worked long hours to make that money."

The Cup is no longer in business, but to honor its legacy Scott High School has named their newest concession stand "The Cup 2". The people who have been to The Cup still remember it to this day. The Cup may have been a small business, but it holds a very large spot in my family's hearts and will forever be remembered in Madison, West Virginia.

MATEO LAO wrote this article for his eighth-grade West Virginia Studies class at Charleston Catholic Middle School. It is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Ashby Martin, Stone Cutter Extraordinaire

By T.G. Griffith

On our family tract of land in Nicholas County there is a two-to-three acre plot in the woods that is strewn with the scattered remnants of half cut, three-quarter finished, oblong, and misshapen stones of various sizes, all from the results of the handiwork of one Ashby Ellis Martin.

Ashby Martin was born in Harrison County in 1878. He married Ursula Tinnel in 1899, and they had eleven children. Ashby died in December, 1949. He and Ursula are buried in the Tinnel Cemetery located on the ridge not far from their old home place in Nicholas County.

Ashby Martin's farm laid on the next ridge over from our home. I never knew Ashby but did know his son Levi who last occupied the Martin homeplace and I was well acquainted with Levi's youngest son Joe, as we attended the one-room Boggs School #2 together and later Nicholas County High School. Joe, his wife Rachael, and Joe's sister Maxine Ellison provided Ashby's biography for this article along with some of their family photos.

Ashby was a stone cutter and mason. He had no other occupation other than working his farm, much as did all the folks who lived in this area during the decades from the 1930's into the 1960's. Ashby's specialty was cutting, finishing, and erecting stone fireplaces, chimneys, and cellars and his work could be easily identified by the type of stone he utilized and the unmistakable hand crafting of his work.

As a young teen playing in the woods around our property, I began to notice these boulders and stones and remnants of stones scattered about in this one particular area of our farm. In fact, some of my boyhood friends and I named some of the larger, quarried parent stones; "The Throne", "The Couch", and "Stagecoach Rock" to name a few. My brothers, David and Mark, along with cousins and neighborhood friends also spent rainy days playing in and around my grandparent's (Theodore & Leona Griffith) stone cellar, which I found out many years later had been built by Ashby Martin.

Ashby performed his craft mostly within a few miles of his home and that covered parts of Braxton, Clay, and Nicholas Counties. The nature of his work, the availability of stone, and the method of dressing, transporting, and erecting chimneys, hearths, and cellars limited Ashby's range of employment. As a young boy I roamed these hills and hollers for miles in all directions from our home. And today, I still traipse these old woods and fields when I can, but I have never come across a quarried stone area like is on our farm.

Ashby cut and dressed his stones where he found them and then transported them by horse drawn sled to the place where they would be erected and there, he could supervise the construction.

Being a fourth generation Scott from Aberdeen, Scotland, Ashby apparently adopted a variation of the Scottish method of stone cutting and then mixed in his own tried and true workmanship. He also had the gift of looking at a stone and seeing the grain in it and the fissures and the cracks and knowing just how to split it. Much like a timberman knows just how to fell or split a tree.

A rock hammer was used to reduce a large rock to smaller pieces quite effectively. Then Ashby would use a stone chisel to trace a line across the stone, cutting a groove along the line. When the groove was deep enough, say an inch or so, he would insert metal wedges into the groove. The wedges were about an inch wide and from four to six inches long.

The wedges were very patiently and gently tapped in sequence along the groove us-



Ashby Martin two story chimney with double fireplace.



Small chimney stone.

ing a mallet. Oftentimes, he might leave the wedges in place for a while and go work on another stone before coming back and tapping the wedges again.

He would do this until the rock split for whatever purpose it was cut for. In colder weather, Ashby would pour water into the trace or groove and let the freezing of the water split the stone. Then the stone would have to be dressed or finished and shaped for its proper use. Ashby's method of dressing his stone was done by using a hammer and a wide-edged chisel. The whole process was very time consuming which made it even more impressive to me considering the preciseness, size, and number of Ashby's finished projects.

Many of Ashby's chimney constructions were of one chimney with a double fireplace. The chimney would be built in the interior of the house with one side of the open fireplace in a room like the living room and the other fireplace opening would be facing the opposite direction in another room of the house, like a bedroom. Many chimneys and fireplaces that heated only one room could have the chimney built up the exterior of the house.

Smaller chimneys by Ashby were built on a smaller scale for heating or cooking stoves. These would be solid, square stones with a five-to-six inch diameter hole cut through them. The stones would then be stacked on top of one another to form the chimney.

In the middle-to-late 1930's, Ashby constructed my grandparent's cellar. He cut and dressed over 240 stones to erect a stand-alone, 16 X 14 X 8 foot, above-ground cellar behind their house. By 1947, my grandfather had extended a screened-in back porch that reached from the kitchen in the rear of the house, to the cellar. The stones, though not all the exact same size, fit together perfectly with precise plumb walls and beautifully defined corners.

The only structure Ashby erected that wasn't a cellar or a fireplace/chimney was his own family home and it was built with



Ashby Ursula Martin in the center surrounded by family. Photo courtesy of the Martin Family Collection.

the help of his son Levi, who was the last Martin family to occupy the home. Construction for the home began in early spring of 1947. The family slept and lived in the several outbuildings on the farm while the house was being completed. At the time, Levi was working in the mines for the Elk River Coal & Lumber Company in Widen. He would walk from the farm, a mile and a half off the hill to Dille where he could sometimes catch the man-trip to Widen.

Other times he might have to walk the entire 4 miles over to Widen if he couldn't catch a ride with another miner. He would head back home from Widen after his shift was over by the same methods. Levi helped his dad work on the house after he got home from work. Many nights they would work into the night by the light of a carbide lamp. The house was finished in the fall of 1947, just in time for Joe to be born there at home. I always thought it was strange that maw maw's cellar looked awfully similar to Levi's house. Ashby Martin had eleven children and Levi had 12 children and none of them followed in Ashby's footsteps as a stone cutter.

Now my dad, Theodore Griffith Jr., was a visionary of sorts. In the late 1950's, he bought a 1941 Ford, 4wd, WWII, Navy surplus weapon carrier (bomb truck) from the Smyth Family who lived out on Sutton Hill. We hooked a log chain to the truck and towed it 25 miles home behind dad's cousin Norris' chevy pickup. After rebuilding the engine and refurbishing the bed of the truck, Dad began to turn his vision into a reality. At first, my brothers and I had no idea what the plan was but, even though it took a while, as we worked along with dad, things began to take shape.

Dad began to "visit" abandoned and dilapidated farmhouses in the area, some with the land owner's permission, others



Ashby's method of dressing and finishing stones is distinct by the chisel marks left on all of his stones.

The cellar of the author's grandparents was built by Ashby. Still in use today.

where owners were long deceased and no one could be found to claim the property. After successful visits, Dad would drive the truck to a farmhouse and we would disassemble the stone chimney.

Using 2 X 6 and 2 X 4 boards, pipes (used as rollers), a come-along, ropes, cables, and some levers and pry bars, we would take down the chimney, stone by stone, and load it onto the bomb truck. Getting the chimney stones down and loaded wasn't too difficult because they were the smaller stones and we were moving them from above. We just had to be careful with them so as not to have the chimney collapse on us or wind up breaking the stones. In some cases, the chimney would be two stories high. The hard part was moving the hearth stones from the floor or ground up to the truck. Some of the bigger stones weighed from five to six hundred pounds.

The terrain we had to travel over—usually through the woods and up and down the steep grades of these West Virginia hills to haul the stones back to our house—had much to do with how many stones we would haul at one time. We usually had a neighborhood kid or two to help us move the stones because Dad would let them drive the truck, when he deemed it safe enough. Actually, you mostly just steered the truck. In mule gear it practically drove itself.

We used the hearth stones to build a retaining wall which we then backfilled with dirt to form an earthen terrace beside the house. We used the chimney stones to lay a patio on the far corner of the terrace.

In 2014, my wife Joyce and I carefully took the patio apart and using our tractor, moved it stone by stone, twenty feet or so and reconfigured the patio next to the house. Once under roof, the patio was



Sunset through an abandoned double fireplace. A ghostly reminder of the fire that once warmed this home.

now more accessible and could be utilized more frequently.

I always felt Dad's vision and our work was a way to preserve the intricate and beautiful work that Ashby Martin had accomplished and perhaps people who had no idea of Ashby's work, would now be exposed to it when they visited our home.

Scattered around the woods and hollers in our little space of West Virginia are the crumbled remains of what were at one time, family farms and homes. Now fallen down and hidden by time and nature, I would come across them in my wanderings. Then taking a few moments of solitude, I could imagine the family, late in evening, gathered around an Ashby Martin fireplace to perhaps listen to Dad or Grandpa read from the Bible or tell stories of the days now gone.

I wonder too, how many older homes and houses still in existence and still inhabited in our area have an Ashby Martin chimney or fireplace covered up, boarded up, or buried within the bowels of a renovated structure, unbeknownst to the folks who reside therein.

T.G. GRIFFITH is a retired educator with 40 years experience in Clay County schools. He has a Masters degree from Marshall University and is the Author of Shades of Sugar Tree, a novel about the coming-of-age of a boy in the Late 50's and early 60's in central WV. Griffith is an active member of the Big Union Baptist Church, in Dille and contributes two weekly articles for the Clay County Free Press. He is a Play-by-play sports broadcaster for Clay County HS athletics on WYAP radio and life-long resident of Nicholas County where he lives on the family home place with his wife Joyce where they raised three wonderful daughters. This is his first article for GOLDENSEAL.

Take Me Home

By Carlee Stone

West Virginia has never really been a bustling state full of towering skyscrapers and honking taxi cabs, though we do have a rich history. Old farms and country roads take many back to growing up surrounded by mountains. There's something about the way the sun sets along those rounded Alleghenies that makes us never want to leave.

My family has lived here for generations. They moved to the mountain state not long after my ancestors immigrated from Italy. My great-aunt lived on a farm near Eleanor, in Putnam County from the time she was born, until she was about six. I've grown up hearing stories about running around fields and walking to a one room schoolhouse. I've helped can tomatoes while she told me how her mom used to make butter and milk cows. Those passed down stories and traditions are insights to what, for me, seems like a simpler life. Life was not so much about rank in society, careers, money, or all of the things that consume us in this fast-paced world. Instead, life was about raising your family, instilling lifelong values, helping your neighbors, and never taking time for granted.

My great-aunt, Sherry Parsons, was born in 1948 in her childhood home. She and her two older siblings, Jo and Glen, grew up in a small house on a hill, surrounded by their farm. Winters at that time were harsh and heavy. During the frigid months, she and her family would stay with her grandmother, waiting out the cold. Sherry, her brother, and her sister would bundle up and play in the many feet of snow. Modern-day snowfall here does not even compare to the thick snow that used to cover the ground back then. Before a big snow, most people go out to grocery stores and grab the essentials. Back then, your "essentials" came from your backyard.

Women canned foods they grew such as tomatoes, beans, and corn. The Parsons also grew peppers, radishes, turnips, and beets. Cabbage from the garden was used for sauerkraut, which actually originates in China but today is a Southern staple. Potatoes were grown and stored for the winter months in a small shed where the icebox was located. That small shed, no bigger than a toolshed, had a cellar where produce that needed to be stored in cool areas—like potatoes—were kept after being harvested and cleaned. The icebox, a bit like a modern day freezer or refrigerator, was where things like milk, butter, and cottage cheese were kept cold. Unlike today, where things like fresh milk or homemade butter are real only on Little House on the Prairie, at that time, the only way to get milk, butter, and other dairy products was to keep your own cows and milk them yourself.

The Parsons had a few cows, a horse, free-roaming chickens, and one or two pigs. Sherry's mom, Alva, would come into the house after milking the cows with a bucket of milk. She would then take the cream on the top of the milk off and put the cream into a, for lack of a better term, butter churner. She would churn the cream until it became butter, then she took the hard butter and pressed it into a mold that would shape the block and indent a pattern onto it. The rest of the milk would be, by hand, run through a cheesecloth to more or less pasteurize it. Along with the butter and milk, the kids would go to the barn and collect chicken eggs. After they washed them off, there was your simple breakfast of an egg and butter on toast with warm milk.

Aside from produce and dairy, hay was cut on the farm by Sherry's dad, Mark. Even today, the farm's fields are still cut for hay by family friends. It was sometimes



Glen, Sherry, and Josephine Parsons, Easter 1951.

baled, but most of the time it was left in a haystack in the barn for feeding the cows in the winter. One particular all-black cow, Blackie, was a family pet. That might seem a little strange to us today, but Blackie was a cow who, much like a dog, would come when called. Though this cow has an extremely original name, many of their cattle were just called, well, Cow. Cattle, minus Blackie, were raised then sold in a market instead of kept for years. Some of the cattle or pigs were butchered for meat close to Thanksgiving. All butchering happened around November so the meat could be hung to cure.

Besides living and working on a farm, Sherry and her siblings walked to Lone Cedar School, which was a one-room schoolhouse with grades first through eighth grade. One teacher had to teach kids ranging from about five years old to fourteen or even fifteen. The schoolhouse, when you first walked in, had a cloak room. The bathroom was, like all bathrooms back then, an outhouse. The cloak room, basically just a mudroom, was where coats, lunch buckets, and the water cooler were located. A water cooler was kind of like the ones we have now, tall and cylindrical with a small spout near the bottom. Because the schoolhouse was one-roomed with multiple grades for one teacher to teach, students who were waiting to start a class walked home to refill the water cooler.

Kids at school had recess like most schools have today. Even though a wide age range of students all had a recess together, on many occasions the older kids might play with the younger ones. Sometimes, because there was no playground



Mark Parsons (Sherry's Dad, left) with his cousin Bill Pauley on the farm.

equipment, the older boys would bend the branches of small trees to create a teeter totter for the little kids. The younger kids would sit on the branch and jump as you would on a seesaw, just without the person on the other side. Besides playing together, older boys and girls would play tag or softball while the younger ones played marbles or other games. Playing wasn't only an activity at school, but also at home. Sherry and her sister both had a Tiny Tears doll, which were popular in the 50's as they were said to "cry real tears!" The sisters also, if their dad hadn't been able to cut the grass for a little while, would pull up some of the long grass, stack it, and play "house" with their makeshift grass home. Not only did the girls have a good time, but all three siblings loved to watch the old show "Howdy Doody" on Saturday mornings. Personally, I find the marionettes to be absolutely terrifying, but to each his own.

Maybe they didn't have much, but the Parsons family had a simple, quiet life for the years when they lived on their small farm. It certainly was not fancy or elaborate, but still taught Sherry and her siblings important lessons and values. I know I learned a lot from her about appreciating the little things and spending time with family. I might not know how to milk a cow, but I do know that bigger is not always better. I know that I need to be thankful for what I have, and hold on to every second I spend with the ones I love. And maybe, one day, the world will become a little wiser, a little closer, or be filled with a little more love—except for the Howdy Doody part. It honestly is beyond me how someone could watch that and not have nightmares.

CARLEE STONE wrote this article for her eighth-grade West Virginia Studies class at Charleston Catholic Middle School. It is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



19 Down, 1 To Go:
A Visit with Monroe County's Larry Mustain

By Carl E. Feather

Spend an hour or two shelling corn and chewing the fat with Larry Mustain at his Reed's Mill, and the conversation is apt to cover any number of subjects—the weather, politics, Bloody Butcher corn meal recipes, and local family histories. Larry is the resident genealogist and historian of this bucolic farming valley in northern Monroe County. Larry's paternal great, great grandfather Thomas Mustain settled in the area circa 1840; the Reeds, his maternal side of the family, have been there for three generations. Fall Reed, his grandfather, was associated with several Second Creek mills; Clara Reed, Fall's wife, ran the Second Creek Post Office from the 1920s to 1947. Larry was born in the circa 1900 mill house down the road; his cousin owns the 1785 mill house above the mill.

As Larry says, "You could make a career of Second Creek (history)," and Larry has done that. Thus, while old-timers from the region still purchase their open-pollinated corn meals at Reed's, first-timers typically discover the place in their quest for ancestral information, the whereabouts of an old family farm or directions to the Highland Park Church Cemetery. Those seeking the "tourist attraction" promised on the highway sign along Route 219 discover a classic water-powered grist mill and a broom factory, both idled because of circumstances beyond Larry's control. Lacking a water wheel and standing some distance from the creek that powers it, the white frame building bears little resemblance to the mill at Babcock State Park or Cook's Mill, a distant cousin in the same county (see Winter of 2016 "Cook's Old Mill, You Can't Help But Stop"). "Most of our old mills around here are just for show," Larry says. "They are tourist attractions, and this is too, in a way."

Only Reed's and the long-closed Roger's Mill, which is in considerably worse condition, remain of the nearly two-dozen mills that once took their power from Second Creek. Fed by the springs of Peter's Mountain to the southeast, the stream falls 600 feet as it travels from its headwaters to Reed's Mill on Second Creek Road. Larry says settlers harnessed this free source of energy that rambles through northern Monroe and southern Greenbrier counties. "Second Creek has never gone dry," Larry says, drawing upon the anecdotes of family members who worked mills along the creek. "The driest time in running the mill was 1932; they went from May to October with very little rain, but the creek never went dry. But it got to the point where (the miller) could only grind for one hour, then had to wait for the head to fill back up."

This reliable flow hosted gristmills, sawmills, two woolen mills and a powder mill. The latter manufactured gunpowder from charcoal, sulfur and saltpeter, mined in a cave on the former Dickson farm. The powder mill was the first to go, literally. "(The owner) was in the house at dark and he needed his glasses," Larry says. "He realized he'd left them in the powder mill, so



The back section of Reed's Mill at Second Creek, Monroe County, dates to 1791, according to owner Larry Mustain. The front part was added in the early 20th century as milling needs changed.

he sent his slave and her child out to get them. Not thinking that she was in a powder mill, she lit a candle. The mill blew up and killed both (the slave and her child). The next time it blew up, the owner went in one night to do something in it and it blew up, killing the owner." According to the pamphlet Larry hands each first-time visitor, Reed's Mill was built in 1791 by Archibald McDowell, who owned thousands of acres of land in this area. Larry's family, long associated with the farming valley, took ownership of the mill in 1914. Larry's familial tie is through his late mother, "Birdie" Marie Reed, whose brother Aubrey Francis Reed became owner in 1925.

Aubrey Reed, whose epitaph honors him as "A Second Creek Miller in the Gap Mills Tradition," was born Oct. 12, 1904, and died Sept. 29, 1989. Larry speaks highly of the man who owned both the mill and over 300 acres of farmland on which he grew many of the grains processed at the mill. "My uncle was such a character. He had a third-grade education, and I'm totally prejudiced when I say this, but he was the smartest man I ever knew. He never went to church, but he also was the most religious man I've ever known," Larry says. Like Larry's mother, Aubrey also was a Democrat, a political anomaly in both the family and valley.

Larry, born Oct. 25, 1936, came under the care of his Uncle Aubrey when Larry's father, Emory Parker Mustain, became ill in 1942. Emory had gone to Charleston during the war and contracted a life-threatening illness resulting from exposure to toxins at the chemical plant where he worked. "It took four years to get straightened out from that," Larry says. While under Aubrey's care, Larry worked as a farm and mill hand



Larry Mustain talks to guests from his office at Reed's Mill in Second Creek. Larry, is his mid-80s, is finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with all the challenges associated with the mill, which no longer operates by water power. The mill's most valuable asset these days is Larry, whose knowledge of the history and families of Second Creek and Monroe County draws many visitors to the mill.

for his uncle. "I'd been raised here, and I'd helped him ever since I was a kid," Larry says. "I shelled corn and stuff from the time I was in third or fourth grade." Larry left the valley at 16 and moved to Newport News, Va. He met his late wife Frances there, also a staunch Democrat, reared four children and worked as a teacher and school principal from Virginia to the Midwest and California. In 1975, he returned to Second Creek to help his uncle with the mill and farm. "As they say, absence makes the heart grow fonder, so I had to come back," Larry says. "I just wanted the mill to stay in the family."

The times had changed, however, and with those changes in the nation and local economy came impossible challenges for a small, water-powered mill like Reed's. Larry says that when he was growing up, there were still several other mills operating on Second Creek: Clark's Mill, a taller structure than Reed's and operated by his Grandfather Reed. The dam washed away in a 1968 flood, and the mill buildings destroyed in the 1970s; The Red Mill, now gone, was near Gap Mills and operated by his Grandmother Reed's uncle Oscar Neel; Roger's Mill, which still stands and dates from the 1770s; and Nickell Mill, built in 1814 and, despite being on the National Register of Historic Places, was torn down in the past decade.

The Nickell Mill ceased operation in 1949, the same year Aubrey Reed gave his mill a face lift. Aubrey enclosed the front porch to create an office area and made operational upgrades. Fortunately, equipment such as the grain scales and American Midget Marvel, were retained. The Marvel is a self-contained roller mill that was produced by the Owensboro, Kentucky, Anglo American Mill Co. It offered small gristmills the flexibility of producing a "better



Grain-handling equipment original to the new section of the mill is intact and could be pressed into service if water could be restored to the millpond and millrace.

barrel of flour cheaper;" Larry says Aubrey installed the equipment in 1926. "We used it to make white flour, wheat, whole wheat flour, buckwheat, bran, and graham," Larry says. It was last run in the 1970s, but Larry keeps it and other antiquated mill equipment as artifacts of milling history.

The mill's waterwheel, however, is long gone, replaced with twin turbines circa 1880. They operate in 10 feet of water below the milling floor; each turbine is capable of 10 horsepower. The turbines power the millstones and drive the mill's legacy machinery, such as the grain elevator, roller mill, feed mixer and bagger. "We could grind about 100 pounds an hour," Larry says. "It all depends on what you're grinding. Up until two years ago, this whole mill was running off 20 horsepower of water." Aubrey's operation focused on dairy feed when Larry came back in 1975, but Larry saw the mill's future in offering consumers stone-ground flour and cornmeal ground from the open-pollinated grains grown on the family farm.

Larry worked alongside Aubrey, learning the craft of milling and preparing himself for the responsibility of being the third Reed family member to own and operate the mill. He says people in the valley suspected he'd moved back just to get access to the land and his uncle's money. "But it was exactly the opposite of that," Larry says. "We never talked about specifics when I moved back. … Once, when we were bailing hay, he said to me, 'I'm going to give you this farm.' And I said, 'No, I don't want you to do that.' I said, 'fix it so I can buy it', because he lived there with his sister (and family) at the mill house, and I told him that he needed to worry about (taking care of her), also."

Whatever he inherited, Larry got it through hard labor, such as shoveling knee-deep mud from the turbine box into buckets and hauling them away. "My uncle told me (as Larry shoveled), "That is the glory of waterpower," Larry says. For a man nearing the ninth-decade, however, the glory has become a curse, and perhaps the end of the mill. Larry says the reason the mill has not ground with water power since 2018 is because mud has filled the holding pond and raceway. A dam diverts water from Second

Backroom Brooms

By Carl E. Feather

The back room of Reed's Mill houses the Everett Hogsett broom factory, named for the 19th-century Second Creek resident who started the operation in the late 1800s.

Everett, who had five sisters and three brothers, was born Nov. 9, 1859. His parents were Hiram McElhaney Hogshead (Hogsett) and Mary Jane Miller Hogsett.

Up until the late 1930s, Everett owned most of the land that comprises the Reed's Mill farm and one-room schoolhouse property. The stories he told Aubrey Reed continue to echo in the mill through the recollections of Larry Mustain, who, as a child, fished Second Creek and the mill pond with Everett.

Cannonballs were occasionally plowed up on the Hogsett farm, and Larry suspected that they were evidence of a Battle of Second Creek. But Everett told Larry that men from the area who were too old to go off to war secured a cannon to protect their homes and farms in the event of a Yankee or Confederate invasion. They practiced firing the cannon across the field that would become the Mustain farm but never had to go to battle with it!

Everett became a broom maker, acquiring equipment manufactured in Schenectady, New York, prior to the Civil War. Larry says the six machines in the workroom facilitate the manufacture of a broom from the raw materials of wood, twine and broom corn, which was grown on the farm.

One of the machines removes the seeds from the thin strands of the annual grass called millet, sorghum or broom corn. Strands are cut to a uniform length and wrapped around the handle, producing a round broom with its bristles attached by wire to the handle. From there, a foot-powered vise is used to flatten the broom. Shakers are credited with inventing the machinery that transforms the round broom into a flat one, believed to be more efficient at its job. The flattened broom is stitched with several rows of cord as the final step in this human-powered process.

Paul Nichols was the second person to operate the factory, the equipment from which was purchased by Jim Rose after Nichols' passing. Jack Fissori was the most recent broom maker to use the equipment. Fissori was manufacturing whisk, children's, hearth, utility, and full-sized brooms as recently as 2013.

Larry says broom makers face the same challenges with sourcing materials that he faces with the mill. Finding a domestic source for the broom corn is challenging, as is competing against the low-cost, plastic-bristled, throw-away brooms. "We used to raise our own broom corn here on the farm," Larry says. "Now, there is hardly anyone in the United States raising broom corn."

A craftsman skilled in the art could walk into the shop and start making brooms; Larry says the equipment is fully functional. And with an endless supply of dust and chaff produced in the adjoining mill, there will always be at least one steady customer for brooms in the Second Creek valley.

Creek into the holding pond above the mill, but without periodic flooding that otherwise would have flushed mud from the pond, it has become a fertile, stagnant basin for plant life. "There's something going on with the creek there that I don't understand," Larry says. "We used to live on fish out of that creek from February to July when I was a kid. There's some kind of algae in it now, some kind of plant that looks like seaweed that makes the pond fill up faster."

Larry says six feet of mud and organic debris would have to be cleared from the pond before he could fire up the turbines again. It would require a contractor with a backhoe and dump truck to accomplish the work. While he received a small grant to clean out the pond and race, Larry needs much more funding to accomplish all the tasks necessary to restore waterpower operation to the mill. The turbines need to be rebuilt, and the millstones have to be

Take a tour of Reed's Mill in this video by Carl E. Feather: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6inzNBS1Yv0&t

groomed before Second Creek water can once again grind the Reed's Mill staples. The mill building itself needs a refresh and treatment for powder post beetles. In the interim, Larry has conceded to using an electric stone grinder so he can fulfill orders for the specialty products.

"We're grinding with a portable upright grinder. My uncle would never use it because it heats the grain, and he said it changed the taste of the cornbread a little bit," Larry says. "All he would use were the two big stones run by waterpower. But I haven't used them for three years now."

His mainstay product is Bloody Butcher cornmeal, an open-pollinated variety with a history reaching back to the Native American occupants of this land. His grandfather and uncle once grew the variety on the bottom land; these days Larry relies upon another farmer for this corn, the ears of which can be red, speckled, purple, orange, or white. He claims that these native grains are hardier, higher in antioxidants, and have more bran than the hybrids that large-scale food producers use for their meals. He points out that these are non-GMO grains. He also offers buckwheat, once grown on the Reed farm but now sourced from an outside supplier because the wild turkeys kept decimating his plantings.

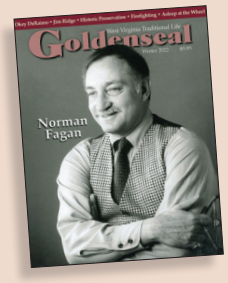
"It's gotten to where the only thing we can raise here is hay," Larry says. "In the past two years, we had two seven-acre patches of corn, and the bears ate it all." Larry grinds and bags small batches of meal and flour, then stores them in several refrigerators so the product is always available for his regular customers. The quantities are small, and it has been years since he's needed the old Stowe bagger that could put up 25-pound sacks of flour. He hasn't had orders of that magnitude for decades, when one customer purchased 400 to 500 pounds at a time. "He makes big pans of cornbread … he's bound to be making bread with it," Aubrey would



A mixing guide poster shows years of display and use. It harks back to a time when the mills along Second Creek were vital partners with livestock farmers of Monroe and Greenbrier counties.

tell Larry, all the while knowing the buyer had a more profitable use for the grain. "The old guy's father was running a still, and they were putting the stuff in plastic milk jugs," says Larry, who asked his uncle about the client's choice of containers, given alcohol's solvent property. "My uncle said, 'Don't worry about that. It's not going to sit around in a jug that da—ed long,'" Larry says.

Larry could use a few moonshiner orders these days. He does about $2,000 in flour and cornmeal sales annually, hardly enough to justify keeping the operation going or offer it as a profitable legacy for his four



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Larry Mustain holds the Bloody Butcher blend of white and red corn that will be ground into meal of the same name. There was a time when the corn was grown on the acreage around the mill.

children, 10 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren. Family assist him as their time allows, but Larry knows the value of this place is in the land, not its past or the buckwheat flour that "mostly older people want because everybody ate buckwheat cakes from the winter to early spring," as Larry says.

The mill is open by request and chance. Since losing his wife several years ago, it has become a mainstay in his social life, as well as therapy and something a man rarely gets in his graying days: an opportunity to connect to and perpetuate a family legacy, even if he's the last man standing. "I keep thinking I should quit," Larry tells me. "My saying is: '19 down and one to go', meaning there were (at least) 20 mills on Second Creek and 19 of them are gone. And now, maybe it's my turn."

Reed's Mill is located on Second Creek Road, 1.25 miles east of Route 219 just south of the Monroe-Greenbrier counties line. Call ahead to schedule a visit: 304-772-5665.

CARL F 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.



Bundles of broomcorn await working into a broom at Reed's Mill. The broom factory operated out of the mill at one time, but mill owner Larry Mustain has not found an artisan willing to take over the operation.

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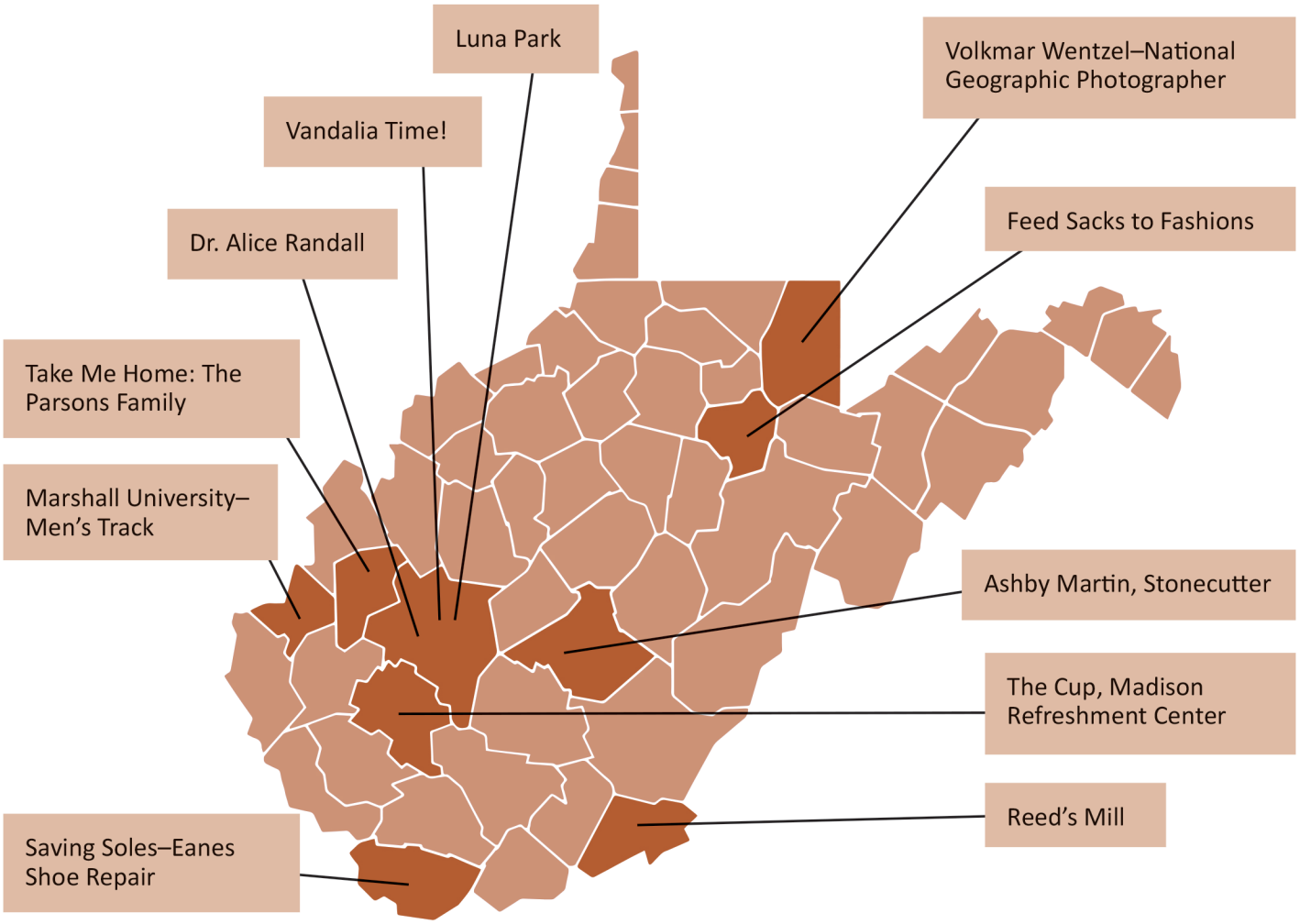

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