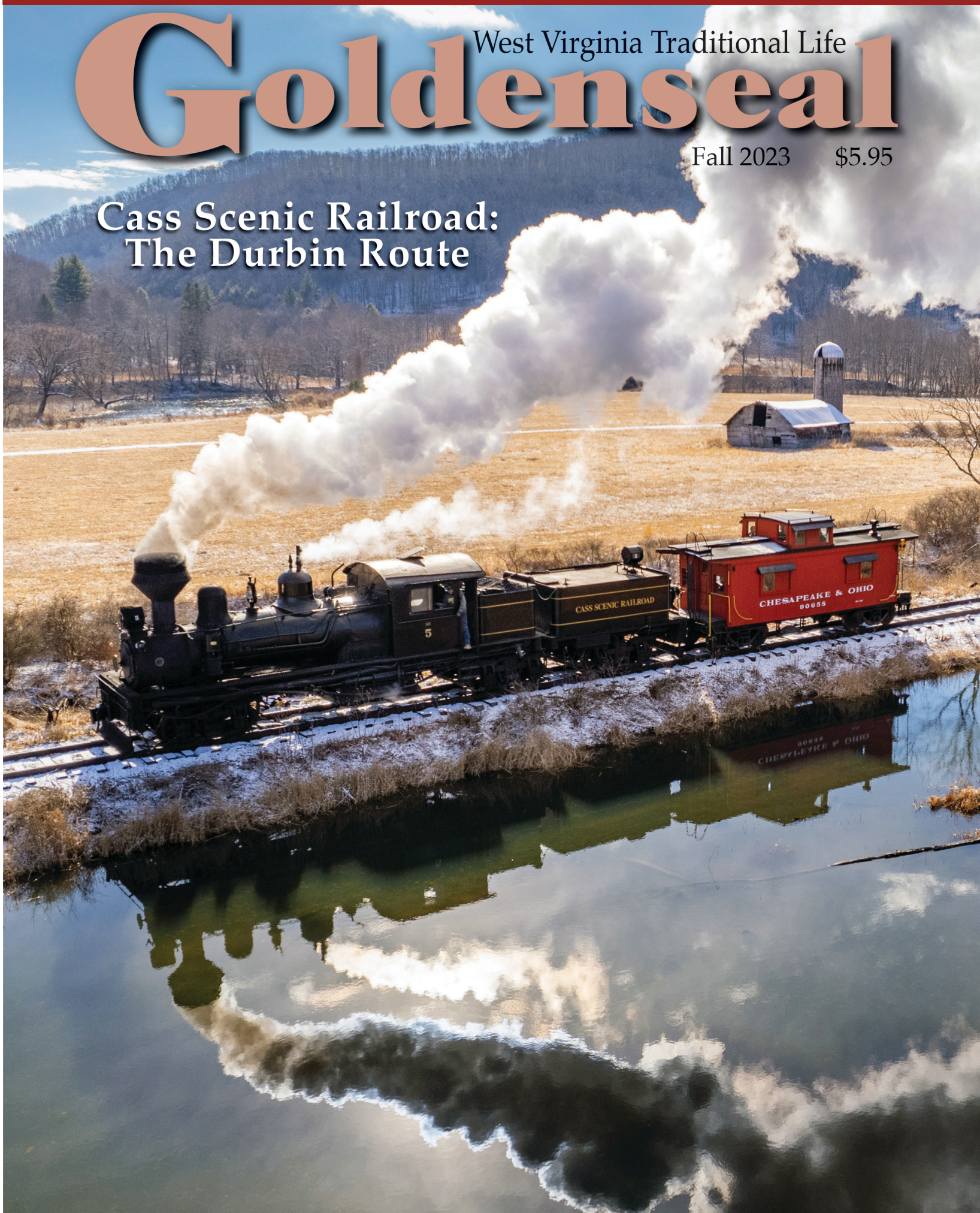
Rail Heritage Weekend • Meade v. Johnson • Ruby Vaughan • Folktales for Fall • American Chestnut

Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Fall 2023 $5.95

Cass Scenic Railroad: The Durbin Route



Goldenseal Fall 2023 The Durbin Route • Bever Boys Brewery • Tranquil Train Excursion • Memories of an Oldsmobile Dealer • Apple Butter Fest Volume 49, Number 3



Ellison Ridge looking towards Willy's Way. Greenville, Monroe County. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

Volume 49, Number 3

Goldenseal

Fall 2023



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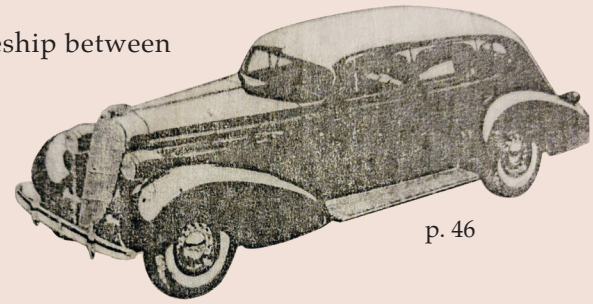

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Cass Scenic Railroad Shay Engine No. 5 traveling a portion of the newly restored track from Cass to Durbin. Photo by Walter Scriptunas.

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From the Editor

Fall in West Virginia is a breathtaking time of year. The mountains come alive with color and texture that wasn't quite as eye-catching before. The scarlets of the oak and dogwood, the vibrant yellows of the elm and black walnut, and the varying hues of maple and sycamore create a natural color palette that rivals that of the most skilled painter. If you have never taken the time to get lost on a mountainous backroad during the fall season, I would highly recommend it! We are blessed with some astounding scenic byways.



Ellison Ridge Road. Greenville, Monroe County. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

Apart from the dazzling foliage, fall is also a time for winding down and preparing for the coming winter. Late season harvesting and canning, storing up root vegetables, winterizing garden spaces and machinery, butchering livestock, rendering lard, making apple butter, foraging for black walnuts, and splitting wood are all common fall time preparations among the people of West Virginia.

This issue of GOLDENSEAL features a nice mix of fall-leaning articles—train rides through the mountain state, an apple butter festival, chestnuts, heirloom apples—and even a few ghost stories! With this issue I wanted to reintroduce a concept from fall issues past—Folktales for Fall. This is a concept I would like to continue in future fall issues. So to our readers and contributors, if you have a good fall folk tale you would like to share, send it our way!

This fall we are featuring two stories in the segment. First is a great little tale on "Story Catching" from storyteller Joe McHugh concerning the Flatwoods Monster and Joe's time spent collecting stories from the folks of our great state. We also will feature another great student article, in partnership with Jennifer Cline who teaches WV History at Charleston Catholic. Eighth Grader Anneliese Blevins has written a nice article on "The Mysterious and Lovely Glen Ferris Inn"—including a couple ghost stories.

All of this coupled with other great articles—rural mail carrier Ruby Vaughan, a Pocahontas County Oldsmobile Dealer, the introduction of a hot lunch program in 1950s Fayette County, re-establishing the American chestnut tree, and more!

As always, I hope you, our readers, enjoy this sampling of West Virginia Traditional Life!

Laikyn J. Blankenship

Letter to the Editor



Burl Hammons (left) and Dwight Diller at Burl's home in Stillwell. 1970. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer.

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the wonderful cover and testimonies regarding Dwight Diller in the Summer 2023 issue. It was moving to hear from all those West Virginia writers recounting Dwight's impact on them, their lives, and (often) their music. He was indeed a force for folk culture in the Mountain State and this letter is but one that could be solicited from those he touched in other parts of the nation and world. In the recollections you presented, the Hammons family was frequently mentioned but not pictured. Please feel free to share a photo I made of Burl Hammons and Dwight in 1970, at Burl's home in Stillwell, just outside of Marlinton.

Best wishes,
Carl Fleischhauer
Port Republic, Maryland

"Still Inventing:"

A Fiber Arts Apprenticeship between Life-Long Friends

by Jennie Williams



Barbara Weaner (left) and Enrica McMillon (right). All photos provided by the author.

Barbara Weaner and Enrica McMillon have been friends for nearly 50 years. In 1976, Barbara moved to a farm in Montrose where she and her husband still reside. At the time, Enrica made her home on nearby Laurel Mountain. "Thank God I met Enrica early on," Barbara recalls. "[Enrica] knew how to do everything, and was very very generous with her knowledge… She would come over and visit and very nicely say things like 'it would be a lot easier if you did it *this* way,'" Barbara laughs. They still get together after all these years, only now Enrica shares with Barbara skills and stories about fiber arts, including dyeing, spinning, and weaving through the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship program.

These days, Enrica's Elkins home is filled with traditional tools, fleece and naturally dyed yarn, and works in progress. "My house has more UFOs than Area 51!" as Enrica jokingly refers to "unfinished objects." Parked along the walls are antique



A scarf and shawl made by Enrica McMillon. By using a single skein of carefully dyed yarn, she is able to produce a scarf with a brilliant faux plaid effect without changing out different sets of colors.

walking wheels and smaller spinning wheels from West Virginia and many parts of the world, wheels made from found objects, baskets made of local plant materials she's made or collected, and recycled denim as furniture upholstery. Just about everything on display, including a stunning traditional Swiss outfit, Enrica made by hand.

Born in Helvetia in 1952, Enrica "grew up with a foot in each century," as she sees it. "There were still a lot of people living just as they had in 1900. It was normal life." She first learned fiber arts traditions from her paternal grandmother Henrietta Hartmann Hofer, whose family was among Helvetia's original Swiss settlers. Her maternal grandmother Susanna Cutright Vangilder lived a few miles down the road in Czar and could trace her ancestors back to West Virginia's earliest settlers. Curious and observant, Enrica learned how her grandmothers practiced similar traditions in different ways. "Grandmothers have a way of talking about what they're doing while they're doing it." Both spun, wove, quilted, and practiced needle arts. While young girls were expected to knit, crochet, and embroider, it wasn't necessary for them to spin yarn, yet she begged her Swiss grandmother to teach her. "I like the fluidity of spinning," she says. "It's very hypnotic and very relaxing to me." Spinning is rhythmic like dancing, and there are certain types of music one can listen to while spinning to keep time. "When you dance, you count."

Enrica is resourceful, practical, and in-

ventive. Her first venture into fiber arts was when she was four years old. Instead of taking a nap, she cut up her socks to make doll clothes but soon ran out of material. "My older brother was at school, but I knew he had a pair of socks that I could make into doll clothes." She gave in to temptation and cut up his treasured Roy Rogers socks; he reminded her of this episode well into adulthood. Rather than punishing her, Enrica's parents called upon her grandmothers, who allowed Enrica to select a wicker sewing basket with pink flowers on top and pink satin lining. They provided fabrics and taught her how to make real doll clothes. She still couldn't resist cutting up her Sunday lace anklet socks, recalling, "I could make a white bride's dress! And I did."

Some traditional ways have been forgotten, Enrica and Barbara recognize. "A lot of the things . . . didn't survive because the tools weren't deemed special enough to save," Enrica says. Some seem quite practical, such as using corncobs as spools or a ladder back chair as a loom. Enrica's Aunt Genevieve Hofer helped found the Mountain Weavers Guild in Elkins in 1967 to help preserve traditions such as these. Barbara notes that it's helpful to be part of an artist community like the guild. While books are useful, they aren't as effective as learning from a teacher in person, and a two-week weaving class won't teach you nearly as much as a longer apprenticeship with individual instruction. Enrica has researched 200 varieties of sheep from around the world and keeps a database of over 6,000 spinning wheels in an effort to preserve this traditional knowledge. She serves as a resource to others and has been published in *The Spinning Wheel Sleuth* and *Spin Off* magazine.

Fiber arts can be highly technical and creatively freeing. "Sometimes I am very rule driven, very measured," Enrica explains. "I know exactly what I want at the end and know exactly how to get there." Enrica continually taps into and adapts the skillsets she learned from her grandmothers. "Enrica is always upping the ante," Barbara observes. "It's kind of mind blowing, actually." Enrica has perfected using traditional methods of preparing fibers for weaving, but she experiments and can dye a colorful gradient into the fleece before arranging, spinning, and weaving it. By using a single skein of carefully dyed yarn, she is able



A ladder back chair utilized as a loom. Enrica's Aunt Genevieve Hofer helped found the Mountain Weavers Guild in Elkins in 1967 to help preserve traditions such as these.



A traditional Swiss outfit, handmade by Enrica McMillon.

to produce a scarf with a brilliant faux plaid effect without changing out different sets of colors. "I'm still inventing," Enrica says.

Enrica and Barbara work patiently together so Barbara can pick up essential techniques at her own pace. "Her creativity is not motivated by money," Barbara says. Enrica playfully interrupts that she is motivated by "where am I going and what do I have to dress for." Barbara deeply appreciates Enrica's expertise and her "love and passion for the craft." Enrica, meanwhile, excitedly prepares Barbara for skills that Barbara doesn't always think she's ready for yet. While she hadn't practiced fiber arts consistently in her life, Barbara reflects, "[I felt] I should pick up again at 69 or 68 because why not? Why not learn it properly and try it and get past my own fears." Their trusting and enduring friendship supports their ability to pass on traditions practiced by generations of 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.

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.

GOLDENSEAL Good-Byes

Lenore McComas Coberly
(1925-2022)

Lenore McComas Coberly passed away September 28, 2022. Born in Hamlin (Lincoln County) Lenore was a beloved wife and mother, poet, teacher, author, world traveler, and welcoming hostess. She wrote a number of books and poetry about growing up in Lincoln County. In her Spring 2019 article, *A Beautiful Place Called Ugly* she reflected on a song sung in her childhood, "Many were the visions bright which the future ne'er fulfilled, but how sunny were my daydreams on the West Virginia Hills."—a good reflection of the fond memories she maintained throughout her life for her beloved home state. A graduate of WVU and later the University of Pittsburgh, she married Camden Arthur Coberly in 1946, and their travels together would eventually find them settled in Madison, Wisconsin.



Lenore Coberly. Courtesy of the family.

Lenore spoke of how much she and her husband missed the West Virginia mountains and how happy they were to discover the Baraboo Hills of Wisconsin. The Baraboo Hills are a protected wildlife area, and one of the most ancient rock outcrops in North America—a forested sanctuary that overlays the durable rock foundation of Baraboo quartzite.

Lenore was a longtime member of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets. She hosted collaborative writing groups in her home until the end of her life. Lenore wrote two other articles for GOLDENSEAL. See both articles in Summer of 1992 *Bob Adkins: Lincoln County Gas Man*, and *Settling Family Differences*. Lenore's life will be joyously remembered by her children and their families, by her many friends and colleagues, and by readers of her poems and stories. –ed.

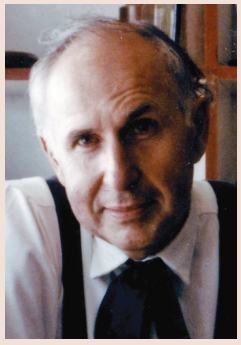
The Hills Remember

They loved children more than themselves,
They slept and woke to the
music of water over rocks
and welcomed early evening
in the shadow of hills,
then quietly prayed
their thanks to God.

– last stanza of a poem from Lenore's 2020 book entitled, From the West Virginia Hills.

Borgan Tanner
(1928-2022)

Borgon Tanner passed away on August 25th, 2022 at the age of 93. Born Brady Martin Boyles, in Clarksburg (Harrison County), Borgon held degrees in Documentary Photography and Geology from the University of Ohio. With a lifelong interest in a plethora of subjects Borgon could discuss a wide range of topics with anyone he met and his descriptive stories were legendary. This wide range of interests led him to many careers—as a Map Instructor with the US Army; a Photographer for the Ohio State Department of Health; a Materials Inspector for the West Virginia Department of Transportation; Fireman for steam locomotives on both the Baltimore & Ohio and the East Broad Top



Borgon Tanner. Courtesy of the family.

Railroads (US); Substitute Teacher in various Elementary schools (US); Bookmobile Driver for a library (US); Historical Interpreter (Justice of the Peace, General Store Proprietor) at King's Landing

Historical Settlement in Lower Prince William, NB; and a contributing writer for several US publications, one of which was GOLDENSEAL.

Borgon wrote several articles for GOLDENSEAL: *Into the Woods with Ely-Thomas: One Day's Drama at Jetsville* 36:1;p40, *Night Sounds* 38:2;p30, *The Swecks' Circle Tour* 43:4;p68, *Thursday Night at the Wetzel Republican* 30:1;p46, *Two Days That Changed Our Lives* 27:4;p14, *Waterborne Entertainment on the Upper Ohio River* 40:2;p38, and *Wetzel & Tyler Railway* 37:2;p10. The GOLDENSEAL OFFICE looked forward to his calls, often lengthy, but always entertaining, and with a good story pitch. -ed.

Mike Reuben
(1958-2023)

Michael Lee "Rube" Reuben, a Ripley native, passed away January 2, 2023. Local historian, award-winning writer and editor for Jackson Newspapers, public address announcer for Ripley High School Athletic teams, and more recently Director for the Ripley Convention and Visitors Bureau and Museum—Reuben was considered the town historian and curator.



Mike Reuben. Courtesy of the family.

Mike was a 1976 Ripley High School graduate and then earned a degree in journalism from Marshall University. He began announcing for Ripley High School football and basketball games while still in high school—he was the "voice" of Ripley's Memorial Stadium for 45 years. He also got a head start in journalism while still in high school, writing for the *Jackson Herald*.

Later in life, Mike would serve proudly as the editor for both *The Jackson Herald and The Jackson Star-News* (formerly *The Ravenswood News*). In 2014, he was presented with the prestigious Distinguished Community Service Award for his years of dedication to making Jackson County a better place to live. That year he also helped found, and became director for, the Ripley Convention and Visitors Bureau, which also houses a museum.

Mike worked closely with Ripley's famed Fourth of July celebration, the Cedar Lakes Foundation, the Ripley High Athletic Boosters, and countless other organizations (See Summer of 2020 *Celebrating the 4th of July 1965 . . . on the 2nd & 5th)*. He will be sadly missed by his friends, family, and community. -ed.

Goldie Lea Webb
1923-2023

Goldie Lea Webb, 100, of Richwood, WV, passed away peacefully in April of 2023, at Hidden Valley Center in Oak Hill (Fayette County). Goldie was born on January 30, 1923, to the late James Arthur and Leola Motsie Metheney Bender. She loved to play guitar, baked some beautiful cakes for many people in the town, loved to paint, and had a love for writing. She wrote a column called "Have You Heard?" for the Richwood News Leader for years. She loved her family and was "Granny Goldie" to many children over the years.



Goldie Webb. Photo Courtesy of the Goldenseal Archives.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Lenzy "Bud" Webb; a daughter Patricia Ann; a grandson Scott Allen Brown; all her siblings Arden Bender, Thomas Bender, Alice Marie Jones; and son in law Franklin L White. Left to cherish her memory are her 2 daughters,

Charlene (Virgil) Erskine of Frostproof, Florida, and Nancy White of Richwood; grandsons Michael (Debra) Brown, and Kevin (Elizabeth) Bennett; granddaughter Sarah (Ronnie) Hammons; great-grandchildren Shawn Schrader, Hallie Martin, Emma Brown, Heather Jackson, Franklin Bennett, Brenna Bennett, Kage Duke, Hunter Bennett, Nicholas Skaggs, Danielle Skaggs, and Isabella Roop; as well as 13 Great-great grandchildren and many cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Goldie was the cover story of our 2017 Summer issue in which she recounted her time spent working at the Dodge Clothespin Factory in Richwood (Nicholas County) during WWII. See *The World's Largest Clothespin Factory* by Beverly Steenstra. –ed.

Jessie Lee Maiuri

by Mike Wood

Jessie Lee (Hall) Maiuri, 90, of Summersville, West Virginia, passed away peacefully on May 2, 2023, at the Fayette Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

Jessie was born August 13, 1932, in Hallburg, Clay County, West Virginia, to the late John Bennett and Jennie Bee Hall. She was raised on a farm with no cars, electricity, or indoor plumbing and was one of 16 children born over a 25-year period, from 1910 to 1935. She chronicled her childhood experiences in a tribute to her mother she authored for *Goldenseal's* Spring 2011 edition titled, "Mom Was a Hard Worker: Remembering Jennie Bee Hall."



Jessie Lee Maiuri, photo courtesy of the family.

In 1940, her parents sold their farm, and Jessie relocated with her family to Glasgow, West Virginia, where she lived until moving to Summersville in 2000. During her high school years—and being one of the few remaining siblings at home—she assisted her mother with cooking and cleaning for boarders who would travel for work and needed a place to stay.

Jessie graduated from East Bank High School in 1950 and soon after was wed to her husband of 72 years, Lou Maiuri. Lou is a 2008 Vandalia Award Winner, a world-renowned Appalachian clogging and square dance expert, and has been featured in *Goldenseal* on a number of occasions.

Jessie was a beloved mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother and led a full life of service to others and her community. Although she held a number of temporary jobs over the years, she spent most of her time as a homemaker and community volunteer. Jessie was a Girl Scout Troop Leader; logged tens of thousands of hours bathing and swaddling newborns at CAMC Women's and Children's Hospital; and later comforted the sick and dying as a Hospice volunteer. She also contributed to the preservation of Appalachian culture as an avid deer hunter, angler, clogger, and square dancer as a member of both the Appalachian Country Cloggers and prior to that, the CBS Travelers.

Jessie was a devout Roman Catholic; a long-time parishioner of both St. Anthony's Shrine in Boomer, West Virginia, and St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Summersville; and a member of the Catholic Daughters of America.

In addition to her parents, she is preceded in death by a daughter, Mary Lee Wood; a grandson, John Louis Wood; brothers John, Ivan, Blaine, William Byrne, Leslie, and Charles Hall; and sisters Lela Riffle, Lola Byard, Oleta Cumbridge, Kathleen Riffle, Helen Mollohan, Mary Erickson, Margaret Hines, Virginia McGraw and Norma Winfree Sizemore.

Those left to cherish her memory include her husband Lou; daughter Linda Brown (John T. Hodgen) of Summersville; grandchildren Jennifer (Michael) Garrett, Michael Wood, Justin Wood, Lisa Jeffries Perdue, and Chad (Saoirse) Wood; and great-grandchildren Mason, Audrey, and Kaylee Perdue; Cooper Gallagher; Jonah Garrett; and Trent, Thomas, Nora, and Coraline Wood.

Cass and Durbin West Virginia are Again Connected by Rail and

Former Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad #4 is on the Road to Recovery

by Alan Byer



Shay #5, the oldest operating locomotive of its type and the official West Virginia State Locomotive, cuts the ribbon, ceremonially opening the Trout Run Bridge Friday, May 12, 2023. Alan Byer photograph.

New boiler will bring iconic West Virginia steam locomotive back to life to power the new Greenbrier Express over the fabled Durbin Route

After 38 years, the towns of Durbin and Cass West Virginia are again connected by rail, and trains have returned to the last remaining miles of the fabled Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad Greenbrier Division, known as The Durbin Route. In a closely related development, the last steam locomotive to operate in common-carrier service in the state eventually will power trains over the newly reopened track.

Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad donated the former Greenbrier Division track and right-of-way—approximately 101 miles from Whitcomb (Greenbrier County) to Durbin (Pocahontas County)—to the State of West Virginia in 1978 after running the last two trains December 27th and 28th of that year. West Virginia converted some 76 miles from North Caldwell, Greenbrier County, to Cass to a rail trail, which became the 950-acre



Still operating as the Durbin Rocket, Heisler #6 with an open-air car and several passenger coaches in tow heads toward the end of rehabilitated track in the fall of 2022, before all 15 miles of the Cass-Durbin line were reopened. Walter Scriptunas photograph.

Greenbrier River Trail State Park in 1980. For the next five years, Cass Scenic Railroad operated steam-powered excursions from Cass to Durbin and return, but the Greenbrier River swept away much of the track during the catastrophic 1985 floods that ravaged West Virginia's high country. Over a decade would pass before another train would travel over any of the rail between Cass and Durbin.

Enter Pennsylvania long-haul trucker John Smith and his wife Kathy. In 1996, the two applied for, and were granted, a license to operate the 15-mile Cass – Durbin route, and soon incorporated the line as the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad (DGVR). With a loyal crew of volunteers, John and Kathy began to rehabilitate the track south out of Durbin and, by 1998, were operating trains pulled by a tiny



Using the caboose platform as a dais, Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad President and CEO John Smith speaks during the Trout Run Bridge opening ceremony May 12, 2023, while other dignitaries await their turns. From left to right, Brett McMillion, Director of the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources; John Smith; Cindy Butler, Executive Director of the West Virginia Railroad Administration; and Jimmy Wriston, Secretary of the West Virginia Department of Transportation and Division of Highways. Alan Byer photograph.

Whitcomb diesel locomotive, Little Leroi, over five miles of repaired track. Before long, the couple replaced Little Leroi with a two-truck Climax geared steam locomotive they purchased from the Connecticut Trolley Museum.

In 1998, the two submitted a bid (as DGVR) to operate the 135-mile former Western Maryland Railway Elkins Subdivision, which the state had purchased from CSX in 1997, and their bid was accepted by the West Virginia State Rail Authority. Before long, DGVR was operating diesel-powered passenger trains out of Elkins and a reproduction Edwards rail bus south out of Cheat Bridge. Buoyed by these successes, DGVR applied to operate the rail assets of the Cass Scenic Railroad in October 2014, and the West Virginia State Rail Authority voted to accept their proposal. By 2021, DGVR operated excursion trains powered by vintage diesel locomotives from Elkins to High Falls of Cheat and Tygart Junction. At the same time, the railroad operated geared steam locomotive powered trains from Durbin south to the end of the restored track, from Cass to Whittaker Station on Cheat Mountain, and from Cass



Shay #5 smokes it up for the photographer as it approaches Trout Run Bridge during the first Cass-to-Durbin-and-return test run February 21st, 2023. Though the crew noted some potential track-and-roadbed issues, #5 completed the test run without incident. Walter Scriptunas photograph.

to Bald Knob, one of the highest peaks in West Virginia.

As the years passed, DGVR crews continued to reopen more and more of the Cass-Durbin line and, by the spring of 2021, had reached the last obstacle—the Trout Run Bridge—some six miles from Cass and nine miles from Durbin. In a unique public-private partnership between the West Virginia State RailAuthority (WVSRA) and Division of Highways (WVDOH) on one side and DGVR on the other, WVDOH engineers first designed and their crews then poured massive concrete abutments for the bridge. DGVR crews delivered the required materials to the remote job site by rail. The following year, contractors designed and fabricated the steel bridge and cross-braces, DGVR delivered the pieces to the job site, and WVDOH crews installed them while DGVR crews continued to work on the track on either side of Trout Run.

Late in January 2023, DGVR President and CEO John Smith announced a new train, *The Greenbrier Express*, that would run Cass-to-Durbin and return, with a special inaugural run set for May 13th and regular, scheduled trains beginning a week later, May 20th. At the same time, he unveiled *Greenbrier Express* logos, created by artist Tyler Hardin, that are very similar to those used by the old Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad in the '60s and '70s. Notably, Hardin's creations feature silhouettes of a conventional steam locomotive with a 2-8-0, or consolidation, wheel arrangement, one very similar to a locomotive already at Cass, but in pieces as of this writing—more about this later.

In February 2023, DGVR ran the first test train Cass-to-Durbin and return. Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad crews operated Shay #5, the oldest locomotive of that design still in steam and the official West Virginia State Locomotive, with a caboose in tow to Durbin. There, they coupled #5 to idled Heisler #6 and then pulled her and the caboose back to Cass. A few track and roadbed trouble spots were noted and later repaired. Next, in March, DGVR ran a second test run with Shay #5, this time with passenger coaches, and completed the thirty-mile round trip without incident. Leaving nothing to chance, DGVR continued to run test trains of passenger coaches right up to the May 4-6, 2023 Rail Heritage Photography Weekend, when Shay #5 pulled a passenger car loaded with 70 photographers and Shay #11 trailed with a train of restored vintage freight cars Cass-Durbin-Cass.

An historic event of this magnitude would require a certain amount of pomp and circumstance and, on Friday, May 12th, West Virginia state dignitaries traveled by rail over the newly reopened route as far as the new Trout Run Bridge. There, Shay #5 first cut the ribbon, officially opening the bridge; and then John Smith, CEO and President of operator Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad, Cindy Butler, Executive Director of the West Virginia State Rail Authority, and Jimmy Wriston, West Virginia Departments of Transportation and Division of Highways Secretary, delivered brief remarks from the caboose rear platform. Mr. Wriston followed by awarding certificates of appreciation to those who contributed time, effort, and expertise to the project; and then Shay #5 pushed the consist back to Cass. A video crew recorded everything, and news outlets broadcast segments the following week.

After the towns of Cass and Durbin had been separated by rail for more than 35 years, the track between them was now unbroken, and the way was clear for DGVR to begin regular operations between the two. The last remnant of the old C&O Greenbrier Subdivision was open for business!

Saturday, May 13th marked the inaugural run of the Greenbrier Express, and DGVR CEO and President John Smith set aside Sunday for a special round-trip for railroad employees and their families. Regular,



Train crewmen gather for a group photograph at Trout Run Bridge on the way to Durbin during the first test run. Photographer Walter Scriptunas, holding his drone controller and wearing a red hat, is in the center of the group; while DGVR President and CEO John Smith stands at the far right. Walter Scriptunas photograph.

scheduled revenue runs commenced Saturday, May 20th.

As of this writing, the new Greenbrier Express trains are pulled by one of Cass Scenic's geared locomotives. Now, geared steam locomotives were designed for pulling power and dexterity on steep grades and uneven, sometimes temporary, track, and not for speed. Cass Scenic Railroad is home to all three of the best-known types of geared steam: Shay, Climax, and Heisler. Shay and Climax locomotives can reach a top speed of about 12 to 14 miles per hour (mph), while the railroad's lone Heisler, #6, is capable of almost twice that speed. In fact, back in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Meadow River Lumber Company in Rainelle, Greenbrier County, used Shay locomotives to haul carloads of logs relatively short distances over rough, temporary track from the woods to Anjean, on the Nicholas, Fayette, & Greenbrier Railroad (NF&G), and



Former Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad #4 masquerades as Southern Railway #604 at the North Carolina Transportation Museum, Spencer, North Carolina the summer of 2003. Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad purchased this locomotive for $150,000 to return it to West Virginia, and eventually, #4 will power the new Greenbrier Express. Alan Byer photograph.

Heisler #6 to forward them the remaining 15 miles over well-maintained rails to the mill at Rainelle. Of the operating locomotives now at Cass, the Heisler would seem to be the best choice to pull The Greenbrier Express. However, Heisler #6 will be laid up with boiler problems for most, if not all, of the 2023 Cass operating season.

Now, even a big Heisler geared steam locomotive wouldn't be considered ideal, or historically correct, for hauling passengers 30 miles over level track and gentle grades, especially on a train named *The Greenbrier Express*, which conjures up images of a fast train hurtling from city to city. Fortunately, Cass operator DGVR also owns three conventional steam locomotives, which transmit power from two horizontal cylinders to the driving wheels by massive steel rods, all of them of the consolidation (2-8-0) wheel arrangement, which was popular on short line railroads until the end of steam operations

in the 1960s. All three of these locomotives would be capable of hauling heavy loads over relatively level track at speeds up to, or even exceeding, 40 mph.

Two of these locomotives were once owned by short-line West Virginia Northern, which ran out of Kingwood, Preston County; then purchased by Maryland short-line Preston Railroad, Crellin, Maryland, on the West Virginia border; and finally sold to a private individual in Hyndman, Pennsylvania, just north of Cumberland Maryland, in the mid-1960s. There, they sat exposed to the elements for decades, until Cass operator Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad purchased both and trucked them to Cass some years ago. Cass shop considers one, #8, almost beyond hope, and the other, #9, reparable, but at a big investment in time and money.

The third, newest, and most powerful of these conventional steam locomotives, considered by many to be one of the real gems of the Cass steam locomotive fleet (and whose silhouette appears on the *Greenbrier Express* logos), was operated by Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad, Dundon, Clay County, West Virginia as their #4 until February 1965. She then moved around the Eastern United States from one tourist railroad to another and finally ended up at North Carolina Transportation Museum (NCTM), Spencer, North Carolina. There, she operated in the guise of Southern Railway No. 604, hauling visitors around the museum's grounds from 1987 until the locomotive's Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) mandated 1,472-day (five-year) service inspections in 2001. During the disassembly of the locomotive, museum mechanics discovered more damage than anticipated, and they eventually stopped work to concentrate on what NCTM considered more important projects. In 2015, the museum sold No. 4 to Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad (DGVR) for $150,000, and DGVR trucked the locomotive and its tender to Cass late that year.

When the Cass shop crew evaluated the locomotive, they determined that critical parts of the boiler assembly would have to be replaced. Because Cass Scenic Railroad's shop mechanics are kept busy maintaining the Cass geared-locomotive fleet, DGVR management decided that replacing the boiler would be the best option. Sistersville Tank Works, with facilities in Sistersville and Parkersburg, West Virginia, successfully fabricated a boiler for Cass Scenic's Heisler #6 some 20 years earlier, and DGVR chose them to recreate BC&G #4's boiler. In February 2023, when John Smith, President and CEO of Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad, announced that BC&G #4 would be getting a new boiler, he estimated that the railroad still needed to raise about $300,000 of the nearly $700,000 required to complete the boiler.

To that end, DGVR set up a fund-raising Web page, https://www.steamthe4.com/ , to accept donations and provide information about progress on the new boiler. According to John Smith, "We're moving forward with BC&G #4 as previously scheduled with a completion date of mid-2024." That means that, by this time next year, if everything goes as planned, the last steam locomotive to operate in common-carrier service in West Virginia could be hauling passengers over Mountain State rails not so very far from her original home. For this writer and many other rail and state history enthusiasts—that is one exciting prospect!

ALAN BYER is a South Charleston native who earned an English degree from WVU. His works have appeared in *Trains, Wonderful West Virginia, Railway Age, West Virginia Hillbilly, The Log Train,* and *Classic Trains.* This is his 8th Contribution to GOLDENSEAL; his most recent being in the summer of 2023 issue.



West Virginia's Sistersville Tank Works, with facilities in Sistersville and Parkersburg, fabricated a new boiler for Cass Scenic Railroad Heisler #6 some 20 years ago and will construct a new boiler for former BC&G #4 from the ground up during the first quarter of 2024. Alan Byer photograph.

Sistersville Tank Works

by Alan Byer

West Virginia's own Sistersville Tank Works is quite a story in and of itself. Founded in 1894 to supply the area's burgeoning oil industry with oilfield boilers, pressure vessels, and storage tanks, the Tank Works fabricated LSD landing craft for the US military during World War II. Business declined precipitously after the war and, by the 1980s, the company seemed on the brink of closing for good.

However, in 1984, company bookkeeper Janet Wells and her daughter, purchasing agent Darlene Morgan, made a successful bid to purchase and save it. They modernized the operation and improved its capabilities and, within a few years, business had increased 600% and employment from seven workers to more than 50. In 1988, Janet Wells was named the U.S. Small Business Person of the Year and was featured in TIME Magazine.

Today, the company is opening a second, more spacious fabrication plant in Parkersburg, West Virginia to accommodate increasing business (including steam locomotive boilers) and expand capabilities even more. Sistersville Tank Works seems destined to remain a successful Mountain State family-owned business as a new generation—Darlene Morgan's sons Jason and Zach—prepares to take the reins.

For more information about Sistersville Tank Works, go to http://www.stwinc.com/index.php.



Sistersville Tank Works crewmen load a large pressure vessel onto a barge on the Ohio River not far from their Sistersville fabrication shop. This scene has been re-enacted many times since the company opened in 1894. Photograph courtesy of Sistersville Tank Works.



Members of the Flying Eagle patrol of Troop 195, Boy Scouts of America, watch as the engineer of Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad #4 shakes the grates to dump the ashes during a visit the summer of 1964. From left to right, John Ackenhusen, David (Barney) Williams, Ray Cosner, and Ken Cosner. Alan Byer photograph.

Still Smokin' Up the Valley

Memories of the Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad

by Alan Byer

I first became acquainted with the Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad (BC&G) in the summer of 1963, when I was 13 years old. My Uncle Ed, a long-time railfan, was visiting from Indiana with his family, and he had heard of the BC&G and suggested that we visit. We drove up the Elk River to the tiny town of Dundon, the railroad's headquarters, and found the railyard quiet but still full of equipment, including three steam locomotives. Later, we drove over back roads to Swandale, the sawmill town at roughly the BC&G midpoint. There, we found another steamer, a Shay geared locomotive festooned with *For Sale* signs. Now, my Uncle had heard through railroad publications that the BC&G had ceased operations, but we wondered about the boxcars and wood-chip hoppers by the mill and the shiny rails over which a train had obviously passed recently. However, we surmised that the mill was using a little diesel we found tucked away in the Swandale engine house and thought no more about it.

After that first visit, my brother and I talked our scoutmasters into stopping at the Dundon railyard whenever we traveled to camping areas farther up the Elk. During one of these rest stops, we were surprised to find BC&G locomotive #4 chuffing back and forth in the yard. What a revelation! When we returned home, I typed and mailed a letter, addressed to the BC&G in Dundon, asking when trains were running

and how we could obtain permission to visit. About a week later, I received the first of several very nice replies from Mr. E. C. George, BC&G Assistant Treasurer, thanking me for writing and telling me trains ran to the lumber mill at Swandale Monday-Wednesday-Friday, with a 2:00 pm call; and we could obtain release forms from shop foreman Ralph Acree. I typed and mailed another letter to *Railroad Magazine* editor Freeman Hubbard letting him know that, despite news to the contrary, BC&G #4 was still operating. I was delighted to find my letter, with the heading *Still Smokin' Up the Valley*, in the next issue of *Railroad*.

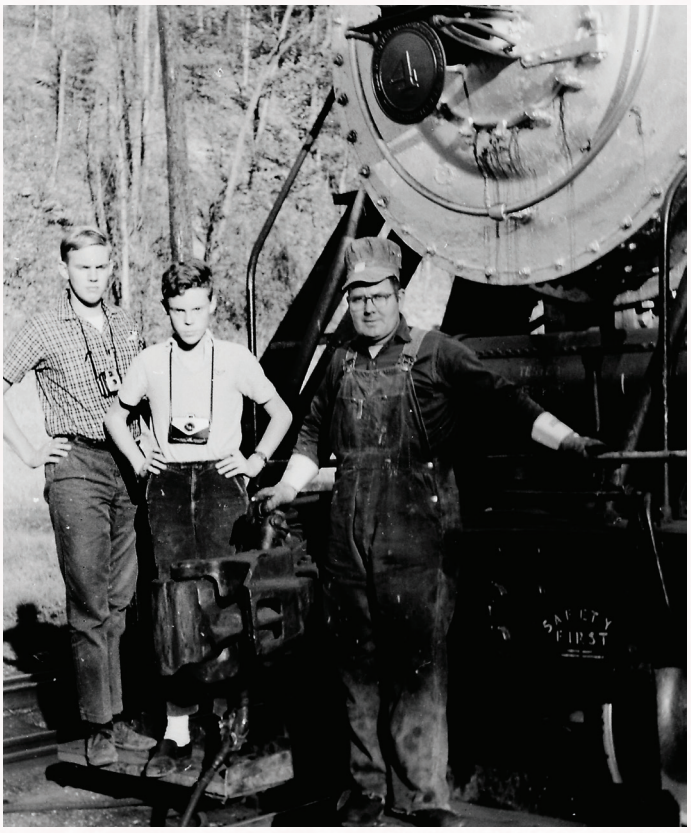


Locomotive #4's engineer watches warily as David Williams and I, fellow members of Flying Eagle patrol of Troop 195, Boy Scouts of America, try to stay out of his way as he runs locomotive #4 back and forth in the Dundon yard to work off the remaining steam. Alan Byer photograph.

Armed with this knowledge, my brother and I began a campaign to visit the BC&G on a day when #4 would be operating. Dad agreed, and we drove over early one summer morning in 1964 but found as we pulled in that #4 was about to depart. As quickly as we could, we visited Ralph Acree at the engine house to sign our release forms and just managed to witness #4 head up the yard lead, caboose in tow, to the mainline, in a cloud of steam. There, the engineer reversed direction for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O) interchange to pick up the empties. We stayed to watch #4 pass the yard again going the other direction and then piled into the car to follow the train to Swandale.

Rats! Foiled again! We were stopped by road construction well short of Swandale and watched helplessly as the train passed us heading to and from the mill. Three very tired and dispirited Byers drove back to Dundon to watch the train return.

But, against all logic, our return to Dundon that evening would be a life-changing experience. There, we met Bob Caruthers who, as hostler, was tasked with maintaining #4 between runs. To our surprise and delight, he invited us into the locomotive cab and then jockeyed the locomotive back and forth in the yard to use up the remaining steam. Before long, his son, Bobby, walked over from their house across Buffalo Creek, climbed into the cab, and took the throttle for several more short jaunts up the yard lead and back. Bob explained that he was training his son to become hostler when he retired. After dumping the ashes, Bob coaxed #4 back to her berth by the engine house and prepared to tie her down until the next run. As the evening light faded, we walked around with Bob and talked as he did his job, greasing the moving parts, capping the stack, and sweeping the cab. The whole experience settled into a very pleasant, dream-



My brother Andy and I pose with hostler Bob Caruthers on the footboards of BC&G #4 during a Byer family visit in the summer of 1964. We had spent the day trying to catch up with #4 and its train with little success, and our expressions show it. However, thanks to Mr. Caruthers, that evening would soon take a turn for the better. A. W. Byer photograph.

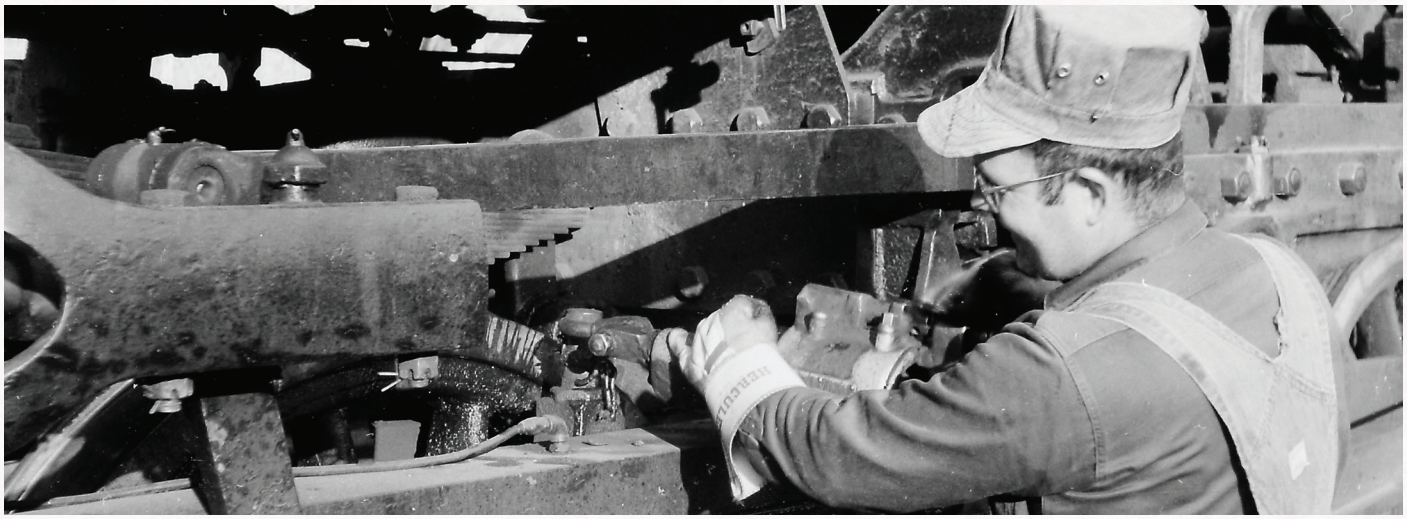


Quick-thinking brother Andy photographs the scene as our Dad, A. W. Byer, focuses his camera on Bob Caruthers, who's greasing the locomotive running gear for the next run. Mr. Caruther's son Bobby looks on. Andrew Byer photograph.

like blur and, as the sun crept toward the horizon, Bob's daughter walked over to tell him supper was ready. Dad and Bob exchanged telephone numbers and addresses, and Bob promised to call if anything came up. That evening, after we returned to South Charleston, Dad and I developed his film from the day; the next evening, we printed enlargements; and the following day we mailed the photographs to Bob.

We returned to school but kept track of the BC&G. Then, one evening late in February 1965, our telephone rang. After talking a few minutes, Dad hung up and announced that Bob just told him that #4 would make the railroad's last steam run the following Saturday, February 27th. Thanks to Mr. Caruthers, we were there for the final run, and even got to ride along in a coach the crew added to the train! Bob called again that spring to invite us to witness the test runs of another locomotive, #17, that the railroad had sold and returned to operation. Again, thanks to him, we were there for that once-in-a-life-time event and, thanks to my Dad, A. W. Byer, we have photographs recording our exploits for posterity.

As the years passed, I got on with adulthood, but still visited Dundon occasionally and grieved as traces of the BC&G disappeared and the wooden buildings returned to the earth. In the summer of 2004, I wrote the first of several articles about Bob and the BC&G and mailed the draft to him as a courtesy. I followed that with a telephone call about a week later. Bob's wife answered and told me that he was



Dad's photograph of Bob Caruthers wielding an Alemite grease gun during our visit to Dundon the summer of 1964. He was the family photographer, and we have few of him from the '60s. However, the previous photo was a happy exception. A. W. Byer photograph.

very ill, but went on to say that she had read the draft to him and he really enjoyed it. She then held the receiver so that Bob could talk to me, and he thanked me and told me as best he could that I had gotten it right. Bob Caruthers departed this life January 20th, 2005.

When I heard the news, I proposed an article about Bob to former editor, John Lilly, for GOLDENSEAL, and he encouraged me to go ahead with it. GOLDENSEAL published that article, titled *Recalling Bob Caruthers, Last of the BC&G Steam Railroaders* in January 2006. Editor Lilly and I collaborated on the final paragraph, which read, in part:

"Gone was the time when coal and timber barons ruled their own fiefdoms, successive generations worked for the same company, and the employees of an operating railroad welcomed a curious 14-year-old boy into their realm. Those days will live on in everything that has been written—and will be written in the future—about Bob Caruthers and the Buffalo Creek & Gauley Railroad."



The morning of the railroad's last steam run on February 27th, 1965, hostler Bob Caruthers pulls out all the stops to send smoke and steam skyward for Charleston Sunday Gazette Mail photographer Ferrell Friend. This photograph graced the front page of the following week's Sunday paper State Magazine Section. I was a paper boy at the time and was thrilled to see that photograph as I unwrapped my bundles of newspapers in the wee hours of the morning. I called Mr. Friend the next day to purchase a copy. Ferrell Friend photograph.

ALAN BYER is a South Charleston native who earned an English degree from WVU. His works have appeared in *Trains, Wonderful West Virginia, Railway Age, West Virginia Hillbilly, and The Log Train*. This is his 9th Contribution to GOLDENSEAL; his most recent being in our summer 2023 issue.



Ruhama Coplin Meade (front) with her sons at her farm in Fairmont circa 1900. Her son Hiawatha is to her immediate right. All photos courtesy of the author unless otherwise noted.

West Virginia's First Civil Right Case: Meade v. Johnson

by M. Raymond Alvarez

The first civil rights case to be heard in a West Virginia court began as a contract dispute between a former slave, Alfred Meade of Fairmont, and the former governor of Virginia, Joseph Johnson of Harrison County. When filed in 1866, this case received much national attention, even though Johnson eventually won. It is little known today compared to *Strauder v. West Virginia* (1880) or *Williams* v. *Board of Education of Tucker County* (1898). This case was a breach of contract; however when the court decided based on the race of the individual, it became this state's first civil rights issue.

Alfred Meade, born a slave in Richmond, Virginia on April 4, 1820, was owned by George Wythe Munford, who served as Virginia's Secretary of the Commonwealth during Johnson's term as governor. Johnson, who owned property on Simpson Creek in Harrison County and founded Bridgeport, served five terms in the Virginia House of Delegates and 13 years in

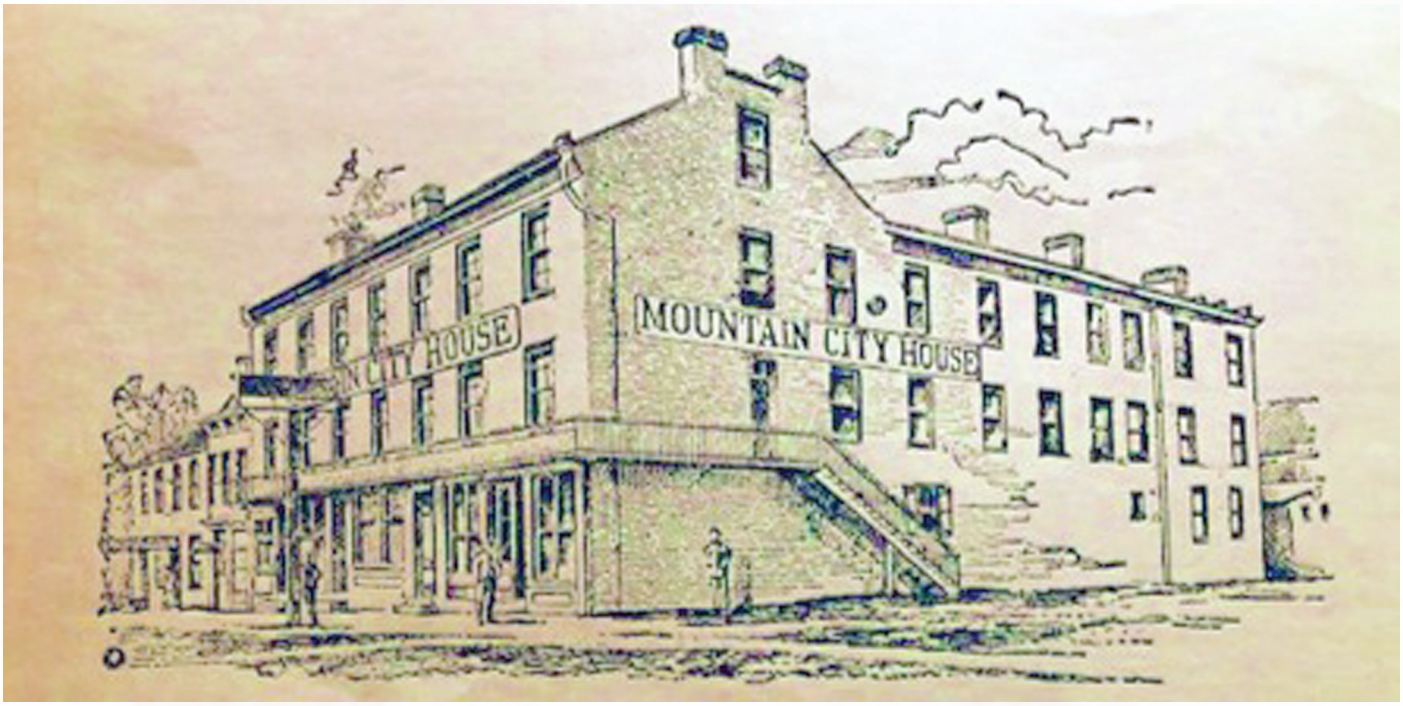


Illustration of Mountain City House.

the U.S. Congress as a representative from Virginia. In March 1851, he was elected governor of Virginia. Around 1852 in Richmond, Meade met Ruhama Coplin, a slave owned by Johnson. Since Munford served in Johnson's cabinet, this marriage was arranged or familiarized by Munford. They married around 1854.

Around the expiration of Johnson's term, Meade worked in Richmond hotels and had already purchased his own freedom from Munford. Johnson, still owning Ruhama, agreed to an arrangement that enabled Meade to pay for Ruhama's freedom in installments. Before returning to Harrison County, Johnson granted that Meade could live near Bridgeport, fending for himself. Thus, Meade settled in Fairmont around 1856. With Meade's experience in some of the finest Richmond hotels, he quickly found employment in Fairmont. After returning to his Bridgeport farm, Johnson continued to support the Confederacy and was pro-slavery. The 1860 Slave Census of Harrison County indicated that Johnson's slaves included a 33-year-old female (Ruhama) and her four children from the marriage to Alfred.

Meade soon became well-known as porter and head waiter at the Mountain City House. At the time, Fairmont had a population of 700 but the railroad created new markets for the fledgling coal operators, which included James Otis Watson and Francis Pierpont. When the Civil War interrupted coal field development, it also split the politics of the Monongahela Valley. Johnson returned to Staunton to assist the Virginia government. Meanwhile, the issue of Ruhama's purchased freedom was unresolved and did not come about during this time. By 1862, Meade and Ruhama divorced, which further complicated the issue of her freedom. Meade married former slave Helen Wilson of Fairmont in 1863.

When West Virginia became a state, the issue of slavery was undecided until 1865. In 1866 the West Virginia legislature gave Black people the right to testify against White people in court. Before this, Black people had been allowed to testify only in cases involving other Blacks. No longer married to Ruhama, Meade wanted his money returned, and estimated it to be around $1100 in payments made over the prior six or seven years. Johnson refused to

give the money back, so Meade filed suit in Harrison County in the summer of 1866.

During the court session in October, the *Wheeling Intelligencer* reported: *"A curious case involving the civil rights of a Black man is pending in the Circuit Court of Harrison County. About the expiration of his (Johnson's) term of office as Governor, Alfred Meade, a colored man who had saved some money as a waiter in the Richmond hotels, found himself able to buy himself, he being a slave."*

The newspaper account stated that Meade followed Johnson back to Western Virginia where he prospered so well *'that he accumulated money that he loaned at different times to the ex-Governor to an amount over $1000, payable with interest between $1100-1200.'*

This story was reprinted in major cities around the country including Richmond's *Virginia Dispatch* that reported on October 9, 1866: *"An interesting case regarding the freedom that freedmen have is expected to be brought before the courts. The basic question is whether or not a White man is required to pay his debts to a Black freedman."*

The article noted that after Johnson's service to the Confederacy, he declared 'situations had changed' and asserted that Meade had been his slave at the time of the money exchange. Therefore, it was not Meade's money but Johnson's. Further, Johnson argued that he did not grant Ruhama her freedom; it came with federal law in 1865. Johnson claimed that as Meade was a slave, borrowing from Meade was borrowing from himself; thus he did not owe money. In addition, Johnson explained that this money was only to purchase Ruhama when enough 'had been paid.' Meade countered that he was a freedman, and his money was earnest. Munford even testified to this fact according to the press reports.

Despite Munford's testimony, the Harrison County jury ruled in favor of the defendant. The *Wheeling Intelligencer* as well as the *Richmond Dispatch* noted: *"In the moral aspect there is but one side and the slave code existing before the rebellion may defraud this black man out of his honest earnings. It is certainly true that Johnson's claim to the money for the purchase of the woman's freedom has no force even in law, because his part of that contract, if it ever existed, never was performed. He did not give her freedom. That was given her by public law."*



Helen Wilson by photographer H.B. Hull, taken around 1861 when she was a slave to Hiram Haymond of Fairmont.

The *Intelligencer* noted that "*the case is a novel one and the trial of it will be attended with no little interest. The (slave) code is but a fair illustration of that infamous system of oppression and wrong which the Copperheads here and the Rebels in the South unit (are) desiring to re-establish.*"

Virginia's code prior to 1865 was a set of rules based on the concept that slaves

were property, not persons. It protected not only the property but also the property owner. The status of the offspring followed that of the mother so that the child of a free father and a slave mother was a slave. Slaves had few legal rights.

Court records state that after evidence and arguments were heard, the jury retired to their chambers to consider their verdict. The records note that after deliberation, the jury stated *"we the jury find for the Defendant. Therefore it is considered by the Court that the Plaintiff take nothing by his declaration and that the Defendant go thereof without delay and that he recover against the Plaintiff his costs by him about his defense."*

How did this case come about for a Black man to take on a person of privilege and power? One of Meade's key supporters was Francis Pierpont, who no doubt encouraged him to file the suit. Two years later, Pierpont and other key leaders of Fairmont would loan Meade and several others money to build the first school for Black children that opened in 1869.

Meade continued to be an influential member of the community. The *Wheeling Intelligencer* and *Daily Register* as well as the *Richmond Dispatch* noted that Meade was a delegate to the June 1870 West Virginia Republican convention: *"Alfred Meade, a mild mulatto, will represent Marion County "loyalty" in the Radical State Conventions next Wednesday. Alfred is said to be the best man in the delegation, Peirpoint [sic] and the rest being far below Mead-iocrity."*

By 1871 the Wheeling government had lost power and their state constitution was discarded by a public referendum. A new state constitution was written in 1872. Pierpont lost his seat in the House of Delegates. Although the new constitution guaranteed Blacks the right to vote and hold public office, it provided for separate schooling and forbade the teaching of Blacks and Whites in the same school. In 1873 the legislature limited jury duty to White males. By 1876 seven of the eight successful candidates for state offices, including the governorship, had served in the Confederate army.



Gravestone of Alfred Mead.

Helen Wilson Meade, Alfred's second wife, died in 1888. All of their children were educated in the Fairmont Colored School. The Mountain City House was razed in the late 1890s for the construction of the new Marion County Courthouse. By this time, Meade was in his 80s. He passed away April 27, 1907. At the time of his death, he owned many lots and buildings in Fairmont.

The *Fairmont Times* and *Clarksburg Exponent* published Meade's obituary on the front page, *"Mr. Meade was probably the best-known colored man in the State and his death, while expected, is deeply regretted."* His obituary noted he was married several times and father of twenty-one children,

though only eight survived by the time of his death. Meade is buried in the old City Cemetery near Windmill Park. A prominent marker can be found on the north side of the softball field in a tangle of shrubs and trees.

An interesting note about Meade's case against Johnson came from a judge in the Midwest around 1901. Henry Clay McDougal, a Marion County native, was a famous lawyer and judge in Missouri. He also became a personal adviser and confidant for several U.S. presidents. McDougal, a well-known speaker and author, returned to Fairmont often throughout his lifetime and always visited his old friend, Alfred, whom he credited for saving his life at the Mountain City Home prior to the Civil War. In 1901, McDougal wrote a loving letter to Meade. Upon learning of Meade's death on April 27, 1907, McDougal shared the letter with various newspapers around the state. He later included it prominently in his 1911 book 'Recollections'' with this introduction: *"Alfred Meade, Fairmont, West Virginia: This mulatto was born a Virginia slave. Up to the day of his death in 1907, few men of any color were blessed with more real friends, and I never knew one who more deserved them. His suavity, gentleness, and rare, good sense may have been inherited from his slave mother, or from his father, who was reputed to have been once the Governor of that ancient commonwealth; but I never questioned and never knew."* The original letter then follows, extolling the relationship between Meade and young McDougal as well as their continued friendship over the years.

Although McDougal hinted at Alfred's biological father being a governor, descendants from the Meade-Coplin family shared information regarding results of DNA testing that verified ancestral relationships in 2019. On the paternal side (Alfred), they are matched to descendants of George Wythe Munford, who was Alfred's original owner. Munford was Alfred's biological father.



Judge Henry Clay McDougal.

On the maternal side (Ruhama), the results matched descendants of Joseph Johnson. Johnson appears to be Ruhama's biological father, which may have indicated why he did not wish to sell her.

While Johnson did not pay any money to Meade, he did help Ruhama financially after her divorce. He helped Ruhama purchase land in Harrison County where she lived on her own farm with her 5 sons according to the 1870 census. Around 1881, Ruhama sold the land, and the proceeds were divided equally among herself and her sons. She then moved to Fairmont and died there in 1911.

As far as the national press coverage in 1866, it is interesting to note that the *Wheeling Intelligencer* and *Dispatch* extensive reporting of this story is in part to the close personal friendship of Francis Pierpont and city editor, Archibald Campbell. Campbell was the only newspaper editor in Virginia



Harrison County Courthouse 1857-1885. Courtesy of the Harrison County Historical Society.

who endorsed Abraham Lincoln's candidacy for the office of president of the United States.

Dr. Greg Hinton, a Fairmont State University professor and attorney, assisted this author in reviewing the Civil Rights Case and provided insight into Meade's relationships with Pierpont and Campbell. Dr. Hinton was the first Black mayor of Fairmont. Jennifer Dillard, a descendant of Rhuhama Coplin, was also kind enough to share family information germane to this story.

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 19th contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

West Virginia Rail Heritage Weekend

by Dale Kinnison

Cass Scenic Railroad is home to the world's most extensive collection of operational geared locomotives with 5 three truck Shays, 1 three truck Heisler, 1 three truck Climax, & 1 two truck Climax. Cass is rich in history and an undoubted staple of West Virginia. Once a year, Cass Scenic Railroad hosts their Rail Heritage Weekend. This weekend provides an opportunity for railfans and photographers to get up close and personal with the engines as well as provide scenic photography opportunities for budding photographers and rail enthusiasts alike.

The 2022 West Virginia Rail Heritage Weekend was a three-day event held in early November with approximately 55 people in attendance. A mix of amateur and professional railfan photographers & videographers from all over gathered for a weekend full of photo/video run-bys with the freight/log train & passenger train.

Friday morning kicked off in Durbin, West Virginia, at 8:45 a.m., with the trains departing around 9:00 a.m. Throughout the morning and afternoon, there were run-bys at multiple scenic locations along the Greenbrier River between Durbin and Hosterman. Our passenger train was led by Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad No.5, a 1953 General Electric 44-ton center cab B-B light switcher with three passenger cars and caboose. Our freight train was led by Cass Scenic Railroad Heisler No. 6 with six different freight cars and caboose.

Heisler No.6 is a C-90 class three truck Heisler built in 1929 by Heisler Locomotive Works in Erie, Pennsylvania, for Bostonia Coal and Clay Products in New Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, as No.20. Later, it was acquired by Meadow River Lumber Company in Rainelle, West Virginia in 1939 where it was equipped with a Radley & Hunter smokestack and used primarily as their transfer engine until it was retired from regular service when diesel-electric engines went into operation in 1957. It was the last geared steam locomotive that Meadow River used. The inspections, however, were kept current despite their rare use. Heisler No.6 was purchased by the State of West Virginia in 1966 for use at Cass Scenic Railroad State Park. She traveled to Cass under her own power via Nicholas, Fayette, & Greenbrier Railway and the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway in December 1966. Her service debut was during the Bald Knob Inaugural Weekend in May 1968. Heisler No.6 entered regular service to Whittaker Station in May of 1969. The Radley & Hunter stack was removed and replaced with a diamond stack prior to the 1970 operating season.

Along with regular operations, she attended the 1968 Strawberry Festival in Buckhannon (Upshur County), annually for the Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins (Randolph County), 1968-1977, & Marlinton's Pioneer Days (Pocahontas County) in 1982, among other special excursions. In 2016 she was moved by truck from Cass to Durbin to fill in running the Durbin Rocket while its normal steam engine, Moore & Keppel Climax No.3, was out of service. While operating in Durbin, she was re-equipped with a Radley & Hunter stack. On February 1st of this year, Shay No.5 made the trip on the newly restored Greenbrier Line from Cass to Durbin and brought the Heisler back home to Cass after seven seasons.

On Saturday morning, we started our day at 8:30 a.m. in Cass at the depot where we boarded our passenger train, pushed by Shay No.2 with three passenger cars. Shay No.11 was the star of the show that day. Our first run location was at Back Mountain Road crossing. From there, we went to Whittaker Station with further runs at Gums Curve, the Upper Switchback, the S-



Cass Scenic Railroad Heisler No.6. Heisler No.6 is a C-90 class three truck Heisler built in 1929 by Heisler Locomotive Works.

curve, and Whittaker Station. It rained intermittently throughout the day but, despite the lousy weather, everyone enjoyed the trip. After returning to Cass, we left to go have dinner and returned to the shop that evening for the night photography session.

Sunday morning began with runs in front of the Cass Company Store & Depot with Shay No. 2 hauling freight cars and a caboose. From there, we moved down to the water tower. As a bonus for photographers, a vintage 1930s Chevrolet truck was used to enhance the scenes. Once we finished at the water tower, we boarded our passenger train pulled by Shay No.11 and made our way to Wanless for the final run-by of the day bringing the weekend to a close.

The 2023 Rail Heritage Weekend was a little different than the previous year, in that it was held in May with roughly 80 people in attendance. I checked in Friday at the Cass Depot with time to browse the gift shop and go up to the Cass Company Store before meeting that evening for a walking tour of the Cass Locomotive Yard Area & Shop. Shay No.5 & Shay No.11 were the only two engines under steam while Shay No.4, Shay No.2, Western Maryland Shay No.6, & Climax No.9 resided inside the shop, cold. The Heisler No.6 & Climax No.3 were tarped outside the shop and parked next to the passenger cars.

I arrived early for a walk down to the water tower on Saturday morning for photos of the locomotives switching in the yard. Afterward, I returned to the depot, waiting for the passenger train to arrive. The weather was exceptional on our first day, with a bluebird sky and shining sun. We departed around 9 a.m. with Shay No.5 pulling our three-coach car passenger train. Shay No.11 followed behind with the freight cars and caboose, traveling north on the Greenbrier Branch of the old C&O Railroad



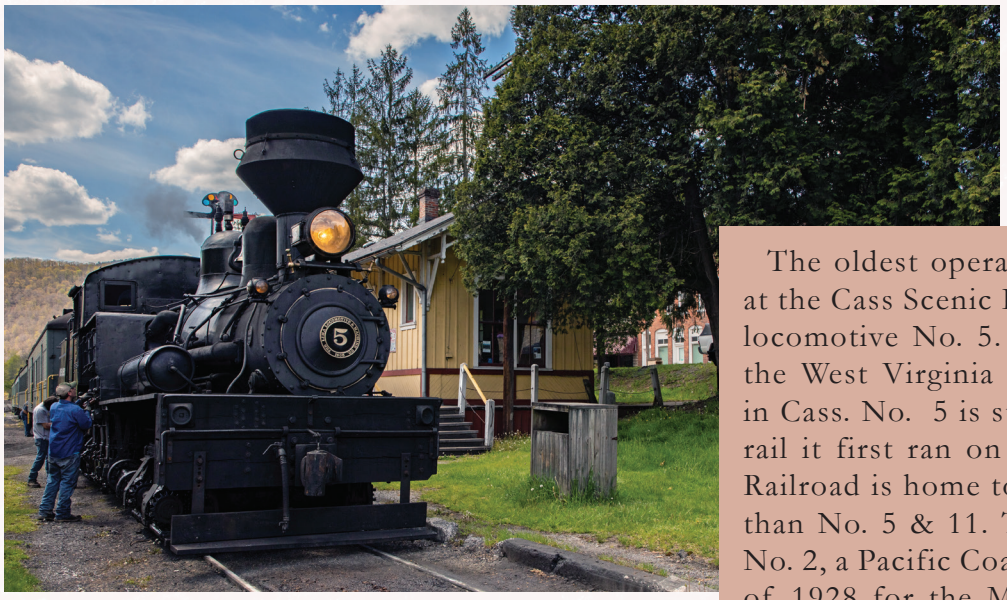
Shay No.11 was built July 14th, 1923, by Lima Locomotive Works in Lima, Ohio, she is a C-90-3 Class 3 truck. Shay was originally an oil burner made for Hutchinson Lumber Company Oroville, California mill operations. Cass Scenic Railroad State Park acquired her in 1998. During the 2000 season, Shay No.11 was converted over to a coal burner.

Line towards Durbin. One week before the inaugural run of the Greenbrier Express, we made the first-round trip. This was a historical day because it was the first loaded passenger excursion on that line in 38 years since the flood of 1985 washed out parts of the track along the river, rendering it inoperable until this year. Thanks to the hard work of the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad, this line will once again be used for passenger excursions.

Along the way on Saturday, we stopped at Wanless, a remote bend along the Greenbrier River, Hosterman, and School House Curve for photo run-bys. We had lunch on the train in between stops. Once we finished at our last location, Shay No.11 and the freight cars made their return journey back to Cass while Shay No.5 took us to Durbin for a quick stop to oil the engine which allowed us time to hop off for a photo at the Durbin Depot before our return trip back to Cass. We started our return trip, but, along the way met back up with the freight train before Hosterman around 3 p.m. One of the cars of the freight train had derailed on its return

This year also marks Shay No.11's 100th birthday. Built July 14th, 1923, by Lima Locomotive Works in Lima, Ohio, she is a C-90-3 Class 3 truck. Shay was originally an oil burner made for Hutchinson Lumber Company Oroville, California mill operations as No.3. Hutchinson Lumber Company was sold. It became Feather River Pine Mills, Inc in April 1927. Hutchinson Lumber Company was a West Virginia-based operation with mills located in Meadow Bridge and Sevy in Fayette County, West Virginia, and Dingess in Logan County, West Virginia. The California operation where Shay No.3 worked was sold because it was losing money.

In contrast, the operations here in West Virginia were reportedly active at that time and continued to make a profit. Shay No.3 later became the property of Georgia-Pacific when the logging job and Feather River Railroad were acquired. In 1961 she was placed on standby status with the arrival of an EMD diesel and was retired in March 1965. No.3 was given to the Pacific Southwest Railroad Museum Association, now the San Diego Railroad Museum, in May 1967. First fired up by the museum in June of 1969, she was used on various occasions until 1991. Cass Scenic Railroad State Park acquired her, with the assistance of Mountain State Railroad & Logging Historical Association, who furnished the deposit. Shay No.3 was disassembled at the museum site in Campo, California, by MSR&LHA volunteers and Cass crew and trucked across the country to Cass in October of 1998, where she was rebuilt and underwent repair work until she entered service in September 1999 as Shay No.11. During the 2000 season at Cass Shay No.11 was converted over to a coal-burner.



Shay No.5, built in 1905 by Lima Locomotive Works in Lima, Ohio. In 2004, West Virginia designated Cass Scenic Railroad Shay No. 5 as the official state steam locomotive.

journey back to Cass—leaving us stranded for several hours. The crews from both trains worked and eventually managed to rerail the car. Shay No.11 carefully took the freight cars back to Hosterman, dropped them off on a sidetrack, and then coupled onto the passenger train while Shay No.5 uncoupled and followed us back to Cass. We arrived back at Cass around 8:30 p.m. We had been scheduled to do a night photo session around that time at the depot. Still, last-minute plans were made and we had the session at the shop after everyone returned from a quick dinner.

On Sunday, we started with run-bys in front of the depot at 9 a.m., boarded our three-car passenger train pulled by Shay No.11, and made our way to Whittaker Station, followed by Shay No.5 pulling two empty flat cars. We made stops at Gums Curve, the Upper Switchback, the S-curve, and finally at Whittaker Station for run-bys. It began raining after we finished up at the S-curve, and it was pouring by the time we arrived at Whittaker Station. We gathered under the picnic shelter to have our lunch at Whittaker. Some braved the rain for the last run-by. In contrast, others—including myself—decided to remain under the shelter and watch before boarding the train and making our return journey back to Cass.

The oldest operational Shay is also located at the Cass Scenic Railroad State Park as their locomotive No. 5. It was bought in 1905 by the West Virginia Pulp & Paper Co. located in Cass. No. 5 is still running on the original rail it first ran on in 1905. The Cass Scenic Railroad is home to several more Shays other than No. 5 & 11. The CSRR also owns Shay No. 2, a Pacific Coast Shay constructed in July of 1928 for the Mayo Lumber Company of Paldi, Vancouver Island, British Columbia. No. 2 is the only Shay locomotive to have burned wood, coal, and oil in her lifetime. The Cass Scenic has one other shay that runs, Shay No. 4; originally numbered 5, she was made for the Birch Valley Lumber Company, Tioga, West Virginia in 1922. -ed.

I grew up in Pocahontas County and fondly remember riding the train for school trips and family outings. In 2007, between my sophomore and junior year in high school, I started working as a brakeman on the Bald Knob train, where I worked seasonally every year until the end of the 2011 season. That was also around the time my passion for photography began. Railfan events, like these Rail Heritage Weekends, allow people the opportunity to experience Cass and see the trains in ways you don't get to visit during normal tourist operations. I highly recommend attending one and experiencing it for yourself!

DALE KINNISON is an amateur photographer based in Arbovale (Pocahontas County). He is a juried artist with the Pocahontas County Artisan Co-Op along with being a husband and father. His main focus areas are landscape, travel, & wildlife photography. Dale loves showcasing the natural beauty of West Virginia and everything that it has to offer. When he's not behind the camera he works full time as a 911 dispatcher in Pocahontas County. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

The Bever Boy's Brewery

By Dr. C. R. Thomas

My father was a voracious reader and told me stories when I was four about the famous James brothers—Frank and Jesse. Perhaps your father told you the same stories about the thoughtful manners of the James boys. But about a year later, it was my mother who told me stories about the infamous Bever boys, Donny and Roy Lee. At the time, Don was almost six and about to start first grade; Roy, four. In truth, the two young Preston Street urchins never robbed any railroads or banks. But they did a lot of minor pre-school mischief in the neighborhood—setting high standards the rest of us would strive to emulate.

When we all later attended Towers Grade School, I was a year younger than Don and a year older than Roy. I instantly liked both Don and Roy, thanks to the advanced PR the neighborhood ladies on the Hill had shared with my mother. Both Bevers were quite outgoing and friendly, fierce competitors, and always ready for ornery adventures.

As we got older, most of the guys growing up on the Hill assembled around dusk in the early spring and summer on the corner of Fifth and Wilson Streets just outside Howard Ryder's first grocery store. There we would tell hundreds of jokes and exchange information about the rites—and wrongs—of passage. Don and Roy would vie for two elevated seats at our cultural symposiums—jumping on top of their two immovable side-by-side metal steeds—"Old Red, White, and Blue," a large U. S. Mailbox, and "Old Olive Brown," a similarly sized storage unit for undelivered mail. Straddling their steel stallions, the Bever boys reminded me of my first Old West heroes, the James boys. After our nightly cultural exchanges, we would often transmogrify into a stealthy night operations group.

The night I vividly recall, Don, Roy, and I formed a smaller squad for *Operation Wine-Making*. After pretending to be heading home, we circled back to rendezvous in the unpaved alley just up from the Byrnside home for what we called Phase One: *The Nocturnal Grape Harvest.* Silently with warlike precision, we invaded every grape arbor in the neighborhood like seasoned military commandos, culling the best grapes and placing them inside a burlap bag, which we later stored inside the Bever boys' garage. Now we were ready for Phase Two: *Producing the Vino.*

Our mission was scheduled for 11 AM the next day at Don and Roy's home. Mr. Bever would be at work, and Mrs. Bever was heading for an all-day social event. The kitchen—or brewery site—would be ours. Don, either because he had taken high school chemistry, or because neither Roy nor I had, became the *brew-meister*; Roy was to be the security manager; and I would be the rank-and-file day laborer. By the time I arrived, Don had a very huge pot with a cork-screwed, glass condensing and distillation tube somehow affixed to the metal lid. He directed Roy and me to take turns mashing all the harvested grapes with a hand-held potato masher and then to carefully pour the grape mash into the large metal container. After first adding just the right amount of sugar for the fermentation process, Don then ceremoniously applied heat to the stove-top distillery. Roy and I marveled at his expertise. Had our wine-making operation worked, this weekend you might be going to a liquor store for a bottle of *Bever Brothers' Famous Wine*, but life in the early years does not always proceed as planned.

After patting ourselves on the back for five minutes as the grape mash was be-

ing heated, Roy initiated Phase Three of our winemaking venture: *Security*. Always the managerial type, the younger Bever had devised a brilliant plan for us to play cards on the front porch as the perfect way to watch for Federal Revenuers and nosy neighbors. But just when I got a good hand, we heard the lid of the huge pot blow off and the glass distillation tube explode inside, sending its smashing parts asunder. Immediately, we ran into the kitchen, discovering purple blotches and grape parts splattered everywhere—on the walls, ceiling, floor, table, chairs, refrigerator, cabinets, and stove.

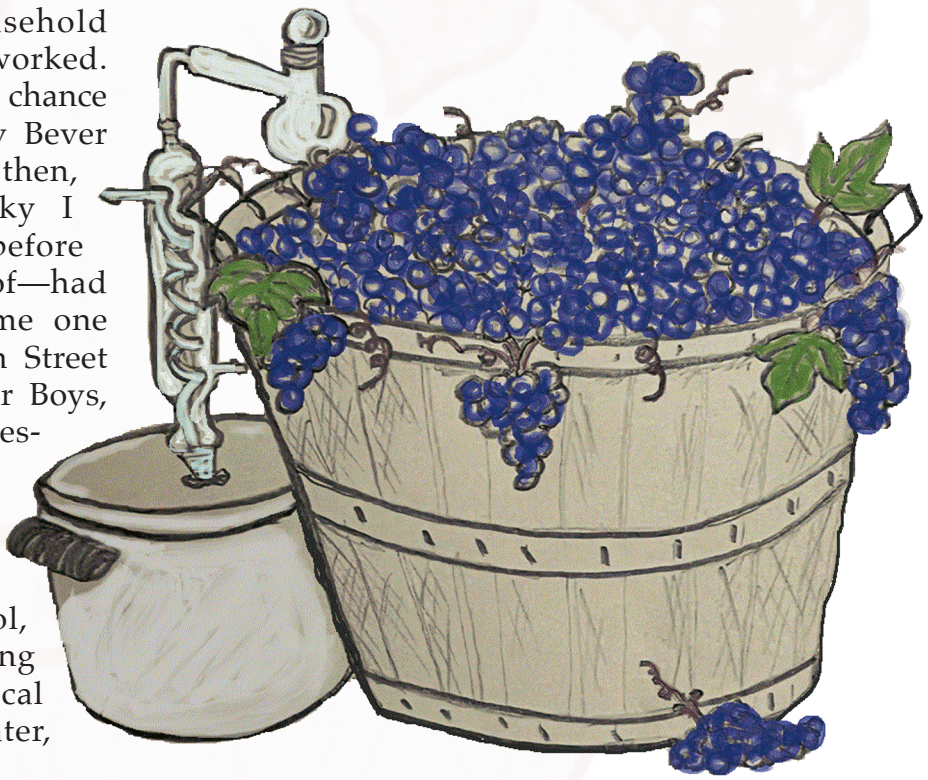
Our Phase Four*:* *Emergency Clean-Up*, had not actually been planned, but we scurried for buckets, brushes, mops, and rags. Lestoil was our only hope! Luckily, Mrs. Bever had some on hand. We scrubbed, mopped, and wiped as well as three clumsy high school boys could until, at some point, I had to leave to go sell newspapers in the Saint Mary's Hospital. But during the hours between when I left the aftermath of our exploding brewery and the time I got ready to go to bed, I kept hoping that Lestoil—that much heralded miracle household cleaner of the 1950s—had actually worked.

For a few days, I feared the good chance that Mr. Bill Bever or Mrs. Rosemary Bever might call on my parents. It was then, however, that I thought how lucky I was to have a father who—even before I was born . . . or even thought of—had the prudent foresight to buy a home one house from the top of South Seventh Street and 3 ½ blocks from where the Bever Boys, my *vino* co-conspirators, lived on Preston Street.

Fast-forwarding to the later years, Donald Robert Bever, WI '55, one of the most gifted musicians ever to graduate from our high school, at some point developed an amazing ability to learn to play any musical instrument in a matter of days. Later, Don distinguished himself by becoming a member of the extremely prestigious U. S. Navy Band at San Diego. Regretfully, Don passed away in 1999.

After graduating from WVU in January '62 in geology with a physics minor, Roy Lee Bever, WI '57, worked for Ashland Distribution Co. as a Marketing Executive. Roy and his wife Lynn, a former second grade teacher and local artist, resided in Columbus, OH. Roy had two children from his first marriage—Brett and Shana—now living in Ft, Myers, FL. Unfortunately, Roy died in a fatal car accident on Saturday, November 19, 2005, returning from Clarksburg, West Virginia, and his monthly visit with his mother.

DR. C.R. (CHUCK) THOMAS, a Clarksburg native and veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, is a retired university professor and currently directs an acting workshop using one or more of the 80+ plays that he authored. Although he was challenged academically in his early school years and never made an "A" grade except for gym class, he was able to maintain a 4.0 average during his doctoral studies and graduated *summa cum laude* in his economics and finance degree. This is his fourth submission to GOLDENSEAL.



The Brewing and Bottling Works at Harpers Ferry Were Always Hopping

by David McCormick

James McGraw, a local merchant at Harpers Ferry viewed property abutting the Shenandoah River with promise. In 1885 he chose this location as the site for his small beer and soft-drink bottling operation. A local newspaper advertisement made note that Milwaukee Lager Beer was being bottled by McGraw. The sale of bottled beer took off in 1888. That year McGraw extended his bottling operation in the rear of his original business, advertising the bottling beer for Schlitz Brewing Co. of Milwaukee.

Although beer had been enjoyed in America since its first hamlet was settled, it wasn't until the 1850s that the production of beer became a commercial enterprise. It was the public's increased usage and technological advances in beer-making that spurred the growth of beer production, that in turn, increased the number of breweries. In 1875, upon the refinement of pasteurization, bottling works and breweries merged. It wasn't uncommon for beer bottlers to market carbonated beverages, as well, as part of their inventory.

In 1893 James McGraw passed away, and two years later, his son James C. McGraw, made known his plans to erect a brewery in Harpers Ferry. As administrator of his father's estate, James C. inherited land his father had purchased in 1885. Upon this parcel of land, situated between the Shenandoah River and the B & O Railroad, referenced as Lot 11, located in Block C, sat a brick and stone building. A newspaper, the *Spirit of Jefferson* ran a lengthy article on James C. McGraw opening his new establishment—the Harper's Ferry Brewing Company—in its June 3, 1895 edition. Upon reading the article, there was little doubt that McGraw spared little expense.

The article details the inner workings of the plant: The plant was equipped with a 20-horse-power engine; its function—drive the machinery within the brewery; water piped from the spring on the mountain fed a steam boiler. A novel machine for making ice, and a Remington Refrigerator used for cold storage purposes, were on site. A large part of the building holds kegs of beer ready for delivery to customers; refrigerating coils ensure the beer stays cold. But before this stage, the beer is stored in the Hacking room while undergoing fermentation. The Hacking room holds nine large tanks holding 40 barrels with one stock tub, with a 60-barrel capacity. The brewery was also equipped with a fermentation room as well as a settling room—important in the beer-making process. These rooms are home to different sized tubs, casks, barrels, etc. And all are kept at 30 degrees fahrenheit.

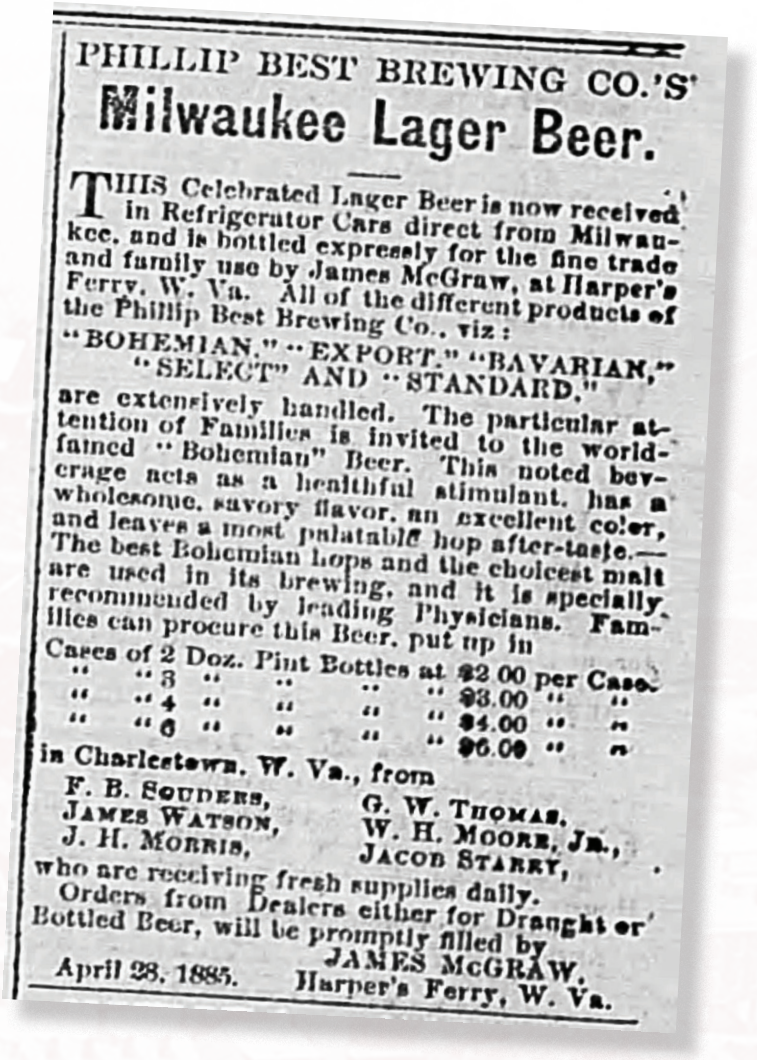
McGraw attests he is determined to use only choice Canadian Barley Malt and Bohemian Hops. At this point, the brewery can deliver 10,000 barrels per year. The entire cost of building the brewery is about $30,000. But what is a brewery without a brewmaster? McGraw hired the most highly recommended—Mr. Fritz Jenson, of Chicago. James C. McGraw created the best brewery, in West Virginia, and possibly throughout much of the United States. The steam-bottling plant now associated with the new brewery continued to bottle beer for other brewers, as well as their own. So aside from brewing and bottling beer, J. C. McGraw bottled soft drinks and produced ice as well.

Although James C. McGraw inherited holdings from his father's estate worth $155,000, only a portion was in liquid assets. Other assets included the bottling

plant and rental properties, one of which housed the post office. It appears that he went to extremes financially. He borrowed money to bankroll his brewery and other sundry investments. In an unfortunate turn of events, a fire tore through the brewery in the summer of 1897, causing $6,000 in damages. This event led to McGraw filing for bankruptcy in October. That same year, McGraw's brewery and bottling plant were put up for auction. The estimated worth of his brewery and bottling enterprise was between $40,000 and $50,000. This would not be an easy sale. James M. Mason, Jr., the attorney overseeing the Bankruptcy sale, saw to it that the brewery remained operational from October to January 1898, in hopes of enticing buyers. In December the property was offered for sale; the price was set at $21,000. On March 31, 1898, the property described as Lot 11, Block C was sold to partners August Krueger and Henry Schafer for $17,200.

In addition to weak financial footing affecting the new ownership of the enterprise, a string of physical misfortunes cut into operations. The tenure of the Krueger and Schafer was short lived, and although they transferred ownership to Belvidere Brewing Company, they remained the main stockholders; but not for long, as they were in for an unpleasant surprise. Evidently, the beer which had been made before Krueger had bought the brewery, was not kept at the correct 30-degree temperature, causing spoilage, leaving the entire batch to be discarded into the river. A new company, keeping the same name, Belvidere Brewing Company, purchased the complex for $14,000, and was incorporated on July 7, 1899, with new stockholders—serious brewers from Washington, D.C.

That spelled the end of the August Krueger and Henry Schafer tenure. But the new Belvidere Brewing Company most likely fell victim to similar financial difficulties as the previous owners and



PHILLIP BEST BREWING CO.'S

Milwaukee Lager Beer.

THIS Celebrated Lager Beer is now received in Refrigerator Cars direct from Milwaukee, and is bottled expressly for the fine trade and family use by James McGraw, at Harper's Ferry, W. Va. All of the different products of the Phillip Best Brewing Co., viz:

"BOHEMIAN," "EXPORT," "BAVARIAN," "SELECT" AND "STANDARD,"

are extensively handled. The particular attention of Families is invited to the world-famed "Bohemian" Beer. This noted beverage acts as a healthful stimulant, has a wholesome, savory flavor, an excellent color, and leaves a most palatable hop after-taste.—The best Bohemian hops and the choicest malt are used in its brewing, and it is specially recommended by leading Physicians. Families can procure this Beer, put up in

Cases of 2 Doz. Pint Bottles at $2.00 per Case.
" " 3 " " " " $3.00 " "
" " 4 " " " " $4.00 " "
" " 6 " " " " $6.00 " "

in Charlestown, W. Va., from

F. B. SOUDERS, G. W. THOMAS,
JAMES WATSON, W. H. MOORE, JR.,
J. H. MORRIS, JACOB STARRY,

who are receiving fresh supplies daily.

Orders from Dealers either for Draught or Bottled Beer, will be promptly filled by

JAMES McGRAW,
April 28, 1885. Harper's Ferry, W. Va.

Advertisement for Milwaukee Lager Beer bottled by James McGraw. Spirit Of Jefferson (Charles Town, West Virginia)16 June 1885.

sold its holdings to the newly incorporated Leder-Weideman Brewing Company on February 7, 1903, for $14,360. But Leder-Weideman was stymied from the start. According to the *Clarksburg Telegram's* June 26, 1903 edition, Leder-Weideman Brewing Company approached the County Council for an extension to pay their liquor license—until mid-July. The Council gave them a week to pay, adding; if they couldn't afford the license they should get out of the business.

As the years passed the brewery, bottling, and ice manufacturing concerns saw owners come and go. Everything was in a state of flux throughout the complex's operation, and not just due to financial miscues. Aside from that matter, a damaging peril was always lurking—fire! Fire, a familiar threat

in breweries, charred parts of the brewery at Harpers Ferry, on three occasions. The aforementioned first fire in July 1897 under McGraw's ownership, burned the interior of the brewery stable. In 1906 this was followed by a second blaze during the Leder-Weideman Brewing Company's ownership. It ravaged parts of the brewery stable and bottling plant. This fire in the fall of 1906 would prove to be the financial death knell for Leder-Weideman. James Mason Jr., working as their agent arranged a sale to the Jefferson Ice and Cold Storage Company for $8,430.00.

Seemingly, this new owner bought the property with the intent of flipping it for a quick profit. A mere four days later, the Jefferson Brewing Company purchased the entire property from Jefferson Ice and Cold Storage Company for $12,216. Jefferson Brewing Company operated until January 1909. That January, the third and final fire led to the demise of the Jefferson Brewing Company. They could not overcome losses that surmounted $50,000. Damages from this blaze were to the ice plant and main-brew house. But fortunately, the bottling plant and stable were spared.

JBC was underinsured by two-thirds of the brewery's value, leaving little option to rebuild. But faced with this bleak outlook, the Jefferson Brewing Company stockholders felt that it was financially feasible to reconstruct the ice factory and make the bottling works operational again to turn out beers "that made Milwaukee famous." After more consideration, the stockholders shelved that idea, and in June 1909, sold the brewery complex to the German Brewing Company for $4,000. The new company operated as a bottler. Their plant most likely continued until prohibition took over in West Virginia in 1914. It must have been a tough grind with no beer to bottle. The German Brewing Company sold Lot 1 Block C to Charles Smith for a mere $400.

In November 1916 the brewing concern sold their remaining holdings in Harpers Ferry to Charles Smith. Smith lived locally and was savvy to the bottling business, supposedly, he once had worked as a salesman for the German Brewing Company. With the properties transferred to Smith, the operation underwent another name change—The Harpers Ferry Bottling Works. Smith carried on bottling soft drinks until he sold to Harry Longbrake and James Grimes, in August 1927 for $11,500.

Longbrake and Grimes continued to operate as the Harpers Ferry Bottling Works until the late 1930s; that's when Longbrake and Grimes began to operate under a new name—Gateway Sodas. With the flood of 1942 all operations at the Harper Valley Brewery Property permanently ceased.

The numerous changes in ownership address the fact that several different brewery operations were never on a strong financial footing. This wasn't necessarily unusual, as several smaller-scale breweries during the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s could not keep up with the large outlay of capital required to keep a brewery up and running, and turning a profit. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, new breweries laid out untold dollar amounts for new equipment, new buildings, and the best Brewmeisters.

The different owners of the brewery at Harpers Ferry followed that same formula; taking on loans that were used for costly expansions. The Belvidere Brewing Company, Leder-Weideman Brewing Company, and Jefferson Brewing Company acquired available property close to the brewery. The companies also made improvements: "Belvidere Brewing Company added its refrigerating plant, the Leder-Weideman Brewing Company moved the bottling plant into the brewery complex, and the Jefferson Brewing Company made improvements on the ice plant." All this was terribly expensive, leaving only the most soundly capitalized firms to survive. The

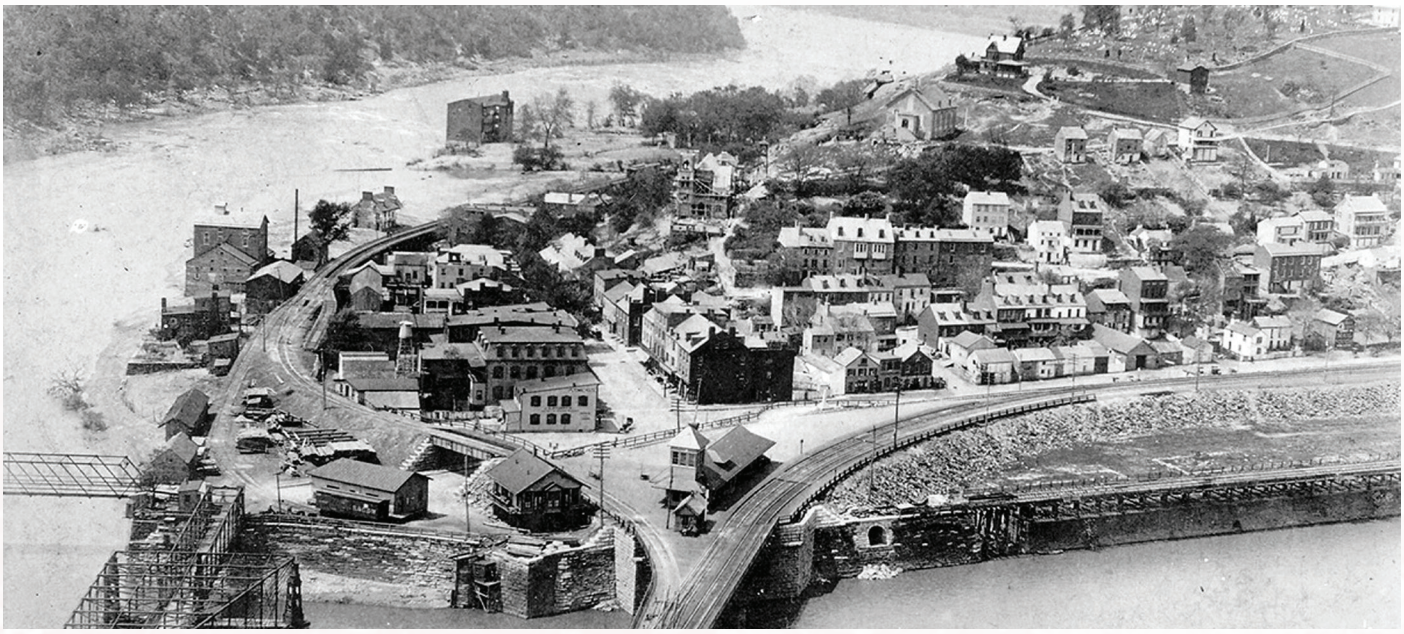


Photo of Harpers Ferry in 1896. The brewery is the large building to the far left. Photo courtesy of Clio: https://www.theclio.com/entry/140263.

most one could say of the numerous brewery operations at Harpers Ferry was most of the owners had an innate ability to court disaster. It seemed one owner after another opted out to diminish their losses. One must take note that the property associated with each transfer of title was not the same as the preceding ones. There were several sales for partial parts of the Harpers Ferry Brewery property.

For example, the bottling plant probably was moved in 1903 to a location inside the brewery complex, as Leder-Weideman Brewing Company failed to purchase the Block B, Lot 3 building. Stockholders of the Belvidere Brewing Company retained title to the Lot 3 building until that parcel alone was bought by Ella Doran in 1907.

The 1910 census tells the tale of breweries such as that of Harpers Ferry. That year the United States counted 1,500 breweries, with most being small, provincial operations. One could hear old Dobbin clopping along the cobblestones making deliveries. That would soon come to an end as it wouldn't be long before the "few large, highly mechanized factories, with merchandising chains extending beyond their own neighborhoods or towns controlled the major part of the market."

But the bottling business itself was another matter; begun in 1885, by James McGraw, it survived despite new owners coming and going, like the swinging door of a saloon. McGraw's venture included bottling beer and soft drinks. During West Virginia's and the national prohibition, which ran from 1914 to 1933, the bottling of beer ceased, however the bottling of soft drinks carried on.

In the wake of a tsunami of overwhelming challenges; weak financial underpinnings, destructive fires such as the final one in 1909 that left the brewery shuttered permanently, and incessant flooding events, spelled doom for the brewery and bottling operations at Harpers Ferry. Prohibition, starting on July 1, 1914, in West Virginia, and a few years later with national prohibition, all productions involving beer at Harpers Ferry ceased. The bottling works capped soft drinks until the flood waters of 1942 ended all operations at Harpers Ferry.

DAVID McCORMICK earned a master's degree in regional planning from the University of Massachusetts. He was employed by the City of Springfield, Mass., for several years. Now retired, he works as a freelance writer; his articles have appeared in *America's Civil War*, *Wild West Magazine*, *Michigan History*, *Naval History*, and *Pennsylvania Heritage*, among others. This is his second contribution to GOLDENSEAL.



The Tygart Flyer, out of Elkins, WV is a vintage diesel-powered locomotive with temperature controlled passenger cars and a historic parlor car.

A Tranquil Train Excursion with Waterfall Views and Apple Pie

by Jennifer Broadstreet Hess

Being from the midwest part of the country, taking a train ride through the Appalachian Mountains is something I had jotted down on my bucket list and dreamed of doing for many years! Then when my daughter moved away from Kansas, after college graduation, we decided this would be the perfect opportunity to include it in our weekend girl's trip to West Virginia.

The New Tygart Flyer, out of Elkins, WV is a vintage diesel-powered locomotive with temperature controlled passenger cars and a historic parlor car. It's a relaxing four-hour, forty-six mile, round-trip train excursion with breathtaking views of the Monongahela National Forest and the High Falls of Cheat Mountain—an area inaccessible by car. While my daughter and I were enjoy-



The stairway and trail that lead down the mountainside to the falls offer different levels of observation decks for passengers to view the spectacular falls and scenery below.

ing a cold-cut buffet lunch, along with wine tasting, a staff member gave an intriguing history lesson on the area and route we were traveling.

This fun day trip takes the passenger on an adventure with tranquil mountain views through an S-curved tunnel visiting friendly railroad and mining towns of yesteryear and the present. I was enthralled with the expansive lush, green wilderness views just outside my parlor car window as we climbed the mountains to even more remote locations. Hoping I might catch sight of a black bear, my eyes spied several spotted baby deer feeding beside the railroad tracks. With the gentle lull of the vintage, rocking parlor car, I felt as though we had stepped back in time; crossing over an expansive bridge with aerial views of rushing rapids down below.

The train's stop at the High Falls of Cheat is purely forty-five minutes of awe-inspiring fun and incredible views, far off the beaten path. The stairway and trail that



"It felt as though we had stepped back in time; crossing over an expansive bridge with aerial views of rushing rapids down below."



The author's daughter pictured amongst the trees of the Monongahela National Forest.



A scenic view of the Cheat River.

lead down the mountainside offer different levels of observation decks, for passengers to view the spectacular falls and scenery below—Cheat Falls is 18′ high and 150′ wide!

My daughter enjoyed examining numerous fossils embedded in the brightly colored river rock, close to the falls. Children and adults both seemed to seize the moment, slipping off their socks and shoes, to dip their toes in the meandering river's cool waters. A man and his son skipped rocks. I followed the sandy edge of the river down a ways, jumping from stone to stone, soaking in the sun's rays and blue skies overhead. My daughter joined me and we explored a path she found in the woods. I stopped to catch my breath, the stillness and solitude of this place overwhelmed me. Time seemed to stop, if just for a moment.

The engine's whistle blew, summoning us, it was time to make our way back up the windy path to board the passenger cars. As the train made its return trip down the mountain, the waitstaff served us a delectable slice of apple pie. The storyteller serenaded the crowd on the train by singing a local folk song, of a bygone era, while we enjoyed our tasty desserts—what a wonderful way to end our day on this train adventure in West Virginia!

JENNIFER BROADSTREET HESS has worked as a freelance writer and photographer for the past ten years, residing in Marion, Kansas. Her passion is history and genealogy, having spent much time doing research in her family's hometown of Sutton, WV. Blog website: https://fineartamerica.com/profiles/jennifer-hess. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Just How Civil Was Edward Kelly?

by Danny R. Kuhn

An old obituary indicates great age and an astounding story, but a second look raises questions.

For most of us, the Civil War seems just as distant as the Revolutionary War or other historical events, but it was not. There are still signs of the greatest military conflict in the history of the New World almost anywhere we care to look.

The last Civil War veterans died in the 1950s. In some cases, information is disputed. A case in point is Edward Kelly, a resident of the White Oak area of Raleigh County when the 1880 census was taken, and later in life lived with his children in various parts of Raleigh, Summers, and Fayette Counties.

The following is a verbatim piece originally appearing in *The Raleigh Register* (published in Beckley) on December 3, 1944: "Lester Man Says He Served In The Civil War



Edward Kelly. All Photos Courtesy of the author.

Edward E. Kelly, of Lester, who says he was 102 last May, has good reason to believe he is Raleigh County's oldest man. He says he was born in Chatham County, North Carolina, and was inducted into the Confederate army in the civil war at the age of 21. After the war, he states, he and 50 men came to Buffalo Gap, where they camped for a while, later coming to White Sulphur Springs where he worked on the Chesapeake and Ohio construction crew. Leaving this, he worked at several different places on railroads and was hired for some time on a steamboat in Charleston. He then married Martha Vest, daughter of Jack Vest. Her father gave them land and they built a log cabin 18 by 20 feet. They had 13 children, six girls, and seven sons. His wife died at this place, at the top of White Oak Mountain. Following his wife's death, he went to Meadow Creek, to one of his son's homes, and it was while he was there he met and later married Mary Adkins. Since her death, he has made his home with different ones of his children."

The Jack Vest referred to as Kelly's father-in-law was Jackson Vest, of the Vest family still prominent in the Shady Spring area. Jackson was, himself, a Confederate Civil War veteran, who served in the Battle of New Market.

When I was younger, I talked with several older folks who knew "Ed" Kelly well. He often wore a medal around his neck he said he was awarded in the War, and stated he was at Appomattox, where in his words, "We had to lay it down."

Kelly's story is very interesting, and a personal glimpse of the great conflict that tore families apart and displaced a large part of the population. That is until you look a bit more closely. You see, "Eddy" Kelly can be found in the 1860 Chatham

County, North Carolina census records, living with his parents, William C. and Edith Kelly, grandfather Bry Harward, and a bunch of siblings—he is eight years old. While some of the Confederate soldiers were indeed young, especially late in the War, being 12 or 13 when the conflict ended is a far cry from having been "inducted into the Confederate army in the civil war at the age of 21."

Old census records are notoriously inaccurate, but it's unlikely the 1860 census taker missed the boy's age by a decade. While he doesn't appear in the 1870 census and much of the 1890 census was, unfortunately, lost in a fire, the age he gave to the Shady Spring census taker in 1880 is consistent with the birth year of 1852 or so, not 1842. It was only in post-1900 census records that Ed's given age began to creep up.

Stretching the truth about one's Civil War service was common, as the last veterans became local celebrities in the 1940s and 1950s. The last fully-verified Civil War veteran living was Albert Henry Woolson, who enlisted as a drummer boy in Company C, 1st Minnesota Heavy Artillery Regiment on October 10, 1864, and saw no combat. Albert died on August 2, 1956. The last survivor to see action was James Hard, of the 37th New York Volunteers, who saw action at Bull Run, Antietam, and Chancellorsville. He died on March 12, 1953.

Over on Ed Kelly's side of the conflict, final veteran status is less clear, since the crumbling Confederacy did not keep very good records late in the War, and many of those existing did not survive. As any historian knows, courthouse and other government building burning was a favorite pastime of Civil War soldiers.

The last verifiable Confederate veteran was Pleasant Riggs Crump, of the 10th Alabama Infantry, who died on December 31, 1951, at age 104. But, there were many pretenders. One of the last and most colorful was Walter Washington Williams, who died on December 19, 1959. If his story were true, it would mean my life overlapped with a Civil War veteran for about eight months. Old Walter had his followers. When he died in Houston, Texas, at the self-professed age of 117, the chairman of the Civil War Centennial Commission, one Ulysses S. Grant III, called it "an occasion for national mourning." It didn't take long for pesky historians to spoil the wake, revealing census records indicating Walt was born in November 1854, making him a very respectable 105, but not the former-boy-in-gray 117.



Gravestone of Edward Kelly.

What motivated these pretenders? In old age, did the seminal event of their early childhoods, which surely impacted their lives, germinate and grow in the fertile soil of dementia?

With some, perhaps, but the reason for some may have been something more universal—money. After Reconstruction, many southern states started paying benefits to aging Confederates, and the Union veterans eventually received U. S. Army pensions. During the hard times of the Great Depression, the temptation of a senior citizen to take a chance that spotty records may let him slip through and receive a pension must have been strong. Call it a survival strategy. And it didn't end with the last veteran, verified or not.

Widows also received survivor benefits. Very often, aging veterans receiving their

pensions found themselves widowed, with a bevy of teenage girls eager for their attention, knowing the survivor pension was paid for life. What an investment! Sometimes, the old warriors had a few last Pickett's Charges left in them, and fathered children. Thus, the last Union widow, Gertrude Janeway, died on January 17, 2003, aged 93 years. She married her Union Cavalry officer husband when she was 18 and he was 81. Shortly before she died, she received what turned out to be her final monthly VA check, for $70. On the Confederate side, Maudie Hopkins married her 86-year-old Rebel when she was 19.

There was even one recipient of a Civil War pension as late as mid-2020. Irene Triplett was the offspring of one of the May-December veteran marriages and, due to a disability, was awarded a survivor's pension from the VA, which she still received at the time of her death. Though there are fewer than 35 left—children of Civil War soldiers still live among us.

So, what to make of the old North Carolinian who, for whatever reason, ended up in Raleigh County? Known for walking the railroad tracks between coal camps to repair white oak split chair bottoms, he died in 1948; his obituary listed his age as 109, even a little older than his 1944 claim. If we assume the earlier census records were accurate, he would have been a much more believable 98 at the time of his death.

His obituary, from the November 10, 1947, *Charleston Gazette*, reads as follows: "Edward Kelly, 109, Dies at Thurmond

Edward Ashworth Kelly, 109, second state centenarian to die during the weekend, succumbed at the home of a daughter, Mrs. William Smith at Thurmond, Fayette County, Saturday night. In Boone County, Mrs. Sarah H. Blake, 100, died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Silas Shabdue, of Andrew. Mr. Kelly was born at Winston Salem, N.C. on May 7, 1838. He came to West Virginia during the Civil War and spent the remainder of his life here.



Edward Kelly.

He is survived by four daughters, Mrs. Rhoda Berry of Milburn, Mrs. Zettie Bennett of Gatewood, Mrs. Allie Settle of Sherwood, Mrs. Lilly Rhodes of Lester; two sons, Joe of Meadow Creek and J. E. of Gatewood; three stepsons, Homer Cadle and Elmer Kelly of Meadow Creek and Miles Adkins of Mabscott; one step-daughter, Mrs. Bill Smith of Thurmond; and about 200 grandchildren.

Funeral service will be at 1 p.m. tomorrow at the White Oak Baptist Church at Jumping Branch, Summers County. Rev. Eli Lilly will officiate. Burial will follow in the Vest cemetery at Jumping Branch. The body will lie in state at the Collins mortuary at Glen Jean until funeral time."

Regardless of his actual participation, Ed Kelly's young life was, no doubt, disrupted by the Civil War, and his ending up in the new and separate state of West Virginia added a colorful local character who is still remembered today.

DANNY KUHN (BA Marshall University, MA, West VIrginia University) is a former social worker, high school teacher, and Deputy Chief U. S. Probation Officer for the Southern District of West Virginia. His books include *O, Mountaineers! Noted (or Notorious) West Virginians*; *O, Mountaineers Volume II: Noted (or Notorious) African American West Virginians*; and *Fresh History, Brewed Daily: Raleigh County (WV) People-Places-Happenings*. He now lives in Myrtle Beach, SC. This is his first article for GOLDENSEAL.



Sheets Garage in 1962, showing a 1962 Starfire and an International Scout. All Photos courtesy of the author.

Memories of an Oldsmobile Dealer Assisting a WWII Veteran

by Charles Sheets

Published with permission from Journey with Olds Magazine, a publication of Oldsmobile Club of America.

My Father was born in 1897 and attended a one-room school until the eighth grade. He had the foresight to learn about automobiles and became an Oldsmobile dealer in a rural farming/timber community of Pocahontas County in 1936. Prior to that, he had an Oakland/Pontiac dealership and later he told me that Olds was ahead of the other GM vehicles in technology. For example—knee action and brakes that would stop a vehicle.

In addition to Oldsmobile, he obtained a Willys and light duty International franchise in the 1950-1960s when 4WDs became

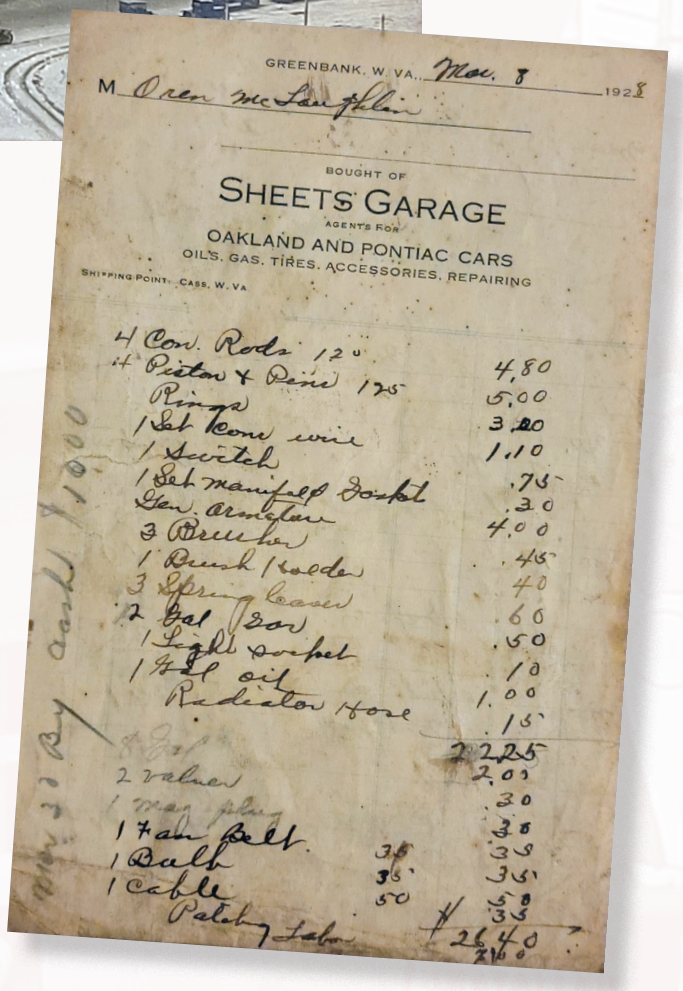


The Sweeney School was in operation from 1908 until 1929.

available. I was born in 1941 and from 6 years old I spent much time around my father's business, which was adjacent to our house. He also was a 50-year ESSO dealer. His first pumps had a 5-gallon glass bowl with gallon markings. The gasoline was hand cranked up to the bowl where customers would argue, "Clarence, you must pump another crank because the gasoline is not level with the line!"

My father joined the Merchant Marines in 1917 and was on a supply ship. I once asked him what countries he visited, and he replied "Son, I did not get to see any countries. I was in the boiler room shoveling coal all the time".

After returning from the Merchant Marines, he came home and became seriously ill in 1919 with the Spanish flu pandemic that was overtaking the country. He contributed his survival to his mother using natural healing medications. Few doctors


GREENBANK, W. VA. Mar. 8 1928

M Oren McLaughlin

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4 Con. Rods 120	4.80
4 Piston & Pins 125	5.00
Rings	3.20
1 Set Conn wire	1.10
1 Switch	.75
1 Set manifold Gasket	.30
Gen. armature	4.00
3 Brushes	.45
1 Brush Holder	.40
3 Spring leaves	.60
2 Gal Gas	.50
1 Light socket	.10
1 Gal oil	1.00
Radiator Hose	.15
	22.25
2 valves	2.00
1 Mag plug	.30
1 Fan Belt	.30
1 Bulb 35	.35
1 Cable 35	.35
Patching Labor 50	.50
	$ 26.40

Mar 30 By cash $1000

Invoice dated March 8, 1928, of a complete engine rebuild from Sheets Garage.



Veteran Tom Edgar and children with their 1948 Oldsmobile. Tom was the recipient of the first Olds from Sheet's, which included Valiant driving controls.

were in the rural area and no drugs were known to be effective.

After regaining his strength and working in the local sawmills he found an advertisement where the Sweeney Automotive School, in Kansas City, Missouri, was offering an automotive course in mechanics. At this time, folks were beginning to buy cars and he saw a future in the automobile industry. He applied for admission and traveled by train 800 miles where they offered an 8-week course in airplane mechanics, automotive, and farm machinery at a cost of $150. Room and board were offered by the school.

A copy of his graduation diploma, dated February 1921, is as follows: "*C.A. Sheets has complied with the requirements and completed a course of study in the Sweeny Automotive School. Has passed a thorough examination in the same and is well qualified in all branches of all automobile work and thoroughly competent to take charge of and repair any automobile or operate the same.*" The school was located in Kansas City, Mo, founded by Emory J. Sweeney with 5 students beginning in 1908.

With increasing enrollment, a new building was built containing 800 rooms for students, a large-tiled swimming pool, a movie theater, and the largest dining room in the world. An 80-foot-tall lighted sign on top of the building was added advertising

the trade courses offered which was lit by 5,000 lights. In 1917, enrollment was 3,674 students and had grown to 9,717 in 1921. The school was closed later mainly due to the flu killing staff and students. The building was placed on the National Historic Register in 2014.

After returning from automotive school, Mr. Sheets got a job with a Ford Motor dealer about 50 miles from home. He said the Model T's were shipped in by rail and they had to assemble tires, body to frame, engine & transmission, and wiring. After working for two years and learning all phases of the Model T, he returned home and started his own business, beginning in 1924, a one-room shop and small office.

He obtained an Oakland/Pontiac franchise, and in 1936 obtained an Oldsmobile franchise. The business survived the Depression through the mid-1930s. During this period when the banks in the area were shut down, he obtained a contract from the government to furnish fuel oil, gasoline, and kerosene to the many Civilian Conservation Camps (CCC) in the area. The C & O Railroad hauled fuel, passengers, and supplies to the area.

In 1942, very few automobiles were being made because of World War II and Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. My father's chief mechanic enlisted in the war effort and later returned after the war with a Purple Heart because of shrapnel wounds.

In 1945, the prospects for ending WW II were beginning to become apparent. Customers were eager to buy automobiles.

My father said customers coming into the business would say, "Clarence, I have been one of your best customers and you must let me have the first Olds." My father said that caused him to lose sleep at night worrying over this dilemma and how to determine who gets the first Olds. In 1945, his prayers were answered when a well-known farmer in the county came to the garage saying he just got word from the war department, "My son, a Captain of a tank battalion, lost both legs in the European theater and is being transferred to Walter Reed Hospital. Would you let him have the first car?" My father said, "Yes," immediately and stated that his prayers had been answered.

Oldsmobile announced that with their Hydra-Matic transmission, they would be offering dealer-installed hand controls for wounded Veterans so they could drive again, offering hope for their future. Oldsmobile called them "Valiant" Driving Controls. They offered them in five categories depending on how the Veteran was handicapped. The group five option was for Veterans missing both legs.

In early 1948 my father got his first car, a two-door blue coupe with Hydra -Matic transmission. As a 7- year- old, I can remember seeing all the hand controls placed on a large workbench with the mechanics trying to figure out how to install all these parts. This was a completely new technology and innovation for the automobile industry with so many deserving Veterans wanting to drive.

It was a big day of celebration when Tom Edgar and his wife came to Sheets Garage to take their car home. Edgar fought in the battles of Bastone, Belgium, and Battle of the Bulge where he lost both legs above the knees. With the help of a pillow he was able to drive with hand controls, one hand for throttle, by pushing down, pulling back on the same lever for power-booster braking, all mounted to the steering column. There was a push-button starter and a knob on the steering wheel.

Sheets Garage, Inc., continued selling Oldsmobiles until the buyout and through contract end in 2005. Subsequently, I obtained a GMC franchise, as Dealer Principle, doing business as Sheets GMC in 2006. We went through the GM bankruptcy, surviving through selling auction vehicles and


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More Comfort · Greater Power · Increased Economy
and Solid-Steel "Turret-Top" Bodies by Fish

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EVERYTHING you want in a 1935 car. Every quality essential to motoring satisfaction. Every feature you expect in a complete modern automobile. This new Oldsmobile is certainly *the car that has everything!* Solid-Steel "Turret-Top" Bodies by Fisher—featuring a seamless steel roof. KNEE-ACTION WHEELS—built into the chassis as an integral unit of all models at no extra cost. Bigger and better hydraulic brakes. All the other features shown at the left. And the price is still right down where you want it . . . definitely in the low-price field.

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Sheets Garage
Greenbank, West Virginia

Notice of Trustee's Sale

Notice of Special Commissioner's Sale

Order Of Publication

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA, Pocahontas County, ss.
AT RULES held in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of Pocahontas county, on the first Monday in the month of February, 1936.
George W. McClintic, Plaintiff
vs. In Chancery
John M. Burgess, J. W. Mills, Ad-

GREENBANK COMMU
By R. W.
The North Fork takes its rise in the near the top of the A tains and flowing springs of this regio sources of the North Creek meander thro until, uniting their

1936 Olds ad in the local Pocahontas County weekly newspaper.

eventually getting a call from a GM representative inviting me back in as a GMC dealer. In 2010 we got the franchise back and could, once again, order new vehicles. We continued in business until December 2012 but, due to the high costs of GM's business requirements, the franchise, parts, inventory, and vehicles were sold to another dealer—ending nine decades in the automotive business.

CHARLES SHEETS has a Bachelor's degree from WVU, and spent two years in the US Army. He worked for the WV Dept of Natural Resources (Div. of Reclamation) and the Dept. of Interior (US Government) Office of Surface Mining. After retiring from OSM he returned to Sheets Garage, becoming Dealer Principal until its closing in 2012. Charles is a long-time Lions Club member and was District Governor in 2014 - 2015 of District 29N. He was president of the Greenbrier Valley Economic Development Corp. for two years and is still currently a member. He is a board member of the Greenbrier Valley Community Foundation and currently, president of the Arbovale Cemetery Assoc. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Living in a rural county in WV, word soon got out about a WW II Veteran, who had lost both legs and was able to operate a vehicle. In time his popularity increased and he ran as a state legislative delegate and was elected by an overwhelming majority.

Edgar's first trip to the WV State Capital in a wheelchair with his wife was difficult because there were no handicapped ways to motivate his wheelchair up the Capitol steps. They had to ride the freight elevator to get into the chambers. One of his first bills submitted was to campaign making handicap accessibility to bathrooms and buildings which eventually became law in WV. He served 13 years in the WV legislature, became a successful farmer, and was an active advocate for wounded veterans for better accessibility to buildings and facilities. In 1974, he and his wife were instrumental in promoting 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and PL 94-142 Disability Act, requiring handicapped accessibility to all public buildings.

Folktales for Fall:
Story Catching

by Joe McHugh

The year was 1984 and I was living in Beckley, Raleigh County, where I was serving as the director of the Youth Museum of Southern West Virginia. I also plied my trade as a storyteller and old-time fiddler at schools, libraries, festivals, and other venues around the state.

One morning, I left the house to drive north to the city of Fairmont where I was scheduled to perform that evening. I had left myself loads of time in case something happened along the way, car trouble or traffic due to an accident and, if it was all clear sailing, then I could spend an hour or two touring the city.

From Beckley, I drove up Rt. 19 over the New River Bridge to where the road merged onto I-79. Ten miles further north where Rt. 19 branched off from I-79, there is a place called Flatwoods. Along with a dozen houses, there was also a gas station and a restaurant and, since I wasn't in a hurry, I decided to stop and have a cup of coffee and a slice of pie. I pulled into the parking lot and grabbed my fiddle case before going into the restaurant—as a rule, I don't leave my violin in the car in case it gets too hot or too cold.

So I sat at the counter and ordered my coffee and pie and, while I waited, a couple of men sitting in a booth called over to me. "Do you play that thing?" said the larger of the two. He was wearing bib overalls and I guessed him to be a farmer. I learned before I left the restaurant that his nickname was Woody. "I do," I said. "Then play us a tune," the other man said. "Sure, why not," I said. I took out my fiddle and bow. "What tune do you want to hear?" I asked. Given we were in West Virginia, I had a pretty good notion they would know the names of at least a couple of tunes. I was not disappointed. "My daddy always loved The Soldier's Joy. Can you play that?" Woody Asked.

I could. It is one of the best-known fiddle tunes in America. I played the tune and the second time through I sang a verse:

Old people, old people, better go to bed,
Old people, old people, better go to bed,
Don't put ideas in the young folks' heads.

Even the waitress and cook stopped what they were doing and came out from behind the counter to listen.

As it happens, I had been thinking about the name Flatwoods since walking into the restaurant because somewhere I'd heard someone mention the "Flatwoods Monster. [see The Legend of the Flatwoods Monster by Buddy Griffin, Fall 2002]" I imagined this monster as some hairy creature with big fangs and sharp claws living way back in the mountains. Near our cottage in northern Wisconsin, there's a mythical creature they call the Hodag that more or less matches that description. "By the way," I said after putting my fiddle away, "can you tell me anything about the Flatwoods Monster?"

"That was the May brothers," said the cook, a short, bald man wearing a stained white apron. "They said they saw it land in a field on the Fisher farm."

"Who landed?" I asked.

"They said it was some kind of spaceship," Woody jumped in, "and when they went to investigate, an alien chased after 'em."

"And it shot some kind of gas at 'em that made 'em sick," the other farmer said. "They claimed they almost didn't get away."

"It created quite a stir," the waitress said. "The newspaper in Charleston even sent a reporter to interview 'em."

"When was this?" I asked.

"Oh, sometime back in the 1950s," the cook said. "I was just a little guy back then."

"So it wasn't really a monster?" I asked.

"It was a spaceman and it was like ten feet tall and had red eyes," Woody said.

"If you want to know more about it," the waitress said, "you should go talk to Norman Boggs. I think he saw it too."

"Where does Mr. Boggs live?" I asked.

"Go two miles up the road towards Heaters and you'll see O'Brien Fork Road on your left. Turn up there and in a quarter of a mile you'll see a mobile home on your right. That's Norman's place."

"Do you think he's at home?" I asked, the story catcher in me stirring to life. Fairmont was only an hour away, I had plenty of time, and I was curious to discover what it was about a flying-saucer-and-little-green-men yarn that had convinced an editor at the Charleston Gazette to dispatch one of his reporters to check it out. It must have been a very slow news day. Or…?

"Norman lives by himself," the waitress said. "He was a coal miner like my daddy but he got the black lung and they pensioned him off. He should be there."

"Can I tell him that you suggested I talk to him?" I asked.

"Sure. Just tell him that Lucy sent you," she replied.

So I finished up my pie and coffee, and thirty minutes later I pulled up in front of a single-wide mobile home with cream-colored aluminum siding and a brown door and trim. To my left was a late-model Ford sedan, gold with a black vinyl roof. I looked for a dog but saw and heard none. I sat in my car for a moment with the engine running to collect my thoughts. It was a spur-of-the-moment decision to seek out Norman Boggs and part of that decision was his name: Norman Boggs. An old fashioned name like that is hard to beat.

But now I was about to knock on the man's door to ask him about monsters. Appalachian people can be quite guarded when dealing with strangers, with outsiders. He might tell me to get the hell off his property. But if I threw my car into reverse and continued my journey to Fairmont, I'd always wonder if I'd turned my back on a good story. So I switched off the engine and went and knocked on his door.

The man who opened the door was very tall and extremely lean. His deep-set eyes were brown with flecks of gray and there was a hollowness to his features that spoke of poor health. "Yes?" he said, his voice wary as if I might be the harbinger of bad news. I sensed he'd known his fair share of bad news over the years and yet there was no ill will.

I smiled. "My name is Joe McHugh and I live in Beckley. I'm a storyteller and I'm on my way to tell stories at the library in Fairmont." I said. I paused for a reaction, but he continued to study me with those intense eyes, so I forged ahead. "Lucy at the restaurant in Flatwoods said you knew something about the Flatwoods monster. I was wondering if you would mind talking about it."

I could see his body relax and when he spoke I was surprised by the softness of his voice, a voice that seemed to me to be at odds with his lanky frame. "All I saw was that thing going over my house. It made the air so hot that I started to sweat. But I didn't see anybody getting out of it."

"Didn't someone say that small green men got out of it?" I said.

"That was my neighbor. That's what he said, but I didn't see anything. I just felt the heat. It was like a burning rock, big as a barn, and it came right over my house." He swept his hand over his head.

"And it heated the air?" I asked

He nodded his head. I wasn't sure there was much more to ask. Then a question sort of popped out. "Do you believe your

neighbor really saw something?" I asked.

Norman waited a long moment before answering, so long that I noticed two birds singing to each other nearby.

"Well, let me just say, he likes to talk a lot," he said. Had Norman winked at me I wouldn't have been surprised. I was a stranger after all and I was asking him to libel a neighbor. Why would he do that without a good reason? So he gave me a hint and left it at that. But the trouble is I'm not all that great at taking hints. Sometimes I wish I were—just ask my wife Paula. So even though I got the drift of what Norman was saying, I wouldn't let it rest.

"But is your neighbor a truthful man?" I asked. I was relieved to see he wasn't annoyed by this rather rude insistence. Instead, he studied me for several long seconds and I could sense the wheels turning inside his head. He was searching for the words that would balance a desire to be truthful with the need to preserve a neighbor's reputation.



Illustration depicting the Flatwoods Monster. Photograph courtesy of Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library, Gray Barker Collection, date unknown.

"Well, even a liar can see something," he said. I nearly broke out laughing as I thought, Good lord, Henry Kissinger has nothing on this man.

"Well, thank you for your time," I said and was about to turn around and head back to the car when Norman said, "Would you care for a cup of coffee? It won't take long to make."

I was surprised by this gesture of hospitality, surprised and touched. "Yes, I'd love a cup," I said.

He stepped back into the trailer and I followed him inside. I took a chair at the kitchen table while Norman filled a kettle with water and put it on the stove. I figured I got as far as I would with the Flatwoods Monster story but maybe I'd get lucky and catch another story. Norman Boggs was a West Virginian through and through and I've known very few West Virginians who didn't have at least two or three respectable yarns up their sleeve. "Do

you know any other stories about the supernatural? Ghosts, premonitions, stuff like that?" I asked.

"No," he said, "I don't know any of those stories." He brought two cups of instant coffee over to the table and poured some Girl Scout cookies onto a plate and pushed the plate towards me.

"I find I'm drawn to those kinds of stories," I said, and then for some reason that still escapes me I launched into a personal story about the time when I was seventeen years old and living in Paterson, New Jersey, and I saw a ghost. Or it might have been a poltergeist, even a demon. To this day, I don't know what to call it. But it did happen, and it scared the bejeebers out of me. For several seconds, I truly believed I was going to die.

When I finished my story, not a little surprised that I had shared such a tale with a complete stranger and fearing that I might have freaked him out, Norman sat down across from me at the kitchen table, his forehead furrowed, his eyes fixed on me in a peculiar way. "If it's that kind of thing you want to know about," he said in his soft voice, "I could tell you something."

What I came to understand only some years later was that for many people who live in Appalachia, the word "story" means something that is not true, a fabrication, a yarn made up to entertain, or perhaps deceive. But having shared my own experience with the supernatural—something that I believed to be true—Norman now was willing to share his "story" with me.

"Now this didn't happen to me but to my son Donald and he told me all about it. You see, after I got my money from the coal company for the black lung, I bought me a new car. It's a Ford LTD. You saw it out front? That's right; it's a dandy, power steering, electric windows, air-conditioning, the works.

"Well, Donald wanted to borrow it one evening to go chase girls over in Sutton. So I said, 'Sure, you can have the car,' But first he had to drive over to his friend's house and pick him up. His friend is Jim Price and the road, just before it reaches his house, runs along a ridge and passes a church and cemetery. It's an old church and, as Donald came even with the cemetery, the car's engine quit. It just stopped dead. Everything, even the lights.

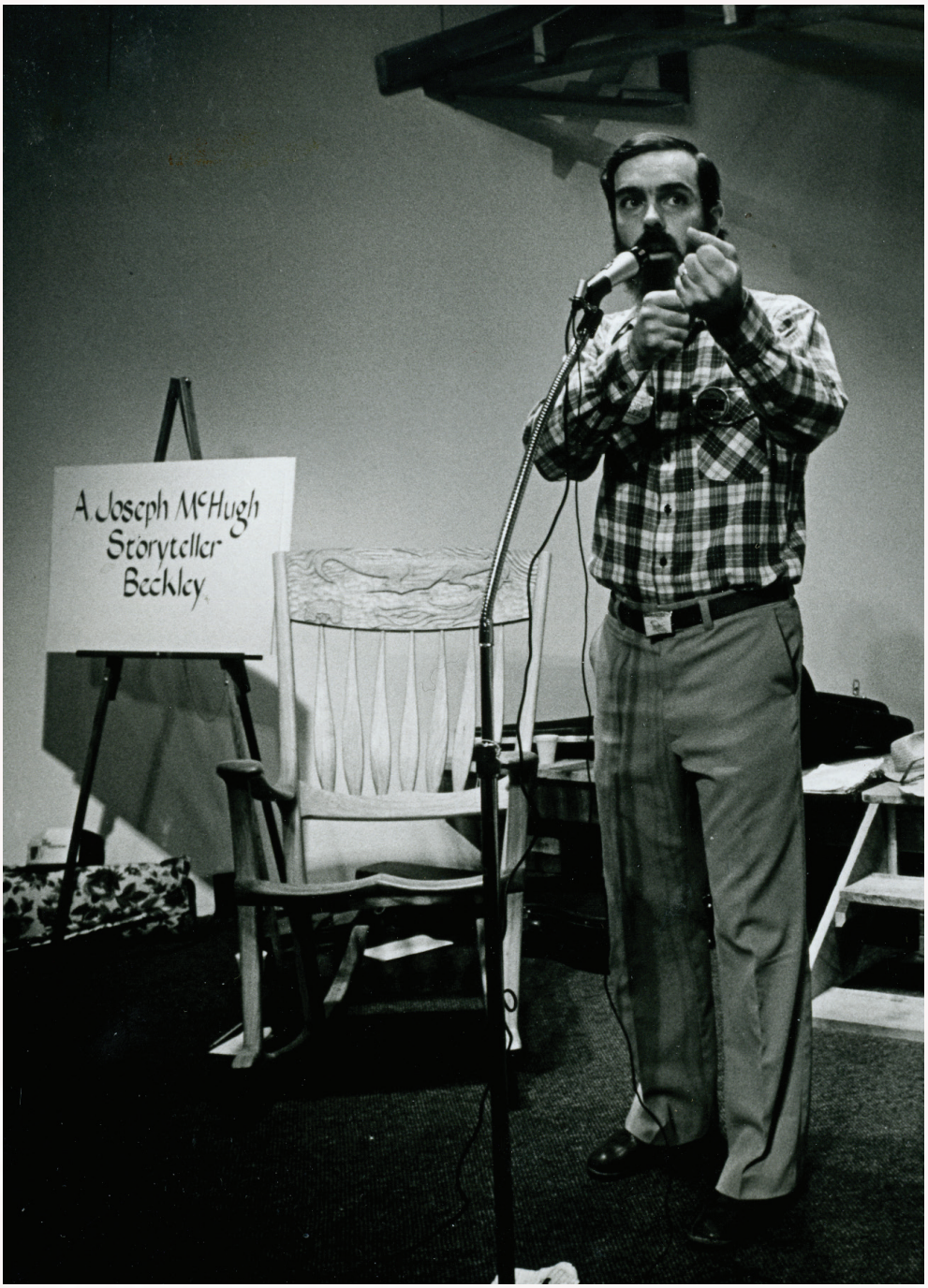
"Well, he didn't know how that could happen. Like I said, it was a new car—less than six months old—so he turned the keys to the off position and pulled them out before getting out of the car. The moon had just come up, it was nearly full, so he could see pretty good. He went around to the front of the car and opened the hood. He didn't have a flashlight but he knows cars pretty good, and he thought maybe a battery cable had come loose. But then he heard something. It was the windshield wipers. They were going, *swish, swish, swish*. This scared him because he had put the keys in his pocket and didn't think the wipers could work without the ignition being switched on.

"And he couldn't see into the car because the hood was up. So he walked around and poked his head in the driver's window to see if the wiper switch was on. And that's when he got the fright of his life because there, in the front passenger seat, sat a girl with red hair. She was maybe sixteen years old, something like that, and she was bathed in the moonlight coming through the windshield. And like I said, she had red hair and she was looking straight ahead. Well, Donald had no idea how she got into the car. He never heard her come up or open the door or anything. He said he had to force his voice to work. 'Can I help you?' he asked. 'Are you in trouble?'

"That was the feeling he got, like she was running away from somebody or was lost. He didn't know what to do or say. Then she turned her head and looked at him and her eyes were so dark and

sad that Donald said he couldn't move. He was just frozen there looking at her through the open window.

"Then she tilted her head back and started to laugh. Donald said it was the most terrible laugh he ever heard and it scared him near to death. So he turned and walked away from the car as fast as he could, his heart pounding in his chest, and he could still hear her laughing. He hurried down the road and, just when he couldn't hear her laughing anymore, he saw in front of him a light bobbing up and down. It was in the middle of the road and coming straight at him. Donald had no idea what the light was, but it was getting closer and closer and it was going up and down like this—" Norman moved his hand up and down—"and Donald said he wanted to turn around and run the other way but that would take him back to the car and he was scared of that red-haired girl. Then he heard someone call his name. 'Donnie, is that you?'



A. Joseph McHugh (the author) pictured mid-story at The Vandalia Gathering c.1984.

"It was his friend, Jim Price. And Jim came up to him swinging a small lantern. And when he reached my son, Jim said, 'What's the matter? Did your car break down?' And Donald told him about how the car stopped next to the cemetery and how a girl had gotten into the car. 'She's not right in the head,' Donald told his friend. 'She just keeps laughing. I don't want to have anything to do with her.'

"'Does she have red hair?' Jim asked. 'Yes, I think so.' Donald answered. 'Then we best get back to the house!' And Jim turned around and began running down the road toward his house with Donald chasing after him.

"When they came through the front door, Jim's parents were sitting in the front room watching the TV and Jim told them what had happened. And they knew all about it. You see, there was a girl who killed herself because of a boyfriend and she was buried in that cemetery. They told Donald that lots of people had had car trouble while driving past the cemetery at night and some had seen the girl's ghost. They all said she had red hair and sometimes she would be laughing. At other times, she would be weeping. Nobody who lived around there would ever walk near that cemetery at night. They believed it was haunted."

"So what did Donald do?" I asked.

"He stayed the night at Jim's house and in the morning they went back to the car together. Donald said he was still kind of scared but when they reached the car, it was empty, the girl was gone. The hood was still up but, before Donald checked out the battery cables, he went and tried to start the car. It started right up and I haven't had a bit of trouble with that car from that day to this."

Well, I had caught me a story after all—and I was glad I'd taken the time to find Mr. Boggs. We talked a few more minutes and I was just getting to leave when I heard a car pull up outside. The door to the mobile home opened and a young man in his twenties came in holding in his arms two large paper shopping bags. I was pretty sure it was Norman's son, Donald, who we'd just been talking about.

"Hi Daddy," he said with a smile. "I brought you some groceries and two quarts of Stroh's beer. I'm on my way over to Gassaway to see about a job." Norman introduced me. "This fellow goes around telling stories. He lives in Beckley."

"Nice to meet you," Donald said. He was an easy-going, friendly sort of person. Norman Continued, "I just told him about what happened to you that night when the red-haired girl got into my car."

I never watched someone so closely for a reaction as I did young Donald at that moment. He had no way of knowing that we had just been talking about him. And yet, in an instant—and this is the truth—the features of his face, his entire expression and manner changed from lighthearted, just checking-on-my-old-man-and-bringing-him-his-beer manner to one that was dead serious.

"Oh, I still have dreams about that girl," he said to me, "and the way she laughed, it still makes me sick." Then he brightened, like someone had flipped a switch, and the smile was back. "Well, it was nice to meet you," he said and, turning to his father, he said, "I'll swing by later this evening and tell you about the job." And out the door he went.

I thanked Norman and made my own departure and all the way to Fairmont I went over the story in my mind, and Donald's reaction to it. It felt fated that he should show up exactly when he did—not a moment earlier, when Norman would have been in the middle of his tale, or a moment too late, after I was gone—story catching—you know, sometimes it does feel like there is a magic to it.

JOE McHUGH fell in love with the art of old-time fiddling and oral storytelling when he moved from the city to a farm in Gilmer County, West Virginia, in the early 1970s. He served as the founding director of the Youth Museum of Southern West Virginia in Beckley. He helped found the Liar's Contest at The Vandalia Gathering and taught courses in traditional storytelling at the Augusta Heritage Center. Joe is an award-winning public radio journalist/producer and a cultural historian with more than thirty-five years of experience helping organizations and communities discover and tell their own authentic stories. He is the host and producer of the public radio/podcast series The Telling Takes Us Home, a Celebration of American Family Stories. (www.americanfamilystories.org) and Rosin the Bow, an Audio Journey Through the World of the Violin Family (www.rosinthebow.org) Joe now lives in Olympia, Washington, with his wife Paula Blasius-McHugh, a painter, graphic designer, and musician. This is his first publication for GOLDENSEAL.



Folktales for Fall:
The Mysterious and Lovely Glen Ferris Inn

by Anneliese Blevins

The Glen Ferris Inn is rich in history and tradition. It has an important role in the history of West Virginia, as well as the history of my own family. Starting in the early 1800s and finishing in 1819, the structure was originally built by a man named Aaron Stockton who had, according to legend, fought in the War of 1812. He was awarded land grants due to the services rendered. He checked out his land grants, traveling to see the area where the inn would be located. At that time, there was just a simple house, and since Aaron loved the area, he decided to buy that piece of property to build his home. He built the entire inn from resources found on the surrounding property. These resources can be seen in the quartz embedded in the beautiful stone fence around the inn, which was mined out of the inn's yard and is still preserved today.

A budding entrepreneur, Aaron soon had boat ferries, a sawmill operation, and a logging operation. One day, Aaron's teenage son was out working with the logging crew, and somehow, he got trapped and drowned. Aaron's men recovered the body and tied it to a log, floating it down a river where they could retrieve it. Aaron, terribly heartbroken by this, sold everything he had except for his house and went into seclusion.

Eventually, Aaron decided he had enough of his self imposed isolation and that it was time to move forward with his life. He went to the Fayette County Courthouse and applied for a license to open up a tavern on the river. It was not designated as an inn at that time, however. Later on, when the Civil War broke out, the tavern was overtaken by Union Soldiers. It was used as a small camp, a quartermaster's depot, and a medical facility. After the war, the inn passed to his remaining daughter. She kept it in her family, and the name was often changed over the years to reflect the owner as it passed through the family line. In the early 1920s, the last surviving member of Aaron Stockton's family, Marga-



A view of Glen Ferris Inn. Notice the quartz that can be seen in the stone border, originally mined from the Inn's yard. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

ret, sold it to a metallurgical company for $100. The first thing the company did once they owned it was tear down the stables and build the west wing two stories high so they could bring visiting officials. Still, it wasn't known as an inn.

Over time, the company was either bought out or became Union Carbide, so the controlling power over the inn shifted to their company in Alloy, Fayette County. The company turned the future inn into a restaurant with full service, including a bar and lodging, and the inn was born. Despite being operated by many different managers over the years, the company did an excellent job of keeping up the inn. In 1981, it was sold to a company called Elkem, another metallurgical company, and was kept up for several years before being sold once again.

My grandfather, Robert D. Hill, a local businessman in Glen Ferris, bought the inn in 1996. It was run by his mother-in-law, then his wife (my grandmother), then his wife and her sister, for 26 years. They sold the inn, and it is now owned by Steve and Pete Lopez. Since my grandparents owned the Glen Ferris Inn, my family hopes it will stay here for many more years because the inn is so rich in history and tradition.

In addition to being historical, the Glen Ferris Inn is also rich in mystery. It is viewed by many as being haunted. My grandmother even had some strange experiences while she worked there as the inn's manager. One Sunday night she was working in the kitchen—she would often make the dessert menus, put them on tents, and replace them every Sunday. This particular Sunday she was trying to get all her work finished so she could go home. While she was working, a small voice suddenly piped up beside her, asking, "What are you doing?" My grandma replied, saying, "Well, honey, I'm trying to get the dessert menus put on these table tents. Then I'm gonna



The entrance to Glen Ferris Inn. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

put them on the tables, and then I have the orders to do, the schedules to do, and I just need to get my work done." The voice then asked, "Can I help?" and my grandma replied, "Oh, no, honey, you better go back and find your parents." She was looking down, working away, and when she looked up, every person in the kitchen was staring at her, standing still—there was no child. She never heard the voice again after that.

The next experience happened to one of my grandma's employees. An employee of the inn and his girlfriend were riding along the road when they got into an argument. He opened up the door and jumped out while the car was going 55 miles an hour, and died. My grandma noted how much this man loved the inn, he even offered to buy it from her at one point. One day, not long after that terrible accident, one of the night clerks there heard a bang in the kitchen and went to check it out. He saw the same employee who had died, standing there, peeling potatoes. Terrified, the night clerk asked, "What are you doing here? You're supposed to be dead!" The man looked up at him and smiled, saying nothing. He began going through all of the cabinets looking for pots and pans to put his potatoes in. After this experience the night clerk, without warning, left and never stepped foot in the inn again.

Experiences such as these are what has caused the Glen Ferris Inn to have such a haunted reputation among many folks of West Virginia. The inn's historical role here, the mysteries surrounding it, being sold, bought, and changed so many times by many people—including my family—are just a few examples of what makes the inn a valuable token to West Virginia, one that we hope will be remembered for generations to come.

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

A Passion for Chestnuts

by Carl E. Feather

A couple of miles off Route 250 in Barbour County, past two locked gates and up a rutted road winding through a former beef pasture teeming with ticks and black bears, is one of the state's most promising orchards: Little Laurel. "It was a cow farm and my father (the late David Kines) was very gracious to allow me to plant trees on it," says Dr. Don Kines as we wade through waist-high grass and weeds to reach the shady orchard oasis. While we passed a few young apple trees on our way to Little Laurel, the focus of this copse is the American chestnut. Aside from nature's tithe, the nuts produced here are for propagation of the strongest and fittest—a maternity ward for the grandparents of trees that will return the American chestnut tree to the hillsides of West Virginia.

The Mountaineer Tree is the centerpiece of this orchard. Standing 60 feet tall, it has reached a height few American chestnut trees in Appalachia have attained since the pre-blight days of the 19th century. A hybrid, The Mountaineer is the result of a controlled back-cross breeding conducted by Don, a dentist who is as passionate about the American chestnut as he is about the patients at his Davis practice in Tucker County.

Back in 1998, Don crossed an American chestnut with a hybrid from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES). The resultant tree is 62.5 percent American, 25 percent Chinese and 12.5 percent Japanese. It and almost two dozen other seedlings were planted in the orchard on January 1, 2000, marking the start of both a new millennium for mankind and the American chestnut.

Like many other such experiments, heartache soon followed that planting. A wood borer of some sort killed the tree the following year. And, true to the American chestnut's nature, sprouts arose from the base. Don discarded all but the strongest specimen.

That sprout has grown into the Mountaineer tree, with a trunk 15 inches in diameter and a straight, narrow form more reminiscent of a lumber tree than its Asian parentage. Its nuts have an excellent flavor and are larger than those of a pure American chestnut. Its value to Don, however, is in its branches now that the flowers and nuts are beyond the reach of his ladder. The tree provides scion wood for Don's continued research into grafting as an approach to restoring the American Chestnut.

Some 70 miles to the east of Don's Phillippi orchard, another amateur plant scientist oversees the Duane Waddell Chestnut Demonstration Orchard. Retired educator Robert Sypolt of Kingwood describes himself as a "guy who just enjoys planting things," but the American chestnut reigns supreme in his plantings—more than 100 of them in Waddell.

The orchard got its start in 2013 after the Preston County Board of Education granted use of the neglected pastureland for the project. Robert mows the grass, keeps detailed lineage and health records for each tree, treats and trims diseased specimens, and leads tours of the orchard for anyone who will listen, including students of Preston High School. His hope, like that of all the state's American chestnut volunteers and professionals, is that their grandchildren will one day be able to walk through Appalachian forests that include the American chestnut as part of the canopy.

Statewide there are over six dozen experimental American Chestnut "orchards" and research projects whose goal is to reestab-

lish the American chestnut in the forests of West Virginia. Many are conducted under the umbrella and assistance of the West Virginia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF), which recognizes its volunteers for their dedication. Robert was selected TACF's Volunteer of the Year, Mid-Atlantic Region, in 2019, and served as president of the state chapter for two years. He is a board member of the West Virginia Chapter of TACF and has served as director of the state's Chestnut Festival in Rowlesburg. Mark Double, president of the W.Va. Chapter of TACF, nominated Robert for the award.



Chestnuts mature inside these burr-covered pods in the Waddell Orchard, Kingwood. Perhaps one of the nuts contained inside will be the genesis of a disease-resistant American chestnut and grandfather a new generation of chestnuts in Appalachia.

Like many West Virginia natives in their retirement years, Robert's early childhood coincided with the afterglow of American Chestnut trees in Appalachia, when lumber from the dead trees was marketed as "wormy chestnut." Growing up on a farm near Etam in Preston County, Robert recalls the wood of dead trees being woodstove kindling, a sad application for a species that once accounted for 25 percent of the hardwood species in the Appalachian forest. Having passed from the forest and into history, the majestic tree also vanished from the mainstream of American life.

"Most of us have grown up having no idea about the American Chestnut and how valuable it was in the pioneer days," Robert says. According to TACF, the entire state of West Virginia was a habitat for the species. It is further fitting that both research and plantings are taking place in Preston County and its mother county, Monongalia. Chestnut Ridge runs along the counties' common border. Historian Samuel P. Hildreth, born in 1783, claimed that the ridge, which extends from north-central West Virginia to Nanty Glo, Pa., was so named for "the immense forests of chestnut trees that clothe its sides and summits." Recreational facilities and businesses alike in the region still claim the chestnut heritage in their naming, even though the tree has been functionally extinct for more than a century.

Henry Ward Beecher wrote that "nature was in a good mood when the chestnut tree came forth." The tree's attractive, reddish-brown wood is soft, easily split, and resistant to decay, shrinking, and warping. The wood and bark have high concentrations of tannic acid, used for tanning leather. A typical mature American chestnut tree was 4 to 5 feet wide and 100 feet tall. Trees often were branchless for the first 50 feet and thus made excellent telephone poles, railroad ties, and lumber—118 million board feet of the latter came from West Virginia chestnut trees in 1919. Rapid-growing trees, American chestnuts were common in both urban and rural landscapes.

The Appalachian pioneer most likely began his life in a chestnut cradle and was laid to rest in a chestnut casket. Between those bookends, the pioneer warmed his cabin and cooked his venison over chestnut fires, and tanned his animal hides with tannin derived from the tree's bark. He

enclosed his livestock pastures in zig-zagging rows of chestnut posts and, when the railroads intruded into his coal-laden backcountry, ties of chestnut united their steel rails. These activities alone consumed millions of trees; a 10-acre field of corn or tobacco would require forty large trees, according to one scholar.

Equally valuable for its fruits, the nuts supplemented livestock feed and fattened the farmers' animals for market. It also provided sustenance for game. "Chestnut-lade forests provided sustenance and refuge for millions of fur-bearing animals and, in doing so, supplied the natural capital upon which the frontier economy was based," observes Donald Edward Davis in his book, *The American Chestnut: An Environmental History.*



Dr. Don Kines explains the pollination process to a group of property owners who met at the Waddell Orchard on July 9, 2022, to learn techniques for chestnut tree propagation.

By the early 19th century, grocers from Maine to Georgia were selling Appalachian chestnuts purchased through commission houses that served as middlemen between the backcountry gatherers and urban consumers. Chestnutting was a practical autumnal "half work, half sport" activity in the forests of Appalachia as nuts were gathered for consumption and sale. All members of the family participated in these outings that stuffed bellies and purses alike. In the fall of 1911, one West Virginia railroad station shipped 155,092 pounds of nuts. TACF notes on its website that the nuts were a cash crop for Appalachian families who did the hard work of collecting them by the bushels.

Ironically, public appetite for plump chestnuts contributed to the introduction of the deadly blight, *Cryphonectria parasitica,* from Asia. It is believed that the parasitic fungus piggybacked on Japanese and Chinese chestnut trees that were imported into the U.S. in the late 1890s. The airborne spores of the fungus target existing wounds in the bark, from where it grows until orange blisters girdle the tree. The mechanism of destruction is oxalic acid which the fungus excretes as it advances across the host. "It's the oxalic acid that kills the tissue," Mark says. Sap cannot move through the damaged tissue, and the tree dies above the canker line. The airborne fungus also can be spread by birds and animals, setting the stage for a plague without a cure.

First identified on the grounds of the New York Zoological Garden in 1904, the blight rushed across the hardwood forests of the eastern United States. West Virginia, the only state entirely within the tree's natural range, suffered comprehensive devastation. Within four decades, the mature American chestnut tree population, once numbering 4 billion in the eastern forests, amounted to stumps and shoots. The loss transformed more than the forest.

"For residents of Appalachia, where the trees defined the pre-World War II landscape, the loss of the American chestnut even served as a metaphor for the passing of a self-sufficient and forest-dependent way of life," wrote Donald Edward Davis.

While "functionally extinct," the American chestnut is not extinct as a species. Robert Sypolt explains that American chestnut trees stand in West Virginia's forests in cutover and disturbed sites where sunlight is abundant. But these wild-growth trees are doomed and will succumb to the blight often before they reach a sexually reproductive stage. In a few rare instances, they approach the stature of small ancestors. West Virginia's champion American chestnut tree, near Harman in Randolph County, is 77 feet tall and has a circumference at breast height (CBH) of 67 inches. Mark Double says the tree, on private property, was discovered growing in a stand of old hemlock. It had somehow escaped infection or possessed a natural resistance to the fungus, making it of interest to researchers, who collect its pollen and grow seedlings from its nuts.

TACF categorizes these rare finds as uninfected wild-growth trees, rather than survivors. Their existence provides hope that a disease-resistant hybrid can be developed through the process of back-cross breeding, one of the three prongs in TACF's effort to restore the American chestnut.

Mark Double has been involved in these efforts since 1977 when the West Virginia University graduate was looking for a job where he could apply his degree in microbiology. He had his sights set on a permanent position with a federal agency, but the only offer he received was for a temporary position in forest pathology at his alma mater. He worked at that "temporary" job until retirement in 2019.

"Chestnuts have basically been my life," says the Morgantown resident.

His 41 years of research coincided with TACF's founding in 1983 and the development of DNA mapping and genetic engineering, which have provided tools for both research and developing a resistant variety. When Mark began his work, recurrent, also known as back-crossing, was the primary approach. In this process, a hybrid is crossed with one of its parents or an individual genetically similar to the parent. The idea is to bring the offspring closer to the genetic identity of the parent without losing the desirable traits contributed to the alien hybrid parent. "They want the final tree to look like the American chestnut, so with each generation, the seedlings are bred back to an American tree," Don Kines says.

Mark says this process was fundamental to TACF's founding by scientists who envisioned using the backcross breeding methods used by Dr. Charles Burnham in his work with corn. Applying the same to chestnut-restoration efforts, the hybrid is an American chestnut crossed with an Asian variety that contributes blight-resistant qualities but reaches a height of only 40 to 60 feet. Through repetitive backcrossing of select hybrids with American chestnuts, the offspring inch closer to the characteristics of the American chestnut, in theory resulting in a tree that is 15/16 American and 1/16 Asian.

That's the way it is supposed to be, based on the assumption that there are fewer than three genes responsible for resistance. "Until 2019 or 2020, it was all on paper that this would work," Mark says. But when the molecular tools were developed to the point they could map the genetic codes, researchers discovered there could be as many as nine genes responsible for resistance. The research revealed that, at best, a cross-backed tree can be only 85 percent American chestnut. "It's enormously complex," Mark says. "We feel we can't get any better than that because the genetics are so complex."

The work continues despite the complexi-

ty. Most of the trees planted in the Waddell orchard are backcrosses, although there also are plantings of Chinese and Japanese trees, as well as American chestnuts raised from the precious nuts of uninfected wild-growth trees. An American chestnut tree discovered near Cathedral State Park in Aurora, Preston County, contributed nuts for several of the trees before it succumbed. Pollen and nuts from these trees, also showing signs of blight, are harvested for the next generation of crosses.

Don Kines has two orchards plus a vintage planting in his parents' backyard—more than 200 trees—each with its own lineage and story. The Sheryl Tree, for example, has an American chestnut mother and a Chinese chestnut father. Don says the West Virginia Department of Agriculture distributed the Chinese chestnut seedlings to property owners throughout the state in the mid-20th century; they are found on many small farms throughout the state. He used pollen from one growing in his uncle's yard to pollinate a flower on an American chestnut that showed strong blight resistance.

Don named this cross after his girlfriend, who later became his wife. He admits he was preoccupied with his fledgling dental practice and "tree addiction" when Sheryl penned a poem that reminded Don of his priorities. The poem helped put the relationship and trees in their proper pecking order. The Kines have four children, and although Mark Double jokes that Don ought to have been a plant scientist, Don loves his profession, which also has been touched by chestnuts. He grew seedlings in his dental office waiting room and set up a website so patients could follow their growth online. They requested seedlings and nuts for their properties, giving birth to Mountain State Chestnuts, the organization that serves as an umbrella for Don's efforts.

"I send out hundreds of nuts every fall," he says. Don approaches back-crossing differently than many TACF researchers, who use only American chestnut pollen and flowers after the initial 50/50 hybrid and aim for a 92.5-percent American tree. Don feels that level of American genes is unnecessary. "I think the Mountaineer tree, which is only 62 percent American, has shown that the majority of genes that we want for height, timber form, and vigor can be recovered in fewer generations," he says. Thus, his first-generation cross will be pure American to Chinese or Japanese and the second-generation cross to a full-resistant American hybrid (perhaps 25 percent American). The resultant third-generation tree will be 37.5 percent American and will be crossed with a pure American, resulting in a 69 percent American tree. This alternating pattern is followed to gradually increase the American genetic content while maintaining the Asian disease-resistance traits.

Regardless of the approach, the methods of creating a back cross are the same. Pollen is collected from the male catkins of an American chestnut or hybrid that has shown good resistance to the blight. The catkins usually appear in late June or early June and are borne on the same tree as the female flowers. To avoid pollination from the same tree, the prickly flower must be isolated, usually inside a bag, until pollen from a donor tree is available. The pollen can be collected in one year and stored in the freezer until the next if its maturity does not coincide with the flowering of a receiving tree. Catkins from the donor tree can be brushed across the receiving tree's flowers when the two trees flower simultaneously.

A paper lunch bag is tied around the flower and left on throughout the summer. Assuming a hailstorm, wind or rain did not destroy the bag, the mature nuts are collected in the fall; after spending a few months in the refrigerator, they are planted in the spring to produce seedlings. Don points out that without controlling what pollen reaches the flowers, it is impossible

to know the parentage of the nuts and resultant tree, thus this painstaking procedure is required. A pollinated flower can produce from one to nine nuts.

The American chestnut produces its nuts high in the bough, beyond the reach of Don's ladders. Thus, the strongest and longest-lived trees are poor candidates for practical pollen collection. That led Don to explore grafting as an option. He selects a hybrid stock to receive scion from those American variety trees that have proven resistant. Don says the method has a success rate of "two steps forward, one step back," but provides another tool for moving the needle toward that holy grail of a 100-percent American chestnut tree that is blight resistant.



Robert Sypolt stands in the Duane Waddell Orchard, Kingwood, where cross-back trees are grown for research into producing a disease-resistant American chestnut hybrid. Bob maintains the orchard and records the research.

Having a population of back-crossed trees growing in the soil and climate of the tree's native habitat is essential to other prongs of TACF-sponsored research, genetic engineering, and biological control. Genetic engineering (GE) borrows resistant genes from other plants to modify the DNA of American chestnuts. Classified as GMO organisms by federal regulators, the GE American chestnut faces intense scrutiny from regulators and researchers alike, who want to know how a GE tree will impact forests and other life forms that interact with it. There is the justifiable fear of "permanently altering the germplasm of one our nation's most iconic tree species," writes Donald Edward Davis. "Certainly, there is no better example of the 'law of unintended purposes' than the introduction of chestnut blight into North America."

Assuming the hurdles are cleared, there will be a need for pure American chestnut germplasm, the supply of which will come from plantings throughout the state. At the Old Hemlock Nature Preserve in Brandonville, Preston County, a germplasm planting was made in the spring of 2022. West Virginia Chapter TACF volunteers planted the seedlings on the east slope of the preserve's golden-winged warbler habitat development site, says LeJay Graffious, Old Hemlock Foundation's director and resident property caretaker.

Mark Double can be confident of the seedling's innate resistance to blight through vetting performed at West Virginia University's Greenhouse in Morgantown where Mark, his family, and volunteers plant hundreds of nuts from back-cross experiments, orchards, and American chestnuts growing in the wild. "We couldn't do this without the dedication of the staff and management (of the greenhouse)," Mark says. "There are no places in the state with enough space to do this. We're very grateful."

Seedlings that emerge from these plantings are tested for their resistance to the blight via the introduction of a small amount of the pathogen. The strongest of the trees go out to germplasm plant-

ings like that at Old Hemlock. According to Mark, the germplasm should come from trees grown in the soils and conditions into which that next generation will be introduced, thus the importance of Mountain State orchards. "The goal is to produce chestnut trees that have the American form, resistance to the chestnut blight fungus, and be adapted to West Virginia," Mark says.



Shirley Meissner and Robert Sypolt pause at the entrance to the Duane Waddell Orchard in Kingwood.

Biological control of the fungus is a third prong of TACF's work and research at WVU. Mark Double says the blight fungus is itself susceptible to a virus that can reduce its virulence. Hypovirulence uses that virus to treat infected trees; infection can be reduced to the point of saving the tree, but the canker scars will remain.

Don Kines used the virus to treat cankers on his trees, however, the virus is ineffective on some strains of the blight. University of Maryland researchers have created "super donor" strains of the fungus, but the release of these strains must undergo USDA review. TACF's focus is to use hypovirulence as a tool for keeping chestnut trees alive and healthy for breeding. Attempting to treat a forest full of infected chestnut trees is impractical.

Thus, more than a century since the loss of this gift from a time when "nature was in a good mood," the void in our forests remains and rebirth remains elusive. Several generations will pass having not eaten a true American chestnut, but the elusive legend remains ingrained in memory and lore. While walking through the forest, Gary Nine of Newburg (Preston County), came across a tree with leaves that looked like those of an American chestnut. That encounter led the young man to research the tree's story, plant several trees on family land, and learn pollination techniques at a seminar led by Don and Robert.

Robert describes the work he and other volunteers perform as "heart-breaking," vigilant efforts that involve years or even decades of waiting for the cycle to complete itself and reveal any defects in the hypothesis or techniques underpinning the work. And while advances in technology and genetic engineering have helped advance the work, nature, and mankind must cooperate. For example, Bob says a germplasm planting in Terra Alta suffered a high failure rate because of unfavorable weather. Others have failed because the landowners failed to tend to the 6-inch seedlings, which deer nibble and weeds choke.

"You don't do well with these unless someone maintains the grass and weeds around the trees," Mark says. Root rot, another biological threat to the trees, must be managed in these backcross orchards, as well.

For Robert, Mark, Don, and the dozens of TACF volunteers in West Virginia, it is a passion reinforced with hard labor and ongoing commitment. While Robert lives



Mark Double waters freshly planted chestnuts in the West Virginia University Greenhouse, early spring 2022. The seedlings produced will be subjected to blight to ensure their resistance before being sent out to research plantings across the state.

near the Waddell Orchard, Don's orchards are a one-hour drive from his home in Davis. He tries to make the trip once a week to cut weeds, repair protective tree enclosures damaged by curious bears and establish new seedlings. He says this passion began nearly 40 years ago, when, as a WVU pre-med senior, he came across a magazine article about the "Chestnuts' Last Stand." The passion thus ignited in the Evansdale Library continues to burn brightly, alongside Don's overall interest in science. "Science was my favorite class in school," says Don, who compares his orchards to a science lab. "My wife will tell you I'm not fun to be around when my experiments don't work."

Mark Double, whose life work has focused on this magnificent tree, says he wants his legacy to be its restoration to the forests of West Virginia, "so that the average landowner can plant seedlings."

"It's my hope that my grandchildren, will in their lifetimes, get nuts from these trees my wife and I have planted," he says.

"I want trees that can be enjoyed," Don Kines says on his website. "I envision trees that will be planted in yards and be climbed by children, anchor tree houses and hammocks, tire swings from the branches, provide shade on hot days, and provide nuts for generations to come."

Check out these websites to learn more about Chestnut Restoration in WV.

mountainstatechestnuts.com (Don Kines' chestnuts home page)

acf.org (The American Chestnut Foundation)

oldhemlock.org (Old Hemlock Foundation)

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



Bob Sypolt unloads young Chestnut trees for sale at the West Virginia Chestnut Festival. Both hybrid and pure Chinese chestnut trees are offered.

Chestnut Festival Honors America's Tree

by Carl E. Feather

The 15th annual West Virginia Chestnut Festival in Rowlesburg, Preston County, is 9 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., October 8, the Sunday before Columbus Day.

Festival Chairman Robert Sypolt says chestnuts will be roasting on a charcoal fire throughout the festival until they are sold out. The festival committee typically purchases 300 pounds of the "Chinese" variety from an orchard in Ohio. Most of those chestnuts are roasted and sold for eating at the event, but some are held back for sale to folks who want to roast their own at home or use them in recipes. Get there early if you want to take some home. For property owners interested in growing their own chestnut trees, both Chinese and back-crossed trees will be available to purchase.

Exhibitors at the festival include The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF), which also sells handmade items of chestnut wood. Sales benefit the foundation's work. For those who want to delve more deeply into the science of chestnut restoration, a technical session will be presented by Mark Double, moderator and president of the West Virginia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation. The session is from 3 to 4:30 p.m. in the Szilagyi Center. The annual meeting of the chapter is at noon.

Various vendors from the region will sell crafts and food products, including ox-roast sandwiches. Charles Wotring, a Preston County woodworker, will offer his array of furniture and decorative items made from vintage "wormy chestnut" lumber he reclaimed from old buildings. Live music, self-guided tours of the Cannon Hill His-



George Nassif (left) roasts chestnuts over a charcoal pit at the West Virginia Chestnut Festival in Rowlesburg. The roasted chestnuts are from oriental varieties and are grown in Ohio. Festival volunteer Don Riggs looks on.

toric Site above Rowlesburg, and an exhibit by the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia round out the events.

Events are held in both the Rowlesburg Community Park and the former Rowlesburg School, aka Szilagyi Center. The center includes the River City Café, World War II Museum, Preston County Sports Museum, B&O Bridge exhibit, and River City Pottery Studio.

A gala banquet closes the festival and includes the crowning of Mr. and Mrs. Chestnut---Bernie and Linda Coyle---dinner, and the premiere of a documentary, Eye Witness Stories of American Chestnut in West Virginia. Banquet tickets are sold during the festival.

For more information about the festival, visit the festival's webpage at www.wvchestnutfestival.com. Rowlesburg is located on the Cheat River, about two miles north of US Route 50, on Route 72.



Charles Wotring and his granddaughter Audrey make décor and furniture from reclaimed chestnut lumber. Their work is sold at the West Virginia Chestnut Festival in Rowlesburg.

American Chestnut Restoration Strategies and Progress in West Virginia

by Jeff Kochenderfer

The American chestnut was once one of the largest and most common trees in eastern hardwood forests. It could be found in all 55 counties in West Virginia. It was highly prized for its wood which was very durable, light, and resistant to warping. It was commonly used for fencing materials, electric poles, railroad ties, trestles, and building materials. Its nuts were an important and dependable food source for wildlife and people. My grandfather who loved to squirrel hunt used to say that the American chestnut never failed to produce nuts. This valuable trait is usually attributed to the fact that it does not bloom until June thereby escaping most spring frosts. It was among the top six species in lumber production for West Virginia between 1900-1930. Chestnut trees grew fast, had good form, and unlike many hardwood trees, grew well on poor, dry, rocky, sites. In West Virginia, it often grows with chestnut oak and mountain laurel. The American chestnut grows well on acid sandstone soils—it is seldom found growing on limestone soils. The chestnut blight fungus was introduced into the United States from Asia in the late 1890s and first detected in 1904 in New York City. By the 1930s most of the large native American chestnut trees in West Virginia were dead or dying.



A 7-foot diameter American chestnut tree growing in Randolph County, WV on Laurel Fork of Cheat River in 1923 (Courtesy of the Forest Historical Society).

Work first began in 1930 by Arthur Graves in Cooperation with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station to develop blight-resistant forest-type chestnut trees by cross-breeding susceptible American and resistant Asian chestnut trees. Scions from this early research work were later used in other breeding programs. The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) was founded in 1983 for the purpose of creating blight-resistant American chestnut trees and restoring them to the forests of the eastern U.S. TACF has been working on three different strategies to accomplish this goal: breeding, biotechnology, and biocontrol.

The breeding program was started in 1983, by cross-breeding American chestnut with Chinese chestnut. Chestnut blight is native to Asia and Chinese chestnut trees



Cutting a large American chestnut on Fork Mt. in Tucker County circa 1905. A 6-ft cross-cut saw was being used (Courtesy William Pennington).

have evolved over the years and naturally developed resistance to the chestnut blight fungus. However Chinese chestnut trees were bred for food production to be planted in orchards, so they are short trees with poor form, unlike American chestnut trees that grew tall, and straight and could compete with other trees in Appalachian forests. American chestnut trees were bred with Chinese chestnut trees, and the nuts were planted. The seedlings produced were grown and evaluated to determine the most blight-resistant ones with good form. The best trees produced from these first crosses were then bred back with American chestnut, and the process was repeated in an attempt to develop blight-resistant trees with American chestnut characteristics. Over the past 36 years, four generations of chestnuts have been bred, largely by volunteers. This effort has produced hybrid chestnut trees, but unfortunately, chestnut tree breeding has proven to be very difficult due to the complexity of the genes involved. Most of the highly blight-resistant hybrid chestnut trees also have a high proportion (10-49%) of Chinese chestnut genes with Chinese tree characteristics. Breeding work is continuing with the goal of producing highly blight-resistant hybrid chestnut trees with mostly American chestnut genetics.

The second strategy involves using biotechnology to create blight-resistant American chestnut trees. Researchers at the State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) have developed a transgenic chestnut tree by inserting a gene from wheat called oxalate oxidase or OxO into American chestnut trees. The OxO enzyme breaks down oxalic acid, the substance excreted by chestnut blight fungus that kills the cells in the vascular cambium (the main growth tissue in the stems and roots) of chestnut trees.

Tests have shown that chestnut trees with this gene are highly resistant to the chestnut blight fungus. Since the OxO gene is found in many food crops, it poses no negative effects to humans. Other experiments have also shown that no adverse ecological impacts are caused to other organisms by inserting the OxO gene. These transgenic chestnut trees are currently under review by the USDA, EPA, and FDA to obtain federal approval so these trees can be distributed to cooperators and planted. Approval of these transgenic chestnut trees is expected in 2023. This is possibly one of the most important advancements made in the 100-year struggle to bring back the American chestnut to Appalachian forests.



American chestnut trees also produced a very important food crop for humans, wildlife, and livestock. Chestnuts were collected and shipped to cities throughout the eastern US. This picture shows chestnuts that were collected in Upshur County WV circa 1905 (Courtesy of the Upshur County Historical Society).

Biocontrol is the third strategy being used to combat the chestnut blight. Biocontrol involves infecting the chestnut blight fungus with viruses that reduce its virulence. The viruses infect chestnut cankers, slowing their growth, enabling the tree to callus over the wound and stay alive. But the virus and the chestnut blight fungus must be genetically compatible for the virus to be effective. Since there are many different strains of the chestnut blight fungus, the natural spread of the virus is rare. Biocontrol is mainly used to keep individual American chestnut trees alive in breeding orchards long enough to flower and produce seed.

The West Virginia Chapter of the TACF has been actively working on the restoration of the American chestnut in West Virginia forests since 2005. Over 72 hybrid chestnut plantings have been made in West Virginia. There have been nine native American chestnut germplasm conservation orchards (GCOs) established in the state. These orchards were established using seeds collected from American chestnut trees and American chestnut sprouts dug up in forests around the state. The purpose of these orchards is to provide pollen from local sources for breeding, with transgenic and hybrid chestnut trees. This will increase genetic diversity and make the offspring more adaptable across the wide range of sites that will be encountered within the natural range of the American chestnut. This will be the first step in developing chestnut trees that are adapted to West Virginia forests that have the form of American chestnut and resistance to the chestnut blight fungus.

The WV chapter is actively involved in the WV Chestnut Festival held in Rowles-



Volunteers planting chestnuts at the WVU forest. (Courtesy Mark Double).

burg WV, every Fall. The chapter has also participated in numerous plantings around the state as well as plantings and outreach activities at the Bechtel-Summit Scout Reserve. The WV Chapter is always looking for native chestnut trees, both larger ones producing nuts and small sprouts (less than 2 ft tall) that could be transplanted in seed orchards. The sprouts are probably the best source of pure American chestnut planting stock because there is always the chance that nuts collected from existing flowering American chestnut trees could have been contaminated with pollen from Chinese chestnut trees. Researchers have concluded that the small seedling sprouts found today growing on forest floors originated from chestnut seed that was produced many years ago. They have continuously sprouted and resprouted in forest understories.

TACF encourages anyone who finds large American chestnut trees or areas with small chestnut sprouts to use the TreeSnap app to record its location or contact someone in the WV chapter of the TACF. Anyone interested in learning more about American chestnut restoration or getting involved in the struggle to bring back the American chestnut is encouraged to go to www.acf.org or they can contact the author.



The Great Chestnut Lodge, located at Camp Washington-Carver—the nation's first statewide 4-H camp for African Americans—was completed in 1942 and remains the largest American chestnut building in the world. For more on Camp Washington-Carver see *Camp Washington-Carver Turns 80* in our summer 2022 issue. - ed.

JEFF KOCHENDERFER grew up in Tucker County. He received his B.S. degree in Forest Resource Management from West Virginia University School of Forestry and a M.S. in Forest Biology from Virginia Tech. He is currently employed by the USDA Forest Service on the Cheat/Potomac Ranger District of the Monongahela National Forest and can be contacted at jeffrey.kochenderfer@usda.gov . This is his first contribution to Goldenseal.

Hot Lunches Come to Springdale

by Myra Alley Kingsbury

It was a school day morning in the 1950s at Fayette County's Springdale Elementary School. As the kids arrived, their priority was play time in the schoolyard before classes began. At eight o'clock sharp the principal, Grace Campbell, stepped out onto the large front porch and began ringing the small but mighty school bell.

"Flag salute," Mrs. Campbell yelled. Everyone knew the routine. Students formed two lines parallel to the porch banisters, became silent, faced the large US flag attached to the left pillar of the porch, placed the right hand over the heart, and began: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America…"

Once completed all moved quietly up the stairs and into one of three classrooms. The kitchen and lunchroom were in a large area in the back of the building. The kitchen was separated from the lunch tables by a counter between the two. In Grace's early teaching years, students brought their lunches from home. On many occasions lunch bag contents were sparse. Some kids showed up with no lunch at all. This was particularly true when the coal miners were on strike. "Is that all I'm a-gonna get?" Grace overheard one little boy say as he peered into his bag. "That's the blackest banana I ever saw," was another's lunchtime lament.

Grace wanted all students well-fed, so she worked diligently to start a hot lunch program. Some of the larger schools in the area had provided hot lunches for several years. Her position as school principal for the 1953-54 school year was secure, as she had completed her coursework and the county had made her an offer. To get a jump start, she attended a hot lunch training meeting in the spring of 1953 in Fayetteville where the Fayette County school administrative offices were located. This gave her the tools she needed to move forward.

Federal government assistance originally came to schools in the form of a commodity donation program, which was established during the Great Depression when markets for farm produce started drying up and children were unable to pay for school lunches. Articles in the *Beckley Post Herald* reported that local schools in the hot lunch program were provided with farm surpluses which was also a way to prop up food prices. For example, in 1944 during World War II, Raleigh County, received around $7,000 worth of canned grapefruit juice. This is the equivalent of at least $65,000 of juice in today's dollars. It was controversial as retail grocery stores were having difficulty buying the juice through their wholesale distributors. In addition, because of war-induced rationing, retail patrons had to use four blue ration points for the juice's purchase when it was available—schools did not have ration point requirements.

Raleigh County, with the largest local metro area, tended to get bigger volumes of commodities. They were often a distribution center for nine surrounding counties which included Fayette. In 1944 they received two tons of raw beets. Community volunteers, schoolteachers, and parents processed almost 2,700 cans in the Shady Springs canning center. Some counties had canning centers that could be used to can their home produce. According to a July 30, 1944, newspaper article from *The Raleigh Register*, Fayette County had its own canning plant, operated by the board of education. The Register reported that "Patrons have the privilege of paying for canning at the rate of twelve cents per can for vegetables and fifteen cents for fruits, or they may pay one-half of their produce brought to the cannery to defray the cost.

Donations of food for the hot lunch program not only will be accepted but will be earmarked for the school which the donor desires to have them."

Schools never knew what commodities they would get. In addition to beets, deliveries included raw potatoes, cabbage, prunes, and eggs. Canned items included tomatoes, orange juice, tomato juice, peaches, jam, honey, peas, green beans, and beef. Powdered milk and cheese were abundant. Even before the federal government got involved, teachers and communities helped hungry children as much as they could. For example, in the early days, students were asked to bring vegetables so they could cook soup on top of the potbelly stove. The National School Lunch Program was enacted in 1946 to provide low-cost or free lunches to students. In addition to commodities, the government offered financial aid. The federal government paid nine cents for each Type "A" meal if served with milk, and seven cents for a Type "A" meal without milk. In addition, $1.00 per day was paid to help cover the cook's wages. The specifications for a Type "A" meal were: at least two ounces of meat, or a substitute such as cheese, eggs, dried peas or beans, or four tablespoons of peanut butter; One-half cup each of two vegetables or a fruit and vegetable; two slices of bread and butter; pudding, cookies, or some other sweet.

To take advantage of the federal government's assistance for Springdale Elementary, Grace's first step was to find a cook. One day after school, she walked to Louella Patterson's house in Meadow Bridge, which was three miles away. Shortly after wrapping on her door, Louella surfaced. "Hello, Grace. I wasn't expecting to see you. How are you doing today? Come on in and have a seat."

"Thanks, Louella," Grace said as she stepped inside the house and sat down on the living room couch. "I've been thinking a lot about what the kids are bringing to school for their lunch. I worry that some are just not getting enough to eat. I want to start a hot lunch program. I know you are a good cook. Heaven knows you've had enough practice with six children and a husband to feed. I was wondering if you'd consider being our school cook?"



The lunchroom with Louella, Bud a teacher at Springdale, and a visitor. Photo provided by Bud Harmon.

"I appreciate you thinking of me," Louella said. "I'll have to think about it. I'm not sure I could do the job justice and keep up with everything I have to do at home."

"That's all I can ask," Grace said as she headed out the door to walk home. Grace's next step was to orchestrate fundraisers for the needed fixtures, equipment, and appliances. The Springdale Parent-Teacher Association held a pie social on October 5, 1953, and raised $140.41. That was a start. A Halloween carnival was held later in the month and featured cake walks, a bake sale, a fishpond, grab bags, target shooting, and fortune telling. Through these events, civic association donations, and retail contributions enough was raised to start feeding the Springdale children a hot lunch in the winter of 1954.

Initially, Grace asked parents to provide

a plate, glass, and silverware for each of their children, as there was no money in the school's budget for these purchases. Until she could get some lunch money in the coffers, she often took dollars from her personal account to cover the cost of groceries. She was a meticulous recordkeeper and she had many a canceled check made out to the school lunch program.

After much consideration, Louella decided to take the school cook's job. She felt the extra income would be helpful for her family, especially during miner strikes. She did love to cook—and cook she did for 26 years until the school closed. All meals were made from scratch for around sixty students per day. She did the menu planning based on the federal government's requirements.

Louella went above guidelines and almost always made homemade rolls. The kids told her she made the best biscuits, but they were yeast rolls. She claimed her secret was the commodity powdered milk. Cheese, hamburger, and green beans were frequent staples received as commodities for the school. Once a week a grocery truck would back up to a window in the rear of the school and hand the food in to Louella. These were the groceries purchased in addition to commodities received.

Every day after all children took a seat with their lunches before them, Mrs. Campbell led her flock in singing grace. With heads bowed all would follow in unison with "God is great and God is good, and we thank Him for this food. Amen."

Milk, a key component of the school lunch program, often wreaked havoc with budgeting due to price fluctuations. In 1946 the wholesale price went up to 19.5 cents per quart and threatened to shut down some of the school programs. By 1956, almost any amount of federal money was available for the purchase of milk. So, during that time, kids at Springdale Elementary got all the milk they could drink. Allowing



Louella Patterson. Photo courtesy of the author.

milk out of the lunchroom came to a halt one day though. One of the students came running into the school over the noon hour in search of Grace.

"Mrs. Campbell, you won't believe what is happening outside. Some of the kids are throwing their milk cartons up against the side of the schoolhouse to watch 'um explode!" It was like a precursor to the water balloon. Because Grace would not tolerate disorderly conduct or waste, she walked briskly out of the building and around to the side where she caught five kids in the act. "Billy, Suzie, Melvin, Kay, and Bobby follow me." They obeyed and each got three swats with a Ping-Pong paddle. She then ordered them to go to their seats for the rest of the day.

I ate Luella's cooking for six years so I can vouch for its goodness. The rolls were delicious. So were her no-bake chocolate

LOUELLA'S UNBAKED COOKIES

2 c sugar
1 stick oleo
¼ c cocoa
½ c milk
Boil together for 1 min after it starts to boil hard.
Mix in quickly:
½ c peanut butter
3 c quick oats
1 tsp vanilla
Drop on a cookie sheet from a teaspoon.

LOUELLA'S CHEESE QUICK

1 T dry mustard
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp cayenne
1 T Worcestershire sauce
2 lbs. cheese, cut or grated
2 c water

In the top part of a double boiler, mix mustard and cayenne. Add Worcestershire sauce, water, and cheese. Place pan over boiling water. Cover and keep over simmering water until cheese melts. Stir several times during the heating process. Beat until smooth (mixture will be thin). Cool slightly to thicken. To store, pour into a refrigerator container, cover, and refrigerate. Use cold or reheated. Makes 5 3/4 cups.

Grace's Notation: It Spreads—It Melts—It Keeps—It's Cheap

Suggestions for Using Cheese Quick: use as a sandwich spread; use in a toasted or grilled sandwich; pour over a frankfurter in a bun; serve on a hamburger patty; used over cooked macaroni; use as a topping for baked potato

Author's Note: Being in abundant supply, commodity cheese from Springdale Elementary School precipitated the use of this recipe.

cookies, made of oatmeal, cocoa, and peanut butter. There was one secret Louella kept. If any cookies were left over, she would allow the kids to sneak them out of the lunchroom. Special meals were prepared for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter.

Schools were advised by the government not to sell or give away commodities. If there were excesses or the commodities were out of date, they had to be thrown away. Grace "threw them away", especially the cheese, in a culvert down past the lower school playground by the railroad tracks after she discreetly let needy families know of the discard location. Her "waste not, want not" philosophy came through yet again.

Over time, Grace was pleased with the benefits of the hot lunch program as she could see improvements in the students' health and performance. Many school officials reported improvements. One report indicated the children had gained an average of five pounds after the school hot lunch program was initiated.

MYRA ALLEY KINGSBURY was born and raised in the hills of Springdale, Fayette County. She received her undergraduate degree from Concord University, and a master's from The Ohio State University, she also obtained a Certified Financial Planner designation. Much of her success she attributes to the guidance of her grandmother (Grace Campbell, better known as 'Mawzy'). This article was a result of the research she conducted for her book Mawzy's Hope Chest. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Mail Carrier Lady

by Cody Burdette

Ruby Mitchell Vaughan was the first lady to carry the U.S. Mail on Falling Rock (Kanawha County) and the first lady on Falling Rock to drive an automobile. She married Cecil Vaughan in 1937. They had three daughters, Marcine, Patsy, and Barbara. She was a woman ahead of her time—she bought a new 1946 Dodge truck to use on her mail route. Before the Dodge, she used a Model A Ford. She bought china, polished silverware, and nice suits. She took over the mail route from her Father, James Westley Mitchell. He carried the U.S. Mail by horseback. One day he fell off the horse and could not return to work, so Ruby started carrying the mail from the Clendenin post office to her route on Falling Rock.

Ruby's grandparents came from Pike County, KY in the early 1800s. There was a song written about them, titled "Sweet Betsy from Pike". They settled in Morris Creek when it was a wilderness. They were Ike and Betsy Bishop. These early settlers of Clay County hacked out nice farms from the wilderness. They were strong, determined people. They had bad, to no roads. When the railroad came up Elk River, the little farms, sawmills, and coal mines had a way to ship their goods to the outside world, so things began to change for the better. Ruby saw these changes first-hand. She came from horse and wagon days to the jet age!

While her husband Cecil was in World War II, she bought the Vaughan family farm with money from the mail route. She sold the timber on the farm to the Osbournes of Clendenin and bought the new Dodge truck from the Dodge dealership in Clendenin. Ruby was a God-fearing Christian lady. She was well-respected by everyone on Falling Rock. She was a beautiful woman, tall, with black hair and black eyes. All the children on Falling Rock would wait by their mailboxes to get the family mail and talk to Ruby. Some of the young boys would go with Ruby and help her when the mail was heavy. In the winter when snow was deep, she would put chains on the Dodge and still deliver the mail on time.

Through all this, Ruby took care of her three girls, seeing to their everyday needs, food, clothes, and getting them off to school. She did all this while Cecil was away at war. No doubt she went to work many days when she did not feel like working! Her mail route started in Clendenin and went up Morris Creek, ending at the head of Falling Rock Creek. A rough route through the wilderness for a man, and really rough for a lady!

The Youmack Lumber Company had a large bandmill at the mouth of Morris Creek. They built a logging railroad to the head of Morris Creek and used switchbacks to cross into Falling Rock Creek. They used Climax logging locomotives on this railroad. Ruby probably saw all of this. Many of the young people on Falling Rock Creek and Morris Creek would hitch rides with Ruby into Clendenin. Some of the folks Ruby delivered mail to that lived on Falling Rock Creek in the 1940s included the Powells, Vaughans, Cantrells, Mullins, Richards, Craigs, Myers, Sayres, Withrows, Mitchells, and Coles.

Morris Creek had a lot of industry at this time. In addition to the Youmack Lumber Company, there was a large coal mine. There were more than 30 homes to which Ruby delivered mail. Twenty-five to thirty loaded coal cars left Morris Creek daily. Youmack mill at the mouth of Morris Creek was a large bandmill, so they shipped a lot of lumber and had a large workforce. Some of the families who lived and worked on Morris Creek were the Evans, Belchers, Bishops, Carpenters, Salisburys, Mullins, Graham, Cantrells, Lanes,



Ruby Mitchell Vaughan and Daughter Barbara Graham, 1958.



A young Ruby Mitchell Vaughan (right), pictured with her brother Denzil Mitchell, a WWII POW.



Ruby Eidth Mitchell Vaughan, age 42.

Shorts, Jetts, Roush, Mitchells, Whites—Ruby knew all these people and their children. She knew when they had a baby and when someone died.

These early folks had to depend on each other, sickness was treated with home remedies, and babies were born at home. The midwives on Falling Rock Creek were Lita Vaughan and Betty Mullins. The midwife on Morris Creek was Mary Joy Mullins. When some new folks moved in, everyone would bring food to their new home. People cared about each other back then.

Falling Rock Creek and Morris Creek were alive back in Ruby's day. The sounds of industry could be heard every day. Each house would have good smells coming from them as housewives would be cooking different meals. Now all is quiet, except the sounds of the creek as it makes its way to Elk River.

Through all these things and changes Ruby remained strong and worked out a better life for her family. In 1948 Ruby came down with Tuberculosis and spent 18 months in the T.B. Hospital at Beckley. By this time someone else had taken over the mail route. Ruby spent the next 18 years working on the farm and raising her three girls. Ruby passed away on July 26, 1968, she was 48 years old. When you talk to older folks, they remember Ruby as a fine, strong, beautiful lady.



The Vaughan Homeplace.

People like Ruby made this country what it is today. Without their blood, sweat, and tears, we would be living in a different world. She was part of one of the greatest generations to live in modern times. We owe a lot to these people and should never forget them.

CODY BURDETTE grew up in a railroading family and went to school all over West Virginia, making a lot of friends as a result. He went to work for BC&G railroad right out of highschool, and later ran his own garage and auto-repair shop in Clendenin for over 20 years. He also worked as an engineer for Cass Scenic Railroad, following in the footsteps of his father who was shop foreman and instrumental in re-establishing Cass Scenic Railroad. This is Cody's eighth article for GOLDENSEAL, his most recent being in Winter of 2006.

Macomber Community Church Annual Apple Butter Fest

by Candy Thompson

An Appalachian October fall day includes multicolored leaves falling to the ground, a cool breeze blowing through the trees, and a giant copper kettle of apple butter cooking. As the aroma fills the air, it's time for the Macomber Community Church Annual Apple Butter Festival to begin.



Folks at the Macomber Community Church Annual Apple Butter Festival hard at work stirring the four giant copper kettles of apple butter. The stirring process takes about seven to eight hours, sometimes longer.

The four giant copper kettles are filled to the brim with all the ingredients to make the most delicious apple butter recipe. Many apples had to be peeled, cored, and sliced. The right mixture of sugar, apple cider, and a few secret spices was added. The ingredients needed to be continuously stirred with a large long handled wooden paddle until perfectly combined.

Creating a large kettle of apple butter takes time and patience. The stirring process takes about seven to eight hours, sometimes longer. A hardwood fire must be maintained under the kettle, to keep a continuous high heat temperature. This keeps the apple butter cooking. The apple butter thickens to a condensed state as it cooks, producing a medium brown colored caramelized spread.

I took a turn stirring the kettle. The wooden paddle did start to weigh on my arm and shoulder muscles. But I wanted to experience what it was like to be a part of this delicious West Virginia tradition. I could smell the sweet scent of the apple butter all around me as I stirred. Anyone who wanted could take a turn stirring a kettle.

Chairs were set up outside all around with tables scattered about. There was plenty of outdoor seating for everyone. Wonderful church hymns and country music were provided by some of the local boys. Normally every year, there are hay rides and various games for all ages—children to adults.

While maintaining social distancing, there were still plenty of opportunities for a neighborly hello and friendly conversation. It was like being a part of one big happy neighborly family.

At noon, we all bowed our heads as the blessing of the meal was said. Local cooks provided a delicious homemade smorgasbord of pulled pork sandwiches, hot dogs with chili or any assortment of condiments, boiled buttered potatoes, green beans, baked beans, coleslaw, and rolls. There was a large assortment of pies, cakes, and cookies for dessert. With many choices of non-alcoholic drinks being served. The church only asks



Everybody mans their post in the assembly line to jar up the hot apple butter.



The finished product. Proceeds from the apple butter sales, along with the donations from the meal, support this small country church.

for a donation for this appetizing well-prepared cuisine. Also, hand sanitizer was provided at several stations.

The announcement was made—a couple of the kettles of apple butter were ready to be put into the glass canning jars. I watched intensely as they set up the equipment to begin processing the apple butter. Tables were lined up, boxes of new jars were opened, lids were placed and gloves were on everyone's hands. People were lined up on both sides of the tables for their assigned tasks. They used a small metal pan for the dipper and a funnel to fill each jar to the brim. Quickly they began moving the filled jars along the assembly line. Until the last filled apple butter jar was finally placed back into the cardboard box.

People were lined up to make their purchases of a filled jar, as soon as it reached the marketing table. Many others had pre-placed orders ahead of time. The apple butter was still very hot in the jars. As I picked up a jar to buy, I could feel the heat from the ingredients inside. The newly filled apple butter jars were sold as fast as they were filled!

Homemade apple butter tastes perfectly delicious on biscuits and toast. I have even enjoyed it mixed in oatmeal. Apple butter adds a sweet and lightly spicy taste, to whatever you add it to. Proceeds from the apple butter sales, along with the donations from the meal, support this small country church. Plus the various supporting offerings and community work the church aids in.

I had a great time at the apple butter making festival. There is nothing like a jar of freshly made apple butter to entice my taste buds. It's a delightful delicacy, to eat all winter long—or any time of the year. I brought home the best apple butter ever because I helped to stir it (well stirred a little bit). I helped to create a state tradition, good ole West Virginia apple butter.

The Macomber Community Church Annual Apple Butter Festival is normally held on the 2nd Saturday in October. Located on Rt 50, (George Washington Highway) near the Cheat River Bridge between Macomber and Erwin, Preston County, West Virginia. There are direction signs and you can see the steamy smoke, from the apple butter kettles cooking away when you are close by.

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



From Milk to Cider:

Preston County Family Farm Transitions to Heirloom Apples

by Carl E. Feather

Shortly after 10 a.m. on a Monday in early March 2022, 68-year-old Paul Teets scrambled up an old apple tree in Eglon, Preston County, and clipped a small branch sporting several scions, the new growth the tree had put out in 2021. Back in the milking parlor of his family's Horse Shoe Run barn, Paul grafted six of the scions onto Geneva rootstock, wrapped the connection with tape, and attached a label: "Carl Feather's." The resulting tree carried that label until fall 2022 when Paul returned to the donor tree and gathered a sample of the fruit with the intent of matching it to a known variety. In the absence of a match, it would remain known as "Carl Feather's" and take its place among dozens of other eponymous trees in the Teets' Preston County orchard.

The donor tree stands in the front yard of what had been the home and farm of my paternal grandparents, Russel and Maud Feather. Its small but flavorful apples—like the barn, its cats, fishing for bluegills in the pond, and gathering hickory nuts up the lane—are among the disparate elements that form my memories of Eglon visits.

Maud often fretted about the messy, often wormy, apples that pelted the driveway and yard throughout September and October. She gathered these drops daily and transformed them into fresh applesauce served alongside the hamburger patties that were my grandfather's standing order for lunch.

I recalled the apples as small but flavorful. In the economy of the farm, they were a gift from God, a crop perennially planted and, hard frosts aside, reliable as the spring rain. They were there for the taking, and take them she did.

My grandparents have been gone from this farm for decades; it slipped from family ownership after my grandmother moved into an apartment in Oakland, Maryland. Grandpa's garage, the smokehouse, and other outbuildings have been razed by subsequent owners, and both the house, built by my great-grandfather, and the barn are succumbing to the entropy of human disregard. But the tree remains, year after year bearing a strong crop, as if waiting for Maud to once again exit the kitchen with a plastic pan and paring knife in hand.

Five months before visiting the tree with Paul, I drove past the farm to verify the tree's continued existence while on my way to an apple sampling event at the Teets farm, owned by Paul and Karen. The Hog Back farm was familiar to me from a visit there in 1997, when I interviewed Paul's late father, David, for a Goldenseal article about the family's dairy and milk route [See "The Milk Had to Get Through: Home Delivery in Tucker County," Spring 1999].

Paul and Karen assumed the dairy aspect of the farm in 1979 and ran it with a herd that seldom exceeded three dozen—too small for profitability. Paul supplemented the farm income as a log truck and school bus driver, with carpentry work, and whatever other odd jobs necessary to maintain the life of the farm and their three children, Kevin, Aaron, and Amanda. Karen also worked off the farm at many different jobs, including in the oil and gas industry.

By 1986 the dairy operation reached the



A Yellow Transparent apple tree, believed to be a century or older, keeps watch over fledgling trees at the Teets heirloom orchard in Preston County. The old tree is among those on the former dairy farm that donated scion that was grafted onto new rootstock and thus perpetuates the variety.

tipping point for the couple and many other operators of small dairy farms. "You either had to get bigger and put a lot of money into it or get out," Paul says. They sold out. The farm was re-purposed for beef cattle and, after a few years of that business, the couple turned to wintering cattle for other producers. "Then we got out of cattle altogether," Paul says.

Concurrent with these ventures, Paul's father began planting fruit trees and berry vines in what had been the cow pasture. Enriched by the byproducts of that former use, the soil was kind and nurturing to whatever Dave entrusted to it. "He just liked growing things," Paul says. "Dad bought several different kinds of pear trees and peach trees. Blueberries, English walnuts."—And apples. Lots of apples.

Like virtually any homestead farm in West Virginia, the Teets land hosted an apple orchard that provided the family with an annual parade of fresh fruit. In early summer, the Yellow Transparents provided apples for sauce; autumn brought the Fallawaters, Fall Rambos, and Grimes Goldens. The black Ben Davis apples, whose flavors don't "zing" until February, filled the home with the sweetness of apple butter gurgling in a pot on the stovetop.

Dave recognized these trees as a legacy from the Blamble, Watring, and Henline ancestors who'd owned and worked these farms since 1828 when pioneer Abraham Watring (Wudring) purchased the entire tract. In 1869 Abraham sold the eastern section of the farm to his son Benjamin. Dan Blamble purchased the eastern portion in 1892. The west farm passed to Watring heirs and was sold to John Henline in 1896. John's granddaughter, Wilma Mae Henline, married David Teets in 1948, and in 1953 David and Wilma Mae purchased the eastern farm from the heirs of Dan Blamble,

thus becoming neighbors to her parents. Following Lawrence Henline's death, David and Wilma Mae purchased the western farm, thereby reuniting the two farms under a common owner for the first time since 1869. In 2001 Paul's parents deeded the tracts to him.

All that is background to the second orchard that once grew on the hill above the Teets' farm on former Watring/Blamble land. Paul says his father told him the story of how Dan Blamble became mentally unstable toward the end of his life and dramatically dealt a death blow to the hilltop orchard one day. "He came in one day and said, 'I took care of them!'" Paul says. "He had taken an ax up there and girdled (the apple trees), but he didn't girdle the Fall Rambo. He killed all the trees except the Fall Rambo."

Trees on the Henline farm, including the venerated Fallawater (see sidebar), had been spared except from time itself. Taking note of the fate of heirloom apple trees throughout the farming community, Dave took an interest in preserving those that remained in his domain. He worked with several contacts who had some experience with grafting, but none of those efforts produced viable trees.

The "Heirloom Apples" story in the Fall 2001 Goldenseal, which was devoted to the Mountain State's apple history, led David to contact Carlos Manning of Lester (Raleigh County). David envisioned an heirloom apple orchard where the cows once grazed, but he felt Paul would be better suited to learning the skills necessary to perpetuate the heirlooms. "Dad told me, 'Why don't you try grafting? You ought to be able to do that," Paul recalls.

Working with Carlos, Paul, and David established a new generation of all but two of the heirloom varieties that grew on the farm, including the Fall Rambo on the hill. "One of the apples (they didn't save) was one that mom made apple salad from," Paul recalls. "The apple would not turn brown in the salad. The other one was one that grew next to the chicken house and kept blowing over." The former cow pasture was selected as the site of this new orchard. "Dad kept saying, 'I'll never get (to eat) any of the apples from these trees, but you kids will have them. But Dad ate a lot of the apples off the ones he said he would not eat from because he lived to be 92. He just loved to grow them."

Largely through happenstance, Paul and Karen took David's passion to the next level. As neighbors learned of his ability to save heirloom varieties and provide the fruit each fall, they asked him to perpetuate trees from their family farms.

While Paul and Karen try to match the varieties they procured from regional farms to documented heirlooms, the trees are often unique volunteers that came up from seed and are crosses with unique characteristics. In these cases, Paul assigns a moniker based on the donor's name, location of the tree, or other unique identifiers. Thus, there are Kelly Farm, Eglon Post Office, Jobe Road, Scott Stemple, Jim 4 and Jim 5, Dr. Kines, Sissa Boo Big Red, and Pride of Preston varieties growing in the orchard.

The latter grew on the Aurora Pike property of the late Clifford Stemple dating back to Clifford's grandfather's time. Paul grafted scion wood from that tree, whose fruit is fine enough to earn it the "pride" label.

Sissy Boo Big Red came from a recommendation by a neighbor who hunts in that hollow, which is located along Route 219 north of Thomas in Tucker County. More recently, a second red apple from that area was brought to Paul's attention, and he is propagating that as the Railroad Red because it was discovered along the abandoned railroad bed at William.

These old apples and the places where they are found intersect with Paul's childhood when he and his father delivered eggs from their farm to Thomas, a bustling

town back in the 1950s and 60s. "We'd pass through William, Pierce, and as we went through there stop and sell eggs," Paul says. "We did that every Saturday night."

He says his father knew the families all along that road, my maternal grandparents included, and could tell Paul where the husband worked, what kind of car they owned, and the names of the children. He had a story for just about every yard of the highway between Horse Shoe Run and Thomas. "I did not pay that much attention to him at that time. I should have paid more attention to what he was telling me," Paul says.

The trees honor the families whose stories, although lost, survive as misshapen fruit with russet, smooth, scabby, or striped skin; some tart, some sweet; some juicy, some mealy; some who winter well and others who spoil quickly; some whose best use is cider, some who are best for baking, and some best enjoyed right off the tree. Perhaps we love them because, in their personalities and qualities, they are akin to humanity. Or, more pragmatically, they simply taste better than the supermarket varieties shipped hundreds of miles and engineered to appeal to the eye rather than the palate.

Word of his effort spread among neighbors who had a tree or two left in their old orchards and wanted to "save" for the next generation. Several newspapers in the region picked up on his orchard story and gave the effort broader exposure. Paul says that before word of their effort was disseminated beyond Eglon and Aurora, they annually grafted 100 to 200 trees in late winter. In 2022, they grafted 700, which included scions they'd acquired from the southern part of the state during a visit with Carlos Manning, who supplies the rootstock. Paul says the scions from the state's other end provided varieties they did not have in their orchard and have helped grow the orchard's inventory to 168 named varieties. Likewise, they shared scions with Carlos Manning and other growers.



By mid-April, the newly grafted trees are ready to be planted in five-gallon buckets filled with soil sourced from area farms and ditching projects. Paul Teets says it won't be until June or so before the success of each graft is known, however. The trees are delivered to customers for planting in their orchards at the end of this first growing season.

Grafting is done while the rootstock and donor trees are dormant. An apple seed rarely produces a tree true to its parent. However, by grafting a piece of new growth from the donor tree onto rootstock, the original variety can be reliably replicated. The trees in their orchard provide scion for fulfilling the orders that their customers place in the fall. Paul says the grafting is done right around the time the trees are being pruned, so there is plenty of this scion wood available.

Paul uses the two techniques that Carlos taught him years ago. And Paul still uses the same thin-bladed knife that Carlos made for him and on which he learned the skill.

The tongue-and-whip graft involves trimming back the top of the rootstock and cut-

ting a notch into the wood. The scion is likewise trimmed and the wood brought to a point, the "tongue" received by the split in the rootstock's wood.

The cleft graft, which is faster to perform, works particularly well for smaller pieces of scion. The rootstock and scion are trimmed at 45-degree angles, then their exposed surfaces matched.

In both cases, the key to success is aligning the green cambium layers between the bark and wood. Because the cambium is the tree's "circulatory system," nourishment from the rootstock can flow across the graft to the scion, from which the new tree will eventually put forth limbs.

Grafts are sealed with wax or a special tape; Paul uses tape. Roots of the freshly grafted trees are wrapped in moistened paper towels, then set aside in a cool area for several weeks. Around the end of March, each fledgling tree is transplanted into a 5-gallon bucket filled with dirt from the barnyard. Karen says accumulating the buckets needed for this operation is a huge task. Drywall contractors save their empty goop buckets for them, and Karen brakes for cat litter buckets and other usable containers discarded in roadside ditches and residential trash-collection piles.

"We scavenge … buckets to plant in from every source we can find," she says. "It is handy for customers to take the trees when they can pick them up, then hold them until it is convenient to plant them. Sometimes we get our buckets back, sometimes not. Some customers start container gardens in them. That is O.K., too. We are often amused at people who preach about saving the planet but who live such wasteful lives. Around here, we salvage everything that still has any good in it. We repurpose everything we can."

By June, Paul can tell which grafts have failed; typically 20 percent or so don't take, so he hedges his chances to ensure that he can fill the orders. The trees are ready for distribution and planting in November. Paul says planting a dormant tree gives it a better start than if it were planted in the spring, a timetable used by most mail-order and garden centers.

Seven hundred five-gallon buckets have a huge footprint, but the former dairy farm's infrastructure can handle it. Paul stores the freshly grafted trees in the former cooler room. His cider press is in the former milk house, and the old milking parlor is used for grafting, cider, and apple storage. A barn is a barn, essential for storing tractors and supplies, and its commodious bay accommodates large groups that attend educational events at the farm.

Paul's parents thus left future generations a practical, adaptable infrastructure in addition to the orchard. Likewise, Paul and Karen are working with their three children and eight grandchildren to create a sustainable succession plan for the 245-acre farm. "That was Dad's dream, to have it for the future generations," Paul says.

Their daughter, Amanda, lives in a house Paul and Karen put in on the former Henline portion of the farm. She operates a daycare there. Son Aaron lives down the road and is a civil engineer. Son Kevin lives in Cleveland, Ohio, and has three daughters. He and his wife, Elissa, plan to eventually move to the family farm, build a house, and look for more ways to incorporate the orchard and farm's natural resources into a livelihood. The ideas range from agritourism centered on the orchard to selling scions for grafting and apple wood for smokers. In March 2022 Kevin assisted his parents with the grafting chores, learning by doing what's involved in preserving heirlooms.

At this time the farm's main cash crop is hay; raising apples and grafting trees are hobbies that became businesses because of the large cash outlays for rootstock, grafting tape, and other supplies that have to be recouped through selling trees. Karen

Favorite Apple is…

Raised on heirlooms and possessing access to hundreds of antique varieties, neither Paul nor Karen can pick out one favorite variety from this deep barrel. Paul says it is like when a person unfamiliar with the options tells him to "pick out a good apple for me."

"I have no idea what a good apple is," Paul says. "What I think is a good apple might not be so for another person. And every time you think you have a favorite, you get another."

It's a personal thing. "I like the Fall Rambo really well," Paul says. "I don't have any bottom teeth, and I don't like the hard, crispy apple, so I like softer apples like the Rambo."

Karen says that if she were starting an orchard from scratch, she'd have five sections: antique, seedling, Limbertwig (varieties with limber, weeping branches, and sweet yet acidic-tasting fruit), cider, and West Virginia apples. "We feel obliged to keep West Virginia apples," Karen says.

Intended purpose has a lot to do with selecting the best trees for one's yard or farm. Karen, who handles the "research and development" side of the business, uses her kitchen as a laboratory for this research. Her favorites are: Gravenstein for apple pies; Baldwin for applesauce; Cox's Orange Pippin for drying; Ashmead's Kernel for out-of-hand eating; Fall Rambo for all-around uses; Cortland for apple salad; July Sweet for canning/apple crisp; Fried Apple for, you guessed it, frying; Ben Davis for apple butter, but only after it has aged for several months; and Fallawater, a large, green apple with great keeping qualities—of course, the list changes with the next new variety that gets tested.

Properly stored, the Fallawater would keep throughout the winter. My father's cousin, Ruby Judy, who lives down the highway from Paul, recalls storing their Fallawater apples in the grain bin. Care was taken to not allow the apples to touch each other. Paul says his parents stored their Fallawaters in the 1948 refrigerator they purchased about the time they were married.

"That was Dad's favorite apple," Paul says. "They eventually got a new refrigerator, but they kept that one because it was not frost-free, therefore it would not dry out the apple. There were some years they would not use all the apples, and when it came time to put in a new crop, there would still be some (edible) Fallawaters in there."

Personally, I thought the Fallawater to be lacking in texture and flavor, but Ruby and Paul find them worthy, familiar neighbors whose roots stretch back to childhood grain bins, bowls of fresh applesauce, and vintage refrigerators (his sister owns and still uses that 1948 fridge). And that is the magic of these orbs; while we cannot return our aging bodies to childhood, we can transport taste buds and smell receptors to that time of Sunday dinners at Grandpap's house, eating a fresh heirloom out of hand, and weekend apple butter stirs.

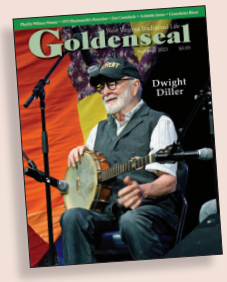
says that by recycling and repurposing, they have been able to keep operating costs and prices at a minimum. It's more than a courtesy to their customers, it's a way of life.

"We could buy shiny new everything and look very professional," Karen says. "We could also raise our prices to pay for those things. That is not why we are doing this. We repurpose everything we can because that is our philosophy and because it keeps our costs, and therefore our prices, down."

Paul says the orchard has reached the point that Carlos Manning warned him about years ago—he will have to decide if he's going to sell apples or trees, a small farm can't do both.

Regardless of which direction the orchard takes, Paul says he'd rather "wear out than rust out," and if his father's longevity is any predictor of his own mortality, Paul will be around for several more decades to keep memories, legacies, and good eating alive on Preston County's rolling farmland.

"I have realized that apples mean more to people than just food," Karen says. "There is often a nostalgia to it. Many



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The Pride of Preston County. This variety grew on the Aurora Pike property of the late Clifford Stemple dating back to Clifford's grandfather's time. Paul grafted scion wood from that tree, whose fruit is fine enough to earn it the "pride" label.

people still prefer what they ate as a child. I often hear stories that begin, "My grandmother …

"(A customer) searched for 30 years for a July Sweet apple and came from New Hampshire to get July Sweet trees," Karen says. "We shipped her a box of apples that year, so she wouldn't have to wait any longer."

But her favorite lost-apple-found story involves a woman who unsuccessfully searched for a Sheep's Nose apple she recalled from her childhood. After she died, the family discovered the variety' among those in the Teets orchard.

"Her family got (some trees) from us and put (a Sheep's Nose apple) on her grave," Karen says.

Paul and Karen Teets typically hold an apple sampling and tree ordering day in October. Contact them at Teets Orchard and Nursery, 723 Hog Back Road, Eglon WV 26716. Email is kbteets@yahoo.com; phone is 304-698-6712. They offer apples, cider, and trees grafted to order.

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



Photo of Shay #11 climbing through the 8.7 percent grade s-curve on its way to Whitaker Station during the Rail Heritage Weekend at Cass Scenic Railroad. Shay #11 was built by Lima Locomotive Works in Lima, Ohio, and turns 100 years old this year in July.

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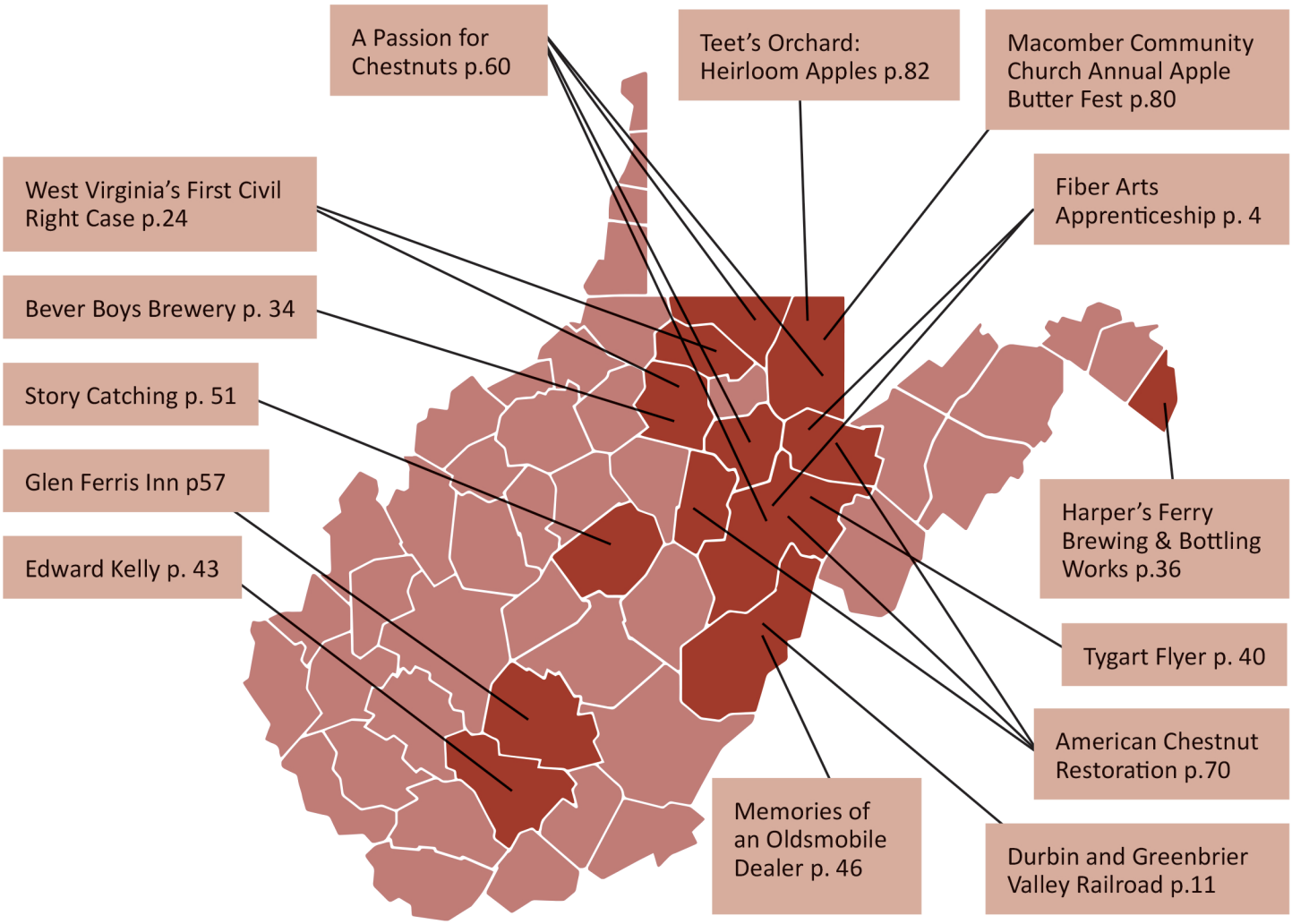

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