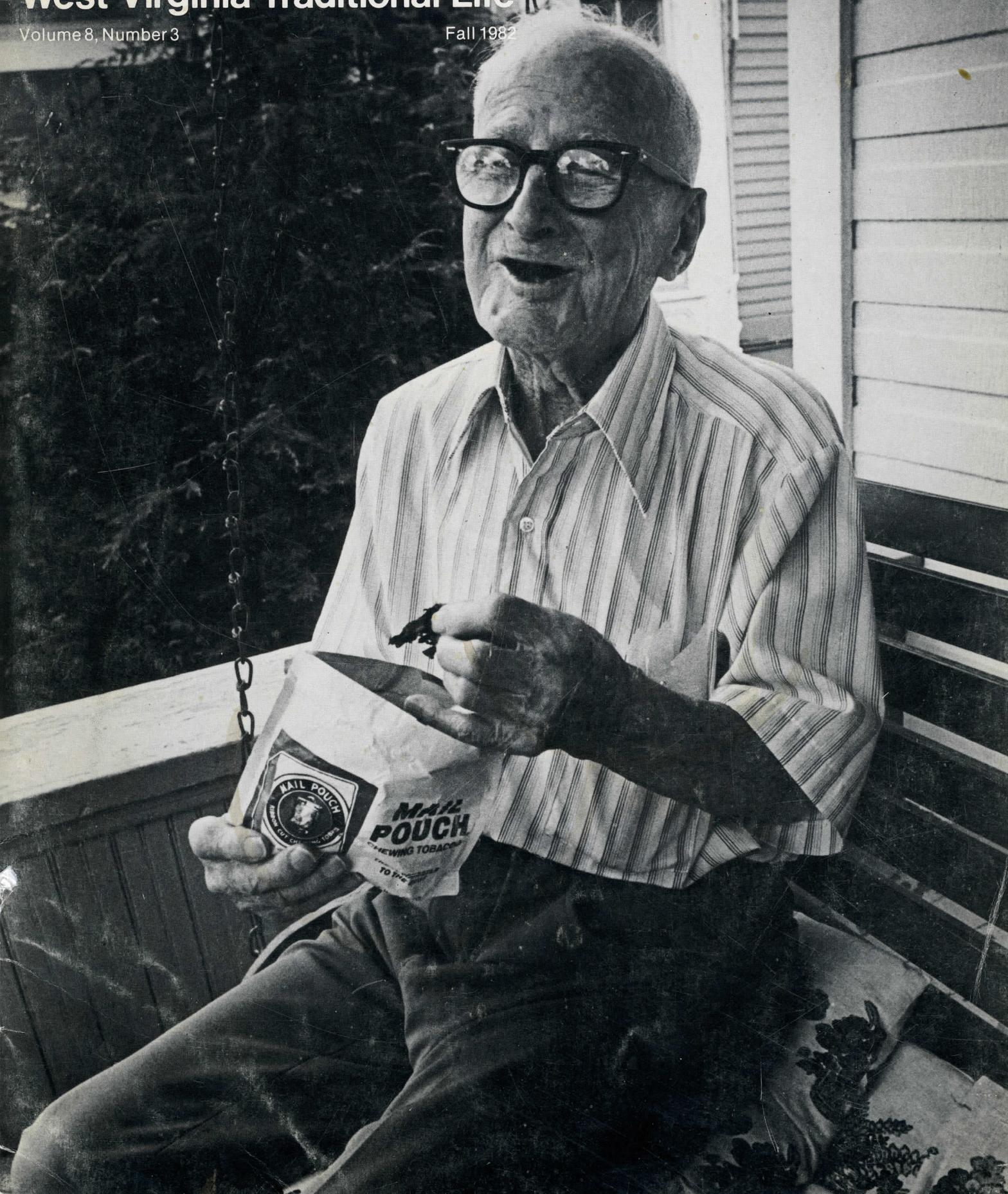


# Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

Volume 8, Number 3

Fall 1982



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## From the Editor: Renewal Time

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This time last year GOLDENSEAL was in a serious financial crunch. We had just finished a rough fiscal year, when a scarcity of funds had forced us to "freeze" our mailing list several times. As names of interested new readers piled up in the office, it often seemed that we spent more time explaining our plight to them than we did working on the magazine. To make bad matters worse, a final disappointment came that spring, when we had to warehouse several tons of the April-June issue for three months for lack of postage money.

Fortunately, the support of the Department of Culture and History never wavered, and—however desperate we felt at the time—I suppose the actual survival of GOLDENSEAL was not in question. But it did appear that we could no longer get the magazine to all those who wanted it, and that we could no longer guarantee that *anybody* got it on time.

At that point, we decided to appeal directly to the readers for support, as many of you had suggested. In the Fall 1981 GOLDENSEAL we outlined a new "voluntary subscription" program, requesting that each reader contribute \$10 annually.

You responded magnificently.

Your generous contributions covered about two-thirds of our printing bill for the year, allowing us to "unfreeze" the mailing list once and for all. And when the State's postage money again ran low this year, the voluntary subscription fund made sure that the Spring GOLDENSEAL went out on time. In fact, with your support and our new seasonal publishing schedule, we've been able to keep a little ahead of each quarter, with this Fall 1982 issue reaching you well before the leaves begin to fly.

Perhaps most important of all, your financial vote of confidence provided a tremendous morale boost, enabling us to concentrate more fully on creating the best possible magazine.

But that was last year. This issue starts us on the new 1982-83 fiscal year, with new bills to pay. It's time to renew your voluntary subscription for another year of GOLDENSEAL. Some readers have already done so, and we urge the rest of you to as soon as possible. Since we've been able to keep our costs down—per magazine costs fall as circulation rises, fortunately—we're keeping the suggested voluntary subscription at \$10. That makes GOLDENSEAL a relative bargain, compared to last year and compared to the cost of other quarterlies.

We're printing a coupon in this issue, with one side for

new readers and the other for renewals. We know that many people save GOLDENSEAL, and we've again designed the subscription coupon so that it may be clipped with no damage to the contents of the magazine. Like last year, we will also follow through with letters to all readers, which should arrive within a few days of this issue.

We welcome contributions whenever they arrive, of course, but it's most convenient for us to lump as many as possible at the time of this annual appeal. For that reason, if you sent your check over the winter or spring months you may want to make a further small contribution to get your subscription on the regular fall-to-fall schedule. For example, if you sent \$10 six months ago, an additional \$5 now would extend your voluntary subscription through this time next year. From then on you can count on us reminding you each year when renewal time rolls around, rather than trying to keep track of it yourself.

Again this year we stress that the GOLDENSEAL subscription is voluntary, and we'll continue to send the magazine to those who cannot make a contribution. We do hope that most readers will be able to make a donation in some amount, whether larger or smaller than the suggested \$10—last year we received checks ranging from \$1 to \$200, and were grateful for all of them. Give what you can, and with your support we'll be able to avoid going to a regular paid subscription for the foreseeable future.

So that's our annual "pitch," as low-key as I can make it while still emphasizing the urgency of our need. Apart from the one follow-up letter you'll hear nothing more from us on the subject, for we didn't have to nag you last year and don't expect to this year. Instead, we'll go ahead with our work here while awaiting your response.

In the meantime, we invite you to enjoy another year of GOLDENSEAL. Beginning with this magazine we have a new printer, McClain Printing Company of Tucker County, and we look forward to a productive partnership with them. We have the same designers and many of the same freelance writers and photographers, as well as some promising new people. This first issue includes stories from West Virginia places as diverse as Preston, Mercer, and Mineral counties, and we have plenty of fine raw material on hand for the future.

Altogether, with your help we expect another good year for GOLDENSEAL.

—Ken Sullivan

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Governor



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GOLDENSEAL is published four times a year, in February, May, August, and November. The magazine is distributed without charge, although a \$10 yearly contribution is suggested. Manuscripts, photographs, and letters are welcome. All correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, GOLDENSEAL, Department of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25305. Phone (304) 348-0220.

# Goldenseal

A Quarterly Forum for Documenting  
West Virginia's Traditional Life

Volume 8, Number 3 ❁ Fall 1982

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# Letters from Readers

GOLDENSEAL welcomes letters of general interest from readers. Our address is Department of Culture and History, The Cultural Center, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305.

Charleston, WV  
June 14, 1982

Editor:

I would like to be placed on your mailing list. Enclosed is a check for \$10, as my contribution to this interesting, enlightening view of West Virginia life.

We are new residents of Charleston, coming most recently from Delaware. We were introduced to your publication through a friend of my parents in central Illinois. This friend's father, who is from Pennsylvania, sent GOLDENSEAL to her, just because he found it interesting. To my knowledge, he has no ties to West Virginia.

I thought you'd like to know how wide a territory your publication touches.

Sincerely,  
Robalee M. Deike

Kenner, Louisiana  
March 21, 1982

Editor:

My fellow "transplanted" West Virginian and friend, Delores Thomas from Hurricane, loaned me GOLDENSEAL to use in writing a West Virginia folklore paper at the University of New Orleans. I hope that you do not mind my using some of the information for the archives here, giving full credit to GOLDENSEAL, of course. There is not one paper here on West Virginia folklore, and I think that should be corrected.

I am writing the folklore paper in an archaeology class. This is a start of a new career for me, as my children are grown up and on their own. There were so many things about growing up in West Virginia (in the country outside of Huntington) that I wanted to put in writing for my children as well as for myself, and your magazine will help jog my memory. Many of the things and places that you tell about in GOLDENSEAL were shared by me and my family who still lives there.

I only had a few of the copies to use and would love to be put on your

mailing list. I'm enclosing a donation to help defray the cost, as I am anxious to start receiving it. The only bad thing about your publication is that it makes me so homesick that I feel like hurrying back. Actually, it makes me feel that I am there for one very enjoyable period of reading, and I find myself going back to it to reread the articles, as each one is a treasure.

Yours truly,

Margaret Morehead Breedlove

**Dr. James Dye**

Minnora, WV  
March 27, 1982

Editor:

A few days ago my sister handed me a few copies of GOLDENSEAL. I found them very interesting and would like to be placed on your mailing list. I have been a subscriber to *Wonderful West Virginia* for a number of years, but had never seen or read a copy of GOLDENSEAL.

I especially enjoyed the story and pictures of Dr. James Dye of Chloe. Chloe is about a mile and a half up the road from Minnora where I was born. I am one of the five thousand babies he delivered, me being the one on August 10, 1913. Dr. Dye was among the last of the vanishing breed, dedicated to his profession of making people well, not getting rich, because his fees were small.

Enclosed is a check for \$10, and I am looking forward to receiving my first copy of GOLDENSEAL.

Yours truly,  
Carl B. Jarvis

**"Grandmother's House"**

Ripley, WV  
April 2, 1982

Editor:

A friend of mine has just acquainted me with GOLDENSEAL. I have delighted in reading the Spring issue, and particularly "Grandmother's House: Memories of a Brooke County Farm," by Anne Clark Culbert.

I grew up in the near vicinity of

the house she writes of and pass the remodeled form of the house several times a year when I visit my 90-year-old mother. My mother lived in the house with the Carters when she taught in the community in the early 1900's. Mother will be thrilled when I read her the article on my next visit in two weeks. She has many photographs of Anne Clark and will be so happy to hear of her now as Anne Clark Culbert.

I have been in the house many times and have fond memories of it, the farm, and the Carters.

Enclosed is a check for \$10. I wish to be on the mailing list for GOLDENSEAL. Both my husband and I will share the writings with our many friends throughout West Virginia. My husband is a former county clerk and I am a former 4-H Club agent and retired teacher.

Sincerely yours,  
Martena Kessel

**Capitol Birthday**

Vienna, Virginia  
June 4, 1982

Editor:

I especially enjoyed the Summer issue of GOLDENSEAL with the stories of the building of the State Capitol. The story about the Daniel Boone Hotel was of special interest too. I grew up in Charleston and remember the hotel as one of the downtown landmarks. I lived in the East End and as a youngster spent many pleasant hours in the Capitol at the museum in the basement; visiting my father, John M. Thompson, who worked in the Auditor's Office; or just enjoying the beauty of the building, inside and out. The Capitol lawn and front steps, as well as the steps to the river across the boulevard, were favorite places to play.

My maternal grandfather, J. Alfred Taylor, Sr., of Fayetteville, was the Speaker of the House of the first Legislature that sat in the new Capitol. He was a Fayette County newspaper editor and publisher who was elected to the West Virginia

House of Delegates four times—1917, 1921, 1931, and 1937. He also served in the 68th United States Congress (1923-25) and the 39th Congress (1925-27) and was the Democratic candidate for Governor of West Virginia in 1928.

I am collecting material on my grandfather's life in preparation for writing his biography. I would appreciate hearing from GOLDENSEAL readers who may have documents, correspondence, or reminiscences connected with J. Alfred Taylor, Sr.

Congratulations on your fine publication. It has been the source of helpful genealogical information as well as providing entertaining reading on West Virginia folklife.

Sincerely,

Jill T. Decker

421 Echols Street, SE  
Vienna, VA 22180

**Dick Rittenhouse**

New Cumberland, WV  
April 18, 1982

Editor:

Want to thank you for sending me the GOLDENSEAL magazine the past two years. I have saved all of them to read over again.

We have enjoyed the articles written by Arthur Prichard, as we were both born and raised in the Mannington area. We liked reading very much in the Spring edition his story about Dick Rittenhouse. We have known of him all our lives, and I

remember his father from when I was a child.

My father, Fred Moore, drove teams in his youth and he used to tell us stories about the teamsters, the elder Rittenhouse, and Bill Smith.

Thank you,

Mrs. W. C. Higginbotham

**Arthur Dale**

Ripley, WV  
June 22, 1982

Editor:

Please find enclosed a check for \$10 to help with the funding of GOLDENSEAL. It is a very interesting magazine. I was introduced to it by a neighbor showing me a story about Arthur Dale and a picture of President Roosevelt with the first class to go all four years of high school there. There I was, standing with the other boys and girls! I was one of the student speakers.

My parents were Edward and Edna Whittaker, part of the first homesteaders that moved to Arthur Dale in June of 1934. Oh, how happy we were! I can see us yet, with our few possessions and dear old milk cow, moving to a pretty new home.

In later years I married the neighbor boy and we bought our own home in Arthur Dale. We spent 15 years in it and then moved because of work. We still love that community and were so happy to see the center being repaired. We still

have folks from both sides of our family living there.

Getting back to graduation (1938): When asked to be one of the student speakers, I was overjoyed! We have a picture, cut from a newspaper, that was taken on that day, but it only shows my hand. I would very much appreciate it if you could send me a copy of the magazine with the article and picture in it.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Forman

Winter Park, Florida

June 8, 1982

Editor:

Would you tell me, please, if it is still possible to obtain a copy of the April-June 1981 GOLDENSEAL?

I was one of the Morgantown volunteers trying to be of help to the miners' families when Eleanor Roosevelt and Alice Davis of the American Friends Society arrived to lend a hand and to establish Arthur Dale.

From 1953 to 1975, a member of the first mining family to be chosen for Arthur Dale was our closest neighbor and dear friend.

I would dearly like to read your story of Arthur Dale. Those were warmly remembered days and you are doing a fascinating job of recalling them in your excellent magazine.

Sincerely your,

Elsie G. Cresswell

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## Current Programs • Festivals • Publications

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### CCC Reunion

The annual reunion of the West Virginia Chapter of CCC Alumni will be held at Richwood, Nicholas County, on September 11, 1982. This will be the fifth year that West Virginia veterans of the Civilian Conservation Corps have gotten together at Camp Woodbine, near Richwood, to talk over old times. The first reunion, in 1978, was the joint effort of Richwood postmaster Jack Dotson and Jim Comstock, editor of the *News Leader* and former editor-publisher of the *West Virginia Hillbilly*. The West Virginia alumni association has

since grown to over 100 members but, according to organizer Claude B. Smith, all former CCCers are welcome to attend the reunion.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was one of the New Deal programs, established by the Roosevelt administration in 1933 to help relieve unemployment by providing conservation work for young unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 25. Although the program ended in 1942, the CCC is still remembered for its work in the national forests and state parks [GOLDENSEAL, Volume 7, Number 1, January-March 1981].

Over 55,000 West Virginia men were enrolled in the CCC, and the state had 26 camps in all. Camp Woodbine, site of the annual reunion, is in the Monongahela National Forest near Richwood. Those interested in attending are asked to meet at Richwood's City Hall at 10 a.m. on September 11; from there, the group will go on to the camp. Participants should also plan to bring their own lunches. Cost of joining the West Virginia Alumni Chapter is \$5 per year.

For further information contact Claude B. Smith, Box 369, Oak Hill, WV 25901; phone (304) 469-6264.

## 46th Annual Forest Festival

"Fun in the Forest" is the theme of this year's Mountain State Forest Festival, to be held from October 6 through 10. One of the state's most popular festivals, the Elkins event attracts thousands of visitors annually, including five U.S. presidents.

One of the highlights of every Forest Festival is the traditional coronation ceremony, which will take place on October 8. Kristin Dodge of Fairmont has been chosen to reign as Queen Silvia XLVI, and will preside over a variety of activities offered to festival goers.

In addition to the Queen's Ball on the evening of the coronation, there will be two festival parades—the annual Firemen's Parade on Friday evening, and the Grand Feature Parade on Saturday afternoon. Other events include arts and crafts exhibits, lumberjack contests, the state championship plug and fly-casting competition, a turkey-calling contest, and the West

Virginia Open State Championship Fiddle and Banjo contests. Another event of special interest will be a jousting exhibition and competition, a nearly extinct sport whose popularity dates back to the middle ages.

For further information, contact the Mountain State Forest Festival, P.O. Box 369, Elkins, WV 26241.

## Hilltop Festival

Huntington Galleries is planning a weekend of festivities to complement and expand its annual Book Fair, September 4 and 5. The Book Fair, now in its fourth year, continues to grow in popularity. The goal of the fair is to raise money to aid the Galleries' education department through the sale of old books, magazines, and—this year for the first time—record albums which have been donated to the Galleries.

The Hilltop Festival, which will be held concurrently with the Book Fair, will offer a variety of activities to Gallery visitors. There will be

demonstrations of such traditional crafts as pottery, glassmaking, woodworking, weaving, and jewelry making, as well as sales of those items. Musical entertainment and bingo are planned for the afternoon, as well as a variety of activities geared to children. There will also be plenty of food to tempt festival goers' appetites. Both ethnic and American cuisine will be represented, including such basic cultural favorites as hot dogs and popcorn.

The Flying Lemon Circus from Johnson City, Tennessee, will be on hand, with jugglers, artists who paint children's faces, and performances of children's plays, including excerpts from *Little Chicago*.

The Hilltop Festival and Book Fair will be open on Saturday, September 4, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., and on Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For further information contact Huntington Galleries, Park Hills, Huntington, WV 25701; phone (304) 529-2701.

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# October Craft and Music Events

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Due to lack of space, the events for the month of October had to be left out of GOLDENSEAL's "Summer Craft and Music Events" listing, a regular feature in our Summer issue. We hope our readers, as well as the organizers of the various October festivals, will accept our apologies, and a somewhat belated printing of the month's events.

Oct. 2-3	County Festival (Mason County Regional State Farm Museum)	Point Pleasant	Oct. 14-17	West Virginia Black Walnut Festival	Spencer
Oct. 2-3	Oglebayfest (Oglebay Park)	Wheeling	Oct. 16	Apple Butter Stir (Morgan Cabin)	Bunker Hill
Oct. 2-3	Rupert Country Fling	Rupert	Oct. 16-17	West Virginia State Honey Festival (City Park)	Parkersburg
Oct. 6-10	Mountain State Forest Festival	Elkins	Oct. 17	Octoberfest (Bavarian Inn)	Shepherdstown
Oct. 8-9	Kermit Fall Festival	Kermit	Oct. 22-24	Mountain State Apple Harvest Festival	Martinsburg
Oct. 8-10	Clay County Golden Delicious Festival	Clay	Oct. 23	West Virginia Turkey Festival	Mathias
Oct. 9-10	Ninth Annual Apple Butter Festival	Berkeley Springs	Oct. 23-24	A.A.U.W. Arts & Crafts Exhibit	Welch
Oct. 9-10	Charter Day and Street Fair	Lewisburg	Oct. 29-30	Cross Roads 4-H Club Annual Bazaar and Sausage & Buckwheat Dinner	Fairmont
Oct. 9-10	Harvest Weekend (Fort New Salem)	Salem	Oct. 29-31	Arts & Crafts Weekend (North Bend State Park)	Cairo
Oct. 9-10	Ritchie County Heritage Weekend (North Bend State Park)	Cairo	Oct. 30	Dunbar Fall Street Festival	Dunbar
Oct. 9-10	Apple Butter Festival (Pricketts Fort)	Fairmont	Oct. 30-31	Christmas Workshops (Pricketts Fort)	Fairmont

# Remembering Luna Park

By Louise Bing

**W**hat makes a place famous? If it gives entertainment and joy to men, women and children, it is pretty apt to become famous. And that's what Charleston's old Luna Park did. It supplied amusement, entertainment, and joy to the people of Charleston and the surrounding countryside. It had something for all ages, from tiny tots on up. Teenagers were especially glorified at this place.

Luna was an old-fashioned amusement park, nothing like King's Island and the other great "theme parks" of our time, but grand enough for its day. Its location was on Charleston's West Side, on the bank of the Kanawha River at Park Avenue. The park covered several acres of ground, and was owned by J. B. Crowley. Mr. Crowley was known among Charlestonians as a partner in the local firm of Ashley & Crowley, tobacco wholesalers specializing in fine cigars. His businesses kept him fully occupied, and Richard Gresham, my neighbor and a former Luna Park employee, remembers that Mrs. Crowley was actually "in charge of everything that went on in the park."

Luna Park's main building was a huge wooden structure with a wooden fence, near the present site of the West Side Women's Club on Kanawha Boulevard. Trolley cars

brought whole families right to the entrance, while steamboats dropped boatloads of people at the nearby waterfront. Such excursion boats came from as far away as Point Pleasant and Gallipolis, leaving their passengers early in the morning for a full day of fun.

When my sister and I moved to Charleston from Ohio we soon heard of Luna Park. We went there with friends, and greatly enjoyed the music and the beautiful dancing pavilion. It was 1918. I had come to work at the South Charleston Naval Ordnance Plant, where armor plate was made for our battleships then fighting the First World War.

Over 60 years have passed since my first visit to the park, and I recently decided to try to locate others who had gone there as I had, to enjoy what it had to offer. I inquired through the popular "Hot Line" column of the *Charleston Daily Mail*. Within a few days several people had called or written, and the newspaper forwarded more than a dozen letters to me, some containing pictures. Others called directly, and in all I heard from about 18 people.

Most who contacted me are now in their 70's or 80's, and all were enthusiastic about a GOLDENSEAL story on Luna Park. Talking to me they recalled many things about the

park, and as they stirred up their recollections other things came to mind that they had not thought of for years. "It all comes back to me as we talk about it," Mrs. Gordon Carter told me.

One of the first to contact me was local historian Harry Brawley, who sent a letter and pictures. Although very small at the time, he remembers being taken to the park for family picnics, often on the Fourth of July.

Brawley says he was fascinated by the concession stands, spinning "wheels of fortune," and rows of dolls waiting to be knocked over by baseballs. "There were shooting galleries, with moving ducks serving as targets," he recalls. "I remember winning a basket of groceries at one of the spinning wheel concessions. The roller coaster was impressive, but my parents would not let me ride it—the merry-go-round was my speed." Brawley adds that the family almost always rode the trolley car to the Park.

Lance Withrow also remembers Luna Park. Now living in Roncerverte, he spent his early years in Charleston and worked for a time with his brother at the Whittemore Glass Company in nearby Dunbar. While in Charleston he lived at 104 Elm Street, near the park. As a teenager he was greatly taken with

the roller coaster, the skating rink, and the boxing ring, where he saw some good professional fighters. One, he says, was Eddie Forbes, then nationally ranked second in the fly-weight class.

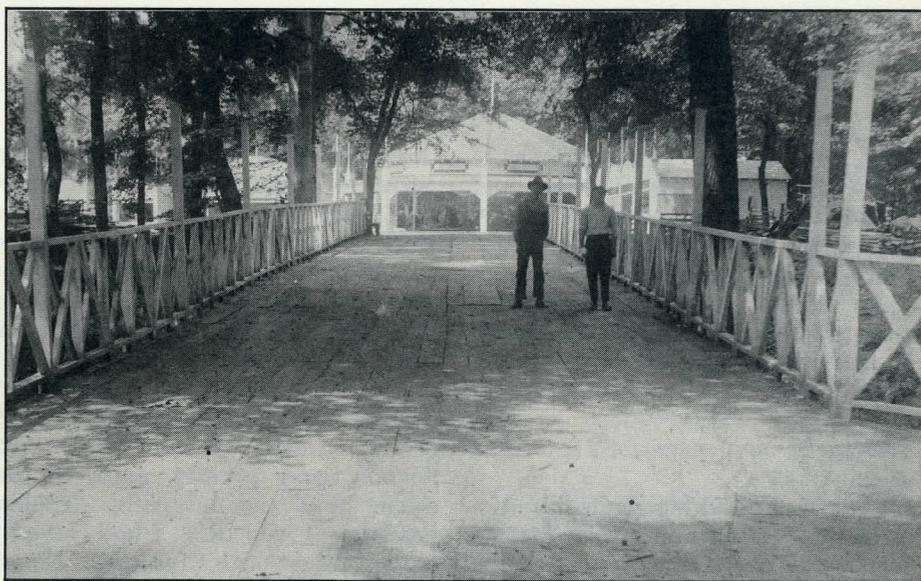
"I spent many happy hours at Luna Park in those long gone-by days," he says. "I remember a fortune teller who told me I'd live to be 76," Mr. Withrow, now 78, recalls. But, he adds, "another one predicted I'd make it to 95."

Richard Stanley, now living on Quarrier Street in Charleston, wrote of his own memories of Luna Park. He recalls Sunday afternoons when his parents took him and a younger brother to the park, where their mother spread food on picnic tables from trees, where he and his brother played. He remembers that the price of admission was only a dime, with other charges for activities within the park. Those who came only for a picnic and to enjoy the outdoors paid for no more than the entrance ticket.

Mr. Stanley has particularly fond recollections of "the roller coaster, the merry-go-round, the shooting gallery, bandstand, and the free outdoor movies. There was also a ferris wheel. There were games of chance, such as a roulette wheel, and a bowling place where, if the ball you rolled fell into a certain pocket, you won a prize." Perhaps influenced by happy childhood memories of Luna Park, Stanley later became manager of Edgewood Park, another old Charleston amusement park at the head of Edgewood Drive.

I also talked to Mrs. Gordon Carter, who grew up in a house alongside Luna Park. She was a tiny child when her parents moved there from Bridge Road, in Charleston's South Hills. Today, she speaks of the "slicky slides," swings, and other things that caught a little girl's eye. She particularly remembers some of the Luna Park regulars, including the champion roller skating twins, Okey and Gus Harmon, and skater "Bum" Gresham. She recalls high wire acts, and prizes won at the shooting gallery.

R. W. Miller, then living on

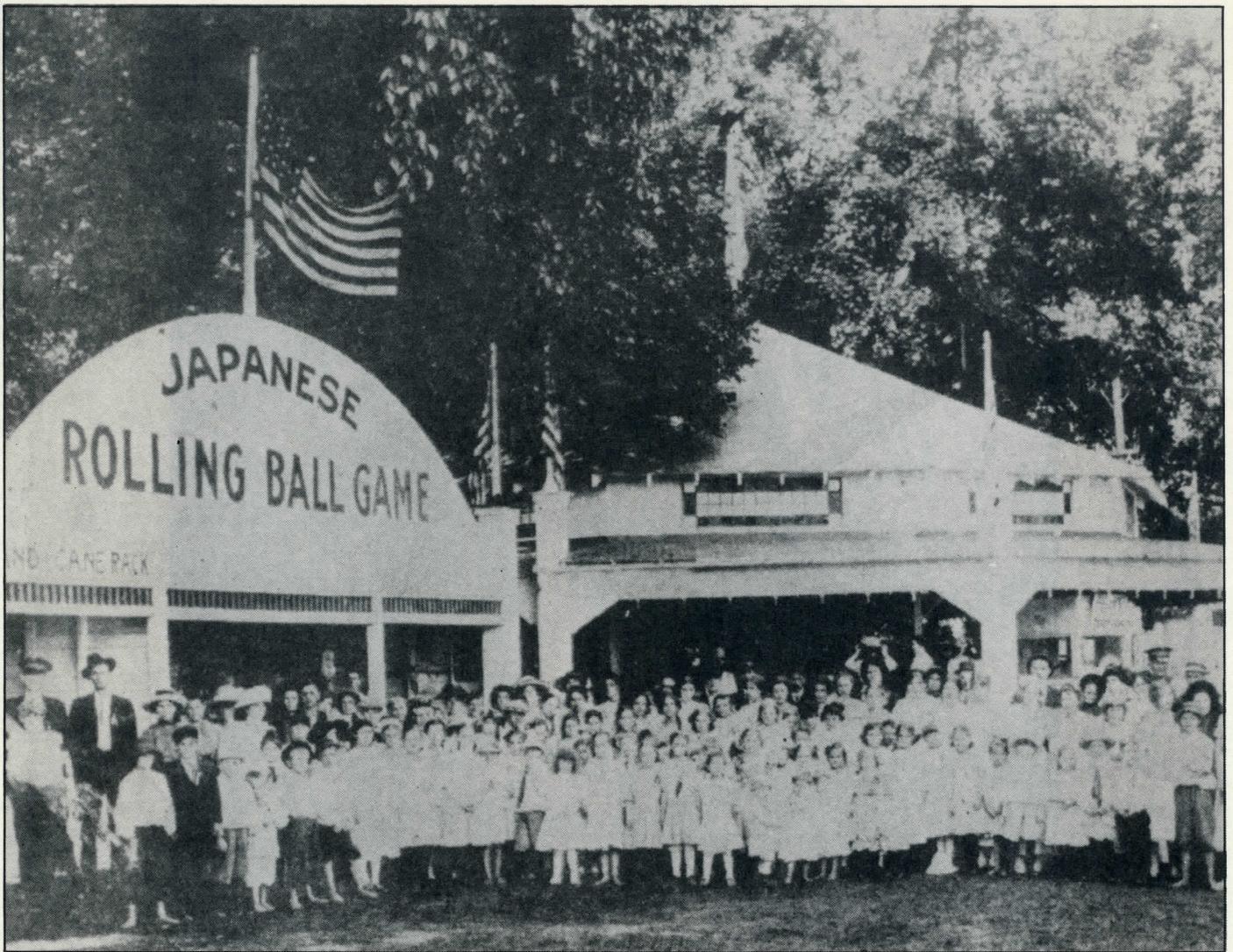


Charleston's Main Street, also had the good fortune to grow up near Luna Park. As a neighborhood child, he remembers frequent visits to the Luna playground. He also recalls people who worked at the park. "There was a high board fence around the Luna Park building, and the caretaker was John Daily," he says. "He had a big white bulldog that helped him watch over the place. The root beer stand was operated by Walter Dean.

"There was a greased pole that the kids tried to climb, to win the \$5 bill that was on top," Miller adds, without saying whether he himself ever tried it. "Few kids ever got to the top of that pole. They also had a greasy pig race."

James E. Thomas, now 68, contacted me from his home in Putnam County. He was about eight when he went to work at the park, picking up trash and paper. Colorful balloons were sent up from Luna Park each morning, he says. His father, Lee Thomas, was in charge of rounding up the balloons when they landed, and James recalls that they came down all over the place, sometimes in the river. He also remembers an unusual game of skill. Baseballs were thrown against a target, which sent six little pigs—real, live pigs—down a chute.

J. F. Johnson also remembers the Luna Park balloons. He's now 76 and living in St. Albans, but as a



Luna Park now lives only in the memory of older West Virginians, and in faded postcard views such as these. Here are the main gate, the popular Japanese Rolling Ball Game, and the bridge to the midway area. Courtesy Harry M. Brawley.

child he lived right across the river from the park. Of the balloons, he remembers that a large one came down in his father's garden, destroying the plants there. Park management paid for the damage, he says. Johnson also recalls taking a ferryboat across from South Charleston to the Luna Park landing. He remembers grand fireworks displays that lighted Charleston's night sky on the Fourth of July and other holidays.

Miller and Thomas recall greased pigs and prize pigs, but there were more exotic animals as well. R. W. Wear of St. Albans, now 76, remembers Luna Park's zoo. "I was about 10 years old when I went there," he says. "I liked the

animals in the little zoo, and I remember very well a monkey that bit my hand when I put it through the wire cage."

Most of the people I talked to remembered Luna Park from the perspective of their childhood, but Mrs. Paul Larson recalled taking her own child there. Mrs. Larson, now 79, was married at age 16 and was soon taking her little boy to the park. She remembers that Charleston showman Captain David Latlip [GOLDENSEAL, April-June 1979] furnished the merry-go-round at Luna Park, and that the hand-painted horses had "real hair tails." While her son enjoyed Cap Latlip's carousel, perhaps with young Harry Brawley, Mrs. Larson recalls roller

skate dancing with the Harmons and other accomplished skaters of the period. She also told me that John Phillip Sousa brought his famous march band to Luna Park for at least one afternoon concert long ago.

Like others, Pearl Harler of Charleston remembered working in the park, in her case selling tickets at the main gate. Mrs. Harler, 82 at the time I interviewed her, has since died.

Sometimes whole families were associated with the park in a professional way. My 82-year-old neighbor, Richard Gresham—skater Bum Gresham's brother—was in charge of Luna Park's famous roller coaster when he was about 20. Mr.



Charlestonian Alicia Cornwell (*left*) performed at Luna Park under the stage name "Aerietta." Here she is held by Dorothy Cadmus. Date and photographer unknown.

Gresham's sister Lucille sold admission tickets, and a sister-in-law, Alicia Cornwell, sometimes performed there. Miss Cornwell, a trapeze artist whose stage name was "Aerietta," traveled with Ringling Brothers and other circuses, and was brought home to Luna Park by the promoter "Marvelous Melville." In 1935 she met an untimely death from a fall, while performing with a Shrine Circus in St. Louis.

Luna Park gave enjoyment for less than a decade, for it was lost to

a great fire on May 5, 1923, the same day that Charleston's Yellow Pine Lumber Company burned to the ground. Newspaper accounts reported the very extensive damage to the park, with the swimming pool building, dance pavilion, skating rink, and almost all the eastern part of the midway destroyed, and the roller coaster partly burned. Nonetheless, the management bravely announced that the damage would be repaired, and Luna Park would open as scheduled on May 19.

Unfortunately, that never happened. Luna Park was not rebuilt and today lives only in the vivid recollections of older West Virginians, those of us who thrilled to its fun and excitement nearly a lifetime ago. Herman Monk of Beckley spoke for many when he recalled his first trip to Luna, with his father and two cousins, at age 13.

"To a country boy that park was heaven," he told me. "The lights, the music, the crowds—it was something to behold." ❖

Samuel N. "Doc" Elliott retired at age 90, and remains hale and hearty as he approaches 102. Photo by Ron Rittenhouse.

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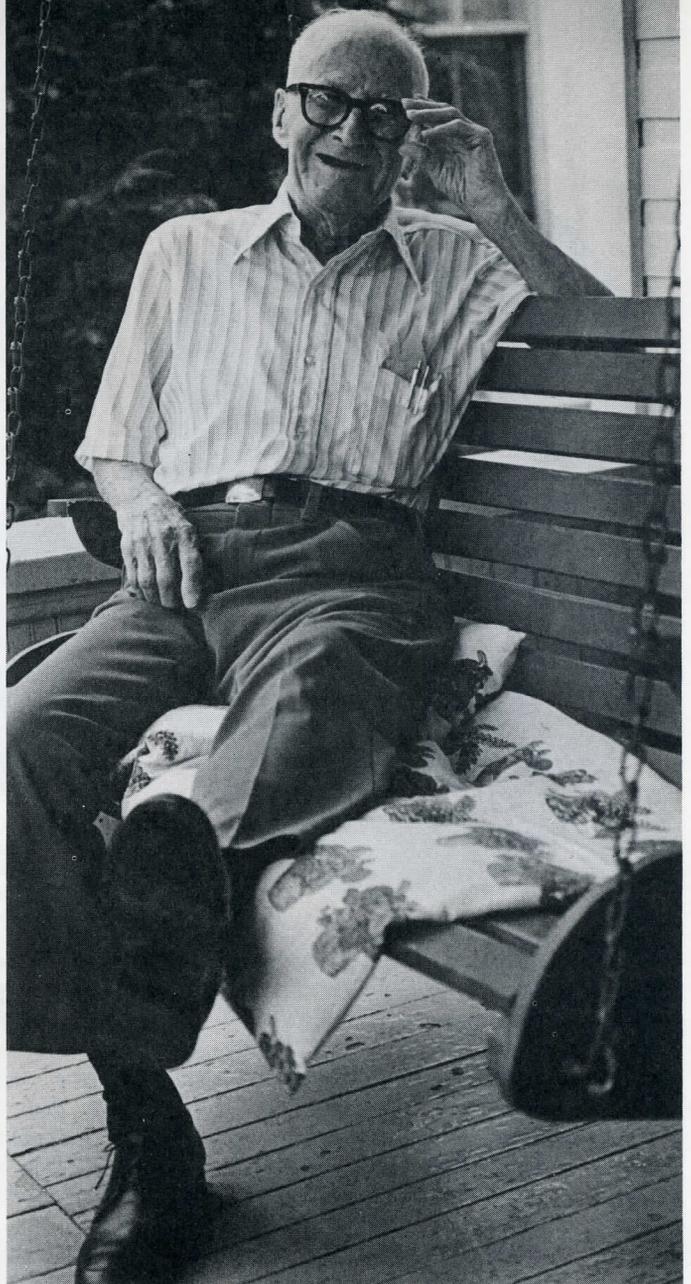
# More Than a Century

## Looking Back With Doc Elliott

By Arthur C. Prichard

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**S**amuel N. Elliott, having worked in oil fields for nearly three-quarters of a century, has a vast knowledge of the petroleum business to share with others. Starting as a water boy at the age of 16, he was employed in the production of oil and gas until he was 90 years old. Mr. Elliott is now 101.

Perhaps he would not have quit working when he did if his family hadn't insisted. An on-the-job accident when he was 87, in which he broke both wrists and his pelvis, lent weight to their urging that he put up his oil field wrenches and hammers. Three years later he finally did.

A contractor, laying a six-inch oil line outside of Mannington for the Eureka Pipeline Company, first hired Elliott to carry water for a

right-of-way gang. Beginning to work on Whetstone and going on into Wetzel County, Elliott lugged great quantities of water for thirsty laborers. Then he continued working with right-of-way crews on similar jobs around Mannington, Downs, James Fork, and Pricetown.

Elliott grew up in an oil field family. Born in Clarion County, Pennsylvania, December 18, 1880, a son of William Lawson Elliott and Emaline Mildred Elliott, Samuel lived in Pennsylvania and New York while his father worked for oil companies. His parents, older brother Truman, younger brother Cecil, and he arrived in Mannington on New Year's Day, 1892, where his father went to work in the booming new oil field. A short time later Truman began his career as an oil worker. J.

M. Elliott, a brother of Samuel's father, was a long-time employee of the South Penn Oil Company, a Standard Oil subsidiary in Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Young Samuel Elliott advanced from water boy to roustabout, first doing unskilled labor. "When I was 18, I went over to see my uncle in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania," he recalled in an interview last year. "He was superintendent of the South Penn at Waynesburg and had charge of some of the company's work in West Virginia, too. I went by horseback from Cameron. My uncle wanted me to go to school, but I said if I wanted to go to school I would have stayed in Mannington. They put me to work.

"It was January and it was cold," Elliott continued. "I stayed with



Left: Elliott as a dapper young man in the early 1900's. Photo by J. L. Stewart, date unknown.

Above: Doc Elliott with writer Arthur Prichard. "I'm not very big," Doc notes, "too light for heavy work and too heavy for light work." Photo by Ron Ritzenhouse.

drillers and tool dressers in a two-story, oil-country boarding house not far from the company's tool house. I was lucky, as I slept in a room over the kitchen where it was warm.

"One night after I had gone to bed my uncle came out from Waynesburg to see about some water boilers, to see that they didn't freeze. He woke me and gave me his overcoat and gloves. The overcoat came nearly to the ground on me as I was just a youngster. The foreman, Mac McGinnis, and I went to the tool house, got some fittings to make a connection for a boiler, and wrenches. We walked up a big hill and halfway down the other side where the first boiler was.

"We put a connection in that boiler so a fire could be made to keep the water from freezing, as the water hadn't been drained from the boiler when it had been disconnected. Then we walked down a hill and part way up another one and lit a fire in a second boiler, which hadn't been disconnected. Then we walked back to the boarding house. After getting only a little sleep, it was time to get up, and I found out it was 32° below."

"Doc" Elliott went on to do many kinds of oil field work. He helped lay

pipelines, assisted in cleaning out wells, and ran a pipe machine. Later he had charge of a warehouse, keeping books and making out reports, and at other times he drilled wells. Often he did the hard work of "dressing" tools, hammering them back into shape after they were battered and dulled in the drilling process.

"I learned a lot of things," he says. "I used to help an old driller by the name of Jack Sheridan in Greene County; he had worked in Mannington too. I helped him on tools, and any time others would get a 'fishing' job [removing tools or other obstructions from the hole], Jack would be sent to clean out the hole and I would go with him. He was good at it, and I learned a lot from him."

After several years in Greene County, Pennsylvania, Doc started working in the Fairview area of Mason County as a foreman for the Carnegie Natural Gas Company. A little later he moved to Farmington. Returning to live in Mannington in 1910, after an absence of 11 years, Elliott acquired a set of cleaning-out tools and began working for himself. Shortly afterwards he started drilling wells for others as a contractor.

"It was a poor time to get started

as there were a lot of contractors not working. Nobody advised me what to do. I went to Clarksburg as I heard that Billy Williams had five strings of drilling tools, and as he had just become the headman for the Hope Gas Company, I thought he would have to get rid of his tools. I knew Billy when he was dressing tools. He welcomed me. I told him my business; I told him I figured that as he was working for the Hope he would be getting rid of his tools.

"Doc; I've got a good man running the tools, so I'm going to keep them. He'll run them for me. But Walter Allender, who is over at Zanesville, Ohio, is wanting someone to go in with him."

"So I wrote Walter. Two or three days later when I was cleaning out a well on the Sturm farm, on Little Bingamon, a kid came down to the well and told me I was wanted on a phone. I went up and Walter was on the telephone. I asked him where he was talking from. He said Mannington. On getting my letter he had come immediately. I went to Mannington and I bought in with him. We started drilling. After two wells I bought him out, and I was in the drilling business.

"I drilled a good many wells for Carnegie Gas Company and for

*Right:* Young Doc Elliott strikes a Napoleonic stance with hand on chest in this family portrait from about 1893. Brother Thurman stands behind father William and mother Emaline, while brother Cleveland sits in front. Photo by J. L. Stewart.

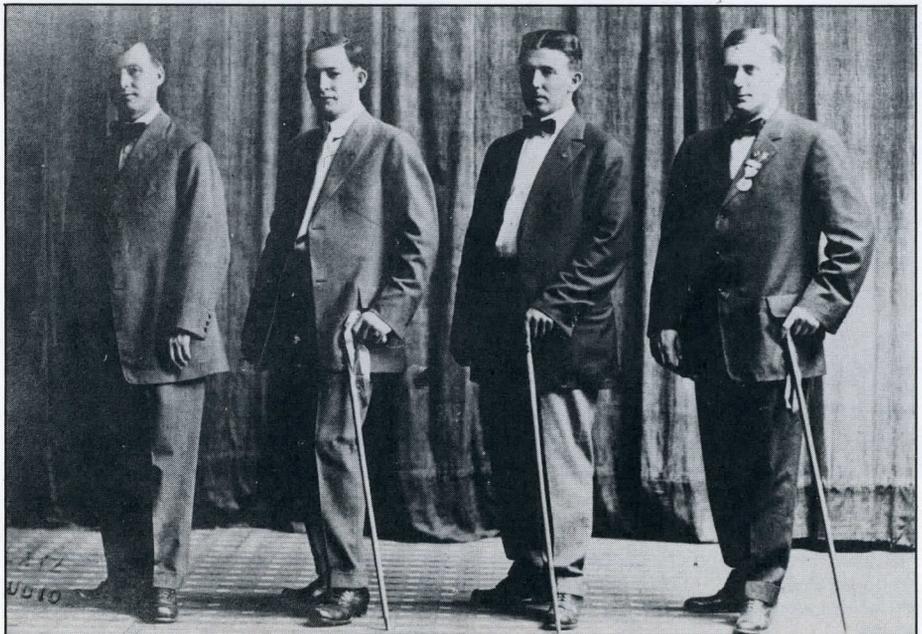
*Below right:* Elliott (*left*) with three Mannington companions at an Elks convention, about 1915. Photographer unknown.

others. Then I got to drilling for myself. Through the years I drilled 22 wells for myself. The last of the wells I worked on was 90 years old.”

Doc stands five feet, five inches, and has usually weighed from 130 to 135 pounds. “I’m not very big,” he notes, “and I used to tell the boys I’m too light for heavy work and too heavy for light work. Sometimes the work on a drilling well is hard. I remember a driller once telling me he had a big tool dresser who had the habit of not showing up for work when they got into the salt sand—maybe he would report he was sick. Then two or three days later, when it would be time to be down through the salt sand, he would come back to work. In the salt sand one has to dress the bits often. To dress a bit you break the big joints [unscrew them], then you set them up [connect them after dressing the bit], and you put a lot of muscle into it. One shift I ran I dressed five bits. When you dress five bits you break five joints and you set five joints, that’s ten joints. It takes a lot of muscle to do it.” Chuckling, Doc added, “After that, I knew why that tool dresser would lay off when they were in the salt sand.”

Elliott often used ingenuity in his work. “I remember having a tough fishing job once. There was a lead plug blocking the hole. Sometime before I had put it there when I thought it wasn’t much use drilling deeper.

“Then later I got the idea it might pay to drill deeper. To get through that plug I tried to do everything anyone told me to do. I put in glass from the glasshouse furnaces, metal shavings from Phillips Tool Shop, but dropping my bit down on the lead plug just seemed to hammer it down, but didn’t clear it out. I got an idea. I took a five-inch bit to a junkyard operator. I marked the bit





so at the lower end it would be only about an inch thick, and I got the man to burn off the rest of the metal. The pointed bit worked; it cut through the lead and didn't hammer it flat. I was able to go on down deeper in the hole. It would have been better still if I had made the bit only a half-inch thick."

There were many accidents to oil workers, sometimes seriously injuring men, and even on occasions killing them. There were nitroglycerin explosions, workers caught in moving bull wheels, men falling from derricks, and others crushed by pipe or heavy tools. Elliott remembers many of these.

"One of the queerest accidents which happened," he says, "was when two men were handling some sucker rods." These were wooden rods 32 feet long with metal straps at the ends. "Two of the rods were still fastened together end to end, and had been stretched out from the derrick floor to the engine house. The fellow on the derrick floor did something to his end of the rod, pushed it or swung it to one side, which caused the other end to get caught in the wheel of the running engine in the engine house. The engine drove the rod through the man's chest—the man on the derrick floor some 60 feet away—killing him. It was sort of like a spear pushed through him."

Another time Jim Kerr, a tool dresser, got tangled in a cable at a well and was killed before his companion could get the bull wheel stopped.

"I never had many accidents myself," Elliott reports. "I do remember two which hurt badly. One happened when a fellow dressing tools for me and I took a set of jars\* off. We used a pinch bar to hold the jars. We started to lower them down to the derrick floor. When we got halfway down the other fellow stopped lowering his end, but I kept going down. The jars—they must have weighed 400 pounds or more—slid over against my hands and knocked them off the bar, and I couldn't hold

\*Jars were special links between the cable and drilling tools, which caused a sudden jerk to dislodge stuck tools.

Above: Elliott with oilfields model presented to him by one of his children. He remembers selling his oil for as low as \$1.12 a barrel. Photo by Ron Rittenhouse. Far right: Elliott stands in excitement to describe his worst accident, working alone on an oil rig at age 87. "I don't remember hitting the ground. When I woke I couldn't move. My wrists were broken, and my pelvis cracked in three places." Photo by Ron Rittenhouse.

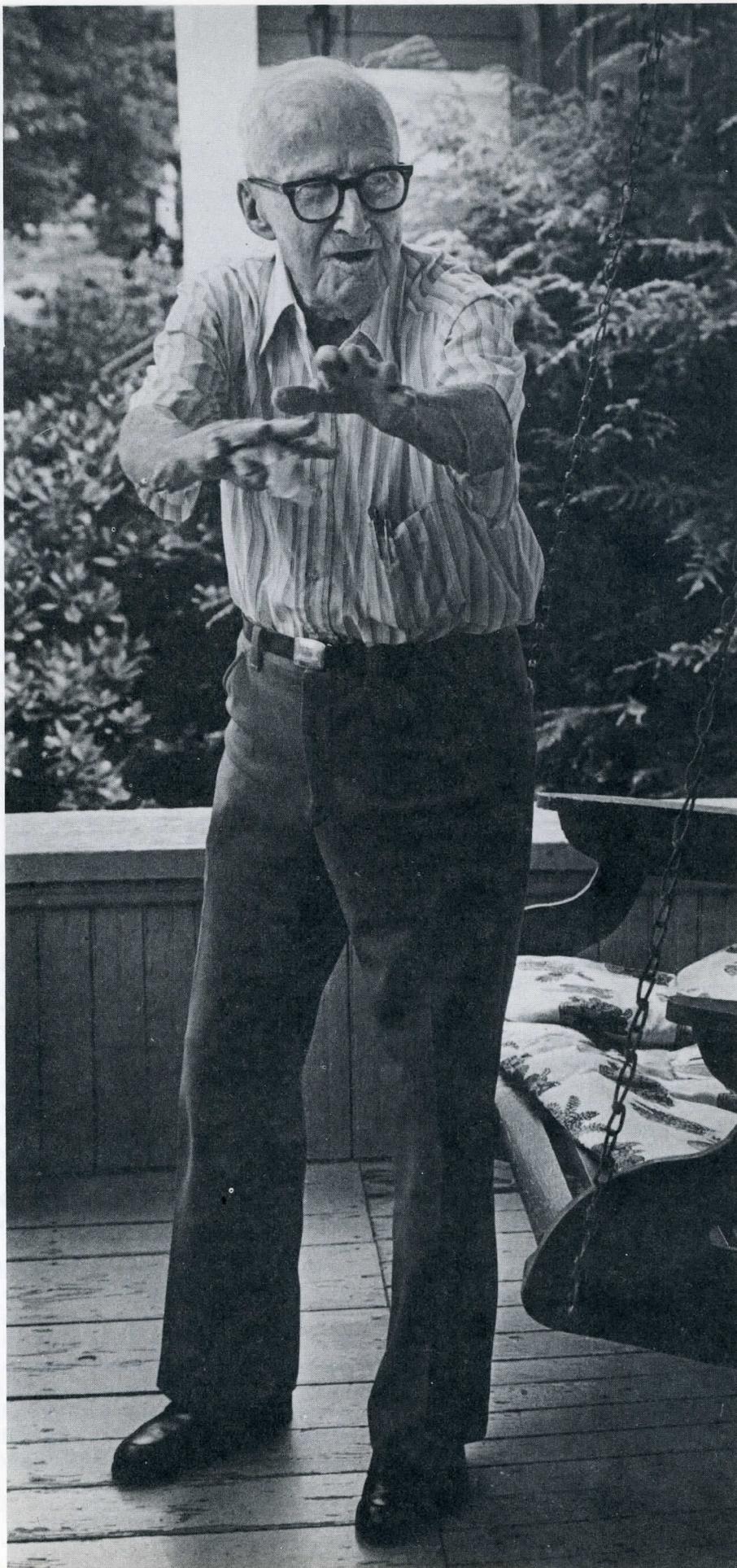
it. We dropped the jars and they landed on a big toe of mine. Did it hurt? My foot swelled, and the next day I could hardly get off the rig.

"Then there was the accident I had when I was about 87 years old. I was building a rig by myself up Hibbs Run. The accident happened when I was closing the gable end of the engine house. I had put a plank five or five-and-a-half feet above the ground next to the engine house. I leaned the long pieces of the galvanized metal up against the plank and laid the shorter pieces up on the 100-barrel water tank, which was close enough for me to get them. I was nailing the metal pieces, reaching as high as I could, and stretching and looking up. The blood must have run from my brain. I blanked out. I don't remember hitting the ground. When I woke I was moaning, going 'Oh, oh, oh.' I couldn't move. I tried to get up but I couldn't. My wrists were broken. My left hand was just hanging down. Later I learned my pelvis was cracked in three places.

"Yet, I could have been hurt worse," Elliott figures optimistically. "Before I had gotten up on the plank I had cleared off the ground under it by kicking off the chunks of wood, mostly 2x4's. Some of the pieces were rough and some had nails sticking out of them. So when I hit the ground, it was hard, but I didn't land on chunks of wood, or nails, or other stuff."

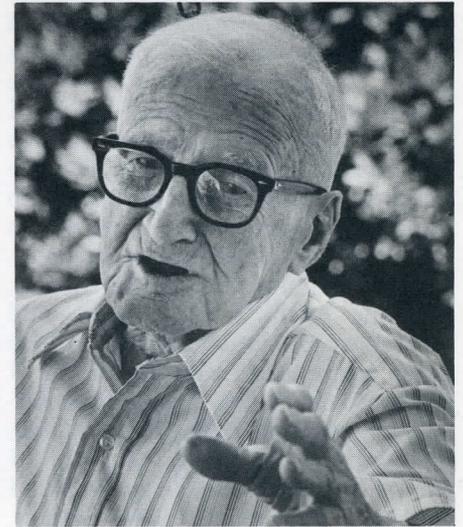
Even so, the injured old man lay there alone and helpless. "In a little while it began to rain. There was a long piece of the tin on the ground near me. I got hold of it and somehow got it over part of me. It slipped off and I put it on again. It kept some of the water off. It was Saturday afternoon and the Hibbs family near the well were away.

"After a while, I saw young Hibbs on the other side of his house, and I hollered. He came around the house, and I hollered again. I could see him and I wondered why he didn't see me. He could see my truck up there. He went into his house and then came out again. I hollered some more and he stopped, then came to me. I told him to pick me up and set me on the running board there and go around the other side of the truck





Left: Elliott and five sons at his centennial party, December 21, 1980. Left to right are Don, Gerald, Doc, Samuel Nelson, Jr., Joe, and Jack. Photo by Edward DeVito.  
Below: Doc Elliott attributes his longevity to moderation in his use of tobacco. "I do some chewing," he says, "but I've never smoked to speak of." Photo by Ron Rittenhouse.



and open the door and then come back and put me on the seat. He did. I got him to take me into Mannington. A doctor worked on me for hours. I guess he put me to sleep." Too young to retire at 87, Doc Elliott went back to the job on Hibbs Run. "I got over the accident all right, and went back to work on the well. In fact, I worked on wells for about three more years.

"During my earlier years I worked for various companies, although much of my work for them was for contractors doing jobs for the Eureka pipeline. I worked for the South Penn, which now is Pennzoil. Then I worked for Carnegie Gas, and did work for other companies too."

When reminded that the Pennsylvania grade crude oil produced in Marion County was listed at \$38 a barrel at the time of our interview, Doc grinned. "That's pretty high," he admitted. "I remember selling some of my oil for as low as \$1.12 a barrel, and when in 1920 oil went to \$6.10 we thought it was great. On the other hand, the cost of drilling a well has gone up. Some of my later wells cost about \$16,000 to drill, and I guess some today would cost close to \$100,000."

Samuel Nelson Elliott was well known in those early days of cheap

oil, and it was then that he had his name shortened. Nicknames were common in the oil fields, and he apparently inherited his from an uncle who was a medical man. "I had an uncle, a brother of my mother, who was a doctor, so they called me 'Doc,'" he says. "I also had a cousin they called 'Big Doc,' and I was 'Little Doc.' He used to wear a cloak with a hood on it, the kind many doctors wore in those days.

"That was my second nickname. When we came to Mannington in 1892 some of the boys asked my brother, Truman, where we came from. He said Clarion County, Pennsylvania, 'on the other side of Butler.' So the boys started calling Truman 'Butler,' and for a while they called me 'Butler Number Two.' But then my name became Doc. Later my first son, Gerald, got the same nickname, which has stuck to him ever since. For a long time he was 'Young Doc.'"

'Young Doc' was the only child of Doc and Rhea Forney Elliott, married just after the turn of the century. Several years later they divorced, and in 1921 Elliott married Florence Ryan of Mannington. This marriage was blessed with a full dozen children, nine of whom still live in West Virginia. Doc and

Florence Elliott now live quietly on Beaty Avenue in Mannington.

On Doc Elliott's 100th birthday in December 1980, all 13 children gave him a dinner at the family home. It was followed three days later by a centennial reception in the Elks ballroom, attended by more than 300 people. Over 100 relatives were among these well-wishers, including many of the Elliotts' 50 grandchildren and 32 great-grandchildren. That month Elliott received greetings from President Carter and the governors of six states.

"It was quite a celebration," Doc told me later. "I enjoyed the whole thing. I was glad to see everyone. Some had to tell me who they were. It was great.

"Maybe a reason I've lived as long as I have has been that I never got the habit of smoking cigarettes," Doc went on. "You know, they blame cancer on that. I haven't smoked much. I remember when cigarettes used to cost 5¢ a pack. Sometimes I would buy a pack just to get a button or another gift that came with them. Maybe I would smoke one or two, and give the rest away." Pausing to spit out tobacco juice, he chuckled. "You see, I do some chewing, but I've never smoked to speak of." ❁



"We usually finished around .500," says Clarence Stone of the Kilsyth Letemhit team, and the 1932 club was no exception: They won 22, lost 22, and tied one. Stone is seated at far right, Fred Corley stands behind him, and Fred Olinger sits third from left. Team owner and coal operator William G. "Uncle Billy" McKell stands at left. Photographer unknown, courtesy Charlie Ball.

Spring had come to the Fayette County coal town of Glen Jean in 1932, and the sunshine had brought out a familiar figure to his favorite spot on the bench near the Athletic Club. Wearing his favorite white suit, a 10-year-old straw hat and comfortable resoled shoes, William McKell juggled a small unlit cigar in his mouth as he spoke to the young man passing by.

"Hi, Jim," McKell said in his distinctive slow drawl. "Hello, Mr. McKell," (pronounced McCow by local residents) replied 18-year-old Jim Hess.

"Going to play ball for me this year, Jim?" McKell asked. "Yessir, Mr. McKell, I'll be there," the young athlete said.

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## Let 'Em Hit It!

### Former Athletes Recall A Forgotten Sport

By Tim R. Massey

Photographs by Peggy Massey

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"Fine," the elderly man said with a noticeably approving smile. "We'll need all the good players we can get to knock off Kilsyth this year. We want to win the championship."

Jim Hess recently recalled that conversation for me. He painted the scene as if it were yesterday, which is difficult because the past 50 years haven't been kind to the once booming coal empire that ran along Loup Creek. The McKell Coal Company, which was headquartered in Glen Jean, has long since faded into history, and the game William McKell loved so much is alive only in the memories of a few former players.

These days, when someone mentions "Billy ball" to the sports fan, he is probably referring to the brand of baseball taught by Oakland A's manager Billy Martin. But "Billy ball" to Glen Jean residents of the 1920's and '30's was definitely "Letemhitit," a distinctive game of slow-pitch softball invented by William "Uncle Billy" McKell.

Letemhitit was a game designed for hard times. Played with a 14-inch (circumference) softball sometimes called big ball or squash ball, Letemhitit could be played on small fields with very little equipment. Gloves were not allowed, although catchers could wear masks. All participants needed was a ball and a bat and a place to play. McKell made sure his teams had everything they needed. He constructed fields at Glen Jean, Kilsyth, Oswald, and Tamroy, communities where he owned every inch of ground and all the buildings. He had the thin, almost stick-like bats specially made for the game. He outfitted his teams in white shirts, matching trousers, hats, and shoes.

"Most people thought McKell was a tightwad, although he was one of the richest men in the country," says Hess, whose father was an auditor for New River Company. "You wouldn't even ask him to buy you a soda. But he would spare no expense for Letemhitit. One year I asked him if he would sponsor a high school league, and Uncle Billy said yes without flinching.

"He brought in teams from out of town, paid for our visits to other places, and almost always went to



our games himself. He didn't drive a car but he had a guy named Brownie (Arnold Brown) drive him everywhere. Or he would take his gas trolley car that traveled from Glen Jean to Tamroy."

Although the fields at Tamroy, Oswald, and Kilsyth were better than those at most coal camps during that era, Glen Jean Park was a showplace. It was McKell's pride and joy. The infield was smooth and the grass outfield was manicured. The park was protected by a seven-foot fence in the outfield and an enclosed grandstand behind home plate. Trees were planted to enhance the field's appearance. Tennis courts and a lighted croquet court were built in the same area. "It was the best park in Fayette County, without a doubt," recalls Hess, who now operates Oyler's Motel in Oak Hill after retiring from a career as an accountant and a chamber of commerce director. "Uncle Billy made

sure the field was in tip-top shape."

The man who did most of the work on the field was McKell's gardener, a black man who lived with the millionaire coal operator. McKell also paid other men to operate the athletic activities. Buzz Bysett, who managed the Glen Jean pool room most of the time, managed McKell's Letemhitit team for many years. One year, 1925, he brought in a Marshall College athlete, Jackie McKown, to oversee the park's operation. McKown, now a former State Senator from Wayne County, remembers his first impression of McKell when he arrived in Glen Jean that year.

"I thought McKell was a bum or something," McKown says. "I had never seen him before and I was expecting to see someone who looked like a millionaire. But here he was wearing an old suit, a straw hat and worn-out shoes. It took me a while to get used to him, but I learned

Left: Jim Hess played for the Glen Jean Letemhitit team as a teenager in the early 1930's.

Below: Fred Ferri played for the Glen Jean team with brothers Pete and John, who remembers it as "mostly an Italian ball club."



what he said was law in Glen Jean. He told me if I needed anything for the park just to ask. And he meant what he said. Money was no object when it came to keeping up the field or buying equipment."

There is little doubt that McKell had a natural affection for Glen Jean and its people. And why not? Glen Jean was built by his father, Thomas G. McKell, and was named for his mother, Jean Dun McKell. Although he was born in Chillicothe, Ohio, Bill McKell lived in Glen Jean most of his adult life, residing in a rambling but not spectacular two-story frame house overlooking the town.

At its zenith in the 1920's, Glen Jean had a bank, pharmacy, dentist's office, doctor's office, paved streets, and a jail. Another landmark was a circular opera house where the state's first talking movie reportedly was shown. William McKell owned it all.

Opera house or no, Glen Jean was known for less cultured activities in the early 1900's. On Sundays when the weather permitted, men would gather to gamble on a deadly duel between a wildcat and bull terrier.

To win, the bulldog had to kill the cat in 10 minutes. According to former coal operator William P. Tams, bulldog-wildcat fights ended after a group of church women in Glen Jean complained until the authorities outlawed the amusement.

A more respectable sport common to the McKell coal communities was croquet. Glen Jean, Oswald, and Kilsyth all had lighted croquet courts in the 1920's and '30's. The one at Glen Jean of course was a model. "It had a roof over it and the playing surface was crushed gravel," says Fred Ferri, a lifelong Glen Jean resident. "McKell would have it rolled every day to make sure

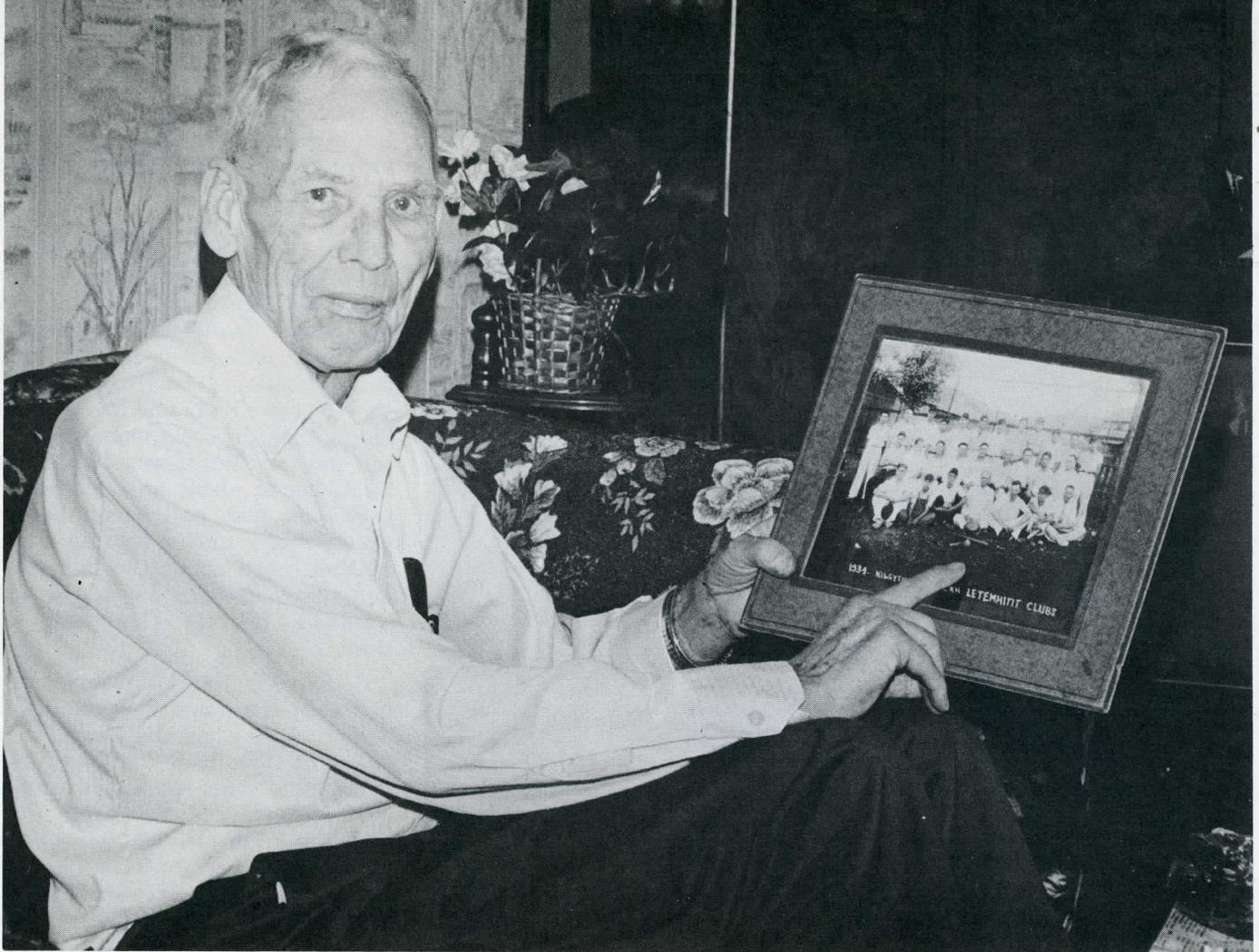
the surface was smooth. It was the nicest place to play croquet I have ever seen."

McKell had the court destroyed around 1935, Ferri and Hess report, after two company employees got into a fist fight during a game. "A guy named Crotty hit the company carpenter, Kyle Allen, over the head with a mallet," Hess recalls. "Allen was the town bully and he was a lot bigger than the other man, who was tall and thin. but it was a heck of a fight, lasted about an hour before they just quit and shook hands. Crotty really took a beating. Then McKell heard about the fight and had the court torn down. He just wouldn't tolerate that kind of thing."

Perhaps it was because McKell had seen too much violence in his earlier years when the Loup Creek towns of Glen Jean and Thurmond had a Wild West reputation. Tams, in his book, *The Smokeless Coal Fields of West Virginia*, tells of one shooting incident during a baseball game at Glen Jean between the local Loup Creek team and a visiting Virginia team of young school boys.

Two Baldwin-Felts detective agents, M. L. Parker of Buena Vista, Virginia, and Vic Rudd of Huntington, began arguing over the game. Both men reached for their guns, but Rudd drew first and fired at the retreating Parker. The shot ripped Parker's coat before he finally drew his pistol and returned fire. His aim was better, striking Rudd in the mouth and ruining his new dental plates. Later, the two men shook hands and the game continued. Loup Creek had little trouble beating the impressionable young visitors after the incident.

Baseball drew large crowds at Glen Jean Park at the turn of the century. The Cincinnati Reds played an exhibition game against the Loup Creek team there in 1903. Later the House of David, crack baseball players whose mystical religious beliefs made them wear their hair down to their waists, made Glen Jean one of their regular stops. So did Green's Nebraska Indians, a group of Indians who played baseball while Green peddled his special cough syrup.



However, sometime around 1911 Bill McKell began to sponsor big ball rather than baseball. Since he was a private person and didn't grant interviews, McKell never publicly said why he became disenchanted with baseball, but several people who knew McKell said he grew tired of companies hiring baseball players and giving them easy jobs around the mines. That practice caused morale problems with the everyday working miners.

"He wanted a game his working men could play," says Dr. Homer Cummings, a Huntington surgeon who grew up in Fayetteville and has studied McKell's life. "He just didn't believe in paying men to play baseball."

Dr. Anthony Giglia, a Ft. Thomas, Kentucky, physician who grew up in Glen Jean, figures Letemhitit was just another public service sponsored by McKell. "He was always doing something for the people, and I think the game was good medicine for us during the Depression," Giglia says.

Those are plausible reasons. Perhaps, too, softball was the game McKell knew best. He was a graduate of Yale University, a school closely associated with softball history. The game was supposed to have started when a group of Harvard and Yale alumni began passing around a boxing glove in 1887. McKell's brief rule book, published in 1935, says Letemhitit was substituted as a name for big ball because it seemed more appropriate.

Letemhitit today would be considered no more than a game of organized sandlot softball. The large ball was delivered over-handed and at a slow speed. No balls and strikes were called. The idea, as the name implies, was to let 'em hit it! "It was a defensive game," Fred Ferri remembers. "The ball was bigger than the average softball today, and it became soft after a few innings. It was tough to hit the ball very far. Our team at Glen Jean had a lot of fast players and a few power hitters."

Teams sprang up all over Fayette and Raleigh counties during the

1920's and 1930's, especially in McKell Coal Company camps. Mount Hope, Oak Hill, and Fayetteville high schools had teams. So did coal communities like Red Star, Harvey, Mill Creek, and Derryhale. McKell provided most of the equipment, and he was the rules authority. He attended nearly every Glen Jean game and would arbitrate any disagreement.

Ferri, who joined brothers Pete and John on the Glen Jean team, had problems with one of McKell's rules. "He didn't allow pitchers to throw curves," Ferri recalls with a chuckle. "I'm lefthanded and the ball just curves naturally when I throw it. Mr. McKell got all over me for throwing curves. He'd sit in his favorite seat beside the third base line, and if he saw something he didn't like, he'd tell you about it."

There might be some argument about which team was the best at Letemhitit, but most agree that Glen Jean won more often than it lost. McKell hated to lose and was in a bad mood for days if his team lost a game, former players say. "Glen

Left: Clarence Stone loaned us the group picture of the Kilsyth and Glen Jean teams. "Glen Jean played us a lot when they could beat us," says this old Kilsyth player.

Below: Miners and miners' sons made up the Kilsyth and Glen Jean Letemhitit teams. The men's ages ranged from 14 to 40, and they all competed effectively in the slow-moving game. McKell sits at front center, with Clarence Stone to his left. Tony "Ground Hog" Giglia, now a prominent obstetrician, is fourth from right, back row. Photographer unknown, 1934.



Jean was mostly an Italian ball club," says John Ferri, a retired coal miner who played shortstop for several years at Glen Jean. "There was Fred, Pete, and me, and the Giglia brothers, Tony, Charles, and James. Tony was the catcher, Charlie played first, and James was our second baseman. Then we had Leon Stewart, Jim Hess, and Benny Vento and some others in the outfield. Not a bad team."

Stewart, Tony and Charles Giglia, and John Ferri were the team's power hitters. "Leon would hit one out about every game. He was really strong. Tony and Charles would hit a lot of home runs, too, and I'd hit one over the left field fence about every other game. I had a favorite bat that had a crook in it. Some teams complained about it for a while because me and Leon hit a lot of home runs with it. One day, McKell took a look at it and threw it out of the game."

The Ferri brothers and Hess were the team's base stealers and bunters. "It was difficult to steal a base because you couldn't leave first

until after the pitcher had thrown the ball, but we still managed," Hess says. "I could lay down a mean bunt, too."

While nearly every ball player had a favorite game, most of the surviving members of the 1935 Glen Jean Letemhitit team fondly remember a weekend outing with Lawrenceville Academy. The New Jersey prep school was McKell's alma mater and he made their visit a big event. When the game bell at the athletic club rang that weekend, nearly everyone in Glen Jean turned out to see their boys play the visitors. "They were just young kids," says John Ferri. "They thought we were going to play fast-pitch softball and they didn't know what hit them. We beat them bad, three straight games." Jim Hess recalls that the scores were something like 25-0, 30-2, and 28-3.

Fred Ferri and Hess have another favorite memory, the time in 1934 when McKell took them and some Fayette County high school players to Concord College in Athens to introduce Letemhitit. His team won

the game against Concord and McKell treated them to a sack lunch on the way back. "We were in the back seat of the car," Hess relates. "Uncle Billy turned around and said, 'I guess you boys are hungry after all that playing.' So he told Brownie to stop in Princeton and he went into a restaurant and come out with a big sack full of sandwiches, fruit, and cakes. Could you imagine a millionaire doing that? I know it made an impression on us."

Other than those special occasions, Glen Jean's biggest games came against Kilsyth, a coal town just west of Mount Hope. Kilsyth was a poor cousin to Glen Jean. It had no paved streets, opera house, or pharmacy. A company store and pool room were situated in the center of the camp. Just behind the two buildings was a small ball field. But what Kilsyth lacked in facilities it made up in talented athletes.

In the beginning Glen Jean dominated Kilsyth teams, remembers former Kilsyth standout Clarence Stone. That changed when the smaller community picked up the

finer points of McKell's game. "Glen Jean played us a lot when they could beat us," Stone says. "But after a couple of years we were just as good as they were. They quit playing us as often. They padded their record against Mill Creek and Red Star. We usually finished the season around .500, but we had a lot of fun."

Kyle Spade, Fred Corley, Stone, and Fred Olinger were among Kilsyth's top players. Stone, now 83 and working on his second pace-maker, spent 46 years in the coal mines and lived most of those years at Kilsyth. He and his late wife raised nine children, including four sons, all of whom played sports at Mount Hope High School. Their home most of those years was just a stone's throw from Kilsyth's ball field.

"It was a nice little park, not quite like Glen Jean's, but not bad," Stone says. "I tried to get Mr. McKell to put some of that nice dirt on our infield like they had at Glen Jean, but he never got around to it. Mr. McKell was good to us though. He outfitted our team and saw that we had about everything we needed to play."

One particular characteristic of the Kilsyth field was its short left field, which ended with the flat-roofed pool room. "Left field was so short that when you hit the ball on the pool room, it was a ground-rule single," Stone says. "Once, we practiced hitting the ball on the pool room just before a big game with Glen Jean. That day, we hit a bunch of balls on the roof, and McKell put a stop to it. He told us it was wasting too much time getting the ball off the roof, and that from then on it would be an out if we hit the ball up there. Later, he enlarged the field by moving a storage building and a small house across the road."

McKell also tried an experimental infield at Kilsyth. He paved it with asphalt. "I guess Kilsyth had the first artificial infield," laughs Hess. "It was nice fielding grounders, but it was murder sliding into second base." Stone recalls skinning his knees on the infield for a couple of years before McKell removed his experimental pavement.

Stone, who was a mine foreman

## Remembering Bill McKell

Like many other early 20th century West Virginia coal operators, William McKell is an enigmatic figure. The few history books that mention him make note of his wealth and his refusal to give to the United Mine Workers of America. But because McKell was an eccentric man who had few confidantes during his lifetime, there has been little factual information written about him.

Born in Chillicothe, Ohio, in 1871, McKell was the son of Thomas Gaylord McKell and Jean Dun McKell. His father acquired 12,500 acres in the coal-rich Loup Creek area in 1870 as a wedding present from his father-in-law John Dun, whose family founded Dun and Bradstreet. The elder McKell later bought adjoining property until he owned 25,000 acres in Fayette and Raleigh counties. Under the land lay the productive Sewell and Fire Creek coal seams. T. G. McKell organized McKell Coal & Coke Company and developed mines and communities at Kelsyth, Oswald, Graham, and Tamroy. A super developer, he built the famous Dungen Hotel at Thurmond and the town of Glen Jean, named for his wife. He also constructed his own railroad, the Kanawha, Glen Jean and Eastern, which ran about 15 miles from Thurmond in Fayette County to Tamroy in Raleigh.

While his father was building a coal empire, Bill McKell was being educated at Lawrenceville Academy in New Jersey, Yale University, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. When T. G. McKell died in 1904, his only surviving son inherited a vast fortune. Young McKell had made his home in Glen Jean since college, and he carried on his father's

work there by establishing a bank in 1909 and building one of the area's best ball parks. Although he never ran for political office, McKell is said to have controlled Fayette County elections for many years.

A bachelor, McKell reportedly was to marry a New York socialite, but the engagement ended when he refused to move away from Glen Jean. He lived alone in a house overlooking the town most of his life, before returning to his family home in Chillicothe in the late 1930's. He died in 1939, leaving an estate of approximately \$13 million, which was the subject of an extended legal battle between West Virginia and Ohio officials. West Virginia won the suit and collected about \$8 million, according to Mrs. William Scott McKell of Chillicothe, whose late husband was McKell's first cousin. The remaining \$5 million was divided among five surviving cousins.

His coal holdings were sold by heirs to New River Coal Company, McKell's chief competitor for many years. McKell supposedly made a death bed promise to his father that he would never allow the union to organize at his mines. He kept that promise. He even sued the UMWA for strike damage in the 1920's and won a \$500,000 settlement.

People who knew Bill McKell say he cannot be categorized under any neat labels. Although hardnosed in politics and business, and a hardliner toward the union, like many other coal operators he clearly took a paternalistic interest in those dependent upon him. It is as a paternalist—the "Uncle Billy" his old ball players recall—that he seems to be most remembered in Fayette County today.



William G. McKell on his 50th birthday. Photographer unknown, 1921.

Clara Craig, who has been a resident of Glen Jean since the early 1900's and for many years was a bookkeeper for McKell, said her former employer was difficult to characterize. "I don't know what you could say about him because he was a very complicated person," said Miss Craig in a recent interview. "All I can say is that he was a wonderful man."

To give an example, Miss Craig told of the time she approached McKell about renting a house in Glen Jean after her mother had died. "I wanted to rent one of the smaller houses near the church," she related. "My father was a Singer Sewing Machine representative and I wanted to have a place so we could live together. Mr. McKell asked me if I'd be interested in taking the big house beside him.

"I said, 'Mr. McKell, I don't think I could afford that.' He said, 'Miss Clara, do you think you could afford \$10 a month?' Well, that's the rent I paid for many years. He was just so kind and considerate." Miss Craig later bought the house from New River Company and still lives there. McKell's house was torn

down to make room for the four-lane highway that now cuts a path just above Glen Jean.

Other people who came into contact with McKell shed more light on his character. "Some people said he was stingy, but he just didn't like for people to ask him for money," said Fred Ferri, John's younger brother and a lifelong resident of Glen Jean. "He was a proud and independent man. He wanted to come up with the idea himself. If he found out that someone was in need, he would see that they got help."

Dr. M. H. Cummings, Jr., of Huntington can attest to Ferri's observation. A former resident of Fayetteville, Cummings said there came a time during the Depression years that his father, the Reverend Homer Cummings, and some prominent members of the Fayetteville Methodist Church paid McKell a visit.

"It was 1932 and the church was in serious financial trouble," Cummings recalled. "McKell was supposed to be an atheist and didn't like ministers coming around. Dad and McKell sat around and talked and they got into an argument about repeal of the 18th amendment [Prohibition]. McKell was for the repeal, but Dad stood up to him. Dad left before they ever got around to talking about money. But a few days later, McKell sent the church a sizeable donation."

Several years later, McKell heard through sources that the minister's son needed financial help to complete his education. So one day in 1939 he had a \$1,000 check delivered to the Cummings home.

"That check helped send me through three years of pre-med at Marshall and one year of medical school at West Virginia University," Dr. Cummings noted.

Dr. Anthony Giglia, Jr., of Fort Thomas, Kentucky, who was raised in Glen Jean where his father ran a combination grocery store-pool room, said McKell once

interceded in his sister's behalf.

"Rose had just graduated from West Virginia University but she was having trouble finding a job as a teacher in Fayette County," Dr. Giglia said. "There was a little animosity against Catholics in the public schools in those days. My dad knew McKell very well and went up to his house and told him about the problem. McKell didn't say he would get her a job, he just said, 'I'll see what I can do.' I bet it wasn't two weeks before Rose was hired to teach at Oak Hill High School."

Clarence Stone, a former mine foreman at Kilsyth, said McKell also pulled strings to get his brother-in-law into a Beckley hospital.

"My brother-in-law had an accident. He drove a spike into his hip and the bone just disintegrated. Doctors thought it was tuberculosis of the bone. But we couldn't get him into Pinecrest Sanitarium in Beckley although we tried on several occasions. I told Mr. McKell about the problem after a softball game. He said he didn't have much influence in Raleigh County, but he would see what he could do.

"Well, the next day just after I had left for work, the company doctor came up to my house and told my wife to make an application to get my brother-in-law in Pinecrest. It wasn't two days before he was admitted."

John Ferri said the coal operator paid top wages for a year during the Depression after other mine companies had dropped their pay scales drastically. And when McKell left Glen Jean in 1938, he forgave all back rent.

"My father owed him a lot of rent and so did a lot of other people," Ferri said. "No one was working more than two days a week in those days. Times were hard. I'd have to say today that of all the people I have met in my lifetime, Bill McKell was tops—number one."

—By Tim Massey



Miss Clara Craig, once McKell's bookkeeper, remembers him as a man of compassion.

for McKell Coal Company, remembers McKell as a friend and benevolent boss who had a wry sense of humor. "When I was playing third base, me and the pitcher, Fred Olinger, had a signal on bunts. When I fielded the bunt, he would duck when I threw to first base. Once, he forgot to duck and I hit him in the head with the ball. The ball

bounced so high in the air that the second baseman caught it on the fly. Mr. McKell thought that was the funniest thing he had ever seen. Every time he saw Olinger, he'd say, "Now it takes head work to play this game and there is a man who knows how to use his head."

A trained engineer, McKell tried another innovation at Glen Jean in

the 1930's—a pitching machine. "I guess he wanted a pitcher that could throw strikes and not curve the ball," says Fred Ferri. "We never could get the thing to work, though. So he finally put the machine away. I don't know what ever happened to it."

Letemhitit's popularity began fading as the Depression eased and more recreational opportunities opened up. Also, William McKell became ill in 1938 and moved back to Chillicothe. When he died in 1939, fast-pitch softball had already replaced his game in the New River coalfields. "The younger players just liked fast-pitch better," says Dr. Giglia. "It was faster and a little more challenging."

The Ferri and Giglia brothers, Hess, and Stone all moved with the times. Fred Ferri managed fast-pitch softball teams in the Oak Hill area for many years, and several competed in state tournaments. John Ferri played fast-pitch softball and took up a professional boxing career when he wasn't working in the coal mines. Anthony Giglia and his brothers James and Frank all went to college. Anthony graduated from the University of Maryland's medical school and is a prominent obstetrician in the Cincinnati area. James and Frank are dentists there. Several second- and third-generation Giglias also are in the medical profession. Charles, now deceased, was a U.S. Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms investigator in Asheville, North Carolina, for many years.

Clarence Stone retired in 1974 after serving as Kilsyth's postmaster for 16 years. He and his second wife reside in Oak Hill. He played softball into the 1950's, and so did most of his sons. One son, Clarence "Jack" Stone, achieved fame as a member of the West Virginia University Sugar Bowl football team in 1953. Some Kilsyth residents still talk about the day Jack Stone hit a softball over the company store in deep center field. His father recalls that Jack had a standing offer from the company that he would be given a big of chewing tobacco every time he broke out a window at the company store.

"He always had chewing tobacco," his father notes. ✻

The West Virginia Turnpike recently opened a new exit near the south end, to provide easier access to Athens and Concord College. Those making use of the new exit are routed down a pleasant country road which twists and curves through the rugged Mercer County terrain.

Shortly after leaving the Turnpike, one rounds a sharp curve and there on the right in a shaded cove is a large white house surrounded by carefully tended lawns, walkways, and split-rail fences. Near the road is a pavilion built over a spring and behind the house are stables and a barn on which has been painted in large letters, "Mercer Springs Farm."

The road at this point, because of the curve, requires the full attention of the driver and most people sail on by with only a quick glance in the direction of the house, totally unaware that they have passed by the site of the former Mercer Healing Springs Resort, the only such facility ever to operate in Mercer County.

The best known of West Virginia's mineral spring resorts is The Greenbrier at White Sulphur Springs in Greenbrier County, which has attracted countless guests through the years and is still the state's premier luxury resort. Today many people are unaware that West Virginia once had over a dozen other mineral spring spas which competed with White Sulphur for guests and prestige and that these facilities were centers of medicine, culture, and recreation. Looking back, the histories of these resorts in West Virginia provide an interesting view of how Americans relaxed and vacationed in the years between 1780 and 1920.

The Mercer Healing Springs Resort had a shorter life than most of the other spas which once flourished in West Virginia, but in its brief time served as the recreational center for Mercer County and the surrounding area. It is unfortunate that this once important facility should be all but forgotten today.

While the ailing were "taking the waters" at White Sulphur Springs by 1778 and at Berkeley Springs in Morgan County even earlier, the history of Mercer Healing Springs



The present dwelling at Mercer Springs Farm sits on the site of the old hotel, amid surviving outbuildings. To the left of the house is the hotel's former kitchen springhouse, and the low building on the right once served as servants' quarters and laundry. Photo by Michael Meador.

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# Taking the Waters

## The Mercer Healing Springs Resort

By Michael Meador

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began much later. The local spring was discovered sometime between 1870 and 1880, but not immediately developed because Mercer County during this period was isolated and still struggling to recover from the effects of the Civil War. But in the 1880's and 1890's outsiders began to move into southern West Virginia to mine the vast deposits of coal found there, and with them came prosperity and railroads. During this period several new mineral spring resorts were opened in counties adjoining Mercer, and they soon became popular vacation spots that made money for their developers.

A money-making idea is quickly copied. Rufus Fletcher, the owner of the Mercer spring, sent the water off

to be analyzed in hopes that it could be marketed. The results indicated that the spring water had medicinal properties and soon the local population began making use of it to treat their ailments.

Sometime around 1900, Fletcher, along with Rufus G. Meador, an Athens businessman, Fletcher's brother Luther, and two local doctors, joined together to form the Mercer Healing Springs Corporation for the purpose of developing a resort around the spring. They constructed a spring house, cottages, and a hotel on the site, and opened for business. The Corporation operated the new resort for a few years but there is no record that the venture was successful during this



Rufus G. Meador, an Athens businessman, was the person most closely associated with the Mercer Healing Springs. An original partner in the resort, he was the sole owner from 1908 to 1920. Photo by Poff Studio, Bluefield, about 1910.

period. Probably the visitors to the resort were mostly locals. Sometime prior to 1908 the other stockholders were bought out by Rufus G. Meador.

In 1909 the Virginian Railroad ran the first passenger train into Princeton, only four miles from Mercer Healing Springs. Meador, hoping to draw guests from further away, began to advertise his resort in neighboring states. By 1911 business at the resort was good enough

for the owner to invest over \$60,000 in constructing a new 65-room hotel.

The building, which was four stories high, was constructed with long porches on its front and back. Each guest room was equipped with hot and cold running water, with baths and toilet facilities located on each floor. Light was provided by acetylene gas. The water used in the hotel was provided by an artesian well located on the hill behind the structure.

No record can be found of how the hotel was furnished, but many older persons still remember the plush oriental carpets and elegant furniture. The ballroom, located in a corner of the downstairs, had an excellent hardwood floor. There were special rooms for music, reading, and games. Also for the amusement of his guests Meador had constructed a billiard room, bowling alley, tennis courts, croquet lawns, and bridle path.

The grounds around the hotel were laid out with paved walkways and flower beds which were meticulously tended. Mrs. Gretchen Jarrell of Princeton, who as a small girl lived near the resort, remembers large circular flower beds filled with blooming petunias. She says of them, "The petunias were so beautiful there that I never see them today without thinking of the Mercer Healing Springs."

"The Season" of the mineral resorts usually began in May and continued into September or October. During this time, resident musicians were kept at the hotel for the entertainment of the guests. The Mercer resort quickly gained a reputation for its frequent dances.

A regular taxi service was provided between the resort and the railroad station in Princeton for the convenience of guests. The trip cost 50¢ one way. For \$1.75 guests could be transported to or from the Norfolk & Western rail station ten miles away in Bluefield.

A 1913 brochure listed the following rates: \$7.50-\$10.00 per week, including board, room, and baths in the hotel. Corner rooms cost \$1.00 extra. A discount of 10% was given to those who stayed four weeks or more. Children and servants were given a 50% discount.

Many of the older residents of Mercer County still remember the excellent food served at the resort. It became the custom for local families to visit the hotel for Sunday dinner. The 1913 brochure also advertised that, "The water gives to those drinking it a ravenous appetite. The table will be provided with fresh garden vegetables and fruits in their season, obtained from nearby farms. For the invalids who require light diet, cereals, fresh

# Healing Waters?

To Whom It May Concern:

*I hereby certify that on the fifth day of May, 1896, I was stricken down with a severe case of milk leg. I had the disease in both sides in a very malignant form.*

*The skill of our best physicians was sorely taxed to save my life. The disease settled in my ankles and broke, forming black indolent ulcers, which baffled the skill of all our physicians. The ulcers were so stubborn that they would not yield to medical treatment, even after one doctor burned the sore out—burned them almost to the bone.*

*In the summer of 1908 I began to use the water from the Mercer Healing Springs, by having the water carried to me. By a short course of the use of the water I was greatly benefited. In the summer of 1909 I again took a six weeks' treatment, by again having the water carried to me, which again very greatly improved my general health; all my improvements seemed to be permanent. When I commenced the use of this water I had reached a condition in which I could scarcely walk, so I decided that I would give the water a fair show, to see what it would do for me, and in the month of July, 1910, in the early part of the month, I went to the Spring, and again began its use. I drank the water freely, and bathed the ulcers with water. It acted like magic in my case. I rapidly improved, and on the fourth day of September I came away from the Spring, the ulcers were entirely healed up, and I could walk very well. Now, after thirteen years of suffering and doctoring, I can truthfully say that I am again in fairly good health, and no further trouble from those ulcers. The cure was effected by the use of the water alone, no other treatment of any kind was used while I was using the water. I can conscientiously recommend this water to all who are similarly affected. I will answer any and all inquiries by mail, if the interested parties will enclose self addressed and stamped envelope.*

Respectfully,

(Mrs.) T. K. Massie  
Box 4, Hatcher, W. Va.

November 28, 1910

Resorts such as the ones at White Sulphur and the Mercer were located in certain places because of the mineral springs which are found there. Such springs are common throughout the Appalachian Mountains but occur most frequently in areas with limestone outcroppings and where there has been considerable fracturing and folding of the earth's rock layers.

The mineral content of the water at any particular spring is determined by what type of rock strata the water originates in deep below the surface. The water at the different springs will vary greatly in taste, smell, temperature, and mineral content. It was common at the different resorts to have completely different springs side by side.

Many persons today scoff at the notion that mineral water was ever used for medicinal purposes. Often the idea is classified in the same category with leeching, alchemy, and witch doctoring.

One must keep in mind, however, that medicine as we know it today did not exist even 80 years ago, and that doctors up until recent times were dependent upon cures and remedies that now seem primitive and ineffective. Mineral waters from certain springs do contain chemical compounds such as iodine, lithium, magnesium, calcium, and mineral salts which are still considered important in the treatment and prevention of certain disorders and in promoting general health. Also the resorts had whirlpools and thermal baths (which are still used in modern hospitals and clinics) for therapy and healing.

The mineral spring waters wouldn't cure many of the ailments that were claimed, such as baldness, sterility, and dandruff. But many times guests left in better health than they entered, because they were able to relax, eat a balanced diet, and exercise. The water itself may or may not have helped, depending upon the individual case.



A new 65-room hotel was begun in 1911, on the site of the original, smaller hotel. Here the new hotel nears completion, probably in the winter of 1911-12. Photographer unknown.

sweet milk, etc., will be furnished."

Of course, good food and accommodations were not the only drawing cards of the Mercer Healing Springs. The healing properties of the water itself brought many to the resort. For the convenience of those who wanted to drink the medicinal water, a special catch basin was built next to the spring. Also, the spring water was piped down the creek a few feet to a bath house in which a person could actually emerge himself in either a hot or cold mineral bath.

The water issues from the ground at an average temperature of 48°. It is clear, colorless, odorless, and has only a slight mineral taste that is not unpleasant. The water does have a very high mineral content, however, and supposedly acts on the human system as a mild purgative.

Promotional literature noted that "while the water is exceptionally clear and sparkling, there is an abun-

dant deposit precipitated upon the material over which it flows, which deposit can be utilized as an external dressing for sores, ulcerated surfaces and eruptions in many forms of skin diseases. This water in every sense of the word is truly Alkaline-Calcic-Chalybeate water, with the happy blending of its medicinal constituents in such a form to act systematically and efficiently on the three excretory routes of the human economy; viz, the skin, kidneys, and bowels. The water, when taken in considerable quantities, has an exhilarating effect, producing a sense of 'well being' soon after taking it freely. Its field of usefulness is wide." The word "chalybeate" referred to the iron compounds in the spring water.

For those who could not visit the Mercer Healing Springs, the water was available in bottled form. The charge for one crate of 12 half-gallon bottles was \$3.00, with a \$1.50 re-

fund if the bottles and crate were returned. The water was shipped all over the United States by rail.

R. G. Meador operated the resort until the latter part of 1920, when he sold the spring to doctors W. H. Wallingford and Samuel A. Lynch of Princeton. They managed the resort during 1921. At the last dance of the season a fire broke out in the hotel, but was extinguished before it could damage the building.

The resort was scheduled to reopen in the latter part of May 1922 under new management. Before the hotel opened, the owners were persuaded to hold a special early dance for the young people of the area on the night of May 11. The dance concluded about 2:00 a.m., and Dr. Lynch checked the premises before locking the building and going home.

At 3:30 a.m. some young men driving by noticed that the hotel was on fire and phoned an alarm in

to Princeton. But nothing could be done to halt the advance of the flames, and the building quickly burned to the ground. The new manager of the resort arrived that morning to find only a smoldering pile of embers.

The disastrous fire that night brought an end to Mercer Healing Springs as a resort. People still visited the Spring to drink the water and occasionally picnics were held on the grounds in the 1920's, but the gay social life was gone.

In 1924 a group of Concord College supporters met on the grounds of the resort to honor outgoing college president Christopher Columbus Rossey, and welcome Dr. George Diehl as his successor. The picnic proved to be a success and the all-male group decided to make the gathering an annual event. It was agreed that the purpose of the yearly picnic would be to promote the athletic program at Concord and that only men could attend the gathering. The name chosen for the new society was the Concord College He-men's Association, and to become a member one had to be male, recommended by a He-man, and be able to swear that he had "never been convicted of being a sissy."

The He-men have met annually since 1924 and over 4,000 non-sissies, including a few ex-governors, have been inducted into their ranks. The picnic was held for many years at Mercer Healing Springs, but was moved in the late 1960's to a location near Princeton which could accommodate more people. Today the group still supports such Concord programs as student loans, scholarships, and athletics.

The ownership of the resort property changed hands several times following the disastrous fire of 1922. In the 1930's Dr. L. A. Van-Court of Princeton sold stock in a new corporation to operate a health spa and athletic club at the Spring. He secured the support of Mrs. Lionel Strongfort, whose husband was a famous body builder of the era, and with her attempted to re-open the resort. The corporation was able to get the road in front of the spring paved by the county and constructed a new log cottage for

guests, but there was not enough business to warrant keeping the resort open.

During the 1940's the property was acquired by T. J. Perry, an Athens schoolteacher, who constructed a large frame house on the site of the hotel. In 1955 the former resort was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Ira Mason Smith, who still live on the property which they have re-named the "Mercer Springs Farm."

The present owners have made few alterations to the landscaping, and the original plantings, walkways, trees, stone walls, and spring house of the former resort have been carefully maintained. The natural artesian spring which furnished water to the old hotel until recently supplied water to the Smith farm. In the early 1970's, however,

an unusual southern West Virginia earthquake disrupted the flow, and the spring dried up.

Except for the absence of the hotel, the resort grounds look much as they did 70 years ago. The waters of the mineral spring still bubble up from deep in the ground at 48°, although very few people today care to "doctor" their bodies or quench their thirst there. Times have changed and we have new medicines and new forms of amusement that we think are more sophisticated. But it is still nice to visit a place with such a pleasant history, and to imagine a time when young ladies in long white dresses and men in linen suits came here to while away the long summer days playing croquet and lawn tennis in the shade of the stately oaks which still keep watch.



The mineral spring was the main attraction at Mercer Healing Springs. The waters are in little demand today, but the present owners continue to value the historic spring, sheltering it with this protective pavilion. Photo by Michael Meador.

## Mercer Healing Springs

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Near Athens, Mercer County, West Virginia

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Altitude 2,500 Feet Above Sea Level!

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SEASON OPENS JUNE 17, 1913

NEW MANAGEMENT

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R. G. MEADOR, Proprietor.      P. O. Athens, W. Va.

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# “A Pretty Big Thing for Princeton and Athens”

## Virgil Fletcher Remembers Mercer Healing Springs

By Michael Meador

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**M**ichael Meador. Tell me a little about the resort at the Mercer Healing Springs.

Virgil Fletcher. Well, when my wife's dad had the mill up there I think him and some of the others found the spring. Joe Farley and Lewis Farley and my dad, Rufus Fletcher. That down there was all in woodlands then. My daddy sent the water off and had it analyzed.

R. G. Meador, Dr. Thornton, Dr. Gauthier, my daddy and Uncle Luther Fletcher, they ran it for a while, they say for a year or two, and then they sold out to R. G. Meador. He just took it all over and then he built the [hotel] building. All the property around the springs belonged to my daddy at one time. When he sold out to R. G. Meador, he let about 78 acres go with it.

The big hotel opened up in 1912. It operated ten years. Guests came in here from California, Texas, Indiana, and they'd stay all summer.

MM Did you tell me that you helped set up pins in the bowling alley?

VF Yes. They didn't pay me but 5¢ a box. But I'd hang around there at night 'til I'd be the only boy there, and people would come in and want to shoot some. They'd say, "Go on down there, boy." I'd say, "No, I'm going home."

"Go on down there and we'll give you 50¢ to set us up a game." I could make good money.

MM Did they ever have a swimming pool?

VF No, they started to put one

in down there but they never did get to it. They got the water for the hotel halfway up the hill there in back of the house, might have been a little further up. There was two big bowl springs there just pouring out, and they had two big water tanks that they'd fill in the spring and then drain in the fall. It was higher than the hotel, so they had plenty of water pressure there.

MM Were the springs on the hill mineral springs?

VF No. Not what they used in the rooms. The main spring was down there where the little hood is over it. Down next to the road. The main spring was cased up, and they piped it over to a little spout that ran continually. There were steps that went down to it. I think maybe they were afraid kids would fall in, so they fixed the spout. They had a bath house a little piece down the creek.

I heard there was a big market for the water. They'd ship it out in big glass jugs—ten-gallon jugs and five-gallon jugs. A fellow that lives over at Bethel told me that he went out to Oklahoma and saw some of the water in the drugstores—40¢ a gallon, from the Mercer Healing Springs.

MM Did you do any work at the resort other than working in the bowling alley?

VF I had a pretty good-paying job picking chickens for a penny apiece when I was seven or eight years old. I'd go down there and they'd kill 175-180 at a time for a big

banquet. They'd wring their necks and I'd poke them down in a pan of boiling water and the feathers would just fall off. It wouldn't take me long to get enough for a bar of candy, so I'd run down and have the old man give me a due bill and I'd go to the office and get a candy bar.

MM Did they have local people working there, or did they bring in their employees?

VF Local people tended the gardens and took care of the flowers and lawn.

MM Do you remember how they had the inside of the hotel fixed up?

VF It was pretty nice. There were carpets all over the floor and carpets on the stairway. They had a winding stairway, I remember. The office was just as you went in at the front door.

MM What do you know about the fire in 1922? Do you think someone set fire to the hotel, or was it just an accident?

VF Well, you don't know. That fall at the closing dance it caught fire, but someone saw it and put it out. The next spring they opened in May. They had their opening dance and after everyone left it caught again. It went down that time. That was in '22. I was living at my old homeplace over on the hill. I went down and watched it burn.

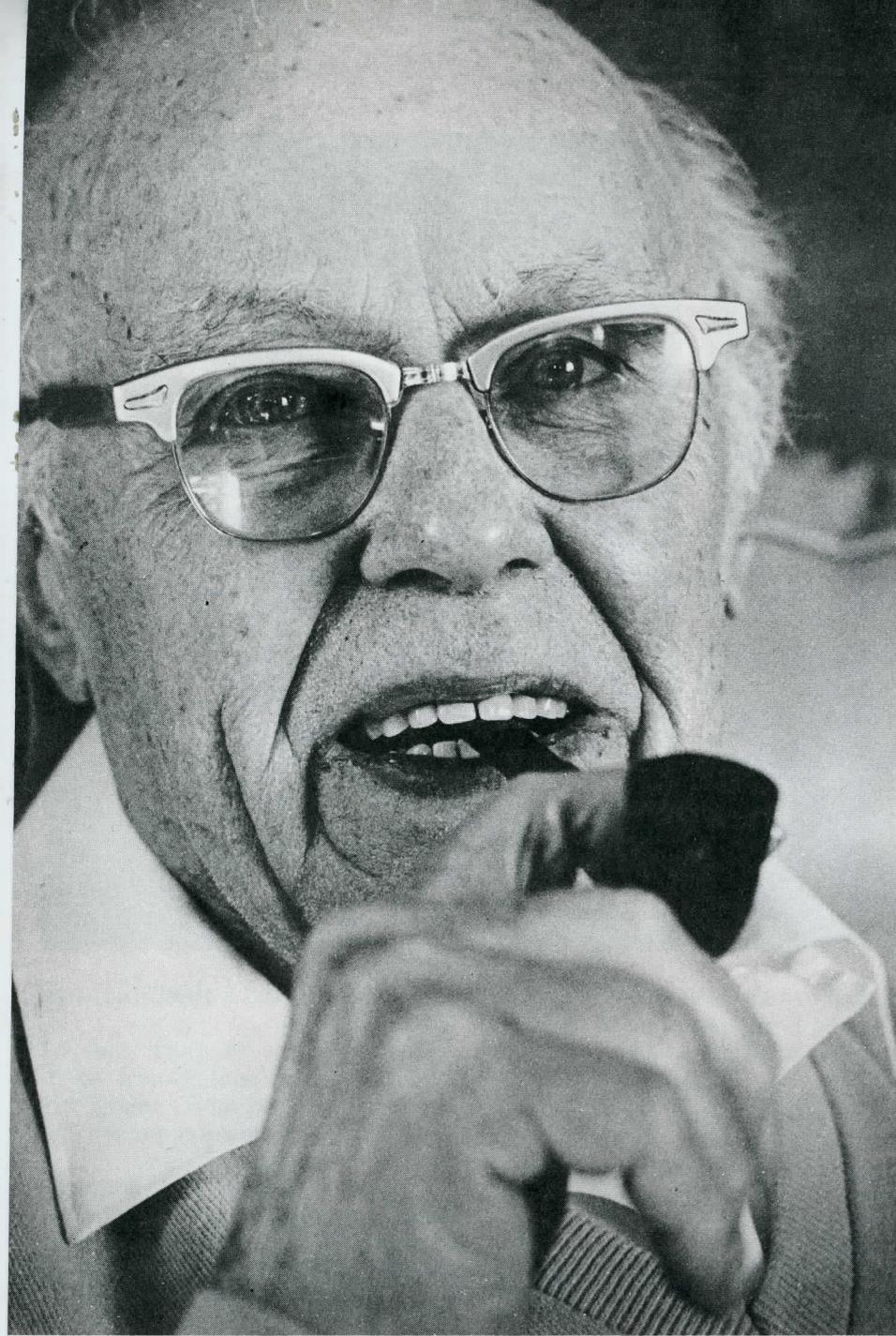
MM What happened after the big fire?

VF R. G. Meador had sold out to two Princeton doctors, Lynch and Wallingford. After the fire, Lynch bought out Wallingford and then sold out himself to Dr. VanCourt and two or three others.

MM Did they keep running the place as a resort?

VF No. They planned to, though. There was a woman came in here from New York. She was going to take over and do big business, but it all fizzled out and they gave it up. There were too many other vacation places then, like over at Shawnee Lake and I think over around Rock they had swimming pools.

The Mercer Healing Springs was a pretty nice place, though, before it burned in 1922. A big thing for the time, because there were no swimming pools around, or hard roads. It was a pretty big thing for Princeton and Athens. ❀



In his 86 years, Jennings Bryan "Bing" Keller has been a soldier, filmmaker, amateur artist and woodworker, among other things.

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# "It's Always Well to Remember"

## Bing Keller of Preston County

By Diane Tennant  
Photographs by Dennis Tennant

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The only reminder of time passing in Bing Keller's Terra Alta home is the chiming of the wall clock, which records the minutes as he recounts the years.

Its soft chime barely penetrates the husky voice recalling his grandfather's eyewitness stories of Stonewall Jackson's death, the sound of bullets pinging off a steel bridge during the 1912 Coal Wars, and other vivid memories of a young carpenter, filmmaker, and soldier grown old.

Jennings Bryan "Bing" Keller's incredibly sharp memory and enthusiasm shake the dust off history. His stories begin in 1912 when, as a 16-year-old, he joined the National Guard and was sent to Mucklow on Paint Creek in southern West Virginia with 68 other men to keep peace between striking coal miners and the mine guards.

"I joined in February and we went to Paint Creek in, I think, it was early August. Three of us were on reserve and we were told to go to a little house there and lay down and try to get some rest because we'd been on day shift but I wanted night time. I had a hunch something was going to happen," he said.

"Over on this side was the mine tipple and we had men in that and the firing started on those fellas in the tipple. As soon as that firing started, we wakened. The captain came up and sent the other two fellas where he wanted them to go and he said, 'You come with me.' That was because I was just a kid, you know.

"We started over there in the moonlight but over on this side were all trees—we were sheltered and they couldn't see us. So, boy, just the minute we got out of the shadow of that bridge they turned the fire on us. The captain and I were pinned down on this railroad bridge.

"And, boy, they just peppered us with bullets but they couldn't get us. They didn't hit us but some of the shells came over the inside and hit on this side. They had us pinned down there for about 30 minutes."

The only casualty during the battle was a hat, shot off one soldier's head.

Keller fell silent for a minute. "It worried me for years, wondering



who the devil was shooting at me. And to this day I don't know for sure."

Keller's unit remained at Paint Creek for approximately one month before being shipped home to Preston County. He remained in the National Guard, a natural for a man who grew up in a family of fighting men, but saw no more action in the Coal Wars because his commander thought he and his friend, John L. "Bugs" Teets, were too young. Being left behind wasn't easy.

"I hate to tell this but we went out here on the hillside where we could see the troop trains go down and we both cried like babies because we couldn't go," he recalled.

"Of course, I thought I was a man after what I'd gone through down there. My old buddy Bugs Teets—he ran a newspaper in Richwood and he still lives in Richwood—he was along, he's just slightly older than me, but he and I weren't allowed to go back.

"I tell you, they're about all gone now. So far as I know, this Bugs Teets and I are the only two living that were on Paint Creek. I couldn't

find any of the others. I don't know why the Lord spared us to live that long. He must have had a reason for it."

Keller wasn't the first man in his family to survive a battle. His grandfather lived through a Civil War incident which claimed the lives of his companions.

"My old grandfather rode with Stonewall Jackson. And he was one of the couriers that was riding messenger when Stonewall was shot. The other courier was killed," said Keller.

"The story is, they were close to the Union forces that night, so Stonewall had pickets put all around. Then he took his staff with the two couriers and they were touring up the line, but somehow they got on an old road and got outside of the line, between the pickets.

"The pickets, why, they had orders to shoot anybody that came over in that direction, so they did, but Stonewall said that he didn't blame them because they were doing what he told them to.

"Grandpa used to tell me a lot

about the war and I think I always liked it."

Keller liked it so much that he joined the National Guard at a younger age than most, asking his mother to sign the entry papers the year before she died.

"When I joined the National Guard I used to go up to the armory to watch the drill every night. So in the February of 1912 I was up there that evening, as usual, the only spectator, and the captain, who was my mother's doctor, Dr. Scott, he read a telegram from the adjutant general's office telling him to recruit to full strength because there was trouble brewing in Mexico. Now that wasn't the greater one that happened in 1916, that was the early one in 1912.

"So he came over to me and said, 'Say, you've been coming up here every night for a long time. Don't you want to join?' I said, 'Yeah.' 'Well,' he said, 'go over there in the rack and get a rifle and fall in. Take one of the rear ranks.' After it was over he said to me, 'I'll be damned, you know, you never missed a beat. How did you learn that?'



Keller began his military career in 1912, as an underage recruit in the West Virginia National Guard (*far left*). After Guard duty in the Paint Creek mine war and World War I service in the U.S. Army, his outlook on soldiering appears to have sobered (*left*). Photographers unknown.

Above: Detail from a World War I painting by Bing Keller. The painting was made during his National Guard days, before the U.S. had entered the war, and depicts a charge by Canadian troops.

"I said, 'That's what I've been up here for, watching.' Of course, the only thing he could do was close order drill and lectures so I never missed a beat. He didn't ask me my age and afterwards I filled out the papers. Under 18 your parents had to sign and I think he had mother sign the enlistment form for me. I've always felt that, because when it came time to go to encampment that summer I hadn't told mother I'd joined but he was there one day and after, she called me in and she said, 'Dr. Scott wants to know if I'm going to let you go to camp with them this year,' and I said, 'Well, I wanted to ask you too, Mother,' and she said, 'Yeah, you've been a pretty good boy, you can go.' But then, of course, we didn't know anything about this business on Paint Creek.

Keller paused to think and the clock struck two. Outside, a coal train whistled at the crossing, reminding him of the important part trains have played in his life. He received his full name, Jennings Bryan Keller, from the famous populist politician who whistled at the Keyser station the

day he was born. Keller's father was a master mechanic for the B&O, who was transferred all over the country until the family finally grew tired of travel and settled in Preston County.

"I grew up here. This is my hometown," Keller said. "This was Mother's old hometown. It was a good little country town when I grew up here.

"First, there were no automobiles. Boy, if one came to town the whole town turned out. And I'll tell you something else. For years, people used to go to the railroad station to meet the train, especially the afternoon train, about three or four o'clock.

"Used to be salesmen—we called them drummers—would come here and stay at the hotel and they'd rent a buggy and a horse from the livery barn, and they'd travel these little stores.

"So, this one fella was in town and he said to this store owner, he said, 'What is the population of this town?' The store owner said, 'Hell, why didn't you count 'em? They

were all down at the train when you got off.' "

Keller laughed and relished his story, pulling silently on his pipe. "I'll never forget the day that we came home from the army," he said, finally. "We'd been discharged and there were only just a few West Virginians in this outfit, only three of us from here.

"Boy, that station was just packed. I said to some of the fellas, 'By golly, they sure turned out to meet us!' But they didn't, it was just the habit they had.

"I could tell stories from morning to night without repeating. I think I could, not only about the army but about other things," he said. He pulled on his pipe for a few minutes. "Well, I'd like to give you something that'd make a story, but I just can't think now."

Keller tells stories with paint on canvas, as well as with his many colorful words. Already dreaming of the regular army while still in the National Guard, he painted a charge by World War I Canadian soldiers which now hangs on his wall.



Before World War I, Keller worked as a cameraman for the short-lived Dixie Film Company. Dixie made short features because it couldn't afford film for full-length movies, he says. Photographed at Dunnington Hotel, Terra Alta, date unknown.

"These were supposed to be Canadian soldiers. We hadn't gotten into the war yet. I gave this to my first girlfriend. She lived in Rowlesburg; she ran the picture show down there. I painted that in 1916 and gave it to her. I hadn't heard from her for years—she went west—and then I got a call one day. She said, 'I still have that picture.' I'd forgotten about it and she said, 'I'm going to

send it to you. I think you ought to have it.'

"I used to paint a good bit, draw and paint. I never had any lessons. My mother had paints when she was young but she had to give it up. She used to give me pointers but that's the only instruction I ever had."

Keller was still in the Guard when the United States did enter World War I. His company was immediate-

ly enlisted as regular troops.

"We were in camp in Fairmont, our whole regiment was assembled there, and the day war was declared we were mustered into federal service. We became regular troops then. While we were National Guardsmen we got the great sum of 75¢ a day—the federal government paid 50¢ and the state paid 25¢, but as soon as we were mustered into federal service we got only 50¢ a day. The highest I ever got was \$1.45 as a sergeant. Boy, they really pay something now."

Again he paused, and the clock chimed three.

"My niece seems to think I have a very keen memory but I don't know that it's any better than anybody else's," he said. His niece and other family members keep track of the 86-year-old Keller, who lives alone since the death of his wife, Dode.

They lived in an isolated house near Auburn, Preston County, for several years, he running a woodshop in a refurbished water mill and she weaving and selling antiques in an attic loft.

Keller now proudly displays his woodwork, beautiful furniture gracefully molded from walnut, cherry, and other hardwoods. Drop-leaf tables, china cabinets, and spoon-holders decorate his home but his best seller lies in the spare bedroom, stacked in the corner with other samples.

"This was our best item—a gout stool," he said, dusting it off with the palm of his hand. "I never saw but one. We did some work for a lady in Grafton, an old lady, and we were in her home and I said, 'Oh, my goodness, a gout stool.'

"She said, 'You know what it is?' and I said, 'Yeah.' She said, 'You're the first one that's ever been able to call it a gout stool.'

"Where I learned it was a gout stool, I don't know, but it is. We tried to buy it and she wouldn't sell it, of course. She said she played with it when she was a little girl."

Keller copied the frame of the carved stool and covered it with needlepoint and upholstery fabric. "They just sold like hotcakes."

He gestured toward the table in his dining room. "We'd take 'em and use 'em and somebody'd buy 'em right out from under our food. That did happen. So I told my wife, 'Well, I'll build one, I've got enough cherry left to build one,' and they tried to buy that, but it wasn't for sale."

An anniversary plate with the date of his marriage, September 1, 1921, hangs near his wife's cherry table. A few feet away lies a photograph of a young man with a bulky camera on a tripod, taken just a few years before his marriage.

The young man with the bushy hair grinned for the photographer, who snapped a permanent record of the short-lived Dixie Film Co. Keller was the cameraman for Dixie, a company that made shorts because it couldn't afford film for full-length features. But Keller believes it had the potential to rival Eastman Kodak, had the war not intervened.

World War I interrupted Keller as he developed a camera with three movable lenses mounted on a turret, and experimented with recording sound on film with light. Those innovations were perfected by others while Keller was in France and when he returned, he couldn't even find his first crude equipment.

He looked at the photograph and rubbed his thin hair ruefully. "We wore caps those days. I had a bushy head of hair but you had to wear a cap or a hat then. Now, when you can go without, mine's all gone. Gone with the wind."

His grandfather, a railroad engineer before and after the Civil War, used to have hair like that, he noted.

"He used to tell me a lot about that—about his railroad days and about the army. You know, he was also a locomotive engineer and he had worked for the company before he went in the army. When he came back he got his job back and was soon running an engine.

"There were wood-burning engines then and farmers would contract to supply wood for the tenders, for the firebox, and they'd be a certain place along the road that they would stack that. They'd stop and

the fireman had to get out and throw that wood in.

"He used to tell me about coming through the glade country. This is the end of the glade right here in Terra Alta. It was sometimes called Cranberry Swamp. There was just patches of it all through clear down through Mountain Lake, Deer Park, all through there there was just patches of it. He said it was a common sight to see whole herds of deer, and of course there were years here that we didn't have any deer.

"They didn't have any signals, and a lot of it was single track. They would run by watching the smoke of the train ahead, where they could see it."

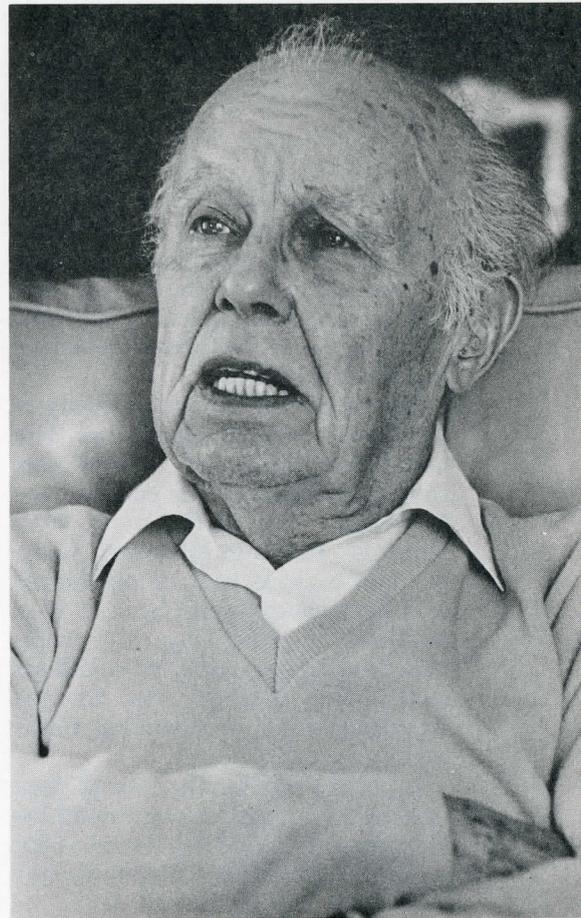
Railroad pilots were assigned to guide engineers through territory that was unfamiliar to them, Keller said, adding that an engineer never switched engines. "He was assigned to that engine. Nobody else ran it. If he couldn't go, his engine didn't go. And if his engine was in to be repaired, he waited for it," Keller said.

He paused again to re-light his pipe. "I know I'm boring, I realize that. I do talk too much because I live here alone. It's a lonely life I live up here all alone." The clock chimed four and Keller's cat, Tiger, scratched at the door. "Good company," he said, smiling, as he let her in.

"There's one more story I want to tell you and it's about the war," he said, launching into a narrative about being sent as an observer with a convoy through France. His truck, the last in line, was flagged down by a soldier who asked them to pick up his captain in a nearby town.

The captain was popular with the locals, said Keller, and they invited the Americans in to sample wine. "I was 21 years old then, and we started sampling wine back 21 years," he said. "Well, I had to skip years because I didn't want to get too high. I wasn't feeling any pain but I was still getting along all right. We finally left."

The captain rode along for a while, then asked to drive, said Keller. "'Well,' I said, 'it's up to you, not up to me,' so he took over. We'd go



As a National Guardsman in the Paint Creek strike Keller never knew which side was firing at him. "It worried me for years after, wondering who the devil was shooting at me," he says.

down the road and he'd say to me, 'Sergeant, do you see that bridge down there? How many do you see?' 'Well, I see three, captain.'

"He said, 'Right, that's just what I see. Which one should I take?' I said, 'The middle one.' 'Right you are,' he said.

"I'll never forget that. That was something. Now how many bridges do you see? Three, sir. Which one shall I take? Middle one, sir. Right."

He smiled silently, smoke curling up from his pipe in the slanting light of late afternoon. "It's always well to remember the lighter side of things. Things weren't always so pleasant, of course, but I'm glad that those things are mostly forgotten and it's just the pleasant things that you remember.

"Well, I don't know of anything that would be of interest to you. Do you think you could make this a story?"

**M**ack Gillenwater. With the last name of Pizzino, is it safe to assume that your parents were immigrants?

Frank Pizzino. Yeah, my father, Carmelo Pizzino, came to this country in the late 1800's from Sicily. He came as a young boy and went to work on the Pennsylvania Railroad on the main line that went into Harrisburg, the capital. Like most all immigrants, he came here with a tag around his neck.

My father went back to Sicily in 1912 and married my mother. Her name was Catherine Sciacca, and they came back to this country and he went to work at Keystone, West Virginia—that's in McDowell County. The biggest part of my family was born there. I was born in 1914 on West Virginia Day. My people had 14 children—eight boys and six girls. Most of them was born at Keystone, some in Wyoming County.

In 1921, my family moved over here to Wyoming County around the Herndon area, and my father went to work in the Micaja Coal Company mines. In the spring of 1925, we moved to Glen Morrison, where he went to work for the Morrison Coal Company, operated by A. W. Lang, out of Charleston. In the fall of 1927, my father built a house and moved to Glen Fork.

I went to Milam High School and graduated in 1933. I went to work for the Department of Highways in Wyoming County, and in 1934, I went to work in the briquette plant.

MG Tell me about your work in the briquette plant.

FP I started out working as a laborer, doing different jobs, and then got promoted to an inspector. The job of inspector was to inspect briquettes as they passed along the conveyor, and if any of them didn't look right, you took a board and raked 'em off the belt and didn't let nothing bad go by.

MG How would you know the briquettes were bad?

FP Well, sometimes they would look a little soft, and some of them would be halves where they had cracked open. If you get a piece of wood, rock, or slate in them, they would bust right open. Lots of times you didn't get the right mix, they

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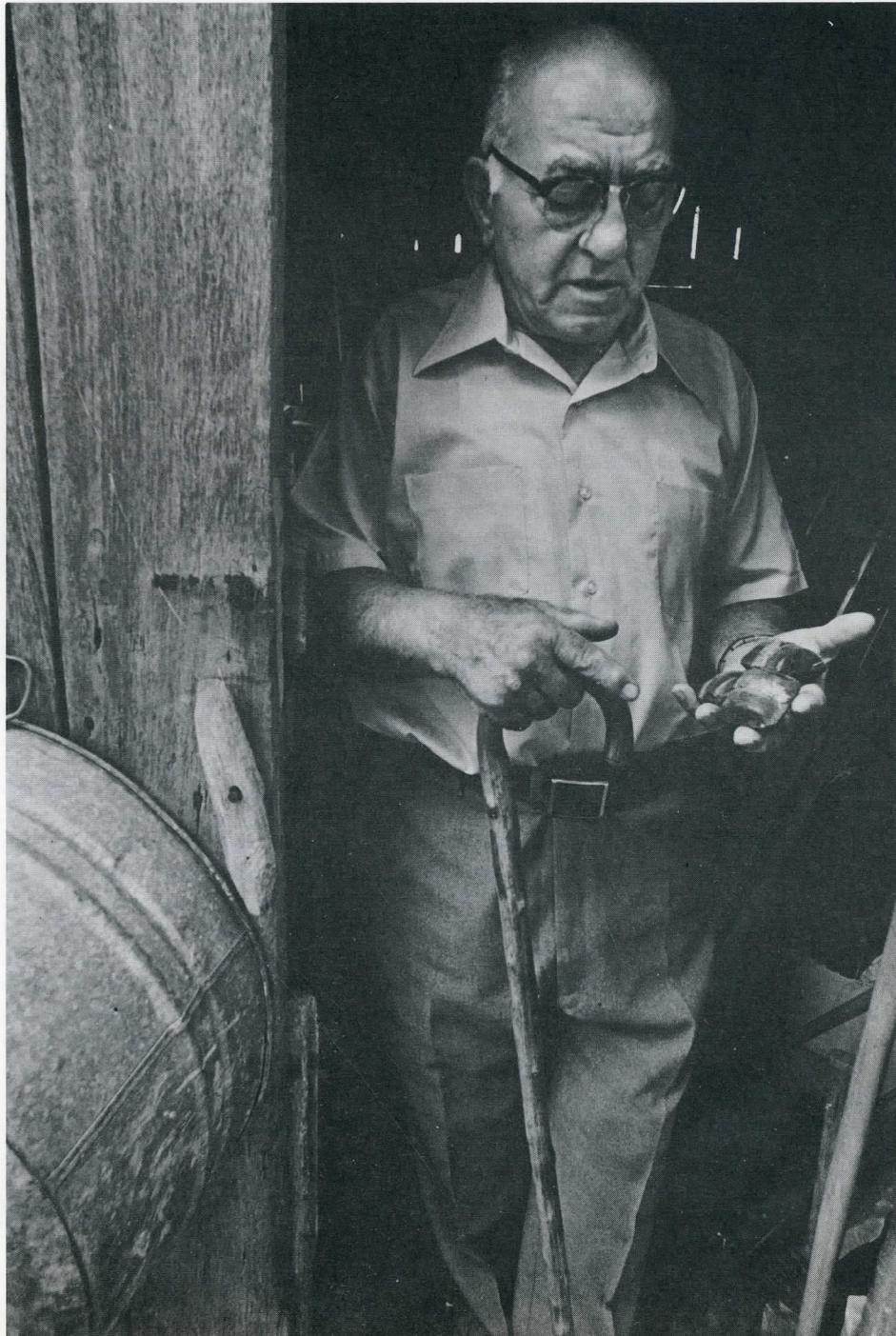
# “The Best Fuel You Could Find”

## Frank Pizzino Remembers The Briquette Industry

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Interview by Mack Gillenwater  
Photographs by James Samsell

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would tend to be soft. You had to get a certain mix at the right pressure to make 'em all hard.

MG So you would just rake the bad ones off. . . .

FP Yeah, you'd rake 'em off on that conveyor and they'd go back through the process again.

MG Was briquetting a coal conservation measure, or what was its purpose?

FP At the time that they made the briquettes, you couldn't give slack coal away. Nobody wanted the fine stuff, everybody wanted lump. They even had experts come into the mine and show you how to "shoot" the coal in order to get more lumps. Then they come up with this briquette thing by adding a little asphalt to slack coal and processing it, and it was good for cooking and heating. It was the best fuel to cook and heat with you could find, and it didn't take too many of them to do the job. People that I talked to up in Minnesota and Wisconsin told me that nothing could come up with the heat in that cold climate as them briquettes would make. They said that coal and gas heat would freeze you to death up there. They used briquettes in stoves and fireplaces by putting them in paper bags, and placing bag and all in the firebox, and when they got hot they would fuse together and burn for hours. We used 'em in our fireplace.

MG Would you discuss the background of the Glen Rogers plant?

FP It went into operation in the late 1920's. When they first started making briquettes there, they were different in shape than your ordinary charcoal briquettes. They used cornmeal and a little bit of asphalt and they called it starch binder.

MG Cornmeal and asphalt?

FP That's right. Now, I didn't work there when they used that. They had quit using it when I started working there in 1934.

MG What type of briquette binder did the Glen Rogers plant finally choose?

FP Petroleum asphalt is what it was. Some French Canadians visited the company and called it pitch. We are the only ones who called it asphalt, but it was made out of petroleum. We bought it from

Ashland Oil Company at \$1.25 a ton, in the early days. At the time we shut down, the stuff was selling at \$22 a ton, and that's plus freight.

During the war they began to say that maybe we was going to get cut off from petroleum. We tried to mix 4% asphalt and 2% silicon of soda, but it added that much more ash to the briquettes and they weighed more. That didn't work out very successfully. They used that binder down in southern Illinois for a long time, more or less to cut down on the smoke, and they were more successful with it than we was. Now the type of coal they used had a lot of smoke. They heated their coal up to a point where it almost started burning, in order to drive off as much smoke as they could. Their plant blowed up once down there and killed about three or four men. This coal we got here doesn't have the smoke in it, especially this Beckley seam we're mining up here. A lot of this Appalachian coal is pretty smoky and got a lot of ash in it. That coal we had at Glen Rogers didn't have that.

Now, in the '50's, we had some Korean visitors to come to Glen Rogers and look us over. They were having trouble with their binder. They used a material they got out of seaweed because at that time they couldn't get asphalt in Korea like we had.

MG Earlier you mentioned cement as a binder.

FP We had an engineer out of Illinois come down here one time and made some briquettes and put cement in them. I don't remember what the ratio was he used, how much coal and how much cement. He just mixed the cement with water and run it into the coal and a little bit of asphalt and mixed it and then run it out on this big conveyor and let it set there for two or three days, and let them harden and then load them up in barrels—now what he ever done with them I don't know. He was experimenting with something all of the time, but that cement didn't work very good.

They had a process in southern Illinois and at Superior, Wisconsin, where they could automatically mix the asphalt with the crushed coal and produce a good hard briquette

that would stand up to rough treatment. The University of Iowa developed that. I went up to southern Illinois and on up to Wisconsin to see this equipment, but the old fella up there had already tore it out, because they had shut his plant down—and he shipped everything down there to me, the books and everything on how to install it and how to use it. And we was just in the process of studying the thing whenever we shut down [1960]. We actually didn't get into it—but the University of Iowa wrote a letter saying they wanted 5¢ a ton royalty for using *their* process.

MG Did you have a dust problem?

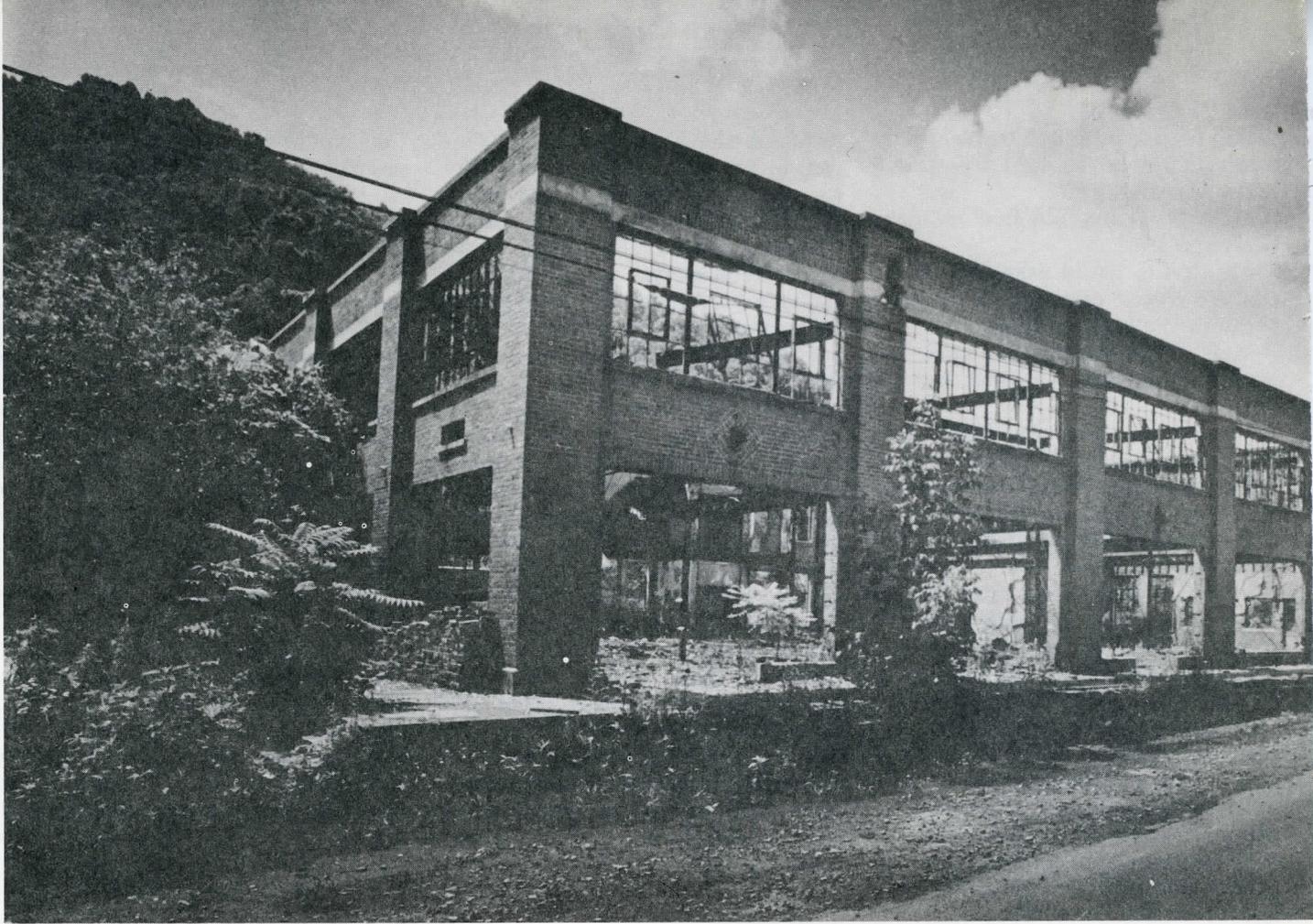
FP Yes, we had a dust problem. The inspector closed us down several times on account of dust. That was the dustiest place I guess I ever laid my head. The only place that seemed to be affected by that dust was just the surroundings and where I lived. The camp was a mile and a half away from the plant. They built a house for me and my wife, and we had a terrible time with that dust.

MG Did you develop any kind of lung problem as a result of the dust?

FP Yes, me and the Labor Department are still fighting it out on this black lung thing.

MG How did you solve the dust problem around the plant?

FP One thing we did was to install a vibrator in the plant. The briquettes passed over a vibrator and into a chute where we sprayed 'em with oil. Whenever the vibrator entered the chute, oil was sprayed on the briquettes and this put a film around them, and when you loaded them on the car you had no dust. The only problem was when the briquettes stopped coming, the operator may forget to cut the oil off, and the oil would keep flowing into the car, and you'd have nothing but oil. Boy, we got some complaints on that! Nowadays you couldn't get by with that, because you'd have oil in the water flowing into the creek. There's lots of things we done then we couldn't do now. One time a fella unloaded a carload of oil and let a tank run over into the creek, and the oil come all the way down here! That's 10 miles.



MG Can you tell me the average production of briquettes?

FP All right, the highest production we ever had was 42,000 tons in the month of August in 1942. I can remember that because the Chicago office wrote down one time and wanted me to come up with how many tons we produced a month. We could produce, when we had both plants in operation, 37 tons an hour, and say if we run 24 hours, well, you could figure that out. Now, that's barring any time down for first one thing and then another, but anyway, that's what the capacity was—37 tons an hour. We had 11 men on each shift, that's including the foreman.

MG Did a firm outside West Virginia own the Glen Rogers plant?

FP Yeah. The Old Ben Corporation in Buckner, Illinois. And the man that operated this plant was Bill Marlin, the father of Governor William C. Marlin.

MG How were the briquettes transported?

FP In the early days, we shipped briquettes in box cars until the railroad stopped that practice. They

had a lot of box cars—nice, clean cars for carrying grain and stuff like that, and we'd order a large number of cars because we'd ship briquettes all over the country. Each box car would hold around 35 to 40 tons. We had a little buggy, and we used to load one end and put boards up and load the other end and board it up and then board the doors up and load the middle. The buyers would put the briquettes in paper bags and sell 'em to the grocery store. When a person would go to the grocery store and buy groceries, maybe they'd buy 'em a bag of briquettes.

We shipped them all over. We sent them to Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia, Illinois, and Wisconsin, but we didn't ship any to Canada. We shipped some to the Eastern Panhandle here in West Virginia, to Charles Town, and to Maryland. Never sold many in West Virginia, just about everybody used lump coal for heating.

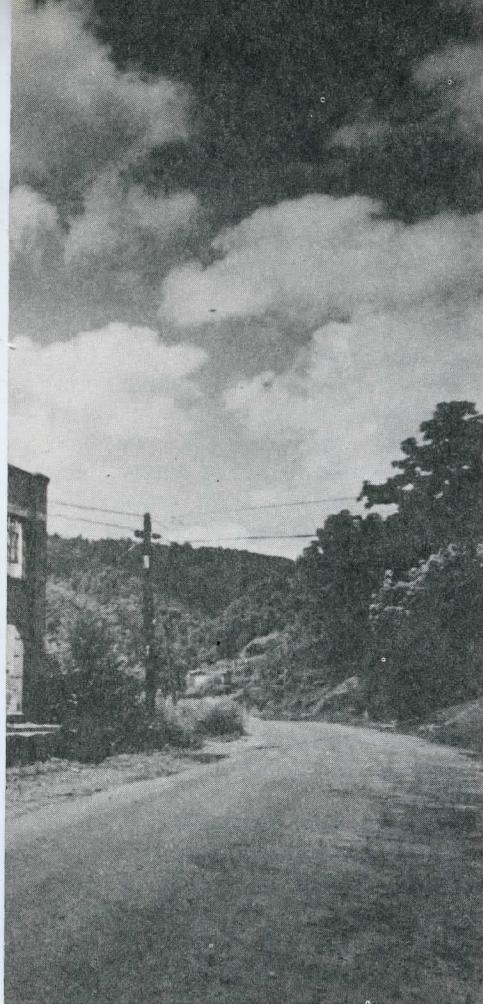
MG Did you ever package briquettes in paper containers?

FP No, we didn't do that at Glen Rogers. We shipped 'em in box cars, and whoever bought 'em, that is

whatever coal company in the town bought 'em, they would load 'em in bags and sell 'em. I asked one of the salesmen about that one time and he said you could sell anything you've got that you can put in a package. People will buy it! Usually they sold them in ten-pound packages. They'd go to the grocery store and say "I want ten pounds of briquettes." A lot of people get so much money every day, and they've just got so much to spend each day, so if they can buy ten pounds, they buy ten pounds!

MG You mentioned about advertising by using briquettes as gifts at banquets and meetings.

FP We shellacked them briquettes by the thousand—and we shipped them all over the country. We shipped them to France; we shipped some to Japan; we shipped them to California. We just shipped them everywhere, all over the country. Lots of times a coal operator would have a banquet or something and they wanted to give somebody a souvenir, so they would give their friends a shellacked briquette. After we got through shellacking them,



er, what they call a fluxer. We had one mixer that mixed the asphalt and coal dust together, which was dumped into the big fluxer where it was mixed with steam. And that thing was airtight and then it came out at the bottom and into a conveyor I'd say maybe 20 feet long and then went up another conveyor about 30 feet long. Now Berwind had a conveyor that had three paddle mixers. One brought it down, and then another took it back, and then another one brought it up and then a conveyor took it up. By the time it got up to the press it would be cool and it would press better. All of our mixers and everything had

lids on them, and we finally took the lids off, which would give it more cooling.

We had a big dryer. The dryer was 80 feet long, and 15 feet in diameter and it had vanes in it. We had a big furnace and kept it fired with big fans that sent the heat down this big barrel. It tumbled the coal in there and that coal would get up to 150°. Whenever we would get the coal up to 150°, we would run it through a crusher and pulverize that coal. And then we put it in a bin and had a gate to measure the amount of coal we wanted to go through there. We had gages, and by the chemist analyzing all of this stuff, we could tell how

Glen Rogers survives as a quiet residential community, but its days as a bustling industrial town are over. The big company store is now a burned-out shell, with sumac bushes growing inside.

them things were pretty. I mean they were clean and the label was yellow, with black lettering on it, and they would put one beside each person's plate as the compliments of Old Ben or our company as an advertisement.

MG Would you discuss the Berwind plant?

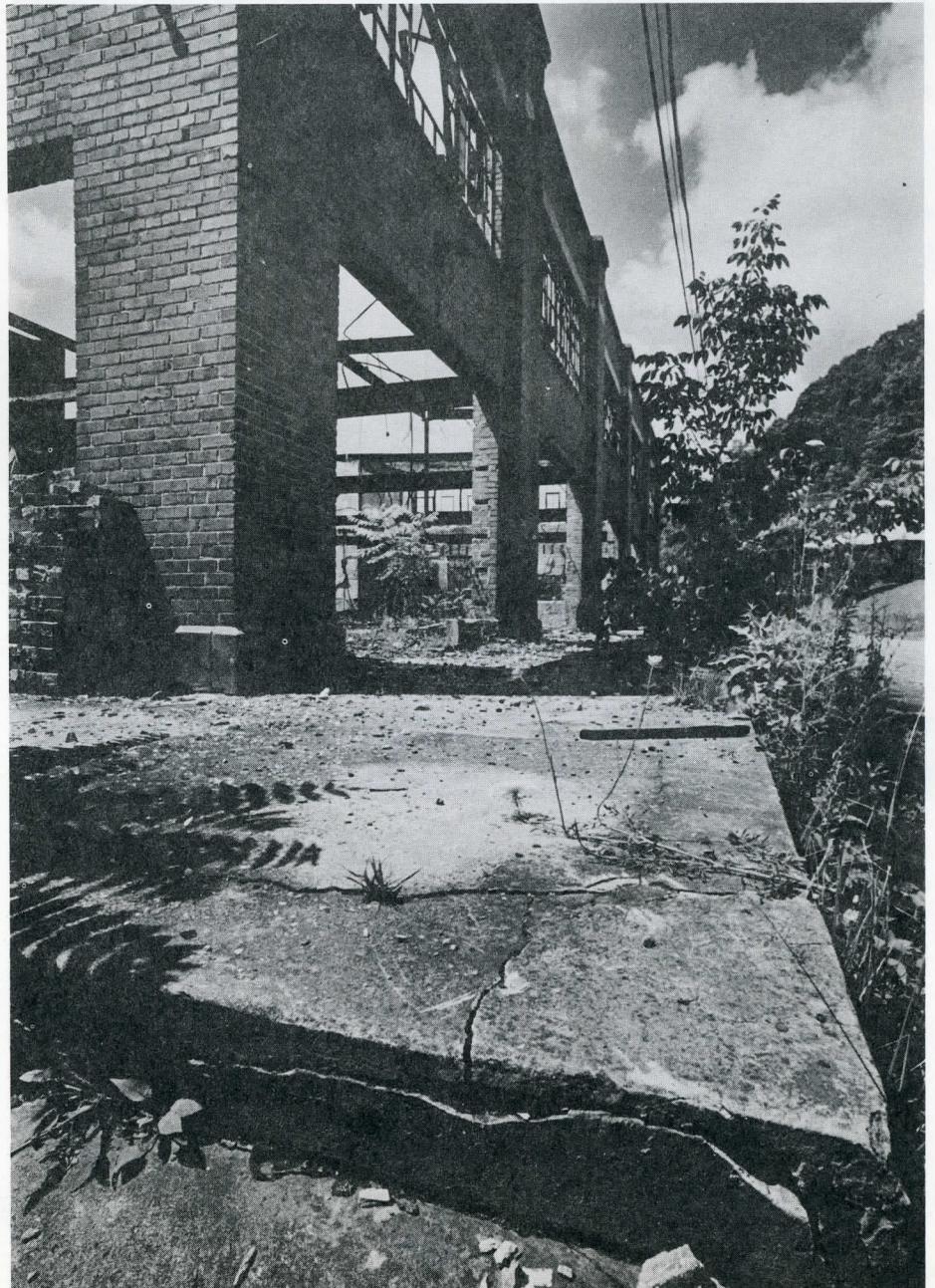
FP Yeah. They had a large plant there, and they made their briquettes in the shape of a barrel. They called that the Berwind-White Coal Company. They also had some plants up on Lake Superior. The way they made their briquettes, they cut them off with a chain and they were barrel-shaped. In other words, their briquettes were round and cut smooth off each end.

MG Were they about the same diameter as your pillow-shaped briquettes?

FP Yes, and about the same weight.

MG How did the Glen Rogers plant compare with the Berwind plant?

FP We didn't have what Berwind had. Berwind had a better set-up than we did. We had this big mix-





Although the briquette plant operated until 1960, only picturesque ruins remain today. The company "leveled the whole thing and sold all the equipment for junk," according to Mr. Pizzino.

much coal and how much asphalt we wanted, and if we wanted to raise the coal a little bit, we would raise the gate a quarter of an inch, or maybe we would speed up the asphalt pump ten revolutions. We had it all figured out.

MG What about the Davy and Matoaka plants?

FP I can't tell you much about the Davy plant except we bought a unit from them in 1934, and they sold their other unit to a Pennsylvania outfit. The North American Coal Company put in a little briquette plant at Matoaka and I went over there one day—it was just a little peanut outfit and they just

couldn't make briquettes because they were trying to make them out of slack coal and not drying it or anything and you just can't do that. So they didn't stay in business very long.

MG What finally happened to the Glen Rogers plant?

FP They leveled the whole thing and sold all the equipment for junk! In 1960, for example, we had \$10,000-worth of spare parts. Back then that was a high price. The elevator was valued at \$3,600 and there was an expensive elevator chain laying around.

MG Do you know of any plants now operating in the United States?

FP No, unless there are some up on Lake Superior or maybe in western Pennsylvania. I don't know anything is operating in West Virginia.

Germany may have some. We had a Frenchman to come over here right after World War II to look us over. A lot of these people came in here at the government expense, and checked out these briquette plants. I didn't know they had any coal in Iran, but anyway one of their engineers spent two weeks over here. And I didn't understand him too well, and you couldn't get much out of him.

We had a Canadian down here that I run off! He just come down, and he wouldn't tell me nothing. All he'd say was, "We get by, we get by." And then he come up and told me that, "We can get better stuff from your government than you can." So he kept on and he wouldn't tell me nothing, so I told him I didn't have nothing else to talk to him about and he could just go on back to wherever he came from.

Old man Putnam was the president of Raleigh-Wyoming Company in charge of operations and he asked me what I did to that Canadian. And I told him that sorry rascal got to bragging about how he could get good material from us down here and we couldn't, and I said he wouldn't tell me nothing, and I told him to get his --- off this property! Putnam got a big charge over that situation. They were particular about who took pictures and who they let come in there. It was more or less a secret operation.

I got tickled one time. We had a mine inspector to come up there and the old fellow whose place I took was called Mike Hannah, and he was German. And this inspector came up and told Mike that he'd like to have a basket of those briquettes there, and he said, "I've got a basket here in my car." He was a state mine inspector. He lived over here around Mullens, somewhere. And Mike Hannah said, "You go up to the office and get an order and bring it down here, and I'll fill it for you." That fellow said, "No, you are going to *give* me some briquettes." So Mike wouldn't do it. The next day the fellow came to inspect the briquette plant and shut us down for three days!

MG How was Mr. Putnam?

FP Old man Putnam was pretty liberal. People would come there and pick up them briquettes along the track where they rolled off the train, and Putnam told us to keep people away from here in the daytime and tell them to come back late of an evening whenever ain't nobody

traveling, because he said some of our people out of Chicago are liable to come along and raise holy cain. Said they don't understand like we do. Said we don't want to see nobody freeze to death out here.

When Putnam retired, they gave him a little pension and paid him \$35 a month as a "consultant." Now \$35 a month for a big outfit like that is just peanuts. Well, he was pretty mad. He said, "I'm almost 70 years old and I put a lifetime in." And he said, "They told me I didn't have enough time in with Old Ben; the biggest part of my time was with coal processing and Raleigh-Wyoming," which was true. But that's the way life is around the coal business; you win a few and lose a few.

MG So how is life treating you now?

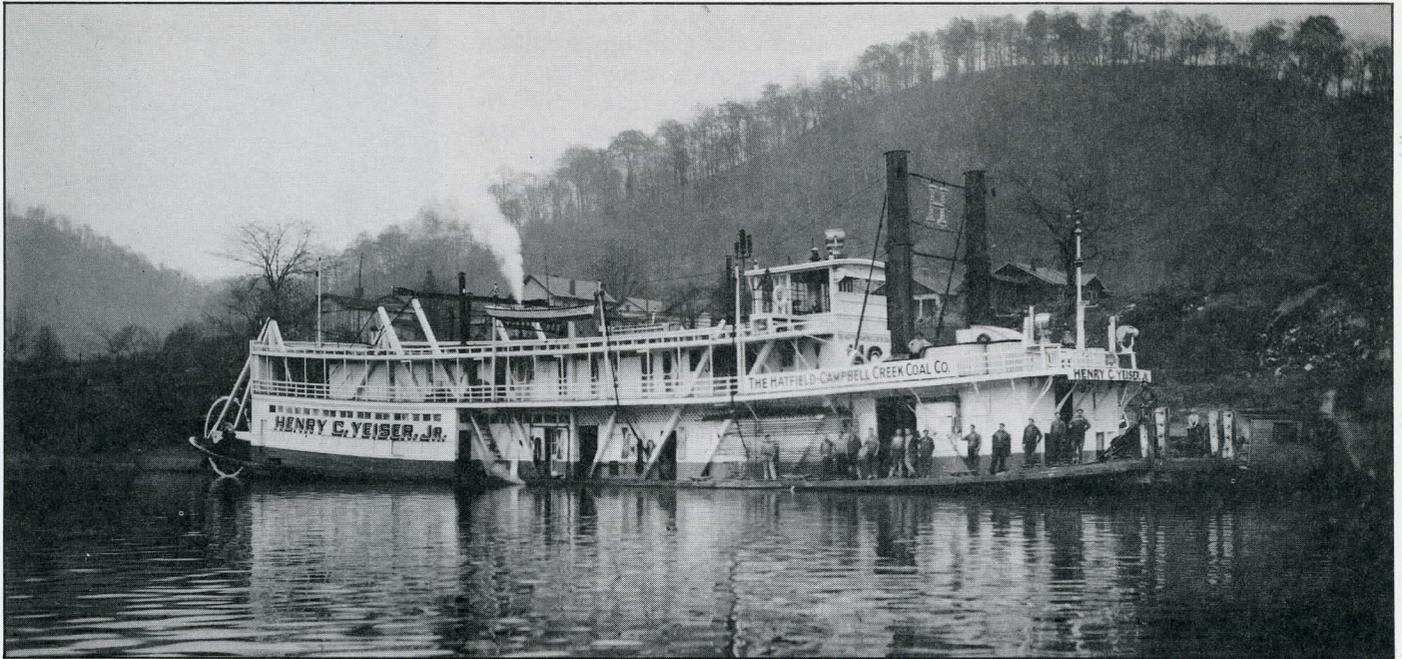
FP I've spent my entire life here in southern West Virginia and I've had some good times and bad times. Life gets a little lonely, but I got my family and friends and a good garden. ❁



Above: "I've spent my entire life in southern West Virginia," Frank Pizzino says. "I've had good times and bad."

Below: The slow-burning coal briquettes were "the best fuel you could find," according to Mr. Pizzino. He figures they may make a comeback, with the renewed popularity of heating stoves and fireplaces.





The *Henry C. Yeiser, Jr.* (originally the *Robert P. Gillham*), was one of many great sternwheeler steamboats towing coal on the Kanawha. The Hatfield-Campbell Creek Coal Company boat is seen here at the Dana landing, now Port Amherst, above Charleston. Photographer unknown, 1928.

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# Coal on the Kanawha

By James A. Wallen

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**H**undreds of millions of tons of coal have been floated down the Kanawha River, from the days of the flatboat through today's high-powered towboats. But the most colorful and interesting river activity happened from about 1880 to 1940. This was the period of the steamboats, when sternwheelers pushed fleets of wooden coal barges down to Point Pleasant, and eventually to Cincinnati, Louisville, and many smaller towns along the way.

The coal fleets were owned by companies important in the mining industry of the day, including the Hatfield-Campbell Creek Coal Company, Winifrede Coal Company, Raymond City Coal & Transportation Company, Plymouth Coal Company, and others. Their boats were the pride of the river. Still well-remembered in the Kanawha and Ohio valleys are such imposing paddlewheelers as the *Henry C. Yeiser, Jr.* (originally the *Robert P.*

*Gillham*), the *E. R. Andrews*, *Eugene Dana Smith*, and *Julius Fleischmann*. Most were named for individuals, and some—the *John Dana*, *George F. Dana*, *Lucie Marmet*, *Otto Marmet*, and *Sallie Marmet*, for example—bore distinguished family names associated with the coal traffic.

There were many others, all operating in the same way. They proceeded down the Kanawha, pushing the strings of loaded barges known as "tows." If the water was low, crewmen "tied off" their tows at the various landings at the mouth of the river near Point Pleasant. Sometimes there were so many coal barges along the shores on both sides that only a narrow lane was left in the middle for the passage of other traffic.

As soon as word came that a rise was on the way, activity became intense. The bigger towboats, the ones that took the coal on to Cincinnati

and Louisville, called in their crews, loaded stores aboard, and began the work of forming the many loaded barges into tightly-fastened tows for the trip down the Ohio. Deckhands walked the narrow, six-inch gunwales with heavy chains and coils of rope, and carried out lengths of pipe for the steam siphons that constantly pumped the wooden barges aptly referred to as "leakers."

These great wooden barges measured 135 feet long by 26 feet wide and eight and a half feet deep. Many of them were built at what is now Port Amherst, five miles above Charleston and home port for the Amherst coal fleet. Originally called Dana for the English mining family that came a century ago to open the Campbell's Creek mines, and later named Reed for Reed Hatfield, Port Amherst is now sometimes referred to by any of the three names. The barges built there were made of West Virginia oak and Oregon fir,

with the great length of the fir making it most useful for hull timbers.

With their leaky barges pumped out and formed into tows, the boats were ready to move downriver. If the rise happened to be only a modest one, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would assist by lowering the movable dams in succession, beginning near the upper end of the Kanawha with Dams 4 and 5. This created a "splash rise," which raised the navigable depth but was of only temporary duration. When the rise became evident just above Point Pleasant, it was time to go. There was no time to fool around, for the river would soon be subsiding to a lower stage again.

This Corps of Engineers assistance began in 1899, the year after Dam 11, just above Point Pleasant, was completed. Late in 1899 one such artificial rise in the Kanawha carried 400 barges loaded with four million bushels of coal from their landings at Point Pleasant.

If necessary, the splash rise could be followed by lowering the wickets of the Ohio River dams, one after another, so the coal could "ride the wave" all the way down to Cincinnati, or possibly as far as Louisville.

The tows had to keep up with the wave, of course. They made every effort to do so, stopping only briefly to drop off barges at such smaller river towns as Manchester, Ripley, Lavanna, Higginsport, and New Richmond on the Ohio side, and maybe Vanceburg and Maysville in Kentucky.

Every man had to do his part to help his boat keep up, although this was usually the easiest part of the whole operation. On the Ohio the locks were larger, the river was wider, and the current could be a real help. But throughout, from the upper Kanawha down to the final destination on the Ohio, it was a demanding job for both men and boats. They worked to deliver the precious mineral where it was needed, and the procession of big towboats, pushing 12 to 18 500-ton barges each, was a welcome sight at Cincinnati and Louisville at a time when those cities relied on West Virginia coal for both domestic and industrial fuel.

Some of those downriver trips were extraordinary. Captain Frederick Way, Jr., the noted river historian, records that in June of 1936 the powerful *Henry C. Yeiser*,

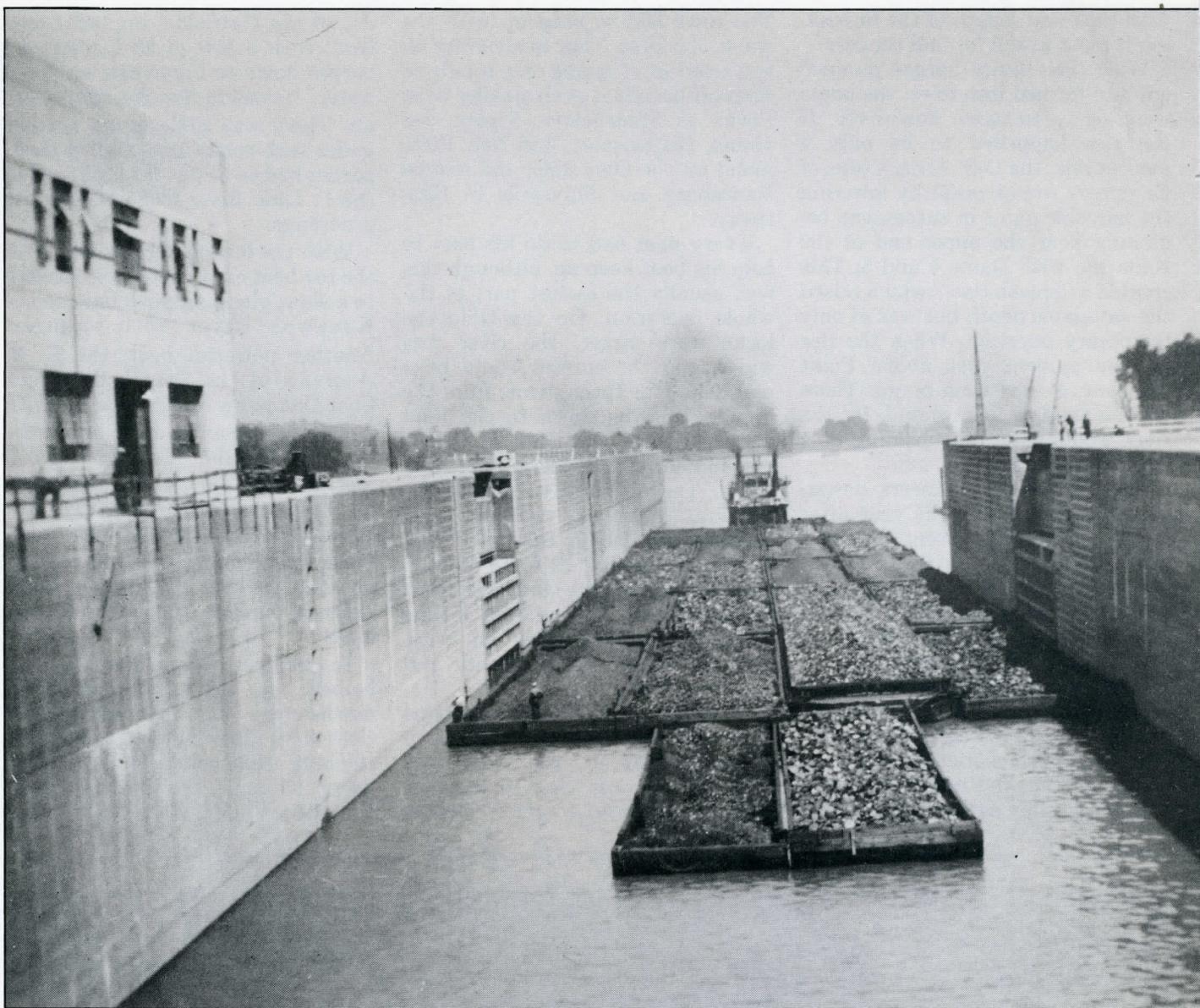
Jr., of the Hatfield-Campbell Creek fleet, took a tow of 28 loaded coal barges down to Cincinnati on "pool water," meaning that the dams were up. There was little or no current under such conditions, and all those barges had to be put through each of the 11 Ohio River locks in separate groupings.

With the loaded barges delivered, the towboat crew could look forward to a slow, plodding push back to the Kanawha River with empties. Another powerful boat, the *E. R. Andrews* of the Campbell's Creek Coal Company fleet, came up with 34 empties on a trip from Louisville in May of 1896. The *Andrews*, a sternwheeler 165 feet long, came on up the Kanawha with this tow. Perhaps there was a spring rise on the Ohio and the *Andrews* was able to go right on over the lowered dams without having to make all the locks.

In contrast to the gentle rises that helped the boats along on their downstream trips, the most dreaded rises were those sudden, rampaging run-outs that could quickly rush down through the narrow upper Kanawha Valley. Boats and barges

The *Otto Marmet* was a familiar sight on the Kanawha River during the days of steam. Date and photographer unknown.





were carried away, sometimes smashing against bridge piers.

Even a moderate rise might be accompanied by a current that would make it difficult for a downbound tow to be stopped. Captain G. Ed Young relates that in a fairly strong current the pilot could ring for full astern, and the sternwheel might roll in reverse for as much as ten minutes or more before the tow could be brought to a halt.

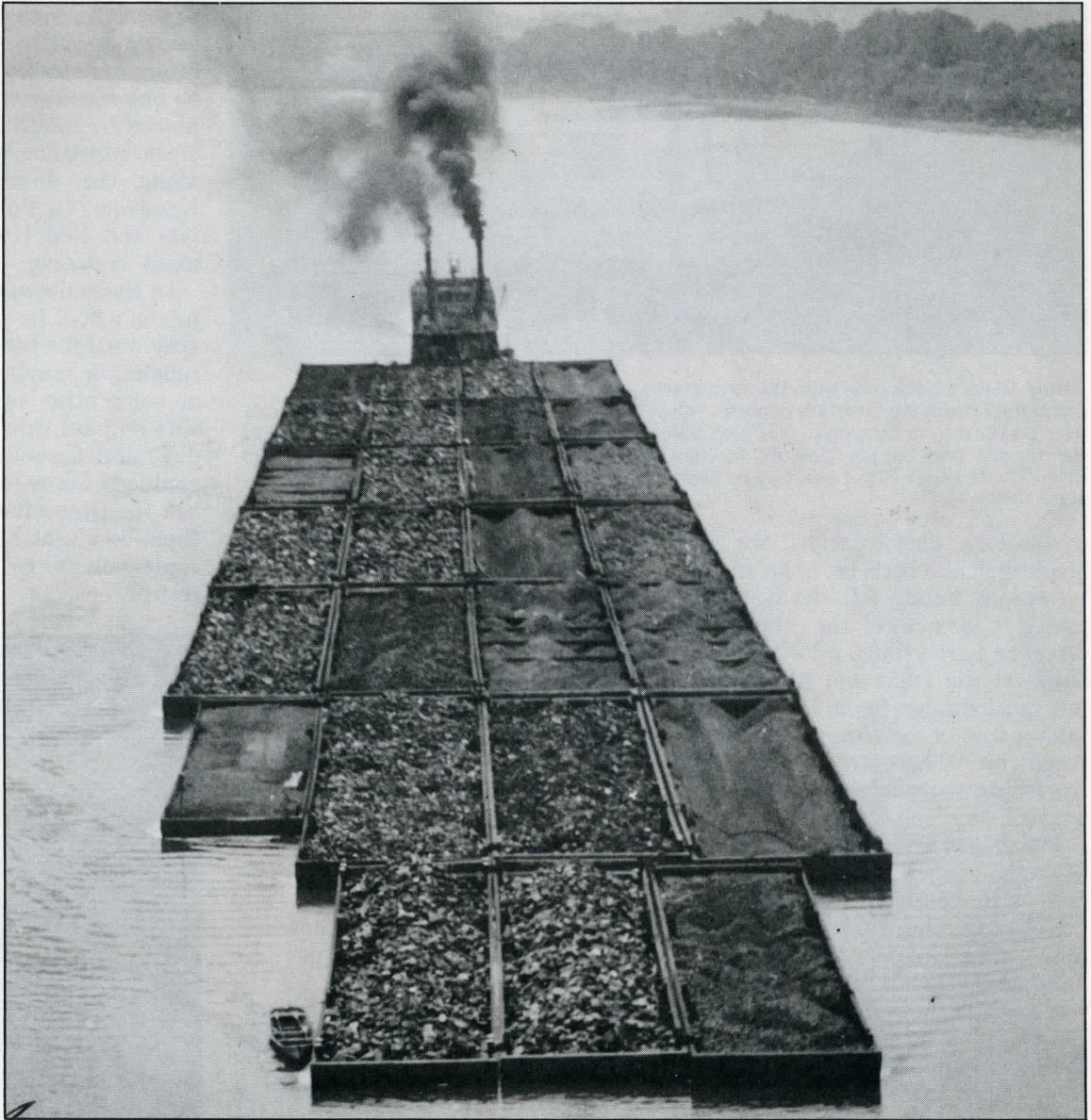
In such situations the mate could send a deck crew ashore with a heavy "check line," to be fastened around a good-sized tree. Usually this worked. But if the weight and momentum of the tow were too great, the line might snap, and then there would be a quick run along the

shore with another line that the crew hoped would hold. If a line parted under the strain, it could fly back like a whip, and a deckhand in the way could suffer a broken leg or worse.

But it was the day-to-day, almost year-round work of picking up barges at Kanawha River tipples and moving them out to the mouth of the river that routinely demanded the most from men and boats. Beginning at the upper end of the river with possibly six of the 135-foot loaded barges, the downbound towboat working in "pool water" with the dams up could have as many as ten locks to go through before reaching Point Pleasant and tying off the coal loads there.

Not all the locks were of the same size. Lock 6 at the lower end of Charleston, which had an inside length of 318 feet and a width of 55 feet, could take four barges without the towboat. So there would be an hour or more of work in breaking up a tow of six barges, putting in the first cut of barges, waiting until they were floated out the lower end of the chamber, and then coming in with the towboat and the two remaining barges after the chamber was refilled. Bigger tows took longer.

The passage required considerable work by the lockmen, too. While the boat's crew was busy unfastening and then fastening the lines that held the tow together, the lockmen



*Left:* A tow of 22 wooden barges made a tight fit, even for the larger locks. Photographer unknown, probably late 1930's.

*Above:* The *Henry C. Yeiser, Jr.*, downbound on the Ohio with a tow of coal, June 1, 1936.

were opening and closing the lock gates with their own muscle power. On the lock walls near each gate there was a vertical windlass generally referred to as a "spool," which was slowly and laboriously turned to open and close the lock gates. Sometimes members of the boat's crew would join the lockmen in this job, to help speed the lockage.

Captain G. Ed Young of Huntington, who began his river career at the age of 13 to become a pilot and captain of Kanawha River coal towboats, remembers the process well. "After we were out of the lower end of the lock, we'd then be in the low part of the next pool for a while," he says. "Those loaded barges we were towing might be sliding along just a

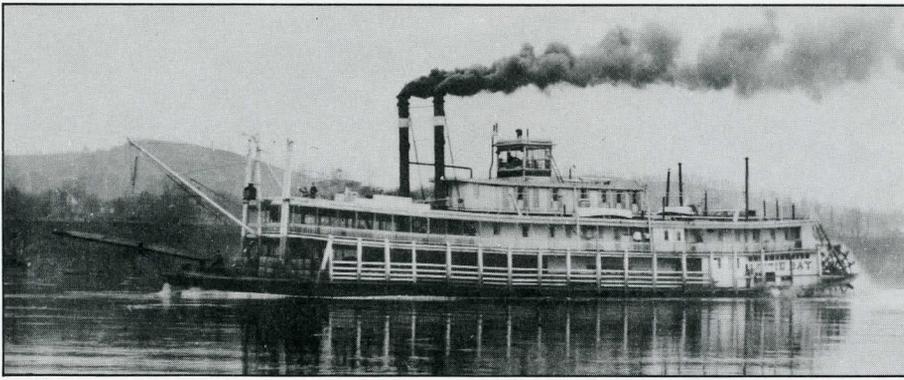
few inches above the bottom of the river, and in some cases they'd be shoving through sand. The minimum navigable depth then was set at six feet in the channel, and that's just about how deep those barges were loaded."

Government aids to improve the channel depth in such places included wing dams to direct the flow of water, and dug chutes to deepen some of the shallow places.

In his wheelhouse, Captain Young had a six-foot pilot wheel in front of him, turned by hand to maneuver the large rudders under the stern of the towboat. That in itself was a man's job, for those rudders had to be large enough to steer the whole tow. At the same time, the man at

the wheel had to know the meanderings of the channel and the locations of sandbars, rocks, buoys, creek mouths, currents, and navigation markers, as well as the outline of the shore in both daylight and darkness.

In those days, before higher dams created a deeper river, "You had to do some mighty careful thinking with those downbound tows," Captain Young remembers. "Sometimes it almost seemed as if we had to make that tow bend a little to get in-



Above: Black smoke rolls from the twin stacks of the packet *Lizzie Bay* in this photograph from the late 19th century. The White Collar Line packet made regular runs from Charleston to Cincinnati, carrying freight and passengers. Photographer unknown. Below right: Coal barges "tied off" at Point Pleasant awaiting higher water on the Ohio River. The towboat *D. T. Lane* may be seen in the foreground. Photographer unknown, early 1900's.

to the lock, particularly if we were heading in at a little bit of an angle."

Captain Young left the Kanawha many years ago for the long-distance barge lines, piloting heavy tows on the Ohio and Mississippi, but not long ago he had occasion to take a tow of gasoline to the upper Kanawha. "There are so many coal tipples up there now, I hardly knew where I was," he observed.

The boats that transported coal fittingly burned coal for their own fuel, with voracious steam engines consuming the mineral day and night. The engines were fired by hand, and all who towboated on the Kanawha in those days agree that of the many hard tasks for deckhands, the most exhausting was "wheeling coal." Each towboat carried a small barge alongside near the firebox, known as a "fuel flat." This barge carried fuel coal, which had to be shoveled into wheelbarrows and pushed up a steep incline to the boat's furnaces. Planks were laid from the fuel flat up to the deck of the steamboat, and heavily-loaded wheelbarrows had to be pushed up, sometimes at an incline of nearly 45 degrees. Deckhands had to be strong men to make it.

If wheeling coal was the hardest work, the greatest discomfort aboard a steamboat in the summertime was the heat. The sun beat down on the decks and the cabin roof from above, and was reflected up from the river. The main cabin, including the dining area and the staterooms in which the crew lived, was just above the hot boilers and

engines. Adjacent to the cabin was the kitchen, where cooking was done over a coal fire.

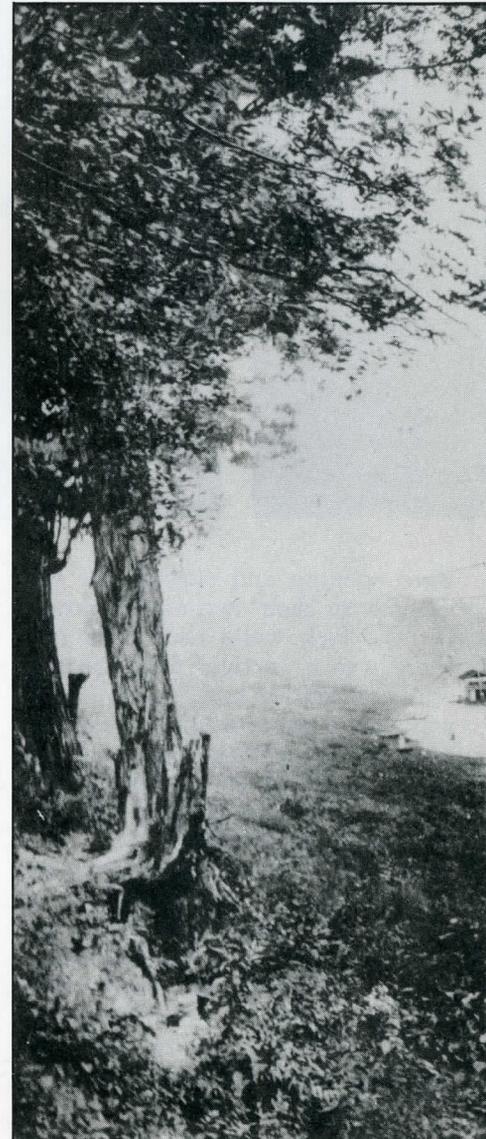
One former deckhand who worked on the river at an early age says, "People used to say how nice they thought it would be in the summer to be moving along on a boat in the midst of a cool river breeze! But the heat was everywhere, and there wasn't any place you could get away from it, either out on the deck or in the cabin." Cinders from the smokestacks were everywhere, too, and sweeping cinders was a constant, "spare time" chore for the deckhand.

But there were enjoyable aspects of Kanawha River coal-boating that old rivermen like to talk about. Food was cheap and plentiful, river cooks were among the best, and every steward saw to it that his boat set a good table. On occasion, the boats would stop at a farm landing and send a yawl ashore for the purchase of eggs and fresh farm produce. "We could always count on three good meals a day, and late-night lunches about 11 p.m. or 3 a.m. for those on watch, with plenty of coffee on hand at all times," says Captain Young. That remains true on today's diesel towboats.

While on the boat, the men had to depend on each other to keep things moving, fostering strong feelings of friendship. Practically all the coal boat crewmen, whether captains, pilots, mates, cooks, engineers, or deckhands, were from localities right along the river. If they were not previously acquainted, or actu-

ally related, they soon became well known to each other. Whole crews often transferred from boat to boat as one steamer was laid up to be replaced by another, and there was a close camaraderie among boatmen along the 95-mile length of the Kanawha. In Putnam County, Buffalo and Red House were home to many crewmen.

In those days, when a man took a job on a boat he was usually there to stay until his boat had to lay up for repairs, or maybe for low water, ice, or some other misadventure. There was no paid time off, as there is today, and the best way a crewman could get home for a few days was to ask for time off without pay. Even then, he might have to find his own replacement to fill in until his return.



If a man was able to get away for a while, he might go ashore near home or else wait at some landing for one of the packet boats carrying passengers and freight. There were many such boats, running from Charleston up to Montgomery and down the river to Point Pleasant, Gallipolis, and Cincinnati. Packets from Pittsburgh made weekly trips up the Kanawha to Charleston. The *T. D. Dale* and the *Evergreen* ran locally from Winfield to Charleston, a convenience to the many Putnam County rivermen.

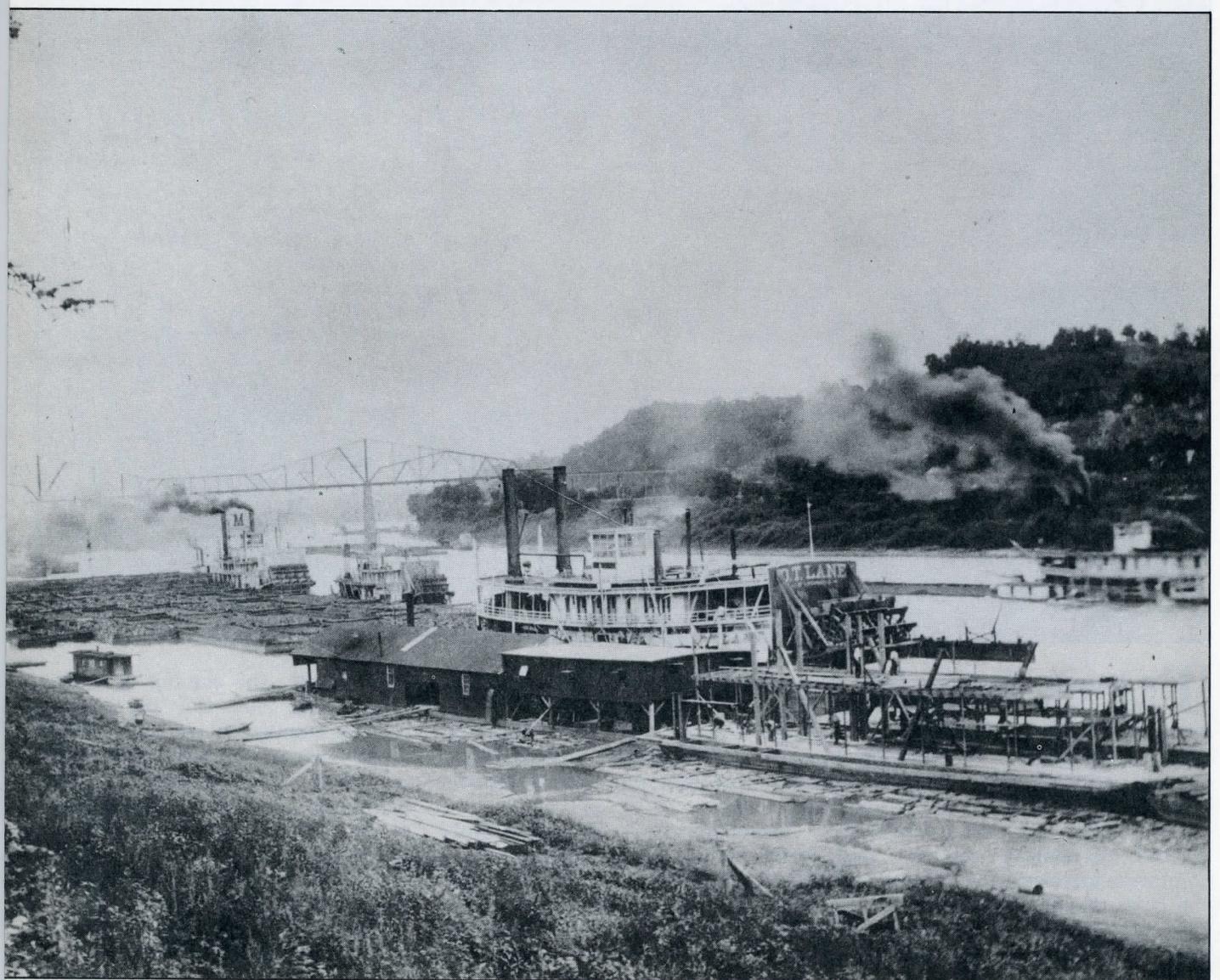
Generations of crewmen saw many changes in the river. With the ten early wicket dams maintaining a navigable depth throughout its length, the Kanawha became the first completely canalized river in

the United States. This success established confidence in the ability of the Corps of Engineers to carry out such new and difficult projects. The Kanawha became a busy river marked by streamers of coal smoke from towboats and packets and dotted with coal tipples, particularly along its upper reaches.

Black smoke no longer traces the course of the Kanawha but coal still predominates in the river tonnage, now pushed in huge steel barges by powerful propeller towboats. With high dams and larger twin locks dating from the 1930's, the river's commerce is far greater than ever before. Records indicate that when construction was begun on the original system of locks and dams in 1875, the river carried 161,932 tons of coal. Coal cargoes were up to a

million tons in 1898, the year the first system was put into operation. By 1977 coal had risen to 5,840,724 tons, out of a total of 10,755,599 tons of all types of freight. Coal is likely to remain the Kanawha's leading cargo, as more river tipples are built.

Coal no longer moves downriver in leaky wooden barges, and much of the romance of riverboating passed away with the great sternwheelers. The diesel age has brought greater efficiency and an easier life on the river. The hard job of wheeling coal is no longer necessary, and today's deckhands enjoy paid days off for time spent onboard. But at heart their work remains the same as that of their fathers and grandfathers, and that is the important work of moving coal on the Kanawha. ❁



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# Locks and Dams

## Improving Navigation on the Kanawha

By Ken Sullivan

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**T**he Kanawha River has been a major transportation artery for centuries. In the earliest days, Indians skimmed the river in bark canoes, and later white adventurers followed in similar light boats.

In time the rich valley lands attracted permanent settlers, and commerce increased the demands on the river. Farm produce, salt from Kanawha County saltworks, timber, and the products of light industry began moving to market on pon-

derous flatboats. These wooden boats were far larger than earlier craft, but still the river effortlessly carried their sizable cargoes, downstream at least, during most seasons of the year.

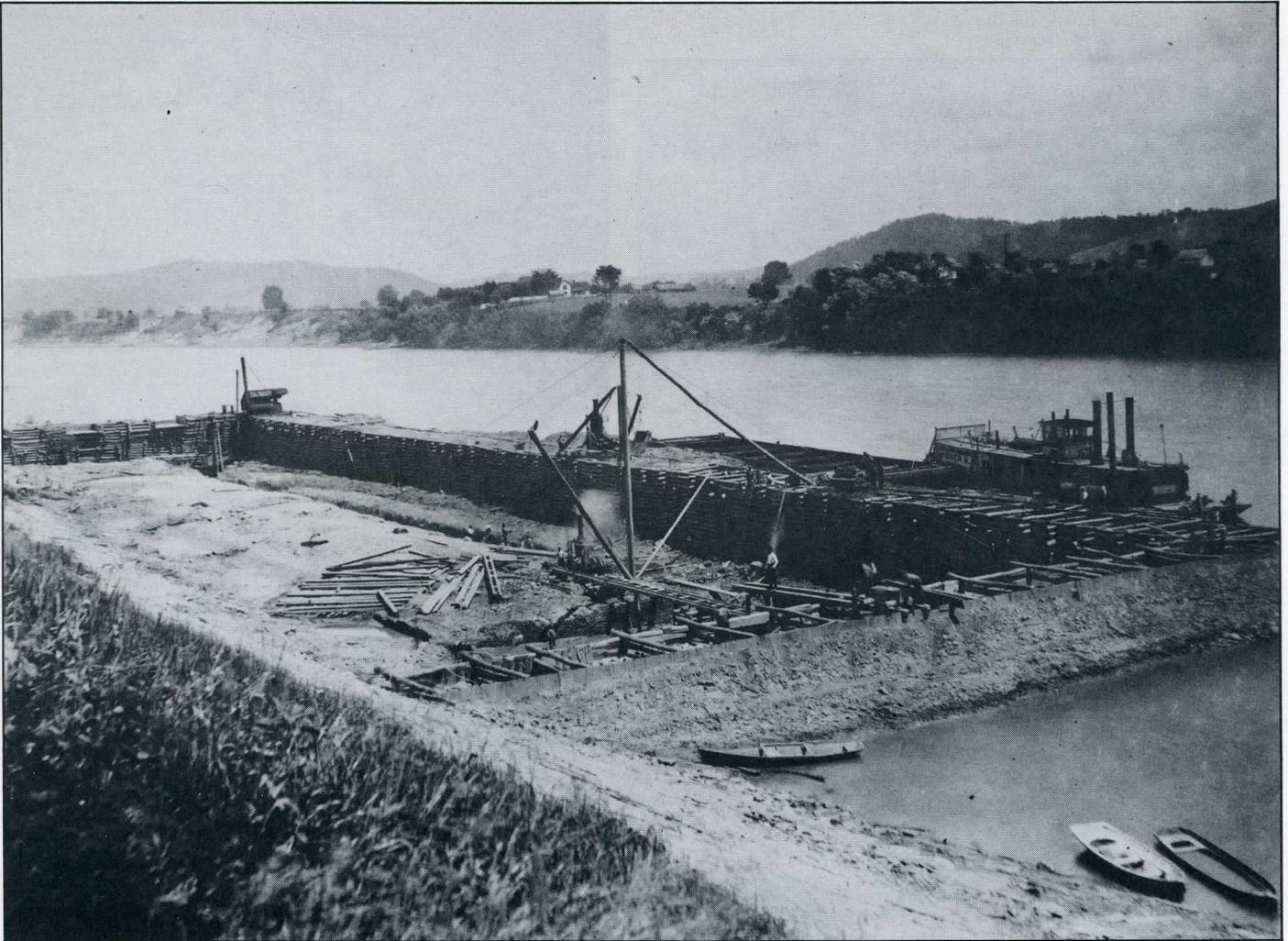
Developments in the 19th century permanently altered human use of the Kanawha. The expansion of commercial coal mining in the upper valley produced a bulky cargo that could only unsatisfactorily be freighted on unpowered flatboats.

Fortunately, the coming of steamboats held out the promise of reliable transportation upstream or down—but only so long as the water remained deep enough for safe navigation. However, an abundance of navigable water could not be taken for granted on the Kanawha, which was as subject to drought as to spring flooding.

After the Civil War, when the country and the new state of West Virginia turned full attention back

*Left:* The first system of locks and dams on the Kanawha, built during the last quarter of the 19th century, brought the water level to a navigable six feet throughout the length of the river. This is old Dam No. 4 at Cabin Creek, completed in 1880. Photographer unknown, courtesy Army Corps of Engineers.

*Below:* Temporary coffer dams held the river water back from construction work on the bottom, where foundations were excavated down to bedrock level. This is a view of early work on Lock and Dam No. 7. Photographer unknown, courtesy Army Corps of Engineers.



to domestic matters, it seemed clear to engineers that the Kanawha and other rivers must be "improved" by some combination of locks and dams to increase and stabilize the water level. Congress agreed in 1875, and work on the Kanawha commenced the same year, under the direction of the Army Corps of Engineers. A series of 12 dams, to provide navigable "slack water" from Kanawha Falls to the mouth of the river at Point Pleasant, was pro-

posed, with the number later reduced to ten. Excavation for Lock No. 5 at Brownstone began on October 7, 1875, with Lock No. 4 at Cabin Creek beginning later that fall.

Construction proceeded slowly, with contractors contending with flooding, bankruptcy, and militant West Virginia workers who struck whenever they felt they were being treated unfairly. Finally, Cabin Creek Lock and Dam No. 4, the first

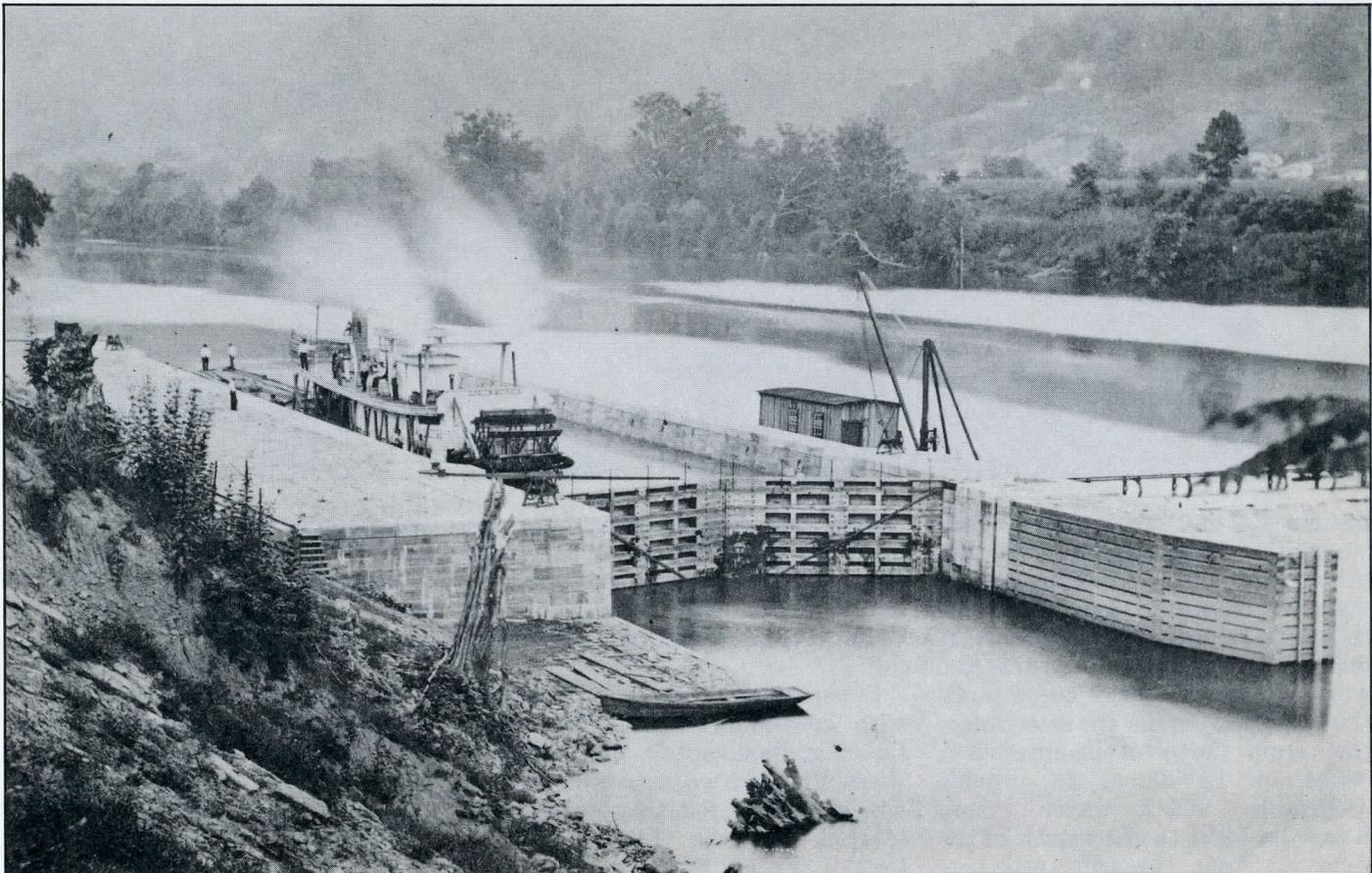
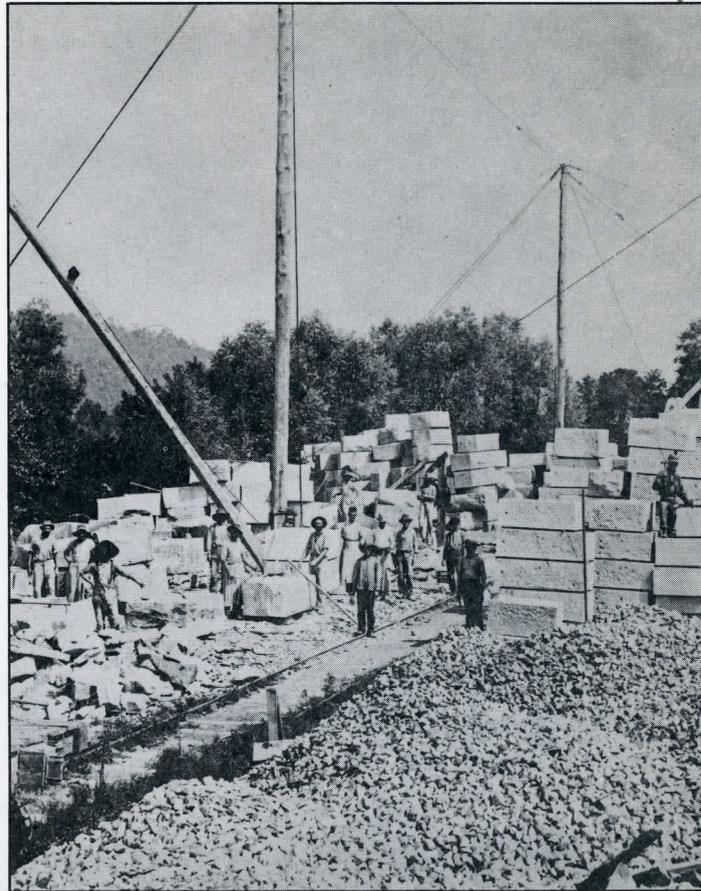
unit completed, was brought into service in July 1880. The entire river-long system was not finished until 1898, with the opening of No. 11 at Point Pleasant.

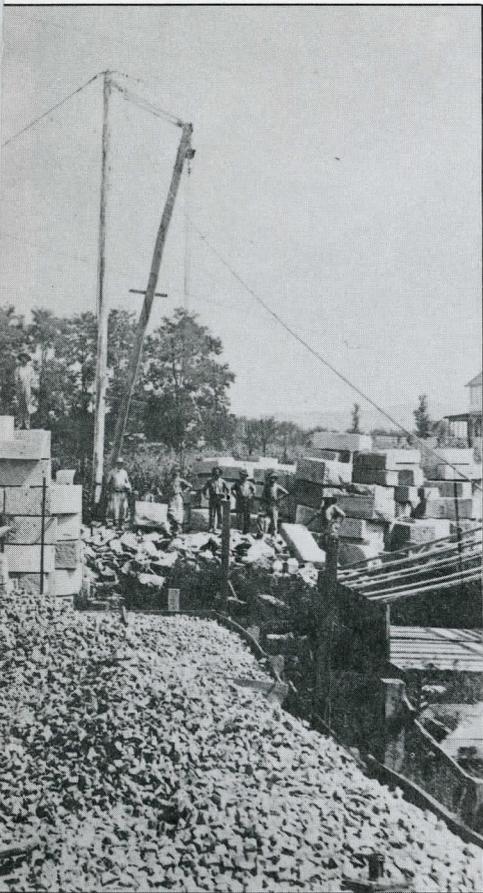
These first Kanawha River dams were of the "wicket" type, with hinged sections (wickets) that could be lowered to riverbed level when the natural flow of water was high enough for safe navigation. Boat and barges then bypassed the locks, gliding directly over the lowered

*Below:* The first system of locks and dams was completed with the official opening of No. 11 above Point Pleasant on October 11, 1898. Here workers hoist one of the lock gates into position on July 16 of that year. Photographer unknown, courtesy Army Corps of Engineers.

*Right:* Stone was quarried locally, boated to the site, and swung into place by cranes, with Irish and Italian stonemasons doing much of the skilled work. This is the stoneyard at Lock and Dam No. 7. Photographer unknown, courtesy Army Corps of Engineers.

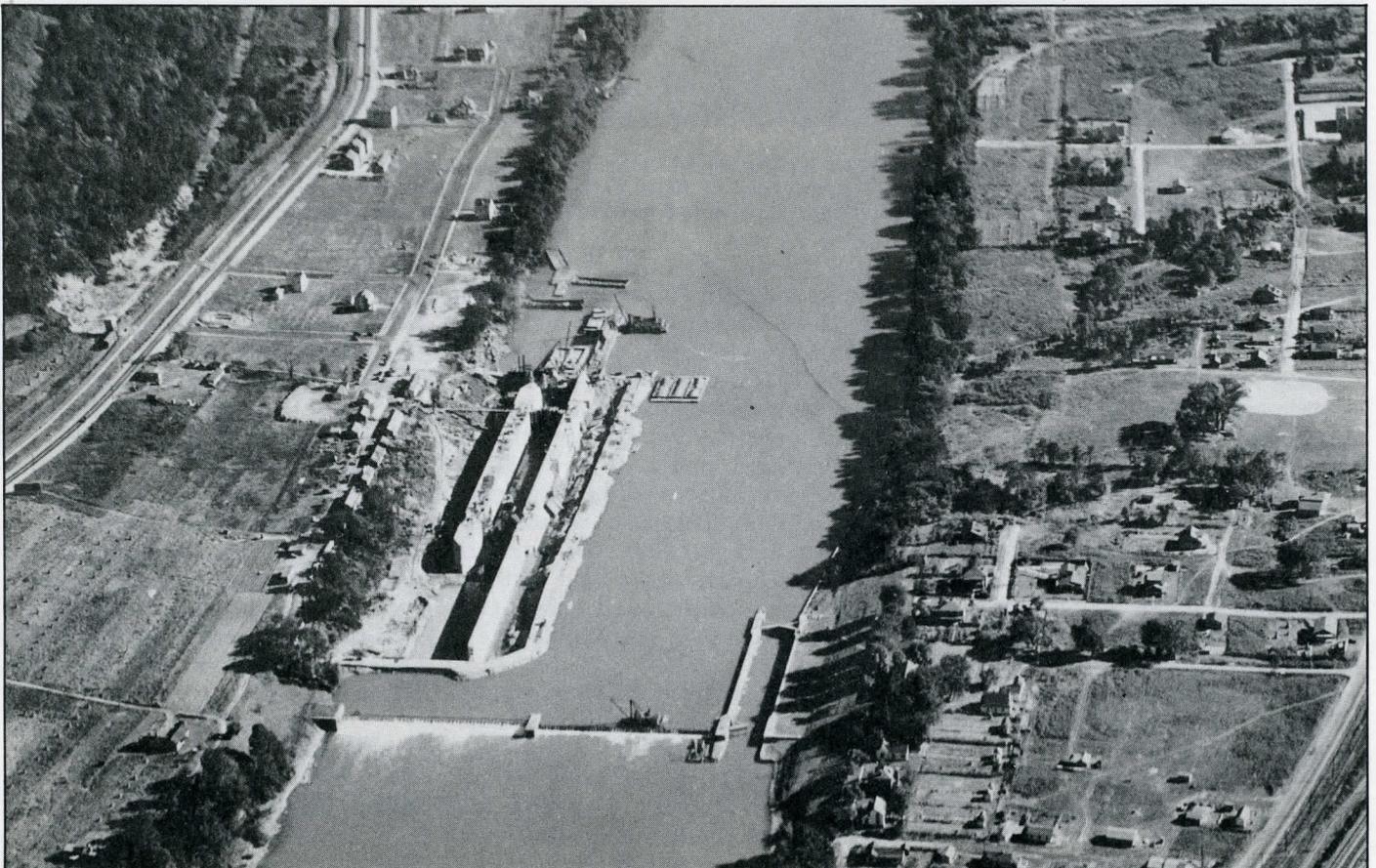
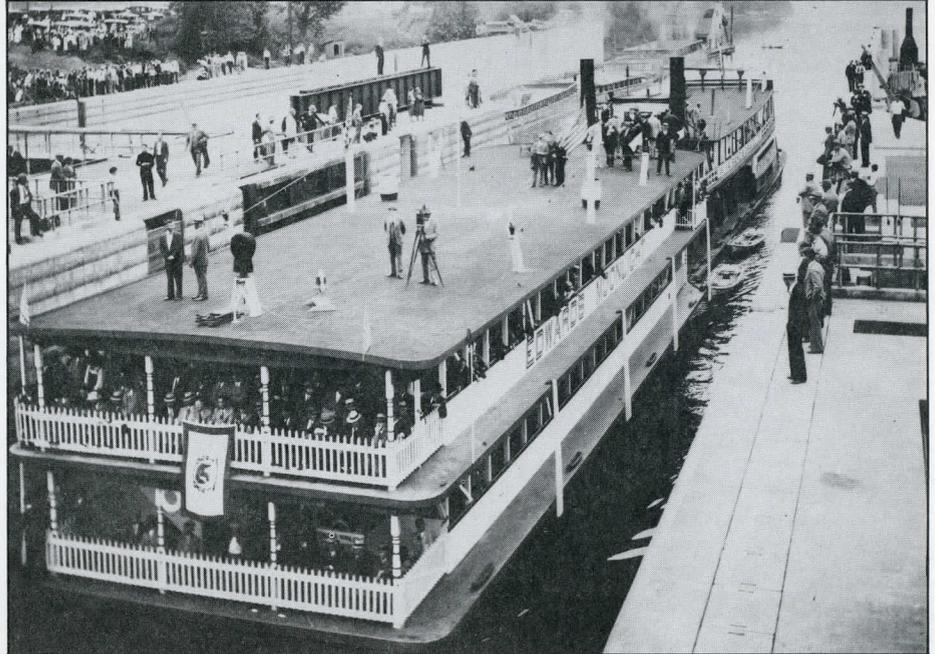
*Bottom left:* Locking through at No. 4. This upstream-bound stern-wheeler and barge had entered through the lower gate, which was then closed to allow the lock to fill to the level of the water above the dam. Now the gate ahead has been opened, and the boat and barge prepare to leave the lock. Photographer unknown, courtesy Army Corps of Engineers.

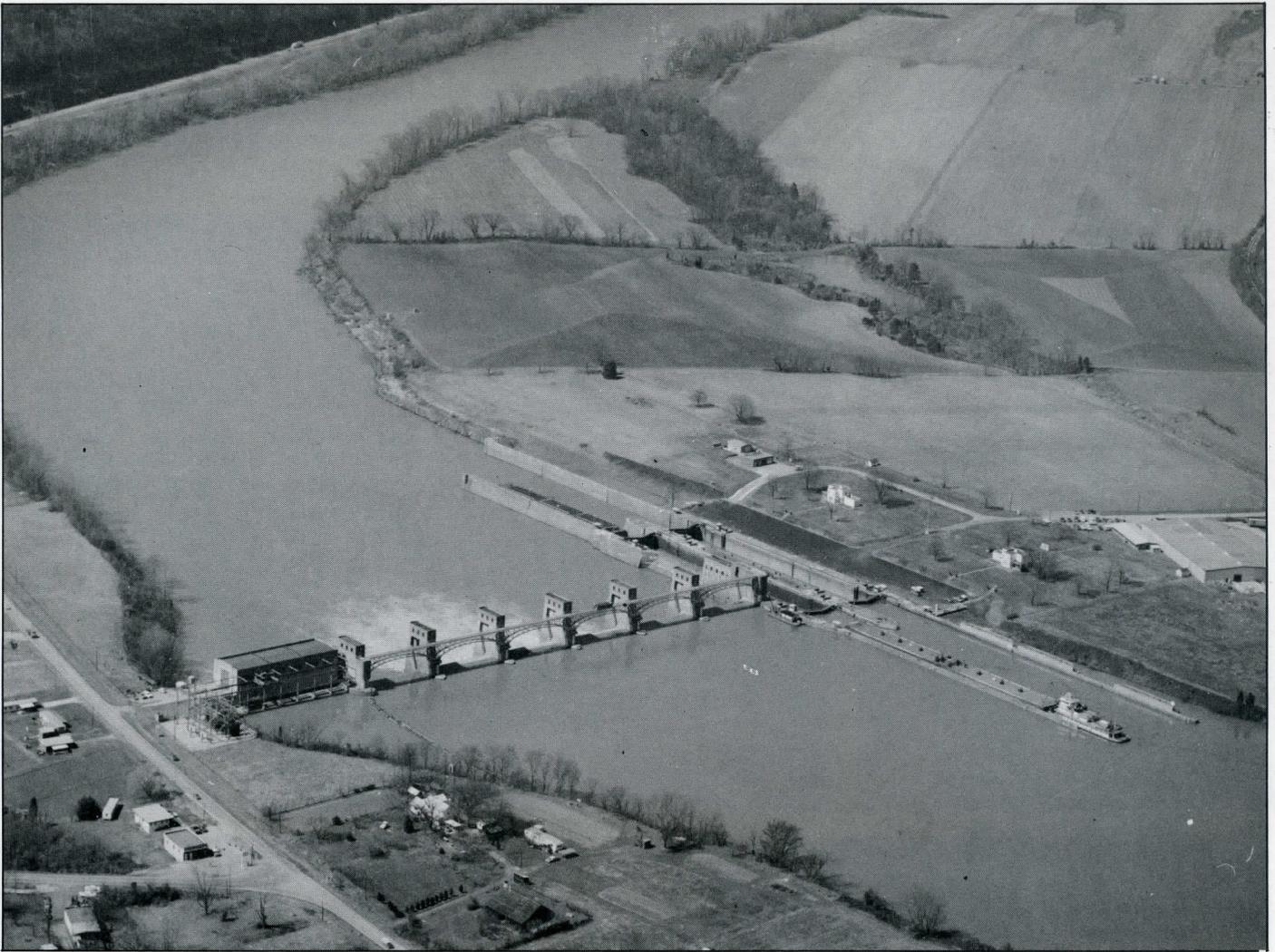




Below: A gala steamboat parade officially opened the new Marmet Locks and Dam in 1933. Here the dance barge *Edward Moonlight* is locked through by a West Virginia Sand & Gravel Company steamer. Photographer unknown, courtesy Army Corps of Engineers.

Bottom right: Increasing river traffic necessitated the building of larger dams and locks in the 1930's. This aerial photograph from 1931 shows old Lock and Dam No. 5 dwarfed by construction of the new Marmet Locks, just upstream on the left bank. Photographer unknown, courtesy Army Corps of Engineers.





Modern Winfield dam in Putnam County, whose double locks permit traffic in both directions. The tow of barges here has been broken for locking, with the front half waiting at the lower end of the lock. The boat positions the others for entry while waiting for the lock to refill. The new high dams brought the Kanawha River to a navigable depth of nine feet. Photographer unknown, courtesy Army Corps of Engineers.

dams. During dry spells the wickets were raised to create a slack water pool for navigation.

Upon completion of this initial system of locks and dams the Kanawha became America's first fully canalized river, with water artificially maintained at a navigable six feet for its entire length. Improved transportation boosted the valley's economy, with the number of upstream mines increasing from only three at the beginning of the project in 1875 to 70 at its end in 1898. By then, those mines annually shipped over a million tons of coal down the river.

Ironically, such growth strained even the capacity of the fine new system. As early as 1901 tows of barges had to be "double locked"—

that is, a typical string of six barges had to be broken at each lock and taken through in two smaller units. By the 1920's triple locking became common. Local businessmen began agitating for further improvements to navigation, and in 1930 the first funding was approved by Congress. The Corps of Engineers went back to work and by 1938 the modern system of high dams and double locks was completed, raising the navigable depth of the Kanawha to nine feet.

The locks and dams tamed a major wild river, bringing the Kanawha under human control from its head to its mouth by creating what amounted to a series of shallow artificial lakes. Today, any such ambitious project would be closely

scrutinized for its environmental impact, and even at the time the damming of the river was not without its critics. Farmers and fishermen worried about the effects of changing water levels, and rivermen fretted over likely changes in their occupation; in fact, river workers went into active opposition for a time when a similar project was proposed for the Ohio. Eventually, however, all parties were reconciled, with transportation remaining as one of the many functions of the Kanawha River. ✧

Further Reading:  
*Men, Mountains and Rivers*, by Leland R. Johnson (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977).

Entering the front door from the cold damp of a January day, stamping feet and rubbing hands, one is greeted by the warmth of a well-fired coal stove, and smell of freshly-oiled floors mixed with left-over Christmas scents, and the sound of a cheery "hello there." The latter usually comes from behind a big, old-fashioned desk that patrons, from the oldest down to the youngest toddler, instinctively recognize as being off-limits to all but store owner Huber Norman.

For city folk, Norman's Store is a journey into the past, but to those of us who live in the little mountaintop community of Elk Garden, it's a necessity of life, supplying everything from coal oil lamps to the latest cold medication; from fresh-daily produce to a wide variety of pre-packaged, canned, and frozen grocery items; from old-time work clothes to Pampers for the newborn. And this tradition of service began nearly 100 years and four generations ago.

Situated on an escarpment of the Allegheny Front Mountain overlooking the North Branch of the Potomac River is the town of Elk Garden. Known as the "elk pond" by the early white hunters and trappers who ventured into the forbidding Allegheny Mountains, the site was later described in a 1774 deed as the "Elk Garden tract." For the most part, this area of Mineral County re-

mained a wilderness, with the exception of a few hardy pioneer souls, until the discovery of the "big vein" coal seams nearby.

Then, almost overnight as often happened in those days, a town was born. A company town to be sure, owned by the Davis Coal & Coke Company, a subsidiary of the West Virginia Central and Pittsburgh Railway headquartered in Elkins.

But Elk Garden was a company

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## Norman's Store A Mineral County Institution

By Mona Ridder

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town with a difference. Henry Gassaway Davis and his brother Tom, president and treasurer of the family railway and coal companies, purchased the Elk Garden tract some time prior to 1881. They laid out a proposed town with streets and lots designated for various specific purposes, including one parcel optimistically reserved for the construction of a courthouse. The lots were leased out by the railroad company, and those leasing them built shops, houses, theaters,



The Norman float in front of the Norman store in 1902, probably for the Fourth of July parade. J. R. Norman sits to the right of the ladies. Photo by F. C. Rollinan.

*Below:* Store founders E. M. and W. L. Norman brought their family to Elk Garden in 1886. Date and photographer unknown.

*Right:* The store moved to its present location at the corner of Spruce and Cottage streets in 1900. At the time of this 1908 photograph, Elk Garden was a town of mud streets and board sidewalks. Photographer unknown.

*Below right:* Before taking over the family store, J. R. Norman taught school at Fort Ashby in Mineral County. Here he poses in front of his school with a Mrs. Wagoner. Date and photographer unknown.

*Opposite page, top:* Flag Day parade through downtown Elk Garden, June 1918. The company name had changed to J. R. Norman about a year before.

Photographer Roy Wiseman perched atop the feed and grain store across the street.

*Opposite page, bottom:* Soup beans were 7¢ a pound in this pre-World War II photograph. Norman's offered Kellogg's Corn Flakes, Hershey's Cocoa, and other still-familiar brands, as well as fresh meat in the meat counter. Date and photographer unknown.



liveries, and other structures to house all those enterprises necessary to build a town worthy of becoming the Mineral County seat. And though the Davises failed in the attempt to have the county seat moved from Keyser to Elk Garden, the community continued to flourish for many years, with the lots eventually being purchased by individuals. Few buildings were erected by the company and for that reason the town never developed the carbon-copy appearance of most coal company towns in West Virginia.

In 1886, William Lindley Norman brought his family to Elk Garden from Mercer County, Pennsylvania, and went to work for the Davis Company mines. In 1896, he and his wife, Emily Melissa, started a small mercantile business in Elk Garden and by 1900 moved into more permanent quarters to become E. M. Norman & Co. The couple worked together, and the business was named for Mrs. Norman.

As the coal, railroad, and timber interests in the area grew, so did the Norman family mercantile trade. In

1903, William's son Alonzo opened another store in Shaw, along the river about five miles away. By 1907, a third store was in operation farther upriver at Gorman, under the management of son-in-law William Oates. During these boom years, the Norman Company was in friendly competition with the chain of Davis company stores, officially known as the Buxton and Landstreet stores, as well as other independent merchants and storekeepers.

At the time of William L.



FLAG DAY PARADE - ELK GARDEN, W.VA. - 6-8-18.



To days Specials  
SALT FISH 9¢/lb  
CHEESE 23¢  
RAISINS 10¢  
SOUP BEANS 7¢

Swill  
3 lbs  
25

Norman's death in 1912, E. M. Norman & Co. was considered to be "the largest and most up-to-date merchandising firm along the railroad line between Piedmont and Elkins, a distance of 90 miles," according to Chamber of Commerce literature of the day.

W. Huber Norman, present owner of the store and grandson of William, recalls family talk concerning the strange circumstances surrounding his grandfather's death. In July 1912, William Norman left Elk Garden on an extended vacation, traveling first to England to visit his birthplace. He returned to New York in November and proceeded to Providence, Rhode Island, and the home of his son-in-law, Professor J. W. Ross. In December, he boarded a train in Providence, bound for Indiana and a visit to his sister. The following day, near New London, Ohio, his body was discovered alongside the railroad tracks. His death was ruled accidental by the New London coroner who determined that he had been walking from one car to another and apparently fell or was thrown by the movement of the train as it rounded a curve.

The three stores of the Norman Company had been operated primarily by Alonzo M. Norman, William's son. After the father's death, the company was organized in partnership with Emily Melissa, Alonzo's brother James R. (Jim) Norman, and John Tice of Elk Garden. The partnership ended about 1915 and the Elk Garden store came into the sole possession of Jim Norman, with the other stores continuing under independent ownership.

Jim's son Huber was born in 1909. After completing his education at Randolph Macon Academy in Virginia and Potomac State College in Keyser, he came into the family business in 1931.

By 1921, the peak production years of the "big vein" had passed and the decline had begun. The Davis Company began phasing out its coal operations during the 1920's and most of its holdings were gradually absorbed by the Western Maryland Railroad, now part of the Chessie System. As the coal was depleted, profits from mining and

timber decreased and competition among Elk Garden merchants acquired a harder edge.

"There was one mine superintendent in those days that was really mean," Huber Norman said. "No one who worked under him was allowed to buy anywhere except at the B&L Company Store—if they wanted to keep their job, that is. So to get around him and keep from owing so much of their pay back to the company, they would mail their orders in to us or send one of the children, then it would be delivered late at night."

Local economic decline accelerated as America settled into the depression years of the 1930's. "Old-

timers" and the newly unemployed gathered around the mercantile store on cold winter mornings to talk about the "good old days."

J. R. Norman's became the focal point of rural community life in the 1940's, and as the years passed Norman's prevailed mostly because of the good management and thrift of Jim and Huber Norman. When Jim died in 1951, the store became a partnership between Huber and his mother Maud Olivia, known as Norman's Store. This partnership continued until 1958.

Huber Norman can recall 65 of the people who have been employed by the family store. "There were more, of course, but I remember 65 distinc-

Like other general stores, Norman's carries a little of everything. Housewares, crockery, snack foods, canned and dry groceries, and frozen foods crowd this corner of the store. Photo by Mona Ridder.



tly," he told me in February. "I met one today, as a matter of fact, Emmett Fahey. He worked at the store before World War I, then quit to join the Army. One year, during World War II, we had 14 employees in one year. As fast as you'd teach them to meet the public, they disappeared and went to Washington, D.C., to work."

The third-generation Norman's has maintained the family and community service traditions that have characterized the store for many decades. Even the building has changed little. With the exception of an addition built in 1943, and the removal of the upstairs balcony in front, it remains essentially the



# SPECIAL SALE

We have just seen the close of a most prosperous year. The business of our country for the year 1901 has been the greatest in its history. What the future has in store for us we do not know, but we do know that the United States is continually advancing to the head of the commercial interests of the world. As this store is located in the said country, and shared in the large amount of business of the past year, we have determined that everything in the following lines shall be sold. As this is to be the last big sale before stock-taking, we have piled the bargain table high with special values. Come and verify this by seeing our great sale of

## SEASONABLE STOCKS!

From now 'till March 1st, 1902, we will give a special discount of 10 per cent. on the following stocks. Remember that with our usual low prices and this special discount of 10 per cent, you will have a choice assortment of bargains to choose from. It is an opportunity rarely met with when you can purchase goods that are in first-class condition, thoroughly up to date and in season at such a low price. A choice assortment of Men's and Boys' Hats and Caps, Clothing, Leggings, Ladies' Dress Skirts, Underskirts, Skirt Patterns, Hoods, Fascinators, Toques and Shirt Waists. Jewelry, Shoes, Rubber Footwear, Mittens, Lined Gloves, Children's Misses' and Boys' Underwear, Lamps and Bed Clothing. As space is limited we can quote you but a few items to show at what unprecedented low prices goods will be sold.

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 11-4 all wool white blanket, worth \$4.40 at \$3.52 a pair. | Boys' Water Proof Coats, worth \$1.00, at 90c.                   | Children's and Misses' Wool Hose, sizes 5 to 9 1/2, worth 16c, at 12c pair. |
| 10-4 double fleece Shaker blanket, worth 60c at 42c a pair. | An assortment of Men's Hats at \$1.17 each, worth \$1.30         | Ladies' Embroidered Capes, worth 1.84, at \$1.50 each.                      |
| Other blankets at proportionately low prices.               | Other hats at proportionately low figures.                       | Ladies' 27 inch Box Coats, worth 9.00, at \$7.00 each.                      |
| 7-7 Comforts worth \$1.30 at 1.00                           | Men's Heavy Sweaters, worth 50c, at 39c each.                    | Ladies' 27 inch Box Coats, worth 5.50, at \$4.00 each.                      |
| Other comforts, worth \$1.30 and \$1.40 at \$1.10 each.     | Men's Athletic Sweaters, worth 98c, at 80c each.                 | Ladies' 27 inch Box Coats, worth 4.00, at \$3.00 each.                      |
| White Cotton Filled Comforts, worth \$1.60 at \$1.25.       | Men's Heavy Overshirts, worth 98c, at 70c, at 63c.               | Ladies' 27 inch Box Coats, worth 3.00, at \$2.50 each.                      |
| 36 inch all wool Venetian Cloth, worth 50c, at 39c a yard.  | Men's Wool Overshirts, worth 98c, at 80c each.                   | All wool Gray Shawls, worth 4.00, at \$3.50 each—size 72x144 inches.        |
| 36 inch all wool Cloth, worth 33c, at 27c a yard.           | Men's Canton Drawers, worth 48c, at 40c garment.                 | Men's Storm Overshoes, worth 70c, at 63c pair.                              |
| All wool Flannels, worth 22 and 25c, at 20c a yard.         | Men's Fleece Lined Underwear, worth 25c, at 20c garment.         | Men's Alaska Overshoes, worth 85c at 77c pair.                              |
| Lumberman's heavy Flannel, worth 35c, at 30c a yard.        | Men's Fleece Lined Underwear, worth 35c, at 30c garment.         | Men's Arctics, worth 1.15, at \$1.04  |
| White Flannel, worth 28c at 25c a yard.                     | Men's Fleece Lined Underwear, worth 50c, at 40c garment.         | Ladies' Macintosh, worth 3.95, at \$3.25 each.                              |
| Outing Cloth, worth 9 and 10c, at 8c a yard.                | Men's Fleece Lined Underwear, worth 50c, at 40c garment.         | Misses' Macintoshes, worth 2.40, at \$2.10 each.                            |
| Outing Cloth, worth 7 and 8c, at 6c a yard.                 | Men's Fleece Lined Underwear, worth 75c, at 60c garment.         | Sleighs, "Yankee Jumpers," worth 25 and 75c, at 20 and 60c.                 |
| Outing Cloth, worth 6c, at 5c a yd.                         | Ladies' Oneita Union Suits, worth 50c, at 40c suit.              | Sleds "Coasters," worth 80c and \$1.10, at 60 and 85c.                      |
| Men's Overcoats, worth \$3.75, at \$3.38 each.              | Ladies' Fleece Lined Underwear, worth 15c, at 12 1/2c a garment. | Men's Work Shoes, worth 1.25 and 1.45, at \$1.13 and \$1.31.                |
| Men's Overcoats, worth \$5.00, at \$4.50 each.              | Ladies' Fleece Lined Underwear, worth 25c, at 20c garment.       | All other shoes in proportion.  |
| Men's Overcoats, worth \$12.00, at \$10.80 each.            | Ladies' Fleece Lined Underwear, worth 50c, at 40c garment.       | Ladies' Storm Overshoes, worth 45c at 41c pair.                             |
| Men's Water Proof Coats, worth \$1.35, at \$1.21.           | Ladies' Wool Underwear, worth 98c at 80c garment.                | Ladies' Alaska Overshoes, worth 65c, at 59c pair.                           |
| Men's Water Proof Coats, worth \$2.00, at \$1.80.           |  | Ladies' Arctics, worth 80c at 72c.  |

Have a full line of Victor Remedies in stock. If you desire to be speedily, safely and certainly cured, you can do no better than trying the said remedies, for they are especially prepared for all ailments for which they are recommended, and are guaranteed to be exactly as represented. Call for the Victor Almanac for 1902. Have a full line of standard Patent Medicines, Drugs, etc., all sold at cut prices.

We are agents for Rose & Co., the famous Merchant Tailors, who always give satisfaction in style, quality, price and fit. Ask for their samples, always ready for inspection. In Groceries, Provisions, Fruits, etc., our aim is to get the best and sell them at the lowest possible prices. A large stock of Hardware and Tinware and small prices. All goods marked in plain figures, so that you can see for yourself that we have but one price for all, irrespective of age, sex, religion, poverty or wealth.

Freight paid on bills of \$10.00 and upwards to any point on the W. Va. C. Railway. Remember, that the big sale at such low prices positively closes March 1, 1902. We thank you for past favors, and earnestly solicit a continuance of the same.

## E. M. NORMAN & CO.,

February 1, 1902.

ELK GARDEN, W. VA.



A recent picture of Huber Norman in the family store. Photo by Mona Ridder.

same. The upstairs provided living quarters that were rented out from time to time, and many a newlywed couple "took up housekeeping" over Norman's Store.

Besides being a storekeeper, Huber Norman has served the community in a variety of roles, including a stint on the Mineral County Board of Education. He and his wife, the former Mildred McKean, married in 1935 and have three daughters, Mary Ross, Jeanne, and Dee, all of whom are married and living away from Elk Garden. The Normans have been active in civic organizations and are members of the Elk Garden Methodist Church.

Daughter Dee spoke of her perceptions of her father and the store as she remembers them from the 1950's and '60's. "I see images of

generations of miners huddled by a glowing coal stove with howling winter circling outside, or little children with pennies in tiny outstretched hands standing on tip-toe, looking longingly into an old wooden, sweet-filled candy case. And I see Daddy, running his domain with alternate methods, anger for those abusive of his behavior code, or a helping hand to those short of money or in need of advice."

In 1902, patronage was sought with the slogan, "one price for all, irrespective of age, sex, religion, poverty or wealth." That policy has remained constant, and has served well. For more than 80 years, Norman's Store has prospered at the corner of Spruce and Cottage streets in Elk Garden. But after providing for four generations of the Norman

family, the business is now for sale.

It'll be a shame to lose it. For Norman's Store is the last vestige of the wild and wooley golden years when Elk Garden was a center of commerce in a busy mining region. Miners, railroaders, and timbermen, as well as farmers and townspeople, traded at Norman's in the accepted currency of the day. Bartered goods and "chinky tin" were sometimes exchanged as often as the federal dollar. And throughout the years the store's stock in trade has been general merchandise, including clothing, drugs and patent medicines, and hardware, in addition to all manner of groceries, provisions, and produce. Plus news from all over delivered for free over the counter and around the coal stove. ❁

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# “All Greek, and All Hard Workers”

Photographs by Ron Rittenhouse

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While researching her book, *The History of Harrison County*, Dorothy Upton Davis became fascinated with the story of the Greek immigrants who came to the Clarksburg area in the early part of the 20th century. This interest led her to arrange a special program for the October 21, 1981, meeting of the Harrison County Historical Society, which GOLDENSEAL was invited to attend and record. Alex Xenakis, the son of immigrants and a life-long resident of Harrison County, was an invaluable aid to Mrs. Davis in organizing the program, helping to locate people who remembered the early days of the Greek community, emceeding the meeting, and offering his own memories of the “Tinplate.”

Approximately 300 families migrated from Greece to the Clarksburg area in the period between the turn of the century and the outbreak of World War I. Most came to work for Weirton Steel, tempted by the prospect of economic opportunity, or escaping being drafted into Greece's battle for independence from Turkey. The first immigrants came primarily from the Aegean islands of Kos and Chios, although later settlers migrated from other areas of the country, such as Skala in the Peloponnesus, and Trikkala, Thessaly, near the Albanian and Yugoslavian borders.

The majority of the families settled in Clarksburg's Summit Park, known then as the Tinplate, to be near the steel mill. By 1918 a sizeable community had grown up, large enough to support the founding and building of St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church. The huge sum of \$35,000 was raised through donations, and family dues established at 50¢ per month. A considerable amount of the construction work on the church was done by members of



Alexander Alex, Alexander Xenakis, and Angelo Koukoulis discuss Clarksburg's Greek history with Father Emmanuel Sakellarides.

the Greek community in their off hours, including the ornate woodcarving in the interior.

Over the years, a number of immigrants and their descendants went into business for themselves. Clarksburg residents still remember the mouth-watering goodies of Candyland, and the Manhattan Restaurant's live seafood, brought by rail from Baltimore.

For the October meeting of the Historical Society, six descendants of Greek immigrants recounted the history of the Greek community in Clarksburg, its influence on area business, and their own personal

memories and family stories. Alex Xenakis outlined the pattern of Hellenic migration to the area; Irene Muscatell recalled the early Tinplate area business; Angelo Koukoulis spoke of the founding of St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church; Michael Alastanos described the Greek influence on downtown Clarksburg business; Alexander Alex told of the early days of his family's Manhattan Restaurant; and Chris Sotirakis remembered Candyland. The following transcript is excerpted from these reminiscences.

—Margo Stafford

## "The Most Magic of All Magic Words"

Alex Xenakis, Hellenes\* migrated into the Clarksburg and surrounding area prior to the year 1900, but what is of historical significance is the migration during the first 15 years of the 20th century, climaxed by the outbreak of World War I. This was a mass movement, intoxicated by the opportunity to come to America, the most magic of all magic words, "Amerike!"—the dream and inspiration, the challenge of millions of youths in Europe and other parts of the world.

The Hellenes were no exception. Some migrated to Florida as early as 1768, to St. Augustine, not to mention the migrations of the 19th century to all parts of North and South America. The Hellenes, by nature of their geographical area, are people of the seas. Commerce and ship building were and still are an important industry, especially the commercial shipping lines of today.

We are concerned at this time with the Hellenic migration into this area. The prime and basic reason was employment that was readily available in the tin mill, originally known as Phillips Sheet and Tube Company, and later as Weirton Steel Company. This was a time in the growth of industry in the United States when real labor was hard to obtain. Industry imported its labor from Europe and other areas of the world to sustain its growth.

Around 1907 a Mr. John Williams, a stockholder in the tin mill company, came to Clarksburg from Monessen, Pennsylvania, the site of another tin mill. Mr. Williams was instrumental in relocating a Pete Pantelaras and a Harry Cardiges (a great-uncle of mine on my mother's side), to work for the Clarksburg plant and to help acquire workers. These two men had emigrated earlier from Chios—now Greece, formerly Turkey. Through their dynamic personalities and their contacts, they made it convenient for other young men, some with their families, to embark for Clarksburg and obtain work immediately, next day for many.

Years ago I was told that the island of Chios lost almost half its population through migration and the war against Turkey. The majority of these immigrants did not have a street address to come to, but only a post office box number. With their name and city around their necks, they departed Ellis Island's immigration headquarters by B&O Railroad to Clarksburg, West Virginia. Yes, they waited in the lobby of the old Clarksburg post office to make their first contact. The best they could do was wire from Ellis Island, but they still only had a post office box address.

For instance, Box 426, which I inherited from my great-uncle, that's the address that Mr. Kaites came to, the elderly man who passed away this year. That's the address he came to. He went into that old post office and he waited there. So they finally realized that he was an immigrant and they went across the street to the Clarksburg Restaurant and left word that there was a Greek immigrant there and he needed to establish contact.

A word about my father. He escaped Chios to avoid being drafted by the Turkish government. From Athens, Greece, he obtained passage and came directly to Clarksburg, in November 1910, to work. The connections were here. As for my mother: She came in 1914, accompanied by her older brother, who came home to visit after the liberation of Chios from the Turks. My mother looked forward to the opportunity to come here because she had an uncle and aunt and a second brother, all in Clarksburg.

A significant migration from the island of Kos should also be noted at this time. This island, along with Chios, was Turkish-occupied. These people from the island of Kos had an immigrant as their contact by the name of Frangouli Pazakis, who was a foreman in the tin mill and was influential in obtaining work for many of the immigrants. Mr. Pazakis was an uncle to the Lambrow boys, football stars at Summit Park Junior High School and then of Victory High School under the reign of Coach Farley Bell in the 1930's.

The migration of the Hellenes to this area was caused by the tin mill,

not the glass plants, railroads, mines, or any other occupations. This migration climaxed by 1915-1916, at the outset of World War I. The majority of these immigrants first settled near the tin mill. By the latter part of the second decade it was estimated that between 250-300 Hellenic immigrants were living in Clarksburg and surrounding areas.

"Tinplate," as Summit Park was known then, was a thriving Greek settlement. This was a Greek town away from Greece. The family home had already been established as many of the immigrants were married and living in their own homes or renting. First-generation children were being born, to add to those youngsters who immigrated with their parents. Tinplate was a flourishing community with all kinds of stores.

By now these immigrants had developed a strong fellowship amongst themselves that generated energy and drive to overcome all their hardships, language barriers, to find better places to live, and to move ahead and stay. Socially they had their good times, their picnics, their name-day parties, for which they would import entertainment from the big cities for a week or weekend with Greek orchestra and singers and the popular comedy marionettes—the Hellene Karakiozis or Punchinello.

In 1916 the Despard Grade School was built to accommodate the influx of immigrants, and in 1923 the Summit Park Junior High School was built for the same reason. The Hellenes at that time felt deeply the absence of their place of worship, a place for their children to learn the Greek language, to preserve their rich ancient traditions and make a contribution to this land and society. They had available two daily Greek newspapers from New York, the *National Herald* and the *Atlantis*.

When the Weirton Steel Company decided to phase out the Clarksburg plant, many families employed by the mill moved to Weirton, Baltimore, and cities in Ohio. World War II brought about the final migration of the early settlers out of Clarksburg to other parts of the

\*From Hellas, the Greek name for Greece.

country, especially to where their children had relocated. Those who remained were in business, well-employed, or retired, and had no reason to relocate.

### “Into Business for Themselves”

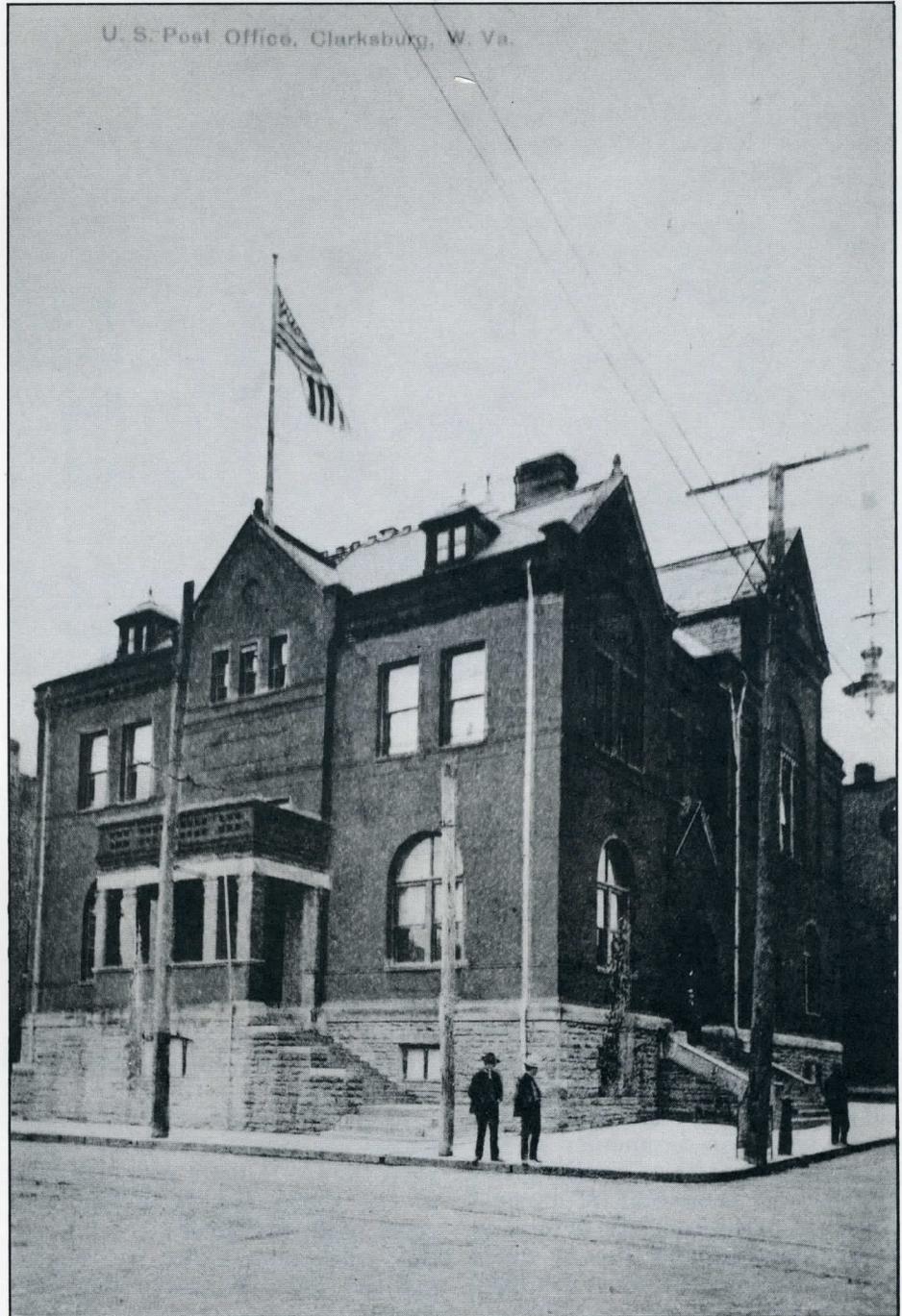
Irene Muscatell. I will talk about the Hellenic influence on Tinsplate area business, from 1910 through 1936.

Most of these Greek immigrants had to borrow money to come to this country. Therefore, they had to go to work at Weirton Steel. The jobs were waiting for them. They couldn't afford to sit around, or get into something that they really wanted to go into. They had to work. But after a while, they became dissatisfied with working for someone else, and they went into business for themselves. They opened grocery stores, barbershops, bakeries, and so-called coffeehouses.

There were about five different grocery stores up there at one time. The first one was opened by a John Maschas in 1911. In 1912, a Mr. Sotirios Bournos began selling groceries, and he also sold clothing, leather goods, mine supplies, and various sundries. In 1917, there were Kostas and Pantelis Maschas. Steve Anastasakis and Alex Topekas had the Anastasakis and Topekas Grocery, which they founded in 1918. There were Apostolis Hastalis and Nick Miller, who owned the Tinsplate Grocery in 1923. Miller, my father, had his name legally changed from Nick Monoguidis.

There were two bakeries. The first bakers peddled their bread from house to house in baskets. But in 1910 Nick Monoguidis opened a bakery, followed in 1923 by Demetrios Calaitges, with Anthony Manolakis and Pete Cokenos. Again we have Mr. Anastasakis and Mr. Topekas, who closed the grocery and started the Novel Bakery in 1933. They were joined by a Pete Panteloukas, and operated that bakery until the 1950's.

There were three coffeehouses. These were areas where only the men were allowed. No women were even allowed to go by there. I remember our mother used to say,



Knowing nothing of their new country, many Greek immigrants came to post office box addresses at the old Clarksburg Post Office. They waited there until friends and relatives were notified to pick them up. Postcard, date unknown, West Virginia Archives and History Division.

“When you girls go by there, keep your head down and just keep going.” I don't know what was going on in there, but we weren't allowed to see. That's where most of the bachelors would go to eat, for recreation—they played a lot of cards there. We used to hear a lot of Greek music going on, too. They'd drink their Turkish coffee, they'd

discuss their politics, and their religion. The first was opened in 1910. Among various owners were Pete Cokenos, Andrikos Parikakis, Pete Vavilusakis, Demetrios Parikakas, George Frezoulis, and Petros Pappas.

There were three barbershops. That's where we all went to get our hair cut, boys and girls. The barbers



Alexander Xenakis with photographic mementoes from the Greek community.

included Demetrios Houzouris, John Moskovos, Gus Frankos, and Louis Georgiadis.

There was one real restaurant, located on the grounds of Weirton Steel. It was first owned by Tom Haidemenos, who later sold to Harry Condell. It was there until 1937, when the factory was closed and moved to Steubenville and Weirton. Many of the employees decided that they would transfer, and that's when the community of Tinplate started on the downhill grade and became something of a ghost town. Of all the hundreds of Greeks, today there are only two of Greek descent that are still up at Tinplate, Alex Xenakis and Angelo Miller.

### "To Be Free and To Pray"

Angelo Koukoulis. I think, for one to understand the Greek immigrant, one must have some knowledge of his religion. One must understand that the tendency of the Orthodox religion is that of ethnic character. It carries the language of the country, whether it be here, the Serbian nations, or in Russia, or any other country that embodies the Orthodox religion. Consequently, you hear the term "Greek Orthodox," or "Russian Orthodox," or "Serbian Or-

thodox." The religion itself is the same.

The family unit revolves around its faith, and the faith is found in a Greek home by custom and holy tradition. Even today you will find in the Greek home a room where the icons are kept, with religious artifacts to make a sanctuary for the family to pray, within their own home.

It is this deep-rooted faith that makes the Greek immigrant somewhat unique. Greece was a captive of the Turks for more than 400 years, and rose again as a free nation, still maintaining its religion and the Greek language. Four hundred years is a lot of time—that's a lot of generations. This cohesive force that kept the spirit alive, and with it the Greek language, without question had to be the love for Christianity in the Orthodox faith. What makes this more dramatic is that the independence of Greece coincides with the Annunciation, the day that, as you all know, the angel told Mary she was the chosen to bear Jesus Christ. This double-meaning day for the Hellene is March 25th, both Independence Day and the Day of Annunciation.

It is not much wonder that the

Greek immigrant had a purpose in his life, perhaps many times not clearly defined, but without question to be free and to have the ability to pray in his own Orthodox church. These churches were built all over the country with members that came from all parts of Greece, its islands, and its colonies. The religious bond brought the Greek immigrant family together as if it were mandated by their forefathers.

It was with this spirit that our church, St. Spyridon of Clarksburg, was founded by Greek immigrants who spoke very little English. Most of them couldn't even write their names. People who had the burning desire to perpetuate their heritage and with the will of God managed to build the church, by contributing talent and time, and—in those days a very scarce commodity—money.

According to historical records, some \$35,000 was put together and spent for the erection of the church. The brick was donated by the Weirton Steel Company, where many of the Greeks worked. Family church dues at that time were established at 50¢ per month per family, and they had a hard time raising that.

The chief framers of the church were Nicholas D. Daramaras and Stelios Anastasakis, who also provided the church with its first constitution. Many made contributions in time, mixing mortar, helping build the church, carrying materials, and so forth. The ornate woodcarvings were the contribution of the talents of Constantinos Andreadis and Andreas Stratakis. They donated their time, their off-hours after they got through working in the mill. They did a beautiful job, and I hope that each and every one of you will have the opportunity to visit the church.

Although not recorded, it has to be said that the women played a major role in the realization of this project. As we all know, it always takes a woman to prod a man to get things done. In most homes, the mother has the responsibility of raising the children, teaching the religion, and schooling in the language. Consequently, she had a very, very deep interest in the task of building the church and replacing what they left back home.

## “Helping to Establish Downtown”

Michael Alastanos. In 1907, the first establishment in the downtown area was the Manhattan Restaurant, located on West Pike Street. The owners were Charles Charas, Edward Toompas, and John Pappas. It was in operation until 1979, when it finally closed its doors. In 1912, Clarksburg Billiards was established on West Pike Street. It was located in the Lancaster Building, which has since been replaced by the Lowndes Bank Building, the owner being Alex Poulicos. In 1915, the Market Confectionery was established on Pike Street, next to what is now the Workingman's Store. The owners were Michael Farmakis and his brother. In 1916 three business events occurred, the first when Nick Kaites joined Alex Poulicos in the Clarksburg Billiards. Secondly, a shoeshine parlor on West Pike Street was sold to Mike Kaites. And thirdly, the Crystal Restaurant was established on West Pike Street, by owners Pete Psihas, Nick Daramaras, and Evangelos Trahanis. In 1917 the Crystal Restaurant was sold to Mr. Nick Koutsobaris, Jim Harapas, and George Diomataris. The name of the restaurant was later changed to Sanitary Hot Dog.

In 1918 Nick Chokatos and Alex Poulicos established the Recreation Pool Room on West Pike Street. This business still exists, but is under different ownership. In 1920, John Rentzos opened a candy store on West Pike Street, beside the current Clarksburg-Harrison Public Library building. Also in 1920, Murphy's Lunch was established on East Pike Street across from Craig Motors. The owner was Constantinos Murphy. In 1923, the Royal Cafe was opened in Glen Elk, the owner being Pete Vavilousakis. In 1925 Liberty Lunch was also opened on Fourth Street; the owner was Gabriel Martin.

In 1927 the Palace Shoeshine was sold to Menelaos Diamond—this was the store that I mentioned earlier was previously owned by Mike Kaites. Also in 1927, the Coney Island Hot Dog was established on West Pike Street, the owners be-

ing Nick Simiriotis and Charles Simiriotis. In 1928 the New York Hat Shop was established on West Pike Street, by Stamatios Sfikai, and later sold to John Sotirakis and Pete Paidas. It is still in operation, run by my uncle, Angelo Alastanos.

In 1931 the Palace Restaurant was established at 327 West Pike Street, the owner being Nick Kaites. In 1932 Mike Plakotaris opened the Main Street Lunch on Main Street, where Roberts Jewelry is currently located. In 1933 the Evans Lunch was opened by George Evans on West Pike Street, across from what is now the Studio II. Later Mr. Evans bought the Evans Hotel on Pike Street, which the family still owns. Also in 1933, Mike Vasilakis opened a fruit stand on the corner of Main and Monticello Avenue. Finally, in 1935, the City Restaurant was established on West Pike Street by Steve Vacolas. In 1935 the Elite

Restaurant on West Pike was established by Mike Kaites. These businesses were the roots for many of the Greek population in helping to establish the Clarksburg downtown in the early 1900's.

## “Open 24 Hours a Day”

Alexander Alex. Here is a Greek history of the Manhattan Restaurant and Clarksburg Restaurant. In 1905, the Clarksburg Restaurant was opened on Third Street. It was founded by Victor Charas, John Pappas, Charles Theodore, and Edward Toompas. In 1907 they opened a second restaurant at 331 West Main Street, called the Manhattan Restaurant. In those days the streets were made of dirt and the sidewalks of boards. The partners formerly worked in Manchester, New Hampshire, before settling in Clarksburg, with the exception of John Pappas, who came from



Angelo Koukoulis recalled the history of St. Spyridon Church. “The Greek immigrant had a purpose in his life, to be free and to have the ability to pray in his own Orthodox church,” he says.



An early photograph of St. Spyridon Church. Date and photographer unknown.

Lynchburg. (He had been in New Hampshire first, then went to Lynchburg, then came to Clarksburg.) They were all Greek, and all hard workers.

In 1911 and 1912, Charles Theodore brought his brother, Theodore (Teddy) Theodore, and his cousin, Charles Alex, to Clarksburg. Edward Toompas brought his brother, Arthur, and Victor Alexis, at a later date. All of these partners came from their native land of Trikala, Thessaly, Greece. This is not from the same area where Tinsplate's people were from. This is up in the mountain area, close to Yugoslavia and Albania. Many young relatives and friends came to work and learned the restaurant business. They later established their own restaurants and businesses in many parts of this country.

In 1919 the old historic Manhattan Restaurant was destroyed by fire. The location was where White's

Parking Lot is presently. The same year the owners purchased two lots on Pike Street and erected a new building which was intended to house a restaurant and a ten-story hotel. But after the first story was built they decided to go into business, and add the hotel later on. The one-story building still exists today. They did not build the hotel.

In 1921 the new Manhattan Restaurant was opened. They closed the Clarksburg Restaurant in 1922 or '23, we're not sure when. The new restaurant consisted of the Boston Dairy Lunch and the Manhattan Dining Room. I have a 1928 menu from the Manhattan, showing Thanksgiving dinner, served Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., for 75¢. You got a seven-course dinner for 75¢!

The Manhattan Restaurant was a famous landmark. It was not only known locally, but throughout West Virginia and the eastern United

States. It was known for its excellent food, famous pastries, and especially for its live seafood. Every Monday—it used to be Monday and Thursday, the later days, what I remember—they had the Baltimore Fish Line come in, or something like that, and that's how they got their stock. My father said that a long time ago there were about three times a week that they were getting seafood from Baltimore.

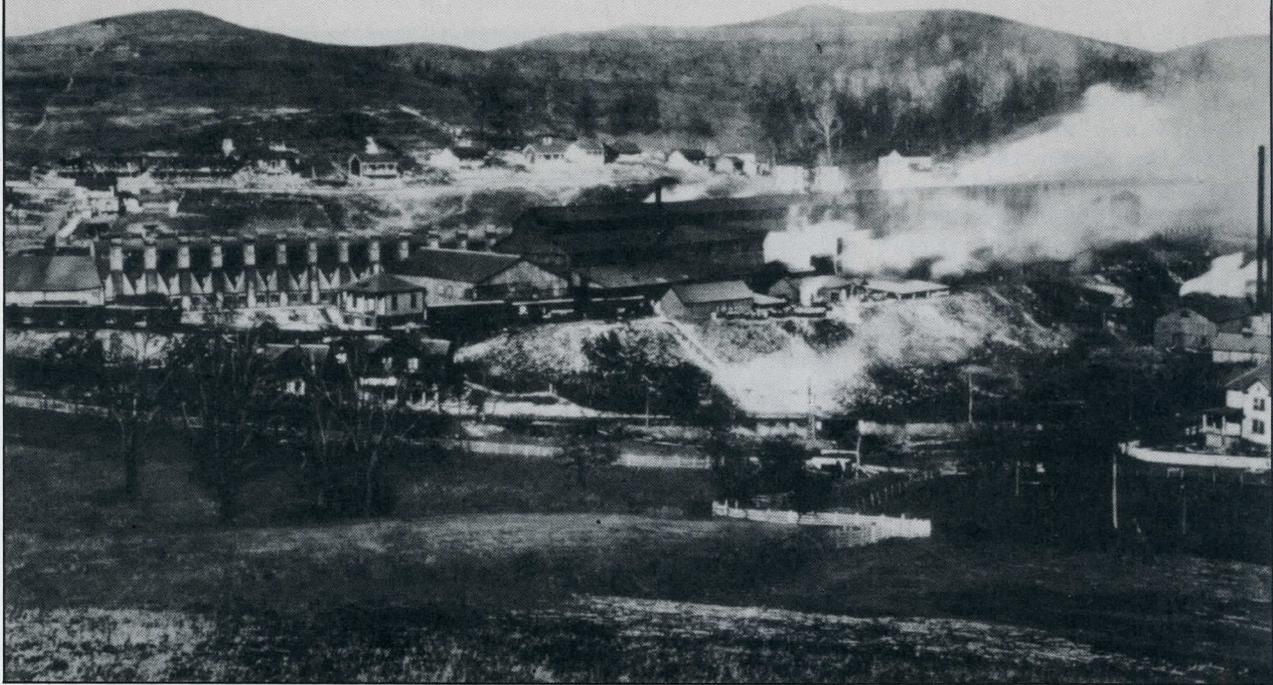
In the front window there was a ceramic tile tank containing fresh seafood of the season, such as lobsters, crabs, shrimp, and fresh fish on ice. Customers then selected their choice to be prepared exclusively by my father. Charlie Niedemeyer, a German baker, was famous for his French bread, eclairs, pretzels, cream puffs, napoleons, cream pies, pecan rolls, and pound cakes. He baked all the breads and sweets for the Manhattan Restaurant from 1912 to his retirement around 1955. The restaurant was also known for being open 24 hours a day. It never closed, making it the most dependable restaurant in town.

Many famous personalities dined at the Manhattan, including actors, orchestras, concert musicians, circus performers, and prize fighters. These celebrities were brought in by the stage shows performing at other Clarksburg landmarks, such as the Rich Theater, the Robinson Grand, and Moore's Opera House. Manhattan was also patronized by those staying at the Waldo, Stonewall Jackson, and Gore hotels.

In 1951, some of the partners decided to retire. After remodeling the restaurant, my father and my mother, Aurora, assumed the ownership of the business. They were later joined by their son, Alexander, which is me. The restaurant remained open for 24 years until closing on July 1, 1979.

### “Long Hours and Little Money”

Chris Sotirakis. Even though Candyland has been closed some 25 years now, it still lives locally on the airwaves. It seems like every morning when I'm shaving, there's an ad that comes over WHAR for a beauty parlor, and in describing their location they refer to it as the “old



Phillip's Sheet and Tin Company, later a part of Weirton Steel, was the magnet that drew Greek immigrants to Clarksburg. This postcard view is from an unknown date. West Virginia Archives and History Division.

Candyland building." Somewhat gratifying to me, at least.

Alexander Poulicos—I'm sure you've heard that name, his son Paul Poulicos was a local attorney a few years back—was the founder and first owner of Candyland, shortly after the close of World War I. He had emigrated to America from Skala, Greece, and had taught himself to make candy in Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania. Alexander Poulicos came to Clarksburg and opened up the original Candyland on the site formerly occupied by Glancy's Fruit Market. I'm sure some of you may remember that. Anyway, Alexander Poulicos brought in his brother-in-law, George Daffin, as his partner.

Alexander Poulicos was also very instrumental in the beginning of our Greek church. I think he was the first president of the organization. I think I remember my father telling me—my father, incidentally, was the owner of the New York Hat Cleaning and Shoeshine Shop, across from the Waldo. Some of you, I'm sure, remember him. But he told me that Alexander Poulicos was instrumental in having shares subscribed to by the Greek people at that time, so that they could accumulate enough money to begin construction of the church.

Eventually Alexander Poulicos sold out his one-half interest in Candyland to George Daffin, who then became full owner. Although George Daffin was a candymaker himself, having been taught by a relative, John Daffin, also an immigrant from Skala, in Peloponnesian Greece, who taught many in the area the fine art of candymaking, George Daffin soon realized he could not spare himself. He could not manage Candyland properly if he had to spend most of his time back in the kitchen making candy for the store. So to work in the candy business he brought down from Despard, or Tinsplate, the area around the tin mill where all the Greek immigrants had settled to be close to the jobs in the factory, one Vasilios Cotsoradis, a Greek immigrant from the island of Chios in the Aegean Sea, in sight of the Turkish mainland. After Vasilios Cotsoradis had learned the art of candymaking, he paid \$1500 to George Daffin to become a full partner in Candyland. The two partners were successful in planning the business, when George Daffin in the late '20's decided he wanted to go back to Greece. He sold his one-half interest to Vasilios Cotsoradis, who thus became the sole proprietor of Candyland, even though his com-

mand of the English language was very limited at the time. Many people counseled him against assuming the ownership because of his inability to communicate adequately.

Yet Vasilios Cotsoradis, by dint of sheer hard work and driving ambition, made Candyland a Clarksburg institution. He was my uncle by marriage, incidentally. Uncle Bill Cotsoradis came over to America from poverty-stricken Greece like most of the Greek immigrants of his time, very young—he was only 14 years old—and penniless. He was uneducated, but with a driving passion to work hard to succeed. Long hours and little money were no deterrent so long as they felt they could make their way and work themselves up the ladder of success. They had no hope of success back in Greece, so they left. When Uncle Bill became the sole proprietor of Candyland the store was saddled with many debts. But Uncle Bill managed to agree with the major creditors who supplied the Candyland that he would pay cash to them for whatever he bought—no more credit—plus a little something on the debt in addition.

In time Uncle Bill paid off all the huge debts of the store, even though it was by then the era of the Great Depression of the '30's. By having

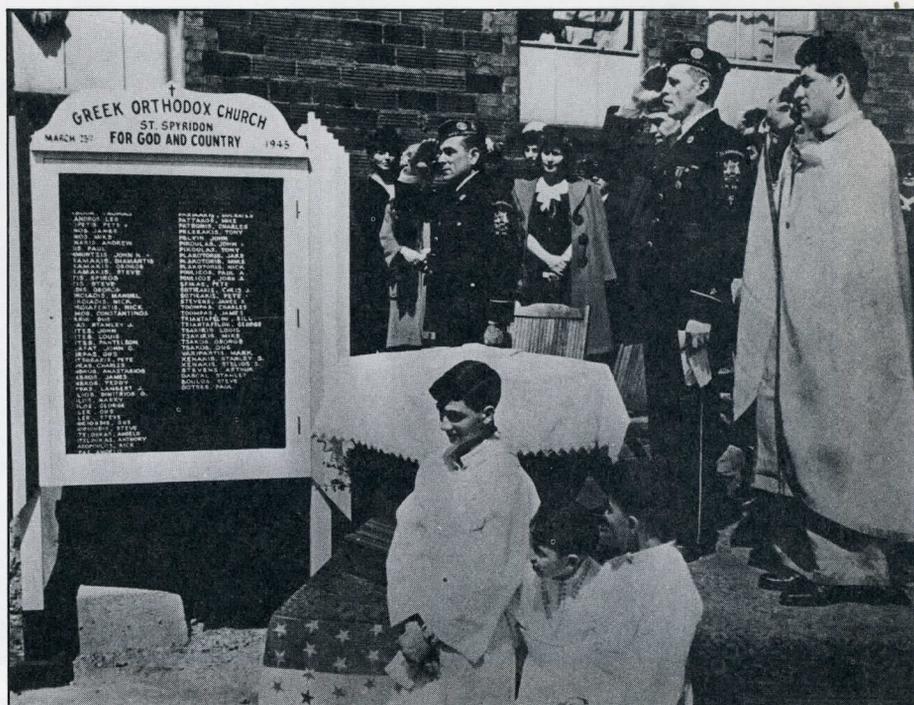
daily specials, Bill Cotsoradis was able to increase his clientele, even during the Depression. This might be amusing. It's in line with the 75¢ special that the Manhattan had for Thanksgiving. Of course, this is not a complete meal, but in the Depression I daresay that some people couldn't come up with 75¢ even. So they could go to Candyland and buy a "delicious fresh-toasted ham salad sandwich, with a large scoop of potato salad, garnished with a dill pickle," for only 10¢. And for another nickel you could get a Coke. Five cents—now what do we pay? Seventy cents?

Uncle Bill became very much a real candymaker. Who can forget his homemade nut candies and chocolate caramels that really melted in your mouth? His hand-dipped chocolates, his fresh dinner mints, his bonbons, his homemade vanilla taffy for the shows? That was fun pulling that. Have any of you ever seen taffy being pulled? You get it up on a hook and then you just pull back on it and the more you pull the more you can stretch it. You can walk away from the hook to some 15 or 20 feet. I remember doing that many times.

Coconut and peanut brittles, his fresh-roasted salted almonds, hot out of his candy kitchen. And his delicious homemade ice cream made with 15% butterfat—can not be found today. His fresh peach ice cream, his butter pecan, his soft ice creams, his fresh lemon sherbet—one could go on and on. All the scores of sundaes and milkshakes. Remember the sundaes that the menu had? Had 20 different kinds of sundaes.

All were available whether one wanted to be refreshed before or after the show, or during intermission when there was a dance at the nearby Masonic Temple and Uncle Bill would stay open till one a.m. to serve the boys and their dates. And I always had to be on hand—eventually I was a soda jerk. But I always got to work, I never got to go to the dances, and I had to wait to serve the rich boys, I might say, and clean up afterwards and maybe get to bed at two or three o'clock in the morning.

And who could forget the festive



"For God and Country": Clarksburg Greeks gather at St. Spyridon on March 25, 1945, to honor members of the congregation serving in World War II. Photographer unknown.

atmosphere of Christmas when Uncle Bill would festoon Candyland with candy canes all around the windows, candy canes of all sizes for the Christmas tree, from 5¢ each up to \$5 for a real giant peppermint-striped candy cane. And Easter time: What a beehive of activity Candyland became to prepare the homemade chocolate-covered coconut cream-filled Easter eggs in the candy kitchen, and to have the girls decorate the eggs so beautifully with all the roses and borders, and all the colors of the rainbow, right out in front of the store, seated at the windows where all the people passing could stop and watch. Not to forget the Easter bunnies and baskets all made of imported Swiss chocolate, came in large slabs to be melted down according to the various Easter molds.

During the Depression years of the '30's and the war years of the '40's, Candyland did indeed become an institution under the hard work and loving care that friendly Uncle Bill gave his store. He came to know and be known by almost everyone who ever passed by Candyland on the convenient corner of Fourth and Pike streets. He would often lend

money at no interest to a friend down on his luck. Candyland became the popular meeting place in town, a place you would be proud to take anyone. Always open, seven days a week—although not 24 hours a day.

One thing about the Greek people—if there was another nickel on that block, they had to stay open to get it. I can remember, there was a kind of an adjunct store to Candyland, a dairy bar down below where you could get a wonderful milkshake for 10¢, a really good, healthy, nutritious milkshake for 10¢. But that place would stay open later than Candyland proper, so to speak, and I was the one that would keep it open, and sometimes when the register showed \$99, my uncle wouldn't close it until I could reach that \$100 mark. Sometimes that may have taken up till one or two o'clock in the morning.

Always open, always clean, always friendly, and plenty to eat and drink at a price you could afford. Small wonder that when Uncle Bill decided to close Candyland in the '50's, it was regretted by the whole town, young and old, for both had become institutions by then: Candyland the store and Uncle Bill the man. ✱

# Ghostly Remembrances

## A Visit to Scollay Hall and Middleway

By Jeanette Brown

If you believe in ghosts, or just enjoy speculating about the possibility of a spirit world, and if you like to see beautiful old houses that have been kept in good repair since colonial times, then you must not miss a visit to Middleway and Scollay Hall. The name Middleway means just that—it is halfway between Martinsburg and Shepherdstown, north and south, and between Winchester and Harper's Ferry, east and west.

The Jefferson County town, known as Smithfield in the 1700's, in its middle years came to be called Wizard the Clip, after its ghost—or just "Clip" for short. Now it is Middleway, but if you mention "Clip," everyone in the area will know what you mean. The Wizard, whose tale has been described as the truest ghost tale on record, exerted such a strong influence on the townspeople that they adopted him as their own, and used his name for their village. Even now, the lunchroom in Scollay Hall is called Wizard Clip. Since the 1700's, this ghost has been an integral part of the history of the Eastern Panhandle, as has Scollay Hall.

More important, I found, a visit to Middleway will bring you to the Hall, a unique and beautiful house dating back to the 1790's. Built in three sections, handsome and imposing either as a private residence or an inn, it is a tangible record of an earlier life. It was named by Dr. Samuel Scollay, after himself, when he took possession in 1832. Its present owner, Louise Smith Bradley, can trace her family back to 1794, when the original owner, her an-

cestor, was deeded the land by Governor Gooch of Virginia—425 acres along both sides of Turkey Creek, a branch of the Opequon. In 1792 the first or middle section of Scollay Hall was built. This ancestor, John Smith (not related to the famous Jamestown John Smith) and descendant John Smiths, II and III, had much to do with the progress of the area. John I had established the mill, and later Smiths laid out the lots for the town and served as justices of the peace.

Except in the coldest weather, you can still make a reservation for lunch with Mrs. Bradley in her Wizard Clip restaurant, established in Scollay Hall in the 1950's. The food is old-fashioned good. "We do my own kind of cooking," she told me, "the way I was reared." More exciting are the true early American surroundings and Mrs. Bradley's interpretation of them.

"The house is built of logs, plastered over inside," she'll tell you. "The outside is genuine clapboard, and the carpentering is the original. Look, hand-hewn nails around these windows and doors." Sure enough, wooden pegs, as solid and firmly embedded as when they were driven in the 1700's. The whole house shows the careful and loving workmanship of bygone days. While you are viewing the nails, she can show you which of the small panes of glass are the originals. The old glass is clear but has little wavy ripples, because it was handblown.

Mrs. Bradley has kept records of her family and the town, and devoted much of her life to accumulating historical data. She will also

help if you go there with a problem about your own genealogy. "I have books and records, I can look things up for you."

Then, if she thinks you are sufficiently interested so as to deserve something special, she can show you newspaper clippings, actual items kept from the time of Jefferson Davis, Stonewall Jackson, and Robert E. Lee, that have been tucked back in a desk drawer all these years.

If you say, "Tell about the ghost," Mrs. Bradley will oblige, as will everyone else in town, all with slightly different versions. The ghost did not inhabit Scollay Hall, but a property nearby. The most common tale goes like this:

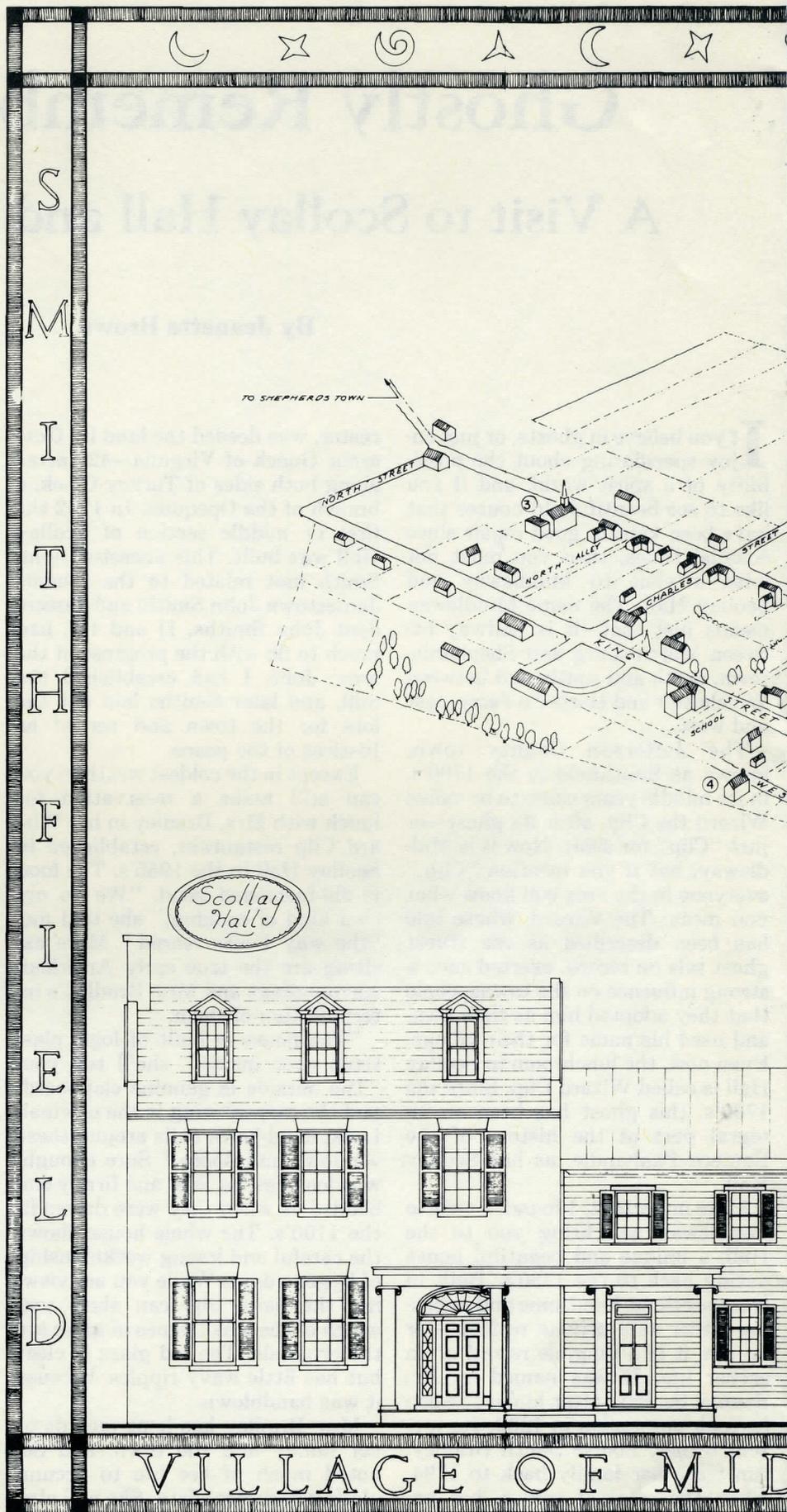
Adam Livingston, an early settler, lived on land granted to his father, along the Opequon. In 1790 he gave shelter to a weary traveler who couldn't find room at the inn. During the night the guest was taken ill and woke Livingston with his groans. The man became so sick that he begged Livingston to send for a priest. Livingston refused since he was not a Catholic, and would not allow any priest to cross his front step. He offered his own minister, but this was turned down. Even though the stranger kept begging, and said that a curse would visit him, Livingston still refused, and the man lapsed into a coma and died unshriven. As there was no record of his name, he was buried in an unmarked grave in unconsecrated ground.

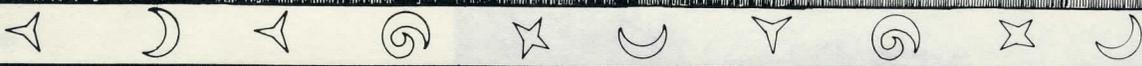
From that time on, strange things happened at the Livingston household. There was the continual sound

Middleway, a village of old churches, cemeteries, and historic houses, is a perfect setting for a ghost story. Scollay Hall, marked No. 10 here, is at the corner of Queen and Grace streets. Priest's Field, Opequon Creek, and other sites associated with the Wizard Clip may be found by following Grace Street westward out of town. Map by Archie Franzen, AIA, courtesy Historic Preservation Unit, Department of Culture and History.

of clipping, as with giant shears, the sound of horses galloping around the house at night, though nothing could be seen. The results of the clipping were real, slashes in clothing and linens. Even saddles and bridles were cut, always in a half-moon shape, some clipped to shreds. Flaming logs jumped from the fireplace and danced about the room. The wilder versions declare that the heads of horses, cows, and chickens dropped off. Livingston's barn burned down. Neighbors who called there went away with their own clothing slashed. One of the favorite stories is of the neighbor who took off her good black silk cap, wrapped it in her handkerchief and put it in her pocket to keep it safe before going to the house; but when she got home and looked at it, it was cut to ribbons.

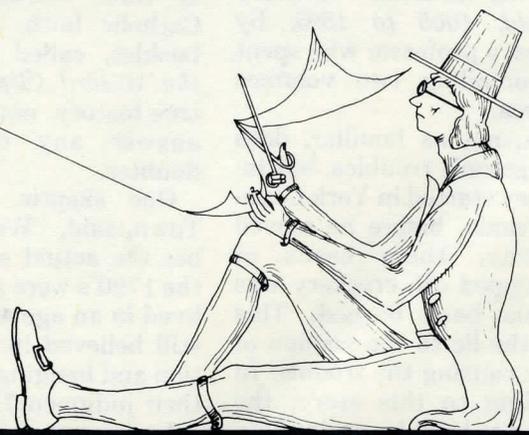
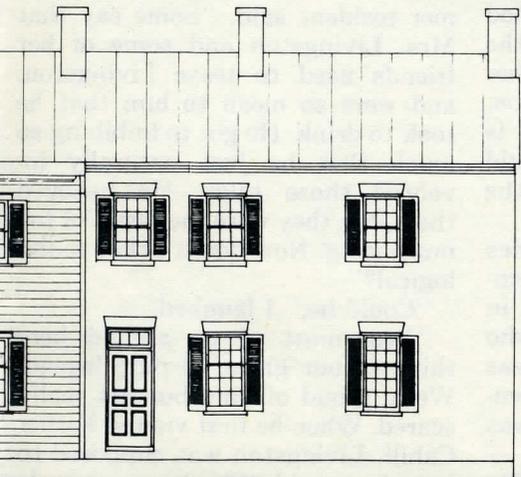
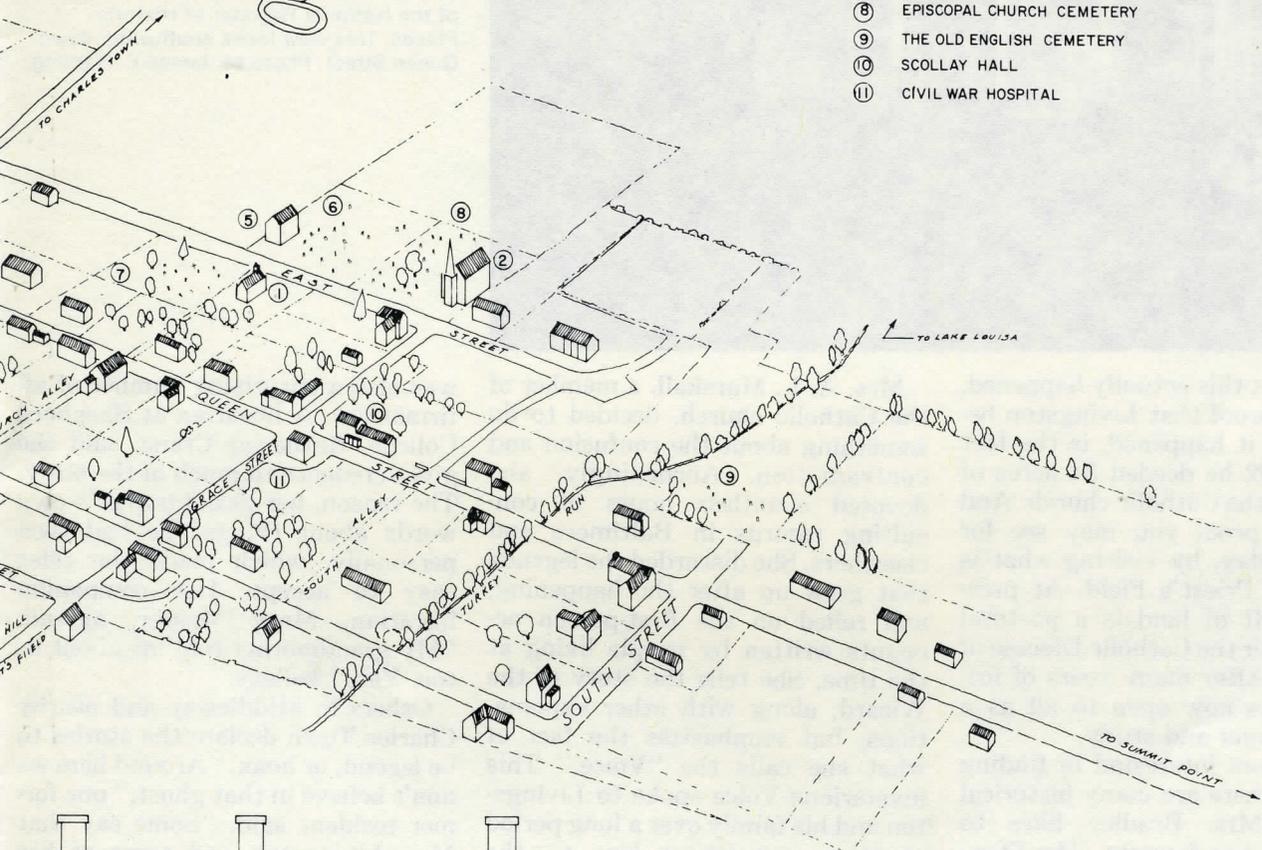
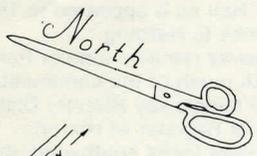
Livingston finally became desperate enough to ask for help. The local minister could do nothing. According to some, three conjurers were called in, and only infuriated the ghost. Finally, in a dream, Livingston saw a man in flowing robes, who was the one person who could help him. Accordingly, he finally visited priests of the Catholic faith. At first, it did no good, but on a visit to Shepherdstown, he met Father Dennis Cahill, the very man he'd seen in his dream. Father Cahill agreed to come to Middleway. After saying mass, and sprinkling holy water on the grave for the second time, the manifestations stopped.





**LEGEND**

- ① UNION OR WHITE CHURCH
- ② GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
- ③ MIDDLEWAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
- ④ FULL GOSPEL PENTECOSTAL CHURCH
- ⑤ TRILUMINAR LODGE NO. 117 (MASONIC)
- ⑥ MASONIC CEMETERY
- ⑦ UNION CHURCH CEMETERY
- ⑧ EPISCOPAL CHURCH CEMETERY
- ⑨ THE OLD ENGLISH CEMETERY
- ⑩ SCOLLAY HALL
- ⑪ CIVIL WAR HOSPITAL



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MIDDLEWAY, WEST VIRGINIA



Left: Scollay Hall as it appeared in 1979. Photo by James E. Harding.  
Right: Middleway remains a quiet Panhandle town, with much of the community included in the Middleway Historic District of the National Register of Historic Places. This view looks southward, down Queen Street. Photo by James E. Harding.

Proof that this actually happened, or rather, proof that Livingston believed that it happened, is the fact that in 1802 he deeded 34 acres of his land to the Catholic church. And this same proof you may see for yourself today, by visiting what is now called Priest's Field. At present, the gift of land is a pastoral center, under the Catholic Diocese of Wheeling. After many years of litigation, it is now open to all as a place of prayer and study.

For visitors interested in finding out more, there are many historical accounts. Mrs. Bradley likes to quote from her favorite, *The Story of Smithfield, 1665 to 1905*, by Robert Bates, a professor who spent 23 years compiling two volumes about the area.

One story, not as familiar, does verify Livingston's troubles, but insists that they started in York County, Pennsylvania, before he moved to Middleway. There heads of chickens dropped off, crockery was smashed, his barn burned. This would give the lie to the version of the stranger causing the trouble. In fact, according to this story, the stranger tried to help, by urging Livingston to call in a priest to exorcise the problems already in force before he met Livingston.

Mrs. A. L. Marshall, a member of the Catholic church, decided to do something about the confusion and contradiction. Accordingly, she devoted countless hours of consulting records in Baltimore and elsewhere. She discarded the legends that grew up after the happening, and relied on the first-person accounts written by people living at the time. She tells the story of the Wizard, along with other explanations, but emphasizes the fact of what she calls the "Voice." This mysterious Voice spoke to Livingston and his family over a long period of time, converting him to the Catholic faith. She feels that her booklet, called *Adam Livingston, the Wizard, the Voice, and the Doubter*, is true history, not legend, and should answer any questions by the doubter.

One skeptic, living in Charles Town, said, "Well, yes, but remember the actual statements given in the 1790's were given by people who lived in an age when witchcraft was still believed in, an age of persecution and hangings. How reliable was their judgment?"

In response to my question, "Do you believe in the ghost?" the answer in the immediate area was mostly "no," with a smile, but there

was also a surprising number of affirmatives. A librarian at Shepherd College, Katherine Crane, said she gives credence to much of the story. The reason, her grandmother's own words about things she had seen personally, which made the tales easy to accept. Her companion librarian, Mary Master, agreed. "My grandmother told me about it, too. Yes, I believe."

Others in Middleway and nearby Charles Town declare the stories to be legend, or hoax. "Around here we don't believe in that ghost," one former resident said. "Some say that Mrs. Livingston and some of her friends used to tease Livingston, and were so mean to him that he took to drink. He got to imbibing so much that he just naturally invented those tales. He believed them, but they were the result of too much grog. Now doesn't that sound logical?"

"Could be," I laughed.

"Yes, most of us around here think of our ghost as pure legend. We're proud of him, but not really scared. When he first visited Father Cahill, Livingston was supposed to have been told, 'Check your friends and neighbors, they're just playing jokes.' That's another explanation."

At the time, however, some people



were really frightened. There was the story of one family who kept hearing strange noises in their own home. It was always at a certain time of day, when they were gathered around the fireplace. Finally, after two or three weeks of the odd noises, always coming at the same time of day, someone gathered enough courage to go outside to investigate. He found one of their cows coming close to the house, for comfort perhaps, and flapping her tail against a loose shingle. Their ghostly visitor was only a flapping cow's tail.

Another story that shows the scare thrown into some of the folks at the time is the one about the funeral procession that had to stop some distance from the cemetery because the horses refused to go any closer to where the stranger was buried. How the owners communicated their feelings to the horses is not recorded. The coffin had to be carried by hand to the burial plot.

For the true believer, there's the statement of Raphael Brown, whose article was originally printed by the Catholic Historical Society. "That seemingly such miraculous phenomena did actually take place has never been questioned by serious historians. It was irrefutably

confirmed at the time, by several priests, and the two foremost figures in the Catholic Church in those years, Prince Galletzin, and Archbishop John Carroll, of Baltimore."

Like any good ghost story the case of the Wizard Clip will never be settled conclusively, of course. Nor is it likely that Middleway citizens on either side of the question would want it to be. The legend is part of their community's rich past, and they treasure it as they do the rest of their history. Much has happened since the stranger came to Adam Livingston in 1790, in the very early days of the Republic. Some events have been of genuine historic import—as when Stonewall Jackson brought his Rebel cavalry through during the Civil War—but most have been the ordinary human happenings that make up all of our lives. Large and small, such events made Middleway what it is.

Today, much of the past is physically preserved in Middleway. The streets are the same after all these years. The old tavern is gone, but there are still many of the same log houses as when the unhappy stranger came. And the water still flows from Turkey Run into Opequon Creek.

But residents look to Middleway's present and future, as well. Take Mrs. White, the Methodist minister's wife. She gave a good account of the ghost in her 1971 booklet, but she also tells me about the modern 3M Company plant nearby, manufacturing lithographic products for a world market. The company chose their location because of the purity of the local atmosphere, a necessity for the sensitive lithographing plates. And she also speaks proudly of the group of young farmers in the area who have banded together in a pledge not to sell land for development, so as to preserve it for farmland.

When the talk got back around to the supernatural, Mrs. White turned the tables on me. Before I had a chance to ask her, she said, smiling, "Do you believe in our ghost?"

When I refused to take a stand, she said, "It's pretty hard to say yes, isn't it? It's hard to know what to say."

So it's up to you, the visitor. Go to Middleway. Listen to the stories, and see if you can resist the Wizard. If you can turn your back on the ghost, you will still have Scollay Hall to enjoy—there in its physical actuality, with a history that no one can question. ✧

# A Wheeling Sketchbook

Text and Drawings by Michael E. Poe

**M**y parents grew up in Wheeling and, in a way, so did I. For on summer vacations, winter holidays, and at other times throughout my childhood, the family would venture back to the homeland of my ancestors.

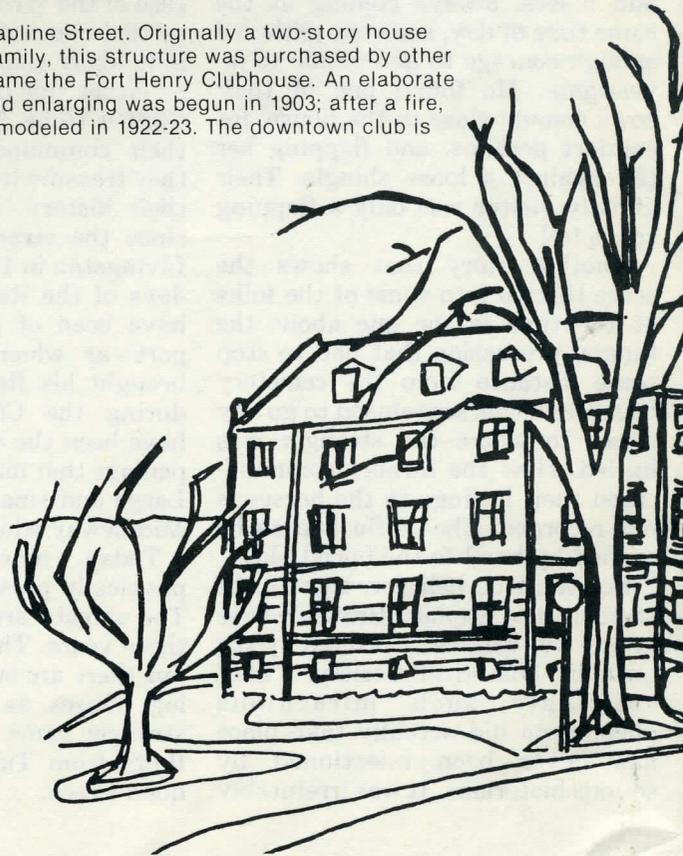
My grandparents on my father's side lived up in Bethlehem on the hill and my grandparents on my mother's side lived on Stamm Lane, right across from Wheeling Park where I went to summer day camp. My mother's twin sister and my uncle and my cousins lived in the Park View area where I went to Park View Elementary for my third grade year. I remember the ceilings there leaked when it rained.

My uncle on my mother's side lived out in Triadelphia—he'd just married and had a little girl named Kim. My aunt on my dad's side and my uncle and my cousin Dick lived in Elm Grove along Wheeling Creek.

As with any other place, the history of Wheeling is the history of its people—people like my own relatives who have called the city home over the generations. But the buildings that the people erected are also characters in Wheeling's history and, outliving any individuals, they offer a more visible picture of the past. Being an artist instead of an historian, I've tried to capture some of the spirit of old Wheeling in sketches of its more prominent historic structures. Since the buildings represent the aspirations of the builders, I hope that some image of the people of Wheeling will shine through these sketches.



Fort Henry Club, 1324 Chapline Street. Originally a two-story house occupied by the Howell family, this structure was purchased by other interests in 1890 and became the Fort Henry Clubhouse. An elaborate program of remodeling and enlarging was begun in 1903; after a fire, the building was again remodeled in 1922-23. The downtown club is now in its ninth decade.





Above: Capitol City Music Hall, 1015 Main Street. Built in 1925 as the Capitol Theater, this building was later renovated and in 1969 became the home of renowned radio station WWVA and the Wheeling Jamboree. The Music Hall is also home to the Wheeling Symphony Orchestra.

Below: House of Friendship, 1228 National Road. Built in the 1890's for Samuel S. Bloch, of Bloch Brothers Tobacco Company and "Chew Mail Pouch Tobacco" fame, this house was donated to the Presbyterian Church by Bloch's children. The gift was made in memory of Mrs. Bloch, to be used as a home for "aged women." The original "House of Friendship," dating back to 1888, was the concept of Mrs. David A. Cunningham, wife of the minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Wheeling.



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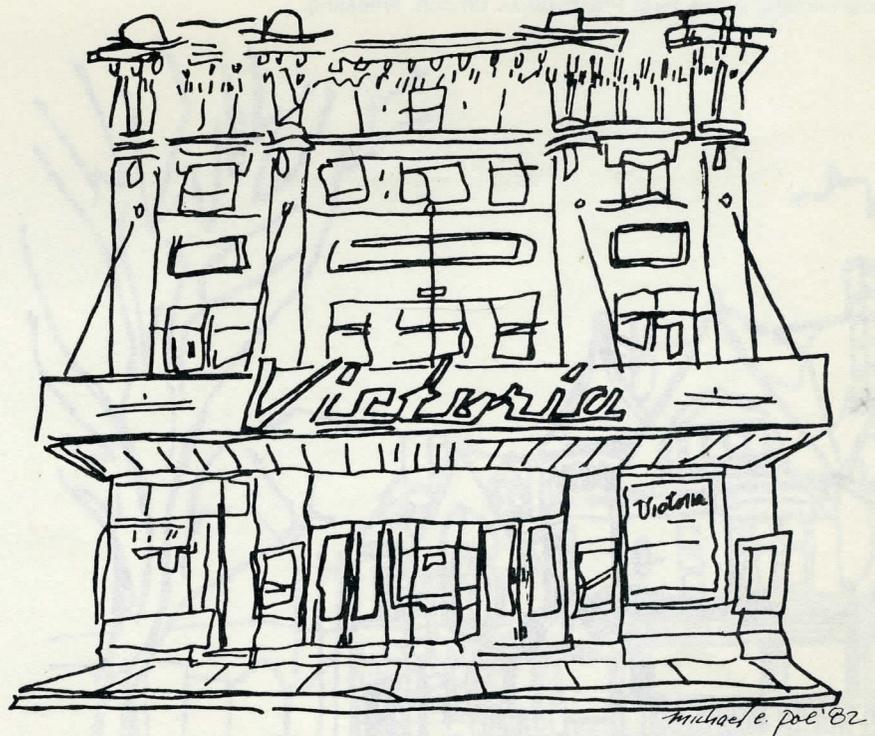
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Mendel/Wagner House, 12th Street. Constructed of brick with wood ornamentation, this house was built c. 1868 by G. W. Mendel, a local furniture manufacturer. In 1889, it was purchased by John Wagner, a cashier at the National Bank of West Virginia. Churchfield, Inc., recently bought the building, renovating it and converting it into apartments. The house is now part of the Monroe Street East Historic District, which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Victoria Theatre, 1228 Market Street. The "Vic" opened on Monday, October 4, 1908, and in its early years was famous for its elegance, popular vaudeville shows, and Edison's Victoriascope. Renovated in 1948, the theater reopened with the slogan, "Everything is new but the name." At the age of 74, the Victoria is still going strong as one of Wheeling's motion picture theaters.

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# In This Issue

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LOUISE BING was born near Gallipolis, Ohio, and has lived in Charleston since 1918. She served at the Naval Ordnance Plant during both World Wars, and worked in the Charleston restaurant business for 35 years—starting with a Broad Street “dog wagon” converted from a street car. Miss Bing has written for the *Charleston Gazette*, and has done “hundreds of articles” for the *West Virginia Hillbilly*. Her story on “Brother Pat” Withrow and the founding of the Salvation Army appeared in the July-September 1980 GOLDENSEAL; she herself was the subject of a GOLDENSEAL interview in the Fall '81 issue, as she reminisced on the efforts of West Virginians to erect a statue of Abraham Lincoln on the Capitol grounds.

JEANETTE BROWN is currently living in suburban Washington, D.C., but makes frequent trips to West Virginia. She has taught school, directed dramatic productions, and worked as a Vista volunteer with Indo-Chinese refugees. Since she began freelancing, her writing has appeared in various publications, including the *Denver Post's Empire* magazine, and *Catholic Fireside* in England. Her latest work for GOLDENSEAL, on Shepherdstown in Jefferson County, appeared in the Winter '81 issue.

MACK GILLENWATER was born in Crumpler, McDowell County, and now lives in Proctorville, Ohio. He obtained his B.A. and M.A. from Marshall University, and earned his Ph.D. at the University of Tennessee. He has taught at Pembroke State College, East Carolina University, Ohio University-Portsmouth, and is now an associate professor in Marshall's geography department. Although this is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL, he has written numerous articles, papers, and reviews for such publications as the *Journal of Geography*, *Peabody Journal of Education*, *The Professional Geographer*, *Geographical Review*, and the *Huntington Herald-Dispatch*. Dr. Gillenwater also served as consultant on the “Mining Communities” section of the West Virginia Coal Life Project.

PEGGY RIEGEL MASSEY, wife of writer Tim Massey, was born in Richmond, Virginia. Daughter of a C&O Railway official, she moved to Huntington as a teenager. She earned her B.A. and M.A. at Marshall University, and now teaches English, biology, and general science at Enslow Junior High School in Huntington. In addition, she works as a freelance photographer, and her master's thesis was published by the West Virginia Department of Education. This is her second appearance in GOLDENSEAL.

TIM MASSEY, a native of Price Hill in Raleigh County, has 20 years' experience as a newspaperman. He first worked for the *Raleigh Register* in Beckley, later moving to the *Baltimore News-American*, UPI, and the *Charleston Gazette*. He holds a B.A. and an M.A. from Marshall University, and now works for the *Huntington Herald-Dispatch*. His first contribution to GOLDENSEAL, on 110-year-old Columbus Avery, appeared in the Spring '82 magazine.

MICHAEL MEADOR was born in Hinton and grew up in Princeton. He attended Concord College and Marshall University, graduating with a degree in sociology. He now works in Madison for the Boone County Community Action Program. His last contribution to GOLDENSEAL included “The Red Neck War of 1921” and interviews with two participants in the Battle of Blair Mountain, which appeared in the April-June 1981 issue.

MICHAEL E. POE was born in Columbus, Ohio, but grew up in Washington, D.C. He is a graduate of the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, where he studied television production and film, and currently works as production cameraman and news editor at WTRF-TV in Wheeling. He is also the author of a recently completed book for children.

MONA RIDDER grew up in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Atlanta, Georgia, and came to West Virginia, her father's native state, in 1972. She currently works as a freelance photo-journalist in the fields of education, regional history, and special events. She is a regular contributor to the *Mineral Daily News-Tribune* in Keyser, and the *Times-News* papers in Cumberland, Maryland. Her articles have also appeared in *Journal of the Alleghenies* and GOLDENSEAL [“The Barn Raising,” October-December 1975]. She lives near Elk Garden with her husband and two children in a collection of reconstructed log houses relocated from around Mineral County.

RON RITTENHOUSE was born and raised in Mannington. Since 1975 he has been senior photographer for the *Morgantown Dominion-Post*. In recent years he has won several first place awards in the commercial and news categories of the Professional Photographers of West Virginia annual contests. His hobby is collecting old cameras and photographs, of which he has one of the largest private holdings in the state. Ron's most recent work for GOLDENSEAL included the photos which accompanied the articles on the Perkovic Family and those of Opal Wells and her Sears mailorder house, in the Summer '82 issue.

JAMES SAMSELL is a Morgantown native, a graduate of West Virginia University, and an Air Force veteran. He was formerly chief photographer for Beckley Newspapers, Inc., and also worked as a reporter for the *Beckley Post-Herald*. Currently working as a commercial photographer in Beckley, he is married and has a daughter. Samsell's photos of Raleigh County's Greek Orthodox congregation and the West Virginia State Gospel Singing Convention appeared in the Summer '82 GOLDENSEAL.

DENNIS TENNANT is a seventh-generation Monongalian Countian. He served as a photo intern at the *Charleston Daily Mail* before his *cum laude* graduation in journalism from West Virginia University. He was a 1977 finalist in the Hearst national photojournalism competition, and has also placed in several photograph clip contests sponsored by the West Virginia News Photographers' Association. He is currently employed as staff photographer for the *Morgantown Dominion-Post*. Most recently, Tennant contributed photos of Marguerite Vollmar for Martha Manning's articles on stained glass in the Summer '82 GOLDENSEAL.

DIANE CASTO TENNANT, a native of Ripley, Jackson County, and wife of photographer Dennis Tennant, graduated *cum laude* from West Virginia University in 1978 with a degree in journalism and a minor in wildlife management. She has been employed as a news reporter for the *Raleigh Register* in Beckley and at the *Parkersburg News*, and was the recipient of a state first place award for spot news reporting in 1979. While working towards her master's degree in journalism at WVU, she held a graduate assistantship. Mrs. Tennant now works as a reporter for the *Morgantown Dominion-Post*. Her latest article for GOLDENSEAL, on Myrtle Auvil of Grafton, appeared in the Fall '81 issue.

JAMES WALLEN is a Huntington native who spent college vacations as a “mud,” or third, clerk aboard one of the last regular Pittsburgh-Cincinnati steamers. He attended Marshall University and Ohio State University, and before retirement served as editor of *The Inco News*, a publication of the Huntington Division of International Nickel. He is also the former editor of the *Ashland Oil Log*, and worked as a reporter for the *Huntington Advertiser* and *Herald-Advertiser*. He now works as a freelancer for a number of newspapers and magazines, recently publishing an extended series on Ohio River steamboating in the *Columbus Sunday Magazine*. This is Mr. Wallen's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

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