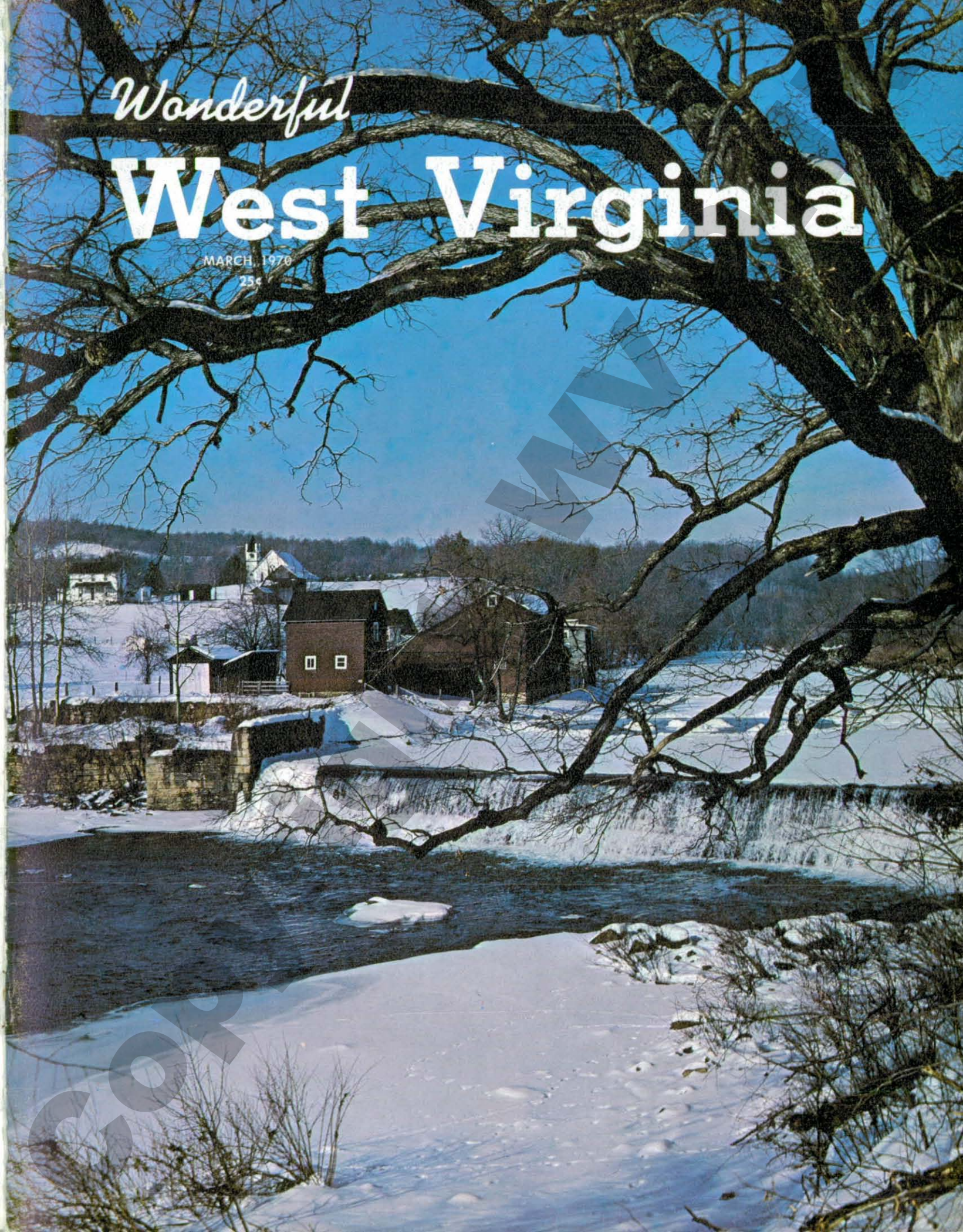
Wonderful
West Virginia
MARCH, 1970
25¢

Arnout Hyde Jr.

New England asters (but in West Virginia) bloom late to be last flowers of summer.

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Arnout Hyde Jr.

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West Virginia's famous springs, sweetened by history, were panaceas to ailing Indians, folks, aristocracy

Hope 'Springs' Eternal

FRANK HILL

HOPE "SPRINGS" ETERNAL for relief from the illnesses, aches and pains humans have inherited. In days of old, there were no miracle drugs, no very effective pain killers, or tranquilizers and no mind-altering pills to ease the suffering.

Early settlers here in West Virginia noticed Indians of many tribes, even mortal enemies, making pilgrimages in peace to bubbling mineral springs strung along our Appalachian chain of mountains. There they would drink of the magic water and bathe in it, we trust in that order, and seemed to be cured of whatever ailed them. A moccasin-beaten path literally led to these watering places.

Pioneers with one complaint or another decided to try it for themselves. At many of the springs, the water smelled terribly and tasted worse, often reminiscent of rotten eggs, and everyone knew that the worse medicine tastes, the quicker the cure.

For some it worked, though more than likely just between the ears. At least the spring water did something, and something was better than nothing in those early days of questionable medical practice when roots and herbs were the sum total of the available pharmacopoeia.

There are always promoters around ready to cash in on the gullibility of suffering humanity, and they quickly snapped up ownership of land around the sources of the curing waters.

Their claims would make a traveling-medicine-show man wince, and they enjoyed the distinction of having hypochondriacs come to them instead of having to carry the nostrums to the populace by horse and buggy.

The "healing" spring waters were claimed to cure jaundice, the vapors, consumption, warts, catarrh, hangnails, bealed ears, lumbago, rheumatism, bursitis, lovesick hearts, gallstones, gout, tired blood, hydrophobia, yellow fever or any other color of it you might have, knock-knees, hard-of-hearing, pimples, boils, carbuncles, shortness-of-breath, flaccidity, too much hirsuteness in the case of ladies or falling hair in the case of men, insomnia or sleeping sickness, flatulence, strabismus, diastema, overweight or underweight and, oddly enough, hypochondria.

Webster Springs.

THE ILL OR IMAGINED-ILL sufferers began to flock to the springs to the point that hotels sprang up to accommodate them while "taking the waters" and it even became fashionable to be seen there. Statesmen, celebrities, the wealthy, noveau riche and social climbers came. Con men, gamblers and other opportunists undoubtedly followed.

The truth will out eventually, and the disheartened and disillusioned came to realize spring water couldn't be guaranteed to cure anything but thirst. Many spas fell

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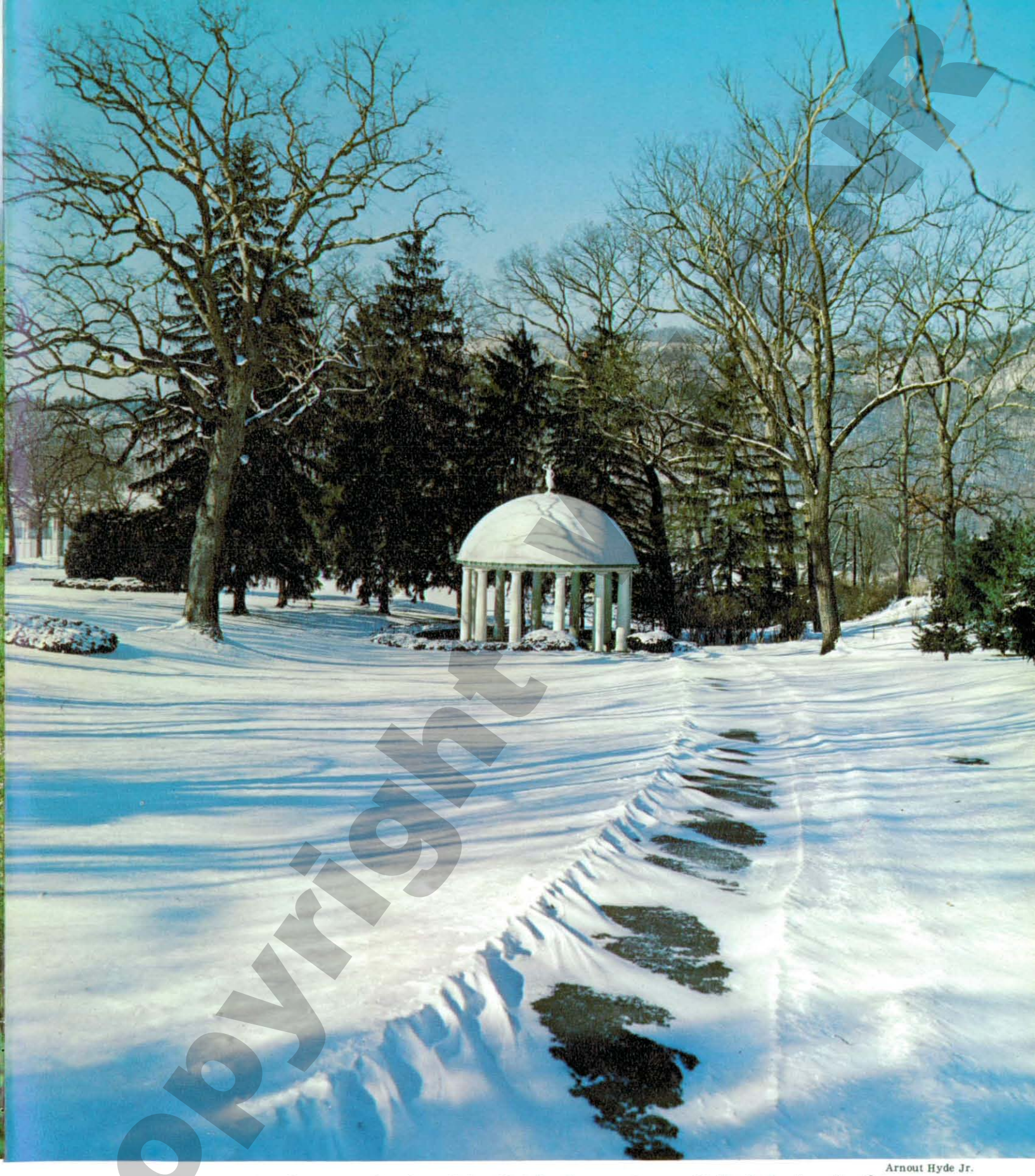

Arnout Hyde Jr.

Historic spring house at the Greenbrier Hotel, whose waters unitially helped make the noted spa world-famous.

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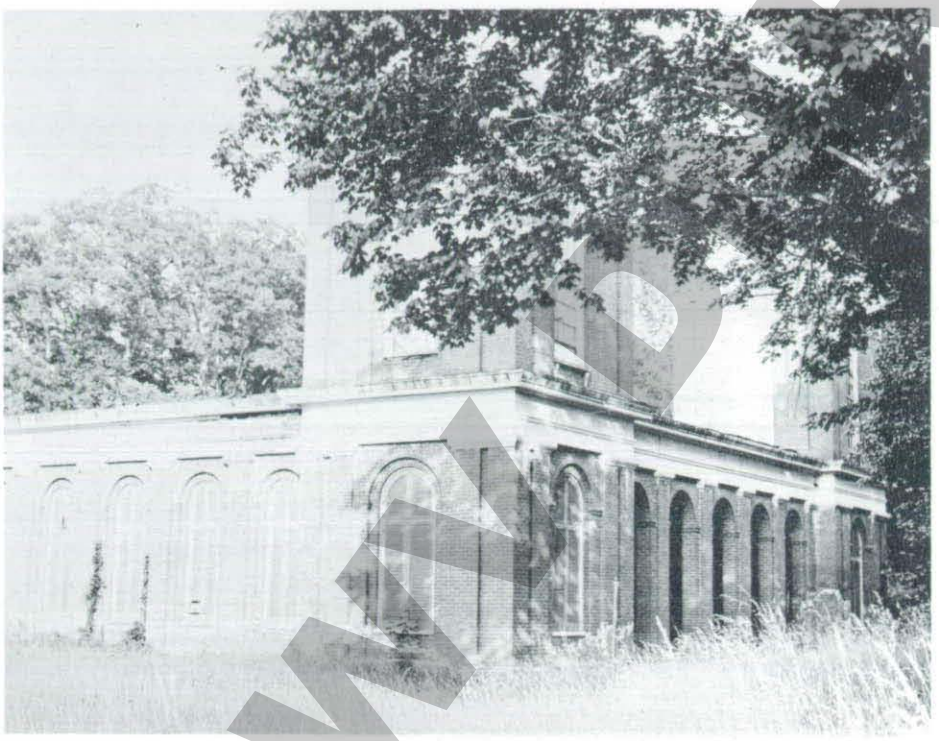
Capon Springs.



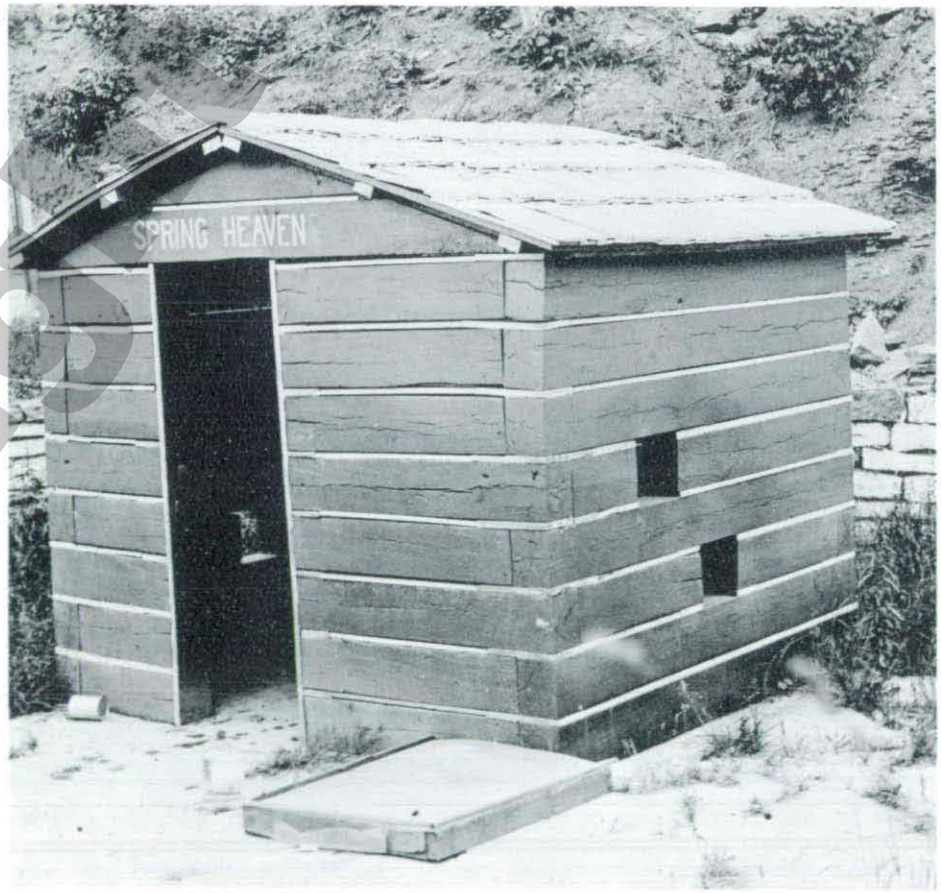
Old Sweet Springs.

into disfavor and disuse with several exceptions, and the hotels burned to the ground, accidentally it is supposed, or were torn down.

The West Virginia Geological Survey inventoried 208 springs producing 100-gallons-a-minute or more. Of these, the granddaddies appear to be Big Spring on Trout Run three miles west of Wardensville, and a spring at the head of Locust Creek three miles southwest of Hillsboro—both gushing at the rate of 15,200-gallons-per-minute. That's a staggering 21,888,000 gallons a day. The Survey also listed 135 springs rated from two to 110 gallons-per-minute though there are countless springs throughout the state not listed.

Each maintains its own fairly constant temperature of anywhere from 45° to 74.3°. Some taste better than some city water supplies, mineral content notwithstanding.

Two remain as spas today—White Sulphur Springs in Greenbrier County with its world-famous Greenbrier Hotel, and Berkeley Springs in Morgan County with its notable, state-operated Sanitarium. Both springs are rated at



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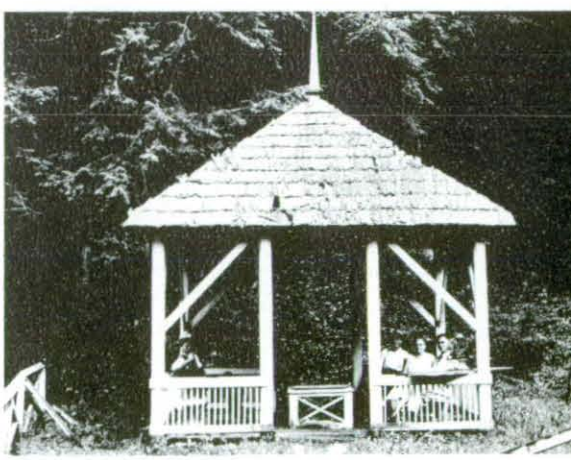
Blue Sulphur Springs.

more than 1-million-gallons-per-day. Wisely, neither makes any claims for the curative qualities of its waters, yet both are health-oriented and offer therapeutic treatments based on sound medical practices.

Not only do all of West Virginia's springs serve as sources of rivers flowing both into the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, but they also serve as municipal and industrial water supplies along the way, not to mention cold-water fish hatcheries operated by your Department of Natural Resources and the federal government.

Though perhaps few today have ever tried it, there is nothing so delicious as a cool, refreshing drink from a clear mountain spring. That is provided it isn't of high-mineral content, usually identifiable by rust-colored rocks, in which case it is best to hold your nose and drink deeply.

It's good for you. It'll cure. . . .



The Lee Pavilion—Howards Lick Spring.

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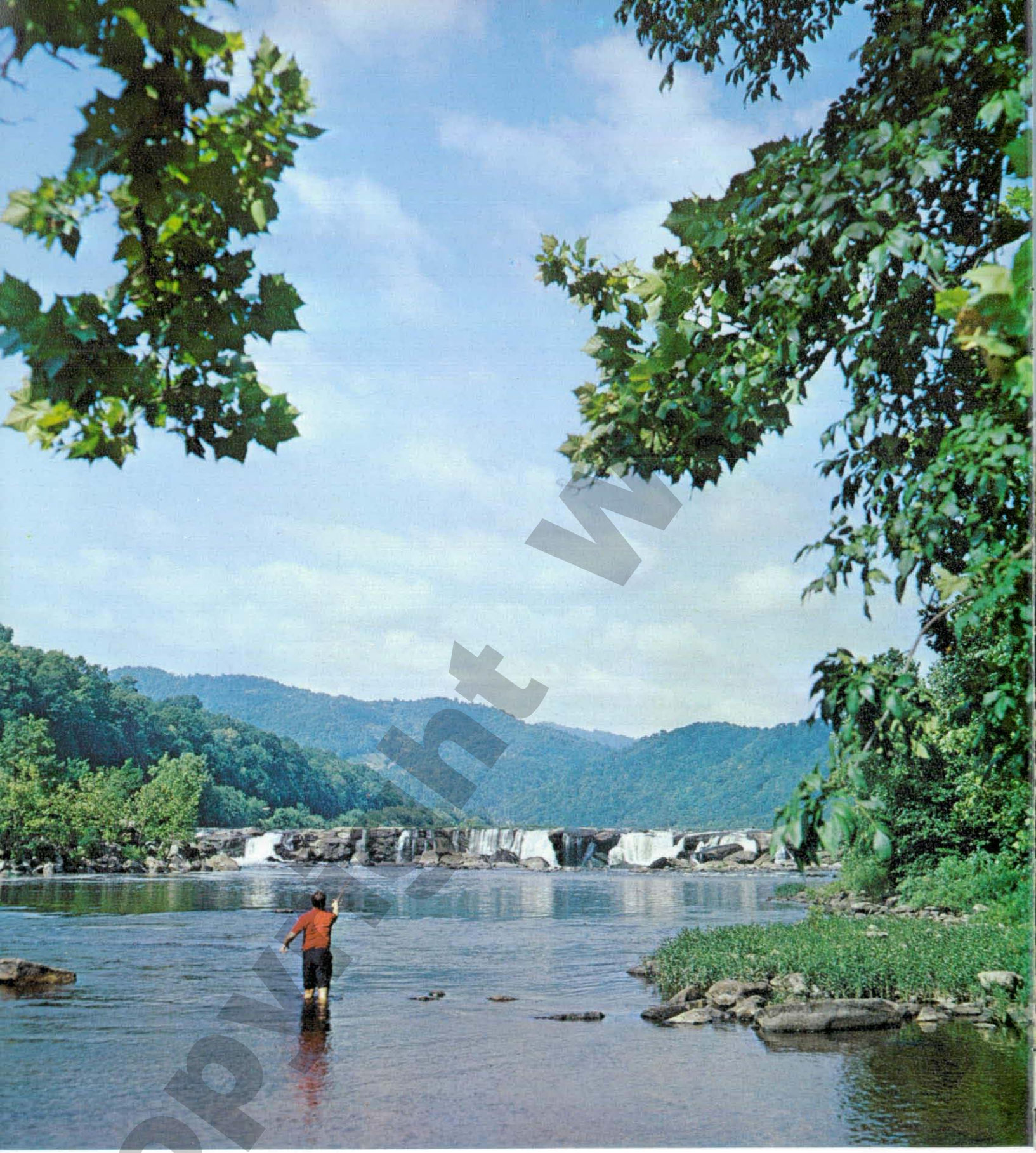

Arnout Hyde Jr.

Spectacular Sandstone Falls on New River are loved by anglers and sightseers.

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The Very Old New River

MAURICE BROOKS

SOME YEARS AGO the North Carolina Highway Department was relocating a road along the crest of the Blue Ridge just south of the resort village of Blowing Rock. State engineers were startled when a local assistant asked, "Which way do you want the water from that culvert to drain, directly to the Atlantic Ocean or to the Gulf of Mexico?"

It was a good question. The Blue Ridge at this place is a secondary continental divide, with some drainage through the Yadkin River directly southeast to Atlantic waters, and another part forming the headwaters of the New River, and so starting a long journey to the Great Kanawha, the Ohio, and the Mississippi. Before it ends its career, the New, carrying waters from western North Carolina, becomes a West Virginia river.

At its source near the Blue Ridge summit, the New River gathers its waters from very ancient rocks, some of the oldest in North America. This is a land of abundant rainfall; the river grows rapidly, and is a respectable stream when it reaches the lowlands. Its course is squarely across the great Appalachian Valley, the wonderful intervale between the Blue Ridge and the Alleghenies which stretches unobstructed from Pennsylvania to Georgia. In crossing the valley it cuts through limestone, and so picks up dissolved calcium and other minerals, to the benefit of fish life farther downstream. Add to this the fertilizers which wash out from rich agricultural lands which it drains, and a veritable fish nursery is the result.

The New River doesn't remain long in the Appalachian Valley; its flow is to the north and west, and it is destined to cut squarely through the entire series of Allegheny ridges, often with spectacular results. Just why it creates these scenic notches and gorges is a matter of dispute; perhaps the best explanation is that the river was there before the mountains were folded, and that it sought the faults and weaknesses of the rocks and eroded them rapidly enouth to continue its westward passage.

Just east and south of Peterstown, Monroe County, West Virginia, the New encounters the main axis of the Alleghenies and cuts the magnificent water gap at Narrows, Virginia, holy ground to geologists who find here an unbelievable exposure of rock strata. Soon thereafter it crosses the West Virginia border and continues until it loses its identity as it is joined by the Gauley and so becomes the Great Kanawha, headed for Charleston and Point Pleasant.

It is a turbulent passage that the New finds across southern West Virginia, and it has carved out tremendous canyons, dizzy ledges, swift rapids—some of the finest scenic features which our state holds. Central to the entire area is the renowned New River Gorge, quite properly called by John Burroughs the "Grand Canyon of the East."

WEST VIRGINIANS have not been unmindful of the New River Gorge. Along it, or adjacent to its cliffs, have been located a series of state parks and recreation areas —the new and increasingly popular Pipestem Park, the Bluestone Dam and Recreation Area, Grandview State Park with its Cliffside Amphitheater, and the much-visited Hawks Nest State Park. Babcock State Park, with its steep cliffs and tumbling steams, is only a short distance away. This is spectacular country, and there seems no end to the recreation potential here.

If we could leave the New River as it mingles its waters with the Gauley and becomes the Great Kanawha, destined to join the Ohio near the site of an ill-fated bridge, our story would be simpler. Geology doesn't permit this; students of the rocks and the story they unfold tell us that the New is but a portion of an ancient, much greater stream, and to it they have applied the name Teays River. According to their findings, the Teays began much as the present New does, flowing northwestward from the Blue Ridge, across the Appalachian Valley, entering West Virginia and spanning the entire state, and continuing on across Ohio, perhaps to enter some ancestor of the Great Lakes in northern Indiana. The Ohio River, so they tell us, was the creation of the great ice sheets, and it didn't exist to interrupt the course of this older stream before the Ice Age.

Traces of this valley still remain; the Cheasapeake & Ohio Railroad follows it from Charleston to Huntington; so does Interstate 64. Even the name, Teays Valley, has not entirely vanished; it is applied to a district in present Putnam County.

There are abundant evidences in the fish life of the New River to suggest a former connection with the Great Lakes. Small mouth black bass, important in the New and many of its tributaries, are essentially Great Lakes fish. So are muskellunge (however you choose to spell it) and walleyed pike. Once there were lake sturgeon in

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the lower rivers, perhaps finding their way to Kanawha Falls or above. There are still members of the catfish, sucker, and minnow families, all with Great Lakes affiliations.

So in one sense this is a "new" river of which we are speaking, but in another background it is old, incredibly so, since it far antedates the folding of the Appalachian Mountains. Its waters have been flowing down from the Blue Ridge through eons which are only names in a geology text.

A river, any river, is a natural thorofare for the travels and distribution of plants and animals. When the stream also provides natural gateways through mountain ridges, its biologic importance becomes even greater. The Teays and its descendant, the New, have been natural travel routes for living things of the southern Appalachians, spores, seeds, and germinal materials carried downward and westward into new places and new conditions. Some of them undoubtedly perished in the transition, but some didn't. The flora, and to some extent the fauna, of West Virginia have been enriched by these emigrants from the Southern Highlands.

West Virginia botany includes a long list of plants, many of them showy and horticulturally valuable, which have reached us by the New River and its beneficence. Some reach the botanical limits of their ranges within the state; in general they all have their centers of abundance southward.

Perhaps the most interesting of these migrants from southern mountain lands is the Catawba rhododendron, often called "purple" rhododendron, although it takes some imagination to see purple color in its abundant blossoms. This wonderfully beautiful and valuable plant, a relative of our more widely-distributed State Flower, is a true child of the southern Appalachians, restricted in its natural range to mountain slopes and summits. Its densely growing masses are responsible for some of the celebrated floral displays of the country—the famous Rhododendron Gardens on Roan Mountain, Tennessee-North Carolina, and the Craggy Gardens along the Blue Ridge Parkway just north of Asheville as examples. In and about the New River Gorge the shrub opens in abundance and full glory during the latter part of May.

SO FAR AS WE KNOW, Catawba rhododendron reaches its northern botanical limits near Mount Lookout, Nicholas County, not far from Carnifex Ferry State Park. Beyond this point it will not seed itself, although when planted it grows freely for hundreds of miles northward.

Catawba rhododendron has many especially fine horticultural qualities; it is hardy, it blooms profusely almost every year, it is attractive at all seasons, and it hybridizes freely with other rhododendrons, often transmitting its good qualities to its offspring. Most of the fine, named rhododendron varieties in gardens have catawba genes in their makeup.

There are profuse stands of this shrub in many sections of the New River Gorge, some particularly good ones along U.S. 21, just after it leaves U.S. 60, in Fayette County. Hawks Nest State Park has good displays, and so does the canyon below Grandview State Park. Someone has estimated, perhaps with justification, that a million of these handsome shrubs are in bloom in the New River Gorge during the last weeks in May.

Another especially fine plant that reaches our boundaries by the New River route is Carolina silverbell, *Halesia* to the botanists, a broad-leaved shrub or small tree which in late April or early May bears a profusion of white or delicately-pink bell-shaped flowers. At every leaf node on every twig there are paired clusters of these blossoms, each one an inch or more in length, and forming a floral mass that is extraordinarily beautiful.

Silverbell likes rich, well-watered slopes, and usually does not climb the canyon walls too far from New River. It is particularly abundant along the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad right-of-way, and there are two places for easy observation; where U.S. 21 crosses the New River at the Cotton Hill bridge, and along U.S. 19 just west of the Prince railroad station before the highway climbs the gorge slopes up to Beckley. Heights of the blooming season will vary with the weather, but May 1-5 are good average dates.

The New River brings to West Virginia two forest trees, both of which are classified by foresters as "southern hardwoods," and both of which grow to sawtimber size. One of these, Spanish oak, is a large tree with very deeply notched leaves which is local in distribution, but is especially abundant in the South Hills section of Charleston. It is a handsome tree which would be just as much at home along the streets of Charleston, South Carolina, as at the West Virginia city of that name.

The other notable southern hardwood species is sweet or red gum, *Liquidamber,* an extraordinarily handsome and useful tree, often classified as one of the finest ornamentals in this part of the world. Sweet gum exudes an amber-like gum which has been used in commerce. The name "red gum" is applied to the heart wood of the tree, extensively used in cabinet work. The tree's sap wood is white by contrast, and is not used in furniture manufacture. This species is heavily cut, making it one of the more important hardwood lumber species in the South.

SWEET GUM is a member of a very ancient, and once widely distributed, plant group. Throughout most of the Northern Hemisphere the sweet gums were destroyed by glacial ice. The genus persists today in three isolated spots—on the island of Formosa, in the mountains of eastern Turkey, and in southeastern United States.

Our representative of the sweet gums grows in alluvial soil along the New and Great Kanawha Rivers, and up the tributaries of these streams for short distances. These trees are naturally abundant in such areas as the Kanawha

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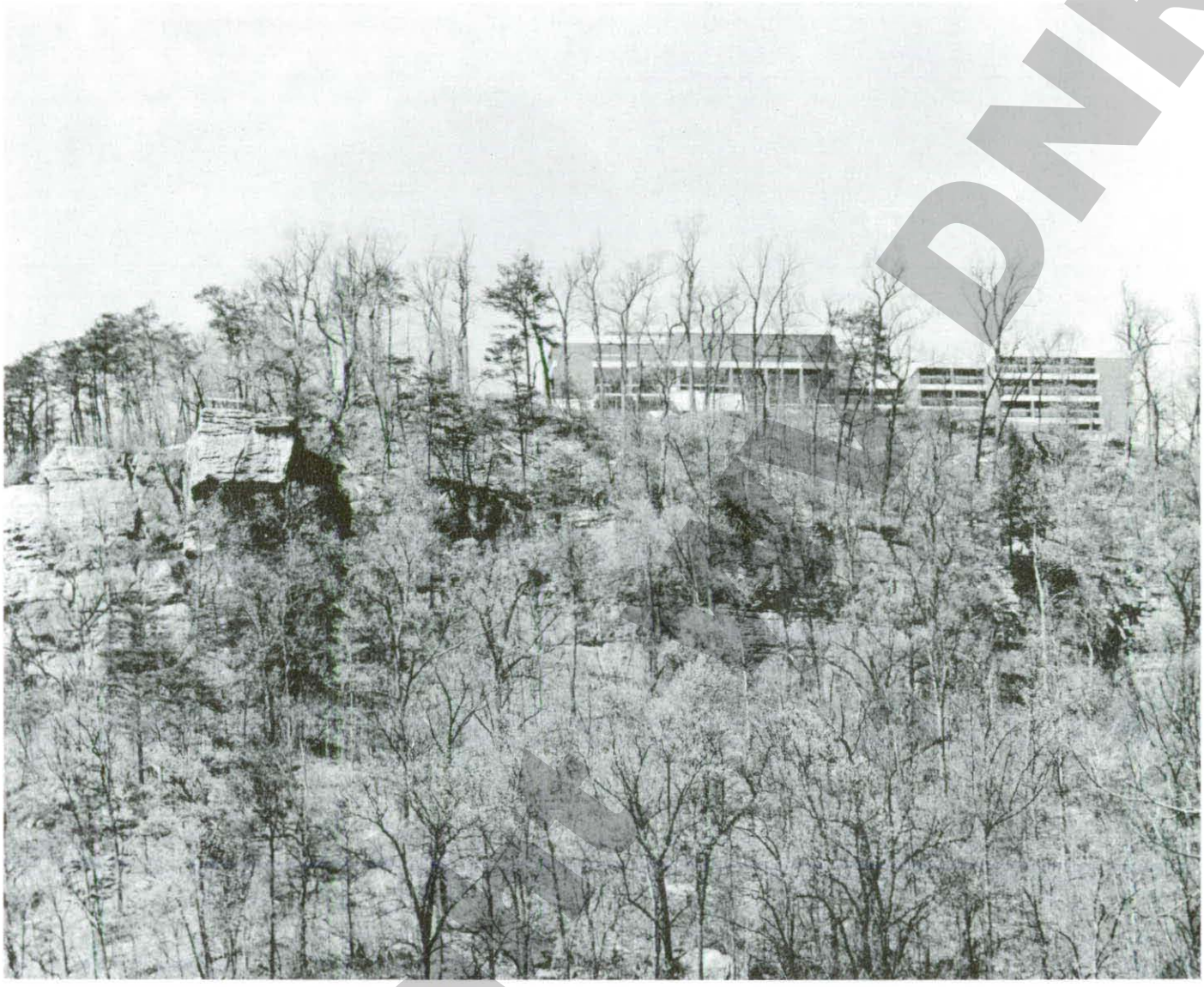

Modern Hawks Nest lodge sits on brink of New River canyon.

Fairgrounds, and have been extensively planted along Charleston streets. Like Catawba rhododendron, it will thrive, if planted, far north of its natural range.

Because of its five-pointed starlike leaves, sweet gum is known to many southern West Virginia people as "star maple," a name appropriate so far as the "star" is concerned, but highly unsuitable as to the second part. This plant is not a close relative of any maple.

Sweet gum foliage constitutes some of the strongest and most varied aspects of autumnal coloration in this portion of the world. While some leaves on a tree may remain green, others may take on shades of yellow, crimson, or maroon purple, and an occasional tree may show all four colors. Further than this, the leaves cling to the trees and remain bright long after most other native hardwoods have shed their foliage.

West Virginia is indebted to the New River system for many other interesting and beautiful plants, some of them herbaceous and some trees and shrubs. Because the ancient river carves its way through mountain ridges, this southern flora is often brought into close relationship with the northern plants and animals which extend southward on mountain summits. The naturalist marvels at this intermingling, but all of us are privileged to see and enjoy it.

———o———

To unhook a fish without having him get away, sew a piece of sandpaper across the palm and fingers of an old leather glove. Grip the fish with gloved hand while unhooking him with the other.

———o———

A large oak tree is capable of giving off as much as 40,000 gallons of water into the air during a single summer through the process of transpiration.

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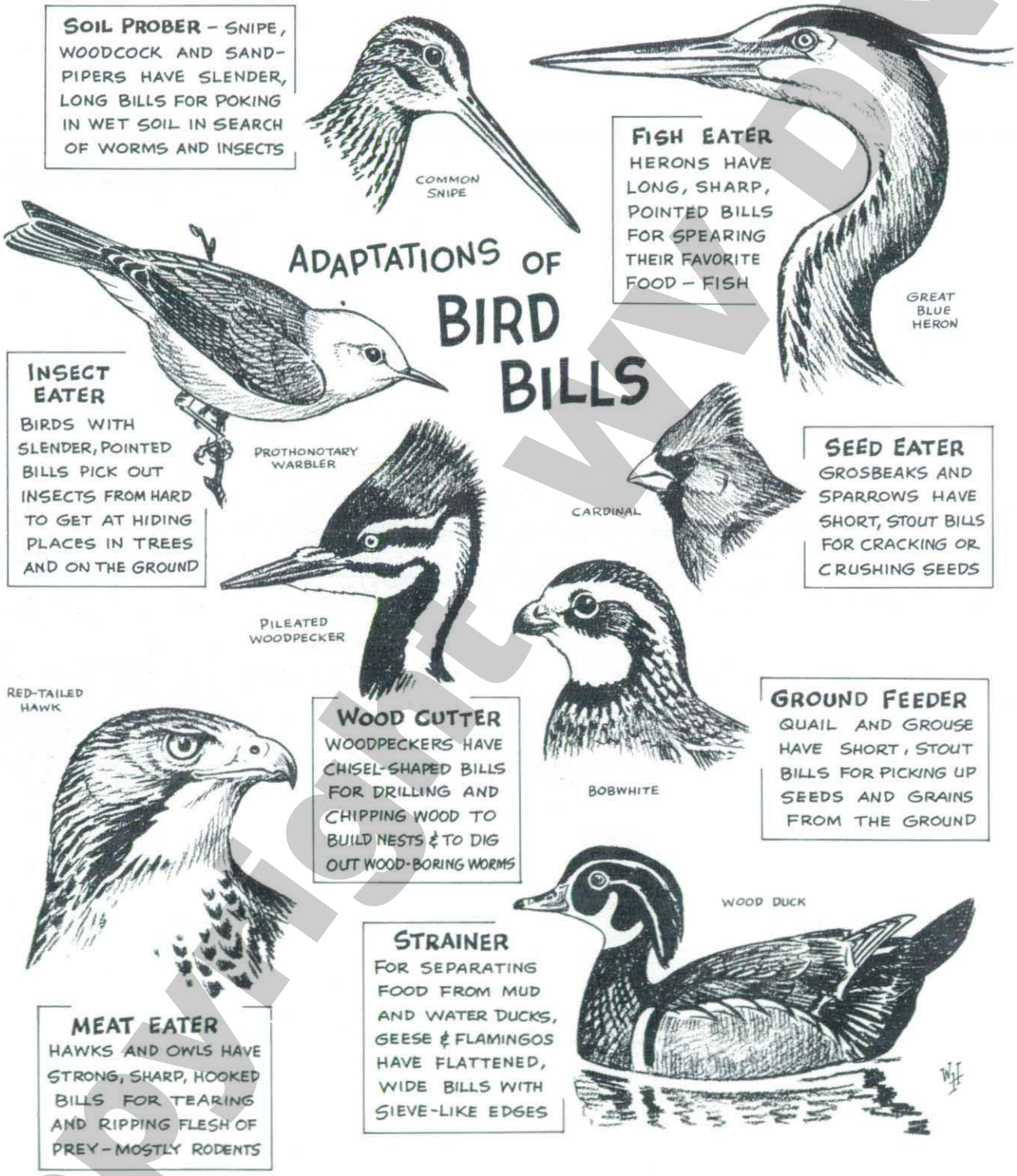

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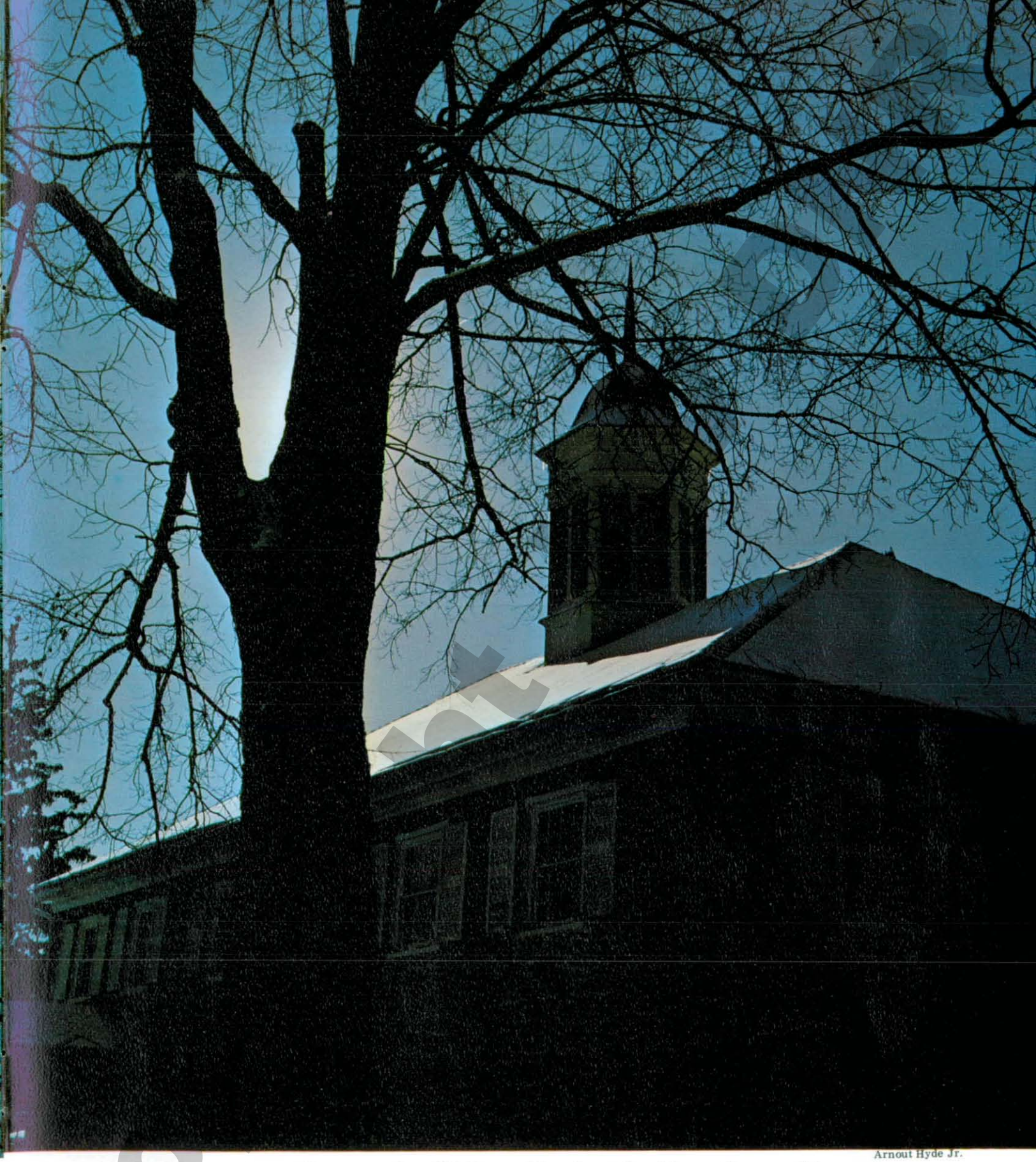

Arnout Hyde Jr.

Heavenly glow silhouettes the Old Stone Church at Lewisburg. Preserved in great detail since 1796, this distinctive house of worship is the oldest and continuously used Protestant church west of the Appalachian Mountains.

Heritage Waters -- The Potomac

BOB BURRELL

Reprinted from United States CANOE Association NEWS Letter

See color spread, pages 14-15

George Washington's river, the mighty Potomac, has its origins high in the mountains of West Virginia. It is composed of the two main branches which meet near Greenspring, West Virginia east of Cumberland, Maryland and forms the Maryland—West Virginia and the Maryland—Virginia borders as it wanders to the sea. For a long time the North Branch, which originates where the extreme southwestern tip of Maryland cuts down into West Virginia's eastern panhandle, was considered main source of the Potomac. Today we know the much longer and more scenic South Branch which originates high in the Appalachian Mountains in Pendleton County, is the true source of the river.

Every school boy knows the story of George Washington's mighty heave of a silver dollar across the Potomac and of his beautiful home, Mount Vernon, located high on the banks of the lower river. Unfortunately, few realize that the father of our country also travelled on and was familiar with the upper reaches of this river, the sections that West Virginians know and love so well. Between Moorefield and Romney, the South Branch courses in a northeasterly direction through a magnificient gorge, the walls of which at times are almost perpendicular. This section, locally known as the "Trough," was explored by Washington in 1748. He described it as ". . . a couple of mountains impassable, running side and side together for seven or eight miles, and ye river running down between them."

The history-laden South Branch has been the scene of bitter Indian wars, hill country feuds, and the modern day type of war between conservationists and the dam builders. Romney was the site of a key fort during the Civil War. Caves overlooking the famous Smokehole section of the South Branch were used as sources of saltpeter from Revolutionary times, as hide-away spots from Indian raiding parties, and even as the site of whiskey stills by some of our more enterprising ancestors. Today the South Branch Valley between Petersburg and the head of the Trough is the home of many industrious farmers whose rich, productive lands add to the beauty of the landscape against the majestic background of the ever-present mountains. Yet within easy reach upstream into the Smokehole country or downstream into the Trough, the canoeist can find wilderness areas of unparalleled beauty.

For the canoeist who would want to tour the river, there is a tremendous variety of scenery and type of paddling open to him. For almost 120 miles, the paddler can find delightful stretches of water to suit any taste. The white-water buff begins his run by putting in near Franklin, West Virginia at the intersection of U.S. 33 and 220. Early in the spring when the warm sun releases the water from winter's icy grip, the Smokehole run is considered tops by paddlers from all over the East.

After portaging a small dam above the hamlet of Upper Tract and passing through some open farm land along U.S. 220, the paddler enters the Smokehole canyon. The water tumbles furiously down the 22 feet per mile gradient creating complex, but invigorating Class 3-4 canoeing. Soon the paddler reaches an area where a landslide has blocked the river. This is portaged by all except the extremely expert Class 6 paddlers or the extremely foolish. The river continues its wild pace through the U.S. Forest Service campground and recreation area, an ideal overnight spot of the canoeist. This is located 22 miles from the put-in.

High on the right one may see Cave Mountain, a spelunker's delight. One more dangerous rapids is encountered seven miles below the campground, but the water gradually becomes calmer, picks up its ripsnorter of a sister, the North Fork of the South Branch, and proceeds to Petersburg, West Virginia along State Routes 4 and 28. The water in the 21 mile trip below the campground is of Class 2-3 complexity and a favorite with spring canoeists. Although the upper Smokehole Gorge is extremely scenic, the paddler will find his attention glued to the complexity of the rapids.

Below Petersburg, the mountains recede and the South Branch flows swiftly but gently to Moorefield, some 17 miles away. In and

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Majestic scenery lines the beautiful Potomac.

around Moorefield there are many stately, ante-bellum mansions maintained by historic families. Each year in late September, tours are available to see these beautiful homes which are open for display. Although the South Branch has more volume, the gradient is such that the rapids are not difficult and consist of gentle Class 1-2 riffles or small ledges, easily negotiated by the well-coached novice. It is at Moorefield that the South Branch is further swollen by its confluence with its South Fork or the Moorefield River, another Class 4 boat buster.

Most paddlers who are not expert whitewater buffs will want to start their trip on the South Branch at the U.S. 220 bridge at Old Fields, five miles downstream from Moorefield, the scene of many an early Indian-settler skirmish. For four miles the river meanders through pleasant farmland and picks up speed here and there to form zesty riffles. Soon the river makes a right-hand turn over a ledge into an exciting chute of haystacks under the railroad bridge that gives the paddler a nice roller-coaster ride.

The sight that greets the canoeist and never fails to impress him is the gateway to the Trough. Here, the grandeur of the mountains provides mile after mile of eye-catching scenery. The vistas continue for another seven miles when the river again enters broader farm land. There are not many rapids in the Trough and only the occasional glimpse of railroad tracks on the left remind the paddler that he is not travelling down the river with George Washington's surveying party. The long, flat pools of the Trough are reminiscent of Canadian lakes. The bass fishing along the 24 mile stretch between the towns of Moorefield and Romney is known all over the eastern United States and is fantastic.

For the rest of the 34 miles from Romney to its junction with the

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ARNOUT HYDE JR.

Canoers whisk through magnificent scenery in the Trough of South Branch of Potomac River.

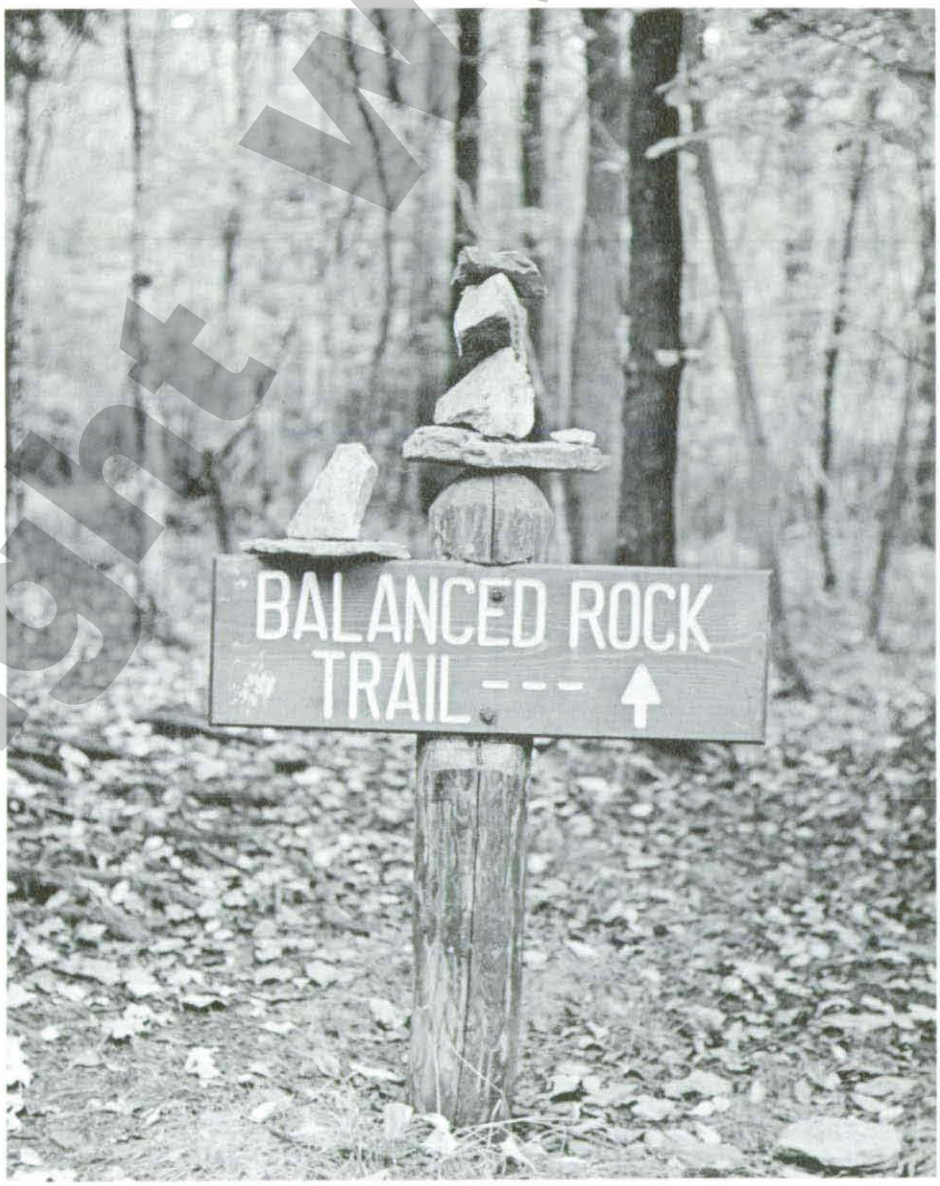
North Branch, the river meanders peacefully with only occasional riffles. The highways are usually near enough so that the trip can be broken up into smaller segments. Campsites, both in the Trough and downstream, are usually found, but be sure to obtain permission if you are on or near farm land. Excellent tourist accommodations may be found at Franklin, Petersburg, Moorefield and Romney. In the same general area, one is in easy driving distance to the historic Shenandoah Valley—Harper's Ferry area of West Virginia and to the new Spruce Knob—Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area.

The upper part of the South Branch can only be run in the spring, but below Petersburg the river volume is such that it can be floated most of the year. The South Branch Valley, as the case with much of the east, has suffered several summers of extreme dryness. At times such as these, the canoeing is poor, so it is wise to check river levels first before entering the river or you might end up taking a hike pulling your canoe through all of the shallow places. Call the weather bureau in Suitland, Maryland, Area 301-736-0444 and ask for River Services and the South Branch Potomac reading at Springfield, W. Va.

According to the dean of Potomac Basin canoeists, Randy Carter who devised the well known river marking system in this area, deduct 2 feet from the Springfield reading if you want to run any of the river above Petersburg and 1.6 feet for the river below this point. A final value of "0" is the lowest possible canoeing level and even at this level there will be a lot of scraping. A final value of 1 to 2 feet above Petersburg or 2 to 4 feet below it is considered ideal. The river becomes mean and dangerous if its level is over these figures.

Conservationists have been fighting the U.S. Corps of Engineers for years over a proposal to put in a dam above Petersburg. If allowed to do so, the Corp's plans would inundate the most impressive parts of the Smokehole country. As the megalopolis of the eastern seaboard grows, there is more pressure from its citizens. Being so close to the Washington, D.C.—Baltimore area, West Virginians feel the pressure from these people seeking such recreation. Downstream from the confluence of the North and South Branches, deterioration of the river banks and water quality has already begun. Fortunately, there is a bill, H.R. 11943, in Congress that seeks to establish the Potomac as the Nation's River by setting up methods to preserve the natural heritage, the historic values, water quality, fish and wildlife, and natural beauty of this great river. The South Branch would be a part of this heritage.

Although it is realized the majority of the USCA membership is located in the central part of the U.S.A., many of them travel in or take vacations in South Branch country. As perhaps one of the few USCA members from West Virginia, I extend an invitation to all my fellow members to dip their paddles in this great river whenever travelling through our area, Bob Burrell, 1412 Western Ave., Morgantown, West Virginia 26505.



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Popular Plum Orchard Lake in Fayette County—200 acres of good fishing.

Leonard Lee Rue

Fence runner—6 1/2 foot pilot blacksnake.

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Dawn subtly awakens big Bluestone Lake in Summers County.

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ROMP AMONGST THE RAMPS

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RICHARD M. STALVEY, Managing Editor

THERE'S A SPOT high on a West Virginia mountain where, say the local folk, "If you was to pour the drippin's from a mess 'o ramps on the ground, they'd flavor seven different rivers—including the Ohio, James, and Potomac—all the way to the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic." We're not certain about the hydrography implied in this claim, but it must be true, considering the way the flavor and odor of a ramp permeates every cell of the body and every fiber of the clothing of one who eats it. This granddaddy of the leek, the onion, and the garlic bulb surely is the mightiest edible to spring from the earth.

It was nothing less than morbid fascination that persuaded me to accept the invitation of a physician friend to make a spring pilgrimage into the West Virginia mountains and participate in the Sixth Annual Ramp Romp. This was to be a gathering of men who spend a weekend competing with each other to find the most ramps in the forest, devise the most unusual recipes for them, and eat the most ramps within 48 hours. It's no place for a man weak of mind and gastrointestinal tract.

I had been invited to the Ramp Romp by George B. Green, a delightful, puckish, and engaging physician who lives in a Virginia suburb of Washington, D. C. Dr. Green is a determined man. He makes the ramp pilgrimage each spring.

The written invitation I received

Ramps. "Good for what ails you," say rampsters.

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should have alerted me to the nature of the challenge that lay ahead. Ramps, it explained, "are a reassuring harbinger of spring, a tonic to mind and body. They're an ideal way to set one's self apart from the common herd, the ideal way to stand out in a crowd. All this and they're vitamin C rich, too. This succulent delicacy is packed with rejuvenating properties providing the punch necessary for the preservation of the human polecat species."

Responding to the dare, I accepted Dr. Green's invitation. After all, I reasoned, this retired Air Force medical officer had once served as an attache at our embassy in Paris. Surely, after his tour of duty in that city of gastronomic delights, I could rely on his sophisticated palate.

I picked him up just at daybreak one beautiful morning and we headed to the mountains and the nutritional rites of spring. Our destination was a wildlife preserve in the middle of the Monongahela National Forest, some 200 miles west of Washington. There, at a place called Shot Cherry Cabin on Spruce Knob—the highest point in West Virginia—we would join a hearty band of ramp fanciers whose annual, insatiable craving for ramps had long since overcome their olfactory and gustatory early warning systems.

As we drove through the gently rolling Virginia countryside and crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains into the Valley of the Shenandoah, Dr. Green—known among ramp fanciers as the official Ramp Physician—patiently prepared me for what lay ahead.

For those who require technical explanations, he told me, the ramp is officially *Allium tricoccum*. Native to the United States, it abounds above 3,000 feet in the rich mountain woodlands that stretch from New Brunswick to North Carolina. They say the most luscious sprouts are to be found in West Virginia, especially beneath the canopy of northern hardwoods in the Monongahela National Forest, situated along the state's eastern boundary. That's where we were headed, into the heart of Ramp Country.

Harry Gordon's Mountain Boys serenade ramp rompers.

The small, highly odiferous plant gets its name from its foreign relatives. It is a cousin of the wild leek that is cultivated in Europe, where it is highly prized for gourmet cooking. Our name for the vegetable probably comes from the euphonious French word for their version of the wild leek: *rampion*. Green and his friends are very possessive about the superiority of their West Virginia variety and claim it is the most lively bulb of them all.

I was surprised to learn that the ramp also includes among its family members the lily. West Virginians know this, Green said, but they are quick to point out that while the ramp may be a member of the same botanical family as the lily, "folks what eat 'em ain't." To prove this, he added, the pungency of a man's breath after he has eaten a ramp is such that schools in mountain districts have been known to close for several days during ramp season. Area residents explain, "There ain't no schoolhouse airish enough to hold more'n one ramp eater."

We were soon winding up the Appalachian Range on the single-lane road that ends at Spruce

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Knob. I was preoccupied, wrestling with the road and the uncertainties of this weekend, wondering what I had let myself in for. Dr. Green sat silently staring out the car window. We'd driven in silence for nearly half an hour when he yelled, "Stop! Stop right here!" I hadn't been going more than twenty-five miles an hour, so by the time he had yelled a second time and the car had nearly come to a standstill, Green had opened the door, jumped out and with a leap gazellish, cleared the ditch and was off, up the side of the embankment. I didn't know whether he was chasing a woodland nymph or the Holy Grail, but as quickly as I could pull myself together, I followed. I saw him leaning over, intently examining a cluster of tiny green shoots. "Ramps!" he exclaimed in triumph. Close up, they were barely visible poking through the rich soil. How he spotted them from our moving car, I'll never know. Such is the perception of the born naturalist.

Dr. Green was in ecstasy. Nature was on schedule and the ramps were coming up. "Ramps," he said, beginning a woodland soliloquy, "combine the best and worst features of garlic and onions simultaneously, and yet they have a taste peculiar unto themselves. I know this seems to be contradictory, and it is. Nevertheless, and this is the mystery of the ramp, what I have said will be vouched for by every ramp eater." This kind of lost me but I listened, more fascinated by the change that had come over the doctor since his discovery of the first ramp of spring than by what he was saying. He invited me to kneel and sniff the blossom. I did.

"Furthermore, while the odor is not objectionable, as you have just learned, the plant apparently undergoes some inexplicable chemical reaction with the human digestive juices and this greatly magnifies its effect upon both the eater and, for a period of time that can extend to days and even weeks, the non-consumer as well. It is the most assertive food known to man," he said, with an air that made me think he wished me to accept that as an understatement. "In short," concluded Dr. Green, pointing to the innocent, fragile flower, "when it comes to describing ramps, it's difficult to exaggerate."

Soon we arrived at Shot Cherry Cabin, where the ramp festival was to take place. I never really learned where the cabin got its name, but it seemed to fit. The four-room central building and outbuildings serve as government headquarters for Harry Gordon, who, when not searching for ramps, is Game and Wildlife Manager for that area. He and Ephe Olliver, former Forest Supervisor, were hosts for our Ramp Romp.

No sooner had we exchanged greetings with the other participants than I was ushered onto the back porch of the cabin. There, piled high on a table, serving as the center of discussion and attention, was a "messaramps." My moment of truth and baptism had come.

Dr. Green wasted little time in introducing me to the star of this nutritional weekend. Spreading a little butter on a piece of bread, he cut several ramps into thin slices, carefully placed them on the bread, and handed me the open sandwich.

Conversation around the table slowed and then stopped. All eyes were directed toward me. Like the pubescent boy in a jungle ritual, I was the novitiate; my elders wanted to see if I could take it. I bit into the sandwich, chewed, swallowed, took another bite. A powerful taste filled my mouth. My nostrils felt as if they were filled with a fog of pungent gas. The sensation penetrated my head, and made me want to sneeze. I controlled that impulse and unsuccessfully fought back the tears that threatened to roll down my cheeks. My stomach had not yet protested but I was certain it was only a matter of time before it, too, would react to this test of gastronomic manhood.

Striving to remain as casual as possible, I finished the sandwich, carefully wiped my hands on a napkin, and smiled wanly. The men hadn't said a word. Then, vanity and conceit took charge of my judgment. I asked Dr. Green if I might have another ramp sandwich.

Another moment of silence, then an explosion of laughter, handshakes, and slaps on the back followed my request. I had passed the test. I was accepted into the fraternity. I am now officially a Ramp Romper.

It was not yet noon when Green decided to enliven the festivities with servings of his Pickapeppa canapes. Pickapeppa is his favorite sauce. It is a fiery Jamaican cousin to tabasco. He mixes it liberally with cream cheese and chopped ramps.

Ted Fearnow, a retired U. S. Forest Service official, the founder of the Romp, had not been idle either. He made a delicious ramp salad that we had to savor and comment upon appropriately. The salad was seasoned with a special ramp dressing sent along to the stag affair by his wife. Additional appetizers included cornpone with ramps, beans with ramps—and always, uncooked ramps munched alone, washed down with generous drafts of cooling spring water or other beverages native to the West Virginia hills, all surprisingly bland by comparison to the ramps themselves.

Lunch was mountain bouillabaisse—a steaming pot of fresh chopped ramps, potatoes, other vegetables, and meat that had been bubbling all morning. The main feature of dinner that evening was charcoal-broiled steaks topped with (naturally) ramps, accompanied by still another ramp salad.

After the evening meal, we were entertained by "Harry Gordon And His Mountain Boys." This somewhat informal orchestra had to compete with voices relating many a tall, tall story about ramps and the people who eat them. One fellow quoted the advice offered him by a ramp-wise physician who cautioned him to harvest the plant only in early spring "before the stems get tough and the flowers strong enough to separate the nerve ganglia from one's eyeballs."

Ephe Olliver said the effects of

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the ramp on a person have led to a West Virginia law which permits a teacher to dismiss from class any student who comes to school after eating ramps. This law, Ephe continued, gives rise to the saying, "A West Virginia boy can do anything, even be President of the United States, cep'n go to school after eatin' ramps."

Bill Blizzard, a reporter for the Charleston, West Virginia *Gazette—Mail,* insisted that he had paused on his way to our feast to ask directions of a farmer. The farmer nodded when asked if he knew the location of Shot Cherry Cabin. "It's where they eat them ramps every spring," the man replied, "and they been eatin' 'em already." Pointing at several buzzards tracing lazy circles in the sky, the native told Bill, "Them buzzards are about to fly over to the next valley, and Shot Cherry Cabin is on their way. Just look under the place where they make a big detour in the sky. That's where you'll find the ramp feast."

In the midst of this storytelling, I wondered aloud whether ramps might have any medicinal significance. An authoritative reply came from Dr. James McClung, a veteran Ramp Romper who heads a medical clinic in Richwood, West Virginia. "Yes, I guess you could say so. I treat an awful lot of patients each spring after they eat ramps," Dr. McClung continued, "I am sure these invigorating leeks have an uplifting psychological, if not physiological, effect on the mountain people of West Virginia, where eating ramps has been a tradition for generations. Ramps contain an abundance of natural vitamin C. The theory is that in the days before refrigerated foods came to the hills, ramps were the first fresh green edibles the local people could lay their hands on in early spring. After a harsh winter's confinement, they viewed ramps as a welcome spring tonic. Ramps are highly nutritious and ward off scurvy for which the stage is certainly set by a winter's diet devoid of vegetables or fruit."

Whole families still trek up the mountains to "dig them some ramps," and they still call each harvesting a "ramp festival." Some mountaineers who know where to look dig down through the snow to get the shoots. Explains one, "Most folks hereabouts feel they ain't shed winter 'til they've ate a messaramps." Local residents can indulge themselves at the many ramp feeds held all over the mountain country. They even select a Ramps Queen each year.

On the second morning of our stay, Dr. Green demonstrated his genius with the ramp. He was up early and with considerable culinary artistry turned out the tastiest omelette I have ever eaten. After a final lunch of ramp soup and ramp salad, we thanked our hosts of the Forest Service, carried a generous supply of ramps to the car and began the pleasant drive home.

When we arrived in Arlington, Mrs. Green greeted us in the driveway, laundry bag in hand for George's tainted clothes. After he had changed in the toolshed, nothing would have it but that I must have a look at his own private ramp patch. He planted the first bulbs several years ago and enough matured to enable him to hold a ramp romp right there in the suburbs last spring. The party wasn't a great success. His neighbors complained of noxious vapors. His guests were shunned by their friends for days. The Society Editor of the *Washington Post* was moved to observe that the event proved all the odors emanating in the Nation's Capital don't arise from political oratory.

W. VA. RAMP FEEDS

Originator and granddaddy of ramp feeds is the annual one scheduled at Richwood April 11, 1970 from 12-noon to 6:00 p.m. at Richwood Grade School, adults $2.50, children $1.50. The menu includes ham, sausage, beans, potatoes, corn pone, sassafras tea and other mouth-watering goodies. It is sponsored by the National Ramp Association.

Frankford's Ruritan Club is sponsoring a feed at Frankford Elementary School on Saturday, April 23 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. with a similar menu. Over 1,000 attended this one last year.

Lonestome Polecat Rampage is scheduled at Spruce Knob April 2 thru 6, but is limited to members only.

Ramp feeds are held at a dozen other towns, but schedules have not been given us, either because rampsters want to keep it all for themselves or the final date will depend on weather and availability of ramps. These include Maysel Grade School, Camp Splinter on the Cranberry River, Fenwick, Nettie, Leivasy, Gassaway-Sutton, Poca, Summersville, Zela, Helvetia, Naoma and Glenville. Readers game enough to try ramps for the first time may want to check local sources at these towns for exact schedules.

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When the jack rabbit shifts into high gear, it can travel at speeds up to 45 mph., and make 20-foot jumps.

———o———

To keep coils of monofilament line or leader material from becoming entangled, wrap them with pipe cleaners. In an emergency the cleaners can also serve as wooly worm flies.

Succulent bulb is ramp eater's delight.

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Cavers and "best friend" prepare to enter Schoolhouse Cave near Harper Gap, Rt. 9 in Pendleton County.

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'DOWN UNDER' WEST VIRGINIA

FRANK J. O'HARA, III

"DOWN UNDER" West Virginia's mountains is a mysterious and dark netherworld which hides many secrets of splendor, beauty and history. Few have ever seen them for they are revealed only when explorers' dim lamps penetrate the dark underground recesses of West Virginia's caves.

The state has over 1,000 caves which have been explored, more than 500 in Greenbrier County alone. Yet a caver on a weekend trip may still thrill to discover a new cave, or a new passage in a known cave which has never before been seen by man.

Conditions for the formation of West Virginia's caves were established when ancient seas laid down their sedimentary deposits of Mississippian limestone some 350,000,000 years ago.

A great uplifting force known as the Appalachian Revolution set the stage. This uplifting of the mountains caused fractures to develop in the limestones. The fractures were slowly enlarged over a great period of time by minute amounts of acids in ground water seeping through and dissolving the limestone. Over thousands of years, vast and labyrinthine tunnels were carved forming the caves as we know them today.

The relatively few sandstone caves here, usually little more than shallow rock shelters, were formed by a similar process with ground-water acids dissolving calcite which cements the sandstone grains together and carrying both away leaving the recesses.

Fragile, Translucent Draperies of Stone

These geological processes still continue with some caves still developing and existing ones increasing in size though the process is incredibly slow. Dainty stalactites hanging from the ceilings, or stalagmites jutting up from cave floors only a few inches long are still slowly increasing in size and may have taken a thousand years to attain their present length. A tiny drop of water carrying dissolved calcium carbonate creeps to the tip of the stalactite, slowly evaporates in the dank air and leaves its infinitely tiny burden of the mineral, so small as to be immeasurable.

Other caves are deteriorating by collapsing as sink holes or are becoming filled with debris.

First visitors to the caves, perhaps millions of years ago, were prehistoric animals. Thomas Jefferson reported a fossilized sloth, no longer native to North America today, found in Organ Cave. Other evidence, often only a fragment such as a tooth, has been found indicating the presence of prehistoric grizzly bears, porcupines and armadillos plus extinct relatives of the horse, mammoths and cave bears. Many important paleontological finds are still being made today in our caves.

FIRST HUMAN VISITORS to these caves were Prehistoric Indians. Among the best evidences of their presence were found in Indian Cave in Harrison County. Relics they left include the usual stone or bone tools, pottery fragments and flint chips, but unique are the pictographs or cave-wall drawings of turtles, rattlesnakes, birds, fishes and even a hand print.

We can boast that young George Washington visited and explored our underground caverns in 1748 while he was here making a survey for Lord Fairfax. His signature can still be seen in a cave named after him near Charles Town in Jefferson County.

THE CIVIL WAR was probably responsible for the most activity that has taken place in underground West Virginia. Our caves were a valuable source of saltpeter, an essential ingredient for the production of gunpowder. Evidence, including one all-wooden shovel, indicates some

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working of this source long before the war. When war was declared, both the South and the North came to depend on these supplies, making control of this territory all the more urgent. The source was more critical to the South because of the naval blockade, cutting off their supplies from overseas.

There are many relics of that war left in West Virginia's caves. The artifacts remaining today include hand-hewn wooden troughs, wood hoppers used to leach out the precious mineral from ancient deposits of bat guano, bridges for easy movement through the caves and even ladders to reach the upper and lower levels. Other remains include piles of the saltpeter-bearing earth just as it was dumped after processing, plus tracks of donkeys and the carts they pulled to haul the mineral from the caves.

Some of the more notable saltpeter caves are Greenville and Haynes Caves in Monroe County, and Organ Cave in Greenbrier County which still has many of the wooden vats for visitors to see.

These saltpeter works are now a part of our West Virginia heritage and must be preserved. The dampness of cave air has caused many of the wood relics to decay, however the mattock marks in the deposits appear today as fresh as the day they were made over a century ago. Visitors should use caution not to touch, remove or destroy this evidence of West Virginia's Civil War history.

DURING PROHIBITION DAYS of the '30s, frequent use was made of our caves to hide moonshine stills from "revenooers," agents of the Internal Revenue Service sent to stop the illegal production and sale of non-tax-paid "likker." If approached properly, an old timer in that business can unwind some exciting tales of the "good ol' days" playing hide 'n' seek to outwit the agents.

Today, down under West Virginia, new light is brought to this strange underworld wilderness. Caving is a popular recreational activity. Cavers or spelunkers are busy exploring, mapping, studying, researching and enjoying the state's natural cave wonders.

Within the state there are three commercial caverns open to the public with guided tours, improved access plus artificial lighting to make the trip through easy for everyone. These are Senaca Caverns near Riverton, Pendleton County; Smokehole Caverns near Cabins, Grant County; and Organ Cave off U. S. Route 219 near Ronceverte, Greenbrier County. A new cave just opened this spring is The Lost World near Lewisburg.

Anyone wanting to explore West Virginia's underground should follow a few basic and sensible rules:

- Never cave alone. A party of four is best. If you have never caved before, it is wise to include someone in the party who has.
- Always let someone remaining outside of the cave know where you are going and your expected time of return.
- Caving is strenuous. Know your capabilities, strength and endurance.
- Always carry three sources of light: a carbide lamp plus plenty of carbide and water, a flashlight with good batteries, and a candle with waterproof matches. Candy bars for quick energy are a good idea, too.
- Caves are usually on private property. Always ask permission to enter, follow the landowner's wishes and be courteous.

A new caver may wonder what clothing and equipment is best suited to meet rugged caving conditions. Most cave temperatures here range around 52° F. The usual attire includes tennis shoes or boots, warm socks, blue jeans and a sweat shirt. Equipment should include a hard hat with a bracket to mount a carbide lamp. Ropes, pitons and other mountain-climbing gear may be required for the more rugged and ambitious caverns later on.

Caves were good hiding places for corn likker stills.

More information concerning cave locations, descriptions and their geology can be obtained from the book "Caverns of West Virginia" by William E. Davies, Volume 19, from the West Virginia Geological Survey, P. O. Box 879, Morgantown, W. Va. 26505. The price is $4 postpaid, plus 12¢ Sales Tax from West Virginia residents.

West Virginia's underground wilderness must be preserved so that future generations may enjoy these same experiences and moments of thrill we enjoy today in the delicate cave formations, strange creatures which inhabit them and evidence of history and pre-history.

If each visitor to a cave took just one little souvenir, even a fallen stalactite, there would soon be nothing left for subsequent visitors to see. Knocking down cave formations which took centuries to build could only be termed vandalism.

A good rule to follow for conservation of our caves is, "Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints."

ANOTHER 'DOWN UNDER'

Editor

I have read each article of your magazine with much enthusiasm. I would like to add, if I may, your magazine presents informative and relaxed reading. I'd like especially to compliment Arnout Hyde, Jr. for his taste and first-class photography.

W. E. Umlauff
North Sydney, Australia

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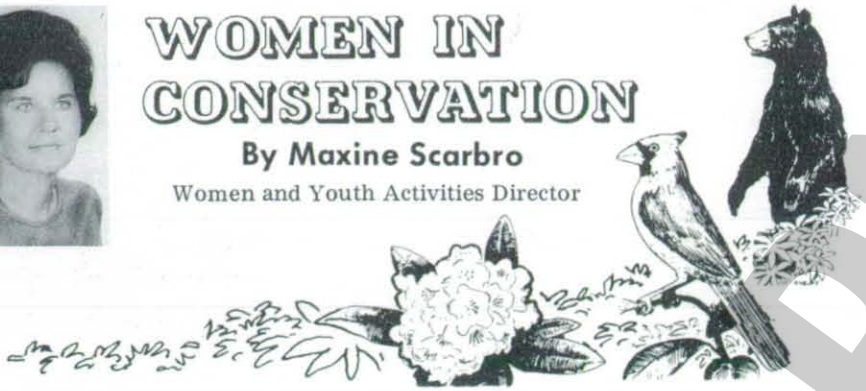
Arnout Hyde Jr.

Hardy County gently ushers in spring.

WOMEN IN CONSERVATION

By Maxine Scarbro

Women and Youth Activities Director



HAWKS NEST NATURE TOUR

Director Ira S. Latimer Jr. invites you to attend the first nature tour of the majestic New River Gorge area, April 24-26. This will be one of the most exciting and interesting outings offered by the Department of Natural Resources.

A hiking trip into the New River Gorge will be offered to participants. You will leave from the lodge, trek down the one-half mile trail, stopping to investigate flowering plants along the way. When you reach the river the tour will wander along the bank and return to the lodge by the aerial tramway. William Grafton, W. V. U. Extension Forester will lead the tour.

A motorcade, led by Osbra Eye of the Department of Natural Resources, will visit the Fayette Station area via Graydon, Lansing, Fayette Station, Fayetteville, Chimney Corner and back to the lodge. The Fayette Station Road offers some rare species for the wildflower enthusiasts. Many species of plants reach their northernmost limit in the New River Gorge area.

A tour will visit a strip mine area on Rich Creek to explore for fossils. We hope to have a display of fossils and relics taken from this site. Robert Combs and Tom Arkle will direct this tour.

As this will be the migration period we are very likely to see many species of warblers, as well as the winter residents. Mrs. Anne Shreve of the Handlan Chapter—Brooks Bird Club, who will lead the birdwalk, advises that the New River Gorge area is a common nesting area for the parula warbler and the yellow throated warbler.

Friday evening, Osbra Eye will present a slide program of spring wildflowers. Mr. Tom Arkle of W. V. U. will speak briefly on the geological background of the Hawks Nest area.

Director Ira S. Latimer Jr. will address the group on Saturday night. Noted historian and outstanding West Virginian, the Reverend Shirley Donnelly will outline history of the New River area Saturday night.

Sunday morning will begin with a guided tour of the Hawks Nest Museum, containing articles from the early pioneer days and a visit to the famous Hawks Nest Overlook. The tour will be led by Superintendent James M. Jennings.

Cost of the weekend is $12, which includes registration, Saturday breakfast, Saturday lunch, Saturday Banquet, and Sunday breakfast. All other meals and overnight accommodations will be your responsibility. If you wish to attend the outing events (with no meals) the fee is $2 per person, students $1.

Please make your reservations at the lodge soon, and be sure to indicate that you will be attending the Hawks Nest Spring Nature Tour. Send reservation blank to Mrs. Maxine Scarbro, Administrative Assistant in Charge of Women's and Youth Activities, Department of Natural Resources, State Capitol, Charleston, W. Va.-25305, not later than Monday, April 20.

HAWKS NEST SPRING NATURE TOUR
April 24-26, 1970

Name_____ No. in Party_____

Address_____

Entire Weekend_____ $12 Weekend Activities (no meals)_____ $2

Hawks Nest Lodge.

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Ira S. Latimer Jr.

NATION FINALLY AWAKENED TO POLLUTION

An alarmed citizenry, sickened by decades of pollution—desecration of its water, air and land, has generated a genuine get-tough policy among federal and state pollution control agencies. The crackdown is on.

Lake Erie, Hudson River, and West Virginia's Poca River—where a source of drinking water was fouled—are going to receive positive progress in water quality. The awakening and impetus are at hand.

The Federal Water Pollution Control Act, enacted in 1965, really put teeth in impotent water pollution laws and snapped some lethargic state agencies into action. Now all states have water pollution control standards approved by the Department of Interior. Implementation, however, is the hard and costly road ahead. A nation's survival demands it along with the clean-up of the air we breathe and life-sustaining water.

A recent issue of National Wildlife magazine, in a provocative article, had a "Polluters' Line-Up:"

- The politician who permits pollution to be legal.
- The farmer whose land drains off chemicals and silt.
- The industrialist whose plant discharges waste.
- The apathetic citizen who is not willing to pay for clean water.
- The alderman whose city discharges untreated sewage.

DNR's Water Resources Division—with a relatively small staff and doing a good job—issues realistic Water Pollution Control Permits to industries and other agencies, but these are not licenses to pollute state waters. At the same time, these permits are revoked for unsatisfactory compliance or applications denied at the outset.

It should not be overlooked that corporate conscience of industry and municipal responsibility have voluntarily helped improve the water quality of many of West Virginia streams. The heavily-used Kanawha and Ohio Rivers by industry are showing a heartening improvement in water quality. Qualified men in your Department of Natural Resources tell me anglers are catching bass, catfish and other panfish within the shadow of the State Capitol on the Kanawha, as well as the Ohio River. With optimism, our fishery biologists are stocking the Ohio and Kanawha Rivers with striped bass. Should these great salt-water gamefish, which have notably prospered in South Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, and other states, take to these rivers, it would be rejoicing news to anglers.

Please, though, and this is where any citizen can help: don't litter streambanks and rivers. After all, they belong to you, too.

—IRA S. LATIMER JR.

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Arnout Hyde Jr.

Winter chills falls at Greenland Gap in Grant County.

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Arnout Hyde Jr.

Marsh-marigolds timidly welcome spring in Pendleton County.

From: The Department of Natural Resources, Charleston, West Virginia 25305
Return Requested