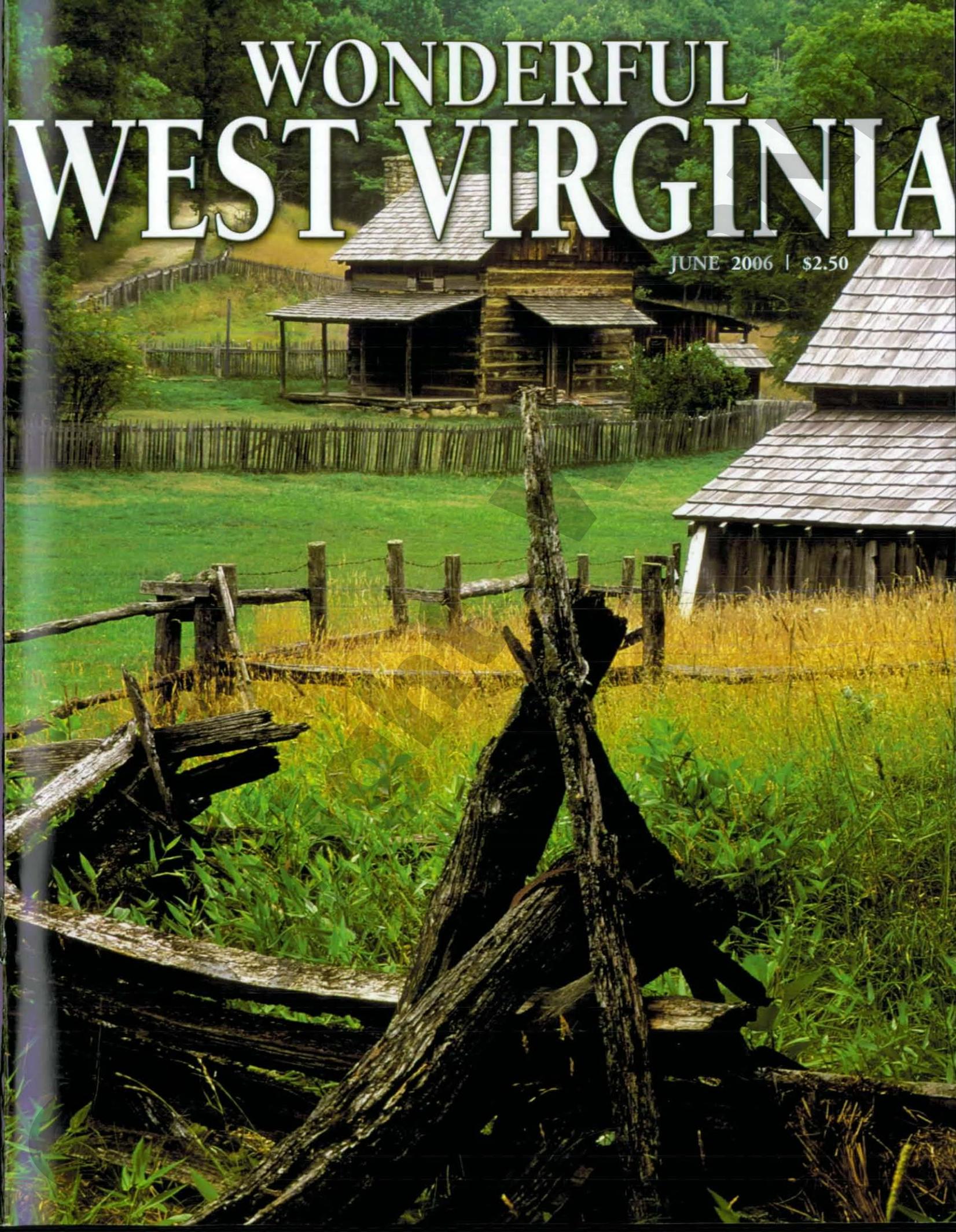


# WONDERFUL WEST VIRGINIA

JUNE 2006 | \$2.50



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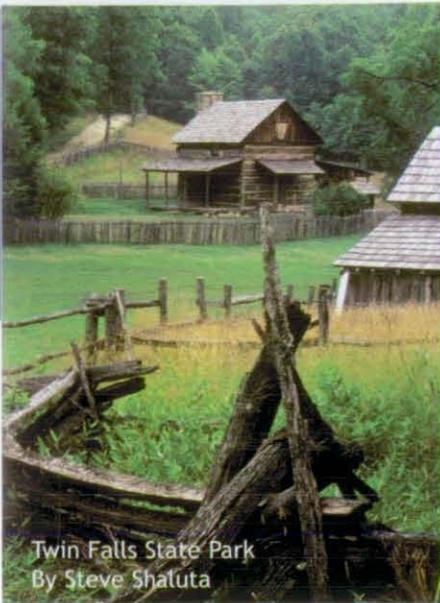
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# WONDERFUL WEST VIRGINIA

JUNE 2006 Volume 70, Number 6



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By Steve Shaluta



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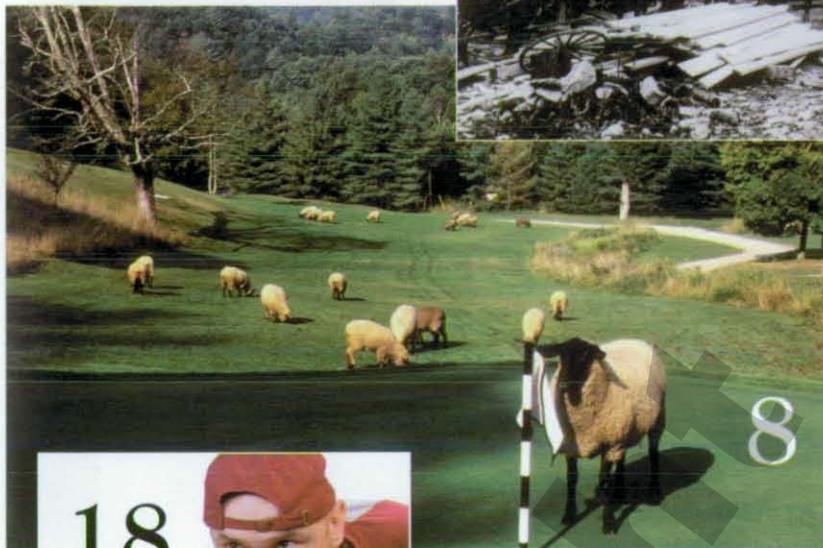
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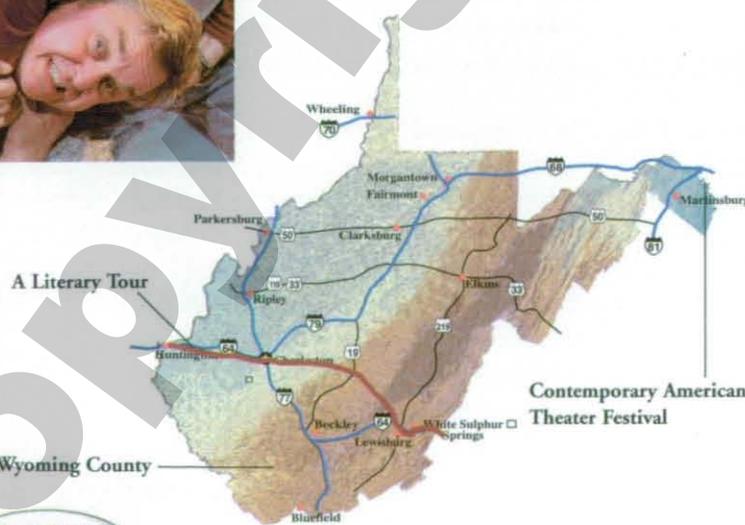
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# A GUIDE TO WYOMING COUNTY

By Mary Catherine Brooks

**C**radled in the southern tip of West Virginia, Wyoming County is rich in both history and natural beauty. Rushing brooks; mighty mountains; and wild, wooded areas make up its rugged topography, with small communities and three diminutive municipalities—Mullens, Oceana, and Pineville—dotting the landscape. Named for a Native American word meaning “large plain,” Wyoming County was created from Logan County in 1850.

Much of the county's history is tied to once-abundant natural resource. At the turn of the last century, King Coal dominated the land and ruled how and where most of its inhabitants worked and lived. Despite the eventual demise of coal as the county's chief industry, the region is still a showcase of earlier coal company heydays. Remains of coal tipples, miners' camps, and old mines now draw tourists.

Coal history buffs can visit the vestiges of once-bustling coal camps at Kopperston, Glen Rogers, Itmann, and Coal Mountain, among others. Some of the camps' historic buildings have even been pressed into modern service. In Itmann, for example, a three-story, cut-stone edifice, constructed in the mid-1920s and used as a company store and offices, now serves as a homeless shelter.

The county also boasts an extensive railroading history. The Caboose Museum, located in Virginian Railway Company Caboose 307 in Mullens, houses a collection of railroad memorabilia gathered from local residents. In addition, murals depicting local history adorn several city buildings in Mullens.

Historic land has also been transformed near Oceana, where the Clearfork Valley Golf Club occupies 120 acres of gently rolling land once roamed by Native Americans and early White settlers. The land was eventually

farmed as the McDonald Plantation in the 1800s, but Union forces burned the ill-fated plantation to the ground during the Civil War. Today, Clearfork Valley's 18-hole golf course is open to the public and draws players from all over West Virginia as well as from Virginia, Ohio, and Kentucky. In addition to its beautiful setting, the course's clubhouse is quickly gaining a reputation for serving tasty, old-fashioned cheeseburgers.

The Wyoming county seat, Pineville, is home to both manmade and natural historic markers. The county courthouse, built in 1916, and the adjoining jail, constructed in 1929, are on the National Register of Historic Places. Built of native stone by Italian stonemasons, the courthouse has been recently renovated to its original elegance. Chandeliers once again illuminate the lobby, and the restored trim on the lobby ceiling reflects the workmanship and attention to architectural detail of the building's first craftsmen.

The property surrounding the courthouse features a statue of Rev. W. H. Cook, a soldier, statesman, and minister who was one of the area's first European settlers, and monuments honoring area veterans, including Kenny Shadrick, a native son

who was the first casualty of the Korean War.

Pineville is also home to Castle Rock, a 165-foot sandstone cliff that towers over the mouth of Rockcastle Creek. Native Americans, scouts, and early settlers used the impressive formation as a natural landmark.

According to many historians, the town of Pineville stands at what was once the convergence of seven Native American trails. In the late 1890s, the town bore the name of its most defining natural characteristic—Castle Rock—but its post office went by the moniker Pineville. (Former resident John W. Cline is credited with naming the post office in honor of a nearby forest of pine trees.) In 1907, the town officially adopted the name Pineville.

Though most of the region's recorded history chronicles the past few centuries, traces of its ancient history survive in Wyoming County. *Petroglyphs*, or rock carvings, on rock outcrops south of Oceana, have fascinated archaeologists, scholars, and the public. Some experts claim that the carvings were done in the sixth, seventh, or eighth centuries AD, while others estimate that they were created much later, in the 1300s to

Along with coal, timber was once a booming industry in Wyoming County. This 1929 photograph shows a logging team with their horses at Otsego, as well as the town's sawmill and part of the lumber yard.

Photo courtesy of Mike Goode



1500s. A subject of fierce disagreement in the 1980s, the origin and meaning of the petroglyphs remain up for debate. Some researchers—including the late Dr. Barry Fell, an often-controversial former Harvard professor—hypothesized that the markings are from an ancient Celtic alphabet called *ogham*. Fell thought that the markings on one of the petroglyphs spell out a Christmas message carved by Irish missionaries, whose arrival in the New World predated Christopher Columbus by several centuries. Others think that a sunburst glyph located on the left side of one of the wall carvings depicts a supernova that is known to have lit up the night sky sometime during the eleventh century. Still other observers have dismissed the carvings as the result of early natives sharpening stone implements.

to the trail system already established through Logan, Boone, and Mingo counties.

Twin Falls Resort State Park, off WV 97 near Pineville, combines unspoiled scenic beauty with a variety of accommodations ranging from plush to rustic. Visitors can enjoy the comfort of the park's 20-room lodge, opt for the serenity of a secluded cabin, or set up camp in one of 50 campsites.

One of Twin Falls' most popular assets is its thriving deer population, which roams the park's 4,000 wooded acres. In the evening, visitors line the park's roadsides to watch the animals from their cars. Another draw is the Pioneer Farm, a restored homestead on Bowers Ridge. The living history farm appears much like area farms



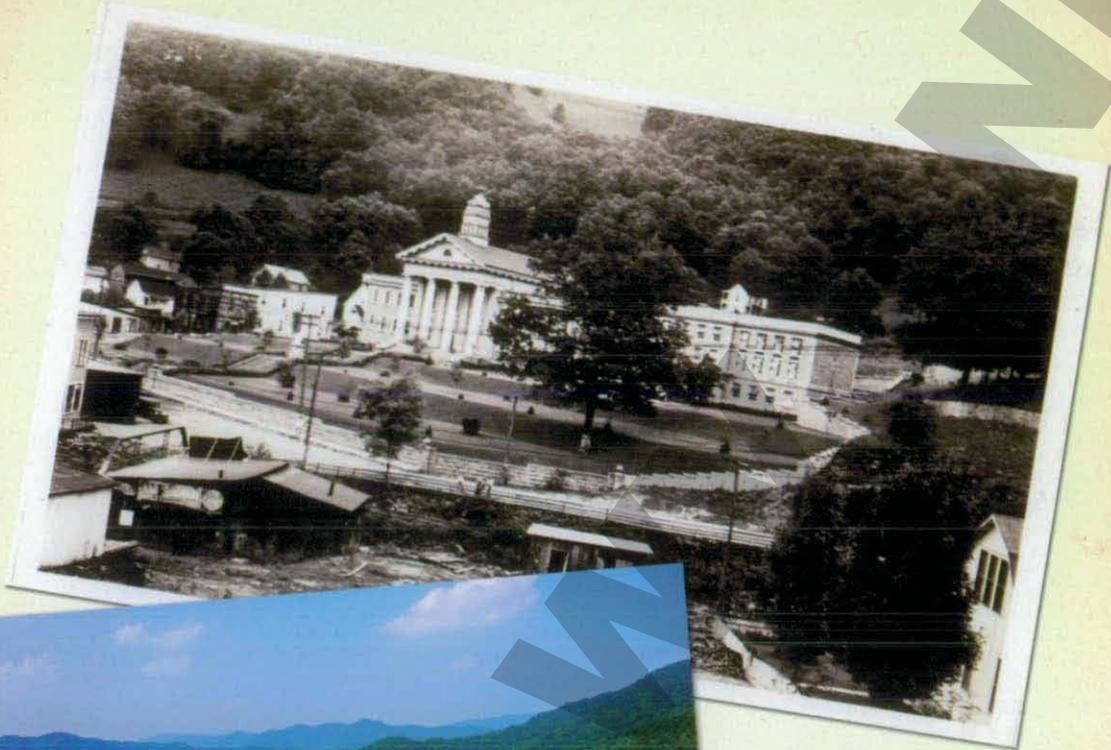
Two men clear land in Pineville in the late 1920s or early 1930s.

Photograph courtesy of Mike Goode

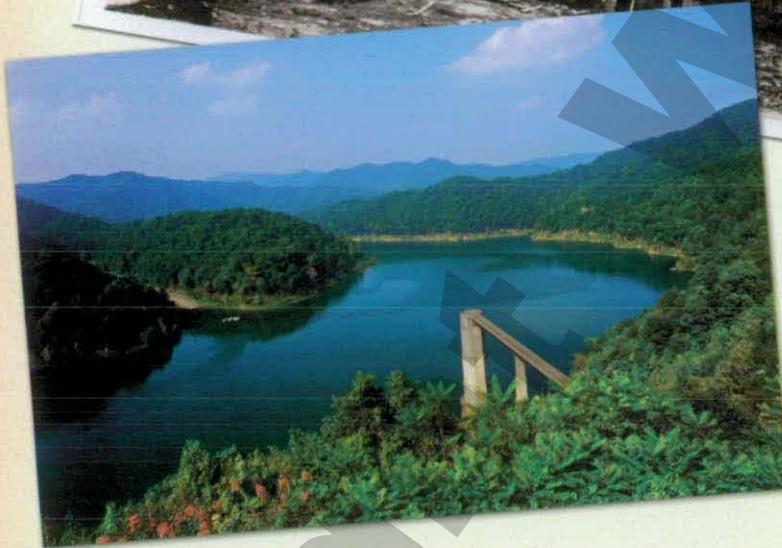
In addition to its historic landmarks, Wyoming County offers plenty of modern-day, outdoor fun. The newest recreational attraction is the Hatfield-McCoy Trails' Castle Rock Trailhead in the Pinnacle Creek area near Pineville. The trail is open from sunrise to sunset to those riding ATVs, dirtbikes, horses, and mountain bikes, as well as to hikers (user permits are available at the trailhead). The Wyoming County loop of the Hatfield-McCoy Trails added nearly 120 miles

would have looked in the 1830s and provides a glimpse into the lives of the pioneers who settled the Twin Falls area. Additionally, the park features an 18-hole golf course, driving range, swimming pool, museum, year-round nature programs, and trails.

At the other end of the county, near Hanover, lies R. D. Bailey Lake, which boasts 17 miles of shoreline and excellent fishing. Open to boaters year-round, the lake is home to largemouth bass, hybrid striped bass, walleye, tiger muskie, catfish, crappie, bluegill, and panfish. While two record-



(Above) The Wyoming County Courthouse in Pineville was built in 1916. Photo courtesy of Mike Goode



(Left) R. D. Bailey Lake  
Steve Shaluta

size bass have been caught in the lake, the area is fast becoming known throughout the country for the trophy bucks that inhabit the surrounding forest. Seasonal picnic facilities, boat rentals at the local marina, and a 168-site campground that stretches along six miles of the Guyandotte River are also available.

Built by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers as part of a flood control project for the Guyandotte River, R. D. Bailey Dam features an unusual, random rockfill design that has drawn visitors from as far away as China. Most dams have a clay core, but R. D. Bailey's is a carefully designed mound of closely compacted rock. The dam is also the first concrete-faced dam built by the Corps.

Constructed in 1974, the dam includes 5.7 million cubic yards of rock, 6.4 million pounds of steel, and 240,000 bags of cement. Tourists can get a bird's-eye-view of the structure from the visitor's center, which sits 365 feet above the lake. The center also has exhibits and photos of the dam project and its flood control mission.

From fascinating history to outdoor fun, Wyoming County is one of West Virginia's wonderful out-of-the-way gems. 🍄

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*Mary Catherine Brooks has been Beckley Newspapers' Wyoming County Bureau Chief since 1989.*

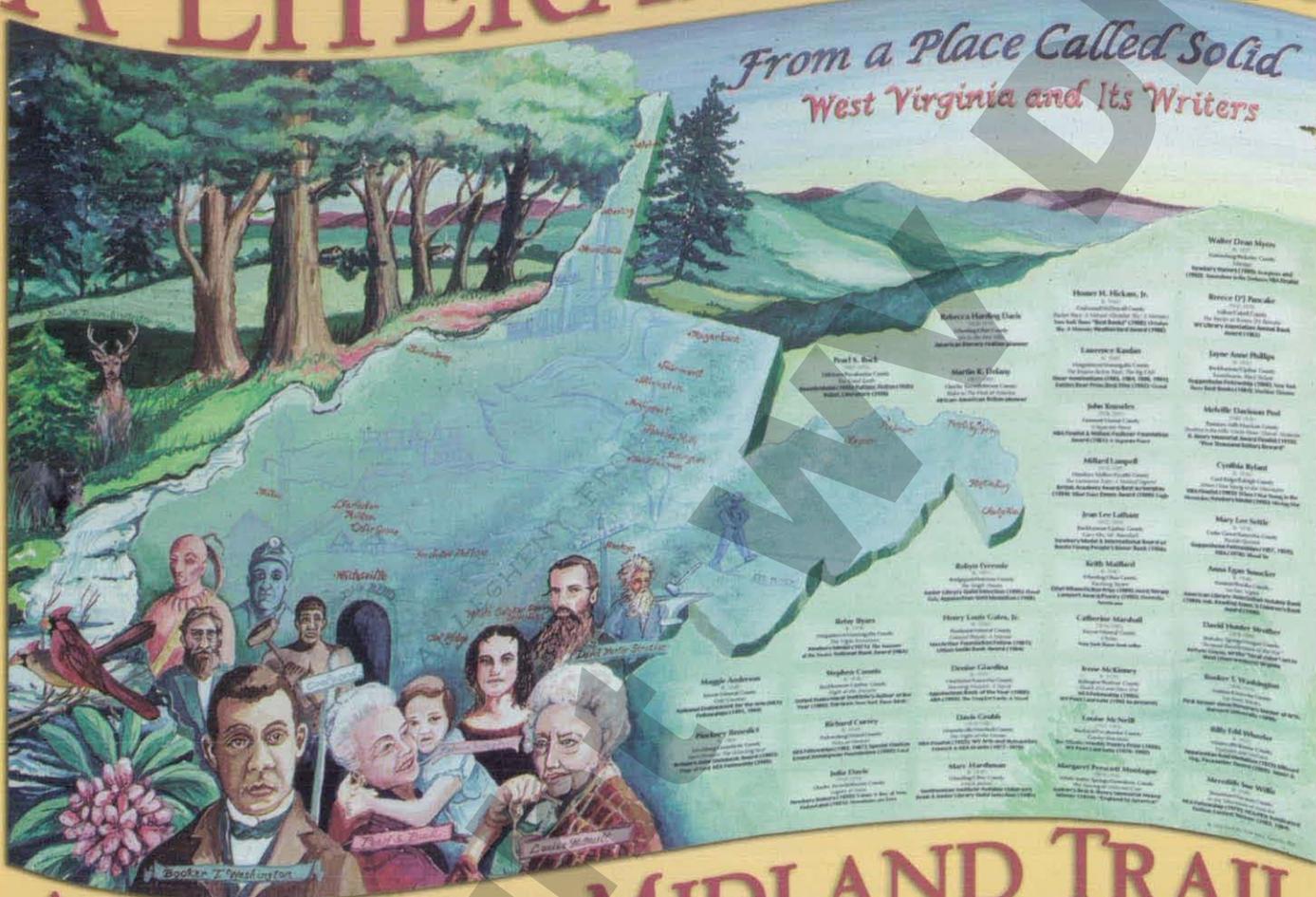


The living history Pioneer Farm at Twin Falls State Park in Wyoming County  
David Fattaleh



# A LITERARY TOUR

*From a Place Called Solid  
West Virginia and Its Writers*



## ALONG THE MIDLAND TRAIL

As I stood in front of the green-steepled African Zion Baptist Church, the first African American Baptist church established in western Virginia and the wedding place of famed African American educator Booker T. Washington, the sounds of bustling traffic began to fade. The contemporary world fell away as I considered the significance of the church and the town of Malden, where Washington, a former slave, first learned to read. Washington became one of the most influential Black men of his time, founding the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. In 1901, he wrote *Up From Slavery*, detailing his firm belief in self-reliance born of hard work.

Landmarks of great historic and literary import such as

Malden and the African Zion church are not rare in West Virginia. Indeed, with a roadmap and the new Literary Map of West Virginia, roving readers can visit many places that molded well-known state authors and see for themselves the settings described in their stories, novels, and poems.

Published in 2004 and sponsored by the West Virginia Folk Life Center at Fairmont State University, in collaboration with the West Virginia Library Commission, the West Virginia Center for the Book, the Library of Congress, and the West Virginia Humanities Council, the Literary Map of West Virginia lists 175 authors who wrote between 1863 and 2003. Their genres include chil-

Soon after we got settled in some manner in our new cabin in West Virginia, I induced my mother to get hold of a book for me. How or where she got it I do not know, but in some way she procured an old copy of Webster's 'blue-back' spelling-book, which contained the alphabet ... I had learned from somebody that the way to begin to read was to learn the alphabet, so I tried in all the ways I could think of to learn it ... At that time there was not a single member of my race anywhere near us who could read and I was too timid to approach any of the white people. In some way, within a few weeks, I mastered the greater portion of the alphabet.

—Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*

dren's and young adult literature, drama, fiction, memoir, poetry, and screenwriting.

Though the map offers opportunities for literary discovery across the Mountain State, one particularly delightful journey lies along the scenic and historic Midland Trail. Winding along Route 60, it ends at the home of one of the most successful female authors in West Virginia history.

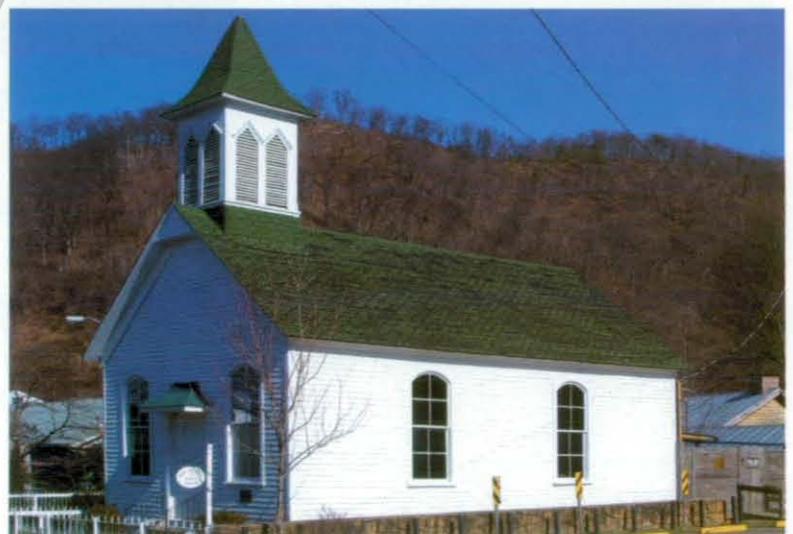
Beginning in Huntington, at Midland Trail Mile 10, literary adventurers step back in time to 1929, when a fledgling journalist named Tom Kromer took an undercover assignment as a panhandler. "By touching an occasional passerby for a 'nickel for a cup of coffee,' he can make at least five thousand dollars a year by merely sauntering up and down Fourth Avenue between Ninth and Tenth streets," Kromer wrote in an article published in the *Huntington Herald-Dispatch*.

Kromer's own life took an unfortunate and ironic turn when he was forced to drop out of Marshall College due to lack of funds. He hoboed his way to Kansas, hoping for farm work, but found that combines had taken over the work of the harvest. "I got my first taste of going three days without food," Kromer wrote in a short autobiography. He returned home to Huntington but found no employment, so he traveled on to New York and then to



The Booker T. Washington memorial in Charleston

(Right) The African Zion Baptist Church in Malden was attended by famous African American educator and author Booker T. Washington.  
Steve Shaluta



Washington, D.C., where he was imprisoned briefly for sleeping in an empty building. From his experiences on the road he wrote *Waiting for Nothing*, a searing novel about the misery of the Great Depression. Here is his vivid description of the harrowing experience of trying to jump a train at night:

*We crawl on our hands and knees and ease up towards the yards. It is so dark you can hardly see your hand in front of you. I crouch here in the dark and wait. Farther up the track I can see these other stiff crouching beside the tracks. They are only a shadow through the dark. I hope I can make it, but I am plenty nervous. It is too dark to see the steps on the cars. I will have to feel for them. I pick me out an even place to run in. I look close to see that there are no switches to trip me up. If a guy was to trip over something when he was running after this drag, it would be just too bad. That guy would not have to worry about any more drags. These engines bellow past us. I can see now that I have waited in the cold for nothing.*

A walking tour of Kromer's old haunts should include a stop outside the historic Keith Albee Theater, built in 1928, just a year before Kromer wrote of his experiences undercover on the streets. His book, and those of many other West Virginia authors, can be purchased at the Marshall University bookstore.

Moving to Mile 29 on the Midland Trail, readers discover the town of Milton, perhaps best known as the home of Blenko Glass. But this small community is also the hometown of Breece D'J Pancake, another former Marshall University student and a tragic figure in West Virginia's literary history. In 1977, Pancake's writing career was off to a promising start with the publication of his story "Trilobites" in *The Atlantic Monthly*. At the time, he was a graduate student at the University of Virginia. Pancake even adopted as his legal name the magazine's punctuation error—an apostrophe instead of periods between the initials of his middle names. Only two years later, at the age of 26, he died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Prompted by the title of his *Atlantic Monthly* story, many visitors to his burial site leave sea shells, says Phyllis Wilson Moore, the project director for *A Literary Map of West Virginia* and one of the state's foremost literary historians. Moore suggests that visitors ask for directions to the cemetery from the staff at the Milton Branch Library



Marshall University and the historic Keith Albee Theater in Huntington are two literary tour stops in the territory of Great Depression author Tom Kromer.

(1140 Smith Street, 304-743-6711), which maintains a lighted memorial case for Pancake.

Driving on to Charleston, literary seekers may feel the way Summer, the young narrator of *Missing May*, did upon approaching the gilded West Virginia State Capitol. Here is that excerpt from the award-winning, young-adult novel by former Raleigh Countian Cynthia Rylant:

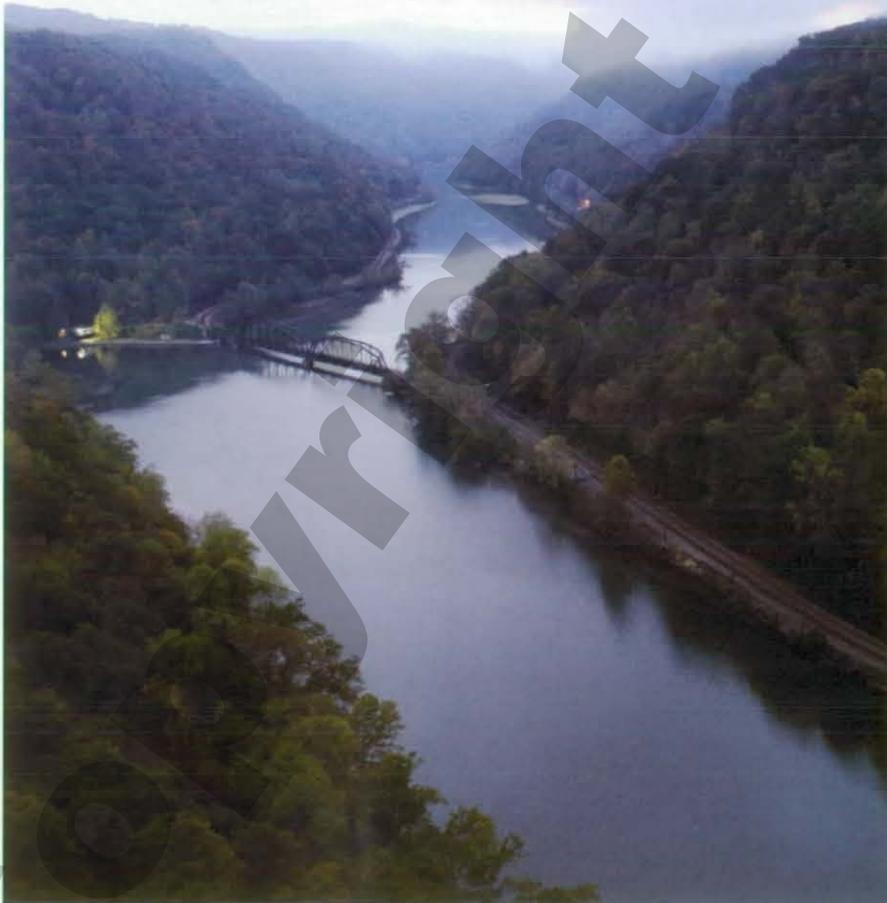
*The capitol building sprawled gray concrete like a regal queen spreading out her petticoats, and its giant dome glittered*

pure gold in the morning sun. I felt in me an embarrassing sense of pride that she was ours. That we weren't just shut-down old coal mines and people on welfare like the rest of the country wanted to believe we were. We were this majestic, elegant thing sitting solid, sparkling in the light.

Just beyond Charleston, at Midland Trail Mile 65, is Malden, where Booker T. Washington labored, as a child, in a salt furnace. The African Zion Baptist Church, now on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as a nearby replica of Washington's boyhood cabin, usually aren't open to the public, but tours can be arranged by calling West Virginia State University at (304) 766-3020.

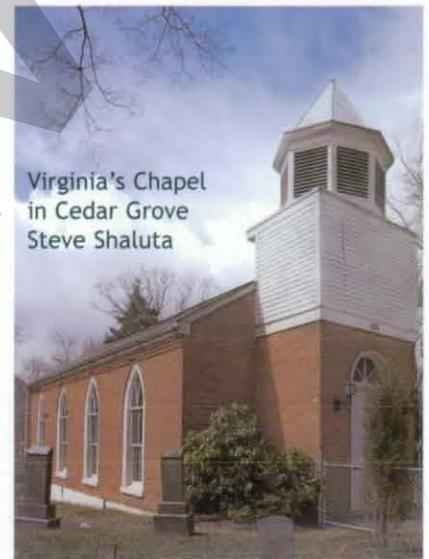
Just 15 miles further down Route 60 lies Cedar Grove,

Hubert Skidmore used the town of Gauley Bridge as the setting for *Hawk's Nest*, his 1941 novel about the tragic deaths from silicosis of hundreds of men who worked in the Hawks Nest Tunnel. Today, the area boasts Hawks Nest State Park, where visitors can enjoy a meal and stunning canyon vistas from the lodge's windowed dining room.



the oldest settlement in the Kanawha Valley. *The Official Destination Guide for The Midland Trail National Scenic Byway* notes that salt industrialist and Cedar Grove resident William Tompkins was the first American to use natural gas for industrial purposes. The town was named for the Tompkins home place. In addition, Tompkins built Virginia's Chapel, also known as the "Little Brick Church," in 1853 as a graduation gift for his daughter.

What the destination guide does not reveal is that Tompkins was also the great-grandfather of Mary Lee Settle, one of West Virginia's most distinguished authors, who died in 2005. Settle and her family lived for a time in



Virginia's Chapel  
in Cedar Grove  
Steve Shaluta

Cedar Grove with her grandparents, Henry Preston and Addie Tompkins, both of whom are portrayed vividly in Settle's *Addie: A Memoir*.

"Mary Lee Settle considered Cedar Grove a haven," says Moore, adding that Settle found comfort in the company of her grandmother, Addie, and her many aunts, uncles, and cousins. For information about tours of Virginia's Chapel, call (304) 595-2280. For a copy of the Midland Trail destination guide, call (866) ROUTE 60.

About 30 minutes further along the Midland Trail readers encounter Gauley Mountain. Hubert Skidmore used the town of Gauley Bridge as the setting for *Hawk's Nest*, his 1941 novel about the tragic deaths from

silicosis of hundreds of men who worked in the Hawks Nest Tunnel. Writer Denise Giardina, who is widely acclaimed for her coalfield novels *Storming Heaven* and *The Unquiet Earth*, also referenced the tragedy in her historical novel *Saints and Villains*. Today, the area boasts Hawks Nest State Park, where visitors can enjoy a meal and stunning canyon vistas from the lodge's windowed dining room.

At Midland Trail Mile 107, literary scouts will find authors featured at The African American Heritage Family Tree Museum. Poet and playwright Norman Jordan, who is listed on the literary map, and his wife, Dr. Brucella Jordan, a historian, founded the museum in 1991. Author exhibits feature Booker T. Washington and Anne Spencer, a Harlem Renaissance poet and activist who spent part of her childhood in Bramwell, West Virginia, and taught school nearby for a period during her adulthood. The museum, which also offers a significant exhibit on coal mining heritage, is open Thursday through Saturday, from Memorial Day to Labor Day, by appointment. For more information, call (304) 658-5526 or (731) 660-5304, or e-mail [normanjordan@msn.com](mailto:normanjordan@msn.com).

Continuing along the Midland Trail, readers come upon the Mystery Hole, an offbeat tourist attraction featured in *Fallom's Secret*, a novel of fantasy history by Giardina, and the beautiful Canyon Rim Visitor Center of the New River Gorge, which is also mentioned in the novel. (For more information about visiting the Mystery Hole, call (304) 658-9101 or visit [www.mysteryhole.com](http://www.mysteryhole.com). To plan a trip to the New River Gorge, call (304) 574-2115 or go to [www.nps.gov/neri/crvic.htm](http://www.nps.gov/neri/crvic.htm)).

Last on this literary journey is the home of one of West Virginia's most successful female authors, Margaret Prescott Montague. Born in 1878, Montague had five books made into movies. In addition, her byline appeared in popular national publications such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Reader's Digest*—an amazing accomplishment, considering that she was nearly blind and suffered from hearing loss.

Montague's celebrity in her day certainly seems in inverse proportion to her current obscurity. *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge*, a movie adaptation of her story by the same name, was lauded by President Woodrow Wilson as presenting the ideal of the League of Nations, according to a 1920 article in the *New York Times*.

"Of Water and the Spirit," published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, tells the fictional story of Sadie Smithson, a West Virginia seamstress who, in the early 1900s, goes abroad to try to earn membership in the Laurel Literary Society. She discovers a strength of character she didn't know she had when she finds herself the lone assistant on

a battlefield strewn with wounded men during World War I. When a doctor arrives the next day and challenges her credentials, she says, "I'm Miss Smithson—Sadie Virginia Smithson—an' I've been holdin' Hell back all night."

Another of Montague's stories, "England to America," which was also published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, was the first-prize winner in *Prize Stories 1919: The O. Henry Memorial Awards*, the first volume of the series.

Visitors can tour Montague's White Sulphur Springs home, which now serves as the clubhouse for Oakhurst Links, said to be the first golf course in America. Established in 1884, play at the links faded around 1910. The course reopened in 1994. Today, golf is played at Oakhurst Links with replica nineteenth-century, long-nose, hickory-shafted clubs and gutta-percha balls hit from sand tees. (The vintage-style equipment is included in the greens fee.) For the sake of authenticity, the fairways are manicured by sheep, a practice that explains this particular club rule: "If ball lands in sheep castings, you are allowed a free drop." To tour the author's stately home, or to play the course, call Oakhurst Links at (304) 536-1884.

The Midland Trail and other routes that cross West Virginia are rich in the tradition of storytelling. Indeed, writers have long been one of our state's most treasured resources. Those who visit their homes and the places that triggered their creative spirits will be stirred by the experience—perhaps the way Summer from *Missing May* was when she visited Charleston:

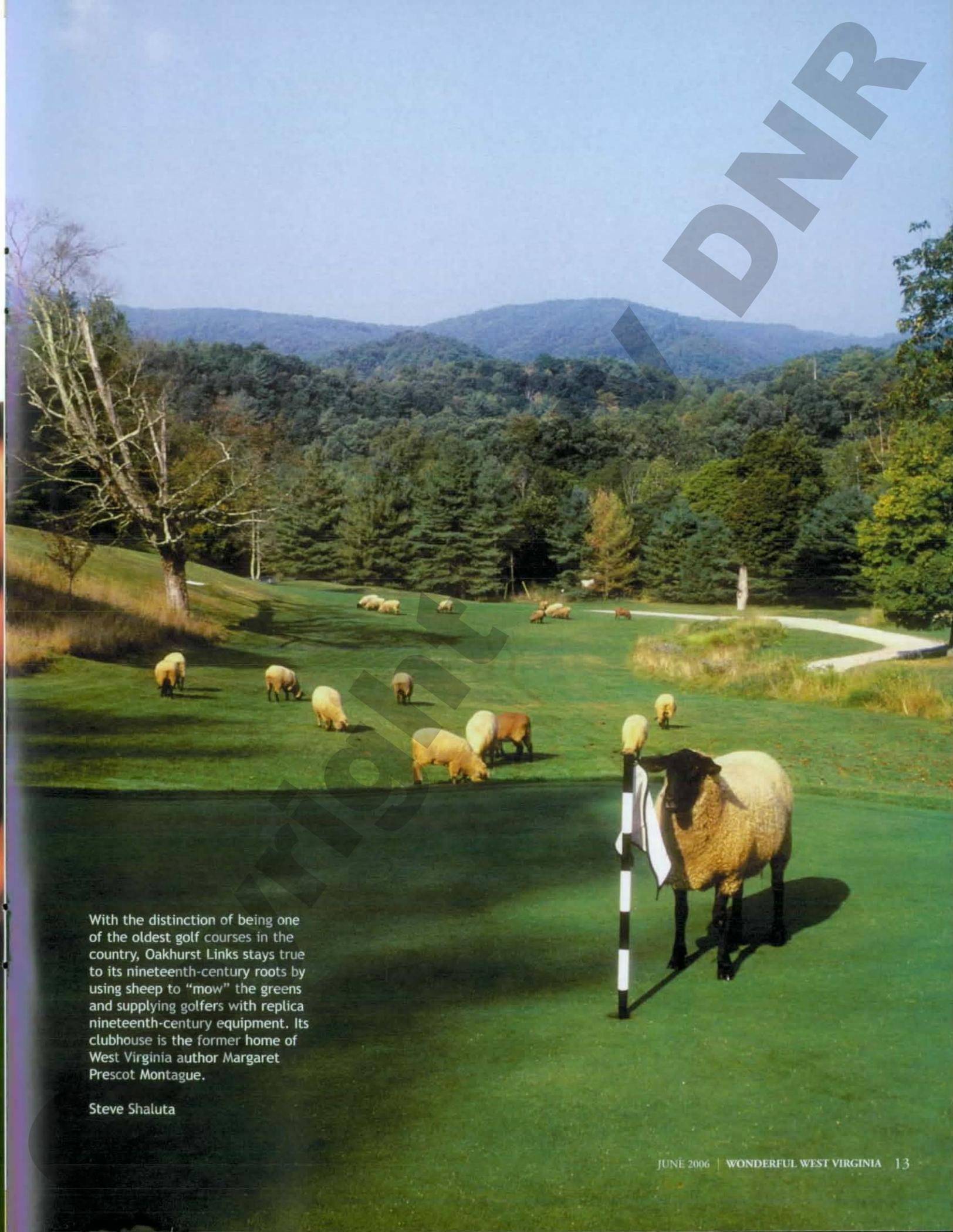
... He turned that buggy around ... Back toward that shining castle. My heart began to lift ... Ob said, "It's getting on to lunchtime. I figure the governor will be in the coffee shop, watching for somebody interesting to come through the door."

For more information about West Virginia authors, or to order the Literary Map of West Virginia (\$6), visit [www.fscwv.edu/wvfolklife/literary\\_map](http://www.fscwv.edu/wvfolklife/literary_map) or call (304) 367-4403 or (304) 367-4286. 🐾

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Belinda Anderson, who is also included on the Literary Map of West Virginia, is the author of *The Well Ain't Dry Yet* and *The Bingo Cheaters*, two short story collections published by Mountain State Press. Visit her Web site at [www.belindaanderson.com](http://www.belindaanderson.com).

Sources for this article include Phyllis Wilson Moore, Cathy Pleska, Senator Larry L. Rowe's *Walking Tour of Old Malden*, The Midland Trail Scenic Highway Association, and American Social History Productions, Inc.



With the distinction of being one of the oldest golf courses in the country, Oakhurst Links stays true to its nineteenth-century roots by using sheep to “mow” the greens and supplying golfers with replica nineteenth-century equipment. Its clubhouse is the former home of West Virginia author Margaret Prescott Montague.

Steve Shaluta

# A CUSTOM ALIVE IN THE HILLS OF WEST VIRGINIA

By Dr. Carol Ann Gillespie

**O**n Memorial Day, or Decoration Day, as many West Virginians still call it, my family participates in a Southern Appalachian custom that has been a part of rural life for generations. Called “eating on the grounds,” or “dinner on the grounds,” the tradition includes decorating and maintaining family graveyards and sharing a meal in the cemetery.

Eating on the grounds began in Southern Appalachia in small, isolated cemeteries, where families gathered annually to pay their respects to the deceased and to maintain the plots. They repaired markers, removed weeds and trash, and decorated graves. They then shared a graveside meal that ultimately served as a family reunion of sorts. Geographer D. Gregory Jeane refers to this practice as part of the *cult of piety*, an organized event that honors the memory of departed family members. Throughout the history of Southern Appalachia, examples of such activities include homecomings, cemetery workdays, and monument dedications.

According to Jeane, these gatherings originally occurred in late summer or early fall but later became more common on or around Memorial Day. The tradition, which long brought generations of extended families together, clearly reflects the close-knit family lifestyle still prevalent in rural West Virginia.

Eating on the grounds is linked to church homecomings, but there are differences. Church cemeteries are situated next to their houses of worship, and homecoming celebrations usually involve a preaching service followed by an outdoor dinner for the congregation. Many family cemeteries are not connected to a particular church, and family gatherings may not include a religious service or even the presence of a preacher.

I was raised in northern Pennsylvania and had never heard of having a picnic in a cemetery until I married my husband, Michael, who is from West Virginia. Eating on the grounds is an important occasion in his family, and we have spent the last 30 years attending these cherished get-togethers. I look forward to our Memorial Day reunions as an important time to connect with family and to share memories of those no longer with us. Even our three sons, who are now young adults in their twenties, plan their busy schedules around this traditional gathering of kinfolk.

When my husband was a child, his family would drive 70 miles of winding, two-lane country roads to spend Memorial Day at the Duffield family cemetery in the tiny, rural community of Duck in Clay County. He and his brother, Billy, would be “spit-shined,” dressed in their Sunday best, and charged to obey the order “Keep clean and don’t get grass-stained!” Of course, with their cousins Adrian and Charles Lee around that stern command was quickly forgotten, and running, wrestling, and childhood games ensued.

The grown-ups were equally well dressed, with the men in white shirts with rolled-up sleeves and dress trousers and the women clad in cotton print dresses and aprons. The women loaded picnic tables with sumptuous country fare, including chicken and homemade noodles, potato salad, meat loaf, fresh-baked bread, deviled eggs, and cheese and squash casserole. Fruit pies of all kinds, especially peach and apple, were served for dessert. The favorite family treat, though,

EATING ON THE GROUNDS

was moist apple cake. Before the advent of picnic tables in the cemetery, everyone spread blankets on the grass and literally dined on the ground.

The women in my husband's family cooked for nearly a week to feed the many relatives who gathered on Memorial Day, some of whom traveled great distances to be there. The local preacher would bless the food and everyone would eat, catch up on family news, and jokingly speculate about "who would be the next one up here on the hill." These days there is no preacher to conduct a service, but in earlier years, the Christian Advent preacher would deliver a message, which would be followed by one from the Mormon pastor.

The Duffield family cemetery is a good distance off the blacktop, up a steep, dirt road with sharp drop-offs and cliffs on one side and a deep ditch on the other. The resting place, which sits high on a hill surrounded by tree-covered mountains and lush, green valleys, is well worth the hair-raising drive to get there. To me, this small, hillside cemetery is one of the most beautiful places in the state.

Diane Duffield Nottingham, my husband's cousin, lives on a farm adjoining the cemetery, and her family has been involved with its maintenance for many years. Diane's father, Jack Duffield, renovated the cemetery in the 1950s by remarking many of the plots and leveling the traditionally mounded graves for easier mowing and upkeep. Nearby family members still maintain the graves with help from monetary donations from family living farther a field.

John McHenry Duffield, Diane's great-grandfather and my husband's great-great-grandfather, inherited the land on which the cemetery is situated from his wife, who was a Murphy. John Duffield's burial in 1872 was the first to take place in the cemetery. As is common in Southern Appalachian family cemeteries, the graves all face east. Even the youngest children are taught not to walk on the graves but to respectfully circle around them.

Today, we gather at the Duffield family cemetery and eat out of coolers. Our spread typically consists of fried chicken, sandwiches, pickles, potato salad, and cookies, and someone always brings a chocolate cake to celebrate Aunt Pauline's birthday. Since the picnic tables are long gone, we sit in folding lawn chairs. Though we wear

casual clothes, everything else is the same as it's been for more than a century. We swat flies, catch up on family news and community gossip, eat good food, and enjoy the company of family from as far away as South Carolina and Indiana. We also place new, silk floral arrangements on the graves and take photos.

After we have had a good visit with relatives both living and dead, we pack up and drive to the Westfall family cemetery in Braxton County. We cross a creek, nego-



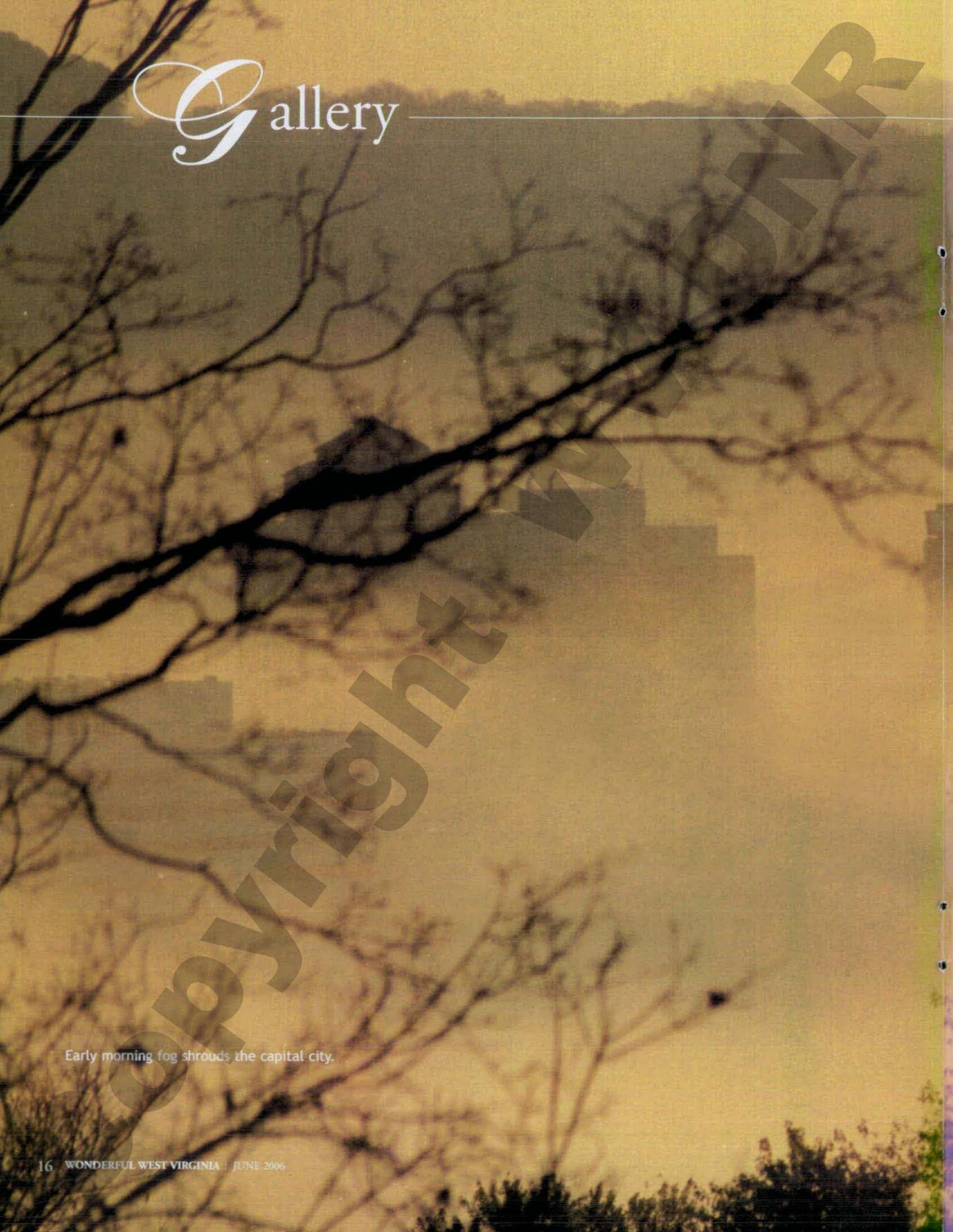
A West Virginia family "dines on the grounds" in the early 1900s  
Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives Carpenter Collection

tiate yet another steep, winding road, and arrive at our second family burial ground of the day. Surrounded by a forest, an air of neglect hangs over the old graves in this remote cemetery, yet it is a place we relish. We happily pay our respects to family members who have gone before us and give the graves a little TLC.

Some Appalachian scholars claim that the tradition of eating on the grounds has vanished and is no longer a part of the culture of rural West Virginia. I, however, respectfully disagree, having enjoyed many such celebrations with my husband's family. 🍷

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*Dr. Carol Ann Gillespie is a cultural geographer with an active interest in Southern Appalachian culture and folk customs. She and her husband, Michael, currently live in Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania, but return to West Virginia often and plan to retire here.*



Gallery

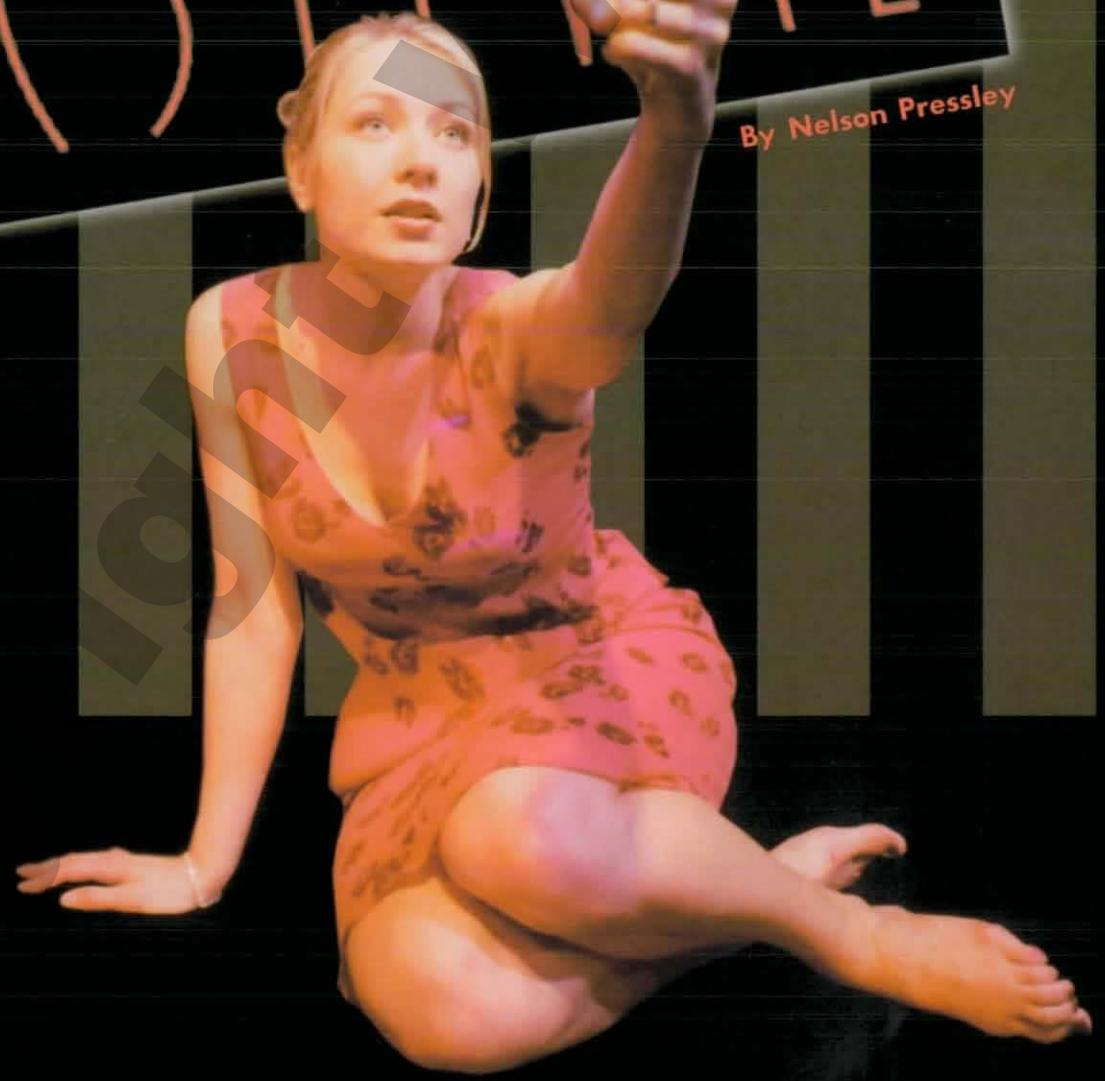
Early morning fog shrouds the capital city.

*By Charles Hawes*

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**CONTEMPORARY**  
**AMERICAN THEATER**  
**FESTIVAL**

By Nelson Pressley





**IT** is easy to think of modern theater premieres, with their risky scripts and edgy actors, as an urban thing, maybe even a Manhattan thing. But that isn't necessarily the case. For decades, the top venues for showcasing new American works have included the Actors Theatre of Louisville; the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center in Waterford, Connecticut; the annual summer festival in Williamstown, Massachusetts; and the Contemporary American Theater Festival (CATF) in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. That's right. Each July, CATF stages fully professional productions of four adventurous, new plays in Shepherdstown.

Perched on a bluff overlooking a bend in the Potomac River, Shepherdstown's main hub is 135-year-old Shepherd University, formerly Shepherd College, which enrolls just over 5,000 students. The town itself maintains a year-round population of roughly 800 people and, though quaint, isn't an obvious place to locate a professional theater festival.

But producing director Ed Herendeen wasn't planning to build a theater when he settled in Shepherdstown in 1990. It wasn't until then Shepherd College President Michael Riccards contacted him for advice that the seed of CATF was planted. Dr. Riccards had recently attended Williamstown's theater festival in the Berkshire Mountains. He had loved the rural setting and cultural vibrancy that came not just from the theater festival but also from nearby Tanglewood Music Center and the Jacob's Pillow Dance group. Hoping to establish a performing arts event in Shepherdstown, he invited Herendeen to consult about what sort of artistic enterprise might work with the college as its base.

Dr. Riccards first suggested a Shakespeare festival, but Herendeen warned against it. A world-class Shakespeare company, The Shakespeare Theatre, is based an hour away in Washington, D.C., and regularly headlines theater stars like Kelly McGillis and Avery Brooks.

Herendeen explained that the biggest gap in American theater was full-scale, professional productions of new plays. He also believed that Shepherdstown might be an excellent place to launch new works. While it is close to D.C. and within reasonable traveling distance of the professional theater hub in New York City, it is far enough away from the kind of big-city, critical scrutiny that can strangle new plays.

This summer, Herendeen and CATF will perform their

16th season July 7 through 30. The popular festival typically draws approximately 12,000 theatergoers during its three-week run and this year has a budget of about \$900,000.

During the festival, colorful CATF banners festoon Shepherdstown's three-block main street. Restaurants, from the upscale Yellow Brick Bank to the beer-centric Mecklenburg Inn, are abuzz with actors and out-of-town theater lovers. (So far, the festival has drawn visitors from 32 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom.) Industry insiders show up to check out the talent, and locals compare notes on productions and debate the issues raised by CATF's contemporary plays.

**Each July, CATF stages fully professional productions of four adventurous, new plays in Shepherdstown.**

In past years, plays have addressed such hotbed issues as race, in Lee Blessing's *Flag Day*, and patriotism, in Sam Shepard's *The God of Hell*, as well as abortion, immigration, and capital punishment. Herendeen notes that CATF audiences seem to have an appetite for serious themes, but not all of CATF's performances are heavy.

Last year's *Father Joy*, a play by Sheri Wilner about a young environmental artist whose father is literally turning to sand, kept the audience laughing. Indeed, no playwright has been produced in Shepherdstown more often than Richard Dresser. Dresser's sharp, dark sense of humor in plays like *Below the Belt* (a black comedy set in an industrial workplace) and *Rounding Third* (about two contrasting personalities coaching little league baseball) has made him an audience favorite. For a period in the 1990s, the festival even included late-night comedy performances in different spots around town.

As usual, the themes and styles of this year's four new plays will run the gamut. Dresser, a veteran stage writer whose nontheatrical works range from TV's *The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd* to last season's Broadway musical *Good Vibrations*, offers a tightly crafted comedy called

(Preceding page) Jennifer Mudge Tucker as Kari in Craig Wright's *The Pavilion*, which was staged at the 2001 Contemporary American Theater Festival. Ken Cobb

*Augusta*—his first installment in a proposed trilogy on happiness. Set in a vacation town on the coast of Maine, *Augusta* follows two cleaning women, one young and the other middle aged, as they negotiate the world of low wages and high demands.

Darker comedy is promised by up-and-coming writer Noah Haidle's *Mr. Marmalade*, which had a run earlier this year at the off-Broadway venue the Roundabout Theatre. The show looks at the lonely, bruising, fast-paced adult world as seen through the eyes of an unnervingly savvy four-year-old girl. Rounding out the season are Keith Glover's pulsing *Jazzland* and a quirky romantic comedy by Kim Merrill called *Sex, Death, and the Beach Baby*. Glover's play, fueled by a tabloid-style slaying and vivid be-bop language, sinks deep into the jazz wars (traditionalist versus pop compromiser) as father and son square off over love and music. Merrill's work involves a young

woman haunted by her adoptive father's drowning and by a debonair English soldier who isn't really there.

Much of the festival's energy comes from the sudden concentration of out-of-town talent in Shepherdstown. Actors and directors from D.C., Los Angeles, and New York City descend on the town in June. From the start of CATF, Herendeen has hired Equity performers (members of the professional actor's union), ensuring top-notch talent. CATF's rehearsal process kicks off each June with a huge company picnic. This upbeat social ritual (not to mention the outdoor pig roast and river tubing that wrap up the festival) no doubt contributes to what one playwright has amusingly dubbed "the cult of Ed"—the positive vibe generated by Herendeen's gregarious nature and tireless enthusiasm.

The festival's high energy also comes from its constantly rotating repertory schedule. CATF uses two stages on the Shepherd University campus: the 425-seat auditorium at the Frank Center and the smaller, 135-seat converted gymnasium known





In July, the usually quiet streets of Shepherdstown bustle with actors, directors, talent scouts, and theater fans from all over the country.  
Steve Shaluta



as the Studio Theater. Most of the actors are cast in two of the four plays, making for a busy rehearsal and performance schedule that occasionally requires them to perform both of their roles on the same day.

Of the roughly 60 plays produced at CATF over the years, 22 were world premieres, many of which went on to critical claim around the country. Three years ago no less than five former CATF shows were playing in New York City at the same time. Stephen Belber's *Tape* played in Shepherdstown before it hit cinemas in 2001 as a three-character movie starring Uma Thurman, Ethan Hawke, and Robert Sean Leonard. Craig Wright had festival hits with *Orange Flower Water* and *The Pavilion* just as his career took off as a writer for HBO's *Six Feet Under*. The 2004 film *Stage Beauty*, starring Billy Crudup and Clare Danes, began as a CATF commission called *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*.

In addition to CATF's stimulating theater, its Under the Tent lecture series, held in front of the Frank Center each Saturday afternoon between the matinee and evening performances, has become a staple of the festival. Playwrights, scholars, theater professionals, and other experts offer fascinating talks on everything from issues raised by the plays to current issues in theater.

For world-class theater close to home, don't miss this year's Contemporary American Theater Festival. For more information and tickets, visit the Web site: [www.catf.org](http://www.catf.org).

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*Nelson Pressley is the former chief drama critic for the Washington Post and the Washington Times and is still a regular contributor to the Washington Post. He now teaches theater and film at Shepherd University and assists with literary matters for CATF.*

(Preceding Page) From left to right: Andy Prosky and Lee Sellars in *Rounding Third* by Richard Dresser, photo by Ron Blunt; T. Ryder Smith in *Compleat Female Stage Beauty* by Jeffrey Hatcher, photo by Stan Barouh; Jason Field, Kevin Daniels, and Kwana Martinez in *Tape* by Stephen Belber, photo by Ken Cobb.

# Lost ... and Returned

## A Tale of Three Species

By David Kisamore

**W**hile a number of West Virginia's wildlife species lost their place in nature's scheme around the turn of the last century due to exploitation and habitat destruction, three have been returned successfully to their native territory. The beaver, the river otter, and the fisher were each extirpated, or nearly extirpated, from the Mountain State in the early 1900s; yet, through legislation and the dedicated efforts of state and federal wildlife agencies, these creatures thrive once again in our forests and waterways. Theirs is a story of human greed but also of passion—to correct the misdeeds of the past and to protect and conserve the integrity of our ecosystems.

### Prized for Its Pelt

As early as Colonial times, the beaver played an

important role in the lives of the natives and settlers of our state, which was then still part of Virginia. Beaver skins were traded between Native Americans and Europeans and even used by local tribes to pay "rent." According to the Treaty Between Virginia And The Indians of 1677, the "Indian Kings and Queens" were to pay rent in the amount of 20 beaver hides for the privilege of staying on the newly acquired land of the King of England. Later, in the late 1700s, Daniel Boone trapped beaver along the Kanawha and Gauley rivers.

Though a member of the rodent family, the beaver is nonetheless endearing to many people, perhaps because of its industrious nature. The largest rodent found in North America and Canada, the beaver can weigh as much as 80 pounds if it has a large enough food supply. Its average weight, however, is about 35 pounds. Beavers are about 41 to 46 inches long, with 10 to 16 inches of that



Beaver populations in West Virginia once suffered from overharvesting and acid mine drainage.  
Steve Shaluta

being a flat, wide tail. Five to six inches wide, the tail serves as both a rudder for swimming and a prop to help the beaver stand on its hind legs. Beavers also use their tails to slap the water to warn other beavers of danger.

These animals spend most of their time in the water. With their short legs and round, rocket-shaped bodies, they are a bit clumsy on land. They are not equipped for running or climbing but in the water, they are right at home. Webbed feet and a flat tail make beavers excellent swimmers. Transparent eyelids and nose and ear valves that close when they go under water allow beavers to stay submerged for three to four minutes at a time. In addition, beavers have a well-oiled, two-layer coat that provides the perfect insulation in icy waters.

Beavers have four incisors, or gnawing teeth. Each is about one inch long and grows throughout the beaver's entire life. By gnawing trees, beavers not only produce

the material for their dams but also maintain their teeth at an appropriate size.

In the early 1900s, an onslaught of commercial trapping, as well as water pollution due to acid mine run-off from unrestricted coal mining, led to the demise of the beaver in West Virginia. But West Virginia was not the only state to lose this admirable, native species. According to the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, by 1900, the 60 million beavers estimated to populate North America before European settlers arrived were reduced to roughly 100,000.

Fortunately, federal and state agencies joined together to address this tragedy, and, in 1937, the Wildlife Restoration Act, also known as the Pittman-Robertson Act, was legislated. The act imposed a 10 percent manufacturer's tax on hunting ammunition and firearms. Still in force today, Pittman-Robertson provides revenues that

# Lost ...

are distributed to state fish and wildlife agencies to be used exclusively for wildlife research, the purchase and improvement of wildlife habitat, and wildlife recovery.

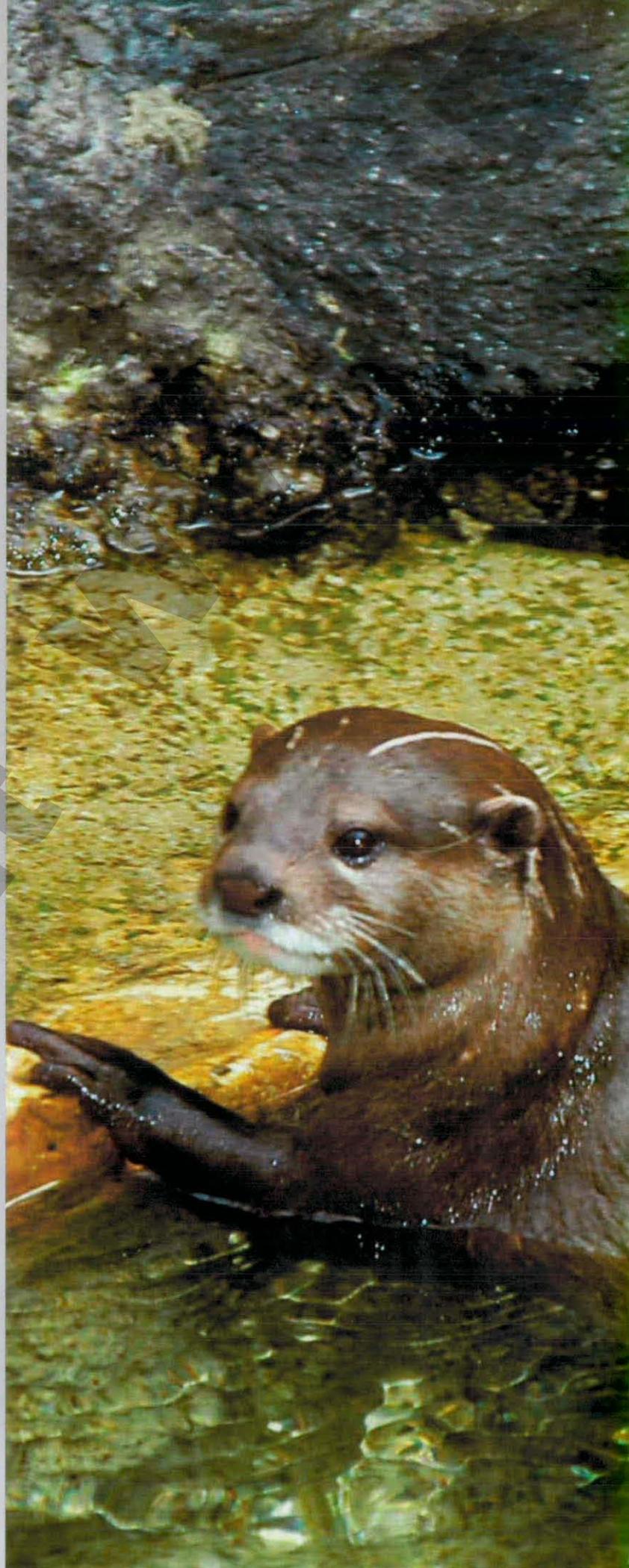
Early beaver recovery efforts were so successful that in the years that followed, increasing populations of this industrious animal began causing flooding as well as damage to irrigation ditches and fish ponds. These new problems and the resulting economic setbacks created the need to manage beaver populations through more liberal harvest regulations and relocation. Today, a healthy and growing beaver population lives in the streams and rivers of West Virginia, providing homes and drinking water for other species and playing an important role in various natural systems across the state.

## Clown of the Waterways

The river otter experienced almost the same fate as the beaver and for the same reasons: unregulated trapping and water pollution. According to Jim Evans, wildlife biologist and supervisor of Game Management Services for WVDNR, West Virginia was one of the last states from which the otter was extirpated. Evans notes in an article in the Spring 2005 issue of *West Virginia Wildlife* magazine that "a few river otters were found in the South Branch of the Potomac in Grant and Pendleton counties and Red Creek in Tucker County as late as the 1950s. Although the state legislature gave the river otter total protection in 1925, populations were too low for this colorful clown of the waterways to survive."

As early as the late 1500s, Native Americans hunted otters and other furbearers and traded them to Europeans for a variety of goods. Prized for their beauty and durability, otter pelts were much in demand in Europe at that time. Though the otter's native range stretched from northern Mexico to the Arctic Circle and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, Evans notes that by the early 1900s, the otter was absent from much of its range.

The river otter is the largest member of the weasel family found in West Virginia. Males, which are about a third larger than females, range in weight from 10 to 25 pounds and are anywhere from 35 to 60 inches long from head to tip of tail. The otter's long, cylinder-shaped body is perfect for swimming, gliding easily through the water with the aid of a long, stout tail and webbed feet.



The river otter is the largest member of the weasel family found in West Virginia.  
Steven Wayne Rotsch



The river otter's fur is dark to reddish brown on its back and light brown, tan, or silver on its belly and neck. Similar to the beaver, otters have a dense, oily undercoat of fur covered by glossy *guard hairs*. Its small, black eyes; small, round ears; long whiskers; and very conspicuous nose pad give the otter a mischievous look.

This impish creature is a carnivore, feeding mostly on crayfish, carp, and suckers, but it will readily eat frogs and muskrats. Otters will also occasionally eat game fish such as trout or bass. They have been known to sneak into local trout ponds for a bite to eat, but they primarily stick with slower fish that are easier to catch.

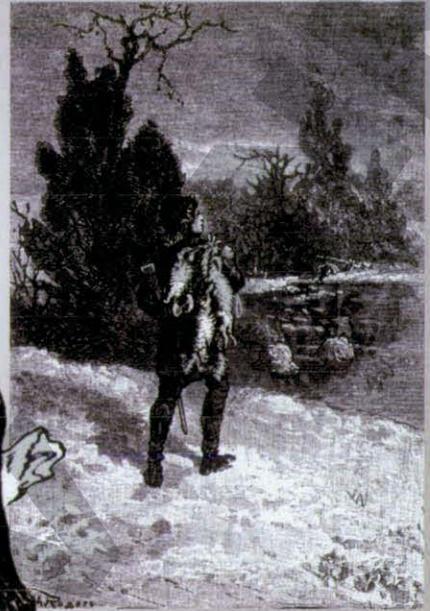
After the extirpation of the river otter, several state wildlife agencies began to explore the possibility of reintroducing it into its native habitats. According to Evans, West Virginia was one of the first states to reintroduce the river otter. "From 1984 to 1997, WVDNR reintroduced 245 otters into 14 major rivers in the state," he writes. Otters were obtained from Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Louisiana.

Ten years later, surveys suggest that otters in West Virginia are doing well. In fact, Evans says, there are several more waterways around the state where otter populations may eventually become established, including the Potomac, Monongahela, Ohio, Kanawha, and Big Sandy rivers. Continued environmental clean-ups, a current ban on all river otter trapping in the state, and other efforts are helping to ensure that this appealing species thrives.

### Overharvest of Fur and Forest

Like the beaver and the river otter, the fisher is native to West Virginia. It, too, was trapped by Native Americans in the late 1500s and early 1600s and became a part of the European fur trade. Its pelt, however, was not as popular as those of the other two. Later, fashion trends of the early 1900s dictated a greater demand for fisher pelts, which sold for as much as \$100 each. This helped lead to the fisher's demise in many states, including West Virginia. Overharvesting and the destruction of the virgin forest ultimately caused the fisher to be extirpated from West Virginia and other states at this time.

Like the river otter, the fisher is a member of the weasel



Rampant trapping destroyed beaver, otter, and fisher (left) populations.

family; however, it makes its home in dense underbrush or in the tops of trees, rather than in streams. Like all weasels, the fisher has a long body, short legs, small ears, and a bushy tail. Its shimmering coat and silky underfur make it an exceptionally beautiful animal. Due to its tricolored guard hairs, the male has a frosted or grizzled silver appearance about the head and shoulders while the female is darker and silkier. Female fisher pelts are especially prized by fur traders. Fishers generally weigh from 3 to 18 pounds; females usually weigh from 4 to 6 pounds and males from 6 to 12 pounds.

Fishers are extraordinarily good hunters—so good that their predatory skills have caused some to paint them as vicious killers. Indeed, some criticized WVDNR for reintroducing the species into West Virginia. In 1969, WVDNR traded wild turkeys to the state of New Hampshire for 23 fishers. Some speculated at the time that fishers were the reason why New Hampshire lost its wild turkey population. The West Virginia Legislature agreed and passed a law banning further imports of fishers. The law was later repealed, after research proved that the fisher was a valuable member of the fauna of West Virginia.

From the 23 fishers obtained from New Hampshire, 15 were released on Canaan Mountain in Tucker County and 8 were released near Cranberry Glades in Pocahontas County. In just three years, West Virginia's fisher population had grown sufficiently to support a legal harvest season. Today, fishers again roam our forests and a harvest regulation of one fisher per season per trapper is in place.

# ... And Returned

History has shown that the human species includes those who are either unable or unwilling to think beyond the filling of their bellies or the lining of their wallets. The improper harvesting of the beaver, river otter, and fisher, and the misuse of natural resources, have had tragic consequences. However, since the turn of the last century, much has been learned about the value of individual species and their significance to the integrity of our state's natural systems. Through appropriate harvest-

ing, environmental clean-up, and management, these animals and others have been allowed to resume their rightful place in the hills and streams of West Virginia. 🐾

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*A native of West Virginia, David Kisamore grew up hunting, hiking, and fishing in the woods around his house. He has degrees in Christian ministries and biblical studies and theology and is a trained minister. He now lives with his wife and three children in Morgantown.*



To reintroduce fishers to West Virginia, 23 of the animals were released near Cranberry Glades in Pocahontas County (above) and on Canaan Mountain in Tucker County.

David Fattaleh

# JUNE EVENTS STATEWIDE

**June 1 – 4**

**Blue and Gray Days**  
Tygart Lake State Park  
Grafton  
(304) 265-6144

**June 1 – 4**

**Calhoun County Wood Festival**  
Grantsville  
(304) 354-9204

**June 2**

**River Cities Symphony Orchestra—Colony Theatre Pops! Summer Concert**  
Parkersburg  
(304) 375-1812

**June 2 – 3**

**Greek Food Festival**  
Clarksburg  
(304) 624-5331

**June 2 – 4**

**Weston Carp Festival and Stonewall Jackson Wine Festival**  
Weston and Roanoke  
(304) 269-3906

**June 2 – 4**

**Whistles and Wildflowers Weekend**  
Cass Scenic Railroad State Park  
Cass  
(304) 456-4300

**June 2 – 4**

**Rail Trail Festival**  
North Bend State Park  
Cairo  
(304) 628-3777

**June 3**

**Wheeling Feeling Chili Cook-off**  
Wheeling  
(304) 234-3636

**June 3**

**Clay Center—Hooray for Hollywood**  
Charleston  
(304) 561-3575

**June 3**

**Rummage and Bake Sale**  
Tomlinson Run State Park  
New Manchester  
(304) 564-3651

**June 3**

**National Trails Day 10-Mile Trek**  
Greenbrier River Trail  
Marlinton  
(304) 799-4087

**June 3**

**Ridge Runner Races**  
North Bend State Park  
Cairo  
Register Online:  
[www.active.com](http://www.active.com)

**June 3**

**Hike 'n Bike National Trails Day**  
Twin Falls Resort State Park  
Mullens  
(304) 294-4000

**June 3**

**Hike across West Virginia**  
Cacapon Resort State Park  
Berkeley Springs  
(304) 258-1022

**June 4**

**ACE Big Canyon Off-Road Triathlon**  
Oak Hill  
(888) 223-7328

**June 4**

**Senior Citizens' Day**  
Tomlinson Run State Park  
New Manchester  
(304) 564-3651

**June 6, 13, 20 and 27**

**Community Band Concerts at the Fort**  
Prickett's Fort State Park  
Fairmont  
(304) 363-3030

**June 7 – 10**

**Mountain Quilt Quest**  
Various locations  
in West Virginia  
(304) 744-3670

**June 8 – 11**

**Hatfield & McCoy Festival**  
Matewan  
(304) 235-5240

**June 9 – 11**

**35th Annual Spring Mountain Heritage Art and Crafts Festival**  
Near Harpers Ferry  
(800) 624-0577

**June 10**

**Fishing Derby**  
Tomlinson Run State Park  
New Manchester  
(304) 564-3651

**June 10**

**Fishing Derby**  
Little Beaver State Park  
Beaver  
(304) 763-2494

**June 10**

**Captain Thurmond's Challenge**  
Fayetteville  
(800) 927-0263

**June 10**

**Norwalk Soap Box Derby**  
Martinsburg  
(304) 262-2560

**June 10**

**Durbin and Greenbrier Valley Railroad—Moonlight Fire Train**  
Durbin  
(877) 686-7245

**June 10 – 11**

**Free Fishing Days**  
Statewide  
(304) 558-2771

**June 10 – 11**

**Old Morgantown Glass Show**  
Morgantown  
(412) 217-2083

**June 11**

**Mother's Day**  
Tomlinson Run State Park  
New Manchester  
(304) 564-3651

**June 12 – 14**

**Prickett's Fort Summer Camp**  
Prickett's Fort State Park  
Fairmont  
(304) 363-3030

**June 13 – 26**

**Music in the Mountains Bluegrass Festival**  
Summersville  
(304) 872-3145

**June 13-17, 20-24, 27-30, July 1**

**The Musical Annie**  
Chief Logan State Park  
Logan  
(304) 752-0253

**June 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, 25, 28, 30**

**Honey in the Rock**  
Grandview Cliffside  
Amphitheatre  
Beckley  
(800) 666-9142

**June 14, 16, 18, 21, 24, 27, 29**

**Hatfields & McCoys**  
Grandview Cliffside  
Amphitheatre  
Beckley  
(800) 666-9142

**June 15**

**Brunch with Margaret Blennerhassett**  
Blennerhassett Island  
Historical State Park  
Parkersburg  
(304) 420-4800

**June 15 – 17**

**Marx Toy and Train Collectors National Convention**  
Wheeling  
(877) 242-8133

**June 15 – 18**

**57th West Virginia State Folk Festival**  
Glennville  
(304) 462-5000

**June 16 – 17**

**West Virginia Country Music Hall of Fame Spring Festival**  
Fairmont  
(304) 292-5854

**June 16 – 18**  
**West Virginia Swiss Mountain**  
**Heimatabig Summer**  
**Homecoming Music Festival**  
 Helvetia  
 (877) 794-7768

**June 16 – 18**  
**Mid-Ohio Valley**  
**Multicultural Festival**  
 Parkersburg  
 (304) 424-3457

**June 16 – 18**  
**Hometown Mountain**  
**Heritage Festival**  
 Ansted  
 (304) 658-5901

**June 17**  
**Kid's Day and Halloween**  
**at the Campground**  
 Tomlinson Run State Park  
 New Manchester  
 (304) 564-3651

**June 17**  
**Smoke on the Water**  
**Chili Cook-off**  
 Charleston  
 (304) 543-1058

**June 17**  
**Jefferson County Farm Day**  
 Kearneysville  
 (304) 725-4325

**June 17 – 18**  
**West Virginia Spring**  
**Wine Festival**  
 Crab Orchard  
 (304) 252-9750

**June 17 and 24**  
**Fiddles and Vittles Train**  
 Cass Scenic Railroad State Park  
 Cass  
 (304) 456-4300

**June 18**  
**West Virginia Celebration**  
 Kanawha State Forest  
 Charleston  
 (304) 925-2771

**June 18**  
**Father's Day**  
 Tomlinson Run State Park  
 New Manchester  
 (304) 564-3651

**June 18**  
**Moundsville Penitentiary**  
**Ghost Hunts**  
 Moundsville  
 (304) 845-6200

**June 20**  
**West Virginia Day**  
 Prickett's Fort State Park  
 Fairmont  
 (304) 363-3030

**June 20**  
**WV Day Celebration**  
 Pipestem Resort State Park  
 Pipestem  
 (304) 466-1800

**June 20**  
**West Virginia Day Celebration**  
**Blennerhassett Island**  
**Historical State Park**  
 Parkersburg  
 (304) 420-4800

**June 20 – 24**  
**West Virginia Coal Festival**  
 Madison  
 (304) 369-9118

**June 21– 25**  
**Dirt Days on the Hatfield-**  
**McCoy Trails**  
 Lyburn  
 (800) 592-2217

**June 23**  
**Free Summer Concert:**  
**Simple Gifts**  
 Prickett's Fort State Park  
 Fairmont  
 (304) 363-3030

**June 22 – 23**  
**Meet the Author:**  
**Belinda Anderson**  
 Dunbar Branch Library  
 Kanawha County Public Library  
 (304) 343-4646

**June 23 – 25**  
**Snowshoe Mountain Bike Race**  
 Snowshoe  
 (304) 572-1000

**June 23 – July 4**  
**FestivALL Charleston**  
 Charleston  
 (304) 444-7062

**June 24**  
**Pearl S. Buck Birthday**  
**Celebration**  
 Hillsboro  
 (800) 336-7009

**June 24**  
**Star Party—National Radio**  
**Astronomy Observatory**  
 Green Bank  
 (304) 456-2150

**June 24 – 25**  
**New Martinsville River**  
**Heritage Days**  
 New Martinsville  
 (304) 266-9418

**June 26 – 28**  
**Prickett's Fort Summer Camp**  
**(Middle and High School)**  
 Prickett's Fort State Park  
 Fairmont  
 (304) 363-3030

**June 27 – 30**  
**Golf Academy**  
 Cacapon Resort State Park  
 Berkeley Springs  
 (304) 258-1022

**June 27 – July 2**  
**Beauty and the Beast –**  
**West Virginia Public Theatre**  
 Morgantown  
 (304) 291-4117

**June 29 – July 1**  
**Gassaway Days Celebration**  
 Gassaway  
 (304) 364-5111

**June 29 – July 1**  
**West Virginia Freedom Festival**  
 Logan  
 (304) 752-3052

**June 29 – July 2**  
**St. Albans Riverfest**  
 Saint Albans  
 (304) 767-6007

**June 30**  
**Murder Mystery Train**  
 Cass Scenic Railroad State Park  
 Cass  
 (304) 456-4300

**June 30**  
**Cacapon Lodge 50th**  
**Year Celebration**  
 Cacapon Resort State Park  
 Berkeley Springs  
 (304) 258-1022

**June 30 – July 2**  
**Independence Day Celebration**  
 North Bend State Park  
 Cairo  
 (304) 643-2931

June						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

*Times and events are subject to change. To ensure you have a wonderful experience, please call ahead before attending an event.*

Background photo: David Fattaleh

# Book of the Month

## *The Bingo Cheaters* by Belinda Anderson

Irene arrived late for the April meeting of the Flat Brush Women's Club. She'd forgotten the bingo cards and had to ask her husband to turn the car back home. She could have driven herself, but he said he wanted to get out of the house and might as well pick up the groceries. Such a sweet man.

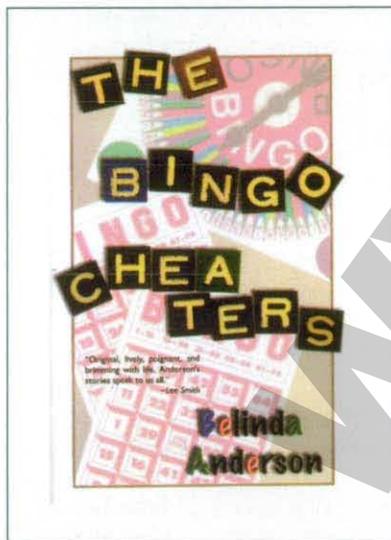
She hurried into Wanda's doily-dappled living room, where the other five members awaited her. The Basham sisters, the club elders, already had claimed the armchairs. Thin and hunched by osteoporosis, they reminded Irene of the pair of ragged old crows that lurched around her back yard, calling to each other whenever they found a treat in the grass. Irene wedged herself between Viola and Alice on the sofa.

"All right, let's get this show on the road," Wanda said.

"You're supposed to say, 'This meeting is called to order.'" Irene always seemed to find herself having to point out procedure. She wondered if her husband would remember to get the one-percent milk.

"All right, this meeting is called to order. Let's play bingo." Wanda was a new member of the club, having moved from Princeton, but she acted like she was still a charge nurse. "I was supposed to buy four prizes, right?" She pulled out the prizes she was offering as this month's hostess.

The prizes were just trinkets from the dollar store, but Wanda had taken the items out of their boxes, displaying them on a mirrored tray as



though they were priceless collectibles. The clown figurine slumped sadly. That little ceramic bell was pretty, though, and the glass candy dish shaped like an oak leaf would be useful. But Irene had set her heart on winning the lighthouse salt-and-pepper shakers for her kitchen collection. They reminded her of the Outer Banks, where her husband had taken her for their honeymoon so many years ago.

Irene kept a firm grip on the bingo supplies. "You're supposed to ask for the officers' reports first. It's in the bylaws."

From the armchairs the sisters cackled. Despite Irene's efforts, the Flat Brush Women's Club had pretty well ignored bylaws and procedures since its formation by a West Virginia University extension agent after World War II. The agent had attempted to present homemaking as both a science and an art, but the

members were suspicious of foreign spices like ginger. After the agent gave up on them, they started quilting at club meetings, but as their fingers stiffened and their eyesight worsened over the years, they had turned to bingo for entertainment.

"Anybody got anything to report? No? Let's play." Wanda grabbed for the cylinder of numbered bingo balls. Irene sighed and passed out the cards and plastic chips. Wanda had called only half a dozen numbers before Viola said, "Bingo!" and claimed the clown. Irene looked at Viola's card. Through the plastic marker, she could see that even though Wanda had just pronounced, "B6," Viola had declared herself a winner with "B9." She'd gotten her numbers turned around again. The club had learned the definition of dyslexia the year Viola had taken a turn at being treasurer. Irene wondered what Viola would do without her husband to look after the bills.

Irene decided not to mention the cheating. Viola, who'd invited Wanda to join the club, was such a sweet, shaggy soul. Her white perm always needed to be trimmed, and she almost always wore a decorative sweatshirt with a collar. Today she sported a yellow one featuring a hand-painted rabbit. Irene herself favored loose blouses and knit pants, usually in some shade of blue that complemented her cornflower eyes. Once, the color had set off her brown hair, but now it highlighted her thinning silver.

Next game, she started scooting

to the edge of her sofa cushion, one number away from winning the lighthouse shakers. The black-striped monument would be the pepper shaker—clever. Alice yelped, “Bingo!” Irene turned her head and saw that Alice had marked “57” instead of “67.” She didn’t say anything, though, because Alice was so sensitive, combing her dyed black hair over her ears to hide her hearing aid. Irene held her breath as Alice’s hand hovered over the mirrored surface of the tray, finally plucking the candy dish.

During the next round, Irene was on the verge of completing the “N” column when Wanda hollered, “Bingo!” She reached for the lighthouses.

“You’re going to take your own prize?” Irene asked.

“I don’t see why not.” Wanda snatched the lighthouses from the tray. “Unless there’s something in the bylaws against it.” The Bashams crowded through their loose dentures.

Wanda probably had cheated, too, intending all along to keep the shakers when she bought them. But Irene didn’t say anything, because she also knew that Wanda’s eyes were about gone. That was no doubt why Wanda had driven into the creek that time, never mind what she said about a deer making her wreck.

The Basham sisters and Alice swept the remaining games and cleared the tray. Irene knew Wanda had spent little on the prizes, but she still mourned the loss of the lighthouses.

“Let’s have refreshments.” Wanda led the women into the kitchen, and started helping herself first, piling her plate with deviled eggs, pickles

and walnut brownies. That cheddar cheese ball looked good. So did Viola’s Luscious Lime Salad, the gelatin such a pretty minty green, peppered with tiny marshmallows. Irene hoped her husband would remember to pick up a box of the strawberry flavor. She tried not to stew over the games. Her friends probably hadn’t meant to cheat. Still, it really wasn’t fair. Maybe she ought to say something.

She was about to bite into her cheese and cracker when she saw the other women staring at her. Had she spoken her thoughts out loud?

“Irene, honey,” Viola said. “Are you sure you want to do that?”

“Do what?” Had she made an accusation?

“Your cracker.”

“My cracker?”

Wanda spoke up. “For God’s sake, Irene, you just spread lime salad on that cracker.”

Irene looked at the food in her hand and saw marshmallow-studded goop covering the cracker. How in the world had she mistaken that green wobbly stuff for cheese? She laughed to cover the confusion clouding her. “I guess I was thinking about something else.”

“Sure,” Viola said. “I mean, they were sitting side by side.”

Alice leaned over to one of the crows as though to whisper, but the loudness of her voice had grown in proportion to her deafness. “It’s not the first time she’s done something like this.” Tears stung Irene’s eyes.

“I believe these are just about the best deviled eggs I’ve tasted,” Viola said. “Try one, Irene.” She took the plate that had been wavering in Irene’s hands.

Irene wiped at her eyes. What in the world was happening to her? The Basham at Alice’s side walked over and patted Irene on the arm. “You know, the other day I started off for church and ended up at the post office. Got mad, too, because it was closed!”

Irene tried to smile. The other sister tottered over. “That’s nothing. I have to check the obituaries every morning to see if I’m listed.”

Alice had turned toward Wanda. “What in the world are you doing?”

“What does it look like I’m doing?” Wanda said, spreading gelatin on a cracker. She popped it in her mouth. “Not bad, really.” She topped another cracker and handed it to Alice. “Try one.”

Alice bit half of it and chewed. “Interesting—sweet and salty and crunchy.”

Wanda plopped dollops of Luscious Lime Salad on crackers and offered them to the other members. The Basham sisters pecked and swallowed. “That’s all right,” one said.

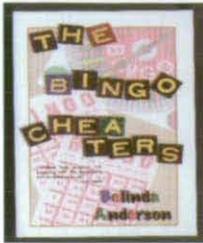
“I think you’ve invented a new dish,” Viola said.

The club members ringed Irene, earnestly eating gelatin on crackers. Her worry and confusion eased in the circle of their warmth. It didn’t matter if her friends cheated at bingo. They had been together so long, one had to overlook these little failings.

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To purchase a copy of *The Bingo Cheaters*, see the *West Virginia Bookshelf* on page 32.

# WEST VIRGINIA BOOKSHELF

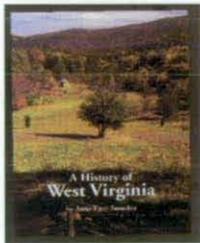


## The Bingo Cheaters

By Belinda Anderson

\$14.95, 5.5 x 8.5, 198 pages, Paperback

In her powerfully human and delightfully humorous new collection, author Belinda Anderson takes us to fictional Hope County in the magical mountains of West Virginia, where we are reunited with Twilight Dawn, the wry and mystical old quilter from her debut book of stories, *The Well Ain't Dry Yet*. Having transcended this earthly realm, Twilight finds herself surveying the predicaments of Hope County's troubled and troublesome inhabitants, including Franklin, a water truck driver who actually welcomes jury duty; Margaret, a not-as-young-as-she-used-to-be mom who runs afoul of Foul the Guesser at the state fair; and the widowed Sadie, who helps a con artist discover that he's a better man than he thought.

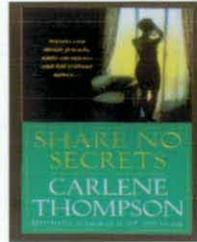


## A History of West Virginia

By Anna Smucker

\$6.95, 7 x 8.5, 81 pages, Paperback

Gifted storyteller Anna Smucker weaves the history of the Mountain State into a lively tale populated with such iconic figures as John Henry, John Brown, Mother Jones, the Hatfields, Chief Logan, and Stonewall Jackson. The pride and strength of West Virginia's forebears runs through Smucker's narrative as she details the many ways Mountaineers have stood up for themselves and the place they call home.

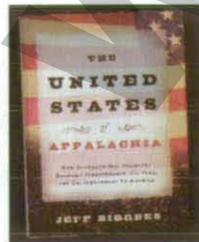


## Share No Secrets

By Carlene Thompson

\$6.99, 4 x 7, 366 pages, Paperback

In yet another riveting novel from author Carlene Thompson, heroine Adrienne Reynolds finds that bad things can happen anywhere, even in her hometown of Point Pleasant. Just days before the town's grand La Belle Hotel is to be torn down, Adrienne and her teenage daughter learn that her best friend's body has been discovered in one of the hotel's elegant rooms. As Adrienne unravels the mystery, she learns that everyone in Point Pleasant has secrets—and a price.



## United States of Appalachia: How Southern Mountaineers Brought Independence, Culture, and Enlightenment to America

By Jeff Biggers

\$26.00, 6.25 x 9, 238 pages, Hardcover

Though Appalachia often gets a bad rap in the media, the region has historically been a cradle of freedom, independence, and enlightenment, as well as a place of progressive social change, literature, and music. *The United States of Appalachia* reveals how many of our nation's basic freedoms and founding ideas started in the mountains we call home.

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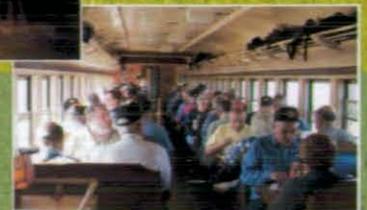


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