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A Cure for Hunger
Almost Heaven Smokehouse, Page 9

Riding the Path of History
The Greenbrier River Trail, Page 12

Take a Walk to the Past
Durbin Historic Walking Tour, Page 20

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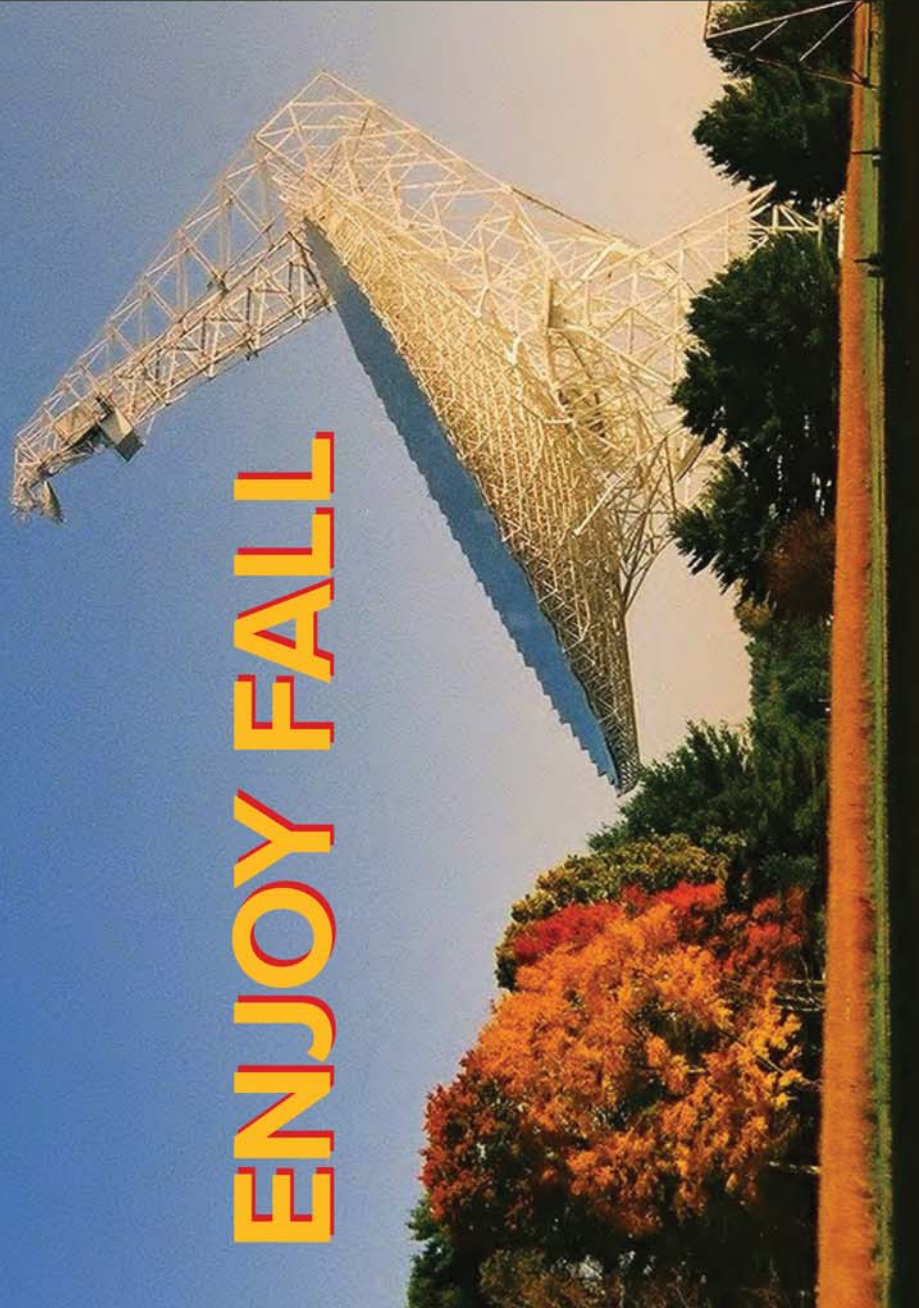
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155 Observatory Road, Green Bank, West Virginia 24944

Music, magic and murder at the Opera House

Oyo
 Saturday, October 8
 7:30 p.m.
 \$10



Oyo

The Pocahontas County Opera House will welcome Ohio-based folk band Oyo to its stage for the first time on Saturday, October 8, at 7:30 p.m.

Gathered around a single mic, Oyo's high-energy performances are equal parts honky-tonk and barn dance, with an indie rock undercurrent. Born on the banks of the Ohio River, the six-piece Appalachian roots band formed from jam sessions in the back of Marietta's JustAJar Design Press. Featuring traditional acoustic instrumentation, driving rhythm, and poignant lyricism, Oyo trades off lead vocals between Aaron Martin (fiddle, mandolin), Cole Adair (guitar), and Michael Bond (guitar, keys, harmonica, spoons), with Bobby Rosenstock (banjo), Drew Tanner (bass), and Joe Ryckebosch (drums, washboard) joining in.

While it might be Oyo's first appearance at the Opera House, for one of the band members, Drew Tanner, it is certainly not his first. Tanner was the Operations Manager at the opera house for many years.

"It's wild to be returning to the Opera House in this way," he said. "It feels like a kind of homecoming after having managed the space and promoted dozens of shows there over so many years. Reflecting on the long roster of impressive, talented acts that have graced the Opera House stage, it's

truly humbling to have the opportunity to pick up an instrument and step into that spotlight with my band mates."

Oyo takes its name from the Iroquois word for Ohio, meaning "beautiful river." Like that big muddy river, Oyo is fed by many influences and tributaries upstream: folk, bluegrass, old-school country and rock and roll. Oyo's self-titled debut album features 12 original songs by Aaron Martin and Michael Bond that take the listener on a sonic road trip through the West Virginia mountains to the Deep South, the American West and points beyond. Along the way, they encounter the heartache of complicated relationships and the ecstasy of connec-

tion, all while capturing the raucous energy of their live performances and distinctive sound...

Chet Shifflett and Friends ~ Magic, Mystery and Mentalism
 Saturday, October 22
 7:30 p.m.
 \$10

Join Chet Shifflett and Friends for a night of magic, mystery and mentalism, Saturday, October 22, at 7:30 p.m.

Shifflett developed an early love of magic. He credits watching a magi-

cian performing as part of a small traveling circus when he was 11, sparking his young imagination.

"I had a real fascination with everything magic after that," he said. "I saved up and would buy magic through the mail order companies that peddled magic tricks and novelty items. I had an uncle who showed me simple card tricks and things like removing his thumb. I loved the feeling of being amazed and amused at the same time. Moments

See **MUSIC**, page 5



Chet Shifflett

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Cover: The Greenbrier River Trail offers breathtaking views – no matter the season. Cooler temperatures and colorful leaves make fall a great time to hike or bike. This section of the trail in Seebert beckons you to come out and enjoy it before the snow flies.

Photo by Carol Carrico

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like these have contributed to my performance style over the years.”

Early influences include Michael Ammar, a world champion magician from Bluefield.

“I remember my dad showing me an article on Ammar in the newspaper and watching this young WVU graduate performing on the Johnny Carson Show,” Shifflett said. “Up until that point, the idea of actually performing was just a misty concept.”

During his teenage years, magic took a back seat and was relegated to childhood memories.

“It wasn’t until my early 20s when I stumbled upon a book on magic tricks and my fascination was rekindled,” he said. “After that, I would read and study every book and pub-

lication that I could find on the subject.”

He continued practicing manipulations and slights throughout his 20s, but it was within the walls of a real brick and mortar Magic Shop where he received his greatest education on performance magic. After becoming a regular fixture and demonstrating some level of skill, it was here the real secrets of magic were revealed from the numerous conjurers who would patron on a regular basis. Lessons in scripting, routine, character development, human behavior, basic psychology, presentation and public speaking were preambles to making a performance not only entertaining, but memorable.

“Magic, for most of my adult life, has served as an outlet and a backdrop in almost all of my endeav-



Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre

ors,” he said. “Including my managerial style in both corporate and entrepreneurial pursuits. I have never actively pursued Magic as a full time job, but it is present in almost everything I do. I love it and benefit from it in so many ways.

“Magic is vast, and it

holds many more secrets than any one magician could ever know. I love that, because who wants to know literally every trick? Sometimes, I just want to lose myself in the wonder just like so many others.

“I think Magic, mentalism and mystery in general is extremely import-

ant to the world, especially now. It not only provides us with an escape, but it also causes us to think objectively and subjectively at the same time.”

“I want my audience to walk away feeling a little lighter, a little more optimistic than when they came. If I can do that,

Pocahontas County
OPERA
HOUSE

MURDER MYSTERY DINNER THEATER

OCTOBER 27 - 29



then it's all worth it to me.”

Chet is a member of the Society of American Magicians and the International Conservatory of Magic. Join Chet and Friends for an evening of Magic, Mystery and Mentalism October 22, with special guest Magician and Magic Creator Louis Paul, of Cumberland, Maryland.

**Murder Mystery
Dinner Theatre
Three nights,
October 27-29**

6 p.m.

Tickets \$40

The Pocahontas Opera House Murder Mystery Dinner Theater is back. The interactive murder mystery is an immensely popular fundraiser for the Opera House.

Guests will get the chance to watch a murder unfold over dinner, interrogate the suspects while enjoying dessert, and find out “who done it” by the close of the evening.

This year’s production, “Murder at Marlinton Abbey,” will include dinner (Rayetta’s lasagna), beverages and an evening of fun and mystery.

The tickets are on-sale now and can be purchased through pocahontasoperahouse.org or by calling the Opera House at 304-799-6645.

“Murder at Marlinton Abbey” is written and directed by Opera House Board Member and local playwright Arla Ralston. Ralston describes the play as “Downton Abbey meets Young Frankenstein.” The play, set in the 1930s, centers around Marvin Marlin (played by Jesse Groseclose) who suddenly finds himself heir to his family estate and a large fortune in England. The play takes place in a castle in the English countryside

See **MUSIC**, page 6

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Center from pg 5

where a number of guests/suspects are gathered for dinner. The cast includes Marvin's new wife Myra (Brynn Kusic), Lady Mary (Kristen Beverage), the Duchess of Durbin (Ruth Taylor), her son, the Duke (Brian Cannon), the Vicar, Woodrow Worthington (Nathan Dameron), the cook Martha White (Blair Campbell) and Boris the Butler (Bob Martin).

The psychic called in to help solve the crime is played by Leslie McLaughlin.

Guests will be seated at tables of eight and people are encouraged to get a group of friends to go together and join in the fun. Some folks, who really like to get into the act, may want to come in costume.

QWANQWA

Saturday, November 12

7:30 p.m.

\$10

Experimental Ethiopian Supergroup QWANQWA is coming to the Opera House.

Live and direct from the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia's QWANQWA make their North American debut this fall, embarking on their very first U.S. tour of 23 states over three months — including performances at Chicago's Hyde Park Jazz Festival, the Boston University Global Music Festival, Freight and Salvage in Berkeley, CA, The Cedar

Center in Minneapolis and more.

QWANQWA is a five-piece improvisatory ensemble based in Addis Ababa, dedicated to furthering Ethiopia's unique string traditions. Inspired by a shared passion for Ethiopian music, the group brings together some of the most accomplished traditional players in the country, creating a space to explore new sounds and break the rules in an otherwise conservative musical culture. QWANQWA takes its name from the Amharic word for "language," dedicated to creating musical dialogues between cultures and the proposition that music is a universal language that transcends borders.

Their singular sound is built on an array of traditional Ethiopian instruments. The group consists of Endris Hassen on mesenko (one-string fiddle), Bubu Teklemariam on bass krar (Ethiopian lyre), Selamnesh Zemene on vocals, Misale Legesse

Center on kebero (goat skin drum), and Kaethe Hostetter on five string electric violin. Together they've forged a new sound rooted in centuries-old traditions — yet exploratory, open and future-facing.

Following three years of planning, pandemics and postponement, the long-awaited QWANQWA U.S. debut is finally happening in 2022, from September through November.

Don't miss this crucial African musical event.

Greenbrier Valley Theater

A Mountain Home Christmas

Saturday, November 26

7:30 p.m.

\$10

The Opera House will welcome back the Greenbrier Valley Theater Saturday, November 26, with its production of "A Mountain Home Christmas."

This original production celebrates the holiday

See *MUSIC*, page 7

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season in the Mountain State. Wild, wonderful and family-friendly, the event will feature memorable songs, humor, storytelling and the spirit of Christmas that you won't want to miss. "A Mountain Home

Christmas" is sure to be a joyous celebration that captures the cultural beauty of West Virginia.

Kelton Boblits
Saturday, December 17
7:30 p.m.
\$10
 Old-time piano cham-

pion Kelton Boblits will grace the opera house stage Saturday, December 17.

Known for its diversity and range, old-time piano playing covers everything from Ragtime piano and Harlem stride to Boogie-Woogie dance and standards of the 1930s. Boblits, a Fayette County musician, has shared old-time piano music with many audiences in the past eight years. Boblits's distinct style of playing provides a unique listening experience for fans of old-time piano music and those new to the genre. Playing piano since the age of six, Boblits was inspired to pursue old-time music after hearing a recording of Maple Leaf Rag. He began performing throughout his home state in schools, churches



Kelton Boblits

and other venues before eventually competing in the World Championship Old-Time Piano Playing Contest in Oxford, Mississippi, where he won first place in the junior division (ages 17 and under)

in both 2018 and 2019. "His playing is effortless, exciting, and fun," described an audience member. "His playing is assured and shows the depth of his knowledge of this music."

Audiences enjoy Boblits's repertoire from half a century of musical history, and while true to the style of old-time piano, he includes his flare and interpretations of many pieces. He will leave his audiences with a memorable performance and a new appreciation for America's first popular music.

Tickets are \$10 for each performance and admission is free for those 17 years of age or younger. Tickets are available at the 4th Avenue Gallery, online at pocahontasoperahouse.org or at the door the evening of the performance.

The Opera House Performance Series is presented with financial assistance through a grant from the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History with approval from the West Virginia Commission on the Arts. Support is also provided by Pocahontas County Dramas, Fairs and Festivals, and the Pocahontas County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Performances at the Opera House are informal, family-friendly, and open to all. The entrance and main seating are accessible to persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are encouraged to attend; special accommodations can be arranged upon request.

Seating is on a first-come, first-served basis.

PAC Pocahontas County Arts Council

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The sweet and glorious maple tree

Cara Rose
Executive Director
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Each of our four seasons has something special to celebrate.

The first snow of the year ushering in winter. The first coltsfoot to bloom and the peep frogs announcing spring's arrival. The fireflies lighting up the fields in summer. And then we come to autumn – my favorite season.

Autumn is a vibrant way for Mother Nature to go out in color as winter sets in. People living in urban and metropolitan areas flock to the mountains in the fall in search of the spectacular display of colors in our Appalachian Mountains. I do the same thing! There is nothing more enjoyable than a fall drive across the Highland Scenic Highway on a warm, sunny day.

So why do leaves change color? Leaves are green because they produce a lot of chlorophyll in the spring/summer – tree food. But in the fall, because of changes in the length of daylight and changes in temperature, the leaves stop their food-

making process. The chlorophyll breaks down, the green color disappears, and the yellow to orange colors become visible and give the leaves part of their fall splendor. When the leaves are completely brown and fall off, they are making no chlorophyll, thus, they go into a hibernating state for winter.

For a spectacular fall season, August should be warm and sunny in the shortening days, along with cooling temperatures at night and a steady supply of rain – not too much though – then the trees will be set up for those brilliant colors.

As September arrives and frost appears, chlorophyll depletes and the pigments in each type of tree are revealed. This process is a delicate balance between temperatures, water and sunlight. I'm no scientist but this is so awesome, our natural world is amazing. Our variety of deciduous trees creates a forest of color and gives the Mountain State a true advantage over many areas that have predominantly evergreens or fewer tree varieties. With a mix of evergreen

and our diverse hardwood forest, we are guaranteed a sensational fall drive no matter what.

According to the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources and West Virginia University, nearly one million acres of northern hardwood forests cover West Virginia (6.5 percent of West Virginia). Four hundred million of these deciduous trees are maple trees. No wonder the Sugar Maple is West Virginia's State Tree. And no wonder our fall season is so spectacular. Three of the most common maples are the sugar, red and sycamore. Maple trees' true colors show in fall as yellow, orange, red and burgundy foliage giving the fall foliage that brilliance alongside the evergreens that also populate our forests.

Pocahontas County is home to one third of the Monongahela National Forest along with two state forests and five state parks making it arguably the best place to view fall foliage in West Virginia.

Fall is my favorite season, thanks in part to the maple tree, but the other claim to fame for maple trees is one of my other fa-

vorite things – maple syrup. The maple tree not only gives fall its vibrancy, it also gives late winter and early spring the sweet taste of syrup. West Virginia has more tappable maple trees than Vermont and with the growing interest in agritourism, maple syrup production has grown significantly over the past decade.

Pocahontas County is lucky enough to have a number of maple syrup producers, many of whom participate in the annual Mountain State Maple Days. In 2022, six producers in Pocahontas County invited guests to their sugar shacks for tours, tastings and maple products to take home. And although it might seem like a long way off, maple syrup season is just around the corner.

So let's celebrate the mighty maple tree this fall and spring. It gives us much to celebrate.

Mark your calendars:
• Peak fall foliage – It is always a gamble when to predict peak foliage. Usually the last week of September through mid-October is a sure bet to enjoy that fall drive through the mountains of West Vir-



ginia and Pocahontas County.

• National Maple Syrup Day Saturday, December 17, 2022: stay tuned for event information. Maple syrup and other sweet treats are perfect for holiday gifts.

• Mountain State Maple Days Saturdays, February 18 and March 18, 2023: Pocahontas County will be participating with sugar shack tours, pancakes with local maple syrup at local restaurants and more.



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Almost Heaven Smokehouse

~ A cure for your hunger

Suzanne Stewart
Staff Writer

At the base of Snowshoe Mountain, you'll find a place where wild game and traditional sides give diners

plenty of options for a perfect meal. That place is Almost Heaven Smokehouse, owned by Derek Hayhurst.

Hayhurst, a retired coal miner, moved to Pocahontas County several years

ago with his wife, Marlinton native Shenda Smith, and their kids, Haylee and Braeden.

He opened a barber shop, The Barber Stop, at Snowshoe, before starting his new venture with the



Photo by Suzanne Stewart

It's hard to drive by Almost Heaven Smokehouse at Snowshoe without stopping for a bite to eat. The aroma of succulent meats from the smoker draws in locals and visitors alike, who are looking for a hefty, melt in your mouth meal.

smokehouse in November 2021.

It may be his first time in the restaurant business, but Hayhurst is no stranger to grilling and smoking.

"I always did a lot of smoking meats," he said. "Anytime there was grilling, I was always cooking, but never on this scale."

There is a wide variety of meats to choose from at

the Smokehouse.

On the menu is the classic pulled pork and brisket, as well as whole chickens, chicken wings, chicken quarters, ribs and bratwurst made from boar, rabbit, duck, venison, elk and pheasant.

The meats are smoked anywhere from 20 minutes to 12 hours.

The menu of sides is just as varied as the meat

offerings. Diners may choose from potato salads, macaroni and cheese, bacon wrapped poppers and bacon wrapped asparagus, just to name a few.

"We've got a pretty steady menu, but we also have specials," Hayhurst said. "We have a lot of seafood and some new

See **HUNGER**, page 10

CARNEGIE HALL

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sides.”
 In addition to serving lunch and dinner at Snowshoe seven days a week, the Smokehouse also caters and travels to fairs and festivals. Whatever event you have – wedding, birthday, anniversary, bus-iness celebration – the Smokehouse can help you – it will show up with all you can eat.
 “I need another smoker and a food truck right now,” Hayhurst said. “We want the food truck so we can have another kitchen, and we can add breakfast. When spring comes and we’re doing fairs and festivals, we can have the two smokers and food truck going in different directions.”

There is room for indoor and outdoor dining at the Snowshoe location, as well as takeout options.

Having two businesses, albeit within a stone’s throw of each other, can be difficult, but for Hayhurst, it’s not a struggle because he has employees at the Smokehouse whom he can trust when he is at the Barber Stop.



Photo courtesy of Almost Heaven Smokehouse
The smoker is the secret weapon at Almost Heaven Smokehouse. Depending on the type and cut of meat, cooking time can be 20 minutes or up to 12 hours. There’s plenty to choose from with pork, beef, elk, rabbit, duck, chicken and more on the menu. And don’t forget the sides.

“You’ve got to have the right people, and I do,” he said.

Almost Heaven Smokehouse, 480 Cass Road in Slaty Fork, is open seven days a week, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Weekly special posted on Facebook!



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Oyo OCT. 8

Chet Shifflett : Magic, Mystery & Mentalism OCT. 23

Murder at Marlinton Abbey: Murder Mystery Dinner Theater OCT. 27-29
 Tickets: \$40 Dinner Included 6 p.m. Showtime
 Not Included with Season Pass

QWANAWA NOV. 12

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Kelton Boblits DEC. 17

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Riding the path of history

Jaynell Graham
Editor

Day in and day out, hikers and bikers can be seen making their way up and down the 77-mile Greenbrier River Trail in Pocahontas and Greenbrier counties.

The air is a little cooler there, the river offers a sense of peace and tranquility and the occasional sighting of wildlife adds to the adventure.

Little thought is given as to the adventure, risk and hard work that went into establishing such a fine recreational trail.

William P. McNeel just published a revised edition of his popular book, "The Greenbrier River Trail – Through the Eyes of History." In it he tells about the rail stations and towns that came and went during the timbering heyday of the last century and offers a list of amenities – such as camping and picnic areas – that are available along the trail today.

His introduction begins, "No doubt the users of the Greenbrier River Trail are aware of its original existence as a railroad. However, many of the people on the trail are of an age that has no personal knowledge of the importance railroads had in the life of the nation..."

The physical evidence that exists today along the trail – particularly with the leaves on the trees – gives little indication of what a busy stretch of railroad the Greenbrier Division of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway was for many years...

"A person spending a day trackside about 1910 would have observed four passenger trains and several freight trains hauling out the production of about 25 sawmills, two tanneries, the area's farms and smaller industries. The freights would also bring in the needs and wants, large and small, of the people of the Greenbrier Valley. Moving ahead to the mid-1920s, our observer would now

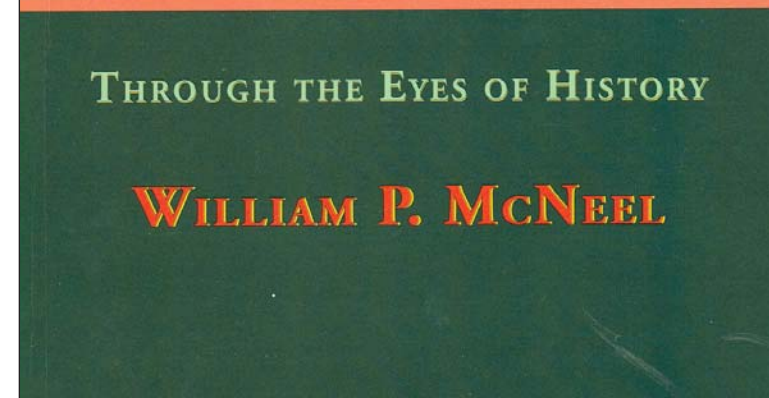
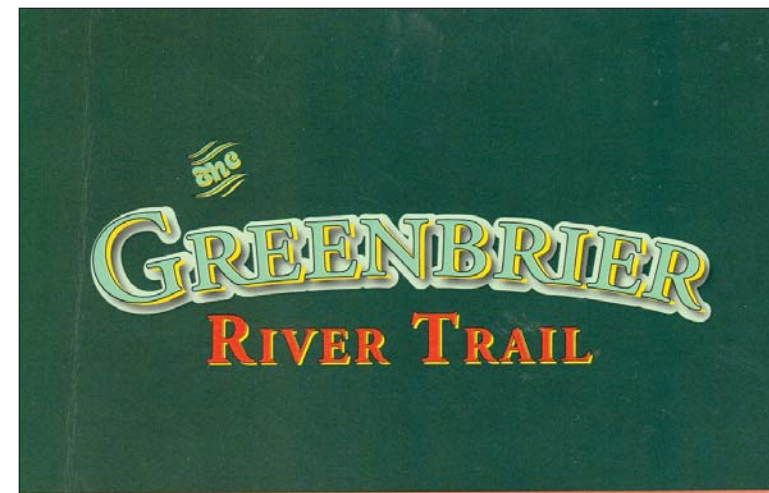
find added to the schedule "timed" freight trains using the line as a route for traffic between Chicago and eastern cities. In both world wars, the Greenbrier line was one of the transportation corridors essential for victory."

Knowing the history, as you hike or bike today, you might hear the faint chink, chink, of a pick axe cutting the railroad's path through the mountains. Or, you might hear the faint sound of a far off whistle.

So, let's get started. Construction began in July 1899, and the new town of Cass was reached in 1901, where West Virginia Pulp and Paper put in a large sawmill that began operation in January 1902.

The railroad extended to Durbin in 1902 and Winterburn in 1905.

The C & O had standard plans for its depots. They all had the same exterior design and identical interiors – waiting room, office and freight room.



Flagstops were also found along the line. These stops provided a shelter for the passengers as they waited to signal or "flag down" and board the train.

Although little remains of the sawmill towns, the areas can be identified by the railroad's mileposts that remain along the trail.

If you are passing by Milepost 11.09 on the southern end of the trail, you are in the vicinity of Keister. It was one of the original stations on the line. It was discontinued as a freight station in 1956, but remained on the

passenger timetable. This stop, as many others, had a section foreman's house, bunk house and a section tool house.

Families lived in the section house, and the "man of the house" was responsible for inspecting and maintaining a certain "section" of the track.

When you reach Milepost 37.40, you are at what was once Breakneck. There was a 12x12 foot freight house at this station. Trains were operating to this point by the middle of September 1900. The name was changed from Breakneck to Lo-



Construction work on the grade for the new railroad, near Renick in Greenbrier County.

cust. They ceased to handle freight, but remained a passenger flagstop. Just up the trail, at 37.57, you will cross the Locust Creek Bridge.

Traveling north to Milepost 41.70, you will find yourself at Burnside where a small shelter was provided for passengers. It, too, was removed from the freight station list in 1956, but remained a flagstop for passen-

gers. At Seebert, Milepost 45.77, there was an agency station and telegraph office. Seebert was one of the original stations on the line and it was a busy place, shipping lumber and coal and sheep and cattle. The animals were driven to the train station on foot from the surrounding areas. An item in *The Pocahontas Times* reported that each farmer was given a specific time to arrive with his livestock to avoid a calamity. That process worked if the train was on time, but the article tells of a day when the whole town of Seebert was overrun by animals because of a delay. Gardens and flower beds became grazing land and it took a while to sort out whose animals were whose.

Two sidings were located at

Violet: Milepost 49.24. This station was first listed as Beaver Creek, then changed to Dan, then to Violet.

Milepost 52.16 at Buckeye was one of the original stations on the Greenbrier line. It had a 10.5x19.5 foot passenger shelter/freight room building. This shelter was located catty-cornered to today's trail parking area. This station also had a section foreman's house and section tool house. It was reduced to a passenger shelter by 1943. Although never a full agency station, Buckeye did have a ticket agent for a number of years, beginning in 1912.

The American and Columbian Lumber Company was located there for a few years, as can be seen in the photo included in "The Greenbrier River Trail."

At Milepost 53.86, you will cross the Monday Lick bridge right before the location of the former siding and switch at Munday Lick, Milepost 53.92. The Sunday Lick Run bridge is at Milepost 54.07.

You can't miss the Marlinton depot with his bright yellow paint. It now houses the 4th Avenue Gallery. On October 26, 1900, the whole town showed

up for a grand rally to celebrate the first train in their town. They also turned out to see their sons, husbands and fathers board the train to go off to war.

Further up the line at Milepost 60.25 was the town of August. It served a lumber operation on Brush Lick Run across the river from the railroad.

Thorny Creek at Milepost 61.28 and 60.90 had a 15x24 foot freight house for the Kendall Lumber Company. There was also a passenger shelter.

Raywood, at Milepost 78.46, had an agency station and telegraph office. The depot served the mill and town of the Warn Lumber Corporation, later Forest Lumber Company.

There are a lot of fun but forgotten names in this book.

Coyner, Dryder, Orwig and Bock were located between Clover Lick and Stony Bottom, and then here's Lombardy, Nichols, Camper and more. All gone now, but recorded in McNeel's book, "The Greenbrier River Trail – Through the Eyes of History."

See RIDING, page 14



Aftermath of the wreck at the bridge across the Greenbrier River at Watoga on May 4, 1925.

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From excavation of the rail bed, the construction of the tracks and operating the trains to the production of the products hauled out of the county, every move required a hard day's work – for some, it was a lifetime's work.

You'll find no better resource of the history of the building of The Greenbrier Division of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway than in William P. McNeel's book, "The Durbin Route."

It contains a wealth of railroad history in words and wonderful – sometimes unbelievable – photos that will continue to tell the story to future generations.

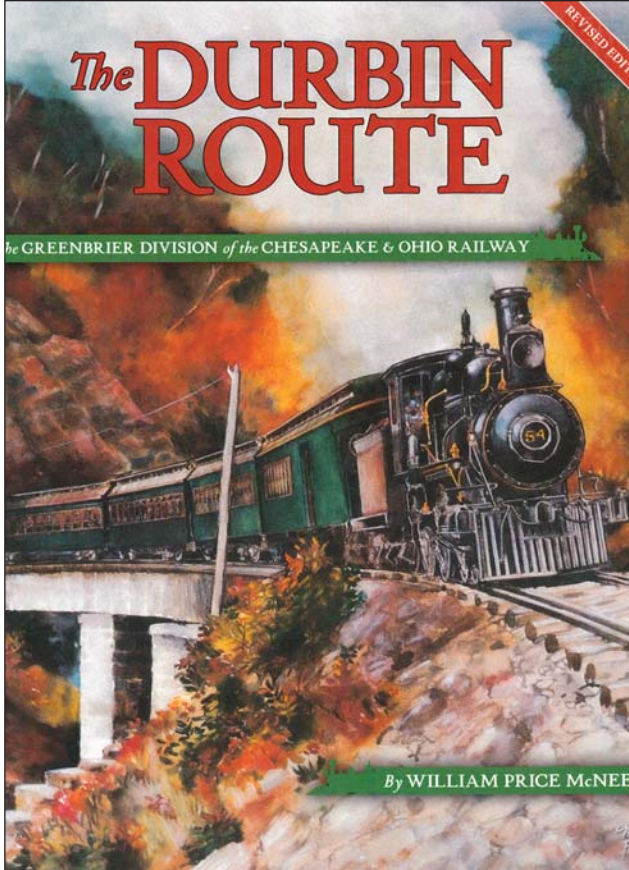
One of the most interesting items is a prediction made by a Greenbrier County writer in 1956 anticipating "an increased number of passengers on the little train that ran along the Greenbrier River." He writes:

"The route along the river is justly considered one of the most scenic in the nation – though a nation has not discovered it yet, and our own people are too accustomed on the one hand and too unaccustomed on the other to recognize it. It has been obscured by the motor age and highways miss it.

"The day is probably not far off when people of the nation will discover the scenic enchantment that a trip up the Greenbrier Division affords... There will be a renaissance of travel on the Greenbrier Division."

That prediction eventually became a reality, but not as the writer imagined.

Today, the Greenbrier River Trail is a place where the people of the nation have "discovered



the scenic enchantment that a trip up the Greenbrier Division affords." The Durbin Route contains 170 pages of history, maps and photos – photos of the construction, crowds at various depots



Construction camp below Marlinton at the Kee Eddy, 1900.

and train wrecks that caused trouble aplenty. As they used to say, "It's worth the price – just for the pictures!" "The Greenbrier River Trail – Through the Eyes of History" and "The Durbin Route" are available for sale at *The Pocahontas Times* office on Main Street in Marlinton.

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Searching family history is a real trip

Carol Carrico
Contributing Writer

“Genealogy is not fatal, but it is a grave disease.”

As a girl in her mid-twenties, I began what would become a lifelong hobby. I could even describe it as a life-long frustration, delight, disappointment or amazing adventure.

A friend introduced me to the world of genealogy or family tree search. It became almost an obsession, and I spent many long hours trying to put the millions of pieces of an unmatched puzzle together. The puzzle remains unfinished after 40+ years and will never be complete.

Having always been a person who wanted everything neatly in its place, I would soon discover my new hobby would never meet that quest, but in many ways, I realized I was luckier than most genealogists.

When I began my search, there were no computers. There was no

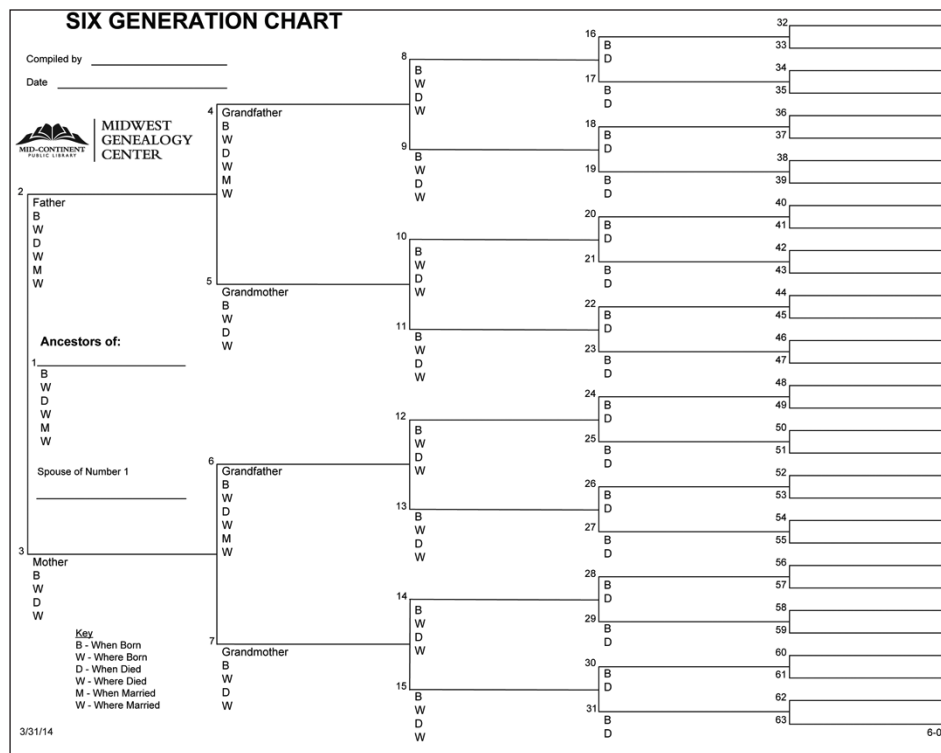
Internet. No cell phones. No simple, electronic connections to this new world. All of my searches began at home with my family. We actually spoke with each other in person or on the telephone – one with dials and hand-held receivers all attached to the wall.

My first recommendation for a beginner is to speak with every person in your family and I mean every member, especially the oldest ones first. I tried. Not many of the family members of that generation remained and some who were still alive were unable to remember.

I was able to begin a family tree chart. It was easy. My name, date and place of birth, marriage date and place. From that simple point, anyone can easily begin charting the history of their family tree.

My parents' names were next. Fortunately, they were both still alive and could give me all the dates and specifics of themselves and most dates of their own parents, my grandparents. Simple.

Then came the fun part. To confirm all of this in-



The Midwest Genealogy Center website has PDFs of family trees and charts which help keep track of your research as you trace your family's history. The PDFs are available to download at <https://www.mymcpl.org/genealogy/resources/family-history-forms>

formation, one must visit the courthouse in the county where all of these specifics took place. Luckily, my parents and grandparents all hailed from two local counties. Today, these visits may prove difficult, as people have

moved all over the world and away from their immediate families. I'll get to this "easier" part in a bit.

At the courthouse, usually in the county clerk's office, many large books with typed or handwritten

information were filled with names, dates, places and easily found to confirm what I had already searched. But, beware! Some of those dates given to me by members of my family may have been a little off by a few days,

months or years! And this information became the most interesting to me.

“There is no king who has not had a slave among his ancestors and no slave who has not had a king among his.”

~ Helen Keller

Every family has secrets. Every family has had events happen they do not want anyone to know about. If you're one of these people and you still don't want to know, please do not delve into this mysterious hobby.

For me? I want to know every single thing and will attempt to find out why it happened and how — and the effects. We can do nothing about what occurred in the past but learn from mistakes made. And the stories are so fascinating, secretive and worthwhile to know.

After years of stomping through cemeteries and

See *TRIP*, page 16



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courthouses, writing letters of inquiry to folks I never knew and would never know and trying to put it all together, the Internet happened. Thank you.

Fast forward to 2022. Today, beginner genealogists have the world at their fingertips.

A couple of quick searches via Google will provide you with more family information than you can imagine – in most cases. Some will be lucky like me and find a family connection back a thousand or more years. Is it all true? Is it all accurate? I'm not sure, but somebody worked awfully hard searching and connecting to attempt to link people.

I am not a professional. I'll say that again – not a professional. I'm probably not much past a beginner, but I know some of my search has been successful due to a lot of difficult investigations and even more accommodating workers at the places I've searched.

Lisa Workman at the Pocahontas County Clerk's office can direct a beginner to the infinite numbers of records provided in that office. Marriage licenses from 1822 to the present are all on record at the county clerk's office. Deaths and births are recorded from 1853 and 1854, respectively, but are sparse.

Remember, not all records will be available because of a couple of reasons. One is that West Virginia was not a state before 1863 and Pocahontas County would have been a county in Virginia. It was difficult to expect every birth and death to be recorded in such rural areas.

Workman said that many records are available



Librarian Pam Johnson caught the genealogy bug years ago and has used her research skills to help people trace their ancestry to pioneer families of Pocahontas County. The archives are kept in a climate controlled room at McClintic Library in Marlinton.

online now, thanks to County Clerk Melissa Bennett who acquired grants to pay employees overtime to complete the huge task.

A visit to McClintic Library in Marlinton provided even more information on this county's genealogical past. The library has an entire room devoted to genealogies of families in this county and other counties. Histories of the counties, the state and even other states can provide valuable search information.

Chris Cook, assistant li-

brarian, explained how the history room is set up with all sections properly organized and labeled. From county cemetery books to cemetery layouts and obituary collections, so much information is easily available for viewing. However, none of this material can be checked out and must be perused during business hours.

Cook also pointed out that books on Virginia county histories and families are available as well as Virginia and West Virginia census records where many valuable family rec-

ords can be discovered.

Historical Sketches of Pocahontas County, written by Rev. William T. Price, provides invaluable information on the county from the 1870s to 1900. It is

available at *The Pocahontas Times* office in downtown Marlinton.

If the actual physical search isn't something you can do, the Internet has a few sites I have used and found quite valuable. Some are free with only a log on required to access the information and some, of course, offer more information with a monthly fee.

A few sites I use regularly include ancestry.com, familysearch.org and geni.com.

Information on any of these sites can be misleading, so take great care and verify all data from other sites or in person at courthouses. Many websites offer free family tree charts to download from beginners to 15-generation diagrams – all waiting to be filled with history.

Another excellent site to access is the West Virginia State Archives and History website which provides research resources for family historians at archive.wv.culture.org

All information is never available anywhere, but

this site is a great place to start.

I appreciate every step of this trip. I've enjoyed the good, the bad and the ugly – and there has been plenty of ugly.

I've loved learning about how relatives journeyed to West Virginia, about where they originated and all the sad and successful stories of their lives. Most were just regular folks like me. Some were quite irregular, but I love them just the same. And so will you.

"Only a genealogist thinks that a step backward is progress."

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Journey to the Past ~ Durbin Historic Walking Tour

Suzanne Stewart
Staff Writer

The town of Durbin has a rich history, dating back to the end of the Revolutionary War. There was the timber industry boom, which brought the trains, hotels, restaurants and people. In 1916, the town reached its peak population of 530 due to the town being a hub for export and import, as well as travelers going from town to town.

As a way to celebrate the town's history, the Upper Pocahontas Community Cooperative founded and installed the Durbin Historic Walking Tour, which consists of 12 signs going east to west through the town.

The signs were dedicated during the Durbin Days Heritage Festival in

July. The walking tour begins at the entrance to the East Fork Trail which leads to the Widney Park and the former Frank Tannery.

The two signs at this location are titled "A Valuable Connection" and "That's a Lot of Sole!"

The first refers to the Greenbrier Division of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway, which was built in 1902; and the Coal and Iron Railroad – later known as the Western Maryland Railway – which was built in 1903. The railroad brought people to Durbin and the surrounding communities including Frank, Bartow, Thornwood and Winterburn.

The town grew so much that, at one time, it had 13 hotels and 12 restaurants to accommodate all the visitors.

One of the largest businesses in the area was in adjacent Frank – Howe's Leather Tannery – where the tannic acid from tree bark was used to treat animal skins in the leather making process. Howe's was one of the largest producers of sole leather until the facility closed in 1994.

The second sign at the trailhead includes a quote from David Burner, who worked at the tannery for 23 years.

"It was hard work, but I enjoyed it," he said. "You didn't make any money, everyone got along. It raised a lot of families."

Next stop on the walking tour is at the entrance to the Durbin Rocket, near the Depot. Here under the shade trees is a cluster of four signs.

"144 Steps to School!" is about the Durbin School,

Photo by Suzanne Stewart
The Durbin Historic Walking Tour is guided by a set of 12 signs that illustrate the history of the hub and the area around it. The tour begins at the entrance of the East Fork Trail with two signs, one of which is all about the Howe's Leather Tannery, located in Frank.

built in 1921. The school was built on a hill at the entrance of Durbin and boasted 144 steps from the road to the main entrance. Needless to say, walking to and from school was arduous for students and staff.

Because of its location, the school buses had to park on the main street and let off students to traverse the stairs each morning. The students did so until 1977, when the school was closed and students were moved to Green Bank School.

The schoolhouse was torn down in 2005, but

See TOUR, page 18



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many of the bricks from the building live on at the other side of town in a welcome sign at the Durbin Library.

More than 100 years before the school was built on that hill, John Slaven, a Revolutionary War veteran, built a cabin on the 30-acre plot of land he owned in what was called the Narrows.

The sign, "Settling the Narrows" tells how John and his wife, Elizabeth, raised seven children in the cabin and through the years, the family went on to acquire a total of 4,004 acres of land.

Returning to the impact of the railroad, the next two signs, "Trains Changed Everything" and "More than a Water Stop" provide information regarding the C&O and C&I. The trains were used to import goods for families and businesses, export goods, including livestock, and as a means of transportation before automobiles became the mode of choice.

At the Depot, where trains stopped on a daily



Main Street in Durbin has been home to many stores and restaurants. The two signs about Main Street are located at the Overlook benches, diagonally across the street from the former Kinder's Market.

Photo by Suzanne Stewart

basis, there was a water tank, which held 50,000 gallons of water. The water supply came from the Durbin Cave, located one mile west of the Depot. When an engine needed a refill, it would be positioned under the tank to be replenished. Depending on the size of the engine, it could travel up

to 100 miles before its next water stop.

Moving deeper into town, the next stop on the walking tour is across the street, diagonally, from the former Kinder's Market, at a small landing by the railroad tracks.

These two signs are all about Main Street during the town's boom. "Wil-

moth & Kerr Store" highlights one of the many company stores found in historic Durbin. Founded in 1897 by R.B. Kerr, the store was the first of its kind in town.

By 1902, the store had 90 vendors, thanks to the railroad. Townsfolk got to experience new groceries

like apricots, coconuts, lemons and oysters.

Four years after Kerr founded the store, Jefferson Davis Wilmoth and Kerr's brother bought the store. Wilmoth ran the store and Kerr farmed and sold produce. Wilmoth worked with his customers and accepted barter as well as cash and credit.

"You must settle each month, for it takes the dough, to make the machine go," was found in the store's ledger from 1919.

The other sign has photographs of different buildings and businesses on Main Street and the wear and tear they suffered, including fires.

Leaving Main Street and taking a right onto Second Street, then another right into the alley, the walking tour continues at the restored town jail, where the sign "One Damn Good Jail" fills visitors in about the history of the small building.

The cinder block building with concrete cells was built after the original

wooden jail burned down in 1938.

The jail was restored by local historian Jason Bauserman in 2015 with grant funding from the Pocahontas County Historic Landmarks Commission and serves as a stark reminder of how bleak a night in the slammer was back in the day.

Moving further down the road, to the right on Highland Avenue, the next sign, "All the Normal Vices," refers to one of the main causes for Durbin men to end up in the aforementioned jail. During prohibition, the town of Durbin was not immune to bootlegging.

Lawmen were breaking up stills left and right, and arresting those who made their own liquor and moonshine.

At that time, Justice of the Peace J.B. Sutton – who had no legal training – was also busy, handing out sentences to the bootleggers. Fines ranged between \$100 and \$300 and came with a jail sentence of 30 to 90 days. For those

See **TOUR**, page 18

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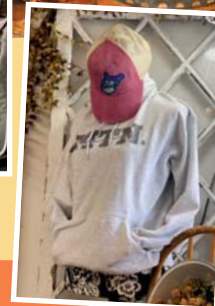
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charges, the convicts served their sentence in the town of Marlinton.

The last two signs in the walking tour are across the street at the entrance to the West Fork Trail.

The first – “A Changing

Industry” – gives the history of logging in the area. From 1880 to 1910, 90 percent of the virgin forests in West Virginia were felled and shipped out. Due to the clear cutting, many issues arose, including erosion, fires and flooding. As a result,

The National Forest Weeks Act of 1911 was established, which permitted the federal government to purchase private land in order to protect the headwaters of rivers and watersheds in the United States and called for fire protection efforts through fed-

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Photo by Suzanne Stewart

One of the several historic buildings in Durbin is the Town Jail, which was restored in 2015 with the help of a grant from the Pocahontas County Historical Landmarks Commission.

eral, state and private co-operation.

The sign also has a sidebar about the Civilian Conservation Corps (CC) which recruited thousands of young men to assist communities in rebounding from economic and environmental issues.

The final sign – “Am-bush at Hanging Rock” – tells the tale of bushwhackers, local fighters, who tormented Civil War soldiers in 1861. Although no Civil War battles were fought in Durbin, it didn't mean the town was safe for soldiers.

The bushwhackers made sure that was the case.

The UPCC printed brochures illustrating the walking tour, with a map and directions for those interested in taking a walk through history. The brochures are available at the Durbin Library.

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Spending time in Marlinton

Blue Ridge Country
July 2022
Elaine Ingram

My husband Bruce and I recently spent time in Marlinton, a Pocahontas County, West Virginia small town that features an abundance of charms.

Our first stop was for dinner at Locust Hill Inn, Cabin and Pub, a place we have stayed previously. This being Thursday we fortuitously arrived in time for Trivia Night. We sat on the outdoor covered patio cooled by the mountain breeze and chatted with co-owner Paula Zorn.

“As my husband Dave and I renovated the house, we discovered a wooden sign where the words January 1922 had been inscribed,” Paula said. “The place was originally known as the Locust Hill Dairy Farm, so we decided to go with Locust

Hill as part of the name.”

The couple added a restaurant in 2014. We watched Dave, whose background is in food service, through the back windows as he prepared dinner.

Bruce opted for a large salad with grilled salmon and a veggie quesadilla filled with mushrooms, cheese, and spinach. I chose a crab cake sandwich with coleslaw remoulade and a side of homemade mac and cheese featuring Parmesan, cheddar, and blue cheese. Both were superb. As good an attraction as the food was, it became clear that many patrons were regulars who came because of quizmaster’s Chuck Cornell’s testing style.

Trivia is just people, places and things,” Chuck



said. “I like to offer weird, off-the-wall questions with lots of side hints,” Chuck said. “I run from the alpha to the omega, but go light on sports trivia so I won’t get booed.”

Teams such as Lazy Assets and Girls Night Out made strong showings. Chuck even paused to



One of the cabins at Jerico Bed & Breakfast and Pre-Civil War Cabins. At left, Dame’s Rocket growing along the Greenbrier River Trail.

chat with one regular contestant who attended on this particular evening via Zoom.

With our evening of food and entertainment

behind us we headed to our lodging at the Jerico B & B and Pre-Civil War Cabins. The eight cab-

See *TIME*, page 21

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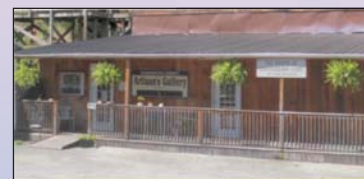


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ins, within a mile of the Greenbrier River Trail, are owned by Tom and Lindie Moore.

Each of the cabins was built before the Civil War," Tom said. "We took them down piece by piece, moved them to sites here and reassembled them."

Each cabin has necessary modern amenities: full kitchen, electric heat, gas fireplace, and outdoor

grill, and hot tub. We also feature both washer and dryer. Nevertheless, Tom believes that every cabin has its own personality which he learned reconstructing and renovating them.

"I don't know if staying here is as much about the cabins as it is about being in Pocahontas County," Tom said as he and I watched cardinals flitting in the morning light.

After a wildflower walk

Trail, which winds through downtown Marlinton, Bruce and I headed to Dirtbean for lunch. Kristy Lanier runs the combination coffee shop/bike shop. Her menu ranges from specialty coffees and teas to wraps, salads and sandwiches.

Bruce chose a chicken avocado wrap with feta, greens, craisins, and balsamic dressing, along with a side salad. I chose The Works Quesadilla: chicken, spinach, tomato, Portobello mushrooms, red



Photo courtesy of Bruce Ingram
Dave Zorn, co-owner of Locust Hill, preparing dinners for Trivia Night guests.

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onions, and cheddar – all delicious.

"We do boxed lunches too, with cold sandwiches, helpful for people going on the trail or other outdoor adventures," Lanier said.

After lunch, Bruce experienced one of those outdoor adventures (trout fishing in the Monongahela National Forest) while I toured downtown. I spent some time visiting the 4th Avenue Gallery at the Marlinton Depot. The depot is one of two sites for members of the Pocahontas County Artisans Co-Op to exhibit and sell. Another favorite destination is the Pocahontas County Opera House which hosts a variety of international performers as well as regional and local ones.

As we drove out of town, I thought back to my earlier conversation with Tom Moore.

"Places like this are getting fewer and farther between," he said.

Indeed, Pocahontas County is a real jewel.

Pocahontas County WV.com

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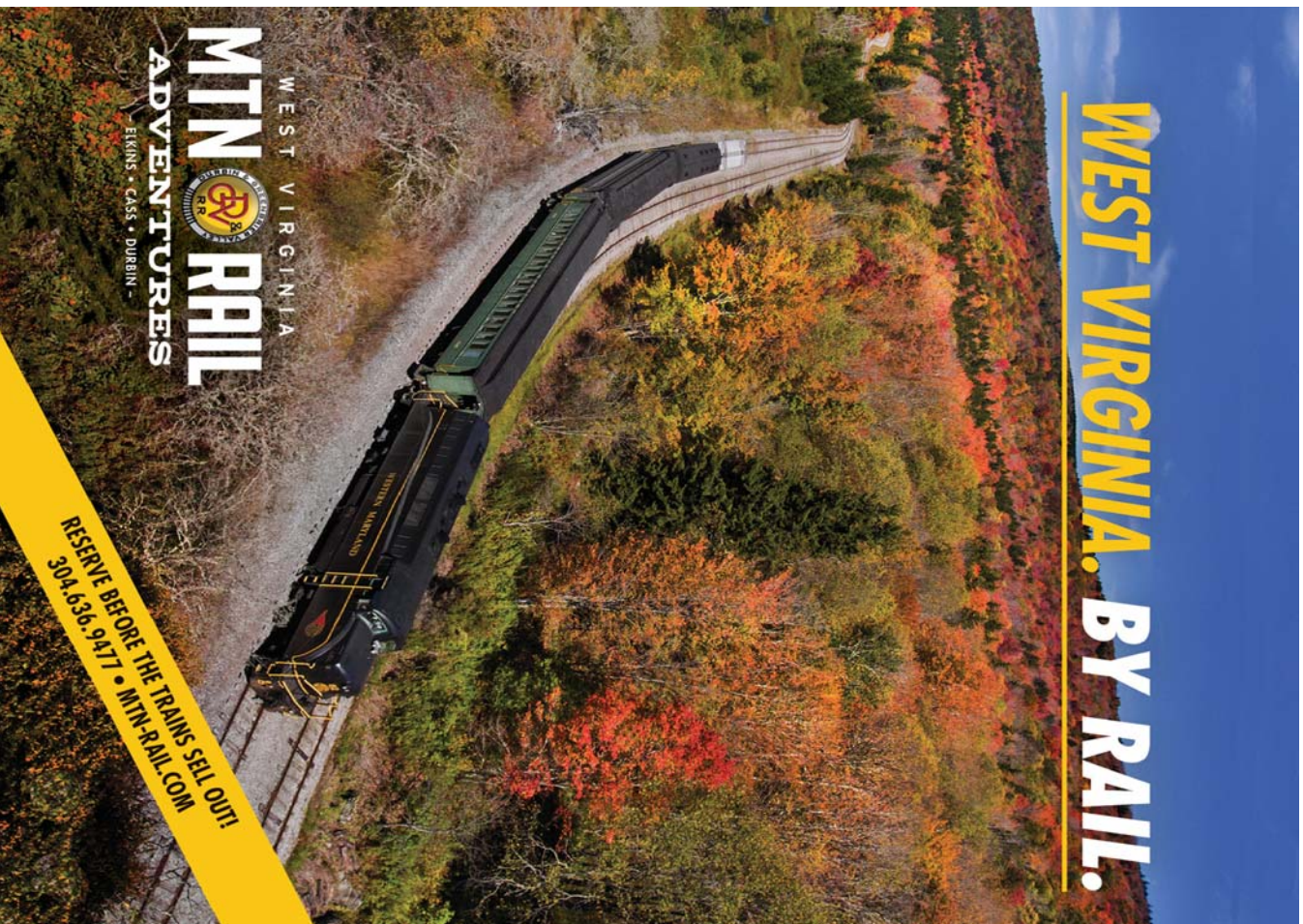
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