

*The Book*  
*of*  
*Bridges*

by  
June Campbell Grossman Welch

*Courtesy of Fort Vance Historical Society*



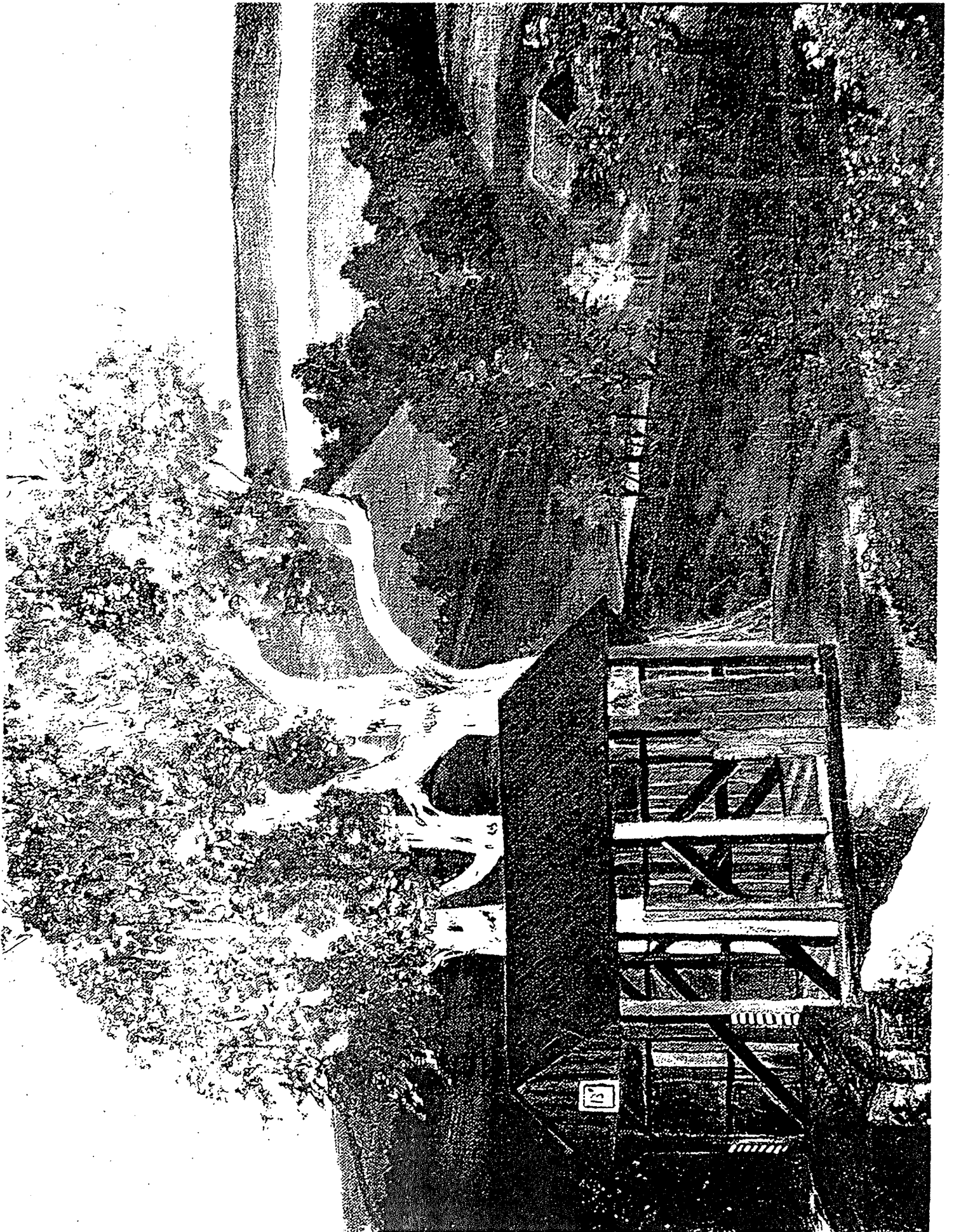
***The***  
***Book***  
***of***  
***Bridges***

**Pictures and stories of nearly 60 bridges, tunnels, trestles, overpasses, & underpasses of the Tri-State, primarily from the Greater Avella area**

**The colored picture on the next page is a photo of a painting  
by Charles B. Temple  
of covered bridge #26 near West Middletown, PA.  
The year of the painting is unknown.**

**Author: June Campbell Grossman-Welch**

**2007**



## **Bridges, Tunnels, Trestles, Overpasses & Underpasses**

**This booklet is published by the A.D. White Research Society, Ltd., headquartered at the Wabash Railroad Station in Avella, PA. It is one of the Society's many attempts to provide affordable materials to the general public that may create interest in local history of the part of the world into which we were born.**

**This particular booklet contains copies of old photographs of bridges, tunnels, trestles, overpasses, and underpasses that played a part in developing the type of community in which we find ourselves. They are each accompanied by at least a line or two of explanation of the picture, giving its geographic location and other pertinent data where available. In a few instances, a story of general interest may also be given.**

**The Society would appreciate your comments on the project and your feelings about the value to you of our continuing efforts to make this type of booklet available. We have, at our fingertips, photos and historical records of old mills, homesteads, schools, churches, stores, mines, railroad complexes, disasters, other buildings, farm and town scenes. Each of these could also be presented in booklet form, similar to the one you are examining now. Please take time to give us your opinion on this matter. Thank you.**

**Author: June Campbell Grossman-Welch**

**The Craighead Tunnel  
(Plummer Mill side)**



**The Buxton Tunnel**



No doubt over the century since their construction, these tunnels have seen their share of the lives of the inhabitants of the area around them. One can imagine hikers caught in a surprise rainstorm running a few feet inside for shelter. Or perhaps a young couple taking a romantic stroll in the springtime, stepping a few feet inside to sneak a kiss or two. These are merely suppositions on our part. But there is one thing we DO know for certain.

On the night of July 16, 1922, coal miners from the greater Avella area made their way through all three of these tunnels on their path to what will always be remembered as the famous Cliftonville Riot. It was, no doubt, a trip filled with fear and trepidation. And history proved how many of these fears were well founded. Even yet today, in the year 2007, there has never been made an accurate accounting of those who lost their lives that fateful night, nor can there ever be. Tradition has it that some were buried on the tops of these tunnels by their companions with no record of even so much as their names.

NOTE: A beautiful story on the theme of this riot is available by its author, Joseph Bogo of the Avella area. Interested persons may purchase this book entitled "*Holes in the Hills*" by contacting the A.D. White Society at the address or phone at the front of this booklet.

During the years of 1902 through 1904 when the Wabash Railroad was under construction, an horrendous epidemic of smallpox infested the men who were working there. Most were young, non-English speaking immigrants from Europe with no family members in this country. They had been taken in by the dream that America was the land of opportunity. Large numbers of them died from this dread disease and since they had no money, were buried on the tops of these tunnels in shallow, hand-dug graves by their fellow workers. No record was ever kept of their identities.

NOTE: The following old photo shows some of the Cliftonville mining houses as well as part of the tippie.

### Cliftonville



## **The McGugin Tunnel**

**The McGugin Tunnel in Mt. Pleasant Township was constructed on the land of Daniel McGugin, pioneer of that family. Having emigrated from Ireland, Daniel arrived in Washington County in 1770.**

**The story of McGugin's arrival as told by the late A.D. White states that he was a sheep farmer, and in taking up land to have patented, chose territory where huge heaps of rocks had been piled in very high stacks by Mother Nature in several places on the land. This would have made plowing to raise crops somewhat difficult. But Daniel had other things in mind when he claimed his settlement.**

**Wolves were prevalent in the area and preyed unmercifully on sheep, destroying whole herds in a brief time. But Mr. McGugin knew that the rams of his flock would protect the ewes and lambs if they could get them out of reach of the wolves. This they were able to do by taking the flocks to the top of the rocks. The ram would then take his place in front of the flock and with his horns, face any wolf foolish enough to attack them. Even today, after nearly 240 years, the area is still referred to as McGugins Rocks.**

**Sometime after the death of Daniel McGugin, an oil well was sunk on his land to a depth of 1800 feet. It proved to be a powerful flow of gas which accidentally caught fire one day. No one seemed able to extinguish it and the light from it could be seen at night for a distance of 20 miles. People held all sorts of dances, picnics, and parties in the light of the McGugin oil well, long after the surrounding territory was in the darkness of nightfall. The light was still burning as late as 1882, according to the Washington County historian, Boyd Crumrine.**

## **McGugin Railroad Tunnel**





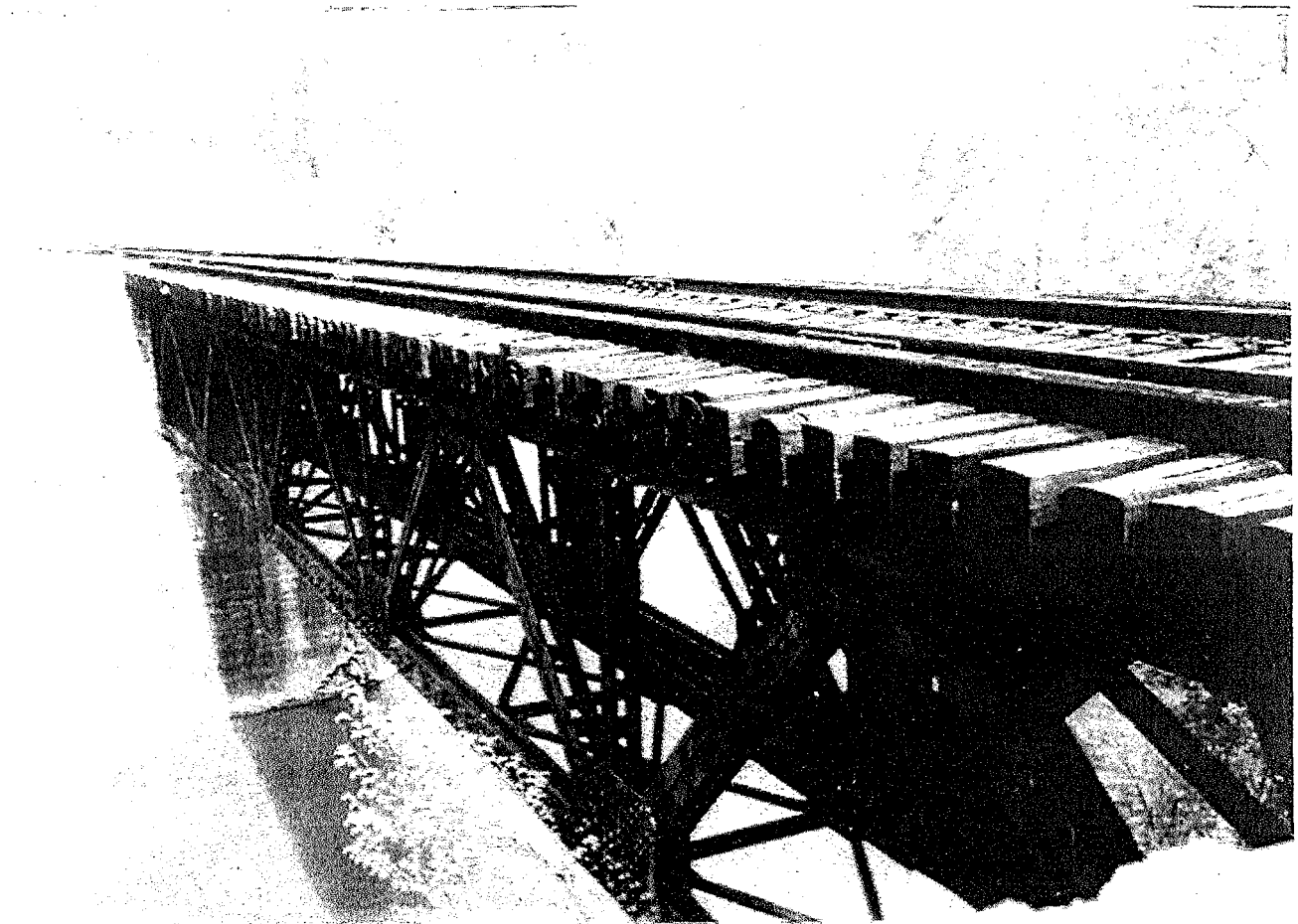
## **The Trestle over Cross Creek at Virginville**

**The trestle over Cross Creek near Virginville, Brooke County, WV, is still standing at this writing. A scary landmark it is for persons viewing it for the first time. But in the "Old Days", every school child who lived in the mining village of New Camp crossed it twice each school day - once, on the way to Scotts Run School House, and once, on the way back home. This scary, dangerous trestle was the only way out of New Camp to the outside world.**

**On each day during the school term, 30-35 kids would be on the trestle at the same time - walking, or running, or crawling between the tracks. Some brave souls actually walked on the tops of the rails. Yet as dangerous as it must have been, no one consulted ever remembered of a school child having a mishap there.**

**One tragic accident with an adult did, however, happen one year when the creek was angry. This man became confused and was apparently frightened. He began to crawl on his knees crosswise, instead of lengthwise, and fell into the swollen stream below. His body snagged near the "Old Mill Tavern" and was not found for two months.**

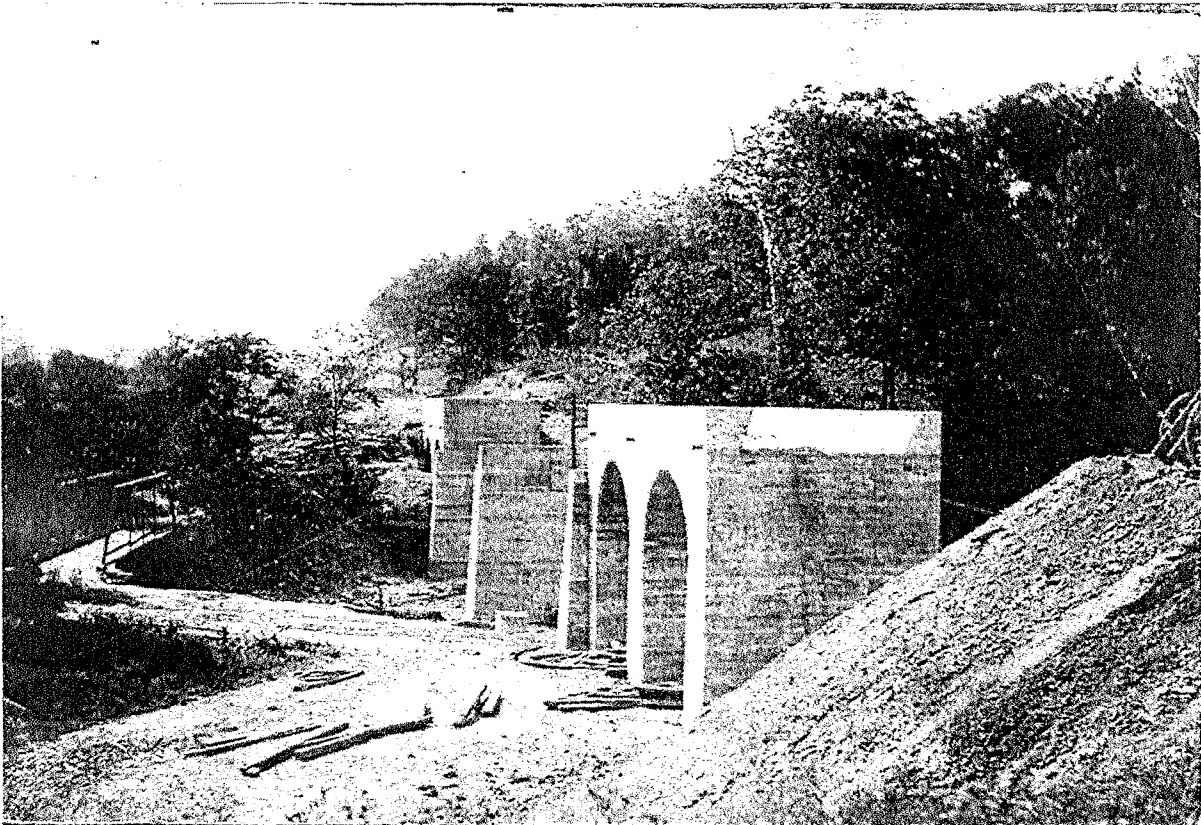
## **The Trestle over Cross Creek at Virginville**



## **The Trestle at Rockdale**

**The first picture shown here was taken when the trestle at Rockdale, Cross Creek Road, Brooke County, WV, was under construction. It was a long structure, spanning both the creek and the road. Although many changes have been made since the taking of this photo, the arch shaped supports seen here are still evident today. But the little bridge, shown on the left side of this shot, has been replaced more than once since this picture was taken.**

## **The Construction of the Trestle at Rockdale**



**The picture on the next page following this story, was taken July 2, 1904, over a century ago, when the first run over the new Wabash Railroad line was made. As written in 1998 by Kathryn Slasor:**

**" The train left the Wabash Station in Pittsburgh at 4:55 p.m., destination, St. Louis, Missouri. It is shown in this picture as it crossed the trestle at Rockdale.**

**When the train left the station in Pittsburgh, great crowds of people cheered. And they continued to cheer all the way to Mingo Junction. The new Wabash Bridge had been constructed over the Ohio, the tunnels had been bored through the hills, and trestles had been built over gorges.**

**One can scarcely imagine today the excitement as bands along the Cross Creek Valley hammered out the tune, 'Meet Me In St. Louis'! The Wabash had been born!"**

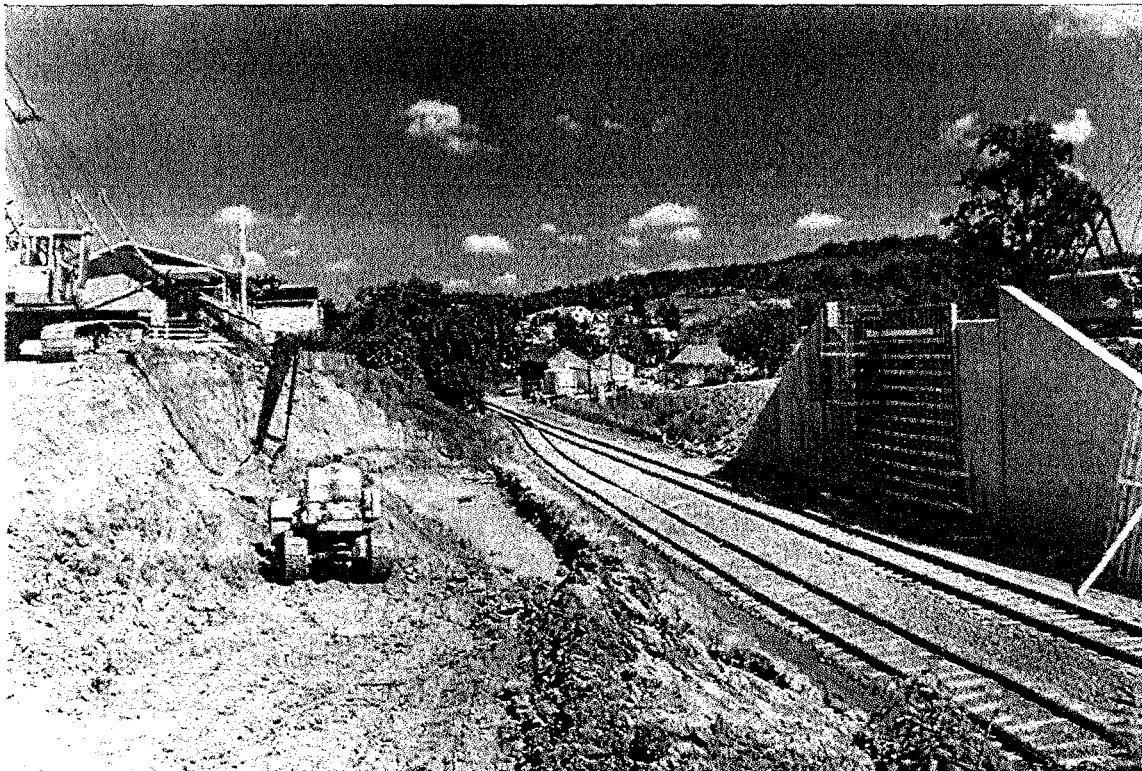
## **Overpasses & Underpasses**

### **The Overpass in Avella between Downtown & Highland Avenue**

There may have been a time when if it were necessary to get to the Highland Avenue area of Avella from Main Street, one had to actually cross over the very tracks themselves. No one seems to remember when a bridge of sorts was finally created in the form of an overpass. And no picture of that early edifice has surfaced. But by the mid 1980s, all of this changed. The bridge which spans the tracks today and the ramps leading to that bridge were constructed. The picture below shows part of that early construction.

About 30 years prior to the construction shown here, a very unfortunate accident took place on the tracks beneath the existing bridge. It was two days before Christmas in 1953. Ross Cheesebrough, an Avella resident, was crossing the tracks, just as he did nearly every day of his adult life. He worked for Sam Campbell at the Lumber Yard. No one ever knew exactly what happened, but his family remembered that his eyesight had been troubling him. It was cold and it was foggy. Perhaps he did not hear the oncoming train and with his sight problem, he most certainly did not see it. At any rate, the train hit him, resulting in death. His son, who ran to the scene of the tragedy, never forgot the horror that awaited him. It was a Christmas the family never forgot.

### **The Overpass in Avella**



## **The Colliers Underpass**

**At the upper end of Colliers, near the jointure of Halls Road with Harmon Creek Road, stands an unusual underpass. Beneath the Panhandle Railroad which, at this point, is running between Hanlin Station in Pennsylvania and Colliers in West Virginia, are two arches. One of them is the underpass for traffic on the roadway to get beneath the railroad, and the other is for the waters of Harmon Creek to do likewise. The house on the right was once the old Ryland homestead, and the bridge once situated here was the old Ryland covered bridge pictured on another page.**

## **The Colliers Underpass**



**Bridge in Upper Collier near the foot of Halls Road  
(Halls Road passes over this bridge)**



## The Underpass at Hanlin Station

The underpass at Hanlin Station is located very near the line between Jefferson and Hanover townships in Washington County, PA. The township line is actually Harmon Creek and the underpass is located very near this waterway.

No one living today of course remembers the construction of either the underpass or the Panhandle Railroad whose existence forced the creation of the tunnel. It was during the Civil War era that this rail system was built, but no one seems to know if the underpass were a later necessity or if it were dug at the time the tracks were laid. It is possible that the road existing today, that passes through the underpass, did not even exist when the tracks were laid. Certainly the terrain surrounding the tunnel is quite different than it must have been when the Panhandle was created, and it is possible that one could then travel across the tracks with the horse and buggy and simply did not really need an underpass to get to the other side. It may have been the coming of the automobile that created the idea to make a pass beneath the railroad as a safety factor. This writer has been unable to find definitive proof of either when or why the hole in the hill was dug. But regardless of the reasons why, one thing is certain: it must have been well constructed. Even today, after perhaps nearly a century and a half, the little underground passageway serves its purpose.

### The Hanlin Underpass in the early 1900s

(courtesy of John Kranak)



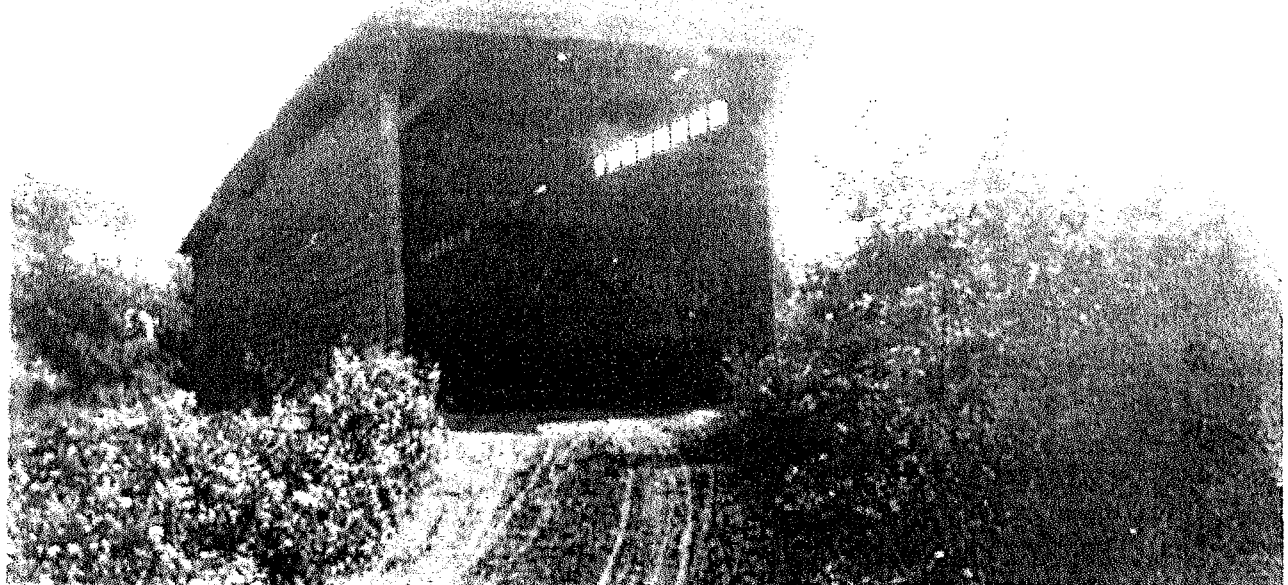
## **Bridges**

### **The Covered Bridge at Hanlin Station**

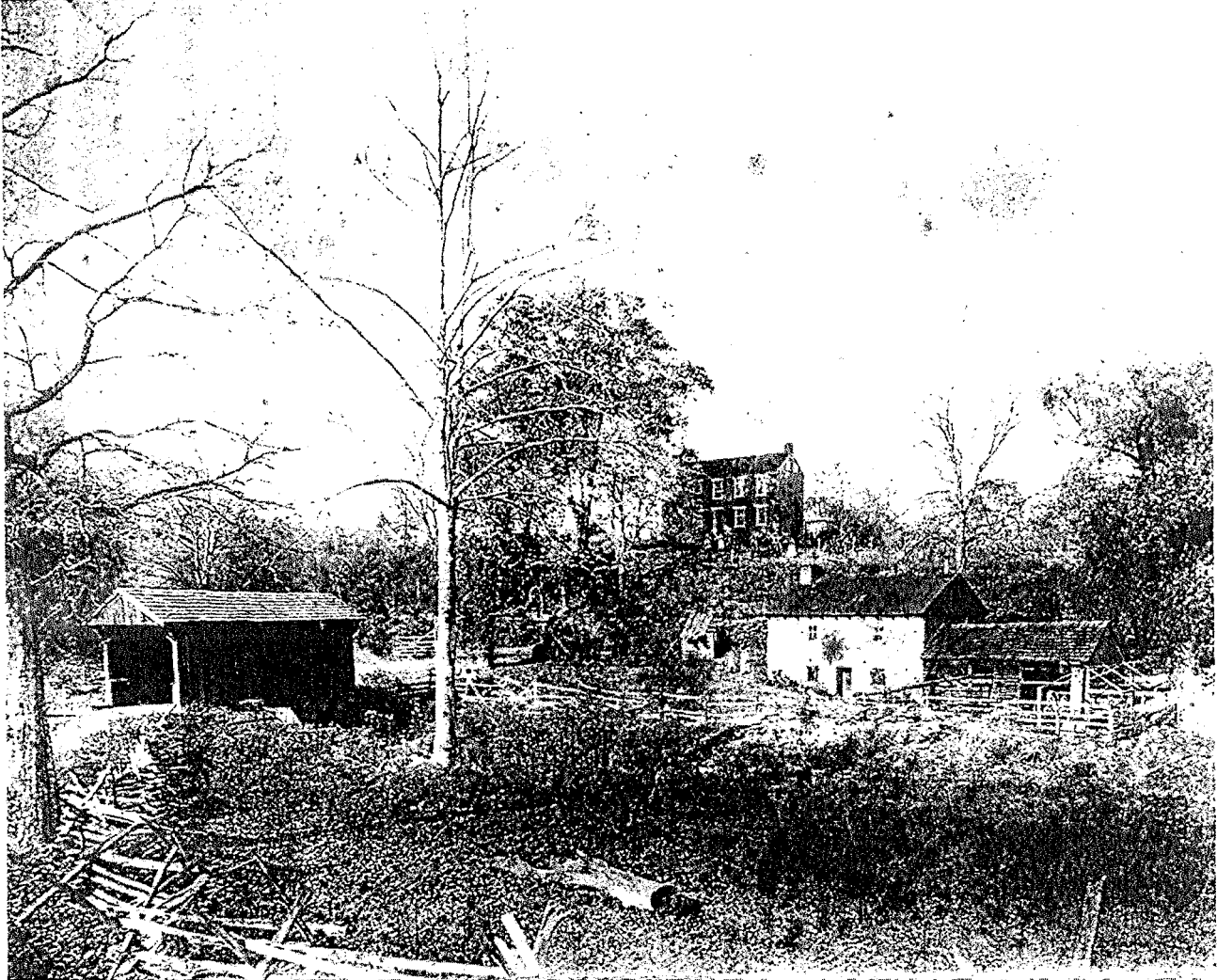
A person traveling down the steep, winding hill from Eldersville to Hanlin Station in Jefferson Township, Washington County, PA, is greeted by the old Panhandle Railroad Underpass. Upon emerging from it at the other side, a choice of direction to pursue presents itself. A right hand turn would take the traveler to Dinsmore, then Francis Mine, and finally, Burgettstown. If, instead, the traveler opted to go straight ahead, he would be headed for Old Steubenville Pike and points beyond. Here, his first confrontation in the old days would have been the covered bridge over Harmon Creek pictured here.

The late Warren Columbia, historian of bye-gone days, recalled that in 1904 or 1905, when he was circa 5 years of age, he was on the spring wagon with his father, hauling empty milk cans from the station. Sprinkles turned to torrents of rain as they pulled on to the bridge. As the water became higher, his father whipped up the horses and said, "This is not going to improve!" Shortly after they pulled from the bridge, they heard a crash behind them. Although the bridge had been built high above the water and was reached by ramps, it was no match for the cloudburst. Father and son escaped with their lives. No one alive today, of course, remembers seeing this bridge.

### **The Covered Bridge over Harmon Creek at Hanlin**



**The Covered Bridge at the Lysander Patterson Homestead**



**Close-up of the Lysander Patterson Brick House**

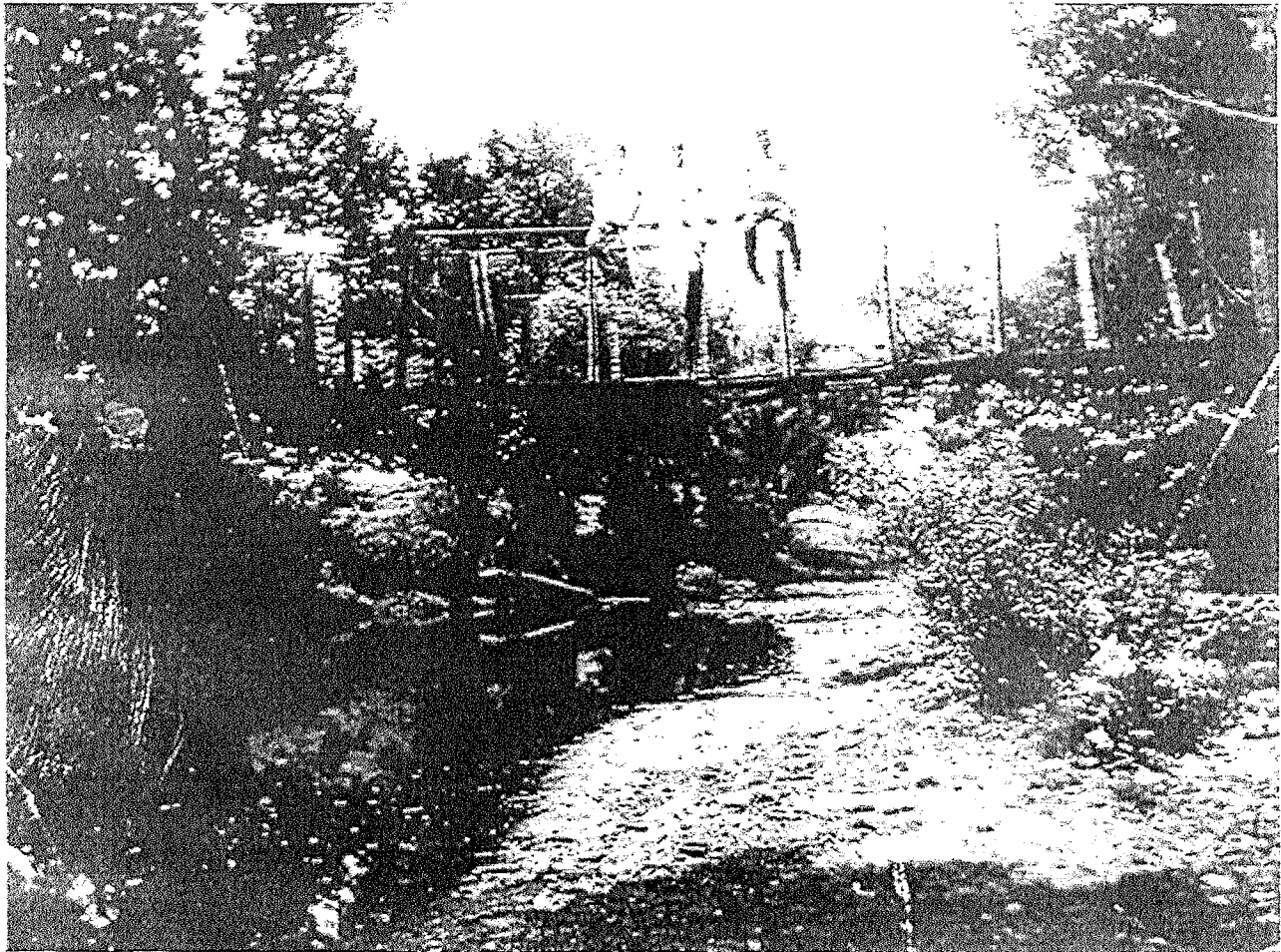


## **The Swinging Bridge over Cross Creek in Brooke County, WV**

**A swinging bridge once spanned Cross Creek near where Scotts Run flows into it. This little bridge was booming with activity in the teens and early twenties of the last century. It was the easiest way to get from the mining camps of Cliftonville and New Camp to Virginville. And of course Virginville was where the post office stood and where the railroad station was located. Thus it became the starting-off point to go anywhere ones heart might desire.**

**Today, nothing remains but the piers that once supported its swinging span between them. Gone are the sounds of life from those days when the mining camps were the centers of existence for countless families. Now, it is a quiet, woodsy glen where the silence is broken only by the songs of birds in the treetops and the babbling of Cross Creek on its never- ending journey toward the great Ohio.**

## **The Swinging Bridge in Brooke County, WV**



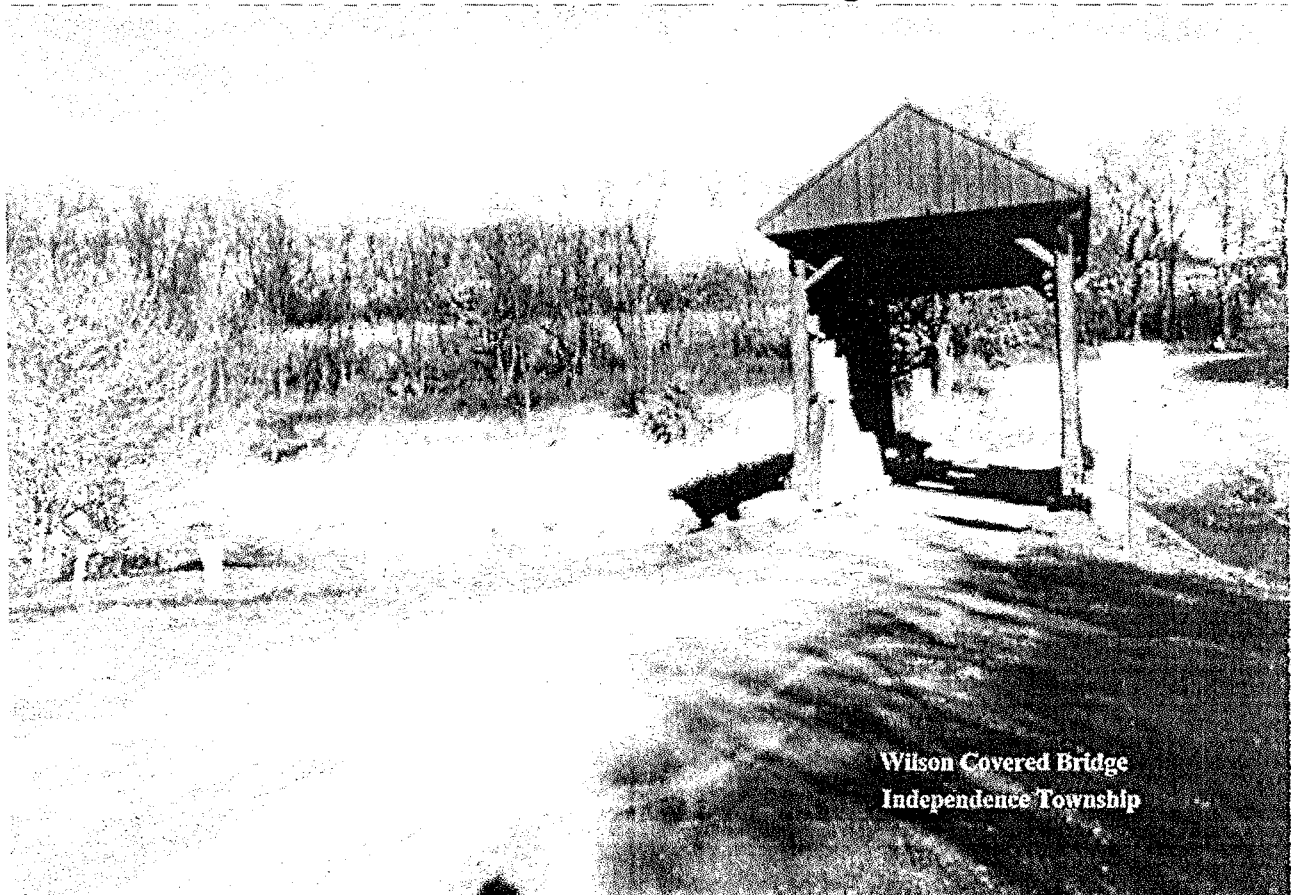


## **The Wilson Covered Bridge**

**Sarah Wilson, of Mt. Hope Ridge in Independence Township, and her late husband, Jim, were once the proud owners of the Wilson farm in Cross Creek Township and of the beautiful covered bridge that once graced the property. Standing near the old Wilson Flour Mill with the mansion house nearby, this delicate little covered bridge was one of the most attractive of its day. But in the name of progress, the valley was flooded and all that once was, is no more.**

**An attempt was made to preserve the bridge, by taking it up stream to the end of the lake where it was placed on a concrete foundation for refurbishing. But after moving it to this "safe" place, arsonists nearly destroyed it. It was later rebuilt, only to meet with the same fate once again. It is rumored that the intent of the community is to make another stab at re-creating it. But to date, this has not yet occurred.**

## **The Wilson Covered Bridge**



## **The Bridge at Seldom Seen**

**The part of Jefferson Township, Washington County, PA, that is located just through the State Line Tunnel from Virginville, is called Seldom Seen. It borders Independence Township, the two being separated by the flow of Cross Creek. The house shown in the picture of the bridge is the home of Louis and Gladys Kaposy. (Some people refer to the little bridge as the Kaposy Bridge.) The mining camp of Seldom Seen was farther up the hollow to the rear of the house.**

**When the mines shut down in 1946, Coal Hollow Road from Seldom Seen toward the village of Independence was abandoned, a local coal company having begun strip mining in 1938 that caused "slips" in the road and nearby hillside. By 1941, everyone had moved out of the mining camp of Seldom Seen.**

**Louis Kaposy, a knowledgeable historian, is the best authority on mines and camps of that area. Louis says that his father bought this old Johnson farm, and that he has lived on it since 1919. The bridge, now gone, was the only way to get across the stream. Louis has re-floored it twice, himself. The most tragic event was when the Flood of 1912 took not only the bridge but the house that preceded the one shown.**

**Louis says that all the houses in Seldom Seen were double ones, built of pine wood. Thus as families moved out, they could not take the houses with them as was done in most mining camps. Pine wood is easily split and is useless the second time around.**

**Before crossing the bridge, John Brown once had a race track on the right. The Buxton Mill was near the creek where Jacob Buxton Jr. in 1836 tumbled off the third floor, when he got his foot tangled in a rope, and fell dead at his wife's feet. And as Kathryn Slasor once wrote: " Seldom Seen may have been seldom seen, but it left its mark in local history."**

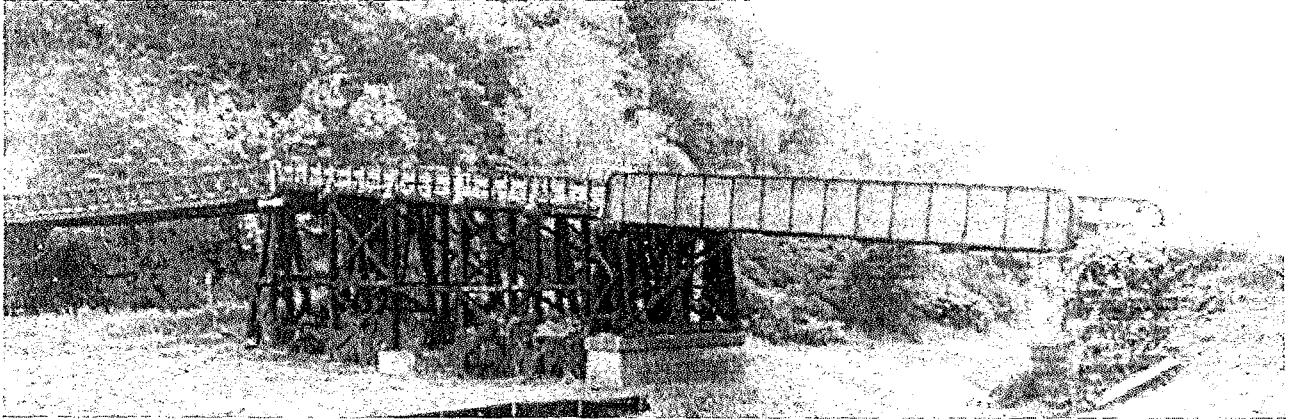
## **The Bridge at Seldom Seen**



## **Bridge at the foot of Colliers Way**

**Pictured are two views of the bridge at the foot of Hospital Hill & Colliers Way not far from the old Colliers Steel Plant in Brooke County, WV. Recently demolished.**

## **Bridge near Colliers Way at the foot of Hospital Hill**

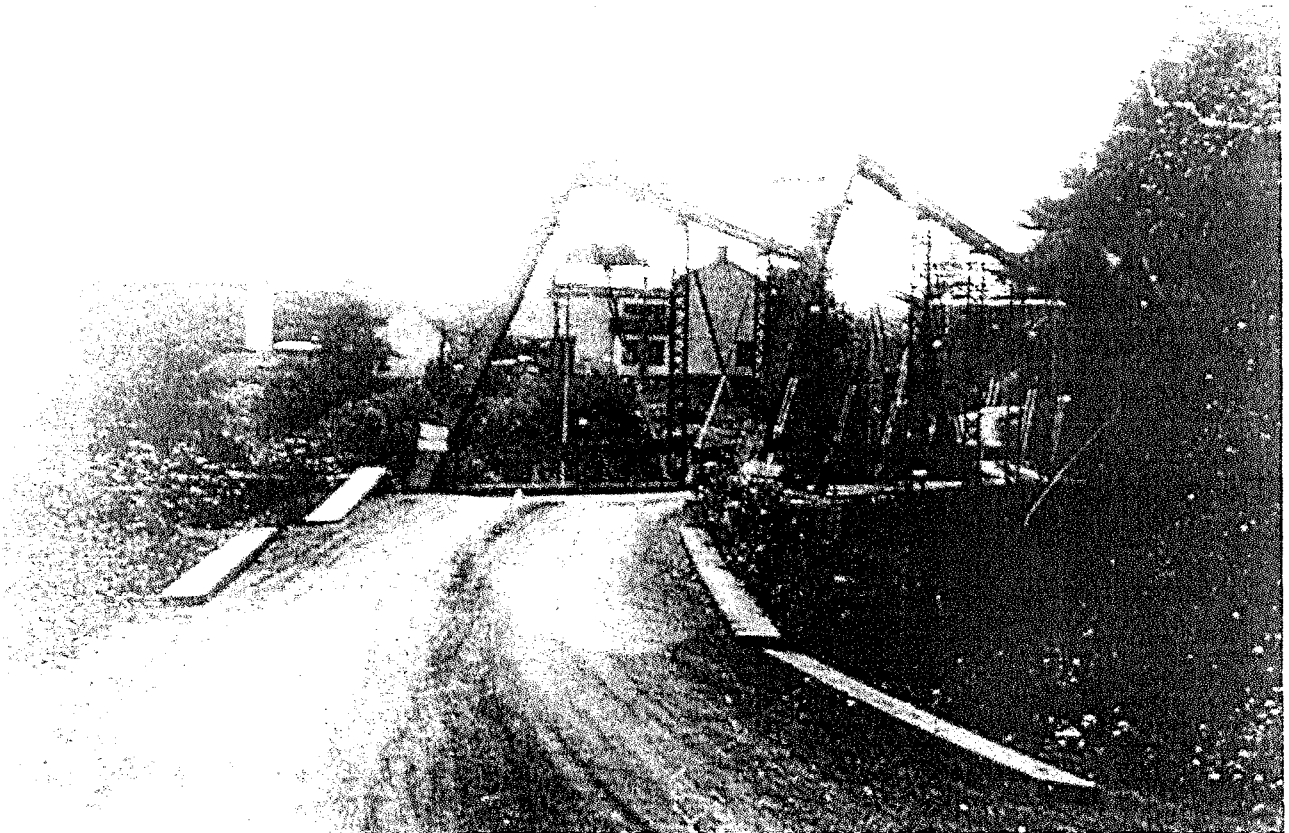


## **Iron Bridge at Murdocksville**

**The old iron bridge which once stood near Murdocksville, Robinson Township, Washington County, PA, is pictured in this very old photo.**

**The idea to switch from wood to iron for the construction of bridges was a mammoth improvement in its day. Wood was constantly being damaged, not only by rain, sleet, and snow, but by the rays of hot summer suns which tended to dry out wooden floors, causing early deterioration. This quick destruction of wooden floored bridges was the incentive to make covers for them. Fortunately, this resulted in a picturesque view still deeply cherished by esthetically minded souls, long after the actual bridges themselves have rotted away. Iron bridges put an end, not only to the rotting away aspect, but to the rare beauty that only a covered bridge possesses.**

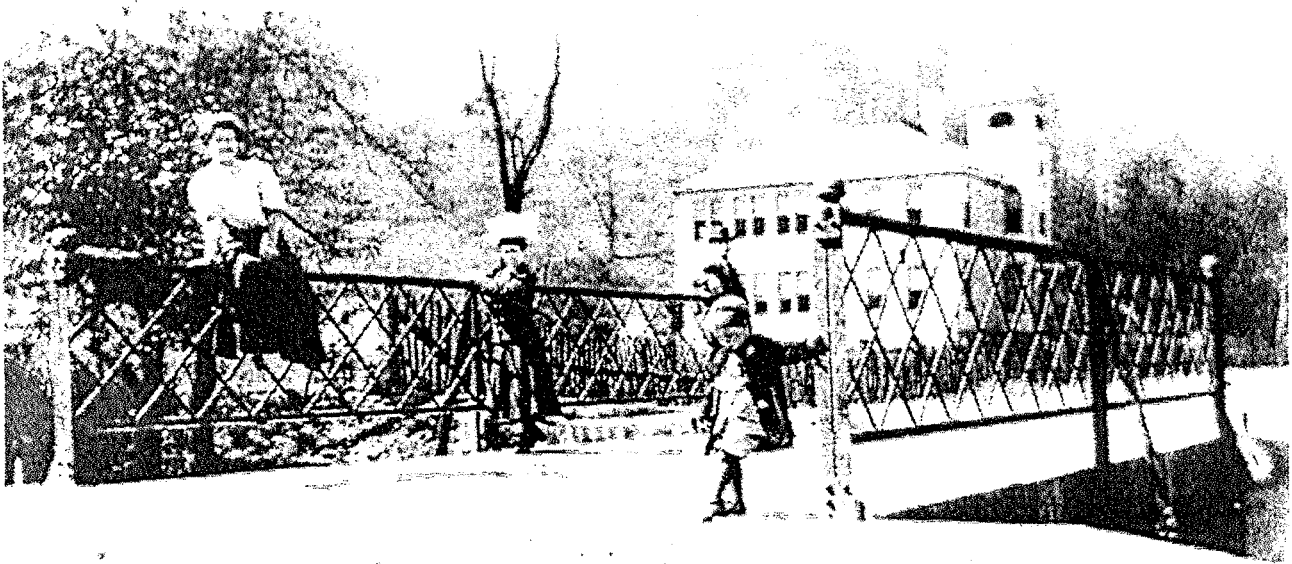
## **Murdocksville Iron Bridge**



## Colliers Bridge

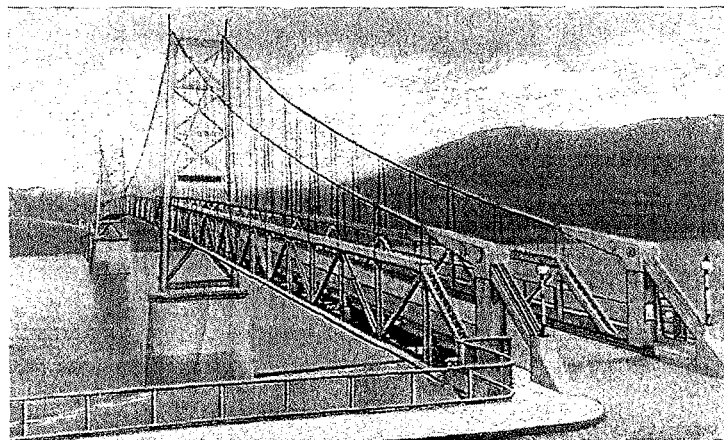
The village of Colliers, Brooke County, WV, once boasted of the school house pictured here. Students who came from the upper end of town had to cross the stream from Mechling Hill that flows into Harmon Creek. The bridge shown here provided that service. Both the bridge and the schoolhouse were replaced many years ago. The school, built in 1907 was replaced in 1922 by a red brick building.

## Colliers Bridge



## Fort Steuben Bridge

At one time, the Market Street Bridge was the only passageway from the Panhandle to Steubenville, Ohio. This Fort Steuben Bridge was a traveling amenity after its construction. Rumor has it that it may be dismantled in the near future. Time will tell.



## The Harmon Creek Wagon Bridge

This picture is of the Wagon Bridge over Harmon Creek that stood near the old Hindman Mill, Brooke County, WV. Another man had built the mill but became weary of milling. Meanwhile, John Hindman had become weary of farming. The story handed down by word of mouth is that the men made an even trade - a farm for a mill.

A picturesque landmark in its own right, this little bridge was a favorite of people of all ages in the days before the Flood of 1912 when it was completely destroyed. It was never rebuilt. Some old timers say that it stood where the "Rat Hole" was later constructed.

The Panhandle Rail Road tracks can be seen on the left in the picture. The white building with the five windows on the side is the first Christian Church of the Hollidays Cove area. It was also destroyed in the flood and never rebuilt. A new and very different looking structure was, however, built on Main Street the following year much farther uptown. This church in the picture stood approximately where the Weirton Lumber Company now stands. The line of houses in this picture stood along Cove Road.

## The Harmon Creek Wagon Bridge



**Groceries were delivered twice a week from Emma Thompson's Grocery Store.**

**We got our milk from Gazell's farm on the road to Avella just before the turn-off to Pine Flats. . . . I loved living in Jefferson. I loved the place and the people, our house, and my teachers. I loved everything about it.**

**In 1991, a local historical society had a little party for A.D. White. My sister and I attended. When he saw us, he called us by name, as if we were still little school children, fifty-four years before, in the days of Turney School. He said he remembered our dad, the house we lived in, and our whole family. It was his 97<sup>th</sup> birthday! What a wonderful man! When I grew up, I realized that his presence as school superintendent, was one of the determining factors in making my life at Jefferson Camp and Turney School the cherished memory that it is today.**

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### **The Cut at the Mouth of Cross Creek**



**This very old photo is labeled: "The cut at the mouth of Cross Creek"...(rest illegible). It may be located where the Wabash Railroad comes through the hill south of Follansbee, WV, after which it crosses the Railroad Bridge over the Ohio River. It is placed in this collection with the hope that someone viewing it may be able to confirm exactly where the picture was taken.**

## **Kreps Covered Bridge**

**Covered bridges in the greater Avella area, once rather numerous, are decreasing with the passing of time. Fortunately, some historically minded people have banded together to either preserve some of those that still remain, or to move them to safer locations and refurbish them. The Covered Bridge Festival in the western Pennsylvania area has been one such attempt to create interest in the preservation of these historic landmarks.**

**The Kreps Bridge, pictured here, is one of those visited yearly by fans of the Covered Bridge Festival. It is a time when weary parents pack up the kids and head for the country to enjoy a day out in mother nature and to talk about how different life in rural America once was from what it is today. And, of course, if Grandma or Grandpa just happen to be along for the trip, children are given a serious lecture about how great life was in "the good old days".**

### **The Kreps Bridge (near Cherry Valley in Washington County, PA)**





## The Market Street Bridge

Pictures of the Market Street Bridge, seen here in the far distance, proved to be few and far between. This bridge, still standing today, crosses the great Ohio from north of Follansbee, WV, to Steubenville, Ohio. It is hoped that this picture is interesting enough of itself that viewers will forgive the absence of a close up of this span that has seen much of life in its century of existence. Completed circa 1905, the bridge did not give travelers as many problems as did Route 2 Highway that one had to traverse to arrive at the West Virginia portal to the bridge.

Shown in the picture is the devastation created by a landslide that uprooted the trolley tracks and apparently made passengers traveling that fateful day a little late for their destinations. Such landslides were more numerous than one might have expected since the hillside had a great tendency to slip toward the river at the least provocation. Its extreme perpendicular height and nearly impassable terrain led early surveyors to give it the euphonic name of "The Intolerable Cliffs". Even those workers in this area in today's world, who have at their command all sorts of marvelous digging and hauling equipment, still refer to it by its ancient name, supposedly given by those early pioneer surveyors of the late 1700s.

## The Market Street Bridge



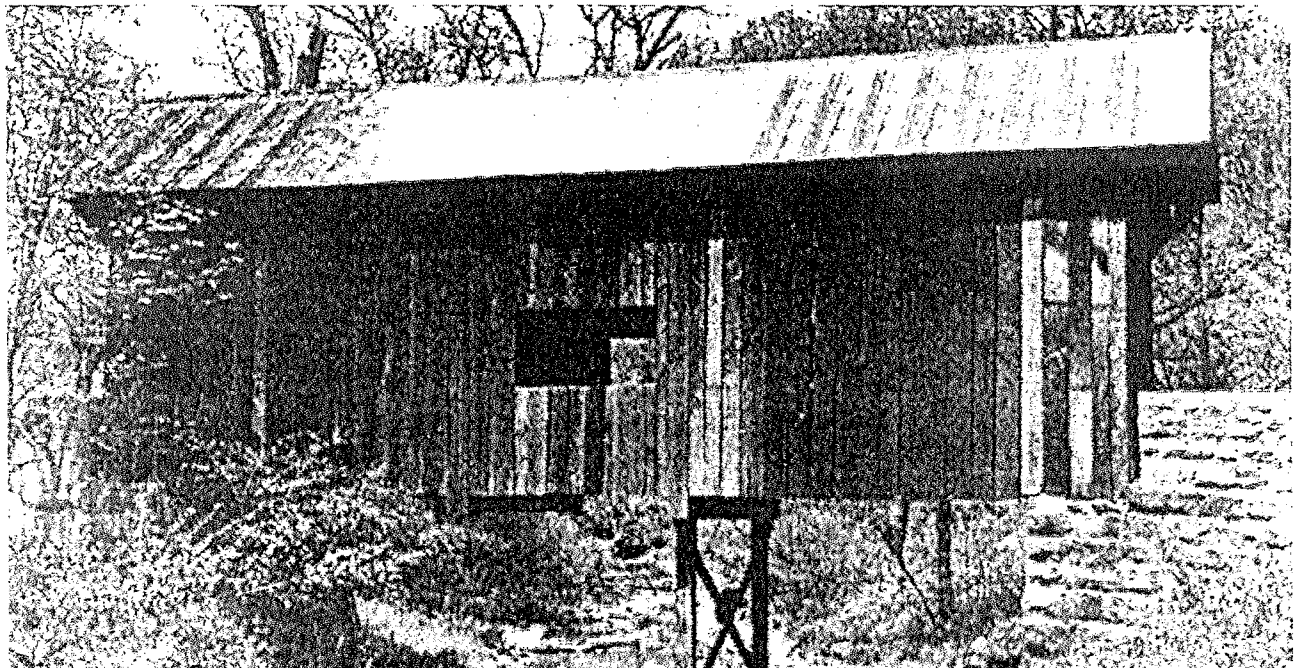
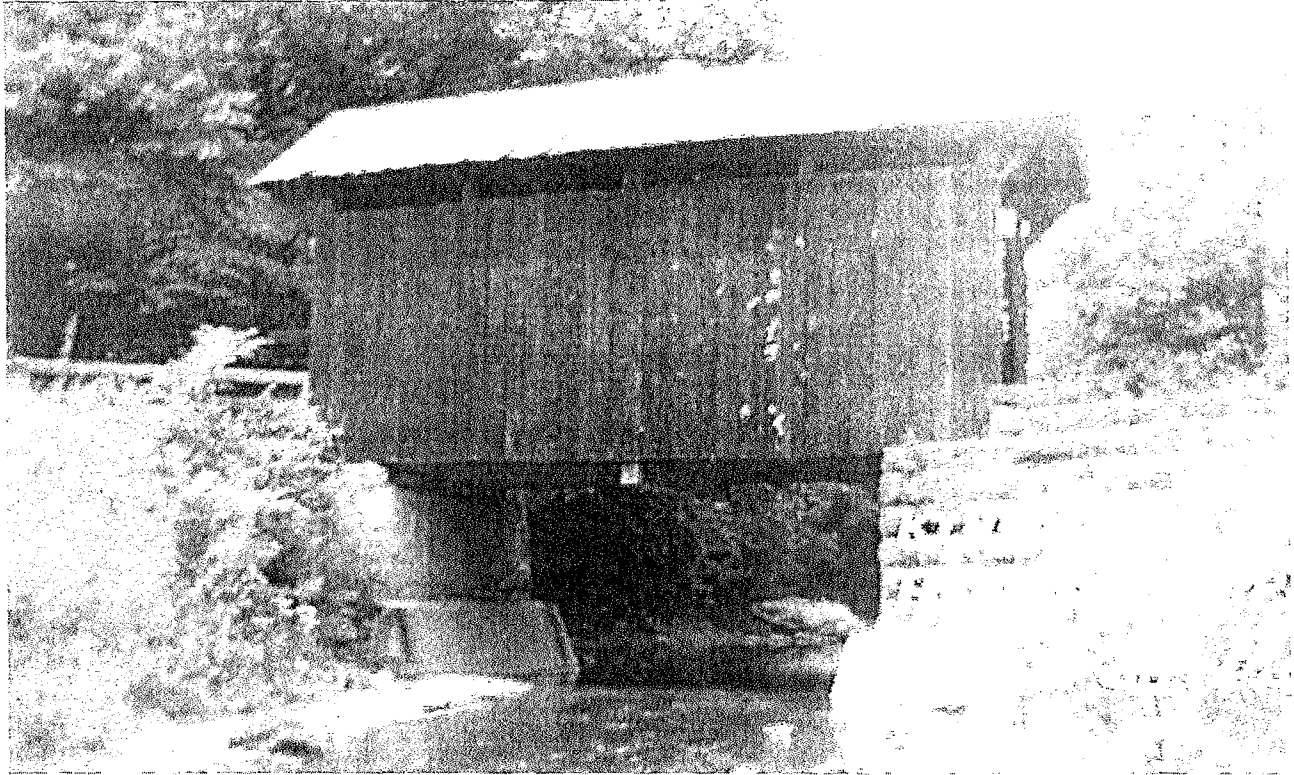
## Two Covered Bridges at Rea, PA

The scene displayed below is from a very old newspaper clipping, once in the possession of A.D. White. At the side of the picture he made note that it was taken at Rea, PA. No one consulted today has any recollection of ever having seen two covered bridges situated so near together in this unusual manner as is shown here. The fault may lie in not having asked the right question to the right person. Or it could be that no one living today is old enough to have remembered this scene, the bridges having been demolished too many years ago. Or perhaps there are two little country villages named Rea, PA. A stranger might come up with the fourth possibility - namely, that Mr. White was wrong in his judgment. This writer seriously doubts the last possibility. But then - everyone is entitled to make at least one mistake in a lifetime of 99 years and 8 months.

## Two Covered Bridges at Right Angles to each other located at Rea, PA ???



**Two Unknown Covered Bridges  
Kings Creek, Hanover Township, Washington County, PA**



## **A Chapter of the Johnnie Amspoker Story**

It was the Sunday evening before Labor Day in very early September of 1912. Johnnie Amspoker had asked his daughter, Zelma, to hitch the team to the surrey with the fringe on top. His wife, Maggie, and daughters Marie, Zelma and little Helen were going along with him to the Camp Meeting that was held annually at Independence, Pennsylvania.

On the way home, they traveled the old Pot Rock Road down the long hill toward Scott's Run and Cross Creek, intending to cross the covered bridge at the foot of the hill. They would then climb the last mile and a half up the narrow, rocky Amspoker Hill Road to home. As they left the Camp Meeting, they noticed a storm approaching. Johnnie had lived through many storms in his lifetime, but there was something different about this one. Even little Helen, not yet old enough for school, recalled about eighty years later that the lightning came very fast, in quick little jabs of brilliance, each one following on its predecessor with breathtaking speed.

Johnnie encouraged Zelma to urge the horses on a little faster. But before they reached the bottom of the hill, the rain struck. All those who survived that day of disaster in 1912 remembered until their deaths that evening of rain. It came down in torrents, blinding everything unfortunate enough to be in its path. Zelma did the best she could to hurry her beloved horses toward the valley below. Somehow, through the blinding rain, they made it to the bottom of the hill and on to the covered bridge at old Pot Rock. Grateful for shelter, they huddled together in the surrey, comforting each other in their rain-soaked clothing, thankful for the relative security of the old bridge.

Time went by, and they waited. Surely the rain would soon abate. But instead of the reprieve they had hoped would come, to allow them time for the last mile and half home, it continued to rain. Hardly before or since has anyone living through that terrible rain experienced anything like it. It showed no signs of stopping. And suddenly, Johnnie Amspoker made a fast, momentous decision.

Whether it was some inborn sense of disaster, or perhaps some instinct of survival inherited from his pioneer forebears who had witnessed so many close calls with death - we will never know. But in the midst of that torrential down-pour, Johnnie told Zelma to get the horses started. They were going to make a run for home.

Out into that terrible storm they went - that beautiful, beloved team finding their way up the long, steep hill by animal instinct in that blinding hurricane of rain. Little Helen recalled until her death, that terrible fright in her tiny heart on that seemingly endless journey. Forever, the words of her father went ringing in her ears, " Whip them up, Zelma. Whip them up!", he urged, as he trusted his faithful animals with the lives of his precious family.

Somehow, they managed to get home. Maggie grabbed tiny Helen in her arms, she and Marie making a dash for the door as a river of water totally obliterated the driveway and front lawn of the old homestead. Johnnie grabbed one horse and Zelma the other, leading them quickly to the stable, leaving the surrey stranded in several inches of water on what was once a lush, green lawn.

The next morning, Johnnie hitched up the team to deliver milk down to Scott's Run. He made the trip as usual. But when he arrived at the foot of the hill, his eyes met a

## **The Old Bridge at Browntown**

One of the local areas prone to severe flooding over the years from the rambunctious waters of Cross Creek is the Browntown region of Avella. The last such disaster was in September of 2004 when the entire lower level of the territory was nearly annihilated by the raging creek. A number of well-kept homes were all but destroyed, while others required repairs and renovations which will live in the minds of their occupants for the rest of their earthly lives. This is, of course, to say nothing of the loss of irreplaceable personal treasures.

The picture shown here was the property of Eugene Georgetti whose daughter generously shared it with the author. It is a photo of what is believed to be the old wooden bridge that once stood on Browntown Road just before it winds up the hill toward Highland Avenue. Persons familiar with that area may recognize in the picture the present location of the beautiful home of Jim and Toni Morris which was badly damaged by that last flood.

This author does not know exactly how many different bridges once occupied this spot in the history of Avella, nor has information surfaced on when this quaint little bridge went the way of all earthly things. But one thing is certain, the surrounding area where this structure once stood is one of the most picturesque, clean little residential sections of the entire Avella area. And it can boast a past history including the old log home of the first Brown family, and the first grist mills of Alexander Wells, reputed to be the first white settler in that entire part of the country.

