

# BICENTENNIAL

1776

1976



# BELLE

W.V.N.

Belle Woman's Club

# THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK *of Belle*

BELLE, WEST VIRGINIA 25015  
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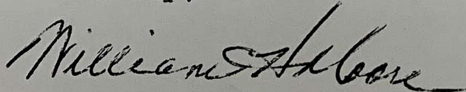
Greetings:

The directors, officers and employees of the First National Bank of Belle commend the Belle Womans Club for their dedication, determination and hard work involving many individuals in their efforts to preserve the historical highlights of our community area.

The documented fact as presented in "The History of Belle and the Area" is a testimony to the praiseworthiness of this splendid undertaking.

The First National Bank of Belle is proud to be a part of this community and with you are looking to the future with rekindled enthusiasm for continued improvement.

Sincerely,



William H. Moore  
President

WHM/sac

# Historic Belle Area Bi-Centennial 1773-1976

*Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the U. S. A.*

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## Acknowledgements

In bringing to a close the final pages on this history, many reflections and thoughts came to me. It has been a hard task and a tremendous challenge to put down in writing a picture of the town of Belle and the surrounding area as it was some 200 years ago. Both myself and many others who have contributed to the Book have learned many interesting and rewarding facts about our towns and the people who settled here.

There are a number of people who deserve special mention for their time and energy. Typing was done quickly and expertly by Kathleen Burgess, Jo Ann Tinsley, Mrs. Roger Hindle and Mrs. Loren Jackson.

Mr. Jake Givens, copying of many old pictures and compiling a specific article. Mr. Richard Fidler, the cover.

To all those people who have contributed in so many ways, I say thank you very sincerely, without your efforts there would not have been a Book. We realize there were so many stories about the area that deserve being done, but time is growing short for the printing.

We have attempted to reflect the history, the families, traditions, industry, and growth of our area. We truly hope we have succeeded.

*Louise Johnson Edwards*

## Introduction

Historical research and data do not reveal any great significant events taking place in this community and the area. Located near the confluence of the Great Kanawha River and just a short distance from the capitol city of West Virginia, the area contributed its part in the winning of American independence and liberty.

Years before the Revolutionary War, it was inhabited by the Indians. Certain areas were favorite spots for them to hunt and trap animals. As the white man gradually pushed the Indians westward, they abandoned this section of the country, as the settlers began to clear the woodlands for home sites.

For many years it was only known as the Dickinson-Shrewsbury Land Tract. It took many many years for this community and the surrounding areas to earn its identity.

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## History of Early Settlers of the Kanawha Valley

Adam Dickinson came early to America settling first in New Jersey, then Pennsylvania but removing later to Augusta County, Virginia. His only son, Colonel John Dickinson was born about 1731-1799.

Although he never became a resident of the Kanawha region, the name is a familiar one in its early records. He was one of the first to patent lands and owned large tracts in western Virginia and Kentucky. In 1775 he entered the first survey that included the ancient Salt Licks at the mouth of Campbell's Creek, which he later sold to Joseph Ruffner. Many tracts were acquired for military services in the Indian wars as he was a veteran of numerous encounters. One reads of his exploits in 1763 at the massacre on Kerr's Creek, Rockbridge County; later his commanding a company at Point Pleasant and of being wounded in the Battle of Copen, South Carolina.

In May 1767, Colonel Dickinson married Martha Usher in Philadelphia, daughter of an Englishman, William Usher. The Dickinsons were parents of five children. Mary Perry Dickinson and two of her sisters became residents of the Kanawha Valley. Mary Perry (1768-1853) married Samuel Shrewsbury in 1785. Martha (Patsy) married his brother, John in 1793. Jane married Lt. Charles Lewis (1774-1803), son of Colonel Charles Lewis and was killed in the battle of Point Pleasant. They first settled in Mason County, four miles above Point Pleasant. After the death of Lt. Lewis she married Captain James Wilson. In 1810 they moved to Kanawha County where they lived six miles east of Charleston at the Salines.

On October 8, 1796, three years before his death, Colonel Dickinson conveyed a tract of seven hundred and four (704) acres of land on the Kanawha to his two Shrewsbury sons-in-law. Including both bottom and hill land, it lay on the north side of the river a few miles east of Charleston in the vicinity of the present towns of Malden and Belle. This tract is referred to in the early land books as "The Pioneer Property", "The Upper Steele Survey", then as "The Rogers-Shrewsbury Tract", and later after the Civil War period as "The Camp Piatt Property", and finally was partitioned into numbered lots.

### The Shrewsbury Family

The Shrewsbury name is an ancient one in England, and an early one in America, certain branches emigrating before 1700. The earliest traceable ancestor of the Kanawha branch appears to be Samuel, son of Reverend Nathan Shrewsbury. He came first to New Jersey, then acquired land and settled where Roanoke, Virginia is now situated, but finding the climate there unsuitable, the swamps causing malaria to be prevalent, he abandoned the location and moved to Bedford County, Virginia. There about 1760 he married Elizabeth (Betsy) Dabney, who sprang from the old Huguenot family of D'Aubigne—later called Dabney. They were the parents of ten children, three of their sons, Samuel, John and Joel becoming Kanawha pioneers.

Samuel Shrewsbury, Sr., was born 1763-1835. When a lad in 1781 he enlisted in the Revolutionary Army. Shortly afterwards he was wounded at the Battle of Cowpens, South Carolina, where it is said he met Colonel John Dickinson whose daughter he later married.

Samuel and his brother, John, who married Martha Dickinson, moved from Bedford County to that part of Augusta which became Bath County and lived there for a number of

years. Joel, their younger brother, who also married a Sally Dickinson, daughter of Joseph Dickinson, possibly a relative of the wives of his brothers, joined them later.

Two years after acquiring the Kanawha tract from their father-in-law, Colonel John Dickinson, Samuel and John determined to settle upon this land. In May 1798 they embarked for western Virginia accompanied by their wives, children, slaves, household goods and other possessions loaded upon wagons.

After a long and tiring journey, over what though officially termed a road was actually little more than a mountain trail along which trees had been felled, they reached their journey's end only to make the appalling discovery that they had failed to bring a time piece. Nevertheless, clocks were considered an essential and a rider was promptly dispatched back over the way they had come to procure one. The nearest place for purchase of clock works was at Lynchburg. These he carried back to Kanawha where a local cabinmaker later fashioned a case of wild cherry and thus was born a family heirloom.

Soon the newcomers had erected log houses for their families and were clearing land for farming on the seven hundred and four (704) acre tract along the river. It was only a few years, however, until the new interest in salt drilling had replaced all others. The necessary farming was done, but the salt furnaces and well rigging grew to be barnyard companions of cows and horses. The Shrewsbury land, lying in the middle of the production area, inspired the brothers to buy adjoining acreage and a good deal of buying and selling went on with the Shrewsbury's becoming actively engaged in the growing salt business.

Less information is available on John Shrewsbury, Sr., than either of his brothers. He lived on the 704-acre tract but the exact location of his home is undetermined.

County historians say that when the Shrewsbury's first arrived on the Kanawha they camped in a walnut grove which afterwards supplied interior woodwork and wainscoting for a "Stone Mansion", built later by Samuel, Sr. No location is given for the grove or mansion other than as being on the Colonel Dickinson survey. With the difficulties of handling and hauling heavy beams, timbers, and stone without mechanical equipment, it seems obvious that the sources of supply and the actual construction must not have been far apart. Not even one walnut tree can now be found to suggest the virgin hardwood timber then so plentiful, but soon to be consumed by the avaricious salt furnaces that were springing up like mushrooms along the river.

Although the grove is lost in the midst of the past, some indication of its existence remains for in this locality there still stands an early stone house whose interior woodwork is of walnut. In spite of exhaustive efforts to identify it positively as the "Stone Mansion", built by Samuel Shrewsbury, the writer must reluctantly admit she believes it to be and the data which has been found tends to verify this belief.

The house is on the original seven hundred and four (704) acre tract and is located about thirteen miles east of Charleston, at the town of Belle, and about a quarter of a mile above Simmons Creek. An indication of its age is shown by the position of the building which has no relation to its present surroundings. Its back is turned to the present route 60 and the entrance, which must have originally faced a long non-existent road that once wound toward the river and continued along the bank to a ferry at the Salines, now stares into the side of a neighboring house. While the house, its building date unknown, perhaps built as early as 1810, its construction defies time. Though the eighteen inch thick walls, made of sandstone quarried from a steep hillside across the highway, are weathered and brown. They are as sturdy and true as they were more than a century ago.

The term "mansion" seems a slight exaggeration, however, as the house, though two stories in height is most primitive and has only four large rooms and one very small one. Nevertheless, compared to the long dwellings which were its contemporaries at the time of construction, it must undoubtedly have appeared as impressive edifice. The building is oblong. The two sides are alike with an equal number of doors and windows.

Chimneys in the end walls furnish fireplaces for the four rooms which are spaced two on each floor with a small hall and steep stairway between one end of which is partitioned on the second floor into a small extra room. There are three windows across the second floor and two on the first flanking the central door.

The interior woodwork is of the crudest sort—thick mantels and window sills, rough and unplanned, but the wooden ceilings appear to be whipsawed boards. The doors are heavy and wooden pegs are in evidence. One of the lower rooms has wainscoting, although much of the woodwork was torn out and utilized as fire wood by Civil War soldiers who may have occupied the house during the period of their encampment at Camp Piatt in the fields near Simmons Creek.

The most interesting feature of construction is the stone work. Random widths and lengths give a varied and attractive pattern to the walls which are supported at the corners by huge blocks of cut stone.

It is unfortunate that so little is known of the history of this truly pioneer dwelling which has sheltered many generations of the Shrewsbury family and, no doubt, as many travelers who stopped here more than once. One of these travelers was the very popular Henry Clay for whom many parents chose to name their children, the Dickinson and Shrewsbury families being no exceptions.

On December 14, 1833, Samuel, Sr., and his wife, Mary, gave several valuable tracts of land to their sons, William, Joel, Jr., Charles L., and to their daughter, Nancy and her husband, John Rogers, Jr. Part of this land had been apportioned to John Shrewsbury, Sr., at the time of the division of the original tract and he had conveyed it to Samuel. Shortly afterwards, part of it lying on the waters of Campbell's Creek, had been purchased jointly by Samuel, Sr., John, Sr., and their brothers, Joel, Sr., from William Tompkins and part was Samuel's interest in land called "dead property" which had been acquired in 1817 by the Kanawha Salt Company. These various tracts included salt wells, furnaces, coal banks, numerous houses, barns, and other buildings, in addition to the farm and house where Samuel, Sr., and his wife then lived, presumably the stone mansion and in which they stipulated they were to continue to reside for their joint lives.

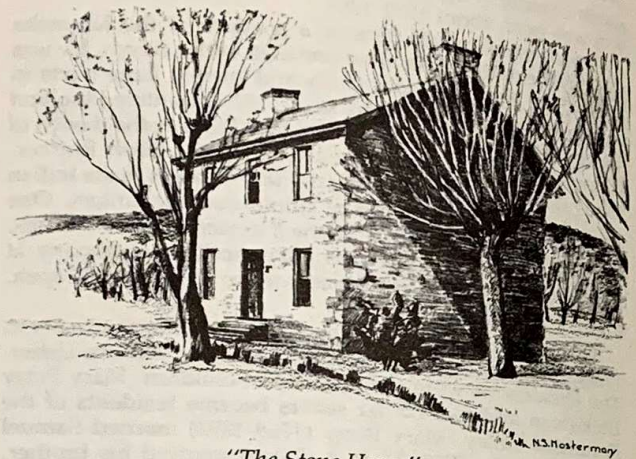
Other stipulations in the deeds were that John D. Shrewsbury be paid \$3,500, James Craik \$2,500 and all debts of Samuel and Mary Shrewsbury be paid. This attempt of the parents to help their children out of financial difficulties was only temporarily successful. Samuel, Sr., died the following year. Fourteen years later, through failure of the sons to meet certain obligations, the lands were sold at public auction, and on June 20, 1849, the Rogers-Shrewsbury tract was purchased by Joel Shrewsbury, Sr., and William Dickinson.

For many years Smithers, Crocketts, and other Shrewsbury descendants lived in the old house but it finally passed out of the hands of the family.<sup>1</sup>

In the year of 1916, Mr. J. K. Nelson, in a property trade with Plus R. Levi, acquired the "Old Stone Mansion" and with his family lived there until his death. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Nelson and his brother, Bob, built and operated a store and barber shop facing old route 60. When the Reynolds estate was settled the post office, which was lo-

cated in the Reynolds store, it was moved to Mr. Nelson's place of business. Some time later the United States Government ruled that the facilities were not adequate, therefore, another building (12' by 24') was built over Reynolds branch for the operation of the post office.

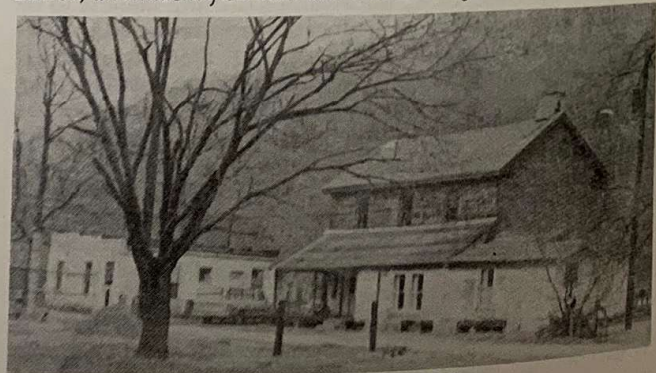
In order to settle the estate, after Mr. Nelson's death, the "Old Stone House" was sold in 1946 to Mr. and Mrs. M. F. Burgess, the present owners.



"The Stone House"

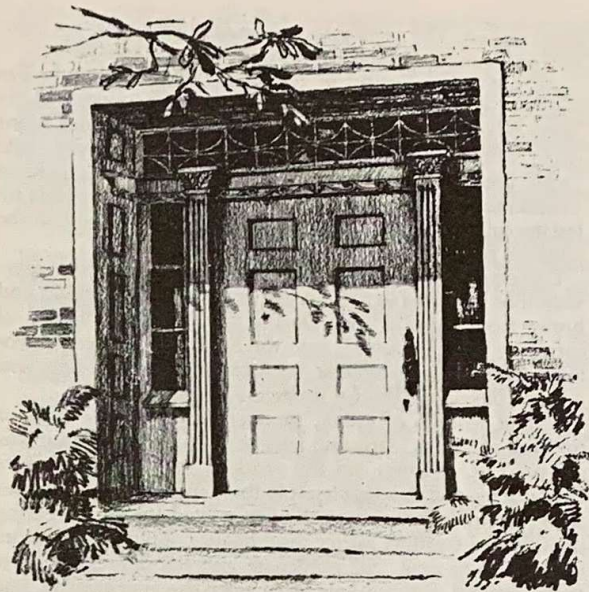


J. K. NELSON'S STORE (about 1929). A favorite loafing place for many Belle residents. Standing in the rear of the store are Frank Coon, Harry Benson Keeney (grandson of Mr. Nelson's), Whitney Borrer, an unidentified man and David Kirby.



The Old Stone House Today





*"The Brick House"*

Where the Joel Shrewsbury, Sr., house stood, the writer was unable to ascertain. It was on the seven hundred and four acre tract near the homes of his brother, and a number of indications point to the possibility of it being the large brick house at Belle, that faces U. S. Route 60 just above the old stone house of Samuel Shrewsbury.

These are the reasons for the "attribution": First, the house is on the Samuel and John Shrewsbury tract where their brother Joel is known to have been living in 1833. Second, it is a very large house, and Joel had a large family—his brother John had a small family, and the elder brother Samuel is identified with the stone house. Since the death of the two older men occurred in 1835, and they spent the last five years of their lives distributing their property among their descendants, with no mention of this house, it is unlikely either of them would have built a dwelling of such size and pretentiousness later in life, and if either had done so earlier, such would place the house in a period at a variance with its architectural details.

Joel, on the other hand, as the younger of the three, and by far the wealthiest—being designated along with William Dickinson, John D. Lewis, and General Lewis Ruffner as one of "The Four Salt Kings" of the Valley—would, by 1833, have reached the time where the building of such a home was indicated. The owner of seventy-two different properties, thousands of acres of coal, and more than a hundred slaves, he must surely have lived in something more than an ordinary house. The year when the house was constructed, one cannot say, but the type of architecture, and certain interior details, indicated the period as approximately within the eighteen-thirties.

The mantel in one of the lower rooms is somewhat similar to that of a lovely old Greenbrier County house called "Mountain Home," that was built in 1833. Massive and hand-carved, it too is supported by a pair of reed columns and both are still painted the original ebony color—the height of style and elegance of the period, however, overpowering for present-day taste. In the adjoining dining room there is another mantel that is not quite as large, and has only one column at each end and a different motif carved in the center. All the interior woodwork shows more careful attention to the beautiful detail than is true in respect to most

of the early houses found in the valley. The thick partition walls permit paneling on the inside of the grooved window and door casings. The doors themselves are very wide and some still have their original English made brass box locks. The baseboards are unusually deep with panels under the windows.

One of the most attractive features is the stairway. One can stand at its foot in the wide central hallway and gaze up to see its graceful curve extending into the open third floor. The small round handrail and carvings on the paneled stair-casing are done in good detail. The floors are composed of the original six-inch boards. Especially interesting is the deep-set central entrance doorway, with side lights and elaborate carving noted in the illustration.

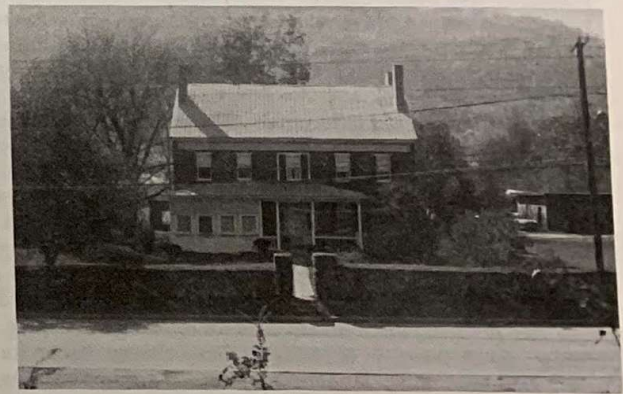
The exterior of this fourteen-room house, built with bricks burned on the premises and walls threecourses thick, is a substantial well-proportioned structure of the customary oblong shape, with steep roof pierced by pairs of tall brick chimneys at each end. A carved wood cornice extends across the front wall above the five shuttered and lintel-trimmed windows of the second floor. In the end walls there is a full window on the third floor and pairs of closely spaced windows below it on each of the other floors.

A few structural changes are in evidence. The one-story brick kitchen, with its large end chimney and Dutch oven, was originally separate from the house and has since been connected by a brick wall. The columns of the small entrance porch are replacements of the earlier ones. An enclosed frame extension has been added to one end of the porch, these however are the only changes.

The log slave cabins, barns and farm buildings that were originally a part of the property, have long since disappeared. The open space that once intervened between this house and the old stone house of Samuel Shrewsbury is now occupied by several small residences.

After the death of Joel Shrewsbury in 1859, the Rogers-Shrewsbury tract was owned jointly by their heirs and William Dickinson II, but who the occupants of the brick house were during this period no one seems to know. The family of Robert F. Reynolds purchased the house in 1863. Mr. Reynolds was the appointed postmaster and dispensed the mail from the end window of the huge dining room of the brick house. The town was named Reynolds after Mr. Reynolds. Before many months passed the United States Government requested a different name for the town, possibly because another town in West Virginia bore the name Reynoldsville. The residents of the community voted to change its name to Belle, naming it for the postmaster's daughter.

Mrs. Mary C. Gardner became the postmistress in 1911 after the death of her father and served in that capacity until 1924.



*The Brick House as it Looks Today*

## Life and Customs in Pioneer Days

The early pioneers came across the rugged mountains of western Virginia or through the long valleys from Pennsylvania on foot or horseback, by wagon or boat. First they cleared the land and planted the garden, which contained the all important corn as well as other vegetables the Indians had grown long before the Europeans came to North America, such as beans, squash, cabbage, pumpkin, melons, cucumbers, sweet potatoes and turnips.

Apple, Pear, Peach and Plum trees were set out and while they matured, many wild berries, such as: grapes, sarvice berries, mulberries, quince, papaws and persimmons, were gathered for eating and drying, pickling and preserving. Early spring was spent by the women and young girls of the household picking a "mess of greens", usually a mixture of plantain, poke, mustard, wild lettuce, dandelions and others. These were cooked with bacon grease or a slice of pork.

After provisions were made for a supply of food, the settlers built a sturdy log house with a big fireplace, around which was the center of many family activities. As a rule, the spot chosen was one that they could defend easily and must be near a water supply. The cabin of log was covered with a roof of clapboards split to the desired thickness. When windows were used at all they were small openings covered with greased paper. In emergencies the windows were used also as loop holes from which to shoot the Indians.

The inside was almost as simple as the outside. The open fireplace served for heating the room and cooking the family food. Utensils included heavy iron pots hanging on a crane. A dutch oven set in the coals of the fire for baking, skillets for frying, a carved wood mortar bowl and pestle for pounding the corn into meal. A variety of baskets, gourds and earthenware vessels made from native clay. Tableware consisted of wooden platters and mugs . . . at a much later date dishes and spoons alike were made of pewter beaten into shape by the blacksmith.

A mantle piece for a number of articles decorated the fireplace. Above it hung the trusty rifle, together with a shot pouch, hunting bag and powder horn. Nearby on a bench were a water pail and a wash pan, above which hung a towel and a gourd used for drinking. The spinning wheel and loom were not far away for the pioneer housewives had to provide material for the family's clothing.

The first chairs were blocks of wood made into desired shapes. Beds consisted of poles laid upon a frame work built in a corner and supported by blocks of wood. Until mattress and coverings could be made from hides, loose leaves and straw served for bedding. Except for buffalo robes, deer and bear skins, the floors were bare. Tables were slabs of wood with one end stuck between two logs and the other supported by two poles. Candles were perhaps the most useful household article. Matches were unknown. Fires were started easily by striking a piece of iron against a flint and catching the sparks on a piece of hemp or a half burned rag. Few pioneers ever allowed the fires to go out.

The settlers hunted game that was very plentiful in this area. Deer, bear, squirrel, rabbit and wild turkey. Fished from the rivers and streams. Before the corn crop produced the grain for cornbread, pone, hominy, and mush, it was not uncommon to use the turkey breast as a substitute for bread. The pig was the primary meat animal in this area. Requiring little care and running wild, feeding in the forest. Hog killing and preparation remains basically unchanged today. Hard work was involved but it meant ham for roasting and frying, sausage, souse meat, liver pudding, head cheese, bacon for eating and seasoning, lard for cooking, as well as making soaps and candles. Some of the settlers had beef, mutton

and chicken. The family fortunate enough to have a cow, had milk, cream, butter, buttermilk and cottage cheese.

As salt was plentiful in our area, adopting the Indian practice, meats were dried, salted, cured and smoked. Many of the vegetables and fruits were dried, with corn and beans dried in the hull. Vinegar was made and the housewife could pickle and preserve a variety of foods. Jars and crocks of sauerkraut, beans, cucumber pickles and pickled meats filled the cellars and cupboards for the provision of food for the long cold winter months.

Cane sugar was scarce unless you lived on a major waterway. The wife had to rely on maple syrup, maple sugar and honey from the wild bees. During the Civil War a variety of sorghum was introduced into the area. Spices were scarce too but native herbs such as sassafras and mint not only was used as flavorings but for medicine as well.

Unlike women of today, pioneer women knew little or nothing of ruffles, curls and jewels. With them makeup was unheard of. Women did the work of men, and women's clothing tended to adapt itself to their employment. Dresses were of Linsey-woolsey and were prized for their wearing quality and comfort rather than beauty. Tailored and store dresses were rare, but petticoats and handkerchiefs were more general. Sunbonnets were worn the year around, and most women and children went barefooted in the summertime.

Favorite clothes for men were hunting shirts, breeches, which with some gave way to breech clout, coonskin caps and moccasins. The hunting shirt was made of deerskin or linsey-woolsey and was generally worn by frontiersmen that they were called "Shirt Men." Shirts bloused over a belt in such a manner to form a pocket which was used to carry food and other articles. Moccasins were made of deerskins and were comfortable in good weather, but they did not wear well and were very uncomfortable for walking in water and snow. In time they gave way to the "shoepack," and finally to boots made of tanned leather.

Despite the fact that homes were few and far removed one from the other, frontier children did not escape the so called children's diseases. Croup was the most feared. A favorite remedy for it was onion juice which "if given in time" was regarded as a cure. For both old and young "sweating" was a favorite remedy for fevers of all kinds. Bleeding was the cure for all other ailments. Among grownups rheumatism was a general affliction. Relief was sought by exposing the affected muscles and joints to open fires. Some persons used ointments made from the fats of native animals, some herbs, but others resorted to "charms."

Because of the continuous necessity for hard work, there was no place in the pioneer life for amusements. Girls helped their mothers with housework and during the busy seasons of the year they worked in the fields with the men. From sun up to sun down the boys worked on the farms and spent much time running errands. Everyone retired when the chickens went to roost. During the long autumn and winter evenings many stayed up about the open fireplace in the kitchen, drying and preserving foods and spinning yarn and weaving cloth.

With all, Sunday or the Sabbath, was a day of rest, when boys and girls alike read the Bible. With most families a Sunday visit from the circuit rider was a red letter day. Like the Pilgrims, the first settlers in West Virginia came in groups and lived in communities around their church. Their desire to worship God as they pleased was, in fact, one of the chief reasons that brought many of them into western Virginia as settlers. Such people could not be happy without the "word of God" and it was not long before the traveling preacher appeared among them. At first there were no

church buildings and religious services were held in private homes or when weather permitted, outdoors. They did not give special attention to education as the Pilgrims did, though they did not neglect schools entirely. In many isolated communities whole families grew up without anyone knowing the alphabet, and very few places had preaching more than once a month and that on a weekday to a few women. As many as ten to fifteen families in a settlement could be visited without finding a Bible.

Undoubtedly there were lean and hungry times in those early days. Virtually isolated by the heavily forested mountains, the pioneer women and men, combined courage, wisdom and faith to withstand their hardships.

Our state history books have revealed that this was a way of life for most of the early settlers, and we are reasonably certain that the Shrewsbury and Dickinson families experienced the same hardships when they migrated to our area. Even though the story does not single out any particular family, many of you will probably recognize something that you have heard told by one of your ancestors of their enduring the same type of hardships. Most of us have become so engrossed in our way of life that we have forgotten that those early settlers were responsible for the destiny of our towns and our heritage. It has been an interesting 200 years, and may we as citizens take pride in our town and salute those who have gone on before.

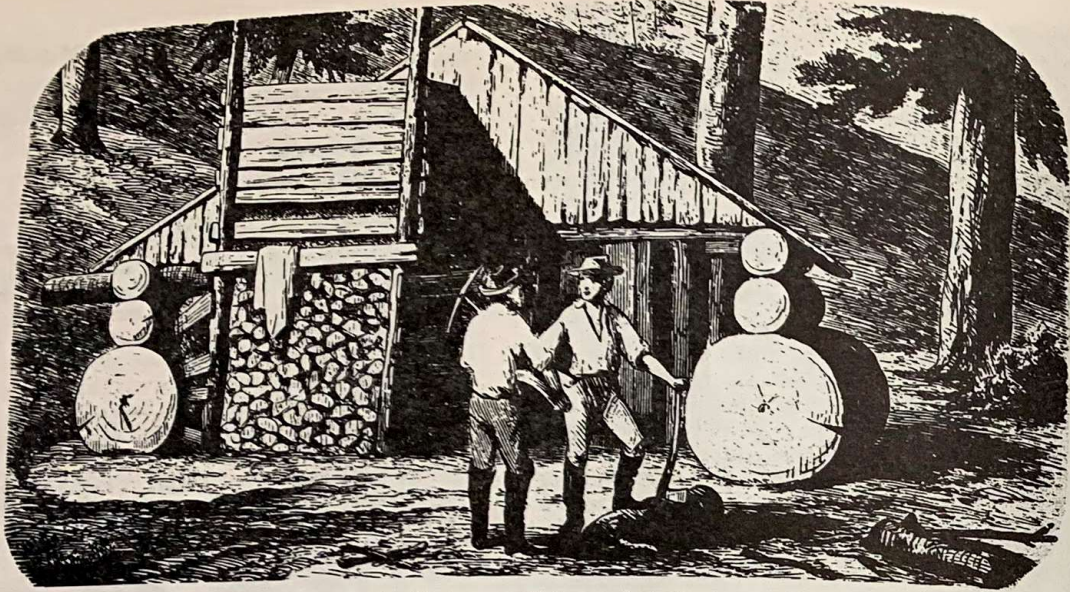
#### Earliest Settlers of Belle

- I. SHREWSBURY, SAMUEL, SR. (1763-1835)  
Wife: Mary Perry (Polly) Dickinson (1788-1853). Daughter of Colonel John Dickinson  
Children as Follows:
- A. John Dickinson Shrewsbury (1786-1845)  
Wife: Nancy Jane Morris (1792-1835). Daughter of Captain Leonard Morris  
Children:
    1. Charles Morris married to Marry Morris; 1872 Eliz. Ralston
    2. Parenthia married in 1840 to Robert Hudson having five children
    3. Samuel married 1861 Pricilla Worth having five children
    4. Andrew-unmarried
    5. Leonard M.-unmarried
    6. Margaret F. married Dr. H. C. Bailey having five children
  - B. Samuel Shrewsbury, Jr. (unmarried)
  - C. Martha Usher (Patsy) Shrewsbury (1791-1874)  
Husband: Jacob Van Meter (1788-1884). Eight children
  - D. William Shrewsbury (1794-1882)  
Wife: Rhoda P. Shrewsbury (cousin)
  - E. Elizabeth Dabney (1796-1829) unmarried.
  - F. Joel, Jr. (Little Joel) Shrewsbury (1798-1849)  
Wife: Fannie Burns Quarrier, daughter of Alexander, Sr. Eight children
  - G. Ann (Nancy) Lee Shrewsbury (1801)  
Husband: John Rogers, Jr. Nine children
  - H. Charles Lewis (1804-1872)  
Wife: Eleanor Woodburn
  - I. Adam Dickinson (1807-1808)
  - J. Juliet (1809)  
Husband: James Craik (Rector of St. John's Episcopal Church). Eleven children
- II. JOHN SHREWSBURY, SR. (died: 1835)  
Wife: Martha Usher (Patsy) Dickinson, daughter of Colonel John Dickinson  
Children as Follows:

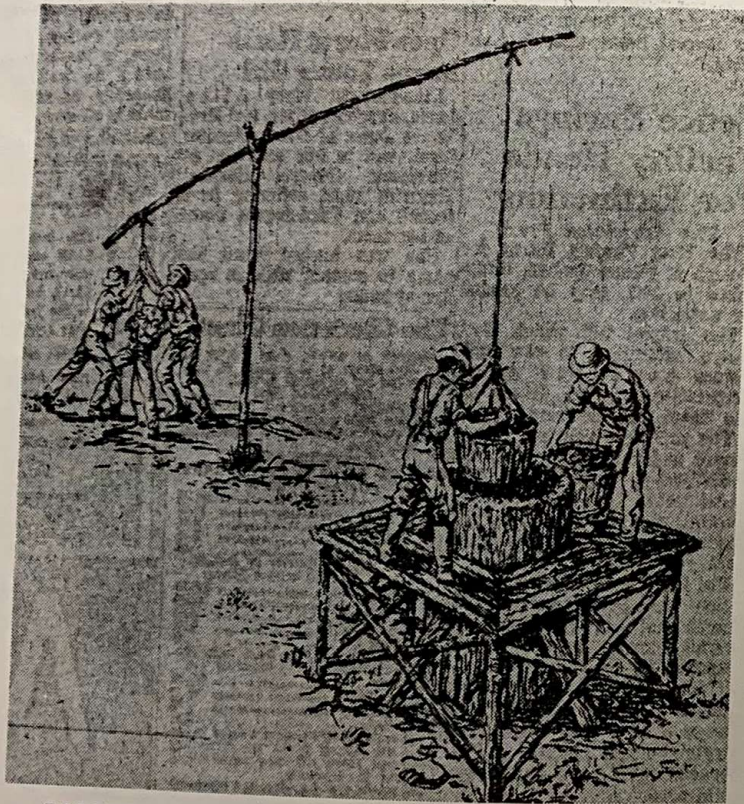
- A. Samuel, Jr. (good Sammy)  
Wife: Laura Angela Parks (1810-1885)  
Children:
  1. Martha Dickinson married to Nicholas Fitzhugh
  2. Lawrence Washington
  3. Andrew Parks
  4. Harriety Washington (unmarried)
  5. Cornelia  
Husband: E. S. Gans
  6. Samuel
  7. Henry Clay
  8. Laura  
Husband: Nicholas Fitzhugh (second wife)
- B. Martha (Patsy)  
Husband: Joseph Darmeal  
Children:
  1. Martha Dickinson married cousin William D. Shrewsbury, son of Joel, Sr.
  2. John Shrewsbury Danial
- C. John D. Shrewsbury, Jr. (died 1831)  
Wife: Cousin Julia B., daughter of Joel, Sr.  
Children:
  1. Martha Dickinson married to Dr. Lawrence Augustine Washington
  2. Joel D.
  3. John Dickinson, Jr.
  4. Julia

#### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Ruth Woods Dayton, *Historical Background from Pioneers and their Homes on Upper Kanawha*, 1947.
- <sup>2</sup>Progressive Party Committee, *Bulletin Handbill*, 1958.
- <sup>3</sup>Clayton (Bill) Harper, Recorder; *Town Hall Recorder Minutes*; 1962-1974.



*Perhaps the early dwellings weren't fancy, but they were often hell-for-strong. Timber and stone, the two basic building materials throughout history, were in plentiful supply in the mother lode region. An ambitious man who had the tools could turn out a cabin like this one, guaranteed to withstand the weather.*



*EARLY SALT WELL drillers at Kanawha Salines (Malden) used this type of apparatus, featuring a hollow gum log, a long lever with attached rope, and manpower. The brine was drawn in crude buckets, and transferred to furnaces for reduction to the final product. This sketch is from an FMC Corp. booklet. Many of these same type of Salt wells were located in the Belle area as well.*

## The Reynolds Family

Thomas J. Reynolds was born in Buckingham County, Virginia. He married Sarah Hamrick and settled in Nicholas County. To this union was born ten children, Robert Ferguson being the oldest.

Robert Ferguson Reynolds was born January 30, 1826, in Monroe County, Virginia. At the age of thirteen, his family moved to Nicholas County where he remained until 1861. He married Bettie Burns, who was born in Ireland, June 3, 1839, coming to America with her parents in early girlhood.

Shortly after their marriage they moved to the Kanawha Valley and for a year lived on the Thomas Newton farm in Malden District. In February 1862, he rented a farm from William Dickinson II. Later Mr. Reynolds purchased twenty acres of the farm and later thirty more, on which the large brick house stood. During the Civil War the soldiers of both armies passed through this section and Mr. Reynolds, like other farmers suffered the loss of fences. In 1863, he opened a store and when General Grant became President of the United States, he was appointed the postmaster in 1869.

After the railroad was built from Cedar Grove to this point, he was again appointed postmaster in 1889, this time by President Harrison and served officially until his death July 21, 1911.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Reynolds were the parents of five children. Mary C., the oldest daughter, married Charles Gardener. They resided with Mr. Reynolds. To this union, four children were born: Robert, Charles, Bettie and Fannie.

Charles Gardner married Margaret Murphy of Summersville. To this union, three children were born: Charles W., Robert and Howard H.

Charles W. (Jr.) married Charlotte Royer of Belle. They have three children: Charles III, Jeanne and Paul. Mr. Gardner, like his ancestors, worked for many years at the post office. In December, 1966, he was appointed acting postmaster. On January 17, 1969 he was appointed postmaster and served in that position to his retirement, December 31, 1972. Mr. Gardner received the same honor that was bestowed to his great, great, great grandfather one hundred years later. 1869-1969, Mr. Gardner and his family are still enjoying life in the same "Brick House", where it all began a long time ago, and which is still a part of the glorious heritage of Belle.



*The Reynolds Store*

At one time this little brick building was the only trading place for miles. The stage coaches, wagons, horses and columns of Confederate and Union troops passed by this store. The settlers of Blue Creek, Kelly's Creek and the many hollows of the mountains came here to trade.

Mr. Robert Reynolds, owner of the store, sold the staples,

notions, plow harness, horse shoes, nails and all the needed materials for agriculture.

When the Federal Army came to the Kanawha Valley, the Reynolds Store served as a PX store for the troops. Where DuPont Plant now stands, a city of white tents stretched along the riverland. Camp Piatt was the head of navigation as most steamboats could not go above this point. The large steamboats had to back down the Kanawha River to the Court House in Charleston to turn around.

The steamboats brought great stores of bacon meat, etc., and stored it on the land near the Reynolds Store. Two thousand Yankee soldiers were customers of Mr. Reynolds. A picket post was located on the road before the store building.

Mr. Reynolds sold liquor in the pre-war days, as did all grocers, but this was not allowed after the army came. From this base of supplies great wagon trains moved constantly up the Kanawha River taking materials and staples to the settlers.



*Belle's earliest, storekeeper, Robert F. Reynolds, numbered among his customers two men who were later to become president of the nation, Col. Rutherford B. Hayes and Lt. William McKinley.*

## Camp Piatt

During the Civil War, this section of the town received notice, because of its strategic turnpike location. Here was the location of Camp Piatt Cantonment of the Ohio Zouaves, the 34th Ohio Regiment occupation troops guarding the Kanawha Valley. The camp was on the old Reynolds farm by the river point known as Malones Landing. The Zouaves were heartily disliked in the region and were notorious for looting and burning homes of confederate sympathizers. There were several battles fought in this area between the Union and Confederate Armies. The camp was named for the commander of the force, Colonel Abraham Piatt.

After the battle of Carnifax Ferry, in Nicholas County, the 23rd Ohio Regiment moved into the camp and in this unit were two men destined to future greatness: Major Rutherford B. Hayes and Commissary Sergeant William McKinley. The latter was commissioned first lieutenant in February 1863 while at Camp Piatt.

The records also state that another soldier who visited the camp site during the war was Major Henry DuPont, who wheeled the artillery pieces he commanded on the ground now occupied by the large DuPont Plant.

# DANIEL NIHOOF.

Commission and Forwarding Merchant and General Freight Agent.



Shipped, IN GOOD ORDER AND WELL CONDITIONED, BY

**DANIEL NIHOOF.**

On board the good Steamboat, *Kan Belle*

the following articles, marked and numbered as below, to be delivered without delay, in like good order and condition, at the Port of \_\_\_\_\_

(the unavoidable dangers of Navigation and Fire only excepted,) unto *Holliday & Miles* or \_\_\_\_\_ assigns,

he or they paying freight for said goods at the rate of \_\_\_\_\_ with privilege of Lighterage, Storing and Re-shipping, and charges \_\_\_\_\_

In Witness Whereof, The Owner, Master, Clerk or Agent of said Boat hath affirmed to \_\_\_\_\_ Bills of Lading, all of this tenor and date, one of which being accomplished the others to stand void.

Dated at **CAMP PIATT** this *10* day of *Dec* 18*69*

MARKS.

ARTICLES.

WEIGHTS.

*Holliday & Miles*  
*Gallipolas*

*6 Bags Seng*  
*1 " Snake root*

*From*  
*Thomas Denson*  
*Nicholas*

*nva*

*E. Todd*  
*Gallipolas*

*17 January - 1870*

*Car Appharboat*

*1 Bot Venison*  
*1 " Deer Skins*  
*1 " Butter*  
*1 Sack B-wat & Cheas*

*Charges 50*



R. F. Reynolds  
1869  
1889-1911



Mrs. Mary Gardner  
1911-1924



Mrs. Nancy Martin  
1934 to Present



J. K. Nelson  
1924

### Post Office Sites and Postmasters

The first location of the post office in Belle was in the Reynolds home in 1869. Later it was moved across the road to the Reynolds Store where it remained until 1924. It was then moved to the store building that was owned and operated by J. K. Nelson. Again in 1925, it was moved into a 12'x24' building located on Reynolds Creek and remained there until 1933. It was then moved to a larger brick building a short distance away (now location of the Belle Furniture Store). In 1961 the post office was moved to its present day location. On April 22, 1961 a new brick air conditioned building was dedicated on DuPont Avenue near 9th Street.

#### *Post Masters and Post Mistresses*

Robert F. Reynolds, 1869-1889-1911  
Mrs. Mary Gardner, 1911-1924  
J. K. Nelson, 1924-1928  
John Kenney, 1929-1932  
Mrs. Alma Borrer, 1933  
J. W. Penix, 1934-1936  
B. F. Penix, 1936  
Nancy B. Martin, 1934-1966  
Charles W. Gardner, Jr., 1966-1972  
Matthew Kinsolving, 1973-Present.



B. F. Penix  
1936



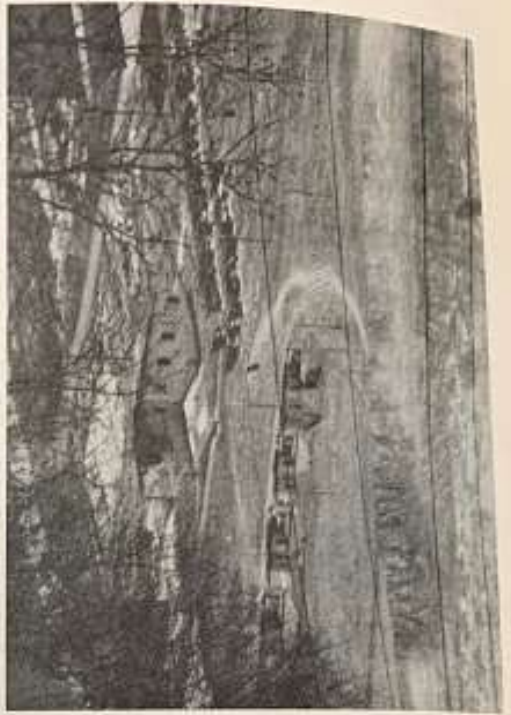
John Keeney  
1929



J. W. Penix  
1934-1936



Mrs. Alma Borrer  
1933



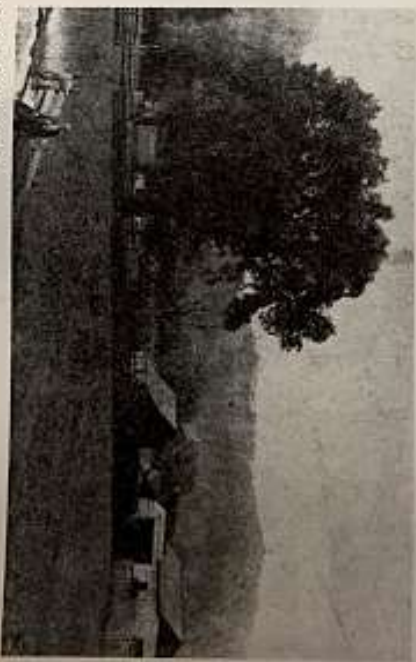
*Clifford Slack's home, the two story one on the left, west end of Belle before DuPont Plant was completed.*



*Rep. W. H. Kersey home, the large one, small one was the home of Walter and Mildred Ashley early 1920's.*



*John Young Slack Farm (latter part of 19th century). Pictured in front of the house are John Slack, Mary M. Slack and Katie Slack.*





## Farms and Their Owners 1850's and 1860's

After the deaths of the first settlers, Samuel, John and Joel Shrewsbury, the heirs of these families and those of the William Dickinson II, sold the land at public auctions and to direct buyers from the owners.

**CABELL FARM:** Burning Springs area to Marmet Locks.

**MCCONNELL FARM:** Marmet Locks to Camp Piatt. Sold later to Joe Werle who developed it into lots for residential home sites.

**MCGRAW FARM:** Camp Piatt to west end of the DuPont property. Sold to individuals in lots.

**SLACK FARM:** Simmons Creek to the west end of the DuPont plant. This farm was sold first to the Charleston Chemical Company, then to the LaZote Company. In 1925 it was purchased by the DuPont Company.

**CROCKETT FARM:** This small farm was owned by a widow, Mrs. Crockett, a descendant of the Smither's family. Located on this land were the homes of Reverend and Mrs. Kersey and Mr. and Mrs. J. K. Nelson. In 1916 this land was purchased by Plus R. Levi, and developed into the first lots for sale to owners. Some of the first families to build homes in this area were the Ruben Ashleys, Stanton Ashley and Walter Brown. It was also the first site for the Judson Baptist Church, with several businesses located on the Midland Trail highway.

In 1937 the DuPont Company bought the entire farm property, demolished all the homes and church, for the expansion of their chemical plant facilities.

**SMITHERS FARM:** East of the Crockett farm, joining, to Reynolds Branch. This is the site of the "Old Stone House" where the first settlers lived and died. The neice of Samuel Shrewsbury, married Benjamin Smithers. His son, David Smithers, owned the house at one time. According to the information given to this writer, this home was the scene for the fall harvest dances, with an abundance of good food served and music provided by local musicians for dancing.

A family cemetery of the Shrewsbury's was located on the south side of the stone house, near the river, covering approximately one hundred square feet of land, enclosed by a rock wall 50' x 50' by four feet high and two feet wide. Graves were located inside, as well as outside of the walls. All of this was later discovered with houses being built over the graves—the flat stone markers used for sidewalks.

As World War I was beginning in 1917, a part of this farm was sold to the Charleston Steel Company. Armour plate was made to be used for ships by the United States Government. At the end of the war in 1918, the company was having difficulty producing usable steel. The company finally discovered that a member of the management was in the service of the German government. He was arrested and convicted of sabotage.

The company built several barracks and a boarding house for the employees. One of these barracks, during 1921 to 1925 became one of Belle's first movie houses. Silent films were shown, operated by Jack Biddle, a member of Belle Alkali Company's supervision. Up to date films were shown with the stars of the day, Almo Lincoln as Tarzan, "Hoot" Gibson westerns, "Our Gang Comedy", "Robinson Caruso", Winning the West, and continued series showing two reels a week. There was plenty of "Green River" drinks, or Coco Cola, available for the sum of five cents each. This was all sold to the Belle Alkali Company, in 1920.

In 1925, the Sharpless Solvent Corporation leased the land from Belle Alkali, to erect a plant using pentane and chlorine gas to manufacture Aml Alcohol and Amyl Acetate. All of the barracks and the houses were dismantled to make room for their operation. This plant operated until December of 1932, at which time it was dismantled and shipped by railway to their plant site at Wyondette, Michigan.

Nearby these two farms, located about one half a mile up Simmons Creek was a coal mine called the "Big Onion". Coal was hauled from this mine with a small steam engine to a tippel built over the New York Central Railroad tracks, where it was loaded into the coal cars for shipment. This

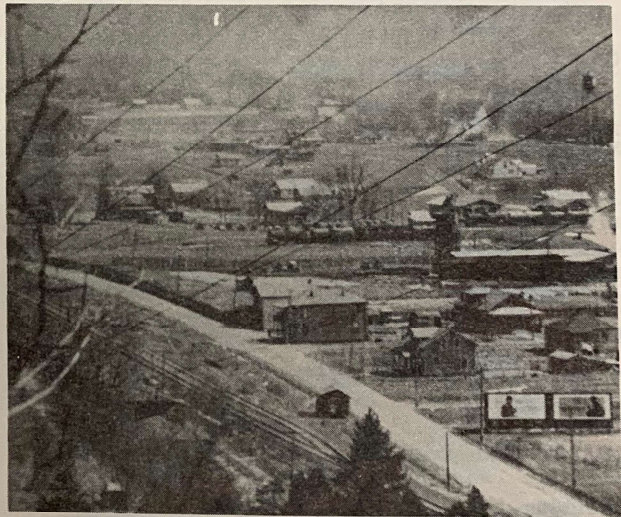
mine operated from 1917 until 1924.

Coal mining was never of any lengthy duration in the Belle area. Several mines have existed but none have been permanent. Two small mines were operated on the mountain side, directly across the railroad tracks from the Belle Elementary School by Joe Bonovitch from 1918-1921.

Another small mine was opened by Ira Rogers on Maple Road in 1918. The coal was hauled to a ramp located north of the entrance of the Diamond Alkali Company, and loaded into coal cars for shipment. This continued operation until 1920.



*Ruben Ashley, C. S. Ashley and the home of J. K. Nelson before construction of DuPont.*



*Looking east just below the Diamond Shamrock Plant—about 1924-25.*

*Scene taken from hill of sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth streets in the early 1920's.*

*The last venture into the coal mining operations was made by the Belle Alkali Company in 1928. A mine was opened about one half mile up Simmons Creek. A new tippel was built at the same location as the one used by the "Big Onion" mine. Coal was hauled by an electric motor car to the tippel for use in the boilers at the plant. After the needs of the plant for the use of the coal were met, the remainder was shipped by rail to other sections of the state. This mine ceased operations in 1935.*