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Spring 5-1-2021

## Folklore of the Shenandoah Valley

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### Recommended Citation

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Folklore of the Shenandoah Valley

Heather Good

PWR-499H: Honors Project

Dr. Scott Suter

## Introduction

It has long been a cliché for young people from small towns to long for a more exciting life in the city. After all, cities are presented as centers for opportunities, culture, and entertainment, everything that small towns so often seem to lack. I must admit that this was my belief for most of my life. Growing up in Stanley, a small town in Page County, Virginia, nestled within the Shenandoah Valley, was fairly uneventful. That is one of the many reasons why I struggled to understand the appeal of the area when I was younger. Every summer and fall, tourists from every corner of the world would flood in, packing the nearby Shenandoah National Park and filing through the shops and restaurants in town. You could tell just from the look in their eyes how much they were in awe of the place. Talking to them made it even more clear.

On the camping trips my parents and I would occasionally take to Big Meadows, a campground in the Shenandoah National Park, we would almost always spark up a conversation with other campers. These talks would always include the customary “So, where are you from?” When we mentioned we lived just down in the Valley, the strangers’ expressions would always brighten. “Really? Wow! You’re so lucky to live in a place like this!” Really? Lucky? I would have given anything to move away from the area to Washington D.C. or New York City, the same places these people were leaving.

Then my senior year of high school rolled around and with it came college applications. I finally had my ticket out of the place I had hated for so long. Something did not feel quite right, though. Part of me was convinced I was under some *Ethan Frome*-esque curse, doomed to stay tethered to the area for the rest of my life. The rational part of myself, however, realized that breaking my ties with the only area I had ever known as home would not be as easily as I had originally hoped. Deep down I knew the reason why. I had belittled the area for so long, saw it as

a place that culture went to die. It wasn't, though, of course. As with all places, big and small, there is something special, things that set it apart from any other area. Before I could leave, I had to find out what that was for the Valley.

Through my research of the area, and my own family history within it, I have come to appreciate the Valley. As much as I tried to erase all signs of my connection with the area when I was younger, it's a part of me as it with everyone who has spent their lives there. I tried to fight that for so long and it did not help me in the slightest. Only after learning about the history and culture of the Shenandoah Valley did I come to appreciate the area and its part in my life.

That is one of the reasons I decided to start this project. There are undoubtedly others who have had similar opinions of the area that I used to have, and that is troubling to me. I believe that become more knowledgeable about the area you live in can be incredibly beneficial in understanding who you are as a person. This is why I wanted to add to the literature concerning the history and culture of the Valley. This paper will begin with a short history of two significant events in the Valley, its founding and the impact of the American Civil War on it, both of which played significant roles in the formation of the unique cultural identities of the residents of the area. From there, several aspects of Valley culture will be explored, including the lifestyles of the residents and their traditions. Throughout the paper, aspects of my own experiences, family stories, and examples of real artifacts that can be found within Bridgewater College's special collections will be included to provide more human perspectives of what life in the Valley has been like.

### **The Founding of the Valley**

According to *A Short History of Page County, Virginia* by Harry M. Strickler, the original inhabitants of the Shenandoah Valley consisted of tribes of Shawnees, Delawares,

Senedos, and Catawbas (7). A sizable tribe of Shawnees lived near present day Winchester, while the other tribes were more transient, moving throughout and out of the Valley at times (Strickler 7). The natives of the Valley lived in close proximity and in relative peace with the European immigrants moving into the area until 1754 (Strickler 7). Emissaries from a tribe of Western Indians passing through the region invited the Shawnees to travel back across the Allegheny Mountains with them and the Shawnees took them up on their offer (Strickler 7). In the years following, interactions between the natives and Europeans grew violent, at least in part due to the start of the French and Indian War, and several white residents of the Valley were killed (Strickler 8).

To fully understand the European immigrants who would settle the Shenandoah Valley, it is necessary to start with their history before arriving in America. In *Short Historical Sketches of Page County, Virginia and its People*, Robert H. Moore II explains that the first European settlers of the Valley consisted largely of German immigrants from an area known as the Palatinate (10). This region consisted of land on both sides of the Middle Rhine River between the Main and Neckar tributaries (Moore 10). While the residents of the Palatinate had been Catholic for several centuries, the Palatinate would go on to become the most prominent Calvinist region of Germany following the Protestant Reformation during the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Moore 10). Lutherans throughout Germany and surrounding countries like Switzerland and Holland flocked to the Palatinate to avoid religious persecution and to join others with similar religious beliefs (Moore 11). However, according to *The German Element of the Shenandoah Valley* by John W. Wayland, during the Thirty Years War (1618-1643), armies from both sides devastated the area (24). Within just a few decades after the end of the Thirty Years War, the War of the Grand Alliance (1688-1697) would once again bring suffering to the residents of the

Palatinate (Wayland 24). This resulted in the first major migration of Germans out of the region (Moore 12). Tragedy continued to befall the Palatinate throughout the late 1600s and early 1700s as two more wars, the War of the Palatinate (1688-1697) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713), left the remaining residents under the constant fear of being taken advantage of by desperate armies, and the winter of 1708-1709 left many with few options other than to try to find another place to live (Moore 12). The War of the Palatinate was started by King Louis XIV of France after he claimed power over the Lower Palatinate (Wayland 24). After his armies were unable to hold the territory, though, he ordered it destroyed (Wayland 24). Towns like Heidelberg, Spire, and Worms were left in ruin, crops were destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of Palatinates were left homeless (Wayland 24). After an invitation from Queen Anne of Great Britain in the spring of 1709, approximately 7000 Palatinates made their way out of Germany through Rotterdam to England and America (Moore 12).

The group that traveled to America would become better known as the Pennsylvania Dutch and would settle throughout states like Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina (Moore 12). The majority of the Germans who would settle in the Valley migrated from Pennsylvania, specifically from counties like Lancaster, Lebanon, Berks, and York (Wayland 20). Others came from Maryland, New York, New Jersey, eastern Virginia, and North Carolina (Wayland 20). After the Revolutionary War, former Hessian soldiers would also begin to settle in the area, and though they often had skills that were useful for the burgeoning settlement, they did face contempt for their role in the war (Wayland 20).

It was around this time, the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, that explorations of the Shenandoah Valley began. The first person of European descent to set eyes on the Valley was John Lederer (Wayland 11). Lederer, a native of Hamburg, Germany, was a jack of many trades (Moore 16).

Other than being an explorer, Lederer was a physician, linguist, scholar, and had extensive knowledge of the languages, manners, and customs of Native Americans (Strickler 21). His knowledge of the natives of the area was so extensive, in fact, that he was able to easily travel amongst them with no guide and avoid any trouble (Strickler 21). In March 1669, Lederer was commissioned by Governor William Berkley of the Colony of Virginia to explore the frontier beyond the Tidewater settlements (Wayland 11). He and his group would make three marches westward through the Valley: the first landing him probably somewhere near Big Meadows, the second taking him far into the south west, and the third bringing him up by the way of the Rappahannock to a high peak near Front Royal (Strickler 20-21). Lederer's records of the expedition leave it slightly unclear exactly what area of the Valley he first saw (Moore 16). There is speculation that it could have been near present day Waynesboro, Swift Run Gap, or, as previously mentioned, Big Meadows (Moore 16). Despite his impressive feat, Lederer would become an object of intense jealousy upon his return, eventually forcing him to leave the colony of Virginia entirely, and would not receive his due recognition until the twentieth century (Wayland 11).

Another significant exploration of the Valley was launched in 1709 (Moore 18). Frantz Louis Michel, a native of Berne, Switzerland, was sent to explore and map the middle and northern parts of the Shenandoah Valley (Moore 18). While exploring present day Massanutten, Michel found what he believed was evidence of a silver mine (Moore 18). This rumor of a silver mine is what would catch the attention of the next, and perhaps most famous, of the explorers of the Valley.

Hoping to set up a colony to work on the rumored silver mine, Baron Christopher von Graffenreid teamed up with Alexander Spotswood to lead another expedition into the Valley

(Moore 18). Spotswood is perhaps one of the most significant figures in this history of colonial Virginia, and it is not surprising to see why based on his credentials. He was "...a soldier under John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough at Blenheim, Postmaster General of the American Colonies, Tubal Cain of America, one time general of the British Army, [and] greatest of the colonial governors" (Strickler 31). He was originally sent to Virginia in 1710 by Queen Anne as Lieutenant-Governor (Strickler 31). Spotswood's party, led by John Fontaine and consisting of 63 men, consisted of the first organized group of English men to explore the Valley (Moore 18). Spotswood and his men likely crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains at Swift Run Gap and from there moved into present day Rockingham (Wayland 7). At the conclusion of the expedition, the legend goes, Spotswood gifted each of his men a small golden horseshoe-shaped trinket (Moore 18). According to *Shenandoah Secrets: The Story of the Park's Hidden Past* by Carolyn and Jack Reeder, the keepsakes were a representation of an inside-joke between the men, who had been delayed when their horses had to be shod after leaving Tidewater Virginia (17). While none of these golden horseshoes have been recovered in modern times, the legend of the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe remains a popular story of the Valley (Reeder 17). A memorial to their expedition, a pyramid-shaped stone and a plaque, can be found at Swift Run Gap by the Skyline Drive Overpass. The Germanna Colony would soon be founded in the region, consisting largely of Germans from the Nassau-Siegen district (Moore 18). With little interaction with those outside of Massanutten, including the English, the Germanic identity of the early Valley settlers was preserved well into the 1800s (Moore 19).

Whole books could be, and have been, written on the various towns and counties that make up the Valley. After all, it consists of roughly eight counties, stretching from Fredrick down to Augusta. Playing into my personal bias, I will focus the formation of my home county,



Page, to give a sample of what the creation of these counties was like. Page county, named after Governor John Page, was officially formed in 1831 (Moore 30-32). The county was formed from land taken from the northern region of Rockingham and the eastern region of Shenandoah (Moore 32). The county seat, Luray, had been founded several years before in 1812 (Moore 33). Before and around the time of its founding, the residents of Page were predominantly German speaking, though they were slowly shifting to become more bilingual (Moore 32). The county would quickly become known as one of the most productive agricultural areas of Virginia, helping the Valley earn its moniker as the “Breadbasket of the Confederacy” (Moore 32).

*Family Stories: How the Goods Came to the Valley*

When I first began looking into my own family history, one of my major goals was to discover where my ancestors were originally from, when they had come to America, and when they had first made it to the Shenandoah Valley. Through various genealogy sites, including Ancestry.com and Family Tree, I was eventually able to map my paternal line, the Goods, back to Hans Caspar Gut, born in 1713 in Zurich, Switzerland. Hans, along with his wife, Anna Naf Gut, traveled out of Rotterdam aboard the English ship *Mercury* captained by Master William Wilson (Janevia). The passengers consisted of 176 Palatines and ‘Switzers’ (Janevia). They arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on May 29, 1735 (Janevia). Within a few years, my 5<sup>th</sup> great-grandfather, Caspar Gut, would be born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. There are no records for exactly when the Guts moved from Pennsylvania, but by the death of Hans around 1754, the family had already established itself within Shenandoah County.

When compiling the research for this project, it was startling to see just how much my own family history lined up with the “stereotypical” story of the Pennsylvania Dutch moving into America. After all, my family even traveled out of the port, Rotterdam, that was mentioned

as the most popular point of exodus. Unfortunately, this is about all the information on my original American ancestors that I could find. The written records of their lives either never existed or have been lost over time. Even the family stories and legends, passed down through so many generations, fail to reach back that far. So, all I'm left with are a few breadcrumbs of their lives. Several family stories do, however, still exist regarding the next significant chapter in the history of the Shenandoah Valley: The Civil War.

### **The Valley at War**

Slavery in the Valley had existed since roughly the mid-1700s, largely due to the influence of Reverend George Samuel Klung (Moore 26). In 1739, Klung became the head of the Hebron Evangelical Church (Moore 26). Since first arriving in Virginia from Germany, Klung was obsessed with cultivating a close bond with the English in Virginia, going to lavish extremes to impress members of Anglican ministries (Moore 26). This gained him considerable criticism from fellow Germanic religious leaders, but members of his congregation still looked upon him as an influential figure (Moore 26). In a bid to win further praise from his Anglican friends, Klung began to purchase slaves to assist in his farming, which gained him considerable profit (Moore 26). Others would soon follow in his footsteps.

Though slavery existed, it never became as widespread in the Valley as it did in other regions of Virginia (Moore 34). By the 1830s, the number of slaves in the Valley was steadily in decline as many slave owners began to allow their slaves to purchase freedom for themselves and their family members (Moore 35). This decline may have been at least partially motivated out of fear following the Nat Turner Rebellion. Within several days of each other in 1831, there were two incidents of alleged slave plots to kill their owners within Page County. On November 10<sup>th</sup>, a slave known as "Joe" was accused of plotting the murders of Vincent Wood and Jacob

Hutchman; he was tried, but eventually determined to be not guilty (Moore 34). On November 25<sup>th</sup>, a slave named “Dan” was accused of brutally assaulting Mary McDaniel with the intent of killing her (Moore 34). Unlike Joe, however, Dan was found guilty, as his attack on McDaniel had been witnessed by others (Moore 34-35). He was sentenced to 30 lashes and banned from the United States (Moore 35). Several years later in February 1842, two slaves, “Captain” and “Martin,” killed their owner, John Wesley Bell, with an ax blow to the head (Moore 36). The pair was tried, found guilty of murder, and sentenced to be hanged (Moore 36). They were executed on April 8 on Bixler Ferry Road in Luray (Moore 36). Perhaps one of the most disturbing elements of the story is that “Their bodies were never buried but were turned over to two Luray physicians who had bought them for cakes and beer of the negroes themselves during their confinement in jail” (Moore 37). As a result of the slaves being freed in the 1830s and 40s, nearly one-third of the African Americans living within Page County were listed in the 1860 census as being free (Moore 40).

When Virginia succeeded from the union, the Valley began forming their first confederate companies. In May 1861, the “Page Volunteers” gathered under the command of Captain William Townsend Young (Moore 53). Through the war, the “Page Volunteers” would go through two more captains, Richard Stewart Park and David Coffman Grayson (Moore 53). The first company of enlisted men, the “Page Grays,” were led by Captain William D. Rippetoe and were officially known as Company H of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Virginia Infantry in the Stonewall Brigade (Moore 54).

The first action seen in Page County during the war took place at White House Bridge on April 19, 1862 (Moore 63). Members of Union General James Shield’s army ran into Company D of the 7<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry, resulting in the death of young Private Charles C. Wheat (Moore

63). The next month, on May 7, there was a small skirmish between portions of the 6<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry, a company of the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry and the 13<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry near Sumerville on the Shenandoah River (Moore 65).

Despite what one might assume about the Valley, considering it was of significance to the Confederacy, there was significant Union sentiment throughout the region, especially before the Battle of Fort Sumter (Strickler 191). In February 1861, a state convention on secession was held in Richmond (Strickler 191). Many of the delegates representing Valley counties were elected to the convention as Unionists (Strickler 191). Though some of these delegates would never change their vote, the sentiment of the majority of delegates shifted after the events at Fort Sumter and the Valley found itself on the side of the Confederacy (Strickler 191). This doesn't mean, however, that some Valley residents didn't remain supportive of the Union. William C. Crippen, a member of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry, wrote a series of reports for the *Cincinnati Daily Times* about his unit's march through the Valley (Moore 67). Many of the Union soldiers were enamored with the sights of the Valley with some even returning to live there after the end of the war (Moore 120). When stopping to talk with one local, Crippen discovered that the man had been entirely against succession until Virginia had left the union (Moore 68). Though he felt he had to support his state, he admitted that he still loved the union and felt that the south would almost certainly lose the war (Moore 68). Other residents willingly gave food to the soldiers and excitedly waved them on as they passed by (Moore 68).

Despite these signs of Union sympathy in the Valley, there is no denying that the region was devastated by the actions of the union during the war. For starters, there was significant raiding. In July 1862, General John Pope issued General Order No. 5 (Moore 71). This allowed Union forces to seize provisions from southern civilians (Moore 71). This could be shattering to

some families in the Valley who were already struggling to survive. Vouchers were given to people whose property was taken, which could be turned in at the end of the war for monetary reimbursement (Moore 71). However, in order to receive the reimbursement, they had to first prove that they had been loyal citizens to the United States since the date on the voucher (Moore 71). Even then, many people would never receive the reimbursements they had been promised (Moore 71). The following year, General Order No. 11 was issued, which stated, “take up all active sympathizers, and either hold them as prisoners or put them beyond our lines. Handle that class without gloves, and take their property for public use” (Moore 71). Not long after this order was issued, all the male citizens of Luray were imprisoned by the forces of General Franz Sigel and held in the courthouse (Moore 72).

Perhaps the most infamous act of destruction in the Valley occurred in 1864 with General Philip Sheridan’s obliteration of the Valley. On August 6, 1864, as stated in the National Park Service’s article “The Burning,” Sheridan was given command over the Army of the Shenandoah. His orders from General Ulysses S. Grant were to “Give the enemy no rest...Do all the damage to railroads and crops you can. Carry off stock of all descriptions, and negroes, so as to prevent further planting. If the war is to last another year, we want the Shenandoah Valley to remain a barren waste” (“The Burning”). Beginning on September 26, Sheridan would lead a 13-day charge through the Valley from Staunton to Strasburg that would leave a path of utter destruction in its wake (“The Burning”). The horrors of “The Burning,” as it would come to be known, can be seen in first-hand descriptions of the ordeal. Colonel James H. Kidd, a member of Custer’s Brigade, wrote of what he witnessed in Port Republic, “What I saw there is burned into my memory. The anguish pictured in their faces would have melted any heart not seared by the

horrors and ‘necessities’ of war. It was too much for me and at the first moment that duty would permit I hurried from the scene” (“The Burning”).

According to *The Burning: Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley* by John L. Heatwole, Sheridan and his men grew increasingly tense as they moved through the Valley as the number of raids by Southern partisan raiders began to increase (3). In addition to this, Sheridan’s supply and communication network with Winchester were also being disturbed by Southern Guerillas (Heatwole 3). Sheridan’s engineer officer Lieutenant John R. Meigs was killed near Dayton in Rockingham County by Confederate scouts who had been sent to gather information on the disposition of the Union soldiers in the area (“The Burning”; Heatwole 3). Sheridan, who considered Meigs to be one of his “favorite and most promising young officers,” believed his death to be an act of cold-blooded murder by the Southerners and ordered all houses within five miles of the area to be burned, despite Grant’s orders stipulating that no private residences were to be destroyed (“The Burning”; Heatwole 5). The Union soldiers were sent to inform the residents of Dayton of Sheridan’s order and evacuate them from their homes (Heatwole 6). The locals were, of course, devastated by the news. One recalled the aftermath, stating “such mourning, such lamentations, such crying and pleading for mercy. I never saw nor never want to see again, some were wild, crazy, mad, some cry[ing] for help while others would throw their arms around yankee soldiers’ necks and implore mercy” (Heatwole 7). The town of Dayton was only spared after Lieutenant Colonel Thomas F. Wildes urged Sheridan to reconsider his order (“The Burning”). This did not, however, mean that all of the homes and barns in the area were spared. Many were still set ablaze by Union troops, who often showed little sympathy for the locals (Heatwole 15). In the end, Sheridan claimed to have destroyed over 2000 barns, over 70

mills, driven away with them over 4000 head of stock, and killed or issued to his troops 3000 sheep (“The Burning”).

*Family Stories: “Mountain Man” Charlie*

One of my favorite family stories that my grandfather would tell me when I was little was the tale of “Mountain Man” Charlie. The story goes that at the beginning of the Civil War, a wealthy Valley man’s son was drafted to fight. Fearing that his son would die in battle, the man set out to find a replacement for him. After being turned down by several other families in the area, he arrived at the homestead of the Goods. They knew that creation of a Confederate States of America was not going to benefit them. They were poor farmers who could barely scrape by, let alone have the money to purchase slaves to help on their land. They were content with living their lives as normally as possible and letting the war blow over. So, when the wealthy man came to ask one of them to take his son’s place in the war, they all turned him down like the other families. All of them, that is, except Charlie. He knew a good deal when he saw one.

In exchange for fighting in his son’s stead, the man offered a new rifle and a considerable amount of money. These were two things that Charlie was very interested in. He took up the man’s deal with one stipulation: he wanted the gun and the money before he left. Thinking that his lucky day had finally turned up, the man quickly accepted. He would pay up soon afterwards. However, when the day came for the unit to march out, Charlie was nowhere to be found. Charlie was a smart man; he wasn’t about to risk his own life fighting for a rich man’s son in a war that wouldn’t benefit him. He had taken the gun and the money and hid in the mountains where no one but his family could find him.

With no replacement, the army came looking for the wealthy man’s son and dragged him off to fight. Meanwhile, Charlie stayed far away from the dangers of war in the relative safety of

the mountains. From that day on, though, his friends and family would refer to him as “Mountain Man” Charlie: the man who knew a good deal when he saw it.

### **The Culture of the Valley: Lifestyle of Residents**

#### *Living Arrangements of Valley Residents*

While the lifestyles of the residents of the Valley were and are, of course, all unique in some degree, there are some overlapping characteristics that appear in many stories about life in the area. In Retta Lilliendahl and Tammy Culler’s book *Local Lore of the Shenandoah*, which features stories about the lives of several Valley locals, primarily during the twentieth century, it becomes clear that the day-to-day lives of residents were lacking in modern conveniences before the latter half of the twentieth century. For example, electricity only started becoming widely available in the Valley in the 1940s (Lilliendahl and Culler 95). Several people interviewed in *Local Lore of the Shenandoah*, like Bob and Virginia May of Singers Glen, mentioned growing up and sometimes even living as adults in houses that had no indoor bathrooms, heat, or running water (23). In the first years of their marriage, C.W. “Bill” Dove and his wife Fern Anne, also of Singers Glen, lived in a log cabin on the property of Fern’s father (Lilliendahl and Culler 17). The only source of heat in the house was an old wood stove (Lilliendahl and Culler 17). Their chickens, on the other hand, lived in cinder block buildings heated by oil furnaces (Lilliendahl and Culler 17). The couple would sometimes have to spend winter evenings in the chicken houses just to stay warm (Lilliendahl and Culler 17). The little schoolhouses dotting the Valley weren’t much different in this regard. Many of them, like the one Donald L. Bowers attended during the 1930s in New Market, consisted of only one room where grades first through seventh would learn together (Lilliendahl and Culler 41). The school had no indoor plumbing or drinking water, so every morning the teacher would have to send two students with a three-gallon bucket



to a nearby farmer's well to fetch drinking water (Lilliendahl and Culler 41). For families like Harry Long's of New Market, things like lunch boxes and tissue paper were constructed out of the things that were available to them (Lilliendahl and Culler 44). As a child, his mother would pack his and his brothers' lunch in karo syrup buckets, which were similar to modern paint cans, and his family would use the pages out of old Sear-Roebucks catalogs for tissue paper (Lilliendahl and Culler 44).

### *Businesses of the Valley*

All this being said, it may seem like the residents of the Valley were living in the dark ages, but this is actually far from the truth. For instance, various types of businesses flourished within the area. In the early 1900s, traveling the distances between different towns in the Valley could be difficult or even impossible for some families. As a result, local country and drug stores became important businesses within towns. For example, the country store in Singers Glen, which also served as the post office for the town, was a popular spot for the townsfolk (Lilliendahl and Culler 7). Here, residents could buy or barter, often with items like fresh eggs and live chickens, for the goods they needed (Lilliendahl and Culler 7). Trapping was a common and lucrative trade amongst locals, so animal pelts were another commonly bartered item, though it was preferred that rabbits were brought in alive (Lilliendahl and Culler 170). Locals would also gather in the store to talk, listen to the store's Atwater Kent Radio, and sit in front of the coal-fed pot-bellied stove (Lilliendahl and Culler 7). Broadway's Drug Store, situated on Main Street, was similarly popular among locals (Lilliendahl and Culler 88). On Saturdays, local women would go to the store to trade town news and gossip while also enjoying lunch (Lilliendahl and Culler 88). Teens enjoyed the store's soda fountain, where they could order ice cream floats and sundaes (Lilliendahl and Culler 88).

Various types of mills were also scattered throughout the Valley. In Turleytown, Turley Creek, also known as Brock's Creek, powered the majority of the industries in the area, including five gristmills, several sawmills, a hominy mill, a carding mill, and a hemp mill (Lilliendahl and Culler 183). In Edom, the mill was the last major industry standing in the area before it was destroyed by a fire in 1960 (Lilliendahl and Culler 67). Also in Edom was the old Wenger Mill, which was built in 1866 as a sawmill (Lilliendahl and Culler 73). For a time, it was also a flourishing gristmill, though it was eventually torn down in 1991 (Lilliendahl and Culler 73). In Thornton Gap, a mill complex, which contained a sawmill, a gristmill, a blacksmith shop, and a distillery, supplied the locals with their needs (Reeder 6). The products produced by this mill complex would be transported by covered wagons to eastern Virginia, and then those wagons would return with manufactured goods for the locals to purchase (Reeder 7).

Another popular business was pottery manufacturing (Lilliendahl and Culler 99). At the Lantz Building Supply building in Broadway, there are the remains of a pottery manufacturer from the 1890s (Lilliendahl and Culler 99). At Shenandoah Pottery, also formerly located in Broadway, a wide variety of pottery was crafted, including sanitary ware, earthenware, porcelain, china, terracotta, bricks, tiles, pipes, and ceramicware (Lilliendahl and Culler 99). The business also produced glassware, glass ornaments, cut glass, and structural glass (Lilliendahl and Culler 99). Bridgewater College's special collections includes several examples of pottery from the area. There is a jar crafted circa. 1860 by John D. Heatwole, probably at his business Dry River Pottery, formerly located near Dayton (*Special Collections Online Catalog*). The collection includes a crock crafted by Isaac Good, probably at Zigler Pottery, formerly located in Broadway, around the 1870s (*Special Collections Online Catalog*). There are also several pieces created by Emanuel Suter, a potter working in Rockingham County during the late 1800s, like an

earthenware communion bowl used at the Beaver Creek Church in Rockingham County (*Special Collections Online Catalog*).

Finally, the Valley earned its moniker of “the breadbasket of the confederacy” for a reason. Many locals participated in some form of farming. For example, there were apple orchards throughout the Valley, including Singers Glen, which had an apple processing plant (Lilliendahl and Culler 16). During the 1940s, when there was a shortage of manpower due to the war, German POWs held in the Valley worked at the plant (Lilliendahl and Culler 16). Many families raised livestock like chickens, cows, and hogs, the latter of which would create a tradition which will be looked at in further detail later on (Lilliendahl and Culler 149). In the spring, some families would collect the bark off of chestnut, chestnut oak, and hemlock trees (Reeder 41). For roughly two weeks, the bark could easily be peeled off the trees and be sold to local tanneries (Reeder 41). The bark contained high amounts of tannic acid, which the tanneries used to cure leather (Reeder 41).

#### *Connection with the Land and Temperament of the Locals*

Many locals have a deep connection with the Valley, and it is not hard to see why. There is, of course, a familial association to the land. For some families in the area, like my own, several generations have spent their lives in the Valley. There is certainly something special about residing on the same piece of land that, say, your great-great grandfather cleared to make a farm, especially if you have also lived your entire life on that land. Even if there is no ancestral connection, people can also connect to the land based on the lives they have built on it. If someone has put in the hard work to build a business or work for a certain industry attached to the area, they are probably going to feel some sort of sentimental attachment to it.

Locals' personal connections with the land can tragically be seen in stories concerning the removal of residents from the area that now consists of the Shenandoah National Park. When the Park was established in the 1930s, 465 families still resided within the area, all of which were forced to move (Reeder 90). The government was providing payment to the owners of the land, but several families did not want to move and were unwilling to go even with the payment (Reeder 13). Melancthon Cliser, who believed he had rights under the Magna Carta and United States Constitution to keep his land, was one of the residents that fought the forced removal (Reeder 13). Starting in the late 1920s, Cliser began writing letters to the editor of the *Page News and Courier*, the local newspaper, arguing that the government had no right to take his land and that others that were about to lose their land should fight against it (Reeder 13). When that did not help, Cliser began writing to the Secretary of the Interior and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and even called the White House to air his grievances (Reeder 13). He refused to accept the \$4,855 payment for his land, arguing that since he had not sold his land, the government could not take it from him (Reeder 13). However, Page County officials were eventually forced to read him his eviction notice (Reeder 13). The sheriff had initially refused to do so since he was sympathetic to the plight of Cliser and those like him, but he eventually agreed after he was threatened with contempt of court (Reeder 13). While his eviction notice was being read, Cliser barricaded himself into his kitchen and refused to listen, but he was ultimately taken away (Reeder 13).

Another objector was Robert H. Via, who decided to take legal action against the forced removal (Reeder 81). His case, known as *Via v. Virginia*, would go all the way to the Supreme Court (Reeder 81). However, on November 19, 1935, the Court ruled against Via, ending the hope of the locals that they would be able to keep their land (Reeder 81). Though the story has

not been verified, some people claimed that one man went so far as to hang himself in his barn so that he would not be forced to leave (Reeder 147). Regardless of whether this story is true or not, it shows just how devastated some of the residents were to leave the land that they held so dearly.

This is perhaps one of the reasons why locals gained a reputation for being suspicious of outsiders. I would also argue that a few of the events mentioned in the previous section about the history of the Valley during the Civil War also played a role in this. General Order No. 5 and 11 and Sheridan's burning of the Valley were devastating to the locals. The resentment for these actions has lingered for generations, often manifesting in distrust of outsiders. There were also the social scientists and writers who came to the area in the first half of the twentieth century. For example, George Pollock, the founder of Skyland, wrote about the locals (Reeder 125). While he did allow locals to attend the attractions at his camp, he wrote about them in an incredibly patronizing way (Reeder 125). According to Charles and Nancy Perdue, authors of *Hollow Folk*, Pollock was "unable to view the mountain people in anything resembling an objective manner and [his writing] is at best insensitive reporting and at worst falsified data" (Reeder 125). While some of the writers who came to the area wanted to create an accurate record of life in the area, many others came looking for salacious stories to catch the attention of their readers (Reeder 126).

Finally, Prohibition also played a role in leaving locals leery of outsiders. The creation and selling of moonshine had been a traditional and respected way of making a living for generations in the area (Reeder 126). With the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment in action, some residents began to fear that revenue agents would sneak into the area and arrest them, leaving them untrusting of any strangers (Reeder 126). For instance, in the late 1920s, a group of hikers scouting a path for

the Appalachian Trail were interested in traveling through Jarman Gap (Reeder 85). Locals, who knew Jarman Gap as the “center of a corn liquor distilling area,” warned them of the dangers of traveling through the area (Reeder 85). While the hikers did eventually go through with their plans of traveling through Jarman Gap, they reported feeling uneasy on the hike as they constantly felt like they were being watched (Reeder 85). Hazel Mountain was another area heavily populated with moonshiners (Reeder 105). One local woman warned that, “Even the tax collectors don’t go up there!” (Reeder 105). In 1930, a group of hikers in the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club were chased out of the area when brush alongside the trail was set on fire, presumably by a disgruntled moonshiner (Reeder 105). Two years later, an edition of the *Guide to Paths in the Blue Ridge* warned hikers to avoid the area until the locals had all been removed (Reeder 105).

### **The Culture of the Valley: Traditions**

#### *Recreation and Celebrations*

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the culture of the Valley are the many recreational activities and festivals of the area. For instance, from the 1920s until 1952, there was a bustling amusement park in Rawley Springs known as Ed’s Park (Lilliendahl and Culler 19-20). Residents of the Valley could go there to swim in the pool, which was fed by nearby Dry River, if they were brave enough to deal with frogs, fish, and occasionally snakes (Lilliendahl and Culler 19). The park also included concession stands, a roller-skating rink, a miniature train line, a carousel, a tavern, and an open-air stage for live performances (Lilliendahl and Culler 19-20). Starting in the 1940s, there were live performances held there every Sunday afternoon, including local contests, fiddle conventions, and performances by popular figures (Lilliendahl and Culler 20). In the early 1950s, the local children were treated to a performance by Lash

LaRue “King of the Bullwhip,” a famous cowboy (Lilliendahl and Culler 20). Additionally, on Saturday nights, there were live boxing matches (Lilliendahl and Culler 20). Jousting tournaments, which would later be held at the Natural Chimneys, would first be held at the park (Lilliendahl and Culler 20).

Opening in 1894, the Stony Man Camp, which would later become Skyland, offered guests, sometimes including Valley locals, a variety of experiences (Reeder 48). Early each morning, the founder of Stony Man Camp, George Pollock, would wake his guests up with a bugle call (Reeder 49). Throughout the day he would lead hikes and horseback rides on the trails he had constructed (Reeder 49). In the evenings, various types of performances would be held like music played by Valley musicians, minstrel shows, and Pollock’s infamous rattlesnake show (Reeder 49). While the visitors of Stony Man Camp were often tourists, locals were welcome to stop by and watch the evening entertainment as well (Reeder 49).

The Page County Heritage Festival, a yearly event that began in the 1800s and continues to this day, remains a popular tradition (Moore 222). Events include live performances by local musicians, wagon rides, steam and gas engine displays, and craft and food competitions (Moore 222). There is an amusing retelling of one of the older Heritage Festival events, the apple butter boil, from a Confederate officer from Richmond visiting the area in October 1862 (Moore 222). While making the apple butter, girls would form a circle around the cauldron and take turns leading a back-and-forth chant about forming a wreath of different types of flowers (Moore 222). In answer to the question “Who shall the next flower be?” the lead girl would state the name of a young man and give him a kiss before the chant would start anew (Moore 222). There were apparently other similar types of games played as they waited for the apple butter to finish

(Moore 222). The officer found the event “disgusting,” but had to admit that the final product was quite enjoyable (Moore 222).

There were also several events tied to specific holidays. In New Market, the Ashbury Methodist Church held a special Christmas program each year (Lilliendahl and Culler 47). In the first few years of its existence, it consisted of a small play and some Christmas music followed by the serving of sandwiches and candy (Lilliendahl and Culler 47). Over the years, though, it began to grow more and more popular (Lilliendahl and Culler 47). Members of the church began to pledge donations and local stores like Henry Tusing’s Midway Grocery Store began donating candy and other refreshments (Lilliendahl and Culler 47). Eventually, the event outgrew the church, and it was moved to the town hall (Lilliendahl and Culler 47). Another Christmas tradition, “Kris Kringling” or “Belsnickling,” shows continuing influence of many of the Valley residents’ Germanic heritage (Lilliendahl and Culler 144). Dating back to the eighteenth century, children would wait for a visit from the Belsnickle, a monster similar to Krampus, who would strike bad children with a bundle of switches and give sweets to good children (Lilliendahl and Culler 144). Similar to how modern children leave out milk and cookies for Santa, children would leave treats for the Belsnickle to find (Lilliendahl and Culler 144).

Other holiday traditions included the May Day Celebration. In Broadway, residents would begin preparing for the celebration in April, announcing what the theme and colors for the handmade crepe paper costumes would be for that year (Lilliendahl and Culler 107). At Broadway Elementary school, children would excitedly practice the May pole dance, hoping that their class would be the one picked to perform the wrapping of the pole (Lilliendahl and Culler 107). In a large field west of Main Street, local men competed in the jousting tournament, both for prizes and local renown (Lilliendahl and Culler 107). For this tournament, the contestants



would ride a horse down the field and try to capture rings suspended in the air with their pole (Lilliendahl and Culler 107). Also in Broadway, there would be a large Halloween party held in the high school's auditorium each year (Lilliendahl and Culler 109). There were booths set up where children could pay a small fee to play different types of games (Lilliendahl and Culler 109). One of the most popular was the "go fishing" booth, in which children would cast a fishing rod into a fake pond where someone would secretly attach a small prize for them to reel in (Lilliendahl and Culler 109-110). Another popular event was the cakewalk. Similar to musical chairs, participants would walk in a circle with places marked by numbers as music played (Lilliendahl and Culler 110). When the music stopped, a number was drawn and the person standing on the marker with that number would win a homemade cake donated by local women (Lilliendahl and Culler 110).

As can be seen in the above examples, music played a large role in the lives of Valley residents. Especially important to many Valley locals, due to the prevalence of Christianity in the region, was religious music. In fact, one of the most significant figures in early Southern hymnal music, Joseph Funk, was from Singers Glen (Lilliendahl and Culler 10). Funk, sometimes known as the "Father of Song in the South," published the *Harmonia Sacra*, the first collection of hymns set to music using "shaped notes" (Lilliendahl and Culler 10, 25). He would also open a singing school that would train many singers who would go on to open their own singing schools across the United States (Lilliendahl and Culler 11). Other members of the Funk family would go on to publish additional works of hymns. An example can be found in Bridgewater College's special collections. It has a copy of *The Brethren's Tune and Hymn Book*, published by Benjamin Funk, a descendent of Joseph Funk, in 1872. According to the library's record of the book, it was "the first Brethren hymnal to make widespread use of musical notation" (*Special*

*Collections Online Catalog*). It also has a copy of *Tabor: Or, The Richmond Collection of Sacred Music, Designed for the Various Religious Societies of the Southern and South-Western States*, written by R. M. McIntosh and published in 1866. Bridgewater's copy of this work was owned by Professor J. H. Ruebush, another descendent of Joseph Funk, who taught at the Shenandoah College and Conservatory of Music from 1886 to 1936 (*Special Collections Online Catalog*).

With music comes dancing. Even though there were some religious folks in the Valley adverse to this form of entertainment, there were plenty of others who loved the pastime. For example, during World War II, Mason's Garage in Timberville was turned into a Union Service Organization, U.S.O., and hosted many dances and parties (Lilliendahl and Culler 201). American soldiers were posted in the town due to the German POW camp that had been established there (Lilliendahl and Culler 201). At the U.S.O., soldiers socialized and even taught some of the local girls how to dance (Lilliendahl and Culler 201). Additionally, Anna Coffman, a resident of New Market, fondly recalled going with her parents to places like the local firehall and Kauffman's Mill where dances were held (Lilliendahl and Culler 35). Dance attendees would participate in "round dances," a form of ballroom dancing in which there is no lead dancer (Lilliendahl and Culler 35). A cuer would call out the steps to the dancers, who would frequently switch partners, allowing the crowd to get to know each other better (Lilliendahl and Culler 35). Another popular dancing event was inspired by *Li'l Abner*, a cartoon strip created Al Capp that originally ran from 1934 to 1977 (Lilliendahl and Culler 68). In 1937, Capp introduced the idea of the Sadie Hawkins Day Race, in which the single girls of the fictional town of Dogpatch would chase after local bachelors, forcing the men to marry them if they managed to catch them

(Lilliendahl and Culler 69). This idea spun off into the Sadie Hawkins dance in which ladies would invite men to the dance instead of the other way around (Lilliendahl and Culler 70).

### *Food/Medicinal Recipes*

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of a culture is its food. Books on the folklore of the Valley mention various foods and recipes popular in the area. In *Local Lore of the Shenandoah*, Catherine Riddle Funkhouser, a resident of New Market, recalled that a popular meal in her household when she was a child was mush, a type of cornmeal pudding (38). While she ate hers with lots of butter and a little salt and pepper, her father would dip his in a bowl of milk (Lilliendahl and Culler 38). Some poorer families, like that of Ray Kuykendall of Broadway, would eat groundhog (Lilliendahl and Culler 113). His wife, Shirley, accepted a recipe from her mother-in-law for preparing groundhog, which included boiling the meat in water with baking soda (Lilliendahl and Culler 113).

As mentioned previously, many locals raised hogs as a source of food. Many families would make an event of the day of the butchering, considering it would take essentially the whole day to complete (Lilliendahl and Culler 149). On hog butchering day, every member of the family, from the youngest to the oldest, would be given a job (Lilliendahl and Culler 149). In the end, every part of the hog would be used, even the inedible bits, like the tail (Lilliendahl and Culler 149). The tail was sometimes used in pranks, where one family member would try to secretly attach it to another (Lilliendahl and Culler 149). My mother and paternal grandparents have often fondly recalled their experiences with butchering day. My great grandfather, Edward Good, along with being a dairy farmer, raised hogs for butchering. On butchering day, all of the family, including his and his wife's brothers and sisters, their children, and their grandchildren, would gather at his house. My grandmother and mother would often tease me when I was little

with the fact that the family would fight over who got to eat the brains, which were fried with eggs the morning after butchering day. As stomach churning as that may seem, it was apparently delicious.

*Local Lore of the Shenandoah* also mentions recipes for other items. For instance, it mentions that some Valley residents would make homemade dish soap from lye and pork renderings (117). The book also gave examples of some homemade medicinal recipes. A cure for the croup was said to be a warm poultice of fried onions on the chest (Lilliendahl and Culler 92).

A cure for a cough is given as:

1 quart of sharp vinegar (hard cider)  
 1 quart of water  
 1 handful of horehound  
 1 handful of allicompane roots (probably elecampane, also called Horse-heal (*Inula helenium*))  
 Boil down to a quart then strain it and put 1 pint of honey in it.  
 Put on slow fire and boil to a pint.  
 Take a tablespoon at night and morning (Lilliendahl and Culler 63).

## **Conclusion**

The history and culture of the Shenandoah Valley can be a complex thing. The content above just barely grazes the surface of these topics. However, hopefully this can offer a taste of what is there is to know. There is, unfortunately, not a considerable number of books covering the culture of the Valley, especially ones that have come out within this century. Works are still out there, though, and can provide additional details on some of the aspects discussed here.

As mentioned at the beginning of this essay, I think it is important, especially for younger people, to have an understanding of the history and culture of the area that they are from. Even the smallest towns have so much to provide in these areas for study. Without interest in this, however, this information can slowly fade away and perhaps be lost forever, which is something that should be avoided at all costs.

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