



# The Way We Were



*From the pages of The Mountain Eagle, here's a look back at what was making news in Letcher County at this time in years past—stories large and small, recorded as they happened, and forming the first draft of our history.*

**THURSDAY  
JANUARY 28, 1926**

The Haymond community is mourning the loss of 19-year-old May Fleming. Newlywed three weeks ago, Mrs. Fleming was burned to death after her clothing caught fire as she was working near an open grate inside her home.

Letcher County mines produced 5,519,805 tons of coal in 1925, up from 4,851,806 in 1924, state mining officials say. Letcher trailed only Harlan (by far the state's leading producer.) Pike and Perry also had high tonnage as the county and state set new production records.

“Uneasy lies the head of anyone who has been fooling with moonshine,” *The Mountain Eagle* warns in a front-page editorial. “A rattlesnake, red-eyed and with fangs dripping with venom could not be more dangerous.”

A special election will be held February 13 to fill the vacant seat for a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 10th Congressional District, of which Letcher County is a member.

The new George Hogg Building on Main Street in Whitesburg is one of the best in the city, fully equipped with all modern conveniences with beautiful offices and storerooms. Several of the offices and storerooms have been rented.

**THURSDAY  
JANUARY 31, 1946**

M.H. Forester, vice president of Consolidation Coal Company in charge of the company's Kentucky operations with headquarters in Jenkins, has agreed to the federal government's request that he accept the position of Chief of Coal and Non-Metalic Mining Section with the office of Military Government for Germany. Forester will be responsible for the administration of the coal problem in the U.S. Zone of Occupation. He will be replaced in Jenkins by Samuel M. Cassidy, now vice president of Weirton Coal Company.

A new business known as the Consumers Electric Store is now open for business in East Jenkins under the management of T.V. Bumgardner. The store will carry the Crosley and Apex lines of appliances as well as deep well water systems and wiring devices and supplies.

The executive council of the American Federation of Labor made room this week for John L. Lewis, rebel leader of the United Mine Workers, who broke with the AFL a decade ago. Lewis was officially returned to the AFL fold when the council voted him unanimously to the 13th vice presidency of the federation of installed him in absentia on the 15-man governing board. The bushy-browed UMW boss led more than half a million miners back into the AFL when he took his place among the labor leaders with whom he previously clashed in 1936, when Lewis organized a revolt of industrial workers who later formed the rival CIO. Lewis later split with the CIO over political differences.

Frank Beverly, a 32-year-old miner, has died in the Jenkins hospital of injuries he received in a fall of mine timbers.

Kermit Combs is now the sole owner of the F.A. Hopkins Store in Whitesburg and will continue to operate the same under the name of Kermit's Superette.

Dimes bearing the portrait

## When the snow was sweet: ‘Snow cream’ remains an edible piece of Appalachian history

In the mountains, winter has always been both hardship and hush. Snow meant cold kitchens, wood to be split, roads made uncertain—but it also brought small pleasures that belonged only to that season. Among them was snow cream, a dish so simple it hardly seems like a recipe at all, yet so firmly lodged in Appalachian memory that many people recall it as clearly as the first snowfall itself.

Snow cream was never planned. It arrived the way snow does—unexpectedly, briefly, and with urgency. Children watched the sky and waited for the flakes to thicken, knowing that timing mattered. The snow had to be new, clean, untouched. Someone—often the youngest and fastest—was sent out with a bowl or pan, gathering it from porch railings, fence posts, or a flat board set aside for just this purpose. Roads were avoided. Roofs were avoided. Old-timers knew better, even if they could not have explained the science behind it.

Inside, the kitchen was already warm. A pot of milk might still be on the stove from the morning's work, or cream skimmed from the top of the crock earlier in the day. Sugar was measured carefully, because sugar was not something to waste. Vanilla, if it was on hand, was used sparingly. Earlier generations sweetened snow cream with sorghum or maple syrup, depending on what the family made themselves. In leaner times, some remembered it with nothing more than milk and a pinch of sugar—still a marvel, simply because it was cold, sweet and came from the sky.

Snow cream belongs to the Appalachian tradition of making do. Long before freezers and store-bought ice cream, mountain families relied on what was close at hand and in season. Ice houses were rare



Snow cream: An Appalachian tradition of making do. (Photo courtesy Southern Living)

in the high hollows, and fresh treats in winter rarer still. Snow cream filled that gap. It was not meant to last. It melted quickly, even as it was eaten, and that fleeting quality was part of its appeal. You ate it because it was there now; it might rain tomorrow.

What made snow cream special was not just the taste, but the moment. It was communal, passed around in mismatched bowls, eaten standing up near the stove or sitting on the edge of a table. Adults smiled at children sticky with melted snow, remembering their own turns with the bowl decades earlier. Recipes were not written down because they did not need to be. You learned by watching. You learned by tasting. And you learned that winter, for all its severity, could still offer sweetness.

Even now, snow cream survives less as necessity than as memory. When it is made today, it is often accompanied by a story: about a grandmother

who insisted on “only the top snow,” or about brothers racing to fill the bowl first, or about a winter snow so deep the fences disappeared. In that way, snow cream is more than a dessert. It is an edible piece of Appalachian history.

**Traditionally Appalachian  
Snow Cream Recipe**

This recipe reflects the way snow cream was commonly made in the central and southern Appalachian region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

**Ingredients**

- Freshly fallen, clean snow (about 8-10 cups, loosely packed)
- 1 cup whole milk or fresh cream
- 2-4 tablespoons sugar (to taste)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional and not always available historically)
- Older variations:*
  - Sorghum molasses or ma-

ple syrup in place of sugar

- Evaporated milk in later years, when it became available

**Method**

1. Collect snow immediately after it falls, from a clean, elevated surface away from roads or buildings. Bring it indoors promptly.
  2. In a separate bowl, stir together the milk or cream and sugar until the sugar dissolves. Add vanilla if using.
  3. Gradually pour the liquid mixture over the snow, folding gently with a spoon.
  4. Continue adding snow or liquid as needed until the mixture reaches a soft, ice-cream-like consistency.
  5. Serve immediately. Snow cream does not keep and should be eaten at once.
- Snow cream was never meant to be perfected—only shared. And like the snowfall itself, once it is gone, it leaves behind the memory of something simple, cold, and sweet that could only have happened in the mountains.

of the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt are now being distributed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland to all banks in the Fourth Federal Reserve District which request them. These new dimes will be made available to the public on January 30. Stocks of the current Liberty head dime, first minted 29 years ago, will continue to be used for trade requirements. Only three other Presidents have been honored similarly by the Treasury Department, the portrait of Lincoln is on the one-cent piece; that of Jefferson is on the nickel, and that of Washington is on the quarter.

In his annual statement to Congress, President Truman has recommended federal aid to elementary and secondary education schools everywhere in the United States.

**THURSDAY  
JANUARY 26, 1956**

Thousands of porch lights — the traditional symbol of the Mothers' March on Polio — will brighten Letcher County tonight when women in every part of the county move into their annual crusade to raise polio-fighting funds. Fire and police sirens will blare as the mothers go from house-to-house to accept contributions to aid the polio fight. The fund-raising event will start at 7 p.m. and last one hour. “We march for those who cannot walk,” said Mrs. S.E. Moncrief Jr. of Whitesburg, chairman of the Mothers' March.

The Consolidation Coal Company (the Kentucky Division of Pittsburgh Consolidation Coal) has honored 53 coal miners for the safety record they set during 1955. The honorees and guests were treated to a four-course filet mignon dinner at the Ridgefield Country Club in Kingsport, Tennessee. A total of 120 employees were invited to attend.

A four-year-old Sandlick girl has died in an automobile accident near the home of Harve Hall on Sandlick Road. Diana Sexton, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bradford Sexton, was riding in her parents' car along with six brothers and sisters when the car collided with another vehicle.

**THURSDAY  
JANUARY 27, 1966**

Letcher County teachers will stage a one-day protest against the failure of the Breathitt administration to recommend \$900-a-year raises for teachers.

A petition bearing 2,500 signatures has been sent to Gov. Edward T. Breathitt asking assistance in make the crossing of the L&N Railroad at Letcher School safer.

Classes will resume at Whitesburg Grade School when other students return to school after a weather-prompted holiday. The grade school has been closed since Jan. 17, when Whitesburg Fire Chief Remious Day ordered the old high school building and the grade school building shut down as unsafe for human occupancy. Repair work has been underway for the past week, and Day and Dr. Richard Keeler, county health worker, have decided that schools may be reopened on a temporary, emergency basis so that the school term can be completed.

“The Pleasure Seekers” starring Ann-Margret and Tony Franciosa is playing at the Alene Theater in Whitesburg.

**THURSDAY  
FEBRUARY 5, 1976**

In apparent violation of Kentucky law, the Letcher Fiscal Court held a special called meeting Friday without any notification to the public.

The Letcher Fiscal Court has voted not to support the City of Whitesburg in its attempt to obtain a federal grant to study the wastewater disposal system in the city and surrounding area. The vote came at a meeting held last Friday without notice to the public.

Gov. Julian Carroll has decided not to return any of the state coal severance tax directly to coal counties.

**WEDNESDAY  
FEBRUARY 5, 1986**

Judge/Executive Ruben Watts says he hopes work can resume later this week on a county road which has left Carcassonne-area residents “at ends.” At issue is the construction — or what some people say

is the lack of construction — on the Bull Creek-Elk Creek Road.

A sign appeared over the weekend on the window of the Whitesburg A&P Food Store, announcing the store will close this Saturday, February 8. The sign was the first official notice that A&P is leaving Whitesburg after selling groceries here for 60 years. The A&P Store in Neon will remain open.

Reports that the Jenkins Community Hospital has laid off a large number of workers and closed part of its operation are not true, hospital administrator Jim Thomas says.

More than half the members of the Whitesburg Volunteer Fire Department plan to resign and join the new Sandlick Volunteer Fire Department, former city fire chief Philmore Bowen said this week. The Letcher Fiscal Court last week agreed to appropriate \$7,500 to start the Sandlick department.

**WEDNESDAY  
FEBRUARY 7, 1996**

Low-temperature records were broken for four consecutive days ending Monday, the National Weather Service at Jackson said. A record low of -8° was set for all of February.

Four members of the Letcher County Board of Education went outside the county last week to hire an attorney to help them try to regain their authority from state education managers they often refer to as “outsiders.” The school board voted 4-0 to retain Lexington attorney Kent Masterson Brown to challenge the state's takeover of the school system. Kentucky Education Commission Wilmer S. Cody took “full and complete” control of the district on January 29.

The deep snow and record-breaking temperatures of this week the end of this year's county school term into the middle of June.

As state Rep. Paul Mason sees it, an industrial site without water, or the prospect of water, is no site at all. So, Mason is pushing for a bill to let coal counties use some of their severance-tax money for construction of water distribution

systems.

**WEDNESDAY  
FEBRUARY 1, 2006**

Jeffrey Allen, convicted last week of murdering two-year-old Dakota Yonts, his foster child, will be back in Letcher Circuit Court later this month to face formal sentencing. Letcher Circuit Judge Sam Wright is expected to follow the jury's recommendation and sentence Allen to 50 years in prison.

Blake Cook learned something that boys his age used to do nearly every day — how to milk a cow. The cow Blake learned on was a Fiberglas model visiting Martha Jane Potter Elementary School as part of a program sponsored by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.

Kimberly Rider, a social services superintendent in Lamar County, Mississippi, wrote to Letcher Countians to express her gratitude for donations received from the Letcher County Katrina's Hope Fund. The Hope Fund was organized a week after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast.

Both the Jenkins Lady Cavaliers and the Letcher County Lady Cougars defeated Cordia. The Lady Cavaliers won 66-43 and the Lady Cougars won 84-31.

**WEDNESDAY  
JANUARY 27, 2016**

Even though Letcher County Public Schools have called off school eight times this semester because of inclement weather, summer break for students could still begin in mid-May.

The reinstatement of expense accounts for magistrates approved last week by the Letcher Fiscal Court total \$600 per month rather than the \$300 per month indicated during the court's January meeting.

Letcher County is home to three of seven candidates who have filed to run for the 94th District State Representative's seat being vacated by Leslie Combs. Those from Letcher County who have filed for the set are Colin Fultz of Camp Branch, Wesley Doughman of Isom, and Angie Hattton of Dry Fork.