



The Friends of Mountwood Park Newsletter

Fall 2018 Issue Vol. 9, No. 4

Friends of Mountwood Park Officers
Peggy Squires, President
Melody Crawford, Vice President
Carolyn Naylor, Secretary
Mike Naylor, Treasurer

**Friends meet the 2nd Thursday of each
month at 6:30 pm.**

**Fall, a Time When Every Leaf
Becomes a Flower, is Here!**



This photo titled "Backroads" taken by Amy Williams appeared in WV Executive Magazine in the summer 2013 issue.

Schedule of Events

•September 28 – 30

Annual Volcano Days Festival

*Check out the schedule of events on the
last page of this newsletter.*

•October 6

Mountwood 10-Mile Challenge

**For more information go to*

www.rivercityrunners.com

We received mail!

We were happy to discover in our mailbox a letter from Mr. Jim Hardigg. Mr. Hardigg's letters have always been filled with interesting information about his family and Volcano and this one didn't disappoint us. Below is a portion of his letter that I think you will find interesting.

"As you may know, my O'Brien grandparents had a house in Volcano that for decades their descendants used to use as a summer getaway spot after the family moved into Parkersburg. As long as Cheslyn Jonas Sr. was alive the house was intact. My Aunt Katherine and her husband George Stevenson Sr. had repairs and improvements made. Numerous other houses had been abandoned and no longer exist."

"My family's house no longer exists. After Cheslyn Jonas was gone, thieves broke in and stole everything. The house burned. Every piece of metal was taken from the site. There was a copper bathtub in the kitchen which undoubtedly was valuable. There was also an Armco steel building for storage which I helped construct. Several years earlier there was a metal antenna at the top of the hill above the house to improve reception from Parkersburg. This was cut off at the ground-level and removed. The coaxial cable from the antenna to the house had scrap value."

“My grandfather, Dennis O’Brien, purchased the land at Volcano, which my family has inherited, about 1880. It had been an oil field owned by men who thought it was pretty well worked out.”

“Grandfather had learned to operate oil wells at Burning Springs. Numerous people had gone there after oil was discovered just before the Civil War. A Confederate raid destroyed the wells and the oil which had been extracted. After the war, oil production resumed. I expect the income that individuals obtained from a well or two was not large enough to satisfy them and they hired other people to operate their wells. I think Grandfather did this kind of work.”

“Geologists realized that Burning Springs was a geological anticline. Moving along the anticline they discovered oil at “White Oak” which was then named Volcano.”

“Grandfather cleaned out some of the wells and drilled some new ones. One was very productive and enabled my grandparents to move into Parkersburg, which offered more opportunities for the children’s education. The Jonas family then operated the oil wells.”

“The amount of oil produced by the field gradually declined along with its price too. The family continued to have the well operated because it was the chief source of income for the Jonas family.”

“The family’s land at Volcano has been leased for recreational purpose to Mountwood Park. The family continues to allow the forest to grow, which we believe is good for everyone.”

In this photo is Dennis, his wife Anna, and their



children Evelyn, Chester and Mary in front of their Volcano home on Raymon

d Street. To the left is a hired worker standing next to a horse. Wonder if the worker is Cheslyn Jonas, Sr.

Museum Report

By Mike Naylor

Through August 31, we have had 436 visitors and collected \$120 from sales and donations. This does not seem like a lot of money; but we have been able to grow the museum and have always paid our bills. The museum produces intangible benefits for the Park as described below.

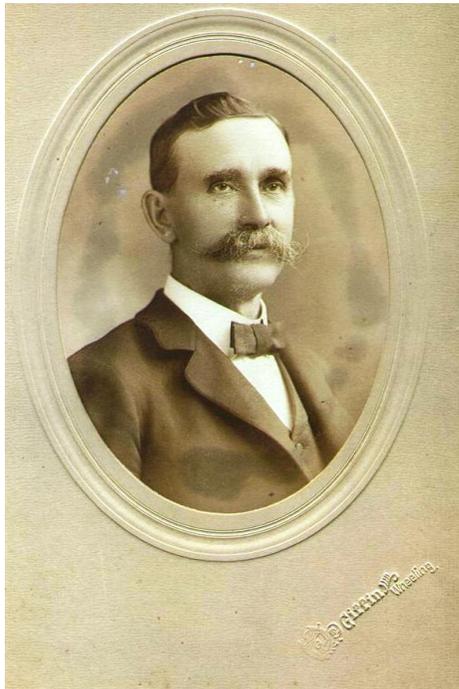
Two regional publications *West Virginia Living* and *Ohio Country Living* have produced articles this year featuring the Volcano museum, the legacy of Volcano, West Virginia and Mountwood Park. This coverage will bring new visitors to Mountwood Park. Marketing that is cost-free!

The 2018 winter issue of *Goldenseal*, West Virginia’s premier history-related publication, will run an article focusing on the Stiles family, Volcano, the museum and Mountwood Park. This article is inspired by Pat Carder’s history of the Stiles family and her diligence in contacting *Goldenseal*. Pat is a member of The Friends of Mountwood Park.

Thank you Steve Parker, again. I also have to thank my husband Mike Naylor for providing the wonderful photographs.

Dennis O'Brien Succeeded in the Declining Days of Volcano where Others Failed!

By Carolyn Naylor



Of Irish descent, Dennis O'Brien was the son of Richard and Katherine (McHenry) O'Brien who crossed the Atlantic to Canada in the 1830s and then moved south beyond the U.S./Canadian border to New York. Dennis was born on November 11, 1842 at Grand Island, Erie County, New York. His father was a farmer but Dennis must have decided farming was not for him because as a young man, he learned the coopering trade.

In 1865, he arrived in West Virginia during the early oil excitement. He located in Burning Springs and engaged in the oil business in a modest way. Eventually he left for the Volcano oil fields where he was successful in his

operations, not only in Wood County, but also in Ritchie County

To quote Linwood Lowden in his book *White Oak, West Virginia Alias Volcano (The Resurrection of a Ghost Town)* "In August 1888, White Oak reported, "Dennis O'Brien will start up a number of old wells that have been idle for some two or three years. He has had new rigs built and will have the old holes cleaned out before starting. According to his grandson, James S. Hardigg, in the area of Little Lick, O'Brien pumped 30,000 barrels of oil from new wells."

Dennis O'Brien married Anna M. McCandless on April 30, 1890. Anna was the daughter of Thomas and Eliza McCandless. Dennis and Anna had five children—an unnamed son born at Volcano in April 1891; three daughters, Mary, Evelyn, and Katherine; and one son Chester. In 1898, the family moved from Volcano to 426 – 13th Street in Parkersburg.

Dennis was a busy man and through his work and sound judgment, he acquired a large estate. At the time of his death, he was:

- President of the Second National Bank;
- One of the officers of The Trader's Building Association,;
- President of the Hardy Machine Company and the Hardy Banking Company of North Baltimore, Ohio; and,
- A member of The Blue Lodge of Masons of Volcano and the Volcano Society.

Days leading to his death, there were plans to go to New York to attend the

wedding of a niece, Madge McCandless—their eldest daughter Mary was to be a bridesmaid. Unfortunately, Dennis became ill with sciatic rheumatism. When Anna decided to stay home, Dennis insisted that she go. He assured her that his ailment was nothing more than a light touch of rheumatism and that he would be all right in a few days. Then, after the attending physician assured her there was nothing to worry about, she and Mary left. Unfortunately, pneumonia developed. When Anna heard the news that he was worse, she left for home on the first train. However, when the train stopped at Grafton, she received word that he had passed. Dennis O'Brien died on April 3, 1910. Anna regretted that she was not at his bedside during his last hours. His death at the family residence was a shock to everyone, as only a few were aware that he was ill.

Anna remained in Parkersburg until her death in 1945 at 80 years of age. According to Anna's obituary, she was the first president of the board of directors of the Parkersburg Y.W.C.A.

A newspaper article described the couple's home life as ideally happy as Dennis was devoted to his family—a loving husband and a kind and indulgent father. I agree with Linwood Lowden when he said Dennis O'Brien was one who in the declining days of Volcano succeeded where others failed. He prospered financially and grew in influence.”

(Note: *White Oak, West Virginia Alias Volcano (The Resurrection of a Ghost Town)* by Linwood Lowden can be purchased at Mountwood Park's Visitor Center/Museum.)

Parkersburg Daily State Journal
November 25, 1869

“The Messrs. O'Brien publish their advertisement in today's Journal. We have had a long and favorable acquaintance with these gentlemen and can truly say that no more prompt and reliable business men can be found in the oil regions of West Va. They have extensive works at Volcano and Burning Springs, and all orders entrusted to their care will receive prompt and satisfactory attention. Everything in the shape of repairs or manufacture of oil well apparatuses can be had at either of their shops; and we have no hesitation in saying that oil men will find it to their interest to deal with this firm.”

This photo is of the store Dennis owned in Volcano. The store was operated by John Shafer.



Funny Quote from Will Rogers
When I die, I want to die like my grandfather who died peacefully in his sleep. Not screaming like all the passengers in his car.

Editor: Carolyn Naylor
Contributors: Carolyn Naylor, Mike Naylor, and Steve Parker.

Volcano Days 2018 Schedule of Events

Friday, September 28

5:00 pm

- Antique Engine Show, Flea Market *
- Tom Roddey

Saturday, September 29

10:00 am

- Antique Engine Show*
- Flea Market *
- Apple Butter Making*
- Cornmeal Grinding*
- Saw Mill Demonstrations*
- Shingle Mill*
- Blacksmith Demonstrations*
- Bingo*
- Inflatable's*
- Climbing Wall*

11:30 am

- Historic Wagon Ride to the Stiles Mansion site**
- Kiddie Tractor Pull (Registration at 12 and Pulling at 1pm)
- Neon Moon Band

1:30 pm

- Plan B

2:30 pm

- Historic Wagon Ride to Stiles Mansion Site**

3:00 pm

- OYO

4:30 pm

-TRO

6-7:30 pm

- Back Porch Alibi

Sunday, September 30

10:00 am

- Antique Engine Show*
- Flea Market *
- Apple Butter Making*
- Cornmeal Grinding*
- Saw Mill Demonstrations*
- Shingle Mill*
- Blacksmith Demonstrations*
- Bingo*
- Inflatable's*
- Climbing Wall*

11:30 pm

- Historic Wagon Ride to Stiles Mansion Site**

12 noon

- Kiddie Tractor Pull (Registration at 12 and Pulling at 1pm)
- Smith Family

1:30 pm

- Stallion

2:30 pm

- Historic Wagon Ride to Stiles Mansion-Site**

*Indicate the activities that will run throughout the entire day.

**Purchase tickets at Visitors Center/Museum. Price of a ticket is \$10 adults and \$5 for children under 18 years of age. The wagon ride will depart from the parking lot at the Stiles Administration Building.