



The Friends of Mountwood Park Newsletter

Winter 2025 Issue Vol. 16, No. 1

In this newsletter is a commemorative to Patty Sue Cooper, a dedicated volunteer with the Friends of Mountwood Park at Mountwood Park.

Officers of The Friends of Mountwood Park

Peggy Squires, President
Rose Russell, Vice President
Carolyn Naylor, Secretary
Mike Naylor, Treasurer

Our mailing address is:
FRIENDS OF MOUNTWOOD PARK
PO BOX 2094
PARKERSBURG, WV 26102
You can contact Mountwood Park by
calling (304) 679-3611.

Friends usually meet the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm at the Stiles Administration Building at Mountwood Park. If you are unsure about the time and place, please check our Facebook page. If you are a member and if we have your current email address, you should receive a meeting notice. If you have any questions, please call or text Peggy Squires at 304-588-9148.

Male Cardinals in Winter



Photo taken from Wonder West Virginia Magazine.
Photo taken by Steve Shaluta.

One of the blessings of old friends is that you can afford to be stupid with them."

Unknown

Letter From our President

We are ready to start the new year and several exciting things are planned. First, is the completion of the addition to our museum. There will be many additions inside and outside the museum this year. Stop and check them out. Our Museum is open May through September, Saturday and Sunday, from 1 to 4 pm.

Next, the Park will be working on our Dog Park Memory Walkway. You may order your Memorial Brick from any member, at the Park or, if you prefer, call 304-679-3914. You can also get a form by visiting our website.

The West Virginia Fairs Festival Pageant will be held in Charleston on January 10th and 11th and our Queen Jalyn Ramsey will attend to represent Woof Fest and Mountwood Park. Tickets are all sold out but you may live stream it.



Next, we will begin working and planning on the Easter Egg Hunt. It takes several months to get the eggs filled and baskets made. Please start bringing candy and items for the baskets to the Park. Since Easter falls on April 20, we will need to work on it at the February and March meeting.

Hope to see you at the meeting in January, it will be at George's in front of the Mall at 6 pm unless the weather is bad.

Peggy Squires

"Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not; remember that what you now have was once among the things you only hoped for."

Epicurus

Museum Summary 2024

By Mike Naylor

2024 has been a momentous year for the museum!! There were 1,516 visitors which is up from 1,011 visitors in 2023.

The new addition has been completed except for the handicapped access ramp. We are anxiously waiting for the diorama to be finished. It started as 4' by 8' and as of the last update it might grow to 6' by 12.' Updates can be followed at the Facebook page, Volcano, WV -Museum

Replica. The diorama will be the “centerpiece” of the new addition.

Many of the 2024 additions to the museum are displayed outside! The Oil and Gas Museum in Parkersburg graciously donated Volcano oil field relics to the Park that are displayed, under shelter, behind the wheel house. Thank you, Paul Hoblitzell!!!



Volcano oil field relics behind wheel house.

The Park has been given an engine, eccentric pump jack, wooden oil tank and an engine house that is almost complete!!

Patty Cooper, AKA “Red Neck Nellie”

By Mike Naylor

Patty, a long-standing member of Friends passed away on October 24, 2024. She is missed by many.

Patty brought history to life through the many characters she portrayed; but at Mountwood Park she will be affectionately remembered as one of Volcano’s memorable ladies, the premier

madam of this small village, “Red Neck Nellie.”

My wife and I were at North Bend State Park in late 2007 for a dinner theater and were taken with Karen Vuranch’s portrayal of Belle Starr. This provided the inspiration for recruiting someone to play “Red Neck Nellie” at Volcano Days. When I contacted Karen, she recommended Patty Cooper. I contacted Patty and found her to be very hesitant because she was concerned that her church family would disapprove. They told her to give it a shot!

Patty made the wagon ride to Thornhill by harassing husbands much to the delight of their wives; and Patty, like Nellie, could find scripture to drive home her point.

The photo below, at Thornhill, was taken on our last wagon ride in 2019.



Patty, thanks for the memories!!

*Feeling gratitude and not
expressing it is like wrapping
a present and not giving it.*

William Arthur Ward

**The following letter appeared in
the Parkersburg Sentinel on
December 29, 1898.**

Submitted by Steve Parker

“To the Editor of the Parkersburg
Sentinel, Parkersburg, W. Va.

I see in the issue of the Morning
News of a late date quite a sensational
article headed “Big Fracas, Lively Time
in Volcano Saturday Night Caused by
Whiskey,” in which their informant,
whoever he may be, took occasion to
state “that for some time the drinking
fraternity of Volcano have been
threatening to wreck the saloon of that
place on Christmas eve. We understand
it is alleged that the liquor sold there is
the rankest kind of rot-gut poison and
this was the reason for the proposed
wreck.” It appears from the article that
their informant was not present, as in the
conclusion he states “as far as we can
learn no arrests have yet been made.”
The fact is, that the whole article is false
and as I am the only proprietor of a
saloon in Volcano, I feel that great
injustice has been done me by this
correspondent, who has not the honesty
and independence to sign his name to his
communications. The fact is, that “the
saloon was not wrecked, there was no
free for all fight, no pistols or knives
used, the doors were not kicked in, nor

the windows smashed out and bar
fixtures ruined,” as stated in that
communication.

There was a fight occurred outside
of the saloon in which the saloon or its
proprietor had no part, nor was it caused
by persons drinking in the saloon, nor
was it for the purpose of wrecking the
saloon for the reason that I have done a
lawful business in a quiet and prudential
manner for a number of years at
Volcano. I have furnished my patrons
with the best of liquors and have no
enemies in Volcano that I know of,
excepting their correspondent, whoever
he may be, and he has not the honesty,
sincerity, or manhood to come out and
sign his name to the articles and thereby
assume the responsibility of his
communication.

The whole communication is false
and the object of it can be well
understood from the manner in which it
is written.

I desire to say to him and the
public that I do not sell rot-gut whiskey,
that my saloon was not a wreck, there
was no fight that occurred in the saloon,
that the door was not kicked in, the
windows were not smashed out, nor the
bar and fixtures wrecked, and the
gentleman correspondent who says that
“full particulars we have been unable to
learn on account of the roads being
almost impassable (which shows that he
does not live at Volcano and has no
personal knowledge of the fact which he

states in his communication) should first ascertain the facts before he tries to maliciously slander or injure his neighbor for the purpose of sending in a sensational article to the newspaper, for which I presume he receives a small compensation.”

Chas. Beane

James W. Fry— Volcano's Fire bug?

Whenever Volcano is a topic of conversation, the fire, and the name James (Jim) Fry soon becomes part of the conversation. Unfortunately, it was a struggle finding what I believed was, without a doubt, information about our Jim Fry. Every avenue I went down came to a dead end.

Thanks to Linwood Lowden's book *White Oak, West Virginia Alias Volcano (The Resurrection of a Ghost Town)* and the book "*Wood County, West Virginia, in Civil War Times*" by Herman Edmond Matheny I was able to find some information. However, after much searching, I still have no idea of when or where he was born or the names of his parents and wife. Did he have children? Don't know.

On page 83 of Linwood Lowden's book, he states that late in 1878, Jim opened a blacksmith shop where he did "blacksmithing in all its branches, neatly and extraditiously." According to Linwood, Jim was "a veteran of the Civil War having served in the Confederate

Army under the command of Stonewall Jackson at the battles of Bull Run, Cedar Mountain, and others. He was proud of his service and of General Jackson. (White Oak).

Finding a record of Jim serving in the War was a challenge. I began to doubt if he served. Then, by chance, I stumbled upon the book "*Wood County, West Virginia, in Civil War Times*" by Herman Edmond Matheny. According to Mr. Matheny, the South did not give western Virginia credit for the enlistees who went south, and in most instances refused to let the soldiers name their companies. James was one of these enlistees.

According to Mr. Matheny, Jim probably served in either Company G, 20th Regiment, Virginia Cavalry (the Wood County Grays) or the 17th Virginia Cavalry (the Night Hawk Rangers). After reading about the Grays and the Night Hawk Rangers, my best guess is that James served in the Wood County Grays.

According to Mr. Matheny, the Grays were recruited and organized in Parkersburg by Paul Neal who was born in Parkersburg. Paul would drill the Confederate troops on the streets and displayed the first Confederate flag in town.

The unit served in General William Lowther Jackson's brigade and confronted the Union in western Virginia

and in the Shenandoah Valley. According to the website *The West Virginia Encyclopedia*, William Jackson helped to organize an infantry unit, he was promoted to colonel and served on the staff of his cousin General Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson.

Lubricator, August 19, 1873--“On Wednesday of last week, a warrant was issued for the arrest of James Fry for an assault upon Joseph Paul, and while trial was in process Mr. Paul jumped to his feet and snapped a pistol at the breast of Mr. Fry. Fortunately, the cartridge did not explode, and constable (sic) Stewart wrested the pistol from the hands of Mr. Paul. On the conclusion of the trial of Mr. Fry, who was recognized to appear before the grand jury, a warrant was issued for the arrest of Mr. Paul, for attempting to shoot with intent to kill, and Mr. Paul was recognized to appear before the grand jury to answer an indictment.

We cannot but shudder to think how reckless some persons are of human life. Had the cartridge exploded there is no telling as to whom it would have killed or wounded, as the room was crowded, and the officers and citizens were using their best endeavors to keep the peace. The carrying of pistols and knives, and flourishing them on all convenient occasions, a dangerous practice, and one that should be noticed in no trifling manner; and we hope this will teach a lesson to this community that will not soon be forgotten.”

The Parkersburg Examiner, October 11, 1873

WOOD COUNTY COURT

The Fall Term of the County Court of Wood commenced its session on the 23rd. Present: Cyrus Hall, Esq., President, and William Devaughn and Jared Florence, Justices.

The Grand Jury consisted of the following gentlemen: William Dils, Foreman; E. P. Chancellor, Fred Stahlman, Kindard Snodgrass, Oliver P. Durham, George Ritters, E. L. Conger, John V. Rathbone, J. G. Blackford, A. E. Rolston, Granville Stout, Edward Tracewell, J. Robinson, and Levi Stephens, were duly empaneled and charged by J. B. Jackson, Esq., States Attorney.

The Grand Jury found the following indictments: Assault and Battery—Joseph Paul, James Fry and Coleman Holleran.

In Linwood’s book, he states that on August 3, 1879, Jim was one of the watchmen on duty watching over Volcano because people were paranoid due to labor unrest and what they considered previous attempts to burn the town.

When a fire began at 4 a.m. on August 4, 1879, arson was immediately suspected. Since Jim had a reputation for being difficult, it was easy for his neighbors to suspect him—he became the primary

suspect. He was even arrested and held for trial. He was acquitted.

From the little information I could discover, I have concluded that James lived with demons and like many Civil War veterans, may have suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Not being recognized by the South for his service most likely really angered him. To add to all these problems, he enjoyed drinking and was possibly an alcoholic. It seems to me that he was reckless and would act without thinking about consequences.

Indiana News, Indianapolis, Marion county, 8 August, 1879

Parkersburg, W. Va., August 8—

“James W. Fry, the incendiary who fired Volcano, was arrested yesterday by officer Mehen, brought to this place, and lodged in jail. He was watchman the night the town was fired, and yesterday a Mr. Cole went quietly into stable and overheard Fry telling a comrade, who was sitting behind the stable, how he did it. On Cole’s coming out of the stable, Fry discovered him, and threatened to kill him if he disclosed what he had heard and Fry’s friend drew a revolver, but a friend of Cole’s coming up released him.”

Parkersburg Weekly State Journal, January 8, 1880

“James Fry, who died was tried and acquitted of the charge of burning Volcano some months ago, died in this city on the 19th ult., of *mania poiui*¹. It is rumored that he confessed, before he died, to the crime of which he was acquitted, and that he got well paid for it. But the rumor is hardly entitled to credit, for the reason that, a man dying under those circumstances, would not be competent to make a rational confession.”

According to Mike Naylor, although Mr. Stiles turned the investigation of the fire over to the Pinkerton detective agency to investigate, he decided to destroy the last page on which the name of the guilty party appeared. The rumor was that he wanted to protect the family of the offender. I would be surprised if we ever find out who set the fire at Volcano. (*Note: You can learn more about the investigation into the fire by purchasing a copy of the Pinkerton Report at the Volcano Museum at Mountwood Park.*)

*To improve is to change; to
be perfect is to change often.*
Winston Churchill

¹ Insanity arising from the use of spirituous liquors. Bouvier’s Law Dictionary, 6th Ed. (1856)

Want to be a Volunteer?

By Carolyn Naylor

We are continuously looking for volunteers to help preserve the history of Volcano.

There are plenty of opportunities available if you wish to volunteer. We can always use help at the museum. If history is not of interest to you, we can always use help with the Easter egg hunt, Adventure Camp, and Woof Fest. It would be up to you to decide how much time you wish to invest. It can be a lot of work and sometimes boring, but it is always rewarding.

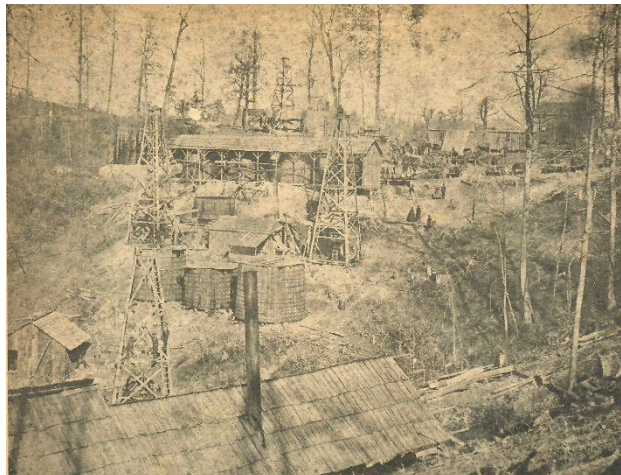
Join the Friends of Mountwood Park through an annual membership of \$20 for an individual membership, or \$25 for a family, or donate just 20 hours of labor annually. Additional information is available at:
<http://www.friendsofmountwoodpark.com/>.

Dues 2025: I want to thank all members who have already paid dues for 2025. For those who haven't yet paid, you will be receiving a dues letter soon.

If you wish, you can pay now by sending a check made payable to The Friends of Mountwood Park for \$20 (self) or \$25 (family). If you include a donation, please let us know how you wish your donation to be spent. For example, Easter Egg Hunt, Adventure Camp, Woof Fest, Museum/History, or Dog Park, etc. Mail your check to The

Friends of Mountwood Park, P. O.
Box 2094, Parkersburg, WV 26102.

Volcano Oil Field



This oil field was located at old Volcano in Wood County. According to Brooks Pepper of Petroleum, this picture was taken about 1890.

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