

# Preserving Coal Creek Mining History

By: Barry Thacker, P.E.  
Coal Creek Watershed  
Foundation, Inc.

Field trip with Briceville students to Wiley Cemetery to see the headstone of Henry Howard Wiley (HHW)...



He was a civil engineer and opened the first commercial coal mine in TN in 1847. He later amassed 40,000 acres of land containing rich coal reserves, which was the basis for his founding Coal Creek Mining and Manufacturing Company:



[www.coalcreekaml.com](http://www.coalcreekaml.com)

Rees R Thomas  
Coal Creek, Tennessee

Amrhegwyl gam  
Ry'r arddwr  
fel arwydd fechan o gyf-  
eillgarwch a gobairth y  
bydd i gadwynau Satan  
a phechod gael eu dryllio.  
i eneidiau ddianc fel adar  
o fazi'r heliwr, a chawr  
Cyda gyfarfod a chydwynu

According to Dr. Eirug Davies from Harvard, Welsh miners came to East Tennessee after the Civil War to escape persecution in Great Britain. The Welsh in America wrote and published books to preserve their native language...

All the Welsh mining communities would have attended this festival

Miners from Soddy won the main choral competition

This "eisteddfod" followed the one held in Knoxville in 1890

Eisteddfod Dalaethol Tennessee

CYNELIU YR UCHOD YN YR  
OPERA HOUSE, CHATTANOOGA, TENN.,  
Hydref 30, 1891.

Hydref  
↳ October

TESTYNAU.

DATGANIARTH.

1 "Hallowell Chorus" (Handel), i gor heb fod dan 30 na thros 75	\$100 00
I'r arweinydd	10 00
All orcu	50 00
2 "Y Blodwyn Olaf" (Lloyd), i gor heb fod dan 35 na thros 50	50 00
3 "Nant y Mynydd" (Thomas), i gor heb fod dros 30 mewn nifer	40 00
4 "Victory" (T. Price), i gor o blant	25 00
5 "Sydgan y Moŷyr" (Parry), i barti gwrywuldd	25 00
6 Pedwarawd, "Sleep my Darling" (Parry)	12 00
7 Tylawd, "Peace to the Souls of the Heroes" (Calcott)	5 00
8 Deuawd, "On Mossy Banks"	5 00
9 Unawd Soprano, "My Lover's Bark is Sailing Home"	5 00
10 Unawd Tenor, "His Salvation is Nigh" (Brunell)	5 00
11 Unawd Baritone, "Leaving, yet Loving"	5 00
12 Unawd Bass, "The Wolf"	5 00
13 Catch, "Johnny Smoker"	5 00

RHYDDIAETH.

1 Tracthawd, "Hanes a gwrbydri y Cymry a gymerasant ran flaenllaw yn rhyfel cartrefol yr Unol Dalaethau"	30 00
2 "Chattanooga; ei hanes a'i mantei- lon"	15 00

BARDDONIAETH.

1 Pryddest goffadwrnethol i'r diweddar Gadlywydd George H. Thomas, "Rock of Chattanooga"—Cadair hardd a	20 00
2 Chwa penill i'r diweddar Jefferson Davis	10 00
3 Pedwar englyn i'r Lookout Mountain	5 00

ADRODDIADAU.

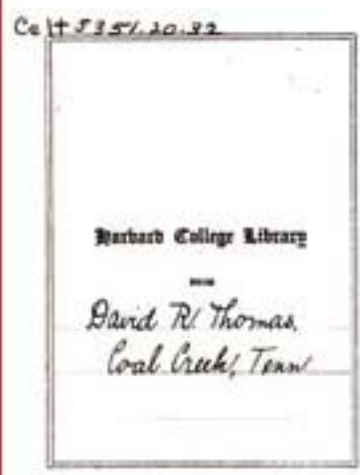
1 "Which shall it be" (Standard Recitations No. 1), for ladies	5 00
2 "The Drunkard's Dream" (Standard Recitations No. 2), for gentlemen	5 00

OFFERYNOL.

1 Brass Band, "Pride of Wales"	40 00
2 Chwareu ar y piano, "The Storm and Silvery Waves"	5 00

→ essays  
→ verse  
→ recitation  
↳ prize money

Y frawdoliaeth; neu, Bigion o weithrediadau y Cyngor Bach (clwb siarad) ...  
David Rhys Williams



Welsh miners from 10 states competed in the eisteddfod in Knoxville in 1890 and Chattanooga in 1891. They became known as the Dixie Eisteddfod.

It was reminiscent of "Roots" when Alex Haley found Kunta Kinte in Africa...

# Miner's book brings Welshman to Briceville

**WALES:** Many miners in the area of Coal Creek, now Lake City, came from Wales and on Monday a Harvard professor from Wales told Briceville students about their heritage.

BY DONNA SMITH  
OAK RIDGER STAFF

**BRICEVILLE** — In the late 1800s, David R. Thomas gave a book written in the Welsh language to his father, Rees R. Thomas, as a token of their friendship.

That book, along with David Thomas' inscription showing the gift came from Coal Creek, Tenn., was found later by Harvard professor Eirug Davies, himself a Welshman like the Thomases, in the Harvard library. The books written in the Welsh language were donated to Harvard by David Thomas.

This weekend Davies along with area residents Barry Thacker and Carol Moore, of the nonprofit Coal Creek Watershed



CAROL MOORE/Coal Creek Watershed

Eirug Davies, standing, and Barry Thacker, sitting, look at a book written in the Welsh language at the gravesite of Rees R. Thomas, who Davies from the Harvard University Lake City.

Foundation, found Rees R. Thomas' grave in the Wiley Cemetery in Lake City.

"I was so excited I was

almost middle everything

SEE MORE



KIERNAN ARCHER

Kyle Leinart, left, and Carrie Neland show the fifth grade class at Briceville Elementary School a Welsh flag that Eirug Davies, a researcher from Harvard University, gave them. Davies gave the class a brief presentation, explaining what life was like in Briceville in the late 1800s, as well as the impact the Welsh culture had on the town.

# PRINTS OF WALES

Welsh immigrants may not have discovered America, but they did leave their mark on our history and culture

**BRICEVILLE** — Did the Welsh discover America?

Well, probably not, but don't snicker. There are those in lofty positions of academe today who think the Welsh might have landed on American shores long before Columbus found the place.

Regardless, there is little doubt but that Welsh immigrants wielded significant influence over American history and culture, whether or not they were among the first who stumbled into here. They went quietly about their business across the centuries and appeared at strategic moments in U.S. history.

Eirug Davies, an associate member of



FRED BROWN  
Appalachian Journal



PAUL EHROD/NEWS SENTINEL

Welsh scholar Eirug Davies, right, and Briceville Elementary School fifth-grader Ricky Bailey, 11, visit the Community Church in Briceville. Davies, a retired electrical engineer with the Air Force who is now with Harvard University, taught students about their Welsh coal mining heritage. The church was built in 1888 by immigrant Welsh coal miners, and its churchyard contains the graves of 22 miners killed in the Fratersville and Cross Mountain coal mine disasters.

Welsh literature in America. That led him to Briceville with Barry Thacker and Carol Moore of the Watershed Foundation and Geo/Environmental Associates Inc., a consulting firm providing geotechnical and environmental engineering design services to mining and industrial

clients.

While Davies was conducting microelectronics research and writing technical papers for the Air Force, he spent his off hours ferreting out Welsh literature written in the United States.

See JOURNAL on B2

# Welsh traditions mold renowned Knox surgeon



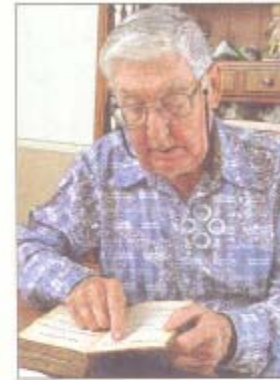
FRED BROWN  
Appalachian Journal

Dr. John Kesterson draws on long line of coal miners

Dr. John Kesterson, a renowned Knoxville surgeon known for his innovative techniques with scalpel and suture, is a small man, chipper and cherub-faced. Looking at him, you'd never suspect he comes from a long, prosperous line of 19th-century Welsh coal miners who arrived in Appalachia and Coal Creek with little more than the clothes they were wearing, books they

enjoyed reading and razor-sharp minds. The real lowdown on Kesterson is this: He was born in LaFollette on Nov. 26, 1918, the great-great-grandson of Rees R. Thomas, a Welsh coal miner, who arrived in Coal Creek about 1870, and the great-grandson of David R. Thomas, son of Rees. David Thomas was also instrumental in starting the Knoxville iron industry, of which The Foundry banquet hall was once a part. Kesterson's mother, Bess Ranes, who is descended from David Thomas, was a 7-year-old girl the day the Fraterville coal

mine exploded near Briceville in 1902. "I am so keenly proud of my dad," said John Kesterson. Kesterson's father, Charles, was a co miner, first as a youngster in Kentucky and then in Coal Creek, today known as Lake City. When Charles Kesterson proposed marriage to Bess, she turned him down at first because she refused marry a miner. "My mother said very wisely, I think — she's from Welsh coal miners and



PAUL EFIRD/NEWS SENTINEL

Dr. John Kesterson reads from the Bible his great-great-grandparents brought from Wales in the 1840s.

See JOURNAL on B7

## Backbone of an industry

They were Welsh mostly.

First and second generation immigrants, miners and steel workers by trade, who had fled persecution in England to find peace and prosperity.

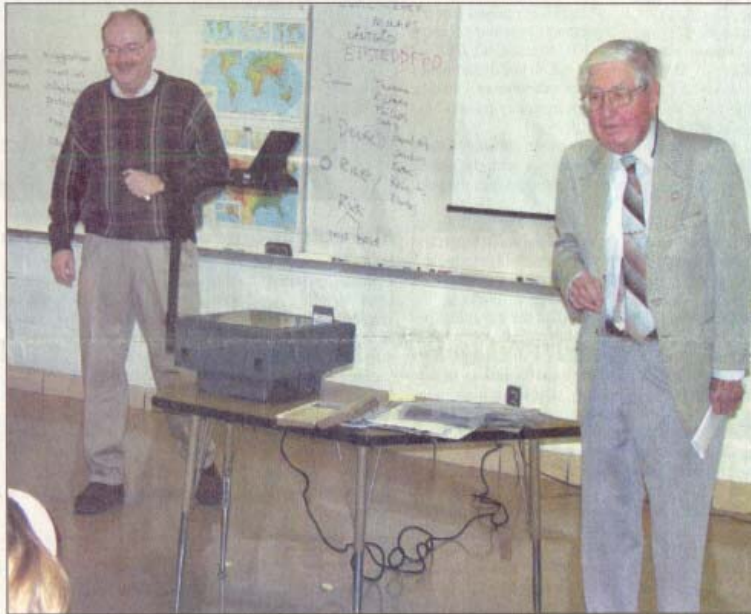
Many found that. Many found hard times and heartache.

But, collectively, they helped change the face of an industry that was the backbone and a black mark on the America dream.

The Welsh coal miners who came to East Tennessee, via the coalfields of Pennsylvania, brought three things with them: Work ethic, love of education and tolerance for others.

Barry Thacker of the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation and Dr. John Kesterson, a retired surgeon and the great-great-grandson of Welsh miners who worked in the darkness below Anderson County, gave a history lesson to students at Briceville Elementary School last week.

The lesson shattered some stereotypes, gave a vivid account of contributions by the Welsh miners of the area and, perhaps most im-



KEN LEINART

Giving a history lesson, Dr. John Kesterson (right) and Barry Thacker of the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation talk with students at Briceville Elementary School last week.

portantly, gave a message of hope through examples of the past.

But first, you have to think about it. Thacker pointed out that usually when someone thought of a coal miner, especially in the late 1800's and

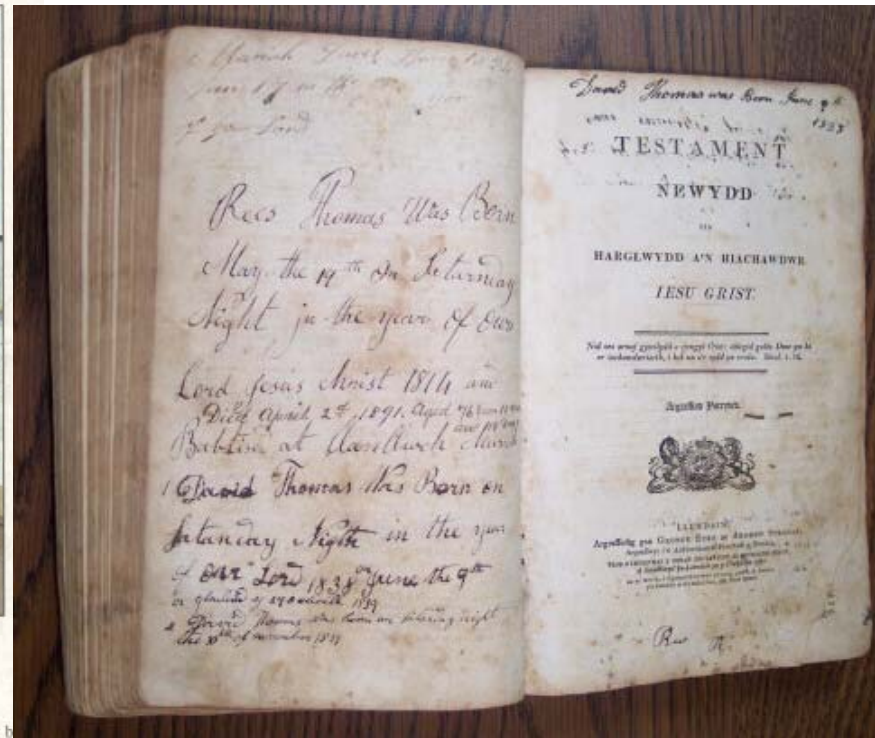
early 1900's, the picture wasn't necessarily a pretty one.

The words, "dirty," and "illiterate" most often came to mind.

But the Welsh miners who worked for the Coal Creek Coal Company in

1902 were more than that.

"They built schools. They built churches. The Welsh cherished edu-



Story and photos  
by Ken Leinart

• WELSH to 8-A

# DIGGING FOR LOST HISTORY

Volunteers hope they can unearth site of opera house

BY BOB FOWLER  
fowlerb@knoxnews.com

**BRICEVILLE** — Armed with shovels, spades and hope, students joined archaeologists Friday in a bid to unearth remnants of an opera house in a once-thriving coal-mining community.

Much of the building's story is lost in the mists of time, said Barry Thacker, president of the nonprofit Coal Creek Watershed Foundation Inc.

This much is known: The Odd Fellow Opera House was built in the early 1890s in the heart of Briceville, could seat 300 people and rivaled the courthouse as Anderson County's most impressive structure.

A century ago, it was the hub of activities for Briceville, a then-bustling community of 6,000 surrounded by coal mines in the foothills of the Cumberland Mountains.

Musical competitions were held there, along with legal proceedings, literary club meetings and other social events. There's no record, however, that an opera was ever performed inside.

Made of wood with a prominent clock tower, the two-story



COAL CREEK FOUNDATION

The Odd Fellow Opera House in Briceville, is shown in this undated photo by W.L. Wilson. The opera house is believed to have been built in the early 1890s and burned circa 1918.

Briceville Opera House burned down in 1918.

Today, it's even uncertain where the building once stood, but researchers think it must have been next to the current Briceville Elementary School.

"This is the only big flat spot in the area, and it was a big building," Thacker said. "Where else could you have built it?"

A faded photo of the building showing a ridge line in the background also puts its likely location



Javen Payne sticks his hand under the sift box during an archaeological dig to find the foundation of the Odd Fellow Opera House in Briceville, on the grounds of Briceville Elementary School.

JOE HOWELL/NEWS SENTINEL

The big dig in search of Briceville's Opera House

Projects teaching students to take pride in their coal mining heritage

# Miners' resting place makes national registry

Solemnity gives way to celebration of lives lost in Fraterville disaster

BY BOB FOWLER  
fowlerb@knews.com

**LAKE CITY** — They came from as far away as Michigan, as near as the next hillside.

They gathered at the base of an ancient obelisk on a sun-drenched knoll in a cemetery behind a rural Baptist church in Anderson County.

And as the "Mystery Mountain Boys" sang a haunting ballad of miners' lives lost, a plaque was planted in concrete to forever remember those men and boys.

Descendants of many of those killed in the Fraterville Mine Disaster celebrated their ancestors Thursday, the 103rd anniversary of the calamity.

They mingled among concentric circles of headstones — from large and elaborate to small and simple — marking the final resting spots for 89 of the 216 miners killed that fateful day.

The Fraterville Miners' Circle in the 160-year-old Leach Cemetery behind



Barry Thacker, center, wearing red, helps Maye Davies, left, place a medallion Thursday proclaiming the Fraterville Miners' Circle on the National Register of Historic Places as John Stooksbury, to the right of Thacker, and dren from Briceville sch watch.

Clear Branch Baptist Church was dedicated officially Thursday as the newest addition to the National Register of Historic Places.

That register is reserved for those special places in America "that define who we are as a people and a nation," said Barry Thacker, head of the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation.

That nonprofit group seeks to improve that creek and the land around it, as well as the lives of those who live nearby. Members applied for the na-

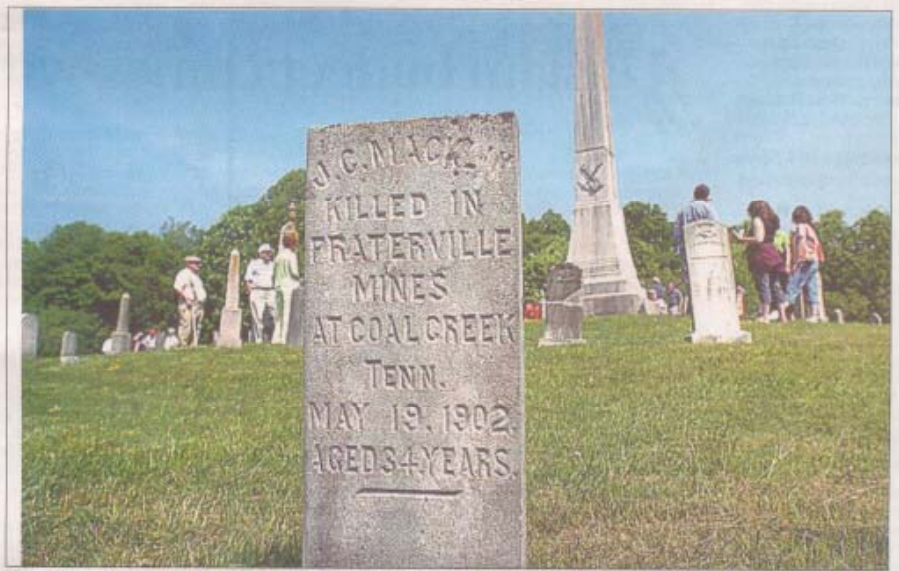
tional designation.

In the past, the anniversary mining disaster has been a solen cation, Thacker said.

This year, descendants of Briceville School students to cel the lives of those Welsh immig who carved lives for themselves remote, coal-rich hollows Briceville, then known as Frater

In a brief history lesson, Th

See HISTORY on B7



## Road sign honors 216 lost miners

Unveiling took place 104 years after Fraterville mine explosion

BY BOB FOWLER  
fowlerb@knews.com

**LAKE CITY** — Jan Whaley choked back tears as she spoke after the unveiling of a memorial road sign paying tribute to those killed in the 1902 Fraterville mine explosion.

"I think it's wonderful you're honoring these men and boys," said Whaley, who drove from her home in Toledo, Ohio, for Friday's brief ceremony along Highway 116, renamed the Fraterville Miners' Memorial Highway.

Friday was the 104th anniversary of the explosion that ripped through the mine and killed 216 men and boys, including Whaley's great-grandfather, William H. Slover.

Louise Nelson of Knoxville, whose grandfather, David DeZern, died in the mine, said she was saddened by the anniversary but glad the miners are being remembered.

State lawmakers Sen. Randy McNally, R-Oak Ridge, and Rep. Les Winningham, D-Huntsville, sponsored a resolution paving the way for four new road signs, said Barry Thacker, head of Coal

Creek Watershed Foundation.

Wearing a bandana, Thacker convinced the lawmakers to also don them. Miners in the Coal Creek War of 1891-92 adopted that headwear during the brief insurrection over state-leased prisoners used as miners, Thacker said.

"Fraterville miners for many years were kind of forgotten, and I think it's significant that we're doing something to honor them," Thacker said.

Ten trapped miners survived the initial blast and scrawled out poignant messages of love and faith before gasping their last breaths, Thacker said.

Those messages were published in newspapers around the country. "It was the first time people knew a coal miner's name," Thacker said.

He said the calamity raised national awareness of coal-mining's danger and led to mine safety laws.

Friday's event is part of a stepped-up effort to draw attention to an area steeped in history, Thacker said. There's even talk, he said, of Lake City reverting to its original name — Coal Creek.

Bob Fowler, News Sentinel Anderson County editor, may be reached at 865-481-3625.

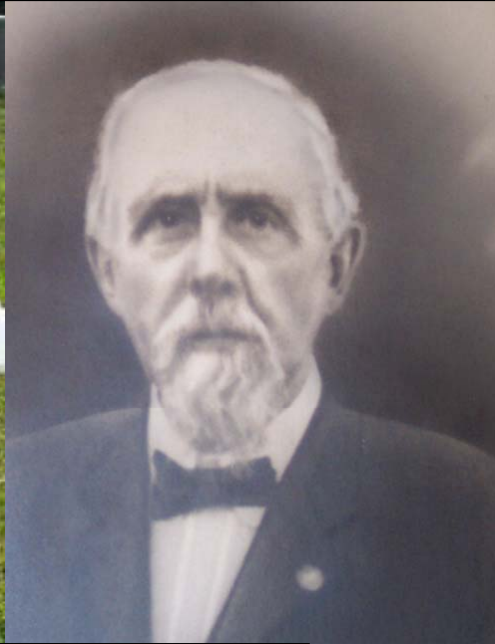


BOB FOWLER/NEWS SENTINEL

Briceville Elementary School student Nathan Smith, center, is boosted up by Sen. Randy McNally, R-Oak Ridge, left, and Rep. Les Winningham, D-Huntsville, as he prepares to unveil the new road sign memorializing the Fraterville miners who died. Lawmakers donned bandanas similar to those worn by miners during the Coal Creek War of 1891-92.

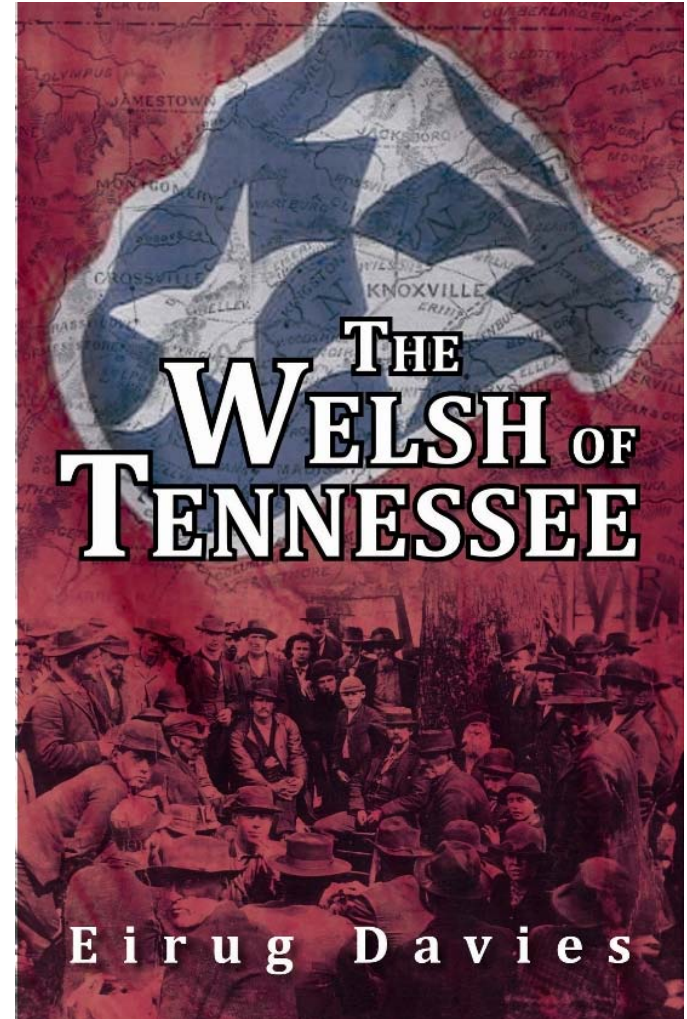


David R. Thomas was a leader of the miners during the Coal Creek War and he retired from the Fraterville Mine three months before it exploded...



**It wasn't scholars or historians who preserved Welsh literature for posterity in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but Tennessee coal miners who did.**

Dr. Davies will be visiting Knoxville in October to promote his book and will lecture on the topic at the East Tennessee History Center



This book tells how the Welsh helped develop Tennessee's fledgling iron, coal, zinc, and copper industries after the Civil War. David R. Thomas, a coal miner from Coal Creek, Tennessee, had the foresight to donate to Harvard University a unique collection of Welsh books published in America.



**CROSS MOUNTAIN MINE DISASTER COMMEMORATED**



Icory Thomas and Judy Curran perform Friday at Briceville Community Church during the 100th anniversary memorial service for those who died in the 1911 Cross Mountain Mine disaster. Descendants of the 84 mine and boys who died in the event attended the memorial.

**Unearthing memories**

**Descendants gather to honor 100th anniversary**

By Fred Brown  
 Special to the News Sentinel

**BRICEVILLE** — The scene was enough to make hard-rock coal miners cry.

R.J. Lester was dead. Clutched in his arms was a 9-year-old boy. They were two of the 84 coal miners and boys who died in the Cross Mountain Mine disaster a century ago Friday.

Wanda Perry, Lester's granddaughter, told that story for the first time last before participating in the 100th anniversary remembrance of the Cross Mountain coal mine disaster in the historic Briceville Community Church on Friday.

Perry said her story was handed down to her by her father, Wade Scott. He was born 13 years after the mine explosion that spared his father, Arthur Scott — one of five men rescued from Cross Mountain miners. Lester was Wade Scott's grandfather and Arthur Scott's father-in-law.

knoxnews.com

**Photo gallery:** Scenes from the centennial commemoration of the Cross Mountain Mine disaster.

**Video:** Briceville descendant, head of the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation, discusses the 1911 disaster and earlier Westmore Mine explosion.

"You always hear lost men and 10-year-olds, plus men in their 60s, worked in the mines," Perry said. "But these were younger boys who worked to send the mules out of the mines. The boys were short and didn't have to crouch like the men."

"The 100th anniversary, sponsored by the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation of Knoxville, drew roughly 200 descendants of the miners who died in the disaster and others interested in the historic mine catastrophe.

Relatives of the 89 coal miners — the dead, plus five who were rescued — traveled from all 50 states and Texas, Alabama, Ohio, North Carolina and Indiana for the centennial honoring.

See DISASTER, 7A



PAUL EPHRO/NEWS SENTINEL

Jacob Sharp, left, and Nathan Jobe toll the bell of Briceville Community Church 84 times for victims of the Cross Mountain Mine disaster. The boys are students at Briceville Elementary School who got the bell-ringing honor by winning an essay contest about the disaster.

In the tradition of the early Welsh miners, Briceville students compete in Dixie Eisteddfod literary competitions to document the oral history of mining in Coal Creek...

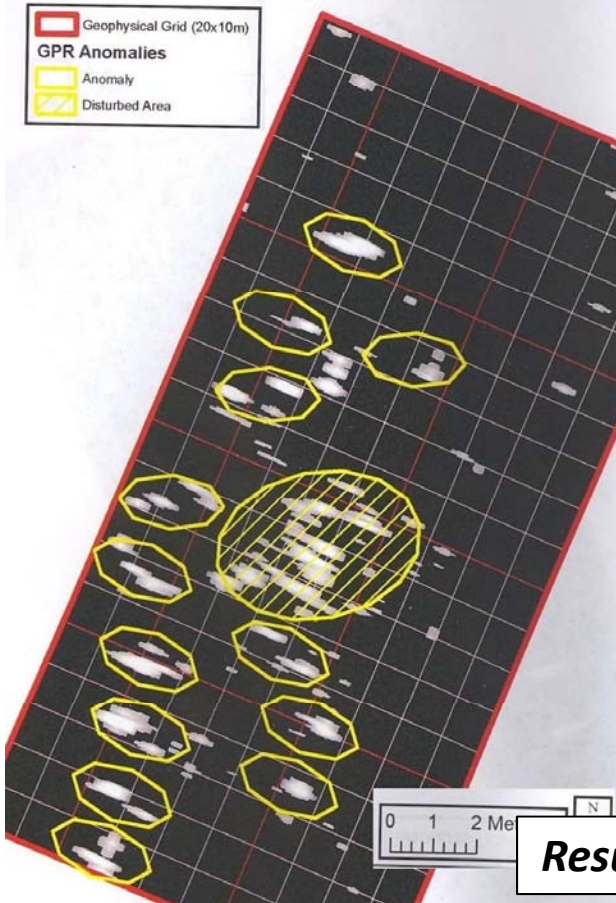
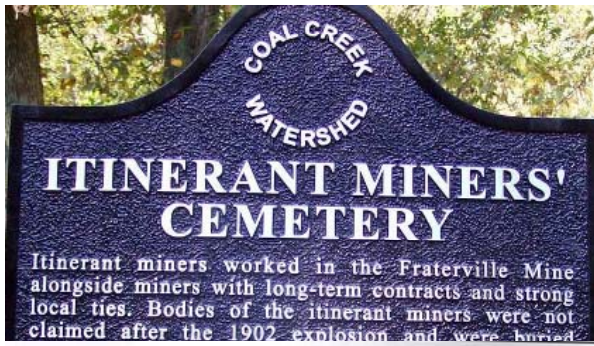


Scott Fraker/Staff

Barry Thacker, also known as the Welsh Druid, prepares to announce the winner of the 2005 Coal Creek Eisteddfod Literary Competition at the Miners Monument in Leach Cemetery outside Lake City. This selection process pays tribute to the miners' Welsh pasts and the Welsh cultural festivals of the 1890s in Knoxville, Chattanooga and Kentucky.



Briceville students are starting a new adventure, this time assisting Fred Brown with research for his upcoming book, *Oh God, for one more breath*, about Coal Creek, its mines and people.



knoxnews  
Knoxville News Sentinel

## Radar finds unmarked graves from 110-year-old mining disaster

By Bob Fowler

Saturday, May 19, 2012

BRICEVILLE — High-tech gear is being used to unravel the saddest mystery in one of history's most tragic mining disasters.

With Briceville Elementary students watching, archaeologists from University of Tennessee searched Friday for unmarked graves of itinerant miners who died in the Fraterville Mining Disaster.

"There are people out here," graduate student Daniel Brock pronounced as he moved a ground penetrating radar device over the backyard of Owen Bailey, a 96-year-old retired Briceville miner.

"We should get a good idea how many there are," Brock said.

Two hundred and sixteen miners, most of them Welch, were killed in the May 19, 1902, disaster at the Anderson County coal mine.

Twenty-six miners slowly suffocated in barricaded rooms, where several of them had time to scrawl heart-rending farewell messages.

All of the bodies were placed next to a railroad trestle on the spur line that led to the mine for relatives to claim.

Some 30 itinerant miners' bodies were unclaimed and buried next to the spur — some with fieldstone grave markers but most in unmarked graves.

Founders of the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation learned of the itinerant miners' final resting spot in 2000, when the nonprofit was taking shape, said Barry Thacker, president of the organization.

"Mr. Bailey came by and said, 'You know, a bunch of those miners are buried in my backyard,'" recalled foundation member Carol Moore.

"I said, 'Yeah, right.'"

But research, including an old Southern Railroad map, confirmed Bailey's assertion,



Archaeologist Daniel Brock, prepares to roll a ground penetrating radar device over the unmarked graves of itinerant miners killed in the 1902 Fraterville Mine Disaster Friday in Briceville. From left: Jonah Wilson, Eddie Sommerfelt, Brock, Autumn Barber, archaeologist Jennifer McDonough and Sam Goins. (BOB FOWLER/NEWS SENTINEL)

**Results of the study will make a great illustration for Fred's book!**

Teasers from Fred Brown's upcoming book, as read to students on their history field trip...



**B. Rule Stout**

**Story about the Welsh miners who developed the first mine in Coal Creek in 1867 as told by B. Rule Stout, engineer and director of Coal Creek Mining and Manufacturing Company (CCMMC)...**

*Their power for hauling coal to the outside was one heavy-built, duck-legged bull, and this bull for several months pulled all the coal mined. But development increased as well as production, so the bull was replaced by two short-legged, stout, little mules.*

*Then the ingratitude, the tragedy... That patient, hard-pulling bull that had faithfully done his part in developing the mine was butchered, and his meat divided around among the families of all the miners.*

*They should have choked!*

**Now we know why the Welsh miners lost their jobs to convict labor in 1877...**

**It was the revenge of the duck-legged bull!**

***You'll have to read Fred's book to learn how early directors of CCMMC gave Knoxville its Lawson McGhee Library, McGhee Tyson Airport, and the McClung Historical Collection...***

**Do you know that after 140 years, CCMMC is still in business, now as The Coal Creek Company?**

## New life at old strip mine: Students plant trees as part of reclamation effort

By Bob Fowler  
Posted April 13, 2010 at midnight



LAKE CITY - An army of children wearing bright-green bandanas planted a forest worth of trees atop an old strip mine site Monday.

Carrying spades and orange digging dibbles, 110 children from four schools traded books for buckets of tree seedlings.

They planted hundreds of American chestnuts that they'd grown since February in pots in their classrooms.

PHOTO BY BOB FOWLER / BUY THIS PHOTO

Lake City Middle School students Ceina Graham, left, and Ally Pyles, right, help Coal Creek Co. General Manager Brent Galloway, center, plant a tree at an old strip mine site in Anderson County.

years-long effort to bring back American chestnuts around the Coal Creek watershed.

The chestnut, once king of Eastern forests, vanished.

Some of the seedlings planted Monday show special blight-resistant chestnut hybrids, sal



THE  
AMERICAN  
CHESTNUT  
FOUNDATION



Appalachian  
Regional  
Reforestation  
Initiative

**TACF predicts that, "Restoration of the American chestnut will be the greatest environmental achievement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century..."**



**American Chestnut  
Restoration Project with The  
Coal Creek Company**

*Most coal mining in Tennessee is now done as re-mining on formerly abandoned mine land. Researchers have found that trees grow twice as fast on FRA sites as in a natural forest...*



**Before re-mining**



**After re-mining and restoration by the Forestry Reclamation Approach**

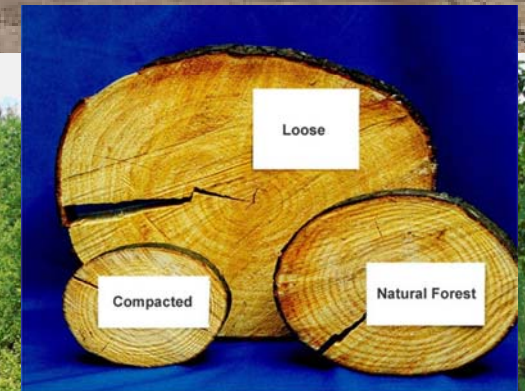




PHOTO COURTESY COAL CREEK WATERSHED FOUNDATION

The 2011 recipients of the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation scholarships are, seated, Megan Dugger and Sarah Byrge. Standing in back, from left, are Tyler Vandergriff, Ricky Bailey, Kyle Leinart and Jonathan Towe.

## Six receive \$40,000 in scholarships from Coal Creek Watershed Foundation

Coal Creek Watershed Foundation awarded \$40,000 in scholarships to six students with diverse interests.

To qualify for these scholarships, these former students of Briceville Elementary School must be currently attending high school and have a minimum 2.5 GPA.

Tyler Vandergriff and Ricky Bailey will each receive 2011 Rec. Roy Daugherty Memorial Scholarships for \$7,500. Vandergriff wants to be a physical therapist because I'll hire him."

Byrge will attend Lincoln Memorial University and Towe will attend East Tennessee State University. Vandergriff wants to be a physical therapist because I'll hire him."

For students who participate in our projects, we offer scholarships

knoxnews  
Knoxville News Sentinel

## Coal Creek grads return to help

Scholars aim to keep students in school, break poverty cycle

By Bob Fowler

Saturday, December 20, 2008

BRICEVILLE - Isolated by mountains, their main income source tapped out, many inhabitants of this small former coal-mining town lead handscramble lives.

Only 5 percent are college graduates, but a nonprofit group is changing that.

On Friday, nine winners of the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation's annual scholarships returned to Briceville Elementary School.

One is now a mental health therapist. Another recent college graduate is a company's administrative assistant. Others, still in college, plan to be a teacher, a nurse, a paralegal. Most are the first people in their families to go to college.



Jonathan Sharp, freshman at Eastern Kentucky University, and other Coal Creek Scholars telling current Briceville Elementary School students about the importance of a college education.

**“Ten years ago, I sat in this seat, and if I can finish high school and go to college, so can you”**

"I was tired of being broke," said Amy Dugger, the first winner of the foundation's annual \$10,000 scholarship. "College has really paid off for me."

Without her higher education, "I'd be working at McDonald's," said Dugger, the therapist, now with a master's degree in psychology.

**So far, we've helped 32 of our scholars attend college...**

**Invitation to attend our Coal Creek War Reunion at Fort Anderson on Militia Hill on Friday, May 17, 2013...**

**KNOXVILLE AREA**  
SELF-GUIDED DRIVING TOUR

**TENNESSEE IS WAITING FOR YOU ON THE SUNNY SIDE.**

**WHITE LIGHTNING**  
TRAIL & BYWAY

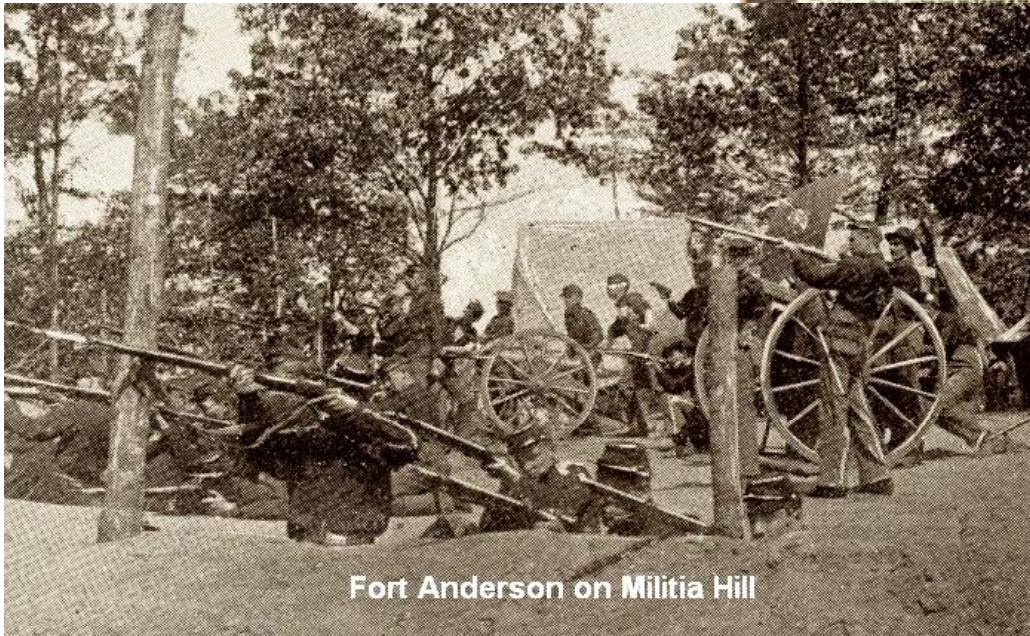
**MINING IN COAL CREEK: CONFLICT & COURAGE**

Due to its abundance of natural resources, the Appalachian region once produced most of the nation's coal. In 1870, when the Southern Railroad was extended to the area from Knoxville to Coal Creek (now Lake City), new coal mines opened. An influx of laborers from as far as Wales came to work in the new mines. Most of the mining operations eventually used convict labor, displacing many free miners from their jobs. From 1891 to 1892 in the nearby town of Briceville, free miners rebelled by attacking and burning prison stockades and company buildings. Hundreds of convicts were freed, and dozens of miners and militiamen were killed or wounded in small-arms skirmishes. In the end, the free miners of the "Coal Creek War" were instrumental in abolishing the convict lease system in Tennessee in 1896.

Coal mine explosions at Fraterville on May 19, 1902, and Briceville on December 9, 1911, killed nearly 300 miners in the Coal Creek watershed of Anderson County. Most died instantly, but some left poignant farewell messages, written while awaiting death. The Fraterville explosion was the third-worst coal mining disaster in U.S. history. To honor those who perished in the Fraterville Mine Disaster of 1902, a section of Highway 116 stretching through the Coal Creek area was renamed the "Fraterville Miners Memorial Highway," and new highway signs were unveiled on the 104th anniversary of the mining disaster. Cemeteries where these miners are buried are marked with "Coal Creek Mine Disaster Burial Site" signs. A self-guided tour begins at Longfield Cemetery.

Disasters like this were sadly common in Southern Appalachia. In the 25 years following Fraterville, 2,400 mining workers have died in similar explosions.

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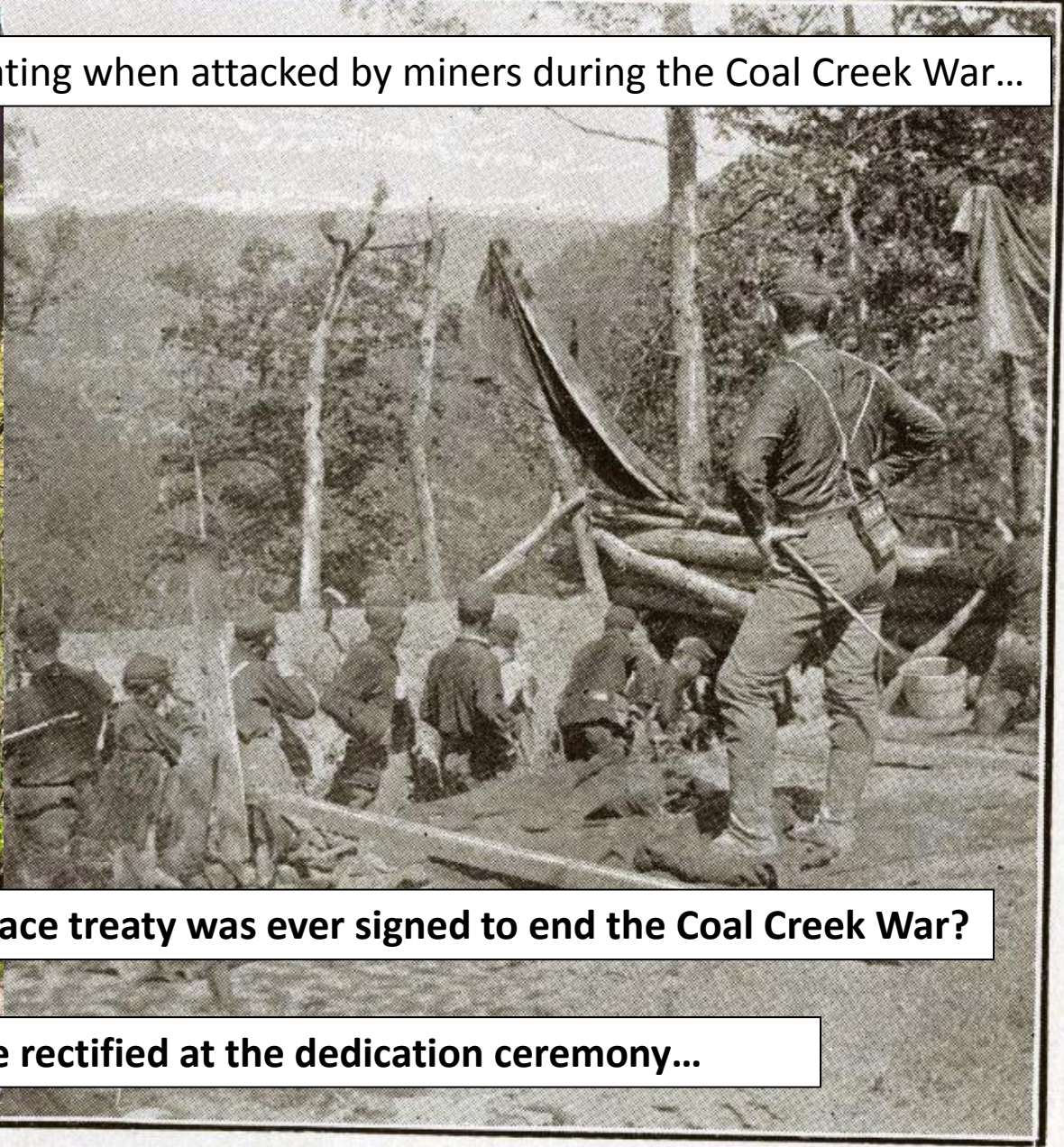
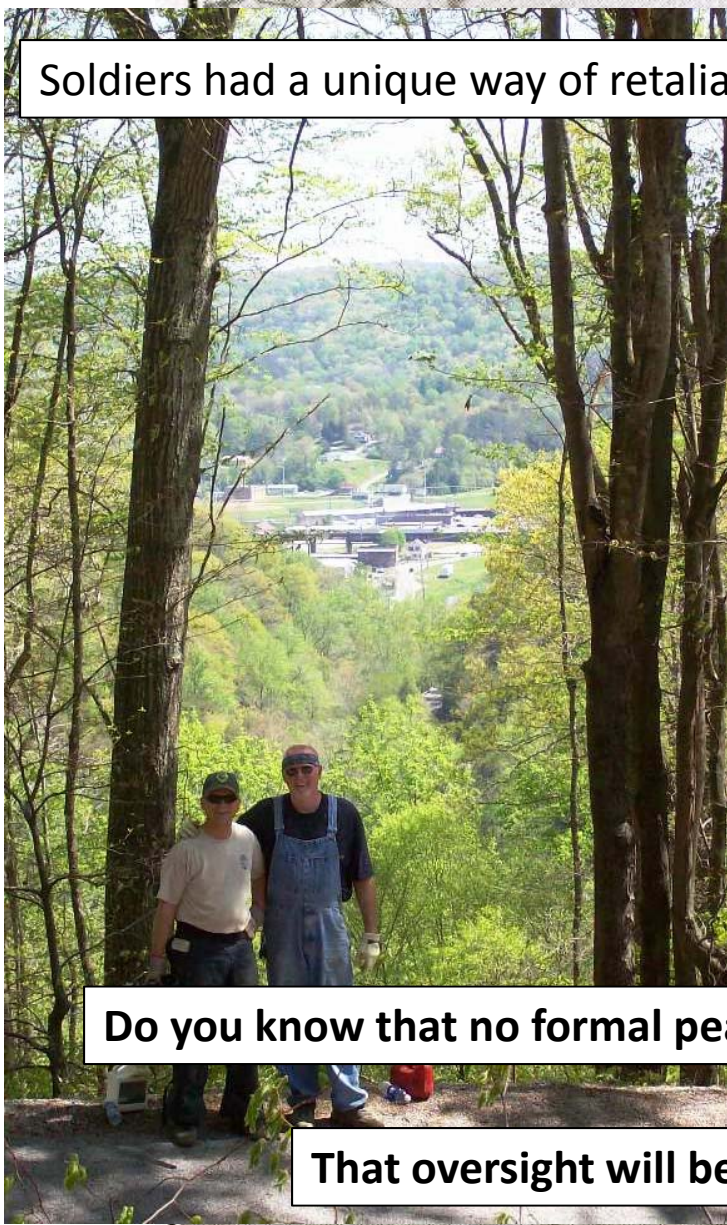


Fort Anderson on Militia Hill



**As part of the festivities, Briceville students will mount the National Register plaque with Tennessee National Guard personnel, and Fred Brown will interview descendants of war veterans for his book.**

Soldiers had a unique way of retaliating when attacked by miners during the Coal Creek War...



Do you know that no formal peace treaty was ever signed to end the Coal Creek War?

That oversight will be rectified at the dedication ceremony...

In the Trenches Answering the Attack of the Miners.



**Also, students will be competing in the 2013 Dixie Eisteddfod during the ceremony:**

Categories will include essays to document the oral history of the Coal Creek War and a recitation of B. Rule Stout's "**THE SNARK**"...

Boys, have you heard that sneaking Snark,  
That prowls the mountains after dark,  
With grisly, grim, and gruesome features,  
And eats up dogs and other creatures?

He may be gone for most a year  
Then suddenly he'll reappear  
And when he screams and snorts and roars  
You'd better keep inside the doors.

I've heard the chill Whang-doo-dle growl,  
The Wampus wail, the Werewolf howl,  
The Lobo and the Wild Dog bark-  
"Great Caesar's ghost," I heard that Snark!

**I'm scared to death!  
What can I do?**

**He's coming after  
m-m-me! or y-y-you!**

Finally, if you attend the Coal Creek War Reunion, leave by dark or face the wrath of Dick Drummond's ghost...



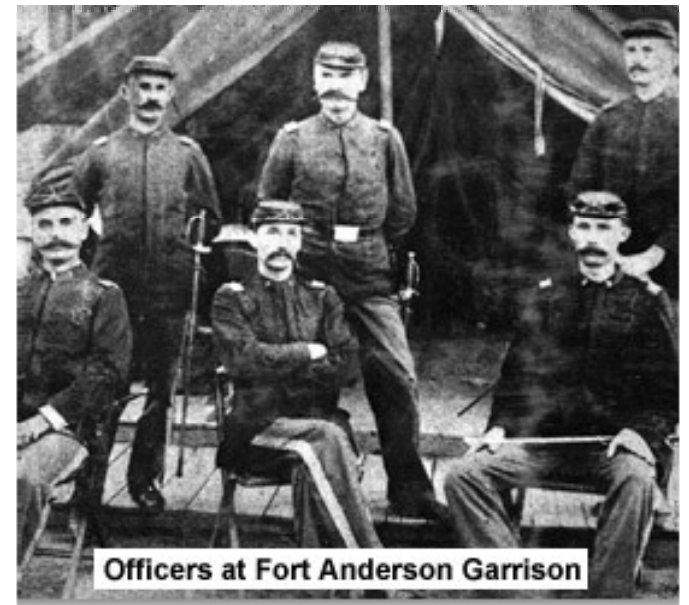
Dick Drummond served in the Navy before becoming a miner at the Shamrock Mine in 1892



*Near the end of the Coal Creek War, miner Dick Drummond got into a fight with an officer over a girl. It took a squad of soldiers to subdue him and he was later found lynched from what is now known as Drummond Bridge.*



From the Office of Paranormal Studies, "We were getting weird emf readings all night at Drummond Bridge."



Officers at Fort Anderson Garrison

For more information about efforts to preserve Coal  
Creek mining history, visit [www.coalcreekaml.com](http://www.coalcreekaml.com).



**QUESTIONS?**

...Briceville Elementary School students planting American chestnuts at Fort Anderson on Militia Hill during their annual mining history field trip.