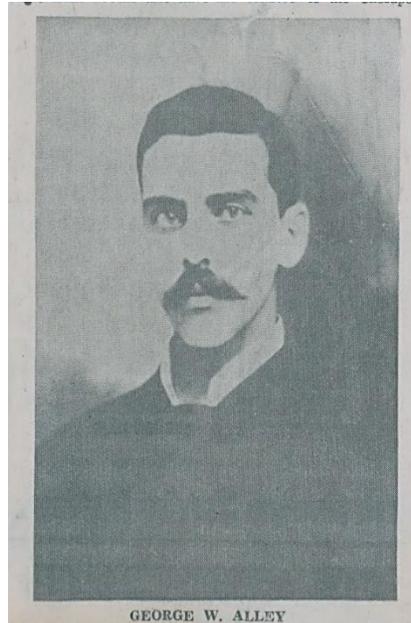


### ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY OCTOBER 23

## Fatal Railroad Accident.



On October 23, 1890, a C&O vestibule train crashed into a boulder near Hinton, resulting in the death of engineer George Alley.

**CSO: SS.8.6, 8.9, ELA.8.1**

**Investigate the Document:** (*Hinton Daily News*, December 23, 1967)

1. How many years did Leonidas Alley actively serve on the C&O Railroad? How many passengers was responsible for losing?
2. The Alley family had been loyal to the C&O railroad to such an extent, that the family had someone receive pay every day for \_\_\_\_\_ consecutive years.
3. On the night of October 23, 1890, what caused the train to wreck? What type of injuries did George Alley sustain? Did his family reach him before he passed away?

**Think Critically:** What does the first stanza insinuate about the train's punctuality? What industry did the C&O Railroad facilitate the growth of in West Virginia? Are railroads still vital to economic growth in present-day West Virginia?

seven-year recording contract with Capitol Records. Later he recorded for several other record companies, including his own Jim-Bob label.

The following single records were recorded by Jimmy Wolford, "Impatient Heart," "Going Steady with the Blues," "Teeny-Weeny Man," "My Name Is Jimmy," "You Look a Whole Lot Like Her," "Trouble in the World," "I Woke up in a Tree," "When This Song Is Over, You're Gonna Cry," he also made an album, entitled "Will There Be Any Red Dog in Heaven?"

He wrote the following songs: "Will There Be Any Red Dog In Heaven?" "Devil Anse and Randall," "We Can't Have a Flood Without the Mayor," "The Man Who Held the Hammer," "The Way to Columbus," "Ada Married a Banjo Picker," and "Another Flood."

**WOMAN'S BEEN AFTER MAN EVER SINCE.** Blind Alfred Reed, composer.

**WOMAN'S TALKIN' LIBERATION BLUES.** Sheet music, Billy Edd Wheeler. Copyright 1971, United Artists Music Co.

**WOMAN'S TALKIN' LIBERATION BLUES.** Single record, Billy Edd Wheeler. RCA Records.

**WOODS, Linda.** See Valley Four and Linda.

**WORK, SWEAT AND GO TO SCHOOL.** Sheet music, Billy Edd Wheeler. Copyright 1964, Butterfield Music Corp. and Quartet Music, Inc.

**WOZZECK.** Record album, Phyllis Curtin. Boston Symphony under Erich Leinsdorf. RCA Records.

**WRECK OF OLD 97.** The Wreck of Old 97, immortalized in song, did not take place in West Virginia, but the engineer, "Steve," who was "way behind

time," was a West Virginian and named Joseph A. Broady, called Steve for Steve Brodie, who had become famous about that time for jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge. Broady was formerly an engineer on the Pocahontas Division of the Norfolk and Western, hauling West Virginia coal to Hampton Roads.

He had worked on the Southern Railway, operating between Washington, D. C. and Atlanta, for about a month when the wreck occurred, near Danville, Virginia. The song was written by a native of the area.

**WRECK ON BARREN-SHE RUN.** The ballad entitled "The Wreck on the Barren-She Run" was recently discovered by and published in an issue of the Sutton newspaper *Braxton Central*. It tells the story of an accident on a logging railroad which ran in what is now the Monongahela National Forest between Richwood and Cranberry. The *Braxton Central* attributed the poem to J. A. Collins, a blind poet of Webster County. Copies were peddled by the poet for five cents. It is believed that, the newspaper report notwithstanding, the poet's name may actually have been J. A. Howell, also blind.

The words to the ballad are:

*On the 16th of October, 1912  
A dangerous log wreck exhibited  
here well;  
Cars and engine smashed up,  
Three men killed outright,  
Four out of seven escaped with  
their life.*

*On Cranberry River,  
Up Barren-She Run,  
The trainmen seemed jolly,  
Were having their fun,  
Eight cars they had loaded,  
And four empties, it seemed,  
The crew got on board and  
Turned on the steam.*

*Ivan Green jumped off  
As she started down hill;  
They had lost all control,  
It was running at will,  
Dick Green and Luke King  
Both jumped off, alarmed;  
Near eighty rods further the  
excitement grew worse,  
The further the faster  
Those loaded cars flew.*

*Frazier Adams, engineer,  
Jumped off and was killed;  
His head struck a tie,  
His brains they were spilled,  
Joe Taylor, conductor,  
And Russell Berry turned brake.  
Both stood to their places,  
Which was a mistake,  
For the cars jumped the track,  
And their lives fled as fog  
Their bodies were covered  
With the wreckage of logs.*

*The engine still rolling  
And left on the road  
Pete King, (the log rollerman)  
Alone left on board.  
The engine turned over  
In Barren-She Run  
But, Pete, he slipped out  
Of the cab as she turned.*

*So, he took a tie-ticket  
For Camp Four, so they say;  
And he arrived there quickly,  
The very same day.  
For he thought himself all  
That was left to tell now  
The crew, cars and engine  
Broke up in a row.*

*Squire Thomas and Doctor McClung  
Got the word and rushed  
To the scene - as quick as they  
could,  
Ivan Green and Dick King  
Were both badly hurt,  
So Doctor McClung was  
Soon put to work.*

*I must speak of an act  
Of Joe Taylor in life;  
He left some support for his  
children and wife,  
Sixteen-hundred dollars,  
In a check that was good,  
His wife she received from their  
good brotherhood.*

*Taylor, Adams and Berry  
Were three youngful men,  
So prompt in their business,  
But sudden their end,  
Their bodies were mangled,  
In all abscess.  
Their spirits departed;  
They greatly are missed.*

*But, those four should be thankful,  
To God for their breath,  
He, the Great Prophet,  
Hath saved them from death,  
That they may have time  
To prepare for the grave;  
God is always able and willing  
to save.*

**WRECK ON THE C & O.** At 5:40 a.m., October 23, 1890, a C & O train was wrecked by a landslide near Hinton, killing the engineer, George Alley, and badly injuring the fireman, Lewis Withrow. Alley, a native of Alderson and White Sulphur Springs, was leaving at Clifton Forge, Virginia at the time. The ballad was probably written by a Negro engine wiper who worked in the Hinton Roundhouse. Several versions of the song have been recorded in different parts of West Virginia; the one given below was sung by Miss Maude Rucks, of Braxton County, in 1915.

*Along came the F. F. V., the  
fastest on the line,  
Running o'er the C. & O. Road, a  
quarter behind time;  
As she passed Sewell, 'twas  
quarters on the line,  
Waiting to get orders at Hinton,  
late, behind time.*

*When she got to Hinton, the  
engineer was there;  
George Alley was his name, with  
bright and golden hair;  
Jack Dickerson, a faithful man,  
was standing by the side,  
Waiting to get orders; both in the  
cab did ride.*

*Georgie's mother came to him  
with a bucket on her arm;*

*Gave him a letter and said, "My boy, be careful how you run; For many a man has lost his life in trying to make lost time, But if you run your engine right, you'll seldom be behind."*

*Georgie said, "Dear mother, to your warning I'll take heed; I know my engine is all right, I know that she will speed; But if I had a local train, the truth to you I'd tell, I'd run her into Clifton Forge or drop her into hell."*

*Georgie said, "Now listen, Jack, it must be known to all, I'm going to blow for the Big Bend Tunnel; they'll surely hear my call."*

*Then he cried, "O look, look, Jack! a rock ahead I see! I know that death is waiting there, to grab both you and me."*

*"So, from the cab, Jack, you must fly, your darling life to save, I'm in my grave."*

*"No, no, George, I cannot go! on that we can't agree."*

*"Yes, yes, Jack, you must! I'll die for you and me."  
O from the cab poor Jack did fly;  
the river it was high;  
Farewell, he kissed the hand of Georgie; old No. 4 flew by;  
Up the road she darted, just like any angry bull;  
To get her back in action, the lever he did pull.*

*Against the rock the engine crashed, and upside down she lay;  
The best engineer on the C. & O. Road went to his grave that day;  
Brave and strong he held his grip; at last she made the crash,  
Knocked poor Georgie upon his face, his tender breast did smash.*

*The firebox fell against his head and burning flames rolled out, (He said), "I'm glad I was born an engineer to die on the C. & O. Road."*

*Georgie's mother came again; with sorrow she did sigh,  
When she looked upon her darling boy and knew that he must die;  
She prayed for every engineer to take warning from her son,  
In making any schedule to be careful how they run.*

*The doctor said, "Now Georgie, my darling boy, be still;  
Your life may be saved, if it be God's precious will."  
"No, no, Doc, I want to die! I'm ready now to go,  
I said I'd die on my engine, No. 134."*

WWVA. It was not until 1926 that West Virginia had a radio station of its own. That year, not one, but two stations, WWVA in Wheeling and WSAZ, in Huntington, went on the air.

WWVA began as a 100-watt station on December 13 of that year. Within 13 years, it had a 5,000 watt transmitter and advertised that it was "eleven-sixty on 2,085,666" radio dials. For lovers of country music, the station became best known for its weekly "Jamboree" broadcasts which, with the possible exception of WSM's "Grand Ole Opry" out of Nashville, Tennessee, is the most popular show of its kind in the United States. It is now a 50,000-watt station, operating at 1170 kilocycles. It is the most powerful station in West Virginia.

In addition to its early affiliation with the Columbia Broadcasting System, which started in 1930, the station produced a wealth of local entertainment programming. In 1932 the station began to feature

the broadcasts of L. P. Lehman, and his staff. In 1936, a flood carried away their auditorium, organ, piano and broadcasting equipment, but the Lehman's never missed a program. The entire Wheeling flood relief program centered around the station's studios.

1934 was the year that the WWVA Jamboree program began. The programs were broadcast live from the Wheeling Market Auditorium, and the program carried to an audience some 91 percent of which did not live in Wheeling. In conjunction with the program the WWVA Jamboree Whooper-Uppers was formed, an organization of regular Jamboree Listeners with members all over the United States.

Another musical program carried by the stations was "The Musical Steelmakers" sponsored by the Wheeling Steel Corporation, and featuring entertainment by Wheeling Steel employees. It began on WWVA in 1936 and within a few years was carried on other stations via the Mutual Broadcasting System.

In 1936 a ten-year family album was issued, featuring pictures of the company's executives: "George Smith, Managing Director; Paul Miller, Production Manager; Walter Patterson, Program Director; Glen Boundy, Chief Engineer; and announcers Wayne Sanders, Paul Myers, Bob Pritchard and Oliver Poor. Among the early country music performers were Cowboy Loye, Elmer Crowe, Vivian Miller, Jack Lloyd, Molly Weith, the Flyin' X Roundup, and many others.

In more recent years, the station continued its country music tradition. In 1965 Bob Finnegan, Program Director, said, "WWVA Radio has been in its 'Modern' country music format

since November of 1965. Our music is indicative of the new ultra modern trend in the country music industry.

"Music is carefully balanced to create excitement. Ballads heard here are 'heavyweight' country western sound. . . i.e., Glen Campbell, George Jones, Buck Owens and Tammy Wynette.

"Our announcers are extremely professional, having many years in format radio not necessarily 'country,' but schooled for many years in the operation of a 'format' theatre.

"Jamboree" shows to be featured and presented from the all-new Capitol Music Hall complex (old Capitol Theatre) will prove most interesting and entertaining to our thousands of 'Jamboree' fans each month.

"We plan to employ such visual aids as 'rear screen' projection and actual staging of a show to tell country music lovers a better story.

"The 'live' show of old vaudeville days will be reborn in the opening of West Virginia's largest theatre as a radio outlet this Dec. 13."

Since that time WWVA has continued to broadcast its "Jamboree" programs from the old Capitol Theatre, which has drawn thousands of tourists to Wheeling. The station is the foremost voice of country music in West Virginia, and one of the most important in the world. Over four million people have attended "Jamboree U.S.A." shows to date.

**WWVA JAMBOREE U.S.A.**  
Album, Gus Thomas, Lawanda Lindsey, Kenny Roberts, Jimmy Stephens, Doc Williams, Bud Cutright, Blue Ridge Quartet, Gwen & Jerry Collins, Skinny Clark & George Adams, Key Kemmer, Kenny Biggs and Chuck Burdett. Jamboree U.S.A. Records.

# Railroadin' Alley Family P

By RONALD S. LANE  
The rugged mountains, deep gorges, and picturesque valleys of West Virginia and western Virginia have spawned many fascinating stories and folktales about the glorious era of steam-powered railroading and the men that built and operated the mighty Chesapeake and Ohio. We have immortalized such heroes as gigantic John Henry, who beat the steam drill at Big Bend Tunnel about 1870, and Uncle Billy Richardson, who met his fate at Scary in 1910 after 27 years at the throttle of two crack passenger trains, No. 3 west and No. 4 east on the Hinton-Huntington line.

Tragic train wrecks also have

lived on in folksong such as "The Wreck of the Old 97", when engine No. 97 on the Southern Railway jumped the trestle near Danville in 1903; "The Wreck of C. & O. No. 5" in which engineer Dolly Womack lost his life just west of White Sulphur Springs when No. 137, heading toward Hinton, hit a broken rail; and "The C. & O. Wreck" in which engine No. 820 collapsed a bridge being repaired near Guyandott, W. Va., in 1913, resulting in the death of a number of workers as well as several trainmen, including engineer Ed Webbers.

Another name that is closely intertwined with both the history and folklore of the Chesapeake

and Ohio is the Alley family, probably best recalled by the folksong "The Wreck on the C. & O." which immortalized engineer George Alley. But there is much more to be remembered about this "railroadin'" family, Mark Maloney, Howard Miller, and George Harwood of Hinton will fondly recall. This story will present the colorful history of the entire family and will close a famous wreck.

Little did Leonidas Salathiel the entire family and will close with a touching story of the famous wreck.

Little did Leonidas Salathiel Alley know when he started running the road in 1852 while still a young single man, that he was to raise a generation of railroaders who would set an unprecedented record of faithful and outstanding service with the C. & O. He was born 10 miles south of Petersburg, Va., on Sept. 8 1832, and spent his early life in the Old Dominion living at Richmond, Staunton, and Jackson River.

In his 46 years of active service he never killed or injured a person, passenger employe or trespasser. He ran all styles of engines from wood burners to large coal burners, from no cabs, oil trade lights, to electric lights and air brakes. Captain Alley supposedly ran C. & O's first train from Clifton Forge to Hinton when the line was opened in 1873.

One of the memorable events of his career which has been preserved for posterity in the "Alderson Advertiser" of December 8, 1904 concerned a passenger run he made during the Civil War. He had just brought a trainload of Georgia soldiers from Jackson River Depot to Staunton one cold November day in 1861. The following is an excerpt from a letter written by A. H. Brentlya of Atlanta to Captain Alley in 1904.

"...It was bitter cold, and as the light closed in with flakes of flying snow from the neighboring mountains, you grasped your lantern-your work finished and well done, you started for your home and the home comforts that you well knew waited you.

"As you started you met, at the door of the Telegraph office, four or five soldiers who were seeking some place of shelter from the weather; all the public houses being filled to overflowing,

"You, out of the goodness of your heart, took them home with you and gave them a hearty Virginia hospitality with all that it implies.

"Ah! How well I remember, when we reached your house - you knocked on the door and a soft, tender voice asked, (Who's there?) It's me Cassie and I've brought some Georgia soldiers to spend the night with us.)

"My dear friend, have you forgotten her reply? I never have, and here it is: (They are more than welcome if they are soldiers, it matters not from where they come.)

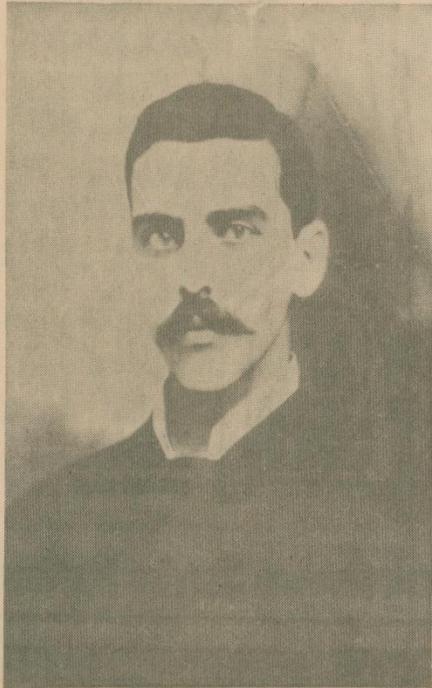
"Of the little squad of Georgia soldiers that sat at your table that November night I believe that I am the only one who has not passed (over the river and to rest under the trees.)"

That Captain Alley's services were outstanding is evidenced by his obituary published in the "Alderson Advertiser" on May 12, 1910, excerpts of which follow:

"...In this business relation (with the C. & O.) Mr. Alley acquired and sustained the best reputation. This is evidenced by the courtesies shown him since he has been unable to perform such service. The company has expressed its appreciation of his long and valuable service by a remembrance of him each month and this as a mark of his singular usefulness. Besides he has been remembered from year to year with an annual pass.

Six of Captain Alley's sons also saw service with the C. & O. The combined services including pensions of Dad and his six boys amounted to approximately 275 years, and one of the Alleys received pay every payday for 162 years! There is probably no other railroad family in the United States that can point to such a long and faithful service with the same railroad. Also, not one of the seven received a reprimand for bad service through any fault or neglect of his own, and with the exception of George there were no injuries save a few minor cuts and bruises.

However, at least three of the sons in addition to George encountered wrecks during their career with the C. & O. John Henry Alley (better known as Dick) had several wrecks, one in which he struck and killed six members of a negro band and injured seven or eight more.



GEORGE W. ALLEY

# Prominent In C&O History



**ALLEY GRAVESTONE**—Author Ron Lane inspects George Alley's gravestone in Alderson. Lane has made an extensive study and collection of the facts and the folksong "The Wreck on the C&O" immortalizing George Alley.

one night at Echo, not far from Thurmond, in the New River Gorge. They were on the tracks playing and were making so much noise they could not hear the train as it bore down on them.

Another son, Charley, was running a freight train down the Allegheny mountain one night and lost his mechanical brakes. There were two trains ahead of him and he rammed the second, driving it into the first, damaging two engines and two cabooses extensively.

The oldest son, Leonidas Franklin (Lon) Alley, pulled out of Alderson with Old 55 and his east bound train No. 14 on March 26, 1891. Old 55 had just started to "whisper good" when, rounding a curve at the approach to Second Creek Tunnel, she plowed into the rear section of a local freight which had broken in two. Both trains caught fire immediately, and miraculously the only injuries were to Lon and his fireman, Lewis With-

row. It is here very interesting to mention that Lewis Withrow was the regular fireman for George and was badly scalded in George's wreck. After being laid up for four months, he became the regular fireman for George's brother Lon, only to be injured again a month later in this accident at Second Creek Tunnel.

The other two Alley boys in the employment of the C. & O. were Peyton, and Emmett

(Wood) Woodward, who was a machinist in the Huntington shops for many years.

It remains to tell the sad tale of George Washington Alley and his famous wreck, which has truly become a living legend through the folksong. George, born in Richmond, Va. on July 10, 1860, learned his trade well as he began firing for his father while still a boy. Quickly promoted to locomotive engineer, he earned the reputation of the division's fastest engineer.

When the C. & O. inaugurated

its first name train the Fast Flying Virginian, in May 1889, it was only natural that George would be assigned to this prestigious run. The train itself was a revolution in passenger travel on the C. & O. Functionally it featured solid vestibules, steam-heat, electric lights, water coolers electric fans, and leather coiled-spring seats. Artistically it was one of the most beautiful trains ever to be put on the tracks. The exteriors were painted a rich orange, with maroon bands over the windows which

(Please turn to Page 22, Col. 1)



## GREETINGS

*May the cheery sounds of Christmas carry with them the warmest joys, and thanks to you, our good friends and customers.*

### Bowling's Dairy Bar

# Greetings



### Railroadin' Alley Family Prominent In C&O History

(Continued from Page 21)

bore the railway name in gold leaf roman capitals. The gay red wheels and silvered glass windows gave a striking effect in combination with the bright paint. The interiors were finished in mahogany, rosewood, and cherry with mirrors enclosed by nickel or brass plating.

When someone on an inspection tour declared that these coaches looked like the homes of the first families of Virginia the officials adopted the initials as the designation for the elaborate cars. The cuisine served in the dining cars was of the style and quality of the best metropolitan hotels, and the meals were served table d'hôte at a uniform price of \$1.

The luxury and beauty of this train would not, however protect it from the inevitable wrecks which seemed to single it out as a favorite target of torture. Indeed, George Alley's wreck was the fourth tragedy to befall the train in less than a year and a half.

On the dark and rainy night of October 23, 1890 F. F. V. train No. 4 pulled into Hinton an hour late. At Hinton George Alley and his fireman, Lewis Withrow, were impatiently waiting to pull on into Clifton Forge, their home and the end of their run. Waiting with time to dead-head back home was Robert Foster, who had been working in Withrow's place. This run would take them along the Greenbrier River, through the Big Bend and Allegheny tunnels to the summit, then down the mountain into Clifton Forge. George vowed to make up lost time, and as his number 4 rounded a curve near Don (now called Wiggins) only three miles east of Hinton, the headlight suddenly illuminated a huge rock that had fallen on the track from an adjacent cliff.

George, fully realizing the danger which lie ahead, yelled for the fireman to jump, while

he stood by his post endeavoring to stop the train. Foster jumped out the window toward the cliff, while Withrow attempted to jump off the gangway on the same side. But as Withrow jumped, engine 134 slammed into the rock and turned over on its right side, spraying him with scalding hot water. George, still in the cab with his hand on the brake, was pinned in by the reverse bar and suffered a broken arm and a broken leg as well as being terribly scalded by steam and hot water. The wreck occurred at 5:23 a. m., and George lingered for five hours suffering intense pain before his brave and noble spirit passed from him, leaving behind a noble example of unselfish devotion to duty and principle.

Every effort was made by the railroad company to enable his wife and children to reach him before he died but all in vain. He spoke of them continually every few minutes, asking "Are they coming? Are they coming?" Which circumstance is touchingly alluded to in a poem written by Mrs. Alexander McVeigh Miller of Alderson, an aunt of George.

George's devotion to his family is well evidenced by the inscription on his gravestone in Alderson. "George W. Alley, B. of L. E., Died from injuries received on C. & O. Ry. Oct. 23 1890. Aged 30 y's, 3 m's & 13 d's. Rest sweetly Dear in thy lone grave sleeping. While we are weeping thy soul has flown to God's white throne." And on the side of the stone a touching phrase reads: "Dear George: our home is sad and lonely without thee."

George's family was honored with not one but two Tributes of Respect: one from his home union, Staunton Division No. 38 in Clifton Forge with W. N. Shepard, E. B. Engart and J. M. Atkins on the committee; and one from the Greenbrier Division No. 101 in Hinton, drafted by

G. E. Showalter, C. W. Spotts, and R. E. Noel.

Following the shock caused by the death of a loved one, a friend, or a fellow workman time usually dims our memories and the event gradually drifts into oblivion. But this was not to happen with George Alley and his fateful wreck. For shortly after the wreck, a negro engine wiper in the roundhouse at Hinton, indeed possibly the very one who polished engine No 134 that October night, started singing to himself, composing lines as he worked. Out of this obscure beginning evolved a famous American folksong "The Wreck on the C. & O." which will forever immortalize George Alley and his famous wreck of the F. F. V.

This, then, is the fascinating story of the "Railroadin' Alleys" and their contribution to the history of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway; and in particular of the immortal George Washington Alley, whose name and fate have spread throughout the folklore of our great land.

(Author's closure: Many thanks are due to Thomas Dixon, owner of the Alderson Museum for newspaper clippings; to publisher John Faulconer who, in 1964 guided me to several people in the Hinton area; to the "Covington Virginian", for the original obituary of G. Alley; and to members of the Alley family in Baltimore, Clifton Forge, Huntington and Talladega, Ala. I have been able to

collect much more than is presented here, including over 30 variants of the folksong. I would ask that anyone reading this who has any information about

the Alley family, the wreck, or about the folksong please contact me at 2839 Village Drive Columbus, Ind. 47201).

**WHY THE MISTLETOE**  
NEW YORK (UPI) - The association of mistletoe with Christmas dates to the ancient Druids, who peopled Britain and Gaul before the time of Christ. Researchers for the National Association of Greeting Card

practiced mystic ceremonies deep within the forests of Cannock. Atop the giant oak trees they found a growing plant that drew its only life from the air - mistletoe - heaven sent and designating purity and love. During a ceremonial rite, it was cut with a golden knife.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**

Santa is busy spreading Christmas cheer, and once again it's our time to thank friends and customers for their loyal patronage.

**Miller Grocery**  
West End