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Barger Springs

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Barger Springs History Long And Varied **By Shirley Donnelly**

The Fayette County Historical Society undertook a field project July 11 that might be termed "history on the hoof." Twenty members of the society went in a motorcade that toured the watering resorts in Summers, Greenbrier, and Monroe counties, spas that were popular long ago.

Family illness prevented my joining the group as lecturer on the spots visited.

Barger Springs was one of the points seen. Barger Springs is an old place with interesting history. It was originally the property of Isaac Carden and was a resort for hunters and trappers before the Civil War.

Earth can boast no clearer water than the flow of this once celebrated spa.

For early guests at Barger Springs a row of double log cabins was built, with chimneys between. A large hewed log house was put up and later enlarged by the addition of a frame dining room.

Isaac Carden had a general country store at this spot. His goods came by canal from Richmond to Buchanan and from there by wagon. That store occupied a place in front of the spring across the branch. Long ago it vanished.

In time this springs property passed to William H. Barger, whose name was given the resort. He married a Carden girl, one whose family owned the property. When Barger died he left the springs property to his son, Wilbur A. Barger, along with the farm on which the springs are located.

During the Civil War the springs property fell into disuse and was not kept up. For 40 years it was just an old, run-down farm, occupied by the Bargers with no effort being made at its development as a resort.

In 1903, 30 Hinton men formed a company under the aegis of T. N. Reid, a Hinton lawyer, who had camped and fished there along the Greenbrier. The group bought the Barger property to build summer homes for families and friends. They had the land platted. Each of the 30 stockholders was given a lot.

They numbered the lots and drew numbers. Whatever number the man drew, that was the number of the lot on the plat that he received. In 1906 a water works was installed which, by steam pump, provided water from the Greenbrier River. In 1906 the property was leased to Keatley and Bolton for public use as a summer resort.

This company added to its holdings by buying three additional tracts, including the Stony Creek Gorge, the famous "Turn Hole", and two islands in the Greenbrier. In all they then had 315 acres. The spring is three miles from the village of Talcott.

High cliffs, deep waters and a curious cave are on these holdings. It is a region of rugged scenery and of some local history. Years ago this section was the scene of operation of Jim Fisher, a notorious horse thief. On one of his thieving forays Fisher stole a horse in the territory west of the springs. A pos[s]e was formed to pursue him. They reached the mouth of Stony Creek Gorge and thought they had the thief in a trap. But Fisher knew the land and got away.

As the pursuers were closing in, he ran up the point, scaled a lofty pine tree which stood against the side of a towering cliff. At the top of the pine Jim stepped off onto the top of the cliff and the wilderness swallowed him. This led to the recovery of the stolen horse but the thief got away. Unless that tall pine has been cut down in recent years it still stands by the cliff.

Jim Fisher's sins later found him out and he was caught and sent to Moundsville for forgery. At the state penitentiary he was shot and killed by a prison guard while trying to escape.

In 1905 Carl Fredeking and a party of young folks visited Barger Springs one Sunday. They went to see the gorge scenery and stopped at the water fall. Young Fredeking fell from the cliff there into the pool below and was killed.

During the Civil War Confederate deserters from Giles County were passing Barger Springs to enter the Union lines around Lewisburg. They passed down Toney Creek and crossed at the "Turn Hole."

Isaac Epling lived there and gave the deserters aid and comfort. One night he sent a group of the deserters on their way, taking care to guide them away from southern sympathizers who abounded in then Greenbrier County.

Epling never returned from that night venture. He was found drowned in the Greenbrier. One of his arms below the elbow was missing. Apparently a Confederate sympathizer got him.

Barger Springs water was recommended for chronic kidney, liver, and [o]ther complaints by those who extolled its medical virtues.

Business and Industry