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Photo by N. Hancock

Pete Ives Tests Divining Rods

Pete Ives Is Rare Gem At Macon County Mine

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

A recent expedition to Franklin, the "Gem Capitol of North Carolina", unearthed the fact that only two of the area's 20 mines were open to the public this early in the year. Most of the mines will resume operations in late April or early May. But curiosity and the lure of finding precious stones led this writer into the heart of Western North Carolina gem country to dig out a story on mining, rockhounds and people who operate the mines.

duct a tour of the mine and explain just how the Old Homestead goes about its business.

It doesn't look much like what the word "mine" conjures up in one's mind. The Old Homestead appears to be a small farm nestled in a little hollow with a stream flowing through it. Pete said the mine is three years old and folks plop down \$3 a head (\$1.50 for kids) to hang around all day and buy buckets of dirt which he and his grandpa, Earl Ives, dig out of a bank near the stream.

Pete said customers aren't allowed to go to the digging site, but he would make an exception for the news media. "This is it," he said pointing to ordinary-looking ground. "There's gem-stones right under your feet."

He pointed to an old log house across the stream and said the mine was named for the homestead. "That house is 91 years old, and that oak tree is about 200 years old," he said.

According to Pete, this particular mine yields rubies, sapphires, garnets and sometimes moonstones. Pete's grandfather explained

that rubies and sapphires are really a form of the mineral called corundum. If it's red, it's a ruby. A yellow or bluish color means it's a sapphire. Garnets are faceted crystals ranging in color from pink to deep red to black or green.

The only equipment that gives a clue that this plot of land is more than a small farm is the sheltered flume which stands in a clearing not far from the creek. Pete explained how the water in the flume is pumped out of the creek, and how government regulations now require the runoff to be contained in small holding ponds until the mud has settled. "They don't want anybody muddying up the creek," he said.

The young gemologist walked the flume line to check the progress of the half-dozen "miners" trying their luck with dirt buckets and sifting screens. While they would stare into the screen box searching, Pete would reach in and pick a garnet here, a bit of ruby there. "They started calling me Eagle Eye around here last summer," he said.

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Mail Rates Increase March 22

Mail rates will go from 15 to 18 cents on March 22, the Postal Service said Tuesday. The new rate for a first-class letter will be three times what it was a decade ago.

Even with the increase, the Postal Service still expects to lose money and seek another rate increase.

The letter rate was 6 cents until May 1971, when it went to 8 cents. The price went to 10 cents in 1974 and to 13 cents in 1975. The last increase came May 29, 1978, when it went to the current 15 cents.

The governors of the Postal Service, protesting that the rate is not high enough, Tuesday asked the Postal Rate Commission to reconsider its April 18 decision in favor of the 18-cent stamp. The Postal Service had asked for approval for 20 cents.

The Postal Service had said it needed \$3.75 billion in additional annual revenue over what current rates bring in. The commission trimmed this by \$1.1 billion.

The rates that will take effect at 12:01 a.m. March 22 are:

• For first-class letters, 18 cents for the first ounce and 17 cents per ounce after that. Post cards will be 12 cents.

• Increases of 3 percent for parcel post and various hikes for second- and third-class mail used by businesses.

Expanded discounts available to business mailers who do preliminary sorting of their outgoing mail. These discounts are given because the mailers are saving Postal Service expenses.

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Power Failure Hit Wide Area

A widespread electrical power failure brought household activities to a halt in many sections of Madison County early Monday morning, according to Iverson Bradley, spokesman for the French Broad Electric Membership Corporation.

Approximately 800 households were affected by the outage which occurred at 6:40 a.m. in Marshall, Walnut, Upper Shut In, Shelton Laurel, Spring Creek and in areas near Mars Hill.

Bradley said the failure was caused by the breakdown of three insulators at the Marshall substation which subsequently caused the substations "high side" fuses to be blown.

Power was restored to all affected customers by 7:42, Bradley said, but the utility company experienced "scattered" outages later in the morning caused by high winds preceding a cold front which passed through the county.

By mid afternoon, all electrical problems were under control, Bradley said.

Forty-Six Teachers To Get Termination Notices Soon

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

Preceding remarks by school board chairman Bobby Ponder which laid the blame squarely on the Reagan administration's proposed federal cutbacks, the Madison County Board of Education voted to send employment termination notices to 46 of the county's school teachers to inform them that the board of education cannot employ them for the school year 1981-82.

Ponder's remarks came at the conclusion of a lengthy six-hour called meeting of the board Monday and after spending nearly four hours in executive session to determine where personnel cuts would have to be made should all of President Reagan's proposed cuts be approved by Congress.

"This has been one bitter dose of medicine to have to take," Ponder said referring to the anticipated federal cut-

backs and the necessity of ending the employment of so many teachers.

"We are having to write letters not only to our kin folks, but to some of our best friends and some of the best employees the board has," he said. "We're sorry we had it to do, but it was a necessity that it be done to protect the taxpayers of the county."

Ponder said that from time to time over the years he and the board have had to send notices to teachers in federal programs, but "each and every time, before the beginning of the new school year, these programs have been funded" and the board was able to rehire teachers.

"If Congress doesn't go along with the Great Doctor (President Reagan), maybe we will get to do that again this time. I certainly hope so," Ponder said.

But a solemn air hovered about the board members as school board attorney Larry

Leake read the adopted resolutions stating the cause of the termination notices and directing school superintendent R.L. Edwards to send those notices.

Leake said the board took the termination action because of a question as to the amount of funding which the federal government will provide, if any, for the teaching positions affected by the programs, and because the funding level may not be known until late summer of 1981. The resolutions stated that the board of education will not have funds available to provide employment for those teachers.

However, the board went on record stating it will "do everything possible" to secure the federal funds and "hopes it will be in a position to employ the teachers in the future."

The board drew up and adopted separate resolutions to cover four groups of

teachers affected by the termination notices.

The 19 non-tenured regular classroom teachers receiving notices this week are: Michael Cook, JoAnn Johnson, Pamela Ramsey, Sandra Randolph, Sandra Cook, Jane S. Davis, Carol Evans, Linda Campbell, Marilyn Wyatt, Jean Conners, Teresa Banks, Katherine Pfeiffer, Carolyn Blevins, Betty Jane Ramsey, Kathy Adams, Wanda Capps, Jerry Gosnell, David Richards and Kathy Waldroup.

ESEA Title I personnel affected by the board's action are: Dr. Owen Fish, Randy Ramsey, Betty Hussain, Jeter Sherlin, Christy Wallin, Emily Chandler, Sharon Baker, Ethel Kirkpatrick, Roselle Ramsey, Mrs. Claude Gillispie, Barbara Ramsey, Barbara Hunter and Margaret Anderson.

Fourteen Title VI-B Special Education instructors coming

under the board's action are: Linda Harrell, Melody Clodfelter, Vickie Carver, Alex Farkas, Frances Knisley, Wanda Hollifield, Kathy Pfeiffer, Carolyn Rich, Debra Baker, Don Fowler, Rita Fay Norton, Kathrine Boone, Debra Callazo and Susan Pendleton.

Three school employees in the Educational Work Experience Program and the CETA program had their jobs terminated by the board. They are Herbert Ponder, Ted Cody and Jeff Treadway.

One school board member said after the meeting that it was doubtful the board would learn of any new or different developments concerning the proposed federal cuts by the April or May school board meetings. As it looks now, everyone involved will have to sit out a long, hot summer to find out exactly which way the federal dollars will fall, if they fall at all.

County Gains People

Preliminary 1980 Census reports show that Madison County gained 788 people in a 10 year period, but four townships within the county sustained population losses, according to the Bureau of the Census.

The 1980 head count shows Madison County having 16,791 residents living in 7,169 housing units. Population figures for 1970 listed 16,003 residents dwelling in 5,565 houses. The county's population increased by 4.6 percent, and housing units by 22 percent during the 10 year period.

Townships 1, 2 and 8, along with the Town of Marshall, decreased in population while townships 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and the towns of Mars Hill and Hot Springs gained in residents.

Preliminary count figures show the following populations for 1980:

Township 1 (Marshall) 3,431

Town of Marshall	811
Township 2 (Laurel)	1,803
Township 3 (Mars Hill)	4,756
Mars Hill (Town)	2,122
Township 4 (Beech Glen)	1,922
Township 5 (Walnut)	1,439
Township 6 (Hot Springs)	1,324
Hot Springs	654
Township 7 (Ebbs Chapel)	1,202
Township 8 (Spring Creek)	914

Towns or Townships showing a loss in population counts were Marshall with 171, Spring Creek with 71, Laurel with 65, and Marshall Township 1 with 40.

Township 3 (Mars Hill) showed the largest increase in population with 590 followed by the Town of Mars Hill with 499 and Township 4 (Beech Glen) with 157.

Marshall Aldermen Looking For Summer Rec Coordinator

Matters ranging from summer recreational activities to a proposed alternative water source for Marshall, Mars Hill and the county were discussed at the March meeting of the Marshall Board of Aldermen.

Aldermen discussed the summer use of the Blannahasset Island area belonging to the town for Little League and softball programs, as well as fire department and Lions Club activities normally held on the island. The board appointed Kenneth Brown as coordinator for the summer programs, but Mr. Brown has since declined the appointment leaving the town in search of a new appointee.

Town officials also signed an agreement between the Town of Marshall, the Town of Mars Hill and Madison County approving a feasibility study for a future alternative water source to serve all three municipalities.

In other matters, the Board of Aldermen:
• Heard a report from Donald Ramsey, project administrator of the HUD Community Development Program, who said work was being

done on the project's 12th house and carpenters would soon be moving onto three additional houses.

• Passed an updated resolution authorizing the town to apply for Clean Water Bond funds for use in the town's 201 Sewer System, Step III. Also a resolution was adopted authorizing the town to apply for Clean Water Bond funds to be used to lay a water line along the Marshall bypass to Roberts Hill Road. The funds will come from the N.C. Department of Natural and Economic Resources.

• Approved the purchase of a five to seven and one-half horsepower, pressure controlled, single phase pump for the Redmon Road water line to correct present pressure problems.

• Received a report that progress was being made in cleaning the City Cemetery in preparation for mowing and further improvements.

• Discussed again the parking situation on Main Street in Marshall, and instructed Marshall policemen to enforce the two-hour parking restrictions for all-day parkers.

Credit Refund Due On March Electric Bills

French Broad EMC's members will see a credit fuel adjustment of \$0.0200 on their March bills. This means \$2.00 per kilowatt hours.

The fuel adjustment the cooperative has to pay Carolina Power & Light Company reached an all time high

last fall when both units of CP&L's Brunswick nuclear plant were out of operation. The FBEMC Board deferred part of this high fuel cost over a longer period of time to keep members' bills from fluctuating so much.

As CP&L's fuel charge to the cooperative has been decreasing, the fuel charge the cooperative has been passing on to the members has also been decreasing until it is a credit in March. Every effort is made to pass on to the members the exact amount the cooperative has to pay

CP&L for fuel charges.

"We hope the fuel adjustment from CP&L will result at a low level so the fuel adjustment charges on our members' bills will also be low," stated Charles Taylor, Coop. Manager.