

# Black Kentucky Pioneers:

## Arnold Shultz

(1886-1931)

“Godfather of Bluegrass Music”

By Jerry Long  
c.2021



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**The greatest?**  
*Guitar picker's life ended  
before promise realized*



Arnold Shultz picks his guitar while Clarence Wilson fiddles in this rare 1930 photograph of the legendary but little-known black musician. Some music historians credit Shultz with helping to ‘put the blues in bluegrass.’

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

In an a grave unmarked for decades in Morgantown's black cemetery lies an Ohio County man who just might have been the greatest guitar picker ever born.

Fifty years ago, Ohio Countians said Arnold Shultz was the best guitar man in the western Kentucky coalfields. And those who still hear his music in their memories say they've never heard his equal in all the five decades since he died.

And that, they add, includes all the guitar greats who have come and gone in Nashville.

His reputation as the hottest picker alive may have been the reason Shultz never saw his 50th birthday. The sole survivor of the old Shultz Family Band says her cousin was murdered by musicians jealous of the magic his fingers worked on the guitar strings.

Music historians say Shultz was a major influence in shaping the musical direction of an Ohio County boy named Bill Monroe — the man who created the bluegrass sound more than a dozen years after Shultz died in Butler County.

That, some say, makes him a godfather of bluegrass — a musical style he never heard. His influence apparently helped put the blues in bluegrass.

His influence can also be traced into the mainstream country music and modern rock through less direct channels.

As far as anybody seems to know, Shultz was never recorded. But those who played with him say if he had ever made his way to Nashville or Chicago in those days of the late '20s, he might have become one of the greats of country music — if he could have broken the race barrier of those days.

Some believe he could have, because he shattered all the racial taboos in Ohio County. "Arnold was always welcome in the best of white homes," said Forrest "Boots" Faught, a white country and Dixieland bandleader in whose band Shultz played in the early '20s.

But Shultz shunned the limelight. By day, he worked in the coal mines of his native Ohio County. But when the sun set beyond the Green River, he picked up his big guitar and went looking for other musicians.

From the roadhouses and barn dances of the farmers and miners, to the black community picnics, to the homes of the well-to-do whites, Shultz was always welcome. He was Ohio County's No. 1 music man.

The passage of time has made him as much legend as man. And for the most part, Shultz remains a short, handsome, slightly overweight, black man somewhat obscured by his big black hat and oversized guitar. His name is relegated to footnotes in the histories of country and bluegrass music — and is usually misspelled.

But here — thanks to the help of bluegrass musician Wendell Allen of Rosine in tracking down those who knew him best — is the Arnold Shultz Ohio Countians remember.

Born in the Cromwell precinct of Ohio County in February 1886, Shultz was the oldest child of David and Elizabeth Shultz. His father was born in slavery in Kentucky in 1844. His mother, who had been born free, was only 16 when he was born.

Shultz apparently managed to get some schooling. The 1900 census says he could read and write. But that year, when he was 14, Shultz was already working in the Ohio County mines beside his father.

He was already learning to play the guitar and fiddle from his musical relatives.

Ella Shultz Griffin, seven years younger than her cousin, says Shultz had been playing music since he was a boy. She joined the Shultz Family Band around 1911 when she was 18 and says "he had been playing a long time before then."

The Shultz Family Band included Mrs. Griffin's brother, Luther, on the bull bass fiddle, brother Hardin on the banjo, cousin Arnold on the guitar and herself on the fiddle.

There were frequent replacements through the years. There were 12 children in Mrs. Griffin's family and Arnold Shultz had a number of brothers and sisters too.

Music ran through the Shultz family. "I had the fever when I was 14 and I began playing music when I got up," Mrs. Griffin recalls. She now she now lives in a Hartford nursing home.

"I didn't play before I got sick. I was laying in the bed and I got to humming one of these banjo tunes and I told my brother Luther that I wanted to play the banjo. He was afraid I would drop it and break it because I was so small. I sat up in the bed playing and commenced singing one of these old songs."

Before long, she was playing the fiddle, mandolin, bass, guitar and banjo. This inherent ability to play musical instruments was apparently the same as Shultz's. He never had any training either as far as she knows.

The Shultz Family Band played country music — "It was called hillbilly music then and it *was* hillbilly too," she said, laughing. "But it was all I knew, all I had ever heard."

Mrs. Griffin was the only girl in the band. "I was too little to be running around with those boys," she says. "It was too rough for me." But she stayed with the band until her brothers moved away from home. "We just played around Ohio County," she recalled. "I think one time we went to Rosine (about 10 miles from the Shultz home in Prentiss). It was cold but some woman fixed supper for us and told us to come on over.

They had a big time. I think they danced until 11 or 12. We had started playing about 6 or 7 p.m. We'd go early and stay late."

Allen said the place was likely the Moses Ragland home. Ragland, a former Ohio County clerk, entertained frequently with dances in a big room in his house, or on the lawn in warm weather.

In those days, Shultz would visit his cousins and jam for weeks at a time. "He was living at Williams Mines (near McHenry) then but he would come to Prentiss. Sometimes he would stay two weeks at a time. We'd just stay there and make music and the neighbors would all come in," Mrs. Griffin remembered with a smile.

In 1922, Shultz, then 36, joined a makeshift band headed by drummer Forrest "Boots" Faught, a 20-year-old McHenry native.

"Arnold was living in Hartford then," recalls Faught, who was still playing drums in a senior citizen's band. "He'd been playing long before he ever heard of me. I don't know exactly how I ran up on him. I guess I heard him playing somewhere. We played together for a year or so."

That year saw a lot of exciting times, Faught says.

"We played dances over at Cromwell regularly every Saturday night for six months. It was an old wooden frame school building that had been turned into a tavern (during Prohibition!)."

Faught grins at the memory of the night they tore that little roadside tavern down. "Arnold was playing the fiddle that night. He always wore a big black hat and he'd hang it on the back of the old split-bottom cane chair he sat in.

"Things was getting pretty rough in there. My instructions were to keep the music going and that would keep the crowd quiet. But it wasn't working that night.

Every now and then Arnold would reach around to get that hat. I'd say, 'Let's play one more, Arnold,' and he'd start fiddling. I was playing the drums and the longer we played, the

rougher it got. Finally, a man landed in my lap and me, Arnold, drums and all went over. He grabbed his hat and we went over across the street and the fight went on.

We went back the next Saturday and nobody was there.”

Faught’s band played in a lot of rough places for very little pay. “We played the opening dance at the Twin Hills Dance Hall at Rosine,” he recalls. “They paid \$3 from 7 to 12 and I mean you played, too. It had a bad reputation, but it wasn’t any worse than any other nightclub in the country.”

But a place in Central City called Hollywood and Kincheloe’s Bluff on Green River, “those were rough places,” Faught said. “Kincheloe’s Bluff was built way up on a bluff with a railing around it. It wasn’t nothing to see people sailing over that railing into the river.”

Faught recalls “I had a four-piece outfit then and Arnold made five. He was the only colored man in the band. He was the first man I ever heard to play the lead on a guitar.”

Shultz, he says, was always teaching the other musicians new chords. One night the band got together under the coal tipple at Render with a grass sack full of home brew for rehearsal and Shultz revolutionized their music.

“Back then everybody used just three chords G, C and D. That’s about all anybody knew how to play. That night we was playing ‘See You In My Dreams’ Arnold showed us where to put that A chord in there. From then on we used the A chord in ‘See You In My Dreams’ and a lot of other pieces.

When they played in Ohio County, the band traveled by foot, horse or road wagon — or occasionally sneaked aboard the cowcatcher of a train, fortified against the cold with a jug of jake. “I don’t know what it was made of. It wasn’t whiskey but it was hot as fire,” Faught says, laughing.

Trips to Muhlenberg County, however, occasionally were made by automobile, he adds.

Like Shultz, Faught worked in the mines. “I shoveled coal all day and played all night,” he recalls.

In McHenry there was a dance every night. “It went from house to house. I saw so many on a floor there one night that the floor just went down. Everybody was jumping up and down. They called it ‘toddle dancing.’”

Shultz continued to work on his own outside the Faught band during those years. “Walter Taylor (another of Ohio County’s outstanding Black musicians) played the mandolin. Walter and Arnold would come to McHenry on payday and make a hat full of money just sitting on the street playing. They weren’t bumming. They were just playing and people would automatically walk up and throw them money”

It was during the mid-20s, after Shultz drifted away from Faught’s band, that he began influencing the musicians who would carry his innovative techniques into the mainstream of American music.

Numerous attempts to set up an interview with Bill Monroe were unsuccessful, but the music histories say that Monroe, another self-taught musician, began following Shultz around to country dances as a 12-year-old in 1924.

Historian Bill Malone says Monroe’s “first actual experience as a performer came when he accompanied the well-known Negro guitarist and fiddler, Arnold Shultz, who played for country dances around Rosine.”

Bluegrass historian Steven Price notes that “Monroe . . . was particularly impressed by Shultz’ s smooth transition between chords as well as his blues playing.”

While Monroe was studying Shultz’s techniques, other musicians were too.

Sixty-nine-year-old Mose Rager of Drakesboro taught Merle Travis, who like Monroe, is now a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, to play the thumb-pick style on a guitar.

Travis passed the style on to Chet Atkins and millions of other pickers around the world picked it up from him.

"I couldn't say that I ever saw Arnold Shultz alive or dead," says Rager, who played on the Grand Ole Opry in 1946 and toured with Grandpa Jones and Ernest Tubb. But Shultz influenced his music, he adds.

"Kennedy Jones, the man that taught me to play, learned a lot of chords from Arnold Shultz. He knew Arnold very well. I used to hear him talk about him."

The thumb-pick style was Jones's innovation, Rager says. "Arnold played with his thumb and finger," he adds. "He didn't have no pick."

Jones taught Rager to pick guitar on a porch in Cleaton in 1925 and Rager isn't sure just which of the chords that were passed on to him that summer when he was 14 came from Shultz, but some of them did. And they were passed on to Travis and Atkins and others.

The influence of Monroe was passed on into such unlikely areas as '50s rock. Both Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly listed Monroe's music as an early influence on their careers.

Faught says that Shultz was "way ahead of his time on that guitar. It was just an old common flattop guitar that probably didn't cost over \$20. It was a large guitar, and I'm sure that it had a round sound hole and the old-time pegs that hung down under it. He had an old grass rope for a cord around his neck.

"He would use a pocket knife on the neck of it to get the steel sound before steel guitars came in. That was before the steel bar was introduced. It's a shame we didn't have sound systems back then. In the noise of a dance hall, if you got 40 feet from a band, you couldn't hear them.

"If Arnold had gotten on records, he would have been in a class by himself."

Nolan Baize of Horton ran the Gold Nugget coal mine there in 1925-26 and he called dances around the area. Shultz frequently worked with him day and night.

"He worked for me and two more guys who had the mines leased for about two years," Baize recalls. "He was a good hand, no foolishness and always business-like. He wasn't very talkative."

Shultz loaded coal at the tippie and Baize weighed it.

"He didn't go for playing for dances much. He'd just do it for a good friend or something. He didn't seem like he wanted to step out as a musician. He always seemed to want to make his living working.

"But he was a guitar picker, I'll tell you. He could come nearer to making it sound like a piano than anybody I ever heard. He knew a lot of chords on that thing and where to put them in. He just used his fingers too.

"He could play anything you could name. If he heard a record, he could sit down and play it in a little while. But I never heard him sing a lick. It (playing) was a gift he had."

Baize remembers a night when he talked Shultz into accompanying him to a barn dance at the farm of Gilbert Wright, some four miles from Horton. A platform was built in one corner for musicians who included Charlie and Birch Monroe, Cleve Baize and Shultz. Nolin Baize called the steps.

Birch Monroe, eldest of the musical Monroe brothers, didn't remember Shultz's guitar picking but he did remember his fiddling. "He was a pretty good musician and a good fellow too," Monroe says.

“He played a good old-time fiddle, I can tell you that.” Although Monroe said Shultz never formally worked with the original Monroe Brothers band formed in 1927 - “he played at dances where we were quite a bit.”

School children in those days liked to sneak off and listen to Shultz play too, said Hugh Duke Sr., a Hartford mortician. “A bunch of us school kids would ride the train from Dundee to Hartford and he would be on the train a lot of the time with that big guitar. It was huge, much bigger than the ones they have today. He was the Chet Atkins of his day. He could play anything, I guess — except maybe classical,” Duke said.

“I’d go by and listen to him play when I could. He was really good. But I never heard him sing, he just accompanied others. That was about 1927, I guess.”

The following year, Shultz was back in the Horton area playing with Clarence Wilson, a clawhammer banjo player of considerable reputation in Ohio County, and fiddler Pendleton Vandiver, the Monroes’ “Uncle Pen”.

“He played with my Daddy and Pen Vandiver for dances Thad Kassinger ran at an old store in Rosine,” Flossie Wilson Hines of Horton recalls. “They went around and about all over the country. Then they got to coming to our house” to jam.

“I don’t know where in the world they got ahold of Arnold Shultz. Oh, he was a guitar player. He could play music. He was something else. It’s a pity that anybody that could play like that had to die. When you heard anybody else play after him it was just like sawing or something. It just sounded awful.

“When a dance was over, they’d say, ‘Arnold, are you coming back?’ and he’d say, ‘Yeah.’ They’d all meet at our house and we’d go to these dances. We’d walk and carry our lanterns in our hands or ride in a wagon. I’ve walked many a time to way up above Rosine for a dance.

“We’d work all day (on the farm), walk to the dance and then dance ‘til midnight. One time it snowed and it done everything. There was still dancing there the next morning at 2 a.m. There wasn’t nobody able to go to work the next day, but it was too bad anyway.”

She remembers a time when the black community that existed then around Horton, had a picnic for the whites and Shultz invited her family to attend. “They had mutton and everything to eat and they just let the white people dance. Arnold played that night too.”

Sometime during those years, Shultz also worked for the Bond Brothers, loading ties onto freight trains in Rosine. Mrs. Donnie Crowder remembers that he taught her husband, who was the Illinois Central agent in Rosine, to play guitar during rest periods around the depot.

But while Shultz overcame most of the race barriers in Ohio County, they still had an impact on him.

Faught recalls, “Back then we would go to play for a dance and somebody would say, ‘Hey, you’ve got a colored fiddler. We don’t want that.’

I’d say, ‘The reason I’ve got the man is because he’s a good musician. The color doesn’t mean anything. You don’t hear color. You hear music.’”

“Around McHenry, white people would invite Arnold Shultz into their homes. He was very welcome. Big crowds came in to listen to him. It was something unusual. I took Arnold lots of places.”

But Faught still remembers one night when Shultz was a victim of what he believes was racial prejudice.

“We entered a contest open to anybody in Kentucky, over at Central City at the Selba Theatre. Arnold wasn’t with me then. There was bands there from everywhere. I guess there must have been 20 bands that night.

“We tied up with a band from Powderly. We fought it out there til midnight. We finally came out second best. The prize was \$50 and expenses paid to Hopkinsville to be on the radio.

“I’m pretty sure Arnold Shultz was there that night with an all-colored band. They was the best band there. If they had been white, they would have won that contest. They all had calfskin instruments — mandolin, guitar, tenor banjo and banjo guitar.”

Mrs. Hines agrees that it was unusual in those days for black musicians to work so closely with whites. But, she says, “Everybody just went crazy when he came around. He could play too. That made him special and he was a nice person, too.

“He was the best there ever was on a guitar around here. He could really make one talk. I ain’t never heard anyone who could play like that.”

But Shultz always waited until after the Wilsons had eaten before he would eat, she said. One night when they were trying to get ready for a dance, she recalled her father telling Shultz, “Now come on in here and eat. There’s no reason you can’t. We work together and play music together.”

But Shultz still waited.

Baize, who frequently visited Shultz’s two-room house, in what was known as Coal Bank Hollow near Horton, didn’t find that a problem though. “He ate many times with me,” he says.



Left: Mrs. Ella Shultz Griffin joined the Shultz Family Band in 1911, when she was 18 years old and cousin Arnold was 24. She continued playing fiddle until a recent stroke disabled her right arm. 'It was called hillbilly music then and it was hillbilly too,' she said. Center: Forrest "Boots" Faught of Hartford, left, who was the first white band leader to hire Shultz in 1921, says if the black guitar picker had ever recorded "he would have been in a class by himself." Right: Birch Monroe, the eldest of the musical Monroe brothers, remembers Shultz fiddling.

Shultz never married, and many of those who remember him said he had two loves besides music — whiskey and women. “He liked to play his box but he liked to get him a little ‘t’ along too,” Mrs. Griffin chuckles.

“They’d just give them (musicians she worked with) a big drink of whiskey and that would start them off and they’d play all night,” she says. “He (Shultz) would be so drunk he

didn't know where he was at. He'd go to sleep and keep on playing. They'd wake him up when everybody quit dancing."

Duke recalls, "He was a good man, but he liked to drink a little. There was a lot of whiskey around Ohio County then. He would play all night for a drink of whiskey."

Faught, who joined Shultz on the jugs on occasion, remembers, "I rented the old Doctor Bean Opera House in Hartford for a dance one night. A man came up to me and said, 'I haven't got a dime but I want to dance. Would you be interested in trading a dance ticket for a gallon of moonshine?'"

"I took this gallon of whiskey and set it up on the stage. When the dance was over, John Phipps and Arnold were laying in back of the stage. They'd been having a little too much. Arnold had his big black hat and I just put his money in his hat and laid it on his chest," Faught remembers, chuckling.

Baize, however, says he believes the stories about Shultz's women and booze are frequently exaggerated. "He'd take a drink now and then but I don't remember ever seeing him drink much. I don't remember him chasing women too much either. "

Earl Austin, a retired farmer and blacksmith near Rosine, recalls that Shultz could and did make a little home brew in those days, though.

Shultz played for a time with the Walter Taylor Band, a Black band, in the late '20s but by 1931 he was spending a good bit of time in Butler County, living with the family of Beecher Carson, a Black butcher.

He still played for dances, although he had shifted his area of operations to Morgantown. "Members of his band were jealous of Arnold because he was getting all the attention," Mrs. Griffin says. "People would say how good Arnold played."

In April 1931 Shultz came back to Prentiss to visit his relatives. "He stayed at our house a week and then he went to Morgantown. Then he came back down there one Saturday night with three boys and they stayed til just about night. Then they left for Morgantown to play for a dance. That's the night they said he got some poison in his whiskey," she says.

Bad whiskey killed many people in those moonshine days. Mandolinist Walter Taylor is said to have died from bad elderberry wine. But does she mean he was accidentally poisoned? Or was Shultz murdered?

"Yes sir, I do think he was (murdered)," Mrs. Griffin says. "He drank whiskey all the time before that and he never got sick over it. He drank that and he took sick and died. They gave him poison in his whiskey.

"People were bragging on Arnold for playing better than they (other musicians) did. So they thought they'd fix Arnold and put him out of the way — and they did. He drank that whiskey and died."

According to the death certificate filed in Frankfort, however, Shultz died in Morgantown on April 14, 1931— a Tuesday— of a mitral lesion, or an organic heart disease of the valves. He was 45.

He was buried in the Black cemetery there. The grave was apparently never marked. The Great Depression was reaching rock bottom and relatives didn't even know about his death until he was buried.

"We didn't know a thing about it until he was dead and buried," Mrs. Griffin says. "I don't guess he ever did have a marker." An index of Butler County tombstones didn't list his name.

Faught says there had been some talk among Ohio County musicians about taking up a collection for a marker for Shultz but nothing had been done yet.

Photographs of Shultz are rare. "He just didn't want any made," Mrs. Griffin says with a smile. "He said if he ever did any devilment he could get away and nobody could find him. But he never got into any trouble."

Mrs. Hines has a picture of Shultz and her father together playing their instruments. She didn't recall just how she got him to pose for it, though.

Recording began in Nashville about 1928. If he had just taken the chance of going to a recording studio there, Shultz's musical legacy might have been preserved on record.

But today, Arnold Shultz' country blues and hillbilly guitar live only in the memories of a steadily dwindling segment of Ohio Countians. And the handsome man in the black hat is just a face in a fading photograph. But his music lives on in those he inspired, and those they have inspired.

Allen sums it up. "Little did Arnold Shultz know that his guitar style and musical contribution to Bill and Charlie Monroe and others, would one day be the object of intense research by writers, music scholars and historians from Washington, Nashville, New York and other faraway places, seeking insight into the self-taught musical abilities of one Black man in the country villages of Ohio County."



### **Wikipedia.com – Biography of Arnold Shultz**

Arnold Shultz, the son of a former slave, was born into a family of touring musicians in Ohio County, Kentucky, in 1886. The community he grew up around was musically active. Ella Griffin, his cousin, says "He learned [music] at home. He just picked it up himself, It just runs in the family." In 1900, Shultz began studying guitar under his uncle, developing a jazzy "thumb-style" method of playing guitar that eventually evolved into the Kentucky style for which such musicians as Chet Atkins, Doc Watson and Merle Travis would be known. Professionally, Shultz was a laborer, traveling from Kentucky through Mississippi and New Orleans, working with coal or as a deck hand.

In the early 1920s, he played fiddle in the otherwise white hillbilly and Dixieland band of Forest "Boots" Faught. To the occasional complaints this brought (objections like "You've got a colored fiddle. We don't want that!"), Faught would simply reply, "I've got the man because he's a good musician." Yet, Blacks playing for whites was not a rare thing in some places, such as Ohio County. Shultz himself was especially liked because of his musical ability. "Arnold was always welcome in the best of white homes," says Faught. Shultz would also play guitar for the band and Faught would say "He was the first man I ever heard to play the lead on a guitar." They would often play in a one-room schoolhouse that had been turned into a tavern where illegal alcohol was available. During Prohibition times, he narrowly avoided arrest when running from "five federal prohibition officers." Shultz, along with "Did" Crumpton and "Bud" Walker were found with a one quart bottle and some smaller bottles of white liquor in their vehicle. They were turned over to federal authorities yet there are no records of the case. It is believed they got off because their vehicle could not be searched without a warrant. Nonetheless, Shultz was shaken up, "during the next few years, he could be found in or near the quiet villages of Horton and Rosine, much to the benefit of Bill Monroe."

Shultz also played with Charlie Monroe and gave Bill Monroe the opportunity to play his first paid musical gig, joining at a square dance with Shultz playing fiddle and Monroe on guitar.

Though he was not recorded, his blues playing made a powerful influence. Bill Monroe, who was formative in the development of bluegrass music, has openly cited Shultz as an influence on his playing. Bill recalled that "him and two other colored men come there to Rosine to play for the dance" and "they had a guitar, banjo, and fiddle. Arnold played the guitar." "Bill was awestruck."

Shultz taught his guitar methods to Kennedy Jones, who disseminated the "thumb-style" methods further. His methods were passed down further to Merle Travis and Ike Everly.

Schultz died on April 14, 1931 of a heart problem, a mitral lesion, though legends have persisted that he died as a result of poisoning by a white musician who was jealous of him.[1][2] Less colorful reports indicate that he suffered a stroke while boarding a bus.[12] Arnold Schultz died in Butler County, Kentucky, near the small city of Morgantown. He is buried in the town's only African American cemetery at the end of Bell Street.

Wikipedia.com – Biography of Ike Everly: Ike Everly, the father of the Everly Brothers, Don & Phil, was a coal miner in Muhlenberg County and a musician on nights after work and weekends. According to the Everly Brothers' website, Ike Everly took lessons from Arnold Shultz, a pioneering black guitarist in the area, who taught him a unique thumbpicking guitar technique. Ike Everly later taught the technique to Merle Travis, his neighbor and fellow coal miner, who brought the style to mainstream bluegrass and country music. And, he taught his sons — Don, who was born in Muhlenberg County in 1937, and Phil, who was born two years later when the family moved to Chicago.



### **Ohio County Messenger, Beaver Dam, KY, Friday, 7 March 1980, p.13:**

There is an unmarked grave in Morgantown's black cemetery. In this grave lies the remains of an Ohio County man, who had he lived in our later times, may have been known as the greatest guitar picker ever known.

This man was Arnold Shultz. He was the best guitar picker alive at that time.

Born in Cromwell precinct in February 1886, he was the oldest child of David and Elizabeth Shultz.

The sole survivor of the Shultz Family Band, Mrs. Ella Shultz Griffin says she joined the band, as the only girl member of the band, in 1911 when she was only 18, and the famous guitar picker was 24. Mrs. Griffin who is at present a resident of the Professional Care Home, continued to play until a recent stroke disabled her right arm.

She is also the aunt of Palestine Finn, an employee of the Ohio County Messenger,

In 1922, Shultz joined a band headed by a McHenry man, "Boots" Faught.

"Boots" recalls that "Shultz was the first man he ever heard to play the lead on a guitar, and was always teaching the other musicians new chords."

The band with Arnold Shultz played in many places throughout Ohio County and in nearby counties.

It is a well known fact an influence he had on Bill Monroe, our own Bluegrass Country musician. He had the tact of influencing many other musicians with whom he came in contact.

That, some say, makes him godfather of Bluegrass. His influence apparently helped put the blues in Bluegrass.

Shultz was far ahead of most guitar players of the later years. He could play anything he ever heard, however, he did not sing.

Shultz did not play for a living. He worked for his living. He played for the mere enjoyment he got out of it and the enjoyment of others.

Shultz never married. He played for a time with the Walter Taylor Band, but by 1931, he was spending a lot of time in Butler Co., living with a Carson family.

Shultz died April 14, 1931, at the age of 45.

Had he gone and had a recording made of his playing, he probably would have been listed as an Ohio County great with a guitar, and his influence definitely lives on in the lives of musicians in Ohio County, Butler County and many other counties nearby.

Wendell Allen, Rosine's, another music lover, sums it up, "Little did he know that his guitar style, and musical contribution to Bill and Charlie Monroe and others would one day be the object of intense research by writers, music scholars, historians, from Washington, Nashville, New York and other far away places, seeking an insight into the self-taught musical abilities of one black man in the country villages of Ohio County."

Today, Arnold Shultz's country blues and hillbilly guitar plays only in the memories of a steadily dwindling segment of Ohio Countians.

Those who still hear his music in their memories say they've never heard his equal in all the five decades since he died.

There has been some talk among Ohio County musicians about taking up a collection for a marker for Shultz, but so far, nothing has been done, says 'Boots' Faught. -

Let the Ohio County Messenger add to this, "He gave people something to enjoy, a thing that will live on.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 9 April 1982, p.1C:**

### ***Musician may finally get tombstone***

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

Fifty-one years after he was buried in an unmarked grave in Morgantown's black cemetery, Arnold Shultz may finally get a tombstone – thanks to a woman from Australia.

Irene Edwards of Adelaide, South Australia, wants to contribute \$50 toward a marker for Shultz's grave – if any area organization is willing to undertake the project.

Mrs. Edwards read about Shultz in a magazine reprint of a 1980 Messenger-Inquirer article,

Shultz, an Ohio County native, is considered by many folklorists to have been one of the greatest guitar pickers who ever lived. His international reputation rests primarily on the fact that he was a major influence in the musical development of Rosine native Bill Monroe, "the father of bluegrass music."

Some music historians say Shultz is responsible for putting the "blues in bluegrass."

Shultz died in Morgantown on April 14, 1931, of organic heart disease at the age of 45. One member of Shultz's family insists, however, that he was poisoned by rival musicians jealous of his abilities with a guitar.

Ella Shultz Griffin, a cousin who played with Shultz in the old Shultz Family Band in Ohio County, said in a 1979 interview that Shultz was buried two weeks before family members learned of his death,

"I don't guess he ever did have a marker," she said. An index of Butler County tombstones doesn't list his name.

Forrest "Boots" Faught, a white band-leader whose band Shultz worked in during the early 1920s, said in 1979 that there had been talk among Ohio County musicians about buying a tombstone for Shultz. But Faught died last year and the tombstone project was apparently never pursued.

Last year, the John Edwards Memorial Foundation Quarterly at UCLA reprinted the Messenger-Inquirer article about Shultz in its spring edition. The publication is dedicated to the serious study of American folk music.

Mrs. Edwards is the mother of the man for whom the foundation was named.

In a letter to the Messenger-Inquirer she said, "I read your fine article with much interest but was deeply moved to learn that Mr. Shultz's grave is without a marker (we call them tombstones here) but that there was some talk among Ohio County musicians about taking up a collection for a marker for Mr. Shultz....

"Do you think such a collection could be opened to provide a marker for the grave? If so I should like to contribute \$50 towards it as I know how my late son John would have felt."

Wendell Allen, the unofficial mayor of Rosine, the Ohio County community where Shultz and Monroe lived in the '20s, said he is unaware of any current efforts to raise money for a tombstone for the famed black musician.

But he said the offer may challenge some group in Ohio County or Butler County to start such a drive.

In the '20s, Shultz was so popular in Ohio County that he broke down racial barriers in music long before they began to fall in other areas of community life, according to Faught.

Shultz was born in the Cromwell precinct of Ohio County in February 1886. By the time he was 14, he was working the coal mines by day and playing music at night.

In 1922, he joined a band headed by Faught. Faught said Shultz was "way ahead of his time on that guitar."

Apparently Shultz was never recorded. But, Faught said, "if Arnold had gotten on records, he would have been in a class by himself."

During the mid '20s, Shultz worked with a band that included fiddler Pendleton Vandiver, the Monroes' famed "Uncle Pen." It was during those years that 12-year-old Bill Monroe began following Shultz around to country dances and trying to copy his licks.

Although Allen knows of no current fund drives for a tombstone, he said that "if people want to donate money for it, I'm sure we can find some group to handle it."



**Ohio County Messenger, Beaver Dam, KY, Wednesday, 3 February  
1993, pp.6-7 and The Leader-News, Central City, KY,  
Wednesday, 3 February 1993, pp. 1C & 6C:**

## Guitar Man: Arnold Shultz traveled through Muhlenberg, Ohio and Butler counties sharing his special musical talents

By Cynthia Grise

It is a summer day in 1920, a crowd has gathered in Sugar Grove, 10 miles south of Morgantown, to dance to the guitar music of Arnold Shultz and friends.

Mittie Render, 97, of Central City and her sister Artie Sweatt, 87, of Morgantown, whose minds and memories are very sharp, remember those gatherings as if they were yesterday.

At that time, no one knew the effect Arnold Shultz would have on the world of guitar music. Most, like Mrs. Render and Mrs. Sweatt, just knew he was the best they had ever heard.

Today, one has only to look into the careers of guitar legends – Kennedy Jones, Ike Everly, Mose Rager, Merle Travis and Chet Atkins. Shultz, the man who never made a single recording, has been linked with each as an influence whether directly or indirectly. Shultz' introduction of sophisticated chords and his innovative style of playing lead and second simultaneously laid the groundwork for the style of guitar techniques called thumbpicking.

Due to the fact that Arnold Shultz never sang, he was considered a "musicianer", one who concentrates on instrumental music. He traveled the crossroads of Ohio, Butler, and Muhlenberg counties looking for fellow musicians to share his music. Shultz played for dancers-square dancers, toddle dancers and buck dancers.

"In Sugar Grove", Mrs. Render recalled, "friends got together in different homes for dance parties. Arnold could play anything and never tired of our requests".

Before the advent of municipal water systems, Morgantown folk went to the local "Big Spring" to get water and do the laundry. At other times, usually during the evening, it was the site of square dances. Mrs. Sweatt remembered, "all anyone would have to say is Arnold Shultz is going to play and that would ensure a crowd". She added, "everyone from the sheriff to your neighbor would be there". According to Mrs. Sweatt, "other musicians who sometimes joined Arnold on these occasions in Butler County were his host Beecher Carson, playing back-up to Arnold's lead guitar. Ella Shultz Griffin, Arnold's cousin from Prentiss, in Ohio County, played fiddle. Mrs. Render stated, "another Butler Countian who joined in the festivities was Sam Ratcliff".

Mrs. Sweatt remembers Arnold using his pocket knife to fret his guitar – a common practice in those days before the advent of the steel bar. She added, "He carried his guitar in a case and used a rope as a strap for the guitar while playing".

Arnold Shultz' playing was not limited to dances and other social gatherings. Mrs. Sweatt recalled, "there were three black churches in Morgantown at the time; Arnold played special functions for each and at the white churches too".

"His mastery of the guitar, his humbleness and always friendly attitude to all", she continued, "made Arnold Shultz a hero to us". She described Arnold's playing as "wonderful" and "wished people of today could have heard him play". A sentiment shared by others familiar with guitar music.

For more than three decades, Arnold Shultz has been the subject of research among music historians particularly into the annals of country music.

Locally, Keith Lawrence, an Owensboro journalist, explored the life of Arnold Shultz through the eyes of Shultz' fellow musicians in Ohio County and with his cousin, Ella Shultz Griffin.

Folklorist, Bill Lightfoot, a Madisonville native, has spent a number of years studying the style of guitar music that came from Muhlenberg County and the effect Arnold Shultz had on the "Travis style".

Arnold Shultz was born in February 1886, the eldest son of David and Elizabeth Shultz. The Ohio County community of Cromwell is listed most often as his place of birth. Prentiss and Shultztown were the home for many of his relatives.

Shultz began working in the Ohio County mines at the age of 14.

Arnold Shultz came from a musical family. The Shultz Family Band included cousins Luther, Hardin, Ella, and Arnold

Ella Shultz Griffin once said Arnold began playing music as a young boy. Neither Arnold or his cousins had formal training but each had the gift of picking up a strange instrument and making it their own. Arnold Shultz was known to have played the fiddle, banjo, mandolin, and piano as well as his main instrument the guitar.

During the 1920's Arnold Shultz played with several well-known Ohio County musicians including Forrest "Boots" Faught, Walter Taylor, Clarence Wilson and Pendleton "Uncle Pen" Vandiver to name a few.

It was during this time that a young Bill Monroe came onto the scene and began playing music with Shultz and Monroe's Uncle Pen – the two men Monroe credits with influencing the style used in the development of bluegrass.

Forrest "Boots" Faught was one of the first to recognize Arnold Shultz' ability to play melody and at the same time accompaniment. He noted that Shultz was always showing the other musicians new chords.

This talent for innovation attracted him to the young musician from Cleaton, Kennedy Jones. Jones was impressed with Shultz' ability to pick with the thumb and forefinger and produce a sound that combines the elements of blues, country and ragtime. Jones was the first to use a thumbpick to produce the sounds Arnold Shultz had made with a flat pick. Jones in turn taught Mose Rager who passed it on to Merle Travis. Each added their own style and improved on their predecessors. Travis brought thumbpicking to the rest of the world and put Muhlenberg County on the map.

Shultz was not unlike his fellow musicians in Muhlenberg County – he worked in the mines by day and made music at night. The miners sometimes only worked a day or two a week. The railroads were in much better shape than the roads then. During idle times from the mines, these young coal miner-musicians sometimes walked the tracks to the next community. In those days, the depot was a popular place – the most likely spot for a crowd and an impromptu jam session.

Shultz was a traveling man and could be seen at various times in any small community in Ohio, Muhlenberg or Butler County. Malcolm Walker described his uncle Arnold's traveling days in this manner. "He traveled a whole lot. He would leave, and we wouldn't know where he was. He didn't write or anything... We'd all be around the house there and the first thing you knew, you'd hear that guitar.. He'd stay around there for awhile. And then, the first thing you know, he'd get himself together, get up and walk a little farther, and the first thing you know, he'd be completely out of sight; we'd just barely hear that guitar".

Arnold Shultz' guitar fell silent April 14, 1931. He was living in Butler County with the Beecher Carson family when he succumbed to a mitral lesion the heart.

Arnold Shultz was, according to all accounts, the genius of string music in his generation. Although others were to follow, his contribution to the world of guitar music is firmly established and always will be.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 25 February 1994, pp.1A & 2A:**

## Monument to honor pre-bluegrass picker

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

For 63 years, a black guitar player named Arnold Shultz has lain in an unmarked grave in Morgantown's black cemetery.

Music historians around the world have researched his influence on the music of such white western Kentucky musicians as Bill Monroe and Merle Travis. But in western Kentucky, Shultz has been largely forgotten.

That will change on Memorial Day weekend.

A monument to Shultz will be unveiled in the cemetery at 1 p.m. May 28, says Nyla Morgan, a Morgantown resident who has spearheaded the project.

Morgan has done research on several area cemeteries. Someone researching Shultz asked her for help in finding his grave. And she was appalled at what she found.

The black cemetery was in bad shape, Morgan said. "There are just little rocks for markers," she said. "And he doesn't even have a rock. This is way overdue." Shultz was born near Cromwell in Ohio County in February 1886. He died in Morgantown on April 14, 1931, of organic heart disease at age 45. Family members, however, insisted that he was murdered, given poisoned whiskey by fellow musicians jealous of his talent.

Dan Hays, executive director of the Owensboro-based International Bluegrass Music Association, says Shultz belongs to the pre-bluegrass era. But his contributions are still in vogue today, Hays said.

Shultz's blues guitar was a major influence on a young Bill Monroe, "the Father of Bluegrass Music." Some historians have credited Shultz with putting the blues in bluegrass.

"A lot of today's most popular bands - the Nashville Bluegrass Band, Del McCoury, Tim O'Brien - harken straight back to the blues of that era and the contributions of black musicians like Arnold Shultz," Hays says.

Bluegrass is just now recognizing its debt to African American music, Hays said.

"Like any piece of society that grew out of the South in that period, bluegrass has been slow to recognize those contributions," he said.

When the Fairfield Four, a black gospel group, performed at the International Bluegrass Music Awards show in Owensboro two years ago, "People were saying, 'Thank God, we're finally acknowledging it,'" Hays said.

The International Bluegrass Music Museum, which is scheduled to open permanently in Owensboro this fall, eventually should have a display of black contributions to the music, Hays said.

"I would hope we can do something major in tracking all influences, but especially black influences," he said. "I'd like to see a major exhibit at some point." Shultz began playing with

relatives in the Shultz Family Band in Ohio County before 1910. In 1922, he joined a country and Dixieland band led by Forrest "Boots" Faught of McHenry, playing guitar. Shultz also traveled with Walter Taylor, a black mandolin player, playing the coal camps of Ohio County in that era.

By 1928, he was working with banjo player Clarence Wilson and fiddler Pendleton Vandiver - Monroe's "Uncle Pen" - playing for dances in the area. It was during that time that Monroe was exposed to Shultz's picking style.

In 1982, an Australian woman who had read about Shultz's unmarked grave pledged \$50 toward a marker.

That year, the Ohio County tourist committee began planning a monument. And Hugh Duke Sr. of Hartford, who listened to Shultz's picking as a child, was working with Butler County officials, trying to erect a major monument in Morgantown. He expected it to cost \$5,000 to \$8,000.

"We tried to put a monument on the courthouse lawn down there," Duke said Wednesday. "Nobody knew where the grave was. But we never could get enough to do it." Morgan said people with information about Shultz can contact her at 227 W. Porter, Morgantown, Ky. 42261. Or call her at (502) 526-4325 or 526-2300.



**Messenger-Inquirer**", Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 29 May 1994, pp.1C &C:

## Music legend honored with monument

By Tracy L. McQueen, Messenger-Inquirer

MORGANTOWN – Arnold Shultz was buried in a tiny Butler County cemetery 63 years ago with only a small rock marking his grave.

On Saturday, relatives from around the country and bluegrass fans from around the state came to Morgantown to honor the guitar-playing legend with a memorial service and an elaborate monument donated by the city.

"He was famous for his guitar picking," reads the monument, which includes an engraving of a guitar.

The monument is a bright spot in Bell Street Cemetery, a tiny 1930s cemetery for blacks where most of the graves are marked with small, scattered stones.

Relatives hope it will help keep the memory of Shultz and his music alive.

"It makes me very proud," said the Rev. Malcolm Walker of Owensboro, a nephew to Shultz. Walker said he used to listen to his uncle when he was a boy. Shultz was one of the few musicians who even played guitar at the time.

"My Uncle Arnold is more or less the one that instituted guitar playing," Walker said. "I never heard anybody play guitar except my Uncle Arnold and my father." Nyla Morgan of Morgantown worked with Morgantown Mayor Charlie Black and others to erect the monument and organize the ceremony.

"This is something that should have been done long ago," Black said.

Shultz, born in Ohio County in 1886, was a major influence on Bill Monroe, another Ohio County native who is known as the father of bluegrass music.

"He put the blues in bluegrass," said Hugh Duke of Hartford.

Duke, 84, used to listen to Shultz play when he was in high school.

"I can see him yet," Duke said. "He had a guitar that was the largest I ever saw." Shultz died in Morgantown in 1931, before Wendell Allen of Rosine was born. But Allen was among those who gathered to honor him.

Allen said he has often heard stories of Shultz playing at dances in Ohio County.

"There would be Arnold Shultz and a very, very young Bill Monroe," Allen said. "He set the stage for the music that we hear today." Shultz began playing with the Shultz Family Band in Ohio County before 1910. In 1922, he joined a country and Dixieland band led by Forrest "Boots" Faught of McHenry, playing guitar. Shultz also traveled with Walter Taylor, a black mandolin player, playing the coal camps of Ohio County in that era.

By 1928, he was working with banjo player Clarence Wilson and fiddler Pendleton Vandiver - Monroe's "Uncle Pen." Although Shultz was very popular in Muhlenberg, Butler and Ohio counties, many people in western Kentucky had never heard of him until music historians learned about his important contributions to bluegrass.



A monument for Arnold Shultz, an early blues guitar player known for his thumb-picking style, was unveiled Saturday in the Bell Street Cemetery in Morgantown. Ben Deal of Owensboro photographs the monument for his wife, Naomi, a relative of Shultz. Shultz's blues guitar was a major influence on a young Bill Monroe, who is considered the father of bluegrass music.

Several bluegrass musicians, including Walker, performed during a memorial service for Arnold at Morgantown's city park.

"I have heard of him all my life. I've heard his music all my life," said Charlotte Johnson of Alton, Ill., a descendant who has researched the Shultz family. "We're just thrilled this day has come." Duke said there are no recordings of Shultz, a man who probably never realized how significant his musical influences would be.

"It's still being passed to younger people," Duke said.

Morgan said she was happy to finally see the monument in the cemetery.

"We have known for several years about Arnold Shultz. We felt like he deserved a tombstone," she said. "It has been said that Arnold was the grandfather of bluegrass music."

Black said it was impossible to determine exactly which grave was Shultz's, so they placed the monument in front of the cemetery where everyone could see it.



Memorial in Bell Street Cemetery, Morgantown, KY



**Herald-Leader, Lexington, KY, Monday, 13 April 1998, p.3B:**

# Thumbs up

National Thumb Picker Hall of Fame inducts 7 guitar greats

Associated Press

DRAKESBORO - Chet Atkins and Grandpa Jones were among those honored during the first National Thumb Picker Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

Saturday's Western Kentucky event also saw the enshrinement of Mose Rager, Merle Travis, Kennedy Jones, Ike Everly and Arnold Schultz. Travis, Rager, Everly and Jones are considered the four legends among thumb pickers.

Eddie Pennington, president of the National Thumb Pickers Hall of Fame, said the ceremony began an era in picking history, adding that the induction gala will become an annual event.

Tommy Flynn, a Muhlenberg County native who now lives in Nashville, is a self-taught guitarist who says he grew up in Rager's barbershop as a teen-ager, learning all that the master could show him. He has written more than 30 books about guitar artists.

"Thumb-picking is like having a full orchestra in your arms," said Flynn, who considers Travis the greatest guitarist who ever lived. "You can play all the parts yourself with one instrument."

Pat Travis Eatherly remembered her father fondly. She said one of her most cherished memories was in 1948, when her family came back to Drakesboro for Merle Travis Day. It was right after he wrote and recorded his first big hit, Smoke, Smoke, Smoke That Cigarette.

"The mayor gave him the key to the city," she said. "It was this big gold key and I got to hold it for a few minutes."

Travis put the key away and may have forgotten about it. His daughter never forgot about it and years later during a father and daughter talk she confided how much she wanted it.

"He brought it to me and when he handed it to me, I realized it was a key carved out of a piece of wood and sprayed with gold paint," she said. "It didn't look like it did when I was 8 years old."

Others recalled Shultz as a black guitarist who first influenced Jones and later had an effect on the stylings of Mose, Everly and Travis.

Bill Lightfoot, a Madisonville High School graduate who now teaches at Appalachian State University in North Carolina, thinks Shultz learned his techniques from black musicians in the 1920s and '30s.

Using the thumb and fingers to play is a common technique used with African instruments like the korta and the bania, he said, adding that the bania is similar to the American banjo.

"When slaves were brought to this country they were forbidden to have musical instruments and they made instruments out of whatever they could find," Lightfoot said. "Those instruments usually required the use of the thumb and fingers."

Lightfoot said he thinks early black musicians started what is known today as thumb picking by playing ragtime pieces on the guitar rather than on the piano.



**Early Schools of Ohio County, Kentucky,  
Anna Laura Duncan (Utica, KY:  
McDowell Publications, 2003) pp.261 & 268:**

Arnold Schultz was born in the coal town of Cromwell. He was the oldest child of David and Ruth Shultz. His father was born in slavery but his mother was born free. He has sometimes been called "God-Father of Bluegrass."

In 1886 you did not travel too far from home to play music. It was said that Shultz shattered the "Color Barrier" in this segregated coal field of Ohio County. By the time he was 14 he had learned to read and write in the colored school of Ohio County. He then worked in the coal mine in the day time but when the sun went down over that Green River, he picked up his guitar and went "hunting" FOR MUSIC. Others in the family were Luther – bass fiddle, Hardin – banjo player, Mrs. Griffin – fiddle, Arnold – guitar.

Hugh Duke remembered, "One day I sneaked off from [the Dundee] school to hear Arnold Shultz play the guitar. He was black and this caused him some trouble in the music world but I had rather hear him play the guitar than anyone else. He was "The Chet Adkins" of his day. I remember that his old guitar was nothing special. It probably cost about \$20.00 in that day and time. He used an old grass rope as a cord around his neck and his pocket knife to make that old guitar sound like a steel, that was the best music anyone played in Ohio County or around Ohio County.

Sometimes when he played goose bumps would stand up all over my arms and I felt honored that I could hear him play even if I did have to skip school. I also knew that I would get in trouble when I got to my home, too, because skipping school was a no no no in my house. That black man sure didn't get the credit in the music world that he should have had."

[Note: Hugh Duke (1909-2003) attended the Dundee School in Ohio County, KY.]



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 25 June 2020, pp.1B & 3B:**

## **Shultz finally getting long deserved recognition**

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

I'm glad the International Bluegrass Music Association is finally recognizing the contributions of Arnold Shultz to the development of bluegrass.

The life of the black Ohio County musician would make an amazing movie.

Forty years ago, when people who knew Shultz were still alive, I had the pleasure of meeting and talking with many of them about his music.

Some said that in the nearly 50 years since his death, they had never heard his equal when it came to playing a guitar.

Shultz was an older contemporary of bluesman Robert Johnson.

And he may have been just as good.

But he was never recorded, so we'll never know.

Music historians say Shultz was a major influence in shaping the musical direction of an Ohio County boy named Bill Monroe — the man who created the bluegrass sound more than a dozen years after Shultz died in Butler County.

That, some say, makes him a godfather of bluegrass — a musical style he never heard.

Some say he put the blues in bluegrass.

Those who knew Shultz said he shunned the limelight.

By day, he worked the coal mines in Ohio County.

But when the sun set beyond the Green River, he would pick up his over-sized guitar and go in search of places to play.

There are only a handful of photographs left of the short, handsome, slightly overweight, man who is somewhat obscured by his big black hat and oversized guitar.

Ella Shultz Griffin, seven years younger than her cousin, said Shultz wasn't a bluesman.

The Shultz Family Band, where Shultz began his career, played country music, she told me.

"It was called hillbilly music then and it was hillbilly too," she said.

In 1922, Shultz, then 36, joined a make-shift band headed by drummer Forrest "Boots" Faught.

"He was the only colored man in the band," Faught told me. "He was the first man I ever heard to play the lead on a guitar. "

Music histories say that Monroe began following Shultz around to country dances as a 12-year-old in 1924.

Faught said Shultz was "way ahead of his time on that guitar. It was just an old common flattop guitar that probably didn't cost over \$20. It was a large guitar and I'm sure that it had a round sound hole and the old-time pegs that hung down under it. He had an old grass rope for a cord around his neck."

He said, "He would use a pocket knife on the neck of it to get the steel sound before steel guitars came in. That was before the steel bar was introduced."

Nolin Baize, who owned one of the mines where Shultz worked, said, "He was a guitar picker, I'll tell you. He could come nearer to making it sound like a piano than anybody I ever heard. He could play anything you could name. If he heard a record, he could sit down and play it in a little while."

Faught said when people would complain that he had a black man in his band, he would say, "The color doesn't mean anything. You don't hear color. You hear music."

Shultz never married and many of those who remember him say he had two loves besides music — whiskey and women.

By 1931, he was living in Butler County with the family of Beecher Carson, a local butcher. That year, on April 14, Shultz died of heart disease (as the death certificate says) or poisoned whiskey (as the legend says). Either way, he was only 45.

Now, after almost 90 years, he's finally getting the recognition he deserves.

And it's about time.



# **Notes on Arnold Shultz and his family**

By Jerry Long

Arnold Shultz, was born on 23 February 1886 in Ohio County, KY (sources – Ohio County, KY 1900 census, p.113A; World War I Draft Registration Card; and Kentucky death certificate, 1931 certificate #8823). He is listed in the Cromwell District in the 1900 Ohio County, KY census. He was then working in the coal mines. He was living in the home of his parents – David Shultz (born Dec 1844 KY, coal miner) and Elizabeth (born 1870); they were the parents of 8 children, who were all then living. At the time seven siblings, of Arnold, were listed in their home, they were – Amos D., Effie, Minnie Lee, Eva, Oliver L., Florence & Novella B. Born subsequent to this census three more siblings were born - Lillie, Douglas and James Richard Shultz. Arnold's parents are listed in the 1910 census of Central City, Muhlenberg County, KY. Arnold was not then shown in their household.

David Shultz, age 24, father of Arnold, is listed in the Cromwell Precinct in the 1870 census of Ohio County, KY; he was living at the residence of Jacob B. Stewart, a white blacksmith. David married twice. He married Mary M. Reynolds, 13 January 1872 Ohio County, KY. He and Mary apparently separated during 1874-1880. Mary Shultz and two sons, Eddie (7) and John (5) are listed in the 1880 census of the Cromwell Precinct, Ohio County, KY and her husband is not shown with them.

David Shultz married second Elizabeth ("Lizzie") Smith, 2 November 1882 Ohio County, KY. According to his death certificate David Shultz was born 25 December 1844 Ohio County, KY, to Henry Shultz, who was born Ohio County, KY. David died in Central City, Muhlenberg County, KY on 6 January 1918 (Kentucky death certificate 1918 – certificate #2479). He was buried at the Central Coal & Iron Company graveyard, abbreviated as C. C. & I. Co. graveyard on his death certificate; also referred to as the Central City Colored Cemetery

Lizzie Smith Shultz, mother of Arnold on the death certificates of her children, Oliver (1912) and Florence (1917) was reported to have been a native of Warren County, KY. Lizzie died on 16 July 1920 in Ohio County, KY and was buried at Central City in Muhlenberg County, KY. Her death certificate recorded – cause of her death as flux, widowed, age 50, born 11 February 1870 in Daviess County, KY, daughter of Richard Smith (Kentucky death certificate 1920 – certificate #25757).

The white Shultz family of Ohio County, KY are descendants of Revolutionary War veteran Mathias Shultz (1764-1834), who was a resident of Ohio County when it was established in 1799. He was born near Winchester, Virginia. He was a member of Washington's army at Trenton and was wounded at Brandywine, under Lafayette. He was sixteen years old when he joined the army. After the acknowledgement of our independence, he came to Kentucky. Mathias was a slave owner. The 1830 census of Ohio County reported that he owned 12 slaves. In the 1850 Federal Census Slave Schedule of Ohio County two of his sons, Joseph Thomas Shultz (1801-1895) and Charles Shultz (1797-1863) were shown as owning slaves. Both owned a male slave aged 6 years old, who may be David Shultz, father of Arnold Shultz.

On 12 September 1918 Arnold Shultz (Negro) registered for the World War I draft (World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, on the website Ancestry.com). On his registration he reported that he was born on 23 February 1884. He was then residing at McHenry

in Ohio County, KY, where he was employed as a miner at the Williams Coal Company. His nearest relative was Mrs. Lizzie Shultz of McHenry (his mother).

**REGISTRATION CARD**

SERIAL NUMBER **2358** ORDER NUMBER **2714**

1 **Arnold Shultz**

2 PERMANENT HOME ADDRESS: **McHenry, Ky.**

Age in Years **34** Date of Birth **February 23, 1884**

RACE: ☒ White ☐ Negro ☐ Oriental ☐ Indian ☐ Other

U. S. CITIZEN: ☒ Yes ☐ No

15 I am a citizen of the U. S. of what nation are you a citizen or subject?

PRESENT OCCUPATION: **Miner** EMPLOYER'S NAME: **Williams Coal Co.**

16 PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS: **McHenry, Ky.**

NEAREST RELATIVE: **Mrs. Lizzie Shultz**  
**McHenry, Ky.**

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE

P. 51, 42, 41.  
Form No. 1 (4-20)

**REGISTRAR'S REPORT**

16-2-24 Ohio 11631

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

HEIGHT			BUILD			COLOR OF EYES	COLOR OF HAIR
Tall	Medium	Short	Thin	Medium	Stout		
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Black	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Black

23 Has person lost arm, leg, hand, eye, or is he obviously physically disabled? (Specify.)

**no**

24 I certify that my answers are true; that the person on card has read or has had read to him his own answers; that I have witnessed his signature on card; and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true.

**W. H. Proctor**  
Registrar

Date of Registration **Sept. 12, 1918**

Local Board for the County of Ohio,  
State of Ky.

(STAMP OF LOCAL BOARD)

(The copy of the Local Board having jurisdiction of the area in which the registrant has his permanent home shall be placed in this box.)

World War 1 Draft Registration Card

Arnold Shultz is listed in his mother, Lizzie Shultz's, home in the 1920 census of Ohio County, KY. They were shown in the McHenry Precinct. He was reported to be single, age 34, and employed in the coal mines.

Arnold was arrested in 1922 for the violation of the Prohibition law - transporting & having in his possession whiskey (Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 18 November 1922 p.8).

On 3 January 1926 he performed at an "Old Fiddlers' Contest" at the courthouse in Hartford in Ohio County (Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 5 January 1926 p.2).

Arnold is listed in the 1930 census of Morgantown, Butler County, KY. He was then reported to be 45 years old. No occupation was given. He was listed as being married but he was living alone.

Arnold Shultz died in Morgantown, Butler County, KY on 14 April 1931. His death certificate gave cause of death as heart disease. The informant for his death certificate was Clarence Hill, of Morgantown. Hill reported that Arnold was single, age 49, born 1882 Ohio County, KY to Dave Shultz (born Ohio County, KY) and Lizzie Shultz (born Ohio County, KY). The certificate recorded that he was buried at the Morgantown Colored Cemetery. This cemetery is also known as the Bell Street Cemetery. For 63 years his grave was unmarked. A large monument honoring him was dedicated in the Bell Street Cemetery on 28 May 1994. The memorial was erected by the city of Morgantown.

FORM V. 2. 1-A-50m-11-1-25  
1 PLACE OF DEATH  
County Burles Co  
Vet. Post Morganfield Registration District No. 170  
Inc. Town Morganfield Primary Registration District No. 2070  
City \_\_\_\_\_ (No. \_\_\_\_\_ St. \_\_\_\_\_ Ward \_\_\_\_\_)  
2 FULL NAME Arnold Schultz  
(a) Residence, No. \_\_\_\_\_ St. \_\_\_\_\_ Ward \_\_\_\_\_  
(Usual place of abode) (If nonresident, give city or town and State)  
Length of residence in city or town where death occurred yrs. mos. ds. How long in U. S., if of foreign birth 1 yrs. mos. ds.

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS  
4. COLOR OR RACE Col. 5. Single Married, Widowed or Divorced (write the word) Single  
6a. If married, widowed, or divorced HUSBAND of (or) WIFE of \_\_\_\_\_  
8. DATE OF BIRTH (month, day, and year) 1882  
7. AGE Years 49 Months \_\_\_\_\_ Days \_\_\_\_\_ If LESS than 1 day \_\_\_\_\_ hrs. \_\_\_\_\_ min.  
9. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as spinner, sawyer, bookkeeper, etc. Laborer  
10. Industry or business in which work was done, as silk mill, saw mill, bank, etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
11. Date deceased last worked at 11. Total time (years) spent in this occupation (month and year) \_\_\_\_\_  
12. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) Ohio Co. Ky. (State or country) \_\_\_\_\_  
13. NAME David Schultz  
14. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) Ohio Co. Ky. (State or country) \_\_\_\_\_  
15. MAIDEN NAME Lizzie Schultz  
16. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) Ohio Co. Ky. (State or country) \_\_\_\_\_  
17. INFORMANT Clarence Hill (Address) Morganfield Ky.  
18. BURIAL, CREMATION, OR REMOVAL Morganfield Ky. Date 4-16, 1931  
19. UNDERTAKER \_\_\_\_\_ (Address) \_\_\_\_\_  
20. FILED 4-16, 1931 Burles Co. Ky. Registrar

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH  
21. DATE OF DEATH (month, day, and year) 4-14, 1931  
22. I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
I last saw him alive on 4-14, 1931. Death is said to have occurred on the date stated above, at 4 P. M.  
The principal cause of death and related causes of importance in order of onset were as follows:  
Organic Heart  
Diphtheria  
(Cerebral Hemorrhage)  
Contributory causes of importance not related to principal cause:  
Name of operation \_\_\_\_\_ Date of \_\_\_\_\_  
What test confirmed diagnosis? \_\_\_\_\_ Was there an autopsy? \_\_\_\_\_  
23. If death was due to external causes (violence) fill in also the following:  
Accident, suicide, or homicide? \_\_\_\_\_ Date of injury \_\_\_\_\_  
Where did injury occur? \_\_\_\_\_ (Specify city or town, county, and State)  
Specify whether injury occurred in industry, in home, or in public place.  
Manner of injury \_\_\_\_\_  
Nature of injury \_\_\_\_\_  
24. Was disease or injury in any way related to occupation of deceased? If so, specify \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signed) L. H. Barclay M. D.  
(Address) Morganfield Ky.

The following is one of only a couple of known photographs of Arnold Shultz:



This picture has been published in numerous books, magazines, newspaper articles, brochures etc. Without exception in all of these Arnold Shultz's fellow musician in the picture is identified as Clarence Wilson (1874-1957) of Horton, Ohio County, KY. Wilson, indeed, was a close friend of Shultz, they frequently performed together, and Shultz often visited and stayed at the Wilson home. I believe that Wilson is mistakenly identified as being Shultz's accompanist in this picture. I believe the fellow musician is Bill Monroe's fiddling "Uncle Pen" (Pendleton Vandiver, 1869-1932).

On 18 November 1981 this writer visited the home of Clarence Wilson's daughter, Flossie Wilson Hines (1910-1997), at Horton in Ohio County, KY (Clarence was a second cousin to my great-great-grandmother). Mrs. Hines said that her father was close friends of Arnold Shultz and Pendleton Vandiver. Shultz's guitar was accompanied by Wilson's banjo and Vandiver's fiddle. The accompanist in the above picture is playing a fiddle, not Wilson's instrument. The fact that Wilson's instrument was the banjo is confirmed by many publications (Interview of Flossie Wilson Hines, oral history collection, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY, 2 July 1991). Mrs. Hines during 1925-1932 took several pictures of Pendleton Vandiver, who appears in the following photos.



Picture on left – in front is Pendleton Vandiver (1869-1932) & on right, Remus Clarence Wilson (1874-1957); in back left to right, unidentified girl, Flossie Wilson Hines (1910-1997) & Vercie Marie Monroe Moore (1914-1992, a first cousin of Bill Monroe). Picture on right – Pendleton Vandiver and Flossie Wilson Hines. The fiddler with Arnold Shultz looks like Pendleton Vandiver in the above pictures – in all of the pictures he is wearing his large-brim hat.

