

The Goodwill House

Site #40 on the USDI NPS Inventory Map

- Philip Goodwill was born on August 9, 1852, in Pennsylvania, the son of Robert and Katherine Wake Goodwill. The family had emigrated from the county of Northumberland, England, to Philadelphia earlier in the 1850's. Robert Goodwill had started mining coal in England as a teenager. In his new country he continued as a miner until 1865, when he started leasing coal lands and opening mines. He had already engaged in several operations before coming to the Pocahontas Coalfield in 1886. His Goodwill Coal and Coke Company was located in the northwestern part of Mercer County where the mining town of Goodwill was named for him (Hager, "Millionaires' Town: The Houses and People of Bramwell" 50).
- Philip Goodwill became a lawyer, but never practiced law, choosing instead to "serve as the general manager of Goodwill mines in 1887" (Hager, "Millionaires' Town: The Houses and People of Bramwell" 50).
- The Goodwill mine opened in 1887 and 9008 tons of Pocahontas #3 coal was shipped during the first year (Untitled n.d.).
- At the turn of the century, 50,000 tons of coal had been shipped. During the first 40 years of operation, 13,528,328 tons of coal were shipped – all hand (Untitled n.d.).
- "The coal town, Goodwill, had its own baseball team. It was called 'The Goodwill Outlaws'" (Bramwell Aristocrat n.d.).
- "The Goodwill mines sold to the Louisville Company. At that time, Phillip Goodwill was President of the Pocahontas Company and a member of the Presbyterian Church, Masonic and Shriners" (Untitled n.d.).
- Phillip Goodwill also owned the Goodwill Hotel in Williamson, WV with "50 modern rooms" (Stationary).
- In 1904 Philip Goodwill remodeled his home. It was "transformed from a two-story distinctive farmhouse to a three-story Victorian mansion (Hager, Thesis 75).
- The Goodwill House was originally white ("Centennial Edition" n.d.).

- Phoebe Goodwill's bedroom and sitting room stretch across the width of the front of the house [on the second floor] (Hager, "Millionaires' Town: The Houses and People of Bramwell" 51).
- The third floor ballroom is quite spacious. Adjoining it are a couple of guest rooms and a gameroom with more Masonic paintings on its walls. (Hager, "Millionaires' Town: The Houses and People of Bramwell" 51).
- The Goodwills held prayers in the middle of the curved foyer turret. Phillip Goodwill read the Bible there every Sunday (Wells n.d.).
- The children's playroom was located in the tower of the turret (Bramwell Aristocrat n.d.)
- Philip Goodwill led citizens in the organization of Bramwell's first grade school, opened in 1894 (Hager, Thesis 51).
- In 1889, Phoebe went back home to Pennsylvania to give birth to her first son. She was laughed at by her family because she hadn't kept up with the latest fashion ((Hager, Thesis 51).
- Phoebe would have parties every other night, especially bridge parties (Wells n.d.).
- Phoebe was quite the socialite ((Hager, Thesis 92).
- Phoebe had up to 4 servants (Hager, Thesis 100).
- Phoebe led the Presbyterian Church's women's groups (Hager, Thesis 98).
- Phoebe believed that Bramwell's children could not survive because they were spoiled and "couldn't fend for themselves" (Hager, Thesis 107)
- Diaries written by Phoebe Dounty Goodwill dating from 1909 to 1941 were also left in the family mansion. These diaries are fascinating reading, capturing a portrait of life in Bramwell during its peak years. A 1932 entry looks back to the time of Phoebe's wedding in 1887, and recalls that her brother and sisters feared that her new husband was carrying her off to the wilderness. That is the way southern West Virginia appeared from the

settled society of Pennsylvania (Hager, "Millionaires' Town: The Houses and People of Bramwell" 51).

- For more than anything, the Goodwill diaries reveal the social character of Bramwell. Parties, teas, bridge games, and open houses were held continuously. People were either giving socials or attending them every day of the week. In the summer of 1913, Phoebe describes giving a party in her third floor ballroom, inviting 120 guests, and having to borrow folding chairs from the Masonic Hall (Hager, "Millionaires' Town: The Houses and People of Bramwell" 51).
- A local story states that Phoebe expressed her concerns to Philip about coming to the wild, uncultured coal mining towns. Philip supposedly assured Phoebe that Bramwell was not such a town with saloons and wild women, telling her that the wild coal towns she had heard about were in an entirely different state! What Philip said was true, since Mercer County, West Virginia, was a dry county. However, what he failed to mention was that the town he spoke of, Pocahontas, Virginia, once having as many as 28 saloons, was only one mile away (source: unknown)!
- Another local story relates how Phoebe ordered the beautiful blue flowers that were growing along the banks of the Bluestone River picked and brought in to decorate the house for a party. What Phoebe didn't realize was that the native Virginia Bluebells would close in the evening. When she emerged for her party, the flowers were closed and limp. Phoebe supposedly ran upstairs and refused to come out for the party (source: unknown).
- "Phoebe Goodwill lingered on in Bramwell for nearly two decades after Philip's death, but in 1934 she left the mansion for Bluefield's West Virginia Hotel. She lived there in retirement another 19 years, before dying at the age of 91 in 1953" (Hager, Goldenseal 52).
- Philip Goodwill died at home on October 4, 1916 (Untitled n.d.).
- The current owners of the Goodwill are Ed and Nora Bell Paisley. "We moved in [to the Goodwill House] on June 30th of 1956," Nora Bell remembers, "and we didn't get the living room finished until 1972" (The Bramwell Aristocrat n.d.).