



WEST VIRGINIA
DIVISION OF
CULTURE & HISTORY

From the Editor:

History Day on March 5, 2009, was a success in terms of the number of historical, genealogical and preservation organizations with display tables, number of visitors to those tables, and 43 new History Heroes honored. Good weather certainly played a role in the excellent turnout, but we hope all participants who appreciated each other's accomplishments and shared camaraderie will move forward with a buoyed sense of common purpose to preserve and promote the history and culture of West Virginia and her people. Mark your 2010 calendars for the 14th annual West Virginia History Day at the Legislature on Thursday, February 18!

Virginia Legislative Petitions for West Virginia Counties

In conjunction with the Mining Your History Foundation, the West Virginia Archives and History Library has acquired Virginia Legislative Petitions on microfilm from the Library of Virginia for the counties which formed West Virginia, except Monongalia County. We expect to acquire the petitions for Monongalia County, as well as those for "parent" counties of Augusta, Giles, Montgomery and Tazewell. Beginning in 1774, Virginia citizens petitioned the legislature for private, public and political concerns that could not be addressed by or were not properly tended by local authorities. The petitioner did not have to be a voter—women, slaves and free blacks could not vote, but they could petition. Since few people could attend legislative sessions in Richmond and since transportation and communication were both slow and difficult, legislators made themselves available, usually at their county courthouses, to hear from constituents before proceeding to

the General Assembly. People could present their concerns orally to individual legislators, or in the form of written petitions addressed to the whole General Assembly.

Petition research is not for the beginning family history researcher, but is an additional resource for the researcher who has looked at everything else available. Petitions

are the only place divorce records will be found for this time period, since divorce was only obtainable then by petitioning the legislature. One may find a petition relevant to a specific family line, or may flesh out an understanding of an ancestor's geographic area and of the practical and political circumstances of the

Continued on the next page

Refurbishing of Archives Library Reading Room Continues

Refurbishing of the Archives and History Library Reading Room continues, with larger projects anticipated over the next few months. The library chairs have been reupholstered and well-padded, and a new Security/Copy desk setup has been installed. Plans call for the carpet to be replaced and the room to be painted. The window blinds, original to the opening of The Cultural Center, will be replaced with ultraviolet light-filtering blinds, and the motorized system to open and

close the blinds will be either replaced or repaired. We do not know at the time of publication if these projects will necessitate any closings of the Reading Room to the public. Keep an eye on our Web site at <http://www.wvculture.org/history> and your local media for announcements. Particularly if you are making a special trip or traveling a distance to visit us, we urge you to call us before coming to ensure that the Library will be open to serve you that day.

Continued from page 1

time and place a family lived in. Former slaves or free blacks sought permission to remain in the commonwealth to stay near enslaved spouses and children (free blacks were only allowed to stay in Virginia for a limited amount of time). Searching the petitions effectively for genealogical information takes patience and a certain amount of fore-knowledge of where people should be and what they may have been doing so that the researcher knows what to watch for when browsing through the petitions. All petitions from the county in which an ancestor lived are potential sources of information and should be browsed. For instance, a petition for a new road or road improvements may give reasons for the request, such as needing access to a mill and naming the mill's owner. In addition to the information found in petitions, the records themselves are originals, not transcriptions; therefore, the signatures are those of the actual petitioners, not written by clerks.

Petition research has great potential for historians as well. Local historians may discover when and why a road was built or diverted, identify types of local businesses and names of owners, find names of professionals such as doctors and lawyers, explore disputes over county borders and naming of county seats, and much more. Even a petition for a change or waiver of a tax can provide a window into the circumstances that prompted the request.

A description of these records can be found in *The Library of Virginia's Legislative Petitions, Research Notes Number 18*, posted at http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwehave/gov/rn18_legspet.htm. The West Virginia Archives and History Library has the most relevant of the additional sources mentioned in the Research Notes

bibliography, including *Popular Influence Upon Public Policy: Petitioning in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*, by Raymond C. Bailey, and all five periodical articles cited. Three Web sites with searchable databases for locating Virginia petitions are identified:

- www.lva.virginia.gov/whatwehave/gov/petitions/: Calendar of Legislative Petitions submitted to the Virginia General Assembly from 1776–1865. Information includes the name of the petitioner and town/county; date presented and description of petition; and reel, box and folder numbers. Each petition has been assigned one or more topics that allow subject index searches.
- <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/petitions>: In the Religion section of the Library of Congress's American Memory Web pages, 423 early religious

petitions to the Virginia General Assembly from 1774–1802 can be searched.

- http://library.uncg.edu/slavery_petitions/: The University of North Carolina at Greensboro maintains a searchable database of petitions regarding slavery from Virginia and half a dozen other southern states. (Of course, the Archives Library will only have the petitions for Virginia.)

Petitions are not indexed by the name of the petitioner, as a rule, but by the “nature of the petitions.” The names of individuals are sometimes listed in the “Description” section of the index entries, but not always. Researchers need to focus on the geographic area and time period, then look through petitions of that

Continued on page 4

History Heroes Online

West Virginia History Heroes for 2009 are listed on the Archives and History Web site [<http://www.wvculture.org/history/histhero.html>] with brief descriptions of the accomplishments for which they were honored and photographs of those who received honors in person on History Day, on March 5. This year honorees received lapel pins in the shape of West Virginia etched with the words “History Hero,” in addition to certificates. The awards were presented by Kay Goodwin, Secretary of Education and the Arts, and Robert Conte, Chairman of the West Virginia Archives and History Commission. Lists of History Hero honorees are posted beginning with 1997, with biographical information included beginning in 1998, and photographs of the presentations included from 2006 to the present.

Pioneer Press Editorials Online

Selected editorials by J. R. Clifford from *Pioneer Press*, West Virginia's first black newspaper, have been posted online at <http://www.wvculture.org/history/africanamericans/pioneerpress.html>. The posted editorials date from January 1911 through September 1916. Clifford was a trailblazer in many aspects of West Virginia's black history. He broke new ground in education, journalism, law and civil rights. In 1887 he was the first African American to pass the West Virginia bar examination. One of two landmark cases he argued before the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals resulted in the first ruling in U.S. history to determine that racial discrimination was illegal. For more information about Clifford and his editorials, visit <http://www.wvculture.org/news.aspx?Agency=Division&Id=1045>.

Gravestone Preservation Workshop in Fairmont

Woodlawn Cemetery will be hosting a one-day, hands-on workshop in gravestone preservation. On Saturday, May 2, 2009, Jonathan Appell will be showing how to repair old gravestones, slow or reverse weather-related deterioration, and stabilize stones which have begun to lose their integrity. Woodlawn is located in one of the older neighborhoods in Fairmont, West Virginia. Men and women significant to the history of the state and the nation are buried there, including Francis Harrison Pierpont, considered the father of West Virginia; Aretus Brooks Fleming, 8th governor; Matthew Mansfield Neely, 21st governor; Congressman

and Senator; the first three state superintendents of schools; over 100 Civil War veterans, both Union and Confederate; as well as judges, lawyers, merchants and just plain folks.

The 42-acre cemetery is 186 years old, has over 15,000 graves, and is still an active burying ground. Gravestones can be found in a variety of conditions, including listing, sinking and disrepair. Appell will use an area of African American gravestones in very poor condition in order to demonstrate various techniques and products to help restore and maintain the stones. Cost for the workshop is \$50.00, including lunch. If you are interested

in attending the workshop, please respond to Gena Wagaman, Superintendent, by April 15, 2009, at (304) 657-1813, or e-mail gwagaman@verizon.net. Information for this article was obtained from a February 9 press release from the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike Alliance, <http://www.spturnpike.org>.

Editor's Note: Check "Cemeteries" in the Subject Index of *West Virginia Archives and History News* at <http://www.wvculture.org/history/ahnews/ahnews.html> to learn more about cemetery and grave marker preservation. Visit the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office Website at <http://www.wvculture.org/shpo/cemeteries.html> for more articles, as well as information and forms for the West Virginia Cemetery Survey.

Vital Research Records Update

Since the last batch of county and state records were added to West Virginia Vital Research Records (VRR), the server for the database is running at near capacity during the busiest times of each day. At best, the system is sluggish, and at worst has timed out before producing results pages. Users have complained that images sometimes will not open, or that they can not move from one page of results to the next. Archives and History is aware of

these problems, has addressed them by defining both the issues and a solution, and is awaiting a decision on a new server. In the meantime, users who encounter difficulties are asked to try again at a different time of day, particularly early morning, when fewer researchers are online. The remaining counties to be added to VRR are Barbour, Berkeley, Boone, Brooke, Doddridge, Fayette, Hancock, Kanawha, Marion, Mason, Mercer, Ohio and Tyler.

Archives and History News
is available on the
Archives and History Web site
<http://www.wvculture.org/history/ahnews/ahnews.html>

Newspaper Microfilm in the Archives Library

If you have not visited the Microfilm Storage Room of the Archives and History Library recently you will find a few changes. More cabinets have been added to accommodate the ever growing collection. As a result, the microfilm boxes have been resorted, and many will be in different locations than you found them in your last visit. The "Miscellaneous" newspaper section, consisting of mixed newspaper

titles, is now located in the "M" section of the county newspaper drawers. The *Fayette Tribune* is now alphabetized by "O" for "Oak Hill," keeping with the practice of filing the daily papers by the town of origin. Newspapers on microfilm in the Archives Library collection are listed by county on our Web site at <http://www.wvculture.org/history/newspapers/newsmic.html>.

New Check Conversion Policy

A recent memo from the West Virginia State Treasurer's office regarding check conversion was received by all state offices. In part, the memo reads: "Beginning in March 2009, consumer checks that are received for deposit in the Treasurer's Office will be converted to electronic debits from the consumer's bank accounts. The paper checks will be imaged and then destroyed. . .When you provide a check as payment, you authorize us either to use information from your check to make a one-time electronic fund transfer from your account or to process the payment as an image

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 2

era to see if their people are mentioned.

Here are several samples of petitions:

- John Norris, Lewis County, 1824: surgeon in the 125th Regiment of Virginia Militia asks for an act allowing him pay for his services for the last five years.
- John Conrad Holstein, Preston County, 1831: asks for a divorce from his wife Wilhelmina.
- John Carter, Kanawha County, 1806: asks to receive a pension for his services against the Indians in 1792 under John Morris, Captain of the Militia of Kanawha County. Includes certificate.
- Sarah Cunningham, Harrison County, 1816: asks for a small pension for assisting in repelling Indians from the West Fork of the Monongalia River.
- Richard Pointer, Greenbrier County, 1819: former slave of Andrew Donnally asks for relief for him for his services against the Indians during the Revolutionary War in 1778.
- Citizens of Jackson County, 1841: ask for a free and sufficient system of public schools; a yearly and moderate appropriation for the Charleston and Parkersburg Turnpike Road and a branch to the Staunton Road; the abolition of prison for debt; etc.
- Citizens of Williamsport, Taylor County, 1845: ask for a change in the name of the town to Pruntytown.
- Martin Whitzel and others, Ohio County, 1803: ask for some provision for the loss of their father and uncle who were killed by the Indians in defense of the frontier in 1786 and 1788.

New Titles

- Family History for Steven**, Volumes 1 and 2: by Daniel Gwin, 2008.
- First Flag on the Summit: History of the 15th Indiana Civil War Regiment**: Sam Passo and Bill Crane, 2008.
- International Vital Records Handbook, 5th Edition**: by Thomas Jay Kemp, 2009.
- Legends of the Mountain State 2: More Ghostly Tales from the State of West Virginia**: Michael Knost, 2008.
- Little, Garrison, Taverner**: Virginia Kable, [1984?].
- Popular Influence upon Public Policy: Petitioning in Eighteenth-Century Virginia**: Raymond C. Bailey, 1979.
- Prose and Poetry of a Southern Woman**: Heather Graham, 1994.
- Reach Me the Tin**: Riley Nelson, 1932.
- Real Patriots and Heroic Soldiers: General Joel Leftwich and the Virginia Brigade in the War of 1812**: Stuart L. Butler, 2008.
- Sing It Pretty**: Bess Lomax Hawes, 2008.
- Sistersville and Tyler County**: Luke Peters, 2007.
- Speak to the Past**: Margaret Calwell, 2000.
- The Ancestry of Anthony Morris Johnson**, Volume 12: Robert Johnson, 2008.
- The Burdett Family of Virginia and West Virginia: Finale, Including Results from 2006–2008 DNA Project**: by Howard W. Burdett, 2008.
- The Charles Snodgrass Family**: Millie Fry, 2008.
- The Life of a Locomotive Engineer**: J. O. Young, 2006.
- The Road to Disunion: Volume 1: Secessionists at Bay, 1776–1854**: William Freehling, 2007.
- Uneven Ground**: Ron Eller, 2008.
- West Virginia Farm Stories**: Mary Figgatt, 2008.
- Wars CNN Didn't Cover**: Jack Muhlenbeck, 2008.

Permission to reprint articles from *West Virginia Archives and History News* is granted, provided:

- (1) The reprint is not used for commercial purposes, and (2) the following notice appears at the end of the reprinted material: Previously published in *West Virginia Archives and History News*, [Volume and issue numbers], [Month, Year], a publication of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.
-

Calendar of Events

Please check our web site (<http://www.wvculture.org/history>) for genealogical and historical society meeting announcements, and for more complete information on activities listed below.

LIBRARY DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE, March 3:
 The West Virginia State Capitol and the Cultural Center, Charleston.

HISTORY DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE, March 5:
 The West Virginia State Capitol and the Cultural Center, Charleston.

GENEALOGY FAIR, KANAWHA VALLEY HISTORY CENTER, April 4: Rand. For more information call (304) 542-3817 or (304) 925-2438, or e-mail kvhc06@yahoo.com.

Calendar of Events

Please check our web site (<http://www.wvculture.org/history>) for genealogical and historical society meeting announcements, and for more complete information on activities listed below.

HOOT OWL NIGHT, April 24–25: Sponsored by Mining Your History Foundation and West Virginia Archives and History, Archives and History Library, The Cultural Center, Charleston.

GRAVESTONE PRESERVATION WORKSHOP, May 2: Woodlawn Cemetery, Fairmont.

FESTIVAL OF NATIONS CELEBRATING WEIRTON'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY, May 16: Weirton Millsop Community Center, Weirton. Sponsored by the Weirton Area Museum and Cultural Center. For more information, call Pamela Makricosta, (304) 748-1549.

VANDALIA GATHERING, May 22–24: The Capitol Complex and the Cultural Center, Charleston.

MEMORIAL DAY, May 25: Archives Library will be *closed*.

WEST VIRGINIA ARCHIVES AND HISTORY COMMISSION MEETING, May 29: Morgantown.

“SEX IN THE CIVIL WAR,” June 19: Dr. Thomas Lowry, lecturer, Beverly Heritage Center, Beverly.

WEST VIRGINIA DAY HOLIDAY, June 19: Archives Library will be open*.

WEST VIRGINIA DAY, June 20: Archives Library will be open*.

WEST VIRGINIA STATE MUSEUM RE-OPENING, June 20: The Cultural Center, Charleston.

LEMUEL CHENOWETH WEEKEND, June 20–21: Beverly.

For more information, visit <http://www.historicbeverly.org>.

“LISTENING FOR A CHANGE: ORAL HISTORY AND APPALACHIAN HERITAGE,” June 28–July 3: Folklife documentation course with Michael and Carrie Kline, instructors, Elkins. For more information, visit <http://www.folktalk.org/events.html> or call (304) 636-5444.

NEW DEAL FESTIVAL, July 10–12: Arthurdale Heritage, Inc., Arthurdale.
For more information, visit <http://www.arthurdaleheritage.org> or call (304) 864-3959.

BATTLE OF RICH MOUNTAIN RE-ENACTMENT, July 11–12:
For more information, visit <http://www.richmountain.org>.

HISTORY DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE, February 18, 2010:
The West Virginia State Capitol and the Cultural Center, Charleston.

**Only the Archives Library will be staffed—all other Archives offices will be closed.*
The West Virginia Library Commission Library in the Cultural Center is closed weekends and all holidays.

transaction. For inquiries, please call 1-866-243-9010. When we use information from your check to make

an electronic fund transfer, funds may be withdrawn from your account as soon as the same day you make your

payment, and you will not receive your check back from your financial institution.”

West Virginia Division of Culture and History
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300

West Virginia
Archives & History
NEWS



We would love to hear from you.

Let us know what you find helpful in the newsletter, and what new topics you would like covered.

Contact *West Virginia Archives and History News* Editor
Susan Scouras, (304) 558-0230, Ext. 742,
or by e-mail: susan.scouras@wvculture.org.

Archives and History Staff

Joe Geiger Director
Debra Basham Archivist (photographs, special collections)
Constance Baston Researcher (Veterans Memorial Archives)
Greg Carroll Historian (Civil War, Native American history)
Dick Fauss Archivist (microfilm and moving images collection)
Denise Ferguson County Records Archivist
Allen Fowler Special projects
Elaine Gates Library Assistant (microfilming and microfilm repairs)
Ed Hicks Photo Archivist (archival photography, darkroom)
Mary Johnson Historian
Terry Lowry Library Assistant (Veterans records)
Cathy Miller Library Assistant (WV State documents)
Harold Newman Library Assistant (microfilming, Revolutionary War)
Susan Scouras Librarian (cataloging, Kentucky, library collection, newsletter editor)
Jaime Simmons Library Assistant (records of the 1700's and early 1800's, Pennsylvania)
Bobby Taylor Library Manager
Nancy Waggoner Secretary
Bryan Ward Acting Assistant Director
Interns Kyle Campbell, Brett Steele
Part time Matt McGrew
Volunteers Carolyn Conner, Bill Kelley, James Wilburn, Sue Shank,
Charlotte Thurston, and Ken Bailey

This newsletter is a publication of : The West Virginia Division of Culture and History
Randall Reid-Smith, Commissioner