



West Virginia Archives & History News



VOLUME I, NO. 5

JULY, 2000

SUMMER IN THE WV ARCHIVES

From the Editor:

Summer is always an especially busy time for the West Virginia Archives for several reasons. More people are traveling and visiting the Archives Library for anywhere from an hour's visit as they pass through town on the interstate, to a week's intensive research. Many professional and amateur historians use their summers between school semesters to research the original documents and special collections available here. Last year one gentleman was working his way across the country by bus investigating the effect of third parties in local and state elections over the years. Cousins, both close kin and "kissing cousins" who have connected over the internet, schedule their vacations together and meet here in the Archives Library to do their research together. Occasionally we discover that they are *our* relatives, too! (If you are descended from Roane County natives, then you are probably related to Bobby Taylor or Elaine Gates!) Summer family reunions spark interest in genealogy and draw more patrons to us. Increased visitation at the Veterans Memorial brings requests for information about individual names inscribed on the Memorial, or requests for a name to be added. As usual, we have several young people working with us for the summer, whom we will introduce to you in this issue. In other news, all of our library chairs have now

been re-upholstered. Those of you who have been library patrons in the last year or so will be happy to learn that new padding was added to the seats!

In addition to our gratitude for increased comfort for patrons, we are pleased that the tastefully colorful fabric used to recover the cushions has brightened up the room considerably.

The Lighter Side of Life in the West Virginia Archives

Rewards are found in almost any occupation. Humor is present in most workplaces. The Archives is not any different. Particularly when we have had a stressful, hectic summer day in the Archives Library, we appreciate a little comic relief or a word of appreciation from a grateful patron. The most touching patrons are those who stand in front of us as they pick up their photocopies from the desk, wave the documents in the air and exuberantly exclaim "I finally have family!" All too often the children of West Virginia natives who moved away a generation or two ago have lost touch with their Mountain State families and feel very alone in the world. Finding names and other information about their grandparents and great-grandparents gives them a sense of self, a knowledge of roots, that they were lacking. We are always proud to have helped these people trace their heritage. Of course, we hear all kinds of hilarious or potentially embarrassing stories about

our patrons' families that we can't repeat for you! Rest assured that Archives employees always respect your privacy, even when your own family members don't.

One of the more interesting aspects of working in the Archives is watching projects in progress and knowing that our staff and our collection have contributed to the final outcome in a positive way. Businesses, private individuals and tourism organizations often come to the Archives seeking information to preserve and restore buildings of all types, or to develop tourism sites. We supply them with histories, photographs, maps and occasionally videotapes to assist them in determining the original appearance or uses of the structures. Engineers, historians and archaeologists use Archival resources to research their options for the path of new roadways or highway improvements. Television and film documentary researchers from all over the country (and sometimes overseas, too) call upon our resources. We supply them with both video and print resources. For example, Archives and History supplied ESPN2 with video clips of Jerry West as a WVU basketball star and photocopies of newspaper clippings we had saved about his career and his visits back to West Virginia over the years. (The museum allowed them to photograph or tape the West memorabilia in that collection, also.)

And then there was the gentleman from a Scandinavian country who had been surfing the net seeking photographs of "real flappers," had discovered Charleston, West Virginia, and was certain that this was where the popular 1920's dance, "The Charleston," had started. He had first called the *Charleston Gazette* newspaper office and had been referred to the Archives. After finally convincing him that he needed to shift his research to Charleston, South Carolina, he divulged the reason for his search: he wanted an authentic model for the new tattoo he desired!

Some of our favorite findings which have given us nice breaks from the routine of researching the

census, vital statistics records, old newspapers, etc.: The aged gentleman who gave his occupation for the 1860 census as "gentleman of leisure"; the eleven-year old boy whose name was listed in the 1880 census as "Fearless Fred" (Wonder what he was doing while the census taker was there?); a very dehydrated dandelion found pressed between the leaves of a tome of American history from the Boyd Stutler collection (What child or grandchild dared to do that?!); the front-page newspaper article from the turn of the century about the West Virginia man who was certain he was going to get rich by catching stray cats, breeding them and making coats from their pelts; the 100-year-old Civil War veteran who sliced his birthday cake with his Confederate saber; the West Virginia Union soldier "discharged on account of worthlessness" and for being "lost for 60 days"; the underage Union soldier who was discovered, discharged, and "taken home by his mother"; occupation given as "Drunk"; cause of death for an elderly person listed as "wore out"; and many others. One of the most touching has been the "will" found in the back of one of the notebooks of county records and Bible records for Mineral County transcribed by the WPA in the 1930's. (We have included it in this issue.)

A source of both amusement and frustration is the surprisingly large number of Confederate veterans' descendants who can not understand why West Virginia did not issue medals and grant pensions to their ancestors. Americans as a whole over the last century may have patched up or chosen to ignore many of the moral and spiritual wounds of the Civil War, but West Virginia in the 1860's was certainly not the place for Confederate veterans to find sympathy and support! Other situations that provoke both headaches and laughter are the "impossible" schoolwork assignments and the newspaper trivia contests that pop up every year. It is not at all unusual for the offices of the Attorney General, the Governor and of individual legislators to refer to the Archives their constituents' requests for help with students' assignments that have stumped everyone else. We can't always answer them either, but we can

sometimes point out a flaw in the question that makes it unanswerable. Regarding public contests, particularly those with prizes, we have a general policy that we will not give out answers to contest questions, but we will direct patrons to sources in the library or elsewhere to find the answers for themselves. There are always a few persistent folks who call repeatedly, phrasing their request in different ways each time to try to trick us into giving them the answer!! The last time the *Charleston Gazette* had a West Virginia-based trivia contest, librarians from all over the state called us for help because they had been unable to assist their own patrons, not knowing that the questions came from a newspaper contest.

Never think of the Archives as a dull and humorless workplace. During Public Employee Appreciation Week this year, the Administrative Section of the Division of Culture and History provided the Archives and History staff with gummy candy tarantulas and snakes, and buttons reading “**Raiders of the Lost Archives.**” We kinda like that image!

IMAGES FROM THE ARCHIVES

In the past six months Dick Fauss, audio/moving images archivist, has had several requests from television news organizations working with the Underwood family to transfer home movie film to videotape. Charleston Channel 13, WOWK, will be using images of the Underwood family in a program about the Governor’s Mansion. Charleston Channel 8, WCHS, used the home movies in a program about holidays in the Governor’s Mansion. During the past year, more requests have come in for clips, particularly during the primary election season. Although the 1960 visits of John F. Kennedy and Hubert H. Humphrey still draw national attention to West Virginia every Presidential election year, the 40th anniversary of that event was noted this year with even more requests than usual.

Readers of the *Charleston Sunday Gazette-Mail* may have noted “The Way We Were” feature by local historian Richard Andre. Some of the photos and postcard images were copied from the Archives photograph or postcard collections maintained by archivist Debra Basham, and/or were identified with assistance from the Archives staff.

SUMMER REUNION ALERT

Summer is the prime time for all types of reunions—family, school, company, community, church. If your family or organization is holding a reunion, please send a copy of any memory books or videotapes that you produce, whether done by amateurs or professionals. Your photos and memoirs are valuable resources for genealogists and state historians alike. In particular we have many requests for information and photographs of the company towns which once thrived in West Virginia, but we have little in our collection to describe a way of life no longer found in the mountains. Please share your pride in your own personal history with the many people who are unable to attend your gatherings. Making your heritage a part of the Archives collection means that it will be preserved for posterity and available to present and future historians.

This newsletter is a publication of:

The Division of Culture and History
Archives and History
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300
(304) 558-0230

Commissioner: Renay Conlin

**The Will of Charles Lounsberry Made
While He was in the Asylum at
Dunning**

[Found in a notebook of Mineral County, West Virginia, documents transcribed as part of a WPA project in the 1930's. Our staff thinks it may have been found with other documents in a family Bible. If any reader can identify this as a published work, please let us know.]

I, Charles Lounsberry, being of sound and disposing mind and memory, do hereby make and publish this, my last will and testament in order, as justly as may be, to distribute my interests in the world among succeeding men.

That part of my interest, which is known in law and recognized in the sheep-bound volumes as my property, being inconsiderable and none account, I make no disposition in this, my will. My right to live, being but a life estate, is not at my disposal, but these things excepted, all else in the world I now proceed to devise and bequeath.

ITEM: I give to good fathers and mothers in trust for their children all good little words of praise and encouragement, and all quaint pet names and endearments, and I charge said parents to use them justly, as the needs of their children shall require.

ITEM: I leave to children inclusively, but only for the term of their childhood, all and every, the flowers of the field, and the blossoms of the woods, with the right to play among them freely according to the customs of children warning them at the same time against thistles and thorns. And I devise to children the banks and brooks and the golden sands beneath the water thereof, and the odors of the willows, that dip therein and the white clouds that float high over the giant trees. And I leave to children the long, long days, to be merry in, in a thousand ways, and the night, and the moon, and the train of the Milky Way to wonder at, but subject, nevertheless, to the rights hereinafter given to Lovers.

ITEM: I devise to boys all the usual, idle fields and commons where ball may be played; all pleasant waters where one may swim; all snow-clad hills where one may coast; and all streams and ponds

where one may fish, or where, when grim winter comes, one may skate, to have and to hold these same for the period of their boyhood. And all meadows, with the clover blossoms and butterflies thereof; the woods with their appurtenances, the squirrels and the birds and echoes and strange noises, and all distant places which may be visited, together with the adventures there found. And I give to said boys each his own place at the fireside at night, with all the pictures that may be seen in the burning wood, to enjoy without let or hindrance, and without any encumbrance or care.

ITEM: To lovers, I devise their imaginary world with whatever that may need, as the stars of the sky, the red roses by the wall, the bloom of the hawthorn, the sweet strains of music and aught else they may desire to figure to each other the lastingness and beauty of their love.

ITEM: To young men, jointly, I devise and bequeath all boisterous, inspiring sports of rivalry, and I give them the disdain of weakness and undaunted confidence in their own strength. Though they are rude, I leave to them the power to make lasting friendships, and of possessing companions and to them exclusively, I give all merry songs and brave choruses to sing with lusty voices.

ITEM: And to those who are no longer children, or youths, or lovers, I leave memory, and I bequeath to them the volume of the poems of Burns and Shakespeare and of other poems, if there be others to the end that they may live the old days over again, freely and fully without title or diminution.

ITEM: To our loved ones with snowy crowns, I bequeath the happiness of old age, the love and gratitude of their children until they fall asleep.

MEET OUR STAFF: SUMMER INTERNS

Vickie Pleska is a Ball State junior majoring in Family Consumer Science. Her hometown is Charleston, WV. **Leah Stover** is a West Virginia Wesleyan junior majoring in History. Her hometown is Charleston. Both Vickie and Leah are compiling paper and computer files for the individuals listed on the Veterans Memorial. **Lenora Kenwolf** recently earned a B.A. in History from WVU Tech. Her hometown is Glasgow, West Virginia. She is scanning and proofing documents for a data base to be placed on-line.

MEET OUR STAFF: SUMMER VOLUNTEERS

Brady Blevins is a West Virginia State College senior majoring in Sociology and minoring in History. His hometown is Accoville, West Virginia. Brady is working on a variety of tasks, including inventorying documents, assisting in the Archives Library and answering research request letters. **Lindsay Kiser** is a Capital High School junior from Charleston. She is transcribing documents and typing lists to be placed on our Web site.

DON'T THROW IT AWAY!!

Yard sale and flea market season is here! If you are cleaning out pamphlets, books, old West Virginia newspapers and magazines, city directories and telephone books, photographs, postcards, letters, etc., please check with Archives and History staff. You may have items we can add to the Archives Collection. Items do not have to be very old to be of interest to us. **You may find potential donations while searching through other people's discards or library book sales.** We are always interested in hearing about your finds; however, please do not send items to us without checking with us by mail or phone. Items we have accepted recently from yard sale or flea market scavengers include community festival programs, scrapbooks, high school yearbooks, church histories and directories, business ledgers,

glass catalogs, and tourism brochures. We have also picked up copies of several volumes of Comstock's *West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, as well as West Virginia-related biographies, histories and maps, from book sales of area libraries and charitable organizations. We are interested in duplicate copies of some items and in each edition of a title for the collection, so often we are grateful to acquire additional copies of things already in the library. We especially would like paperback and hardback copies of anything by West Virginia authors. **Keep your eyes open--you may find a real treasure in the trash!**

We would like to express our gratitude to **Shirley Parsons** of Charleston who has donated a large number of excellent titles to the Archives in the past two months. Ms. Parsons found great books in second-hand book stores and yard sales that she was kind enough to pass on to our collection.

WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY COLLECTORS EDITION VOLUME 47

Regular price: \$12.00

Special Sale Price: \$3.00

This special 1988 volume of the Mountain State's history journal presents the **Statehood and Civil War** period of West Virginia's past in articles written by some of the state's most prominent and prolific historians. In addition, the journal features **146 pages of photographs** relating to West Virginia history. This **Commemorative Issue** is an excellent gift for West Virginia and/or Civil War history buffs. Out-of-state patrons to the Archives Library have been snatching them up, indicating that the volume would be a thoughtful gift for family members and friends who do not live in-state. Other back issues of *West Virginia History* are available on request at the regular price. Additional information is available through the "What's New" category on our Web site, or you may call Joe Geiger, Archives and History.

If you are unable to visit the Archives to pick up a copy, you may order by mail for an additional \$1.50 postage and handling. Send payment, mailing information, number of copies and volume number to:

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

C H E C K O U R W E B S I T E
(<http://www.wvculture.org/history>) *FOR*
GENEALOGICAL and HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND FOR
MORE COMPLETE INFORMATION ON
ACTIVITIES LISTED BELOW:

A SLAVE SHIP SPEAKS: THE WRECK OF THE HENRIETTA MARIE. NOW EXTENDED UNTIL THE END OF JULY. State Museum, Cultural Center.

ROUNDHOUSE RAIL DAY, JULY 1. Martinsburg.

INDEPENDENCE DAY, JULY 4. Archives Library will be closed.

2ND ANNUAL COL. GEORGE S. PATTON CIVIL WAR WEEKEND, AUG. 12-13. Craik-Patton House, Charleston.

LABOR DAY, SEPT. 4. Archives Library will be closed.

BERKELEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR, SEPT. 9-10.

“MILITARY CLAIMS AND PENSIONS,” OCT. 17. John Lavery, KYOWVA Genealogical Society, Huntington.

“1910 CABELL COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA CENSUS,” NOV. 21. Sheri Pettit, KYOWVA Genealogical Society, Huntington.

ARCHIVES AND HISTORY STAFF

Fredrick Armstrong: Director

Debra Basham: Archivist (photographs, special collections)

Greg Carroll: Historian (Civil War, Native American history)

Dick Fauss: Archivist (microfilm and moving images)

Elaine Gates: Part-time Library Assistant (microfilming and microfilm repairs)

Joe Geiger: Historian (Web site, publications)

Ed Hicks: Photographer (archival photography, darkroom)

Mary Johnson: Historian (John Brown)

Jaime Lynch: Library Assistant (Records of the 1700's and early 1800's, Pennsylvania)

Cathy Miller: Library Assistant (WV State documents, periodicals)

Sharon Newhouse: Secretary to the Director.

Harold Newman: Library Assistant (microfilming, Revolutionary War)

Pat Pleska: Part-time Library Assistant (Clipping File)

Susan Scouras: Librarian (cataloging, Kentucky, library collection, newsletter editor)

Bobby Taylor: Library Manager

Nancy Waggoner: Office Assistant

Contract employees working on special projects:

Constance Baston and Allen Fowler.

Summer volunteers: **Brady Blevins and Lindsay Kiser.** Summer interns: **Vickie Pleska, Lenora Kenwolf and Leah Stover**

****WE NEED VOLUNTEERS****

If you or your organization would like to donate service time to the Archives, we have several projects needing volunteers. Please call Archives and History for more information.