

# West Virginia Archives & History NEWS

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WEST VIRGINIA  
DIVISION OF  
CULTURE & HISTORY

## From the Editor:

*I realize this month's main topics are neither glamorous nor exciting, but the facts presented and operational methods discussed are vital to the continued preservation and use of collections of the West Virginia State Archives, as accessed through the Archives and History Library. Please read carefully and thoughtfully, and share your questions and comments with us. As we have stated many times before, the amount of genealogical and historical information presented through digitized primary documents on the Internet is only a drop in the bucket of existing primary resources housed in libraries and archives, and only a small percentage of these materials are being preserved on microfilm.*

## Not-So-Buried Treasure, Part V: Microfilm Collection

Since the subject of this series has been lesser-known resources in the West Virginia Archives and History collections, you may be surprised to see microfilm as our subject this month, because county records, census and newspapers on microfilm are among the most used items in the Library. That is precisely why we are going to tell you about the documents and books we have preserved ourselves on microfilm or purchased from other academic or commercial microfilm services that are not everyday materials. Some of these have been called to your attention previously in this newsletter and some have not. There are several reasons you may not know about these microfilmed titles and collections. First, most are not listed in the current online library catalog, a situation we intend to remedy this fall once we have our long-awaited new library catalog system operational. (Using the current online catalog [<http://ill.wvlc.lib.wv.us/vtls40/frame/>], you can quickly locate

all of the cataloged microfilm in the Archives and History Library by limiting the search to the Archives Library only, then selecting "Call Number" in the Search Type drop down box and entering Mi as the "Word or Phrase" to be searched.) Second, until a few years ago, the majority of this film was kept in Closed Stacks and was not available for discovery by browsing. Last, few of these materials are commonly used by the average genealogist or amateur historian and require some knowledgeable searching to find as a source. All of the following microfilm is housed in the Reading Room in publicly accessible file cabinets located between the microfilm reader-printers and the public computers.

We have a few collections of correspondence, journals, ledgers and papers relating to West Virginia genealogy and history in Special Collections and in the Manuscript Collection that have been microfilmed for preservation. Microfilming provides two different ways of

preserving documents. If the paper is deteriorating, microfilm will preserve the best possible images of the pages before they deteriorate further. The fact that the general public can then use the microfilm rather than the originals will protect the material from additional exposure to light, skin oils, and handling, both through use by patrons and photocopying by staff, thus extending the period of successful preservation. Examples are the **Smith-Riffe Collection** of genealogical records and correspondence, and **Harden and Harden Funeral Home** record books. Churches and other organizations have brought their records and publications to the West Virginia State Archives to be microfilmed for preservation. After microfilming, the originals are returned to the organization and copies of the microfilm are added to the Library's collection for use by the general public. [Editor's Note: If you would like to have the records of a church or other

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organization microfilmed for posterity, please contact us to make arrangements before bringing any materials to the Archives.]

Several years ago we moved the original copies of the **statewide gazetteers** from the Reading Room shelves to Closed Stacks because they were rapidly deteriorating, and microfilmed them for preservation and for public use:

- **Delaware, Maryland and West Virginia Gazetteer and Business Directory**, 1884.
- **West Virginia State Gazetteer and Business Directory**, 1877, 1882–83, 1891–1919 biennially, and 1923–24.

We also have the **West Virginia State Directory and Shippers Guide**, 1875, filmed by the West Virginia University Library, available on microfilm only. The original paper volumes microfilmed by us will be retained in the Archives and History Closed Stacks collection until they deteriorate completely beyond use. The originals are invaluable to those who would like photographic copies made of the many illustrations and advertisements (buildings, storefronts, industrial and mining equipment, transportation, household items, etc.) in these works, since quality reproductions for printing can not be made from the microfilm, although the images photocopy nicely. As time and budget allow, we would like to microfilm

other directories from the pulp paper era, such as the R. L. Polk city directories for Charleston, Bluefield, and Clarksburg, and the W. L. Callin's city directories for Wheeling.

We have obtained a few print copies of **dissertations and theses** on relevant West Virginia subjects or by West Virginia authors, but most academic papers have only been available to us for purchase on microfilm. Dissertations and theses are included in the online library catalog and may be identified through author, title and subject searches. A few sample titles:

- *Conflict and Accommodation: Some Aspects of the Political Behavior of America's Coal Miners and Steel Workers, 1890–1920*, by Michael Nash, 1975.
- *The Land Problem in the Ohio Valley, 1775–1784*, by Carl H. Laub, [no date].
- *The Guineas of West Virginia*, by John P. Burnell, Jr., 1952.
- *Mixed Bloods of the Upper Monongahela Valley, West Virginia*, by William Harlen Gilbert, Jr., 1957.
- *Appalachian Metamorphosis: Industrializing Society on the Central Appalachian Plateau, 1860–1913*, by Randall G. Lawrence, 1985.
- *The Flint Glass Industry in Wheeling, West Virginia, 1829–1865*, by Gary Everett Baker, 1986.
- *Some Dimensions of the Immigrant Experience: Italians in*

*Steubenville, Ohio and Weirton, West Virginia*, by Richard Patrick Lizza, 1984.

- *Portrait of Dr. Louise McNeill Pease, West Virginia Educator*, by Willa Louise Cather, 1988.

While the majority of these research papers were prepared for West Virginia colleges and universities, others were authored by West Virginians studying at out-of-state institutions. Some evolved into published books, but most have not. The bibliographies and footnotes accompanying these papers can be of value in themselves in directing a researcher to new avenues of information that he or she may not have discovered otherwise.

A select number of material categories are microfilmed both for preservation and for reduction of necessary storage space. Once microfilmed, the originals are discarded. Examples are primarily newspapers, but also include some state mine inspection reports and television news scripts. Half of the Archives' microfilming capacity as measured by the cost of film and developing and the allotment of staff time, is devoted to microfilming West Virginia newspapers. While larger city daily newspapers such as the *Charleston Gazette*, the *Wheeling News-Register* and the *Martinsburg Journal* are microfilmed by a commercial company and are available for purchase, the majority of our state's newspapers do not have significant commercial appeal, and must be microfilmed by our staff. Our staff is very experienced in microfilming techniques and is devoted to producing high quality images with no skipped or obstructed pages. When developed film is returned, a staff member checks the entire reel, frame by frame, to make sure no pages were skipped and all pages are fully legible. The originals

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## West Virginia Vital Research Records Database Still Growing

The West Virginia Vital Research Records database accessed through our Web site at [http://www.wvculture.org/vrr/va\\_select.aspx](http://www.wvculture.org/vrr/va_select.aspx) is still growing. More birth and marriage records for the ten most recent counties to be added to the project will be loaded into the database soon.

Keep checking back to see if the records for Braxton, Cabell, Grant, Greenbrier, Jefferson, Lewis, Logan, Marshall, Mingo and Wood that you need have become available. The original six counties in the database are Calhoun, Gilmer, Hardy, Harrison, Mineral and Pendleton.

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are retained until the proofreading process is completed. [Editor's Note: We are constantly on the lookout for caches of old West Virginia newspapers that have not been microfilmed. We and other libraries throughout the state have shared our collections with each

*This is the concluding article of our Not-So-Buried Treasure series highlighting some of the collections of the West Virginia Archives and History Library. If you missed previous articles, you may read current and all back issues of West Virginia Archives and History News on our Web site at <http://www.wvculture.org/history/ahnews/ahnews.html>.*

## **An Addendum: Preservation and Accessibility of Archival Collections of the West Virginia Archives and History Library**

The vast majority of material in the West Virginia State Archives is *not* on microfilm and is *not* digitized, and most probably *never* will be. As we have stated in *West Virginia Archives and History News* repeatedly, the process of microfilming, scanning, digitizing, transcribing and/or indexing print materials and making them available as reels of microfilm, computer and/or Web-accessible files is time-consuming, requiring many staff hours, making it far more expensive than our agency can afford, even if the equipment and software were given to us without use of agency funds. Contracting this type of work to outside sources is also expensive, and is not a secure option for most archival materials. Quality control of such projects is very problematic and again, requires much staff time to organize, analyze, supervise and proof. Also, most documents made available online were *digitized from microfilm*, not directly from the original paper documents. Prime examples are the United States Census available through Ancestry and Heritage Quest, and vital records projects such as our own West Virginia Vital Research Records. Above all, the

other in order to fill in gaps in our individual collections, but we are missing many runs of issues over the past century, particularly in the 1920's. If you know of any bound or loose newspapers anywhere in the state, please check with us to see if we are missing those issues.]

staff of West Virginia Archives and History agree with the great majority of archival experts that digitization alone is not an adequate and secure means of preservation—microfilm is still the standard and preferred medium of archival preservation. Would we like to microfilm *all* of our collections? Most certainly we would, but we will never have the budget to do so, and must continue to strictly prioritize use of our limited funds.

Unless you have worked with archival materials or have attended classes regarding the same, you probably don't realize that much of the collections in the West Virginia Archives and History Library and other similar archival collections would be extremely difficult, if not impossible to directly scan using current technology and equipment without risking destroying or damaging the materials, and/or purposely dismantling bound materials. Large parts of our collection are not even eligible for photocopying due to fragility of the paper, the size and weight of the item, or the potential for damage to bindings. This is the main reason why only staff members are allowed

to photocopy materials in the Reading Room—the staff member must judge whether an item can be safely copied, and must be knowledgeable of the care needed in handling. The bulk of our collections consists of two types of materials, loose papers and bound ledgers, each of which presents its own problems for reproduction.

In contrast to standard business documents, most archived loose papers are too fragile and irreplaceable to risk running them through document feeders, even with protective sleeves. Each document must be copied carefully on a flat bed scanner or photocopier, one side at a time, which is very time consuming. We know well that currently most of the business world uses document feeders on photocopiers and scanners as a time-saving method. The Archives Library had to spend considerable time and effort justifying the need to go outside the state purchasing contract requirements in order to obtain a photocopier for the Library that did not have a document feeder, and that had a removable lid to enable copying of large ledgers, maps, etc.

The large ledgers present the opposite problem of the loose papers in that the pages are usually tightly bound, making them difficult to photocopy well, and the tomes are too heavy and oversized even to attempt to scan pages on a standard 8½" x 14" flatbed scanner. In fact, large ledgers and record books often require two staff members to wrestle onto the photocopier, taking particular care not to push too hard to force the pages flat and risk cracking the spine or tearing the covering (cloth or leather that is often deteriorating from age). In order to obtain a full page, good quality image by scanning or photocopying, the pages would have

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to be cut from the bindings, or the bindings destroyed. In contrast, a skillful microfilm camera operator with proper lighting usually can capture a full page in a legible manner, except in the case of the largest, most tightly bound volumes.

In addition to the books housed in Closed Stacks, none of the Special, Archival, Photograph, Audio-Visual, or Manuscript Collections are publicly accessible for browsing and must be retrieved by staff upon request only. (All of our microfilm, however, is open to the public on the main level.) In order to be sure the researcher finds all available resources, use of the library catalog, finding aids and guides to collections is important. Follow the recommendation on our Web site and in our brochures to contact us in advance, since non-Reading Room materials have to be pulled by a staff member, which is sometimes difficult and time consuming due to storage limitations and access requirements. This is especially important on weekends, evenings and holidays when a limited number of staff members are on duty. (Don't forget if your plans include use of the West Virginia Library Commission library also located in The Cultural Center, that it is only open the standard business hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and is closed all holidays.)

At present, barring recurring elevator problems in the aging Cultural Center, we make every effort to pull requested non-Reading Room items as soon as the call slip is submitted at the reference desk. We have no plans to change the system at this time, but we must always be aware of other methods of operation in case they are needed. Many libraries of our type do not pull on demand, but on a scheduled basis. Call slips are turned in or requests sent electronically, and items are

retrieved on the hour or the half-hour only, for example. Limitations on hours of availability of items from closed stacks are also imposed by some institutions during periods when fewer staff members are on duty, such as nights, weekends and holidays. While we make every effort to be as user friendly as possible, we must maintain the most secure and preservation-minded environment we can provide for the collections themselves, balanced with both physical space and staff limitations. Ideally, we should have a separate room for use of all of our non-book collections, as well as our Rare Book and Rare Pamphlet Collections, with a staff member on full time duty and responsible for only that room when occupied. During the presence of those collections, the staff member would keep close watch during use

## **Upshur County Summer 2007 Exhibit**

The Summer 2007 Exhibit of the Upshur County Historical Society is entitled *From Dawn Until Dusk: Farming, Agriculture, and Rural Life in Upshur County*. The exhibit is located in the History Center Museum, 81 Main Street, Buckhannon, WV, and is open on Sunday afternoons from 1 to 4 p.m. from June 10 through September 30. The exhibit follows a central theme of early 20th century farm life, including 4-H Clubs, Farm Women's Clubs, Farmer Institutes, Country Life Conference Movement, Farm Bureau, Future Farmers of America, county fairs, dairies, stockyards, and other farm-related industries and activities. They hope to have their Web site [<http://www.upshurcountyhistoricalsociety.com>] operational soon. For more information, write Upshur County Historical Society, Box 2082, Buckhannon, WV 26201, or e-mail [upshurcountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:upshurcountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com).

and then immediately return the items to Closed Stack areas when patrons are finished. We make do with a reserved table near the Reference Desk and increased vigilance by the Reading Room staff as they fulfill their other responsibilities.

While the various collections of Archives and History are spread over four of the five levels on the north side of The Cultural Center, only the main floor Reading Room and Microfilm Rooms are open to the public. Figured conservatively based on linear feet of shelving space, *less than 4%* of the total collections of the West Virginia State Archives are housed in the public Reading Room of the Archives and History Library. If map cases, file cabinets, and items housed in offices and other work spaces were included, the Reading Room collection is probably less than 3% of the total collections. Even if we had more space that could be made publicly accessible, we would only use it for an expansion of the Reading Room, returning certain subject areas that have been in the Reading Room collection in the past, but had to be moved to closed stacks to make room for newly acquired books in categories used more often. For example, a donation of a large number of Civil War books meant that the full set of *War of the Rebellion* had to go upstairs to make room for the

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(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.

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 newly acquired books, with only the indexes left in the Reading Room for reference. The majority of our non-book collections and selected portions of the book collection will never be made publicly accessible for browsing because of our responsibility as a state archives for security and preservation. This is common and accepted practice in any archival setting, and indeed is the very reason that archives exist.

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

## Library Online Catalog in Transition

The West Virginia Archives and History Library and the West Virginia Library Commission Library are in the process of launching a new joint Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) that will replace the outdated West Virginia Union Catalog. The new catalog will operate on the Ex-Libris Voyager system and will be much more user friendly. As the transition to the new system is made, the current VTLS-based catalog will continue in operation except for the week of July 23–27, when it may be unavailable all or part of the time due to a data transfer. Cataloging of new acquisitions will be suspended from July 20 until possibly October 1 while the new OPAC is completed and staff receives training in the new system.

## Web Sites of Interest

- **Disney** has three free colorful and amusing **family tree charts** online that are great for introducing the youngest twigs on your branches to genealogy: <http://disney.go.com/disneyvideos/animatedfilms/tiggermovie/familytree.html>.

## 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.

**“FROM DAWN UNTIL DUSK: FARMING, AGRICULTURE, AND RURAL LIFE IN UPSHUR COUNTY,”** June 10–September 30: Upshur County Historical Society, The History Center Museum, Buckhannon.

**INDEPENDENCE DAY, July 4:** Archives Library will be *closed*.

**THE GLENWOOD ESTATE SYMPOSIUM,** July 28: Marshall University Graduate College, South Charleston. For more information and reservations (by July 16) for this free event, contact Sarah Funk, [funk2@marshall.edu](mailto:funk2@marshall.edu) or phone (304) 746-8975.

**26TH ANNUAL GATHERING, HACKERS CREEK PIONEER DESCENDANTS,** August 9–12: Horner. For more information, visit <http://www.hackerscreek.com/2007gathering.htm>.

**2007 PADEN CITY LABOR DAY FILM FESTIVAL,** August 31–September 3: Sponsored by Paden City Eagles Club with support from Paden City Public Library and endorsement of the West Virginia Labor History Association, Paden City.

**LABOR DAY, September 3:** Archives Library will be *closed*.

**“PORTE CRAYON’S MEXICO: DAVID HUNTER STROTHER’S DIARIES,”** September 27: Dr. John E. Stealey III, lecturer, Robert C. Byrd Center for Legislative Studies, Shepherd University, Shepherdstown.

**HISTORY DAY, February 21, 2008:** West Virginia State Capitol Complex, 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.

- **Classbrain.com** offers not only a free color printable standard **family tree chart** [[http://www.classbrain.com/artholiday/uploads/family\\_tree\\_ws.pdf](http://www.classbrain.com/artholiday/uploads/family_tree_ws.pdf)], but a **“family orchard” chart** [[http://www.classbrain.com/artmovies/uploads/family\\_orchardws.pdf](http://www.classbrain.com/artmovies/uploads/family_orchardws.pdf)] that has a regular family tree in the center, with a smaller family tree on each side for the lineage of a stepmother and a stepfather.
- **Wonderful West Virginia**, March 2007 feature story, ***They Came by the Thousands: West Virginia’s Immigrants***, by James Casto, with photographs courtesy of the West Virginia Archives: <http://www.wonderfulwv.com/sub.cfm?month=mar07&fea=1>.

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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.

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**Greg Carroll** ..... Historian (Civil War, Native American history)  
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**Denise Ferguson** ..... County Records Archivist  
**Allen Fowler** ..... Special projects  
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**Joe Geiger** ..... Assistant Director (Historian, Web page)  
**Ed Hicks** ..... Photo Archivist (archival photography, darkroom)  
**Mary Johnson** ..... Historian  
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**Harold Newman** ..... Library Assistant (microfilming, Revolutionary War)  
**Susan Scouras** ..... Librarian (cataloging, Kentucky, library collection, newsletter editor)  
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