From the Editor:

One never knows where a telephone call answered at the Archives and History Library reference desk will lead. I recently received a postcard announcing the publication of Warren Beatty: A Private Man, by Suzanne Finstad, with a brief thank you note from the author. Somewhere in this biography readers will find information provided from our library on Ira J. Partlow of McDowell County, who was Attorney General of West Virginia from 1944 to 1952, a judge, and the great-uncle of Warren Beatty (and therefore great-uncle of Shirley MacLaine, also). You will find a biography and photograph of Partlow in the 1949 West Virginia Blue Book.

Vital Research Records Project

The Vital Research Records Project is a collaborative venture between the West Virginia State Archives and the Genealogical Society of Utah (GSU) to place online via the West Virginia Archives and History Web site selected West Virginia county birth, death and marriage records, and statewide death records in a viewable, downloadable and searchable format. The project is ongoing, with more records being added when possible and the system undergoing refinement as needed. In Virginia/West Virginia, births and deaths were first reported to the counties in 1853, while marriages were recorded in the counties from the inception of each county. All three types of records are still reported to county clerks today. In 1917, the West Virginia Dept. of Health Vital Registration office began collecting the county reports of births and deaths and issuing official state certificates. The records made available online in the Vital Research Records Project come from both sources: county records as recorded on microfilm by the Genealogical Society of Utah largely in the 1960’s and 1970’s, and statewide records as selected for release by the West Virginia Dept. of Health Vital Registration office.

State death certificates for individuals from all 55 counties dating from 1917 through 1954 are currently available online through this project. Additional death certificates will be added in a batch once a year as the certificates pass the 50-year mark of issuance. For example, in 2006 the death certificates for 1955 will be added to the database. The addition of state birth certificates and of state delayed birth certificates to the database are not anticipated at any time in the future. (Some delayed births may show up in the regular county birth records.)

Six counties are included in the initial database for birth, death and marriage records: Calhoun, Gilmer, Hardy, Harrison, Mineral and

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Henry Louis Gates Jr. to Speak in Celebration of the Centennial of the West Virginia State Archives

As part of the celebration of the centennial of the West Virginia State Archives, the Division of Culture and History and the Department of Education and the Arts are very excited to be hosting a lecture on “The Importance of History” by one of today’s most prominent historians, West Virginia’s own Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in the Norman L. Fagan West Virginia State Theater in The Cultural Center, Charleston, on October 14, 2005, at 6:00 p.m. He also is expected to speak about The Bondswoman’s Narrative, by Hannah Crafts, a novel by an African American slave, discovered as a handwritten manuscript and edited for publication by Gates. Seating will be limited. We hope you will join us for the lecture, and for the reception following in the Great Hall. Professor Gates will be available to sign copies of his books during the reception.
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Pendleton. For these six counties marriage and death records are included up to the last record microfilmed for that county by GSU: Calhoun, Gilmer, and Mineral through 1969; Hardy, Harrison and Pendleton through 1970. For these six counties birth records are included up through 1930. Due to a change in the selection parameters since the initial records were chosen for inclusion, when subsequent counties are added only births recorded in those counties more than 100 years ago will be included, meaning currently only births for 1853 through 1905 will be made available, with additional births added some time after the records pass the 100-year mark.

The records are not fully transcribed and are searchable only by the information requested in the search boxes for each type of record. The county records are double-paged records, so if the record you want is not visible on the first page shown on the screen, scroll right or left to the adjacent page to find your record. We are aware that the images are over-sized and that a user must scroll up and down, left and right, to view the entire record, and we are trying to address the situation in hopes of making the images a more convenient size. Before notifying the Archives of any problem encountered in downloading and printing, please fully explore all of your options on your own computer first.

You may notice some dates earlier than 1853 for county births and deaths. These are either delayed records accepted by the clerks, or are transcription errors. We have been correcting transcription errors as we find them; however, we cannot correct errors in the original records, only errors made in the transcription and indexing process. To correct errors in the original information recorded by a county clerk or by the Dept. of Health, researchers must contact the relevant agency. To report transcription or indexing errors, send an e-mail identifying the problem to wvvrr@wvculture.org. Due to staffing time limitations, please do not telephone Archives and History with questions about Vital Research Records, and please do not make research requests to this e-mail address. For instance, if a researcher does not find a record as expected, and would like the staff of the Archives to conduct further research to locate that record, or a substitute source such as a census record or an obituary, a written research request letter is required. Research requests must be sent in writing by regular mail, with the proper fee enclosed, to the West Virginia Archives and History Library (address and details posted at http://www.wvculture.org/history/services.html). For certified copies of records, most often needed for legal purposes, write to the issuing agency, either the county clerk or the West Virginia Dept. of Health Vital Registration office. The West Virginia State Archives can not provide certified copies of any of these records.

To date there is no timetable or definitive schedule for adding new counties. Please be patient with us, check the site periodically for new additions, and watch for announcements in West Virginia Archives and History News. Archives and History does not have the capability of maintaining a mailing list or of e-mailing individuals with updates to the records.

While there are limitations and restrictions pertaining to both the contents and the use of the Vital Research Records Project database, we are offering these records online as a public service to family history researchers. We think the ability of researchers to view digitized photographic images of the actual records rather than typed transcriptions only is very important and contributes to increased accuracy in family records research.

New Titles

Above the Smoke: A Family Album of Pocahontas County Fire Towers: LeAnna Alderman, 2005.
In Their Footsteps: Rody Johnson, 2005.

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2005 Betsy K. McCreight Lecture in the Humanities to Feature Joseph J. Ellis

One of the leading scholars of the founding fathers of the United States, Joseph J. Ellis, will deliver the annual Betsy K. McCreight Lecture, sponsored by the West Virginia Humanities Council, on October 27 at 8:00 p.m. in the Norman L. Fagan West Virginia State Theater in The Cultural Center, Charleston. His lecture, entitled “Our Founding Brothers: The Political Values of the Revolutionary Generation,” will undoubtedly draw upon the resources of three of his books: American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson (1997 National Book Award winner); Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation (2001 Pulitzer prize winner); and his newest best-seller, His Excellency: George Washington. A public reception and book signing will follow the lecture. All activities are free and open to the public.

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Elizabeth City County, Virginia Wills, 1800-1859: Joan Charles, 2002.

Carpet Installation in The Cultural Center

The carpeting in the West Virginia Division of Culture and History and the West Virginia Library Commission libraries and offices housed in The Cultural Center in Charleston soon will be replaced over a several month period, September 2005 through January 2006. We anticipate closing the Archives and History Library sometime in January for an as yet undetermined number of days. While the staff will have to vacate their usual offices at some point, most will be working elsewhere in the building during the installation. Throughout the process we will be available by telephone and e-mail. Please check our Web site at http://www.wvculture.org/history or call (304) 558-0230 before visiting to verify which facilities and offices will be open on a given date. We appreciate your patience during the necessary disruption.

Don't Forget History Day, February 16, 2006
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.

**LABOR DAY, September 5:** Archives Library will be closed.

**CIVIL WAR LECTURE “DR. JONATHAN LETTERMAN: THE FATHER OF AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD MEDICINE,” September 28:**

**ARCHIVES AND HISTORY COMMISSION MEETING, October 7:**
Organ Cave Community Center, Ronceverte.

**FAMILY HISTORY FAIR, October 8:** The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, Sissonville.

**COLUMBUS DAY, October 10:** Archives Library will be open.*


**MUSEUM IN THE PARK CLOSED TEMPORARILY, October 10-28:** New exhibit installation, Logan.


**MUSEUM IN THE PARK REOPENS, October 29:** New exhibit opens, Logan.

**MINING YOUR HISTORY FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING AND WORKSHOP, November 5:** The Cultural Center, Charleston.

**VETERANS DAY, November 11:** Archives Library will be open.*

**CIVIL WAR LECTURE “THE CIVIL WAR IN GREENBRIER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA,” November 15:** Tim McKinney, speaker, sponsored by the Kanawha Valley Civil War Roundtable, South Charleston Public Library, South 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.
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.

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This newsletter is a publication of: The West Virginia Division of Culture and History
Troy O. Body, Commissioner