



# West Virginia Archives & History News



VOLUME III, NO. 8

OCTOBER 2002

## Primary and Secondary Resources

### From the Editor:

The two major articles in this month's newsletter, *Primary and Secondary Resources* and *Contrasting Search Methods*, are intended to assist you in improving your research skills in order to raise the accuracy level of your data and to increase the reliability of conclusions based on that data. As every researcher quickly learns, one small error in interpretation of a record, or a single unwise decision to accept an undocumented statement as fact can lead to hours of wasted time and effort, not to mention potential embarrassment. Because written history and genealogy are intended to be shared with other researchers or with the world in general, the researcher has an obligation to be as accurate as possible in both the information gathered and in the analysis of that information.

### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY RESOURCES

Both historical and genealogical research require using a combination of primary and secondary resources. Knowing the difference between the two types of resources and recognizing how to interpret information from each source accordingly is vital to the accuracy and quality of the researcher's work and the conclusions drawn from it. The Library of Congress Learning Page, part of the American Memory Web site, provides

simplified definitions: "Primary sources are actual records that have survived from the past, such as letters, photographs, articles of clothing. Secondary sources are accounts of the past created by people writing about events sometime after they happened." (<http://lcweb2loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/index.html>)

The Ohio Historical Society identifies a primary resource as a source "created by people who actually saw or participated in an event and recorded that event or their reactions to it immediately after the event," while calling a secondary source one "created by someone either not present when the event took place or removed by time from the event." (<http://www.ohiohistory.org/resource/teachers/primary.html#definitions>)

The University of California at Berkeley Teaching Library states that primary resources "enable the researcher to get as close as possible to what actually happened during an historical event or time period. A primary source reflects the individual viewpoint of a participant or observer." In contrast, a secondary resource is described as "a work that interprets or analyzes an historical event or phenomenon. It is generally at least one step removed from the event." (<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/PrimarySources.html>) The UC Berkeley Library lists various types of materials as examples of

primary resources. The following is a summarized version of that list:

- **Diaries, journals, speeches, interviews, letters, memos, manuscripts and other papers** in which individuals describe events in which they were participants or observers.
- **Memoirs and autobiographies.**
- **Records of or information collected by government agencies.**
- **Records of organizations.**
- **Published materials** (books, magazine and journal articles, newspaper articles) written at the time about a particular event. While these are sometimes accounts by participants, in most cases they are written by journalists or other observers. The important thing is to distinguish between material written at the time of an event as a kind of report, and material written much later, as historical analysis.
- **Photographs, audio recordings and moving pictures or video recordings.**
- **Materials that document the attitudes and popular thought of a historical time period.** Again, the point is to use these sources, written or produced at the time, as evidence of how people were thinking.
- **Research data.** Scholarly activity of the time.
- **Artifacts of all kinds:** physical objects, buildings, furniture, tools, appliances and household items, clothing, toys.
- **Reprinted primary sources.** Transcriptions of original records, microfilm copies, videos that include reproduced archival film footage, etc.

The UCLA Institute on Primary Resources summarizes: “Primary resources provide firsthand evidence of historical events. They are generally unpublished materials such as manuscripts, photographs, maps, artifacts, audio and video recordings, oral histories, postcards, and posters. In some instances, published materials can also be viewed as primary materials for the period in

which they were written. In contrast, secondary materials, such as textbooks, synthesize and interpret primary materials.”

A few categories, such as census and county record transcriptions and newspapers, blur the line between primary and secondary resources. When using a transcription of a primary record, such as a census listing, the user must remember that the transcriber has provided his/her own interpretation of the handwriting on the original. The Library staff routinely advises researchers to view the microfilm copy of the original in order to verify the transcribed version. Other records that must be considered cautiously are death records and obituaries, particularly the family history information included. This information is only as reliable as the knowledge of the informant for the record. The same caution applies to Census records, where the researcher must take into account the accuracy of both the census taker who asked the questions and the household member (or neighbor) who answered them. Likewise, newspaper articles must be carefully examined. A first-person account of an event or a published letter are primary sources. Any type of analysis of an event, or a report compiled by someone who did not witness the event, for example, would be regarded as secondary resources.

Unless the item in question is a scanned document or photograph, consider *anything* you find on the Internet to be a secondary resource. Regard the family trees posted by genealogists on Web sites in the same manner one would approach a family history book taken from a library shelf. The author should list the resources used in compiling the information, or should be able to provide documentation upon request. Use the names, dates and locations provided to look up the original record to verify the accuracy of the data for oneself.

The West Virginia Archives and History Library is a treasure trove of primary sources for West Virginia history and genealogy. Most of our Special Collections section, manuscripts, business

and organization records, letters, military muster rolls, governors' papers, the Photograph collection, the moving images and audio collection, state documents, the land grant and tax books, and our microfilmed copies of U.S. Census and county records are all primary resources. In addition to the microfilmed records, we provide reprinted primary sources through such works as *War of the Rebellion*, *The Papers of John Marshall*, numerous facsimiles of maps and documents, etc. In addition, we strive to provide a wide variety of secondary resources, such as state and county histories, family histories, biographies, and both scholarly and popular genealogy and history periodicals. We urge all historical researchers and genealogists to familiarize themselves with the definition of primary resources, and to use primary resources to insure the highest level of accuracy possible in their work.

## CONTRASTING SEARCH METHODS

Take a look at this advice to genealogists for searching the Internet:

QUICK TIP FROM READERS.  
Less Can Be Better

Thanks to: Julia M. Case  
juliecase@prodigy.net  
Editor of Missing Links e-zine:  
<http://www.petuniapress.com/>

TOO MUCH AND/OR TOO RECENT INFORMATION can create artificial barriers in online research. Try searching on your earliest known ancestor in a particular family because there are more people out there who will be able to connect to him or her. Include only the minimum search terms in case someone has your Ichabod Crane recorded as I. Crane in their files or has no town, parish, or county location listed. If you specify too much in your searches, any portion of it might not "match" in a given search thereby causing you to hit the dreaded brick wall. *Reprinted from Rootsweb Review, Volume 5, No. 42, October 16, 2002.*

Those experienced in researching the "old-fashioned" way will recognize that this advice is directly opposite to the most effective methods for working with county and census records. Starting with your earliest known ancestor is great for making connections with living, breathing people who may be relatives capable of adding to your family tree, or who may *not* be your relatives, but are able to help you find your own family; however, this practice will not help you find your ancestors' actual records in a reliable, documented manner and is not conducive to accurately identifying any missing branches between that early ancestor and the present-day family.

All too often these days, first time visitors to the Archives and History Library come armed with printouts of likely looking ancestors found through Internet research, with the intention of jumping into the middle of the story and making connections by working from the past to the present. Accustomed and experienced with Internet research, but unfamiliar with historical research, they immediately become frustrated when trying to trace where people went from a certain location at a given point in time to an unknown location, instead of tracking them back from a time and place where they were known to be. We always recommend beginning with yourself, then working your way back in time, following a trail of documents that will verify *or disprove* the information you started with. Either way, clues will be found that will lead to additional sources to be checked.

Younger researchers in particular do not always understand that many commonly accepted or tolerated actions in today's society were not accepted in the past. Children born out of wedlock were not always told the truth about their parentage or the circumstances surrounding their conception. Dates given by family members for marriages and births sometimes were changed to conceal conception before marriage, etc. Women were not always married to the fathers of their children, and particularly if those fathers disappeared upon hearing the news, the women

called themselves “widows.” Children abandoned by a parent were often told that the parent had died, even though the parent may have been living only 100 miles away. Limited travel and communication between communities reduced the likeliness of accidental discoveries of the truth.

These same circumstances gave rise to other situations that complicate research as well. Family members that left the county sometimes lost touch with those remaining on the homeplace, leaving few footprints to follow unless letters or diaries have survived the intervening years. Although the occurrence is rare, a few male ancestors traced in our Library have been discovered to have had two (or three!) families at the same time, living in adjacent counties. In all these examples, various family members usually knew about (but didn’t discuss) the fabrications, or told all kinds of stories to cover the family secrets.

Another drawback for Internet users trying to become accustomed to historical research methods is that there are no search engines that lead to neatly typed pages of information. Instead, patrons must learn to make the best use of limited indexes, a few transcription books, lots of murky microfilm and puzzling handwriting. Even those who have discovered that just because something is posted on the Internet does not mean it is true often have trouble accepting that lies, mistakes and errors of omission occur all too often in public records, as well as in history books, obituaries and newspaper stories. We won’t even get into the whole nightmare of transcription errors and indexing mistakes!

However, there is one place in any library where broader subject searches are advisable—the library catalog. Library subject headings are not intended to pinpoint specific information, but to guide the user toward broad topics, then narrow down the search with subheadings. For instance, a few specific heads of families may be listed by full name and dates in a catalog, but the vast majority of family histories will be cataloged by the surname and the word “family” only, such as

“Ruffner family.” If you are looking specifically for the Ruffner family that lives/lived in Kanawha County, West Virginia, try searching “Kanawha County (W. Va.)—Genealogy.” If you are interested in the broader view of surnames common in West Virginia, or of the origins and circumstances of early settlers or later immigrants, look under “West Virginia—Genealogy.”

As always, when you are not getting anywhere with your family history explorations in general or when you encounter a “brick wall” in your research, ask for help! There are several Web sites and e-zines, such as *RootsWeb* and its associated periodicals *Missing Links* and *RootsWeb Review*, that provide strategies and suggestions for more effectively searching the Internet. For both traditional and Internet research, how-to genealogy books are abundant, many of them tailored toward specific ethnic groups or sets of records. Most are available through libraries, either as reference books or for loan.

Ask an expert—our staff is always available to help you regroup and reorganize your West Virginia research. Consider hiring an experienced genealogist to help you work through a tricky problem. The West Virginia Archives and History Library maintains a list of researchers who have notified us that they are available for hire for West Virginia research. Many local historical/genealogy societies provide research services for a fee, as well. Once you untie the knot, or resolve yourself to the lack of an immediate solution with the currently available information, you can return to doing research on your own.

Research of any kind is an on-going learning process. Even those of us who work with historical and genealogical research on a daily basis as professionals constantly encounter problems and surprises that we have to deal with. Sometimes the best you can say is that you have drawn the most reasonable conclusion possible based on the most reliable information currently available, while leaving yourself open to other

possibilities and always looking for new clues and new sources. There still will be those days when all of your hard work leads to nothing but ambiguities and dead ends, and you feel like proclaiming the message recently seen on a t-shirt: "I have gone to find myself. If I get back before I return, keep me here."

### ARCHIVES STAFF AVAILABLE FOR PHOTO SHOOTS IN WEST VIRGINIA COUNTIES

As part of their mission to visually document West Virginia's past, Archives staff are available to come to your West Virginia location for an organized photograph copying session. Images sought for the collection include anything and everything having to do with West Virginia and West Virginians past and present. Identified images are most preferred, or ones that tell a story in some way. Currently, photographs of businesses are at the top of the want list. Views of coal camps and small town Main Streets, plus scenes of West Virginians engaged in work, recreation and education are highly desirable. Also, the collection's coverage of church buildings and events is in need of expansion.

Either in conjunction with photo shoots or for separate meetings, Archives staff members are available as speakers on the preservation and collection of photographs. If you have technical questions about photographs, call Ed Hicks, Archives Photographer. Direct questions concerning the contents of the Archives Photograph Collection to Ed Hicks, or to Debra Basham, Archivist. To set up a photo session or to arrange for a speaker, call Fredrick H. Armstrong, Director of Archives and History. They may be reached at (304) 558-0230, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. We also suggest reading the June 2001 issue of *Archives and History News* on our Web site: <http://www.wvculture.org/history>.

### NEW TITLES

**American Colonies:** Alan Taylor, 2002.

**Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000:** Adam Fairclough, 2002.

**Mountain Memories: A Collection of Poems to Soothe the Soul:** Jay Harman, 2000.

**Oliver's Diary: A record of the weather, notable events and things worth remembering as recorded by Oliver Scott from 1895 to 1901:** Oliver Scott. Margradel Richmond, publisher and editor, 2001.

**Currier Family Records of U.S.A. and Canada: Volumes 5, 6 and 7:** Philip Joseph Currier, 2002.

**Retail Trading Areas in West Virginia, 1963:** West Virginia Chamber of Commerce, [1965?].

**The Brier Patch: 1945 yearbook:** Greenbrier Military School, 1945.

**1870 Barbour Co., W. Va. Census:** Marian Challenger, 1985.

**Testerman Testament: U.S. Census 1787-1920:** Mary Ann Testerman Meyer, 1997.

**History of the First Settlers of Cow Run:** W. M. King, 1953.

**Pauley v. Kelly:** Circuit Court of Kanawha County, West Virginia, 1982. Note: "Judge Recht's decision on financing education in West Virginia."

**A Story of Progress in West Virginia:** The Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company of West Virginia, [n.d.]. Note: "Here is what we have accomplished since V-J Day."

**My Soul is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered:** Howell Raines, 1983.

**The Killer Angels:** Michael Shaara, 1996.

**The Jacksonian: 1947 yearbook:** Stonewall Jackson High School, Charleston, W. Va., 1947.

**Obituaries: Glenville Democrat, 1996-2000:** David M. Gillespie, 2001.

**Outside-Inside Appalachia:** Wandah Exline Walters, 1986.

**Wirt County WV 1930 Census:** Wes Cochran, 2002.

**Wood County WV 1930 Census: Harris, Steele & Slate Districts:** Wes Cochran, 2002.

**Wood County WV 1930 Census: Lubeck & Tygart Districts:** Wes Cochran, 2002.

**Roane County WV 1930 Census: Curtis, Geary, Harper, & Reedy Districts:** Wes Cochran, 2002.  
**Braxton County WV Deaths 1956-1969:** Wes Cochran, 2002.

**Rector Records:** Larry King, 1986.

**Central Station, Doddridge County, West Virginia:** James L. Miracle, 2002.

**Floral Hills Cemetery, Pocatalico:** Sissonville Historical Society, 1999.

**The BCG Certification Roster 2002:** Board for Certification of Genealogists, 2002.

**Ahnentafels of the Members of the Bucks County Genealogical Society:** The society, 1993.

**Light That Splits the Dark: The Solitude Papers II:** Paul Elmo Keenan, editor. Note: "From five high schools in West Virginia."

**1880 Logan County, West Virginia Families Old and New:** David Turner and Janet Hager, 1981. Note: Annotated census.

**1860 Census of Logan County, Virginia:** David A. Turner, 1981. Note: Annotated.

**A Selected Bibliography of Black Heritage Materials in the James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia:** [The library?], [1980?].

**Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, 2003 Supplement, Part 2:** Gale Research Co., 2002.

**Architects of Our Fortunes: The Journal of Eliza A. W. Otis, 1860-1863 with Letters and Civil War Journal of Harrison Gray Otis:** Ann Gorman Condon, 2001.

**A Guide to Adventure: An Autobiography:** Ellis R. Dungan with Barbara Smik, 2001.

**Official Journal and Year Book of the West Virginia Annual Conference: The United Methodist Church:** The church, 2002.

**A Century of Black Surgeons: The U.S.A. Experience:** Claude H. Organ, Jr. and Margaret M. Kosiba, 1987. Note: Volume 2 of 2 only.

**The Sarah Morgan McKown Diaries Index: 1860-1899:** indexed by Scott Ryneal Grove, [n.d.]

*We need volunteers for several projects!!*

**LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA**

## ANNOUNCES REDUCTION OF STAFF AND LIBRARY HOURS

Effective October 21, 2002, the reading rooms of the Library of Virginia will be closed to the public on Mondays. Visitors will be able to view the Library's exhibits on the first floor, purchase food in the café, and purchase items in the Library Shop on Mondays. The reading rooms will now be open Tuesday through Saturday (except holiday weekends) from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., with limited staff on Saturdays, as posted on the Library's Web site, [www.lva.lib.va.us](http://www.lva.lib.va.us). These changes were necessitated by a 22% cut in the Library's operating budget this fiscal year, which resulted in the loss of 40 positions.

We at the West Virginia Archives and History Library are saddened to learn of this drastic reduction in services by a fellow agency, particularly one that is relied upon by many of the same researchers who use our facilities. We are grateful that even as other, much more well-endowed state archives and libraries have had to endure either permanent or temporary cuts in the past year, we have been able to increase our reading room hours and to add staff member hours in order to better serve our patrons. With your support, we hope to be able to continue this level of service to meet the needs of those unable to visit the library during the regular workday.

## CHARLES LOUNSBURY'S WILL LIVES ON!

Williston Fish is probably looking down upon us all and shaking his head in wonder over the continuing popularity of his essay, "The Last Will and Testament of Charles Lounsbury." (Spellings vary. Our transcribed copy from Mineral County WPA records, which has it entered as an actual will, has this spelling.) Regular readers will recall that in the July 2000 issue of *Archives and History News* we included this piece, an eloquent and touching testament purported to have been written

by an indigent former lawyer confined in an insane asylum. We informed our readers of the essay's history in a follow-up article in the June 2002 issue of *Archives and History News*. The work was actually first printed as an article in *Harper's Weekly* in 1898, and in many subsequent book and pamphlet editions, both authorized and unauthorized.

The two newsletter articles were found in an Internet search by Mike Widener, Head of Special Collections, Joseph D. Jamail Fellow in Law Librarianship, Tarlton Law Library, School of Law, The University of Texas at Austin. The Law Library has a donor who is supporting the library in collecting a copy of every edition of every variation of the infamous will! As of September 2002 Mike has identified 57 different publications, with the title appearing in 20 variations. The Tarlton Law Library has purchased 24 of these editions. Mike is actively seeking the rest for purchase. To view a list of their holdings of *The Will* (Mike has assigned this as a uniform title for all of the variations), visit their online library catalog at <http://tallons.library.utexas> and search for Williston Fish as author, or "Will" as title. To learn more about the Tarlton Law Library, visit <http://www.law.utexas.edu/rare/>.

If you want to surf the Web for references to *The Will* on your own, use Google as your search engine and take advantage of the advanced search option, and the "without the words" feature, typing in "hatchery." If you search for "Williston Fish," you will get thousands of references to the Williston Fish Hatchery! If you search for "Charles Lounsbury," use the "with at least one of the words" feature to type in all of the spelling variations of Lounsbury. You will not find everything by searching under Williston Fish because many people do not know he is the author. The number of Internet references to this work are astounding, as is the impact of *The Will* on readers more than a century after its composition.

## A REFRESHER COURSE IN

## ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTION

The skill of asking a well-thought out question is one that comes naturally to few people. Most of us must practice and learn from our mistakes in order to develop the ability to ask carefully worded questions that result in the information we want. Here are some tips gleaned from "Asking the Right Question," *Archives and History News*, December 2000, to think about when writing a research request letter, or when visiting a library for hands-on research:

- **Find out what records are available from the source you are addressing.** Make sure you are asking for information in an area they cover, and that you are supplying the basic data or clues needed for them to find the correct record for you.
- **Remember the "Five W's": Who, What, When, Where and Why.** Supplying the basic data for each of these categories will also improve your inquiries and produce better replies. If the specific item you have requested is not available, knowing *why* you want the information may help the researcher or library staff answer your question by using a different source.
- For tips on defining what you want to know and on framing a specific question to draw the most accurate response, refer to "RootsWeb's Guide to Tracing Family Trees," Lesson 7, "**What is the Question.**" (<http://www.rootsweb.com/~rwguide/lesson7>.)
- **Important:** *if you can't formulate a good question, you need to do more research on the generation that led you to this person.*
- If you are writing to the **West Virginia Archives and History Library**, but aren't sure what to say, call us. We will be happy to discuss how to word your letter, although we can not provide research replies over the telephone.

## 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.*

**SHAPING THE CAPITOL COMPLEX: CASS GILBERT, INC.™:** Collection of photographs and documents on display in the Archives and History Library and on the Archives and History Web site.  
**ELECTION DAY, NOVEMBER 5:** The Library will be open.\*

**VETERANS DAY, NOVEMBER 11:** The Library will be open.\*

**MINING YOUR HISTORY FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING, NOVEMBER 16:** Charleston.

**THANKSGIVING DAY, NOVEMBER 28:** The Library will be *closed*. Friday, November 29, and Saturday, November 30, the Library will be open.\*

**HISTORY DAY 2003, FEBRUARY 27:** The Capitol and The Cultural Center, Charleston.

**U.S. SENATOR RUSH HOLT HISTORY CONFERENCE: "ON THE MOVE: MIGRATIONS AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY," MARCH 14-16, 2003:** West Virginia University, Morgantown.

*\*Only the Archives Library will be staffed--all other Archives offices will be closed.* The State Museum will be open any time the Archives Library is open. The West Virginia Library Commission Library in The Cultural Center is closed weekends and all holidays.

## ARCHIVES AND HISTORY STAFF

**Fredrick Armstrong:** Director  
**Debra Basham:** Archivist (photographs, special collections)  
**Constance Baston:** Researcher (Veterans Memorial Archive)  
**Greg Carroll:** Historian (Civil War, Native American history)

**Dick Fauss:** Archivist (microfilm and moving images collection)

**Elaine Gates:** Library Assistant (microfilming and microfilm repairs)

**Joe Geiger:** Historian (Web page)

**Ed Hicks:** Photographer (archival photography, darkroom)

**Mary Johnson:** Historian (*West Virginia History*)

**Terry Lowry:** Library Assistant (Civil War)

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

**Sharon Newhouse:** Secretary

**Harold Newman:** Library Assistant (microfilming, Revolutionary War)

**Pat Pleska:** Manager of the Veterans Memorial Archive

**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:** Office Assistant

Working on special projects: **Allen Fowler.**

Volunteers: **Carolyn Conner, Bill Kelley, Angela Tolbert, and Bob and Lucile Foster.**

-----  
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  
Nancy P. Herholdt, Commissioner

**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.