



West Virginia Archives & History News



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West Virginia Civil War Union Medals

From the Editor:

If you routinely visit us on Saturdays and holidays, please mark your calendar to note that the **Archives and History Library** will be closed **Christmas Eve, December 24; Christmas Day, December 25; New Year's Eve at 1:00 p.m.; and New Year's Day, January 1. The Library will also be closed Saturday, January 18, and Monday, Martin Luther King Day, January 20, 2003 for maintenance.** Electricians are scheduled to work on non-functioning and poorly functioning lights in the ceiling and elsewhere. We apologize for the inconvenience to those of you who are unable to utilize the Library during the regular work week. On the other hand, we hope we will be able to continue our evening, weekend and holiday hours in the face of the West Virginia's current financial difficulties. As with all of state government, we do not know what the future holds for our agency; however, we pledge to continue to provide the public with the highest quality service within our means.

Unclaimed West Virginia Union Civil War Medals

The young state of West Virginia, which separated from the Confederate state of Virginia to become a Union state during the Civil War, authorized the minting of 26,099 medals in 1866 to be presented

to veterans of West Virginia's Union regiments. (No medals were issued for Confederate soldiers.) The majority of the medals were distributed as soon as they were received by the state in 1867 to the veterans or their families; however, many medals went unclaimed when the soldier or his family could not be located. Although they had served in West Virginia military units, some soldiers were from other states, while a sizeable number of West Virginians moved away, often to western states and territories, following the end of the bitter and bloody conflict. Others may have belonged to companies whose officers were less diligent in trying to find their men in order to present the honors.

Originally held by the Adjutant General's Office, the medals, in their original cardboard boxes with the soldiers' names written on the lid, were eventually transferred to the State Archives. Over the years, repeated attempts have been made by state historians and archivists to publicize the existence of the medals still held in the state's safekeeping. Around 4000 West Virginia Union Civil War medals remain unclaimed 135 years later. A medal can still be claimed today by a proven descendant of the Civil War veteran for whom the award was intended. Please note that there are no generic medals—each medal is inscribed with the name and service unit of the soldier for whom it was intended.

Fredrick H. Armstrong, current state historian, described the medals in a *West Virginia History* article, Volume 45 (1984), pages 219-222, excerpt as follows:

These medals of honor for West Virginia Union soldiers were "tokens of respect" designed on the Ohio veteran and Crimean War medal patterns. The finely bronzed medals of copper were struck in three categories at a cost not to exceed one dollar each.

The greatest number of medals struck were Class I—"Honorably Discharged"—which have the figure of Liberty, scantily draped, to the right, with both arms extended. In the right-hand is a laurel wreath which she is about to place upon the head of a soldier, who is stepping forward to be crowned; and in the left-hand she is holding a scroll which the soldier is receiving. Behind Liberty is the American eagle and behind the soldier is a box of growing cereals. In addition to the legend, motto and figure from the state's seal are the dates 1861 and 1865 and the name of J. Sigel, one of the artists responsible for the medal's design (this being the same for all three medals).

The Class II—"Killed in Battle"—medals show a battle scene with a mounted officer with sword drawn leading a charge of United States soldiers with fixed bayonets and flag flying. Also on the field is a dismounted cannon, and dead bodies and fleeing troops.

Class III—"For Liberty"—medals issued for those officers and soldiers who had died of disease and wounds received in battle, have a catafalque on which are the words "Died in the Defense of his Country." To the right of this is the properly draped figure of Liberty holding a drum and to the left a soldier with his right arm in a sling.

The reverse of all three medals has a wreath of laurel inscribed within, with the words "Presented by the State of West Virginia," and the name "A Demarest, N.Y." All three medals are suspended from a bronzed pin, a scroll, on which the words of

the classification of the medal are inscribed and to which is attached the letters WV, interlaced, and a red, white and blue ribbon one-eighth inches wide by four inches long. In sunken letters in the milling edge of each medal is the soldier's name, rank, company and regiment."

The names and service information imprinted in the edge of the medals is the basis for the periodically updated list of unclaimed medals available for reference in a printed format in a notebook in the Archives and History Library, and on the Internet as posted on the Archives and History Web site. (Medals lists have been published in the past in *West Virginia History* and other publications, but a number of the medals so listed have been claimed since then.) If you think a member of your family may have qualified for one of these medals, based upon his service in the Union Army out of West Virginia, check the list to see if his name appears. If you find a name that occurs in your family in that time period, and you would like to submit a claim for the medal, you will need to establish a documented line of descent, beginning with *yourself* and leading back to the veteran in question. Copies of documents such as birth, death, marriage, will, deed, census and other public records must be submitted as proof of relationships. Bible records, diaries, marriage announcements or obituaries may also be used when public records are unavailable. A family tree chart or a family history book is not sufficient in itself. You must present the supporting documents as well. Likewise, although copies of your ancestor's service and pension records will be helpful in proving your claim, they are not enough by themselves—you must trace *your* relationship to the original soldier.

Medals of soldiers who died without offspring or who have no surviving descendants may be claimed by other relatives, such as descendants of the soldier's siblings. Again, your relationship must be established through documentation. A six-month waiting period is observed once a medal claim application has been submitted in order to allow for verification of possible closer relationship of the claim, and to give other descendants the

opportunity to place claims as well. At the end of the waiting period the medal will be awarded to the closest descendant. If two applicants for the medal have equal claims, the person whose application was received first will obtain the medal.

To read Mr. Armstrong's complete *West Virginia History* article, to learn how to submit a claim, to print a copy of the claim application, or to view the list of names for unclaimed medals, go to the Archives and History Web site at <http://www.wvculture.org/history>.

Linda Fluharty, who maintains several excellent Web sites regarding West Virginia history and genealogy, offers *The Civil War Medals of West Virginia*, a listing of medals and their current owners, as well as information about the soldiers to whom the medals were originally issued, found at rootsweb.com/~wvmarsha/cwmedals.htm. Entries usually cite how the medal was obtained, whether passed down in the family, purchased or claimed from the West Virginia State Archives. The site also includes the text of *The History of the West Virginia Civil War Medals*, by the Reverend Horace Edwin Hayden, 1881.

West Virginia Civil War medals also turn up for sale through antique and collectible dealers, various on-line auction houses, and military collectible Web sites. The unclaimed medals held by the West Virginia State Archives are not for sale.

NEW TITLES

One Hundred Years Strong: The First National Bank of Bluefield: 1891-1991: Lena French, no date.

Ritchie County WV 1930 Census: Clay & Grant Districts: Wes Cochran, 2002.

Ritchie County WV 1930 Census: Murphy and Union Districts: Wes Cochran, 2002.

The Lincoln No One Knows: Webb Garrison, 1993.

Anne Bailey: Frontier Scout: Mary R. Furbee, 2001. [juvenile literature]

A Commitment to Valor: A Character Portrait of Robert E. Lee: Rod Gragg, 2001.

Wild Rose: Nancy Ward and the Cherokee Nation: Mary R. Furbee, 2002. [juvenile literature]

Ward W. Va. 24th Annual Reunion: Patsy Ruth (Hudson) Tucker, 2002.

Front Porch Stories: James Wilson Douglas, 2002.

In the Footsteps of Stonewall Jackson: Clint Johnson, 2002.

The Civil War Book of Lists: Donald Cartmell, 2001.

Oradell at Sea: a Novel: Meredith Sue Willis, 2002.

School Board Minutes, Enumeration Lists, and Account Records: Barbour County, West Virginia, Philippi Independent District, July 1870-December 1899, Philippi District, September 1871-November 1899: Sharon Wilmoth Harsh, 2002.

Discussion and Activity Guide: To Accompany School Board Minutes, Enumeration Lists and Account Records: Barbour County, West Virginia: Philippi Independent District 1870-1899, Philippi District 1871-1899: Sharon Wilmoth Harsh, 2002.

School Board Minutes, Enumeration Lists and Account Records: Barbour County, West Virginia, Township of Barker, 1870-1890, Independent District of Belington, 1893-1899: Sharon Wilmoth Harsh, 2000.

2001 Annual Report: West Virginia Catholic Foundation, [2002].

A Century of Home Remedies: For Entertainment and Historical Value: Mingo County EOC Headstart, no date.

The Blackwater Chronicle: Philip Pendleton Kennedy, illustrated by David Hunter Strother; WVU Press edition edited and with preface by Timothy Sweet, 2002.

Order of Scions of Colonial Cavaliers: 1640-1660: The Order, 2002. [Pamphlet: request from staff.]

Jacob Alt...: His Descendants and Related Families: Clara Mae Alt Ross, 2002.

Annual Report FY 2002: National Institute for Chemical Studies, 2002.

Senator from West Virginia: Extracts from the Congressional Record relating to the proceedings in the United States Senate in the seating of Rush D. Holt as senator from West Virginia, together with the briefs and petitions filed with the Committee on Privileges and Elections: 1935.

**NEW MICROFILM READER
DEDICATED BY JOHN YOUNG
CHAPTER, NSDAR**

Both the John Young Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution and its individual members have always been loyal supporters of the West Virginia Archives and History Library. Several times in recent years they generously donated the funds for new microfilm readers for the Library's Microfilm Reading Room. The most recent gift of a Gideon 1000 microfilm reader with electrically powered features was dedicated in a ceremony as part of the Chapter's November monthly meeting, specially held in the Cultural Center for the occasion. The dedication plaque reads: "Donated by Claudette M. Roberts in memory of Vera White Inman, 5 August 1914–31 January 2001, John Young Chapter DAR."

New plaques were placed on two readers donated earlier. The first plaque reads: "Presented by the John Young Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution." The second reads: "Donated by Cleo Zimmer Sears in recognition of Virginia B. Johnson, Honorary Vice President General NSDAR, John Young Chapter, 1999." (You can read about the original presentation of this reader and view a photograph of the donor and the honoree in the August 2000 issue of *West Virginia Archives and History News*, accessible on our Web site.)

Both the staff and patrons of the Archives and History Library appreciate the generosity of the John Young Chapter, and applaud the dedication to history and genealogy demonstrated by the placement of readers for use by the general public.

**2003 HISTORY DAY
AT THE LEGISLATURE**

History Day is officially designated by the **West Virginia Archives and History Commission** as a special day to recognize the state's rich and varied history. The next History Day, **February 27, 2003**, will feature historical exhibits and other cultural events depicting the unique heritage of the Mountain State, including re-enactments of historical events, musical performances, and storytelling. For further information, and for History Hero nomination forms and exhibit registration forms, visit our Web site (click on "What's New?", then on "West Virginia History Day") or contact:

Joy Stalnaker, Chair
Archives and History Commission
c/o HCPD
45 Abbotts Run Road
Horner, WV 26372
Fax: Attention J. Stalnaker, (304) 269-4430
E-mail: wvhistoryday@hackerscreek.com

History Hero nominations must be postmarked by January 30, and/or received by February 4, 2003. Exhibit registrations must be received by February 4, 2003.

We encourage all historical groups to bring their members, friends and neighbors to Charleston to celebrate West Virginia History Day!

BINDERY ORDER RECEIVED

The titles shipped to Heckman Bindery in November have been returned to us in their colorful new bindings, and have been re-labeled and replaced on the Library shelves. If you were unable to find a particular volume in November because it had been sent to the bindery, you will be able to use that book on your next visit.

**THANK YOU,
DR. BAILEY!**

Readers' Forum, The Charleston Gazette, December 2, 2002: "Archives staff deserves thanks"

Editor: I wish to commend the staff of the Department of Archives and History Library at the state Capitol for keeping the Archives Library open on holidays, evenings and all day on Saturday.

In 2001, a decision was made to expand hours of operation to 8 p.m. from Monday to Thursday and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. I was pleasantly surprised to recently learn that the staff also keeps the library open to the public on holidays such as Presidents Day, Election Day and Veterans Day.

Not only does the staff work these hours for the public's convenience; each member has always demonstrated politeness and patience with the many, and I am sure constantly repeated, requests for help in genealogical research or a school paper. These are truly public servants who deserve our appreciation and thanks.

Kenneth R. Bailey
Elkview

Genealogy E-zines

Editor's Recommendation

Missing Links: A Magazine for Genealogists and *Somebody's Links: Genealogical Treasures Found* are free on-line genealogy magazines sent by subscription directly to your personal e-mail address, or viewed on the Petunia Press home page, <http://www.petunia.press.com>. Several Archives and History Library staff members read these publications weekly, and share relevant items with the rest of the staff. On occasion, articles or notices from the e-zines are shared with you through *Archives and History News*. We have been made aware of many new resources and ideas through *Missing Links*, and have acquired

donations of West Virginia-related materials through contacts made through *Somebody's Links*. Until recently, *Missing Links* and *Somebody's Links* were supported by and accessible through RootsWeb, one of the most prominent genealogy Web sites. Although content and quality are unchanged, the publications are struggling to survive with lower readership since leaving the RootsWeb umbrella. Please check out several issues through the Petunia Press site and consider a free subscription to one or both. We would like to see this valuable genealogy source survive.

SHPO PUBLISHES 13-MONTH CALENDAR

West Virginia's County Courthouses 2003

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History has published *West Virginia's County Courthouses 2003*, a 13-month full color calendar highlighting historic courthouses across the state. Counties featured include Marion, Boone, Braxton, Brooke, Clay, Mercer, Randolph, Pocahontas, Jefferson, Harrison, McDowell, Wood and Tyler. The calendar also contains a narrative overview of the history of West Virginia's county courthouses and a summary of common architectural styles.

Copies of the calendar are free while supplies last. You may pick up a calendar in the Archives and History Library, or contact Lora Lamarre:

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The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300
(304) 558-0240, Ext. 711
lora.lamarre@wvculture.org

Publication of the calendar was funded in part by the National Park Service.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOTE: CALENDAR AND HOURS OF OPERATION BASED ON KNOWLEDGE AS OF DECEMBER 2, 2002. BUDGET CONSTRAINTS MAY LEAD TO CHANGES AFTER PUBLICATION.

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.

CHRISTMAS EVE, DECEMBER 24: The Library will be *closed*.

CHRISTMAS DAY, DECEMBER 25: The Library will be *closed*.

NEW YEARS EVE, DECEMBER 31: The Library will be *closing at 1:00 p.m.*

NEW YEARS DAY, JANUARY 1: The Library will be *closed*.

SPECIAL NOTE: SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, AND MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY,

JANUARY 20: Library will be *closed* for repair of lighting system. Staff will be available by phone.

LINCOLN’S BIRTHDAY, FEBRUARY 12: The Library will be open.*

PRESIDENT’S DAY, FEBRUARY 17: 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.

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

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Nancy P. Herholdt, Commissioner

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ARCHIVES AND HISTORY STAFF