

OVERVIEWS AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

The following narratives define the historic significance of the state museum's timeline and suggest connections for extended study

PREHISTORY

300 million BC – 1650 AD

West Virginia: An Ancient Land

Over millions of years, cataclysmic forces created West Virginia's towering mountains, precious minerals, and breathtaking scenery.

Over time, water eroded the massive Appalachian Mountains, created beautiful waterfalls and caverns, and cut valleys through mountains of rock. The New River Gorge, one of the state's most scenic features, was carved by the second-oldest river in the world.

What was once a steamy swampland became coal, oil, and gas. Ancient oceans evaporated, leaving behind salt, iron, limestone, and manganese deposits. Rivers and streams also deposited rich soils that were ideal for growing farm crops and producing some of the first hardwood trees in the world.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

An Ancient Time

- * Geological definition of West Virginia
- * Minerals and conditions that create salt, coal, gas and oil
- * Changing formations and new geo-systems
- * Forestation and Waterways
- * Wildlife

A Native People

- * Earliest inhabitants
- * What we do not know
- * Survival and native settlements

- * Prehistoric culture
- * Archaeology

FRONTIER

1754-1860

The Frontier: Conflict and Independence

In the 1700s, England, France, and American Indian tribes held separate claims to present-day West Virginia, which was then part of Virginia. Through a series of violent conflicts, all three groups surrendered their claims to the region.

When the conflicts ended in the late 1700s, Scots-Irish and Germany settlers poured into western Virginia. They brought with them traditional music, food, and crafts, which became the roots of Appalachian culture.

Life on the frontier was challenging. Pioneers hunted or harvested all the food they ate, forged homemade tools, and built houses on the land they cleared by hand. Women not only clothed and fed large families, they helped tend crops and livestock.

Over time, western Virginians developed a distinctly different culture from the eastern part of the state. Their sense of self-reliance and independence eventually led to a split from the state of Virginia.

Pre-requisite understandings: In order to better appreciate the significance of this period in western Virginia's history, knowledge of the following circumstances and events is encouraged.

Colonial Settlement

- The London and Plymouth Land Companies
- Jamestown
- The evolution of the Virginia Colony
- European explorers and claims to the Ohio Valley
- Native American treaties – tribes that ceded rights and when

- The French and Indian War

Discussion Topics

Settlement in western Virginia

- Hunters and trailblazers
- Claiming the land
- First white settlers
- Land Speculators
- Native American concept of land ownership
- Fighting for land
- Heroes and legends

Growth and Development Period

- Formation of towns and counties
- Importance of salt
- A booming industry
- Slave labor
- Influence of religion
- German and Scots-Irish influence

Home on the Frontier

- Handmade
- Home grown
- Frontier craftsmanship
- Home remedies, healing waters

Transition to next time period

- Harpers Ferry, a company town
- John Brown

Civil War and the 35th State

1861 – 1899

The Civil War and Statehood: A War within a State

During the Civil War, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad made the present-day eastern panhandle a constant battleground. Both the Union and Confederate armies occupied Harpers Ferry, Martinsburg, and Romney on numerous occasions. Meanwhile, the

North controlled most areas west of the Alleghenies through key victories at Rich Mountain, Carnifex Ferry and Droop Mountain.

Beyond the strategic importance, the Union's military control of western Virginia protected the political leaders who had gathered in Wheeling to break from the pro-Confederate government of Virginia. These leaders had grown increasingly frustrated with Virginia for its failure to fund roads, railroads, and other improvements in the western part of the state. They used Virginia's secession from the Union as an opportunity to break away and form a separate government.

In 1861, leaders from northwestern Virginia established a new Virginia state government that remained loyal to the Union. This government then carved out territory to create a new Union state. On June 20, 1863, West Virginia became the 35th state – the only permanent change in territory due to the Civil War.

Pre-requisite understandings: In order to better appreciate the significance of this period in West Virginia's history, knowledge of the following national circumstances and events is encouraged

Abraham Lincoln is Elected

- “Free States” and “Slave States”
- The Missouri Compromise of 1850
- Belief systems and religions that supported slavery and abolition
- The Virginia State Constitutional Conventions
- The making of the Confederate States of America

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Internal Improvements in western Virginia

- * Separation and neglect
- * Roads and turnpikes
- * Economic growth and cultural identities
- * Publicly funded facilities
- * An emerging society and its priorities

Military Significance of western Virginia

- Influence of the railroad and westward migration

- Mapping of rural/agricultural and urban/industrial regions
- Strategic importance of state's major battles
- Appalachian settler's belief systems and military alliances

Creation of the 35th State

- Western delegates vote
- Opportunity and empowerment: the Restored Government of Virginia
- Maintaining "slave state" status
- Provision for the emancipation of slaves
- The fate of the Restored Government of Virginia

19th Century Wheeling, an Urban Manufacturing Center

- * "Gateway to the West"
- * Rivers, roads and railways
- * Iron and Steel Mills
- * Wheeling's Streetscape
- * Workforce of Immigrants
- * The beginning of the labor movement

Immigrants and Industry

- * Reasons to emigrate
- * Why West Virginia
- * Connections to the Old Country
- * Special skills, special people
- * Evidence of ethnic communities today

Our Agricultural Heritage

- The family farm
- Subsistence farmers, cash crops
- Farming organizations
- Farm tools, technology and the science of farming
- WVU Extension Service: 4-H and Home Demonstration Clubs
- Agricultural Fairs

INDUSTRIALIZATION

1900 – 1945

Industrial West Virginia: From Farms to Factories

In the late 1800s, railroads connected the new state of West Virginia with the rest of the country. The Industrial Revolution soon swept through the Mountain State. Coal mines. Sawmills. Oil and gas

wells. Steelworks. Glass and pottery factories. As the value of natural resources increased, out-of-state investors bought land cheaply from West Virginians, who thought they were getting a bargain.

The new industries offered men and women in West Virginia a paycheck for the first time. Companies, which needed more workers than the region could supply, recruited African American laborers from the South and recent immigrants. As a result, the state's population doubled between 1870 and 1900, with new company-owned towns and lumber camps emerging along the rail lines.

No industry dominated the state's economy like coal. West Virginia coal fueled the nation's steel factories, battleships, steam, locomotives, and power industries. For many years, southern West Virginia led the country in bituminous coal production; though, its mines were the deadliest in the nation.

Coal mines quickly grew weary over low wages, long hours, and poor working conditions. Their only leverage was to go on strike. In the early 1900s, these work stoppages became increasingly violent. Hundreds of West Virginians died during the mine wars, which culminated with the Battle of Blair Mountain in 1921.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Coal Industry

- The hand-loading process
- Hard labor, dangerous conditions and long hours
- Different people, same job
- The measure of a day's work
- From the mine to the world market
- Monongah
- Coke
- Safety becomes a priority
- Women and children workers
- Mechanization effects jobs
- Still West Virginia's most significant industry

Timber Industry

- Settler's homes to sawmills
- The timbering process
- Tools of the trade
- Lumber companies
- Deforestation

Iron and Steel Industry

- Jefferson County, 1754
- The Bessemer Oxygen Furnace
- Steel companies
- Hand-cut nails, galvanized metal and tools
- The impact of imported steel

Chemical Industry

- "Chemical Capitol of the World"
- The significance of natural brine deposits
- Research and innovations
- Better living through chemistry

Oil and Gas Industry

- Wirt County, 1860
- The Jones-Imboden Raid
- The Oil Boom
- Natural gas and the glass industry
- Fires
- Production declines

Glass and Pottery Industries

- The key ingredients
- The artisan
- Glass plants and factories
- Commercial pottery
- Child labor
- Window glass cooperatives

Transportation's Effect on Industry

- Rivers and Steamboats
- Locks and Dams
- Barges
- Railroads
- Lanterns and Shop Tools
- John Henry
- 1877 Railroad Strike

Life in a Company Town

- The Company Store
- Toys
- Scrip
- Payroll Book
- Itmann Store blueprints
- Not all work --- company teams
- Medical survey of coal towns
- Community Spirit
- Music, dance and the radio

The Hatfield – McCoy Feud

The Changing Role of Women

- Mother, homemaker, breadwinner
- Community activities and organizations
- Entering the workforce
- Cottage industry to arts-and-crafts industry
- The right to vote
- Politics, preservation and power
- Suffragettes

Caves, Taverns and Temperance

- Making whiskey
- Revenuers and the State Police
- Women's Christian Temperance Union
- Thurmond Paint

The State Capitol

- Location, location, location
- The Capitol burns
- State Capitol Annex
- Capitol Complex statues and memorials

The Labor Movement

- Paint Creek – Cabin Creek strike
- United Mine Workers
- Law Enforcement, creation of the State Police
- Management
- Matewan Massacre
- Yellow dog contracts
- Miners bear arms and declare war
- Blizzard treason trial
- The failure of violence

The Great Depression

- The New Deal resettlement program
- Arthurdale
- National Recovery Administration
- Rural electrification
- Civilian Conservation Corps
- Works Progress (and Projects) Administration
- Hawks Nest Tunnel disaster

MILITARY ZONE

West Virginians at War: Service and Honor

From the Revolutionary War through today's military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, West Virginians have proudly honored their state. West Virginia leads the nation in military veterans per capita. More than 500,000 West Virginians have served in the military, more than 10,000 have sacrificed their lives.

The Mountain State has contributed more than its share of military heroes during international conflicts. Monroe County's Andrew Rowan carried the "message to Garcia" in the Spanish-American War. Hampshire County's Chester Merriman was one of the youngest casualties of World War I. Harrison County native "Woody" Williams and 10 other West Virginians won the Medal of Honor during World War II. Wyoming County's Kenneth Shadrick was one of the first Korean fatalities. Monongalia County's Thomas Bennett, a medic and conscientious objector, was awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War. Wood County's Robert Sweet was a POW during the Gulf War. Roane County's Ruby Bradley is the American military's most decorated woman.

West Virginia's have played equally important roles on the home front. The origins of West Virginia's National Guard can be traced to a militia formed in 1735 in present-day Berkeley County. West

Virginians have sold bonds, raised victory gardens, and conserved key resources for the war effort. During World War II, the state increased industrial production to support the war effort, particularly in the coal, steel, and chemical industries. In times of war and peace, West Virginians answer the call.

CHANGE and TRADITION

1954 – 21ST Century

West Virginia changed greatly in the late 20th century. The coal industry increasingly used surface mines and massive underground machines to extract coal – both of which eliminated mining jobs. The loss of these jobs and a downturn in the coal industry had a domino effect on the state's economy. Unemployment reached record levels, and, by 1970, more than 250,000 West Virginians had left the state. While the nature of mining has changed, the coal industry continues to be the state's dominant economic force, providing more coal than ever.

During this same time, there were noticeable advances in civil rights. African Americans fought to integrate schools, and some of the nation's earliest lunch-counter sit-ins occurred in Charleston, Bluefield, and Huntington. Women also battled for equal rights, particularly in the workplace.

The state's landscape was altered dramatically in the late 20th century. New interstates and corridors bypassed once-thriving towns while sparking the growth of recreational industries, such as white-water rafting, skiing, and golf. Abandoned railroad beds were converted into popular biking and hiking paths, while old logging roads became ATV trails.

In the last few decades, Appalachian music, arts, and crafts have experienced a revival. Fairs and festivals are held across the state

to celebrate the traditions of quilting, carving wood, making hand-blown glass, and many other crafts. Musicians keep alive the frontier spirit by playing fiddle tunes that have been handed down from generation to generation. Today, the pioneer traits of self-reliance and craftsmanship are more alive than ever throughout West Virginia.