



# West Virginia Archives & History News



VOLUME II, NO. 1

MARCH 2001

## NEWSPAPER RESEARCH

### From the Editor:

Local newspapers are wonderful sources of information for far more than obituaries. My family is lucky to have a cousin who has been reading the *Paintsville Herald* (Johnson County, KY) on microfilm and e-mailing the rest of us with all the marvelous tidbits and gems of news about our family in the 1920's through the 1940's, as reported in the society columns. What kind of gems? Well, we all knew my grandparents had eloped, but we didn't know until we read the 1929 newspaper that after the marriage ceremony they each returned to their respective parents' homes and didn't tell anyone they had married! From the society news report printed over a month after the elopement (with plenty of sly remarks), we learned the address of the apartment in town they rented, and were fascinated by the flurry of parties and showers held in their honor. Each report included a list of guests, and often descriptions of food and decorations. Other items gleaned include quotations of my great-grandfather's witticisms, valuable reports of visitors from out of town (from which I learned married names and locations), touching eulogies, and many reports of the athletic and musical careers of the youngsters in the family. Those who were teachers had their salaries and teaching assignments reported regularly by the city and county school boards. Check out the local newspaper for your families' hometowns and see if you can learn more about your kinfolks' lives.

### USING NEWSPAPERS FOR GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

Genealogists usually turn to newspapers to search for obituaries, and occasionally for birth and marriage announcements. Newspapers offer a far richer source of information than the Victorian standard for a true lady suggests, that one's name should appear in a newspaper only three times in one's life: birth, marriage and death. Although research in newspapers can be daunting, Linda Herrick Swisher offers the following advice: "Genealogists face rolls of microfilmed newspapers of small print, misspellings, haphazard layout and questionable content. It takes practice, and patience, to research old newspapers. Find the obituaries, certainly. But don't overlook all the other clues." ["Newspapers: More Than Obituaries," *Family Chronicle*, March/April 2001]

Be prepared to read and read and read. Very few newspapers are indexed. If you are searching for a specific piece of information, first narrow down the possible spread of dates as much as possible using other sources. Find out which newspapers are available for the community you want to learn about. Many small towns do not have their own newspapers, but rely on a county-wide, county seat or larger town paper to print their local news. Remember that the closest town of some size may not be in the same county as your town. Large city newspapers usually have multiple editions, with at

least one edition prepared for distribution outside the city itself. A non-city edition is more likely to carry obituaries and other notices for surrounding communities than the city edition. On the other hand, if a town or county has more than one newspaper, check them all. Obituaries and other information are not always submitted to all the area papers, or may not be the same in all. Likewise, don't stop reading with the first day's paper that has what you are looking for. Subsequent days' coverage may have different or additional information.

Make good use of the information you find. Obituaries can help with more than dates of death and places of burial. An obituary may detail places lived, schools attended, church and fraternal organization memberships, etc., all of which are potential sources of additional records. Use obituaries to narrow down possible death dates for other family members by seeing who is listed as having preceded in death or as having survived. Take note of women's married names and the hometowns of those who have moved away. Don't forget that, like death records, obituaries are only as reliable a source as the knowledge of the person(s) supplying the information.

What is there besides obituaries? How about news articles covering deaths by accident or foul play; letters to the editor and political news of those in office or campaigning; school news of athletic events, concerts and other performances, graduations, honor rolls, awards, and teaching assignments; war news of deaths, injuries, those missing in action, enlistments and draft notices; and best of all, society columns. Columns of social interest often focus on a specific community and are usually written by someone who lives in that community and knows all the "good stuff." Reports of engagements, weddings, baby showers, births, anniversaries, birthday celebrations, reunions and graduation parties may provide lists of names, and possibly identify relationships. If you have missing branches on your family tree, pay particular attention to mentions of out-of-town visitors or of trips by locals to their out-of-town

relatives. For instance, if you don't know who the daughters of a family married or where they lived after marriage, look for their names when they come home for a visit.

Newspapers are valuable in developing an image of the community in which your family lived. What were their living conditions? Did friends and family socialize and visit frequently? Were any of them talented in athletics, academics or music? What were their health concerns? How did they entertain themselves? Did they seem to be affected much by world events, or were they largely concerned with their own community? What business or industry dominated the town?

Maybe you will be lucky and have a relative who got quoted a lot. My great-grandfather, William Randall Preston, always known as "Bill R.," was well known within the family for his tall tales and witty sayings. In a May 23, 1943 *Paintsville Herald* society column, under the heading of "Visits New Grandson," appeared the following: "Mr. Bill R. Preston spent last Friday in Seco, Ky., but according to Bill R., he did not go to see the company but to see his new grandson Robert Neville. Bill R. says that the baby is a very ordinary looking boy, but that it is his unbiased opinion that he will one day be President of the United States. He is inclined to be a dictator now, but it is hoped he will outgrow that and be a good democrat, says Bill R."

-----  
***DON'T FORGET !!!***

## **HISTORY DAY 2001**

***MARCH 22 IN CHARLESTON AT  
THE STATE CAPITOL COMPLEX  
FEATURING  
HISTORY HERO AWARDS  
EXHIBITS AND DISPLAYS  
FEBRUARY NEW TITLES***

**A Journey Through the West: Thomas Rodney's 1830 Journal from Delaware to the Mississippi Territory:** Dwight L. Smith and Ray Swick, editors, 1997.

**The Appalachian Forest: A Search for Roots and Renewal:** Chris Bolgiano, 1998.

**History of the Improved Order of Red Men and Degree of Pocahontas, 1765-1988:** Robert E. Davis, 1990.

**In Remembrance: Tombstone Readings of Preston County, West Virginia, Volume 3:** Janice Cale Sisler, 2001.

**Soldier of Misfortune: Alexander Welch Reynolds of the United States, Confederate and Egyptian Armies:** Weymouth T. Jordan, Jr., 2001

**The Athenaeum: The Story of a Building 1855-1861:** Edward L. Phillips, 2000.

**Lincoln's Bastile: The Athenaeum: The Story of a Building 1855-1861:** Edward L. Phillips, 2000.

**Transportation in the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1929.

**Little Joe:** Andrew Wayte McLaughlin, 1982.

**Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America:** Jack R. Gannon, 1981.

**Passenger and Immigration Lists Index: 2002 Supplement, Part I:** Gale Research Co., 2001.

**Obituaries from *The Times Record* newspaper: Spencer, Roane County, West Virginia: [1979-1999]:** David L. Boggs, compiler, 2001.

## WELCOME COMMISSIONER HERHOLDT

Nancy P. Herholdt is new to the Commissioner's office, but not to the Division of Culture and History, where she had been Director of Events for 18 of her 21 years with the agency. Active in the arts community for most of her life, she brings a diversified background to her current position of leading the efforts to create a climate that nurtures our culture, history and the arts in West Virginia. A 1974 graduate of West Virginia State College's Fine Arts Department, Herholdt worked in local radio as a copywriter and on-air talent. She donated thousands of hours over several years to community theater as an actress, director and stage

manager. She served as an administrative assistant with the West Virginia Opera Company and the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, now the West Virginia Symphony. She joined the staff at the Division of Culture and History to develop positions, policy and the protocol under which the performing arts programs of the agency would be executed. Herholdt's influence is most evident in the development, continuation and growth of the annual West Virginia State Dance Festival and the state's traditional arts festival, the Vandalia Gathering. *[Thank you to Ginny Painter for sharing her news release.]*

## ARE WE RECEIVING YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER?

Most of you are probably not aware that the Archives must subscribe by mail to all of the newspapers we receive. The cost of subscriptions takes a considerable percentage of the Archives budget, plus many titles have a very limited local distribution; consequently, we miss out on a lot of potentially valuable local history and genealogy. While the Archives subscribes to all of the major daily papers in West Virginia, we do not subscribe to all of the many small county and local community newspapers across the state. Some papers are distributed at no charge locally, but are not available to us in Charleston. If you are interested in sponsoring a subscription in your name or in the name of a family member, or are interested in arranging for the forwarding of papers to the Library's collection, please call or write us. To find out if we are already receiving a paper, call Cathy Miller or Elaine Gates, (304) 558-0230.

## LET US HEAR FROM YOU

Is there anything you would like to learn through *Archives and History News*? Call or write Susan Scouras, Editor, with your topic ideas.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*C H E C K   O U R   W E B   S I T E*  
*(http://www.wvculture.org/history) FOR*  
*GENEALOGICAL and HISTORICAL SOCIETY*  
*MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND FOR*  
*MORE COMPLETE INFORMATION ON*  
*ACTIVITIES LISTED BELOW:*

**HISTORY DAY 2001, MARCH 22.** Capitol Complex, Charleston.

**“HOOT OWL” RESEARCH IN THE WV ARCHIVES, MARCH 23-24.** Archives Library, Charleston.

**“STANDING ON THE MOUNTAIN, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.” MARCH 30-APRIL 1.** Annual Conference of the Appalachian Studies Association, Snowshoe Mountain Conference Center.

**“BEGINNING GENEALOGY” WITH MARY LOU HENDERSON. APRIL 17.** Ohio County Public Library.

**ANNUAL GENEALOGY FAIR, APRIL 21.** West Augusta Historical and Genealogical Society, Wood County Courthouse.

**ANNUAL WEST VIRGINIA BLACK HISTORY CONFERENCE, APRIL 30-MAY 1.** West Virginia State College History Dept., Institute.

**GENEALOGY FAIR, MAY 12.** West Virginia Genealogical Society, Elkview.

**BLUE AND GRAY REUNION 2001, 140<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF PHILIPPI.** Philippi.

*\*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 LIBRARY HOURS ARE 9:00 A.M. TO 5:00 P.M. MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, AND 1:00 P.M. TO 5:00 P.M. ON SATURDAYS. HOLIDAY HOURS ARE AS POSTED.**

## **ARCHIVES AND HISTORY STAFF**

**Fredrick Armstrong:** Director

**Debra Basham:** Archivist (photographs, special collections)

**Greg Carroll:** Historian (Civil War, Native American history)

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

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

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

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

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

**Jaime Lynch:** Library Assistant (Records of the 1700's and early 1800's, Pennsylvania)

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

**Sharon Newhouse:** Secretary

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

**Pat Pleska:** Part-time Library Assistant (Clipping File)

**Susan Scouras:** Librarian (cataloging, Kentucky, library collection, newsletter editor)

**Bobby Taylor:** Library Manager

**Nancy Waggoner:** Office Assistant

Contract employees working on special projects:

**Constance Baston, Allen Fowler, and Leah Stover.**

*We need volunteers to assist with several different projects in the Archives and History Library. High school and college students seeking public service hours are welcome. Please call for further information.*

-----  
 -  
 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