MayDay—Saving Our Archives

Beginning in 2006, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) has designated May 1 as MayDay for saving our archives from the consequences of disaster, largely in response to the growing number of hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and fires in recent years that have damaged or threatened archival collections. SAA has issued a call to action on MayDay for everyone “to do something that will make a difference when and if an emergency occurs,” “something that can be accomplished in a day but that can have a significant impact on an individual’s or a repository’s ability to respond.” Ideas for MayDay activities as listed on the SAA Web site (http://www.archivists.org/mayday/ideas.asp) include:

- Create or update your emergency contact lists.
- Review or establish basic emergency procedures.
- Conduct a disaster drill.
- Conduct scenario exercises.
- Invite your local firefighters to visit your repository.
- Survey the building for risks.
- Make sure all collections are in boxes.

- Make sure boxes are off the floor.
- Identify the most critical, essential, important records.
- Inventory emergency supplies.
- Review your emergency preparedness plan.
- If your repository does not have an emergency preparedness plan, MayDay 2008 is a great day to start one, with a timeline to finish it by MayDay 2009. Explore “Annotated MayDay Resources” on the SAA Web site at http://www.archivists.org/mayday/texts.asp to get started.

Institutions and other organizations, such as the Council of

Continued on the next page

Records Management and Preservation Board
2008 Grants

The Records Management and Preservation Board (RMPB) has awarded $317,858 in grant funds to 30 West Virginia county commissions for county records management and preservation projects through its County Records Management and Preservation Grants program. The board reviewed submissions and made its recommendations in January for projects to improve management, storage conditions, access and preservation of public records held in several county offices. Following official letters announcing the successful grants, RMPB staff began conducting courthouse site visits to provide technical assistance in setting up the grant project, which officially begins with the new fiscal year, July 1, 2008. Individual grant award amounts range from $3,477 to $26,000. The list of 2008-2009 recipients is posted on the RMPB page on the Archives and History Web site at http://www.wvculture.org/history/rmpb/rmpb.html.

The RMPB, with its continuing interest in addressing records storage and management issues in the court houses, announced three grant criteria in its invitation to applicants last September. The three criteria were:

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State Archivists (CoSA) have picked up on the SAA MayDay call, and have developed plans and programs designed to urge archives and others responsible for records preservation and management to take active steps to prepare for potential disasters. With such preparedness initiatives in mind, CoSA has developed a Pocket Response Plan (PReP™) whereby an organization can create a disaster response plan, fill out the PReP™ form which folds to wallet size and fits in a protective envelope, then require designated staff members to carry the emergency plan with them at all times.

CoSA also provides a list of links and other information available from state archives around the country. A good example is the California Preservation Program, created by the California State Library to meet preservation training, education and assistance needs of libraries, archives, and other records repositories in that state. Their Web site, CaliforniaPreservation.org, offers emergency preparedness and response information, including a “Generic Disaster Plan Workbook.” In that workbook, under the “Disaster Preparedness and Prevention” section, is a list of “General Housekeeping Guidelines” of policy rules and everyday practices that will help protect an archival or library collection from a disaster, and/or lessen the extent of damage if a disaster occurs. All libraries, no matter how small or underfunded, will find these guidelines both practical and valuable. Following is an edited version of that list:

- Keep internal fire doors closed.
- Ensure that emergency equipment such as fire hoses, fire extinguishers, and first-aid kits is always accessible and in good working order. Do not, under any circumstances, place furniture, display cases, coat racks, etc., in front of a fire hose cabinet, fire extinguisher or manual fire alarm box. [Note that in the West Virginia Archives and History Library, we do not allow book carts to be placed even temporarily in front of the fire hose cabinet in our interior hallway.]
- Close drawers of file and storage cabinets when not in use.
- Do not leave any exposed materials, especially original documents or other archival material, on desks or tables overnight.
- Maintain a stable temperature in the library. [This reduces risk of condensation, frozen pipes, heat expansion, etc.]
- Store valuable material in fire-proof and dust-proof cabinets, preferably made of steel and treated with a non-corrosive, non-staining and noncombustible paint.
- Do not shelve books too tightly. This prevents not only user damage to the bindings when books are pulled off the shelves, but also ensures that, if flooding occurs, the water will not cause the books to swell to the point where they burst from the shelving units [and therefore fall into the water, become completely saturated, and suffer irreparable damage from being tossed around in the water]. This applies to a lesser degree to other materials [such as files in file cabinets and maps in map drawers].
- Shelve materials so that they are set back a short distance from the edge. This precaution prevents user wear, the vertical spread of fire from one shelf to another, and books “walking off” shelves during minor earthquakes. [This also protects books from falling debris during a tornado or overhead structural problems such as falling ceiling tiles and broken pipes spraying down.]
- Ban smoking, eating and drinking, or confine such activities to a designated area within the building, certainly not in the stacks, and preferably not near them.
- Ensure that appropriate standards (such as dust control and supplies storage) are established and met by janitorial staff. Doors may be weather-stripped to minimize

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Updated Guides to Tracing Family Trees on RootsWeb

The free genealogy site RootsWeb has long offered a series of guides designed to introduce basic methods of genealogy research to beginners with tips on getting started, finding and using varying types of records, problem-solving, citation of sources, etc. Currently there are 31 lessons in RootsWeb’s Guides to Tracing Family Trees, and all have been updated. Find the guides by going directly to the list at http://rwguide.rootsweb.ancestry.com/, or by looking on the RootsWeb homepage under the “Getting Started” link.

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conduct a total records inventory and
condition assessment, and develop a
master records management plan for
county records; remove non-records
and accumulations of records having
reached or exceeded required reten-
tion periods; and provide proper and
improved storage of and access to
permanent records or records with
required retention periods in excess
of 25 years. The latter will include
physical storage to provide proper
shelving and/or archival records
boxes, and security/preservation
microfilm, with a digital imaging
combination for enhanced access.

Funding for the County Records
Management and Preservation Pro-
gram is from the filing fees collected
by county clerks and deposited in
the special Public Records and
Preservation Revenue Account. The
funds serve as an incentive
to county officials to improve the
management of their public records
and conditions for their preserva-
tion. The RMPB was created by the
West Virginia Legislature in 2000 to
develop uniform county records man-
agement programs. Its primary focus
is to establish guidelines and provide
technical assistance to address the
needs of the records of county gov-
ernments through a uniform records
management system, and to further
encourage adoption of these goals
through the county records grant
program. In pursuit of these goals
the RMPB authorized a statewide
survey and report on the current
state of county records, developed
rules and a County Records Man-
gement Manual for county offices,
and sponsored records management
workshops for county officials and
staffs. The next grant cycle and pri-
orities will be announced September
1, for the fiscal year 2009–2010.

For more information about the
RMPB’s annual grant program or the
work of the Board, contact Joseph N.
Geiger, Jr., acting director of the West
Virginia State Archives, by phone
at (304) 558-0230, by e-mail at joe.
geiger@wvculture.org, or by mail
to RMPB, West Virginia Division of
Culture and History, The Cultural
Center, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East,
Charleston, WV 25305-0300. Full
information is available on the Web
at http://www.wvculture.org/history/
rmpb/rmbp.html.
Commemoration of 250th Anniversary of the French and Indian War Continues in West Virginia State Parks
Doug Wood is Key Player in the Re-enactments

West Virginia State Parks and Forests is sponsoring educational events in three state parks in 2008 to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the French and Indian War. Activities will include historical re-enactors, living history demonstrations, warrior hikes, and more, focusing on the raids led by Cherokee Commanders Otstenaco and Oconostota along the Ohio River in 1758. The first event was held successfully in Tu-Endie-Wei State Park in March. The next event will be at Blennerhassett Island State Park on June 29, followed by the third and final event in Tomlinson Run State Park on August 30. A key player in the re-enactments is Doug Wood, who performed much of the research for his and his colleagues’ highly accurate and detailed portrayals of 18th century Native Americans as a patron of the West Virginia Archives and History Library. Anyone who heard his presentation, Researching 18th Century American Indian History, in the Archives Library Evening Workshop series in April 2007, will certainly enjoy this presentation. For more information on these activities, visit http://www.wvstateparks.com/French_Indian_War.html.

Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation Sponsors Civil War Lecture Series

The Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation is sponsoring a Civil War Lecture Series featuring controversial topics designed to inform and entertain, but also to stir debate. On May 9, Dr. Mathew Lively will talk about the life and death of General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson in his lecture entitled The Death of Stonewall. Keynote speaker for the West Virginia Birthday dinner on June 20 will be Dr. Forest Bowman, presenting The 35th Star—The Creation of West Virginia. Dr. John M. Coski will lecture and lead a discussion regarding The Controversial Confederate Flag on September 19. For more information about these events, or to learn more about the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation, visit http://www.richmountain.org/, call (304) 637-7424, or e-mail richmt@richmountain.org.

Calendar of Events

VAUGHAN PRESERVATION AWARDS

“THE DEATH OF STONEWALL,” May 9: Lecture by Dr. Mathew Lively, Beverly Heritage Center, Beverly. For more information call (304) 637-7424, or e-mail richmt@richmountain.org.

WVGS GENEALOGY FAIR, May 10: West Virginia Genealogical Society Library, Elkview (Blue Creek). For more information call (304) 965-1179.

PRIMARY ELECTION DAY, May 13: Archives Library will be closed.
Calendar of Events

WEST VIRGINIA ARCHIVES AND HISTORY COMMISSION MEETING, May 16: Shepherdstown.

SPRING CIVIL WAR ENCAMPMENT, May 17: Jenkins Plantation Museum, Lesage. For more information call (304) 762-1059 or visit http://www.wvculture.org/sites/jenkins.html.

VANDALIA GATHERING, May 23–25: Capitol Complex, Charleston.

MEMORIAL DAY, May 26: Archives Library will be closed.

“WRITING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY” WORKSHOP, June 3: Kanawha Valley Family History Center, Rand Community Center, Rand. For more information call Linda Hoskins at (304) 925-2438 or the Center at (304) 542-3817.

WEST VIRGINIA DAY, June 20: Archives Library will be open.*

WEST VIRGINIA BIRTHDAY DINNER AND LECTURE “THE 35TH STAR—THE CREATION OF WEST VIRGINIA,” June 20: Dr. Forest Bowman, keynote speaker. Sponsored by Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation, Beverly. For reservations, call (304) 637-7424, or e-mail richmt@richmountain.org.

LEMUEL CHENOWETH DAY,” June 21: Community-wide celebration in Beverly of the building of the Philippi and Beverly covered bridges. For more information visit http://www.historicbeverly.org or call (304) 637-7424.


WARRIORS CAMP LIVING HISTORY DEMONSTRATIONS AND WEST VIRGINIA HUMANITIES COUNCIL HISTORY ALIVE! PRESENTATION OF CHEROKEE COMMANDER OUTACITE OSTENACO, June 29: Blennerhassett Island State Park, Parkersburg.

BEVERLY HERITAGE DAYS, July 19–20: Community-wide celebration in Beverly, including primitive and Civil War encampments, heritage living and craft demonstrations. For more information visit http://www.historicbeverly.org or call (304) 637-7424.

250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR PROGRAM, August 30: Doug Wood and members of Trails, Inc., re-enactors. Tomlinson Run State Park, New Manchester. For more information visit http://www.wvstateparks.com/French_Indian_War.html.

“THE CONTROVERSIAL CONFEDERATE FLAG,” September 19: Lecture by Dr. John M. Coski. Sponsored by Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation, Beverly. For reservations, call (304) 637-7424, or e-mail richmt@richmountain.org.

*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
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