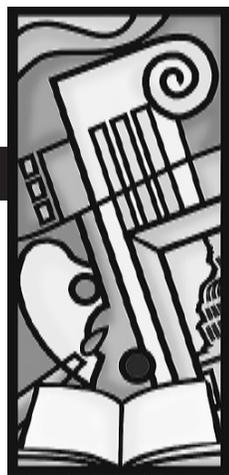


West Virginia Archives & History NEWS

VOLUME VIII, No. 9 NOVEMBER



WEST VIRGINIA
DIVISION OF
CULTURE & HISTORY

From the Editor:

Our thanks go to Pam Gibson, a family history researcher and regular patron of the Archives and History Library, who has volunteered to present an Archives Library Evening Workshop, Using a Scanner for Family History, on December 6. She will offer suggestions for using a scanner for family history projects in general and will teach use of an Epson 4490 Photo scanner in particular. We hope you will take the opportunity to learn how to digitally copy your documents and photographs as a method of sharing and preserving your personal family history.

Vital Records in West Virginia: Marriages

Marriage records have not always been considered vital records, but in recent years have joined birth and death records as recordings of a life event that are important for legal purposes and in proving identity and lineage. Marriage records were kept in each county from the inception of a new county government; however, few records from the earliest years of the counties formed in the eighteenth century have survived. For example, Berkeley County was formed in 1772, but its earliest extant marriage records were entered in 1781; Ohio County was formed in 1776, but its earliest marriages records available are from 1790; and Hampshire County was formed in 1754, but no marriage records earlier than 1824 survive. In addition, some county courthouses may hold loose documents such as marriage bonds, permission notes and ministers' lists that were not microfilmed since in most counties only the ledger books were microfilmed.

Unlike births and deaths, a marriage always has required a minimum of two trips or written contacts by parties involved to the courthouse for

a complete record. The bride and/or the groom or their representative makes the initial visit as informant for a marriage license application. When a marriage bond was required, that process may have involved a separate trip to the courthouse by the groom and one or more other guarantors for the bond. If one or both of the parties is underage, a parent or guardian must appear or provide written permission for the marriage license. (In the 17th and early 18th centuries, the bride's parent or guardian often sent a note stating approval of the marriage, even

when the bride was past the age of consent.) Once the marriage was performed, the duly authorized person who performed the ceremony must return a report of the marriage, either by a list of marriages performed in a certain county over a certain period of time, by writing directly in the county clerk's marriage ledger where the application information was recorded, or by signing the marriage license document and returning it to the county clerk, hence the term "marriage return" to indicate verification

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Archives and History Library Evening Workshops Schedule

Date	Conducted by:	Subject
December 6 Thursday	Pam Gibson, guest speaker	<i>Using a Scanner for Family History</i>
<p><i>Registration for this free workshop is helpful but not required.</i> Call our office at (304) 558-0230, or e-mail bobby.taylor@wvculture.org. Workshops are held 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the West Virginia Archives and History Library, The Cultural Center, Charleston, West Virginia.</p>		

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of an actual marriage.

Various deadlines for the ministers' reports were set over the years. When a marriage return was not received, a couple of things could happen. If the marriage application was written into a bound ledger, the clerk usually left it there, sometimes with a dated note that a return was not received. If the marriage license application was a loose document, some clerks retained them and some clerks disposed of them after an unspecified period of waiting.

The West Virginia Archives and History Library has noted a drastic increase in the number of patrons searching for 20th-century marriage records of living people, either their own or those of family members, for two major reasons. First, Americans are having to prove their legal names, ages and correct identity in unprecedented numbers due to the stringent requirements related to Homeland Security regulations. In particular, passport applicants and those trying to renew an expired driver's license often find themselves lacking documents that will fulfill the level of proof required. In some cases they are asked to provide copies of their parents' marriage and birth records as well as their own to prove citizenship.

Second, both public and private benefit providers are requiring applicants to show proof of *all* marriages and *all* divorces in a person's lifetime, even if the marriage was a "youthful indiscretion" like Brittany Spears' Las Vegas wedding that didn't last a day. The popularity of elopement in the Roaring 20's, the Depression 30's and the Wartime 40's further complicates matters. When the patient has Alzheimer's, other serious illness that affects memory and comprehension, or is of advanced age, trying to determine when and where (or to whom!) a marriage took place can

be very difficult, if not impossible. Family historians should remind all of their kin that even if they never need their marriage and divorce records themselves, their children or next-of-kin may need them urgently in the future, and they should obtain copies or make note of where to find all such records *now*, even if they choose not to share them until a later date.

Facts and Research Tips

Ignore statehood and follow the Virginia/West Virginia county name for county records. No counties were divided between the two states, no counties changed names, and each county kept the originals of its own records, even if copies were sent to Richmond. (There are a few West Virginia counties that lost records in the Civil War for which copies of birth, death and marriage records from approximately 1853-1860 survived in Richmond. These records are available on Library of Virginia microfilm in the West Virginia Archives and History Library.)

Marriages are legally recorded in the county where the marriage license application was made and where the marriage should have been performed; however, there are rare exceptions. I have seen a marriage return recorded in a county other than the county that issued the license. For example, the bride and groom may have resided in Kanawha County and obtained their marriage license from the Kanawha County clerk, but had the ceremony performed in Putnam County, with the clergyman reporting the marriage to the Putnam County clerk. Another possibility is that the clergyman did not want to go to two different courthouses and simply reported all marriages he had performed since his last report, regardless of location, to one county clerk.

Before 1921, there are no statewide marriage indexes. The West Virginia Vital Registration Office annual index of marriages by bride (except 1936, 1937 and 1938) and by groom, compiled by the West Virginia Dept. of Health Vital Registration Office, is available for public searching on mi-

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Decoding Social Security Numbers In One Step

The number groupings in a Social Security number have geographical and chronological meaning that can be helpful to family historians by placing the holder of the Social Security number in a certain place during a certain year by identifying the location and year in which the number was assigned. The first three digits indicate the state in which the number was issued, while the next two digits indicate the year of issue. Stephen P. Morse has added a "decoder" to his collection of genealogy and history Web sites that allows you to enter a Social Security number and determine the place and date of issue. He has included

all the exceptions, such as Railroad Workers retirement system numbers, and the U.S. territories in the Pacific Islands. His site is especially helpful to those researching West Virginians and North Carolinians due to shared number groups that occurred for a few years. He provides a means of telling which state is which that is not available from the Social Security Death Index. For anyone who wants to know if a Social Security number is valid, he also includes unassigned numbers. You will find *Decoding Social Security Numbers in One Step* at <http://www.stevemorse.org/ssn/ssn.html>.

crofilm in the West Virginia Archives and History Library. The index is useful for finding the date and county of a marriage so the actual record can be located in county records. *Ignore the book and page numbers cited in the index itself, since those refer to a state record project that was abandoned.*

For early marriages in particular, check the bride's home county first. For many years the law required a marriage license to be obtained in the bride's home county, and for many more years it has remained social custom to marry from the home of the bride's family.

*To learn more about early marriage laws, read *Early Marriage Laws in Virginia/West Virginia* in the June 2004 issue of *West Virginia Archives and History News*, available in some West Virginia libraries and on the Archives and History Web site at <http://www.wvculture.org/history/ahnews/0604news.pdf>. Also, you will find the full text of two examples of early Virginia marriage laws on our Web site at <http://www.wvculture.org/history/marriagelaws.html>.*

If you don't find a marriage record in the expected county, check adjacent counties, including adjacent counties across state borders. During different time periods elopement has been popular, especially from the 1920's through the 1940's. Elopement across state borders was not uncommon, particularly if one's home state required blood tests and/or fees and a border state did not, or if a clerk in a particular location was known to turn a blind eye to an underage bride or groom. West Virginians in the northeastern counties often eloped to Maryland, and those in the western counties eloped to Kentucky, usually to Catlettsburg in Boyd County. Those along the northern Ohio River border of West Virginia may have eloped across the nearest bridge. Those in the southeast may have gone to Pearisburg in Giles

County, Virginia.

If you do not find the person you are seeking in a marriage index, be sure to check both the Groom (Direct) index and the Bride (Reverse) index. If one of the names was recorded incorrectly or just differently than you expect, you have a second chance to locate the record.

When searching a bride index, keep in mind that the marriage you seek may not have been the bride's first. If you don't find the bride, and you know the name of the groom, check out any entries with a close match to the groom's name. If you don't know the groom's name, you may have to check the full record of all entries with the same first name as the bride for the time period in question.

If the bride has been married before, search for both her past married name(s) and her original maiden name for a subsequent marriage. Women sometimes resumed use of their maiden names after a divorce, but

much less often in widowhood, and very rarely in early times. Women who had children with a previous husband may have reverted to that married name in order to have the same surname as the children.

The amount of information included in a license application and the marriage record can vary widely from county to county and from time period to time period. The earliest records generally are marriage returns, giving only the names of the bride and groom and the date married. Information for brides and grooms that may be found in marriage records: birthplace (county, state or country), residence (usually town or county), age (not birth date), race, names of parents, and, for the groom, occupation. The name of the person who performed the marriage and the location of the marriage are commonly given. There may be an entry stating that the bride's parent or guardian gave

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Two Ways to Find Elusive Genealogy or Local History Books

We frequently receive requests for assistance in locating out-of-print, limited edition or privately printed books on family history, county or community history, and other books of interest to researchers. Most are seeking a copy to purchase, but often can not locate the title in the used book market. The September 26, 2007, issue of *RootsWeb Review*, Volume 10, Number 39, includes articles on two sources of such material. *Books We Own* is a RootsWeb site at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~bwo> that is a searchable list of genealogical books owned by volunteers who are willing to perform look-ups for others. Most do not charge for electronically transmitted material, but will charge for copy costs and postage for regular photocopies sent by mail. Tips for submitting look-ups and instructions

for becoming a volunteer contributor are included. [Editor's Note: You can read the full articles of this issue and search archived issues of *RootsWeb Review* at <http://e-zine.rootsweb.com/>.]

The second source is a commercial site called America's Book CDs, <http://www.abcd-usa.com>. The site offers for sale CDs made by scanning rare books published before 1923 (to avoid copyright issues). Both genealogical and historical titles are included. Although the site currently does not have West Virginia, Virginia or Kentucky titles, there are books for Ohio and Pennsylvania, gazetteers and atlases, histories of specific families, as well as books on such topics as the Civil War. Prices range from \$14.95 to \$35.95 per CD.

Quick Guide to West Virginia Marriage Records

- Inception of each county to present:** records available in each county, as limited by the specific history of record keeping, courthouse disasters and Civil War era disruption that resulted in loss of records or failure to report marriages. Originals are in the county courthouses, with a few original records located in the West Virginia University West Virginia and Regional History Collection. County records microfilmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah (GSU), available in the West Virginia Archives and History Library and elsewhere, generally include marriages up to the date of filming, usually 1968 to 1971. Uncertified and certified copies of records may be obtained from the relevant county clerk. Certified copies of marriage applications from 1964 to the present may be obtained from the West Virginia Dept. of Health Vital Registration Office.
- 1853–1860:** some duplicate county records are preserved on Library of Virginia microfilm, available in the Archives and History Library and elsewhere.
- 1921–1991:** annual index of marriages by bride (except 1936, 1937 and 1938) and by groom, compiled by the West Virginia Dept. of Health Vital Registration Office, available for public searching on microfilm in the West Virginia Archives and History Library. The index is useful for finding the date and county of a marriage so the actual record can be located in county records. *Ignore the book and page numbers cited in the index itself, since those refer to a state record project that was abandoned.*
- 1964 to present:** certified copies of applications for marriage licenses for marriages performed in West Virginia are available through the West Virginia Dept. of Health Vital Registration Office. For more information visit <http://www.wvdhhr.org/bph/oehp/hsc/vr/birtcert.htm> or call (304) 558-2931.

written or oral permission prior to the marriage, or was present at the marriage. Sometimes the actual permission note is tucked in or attached to the marriage record document or ledger.

Marriage transcription books are probably the most common printed genealogical resource available for any given county, usually with indexes for bride and groom. If the county record does not have an index or, more commonly, does not have a bride index, look for transcription books for that county's marriage records. Also, if you don't know what

county to search, you can check the index books of several counties very quickly in a good library collection, narrowing down the number of counties requiring more time-consuming searches of microfilmed records. One warning—do not assume that a transcription book contains the full record for every entry. Some transcribers choose to present only the names of the bride and groom and the date of marriage, while the actual marriage record may contain additional information. Always check the original record.

Almost all records prior to the 1930's were handwritten, with the percentage of typed records increasing in the 20th century until becoming a large majority by 1950. If you find a typed record for the years prior to 1900 in particular, chances are that an efficient county clerk made a typed copy of the original handwritten record, perhaps indexing the names alphabetically or grouping the marriage by alphabet and by year. (Note that handwritten copies were made on occasion, too.) Sometimes the original handwritten book has been microfilmed as well.

Hopefully it has been retained in the courthouse if needed for reference, but it may no longer exist. If you are looking at a typed record that appears to be a transcription of an earlier record and you can not find the person you seek, or if you have a question about the entry as typed, you may be able to request a search of the original book or a photocopy of the original page from the courthouse. There have been instances of skipped lines, omitted information or typing errors in transcribed records that can be resolved by viewing the original.

While the typed transcriptions of county records included in the *Historical Records Survey* made by employees of the WPA (Work Projects Administration) Historic Markers Commission in the 1930's and 1940's are full of typographic and other errors, they still serve a purpose. If the county record you need from that time period is illegible or missing, whether it is an entire ledger or a single page, check the WPA transcript as well. The Archives and History Library holds notebooks of typed onionskin paper copies in its Special Collections, and makes bound photocopies available for browsing by the public. These transcriptions are an especially helpful resource for counties that experienced flooding and water leaks; improper handling by staff or the public; misguided attempts at preservation involving lamination or tape; less than desirable storage conditions (temperature extremes, mice, mold);

etc., that accelerated deterioration of ink and paper or otherwise obscured legibility. There is also the simple fact that ink that may have faded 150 years after being applied to a page was probably much more legible only 80 years after use. Unfortunately, in addition to losses due to natural disasters, wartime conflict or neglect, records have been stolen over the years by unscrupulous researchers who have ripped out ledger pages or tucked loose documents into notebooks or pockets.

Copies of county marriage records may be obtained from the county courthouse, or from the microfilmed county records found in the Archives and History Library as well as many other libraries and organizations. Some county marriage records have been digitized from microfilm and included in the West Virginia Vital Research Records (WVRR) searchable database available free online on the West Virginia Archives and History Web site at http://www.wvculture.org/vrr/va_select.aspx. *There are no plans to include any West Virginia state marriage certificates in the WVRR database.*

If you need a legally certified, raised-seal record, you must obtain it from the issuing agency—either from the appropriate county clerk or, for marriages from 1964 to the present only, from the county clerk or the Dept. of Health Vital Registration Office. The Archives and History Library will certify pages as true copies from

the microfilm for genealogical and historical purposes only, for a fee of \$2.50 per page. Notary services are available on a case by case basis.

PERSI™ Updated for 2007

The Periodical Source Index (PERSI™) is a subject index to genealogy and local history periodicals published in North America and the British Isles. The Index is produced by the Allen County Public Library Foundation in association with the Fort Wayne branch of the Allen County (Indiana) Public Library, one the foremost genealogy libraries in the United States. The 2007 edition was loaded on HeritageQuestOnline .com in September. According to *Genealogy Gems: News from the Fort Wayne Library*, No. 53, September 30, 2007, PERSI™ now contains 2,028,494 article citations from 6,652 periodical titles. Search categories include People, Places, “How to’s” and Periodicals. The “How to’s” category allows searching for articles about research methodologies by entering one or more key words, by selecting a specific record type from a dropdown box, or a combination of both. Once you have found an article, you can locate the periodical on your own, or you can order a copy of the article by mail from the Allen County Public Library Foundation. The Foundation accepts requests for a maximum of six articles per letter for a \$7.50 per letter pre-paid fee, plus \$.20 per page photocopied that will be billed. [Editor’s Note: Heritage QuestOnline is a subscription Web site available free of charge to patrons of the West Virginia Archives and History Library in The Cultural Center in Charleston. Remote access is not available. Some of the periodicals indexed in PERSI™ are available in the Archives and History Library.]

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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.

**MINING YOUR HISTORY FOUNDATION WORKSHOPS,
November 3: CANCELLED.**

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION TRAINING SESSION, November 3:
Presented by the State Historic Preservation Office and the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia,
Randolph County Community Arts Center, Elkins.

FRONTIER DAYS AT MUSEUM IN THE PARK, November 3-4:
Chief Logan State Park, Logan.

**“JAMES MORTON CALLAHAN,” A LECTURE BY PROFESSOR
JACK HAMMERSMITH, November 6:** The Norman L. Fagan West Virginia State Theater,
The Cultural Center, Charleston.

**MINING YOUR HISTORY FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING ONLY,
November 10:** The Cultural Center, Charleston.

**GOODBYE, MISS FOURTH OF JULY, FILM SHOWING WITH SPECIAL GUEST,
CHRISTOPHER JANUS, November 10:** Sponsored by the West Virginia Labor History Association
and the Charleston Museum, Labelle Theater, South Charleston.

VETERANS DAY, November 12: Archives Library will be open.*

THANKSGIVING DAY, November 22: Archives Library will be *closed*.

THANKSGIVING FRIDAY, November 23: Archives Library will be open.*

THANKSGIVING SATURDAY, November 24: Archives Library will be open.*

“USING A SCANNER FOR FAMILY HISTORY,” December 6: Pam Gibson, presenter,
The West Virginia Archives and History Library, The Cultural Center, Charleston.

CHRISTMAS EVE, December 24: Archives Library will *close at 1:00 p.m.*

CHRISTMAS DAY, December 25: Archives Library will be *closed*.

NEW YEAR’S EVE, December 31: Archives Library will *close at 1:00 p.m.*

NEW YEAR’S DAY, January 1, 2008: Archives Library will be *closed*.

**“EARLY WEST VIRGINIA ART HISTORY,” A LECTURE BY PROFESSOR
JOHN CUTHBERT, January 15, 2008:** The Norman L. Fagan West Virginia State Theater,
The Cultural Center, Charleston.

**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.*

Historic Landmark Commission Training Offered

The West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), in collaboration with the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia (PAWV), is offering a historic landmark commission training session on Saturday, November 3. The free session will be held at the Randolph County Community Arts Center in Elkins from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Members of historic landmark commissions, interested government officials and the general public are encouraged to attend. The program will include certified local government designation, available grants, National Register nominations, local historic district

designations, financial incentives, and tax credits.

This training session is the first of several regional workshops for historic landmark commissions throughout the state. Anyone interested in sponsoring a workshop should contact Chris Knorr, certified

local government coordinator for SHPO at (304) 558-0240, or by e-mail at chris.knorr@wvculture.org. Registration is requested for the Elkins session and can be made by contacting Martha Ballman of PAWV at (304) 345-6005, or by e-mail at mballman@pawv.org.

Calendar of Events

“ABRAHAM LINCOLN,” A LECTURE BY PROFESSOR KEVIN BARKSDALE, February 12, 2008:

The Norman L. Fagan West Virginia State Theater,
 The Cultural Center, Charleston.

HISTORY DAY, February 21, 2008:

The Capitol Complex, Charleston.

“CIVIL WAR,” A LECTURE BY PROFESSOR PETER CARMICHAEL, February 25, 2008:

The Norman L. Fagan West Virginia State Theater,
 The Cultural Center, Charleston.

**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.

Archives and History News is available on the Archives and History Web site
<http://www.wvculture.org/history/ahn-news/ahnnews.html>

Six Million Military Personnel Files Now Open

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has opened over six million records in the individual Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs) of Army, Army Air Corps, Army Air Forces, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard military personnel who served and were discharged, retired or died while in the service, prior to 1946. The NPRC will continue over time to open its entire paper and microfiche collection of more than 57 million OMPFs, until the entire collection is opened by 2067. A typical OMPF contains documents outlining all elements of military service, including assignments, evaluations, awards and decorations, education and training, demographic information, some medical information and documented disciplinary actions. Records may also

include photographs of the individual and any official correspondence related to military service.

To view an original record, patrons may visit the NPRC Archival Research Room in St. Louis, MO, and are strongly encouraged to make reservations by phone at (314) 801-0850. To obtain copies of records, write to NPRC, 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63132; fax a request to (314) 801-9195; submit a request through eVetRecs at <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs/index.html>; or use Standard Form 180 available at <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/standard-form-180.html>. The fee schedule for OMPFs is \$15 for five pages or less; \$50 for six pages or more (most files are in

this category); and \$.75 per page for files of “Persons of Exceptional Prominence” (famous individuals such as former Presidents, famous military leaders, decorated military heroes, celebrities, entertainers, and professional athletes) who served in the military and have been deceased at least ten years.

Information about all records available at NPRC can be found at <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/public/archival-programs.html>. Archived records are subject to a limited privacy exemption under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, with all records reviewed prior to release and Social Security numbers removed.

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West Virginia
Archives & History
NEWS



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.

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This newsletter is a publication of : The West Virginia Division of Culture and History
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