



West Virginia Historical Society

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**“Honest, I couldn’t make
this stuff up.”**

By
Kenneth R. Bailey

Kenneth R. Bailey is editor of the *Quarterly*, and retired Dean of the College of Business, Humanities and Sciences at WVU Tech in Montgomery, WV.

While doing research in a variety of newspapers over the years, it has been a special pleasure to read articles about life in the 1800s and early 1900s. Recently, a number of very interesting items have been uncovered, several of which I wish to share with readers of the *Quarterly*.

(Note: After the invention of the automobile, but before mass production and financing put automobiles in

virtually every American family, there was a period of social adjustment to living with automobiles. In many ways, they were a novelty and had yet to be taken seriously. They were also put on the streets with horses and horse drawn vehicles, creating some hazardous situations. However, slowly but surely, a new, mechanized world came into being.)

The Charleston Mail
September 8, 1909

**RIGHTS OF
PEDESTRIANS PUT
IN JEOPARDY BY
FAST DRIVING**

Numerous complaints have been made to the Mail by some of the leading citizens of Charleston of the laxity of the city officials in enforcing

the laws relating to the speed of vehicles and the obstruction of the city's highways.

Automobiles, motor cycles, buggies and other vehicles are allowed to exceed the speed limit without interference on a number of streets in the city, while the streets and sidewalks are blocked in the vicinity of new buildings under the process of construction.

Another objectionable nuisance in Charleston, which is seen in but few cities, is the riding of bicycles on the sidewalks of the city by numerous people without being molested by the officers who are supposed to enforce the law. The rights of pedestrians in Charleston have been safeguarded by law but the officers are not prone to enforce these ordinances.

In some of the residence sections of the city drivers of vehicles are also annoyed by children, in a spirit of bravado and daring, running out in front of an approaching vehicle and then jumping away in time to escape injury. This is a matter that should be promptly attended to by the parent, and without any delay.

The Charleston Mail,
September 2, 1909

**“CHARLESTON
AUTOISTS
TO GO TO
PARKERSBURG”**

A goodly number of automobile men in this section and their friends are preparing to spend Labor Day in Parkersburg as visitor to the automobile meet. This event will be the first of the kind in West Virginia and will be a most important one among automobile men. Some very celebrated drivers will participate. The trophies and different awards have been made substantial enough to attract the best speed in the profession.

The track at Shattuck Park in Parkersburg is admirably adapted for automobile racing. At least 10,000 people are expected, and as the proceeds will be given for good roads, there is being shown an active interest by most everybody in the state who can get away on that day.

The Automobile Club of Parkersburg, under whose auspices the event is to be given, will no doubt realize handsomely, and their contribution of the proceeds for good roads will be a very important step in this direction.

The Charleston Mail
May 20, 1908

**MUSHROOM SAILORS
WORN BY AUTOISTS**

**Made of Patent Leather, They Are
Now The Smart Thing**

The big patent leather mushroom sailor is the smart thing for automobiles. It is trimmed only with a band and a hat box, such as are worn on pumps of patent leather.

Small, close fitting hats and poke bonnets are especially appropriate for motoring. These are simply trimmed with a small cluster of blossoms or fruit and bows of soft ribbon.

Heavy chiffon veils the colors of the hat are in good style. These are arranged on the hat so that they may be easily thrown back over the face or removed altogether if necessary. They are finished with a plain hem, rather wide, or have hemstitched ends.

Fine mesh net veils finished with wide lace ends are very smart, but do not protect the fact from dust and winds as effectively as the chiffon ones do.

A black straw braid hat with high crown and narrow brim in front, the back cut out in a semi-circle to allow for the masses of hair at nape of neck, is

trimmed with a wide, soft scarf of Adriatic blue satin around the crown and huge bow at the side.

A veil of chiffon of the same tone of blue is attached to the hat, sufficiently wide to fall down over the neck at back. The long ends are wound around the throat and tied in a loose knot under the chin.

(Note: Though automobiles were becoming common place, horse riding was still newsworthy.)

The Charleston Mail
July 31, 1909

**CLENDENNIN (sic) DON'T
FORBID LADIES RIDING
ASTRIDE**

“Recorder of Town Declared with Tears in His Eyes it is Not so, and Intimates He Wouldn't Have Recorded so Unchivalric (sic) an Ordinance if it Had been Passed”

The Clendenin Herald denies the statement that the Clendenin council has forbidden women to ride horseback astride in that classic town. It says: “It was stated in a recent issue of the Charleston Mail that the city council of this town had passed an ordinance forbidding women to ride horseback astride in the corporate limits of this town, that the side

saddles were cast to the four winds and the children using them for hobby horses, while the fair sex were riding men's saddles, with whip and spur, that they could manage the most fiery steed, mustang pony or mule or any old animal with no trouble, but the council had decided to stop the whole business and compel these equestrians to ride in the old way, viz: with both their feet hanging down on the same side of the horse.

The Herald was very much interested in this matter - as every man no doubt is - and called on the city recorder to know if such an ordinance had passed, or even been thought of. The common - or uncommon council - of town, will have many sins to atone for, but never will they pass any such an ordinance as this. Never! Never! No man in the world has any kick coming about which side of the horse the ladies' feet are on when they are riding. Our city recorder explained with tears in his eyes that he did not want to sacrifice his good name with the fair sex by recording an ordinance that would deprive them of their rights; that not one of the common council has any objections to the fair sex riding as they wish; that whoever gave this information to the Mail was jealous of the good name of the common (?) council among the women.

“Thus we are glad to say, the common council passed no such ordinance, we do not need such an ordinance, do not want it, and would not have it.”

(Note: On June 8, 1909, the Charleston City Council approved an ordinance forbidding the sale of liquor in Charleston from July 1, 1909 until June 30, 1910. As the city scrambled to cope with the sudden change in lifestyle, several interesting articles appeared in the local newspapers. The temperance movement in West Virginia, as in the rest of the United States, grew until prohibitions on manufacture and sale of intoxicating beverages and liquors were enacted. West Virginia's temperance groups failed to enact a Constitutional prohibition amendment in 1888, but succeeded in 1912. The state was “dry” until 1933)

The Charleston Mail
August 7, 1909

**BOTTLE OF GINGER ALE
MADE MAN TURN
HANDSPRINGS**

‘Vendor of Magic Fluid Gets Fine of \$200 and 30 Days Behind the Bars - - He has Appealed His Case’

Chick Hunley drew a fine of \$200 and a sentence of 30 days in jail from Police Judge A. D. MacCorkle Saturday morning in police court when the court found him guilty of selling whiskey without getting a

license from Billy Wertz and the other members of the city council.

Chick, it was contended by the city officials, sold his whiskey wrapped up in a bottle of ginger ale, but continued nibbling at the ginger ale bottle made one old fellow kick up his heels and try to turn handsprings. As a result, Chick was taken in tow and drew the \$200 assessment this morning. He appealed his case to the intermediate court.

The Charleston Mail
August 7, 1909

**“WOMAN MOONSHINER
PICKED UP IN LOGAN”**

Huntington, W. Va., Aug 7 - Deputy United States marshals are again operating up the Guyan valley and rounding up numerous moonshiners and illicit retailers for the meeting of the federal court in this city next month. Deputy Marshal Brockmeyer located a notorious female moonshiner near Chapmanville, Logan county, yesterday and will probably arrest her today. She has been handling a large quantity of the fluid recently and will have to answer to Uncle Sam for it.

The Charleston Mail
August 16, 1909

**“BOOZE EASY TO GET
IN THE CITY OF
CHARLESTON TODAY”**

‘Fourteen Jags in Police Court this Morning - Evidence that The Golden Brew is Sold Openly, Copiously and Defiantly - Jagsters Say they Can’t Tell Beer from Malt - Effects Testify.’

Charleston is the mecca (sic) of vendors engaged in the illegal traffic of intoxicating liquors. The capital city, the largest city of the state, with its diversity of interest and homogeneous citizenship, refuses to stay dry in spite of the edict of the council and the abolition of licensed saloons.

At the present time, six weeks after the licensed sale of intoxicants had been prohibited by the city council, liquor and beer are being sold in Charleston without regard for law. The participants in the illegal trafficking are not discriminating. They do not choose their customers but any one having the price of a drink can secure the same at most any of the temperance saloons.

‘Fourteen Drunks at Police Court’

As proof of the fact that the liquor traffic is now in the hands of a bad class of citizens, who care not for law or order, the blotter in police court

Monday morning showed fourteen cases of drunkenness out of a total of 17 cases.

Saturday night was a saturnalia of vice throughout the city and the Sabbath was little better. On Saturday night drunk men paraded the streets. The few police on duty were active and made many arrests, but were powerless to contend with the huge wave of drunkenness.

When Police Judge MacCorkle stepped upon the bench this morning he saw his courtroom crowded with desperate looking characters, many of whom were interested in the cases at bar in an effort to learn what information would be given to the court by the numerous drunks.

'The Judge's Admonition'

Judge MacCorkle, after administering the oath to each witness, made a very impressive talk to the defendant, in which he stated that he realized it was the desire of the buyer to protect the seller at all hazards, but this burden was lifted when the defendant took the oath to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The main duty of a citizen, the court expressed it, was to the courts of the land, for the crime of perjury was far worse than that of intoxication and the punishment more severe. Invariably, Judge MacCorkle closed his talk with "Where did you get that liquor?"

"Witnesses are Not Clear"

By the elimination of several defendants who were charged with being drunk and whom Judge MacCorkle and City Solicitor Higginbotham questioned closely in an effort to ascertain who were (sic) dispensing the wet goods, it was feared there was a material conflict in the opinion of the witnesses as to the effect of the alleged malt upon the human being.

While one of the defendants declared it to be nothing more nor less than beer, for it tasted like beer, smelled like beer, made the head weary and the legs wobbly, others declared it to be a very poor substitute which lacked that invigorating tone which characterizes Budweiser.

It developed, however, that malt, which is akin to beer, is being sold throughout the city and whether it is of that nature to cause intoxication depends largely upon the witness. In many instances the witness had mixed his drinks with some liquor which had been secured from friends at Montgomery and the mixture of the two were responsible for the jag which resulted.

(Editor's note: Newspaper editorials have always allowed the free expression of the editor's feelings on a number of topics. Usually, especially if there are a number of editorial writers, it is difficult to know whose opinion is being expressed. The following editorial appeared in the *Cabell County Press* at a time when the editor was George A. Creel and is likely his work.)

CABELL COUNTY PRESS
July 1, 1873

**HANGING AS A MEANS
 OF SALVATION**

The confessions of murderers from the gallows that they are ready to die - that they feel that although they have committed the most heinous crimes that they are satisfied their sins are pardoned, and that when the rope performs its important office of sending the soul into the realms of an unknown world that their happy spirits will proceed to an everlasting abode of peace and happiness, we must confess, seriously puzzles our philosophy.

It is of an almost everyday occurrence that we read in the newspapers an account of the taking off of some villainous (sic) scoundrel whose hands have been imbrued in the life-blood of some innocent, unoffending human being. Must we believe that a few days of penance and psalm singing

are sufficient to wipe out the crime that has been fastened on him probably after exhausting ever (sic) effort to cheat the gallows out of its victim? And when there is no further hope he solicits the aid of the clergy and assumes the importance of an injured martyr and tells the public to meet him "in Heaven!" It is preposterous. (Word is undecipherable) people we should think would rather decline the invitation.

Our idea of Heaven is that it is the abode of the just - the home of those who have served God faithfully and honestly here below - of those who have observed the commandments and otherwise performed the offices of the christian (sic).

How any sane mind could believe that the gallows had any part in peopling that pure and holy region we fail to see.

Then let us have less of it. And when a man's offence calls for such condign punishment for the sake of reason, common sense and decency, let us have no more dying exhortation from that class of people. They are in very bad taste, in themselves sacriligious (sic) and the emanations only of a crazed intellect.

(Note: Also from the Cabell County Press, is this interesting note about the problems associated with tobacco. The article does not identify the "deleterious effects" of nicotine and

leaves the reader to wonder what effects had been observed.)

CABELL COUNTY PRESS
November 1, 1869

Good news for the users of the weed. - Chemistry has discovered, from time to time, different substances capable of rendering innocuous the nicotine contained in tobacco, so that the human family may partake of the luxury of using the same without suffering severely from its injurious effects. One of this has been the moistening of a sponge with a strong solution of tannin and placing it in the bottom of the pipe, thus neutralizing the effects of, and forming a nearly insoluble compound with the nicotine. We find that M. Armand has discovered another and very simple remedy to the same purpose. We quote from the *Comptus Rendus* the account of this valuable discovery:

“The author proposes that the deleterious effects of the use of tobacco should be counteracted, if not entirely annihilated, by moistening it while undergoing the various preparations and fermentations previous to its delivery to the consumer, with a strong infusion, or other preparation of water cresses, since the author has discovered that this vegetable contains principles, which without destroying the peculiar aroma of tobacco, destroy the deleterious effects of nicotine.

(Note: Charleston frequently hosted visits from national figures who were campaigning or making speeches in the city. The following is an article following the visit in 1909 of William Jennings Bryan)

The Charleston Gazette
October 23, 1908

**TWO SHOTS FIRED
 AT PAVEMENT**

‘John Salisbury Wanted to
 share in Bryan
 demonstration’

John Salisbury and his big gun came near causing a panic in front of the Office Café on Capitol street (sic) yesterday afternoon. Salisbury was celebrating as best he knew how, Bryan’s visit to Charleston. With his gun, as well as himself, loaded to the brim, he had started down the street and knowing that noise was one of the best signs of political enthusiasm, he whipped out his weapon and fired point blank at the pavement. Fortunately nobody was hurt but the crowd, fearing that Salisbury might turn loose on them, started in all directions, women screaming and children crying.

Cy Stephenson rushed up and took Salisbury by the arm and led him

out into the street, to get him away from the crowd, but Salisbury wanted some more enthusiasm and he fired again at the pavement, this time puncturing one of his own fingers. Several men grabbed Salisbury by this time and he was laid out on the street, helpless. The police took him to the city lock-up and this morning he will have to explain his conduct to Judge MacCorkle.

(Note: Though nearly a hundred years have passed since the above articles appeared in the newspaper, and we can find them amusing, it is probably wise to note that careful reading of the current newspapers would lead us to many similar stories. Should we wonder what readers 100 years from now will think of our era?)

NEW BOOK BY TIM MCKINNEY

Tim McKinney, a noted Civil War historian and past president of the WVHS, has recently published *The Civil War in Greenbrier County, West Virginia*. This is a fine volume which is the first to provide a full history of four years of warfare in this southern West Virginia County. The book is available from Pictorial Histories Distribution, 1125 Central Avenue, Charleston WV 25302 (888-982-7472) or on line at www.wvbookco.com.

Library History Published

Also recently published was *Kanawha County Public Library, A History (Including biographical sketches)* by Kenneth R. Bailey. This book traces the history of library from its creation in 1909 to 2004 and includes biographical sketches of KCPL board members and members of the Garnet Library Board of Directors. The Garnet Library was a library branch created exclusively for black residents of Charleston between 1926 and 1954. The book is available from The Library Foundation of Kanawha County, Inc., 123 Capitol Street, Charleston WV 25301 (304-343-4646)

CALL FOR PAPERS

The editor of the West Virginia Historical Society *Quarterly*, is seeking submissions for consideration for inclusion in future editions. Articles on historical subject or genealogy will be considered. Articles of any length are welcome and should be submitted to Editor, WVHS *Quarterly*, Box 5220, Charleston WV 25361-0220.

RENOVATIONS UNDERWAY AT CULTURAL CENTER

Renovations needed for the recreation of the State Museum have been underway for several months in the Cultural Center. While this work will be continuing for several months, those who wish to visit and use the Archives and History library are still able to access the materials. The Archives library is open Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and from 9:00 to 5:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. The Archives staff continues to work on many state holidays and the library is open when most other state offices are closed. To check on availability during upcoming holiday periods, contact the Archives library at 304-558-0220.

TIME TO RENEW

**If the date on your label is earlier than January 1, 2005, it is time for you to renew your membership in the West Virginia Historical Society.
(For international mail, please add \$5.00)**

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