



West Virginia Historical Society

Volume XXVIII, No. 1, SPRING 2014

Visit us on the web at
www.wvculture.org/history/wvhssoc.html

**Chapman Revercomb: West Virginia's
Last GOP Senator**
By
Michael K. Wilson

Michael Wilson is the Senior Historian and Cultural Resources Manager at Moreland Altobelli Associates, Inc., a full-service transportation consulting firm headquartered in Norcross, Georgia. Prior to relocating to the metro Atlanta area, Wilson was the longtime Senior Historian with the West Virginia Division of Highways.

Following Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito's announcement last year of her intended run for the United States Senate, many political observers had to search the history books to determine West Virginia's last Republican senator. Since 1956 the Mountain State has witnessed Republicans Arch Moore and Cecil Underwood elected or re-elected to the governor's office five times. In that same period, six different Republicans have served West Virginia in the United States House of Representatives. When Capito and David McKinley won their congressional seats in 2010, it was the first time in twenty-eight years that two Republicans held seats at the same time and marked the first time in sixty-two years that Republicans controlled West Virginia's House delegation, although it was split evenly from 1981 to 1983 when the state still had four seats. In presidential politics, West Virginia has become so GOP-dominant that, during the 2004, 2008, and 2012 campaigns, the major nominees did not spend significant time or resources to contest the state. Recent election results have shown Repub-

licans winning the office of attorney general, seats on the Supreme Court of Appeals, and additional seats in the House of Delegates; however, since



Chapman Revercomb. West Virginia State Archives

1959, the bastion of power in the West Virginia Democratic Party has been the continuous control of the state's two seats in the United States Senate. Not since Robert Byrd and Jennings Randolph claimed both seats in the 1958 election has a Republican from the state been able to acquire membership in the exclusive club. In fact, most West Virginians probably cannot identify the last Republican to serve in the United States Senate. Chapman Revercomb was not only the last Republican to do so, but he did

it twice, serving first a full term from 1943 to 1949 and then an unexpired term from November 1956 to January 1959. While fellow Republican John D. Hoblitzell Jr. would serve in the Senate with him for most of 1958, Hoblitzell had been appointed to the seat following the death of Matthew M. Neely and had to relinquish it upon the election of Jennings Randolph on November 7, 1958, leaving Revercomb as the sole Republican to finish the 85th Congress.

The courtly, white-haired man who longtime Associated Press reporter Herb Little said “could have played United States senator roles in movies if he had not been one in real life” was born William Chapman Revercomb in Covington, Virginia, on July 20, 1895. His father, George Anderson Revercomb, was an attorney in Covington and his mother was the former Elizabeth Chapman.¹ The Revercomb family had at least five children—four boys, including Chapman, and one girl—that survived to adulthood.² Young Chapman followed his father into law after attending the local public schools, where he was a high school football and baseball player. He later went to Washington and Lee University and played football as a freshman before giving it up to focus on academics.³ After taking time off to serve as an army corporal during World War I, he earned his law degree from the University of Virginia.⁴ Following admission to the bar in 1919, he practiced law with his father in Covington until 1922, when he moved to Charleston and joined a practice with Arthur Koontz, Pat Koontz, and Frank Hurlbutt. Early in his career, he served as the court-appointed defense counsel for criminal cases. For years, he entertained small groups telling humorous stories concerning the cases, many of which involved moonshiners.

The law partnership with the Koontzs and Hurlbutt lasted until 1936, at which time Revercomb decided to form his own practice in the Kanawha Valley Bank building. Going into business during the Depression did not offer good prospects, but he succeeded. He said, “I always worked hard and tried to attend to the business of my clients.” The focus of his work was civil law with an occasional criminal case, practicing in all the local and state courts and at least once before the United States Supreme Court. The Supreme Court case, he once said, was one of his most interesting and involved the Dravo Contracting Company. Revercomb explained the

case in a 1975 interview:

It [Dravo] built the locks and dams up and down the [Kanawha] river here, and the case was whether or not the state could tax it. We argued that it was an instrument of the federal government and could not be taxed, and it went on for two years. We tried it before the Supreme Court with that one. We lost it, but it was one of the more interesting cases I tried.

In all, Revercomb would practice law for approximately forty-nine years.⁵

It was during his early days as an attorney that his personal life changed, beginning with his marriage to the former Sara Hughes of Ashland, Virginia, in 1925. Chapman and Sara had four children: Bill, the oldest, became a Charleston doctor; George became a federal judge in Washington, D.C.; Anne married N. R. Graney and lived in Mount Hope; and James, the youngest, became a Roanoke, Virginia, businessman.⁶

Besides starting a new firm in 1936, Revercomb was named the chairman of the state judicial convention and also made his first attempt for political office, entering the 1936 Republican primary for governor. He finished third in a five-candidate field, but the fact that he got his name out to the public would pay dividends in the future.

Revercomb was ready to collect on those dividends in 1942. In 1940, United States Senator Matthew M. Neely had given up his seat and was elected governor after being pressured by the Democratic leadership to run for the office, which caused a fracture in the party machinery. Now, after two years in the governor’s mansion, Neely wanted to reclaim his seat. Before facing off with Neely, however, Revercomb had to survive a tough Republican primary. “Survive” might be the key word, as Revercomb hung on to defeat Raymond J. Funkhouser, an Eastern Panhandle businessman, by a mere 124 votes.⁷

Matthew Neely was a colossus in West Virginia politics. By the time his career ended, he had served in the United States House of Representatives for a decade, a term as governor, and more than twenty-five years in the United States Senate. A New Deal Democrat, Neely had supported Roosevelt policies throughout the 1930s, had long enjoyed the backing of organized labor, and possessed many more resources than Revercomb.

Revercomb made up for the lack of funds and political machine by going to the people. *Charleston Daily Mail* associate editor Bob Mellace once wrote of Revercomb:

Mr. Revercomb worked harder at meeting West Virginians and talking to them than any of his contemporaries, or those who have followed him on the political scene since his departure a few years ago. He did it from the pre-dawn hours to long after dark, and at a killing pace. As long as there was a voter in sight who wanted to talk, Chapman Revercomb was never too tired to listen. One of my favorite stories of the senator in action was a scene in Preston County in the fall, with woods a riot of colors and full of squirrel hunters. He saw some of them as we drove along Route 50, stopped the car and took off up the hill after them, leaving behind a lot of people who were trying to keep him on schedule. But he caught the hunters, let them know who he was, and asked for their vote.⁸

“When we were on the road all across West Virginia, campaigning, he was the most indefatigable man you ever saw,” another witness of his energy and campaign skill said. “He could go from early morning to late at night, one stop after another and speaking to one group and another, travel several hours by car and then speak to another group, and seem as fresh as when he started.”⁹

Perhaps it was this relentless personal campaigning, the fact that the split in the state Democratic Party from the 1940 gubernatorial primary had not yet healed, or the voters’ belief that a sitting governor should not desert a job to which he had been elected only two years before. Regardless of the reasons, when the final tally came in, Revercomb had pulled off one of the biggest upsets in state history, winning by nearly fifty thousand votes and taking forty-four of the fifty-five counties.¹⁰

When Revercomb was sworn in as a member of the United States Senate on January 3, 1943, his fellow Republicans included Robert Taft of Ohio, the grandson of the former president and chief justice; the powerful Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan; Robert La Follette Jr. of Wisconsin; and the Republican leader Wallace White of Maine. Across the aisle the Democrats included future vice president and president Harry Truman of Missouri; Truman’s future vice president, Majority Leader

Alben Barkley from Kentucky; Richard Russell of Georgia; and Revercomb’s West Virginia colleague, Harley Kilgore from Beckley.

In his insightful *A Senate Journal, 1943-1945*, United Press reporter Allen Drury described Revercomb as “the handsome gentleman from West Virginia who bears the romantic name of Chapman Revercomb” and as “stocky of body, handsome of face, liquid of voice.”¹¹ Such descriptions would be used to describe him for the remainder of his life.

Revercomb was assigned to the committees on Military Affairs, Privileges and Elections, and Public Works. The placement on Public Works would prove to be beneficial in the future as West Virginia attempted to obtain funding for infrastructure projects such as roads and the airport in Charleston now known as Yeager Airport.

From the outset of his Senate career, Revercomb proved to be conservative, an isolationist, and not a close friend of organized labor. His votes and arguments on these issues show his ideology.

Revercomb stood against various aspects of the United Nations charter, specifically the use of American armed forces, which was debated in the Senate in 1945. He said:

I took an active part in the debate on the United Nations. . . . The charter for the U.N. was originally written so that the U.N. could call up troops of member nations without consulting anyone. I opposed that. It is my firm belief that this country must remain sovereign over its own troops. That is the law today.¹²

His leaning toward isolationism is also evident by his opposition to the Marshall Plan in 1947, which provided aid to war-torn Europe following World War II, in addition to legislation for aid to Turkey and Greece in 1947-1948. The intent of these measures was to provide assistance to the affected regions, not only for humanitarian purposes, but also to fight against growing communist influence. In regard to the Marshall Plan, Revercomb later said, “[The Marshall Plan] was a great giveaway plan that didn’t stop war,” referring to the Korean War that followed in 1950-1953.¹³

Revercomb showed opposition to organized labor as a supporter of the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947. Sponsored by Senator Taft and Representative Fred A. Hartley Jr. of New Jersey, the law restricted the

power and political activities of labor unions. Since the 1937 National Labor Relations Act, labor unions had grown in strength and numbers. In 1946 alone, more than five million American workers had gone on strike. While the unions considered striking to be a legal right, many believed that these work stoppages hindered U.S. Cold War efforts. Taft-Hartley limited striking, outlawed closed shops, gave additional power to the National Labor Relations Board, and required unions to submit affidavits stating that they had no association with the Communist Party. Following congressional passage, Truman, who became president upon Franklin Roosevelt's death in April 1945, vetoed the bill, only to have his veto overridden by Congress. Taft-Hartley would play an important role in the 1948 elections.

Following the 1946 congressional elections, however, the GOP was firmly in control, gaining the majority in both the Senate and the House. Senator White now became the majority leader and Revercomb became the chairman of the Public Works Committee, even giving up his seat on Military Affairs to devote more time to his new responsibilities.

Chapman Revercomb also became chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization. After the November 1946 elections, the Republican Steering Committee picked Revercomb to prepare an advisory report on displaced persons, those Europeans who had been dislocated by the war or persecution. His report noted the potential economic and political, in particular communistic impact of increased immigration on the United States. Revercomb concluded:

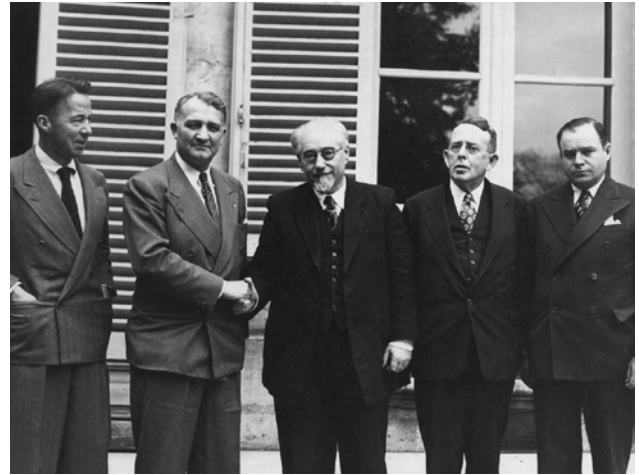
No step should be taken at the price of probable economic or political turmoil in our own midst.

Our position should be taken squarely upon what is best for this country.

This does not mean that we ignore the plight of distressed people anywhere. Their needs should be met with great liberality. But it does mean that we cannot ignore our paramount duty to the people of this country to do what is best for them within the bounds of right and to keep secure the strength and progress of the Nation.¹⁴

Revercomb played an influential role in shaping displaced persons legislation over the next two

years, first, by supporting postponement of congressional action in 1947 while a special committee of which he was a member traveled to Europe to visit camps where those displaced by war were living and, second, by proposing a more restrictive bill in 1948. The resulting legislation, while admitting additional immigrants into the United States, effectively limited the numbers of Jewish and Catholic émigrés admitted because of provisions regarding date of entry into Germany, Austria, or Italy and agricultural employment.¹⁵

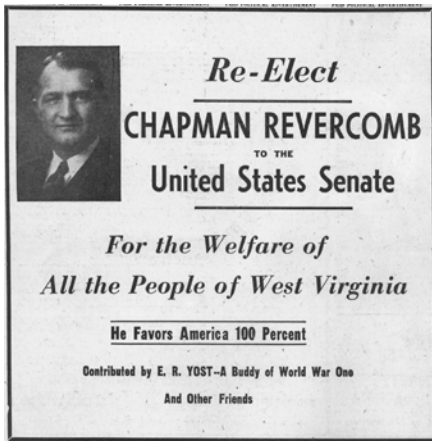


The Senate Judiciary Subcommittee in Paris, France, on October 16, 1947. L-R: Sen. Harry Cain of Washington, Sen. Chapman Revercomb, Prime Minister Paul Ramadier, Sen. Forrest Donnell of Missouri, and Sen. James McGrath of Rhode Island. West Virginia State Archives.

Revercomb's position on the displaced persons legislation was sharply criticized in some quarters, led to accusations of prejudice, and reportedly caused a division between himself and the 1948 Republican presidential candidate, New York Governor Thomas Dewey. Discussion of the Dewey-Revercomb situation was prominent throughout the fall campaign.¹⁶

While Revercomb was in Washington, Neely stayed in Charleston to finish out his term as governor before being elected to the House of Representatives in 1944. He, like many other Democrats, was swept out of office in the 1946 Republican landslide but was ready to reclaim his Senate seat in 1948. Truman went on the offensive during the election season, not only to save his own job but to rid himself of what he referred to as the "Do-nothing" 80th Congress. Organized labor also

mobilized after largely sitting out the 1946 election. These factors contributed to a huge Democratic year with Truman maintaining the presidency in a shocking defeat of Thomas Dewey and the Democrats reclaiming both houses of Congress. Neely defeated Revercomb decisively by more than one hundred thousand votes and taking thirty-nine counties.¹⁷



Revercomb political advertisement from the 1948 campaign. West Virginia State Archives

Following the loss, Revercomb went back to his law practice. He had been knocked down but was not ready to give up politics yet. He attempted to take Kilgore's seat in 1952, ran strong, and was only beaten by a margin of 470,019 to 406,554;¹⁸ however, many began to wonder if he was a one-term phenomenon. He may have had doubts himself, passing up the chance to challenge Neely for his former seat in 1954.

Second chances in politics sometimes arise out of strange circumstances. On February 28, 1956, Harley Kilgore died at Bethesda Naval Hospital. This necessitated a special election for his unexpired term which had two years remaining.

Governor William C. Marland had experienced a controversial administration. Elected in 1952, he stirred up controversy early in his administration when he proposed a severance tax on natural resources, mainly coal. While some in the legislature would have supported the idea, many considered his methods heavy handed. He also had several run-ins with the legislature on other issues and had a strained relationship with both houses, especially the state senate, which refused to confirm several of his appointments. When Kilgore died, Marland appointed tax commissioner William Laird III to the

seat until a more permanent successor, hopefully the governor, was chosen.

Revercomb easily outdistanced a five-candidate primary field that included 1954 GOP senatorial nominee Tom Sweeney of Wheeling and set up a general election contest against Marland. The campaign was hard fought with Marland attacking the Eisenhower Administration and Revercomb embracing it. In the end, 1956 was a Republican year as the Eisenhower-Nixon ticket easily won a second term, thirty-four year old Cecil Underwood became governor, and Revercomb pulled off his second upset by a majority of nearly sixty thousand votes.¹⁹

When Revercomb returned to the Senate in January 1957, many of the faces had changed since his departure eight years earlier. The Republican leader was now William Knowland of California and other new Republican members included Everett Dirksen of Illinois, Barry Goldwater of Arizona, and, from Connecticut, Prescott Bush, the father and grandfather of future presidents. New members on the Democratic side included Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, South Carolinian Strom Thurmond, Henry "Scoop" Jackson of Washington, Revercomb's old nemesis Matthew Neely, and John Kennedy from Massachusetts. The Majority Leader by this time was the powerful Texan Lyndon Johnson.

Revercomb spent most of his second term in the Senate supporting the Eisenhower Administration. One of the major pieces of legislation before Congress in 1957 was the Civil Rights Bill. No significant legislation dealing with the civil rights issue had been passed since Reconstruction. Even though many considered the bill weak, both houses of Congress were the scene of serious debate. At one point, Strom Thurmond filibustered the Senate for a record twenty-four hours and eighteen minutes. When the debate came to an end the House of Representatives passed the bill easily and the Senate followed suit by a vote of 72-18, with opposition coming mostly from the southern Democrats, along with Neely. The Republicans, including Revercomb, voted 43-0 in favor of passage.²⁰ Although an administration supporter, Revercomb, at least once during the debate, felt it necessary to write the president to explain why he had differed from the White House position on an amendment to the bill that dealt with jury trials. In a letter to Eisenhower,

Revercomb wrote that he had acted without “any thought of opposition” to the president, but rather out of his “earnest belief in the use of the jury system whenever the liberty of anyone is at issue in our civil trial courts.” Revercomb concluded by saying, “Be assured of my desire to work with you in the great service you are giving the country.” Eisenhower responded on August 15, 1957:

Thank you very much for what you have to say about your desire to work with the Administration in the development and implementation of programs necessary to our country. Moreover, I appreciate the trouble you took to communicate with me to that effect.

While I cannot agree with your stated position with respect to the jury system—since I am told we have a total of thirty-nine different laws in which this system had no application—I respect of course your right to your own beliefs. Certainly I hope that no other important question will arise where we will be forced into different sides of the argument.²¹

In the end, the Civil Rights Act of 1957 became law with federal judges having the option of hearing cases with or without juries.

The death of Neely on January 18, 1958, while unfortunate, allowed Revercomb to have a Republican colleague from West Virginia for the only time in his Senate career. Soon after Neely’s death at Bethesda, Governor Underwood appointed Parkersburg businessman John D. Hoblitzell Jr. to replace him until the November election. When Hoblitzell was sworn in on January 25, he was forty-six years old.²²

The 1958 election would be difficult for both Revercomb and Hoblitzell. Three-term Congressman Robert C. Byrd filed for the Democratic primary for the full term that Revercomb held, and former Congressman Jennings Randolph decided to run against Hoblitzell for the unexpired term. National Democratic heavyweights invaded the Mountain State, among them Hubert Humphrey, John Kennedy, Maine’s Edmund Muskie, Wayne Morse of Oregon, Lyndon Johnson, and former President Harry Truman. Truman, in a speech in Charleston on September 20, said about Revercomb: “It was only a fluke that put that Republican into the Senate two years ago. The voters have since had a chance to see this so-called conservative Republican in action, and

they are ready to retire him this fall, just as they did once before.”²³

Ten days before the election, all four of the senatorial candidates faced off in a televised debate. Revercomb and Byrd spent most of the debate sparring over issues confronting Congress and past votes.²⁴

On election night, the returns were disappointing for the Republican candidates. Randolph defeated Hoblitzell handily and Byrd beat Revercomb in a landslide by more than one hundred eighteen thousand votes.²⁵

If Revercomb was disappointed, he shook it off quickly and made the last run of his political career two years later in the 1960 gubernatorial primary. He was sixty-four years old. He lost that race as well, by almost twenty thousand votes to Public Institutions Commissioner Harold Neely of Hinton, who had the backing of out-going Governor Underwood.²⁶

With his final defeat, Revercomb went back to his law practice, which proved productive until he suffered a stroke in 1968 at the age of seventy-two. The stroke affected his eyesight and hearing to the point that he could not practice law, although he still came by his office every day to go through the mail. He suffered a second, more significant stroke in 1976 and his health continued to decline until he died on October 6, 1979, at the age of eighty-four. He was buried at Sunset Memorial Park in South Charleston.

Since 1958 only two Republicans have made solid runs at the Senate. Arch Moore, in 1978, ran a tough race against Randolph in the latter’s last campaign, and John Raese gave Jay Rockefeller a scare in 1984. These are the exception rather than the norm, as most have not come so close. Since Revercomb’s Senate career came to a close, no Republican has been able to accomplish once what he did twice. His Senate career began with a victory over a state political legend before ending for good against another who would hold the seat he took from Revercomb until his own death nearly fifty-two years later. In all due respect to President Truman, Chapman Revercomb’s success hardly seems to be a fluke.

1. J. Howard Myers, editor, *1947 West Virginia Blue Book* (Charleston: Jarrett Printing Company).

2. Herb Little, Associated Press, "Ex-Senator Revercomb Dead at 84;" *Charleston Sunday Gazette-Mail*, October 7, 1979.
3. Ibid.
4. Revercomb, William Chapman, *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*; <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.
5. Adrian Gwin, "Ex-Senator Chapman Revercomb: We're Living Too High;" *Charleston Daily Mail*, February 5, 1975.
6. Ibid.
7. Little.
8. Bob Mellace, "A True Independent, Best Campaigner;" *Charleston Daily Mail*, October 10, 1979.
9. Gwin.
10. Fred B. Watkins, editor, *1943 West Virginia Blue Book*.
11. Allen Drury, *A Senate Journal, 1943-1945* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963).
12. Gwin.
13. Robert C. Byrd, *Child of the Appalachian Coalfields* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2005), 111.
14. Report on the Possible Admission of Displaced Persons to the United States, Remarks of Hon. Chapman Revercomb, 25 March 1947, *Congressional Record*, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., Box 5, Chapman Revercomb Collection, West Virginia State Archives.
15. Press Releases, Box 5, Revercomb Collection.
16. The Revercomb Collection at the State Archives contains several folders of correspondence related to the subject of displaced persons.
17. Myers, editor, *1949 West Virginia Blue Book*.
18. Myers, editor, *1953 West Virginia Blue Book*.
19. John G. Morgan, *West Virginia Governors, 1863-1980*, 2nd ed. (Charleston: Charleston Newspapers, 1980), 224.
20. Govtrack.us; Senate vote #75, 1957.
21. Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission, www.eisenhowermemorial.org; Document # 292, August 15, 1957.
22. Hoblitzell, John Dempsey, Jr., *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*; <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.
23. Byrd, 107.
24. Ibid, 111.
25. Myers, editor, *1959 West Virginia Blue Book*.
26. Myers, editor, *1960 West Virginia Blue Book*.

From the Editor

Due to an unexpected delay, the second part of the article on the state police was not available for publication in the Spring issue. It will appear in the Fall issue.

The Chapman Revercomb Collection is housed at the West Virginia State Archives in Charleston. It consists of thirty-one boxes of manuscript materials, roughly two-thirds of which deals with Revercomb's political career. From the collection is the following text of a live radio address that Revercomb gave on October 29, 1956, near the end of his political campaign for the U.S. Senate against Governor William C. Marland.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As Election Day approaches, it will be helpful to you in making your choice for United States Senate to compare the issues and objectives expressed by the two candidates during this campaign.

My objective, briefly, is to give West Virginia a responsible voice to speak for her in the United States Senate; to contribute to the unprecedented national advancement which we have had, in an era of peace, under President Eisenhower; and to help bring West Virginia its deserved share of the national progress.

I'm looking to the future. My campaign has been so directed.

My opponent, the present Governor of this state, on the other hand, has spent much of this campaign groping in the past—groping for issues, but coming up instead with inaccuracies. Let me identify some of these inaccuracies.

The other evening in a televised speech he said that the G. I. Bill of Rights has done more to raise the educational level of our people than any other legislation. I have no quarrel with this statement.

But less than a minute later, he was saying, and I quote him, "I foresee the probability that a Republican Senator will allow the rights of veterans to be tampered with."

Now the Governor knows, and the people of West Virginia know, that I was one of the sponsors of the G. I. Bill of Rights in the United States Senate. I have always fought for the rights of veterans. I am one myself.

In Huntington on October 23, according to the press, the Governor said that I had voted in the Senate against absentee voting for soldiers.

There were 14 proposals and amendments

brought before the Senate in a period of less than a week, all designed to give servicemen the right to vote. The Congressional Record for February, 1944, shows that I voted yea nine times.

I helped write and actively supported the legislation which gave the servicemen the right to vote their own individual ballots. I opposed the proposals which would have permitted interference from those in military command with the right of servicemen to vote a secret ballot.

In Logan, on October 25, according to the press, the Governor claimed that I am opposed to federal aid to education. Nothing could be further from the facts—although I am opposed to federal control of education.

On April 1, 1948, the Senate passed the Federal Aid to Education Bill, authorizing \$300 million annually to be distributed among the states. The vote was 58 to 22. I voted for it, as did the late Senator Kilgore.

Also in Logan on October 25, according to the press, the Governor charged that I voted against funds for research against cancer. Again, let's go to the record.

On May 5, 1947, the Senate by a vote of 34 to 24 agreed to a committee amendment increasing the appropriation for the National Cancer Institute from \$7,169,000, which President Truman's Bureau of the Budget requested, to \$12 million. I voted for this increase. Does this sound as if I oppose cancer research? I want every possible step taken that can hasten the day when we can meet and cure the diseases that destroy life and cause suffering.

Also in Logan on October 25, according to the press, the Governor charged that I oppose Social Security. No statement he has made is more irresponsible.

Twice I voted to increase Social Security benefits, once over President Truman's veto. I introduced a bill to start Social Security payments at any age to those physically unable to continue work. Does this sound as if I oppose Social Security?

In Keyser this month, and again in Romney the following night, the Governor accused me of voting against the best interests of our farmers. My record refutes this. It shows that I have consistently supported the views of the farmers of West Virginia.

On June 17, 1948, the Senate passed the Coordinated Long-Range Farm Program. The vote

was 79 to 3. The late Senator Kilgore and I were among the 79. Does this sound as if I voted against the best interests of our farmers?

Again, I would have you remember that in the OPA days, when there were severe controls and restrictions on our farmers, that time after time I went to the aid of those upon whom penalties were sought. It was an unnatural situation for the freedom and our farmers and they deserved help.

I challenge my opponent now to tell the farmers of this state whether he would vote against their interests on farm legislation by opposing the Eisenhower farm program, which I support and which the West Virginia Farm Bureau supports. Unlike the farm bill which our two present Senators voted for this year and the President vetoed, the present program should prove of benefit to West Virginia farmers. Also in Keyser on October 25, my opponent accused me of opposing Soil Conservation payments. On July 21, 1947, as the Congressional Record will show, the Senate voted to increase by \$3-1/2 million the appropriation for soil conservation over the appropriation approved by the House of Representatives. The late Senator Kilgore and I voted for this bill. Does this sound to you like I oppose soil conservation?

On October 20 in Morgantown, the press quoted the Governor as saying that, even though I was chairman of the Senate Public Works Committee in 1947, I wasn't alert to the opportunity to obtain an inter-state route for West Virginia.

This is a most interesting observation—and a completely erroneous statement. Under the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916, as amended, it is the responsibility of state highway departments, in cooperation with the United States Public Roads Administration, to designate the natural system of inter-state highways. It was not until the national change in administration [in] 1953 that there was the help needed from the White House for an aggressive attack on the highway problem.

The first funds authorized for the National System of Interstate Highways were authorized in 1954—nearly six years after I left the Senate! And it was not until 1956 that the \$33 billion, 41,000 mile highway program, largest in the history of the world, was enacted.

Out of the 41,000 miles, West Virginia—as things now stand—will get only 226 miles of

highway. That's exactly the amount of mileage of interstate highways our State Road Commission requested.

Although I cannot be charged with responsibility for this injustice, I intend to make a determined effort to right the wrong done this year, if I am sent to the Senate. I realize that at this late date it will be no easy task.

There have been other mis-statements by the Governor, not all of them confined to me. He has reserved some for the President.

The Governor blames the President for an increase in the cost of living. At the same time he attacks the Administration's money policy, which has held the increase in the cost of living to 2.8% since 1953. The Governor neglects to tell you that the cost of living rose 47% under the preceding national administration, 12% in the last four years of it.

The Governor solemnly has been telling audiences in West Virginia that the present national administration has little regard for the rights of the working people. And he has been saying the same thing with reference to me.

The people know better. They know that more workers now are employed in the country at higher wages, with a higher standard of living, stronger unions and larger Social Security benefits than ever before in history. The Bureau of Labor Statistics announced last Saturday that the weekly earnings of factory workers, after taxes and withholding, now averages as take home pay \$66.65 for single men, \$74.04 for those with three dependents.

The people know also that under the laws which I supported—and for which I have been attacked by the Governor—the working men and women have had more freedom, more labor peace, more pay raises, fewer and shorter strikes, more favorable working conditions and safer places of employment.

But perhaps the most irresponsible assertion of all on the part of the Governor has been his statement that the Eisenhower administration has been the most corrupt since General Grant was President.

Here again, the people know better. They know that one of the great achievements of this national administration has been the restoration of respect for government.

Compare our national administration on this

score, if you will, with the state administration over which the Governor presides.

The recklessness of the Governor's charges in this campaign is typical of an irresponsibility that has characterized his administration as the chief executive of our state.

His administration has thrown a cloud of instability over all of West Virginia. Our roads, our schools and our reputation as a state have been exposed to the fall-out from this cloud and all have suffered.

The present climate of state government has discouraged industry from locating here. While the rest of the nation has attained record employment and opportunity, our state has receded. Despite the Governor's sweeping claims to the contrary, this statement is documented by official Department of Labor Statistics. Employment is down in West Virginia since 1952 in the factories as well as in the mines. And the Governor, with noteworthy truthfulness, admitted on October 17 that there were 227,000 on the commodity relief rolls now in West Virginia.

While the rest of the nation prospers and gains in population, we have been reduced in numbers as our young people and others go elsewhere to find work. This has been the pattern for the last several years. The U. S. Bureau of the Census again confirmed it in a report issued less than two weeks ago.

Only a few areas of our state have shared in the progress the nation has enjoyed since 1952. One of these is the great Ohio Valley area. But even in this industrial area, where natural resources abound—as I have said before only to be misquoted by the Governor—we have played second to our neighbors across the river in Ohio, which has acquired most of the new industry in the area.

With clean, conscientious government at home and with effective and responsible representation in Washington, we have the opportunity, if we will but accept it, to contribute to and benefit from—the national progress.

No state is richer in natural resources. No state has a more industrious people.

In submitting my candidacy to you for United State[s] Senate, I seek to give all the people of West Virginia responsible representation in Washington and to assist West Virginia in her forward march to a glorious future she so richly deserves.

**In Memoriam: William Davis Wintz
(1917-2013)**

William Davis Wintz, known to all as Bill Wintz, had been a member of the West Virginia Historical Society for more than fifty years at the time of his death on February 13, 2013. Born in Charleston on June 27, 1917, Wintz's roots in the Kanawha Valley were deep. His ancestral line extended back through William Morris, recognized as the first permanent white settler in the valley.

Soon after his birth, his parents moved to the town of Nitro, like Wintz born during World War I. Built by the government as the site of a gunpowder plant for the war effort, Nitro only had a brief existence as a government town before the close of the war brought a swift end to the original reason for the town. The Wintz family remained, however, and Bill Wintz spent his childhood and youth there. After serving in the army during World War II, Wintz came home to the Kanawha Valley. He worked for American Viscose and later at Union Carbide, and he raised four daughters.

According to daughter Cheryl Wintz Withrow, "Nancy Morris Wintz [his grandmother] was very proud of her heritage and because her husband worked on the railroad, she and little Billy Wintz would board the train to attend historical meetings in Pratt." The boy was "smitten." Considering why her father became so interested in history, Withrow writes,

Maybe it was because of the special attention he received while attending these meetings[.] In retrospect, perhaps God was placing a desire in Billy's heart to take this interest in history into his generation for greater accomplishments.

Over the years, Bill Wintz was the editor, author, or co-author of several books:

Recollections and Reflections of Mollie Hansford, 1828-1900 (A Daughter of the Kanawha Valley) (n.d.);
History of Putnam County (1967);
Nitro, the World War I Boom Town (1985);
Civil War Memoirs of Two Rebel Sisters (1989);
Annals of the Great Kanawha (1993);

Bullets and Steel: The Fight for the Great Kanawha Valley, 1861-1865 (1995);
Recollections and Reflections of Mollie Hansford, 1828-1900: A Daughter of the Kanawha Frontier (rev. ed. 1996);
All the Way from Omaha Beach to the Czech Republic (2006).

In 1961, Bill Wintz co-founded the Upper Vandalia Historical Society, of which his daughter Cheryl is current president. He also was associated with the Kanawha Valley Historical and Preservation Society and the Kanawha Valley Genealogical Society. In addition, Wintz served on the editorial advisory board of *West Virginia History*.

Bill Wintz was active in the West Virginia Historical Society for many years. As membership chairman, he was responsible for increasing and maintaining membership during the 1970s and 1980s. He was a regional vice president for more than thirty years. In 1994, Bill Wintz received the Virgil A. Lewis award from the society. The award is named for the first state historian and archivist (and head of Archives and History) and was created in 1991 to recognize individuals who have worked for the preservation and dissemination of West Virginia's historical and cultural heritage.

News

History Day was held on February 13, 2014, at the state capitol and Culture Center in Charleston. This year, thirty-eight individuals who were nominated by historical, preservation, genealogical, museum, patriotic, and similar groups from around the state were recognized as History Heroes, and approximately one-third of them received their awards in person. (To find out about this year's group of History Heroes, visit the West Virginia Archives and History Web site at <http://www.wvculture.org/history/hisher2014.html>.) About seventy historical groups signed up to have displays in the capitol, but a severe winter storm kept many from coming. In spite of the conditions, thirty-nine groups, including some from Wheeling and Moundsville, and Preston, Randolph, and Ritchie counties, had displays. The date for the next History Day is usually provided to groups during the day's activities, but the House

Speaker's Office is not letting people reserve days/space until after the legislative session has ended. The **West Virginia Historical Society** is one of the sponsors of this annual event, now in its eighteenth year.

One of the "perks" of being president of the **West Virginia Historical Society** is serving as an ex-officio voting member of the Archives and History Commission, the governor-appointed entity created to advise the Archives and History, Historic Preservation, and Museums sections of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. The work of the commission largely consists of approving historic preservation grants and National Register nominations. The following nominations were approved by the commission in 2013:

Whitesville School, Whitesville, Boone County
Morris Memorial Hospital for Crippled Children,
Milton, Cabell County
New River Gorge Bridge, Fayetteville, Fayette
County
Fort Mill Ridge Civil War Trenches, Romney vicinity,
Hampshire County
Potomac Mills, Jefferson County
Thomas C. Miller Public School, Fairmont, Marion
County
Mount Woods Cemetery, Wheeling, Ohio County
Brookside Historic District, Aurora, Preston County

The fifteenth annual Hoot Owl will be held March 28-29, 2014. The all-night event offers researchers the opportunity to spend the night exploring materials in the West Virginia Archives and History Library in Charleston. Registration of \$25 is due by March 14, with late registration of \$35 if space is available. For a registration form, visit <http://www.wvculture.org/history/hootowl2014brochure.pdf>.

to the editor, West Virginia Historical Society, P.O. Box 5220, Charleston, WV 25361.

Membership is available at the cost of \$10 per year for individuals and \$15 for institutions. Members receive the society magazine, which is published two times a year. Dues should be sent to West Virginia Historical Society, P.O. Box 5220, Charleston, WV 25361.

If you are moving, please send us your new address so that we can update our records.

Submissions

The West Virginia Historical Society magazine welcomes manuscript submissions for publication consideration that deal with state or local history-related topics. Submissions, which should be of a length suitable for publication in the magazine and include footnote/endnote citations of referenced materials, should be sent

West Virginia Historical Society

P.O. Box 5220

Charleston, WV 25361-0220

