



WEST VIRGINIA
DIVISION OF
CULTURE & HISTORY

From the Editor:

The importance of genealogy for compiling family medical history has been emphasized by a recent finding that descendants of a Fry family line carry a genetic trait for colon cancer that can be traced back to the 1600's. [To learn more, read http://www.boston.com/news/health/articles/2009/04/04/a_cancer_mutations_colonial_roots/.] We regularly encounter situations where a lack of openness about family history in general or family medical history in particular, unwillingness to name fathers of out-of-wedlock children, or closed adoption records have stymied people who need to know something about the medical history of their families in order to make the best medical decisions for themselves and their children. Keep this in mind if you are asked to share your own family's issues. While a situation may be embarrassing or painful for one generation, it may mean life or death to the next.

Hoot Owl Night in the State Archives on April 24–25

For the 10th year, the Mining Your History Foundation and West Virginia Archives and History are sponsoring Hoot Owl Night at the West Virginia State Archives. Stay up all night, researching and networking in the West Virginia Archives and History Library from 6:00 p.m., Friday, April 24, to 8:00 a.m., Saturday, April 25. Well-known West Virginia genealogists will be on hand to offer help and guidance. Tours behind the scenes of the State Archives will be given. Participation is limited to 50. Registration is \$25.00 by check or money order payable to Mining Your History Foundation, postmarked by April 10, with a late registration fee of \$35.00, if space is available. Self-service microfilm copying will be available for \$.25 per page. Staff microfilm copying will be available for \$.50 per page and photocopying for \$.25 per page. For more information about Hoot Owl Night, contact Joe Geiger, (304) 558-0230, joe.geiger@wvculture.org

or wvculture.org, or Wes Cochran, (304) 422-1774, wescochran@juno.com. For more information about

Mining Your History Foundation, visit <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~myhf/> or call Wes Cochran.

West Virginia Archives Responds to *Family Tree Magazine* Article

Family Tree Magazine, May 2009, Volume 10, Issue 3, contains an article entitled "States of Mind," by David A. Fryxell, listing the author's opinion of the ten best and ten worst states in which to do genealogical research. Mr. Fryxell lists his criteria for his admittedly subjective choices of the states that are toughest to research as those that have been slow to put information online, have limited access to vital records, have had courthouse disasters, began keeping vital statistics at later dates than other states or did not keep them at all, or have not had adequate amounts of records made accessible on microfilm. Using these criteria, West Virginia is ranked as the seventh worst state (number seven

from the bottom) for genealogical research and Virginia is ranked as the third best state. The following line-by-line response to the West Virginia portion of the article was submitted to the magazine editor by West Virginia Archives and History. Each line of Mr. Fryxell's article appears in bold, followed by the Archives and History response.

Response to "States of Mind,"
by David A. Fryxell, *Family Tree Magazine*, May 2009:

Like Oklahoma, the Mountaineer State suffers from a quirk of historical geography: Until the heat of the Civil War in 1863, it was part of Virginia. That means

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earlier records for 50 of West Virginia's 55 counties (five were formed later) follow different rules and may be found in Virginia.

- **This is completely false.** The records of West Virginia counties will be found in West Virginia. Virginia only has copies of a few West Virginia county records from roughly 1852 to 1862, most in poor condition and poorly microfilmed. West Virginia statehood in no way affects the availability of county records either before or after statehood. All records were kept at the county level both before and after statehood with no break in continuity for the great majority of counties, which is more than can be said for many Virginia counties during and after the Civil War. ***The counties that became part of West Virginia already had their own records and retained them.***
- The comparison with Oklahoma is invalid. Oklahoma was formed from territorial land and included Indian territories as well. Mr. Fryxell states that research in Oklahoma requires “a mix of territorial, state and Indian records.” West Virginia was cleanly cut from another well-established state, Virginia, with continuity of record keeping and with pre-statehood records still available in counties of the same names and boundaries.
- We have absolutely no idea what Mr. Fryxell is referencing when he says that West Virginia records “follow different rules.”

West Virginia didn't get its own census until 1870.

- How is this a negative factor? It is not as if there were no censuses taken for the residents of this geographic area—the populace is

simply found in the Virginia census records. Fifty whole adjacent Virginia counties became West Virginia counties in 1863, and all retained their original boundaries and county names. Researchers easily search the Virginia censuses prior to 1870 using the same county names.

Its oddball history also means that, despite being birthed after the US federal government, West Virginia was not a public-land state.

- Again, how is this a negative factor? Public land records are of limited use anyway. While neither Virginia nor West Virginia are public-land states, there were many land grants from the earliest of times in Virginia colonial and state records from which information and records can be found for what would become West Virginia land and landowners.
- Virginia land grants for the counties that later became West Virginia counties are easily accessible. There is even a separate index for West Virginia counties, *Sims Index to West Virginia Land Grants*, that not only includes the West Virginia counties, but the Virginia “parent” counties of Augusta, Bath, Botetourt, Frederick, Montgomery, Russell, Tazewell and Wythe that contained grants for land that later became parts of new Virginia counties that in turn became part of West Virginia. West Virginia grants awarded after statehood are included as well. State Auditor Sims sent clerks to Virginia and had handwritten

transcriptions made into large ledgers that became official records of the West Virginia State Auditor. Copies of the land grants are currently available through the West Virginia State Archives, to which the State Auditor's Office eventually transferred the original ledgers and microfilm copies. These copies are accepted as legal records.

- Deed records of West Virginia counties, along with grantor and grantee indexes, are available on Genealogical Society of Utah (GSU) microfilm for every county, at least up to 1900, and for some counties for decades more.

Statewide birth and death records didn't begin until 1917, but a fire destroyed most of them through 1921; you'll have to look to county courthouses for earlier records, which date from 1853.

- Again, a major falsehood has been stated. **The West Virginia State Capitol burned in 1921, but no Dept. of Health Vital Registration records were lost.** Even if they had been, county birth and death records would still be available, since West Virginia began with and has continued with a dual county/state system.
- Yes, West Virginia state birth and death records began later than in many states, but West Virginia counties were keeping birth and death records pretty consistently from 1853 on, unlike many states, such as neighboring Kentucky, which have virtually no birth and death records for decades in the 19th and early 20th centuries.
- Interestingly, Mr. Fryxell is saying county birth and death records exist from 1853 in county courthouses, a decade before statehood, while his earlier statement incorrectly says these records are in Virginia.

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

- Having to search county court records is not such a terrible thing for West Virginia researchers, by Mr. Fryxell's own standards as stated in his introduction: "Maybe they suffered courthouse fires and other natural disasters in years past, or were unaccountably late to the vital-records-keeping party. It could be that the microfilming legions of the Family History Library... have given these states short shrift."

* Extensive West Virginia county records are available on GSU microfilm, including wills, estate settlements, deeds with grantor and grantee indexes, immigration records, discharge records, minute and order books, chancery records, and more. Births, deaths and marriages recorded in county records were filmed up through 1967-1970, depending on the film date for the specific county. The West Virginia State Archives has micro-filmed several sets of loose paper county records that were not microfilmed by GSU.

* Arguably, West Virginia counties have had far fewer courthouse fires, wartime

Archives and History Presents *Preserving Your Family History* Workshops

West Virginia Archives and History announces a new series of workshops entitled *Preserving Your Family History*. The first presentation will be "Beginning Family History Scrapbooking," by Lynn Barney on May 12, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. in the West Virginia Archives and History Library, The Cultural Center, Charleston. Ms. Barney has been conducting various craft programs in the Kanawha Valley area, including the Kanawha County Public

Library. Bring your photographs and other two-dimensional memorabilia and learn how to properly organize and preserve them in a scrapbook format. Scrapbook materials will be provided. The workshop is free of charge and no reservations are necessary; however, we would appreciate hearing from you if you plan to attend in order to be sure we have enough supplies for all. Call Bob Taylor at (304) 558-0230, or e-mail bobby.taylor@wvculture.org.

Permission to reprint articles from *West Virginia Archives and History News* is granted, provided:

(1) The reprint is not used for commercial purposes, and (2) the following notice appears at the end of the reprinted material: Previously published in *West Virginia Archives and History News*, [Volume and issue numbers], [Month, Year], a publication of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.

disruption or natural disasters resulting in loss of records than most other states, particularly compared to other states in which the Civil War was physically conducted.

* Additionally, while vital registration law enforcement may have been poor in some counties during certain time periods, there was never a

time period in which West Virginia counties uniformly stopped vital registration as occurred in other states.

* Although West Virginia did not start vital registration at the state level until 1917, the dual system means that if a county record is missing or incomplete, the state record version is available, and vice versa. Also, West Virginia Vital Registration has issued "Delayed Birth" records since 1917 to anyone without a birth record who presented adequate proof of birth information, including to people born before 1917 who did not have county birth records filed at the time of birth.

Editor's Note: *Family Tree Magazine* invites comment in its Talk to Us Forum at <http://forum.familytreemagazine.com/forum>. The editor requests feedback through the Talk to Us Forum or by e-mail at FTMedit@fwmedia.com.

Refurbishing of Archives Library Reading Room Continues

Refurbishing of the Archives and History Library Reading Room continues, with larger projects anticipated over the next few months. The library chairs have been reupholstered and well-padded, and a new Security/Copy desk setup has been installed. Plans call for the carpet to be replaced and the room to be painted. The window blinds, original to the opening of The Cultural Center, will be replaced with ultraviolet light-filtering blinds, and the motorized system to open and

close the blinds will be either replaced or repaired. We do not know at the time of publication if these projects will necessitate any closings of the Reading Room to the public. Keep an eye on our Web site at <http://www.wvculture.org> and your local media for announcements. Particularly if you are making a special trip or traveling a distance to visit us, we urge you to call us before coming to ensure that the Library will be open to serve you that day.

Donations to Archives Library

Upshur County Genealogical Society

- *Bailey Brothers Undertakers Records*: Karon King.
- *From Camp Rock and Cabin to Courthouse*: Noel Tenney.
- *Upshur County, West Virginia Obituaries and News Items, Volumes 2, 3 and 4*: Lemoyne Wentz and Karon King.
- *Heavner Cemetery Readings*: The Society.

Mining Your History Foundation

- *Monongalia County, (West) Virginia, Deedbook Records, 1784-1810*: Rick Toothman.
- *Clarke County Virginia Marriages, 1836-1886*: Patricia Duncan.
- *Clarke County Virginia Death Register, 1853-1896*: Patricia Duncan.
- *Clarke County Virginia Will Book Abstracts, Books A-1 (1826-1904) and 1A-3C (1841-1913)*: Patricia Duncan.
- *Fauquier During the Proprietorship*: H. C. Groome.
- *Bounty and Donation Land Grants in British Colonial America*, by Lloyd deWitt Bockstruck.
- *Monongalia County, (West) Virginia Deedbook Records 1784-1810*: Rick Toothman.

Wetzel County Genealogical Society

- *Wetzel County West Virginia Death Records, 1854-1895*: Carol Hassig.
- *Wetzel County West Virginia Marriages, 1894-1902*: Lisa Neff.
- *Index to Wetzel County, West Virginia History, 1983*: Helen Estlack.
- *Wetzel Co. WV Obituaries, Volume 1 (Rev.) Through Volume 7*: Carol Hassig and Elizabeth Mullett.
- *Wetzel County West Virginia 1920 Census: Magnolia, Green, Grant, Church and Clay, Center and Proctor Districts*: Elizabeth Mullett.

Wes Cochran (Unbound books by Wes Cochran, with binding costs donated by Mining Your History Foundation)

- *Marshall County WV 1850 Census*
- *Index to Wood County WV Cemeteries, Volumes 1 through 6*
- *Randolph County WV Deaths 1960-1969*
- *Tucker County WV 1870 Census*
- *Tyler County WV 1910 Census*
- *Washington County Ohio Marriages 1918-1924*

Thanks also to David L. Parmer, the Benedum Foundation, Roy E. Killgore and Clara Mae Alt Ross who donated copies of their own works. Shirley Parsons continues to be a frequent donor of books from her own collection, as well as much appreciated backup copies of mainstream West Virginia resources, such as *The West Virginia Encyclopedia*, that she rescues from yard sales and thrift shops.

Virginia Legislative Petitions Update

Petitions of West Virginians to Their General Assembly in Richmond: An Humble Petition to West Virginians to Make, in Their Research Projects, More Frequent Use of the Official Records of the Era When They, Too, Were Virginians, by W. Edwin Hemphill, a talk by Hemphill as it was published

in *West Virginia History*, January 1957, Volume 18, Number 2, has been posted on the Archives and History Web site at http://www.wvculture.org/history/journal_wvh/wvh18-001.html. The article includes a chart of Virginia counties that became West Virginia counties, year formed,

number of years as a Virginia county, and number of petitions. By the way, the personal property tax records for West Virginia counties mentioned in the article are also now available in the West Virginia Archives and History Library microfilm collection.

Sesquicentennial Anniversary of John Brown's Raid

Many events are planned throughout 2009 in commemoration of the sesquicentennial anniversary of John Brown's raid on the arsenal at Harpers Ferry. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park's opening sesquicentennial event, on April 18, focuses on the arrival of John Cook to Harpers Ferry and his subsequent marriage to Virginia Kennedy. The Mason-Dixon Civil War Round Table's annual symposium, also on the 18th, focuses on John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry. While this newsletter's Calendar of Events will highlight a few of the activities, the Web site of the John Brown 150th Anniversary Quad-State Committee provides dates and information for a wide range of events, including lectures, tours, art exhibits, dramas, displays, re-enactments and more. Visit <http://www.johnbrownraid.org/index.php>.

History Heroes Online

West Virginia History Heroes for 2009 are listed on the Archives and History Web site [<http://www.wvculture.org/history/histhero.html>] with brief descriptions of the accomplishments for which they were honored and photographs of those who received honors in person on History Day, on March 5. This year honorees received lapel pins in the shape of West Virginia etched with the words "History Hero," in

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Scenes from History Day at the Legislature March 5, 2009



Mining Your History Foundation table



Robert S. Garnett Camp, Sons of Confederate Veterans



Photos courtesy of
Gerald Ratliff



Kanawha Valley Genealogical Society table



West Virginia Archives and History Library table

addition to certificates. The awards were presented by Kay Goodwin, Secretary of Education and the Arts, and Robert Conte, Chairman of the

West Virginia Archives and History Commission. Lists of History Hero honorees are posted beginning with 1997, with biographical information

included beginning in 1998, and photographs of the presentations included from 2006 to the present.

Darby's Universal Gazetteer

The full title of this reference book by William Darby is *Darby's Universal Gazetteer, or, A New Geographical Dictionary: containing a description of the empires, kingdoms, states, provinces, cities, towns, forts, seas, harbours, rivers, lakes, mountains, capes, &c. in the Known World; with the Government, Customs, and Manners, of the inhabitants; the extent, boundaries, and natural productions of each country; and the trade, manufactures, and curiosities of the cities and towns.* The West Virginia Archives' copy is "The second edition, with ample additions and improvements," published in Philadelphia by Bennett & Walton

in 1827. Following are a few sample entries for features now in West Virginia, with spelling and punctuation unchanged:

Kenhawa, Great, river of Virg. It rises in Ash cty. N.C., and being enlarged by a number of tributary streams, runs nearly due N. through Grayson, Wythe, and Montgomery cties.; it thence turns to NW., joined by the Green Briar; thence it continues nearly NW. till it falls into the Ohio at Point Pleasant. Its whole course is about 400 ms., and its width at the Ohio about 500 yards.

Kenhawa, Little, river of Virg., rises in Lewis cty. and flowing NW.

through Lewis and Wood cties., falls in to the Ohio at Parkersburg, 12 ms. below Marietta.

Kenhawa, cty. Virg., bounded SE. by Greenbriar and Giles, SW. by Cabell, NW. by Mason and Wood, and NE. by Lewis and Randolph. Length 62 ms., mean width 38; area about 2400 sqms. It is intersected by Kenhawa and Elk rivers, and drained by their numerous branches. The surface is extremely broken, and part mountainous. Soil generally rocky and sterile, though presenting some remarkable exceptions. Chief town Charleston. Pop. 1820, 7000. Ctl. lat. 38° 28' N. lon. W. C. 4° 30' W.

Editor's Note: If you would like me to look up your favorite locale and print the entry in a future issue, give me a call at (304) 558-0230, or drop an e-mail to susan.scouras@wvculture.org.

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.

"A PRELUDE TO HISTORY: THE WEDDING OF VIRGINIA KENNEDY," April 18:

John Brown Sesquicentennial opening event, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Harpers Ferry.

For more information, visit <http://www.johnbrownraid.org/april.html>.

A HOUSE DIVIDED: THE CIVIL WAR IN NORTHWESTERN VIRGINIA, April 18:

Mason-Dixon Civil War Round Table 7th annual symposium, West Virginia University Erickson Alumni Center, Evansdale Campus, Morgantown. For more information, visit <http://www.wvmasondixoncwrt.org>.

HOOT OWL NIGHT, April 24-25:

Archives and History Library, The Cultural Center, Charleston.

Sponsored by Mining Your History Foundation and West Virginia Archives and History,

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION TRAINING, April 25:

North Bend State Park, between Harrisville and Cairo. Sponsored by State Historic Preservation Office of West Virginia Division of Culture and History and Ritchie County Historic Landmark Commission. For more information,

contact David Scott, (866) 363-8416, or bluemoon@ruralnet.org.

BLUE AND GRAY RECONCILIATION DINNER, May 1:

Reception and buffet dinner with talk by Dr. Mark Snell. Sponsored by Wheeling Independence Hall Museum.

Reservations required by April 24. For more information, call Melissa Brown, (304) 238-1300.

GRAVESTONE PRESERVATION WORKSHOP, May 2:

Woodlawn Cemetery, Fairmont.

"PUT YOUR FAMILY'S MEMORIES IN A SCRAPBOOK," May 12:

A West Virginia Archives and History *Preserving Your Family History* workshop, presented by Lynn Barney, Archives and History Library, The Cultural Center, Charleston.

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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.

FESTIVAL OF NATIONS CELEBRATING WEIRTON'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY,
May 16: Weirton Millsop Community Center, Weirton. Sponsored by the Weirton Area Museum and Cultural Center. For more information, call Pamela Makricosta, (304) 748-1549.

VANDALIA GATHERING, May 22–24: The Capitol Complex and the Cultural Center, Charleston.

MEMORIAL DAY, May 25: Archives Library will be *closed*.

WEST VIRGINIA ARCHIVES AND HISTORY COMMISSION MEETING,
May 29: Morgantown.

“SEX IN THE CIVIL WAR,” June 19: Dr. Thomas Lowry, lecturer, Beverly Heritage Center, Beverly.

WEST VIRGINIA DAY HOLIDAY, June 19: Archives Library will be open*.

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

WEST VIRGINIA STATE MUSEUM RE-OPENING, June 20: The Cultural Center, Charleston.

LEMUEL CHENOWETH WEEKEND, June 20–21: Beverly.
For more information, visit <http://www.historicbeverly.org>.

RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE CIVIL WAR, CIVIL WAR SEMINAR, June 25–28:
The George Tyler Moore Center for the Study of the Civil War, Shepherd University, Shepherdstown.
For more information, visit <http://www.shepherd.edu/gtmcweb/cwcenter.htm>.

“LISTENING FOR A CHANGE: ORAL HISTORY AND APPALACHIAN HERITAGE,” June 28–July 3: Folklife documentation course with Michael and Carrie Kline, instructors, Elkins. For more information, visit <http://www.folktalk.org/events.html> or call (304) 636-5444.

INDEPENDENCE DAY HOLIDAY, July 3: *To be announced.*

INDEPENDENCE DAY, July 4: Archives Library will be *closed*.

NEW DEAL FESTIVAL, July 10–12: Arthurdale Heritage, Inc., Arthurdale.
For more information, visit <http://www.arthurdaleheritage.org> or call (304) 864-3959.

BATTLE OF RICH MOUNTAIN RE-ENACTMENT, July 11–12:
For more information, visit <http://www.richmountain.org>.

HISTORY DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE, February 18, 2010:
The West Virginia State Capitol and 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.

West Virginia Division of Culture and History
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300



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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