

### ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY APRIL 26



On April 26, 1937, the first highway historical marker, "State Capitol," was installed and dedicated in Charleston.

**CSO: ELA.8.22**

**Investigate the Document:** (*State Papers and Public Addresses, Gov. Homer Holt, 1937-41; Charleston Gazette, April 27, 1937*)

1. You have been commissioned by West Virginia Archives and History to create the text for a significant event or person from your home county. Use your own words to accurately write the inscription for a historical highway marker. (50-75 words)



*From an oil painting by Leopold Seyffert.*

HOMER ADAMS HOLT  
Twentieth Governor of West Virginia  
January 18, 1937 to January 13, 1941

STATE PAPERS  
AND  
PUBLIC ADDRESSES

HOMER ADAMS HOLT

Twentieth Governor of West Virginia  
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Compiled and Annotated by WILLIAM E. HUGHES

## REMARKS ACCEPTING WEST VIRGINIA'S FIRST HISTORICAL MARKER

CHARLESTON

APRIL 26, 1937

*Mr. McCullough,<sup>6</sup> Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

It is fitting and proper that this preserved space on the site of West Virginia's Capitol Building where first permanently established in Charleston should be selected to receive the State's first historical marker.

It is but a short distance from this point to the present magnificent structure that houses the divisions of the State government, but there is broad space for comparison between the new capitol and the building wherein worked those comparatively early statesmen.

This, too, is as it should be. West Virginia has grown and progressed to a place of prominence in the sisterhood of states. Its industries have become an important factor in supplying the needs of the nation and of the world.

New industries have sprung up in all sections of the State, and the old industries have grown with amazing rapidity. The increase in manufacturing alone—particularly in this Great Kanawha Valley—is something that never fails to bring comment from visitors to the State.

I have no figures for the manufacturing in 1885, but the census of five years later—1890—shows only 20,329 persons employed in West Virginia industry, exclusive of mining and farming. Most of these were in manufacturing and lumber.

In 1936, according to the State Department of Labor, this figure had risen to 180,383.

In 1885, the mines of West Virginia produced only 3,367,062 tons of coal. In 1936, West Virginia stood as the leading bituminous coal producing state in the nation with an output of 117,607,452 tons.

Those early mines employed but few of our citizens. There are no figures for 1885, but in 1900, at the beginning of the present century, the total employed in our coal mines was only 28,017 men. The 1936 total was 111,408.

Farming was the principal industry of early West Virginia, but it

<sup>6</sup>F. Witches McCullough, at that time director of the West Virginia office of the Works Progress Administration.

has not failed to make gains with our industries. It is, I believe, quite safe to say that the records for the time of the capitol's establishment on this site would show farm development far below that of 1900. In 1900, there were 92,874 farms in West Virginia, averaging 114.7 acres. In 1935, the number of farms had increased to 104,747, but the average size had dropped to 90 acres. This is a definite decrease in acreage, but farm labor was paid only \$2,041,560 in 1899, according to the census for 1900, compared with \$5,012,000 in 1929 according to our last census—that of 1930.

The value of West Virginia farm products advanced from \$44,768,979 at the end of the last century to \$60,500,000 in 1935.

Therefore, it was plainly inevitable that West Virginia should advance in every way. We are proud of our new capitol building, but we also are proud of the years and the events that gave our State the wealth that made it possible.

Mr. McCullough, I accept this fine marker as a memorial to what we had and a reminder of what we have. I look to the future for even greater development in our rapidly growing State. I thank you and the Works Progress Administration for the work that has been done here.

Mr. Simpson,<sup>7</sup> yours is the task of caring for much of our material wealth—principally our highways. Into your care I now entrust this marker for the State of West Virginia.

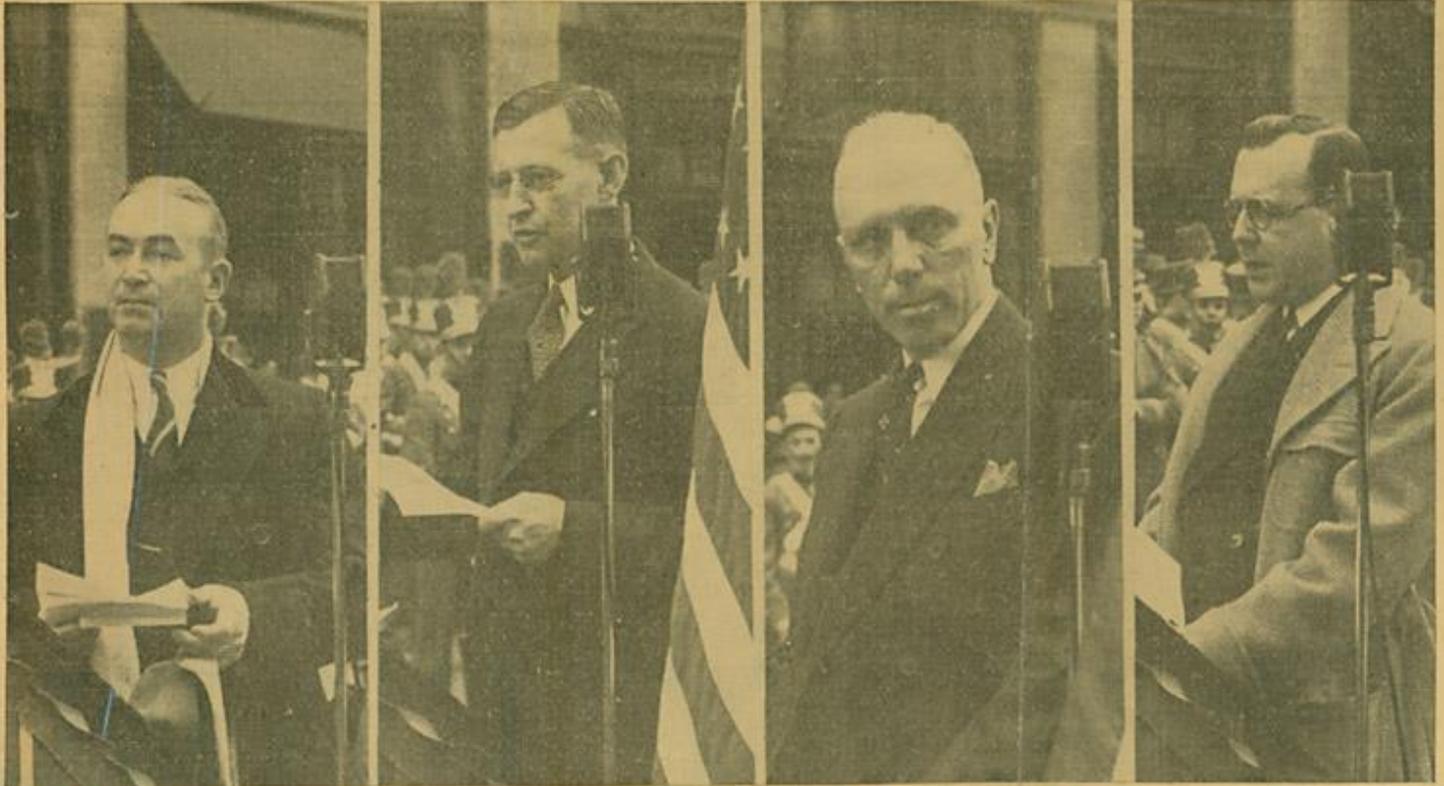
<sup>7</sup>The late Burr Simpson, then State Road Commissioner.

The Charleston Gazette, Tuesday, April 27, 1937.

*First Historical Marker, on Old  
Capitol Site, Presented to State*



### *Speakers at Dedication of First Historical Marker*



Four of the speakers who took part Monday afternoon in ceremonies marking the setting of the first historical highway marker in West Virginia are shown above. Left to right, Governor Holt, who accepted the first marker; Roy Bird Cook, Charleston druggist and state historical authority, member of a commission appointed to supervise the program; Burr H. Simpson, state road commissioner, who will have charge of setting the remaining markers throughout the state, and F. Witcher McCullough, state WPA administrator.