



# West Virginia Historical Society Quarterly

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## GEIGER NEW ARCHIVES DIRECTOR

The Division of Culture and History has announced that Joe Geiger, acting Director of Archives and History since November 2007, has been appointed as Director effective January 1, 2009. Patrons of the Department of Archives and History library or website will recognize the name. Joe, who has been on staff since 1998, is largely responsible for the large number of electronic materials available on the Department of Archives and History website, having served as the webmaster for the Department for a number of years. He is a graduate of Marshall University, where he received a bachelor's degree in business administration and master's degree in history. He has taught West Virginia History as an adjunct professor at Marshall for the past eleven years. Before coming to the Department of Archives and History, he was a member of the finance department for the City of Huntington.

His research and writing has centered on the Civil War in West Virginia. He has published a book on *Civil War in Cabell County, 1861-1865* in 1991, an article, "The Tragic Fate of

Guyandotte," in Vol 54 of *West Virginia History*, as well as other publications on state history.

Joe is a member of long standing of the West Virginia Historical Society and recently served as Vice President. Indicative of the historically close relationship between the Department of Archives and History and the WVHS, he will become the Secretary of the organization, continuing a tradition established when the WVHS was organized. He is a member of the Commission on Archives and History for the West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church and the Mining Your History Foundation. During the school year, he teaches a Sunday school class for college students. A former high school baseball player, Joe has shared his love of the sport with Little Leaguers and high school players in various capacities, including coaching. He lives in Huntington with his wife and two children

The West Virginia Historical Society congratulates Director Geiger on his appointment and offers best wishes for his tenure in that office. Joe is an excellent choice to lead the Department of Archives and History.

(There continue to be historical gems in the newspapers. A recent browse through the *Charleston Daily Mail* unveiled the following article, provided here with editorial notes.)

**CHARLESTON DAILY MAIL**

Sunday, March 12, 1922

**COLORED YOUTH WORKING WAY THROUGH COLLEGE**

*Dennis Edward Smith, Son of Mrs. Lucy Gurdy Soon to Graduate from Howard.*

Another young colored man of Charleston has distinguished himself in his search for knowledge. The young man is Dennis Edward Smith, age 22, son of Mrs. Lucy Gurdy, 43 Second Avenue. He is now a student of dentistry at Howard University in Washington.

Smith is in his third year at Howard and has worked his way through there with no outside aid. In fact, all through his educational career, he has worked his way.

He first attended the local colored high school (1) where he remained for two years. Then, getting a job scrubbing the dining room floors, he went to West Virginia collegiate institute (2) near here. He stayed at the institute five years, graduating in the spring of 1917, when he was 17 years old. Shortly after, he enlisted in the army and was later assigned for duty in the military department of the institute, where he remained until the end of the war.

In the fall of 1919, he entered Howard University to study dentistry, having earned the necessary money the previous summer. Since he has been there, he has been identified with all college activities. He is a teacher (sic) of the football

and basketball teams of the university, belongs to the Psi Phi fraternity, and, as he is a tenor of considerable repute, he is a member of the glee club there. He has sung before several of the civic organizations of Charleston and also has been heard in the churches of this city. Those who have heard him say that he has an excellent voice.

Every summer he is employed at a bathing beach in Washington. During the winter he makes money by attending to furnaces in the mornings before school. In the evenings he works in an insurance office.

Next year will be Smith's last at Howard as he is to graduate from there in June 1923. He plans to make his home here after his graduation. (3)

**Editor's Notes:**

(1) probably Garnet[t] High School  
 (2) now West Virginia State University  
 (3) Dr. Smith returned to Charleston and by 1930 had his own dental office. In that year, he was listed in the census as sharing a home with his mother and stepfather, Lucy and Agustus Gurdy. Dr. Smith was married to Willia and had two children – Thelma, age 5 and Valerian, 3. Dr. Smith died in Grambling, Louisiana in 1974. He had practiced dentistry for many years in Charleston and Institute before moving to Louisiana. He was survived by his wife, Willia; son, Dr. Valerian E. Smith, DDS, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and daughter, Mrs. Thelma Williams of Grambling. Dr. Valerian Smith had followed his father to Howard University where he received his undergraduate degree and then a degree in dentistry. During the Korean War, the younger Dr. Smith served in the US Army as a Captain. Dr. Valerian Smith was a well known tenor in Charleston and he continued his interest in music all his life, writing a number of stage productions and musicals

including Tribulations (a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.) and A Cat's Tale for children. Sources: *The Charleston Gazette*, February 19, 1974; Helen Turner Rutledge, "The First Annual South Baton Rouge Black History Recognition Program," February 27, 1993; and *The Advocate* November 24, 1992.

### Genealogy Fair Rand, West Virginia

The Kanawha Valley History Center has announced that a Genealogy Fair is scheduled for April 4, 2009 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Rand Community Center, 5701 Church Drive, Rand, WV 25306-6001. There is no admission charge and attendees are encouraged to bring their family history to share with participants. More information on the fair can be found at <http://www.geocities.com/kvhc06> or by e-mail at [kvhc06@yahoo.com](mailto:kvhc06@yahoo.com).

### COMING IN JULY

Merle Cole, a frequent contributor to the West Virginia Historical Society *Quarterly*, will return with an excellent article which continues his research and writing on the West Virginia State Police.

## Archives and History Website

Researchers interested in genealogy or state history can find an ever increasing amount of historical data on line at the Department of Archives and History website. The website is [www.wvculture.org/history](http://www.wvculture.org/history). As an example of the breadth of information available, note the following links which are accessible from the Archives home page.

- [History Center](#)
- [State Archives](#)
- [Genealogy Corner](#)
- [Births, Deaths and Marriages](#)
- [Records Management & Preservation Board](#)
- [Veterans Memorial Archives](#)
- [Highway Historical Markers](#)
- [West Virginia Memory Project](#)
- [On This Day in West Virginia History](#)
- [Daily Trivia](#)
- [Quick Quizzes](#)
- [Voyager Online Catalog](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Upcoming Events and Meetings](#)
- [Featured Links](#)

Each of these links leads to literally hundreds of sources. The Archives home page also provides information on new accessions, such as a new finding guide for the Cecil H. Underwood papers. If you can visit in person, the Archives library continues to be open to the public from 9:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and until 5:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.



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