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West Virginia and Regional History Collection

NEWSLETTER

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"Christmas in Helvetia," from the Helvetia-Mailloux Collection of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, is one of nine historical photographs featured on the 1995 West Virginia Day poster.

BENEFIT CONCERT FOR THE WEST VIRGINIA COLLECTION SOUND ARCHIVES

On November 3, 1995 a Benefit Concert of traditional mountain music was held in support of the sound archives of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection. The concert was organized by musicians Leslie Green and Chris Haddox, to whom we are extremely grateful. Musicians performing included Melvin Wine, Dwight Diller, Tracy Schwarz, Wilson Douglas, Dave Bing and poet Kirk Judd, Dave Shombert, Jay Best, Kim Johnson, Jerry Milnes and Leslie Green. The event was a resounding success, with Gluck Theatre in the Mountainlair filled nearly to capacity. Exciting performances by all provided a full three hours of classic mountain music. The musicians later went on to play into the wee hours of the night at an "after-the-concert" party held off-campus. All performers and organizers donated their time and music for this truly wonderful benefit concert.

Money raised by this concert will directly support the sound archives of the West Virginia Collection. With over 2000 sound recordings this archive includes actual live performances of Appalachian folk musicians dating back to as early as the 1920s. A guide to this collection was published by the West Virginia University Press in 1982 as *West Virginia Folk Music: A Descriptive Guide to Field Recordings in the West Virginia and Regional History Collection*, edited by John Cuthbert.



West Virginia Fiddler

MULTICULTURAL WEST VIRGINIA

West Virginia University Libraries sponsored the 9th annual celebration for West Virginia Day 1995 this summer. The celebration of the state's birthday was built on the theme "Multicultural West Virginia." On June 20, invited speakers addressed the history and influence of particular cultural groups in West Virginia at the forum hosted by the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, in Colson Hall.

This year's speakers addressed four ethnic groups in West Virginia. Michael Oliverio, co-director of the West Virginia Italian-American Festival, spoke on the history of Italian-Americans of our state. Paulette Lawrence-Wood, current president of the West Virginia Native American Coalition, talked on the history of American Indians in West Virginia. Bruce Betler, lec-

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turer at Davis and Elkins College and former president of the Swiss Folklore Group of Washington, DC, spoke on the Swiss community of Helvetia. The current mayor of Morgantown, Charlene Marshall, shared her observations on serving as West Virginia's first female African-American mayor. WVU Provost Thomas La Belle provided an introduction to the forum.

This year's West Virginia Day exhibit also followed the multicultural theme with "The Peace Tree: A Message for All Peoples, The Story of the Haudenosaunee Iroquois *Great Law of Peace*." This exhibit was shown at the Grandview Gallery of the Mountainlair. Officially opening at noon on West Virginia Day, the exhibit featured photographic documentation of the planting and honoring of the WVU Peace Tree by Native American spiritual leaders. The significance of the Peace Tree concept is explained in the exhibit from its origin in Iroquois Indian culture to its present multicultural symbolism on the West Virginia University campus. This exhibit was created by Anna Schein, Head, Serials Department with assistance from the curators of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection. It has been transferred to the West Virginia Collection to become a permanent addition to our holdings.

The poster for this year's West Virginia Day was again designed by John Cuthbert, Curator for the Arts. It features nine select historical West Virginia photographs set against a background image of the Peace Tree, one of which, "Christmas in Helvetia," is shown on the cover of this newsletter. These limited edition art posters are still available for purchase from the WVRHC at \$6.00 each, with \$2.50 for postage and handling if mailed. Posters from previous years are available at \$10.00 each.

Excerpts from each of the invited speakers:

Paulette Lawrence-Wood

"Good morning, West Virginia University. What a beautiful state we live in. This is the land of my ancestors, the Shawnee. I'm honored to be here talking to you. First of all, I would like to address the question that most people ask me, "Just how much Indian are you?" Am I supposed to point to the half of me that has the French blood and the half of me that has the Indian blood? Native Americans know they are Indian because of the close bond that ties them to the land, the faint memory of oral tradition, the awareness of our relationship to the Creator, Maniteau, that constantly calls us back to our ancestors. It is our beliefs that make us Indian. I would like to quote Elizabeth Hallmark, an Ojibwa director of the Minneapolis American Indian Center. She said,

“Just because an individual has a tribal enrollment number entitling him to certain services, does not” in her mind, “define this person as an Indian.” It is in the heart of the person that speaks — that’s where the Indian-ness is — in the heart. One of the greatest Sioux holy men, John Fire Lamedeer, also associated Indianness with the heart, and went on to say that even as an old man he was still learning. To be Indian is a way of life — a feeling of respect for our cousins the animals, the birds, and even the tiniest of insects. Do not judge Indians on the color of their eyes, or the color of their hair or skin. For many of us, to be Indian is not a heritage granted by legislation, percentages of blood, or bureaucratic statistics, or even by a community. It comes from the heart, and the heart knows what it is. The past is hard to swallow, the present hard to deal with, the future is in the Creator’s hands.”

Bruce Betler

“... Now Helvetia. We have this little Swiss village in Randolph County at the southern end in the middle of nowhere. Just to the north, or downstream, is this tiny hamlet of Czar, which is where the woodsmen of Upshur County slipped over the border, and then in 1890, on July 4, 1890, the B&O Railroad pushed in and formed really what’s now the town of Pickens, which became a boom lumber town. On the day of the dedication, July 4, it snowed in Pickens, during the dedication of the railroad. The Swiss, however, were still speaking Switzedietch down there in Helvetia and there were all kinds of ethnic groups coming into Pickens with this railroad and the timber industry. And we would have dances. Dancing and yodeling are always important to the Swiss. We would have dances down there and if any of these Anglishers, English-speaking people, if any of these Anglishers came down and started dancing with our girls all the Swiss boys and men together would throw them out of the dance hall, just pick them up and remove them, and kind of didn’t allow the Anglisher to come mix with us, because I don’t know, they probably were better looking and got all the good girls. The problem was there, plus the Helvetians...”

“There’s a joke: ‘What do you get when you get two or three Swiss together?’ The answer is: a club. Helvetia has 151, 152 people in it, but we have eleven organizations in our village. We have the 4-H Club, the Farm Women’s Club, the Farm Men’s Club, the Alpheners Garden Club, the Helvetia church, the Library Association, the Helvetia Restoration and Development Association, Helvetia Community Hall Association. We have eleven of these things, and it’s very normal, and the Helvetia Star Band and the Helvetia Folk Dancers, the Helvetia Kid’s Folk Dancers. In Switzerland it’s that way also. All these little clubs and you belong to at least four, or there wouldn’t be enough people in any one of the clubs. Czar and Pickens did not form clubs that way, and none of the three villages ever incorporated with a mayor or a burghermeister, and therefore because of this tight-knit club organization everyone in Helvetia knows what events are going to go on and if I’m sitting on the council of this thing I can go home and say we’re gonna do a dance next week and that way when my mom goes to the Farm-Women’s meeting she won’t schedule something that week—it works like a government. And I know that some of the Swiss look down their noses

at the poor peasants in Czar who don’t have clubs or those people in Pickens and it has caused, from throwing out the men in the dances at the turn of the century until today this sense of [a word in Swiss—Switzedietch?], a high-noseness of the Swiss, and I’m interested at this point in my life in how to smooth that over. You might be able to help me with that, and if you’re successful in Helvetia you might go to Europe and help the Swiss get along with the Germans and the Austrians better.”

Michael Oliverio

“Last year, June, I stepped down as the vice-chairman of the American Heart Association, went over to Italy, and did a study, south of Rome on the Italian food, and what it did for you as far as the heart and vascular situation, etc. Most of us felt that would have been the death of Italy, but not so. They found that their food doesn’t cause much heart problems because they eat a lot of pasta and potatoes. They don’t have a lot of beef, so they consume a lot of poultry and fish, they eat a lot of fruit, they don’t have a lot of butter, so they use olive oil and it turned out that the diet is very, very conducive to good heart health.

“Gardens, their pride. House, kitchen is where you live, there’s no such thing as a living room, because they live in the kitchen. Unfortunately we idolize fireplaces. He [Bruce Betler] was telling us about the curse of fireplaces. In Italy every room has a fireplace and you sit in front of that fireplace and just talk by the hour. The two basic ingredients in the Italian family as I mentioned are tomatoes and onions and if you have those and it’s amazing, most of us know from our mothers and grandmothers, they can produce more food and more beautiful aroma with tomatoes and onions than almost anything. When they came over here they were somewhat deprived and they made use of things and I’ve often said an Italian family can take a pig and use everything of it except the oink, and they’ve probably figured out ways to do something with the oink if they could get ahold of it.

“Language situation — two types of immigrants in the United States: some who said their children had to speak English and they insisted on it so they could get into the culture, and there were others who said they were going to learn the English in school, etc., and they demanded their children learn Italian. This doesn’t necessarily mean one’s right and one’s wrong, but I’ll tell you this because my parents both spoke it at home fluently and I learned to speak. It’s probably been one of the greatest assets I’ve ever had so I would encourage people of any culture to continue, as the fine lady said here this morning [Paulette Lawrence-Wood], to preserve their culture. Some of the organizations — Sons of Italy, Catholic Daughters of America, Knights of Columbus, the Catholic Church, West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival, etc. ”

Charlene Marshall

“I’ve been invited to speak to you on some of my experiences leading up to my becoming the mayor of Morgantown... I always make it a point to let people know that I am originally from Osage. I believe that there’s a lot of people who start out in little places like that and they make a contribution to our state.

"...I've lived in Morgantown since shortly after graduating from high school and I attended Monongalia High School over in Westover, which is now Westover Junior High, and for those of you who are not familiar with Monongalia High School, it was a building that was built predominantly for the black students at that time.

"...Several people asked me if I would be interested in being a candidate for City Council. And right off I said 'No way, I would never run for public office.' So of course you know the rest. ... A very strange thing happened when I entered the race. There were four other candidates. They had filed for the same seat — I represent the 6th Ward in Morgantown. All of them were men. All of them were in education, and I started getting phone calls, and from some of the people, they were all men, and they all had the same message: you can't win, you're going to mess things up. And they all had a different number of messages, but basically the same thing. Well, I guess, in my family sometimes they tell me that maybe I'm a bit stubborn, but I sort of, in the past, I had thought of myself as someone that would be easily intimidated by other people, and at that particular time I decided that I would just use this in the reverse. Instead of being intimidated, this gave me the strength and it just really made me want to fight back. I realized that if I backed down after a few phone calls I would be letting a lot of people down that had confidence in me and had faith in me that had come to me originally to ask me to be their candidate. And not just the people who had encouraged me to become a candidate, but the people who had worked also in the civil rights movement, so that individuals such as I would have the opportunity to run for office."

MICHAEL R. RIDDERBUSCH NEW UNIVERSITY ARCHIVIST

The West Virginia Collection is pleased to welcome Michael R. Ridderbusch to the position of Assistant Curator of Manuscripts and University Archivist. On May 8 Mr. Ridderbusch began his new duties in surveying and appraising an estimated 60,000 linear feet of West Virginia University records. This is the first step in a planned two-year project to make a large-scale transfer of materials to the WVU Archives. The identification and preservation of permanently valuable WVU records from amongst the larger mass of temporarily essential administrative records will require close work with WVU administrators throughout the University. Mr. Ridderbusch will also be responsible for supervising the processing of non-WVU manuscript collections of the West Virginia Collection as well.

Before coming to Morgantown Mr. Ridderbusch managed the archival and records management program at Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon for seven years. In prior professional experience at the Special Collections of the University of Oregon Libraries he was responsible for processing over 600 linear feet of labor union records. He also brings with him experience in computer applications, having designed in-house archival computer systems that meet MARC-AMC descriptive standards. His education includes master degrees in both library science and music from the University of Washington.

LILLIAN MAYFIELD ROBERTS WRIGHT

Papers and publications of West Virginia poet Lillian Mayfield Roberts Wright (1895-1986) have been acquired. She was born in Conaway, West Virginia, attended high school in Middlebourne, later attended West Virginia Wesleyan College and eventually studied at New York University with poet Joyce Kilmer. She published her poems and short stories between 1921 and 1938 under her maiden name of Lillian Mayfield Roberts in *Scribner's Magazine*, *McCall's*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *The House Beautiful*, and *The West Virginia Review*. Within *The WV Review* she has the distinction of being the first poet published with her lead poem *Oil* in v.1 n.1 (1923:5). Her most highly acclaimed poem is *Hill Hunger*, also published in *The WV Review* v.1 n.4 (1923:5). After marriage to college professor John Wright she settled in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in the 1940s and remained there for the rest of her life.

Lillian Wright's papers were discovered in 1990 by Judy Manning of Liberty, North Carolina. She found them in the bottom of a box of old magazines she had purchased at a yard sale for fifty cents. The papers include the poet's personal scrapbook of her own published poems, an unfinished novel, and a substantial collection of unpublished poetry. Judy Manning, through her own research, established the identity of the poet and eventually discovered that Mrs. Wright had passed away only a few weeks before. Without the dedication and determination of Judy Manning this important poet's papers would have been lost for all time. At present Mrs. Manning is exploring the possibility of publishing this newly found collection of Lillian Roberts Wright's poetry.

Reprinted below is her poem *Hill Hunger*, as originally published in *The West Virginia Review* in 1923.

HILL HUNGER

I think that something in the hill child dies
when he is taken to the level lands.

The man bred by an ocean understands,
And he will tell you that his sick heart sighs
for hiss of surf — and all his being cries
For roar of waves, and spray upon his hands;
Ever beneath his weary feet the sands —
Ever before his searching eyes a sail —

And so I think the hill child always sees
that broken line inked in against the skies,
Where saffron sunset drops to meet the trees
upon the hill tops — and the night hawk flies—
And when his mind cannot recapture these
I think that something in the hill child dies.

OLD AUGUSTA COUNTY FOUNDATION, INC.

Old Augusta County Foundation, Inc., has donated \$2,000 for preservation of newspapers and manuscripts. The geographic area specified by foundation president Alice Ann Wolfe Mills for this donation includes the West Virginia counties of Barbour, Grant, Hardy, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Randolph, Tucker, Upshur, Webster, and the Virginia county of Highland. Currently the funds are being used to employ a student assistant to microfilm newspapers from this area. This funding represents additional microfilming that would not otherwise have been possible from the regular budget of the WVU Libraries. We are, of course, most sincerely appreciative of this assistance with our micro-filming operations.

THE LOUISE MCNEILL PEASE COLLECTION

Writings and personal papers of West Virginia Poet Laureate Louise McNeill Pease (1911-1993) have been donated to the West Virginia and Regional History Collection by her son Douglas Pease. Born in Pocahontas County, West Virginia, Louise McNeill became one of the state's most widely read poets. She was blessed with literary acclaim from her peers, including Stephen Vincent Benet and Jesse Stuart. Her list of publications includes *Mountain White* (1931), *Gauley Mountain* (1939), *Time is Our House* (1942), *From a Dark Mountain* (1972), *Paradox Hill* (1972), *Elderberry Flood* (1979), *The Milkweed Ladies* (1988), *Hill Daughter: New and Selected Poems* (1991), and *Fermi Buffalo* (1994). In recognition of the importance of her writings she was named state Poet Laureate in 1977, a title she held until her death in 1993. Her influence on other regional poets was remarkable, with one of her peers recently referring to her as having been West Virginia's "poetic hammer."

The sixteen boxes of materials received, which include correspondence, family history, photographs, draft copies of her most recent publications, notebooks, and unpublished poems and stories, complement a previous 1971 donation by Mrs. Pease of a 1939 typescript draft of her most famous book of poetry, *Gauley Mountain*.

Publication typescripts received are for *Fermi Buffalo* (1994), *Hill Daughter: New and Selected Poems* (1991), *The Milkweed Ladies* (1988), and a set of unpublished stories, "Three Shades of Blue." Her correspondence dates from the early 1980s through 1993. There are many letters from her family, and there is fan mail along with letters from poets Maggie Anderson, Walter Havighurst, and Kirk Judd. Her personal papers include handwritten notebooks for her poetry, short stories, and photographs.

Here are two of Louise McNeill's previously unpublished poems included in the donation from A&M 3201, Box 12, folder "many good poems - unpublished..." of unknown date. They are entitled "Herbs" and "A Farmer," and have been selected to show the range of diversity within this collection.

VISITING COMMITTEE WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

John E. Stealey III—Chairman, *Shepherdstown*
William Adler, *Weston*
Ruel E. Foster, *Morgantown*
Michael Greer, *Bridgeport*
Beth Hager, *Morgantown*
Joseph C. Jefferds, Jr., *Charleston*
Vaughn Kiger, *Morgantown*
Brooks McCabe, *Charleston*
Merle Moore, *Weston*
Fred Newbraugh, *Berkeley Springs*



Louise McNeill, c. 1940

HERBS

The herbs from those old gardens
Have wandered far away
Across the fields and hilltops
In fragrant disarray:

The tarragon and horehound,
The peppermint and dill,
Gone vagrant by the roadsides
To travel westward still
Forever and forever—
From shore to shining sea—
To follow us who followed
The suns of destiny.

The herbs from those old gardens
At evenings long ago—
When women in their bonnets
And skirts of calico
Bent down and deeply planted
To blossom age to age:
The fennel and marjoram
The balsam and the sage,
The roots of golden tansy,
The anise and the cress,
And fragrant coriander
To tame the wilderness.

A FARMER

(Interviewed in a Survival Cellar)

“I was just starting in my hay
The day they set the Earth on fire...
It was the twenty-ninth of May
And I had Charlie Plum for hire.

“I didn’t notice at the first
Until the smoke-cloud’s greenish bloom
Began to open in the east
Half-shapen like a mushroom.

“Then in the shaping of the cloud,
I saw a flaming little girl;
A red computer in a shroud
Went by me, clicking, in the whirl;
My haymow driven by the blast—
A flame-tree toppled up the skies—
A crow went by me at the last
With blinded beak and cawing eyes.”

SELECTED RECENT ACQUISITIONS

UMWA Health and Retirement Funds records have been acquired from both the Johnstown, PA and the Star City, WV branch offices. 25 linear feet from Johnstown includes records of early 20th century coal companies and District and Local Union records, and 12 linear feet of documentation from Star City concerns administrative history of The Funds.

Pearl S. Buck manuscripts have been acquired, including correspondence, handwritten and typed draft publication manuscripts for the novels *Come My Beloved*, *The Real Thing* and *Stay as You Are*, and the theatre play *Whatever it is You Want*. 1.5 linear feet.

A SPECIAL "THANK YOU" TO...

Dr. Harvey Wolf, of Wolf's Head Books, St. Augustine, Florida (recently retired from the WVU Department of Administration). Dr. Wolf conducted an appraisal of the Dayton Rare Books Collections, WVU Libraries. The time and energy spent in this endeavor are sincerely appreciated.

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