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West Virginia and Regional History Collection

NEWSLETTER

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The West Virginia Digital Newspaper Project

Anyone who has ever searched at random through a cache of old newspapers hoping to stumble on an article of interest – an obituary perhaps – knows just how frustrating newspaper research can be. While newspapers are among the most informative primary resources available for studying family, local and national history, sifting through their voluminous content is like searching for the proverbial “needle in a

haystack.” This painstaking endeavor is about to get a little easier at the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, in the case of a few newspaper titles at least.

On September 1, 2011, the West Virginia Collection joined libraries and historical repositories in 27 states nationwide as a participant in the United States Digital Newspaper Project. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the goal of the USD-NP is to digitize a broad selection of historical newspapers from across America and incorporate them into a national digital newspaper database hosted by the Library of Congress. In addition to offering online images of the selected newspapers, the database will include full-text search capability that will enable researchers to find in an instant information that might have taken them literally years to find through random searching in the past.

West Virginia has a rich heritage in the field of journalism. At least 1200 different newspaper titles have been published within the state’s borders between the late eighteenth century to the present. The earliest, the *Potomac Guardian* and *Berkeley Advertiser*, made its debut in Shepherdstown in 1790. It was followed several years later by a pair of additional Eastern Panhandle titles, the *Impartial Observer* (1797), also published in Shep-



Staff of the *Independent*, Lewisburg, WV, ca. 1910.

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26506-6069. (304) 293-3536.

STAFF: John Cuthbert, Harold Forbes, Kevin Fredette,
Catherine Rakowski, Michael Ridderbusch, Anna Schein, Judy
Sirk, Larry Sypolt, Michael Thobois, Francisco Tovar, Christelle
Venham, Lauren Wilson.

EDITOR: John Cuthbert
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herdstown, and the *Berkeley Intelligencer* (1799) which was issued in Martinsburg.

Newspaper publishing spread to other parts of present-day West Virginia during the first decades of the 19th century. Morgantown's *Monongalia Gazette* appeared in 1804. The *Wheeling Repository* was established three years later. Within the next two decades newspapers emerged in Clarksburg, Charleston, Lewisburg and many other communities throughout the region. By 1850, 21 weekly newspapers and three dailies were serving a population of approximately 300,000 western Virginians.

By the time West Virginia achieved statehood in 1863, nearly 250 different newspapers had been published around the state. A great many of these titles existed only briefly during the tumultuous Civil War era when there was high demand for news of military and political developments and opposing interpretations of those developments by rival parties. There was also a special need during this time for dissemination of legal and official notices regarding the changing face of state and local government.

While the Civil War spawned a proliferation of short-lived titles, the war proved detrimental to many of the state's more significant newspapers, especially those with a pro-Southern slant. The publishers of the *Fairmont True Virginian*, the *Ritchie Democrat*, and Lewisburg's *Greenbrier Weekly Era* all ceased publication to join the Confederate army. Charleston's *Kanawha Valley Star* and Martinsburg's *Virginia Republican* were among several

newspapers seized by Union soldiers who in several cases employed confiscated presses to publish newspapers for distribution to military camps. Secessionist newspapers in Philippi, Romney, and Parkersburg were among many that were destroyed either by the military or by civilian mobs.

Dramatic growth in West Virginia's natural resources industries brought substantial increases in population to the Mountain State during the decades after the Civil War. This influx led to the establishment of new communities many of which were multicultural in nature. Newspapers designed to serve this new populace were often geared to specific ethnic or occupational groups. German and Italian newspapers appeared in Wheeling and Thomas, respectively, while newspapers published by and geared to African-Americans emerged in Martinsburg (*Pioneer Press*), Charleston (*The Advocate*) and Keystone (*McDowell Times*). The *Volcano Lubricator*, *West Virginia Walking Beam* and *Derrick Herald* emerged to serve boomtowns that arose overnight when West Virginia became a leading center of America's oil industry during the late nineteenth century.

The availability of cheap newsprint, the rise of news distribution networks, and the invention of the linotype, telephone, and the typewriter all combined to foster another boom in newspaper publishing in West Virginia during the first decade of the twentieth century. With at least 223 titles publishing concurrently by 1912, more papers were being issued within the state



Morgantown Post Printing Office, Walnut Street, Morgantown, WV, 1903.



Interior of Upshur Record Newspaper Office, Upshur County, W. Va. ca. 1900

at this time than at any other point in history. Many of the titles founded during this period survive to the present.

World War I ushered in a decline in the number of titles issued in West Virginia. As had happened during the Civil War, several newspapers closed when their owners departed for military duty. Those who remained faced higher paper, labor and postal costs. Many smaller papers were forced to suspend publication or merge with competitors.

Although the number of daily newspapers remained fairly constant in the ensuing decades, the number of weekly newspapers continued to decline. Due to factors ranging from slow population growth to the widespread poverty of the Great Depression, the number of weeklies had fallen to 130 by the outbreak of World War II which forced even more closures and mergers.

Further declines came in the following decades as tens of thousands of West Virginians left the state seeking employment. Although circulation remained relatively stable during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, population losses and an unfavorable economic climate triggered a continuing decline in newspaper publishing through the remainder of the century.

Ironically, several innovative West Virginia newspapers led the nation in technological advances during this period. The installation of the first offset presses in the early 1960s permitted the printing of several different newspaper titles per day, allowing the owners of such presses to contract to print newspa-

pers from neighboring communities as well as their own. By 2002, just 25 printing presses printed all the newspapers operating in West Virginia as well as many titles from other states. The disastrous West Virginia 1985 flood also dramatically changed the technology of newspaper production. The *Pocahontas Times* was the first West Virginia newspaper to use a desktop publishing system after the flood demolished its printing plant, instantly moving the paper into the computer age. Other flood-ravaged newspapers followed suit, and today, all West Virginia newspapers rely on automated information processing and computerized typesetting systems.

By 2010, the number of West Virginia newspaper titles had shrunk to 79 including 21 daily and 58 non-daily. The state's leading newspapers today include Charleston's *Gazette* and *Daily Mail*, Huntington's *Herald-Dispatch*, Parkersburg's *News & Sentinel*, Beckley's *Register-Herald* and Morgantown's *Dominion Post*, each of which has a daily circulation of more than 20,000.

The West Virginia University Libraries and West Virginia Collection have long maintained a position of leadership in preserving West Virginia newspapers. The West Virginia Collection's holdings are not only the largest but also the most significant in existence for the state. Between 1983 and 1988, the West Virginia Collection participated in the United State Newspaper Project which was also sponsored by the NEH. The primary goal of that project was to seek out and preserve on microfilm every surviving historic newspaper issue that could be located that was not already on microfilm. The National Digital Newspaper Project follows on the heels of that project by providing funds to enable libraries and historical repositories across the nation to digitize key selections from their newspaper microfilm collections.

Over the next two years, the WVRHC will digitize 100,000 newspaper pages dating between 1836 and 1922. An advisory board of historians and archivists from across West Virginia will help select the issues to be included in the project guided by selection parameters set by the NEH.

After the issues have been scanned, transcrip-



Morgantown Post Newspaper Delivery Boys, ca. 1930.

tions of the content on every page will be created by using “optical character recognition” (OCR) software to literally translate the visual images into electronic text. Detailed cataloging records will also be created for each page in order to make it possible to link the scans, transcriptions and bibliographic data together.

Upon its completion, the West Virginia Digital Newspaper Project will present the West Virginia Collection’s frustrated newspaper researchers with a revolutionary tool – an extensive newspaper database with the search capability to make the needles jump right out of haystacks! Indeed, a new era in newspaper research is at hand.

Visiting Committee West Virginia University Libraries

Diane Hackney-Oliver, Charleston, WV

Vaughn L. Kiger, Morgantown, WV

Brooks F. McCabe, Jr., Charleston, WV

R. Samuel Oliver, Jr., Charleston, WV

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John E. Stealey, III, Shepherdstown, WV, Chairman

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Make a Difference in the Lives That Follow

The fascination of exploring historical information about other lives lived keeps people coming to the sixth floor of the Wise Library day in and day out. The resources they find in the West Virginia and Regional History Collection open many doors for them.

The Collection’s value is inestimable. Assuring that access to these physical and online resources continues in the future is important and is something that anyone can decide to help accomplish. There are a number of worthwhile options, including current and future gift support.

One direction for future support is to include a gift in your will or revocable trust as a part of preparing your estate plan. The wording of “to the West Virginia University Foundation, Inc. for the benefit of the WVU Libraries’ West Virginia and Regional History Collection” should be provided to your attorney. Additional wording can specify how the gift is to be used. Funds for acquisitions, resource conservation, staffing or general purposes are excellent choices.

Another option for supporting the WV&RHC is to make the WVU Foundation the after-death beneficiary of retirement account funds. Then an agreement stating how the funds are to be used is important to assure the best results.

Contact Monte Maxwell, the Libraries’ development representative, at 304-293-0306 or monte.maxwell@mail.wvu.edu to learn more about these options. Providing such personal support will definitely help those who visit the Collection online or in person to find what they need for generations to come.

Selected Recent Accessions:

Brand, Franklin, Lawyer and Politician. Papers, ca. 1917-1967, 2 ft. 6 in., Gift in 2011. A&M 3796.

Papers of Franklin Marion Brand, lawyer and politician of Monongalia County, West Virginia. Includes mostly correspondence related to legal and political matters (some personal) in Monongalia County and

the state of West Virginia (inclusive dates: 1917-1944; bulk dates: 1935-1943). Diverse in content, this correspondence includes material regarding activities of city government (Morgantown), local schools and churches, bar associations, the Republican State Committee, state government, and other organizations. A series of correspondence dating from 1943, labeled "legislative" by Brand, includes a wide range of material reflecting his activities as a delegate from Monongalia County. There is also an extensive series of political handbills and pamphlets, many of which advocate Republican opposition to the New Deal policies of President Franklin Roosevelt.

Brown, Martin Luther, Warden. Moundsville Penitentiary Records, ca. 1910-1920, 5 1/2 in., Gift in 2011. A&M 3786.

Records of Warden Martin Luther Brown of Moundsville Penitentiary. Includes series of historical information, incoming letters (mostly from inmates to Warden Brown), and photographs (related to Moundsville Penitentiary). The date range of the series of incoming letters (1911-1914) corresponds to Martin Brown's tenure as Warden.



Inmates Gather in "Yard" at Moundsville Penitentiary, Moundsville, WV, ca. 1912.

Carpenter, Thomas Jack, Soldier. World War II Narrative and Letters, 1945-1946, 1998, 1 1/4 in., Gift in 2011. A&M 3772.

Reminiscence and transcripts of letters by T. Jack Carpenter regarding his World War II experiences. The reminiscence of six pages, written in 1998, chronicles in summary form the life of Jack Carpenter from 1940 to 1946, starting from his high school years in Middlebourne, West Virginia through 1946, the year he was discharged. The letters, dating from 1 May 1945 through 14 October 1946, document in detail his training at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, and Camp Livingston, Louisiana; trip overseas to Camp Lucky Strike outside Paris, France; transfer to Schwabach in post-war Germany; training at Fontainebleau, France for clerical work; and transfer to U.S. Headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany. Finally, he was assigned to the staff working for General McNarney, commander in chief, U.S. Forces of Occupation in Germany. The letters, in their detailed rendering of Carpenter's professional and personal life, provide a window through which we can view the world of post-war Europe from the perspective of a U.S. serviceman. There are also a few photographs, including the sea crossing, Camp Lucky Strike, Fontainebleau, headquarters in Frankfurt, and the General's lodge at Oberammergau. There are also photos of Carpenter in Frankfurt.

Coogle, Benjamin F., Union Soldier. Civil War Diary, 1864-1872, 1/2 in., Gift in 2011. A&M 3800.

One diary kept by Second Lieutenant Benjamin F. Coogle of Company A, 6th West Virginia Volunteer Infantry, "Sunday Soldiers", a unit stationed along the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad between Grafton and Piedmont, West Virginia. He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant on 22 September 1864, and discharged 10 June 1865. There are entries for the period 12 September 1864 through 14 June 1865, and a few miscellaneous entries for the years 1871 and 1872. Entries are generally short and succinct, including references to weather, health, drilling, scouting, inactivity, homesickness, and other events and activities.

Costa, Jim, Collector. Glass Plate Negatives of Hinton, ca. 1900-1910, 7 1/2 in., Gift in 2011. A&M 3784.

Glass plate negatives (44 items) documenting subjects in the area of Hinton, Avis, and Bellepoint, West Vir-



A visit to the Silar Store, Hinton, WV, ca. 1890.

ginia. Includes pictures of the Hinton and Silas families and their associates. Other subjects include the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad, children in a carriage, a mill, and members of a baseball team, among others.

Dailey, Virginia, Collector. Burchinal, Minear, Jackson, and Kemble Family Photographs, ca. 1860-1912, 1 ft. 3 1/2 in., Acquired in 2011. A&M 3773.

Collection of two Victorian Era photograph albums containing cartes de visite, cabinet cards, tintypes, and prints. There are also five cased daguerreotypes, several mounted prints, loose prints, photo postcards, and illustrated postcards. More than half of the subjects of the photos are identified. Many of the subjects are members of the Minear (Menear), Burchinal, Kemble, and Jackson families from north-central West Virginia and southwestern Pennsylvania. Most of the photographers were located in the same region. Other items include 15 stamped and postmarked postcards made of leather addressed to "Miss Irene Burchinal" of Kingwood, West Virginia; a few pieces of advertising ephemera; a photograph case containing a lock of hair woven into a heart; a very small print of two men; and a paper heart.

Ewing, John, Soldier. Civil War Letter, 1862, 1 item, Acquired in 2011. A&M 3777

Letter of John Ewing, Corporal of the 16th Ohio Infantry, to his wife and children, written from the Kanawha Valley in the vicinity of Charleston, (West) Virginia (2 November 1862). Ewing writes that he is in good health and describes recent encounters with Confed-

erate troops. He describes in detail his experience as a Confederate prisoner, including a time he saw a "Company" of Indians with the Confederates. He also remarks on the opinions, mood, and character of the Confederate soldiers he met while in captivity. Ewing writes about conditions and happenings at the Union camp where he was currently stationed. The collection includes a transcript of the letter.

Florence Stewart Book Club. Records, 1957-2011, 5 in., Gift in 2011. A&M 3794.

Records of the Florence Stewart Book Club of Morgantown, West Virginia. The book club was founded in 1957 by a group of Morgantown women to read and discuss literature. The collection includes book lists, membership lists, news clippings, correspondence, photographs, and other material.

Harsh, Samuel F. Family. Genealogy, Photographs, and Artifacts, ca. 1860-1918, 2011, 2 ft. 1 1/2 in., Gift in 2011. A&M 3789.

Material regarding the family of Samuel Frances Harsh of Barbour County, West Virginia. Includes genealogy and family history records, photographs, three Bibles, and artifacts. Photographs include a cased photograph, tintypes, and cabinet cards of the Harsh family and relatives, some dating to the Civil War era. The Bibles date from 1865, 1880, and 1881, and include family genealogical information. There are two artifacts in the collection owned by Samuel Harsh, including a potato masher and a clock. The masher includes engravings of his name and the date of 1890. The cased photograph is an image of Samuel F. Harsh dating from 1865 as a member of Captain Haller's Home Guards, a local militia unit formed for the purpose of protecting Barbour County from Confederate raids; and there is a lock of hair, also in a Union case, that was kept by his wife Louisa during the Civil War.

Hinebough Photograph, ca. 1861-1865, 1 item, Acquired in 2011.

One Civil War era carte de visite (cdv) photograph (2 1/2 in. x 4 in.) of Second Lieutenant John Hinebough of the 6th West Virginia Cavalry. Includes signature in ink, "Yours...John Hinebough". Verso marked in pencil "2nd LT / John Hinebough / 6th W. VA Cav / M.O 81564". The 6th West Virginia Cavalry saw ac-

tion early in its service, though it spent much of the war lacking in arms and equipment. The regiment was captured at New Creek by Confederate General Rosser.

Powell, William Henry, Colonel. Civil War Telegram, 1863, 1 item, Acquired in 2011. A&M 3779.

Telegram by Colonel William Henry Powell, 2nd West Virginia Cavalry, from Camp Piatt, to Captain Eli W. Botsford, 16th Ohio Infantry, dated 6 July 1863. The telegram regards the report of a scouting party concerning Confederate troop positions and recent engagements. The scouts report finding 300 Confederate cavalry and capturing a small number of men and horses. The party was also ambushed and one man was killed and another wounded. Camp Piatt occupied a location of strategic importance on the James River, Kanawha River, and Kanawha Turnpike, and is nearby to present-day Belle, West Virginia.

Ramage, Chesney MacCauley, Surgeon. Photographs and Biography, 1900-1907, 2007, 1/4 in., Gift in 2011, A&M 3790.

Three photographs and biographical material regarding Chesney MacCauley Ramage, a native of West Milford, West Virginia. After graduating from Fairmont High School (in 1900) and West Virginia University (WVU), he attended John Hopkins University Medical School in Baltimore. He then returned to Fairmont and established a surgical practice, becoming the superintendent and chief surgeon at the Miners' Hospital (Fairmont Emergency Hospital). Photographs include graduating glass of Fairmont High School (1900), Chesney building a hunting lodge (ca. 1904), the WVU Men's Glee Club (ca. 1906 or 1907), and hunting lodge (ca. 1904).

Rathbone, John Castelli, Colonel. Civil War Letter and Parole Pledge, 1862, 1 item, Acquired in 2011. A&M 3781.

Single leaf with two documents on front and back (recto and verso) respectively. On one side is an apparently unsent letter authored by Colonel John Castelli Rathbone, 11th West Virginia Volunteer Infantry, from Spencer (West) Virginia to the commanding officer at Ravenswood, (West) Virginia, dated 2 September 1862. Rathbone urgently requests reinforcements against an expected attack by Confederate cavalry. The verso is

a "true copy" of the parole pledge signed by Rathbone and other members of his unit after their surrender to Confederate General Albert G. Jenkins, dated 2 September 1862. Rathbone's unit was captured during Jenkins' Raid of western Virginia.

Rhodenbaugh, Suzanne, Compiler. Records Regarding United Mine Workers of America Health and Retirement Funds, 1949-2003, 10 in., Gift in 2011. A&M 3801.

Collection of files compiled by Suzanne Jaworski Rhodenbaugh regarding the Health and Retirement Funds of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA Funds) and other managed health care programs. Rhodenbaugh worked for UMWA Funds. Includes reports, correspondence, clippings, strike records, histories, studies, and related material regarding health clinics in the coalfields. Includes two historical narratives by George S. Goldstein, including: 1. "A History of Medical Care Delivery in the Coal Industry Since 1946"; and 2. "The Rise and Decline of the UMWA Health and Retirement Funds Program, 1946-1995."

Robson, James K., Soldier. Civil War Diary, 1862, 1/2 in., Acquired in 2011. A&M 3775.

Civil War diary of ca. 160 pages kept by Private James K. Robson of the New York 8th Cavalry, Company E, for the year 1862. Though diary entries are short, they are pithy and informative for every day of the year, documenting highlights from the perspective of an army private. The diary begins with a description of guard duties and camp life in the vicinity of Washington, D.C. (January to March), and activities during the Valley Campaign guarding the railroad and Harpers Ferry from General T.J. Jackson's army (March to June). Robson's unit was then withdrawn to Relay House near Baltimore to be mounted, fully equipped, and drilled as a cavalry unit (June to August), and subsequently deployed to the defense of Harpers Ferry in response to the invasion of Maryland by Confederate forces during the Antietam Campaign (September). Sick in the hospital, Robson was among the 12,000 Union soldiers who surrendered at Harpers Ferry, and then paroled with nine others of his unit to Camp Douglas near Chicago, Illinois (September to November). After his exchange he ended the year at Fort Albany within the Washington, D.C. fortification system.



*Morgantown paperboy, ca. 1900.
See story, page 1.*

Rosecrans, William Starke. Letter Regarding Presidential Election of 1868, 1868, 1 item, Acquired in 2011. A&M 3778.

Letter by William Starke Rosecrans, former Union general, regarding the presidential election of 1868, dated 25 August 1868. Rosecrans was writing from White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia and the letter is written on stationery from the Greenbrier resort. The letter is addressed to Horatio Seymour, then Governor of New York and the Democratic presidential nominee. Rosecrans solicited support for Seymour while at the Greenbrier. In the letter, Rosecrans requests to meet with Seymour discreetly upon his return to New York, and refers obliquely to being on important business during his stay at the resort.

Smith, Clement. Civil War Letter to General Scammon, 1863, 2 items, Acquired in 2011. A&M 3780. Letter by Clement Smith of Peytona, Boone County, West Virginia, a civilian, to Eliakim P. Scammon, Union General, dated 29 October 1863. Smith

requests that General Scammon endorse his claim for several boats taken by Union troops in 1862. Smith writes about General William S. Rosecrans and the negative opinions of him held by the public and the press after the Battle of Chickamauga. Smith also observes that Scammon has been accused of secessionist sympathies on account of building plank roads in Charleston. Scammon served in the Kanawha County region of western Virginia between October 1861 and February 1864. Also includes a slip of paper with "W.S. Rosecrans" and other text written upon it.

Viquesney Family Papers, 1880-1892, 1/2 in., Gift in 2011. A&M 3799.

Papers related to the Viquesney family. Includes land grant signed by West Virginia Governor Arthur Boreman to Joseph Howes and G.E. Jarvis (1866), naturalization papers for Charles Emile Viquesney (1880), and other Viquesney material. Also includes items from the related Hayes family.