

WEST VIRGINIA **History Heroes**

Fredrick H. Armstrong served as the director of Archives and History for 22 years. During his tenure, he acquired many valuable collections for the State Archives, ensuring their preservation for future generations. Armstrong established the Records Management and Preservation Board, which distributes grant funds to county offices for the preservation of county records. He initiated the Archives and History Web site, the West Virginia Memory Project, and West Virginia Vital Records Research Project to make information and records available to the public via the Internet. Over the years, Armstrong has readily shared his extensive knowledge of the state's history and its preservation with many individuals and groups throughout the state and beyond its borders.

Nominated by West Virginia Labor History Association

Barbara Beerbower, James Feather, Janice Feather, and Rowena Mersing are the inventory team organizing the information about the holdings of the Preston County Historical Society at its History House museum. Under the direction of Vice President Edna Britton, James Feather created a unique computer program that describes artifacts, identifies location and donor, and displays photographic views. He also photographs the items. Barbara, Rowena, and Edna locate and prepare a written description for each item, while Janice enters the data into the computer program. These dedicated members have given countless hours over the past two years to catalog the thousands of items located on three floors of the former bank building.

Nominated by Preston County Historical Society

John Belcher joined the Madie Carroll House Preservation Society soon after moving to Guyandotte. He volunteered to chair the society's landscape committee because of his love for landscaping, especially historical landscaping. He also has experience in construction and has assisted with restoration and maintenance work at the site. Belcher researched General Albert G. Jenkins and now portrays the general for the Historic Madie Carroll House. He was instrumental in the re-establishment of a Huntington Landmarks Commission and is currently working on a nomination of historic

Guyandotte to the National Register of Historic Places.

Nominated by Madie Carroll House Preservation Society, Inc.

Bryan (deceased) and **Jackie Bills**, members of the Pleasants County Historical Society, spent years studying Pleasants County families through obituaries, historical documents, official records, cemetery records, and personal knowledge. Their efforts have resulted in the creation of extensive genealogical charts for hundreds of Pleasants County families, which have been made available at the Pleasants County Library. Copies of the accumulated obituaries were organized and donated to the library, the Pleasants County GenWeb site, historical society, and Daughters of the American Revolution. The Bills have welcomed researchers into their home, and Bryan shared his lifelong knowledge of the county with these visitors and often gave personal tours.

Nominated by Pleasants County Historical Society

Shirley B. Bingman is a charter member and current board officer of the West Virginia CCC Museum Association and works tirelessly to promote and preserve the history of the Civilian Conservation Corps. She has obtained memorabilia, photos, and archival documents for display at the museum at Quiet Dell and has traveled around West Virginia promoting the CCC at schools, fairs, and West Virginia history events. Bingman has appeared in numerous newspaper photos/articles and was interviewed for a New Deal documentary aired on statewide public television. Shirley Bingman is a fine ambassador and an invaluable member of the association.

Nominated by West Virginia State CCC Museum Association

A longtime member of the St. Albans Historical Society, **Bettie A'Hearn Burdette** donated time and money to build the society's William P. Burdette Memorial Building. She also has donated photographs and artifacts and served on many society committees. Burdette is knowledgeable about local structures and their significance, and she recalls old times on the Coal River and enjoys telling stories about its history and its people.

Nominated by St. Albans Historical Society

Mabel Starcher Chapman has served three terms as Jackson County Historical Society president. A first-term president when the society published *Jackson County 1990, Past and Present*, she supervised the fourth printing of the book when she returned as president in 2006. She is known for her vast knowledge of Jackson County history and is kept busy answering queries about the area. Chapman is also a member of the Early Settler's and Pine Hill Cemetery committees. In 2002 at age 81, she mowed a field in front of her house for use as a helicopter landing site during President Bush's attendance at Ripley's Fourth of July celebration.

Nominated by Jackson County Historical Society

Tedra Cremeans Chapman has been a dedicated member of Guyandotte Civil War Days for seven years and has been president for five years. Tedra worked diligently to lead the organization through five successful events, promoting it to the community by involving and successfully gaining the support of more local organizations. Tedra has served on every committee of Guyandotte Civil War Days during her seven years of service.

Nominated by Guyandotte Civil War Days

The team of **James Edward Dague** and **Karen Dennison Hucko** spent months recording tombstone inscriptions for Mt. View Cemetery, one of the largest cemeteries in Marshall County. It was a challenge for James, who was born with cerebral palsy, and for Karen, who lives in Ohio, but the two compiled a list of nearly 2,000 graves and spent additional months of research to supplement the tombstone readings. James also has researched the Dague and associated families, spent countless hours doing courthouse and library research, and collected many obituaries that he shares on the Internet. Karen has helped record tombstone inscriptions for numerous Marshall County cemeteries and has transcribed Marshall County census records for the Internet. She is the author of books about several families and compiled a book of Richmond family obituaries. Additionally, Karen has researched, ordered, and set government-issued headstones for 11 Revolutionary War and Civil War soldiers in Marshall County.

Nominated by Marshall County, West Virginia Virtual Genealogy Society

A member of the board of directors of the Tyler County Museum and the Heritage and Historical So-

ciety, **Clarence Delancey** has been a hard worker at the museum. He adopted the Boy Scout youth room at the museum and has brought many scouts and their leaders to the museum to arrange and frame memorabilia displays and to clean, dust, and show the room to visitors. Delancey also has participated in fundraisers, laid brick for a flower bed, and kept the lawn mowed and the flower beds weeded and in order.

Nominated by Tyler County Heritage & Historical Society

Betty Bane Dzubba is the chairperson of the membership committee for the Mineral County Historical Society and serves as the secretary of the Mineral County Genealogy Society. She has continued the collection and organization of information on Mineral County history that was begun by her mother, historian Evelyn Bane, and assists local and out-of-town genealogy researchers. Through her title searches, she gleans valuable information about local landowner history. Dzubba co-authored with Edna Mott a history of Antioch, West Virginia, and wrote a history of the Sunnyside Church of the Brethren at New Creek.

Nominated by Mineral County Historical Society

A Vietnam Navy veteran, **Gary Farris** single handedly started the Veterans Museum of Mid-Ohio Valley in 2002 from the basement of his home with only \$240 and a single World War II jacket. He has spent thousands of hours promoting the museum, which now has more than 150 members and a board of directors. Since the grand opening of the museum at its current location on Avery Street in Parkersburg, Farris has started a docent class with local students, a model building class, and, most importantly, the family support program. He continues to work unselfishly to help all veterans and their families.

Nominated by Veterans Museum of Mid-Ohio Valley

Virginia Gadd became a member of the Summers County Historical Society in 2004. A member of the book committee, she was very active in gathering and contributing postcards and in writing captions for *Summers County in Vintage Postcards*, and she also helped in writing the second volume of *Summers County, West Virginia, Historical Society Cemetery Book*. Recently, she has been checking on the availability and visibility of the society's books at retail places. She also writes minutes of society meetings.

Nominated by Summers County Historical Society

Marla Zelene Harman serves as treasurer of the Pendleton County Historical Society. She compiled the brochure "Walking Tour of Historic Franklin, W.Va." that includes a map and descriptions of 39 buildings. Her most recent project was the development of the 2008 "Barns of Pendleton" calendar, which netted a profit for the society. Harman provides a room in her law office for the society's use, sells society books, writes letters, and provides legal expertise. Her window of vintage Halloween artifacts won first place in competition at Pendleton County's annual Treasure Mountain Festival.

Nominated by Pendleton County Historical Society

For more than 50 years, **Ken Hechler** has lectured in West Virginia and throughout the United States, and he has written countless articles about West Virginia history. He also has been interviewed for many television and newspaper stories, as well as for such films as Mimi Pickering's landmark films about the Buffalo Creek Disaster (1972), Mari-Lynn Evans's forthcoming film on coal mining, and ABC's strip-mining documentary *West Virginia: Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Coal* (1972). Hechler has devoted much of his life to promoting West Virginia and American history.

Nominated by South Charleston Museum Foundation

Darrell Helton has been actively involved in preserving the history of Fayette and Raleigh counties and has helped hundreds of people research their family history. In 2005 and 2006, he organized genealogical workshops at the Raleigh County Public Library. Long interested in the Civil War activities in the area, Helton has written several articles on the subject and currently is working on a book about Union soldiers who died in the war and are buried locally. Through Helton's efforts, in 2007 a government marker was placed at the grave of a Civil War soldier buried near Oak Hill.

Nominated by Raleigh County Historical Society

Judi Hendrickson is secretary of the Friends of Wheeling, a local preservation group. She recently researched and co-authored a book *Walking Pleasant Valley*, a history of the old Wheeling homes and families along the National Road, and is currently researching the Woodsdale area for an upcoming book. Judi presents programs on Victorian wedding traditions and the history of tea. In 2003, as coordinator of the Lewis and Clark Project at Wheeling Jesuit University, she organized the distribution of educa-

tional materials to schools in West Virginia. Judi also researched and presented the character Sacagawea to children all over the state.

Nominated by Wheeling Area Historical Society

Dottie Hughes is a charter member of the Mineral County Genealogy Society, formed in November 2000. She has researched, organized, and published 32 genealogy books on the area. Hughes chaired the committee that published the first volume of *Rural Cemeteries of Mineral and Grant Counties, West Virginia*, and she also edits the society's newsletter. She produces "The Martin Rambler," a newsletter highlighting different families in the Martin, West Virginia, area; maintains a Web page "Diggin My Roots;" and assists with local genealogy displays.

Nominated by Mineral County Genealogy Society

Mary L. Lamp is an active member of the Pleasants County Historical Society and registrar for the Ohio Valley Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution. She chaired a DAR lineage workshop and as chapter registrar assists local women seeking to become members, helping them document descent from a Revolutionary War patriot. Lamp is a talented genealogist and contributor to the Pleasants County Web page and has written and presented programs on the history of several pioneer families. She also was instrumental in procuring a government marker for the grave of Ralph Wilson, a War of 1812 veteran, and spoke at its dedication.

Nominated by Ohio Valley Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution

Karen LeGrand is a past president of the KYOWVA Genealogy and Historical Society. One of her most important accomplishments was the change in the society's name to reflect better what it does as an organization to preserve and save history. Her fundraising efforts are commendable, and she is an active volunteer who has worked tirelessly to foster cooperation and collaboration between history groups, politicians, and community members to bring about change in Guyandotte. LeGrand also decorates the Jenkins Plantation every year for Christmas out of love for the home and its importance to her community.

Nominated by KYOWVA Genealogy & Historical Society

Judith Faye Likins has been a contributing member to the Rowlesburg Area Historical Society since its beginning in 1995 and currently serves as the so-

Pg. 5 - History Hero Winners 2008

ciety's vice president. She has worked every year on the society's Annual Homecoming Dinner, the Labor Day Ox Roast Weekend, candy sales, and other fundraising projects. A dependable member, Judy can be called upon to help with most activities, from cleaning the depot to making cakes for a dinner.

Nominated by Rowlesburg Area Historical Society

As president of the Julia-Ann Square Historical Association, **Lillian McCrary** has worked with enthusiastic dedication to restore the district to its original splendor. She has met with state and local officials, promoted association projects, obtained letters of support, and gained financial assistance from many sources. She also obtained volunteer labor and material donations from local businesses. In 2007, Lillian concentrated on installation of gateway arches at four district entrances and exits. The project is underway with a completion date scheduled for early 2008.

Her hard work and dedicated effort, and her love of historical preservation and community involvement, is the shining badge of achievement.

Nominated by Julia-Ann Square Historical Association, Inc.

Irene Moore has been an active member of the Logan County Genealogical Society for 23 years. After serving as recording secretary from 1984 to 1989, she was editor of the newsletter for 11 years (1989-2000). She also has researched and compiled five books on Logan County history. The society and many people seeking their family heritage have benefited from her years of research and vast knowledge of the pioneers of Logan County.

Nominated by Logan County Genealogical Society

A native of Roane County and a retired businessman, **Jack Nida** is the author of the recently published *Images of America: Roane County*, which was completed with the assistance of the Roane County Historical Society. The society inspired Jack's interest in genealogy, and his new book is dedicated to the early settlers of West Virginia. He is also the author of a family history book on the Nida family that is in its third edition.

Nominated by Roane County Historical Society

Barbara J. Palmer has been a "Monday" volunteer for Hacker's Creek Pioneer Descendants for the past nine years, each Monday assisting library patrons with research and working on other projects as needed. On two Mondays each month she keeps

the library open until 8 p.m. so that patrons have an opportunity to access the library in the evening. Palmer served as vice president of the organization and was responsible for planning the Annual Gathering for five years. She currently serves on the board of directors and as chairperson of the cemetery committee. An experienced researcher, Palmer answers most of the requests for extensive research that the society receives.

Nominated by Hacker's Creek Pioneer Descendants

For the past 15 years, **Russ Roy** has painstakingly documented vital records of Wood County. Using microfilmed newspapers as his primary source, he has created three volumes of Wood county death records for the years 1841-1875, 1876-1885, and 1886-1890. He currently is working on two more volumes of obituaries that will complete his works through 1900. Russ also has indexed the 1876 work of S.C. Shaw, *Sketches of North Western Virginia*. In addition to his newspaper research, Russ speaks to local organizations about his work with old obituaries.

Nominated by Wood County Historical & Preservation Society

Mike Ruben has accomplished the daunting task of preserving history through his play *Ripley: the Man and the Town That Honors His Name*. After in-depth research about the circuit-riding preacher Harry Ripley, Ruben took the few facts he could find, along with known facts about the typical circuit rider, and wrote the play, which was presented in June 2007. Mike also chose to pay tribute to Harry Ripley's memory by having a beautiful concrete bench installed on the Jackson County Courthouse lawn in Ripley that memorializes Harry Ripley and the town that bears his name.

Nominated by Jackson County Public Library

Susan J. Scott has been an active member of the Ritchie County Historical Society since 1982. She has served twice as the treasurer, helped with numerous fundraising activities, and conducted tours of the Old Stone House Museum. In addition to helping advertise and sell the society's publications, Scott helped with preparation of the society's books *A Photographic History of Ritchie County, West Virginia* and *Ritchie County, West Virginia Cemeteries - Through 1995*. She also assists the society with its newsletter and historical and genealogical queries.

Nominated by Ritchie County Historical Society

As current regent of the Wheeling Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, **Deborah M. Smith** has emphasized preservation efforts. She recently purchased the Third Presbyterian Church in South Wheeling, thus preventing its demolition. She currently is restoring the building, a project that has been adopted by the Wheeling Chapter, which holds meetings in the building. Smith is also a member of the Friends of Wheeling and the Wheeling Area Historical Society, and has presented programs on historic preservation. A Mayor's Award recipient, Smith is also restoring her fifth Victorian home, a former girl's halfway house in Wheeling Island's Historic District.

Nominated by Wheeling Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution

Erin Smith, a 2007 graduate of Fairmont State University and currently a student at Virginia Tech, organized the Veterans' Oral History Project in Calhoun County. Erin provided training for interviewers, acquired recording equipment, encouraged public involvement in locating veterans, scheduled interviews, and made all necessary arrangements. The recordings are now available to the public and provide a valuable resource. She is an asset to both the Calhoun County Historical Society and the county.

Nominated by Calhoun County Historical Society

James "Jim" St. Clair has spent years preserving West Virginia's history and heritage, working with the Cabell-Wayne Historical Society, Madie Carroll House Preservation Society, Greenbottom Society, and Historic Coin Harvey House. When asked if he could assist the Save the Historic Martha Bridge group with a means to preserve or mitigate the loss of the bridge, he immediately came on board. During the past two years, he has played a key role in reaching a settlement agreement between the United States and West Virginia departments of highways and plaintiffs seeking mitigation in the loss of the Historic Martha Bridge.

Nominated by Save the Historic Martha Bridge

John G. Van Meter has assisted the Grant County Historical Society with restoration of the 1913 Scherr Schoolhouse, the 1899 Greenland Presbyterian Church, and the 100 year-old Tannery House. In

1987, Van Meter wrote a history of the Petersburg Presbyterian Church, and he edited the Civil War letters of 2nd Lt. Charles W. DeLay in 1999. He also was instrumental in the permanent preservation of Ft. Mulligan in 1993. He and his wife have restored "Bean Meadow," the 1854 home of the Grove family that provided the community with physicians for 106 years. Van Meter credits his grandmother Elizabeth Harness Van Meter, whose father and father-in-law were Confederate veterans, with instilling in him a reverence for the past.

Nominated by Grant County Historical Society

Currently serving as recording secretary for the Wheeling Area Genealogical Society, **Phyllis Walters** started by filing obituaries for the late Audra Wayne. She took over the task in 1998 and since has developed her own system. She spends 20 to 30 hours per week on obituary filing work. Additionally, Phyllis has served on the book committee and assisted others with their tasks.

Nominated by Wheeling Area Genealogical Society

Tony E. Whitlow served in the U.S. Army from 1953 to 1955 during the Korean Conflict and was instrumental in establishing Mercer County's Those Who Served War Museum in the Memorial Building in Princeton. A retired longtime legislator, he has served as president of the museum's board of directors and volunteers each week to show the many displays and to answer questions about the war memorabilia.

Nominated by Mercer County Historical Society, Inc.

Gail Yoho passed away in 2007 after serving the Marshall County Historical Society faithfully in many capacities for several years. She chaired the genealogy and museum committees, served as editor of the society's newsletter, volunteered her typing skills in the publication of *Descendants of Simon & Elizabeth Martin Dakan*, and was the society's historian, preserving a written and pictorial history of society activities. She catalogued donors and donated items and also donated many artifacts to enrich the museum. As genealogy chair, Gail worked tirelessly to organize and enlarge the society's genealogy records and distributed information to people all over the country, assisting them with their research.

Nominated by Marshall County Historical Society