



West Virginia Archives & History News



VOLUME III, NO. 11

JANUARY 2003

WV County Records Research Tips

From the Editor:

We hope you are making plans to participate in West Virginia History Day on February 27, here at the Capitol and the Cultural Center in Charleston. Don't forget that the Archives and History Library will be closed Saturday, January 18, and Monday (Martin Luther King Day), January 20, for lighting repairs. Happy New Year!

Using West Virginia County Records

Most genealogical information in West Virginia is based on the geographic and political designation of counties. In order to search for births and deaths before 1917, and for any other legal records commonly used for family history research, such as wills, deeds and marriages, the researcher has to determine in which county the event was most likely recorded. When the county is not known, locate the person or family in the census records before and after the event date, and try those counties of residence first. Checking the details on records already researched can be helpful, as well. Marriage records in particular may report the birthplace and county of residence of each of the two parties. Migration patterns of an era can also provide sound clues for likely counties to check.

Records for the Virginia counties that became part of West Virginia were retained by those counties

after separation. Therefore, all records available for West Virginia counties from their inception as Virginia counties can be searched through West Virginia sources such as the Archives or the county courthouses. For records prior to the formation of the county, check the records of the counties from which your county derived until you locate the one that includes the actual land area where your family lived. Also, if you do not find your family in the county you expected, check the map to see which counties are adjacent to the one you started with, and if any of those counties were separated from your initial county in the relevant time period. Your ancestors may not have moved, but their county government may have changed. For example, Grant County was formed in 1866 from Hardy County, which was formed in 1786 from Hampshire County. Counties were divided into districts for voting, tax collecting, the census, and sometimes for recordkeeping. In searching county records, be sure you see all of the records for a specific time period. A single, county-wide record ledger was not always kept. Sometimes a magistrate in each district kept records for his district only, and each individual district's record list will be copied separately into the county ledger. In other words, if a list of births is indicated as being for a specific district, check the next few pages for additional district listings with births for the same time period.

Between roughly 1890 and 1920, many clerks used a filing system unfamiliar to modern researchers.

The system is alphabet based, but is not in straight alphabetical order. Be sure to take a few minutes to look over any indexing arrangement, or to ask staff for assistance in understanding how to locate a particular surname. Keep in mind variations in spelling that may require you to search more than one section of a record book. Don't overlook your ancestor because you didn't know how to use the index, or the *index to the index*. In the same time period mentioned above, the use of typewriters increased. Some county clerks took their old ledgers, typed the information onto sheets for new ledgers, and tossed out the original handwritten records. Although 18th and 19th century handwriting can be difficult for 20th century eyes and minds to interpret, the typewritten records have their own problems. Be on the lookout for copying mistakes and typographical errors in such records. Letters or numbers may be transposed, etc. (There is also always the possibility that a line may have been skipped in the copying process, and a record lost.) Even a handwritten record may have been rewritten into a new ledger over time, or compiled from lists made by district magistrates. Consider all these possibilities when trying to determine if a record is the one you are looking for. Be persistent and ask questions! (Portions of this article were originally published as part of "West Virginia County Resources in the Archives," *West Virginia Archives and History News*, Volume I, No. 6, August 2000.)

THOUGHTS FOR THE NEW YEAR

GIVING TREE FOR GENEALOGISTS

by Myra Vanderpool Gormley,
Certified Genealogist

You know what we tell our children and grandchildren: "It is better to give than to receive." Here are some ways that we genealogists can give back to this wonderful hobby of ours.

1. Donate genealogy books, CDs and periodicals to our libraries.
2. Give our time and talents and provide financial support to local genealogical and historical societies. They depend on us.
3. Index a genealogy book or records compilation—especially old county histories.
4. Share our knowledge about research in a particular locality by posting the information on Web pages, message boards, or to genealogy newsgroups.
5. Help a newbie online discover the joy of genealogy.
6. Make copies of those family photographs and old home movies to share with our cousins.
7. Create a family cookbook of old favorite recipes to give as a present to family members.
8. Compile a family history and publish it in 2003.
9. If that is too large a project, compile what we have on one of our grandparents or great-grandparents and share that chapter of the family history with our relatives.
10. Start or join a surname mailing list and share our data with others.
11. Update our GEDCOMs to make sharing easier and faster in 2003.
12. Create a personal home page on the Web and post our genealogy data to make it easily accessed by online genealogists.
13. Join the "Friends of _____" (state archives and libraries). [Editor's note: For the West Virginia Archives and History Library, the organization is called the **Mining Your History Foundation**. For more information, go to the group's Web site at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~myhf> or write MYHF, P. O. Box 6923, Charleston, WV 25362-0923, or call Pat Pleska at (304) 558-0230, Ext. 116. See also *Archives and History News*, January 2002.]

14. Compile some (any) records that a genealogist might use and publish them—in print or electronically or both.
15. Do random deeds of kindness to librarians, archivists, county clerks and other officials with whom we come in contact this year in pursuit of our roots.

Reprinted from *Missing Links: A Magazine for Genealogists*, Vol. 7, No. 51, December 24, 2002. (<http://www.petuniapress.com>). Article first appeared in *Missing Links*, Volume 2, No. 2, December 19, 1997.

NEW TITLES

Argall: William T. Volman, 2001.
Industrial Progress in the South: A Report to the Southern Governors Conference: Southern Association of Science and Industry, 1958.
The South's Competitive Position: A Report to the Southern Governors Conference: Southern Association of Science and Industry, 1959.
The Warrior: Wyoming East High School, 1999.
118th Church Anniversary Celebration: St. Paul's Baptist Church: The Church, [St. Albans, WV], 1985.
Miracle on "B" Street: A Comprehensive History of St. Paul's Baptist Church: The Church, [St. Albans, WV], 1985.
Seventy-fifth Anniversary Souvenir Book: Sixteenth Street Baptist Church [Huntington, WV], 1980.
Story of Our Ancestors: Mabel Ruttencutter Norris Casto, 1967.
Crossroad at Corrick's Ford: The First Campaign of the Civil War and Its Effect on West Virginia Statehood: Andrew Patrick Desbrow, 2002.
Marriage Records, 1805-1866: Athens County, Ohio: Marvin Fletcher, 1985.
Marriage Records, 1865-1880: Athens County, Ohio: Marvin Fletcher, 1981.
Marriage Records, 1881-1895: Athens County, Ohio: Marvin Fletcher, 1982.

Marriage Records, 1896-1905: Athens County, Ohio: Marvin Fletcher, 1983.

Birth, Marriage, Death Records: Hancock County, West Virginia: 1848-2000: Surnames Allison, Herron, Stewart: David R. Ash, no date.
The Stewart Family, or More Than You Want to Know About the Stewarts of Southern W. Va.: James Edward Stewart, no date.

Minute Book: Board of Directors: Lunatic Asylum West of the Alleghany Mountains: (Weston State Hospital): July 10, 1858–October 21, 1881: One reel of microfilm of original manuscript held by West Virginia State Archives, 2002.

Heritage Books Archives Virginia/West Virginia: Revolutionary War Records: Volumes 1-6: CD-ROM, Heritage Books, 2000.

Obituaries of West Virginia Newspapers, Volume 7, 1897: Gerald S. Ratliff, Kanawha Valley Genealogical Society, 2002.

Dr. Daniel Ross and the Berkeley County Schools: D. Reid Ross, 2002.

Lester Family Genealogy: Chester Lester, no date.

Knight Family Genealogy: Chester Lester, no date.

Early Marriage Records of the Hopkins Family in the United States: Official and Authoritative Records of Hopkins Marriages in the Original States and Colonies from 1628 to 1865: William Montgomery Clemens, 1980 [reprint of 1916 first edition].

The Negro in America: Andrew Carnegie, 1907.
Souvenir Program of the Silver Anniversary of the Charleston Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People: NAACP, 1943.

Roosevelt and the Negro: Kelly Miller, 1907.
Reprint of the First Edition of The Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church: with historical preface and notes: C. M. Tanner, 1916.
Vocational and Educational Survey for the Kanawha County Negro Schools: Andrew H. Calloway, 1945.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOTE: CALENDAR BASED ON KNOWLEDGE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2003. BUDGET CONSTRAINTS MAY LEAD TO CHANGES AFTER PUBLICATION.

PLEASE CHECK OUR WEB SITE (<http://www.wvculture.org/history>) FOR GENEALOGICAL and HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND FOR MORE COMPLETE INFORMATION ON ACTIVITIES LISTED BELOW.

“SHAPING THE CAPITOL COMPLEX: CASS GILBERT, INC.”: Collection of photographs and documents on display in the Archives and History Library and on the Archives and History Web site.

*****SPECIAL NOTE***: SATURDAY, JANUARY 18 , AND MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY, JANUARY 20: Library will be closed for repair of lighting system.**

LINCOLN’S BIRTHDAY, FEBRUARY 12: The Library will be open.*

PRESIDENT’S DAY, FEBRUARY 17: The Library will be open.*

HISTORY DAY 2003, FEBRUARY 27: The Capitol and The Cultural Center, Charleston.

U.S. SENATOR RUSH HOLT HISTORY CONFERENCE: “ON THE MOVE: MIGRATIONS AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY,” MARCH 14-16, 2003: West Virginia University, Morgantown.

BLUE AND GRAY DINNER, APRIL 10: Dennis Frye, speaker, on the Civil War movie, “Gods and Generals,” Independence Hall, Wheeling.

**Only the Archives Library will be staffed--all other Archives offices will be closed.* The State Museum will be open any time the Archives Library is open. The West Virginia Library Commission Library in The Cultural Center is closed weekends and all holidays.

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!

PLEASE CALL ARCHIVES AND HISTORY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT AVAILABLE PROJECTS!

ARCHIVES AND HISTORY STAFF

Fredrick Armstrong: Director

Debra Basham: Archivist (photographs, special collections)

Constance Baston: Researcher (Veterans Memorial Archive)

Greg Carroll: Historian (Civil War, Native American history)

Dick Fauss: Archivist (microfilm and moving images collection)

Elaine Gates: Library Assistant (microfilming and microfilm repairs)

Joe Geiger: Historian (Web page)

Ed Hicks: Photographer (archival photography, darkroom)

Mary Johnson: Historian (*West Virginia History*)

Terry Lowry: Library Assistant (Civil War)

Cathy Miller: Library Assistant (WV State documents, periodicals)

Sharon Newhouse: Secretary

Harold Newman: Library Assistant (microfilming, Revolutionary War)

Pat Pleska: Manager of the Veterans Memorial Archive

Susan Scouras: Librarian (cataloging, Kentucky, library collection, newsletter editor)

Jaime Simmons: Library Assistant (records of the 1700's and early 1800's, Pennsylvania)

Bobby Taylor: Library Manager

Nancy Waggoner: Office Assistant

Working on special projects: **Allen Fowler.**

Volunteers: **Carolyn Conner, Bill Kelley, Angela Tolbert, and Bob and Lucile Foster.**

This newsletter is a publication of :
The Division of Culture and History
Archives and History
The Cultural Center
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East
Charleston, WV 25305-0300
(304) 558-0230

Nancy P. Herholdt, Commissioner

Permission to reprint articles from *West Virginia Archives and History News* is granted, provided: (1) The reprint is not used for commercial purposes, and (2) the following notice appears at the end of the reprinted material: Previously published in *West Virginia Archives and History News*, [Volume and issue numbers], [Month, Year], a publication of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.