



WEST VIRGINIA
DIVISION OF
CULTURE & HISTORY

From the Editor:

This issue's message that paper copies of digital files are still very important may not be welcome to many of you, but it is a necessary caution. The problem is more obvious to libraries and to individuals with the means to frequently upgrade their computers and other technology, but the dilemma is very real. We are appalled at the thought that many of you may not be able to preserve your hard work and pass it on to future generations, and we are continuing for now to accept copies of your research in whatever medium you have used, but unfortunately we can not guarantee continued access to your information over time unless you provide a paper copy.

More Counties Added Soon to WVRR

West Virginia county court birth, death and marriage records for Clay, Hampshire, Pocahontas and Randolph counties soon will be added to the West Virginia Vital Research Records (WVRR) searchable database on the Archives and History Web site at http://www.wvculture.org/vrr/va_select.aspx. Birth records will include 1853 to 1907, death records will include 1853 up to the year a particular county's records were microfilmed, and marriage records will start with the inception of each county and go up to the date that county's records were microfilmed. The microfilm year was 1968 for Clay County and 1969 for Hampshire, Pocahontas and Randolph counties. If all goes well, additional counties will be available in Fall 2008. If you have not used WVRR for awhile, you may not be aware that 1907 county births for the counties already in the database and 1957 state deaths were added in January 2008. If you find a transcription error, where a name has been incorrectly transcribed from the actual record, please let us know by e-mailing vrr@wvculture.org. (Be

advised that if the error is in the original record, we can not correct it, only transcription errors.) For more information about the contents of the

database and tips for searching, we suggest users read the linked article regarding the Vital Research Records database.

Backing Up Your Family History Files for Preservation

All the technological advances of the information age seem to cause as many problems as they solve. While personal computers have allowed individual researchers to record and organize their genealogy charts, family history narratives, and accompanying documents and photographs to a greater extent every year, the rapid development of new software, hardware and storage media accelerates the pace at which the older equipment and storage media become obsolete. If you have a hard time visualizing this regarding computers and data, just think about the music and video industry today. A recent report said that audio cassettes and VHS cassettes are now obsolete, high definition television is making non-HD video discs and players unplayable, and that even compact audio

discs are no longer being produced by companies that have switched to down-loadable music files only. Along the way, such "hot" technology as Beta videocassettes, video Laserdiscs (hard discs the size of an LP record), mini audio discs, and now HD DVD, had short lives as they were eclipsed by competing inventions that better suited the market. If you have a collection in one of these media, you increasingly will have trouble finding equipment to play them. While we don't expect new cars to come equipped with eight-track players nor new stereo systems to have turntables for vinyl records, many of us still expect cassette and CD players, and soon will wonder what we are supposed to do with our large collections of recordings when our vehicles only

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have iPod docking stations. Transferring recordings from one medium to another is sometimes possible, but the quality of the copied sound and/or picture is poorer than the original, plus the transfer process can be time-consuming and expensive.

Now think about your computer and the media on which you have stored your genealogy research and photographs. New computers have not come with 3.5 "floppy disc" drives for a couple of years now (and do you remember the original 5 1/4" true floppies from which these non-floppy hard discs got their name?), unless you specifically order one. Remember when computer printouts were large sheets of green lined paper with holes punched all along the edges? As you have upgraded your computer over time, have you had problems opening files in older versions of Word and Excel? Can you open and use the files on those first census CD's you bought from Ancestry now that you have XP or Vista? Do you have the original software for your genealogy program so you can reload it if necessary? Is the genealogy program you are using a widely available one that is periodically upgraded, or is it a lesser known one that may be impossible to find a few years from now? Even if you are upgrading within the same brand name, is the new version compatible with all of the previous versions, or do you find yourself

unable to open older files? A note of caution—some new programs will open the directories or indexes of older programs, but will not open individual files. Be sure you try to fully navigate any software you are testing. Be advised that many libraries will not accept GEDCOM files or data stored in outdated versions of Word, Excel and other programs because they are unable or unwilling to purchase the software and/or maintain the old hardware needed to use them.

The moral of this tale is that technology is great, but it changes too often and too rapidly for archival preservation purposes. Since micro-filming is not an option for non-institutional researchers, you must fall back on periodically (minimum once a year) printing out files on acid-free paper and storing paper copies in several different locations. You can transfer your data from old media to newly developed media as well, as long as you stay on top of the changes in the marketplace, but you run the risk of degrading the data with each

transfer. You probably know full well what happens when you photocopy a photocopy of a photocopy of a printout of a scanned photograph. The image becomes less distinct with each transfer. A comparable degradation takes place in data files. If your text files are too large for you to print out all at once, try printing a section every week or month on a rotating basis. As soon as you duplicate the last section, start again with the first to preserve all your updates since the last printing, being sure to date the printouts. Make at least one photocopy of the printout and preserve it in a safe place in another location, whether it is a fire-resistant box in your sister's closet, a safety deposit box at a bank, or best of all, an archival collection in a library.

Archives and History News
is available on the
Archives and History Web site
<http://www.wvculture.org/history/ahnews/ahnews.html>

Upshur County Historical Society Document Repository is a Research Center

The Upshur County Historical Society (UCHS) Document Repository, located at 29 West Main Street in Buckhannon, is open on Tuesday evenings, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., for individuals researching genealogy and local history. All UCHS publications are available here for research or purchase. The collection includes photographs and special collections, such as the Marci Sumner Phillips Collection that includes letters and her Civil War diary. Maps, letters, business and personal memorabilia, Civil War records, WPA files, *Buckhannon Record* newspaper files, legal documents and extensive 4-H files are available to researchers, in addition to the usual research ma-

terials. Some of the Upshur County history books offered are out-of-print and considered rare. The Repository has recently acquired hardware and software to begin digitizing much of the collection, as well as to organize the collection, thus greatly increasing accessibility. For those unable to visit personally, limited research assistance is available for a fee. Research inquiries should be addressed to the UCHS by mail or e-mail. For more information, visit <http://www.upshurcountyhistoricalsociety.com>. Contact information: Upshur County Historical Society P.O. Box 2082 Buckhannon, WV 26201 info@upshurcountyhistoricalsociety.com

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Calendar of Events

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.

THE STORY OF NEWSPAPERS IN UPSHUR COUNTY, June 8–September 28: Summer Exhibit, Upshur County Historical Society, The History Center Museum, Buckhannon.

“RIDING THE RAILS: RAILROADS CONNECTING WEST VIRGINIA,” June 13–August 17: West Virginia Division of Culture and History touring exhibit, Pennsboro B&O Depot, Pennsboro.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE FOR AUGUST BUS TRIP TO ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY, June 30: KYOWVA Genealogical and Historical Society [See information below].

INDEPENDENCE DAY, July 4: Archives Library will be *closed*.

BEVERLY HERITAGE DAYS, July 19–20: Community-wide celebration in Beverly, including primitive and Civil War encampments, heritage living and craft demonstrations. For more information visit <http://www.historicbeverly.org> or call (304) 637-7424.

“LOOK! SEE HOW WE HAVE GROWN,” HACKERS CREEK PIONEER DESCENDANTS 27TH ANNUAL GATHERING, August 7–10: Horner. For more information visit <http://www.hackerscreek.com>, call (304) 269-7091, or e-mail hcpd@hackerscreek.com.

BUS TRIP TO ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY GENEALOGY CENTER, FT. WAYNE, INDIANA, August 12–14: Sponsored by KYOWVA Genealogical and Historical Society. Contact Debbie Campbell, president, (304) 525-9098. Make your own room reservation by July 15, Hilton Ft. Wayne Grand Wayne Center, (260) 420-1100. For more information about the Allen County Public Library Genealogy Center, one of the premier genealogy research collections in the U.S., visit <http://www.acpl.lib.in.us/genealogy/index.html>.

FRENCH CREEK PIONEER GATHERING, August 16–17: French Creek Presbyterian Church, French Creek. For more information about this biennial meeting of descendants of the original dozen French Creek families, contact Mary Albaugh, president, (304) 473-0738, IWABYF@aol.com, or Amy W. Tenney, vice-president, (304) 472-5174, buckhannon@hotmail.com.

250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR PROGRAM, August 30: Doug Wood and members of Trails, Inc., re-enactors. Tomlinson Run State Park, New Manchester. For more information visit http://www.wvstateparks.com/French_Indian_War.html.

LABOR DAY, September 1: Archives Library will be *closed*.

“THE CONTROVERSIAL CONFEDERATE FLAG,” September 19: Lecture by Dr. John M. Coski. Sponsored by Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation, Beverly. For reservations, call (304) 637-7424, or e-mail richmt@richmountain.org.

14TH ANNUAL ROANE COUNTY GENEALOGICAL FAIR, September 27: Roane County Historical Society, Heritage Park Community Building, 110 Church Street, Spencer.

**Only the Archives Library will be staffed—all other Archives offices will be closed.*
The West Virginia Library Commission Library in the Cultural Center is closed weekends and all holidays.

West Virginia Division of Culture and History
 The Cultural Center
 1900 Kanawha Boulevard East
 Charleston, WV 25305-0300



We would love to hear from you.
 Let us know what you find helpful in the newsletter, and
 what new topics you would like covered.
 Contact *West Virginia Archives and History News* Editor
 Susan Scouras, (304) 558-0230, Ext. 742,
 or by e-mail: susan.scouras@wvculture.org.

Archives and History Staff

Joe Geiger	Acting Director (Historian, Web page)
Debra Basham	Archivist (photographs, special collections)
Constance Baston	Researcher (Veterans Memorial Archives)
Greg Carroll	Historian (Civil War, Native American history)
Dick Fauss	Archivist (microfilm and moving images collection)
Denise Ferguson	County Records Archivist
Allen Fowler	Special projects
Elaine Gates	Library Assistant (microfilming and microfilm repairs)
Ed Hicks	Photo Archivist (archival photography, darkroom)
Mary Johnson	Historian
Terry Lowry	Library Assistant (Veterans records)
Cathy Miller	Library Assistant (WV State documents, periodicals)
Sharon Newhouse	Secretary
Harold Newman	Library Assistant (microfilming, Revolutionary War)
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	Secretary
Volunteers	Carolyn Conner, Bill Kelley, James Wilburn, Sue Shank, Ken Bailey, Maggie Powers, and Carol Vandevender

This newsletter is a publication of : The West Virginia Division of Culture and History
 Randall Reid-Smith, Commissioner