



West Virginia Archives & History News



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Stories of a West Virginia Civil War Veteran Recounted in New Book

From the Editor:

We receive interesting telephone calls every day in the Archives and History Library. Some of them turn out to be amusing, such as the Scandinavian gentleman with limited English calling from overseas who was seeking a photograph of a genuine flapper from Charleston. We finally determined that he had in mind Charleston, South Carolina, the place where the 1920s dance originated, not Charleston, West Virginia. As he ended the conversation, he explained why he wanted the photograph. He was looking for an image to serve as a model for his newest tattoo! Other calls are of greater consequence. Last year, a woman in Kansas called to find out if the West Virginia Archives would be interested in publishing Civil War memoirs written by Jesse Tyler Sturm, her husband's ancestor, since Sturm was originally from West Virginia. As a result:

***West Virginia History Journal* Publishes First Book**

The Civil War stories of Marion County native and Union veteran **Jesse Tyler Sturm** are now available in a new book. Published by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, *From a "whirlpool of death . . . to victory": Civil War*

Remembrances of Jesse Tyler Sturm, 14th West Virginia Infantry, is the first book produced under the auspices of *West Virginia History*, the state's history journal. Sturm was born in Marion County in 1844, and was living in Harrison County at the outbreak of the Civil War. After serving a year with a local militia company, the eighteen-year old Sturm enlisted in Company H of the 14th West Virginia Infantry in 1862. He spent much of the next two years guarding the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad before participating in his first important action at Cloyds Mountain in southwestern Virginia on May 9, 1864. Over the next six months, the regiment fought at several places in the Shenandoah Valley, including Carter's Farm, Fisher's Hill, Winchester (Opequon) and Cedar Creek. Sturm saw his last action during a March 1865 skirmish near Patterson's Creek in West Virginia.

More than 40 years later, Sturm, by then a longtime resident of Kansas, wrote several series of articles about his wartime service. The longest series, which focuses primarily on events of 1864, was brought to the attention of the Division's West Virginia State Archives by Sturm's descendants, who own the original typed manuscript. A published version was located in a Kansas newspaper, and variations between it and the manuscript have been identified in this new book. In searching for the published version, Archives

and History staff discovered other Civil War stories written by Sturm, and have included most of those articles in the book as well. Sturm's reminiscences are supplemented by an introduction, annotations, illustrations and an index.

Copies of the 175-page paperback book are available in the Archives and History Library, in the Cultural Center, State Capitol Complex, Charleston, for \$12.95. Books may be ordered by mail for \$15.00 per copy, including postage and handling. For more information, visit our Web site at <http://www.wvculture.org/history>, or call (304) 558-0230.

SUMMER INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS

As usual during the summer break from school, the Archives benefits from the assistance of several remarkable young people. **Heather Sayre**, Charleston, is a sociology major at West Virginia State College and currently is volunteering as an assistant to Debra Basham in processing Special Collections. **T. W. Hindman**, St. Albans, who is majoring in business at West Virginia University, is working with Fredrick Armstrong on digital records management policy. **Zachary Warren**, Charleston, is majoring in human development and social relations with a minor in religion at Earlham College in Indiana. He will also be assisting in digital records management policy. Working with the Veterans Memorial Archive for the summer is **Phillip Sword**, Belle, who is studying political science and history at West Virginia University.

Also throughout the summer, visitors to Archives and History may see the teenage or twenty-something offspring of our staff who have been recruited as volunteers for various projects. Observation will quickly separate them from the official summer staff since our employees will not be doling out car keys, lunch money and kisses to non-family members.

We are delighted to have these students with us for the next few months. Quite often interns and young volunteers provide fresh insight and enthusiasm to the day-to-day operations of the West Virginia State Archives.

DO YOU REMEMBER “*THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF CHARLES LOUNSBERRY*”?

In the July 2000 issue of *Archives and History News*, we printed “*The Will of Charles Lounsberry Made While He was in the Asylum at Dunning.*” Our staff found it included in a 1930's WPA transcription of Mineral County, West Virginia, documents and family Bible records, and enjoyed reading it. However, being suspicious of the literary essence of the prose, we asked if any reader could identify this as a published work of fiction or prose, rather than as an actual legal document. Readers responded that they had enjoyed reading the “will,” but did not know of a published source.

Subsequent Internet searches show that this essay pops up all over, including an on-line audio recording of a dramatic reading of the will by Gene Barry on his fan Web site! It was read into the record of various state legislatures and bar associations over the years. It was reprinted in *Cougar Scream*, the shipboard newsletter of the U.S.S. *Washington* in January 1942 with the heading “A Scrapbook Favorite.” An “Ethical Wills” Web site includes it as an example of an ethical will, said to have been written in the early 20th century and found in the pocket of an old ragged coat belonging to a former lawyer who was then an insane patient in the Chicago poorhouse. A printed copy, probably once framed, is cataloged in the Lilly Family Collection in the archives of Eastern Kentucky University. It is translated into German on a Web site based in Germany. Many people have posted it as a favorite inspirational piece on personal Web sites.

Then, a few months ago, I was clipping old newspapers that had been recently microfilmed,

and found an article titled “Poetic last will from 1907,” in the *Mountain Messenger*, November 21, 1989, published with the following “Editor’s Note”: *About 1907, The Chicago Record-Herald printed this ‘last will and testament of Charles Lounsberry.’ At that time it was thought this ‘will’ was written by an inmate of the Cook County Asylum at Dunning, Illinois. For years, the will cropped up in newspapers and magazines throughout the country. Many years later, The Saturday Evening Post reprinted the Lounsberry Will and said the writer ‘was once a prominent member of the Chicago legal profession, who lost his mind and was committed to the insane asylum where he died penniless.’ It wasn’t until much later that the true author of the will was discovered to be a writer by the name of Williston Fish. Mr. Fish created the character of Charles Lounsberry and wrote the will for his imaginary character. Regardless of the origins of this piece, the sentiments are worthy and hopefully of interest to modern-day readers. The Mountain Messenger then reprinted “the text, reproduced from the original 1907 printing.”*

Armed with the author’s name, I searched the Internet and found that the work of Williston Fish is included in a number of poetry and prose anthologies. The most enlightening entry is from the library catalog of the Lillian Goldman Law Library at Yale Law School: *Ostensibly the will of one Charles Lounsbury, this work by Williston Fish was written in 1897 and published first in Harper’s weekly, Sept. 3, 1898, under title, “A last will”; subsequently published under titles, “A legacy to mankind”, 1907, “A last will”, 1908, and “The happy testament”, 1913. Slight textual variations in different editions and printings.*

Next I looked up Williston Fish, author, in the Library of Congress on-line catalog. The first entry listed is the autobiography of his father, Job Fish, which was “partially narrated to his sons, Williston Fish and John Charles Lounsbury Fish.” (Well, now we know where he got the name!) The Library of Congress holdings include the ones listed above, plus several more, including a 1935

edition located in the Law Library Reading Room and cataloged as if it were a genuine legal document. It seems to have been a popular gift item, either published in a decorative book or as a framed print.

Together with the story of Mrs. O’Leary’s cow, Chicago was ahead of its time in terms of developing “urban legends!” If you would like to read this famous testament, you will find it in the text of the June 2000 issue of the *Archives and History News* posted on our Web site.

NEW WEB SITE OFFERINGS

- **“Shaping the Capitol Complex: Cass Gilbert, Inc.”** If you are unable to personally visit the display in the Archives and History Library, you may view digital representations of the letters and photos.
- Also new to the Web site is the **Bollinger Collection** of almost 350 photographs of the construction of the West Virginia State Capitol, from groundbreaking for the West Wing in 1924, through completion of the main building in 1932.
- The **Taylor Collection** of nearly 100 photographs primarily taken circa 1900 in Nuttallburg and Fayette County area, including family photos, scenic views and coal mining activities, has been added to the on-line Photograph Archives database.
- Check our **Featured Links** and **Genealogy Links** often. If you have discovered a good Internet source for West Virginia history or our Genealogy Corner feature, e-mail (joe.geiger@wvculture.org) or call (304-558-0230, Ext. 165) **Joe Geiger**, Web master.

**ARCHIVES AND HISTORY
LIBRARY BOOKS ARE BACK
FROM THE BINDERY**

The books and manuscripts temporarily removed from the Archives and History Library collection and sent to the bindery in May are back on the library shelves.

NEW TITLES

Addendum to Backenstoss-Baggenstoss Family History: Elwood Bruce Backensto, 2002.

Headquarters in the Brush: Blazer's Independent Union Scouts: Darl L. Stephenson, 2001.

National Coal Heritage Area Management Action Plan: Draft Environmental Impact Statement: National Park Service, 2002.

Jenkins in Mechanicsburg: The Confederate Attempt on Pennsylvania's Capital: Michael W. Weaver, 2001. [Historical Fiction]

From a "whirlpool of death . . . to victory": Civil War Remembrances of Jesse Tyler Sturm, 14th West Virginia Infantry: edited by Mary E. Johnson, 2002.

Documents of Our Ancestors in the Revolutionary War: Justice, Smith, Harless, Blackburn and Ferrell: Jeffery R. Justice, [no date.]

The Duty of the Lawyer to the Members of His Profession: Lecture Delivered by Wm. O. Parsons before the College of Law of the University of West Virginia: William O. Parsons, 1908.

A Century with St. Albans, West Virginia: West Virginia Centennial, 1863-1963: edited by Russell L. Davisson, 1963.

West Virginia Quilts and Quiltmakers: Echoes from the Hills: Fawn Valentine with West Virginia Heritage Quilt Search, Inc., 2000.

Lewis County Birth Records, Volume I: 1853-1868: Hartzel G. Strader, 1995.

A Short History of Weston Hospital: Joy Gilchrist-Stalnaker, 2001.

Brooke County (VA/WV) Personal Property Tax Records 1797-1851: Gwendolyn Mackey Hubbard, 2002. [3 volumes]

The Descendants of John Jacob, Maryland Pioneer, and Some Allied Families: compiled and edited by Samuel Wilbur McCulloch, 2002. [Contains Volume I, originally published by Julian Hurst Jacob in 1943, and Volume II compiled by McCulloch.]

**HERE'S WHY WE ALL NEED
TO KNOW HISTORY**

**Quoted from *Ask Marilyn*,
by Marilyn Vos Savant,
Parade Magazine, June 2, 2002**

"I'm a first-year high school history teacher, and my students constantly ask why they have to learn about ancient Greece, the Renaissance and so on. I'm hoping you have an answer that will give them something to think about and perhaps motivate them to appreciate the importance of history in their lives.—John Zulick, Matamoras, PA.

It is the chronicle of historical events that teaches us—bit by bit by bit, like a mosaic that eventually forms a picture—about civilization and human nature and its consequences. Imagine two men who find themselves at the end of a centuries-long journey in time: One was asleep all along the way; the other was awake. The latter man witnessed every triumph and calamity, learned where beauty flowered and where it died, and watched the greatest and most inglorious fights of good against evil. Which man would you choose as a leader? As a father? As a friend? Which would you rather be: the man who saw everything or the man who saw nothing? Your answer is the reason that you should study history."

Editor's comment: *I received the same viewpoint of history from my junior high and high school teachers, as well as from my family, leading me to*

major in history in college. I hope all our readers with share this with the young people in their lives.

THE WV ARCHIVES NEEDS YOU!

ARE YOU A LOVER OF HISTORY WHO IS LOOKING FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT TO DO THIS SUMMER?

-OR-

ARE YOU A HIGH SCHOOL OR COLLEGE STUDENT IN NEED OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS?

WHETHER YOU HAVE A FEW HOURS OR A FEW WEEKS AVAILABLE, PLEASE CALL ARCHIVES AND HISTORY AT (304) 558-0230.

WE WILL WORK WITH YOU TO FIND A PROJECT THAT IS BOTH INTERESTING TO YOU AND HELPFUL TO THE WEST VIRGINIA ARCHIVES.

JAMES MCPHERSON TO GIVE CIVIL WAR TALK IN WHEELING

As part of the Independence Hall West Virginia Day celebration on June 20, Pulitzer Prize winning author James M. McPherson will deliver a talk entitled "When Will This Cruel War Be Over? The Problem of Peace in the Midst of War, 1863-1865." Admission is \$10.00 per person and reservations are required. Payment by check or cash confirms the reservation. The program, co-sponsored by the West Virginia Humanities Council, is limited to 150 people. For more information, call (304) 238-1300.

PROBLEMS WITH THE 1930 WV SOUNDEX

We have been encountering some difficulty in using the Soundex for the 1930 Census. The "sheet" numbers given on the Soundex entries are not valid, in our experience. Sometimes the "sheet" number has turned out to be the *household* number for the family in question, but in no instance has it proven to be a page number of any type.

If any of our readers have figured out a way to make sense of the sheet numbers, particularly for Kanawha County entries, please let us know.

SUMMER REUNION ALERT

Summer is the prime time for all types of reunions—family, school, company, community, church. If your family or organization is holding a reunion, please send a copy of any memory books or videotapes that you produce, whether done by amateurs or professionals. Please share your pride in your own personal history with the many people who are unable to attend your gatherings. Making your heritage a part of the Archives collection means that it will be preserved for posterity and available to present and future historians.

This newsletter is a publication of :

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Nancy P. Herholdt, Commissioner

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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.

“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.

WEST VIRGINIA ARCHIVES AND HISTORY COMMISSION, JUNE 14: Regular meeting. Thomas.

CIVIL WAR ENCAMPMENT, JUNE 15. Independence Hall, Wheeling.

WEST VIRGINIA DAY, JUNE 20. Archives Library will be *open*.*

FREE FAMILY FUN DAY AT JENKINS PLANTATION MUSEUM, JUNE 20. Discover how West Virginia became a state. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Call the museum at (304) 762-1059, or Education Coordinator Bill Lepp at (304) 558-0220, Ext. 131.

INDEPENDENCE HALL’S WEST VIRGINIA DAY CELEBRATION, JUNE 20. Wheeling.

“WHEN WILL THIS CRUEL WAR BE OVER? : The Problem of Peace in the Midst of War, 1863-1865,” JUNE 20. Co-sponsored by the West Virginia Humanities Council. **James M. McPherson**, speaker, Independence Hall, Wheeling.

KENTUCKY RESEARCH WORKSHOP, JUNE 29: Eastern Kentucky Genealogy Society, Ashland.

INDEPENDENCE DAY, JULY 4. Archives Library will be *closed*.

BELLE BOYD HOUSE 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION, AUGUST 17: Berkeley County Historical Society, Martinsburg.

**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.

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)

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)

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

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

Sharon Newhouse: Secretary

Harold Newman: Library Assistant (microfilming, Revolutionary War)

Pat Pleska: Manager (Veterans Memorial Archive)

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

Bobby Taylor: Library Manager

Nancy Waggoner: Office Assistant

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

Volunteers: **Carolyn Conner, Bill Kelley, Dale Newhouse, Angela Tolbert, Bob and Lucile Foster, Heather Sayre and Barry Williams.**

Interns: **T. W. Hindman, Phillip Sword, and Zachary Warren.**