

# WEST VIRGINIA Archives and History NEWS From the Editor:

VOLUME XII, No. 10 DECEMBER 2011

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

*Have historical/genealogical societies lost their usefulness?* Nowadays, it seems that at least one society closes its doors every year. Two groups folded last year, and last month the Wheeling Area Historical Society held its last meeting. This writer knows of another that is struggling financially. A few others have a declining membership and loyal members who may no longer be able to participate as actively as in the past. The Internet has given family history researchers access to information and opportunities for networking that once drew them to local genealogical societies. The Archives and History Library has felt the impact of that change as well. At some point, some will face a difficult question: Is there still a good reason for this society to exist? If there is, then comes the hardest part: identifying what needs to be done, and figuring out how to do it, in order to be part of the future rather than left in the past.

# Why Archive? The Peterson Collection Sets the Standard

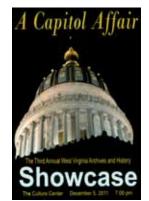
#### By Patricia Richards McClure

Do you consider yourself a saver? Or a hoarder? How many stacks or boxes of papers, books, or photos do you have in your living room, family room, basement, or attic? Do you have items you have considered disposing of, but have the uneasy feeling that trashing them would be a disservice to history? If these questions resonate with you, you just might possess archival material that should be passed on to West Virginia Archives and History.

A prime example of the kinds of materials an individual might donate to the State Archives is the Roland H. Peterson Collection. For more than a half century, Roland Peterson (1915–2008) made his home in the Kanawha Valley, where he was a research chemist for Union Carbide. Born in Wisconsin, Roland was the son of Swedish immigrants Nels and Agnes Nordlof Peterson. He attended the University of Chicago, where he was chosen for Phi Beta Kappa in 1937. (Daughter Marcia Peterson Daoust still has his key.) The university was known for its *Continued on the next page* 

# Archives and History Annual Showcase December 5

Archives and History's Third Annual Showcase will be held on Monday, December 5, 2011, in the Great Hall and Archives and History Library at the Culture Center. Items from our manuscript, photographic, and moving images collections will be on display in the library, along with other



is the state capitol, but that won't be the only focus. Once again, we will offer behindthe-scenes tours, refreshments in the Great Hall, and more. The event will begin at 7:00 p.m. on December 5 in the Great Hall. If you haven't attended the Showcase, or even if you have, the event

unique materials. This year's theme

is one not to be missed!

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prominence in producing outstanding scientists, and Roland's university colleagues would go on to such well known endeavors as the Manhattan Project.

A description on the West Virginia Archives and History Web site (http://www.wvculture. org/history/collections/ms2009-008.html) is hardly adequate to convey the scope and content of the collection. It states, in part:

The Roland H. Peterson Collection contains information on Swedish immigrants Nels and Agnes Peterson ... Son Roland attended the University of Chicago to study chemistry and came to Charleston to work for Union Carbide. Son Russell moved here with his brother and graduated from Charleston High School. Russell joined the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion and was killed in the sinking of LST-422 at Anzio, considered one of the worst naval disasters of World War II. The collection includes correspondence with the War Department about Russell's death, [and] letters describing life in Charleston in the prewar, wartime, and postwar years....

The collection also includes a great deal of correspondence both to and from Roland's future wife, Mary Nelson Tavenner, who hailed from Berkeley County and was a teacher there at one time. Numerous letters between Roland Peterson and his university classmates, many of whom later became noted in the fields of science and law, including John Keith Butters and Norman Nachtrieb. are pivotal to an understanding of the times. Roland and Mary Nelson were politically active members of their St. Albans community, she being highly involved in the American Association of University Women, the League of Women Voters, and the Tri-Acres Civic Club of St. Albans and sitting on the library board for a number of

#### **DECEMBER 2011**

Evening workshops and Eceture Senedure		
Date	Conducted by:	: Subject
January 3 Tuesday	Bob Barnett	Memoirs as Historic Research
February 7 Tuesday	Tom Rodd	J. R. Clifford and the Carrie Williams Case
March 6 Tuesday	Sara Prior	West Virginia's Civil War Historic Sites
April 3 Tuesday	Bob Withers	Presidential Whistle Stops in West Virginia
May 1 Tuesday	Jack Dickinson	Every Blood-Stained Mile: The Building of the Norfolk and Western in West Virginia
June 5 Tuesday	Larry Rowe	Malden and the Salt Industry
-	• •	workshops is helpful but not required. 0230, or e-mail bobby.l.taylor@wv.gov.

**Evening Workshops and Lecture Schedule** 

Workshops are held 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the West Virginia Archives and History Library, The Culture Center, Charleston, West Virginia.

years. It was in this environment that Roland and Mary Nelson raised their daughter Marcia and sons Neal and Bruton. To take a cursory glance into the many boxes of the collection is to take a trip through the history of the area in the twentieth century, as well as to look behind the scenes in the chemical industry and the politics of the time as filtered through the eyes of what daughter Marcia Peterson Daoust calls "an average chemist and housewife for the Kanawha Valley."

The story of how the State Archives acquired the Peterson Collection is nearly as interesting as the materials in the collection itself and shows how such donations can come "out of the blue." Ed Hicks of the Archives and History staff, a Peterson family friend, attended Roland's funeral, where among photos displayed was one of his brother Russell H. Peterson, along with a letter from the War Department that mentioned Russell's service in the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion. Marcia Daoust noted that "because the loss of his brother was such a traumatic experience for him, we [she and her brothers] made a point of putting the letter from the War Department on the memory board at Dad's funeral." Ed remembered that his Archives' colleague Terry Lowry was working on a book about Terry's father's wartime service-in the 83rd. Subsequent conversations between Terry and Marcia convinced her that much of the Peterson memorabilia-not just those items dealing with Russell's service-had historical significance and would be welcome additions to the State Archives. How serendipitous it was that Roland collected so diligently, that the Petersons were willing to donate the collection, and that Terry had the knowledge to organize it!

And what a magnificent collection it is! Seven boxes filled with the history of the twentieth century as carefully reposited by one who must

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# Can Treason Be Committed Against a State?: Extracts from the Debate 150 Years Ago

On December 13 and 14, 1861, during debate at the First Constitutional Convention, delegates took up the section in the constitution on treason:

Peter G. Van Winkle: There have been great doubts—and I think very good and well founded—whether there is such a thing as treason against a state. The United States Government undertakes the conduct of the war that is to be conducted in or on behalf of the states. States are not permitted by the Constitution of the United States to keep armies or ships of war in time of peace. The United States is bound to repel the invasion of any state, and is bound, upon proper application, to suppress any insurrection arising within any state....

James H. Brown of Kanawha: We know that treason exists against the state . . . ; but the question is, cannot a state declare what is treason against itself? And try and execute a citizen for disobedience to its mandates and violation of that allegiance? . . .

**On December 14, Mr. Van Winkle:** The point I made is that the treason described in the Constitution of the United States cannot be committed against the state—that is levying war; not that a state cannot call a riot treason and punish it....

**Mr. Brown of Kanawha:** If there can be no such thing as treason against a state, it would be idle, it would be actual stupidity, to put in a provision in the Constitution declaring what treason is against the state....

John J. Brown of Preston: I will not trouble the house with reading any more than three lines from the code declaring that treason is: "That treason shall consist only in making war against the State or adhering to its enemies." That is the law that has stood on the Statute Book since the 9th Henning Statutes at Large, I believe. I do not know the number of years before the Revolution. And it has been the law ever since....

Mr. Brown of Kanawha: If you undertake to carry out the letter and hang every man guilty of treason by open rebellion, or by giving aid and comfort to the enemy, you involve such masses of individuals in the one crime as make the law a dead letter. By this clause in the Constitution, we indicate that the legislature may discriminate between grades of this crime and provide punishments to correspond with these grades of the offence, and that you may mitigate it until it will be so abhorrent as that you will fail to execute it; and thereby you will secure a compulsion by many individuals in return to their allegiance that you could not otherwise have done...But now you have hundreds and thousands involved in the difficulty and to pass a law looking to the destruction of all is monstrous. It is right therefore that this very provision, while it maintains the right of the State to punish treason, to declare it an offence, also indicates the mode by which it may be mitigated to suit each case, and thus mitigate to a great extent the evils....

Mr. Van Winkle: The question is this:

### **Genealogy Club**

Archives and History Library

Every Thursday Evening 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Once a month, on the second Thursday, there will be a special program with a speaker. 6:00-7:30 p.m. can the levying of war with the purpose of overthrowing the state government —for nothing else is treason than the overthrowing of a government—can this be treason against a state, or is it simply treason against the United States? Now, that is the question—at least the question which I wish to raise —the doubt which is on my mind and which I sought to have the aid of the Convention about. . . .

Mr. Brown of Kanawha: The gentleman on my left (Mr. Sinsel) seems to be somewhat alarmed at the apprehension of our neighbors over at Richmond hanging us. Now, sir, whether we would be hung for treason under the law of Virginia would depend entirely on who the judges were. If they were

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# 150 Years Ago in December 1861

- **Dec. 3:** The state constitutional convention changed the name of the new state from Kanawha to West Virginia
- **Dec. 13:** Union and Confederate forces fought at Allegheny Mountain
- **Dec. 14:** Gordon Batelle proposed the state constitution provide for the gradual end of slavery
- **Dec. 17:** Anti-slavery proponent Henry Ruffner died
- **Dec. 24:** Gen. Rosecrans, Gov. Pierpont, and others testified in federal court about the storage of powder in the Custom House **Dec. 29:** Confederate raiders
- burned the town of Sutton

To learn more about these and other events from December 1861, visit the Archives and History Web site at http://www.wvculture.org/ history/sesquicentennial/186112. html. Check out all the Archives and History online sesquicentennial projects at http://www.wvculture. org/history/sesquicentennial.html.

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have had some sense of what he was saving. Items in the print collection run the gamut from Roland's parents' passenger listing on the ship on which they emigrated from Sweden to his children's high school commencement programs. The large amount of personal correspondence offers a glimpse into not only family life, but also local and national events. An additional box of pictures contains everything from postcards to snapshots to studio pictures. And Marcia Daoust says that they're not finished vet-she has more items to "skim" and review before donation, including much of her mother's vast correspondence and her journals.

Neal Peterson says he decided to donate the collection because "the correspondence of a lifetime was so well organized and so voluminous that it seemed superficial and cavalier to just pitch it in a landfill. . . . I wanted to do something to honor the memory of my parents, and preserving these paper records did more to do that than a burial monument or an engraved plaque somewhere."

Box 6 provides a good example of the diversity and depth of the material. Among the items saved from the early years of the Petersons' marriage-war years when consumer goods were scarceis a 1943 Dewees shoe catalog that proclaims: "Shoe Fashions for Spring and Summer 1944 . . . designed to give you the foot flattery, the comfort, the mileage you must count on from every precious ration coupon." A 1945 sugar rationing home canning form requests the applicant to "estimate your home canning needs carefully and apply only for as much sugar as you are sure you will need." The sugar was to be used for canning purposes only, with a limit of twenty pounds per person. The form cautions that sugar production had a shortfall the Page 4

previous year and many people overapplied for canning sugar.

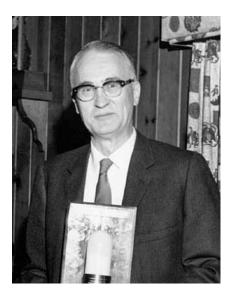
The numerous official documents in this box include Agnes Peterson's birth, naturalization, and death certificates. Written in Swedish and bearing a seal of the district, it appears that Agnes applied for the birth certificate retroactively as it was attested to on October 7, 1927. Her birth date is given as October 17, 1886, with an emigration date of June 6, 1907. The naturalization certificate was issued thirty-four years later after Agnes settled in West Virginia, having moved from Wisconsin to Chicago and then to Charleston as the result of Roland's employment. And, interestingly, the naturalization occurred on December 12, 1941, just five days after the U.S. entrance into World War II. Agnes Peterson was to move vet again; her death certificate shows that she died in Baltimore City Hospital in 1969.

In addition to period pieces and official documents, there are family keepsakes, ranging from holiday photo cards to Bruton's baptism book. Roland also kept meticulous financial records, and a glance at his expense books from the 1960s and

# **Deadline for History Hero Nominations**

The deadline for submitting History Hero nominations is fast approaching. Nominations must be hand delivered to West Virginia Archives and History by the close of business on Friday, December 30, 2011, or postmarked by December 31. Any West Virginia historical, museum, preservation, genealogical, or like organization that did not get a form in the mail can find them on Archives and History's Web site at http://www. wvculture.org/history/historyday/ historyday2012announcement.html. If you would like to receive one in the mail, contact Mary Johnson at (304) 558-0230, mary.e.johnson2@wv.gov. 70s provides a real sense of the cost of everyday items in that era.

Although much of the archived correspondence is personal, Roland was passionate in his political views and felt comfortable in writing to presidents. Always maintaining a



carbon copy for his own files, he responded on April 5, 1942, to an apparent call from President Franklin D. Roosevelt to "name" the war by saying it should be the "War of Liberation." He added: "For me it is the most satisfactory of those I

The History Hero award is intended to give one-time recognition to an individual for his or her dedicated service to the nominating organization or for a recent significant contribution to state and local history through research, interpretation, preservation, publication, or Web site presentation. Although there have been a few team nominations, the award was designed to recognize one individual. In addition, an organization may submit only one nomination a year.

The History Hero awards ceremony will be held on February 23, 2012, in the Culture Center.

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thought of. To those in a large part of the world such a name has a most fervent physical meaning, while to those of us still nominally free, a liberation from the Nazi spirit is most passionately wished for."

Of what use is this large volume of material to patrons of Archives and History? Marcia Daoust talks about how the materials can shed light on family life in a small townspecifically, St. Albans, in the 1950s and 60s. She notes that in some ways the town was typical and in some ways not, saying it was a "unique place on the planet; [people here] were highly educated" and there was "social pressure for community service," which she attributes perhaps to the chemical industry, as well as to the remembrance of World War II and the Depression. Marcia calls the Peterson collection "a window on the daily lives of people in the cities where they lived at the time." She believes a study of this collection (along with others) can generate an understanding of how a community can foster civic-mindedness.

Neal Peterson sees the usefulness of the collection more globally. He puts it this way: "I imagine (not based on logic) that some persons in the future, writers perhaps or historians, may find inspiration and material for some literary work, quasi-fictional.... I can say that I have always felt that the world has been often deprived when famous writers, thinkers, or politicians have had, near the end of their life, the mass of their papers burned by their servants. To me that seems so unfair. My father was not one of those great or famous persons . . . but the principle is the same."

The collection has already generated interest internationally. Swedish relatives of the Petersons, conducting genealogical research, found the collection and ended up translating some of the papers that



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were in Swedish. The large amount of material Roland saved relating to his brother's life and death was used in the writing of Russell Peterson's online biography for the West Virginia Veterans Memorial project [http://www.wvculture.org/history/ wvmemory/vets/petersonrussell/ petersonrussell.html]. Although the Peterson descendants are modest about their family's contributions, there's a wealth of detail in those boxes for budding historians. For someone looking to write a master's thesis on life in the Kanawha Valley in the mid-twentieth century or a doctoral dissertation on the chemical industry in West Virginia, they are definitely worth a look.

Which brings us to how any individual might contribute family documents. Archivist Debra Basham says that the agency welcomes all kinds of items about West Virginia or West Virginians. She adds that some people might have valuable articles but think they should be "old"; however, she pointed out that items don't have to be of a certain age. As an example, she cited the Sago and Upper Big Branch disasters, noting that one day they will have the historical significance of the Monongah explosion of 1908. Photos of West Virginia (places), West Virginians (people), or events are welcomed. Even pictures of unidentified people may be submitted if, for example, they are standing in front of a West Virginia landmark. Donors should also consider submitting photos of West Virginians taken outside the state if they are doing something worth noting, such as serving in the military. In addition to paper documents and photos. home movies (there's an audiovisual collection), maps (for example, property maps), and original art works (for example, editorial cartoons) are among the kinds of articles frequently submitted. An excellent genealogical tool, many family Bibles are archived. The agency is always looking for yearbooks from West Virginia schools because they can pinpoint just when a person was enrolled in a certain school, give a flavor of the times, and offer pictures of individuals not available from any other source.

There are, of course, some kinds of materials not useful. Detailed. recent financial records and medical records fall into this category, obviously because of privacy concerns. Debra Basham says she asks potential donor families if there are items of a personal nature in the donated materials that they would like to keep and urges them to do so. Generally, Archives and History does not encourage the donation of newspapers because the library has an extensive microfilmed collection, but if a donor has extremely old or unusual items, it would be wise to check with Archives and History before disposing of them.

A list of collections at Archives and History can be found at the manuscript collections Web site [http://www.wvculture.org/ history/manuscripts.html]. Further information may be obtained by contacting Debra Basham at (304) 558-0230, ext. 702, or e-mailing debra.a.basham@wv.gov.

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our foes, they certainly would hang us. But just reverse the case and suppose we catch them and we have the same identical law to try them by. We maintain we are the State of Virginia and they imagine they are. If we catch them and it is tried and decided before one of your judges, he decides that they are guilty of treason against the State of Virginia and the law fixes the sentence of death. Now, the question all depends on the judge and we claim as much to be the state as they. They are in precisely the same category as he supposes ours if they should catch us. Why, what is it that gives us authority here today but this state government that you are now upholding and maintaining? Against which treason can be committed just as effectually, unless it is a bogus government. Now, if you acknowledge your whole concern is bogus, you ought to abandon it at once. But I understand we stand here maintaining the fundamental principle that we are the only true, lawful and legitimate government, and that these men whom he seems to think would hang us are only usurpers of the government and attempting to usurp the rights and freedom of the people and that they are amenable to the law he is seeking to try us by. It is this very doctrine of treason that secures us against the attacks and violence from this very quarter, and it is the only manner you can maintain and uphold the government you are embarked as the rightful one. I do not acknowledge that we are traitors either against the Union or against the state, but that we are here lawful citizens of both, and not the perpetrators of a crime, engaged in a high and holy cause in restoring the government and maintaining the principles of freedom....

On December 16, delegates agreed to the wording of the section on treason against the state.

To read the debate on treason

# **Arts Grants Available**

The Arts Section of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History and the West Virginia Commission on the Arts will award grants of between \$2,000 and \$20,000 to qualifying arts organizations and history museums. Priority for this special funding opportunity through the Cultural Facilities and Capital Resources Grants will be given to energy efficient projects; accessibility improvements and purchases needed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act: renovations and repairs; and capital purchases that assist with programming. Arts organizations are given first priority

from April 1, 2012, through Sept. 20, 2012. Potential applicants must contact program coordinator Rose

priority.

grants.

A. McDonough for materials and further information. McDonough can be reached at rose.a.mcdonough@ wv.gov or by calling (304) 558-0240, ext. 152.

while history museums are second

dollar match. Each application will

be reviewed by members of the

commission and individuals with

expertise in the applicant areas

before the commission awards the

1, 2012. The grant period will run

The application deadline is Feb.

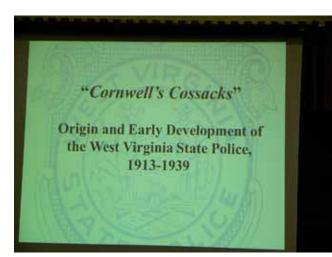
All projects require a dollar for

[Extract from an October 27, 2011, press release of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.]

# November Programs Well Received

A total of 55 people attended the November first-Tuesday and second-Thursday evening programs in the Archives and History Library. On November 1, Merle Cole discussed the origins and first two decades of the West Virginia State Police, while Kitty Baughan Cole addressed using the computer for genealogical research on November 10.

There will be no Tuesday/ Thursday night programs in December because of Archives and History's third annual showcase on December 5. The monthly programs



during the convention, visit http:// www.wvculture.org/history/ statehood/cctoc.html and click on the links for the appropriate dates. will resume on January 3 with Bob Barnett. who will present "Memoirs as Historic Research." (See Page 2 of the newsletter for a schedule of upcoming Tuesday evening lectures.) At the Thursday evening program on January 12,

the State Museum's collections curator Jim Mitchell will discuss "West Virginia Glass in the State Museum."



# **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.

AN AMERICAN TURNING POINT: THE CIVIL WAR IN VIRGINIA EXHIBIT, through December 30: Virginia Historical Society, Richmond. Exhibit includes West Virginia.

"THE WAY WE WORKED," SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION EXHIBITION TOUR, through December 10: Mary H. Weir Public Library, Weirton.

"ON THE EDGE OF THE EMPIRE: THE MAKING OF MECKLENBURG," December 1: Dr. Warren Hofstra, speaker, Robert C. Byrd Legislative Center, Shepherdstown.

> ST. ALBANS CHRISTMAS HISTORIC HOMES TOUR, December 3: St. Albans, Sponsored by the St. Albans Historical Society.

HISTORY OF WASHINGTON AND BEALL FAMILIES OF JEFFERSON COUNTY, December 4: Claymont Court, Charles Town. Sponsored by the Claymont Society and Beallair Manor Historical Group.

"WALTER REUTHER AND THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT," December 8: Brent Carney, speaker, Mary H.Weir Public Library, Weirton.

CHARLES TOWN CHRISTMAS HISTORIC HOMES TOUR, December 10: Charles Town.

"THE WAY WE WORKED," SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION EXHIBITION TOUR, December 17–January 28, 2012: Morgantown History Museum, Morgantown.

"THE WHEELING FAMILY VOLUME 2: MORE IMMIGRANTS, MIGRANTS, AND NEIGHBORHOODS," December 20: Sean Duffy, speaker, Ohio County Public Library Lunch with Books, Wheeling.

CHRISTMAS EVE, December 24: Archives Library will be closed.

CHRISTMAS DAY HOLIDAY, December 26 (Monday): Archives Library will be closed.

"OUR FATHER WHO AREN'T IN HEAVEN," December 27: Tracy Mercier and Debbie Frye, speakers, Ohio County Public Library Lunch with Books, Wheeling.

NEW YEAR'S EVE, December 31: Archives Library will be closed.

NEW YEAR'S DAY HOLIDAY, January 2, 2012 (Monday): Archives Library will be closed.

UNCOMMON VERNACULAR: THE EARLY HOUSES OF JEFFERSON COUNTY, WV, 1735–1835 EXHIBIT, January 10–February 13: Culture Center, Charleston.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY, January 16: Archives Library will be open.\*

PRESIDENTS DAY, February 20: Archives Library will be open.\*

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

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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.c.scouras@wv.gov. www.wvculture.org/history West Virginia Division of Culture and History The Culture Center 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East Charleston, WV 25305-0300

# Archives and History Staff

Joe Geiger	Director
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Debra Basham	Archivist (photographs, special collections)
Constance Baston	
Kyle Campbell	Cultural Program Specialist (county records preservation project)
Greg Carroll	
Dick Fauss	Archivist (microfilm and moving images collection)
Denise Ferguson	County Records Archivist
Allen Fowler	
Elaine Gates	Library Assistant (microfilming and microfilm repairs)
Ed Hicks	Photo Archivist (archival photography, darkroom)
Susan Holbrook	
Mary Johnson	
Terry Lowry	
Randy Marcum	Cultural Program Associate (county records preservation project)
Cathy Miller	Library Assistant (WV State documents)
	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
Part time	James Balch
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This newsletter is a publication of: The West Virginia Division of Culture and History Randall Reid-Smith, Commissioner