Birth of West Virginia Revealed through the Papers of its Founders

On June 20, 2013, West Virginia will celebrate the sesquicentennial of its existence. The circumstances surrounding the state’s creation 150 years ago were unprecedented, possibly unconstitutional and certainly ironic. A civil war then being fought to prevent secession at the national level led directly to what many viewed as secession at the state level. Hypocrisy? A century and a half later, these seemingly contradictory events still excite and confound those who wish to study and understand them.

For scholars and laymen alike who wish to delve into the facts and mysteries surrounding creation of the Mountain State, there is no better resource than the West Virginia and Regional History Center at the WVU Libraries. Indeed, the WVRHC owes its very existence to the recognition, just about four score and seven years ago, that the papers of West Virginia’s founders were then in danger of imminent destruction.

The WVRHC’s first curator, Dr. Charles Ambler, began collecting archival resources that documented West Virginia’s creation during the late 1920s. His acquisition in 1930 of the voluminous papers of Senator Waitman T. Willey, the “father of West Virginia,” induced Ambler to move his growing collection from his office in the history department to the University Library. Initially dubbed the “Division of Documents,” the collection grew to include the papers of other key founders including Francis H. Pierpont and Arthur I. Boreman in the years that followed.

Due to Ambler’s efforts, and those of his successors, the WVRHC now holds the most significant collection of primary resources of any repository regarding West Virginia’s early political and economic history. The following brief summaries are but a sampling of the vast riches that await those interested in studying the unique circumstances that led to the birth of the nation’s 35th state.

Waitman T. Willey Papers

Waitman T. Willey (1811-1900) was one of the most instrumental figures in the West Virginia statehood movement. A delegate from western Virginia who voted against secession at the Virginia Convention in April 1861, Willey was a master politician and played an integral part in the series of compromises that would eventually lead to West Virginia’s independence from the “Old Dominion.”
During the Second Wheeling Convention in June 1861, Willey led a group who achieved a compromise between those who wanted to form a new state immediately and those who thought it would be unwise to attempt to do so at the outset of the war. The compromise proposed that the Unionist faction of Virginia’s government be refashioned as a loyal or “restored” state government with its own governor, legislature, and representation in the U.S. Congress. This would be the first step in the complicated procedure required by the U.S. Constitution for the formation of a new state out of the territory of another.

In July, Willey was appointed to the U.S. Senate representing the Restored Government of Virginia. In this role, he introduced and supported legislation to admit West Virginia into the Union. One stumbling block was the potential new state’s position on slavery. Opinions within the state and the U.S. Senate were sharply divided on this issue. Willey proposed a compromise, known as the Willey Amendment, which provided that all slaves under 21 years of age on July 4, 1863, would be free on reaching that age. Though eventually superseded by the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, Willey’s compromise led to the passage of the statehood bill and paved the way for creation of West Virginia on June 20, 1863. When West Virginia achieved statehood, Willey served as one of its first U.S. senators.

A key to understanding the political context of Willey’s views and actions can be found in the Waitman Willey Papers (A&M 3, 1361) at the West Virginia and Regional History Center. Willey left behind a record of his thoughts and actions in the form of an extensive two-volume diary which extends from 1830 through 1899. Entries address family matters, including the death of his daughter, as well as political matters, such as the question of a new state. On March 3, 1863, Willey wrote “It is now as certain beyond doubt that the vote of the people of West Virginia is overwhelmingly in favor of the amended constitution and the new state of West Virginia is a fixed fact” (p. 111). On the following pages, he describes his work and observations in connection with making West Virginia a reality. He also describes his hasty departure from his home in Morgantown on April 27, 1863 due to the advance of rebel cavalry then engaged in a string of battles known today as the Jones-Imboden Raid. Willey also used his diary as a scrapbook—it includes clippings, correspondence, ephemera, and printed speeches, including a speech Willey made at the Constitutional Convention of West Virginia in Wheeling on February 12, 1863.

The Willey Papers include thousands of pieces of incoming correspondence dating from 1833 to 1900 (bulk 1859-1869) from friends, family, and prominent Virginia and West Virginia leaders such as U.S. Senator Peter G. Van Winkle, Governor Francis H. Pierpont of loyal Virginia, and governors Arthur I. Boreman and William E. Stevenson of West Virginia. These letters give insight into political life before the Civil War in Virginia, and later in West Virginia; sentiments about the state’s constitution, slavery, and emancipation; and the plight of citizens and communities resulting from war (e.g., battle casualties and damage, reparation requests, loyalty "disabilities").

Francis H. Pierpont

Another key figure in West Virginia’s journey to statehood was Francis H. Pierpont (1814-1899), an anti-slavery and pro-Union politician often hailed as the “Father of West Virginia.” He participated in the First and Second Wheeling Conventions in 1861, during which he worked with Waitman T. Willey and others to postpone immediate formation of a new state. Pierpont believed it would be clearly unconstitutional for a new state to be carved out of another state without the latter’s approval. He concurred with those who advocated the organization of a loyal Virginia state government as an interim step. During the Second Wheeling Convention, Pierpont was unanimously elected Governor of the Restored Government of Virginia on June 20, 1861, and continued to serve as Governor of Virginia after the Civil War, until 1868.
President Abraham Lincoln recognized the Restored Government as the legitimate government of Virginia, enabling the loyal western Virginians to send delegates like Willey to the U.S. Congress to advocate for West Virginia statehood. As Virginia's recognized governor, Pierpont consented to the formation of the state of West Virginia on May 13, 1862. Pierpont also helped to shape the state's boundaries, ordering the election that allowed the residents of Jefferson and Berkeley counties to determine whether their counties should be part of West Virginia or Virginia. Those citizens who chose to and were able to participate in the election voted to be part of West Virginia. Though the election was later contested, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of West Virginia in 1871.

The several collections of Francis H. Pierpont papers (A&M 9, 419, 420, 497, 559, 1034, 2968) held by the WVRHC elucidate Pierpont's role in forming West Virginia and the incredible challenges he faced as loyal governor of a rebel state. Researchers can follow West Virginia's journey to statehood through Pierpont's writings and addresses presented at the Wheeling Conventions including his plans for the creation of the Reorganized Government of Virginia. Pierpont also wrote essays on his reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln and experiences as governor during the Civil War. The Pierpont collections include an assortment of contemporary political pamphlets about the constitutionality of West Virginia's statehood and the sharing of state debt with Virginia, as well as scrapbooks of newspaper clippings that touch on all aspects of Pierpont's life, including his involvement in West Virginia becoming a state.

Pierpont's correspondence also provides a window to the past. Letters between Pierpont and notable figures such as Gordon Battelle, Arthur I. Boreman, John S. Carlile, Abraham Lincoln (copies), William E. Stevenson, David Hunter Strother, Peter G. Van Winkle, and Waitman T. Willey touch on politics, the statehood movement, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and religion. Included is a letter from Van Winkle regarding the poor prospects of the proposed new state's survival (1862; A&M 2968) and letters from Pierpont to President Lincoln regarding issues facing Virginia and the creation of West Virginia (1861-1864, microfilm; A&M 1034). Also included in the collections are original and facsimile telegrams to Pierpont, many of which address military issues of the Civil War, such as decisions Pierpont had to make regarding personnel and provisions, reports of troop movements, etc. Also included are telegrams of a political nature, such as one from U.S. Senate leader Benjamin F. Wade in July 1861, in which he recognizes the legitimacy of Pierpont's Restored Government of Virginia and its congressional representatives. Other notable correspondents include generals J.A.J. Lightburn, George B. McClellan, and W.S. Rosecrans, and Lincoln cabinet members William H. Seward and Edwin M. Stanton. Digitized copies of the majority of these telegrams can be found online at the Francis H. Pierpont Civil War Telegram Series 1861-1865 website, http://civilwarwv.lib.wvu.edu/.

Arthur I. Boreman

West Virginia's first governor, Arthur I. Boreman (1823-1896), was another pivotal figure in the statehood movement. In June 1861, after Virginia voted to secede from the Union, Boreman presided over the Second Wheeling Convention, which voted to establish the Restored/Reorganized Government of Virginia. The creation of that government was a key step in West Virginia's evolution. In October of that year, he was elected Judge of the Parkersburg district Circuit Court and remained in that office until 1863 when he was elected governor of the new State of West Virginia. He was elected without opposition and reelected twice, serving from 1863 to 1869.

After the state's creation, Boreman had the difficult task of presiding over the state during the final war years and into the reconstruction period, when partisan tensions in West Virginia ran high. During his term as governor, he helped establish a public school system and secured the passage of the voters' test oath law, which denied former Confederates the right to hold office, practice law, or vote. He also steered the state through the end of the Civil War, appealing to President Lincoln for federal assistance, organizing militias to fight Confederate guerillas, and dealing with the exchange of hostages.

The Arthur I. Boreman collections (A&M 104, 639) at the WVRHC, especially his correspondence, highlight the challenges he faced after West Virginia achieved statehood. Included in the correspondence are candid and personal letters from Boreman to his brother, Jacob, touching on political events in West Virginia, such as efforts to disenfranchise former rebels. The letters between governors Boreman and Francis H. Pierpont
highlight post-statehood difficulties such as the admission of Berkeley and Jefferson counties into the state, West Virginia's share of the Virginia debt, Reconstruction in Virginia, and Lincoln's and Grant's presidential leadership. The taking and exchanging of hostages by the West Virginia government during the Civil War is documented by letters, notes, and warrants for arrest. The hostages were taken in retaliation for captives taken by Confederate guerrillas during raids on Union-held territory in the state. Boreman's papers also include manuscript drafts of political speeches (such as his annual message to the state Senate and House of Delegates, 1868 and 1869), as well as papers relating to Boreman's judgeship and to the law firm of Boreman and Bullocks in Parkersburg.

Granville D. Hall

Granville Davisson Hall Collection (1837-1934)

notes on the conventions were later published in book form as The Rending of Virginia, a memoir and history on the formation of the new state. Hall went on to serve as the first clerk of the House of Delegates (elected 20 June 1863), private secretary to West Virginia's first governor, Arthur I. Boreman (1856), and as West Virginia's Secretary of State (1865-1869). The Granville Davisson Hall Collection (A&M 42) at the WVRHC provides much additional insight into the politics and activities of West Virginia's formative period. Included is correspondence regarding the early statehood period and Civil War activities in West Virginia, as well as personal matters; miscellaneous printed material from the First Constitutional Convention of West Virginia (1861-1863); and typescript drafts of numerous articles by Hall, including "The Name of W.Va. - It was Lawfully Named Kanawha," "How the W.Va. Convention Tried to Conserve Slavery," and The Flick Amendment.

Peter G. Van Winkle

Senator Peter G. Van Winkle (1808-1872)

While most of West Virginia's founders were native to western Virginia, Peter Godwin Van Winkle (September 7, 1808 - April 15, 1872) was not. Born in New York City, he moved to Parkersburg in 1835. Before the push for statehood, he worked as a lawyer and helped organize the Northwestern Virginia Railroad. Politically active as a Republican, he served as a delegate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1850-1851, a member of the Second Wheeling Convention of 1861, a member of the Governor's Council of the Reorganized Government of Virginia from 1861-1863, a delegate from Wood County to the West Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1861-1862, and a legislator from Wood County in 1863. After West Virginia statehood was achieved, he was elected as one of the new state's first United States senators. Van Winkle is also remembered for having cast the next-to-last vote that saved President Andrew Johnson from conviction on impeachment charges in 1868. The WVRHC's Van Winkle Papers (A&M 136) include several choice items relevant to statehood. One highlight is a draft of his "Address of the Delegates composing the New State Constitutional Convention to their Constituents" penned in 1863. The collection also includes manuscripts, speeches, essays, correspondence, and three scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, on topics such as Virginia and West Virginia politics, transportation, and Parkersburg.

Archibald W. Campbell

Though not a founding father in the legislative sense, newspaperman Archibald W. Campbell (April 4, 1833-February 13, 1899) played an important role in generating popular support for the formation of the new state of West Virginia. Nephew of the renowned clergyman Alexander Campbell, Campbell was born in Steubenville, Ohio. He spent most of his childhood in Bethany, (West) Virginia where his famous uncle founded and served as president of Bethany College. Educated at Bethany and at the Hamilton College Law School, Campbell moved to Wheeling in 1856 to take a job at the
*Daily Intelligencer.*

He assumed editorship of the newspaper later that year when he and John F. McDermot became co-owners. A devout unionist and Republican, Campbell used his newspaper as a vehicle to support the Union, the abolition of slavery, and West Virginia statehood through both reporting and editorials. He also worked to promote statehood behind the scenes. The WVRHC’s Archibald Campbell Papers (A&M 14) reveal Campbell’s critical role in shaping public opinion throughout this tumultuous era. In addition to voluminous correspondence, the collection includes newspaper clippings, printed ephemera and scrapbooks. Among the many correspondents represented in the collection are prominent abolitionists Cassius M. Clay and John C. Underwood.

**Gideon D. Camden**

In addition to papers of West Virginia’s founders, the West Virginia and Regional History Center also preserves archival materials relating to several key western Virginians who opposed statehood. One such figure was Judge Gideon D. Camden (1805-1891) of Clarksburg. A Confederate sympathizer, Camden’s papers afford valuable insight regarding the perspectives of southern Democrats in West Virginia. Camden was a lawyer, a member of the Virginia Convention of 1850-1851, a circuit judge, and a state senator (1872-1876). The Gideon Camden Collections (A&M 1188, 1199, 1221, 1523) include a wide assortment of papers including correspondence related to Camden’s business dealings in law and natural resources, as well as material pertaining to the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1850, Secession, West Virginia politics, Reconstruction, the state election of 1868, the Flick Amendment, and the Constitutional Convention of 1872.

**What’s in a Name?**

The WVU Libraries’ West Virginia and Regional History Collection has a new name! From this day forth, the letters WVRHC will now stand for West Virginia and Regional History Center. The change is intended to better reflect the nature of the state’s leading historical archives-library.

“Rather than simply a subject area within the WVU Libraries, the WVRHC is, in fact, a complex research organization with distinct reading rooms and galleries, expert staff, and not one, but many collections and units,” said John Cuthbert, Director of the WVRHC.

The Center’s Archives and Manuscripts collection alone consumes more than half of the total shelf space in the ten-story Wise Library. As noted earlier in this Newsletter, those collections include the majority of deposited papers of West Virginia’s founders, as well as those of many early governors, industrial barons and laborers, authors, soldiers, doctors, musicians, and indeed, people of all walks of life. The Center’s collections of West Virginia and regional books, photographs, early sound recordings and historic newspapers are also the most comprehensive of any institution.

The WVRHC’s origins date back to 1930 when the University Library accepted responsibility for preserving the papers of Senator Waitman T. Willey, a founding father of West Virginia. The papers of other key political and industrial leaders soon followed, including those of Francis H. Pierpont, governor of the Reorganized Government of Virginia (1861-1863), and U.S. senators and capitalists Henry Gassaway Davis and Johnson Newlon Camden.

The West Virginia University Board of Governors formally authorized the Library’s growing “Division of Documents,” as the Center was initially known, in 1933. The Center was made an official depository for state government records by an act of the West Virginia Legislature the following year.

The WVRHC serves literally thousands of researchers each year through both onsite services and a growing offering of digital collections and services. Among the most popular of the latter is *West Virginia History OnView*, a digital photograph database, which provides online access to more than 40,000 historical photographs. Visit the site at [http://wvhistoryonview.org](http://wvhistoryonview.org)
The WVRHC's home page features rotating images from Edward Beyer's famous Album of Virginia (1858).

Along with a new name, West Virginia and Regional History Center also boasts a new and improved website which improves access to both finding aids and online content. As feedback on the new site is eagerly desired, all readers are invited to check out the new site at the following address: http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/wvcollection.

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**West Virginia Day 2013**

**Join Us in Celebrating 150 Years of Statehood!**

The Regional History Center will be pulling out all stops to commemorate the sesquicentennial anniversary of West Virginia's founding on June 20, 1863. Festivities will commence on the morning of June 20, in the Wise Library's Milano Reading Room with a forum featuring remarks by three distinguished scholars -- Dr. John E. Stealey, III, Dr. Mathew Foulds, and Robert M. Bastress, L.L.M. -- addressing topics relating to West Virginia's creation. The opening of the WVRHC's West Virginia Day Exhibit and distribution of a very special West Virginia Day poster will follow promptly at 11 o'clock.

At noon, activities will shift to the Erickson Alumni Center where the WVU Libraries will host a reception for the exhibition Lincoln, the Constitution and the Civil War. Prepared by the National Constitution Center in collaboration with the American Library Association, the exhibit focuses on how President Lincoln's leadership and constitutional vision steered the nation through its most turbulent years and into a future that forever changed America.

At two o'clock, President Lincoln himself (Michael Krebs of Lincoln Productions) will make an appearance. Following an address on pertinent issues of the day, Mr. Lincoln will field questions regarding his decision to support West Virginia statehood.

**Selected Recent Accessions**


Historical material compiled by Jack Sandy Anderson. Contains a land grant for land in Monongalia County, Virginia signed by James Monroe (1801; oversize); a typed copy of a Civil War-era letter from a Union soldier (1862); genealogical information; and other material. Also includes notes from the donor, which give context and sometimes genealogy of the items' owners.


Correspondence, publications, printed material, research material, photographs, and clippings of former West Virginia University professor of journalism and Director of Development Donovan Bond (9 February 1921 - 12 June 1995) of Morgantown, West Virginia. Main topics include West Virginia University-related material, including Bond's involvement in Phi Sigma Kappa; genealogy on several early West Virginia families, including Bond, Dent, Core, McWhorter, Romine, Hiner, Scott, Maxson, and Cutright; materials relating to several West Virginia-specific projects,
including the Hacker’s Creek Descendants, the Henry McWhorter cabin at Jackson’s Mill, and others; World War II memorabilia, including letters home from New Guinea and photographs; Morgantown history, particularly from ca. 1914-1970, including Morgantown High School (both 1914-1918 and 1934-1938) and plays produced at the high school in the late 1930s. Also includes papers of Helen Louise Dent Bond, Donovan’s wife. Addendum of 2013/01/18 includes Phi Sigma Kappa records.

Calverley, Mary Eliza Smith. Correspondence and Photographs. 1924-2010, 1/2 in., Gift in 2013. A&M 3888.

Copies of correspondence and photographs of Mary Eliza Smith Calverley, compiled by her daughter Diana Calverley Haskell into a book titled Travels with Eliza. Eliza was born and raised in Clarksburg, West Virginia. She left in 1925 to become personal secretary to Ellen Ayer Wood, wife of textile mill owner William Madison Wood, whom she accompanied through 1940. In 1940, Eliza married Harry Calverley. The majority of the correspondence is from Eliza to her family in Clarksburg, written while she was traveling and living abroad in the 1930s. Travel destinations included Italy and Switzerland. Also includes biographical information about Eliza, her family, and the family of her employer Mrs. Wood, as well as letters and photos of Mrs. Haskell.


Newsletters and radio program of various Civilian Conservation Corps camps in West Virginia. Contains an issue of The Greenbrier Echo, published by Company 1539, Camp Greenbrier, Rupert, WV (June, 1934); issues of the Police Up Gazette, published by Company 1538, Camp Wyoming [?], Pineville, WV (July, 1935 - April, 1936); an issue of The Mountaineer, published by Company 3527, Camp Preston, Kingwood, WV (February, 1936); a transcript of Camp Rhododendron’s Trico Forum of the Air radio program (March 28, 1937); and the first two issues of The Cooper Crier, published by Company 3527, Camp Rhododendron, Morgantown, WV (May, 1937). All are photocopies except for the Police Up Gazette.


Records of Engineer Roland P. Davis, who was associated with the College of Engineering at West Virginia University, serving as a professor (1911-1932), and later as Dean (1932-1955). These papers document his work as a consultant, including work for the State Road Commission as a “Consulting Bridge Engineer”. There are extensive records and photographs regarding bridges in West Virginia, including the New Martinsville Bridge, the Parkersburg suspension bridge, and others. There are also published reports regarding West Virginia highways, and many product prospectuses in connection with concrete, rivets and bolts, steel, and welding, among other topics.


Personal and family papers of Virginia statesman Philip Doddridge (1773-1832), the namesake of Doddridge County, West Virginia. Includes printed material, correspondence, and legal and financial documents. The collection is divided into two main series: Doddridge Family Papers and Plattenburg Family Papers. The Doddridge Family Papers include letters by Phillip Doddridge (26 items regarding politics, family matters, etc., most dating from 1829-1832), letters to or about him, and family correspondence. The Plattenburg Family Papers includes legal and financial documents as well as correspondence of the family of Philip Doddridge’s daughter, Ellen [or Eleanor] Sophia, who married Perry Plattenburg.


Property tax ledgers of Monongalia County, Virginia (1851-1862), later West Virginia (1863-1954). There are 175 ledgers containing information collected annually regarding property owned by individual citizens of the county for purpose of taxation. Records for each year are entered by district, and for each district are listed the names of citizens in alphabetical order; from 1923 onward address information for each citizen is also included. Slave ownership and free African-Americans are recorded through 1863; subsequent ledgers distinguish between white and African-American citizens.


Papers of Victorine Louistall Monroe, the first African-American woman to receive a graduate degree from West Virginia University (WVU), and the first African-American to serve as a WVU faculty member. Contains material regarding Louistall’s education, career, and personal life, including
correspondence, photographs, newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, awards, and other items.

Papers of West Virginia artist Bernie Peace who taught art at West Liberty State College from 1960-1995. Includes notebooks of slides of artworks, exhibit programs, and clippings, among other material.


Correspondence of the Varner and Darrah families. Folder 1 includes original manuscript letters to and from members of the two families (1870-1884). Folder 2 includes manuscript genealogical information from the Varner Family Bible, and typed transcripts of the papers of the Varner family of Monongalia County, West Virginia, dating from 1775 to 1918, which includes correspondence with the Darrahs. The two families were related.


Papers of Raymond M. Young (1924-1986) of Oak Hill, West Virginia, a combat photographer who served with United States armed forces in Europe during and after World War II and in Vietnam. Includes commercially distributed stereographic cards showing subjects in Germany (ca. 1930-1945) and the Helsinki Olympics (1952), among other subjects; many photographs of subjects in Germany and France at the end of World War II; and a few photographs from Vietnam (ca. 1965). There are also two research articles about radiography coauthored by Young (1957); correspondence and other documents related to Young's military service (1946-1967); and certificates (1980-1985).