WVRHC Newsletter, Spring 2004

West Virginia & Regional History Center

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Recommended Citation
West Virginia & Regional History Center, "WVRHC Newsletter, Spring 2004" (2004). West Virginia & Regional History Center Newsletters. 28.
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Richard Miller began painting at the ripe old age of six. Nearly seven decades later, he is still painting.

Born in 1930, Miller grew up in the heart of downtown Fairmont. Despite being situated “in the heart of Appalachia” he recalls his hometown, and his own household, as having been no less sophisticated than one might have found anywhere in America. His parents and two elder siblings were all highly literate and culturally refined in their respective interests. Mr. and Mrs. Miller owned and operated a job printing business. His elder brother began a distinguished career in law when Richard was still just a boy while his older sister was married to financier and philanthropist Jess Speidel of Wheeling.

Considering such examples, it is not surprising that the youngest Miller was intent on “doing something important” with his life. It is unlikely, however, that the family took him seriously when he vowed to become a great artist when he was still in grade school. If so, however, they did not doubt it for long.

Miller’s talent was discovered quickly when he enrolled in grade school. In the first few years of his enrollment he won numerous prizes for his work and also painted murals throughout the building. When a community art center opened in town in 1939, he attended evening classes initially, and was eventually granted early release from school to attend the center each afternoon. When he was just a lad of ten, a Still Life he painted at the center was selected for an exhibition of juvenile art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

In June 1943, when the Miller family relocated in Washington, D.C., the aspiring artist soon became a fixture in the city’s art museums. The following summer he became the youngest artist ever granted permission to copy Old Master paintings in the National Gallery of Art. He recalls working diligently from opening to closing each day, copying a work by a master that he particularly esteemed named “van Rijn.”
Several weeks went by before someone pointed out to him that the artist was better known by the first name, Rembrandt!

The budding artist received a variety of awards over the next several years that did much to advance his education. In 1944 and 1945 he won scholarships to study art in Washington and also in Provincetown, Massachusetts, with some of the nation’s finest teachers.

By 1947, Miller was showing his paintings in most of the juried exhibitions in the Washington area. Still just a junior in high school, his progress did not escape notice back in Fairmont. On February 16 of that year, the Millers returned to West Virginia to attend the opening of the young painter’s first one-man show, an exhibition of 11 portraits, at Fairmont State College.

The following year, when one of Miller’s works was included in an exhibition of works by Washington artists, it captivated one of the foremost art connoisseurs in the nation, Duncan Phillips. Phillips eventually acquired two of Miller’s works for the Phillips Collection, one of the leading museums of modern art in the world.

Upon graduating from high school in 1948, Miller received one of the most lucrative prizes available to aspiring artists of the day, the Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney scholarship. Awarded by the Washington Chapter of the National Society of Arts and Letters, the prize provided funds for up to five years study at the college level. Miller spent the first year at the Pennsylvania Academy for the Fine Arts and the ensuing four at American University where he graduated in 1953.

After receiving a Fulbright Fellowship to study in Europe and a second Whitney Scholarship to
In 1960, Miller received a solo exhibition at one of New York's most prestigious galleries, the Duveen Graham Gallery on Madison Avenue. The event proved to be such a resounding success from both critical and financial standpoints that an affiliation between the gallery and the artist began which would continue for the next decade.

The following year, when Miller was invited to exhibit at the world famous Carnegie International, his monumental abstraction, *Strata*, was selected as one of the International's top 21 paintings out of more than 300 entries by the foremost artists of 29 countries. At 30 years of age, the Fairmont native had truly made his mark in the art world.

Art, however, was not Miller's only talent. Blessed with musical gifts as well, in 1957 Miller wed a "beautiful singer," Teresa Robinson, whom he met while performing with a summer stock theater company in Upstate New York. The union resulted in what proved to be a dual career for Miller for the next two decades. The couple appeared together in the long-running Broadway production of *Oliver*, and in countless other shows in locations ranging from New York to Los Angeles.

Strata, oil on canvas, 108 x 57 inches, 1960.

pursue an MFA at Columbia, Miller established himself on the New York art scene during the mid-1950s. In 1956 his work was exhibited at the famous Whitney Annual alongside those of many of America's leading modern painters including Charles Burchfield, Robert Motherwell, Georgia O'Keefe, and Larry Rivers to name but a few. Many of these artists, and other leading New York School Abstract Expressionists - Mark Rothko, Helen Frankenthaler, Paul Burlin - soon became good friends and neighbors. Miller exhibited at the Whitney again in 1957. Dedicated to "Fulbright Painters," that show proceeded to tour the country.

Miller in the role of Oliver's Fagin.
Angeles. Rather than detracting from his artwork, Miller found that theatrical work became both inspirational and interwoven with it.

Due to their many interests and talents, the Millers' Upper East Side apartment became a popular gathering place for artists, actors and singers from across the city during the 1960s. Parties in their home routinely drew “more than 100 guests ranging from Paul Burlin to Albert Finney.”

In 1968, Miller embarked upon yet a third vocation, accepting a one-year post on the faculty of one of the nation’s finest art schools, the Kansas City Art Institute. He found the experience highly rewarding. Though he was anxious to return to “the center of the world” at the year’s end, he left Kansas City with a determination to continue teaching. Opportunities materialized, first at the Scarsdale Studio School where his colleagues included several well known New York painters, and later at the Westchester Community College and the Jewish Community Center of Mid-Westchester, where he continues to teach to this day.

Throughout these years, Miller kept painting. His enthusiasm became renewed with every turn and twist of what proved to be a constant evolution. The large spontaneous abstract paintings of the 1960s gave way to medium-sized highly ordered works incorporating three dimensional objects during the mid-1970s, and then to freer works with folded and overlaid canvas collage during the early 1980s. During the late 1980s, he returned to representational art when he began to sense that his abstract work was becoming “predict-
The Second Source, oil and oil stick on canvas, 80 x 56 inches, 2001.

able.” He ended up traveling “full circle,” back to a form that had fascinated him since his youth – the still life. He returned to abstraction during the early 1990s when he discovered a new language based in the primitive formal concepts of African and American Indian art. Yielding results that critics found “profoundly moving,” this phase has continued to the present.

At age 73, Miller is creating some of the most powerful and stirring works of his career. He continues to approach the art of painting each day with the same enthusiasm he had when he first touched brush to canvas in Fairmont, West Virginia nearly seven decades ago.

RICHARD K. MILLER EXHIBIT AND LECTURE SCHEDULED FOR WEST VIRGINIA DAY

Despite Richard Miller’s triumphs in New York and elsewhere, Miller’s art is virtually unknown in his home state. The West Virginia University Libraries hopes to remedy this situation through an exhibition of 25 paintings by Miller that will be on view in the Libraries’ Davis Family Galleries throughout the coming summer months.

The exhibit will open on Saturday, June 19, as part of WVU’s West Virginia Day celebration. Opening ceremonies will include a reception for the artist as well as a lecture by Miller discussing his life and work with a special emphasis on his West Virginia roots.

To commemorate this auspicious event, a 2004 West Virginia Day poster is currently in production. In honor of West Virginia’s 141st birthday, the poster will be presented free of charge to the first 141 visitors to the exhibit which will open its doors at 6 pm sharp.

The Miller exhibition will remain at the WVU Libraries until August 27. The exhibit will subsequently travel to Charleston where it will be on view in the State Museum at the Cultural Center from September 17 to November 7.

CIVIL WAR RECORDS FROM THE ROY BIRD COOK COLLECTION NOW AVAILABLE THROUGH WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY ONLINE WEBSITE

The West Virginia and Regional History Collection is pleased to announce the availability of several archival and pictorial resources via the West Virginia Collection’s new website, West Virginia History Online. Of special interest to Civil War buffs will be a collection of more than 3500 documents relating to the 31st Virginia Infantry Regiment, C.S.A. The documents were assembled by the noted Civil War and West Virginia scholar and collector Roy Bird Cook.

Born in Lewis County, near Roanoke, Cook was a pharmacist by trade, and a leader in his field. During a professional career that spanned more than half a century he was elected by his peers to posts including the presidency of both the National Association
of Boards of Pharmacy and the American Pharmaceutical Association. In recognition of his accomplishments, Cook received numerous awards during his life including the American Pharmaceutical Association’s Remington Award, and an honorary doctorate from West Virginia University.

In addition to a passion for his vocation, Dr. Cook was equally passionate about the study of West Virginia history in which field his achievements were no less remarkable.

Cook began studying and collecting information about his native Lewis County when he was still in his teens. He established himself as a leading authority on that subject through the publication of an extended series of “Pioneer Sketches of Lewis County” which appeared in the Weston Independent in 1916 and 1917. Many significant contributions on state and local history to this and numerous other newspapers and journals throughout the state followed in the ensuing years.

Cook had a special interest in the Civil War and Stonewall Jackson who hailed from Lewis County. Drawing upon the reminiscences of people who had actually known Jackson, in 1924 Cook published a book on The Family and Early Life of Stonewall Jackson. The study became the foundation upon which all subsequent biographies of Jackson’s early life were based, enjoying five editions in as many decades. Published in the same year, Cook’s book chronicling Lewis County in the Civil War remains one of the most detailed studies of its kind.

In addition to his efforts as a writer, Cook played a leading role in promoting the study and preservation of West Virginia history throughout the early twentieth century. He shepherded the resurrection of the West Virginia Historical Society in 1939 and served as the first editor for the Society’s quarterly journal West Virginia History. As a member of the West Virginia Commission on Historic and Scenic Markers, he was responsible for the erection of signs demarking prominent historic sites across the state. As a member of the War History Commission he spearheaded the effort to preserve records documenting the state’s military history during the World War II era. He also served as a consultant and advisor on the development of the State 4-H Camp at Jackson’s Mill.

A voracious personal collector, Cook also contributed greatly to the preservation efforts of the State Department of Archives and History which was directed by his wife, Eleanor Jones Poling Cook, during the late 1940s and early 1950s. He was a tireless promoter of West Virginia public libraries and served as a trustee of the Kanawha County Public Library for the last eighteen years of his life. His contributions in this regard were recognized by a merit award from the West Virginia Library Association just four years before his death.

The 31st Virginia Infantry Regiment, C.S.A.

The 31st Virginia was formed in the early weeks of the Civil War when General Robert E. Lee ordered the recruitment of troops to protect the railroad lines running through western Virginia’s northern counties. On May 4, Lee appointed Col. George Porterfield to assume command of these forces which were being raised primarily in Taylor, Marion, Harrison, Monongalia, and Barbour counties.

In the next few weeks these raw recruits found themselves in the war’s first arena, a tactical struggle for control of the Confederacy’s northwestern flank — the hills, rails and rivers of what would soon become the nation’s 35th state, West Virginia.
Composed of some of the war’s earliest recruits, in the years that followed, the 31st Virginia Infantry would see action under generals Garnett, William L. "Mudwall" Jackson, Jones and Imboden, Stonewall Jackson, Jubal Early and many more legendary Confederate commanders, at battles including Corrick’s Ford, Cross Keys, Cold Harbor, Gettysburg, New Market and other engagements too numerous to mention. Approximately 57 of the 850 men who joined the regiment in 1861 witnessed Lee’s surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865.

A detailed history of the 31st Virginia by James Dell Cooke is included in the records presented in the West Virginia History Online site. Also included are muster rolls, orders, daily reports and many other documents evincing the men, movements, and activities of the regiment.

UNRAVELING THE MYSTERIES OF A MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPT

As keeper of the WVU Libraries’ Rare Books Collection, the Regional History Collection’s holdings include a number of medieval manuscript leaves. When several of these were exhibited last spring, a WVU art history student became intrigued with one particular leaf whose origins in terms of date and place, and even content, were unknown.

Robert Tallaksen decided as a semester project to attempt to identify the text and, as far as possible, to determine an approximate date for the manuscript’s production. He began by transcribing portions of the text and deciphering the contractions and abbreviations that were common in medieval manuscripts. When such words as “sacerdotes” (priests) and “archam” (ark) began to appear, it quickly became evident that the manuscript was likely an excerpt from the Bible. Through the use of an online searchable database of the Bible in Latin at the web site for the Vatican Library, Tallaksen determined that the text was from the Old Testament book of First Chronicles, beginning at chapter 12, verse 40, and continuing through chapter 14, verse 9.

The next problem was to suggest a date for the production of the manuscript. The discipline of Palaeography, the study of ancient handwriting, recognizes a definite progression in the style of lettering in books from the earliest surviving manuscripts up to the present. Dating a manuscript requires a close examination of the individual letters, their relation to each other, and an analysis of all abbreviations used by the scribe. It seemed clear that the style fit best into the evolution of manuscript lettering between the

(Continued on page 9)
NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS, WEST VIRGINIA
AND REGIONAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Adams, Annon C., Poughkeepsie, NY
Anderegg, Ralph C., Kingwood, TX
Atkins, Paul A., Morgantown, WV
Bastress, Robert, Morgantown, WV
Biller, Deloris, Westover, WV
Birurakis, Louis B., Morgantown, WV
Bower, Donna, Fillmore, NY
Brennan, Margaret, Wheeling, WV
Brooks, Gilbert D., Charleston, WV
Carpenter, Walter, St. Mary's, WV
Channell, Jeff R., Pittsburgh, PA
Dahmer, Maryan, Upper Tract, WV
DAR Library, Washington, DC
Dean, Darrell R., Jr., Rowlesburg, WV
Decker, Lucinda B., Uniontown, PA
Dotson, Richard, Greenville, SC
Evans, Clyde P., Jr., Novelty, OH
Fenton, Adrian, Wexford, PA
Forshee, Gladys, Superior, CO
Fredette, Raymond H., Alexandria, VA
Hamilton, W. Clay, Hightown, VA
Heal, Richard, Clarksburg, WV
Jones, Helen, Clarksburg, WV
Kaunike, Linda L., Colville, WA
Kiger, Vaughn L., Morgantown, WV
Kinsley, George, Flushing, MI
Legg, Mrs. James R., Proctor, WV
Little, Barbara Vines, Orange, VA
Mann, Dorothy, Wheaton, IL
Martin, Harold L., Lebanon, OH
Maxwell, William B. III, Charleston, WV
Miller, Monte, Charleston, WV
Moore, James H., Clarksburg, WV
Morris, James V., Enterprise, WV
Musgrave, James, Arlington, VA
Neptune, Virginia, Parkersburg, WV
Odwalt, Thomas, Denver, CO
Parkinson, George, Columbus, OH
Pegg, John W., Crown Point, IN
Poesch, Jessie, New Orleans, LA
Proudfoot, Robert, Oakland, MD
Quigley, Beatrice, Bridgeport, WV
Rhodes, Jeannette, Grants Pass, OR
Rice, Donald, Elkins, WV
Robinson, Barbara J., Keyser, WV
Russell, Robert, Wilton, CT
Salstrom, Fredric, St. Mary's, IN
Schilling, Sally, Columbia, MO
Schwietering, Josephine, Morgantown, WV
Shaw, Josephine, Buckhannon, WV
Sides, Margaret Dobson, Nashville, TN
Spiker, James, Lexington, KY
Tenney, Noel W., Tallmansville, WV
Teter, Donald L., Monteville, WV
Toney, Virginia, Houston, TX
Wardi, Dorothy B., Orlando, FL
West, Clive, Weston, WV
West, Virginia, Troy, WV
Wise, Mary Porter, Miami, FL
Wolfe, Devera M., Richmond, VA
Woodworth, Jean, Beverly Hills, MI

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP!

The colorful heritage and unique history of West Virginia are nowhere so richly documented as in the broad holdings of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection. Courthouse records, family genealogies, photographs, diaries and papers from West Virginians of all walks of life are but a few of the matchless resources preserved here.

In recognition of the importance of this unique collection, many are interested in ensuring that the future of the Regional History Collection remains strong so that the stories of our culture, our families, and our accomplishments can be revealed to all who want to learn about them, both now and in the future.

One way to provide support to the WVRHC is by including a gift provision in your will or revocable trust that is dedicated to maintaining this special mission. Giving your attorney the wording "to the West Virginia University Foundation, Inc. for the benefit of the WVU Libraries' West Virginia and Regional History Collection" is the first step to making such a gift happen. Your donation can be used for general purposes or to enhance any aspect of the Collection you wish to specify.

Whether the gift is for a specific amount or for a percentage of your estate, your choice will help to secure the future of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, and consequently, that of every West Virginian!
Carolingian minuscule, promoted by Charlemagne and widespread in Europe beginning in the 9th century, and the fully developed Gothic, which appeared around the beginning of the 13th century. On further investigation, Tallaksen concluded that the script best matched what is called Protagothic, and that the manuscript was most likely produced in England or France not later than the 12th century.

Tallaksen presented a research paper describing his work in identifying the manuscript at the Southeastern College Art Conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, last October. A student in the graduate program in Art History at the College of Creative Arts, Tallaksen is also an Associate Professor in the Department of Radiology in the WVU School of Medicine. He said that working on this paper was his most enjoyable academic project to date, adding that it was "an amazing experience" to be able to work on something that had survived from the time of King Richard the Lion Heart and St. Thomas Becket and had eventually found its way into the WVU Libraries.

SELECTED RECENT ACCESSIONS:


Receipts related to the construction of the Buffalo Academy, Putnam County, (West) Virginia, in 1850-51, as well as receipts for repairs in 1859-60. Also includes a mounted oval albumen photo of the Academy and Buffalo Presbyterian Church.


Records of the Tompkins Estate, the Cedar Grove Mining Company, and Cedar Grove Mills, West Virginia. Includes Tompkins farm tavern ledger (1846), list of slaves, general accounting records (1850s), miscellaneous accounts ledger, stage coach accounts, and agreements with tenant farmers. Also includes a daybook (1884-1885) and shipping book (1883-1884) for the Cedar Grove Mills, as well as a scrip stub book (1884) and account ledgers for the Cedar Grove Mining company store (1873-1875, 1880-1881, 1894).


Letter written on January 15, 1861 by Confederate soldier Lt. B. Anderson from Franklin, (West) Virginia to his brother, also in Confederate military service. The letter describes Union troop movements in the mountains of western Virginia and Confederate strategies, including a mention of Confederate General Robert S. Garnett. Also discusses supplies and family matters.


Letter written on January 15, 1863 by Thomas Barron from Moundsville, (West) Virginia to C.S. Barron in
Key West, Florida. The letter describes the impact of the Civil War on Wheeling, railroads, and the steamboat industry on the Ohio River.


Order (May 31, 1864) by Thomas B. Reed, Surgeon, U.S. Army, Assistant Medical Director, Department of West Virginia, from near New Market, Virginia to Assistant Surgeon William G. Hall directing Hall to take charge of the Post Hospital at New Market.

**Deakins Family. Papers, 1787-1810, 0.01 ft. Gift, 2004. ADD A&M 624.**

Six Virginia land grant documents recording land transactions of Francis Deakins, William Deakins, and Elijah Butler in Monongalia and Randolph Counties from 1787 to 1810.


One ledger for general store in Evansville, Preston County, owned by William Hamilton. Includes accounting records arranged alphabetically by last name listing items purchased and costs.


Six letters relating to the wartime death of Private Abraham Glendening, 5th Co., Ohio Sharp Shooters. The letters detail the circumstances of Glendening's death; the conflict in which he was killed (action involving gunboat near Hollowells Landing, Alabama, May 12, 1864); efforts to acquire his belongings and pension; and the grief of his family and friends in Mill Creek, Berkeley County, West Virginia.


Over 400 slides documenting community, industrial and natural features of the Morgantown area and other West Virginia locations during the 1970s-1990s. Subjects include but are not limited to the following: roads, nature, crafts, musicians, railroads, coal mining, glass making, fishing, skiing, white water rafting, Blackwater Falls, the Cheat and Monongahela rivers, the Canaan Valley, Cheat Lake, Tygart Lake, the WVU Arboretum, Cass Scenic Railroad, McMechen House, Oglebay Park, the Philippi Bridge, Kemper Hall, Simpson Creek, Fort New Salem, Watters Smith, Jackson's Mill, Lake Riley, Rebecca's House, the Stonewall Jackson Jubilee, Kilmanock Farm, Fairmont State College, Marion County Court House, Morris Park, Pickett's Fort State Park, Mannington, Alpine Lake, Americana Museum, Briery Mountain Craft Shop, Bruceton Mills, Cathedral State Park, Coopers Rock State Forest, Cool Springs, Preston County scenery, Smallest Church, French Creek, and the Buckwheat and Strawberry festivals.
Weekly weather log and scrapbook by George Patrick of Walnut Run, Kanawha County, West Virginia. The log consists of weekly entries from January 1, 1850 to January 1, 1860, recording date, current temperature, and narrative remarks regarding the previous week's weather. The scrapbook, ca. 1837, includes mostly clippings and some manuscript pages regarding home remedies for humans and livestock, recipes, and general agricultural information and advice.

Records of Phi Beta Kappa, Alpha Chapter of West Virginia University. This collection documents the founding and early activities of the honorary, particularly the nomination of new members. Includes news clippings (1970), correspondence (1911-1941), financial records (1910-1948), membership records (1910-1931), organizational records (1898-1950), programs (1910-1970), publications (1903-1932), reports (1932-1935), and miscellaneous records (1910-1913).

Business records and family papers of Thoney Pietro, founder and owner of the Thoney Pietro Company, masons and general contractors at Morgantown, WV. Photographs, correspondence, project lists, clippings and minutes provide details about the Pietro company and its business projects in Morgantown, Williamson, and other areas. Biographical information relating to the Pietro family is found in correspondence, clippings, and photographs, while architectural drawings and blueprints illustrate their residences and property. Postcards, maps, and photographs document Morgantown in the early 20th century.

Thoney Pietro (pictured at left) oversees a paving project in Westover, ca. 1912.

Microfilm copies of 219 scrapbooks compiled by Appalachian author Jesse Stuart from 1932 to 1970. The scrapbooks include clippings from newspapers, magazines, journals and books as well as published and unpublished poems, articles, and short stories, critical reviews, letters to Stuart, personal writings, programs, schedules, contracts, stamps and postmarks, telegrams, and tear sheets. Topics include Kentucky; education; Stuart’s family and friends; contemporary authors, poets, and artists; speaking engagements and activities; Stuart’s published books, poetry, articles and short stories; Jesse Stuart Day; religion and religious figures; awards; heart disease; American University in Cairo; international perceptions of the United States; space exploration; agriculture; and wildlife.


The West Virginia Department of Health Vital Statistics microfilm contains the index for deaths in West Virginia for the years 1917 to 1983. The indexes are organized alphabetically by year and include name, date of death, county, volume number, and certificate number for the deceased. Starting in 1945, a cause of death code is listed for each decedent. Social Security numbers were added to each record beginning with the 1979 index. The microfilm collection also contains obituaries for Roane County circa 1973 to 1987.