

Spring 2003

WVRHC Newsletter, Spring 2003

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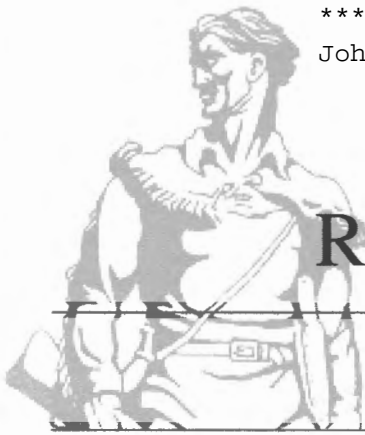
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West Virginia and Regional History Collection

NEWSLETTER

Volume 18, No. 2

West Virginia University Libraries

Spring 2003

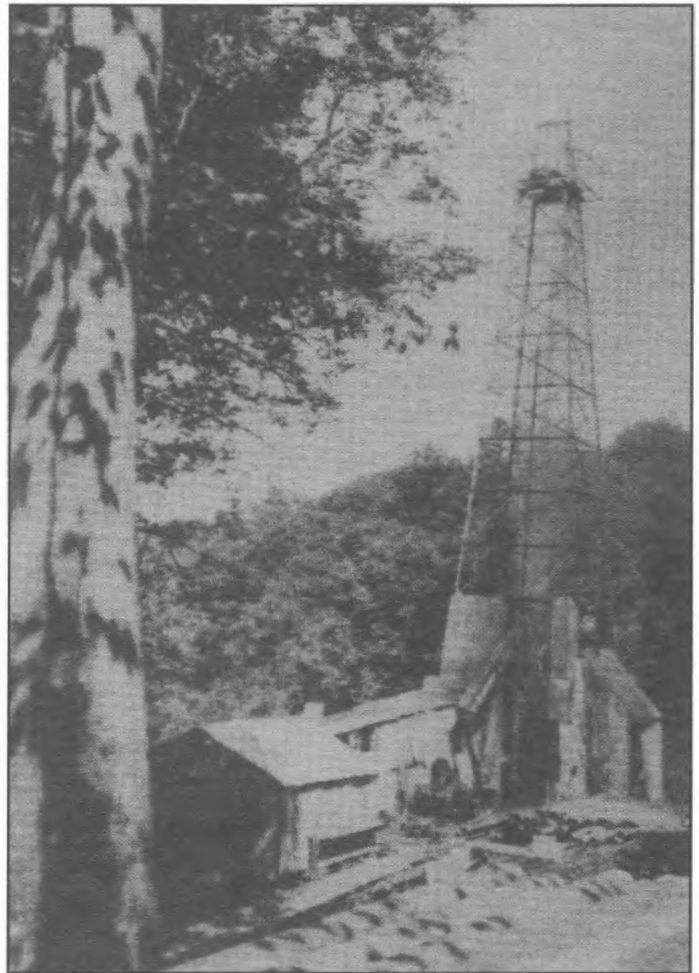
OLO FILMS AFFORD EYEWITNESS VIEW OF NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY HISTORY

In an age in which many if not most Americans spend their evenings surfing through up to 100 TV channels, it is not surprising that there is a growing recognition of the value of vintage audiovisual materials in the historical archives field. We are living in an increasingly video-oriented world in which much of the information that flows around the globe each day is transmitted and received in audiovisual form. This is true not only in the fields of news and entertainment, but also in education. In fact, one could argue that audiovisual presentation is gradually blurring distinctions between the three. Each night, stations like Discover and The History Channel prove that a growing number of viewers are finding "fact-based" programing to be at least as entertaining as another episode of *Survivor* or *The Family Feud*. Indeed, studies in the journal *Film and History* and elsewhere have repeatedly indicated that the recent proliferation of documentaries, by Ken Burns and others, is having a positive effect on popular interest in history. Perhaps it is simply the ease of consumption, but more than likely it is the authenticity and immediacy of old photographs, sound recordings, and above all vintage film footage, that makes video history so appealing. It's like being there!

A collection of motion pictures recently donated to the Regional History Collection serves as a case in point. Produced by the Owens, Libbey-Owens gas company from the 1930s-1960s, the films afford viewers with an opportunity to "attend" company picnics and banquets and to tag along as company workers go about the business of drilling and pumping natural gas to fuel the Kanawha Valley glass industry. Altogether, the films are as entertaining to watch as they are educational.

The origins of Owens, Libbey-Owens date back to 1915, when American glass industry tycoon Edward D. Libbey acquired several natural gas properties in Kanawha County for the purpose of firing two new glass-making plants in Charleston. Organized December 22, 1915, Libbey's

Kanawha Manufacturers Gas Company was pumping gas for the new Libbey-Owens Sheet Glass Company, formed in May 1916, in less than a year. In July 1917, ownership of the gas company's properties was transferred to the Owens Bottle Company of Toledo, Ohio, which Libbey also financed. Six years later, the Owens Bottle Company



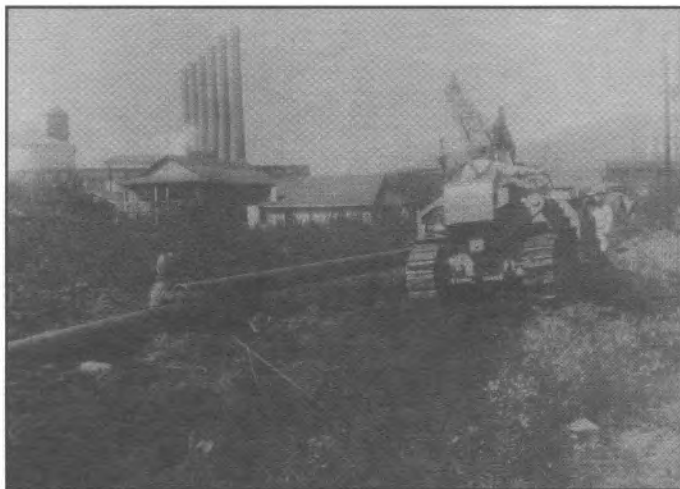
"A standard rig," Owens, Libbey-Owens Gas Department, ca. 1940.

returned one-half interest in the gas operation back to Libbey-Owens Sheet Glass in Charleston. These and subsequent changes in the names of the various companies involved eventually produced the company's enduring moniker, the Owens, Libbey-Owens Gas Department.

The primary function of the OLO Gas Department throughout its history was to supply fuel to the two Libbey-Owens Charleston glass plants. While some of this fuel was purchased through independent suppliers, the company relied mostly on the development and delivery of gas from its own properties, which generally averaged in the neighborhood of 150,000-160,000 acres, including both deeded and leased acreage. This job entailed the continuous search for and acquisition of potentially productive land, the exploration for gas, the drilling of wells, the pumping and transmission of gas, and the constant regulation of pressures to maintain sufficient reserves to insure a continuous supply. A typescript company handbook of operations, written in layman's terms, comprises a step-by-step manual to the myriad tasks involved in natural gas production.

The job began with the exploration for gas and acquisition of land. By the time Owens, Libbey-Owens came into being, most of the promising gas lands in southern West Virginia were already owned by other gas concerns, yet a considerable amount of flux in the market existed as property holders continually reevaluated costs and profitability, and traded their assets accordingly.

Once rights to a piece of property were acquired, through purchase, lease, royalty, rental or other arrangement, the initial step in developing the property rested in the hands of the Owens, Libbey-Owens legal department. In addition to performing title searches, the department was entrusted with procuring right of way into the area as well as drilling permits.

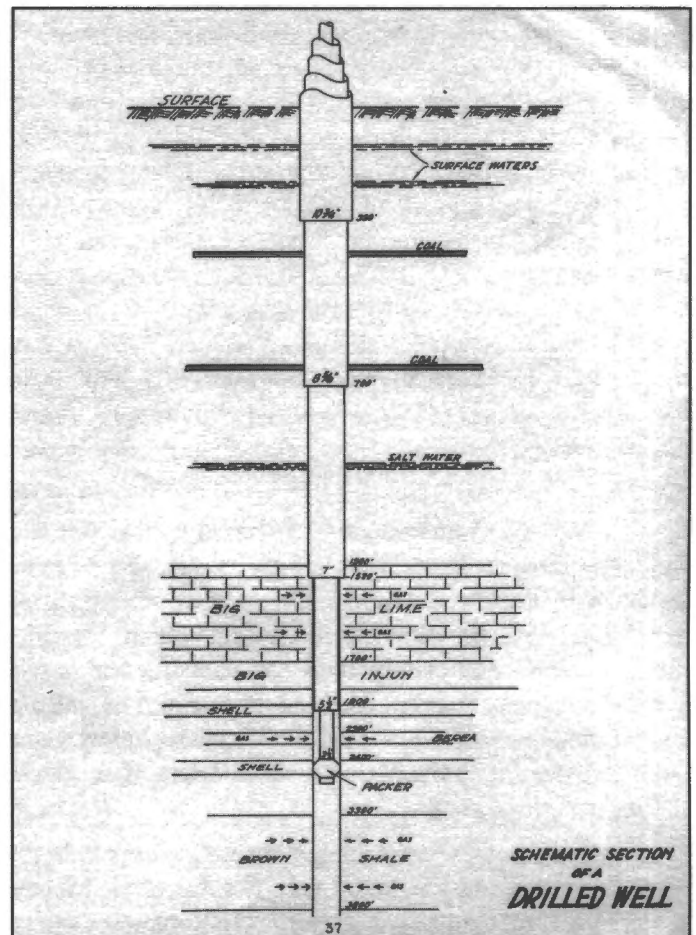


Owens, Libbey-Owens crews laid more than 500 miles of pipeline in the greater Kanawha Valley between 1915 and 1960.

Next came surveying, locating sites for wells, and the construction of roads into the area. Well equipment, drilling machinery, and casings and fittings were purchased and hauled to the site, and a fuel supply was run in from the closest company gas line, or occasionally from a neighboring competitor. A drilling crew was hired consisting of six workers for each well, working two at a time, for continuous eight-hour shifts.

The OLO manual reveals that a typical gas well ranged between a half mile to a mile in depth. Water, coal, and salt water deposits were generally traversed before natural gas was encountered at deeper depths, seeping from sandstone, limestone, shale and other geologic deposits. A well was considered to be "completed" when a sufficient gas "pay" was achieved. Often, a final step before capping was the "shooting" of the well with a blast of explosives designed to fracture and fissure the geologic strata to promote the escape of gas.

The job of transmitting gas from the finished well to the factory was also a multifaceted and challenging one. First, an engineering team was assigned with the task of deter-



"Schematic of Section of a Drilled Well," Owens, Libbey-Owens, Handbook, p. 37.

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mining the optimal pipeline route from the well to the factory or nearest main line connection. The legal department was then called back in to obtain rights of way along the route. The survey team returned to mark and map the route. Finally, the construction crew was dispatched to install the line. Their job began with the daunting task of clearing and grading the entire length of the line for a width of 30 to 50 feet, often through very rugged terrain. After the pipe was laid and tested, and compressor stations and regulation equipment were installed to control the pressure and flow of the gas through the lines, the lines were tied in to the well.

Between 1915 and 1968 the Owens, Libbey-Owens Gas Department developed more than 600 wells in Kanawha, Wyoming, Lincoln, Boone and Wayne counties. Transmitting natural gas from those wells to the Libbey-Owens factories in Charleston, and later Owens-Illinois in Huntington, required the installation of more than 500 miles of pipeline.

From the 1930s to 1960s, Owens, Libbey-Owens occasionally documented operations on film for company records. Footage shot of drilling operations, the laying of pipeline and assorted other activities provides viewers today with a chance to be an eyewitness to natural gas production more than a half century ago. Of perhaps even greater interest is extensive film footage revealing employer-employee relations at Owens, Libbey-Owens. Engaging more than 200 employees during its heyday, the OLO Gas Department remained non-unionized throughout its history in a region that was especially noted for active and sometimes violent union struggles.

No doubt responsible for this was the company's "family-oriented" management philosophy, which included the provision of generous employee benefits including free life and health insurance, pension and vacation plans, and employee recognition programs. The Owens, Libbey-Owens motion pictures and monthly company newsletter reveal that, in addition, the company provided employees with a host of

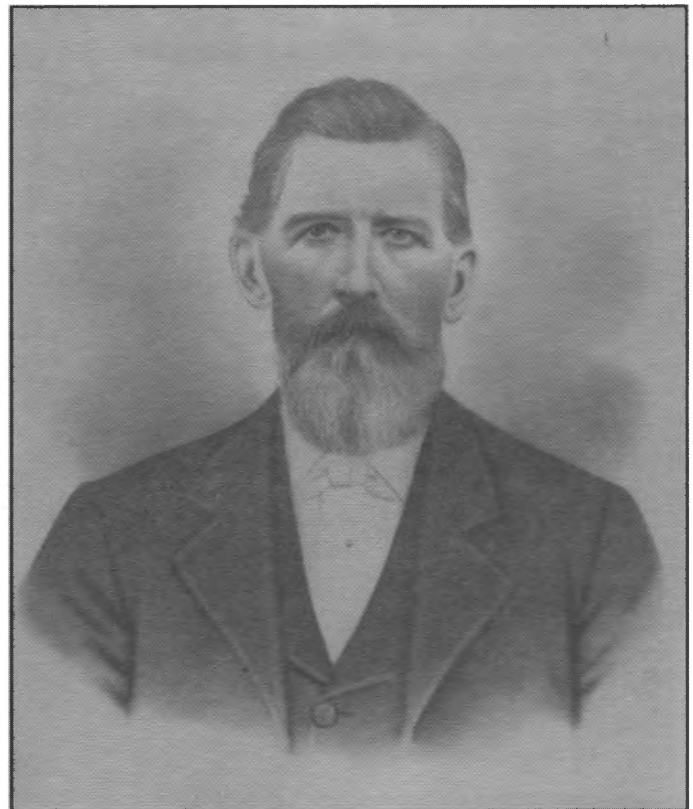
social and recreational opportunities ranging from picnics and holiday banquets to softball teams and turkey shoots.

The Owens, Libbey-Owens Gas Department Collection comprises a unique record of the natural gas industry as it existed during the early and mid-twentieth century in southern West Virginia. It also documents a paternalistic style of management that is a rarity among larger organizations today.

CONFEDERATE OFFICER'S MILITARY ARTIFACTS AND PAPERS ACQUIRED

This past winter, moviegoers across the nation flocked to their local theater to see the story of General "Stonewall" Jackson unfold in the Civil War epic "Gods and Generals." Thanks to a recent donation of military artifacts and papers to the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, researchers can now unravel the tale of one of the many courageous men who fought under the famous Confederate commander.

Miles Jennings Dahmer was born near Upper Tract, Pendleton County, in 1825. Like many of his South Branch Valley neighbors, he chose to remain loyal to his state, rather than his nation, when the Civil War erupted in 1861. Enlisting at Franklin on May 14, 1861, he joined the war effort initially as a major in the 46th Regiment of the Virginia Militia. Serving under General Jackson in the Shenandoah



Miles Jennings Dahmer (1825-1894).

Valley, he continued in this capacity until all Pendleton County militiamen were ordered to report to General Edward Johnson's Army of the Northwest the following spring.

Thus, in April, 1862, Dahmer found himself no longer a militia officer but a regular enlisted man in the Confederate Army. Assigned to the 25th Virginia Infantry, he was briefly under the command of Colonel George A. Porterfield. Porterfield had recently faced a court of inquiry for his mishandling of an engagement with Union forces at Philippi, Barbour County, that became known as "the Philippi Races" due to the haste of the Confederate retreat.

On April 25, command of the 25th Virginia passed to VMI graduate, Colonel George H. Smith. New to combat, Colonel Smith got his trial by fire when Federal troops under Brigadier General Robert Milroy began advancing upon the Army of the Northwest's position in the hills above McDowell, Virginia, on May 8, 1862.

The Battle of McDowell began in earnest in the early afternoon when General Johnson sent two regiments to intercept the Federals as they moved up Sitlington's Hill on the outskirts of town. The men of the 25th Virginia Infantry sat in reserve during the early hours of the engagement until the battle literally came to them. Threatened on two flanks, Col. Smith, who "hardly knew what to do," in his own words, was one of the regiment's first casualties in a fight that raged until darkness.

According to private George Sponaule, "it was a sad time when they called the roll of our company the next morning." Eighty-six members of the 25th Virginia failed to respond, being either killed or wounded, including Private Miles Dahmer.



Reunion of Confederate Veterans of Pendleton County, Franklin, WV, ca. 1900.

Fortunately, Dahmer's wounds were only slight. Yet, his days with the 25th were numbered. In December, while on furlough, he was taken as a prisoner of war in his home county, which was then under Union control. He spent the next several months in assorted Union prisons.

Among the many papers in the Dahmer Collection are several items that document his military service, including a report he penned as "Field Officer of the Day" to General Jackson in December 1861, and the medical furlough received following the Battle of McDowell. Another legacy of that battle included in the collection is the three-ring Minie ball bullet that led (or shall we say "lead"?) to that furlough.

Among the most valuable artifacts in the collection is an eagle-head sword and its brass scabbard. The sword has a long, finely etched blade and checkered ivory grips while the guard displays a chased floral motif and a langet with an eagle and shield. A gilded acorn sword knot is attached to the guard. Paired with this item is a sword belt. The keeper with wreath is missing, but the sword hangers and clips are still attached and the leather is in unusually good condition for a piece of this age. Also at Major Dahmer's side was a Remington 1858 Army percussion revolver that is in surprisingly good original condition as well.

The remainder of the Dahmer Collection includes a red wool officer's sash, epaulets with rank insignia, and many pieces of personal correspondence pertaining to Dahmer and his relatives penned over a period of several decades.

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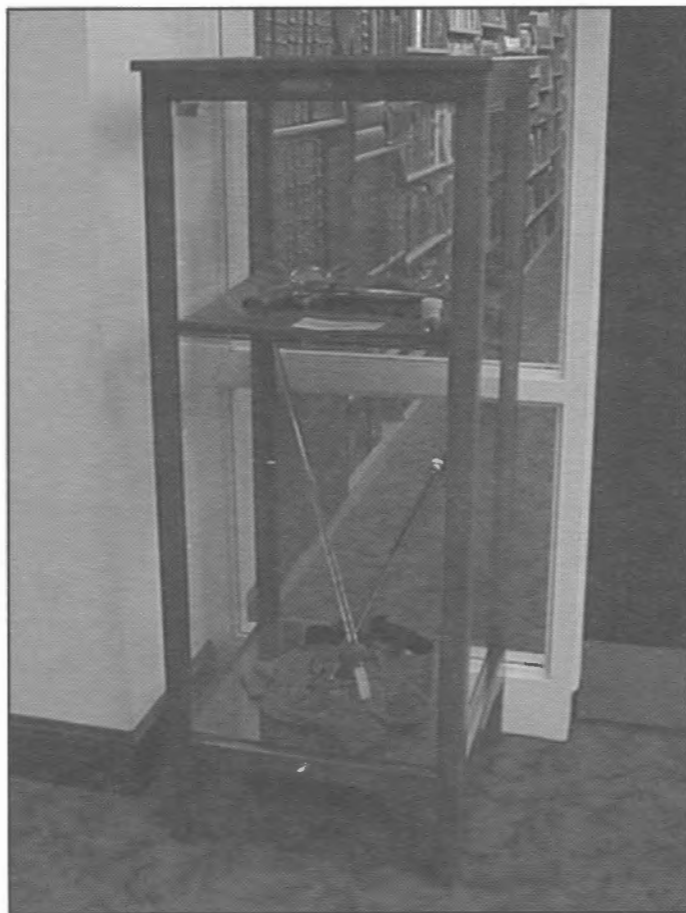
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The Miles Jennings Dahmer Collection comes to the Regional History Collection as a gift of Dahmer's granddaughter, Maryan Dahmer, who served as caretaker for the late major's possessions. Surveying her options for handing down the heirlooms, she selected her alma mater, WVU. Ms. Dahmer reports that a major factor in her decision was the creation of the Regional History Collection's new "exhibit-friendly" facility in Wise Library. "I wanted a place where I thought my things would be appreciated and cared for rather than stuffed in a box of a large museum," Dahmer said. "I felt the University was the best place for these family treasures."



Among the items on display this spring in the Regional History Collection's new Wise Library facility are Civil War weapons and accoutrements of Major Miles Jennings Dahmer. Born near Upper Tract, Pendleton County, in 1825, Dahmer joined the Confederate Army at the outset of the Civil War, serving initially under "Stonewall" Jackson. Included in the display are Dahmer's revolver, sword, epaulets, sash, and belt. The items were recently donated to the Regional History Collection by Dahmer's granddaughter, Maryan Dahmer.

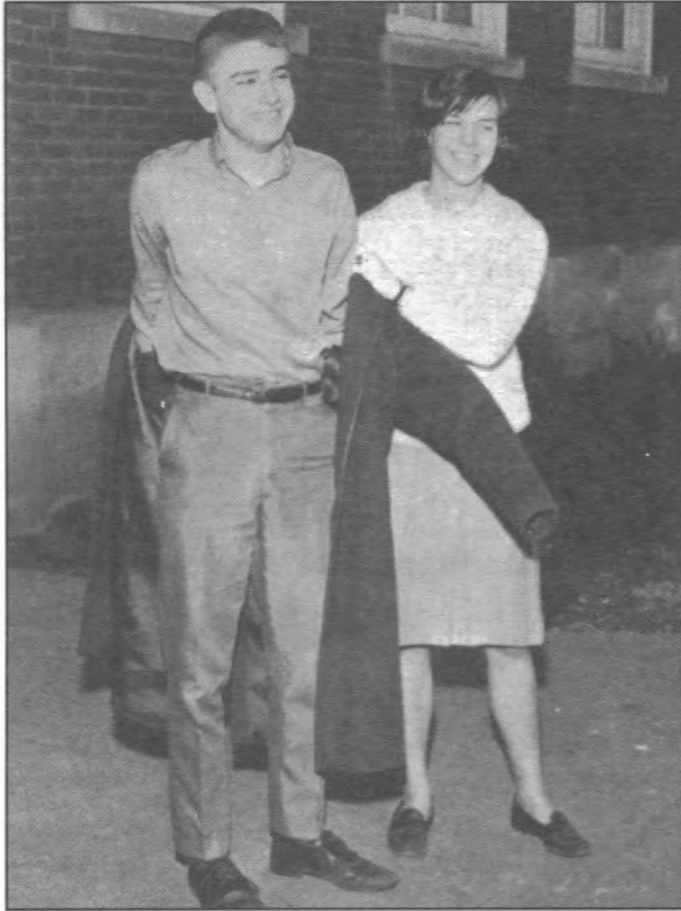
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SELECTED RECENT ACCESSIONS

Bennett, Thomas W. Research Papers, 1962-1994, 10 in. Gift, 2002. ADD 2714.

Research papers of Bonni McKeown for her book *Peaceful Patriot* (published in 1980), a biography of Thomas W. Bennett. A native of Morgantown, West Virginia, Bennett was the only conscientious objector to win a Congressional Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War. Included are photocopies of original letters by Bennett, transcriptions and notes by McKeown, and clippings and photographs documenting Bennett's personal life, including his attendance at West Virginia University, and military experiences. The collection provides much insight into Bennett's views regarding, and response to, the Vietnam War.



Congressional Medal of Honor winner Tom Bennett was voted 'most polite' by the Morgantown High School Class of 1965.

Gattian-Hallam and Layman Families. Photographs and Miscellaneous Papers, 1905-1940, 2 in. Purchase, 2003. A&M 3428.

Photographs and miscellaneous papers regarding the Gattian-Hallam and Layman families (ca. 1905-40) of north-central West Virginia, including 10 cabinet cards, three photo portrait postcards, three commercial postcards, and a wedding announcement, among other items. Most materials document John and Stella (Gattian) Hallam and their relatives including their daughter Katherine Joan Hallam, who married Walter

Layman. Also included are group portraits of grade school classes in Fairmont (ca. 1920s, including Katherine Joan Hallam), and miscellaneous household records from the 1930s.



Katherine Joan Hallam is somewhere in this class portrait from the Fifth Ward School, Fairmont, West Virginia, ca. 1925.

Gentile Glass Paperweight Pattern Catalog. Booklet, 2002, 43 pages. Gift, 2003. A&M 3425.

A catalog of facsimiles, compiled by Wallace Venable, of patterns employed by the Gentile Glass Company of Star City, West Virginia, to decorate paperweights. The company was established in 1947 by Peter and John Gentile and continues in operation to this day.

League of Women Voters. Records, 1990-1996, 1/4 in. Gift, 2002. ADD A&M 2777.

Records of the Morgantown, Monongalia County, chapter of the League of Women Voters. Included are membership lists, minutes, and guides to government officials.

Lightner Family. Photo Album and Papers, 1870-1920, 3 in. Acquired, 2003. A&M 3427.

A family photo album and miscellaneous papers of the Lightner family of north-central West Virginia. The photo album (ca. 1870-1920) includes 27 tintypes and 22 cabinet cards. The latter document the existence of many 19th century photographers active in north-central West Virginia.

McKeown, Bonni. Records, 1979-2000, 5 ft. Gift, 2003. A&M 3424.

Records of two West Virginia citizen activists groups, including "Retain the Train" (1979-1982) and "Corridor H Alternatives" (1993-2000). Includes correspondence, newsletters, court documents, maps, clippings, photographs, and sound recordings. Also included are books and literary magazines pertaining to Appalachian poets whose work was selected for inclusion in the *Wild Sweet Notes* literary anthology (published in 2000).

Patteson-Carone Collection. Scrapbooks and Sound Recordings, 1948-1980, 3 ft. Gift, 2003. A&M 3421.

Papers used by Patrick Carone for his thesis "The Governor as a Legislator in West Virginia" (1969). Included are 11 scrapbooks maintained by West Virginia Governor Okey L. Patteson's press officer documenting Patteson's 1948 election campaign and subsequent public relations activities as governor (1949-52), as well as Patteson's post-gubernatorial life (1953-58). The scrapbooks contain clippings, photographs, programs, tickets, and political buttons. Topics include annual governors' conferences, festivals, football games, Churchill Downs and Wheeling Downs, and the St. Mary's Centennial Festival (1949). Among the many photographs in the collection are pictures of a governors' conference at White Sulphur Springs (1950), the Governor's Mansion (1951), and entertainers Frances Langford (1950) and Dagmar (ca.1953). There are also 17 three-inch reel audio tapes containing interviews conducted by Carone during the late 1960s with West Virginia politicians, including John E. Amos, Don Eddy, Thomas Myles, Okey L. Patteson, William Wallace Barron and Harry Pauley. The bulk of material dates from 1948-1969.



Governor Okey L. Patteson crowns Miss Jane Dieckmann, age 17, of Wheeling as Queen Silvia XVI at the Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins, on Oct. 3, 1952.

West Virginia Railroads. Photographs, 1899-2001, 20 items. Acquired, 2003.

Twenty photographs in digital format of West Virginia railroads, mostly from the 1940s and 1950s, documenting engines and cars involved primarily in transporting coal and timber.

West Virginia Northern Railroad. Photographs, 1971-1977, 4 items. Gift, 2003.

Four photographs of the West Virginia Northern Railroad, which operated between Kingwood and Tunnelton, West Virginia, from the 1890s to the 1990s. The railroad was primarily involved in hauling coal.

West Virginia Wildwater Association. Newsletters, 1972-2002, 10 items. Gift, 2003. ADD A&M 3219.

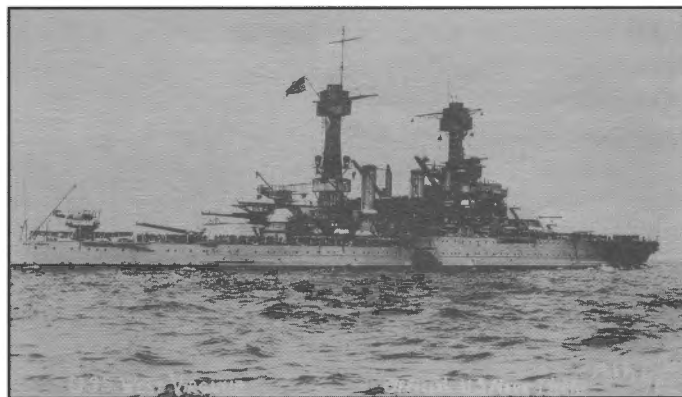
Ten issues of the newsletter of the West Virginia Wildwater Association. Includes complete run of newsletters for 2002 (six issues) and Roster Booklet for 2002. Also includes a June 1972 issue; a March 1973 issue, pages 6 and 7; and a February 1986 issue, pages 9-12.

Wooddell, James. Research Papers, 1850s, 1970-2000, 26 ft. Gift, 2003. A&M 3422.

Genealogy research papers of James Wooddell regarding families of primarily Pendleton, Pocahontas, and Randolph counties in West Virginia. Also includes financial records of a general store run by Thomas R. Maupin of Green Bank, Pocahontas County, ca.1850.

World War II. Oral History Interviews. Motion Pictures, 2002, 39 video tapes. Gift, 2003. A&M 3426.

A collection of 39 video tapes containing interviews with World War II veterans from West Virginia. The interviews were conducted during October and November 2002 as part of the Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress. Interviewees include a survivor of the *USS Indianapolis*, a sailor who was on board the *USS West Virginia* at Pearl Harbor, a procurement officer for the Manhattan Project, a pilot who was shot down and spent months training partisans in the Italian Alps, and a sailor from one of the ships that captured the German submarine containing the Enigma Machine. Other interviewees include an Army nurse, a USO performer, a French war bride, and a member of the US Navy's WAVES (Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service) organization.



Sunk at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the USS West Virginia was raised in May 1942 and sailed under its own power to the Puget Sound Navy Yard. The vessel was rebuilt and served in the South Pacific during 1944.

West Virginia University Technology Education Center. Records, 1970-1990, 3 ft. Gift, 2002. A&M 5073.

Records of the West Virginia University Technology Education Department documenting TERAD (Technology Education Research and Development) House, the Autoclaved Cellular Concrete Project, and the Transportation Technology Transfer Project.



Two-tier Union Station at Kenova, Wayne County, in September, 1947. The Chesapeake and Ohio F-15 Pacific #440 is pictured here with westbound local train #7. The Norfolk and Western ran on the upper tracks.

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*Major Miles J. Dahmer, CSA.
(See story p. 3.)*