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The setting is Lewisburg, Virginia, in 1794. The town, laid out just twelve years earlier, had been the site of settlement since colonial times. In fact, the area was one of the oldest settled regions west of the Allegheny Mountains. Even before it was incorporated, the village was the county seat of Greenbrier County, which was created in 1778. Lewisburg had a history as a jumping-off point for expeditions against the Indians during Dunmore's War and the Revolution and now was a base for westward migration into the Kanawha and Ohio valleys. Travelers paused at Lewisburg after crossing the Alleghenies on one of few roads through the mountains to stock up on supplies before continuing the rough journey west. The town and surrounding country no longer stood at the forefront of the frontier in 1794. The area was well settled. The Indian threat that tormented settlers for over two decades had ended, and new residents had joined the hardy pioneers who conquered the country. Land dealers had been active for a number of years and formed a class of prosperous, leading citizens. The inhabitants of the county included many Scots-Irish. This was reflected in the existence of a Presbyterian Church in the community, a predecessor of the historic Old Stone Church, which was built in 1796. A fair number of Germans also had come from the Shenandoah Valley.

Lewisburg in 1794 served as a commercial, government, and social center with a courthouse, a tavern, a Presbyterian Church, and two competing stores. Thomas Creigh, a recent Irish immigrant, operated one store. Creigh was destined to become a leading citizen and landowner of Greenbrier County. Land speculator and entrepreneur Jacob Skiles owned the other store. Skiles was a typical early businessman in western Virginia. He became involved in nearly every sort of enterprise that showed some promise on the frontier. These included iron mining, distilling, salt making, and milling as well as merchandising. With so many projects, Skiles hired others to manage the day-to-day affairs of his businesses. Charles Arbuckle, who eventually became one of the town's leading merchants, ran Skiles' Lewisburg store in his absence.

A ledger, loaned to the West Virginia Collection for microfilming, allows us to take a look inside the Jacob Skiles store and brings Greenbrier County in the late eighteenth century to life. The bound volume covers the period from 1793 to 1796. We have chosen to look at the year 1794—two hundred years ago.

The store was typical for the period, and 1794 was a typical year. Besides selling goods to area residents, it also functioned as a post office, land agency, and supply post for the local militia. While other stores existed in Lewisburg and Greenbrier County, customers included people from all over the region and from many walks of life. These included farmers, land speculators, county officials, carpenters, an iron monger, mechanics, shoemakers, blacksmiths, seamstresses, tailors, millers, teamsters, a cooper, a lawyer, a doctor, milliners, a rope maker, and trappers. Slaves also visited the store to make purchases for the households where they worked.

Skiles dealt with these people in typical fashion for the 1790s. Customers purchased most items on credit. An increasing number of people paid their bills in cash—French, Spanish, British, American, and Virginian. Occasionally, he received bank notes and Pennsylvania currency. Skiles kept his accounts in terms of pounds, shillings, and pence. Although the use of money increased, it was still scarce on the frontier. In fact, with
the absence of nearby banks, Skiles frequently loaned money—with interest—to people who had an immediate need for cash. He had better access to money than most westerners through his supply connections to Staunton, Richmond, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Due to the scarcity of money, most residents, even those who sometimes used cash, bartered for their purchases. There appears to be no distinction between the rich and poor in this practice.

The people of Greenbrier County traded a variety of goods and services in barter. Corn, oats, and rye were commonly traded. Wheat does not appear in the ledger, but some people brought flour to the store. Whiskey, while not the most popular grain product, was very common. Furs and hides also were heavily traded. These were mostly deer skins. Skiles made distinctions between gray, red, and the rare, blue deer skins. He also received fox, mink, wild cat, and otter pelts and an occasional cow hide. Butter was next in popularity for trading. Other bartered products included hay, linen, venison, bacon, maple sugar, chestnuts, fire wood, livestock, hemp, salt, tobacco, beeswax, saltpetre, feathers, ginseng, tallow, and thread. Skiles also accepted the services of the various artisans in the county, either for himself or to acquire goods for his store. Store customers built his house, plowed and tended his garden, pastured his cattle and horses, made and washed his clothes, shoed his horses, hauled supplies, and provided room and board for him and his clerk in trade for goods. Others made shoes, hats, mattresses, plow lines, bed cords, halters, bridles, and door hinges, bars and bolts. On occasion, Skiles traded rights to wolf scalp bounties, and in one instance, he traded 25 pounds ($83.25) worth of store merchandise to Thomas Ballantine for 330 acres of land on the Kanawha River.

The building that served as the Greenbrier County Courthouse during the 1790s. The building was the scene of numerous lawsuits between Jacob Skiles and county residents.

The Old Stone Church in Lewisburg, the oldest church west of the Alleghenies, was built in 1796, the last year of Jacob Skiles’ ledger.

Greenbrier Countians also bought goods on others’ accounts on a regular basis. Store credits and debts became a common means of exchange. Because of the lack of money, individuals paid debts and wages by allowing creditors and employees to charge store items to their accounts. A variation of this involved the payment of the accounts of creditors or employees. This had particular advantages for people who could not easily travel to Lewisburg themselves. For the same reason, neighbors often made purchases for one another during trips into town.

The merchandise that store customers bought varied from family to family and ranged from ale to worsted stockings. The most sought after items were dry goods and chemicals for curing hides and dyeing and bleaching cloth—substances such as alum and madder. Whiskey, wine, brandy, and cider were popular as ever, but chocolate appears to have been the most common vice. Tea and coffee equalled one another as the most favored beverages sold in the store. Nails, tacks, iron, steel, awls, augers, files, rasps, and other hardware were important, if infrequent, purchases. Harnesses, bridles, and saddles appear regularly in accounts as do Barlow knives, gun parts, powder horns, and gun powder. Spices and medicines were in demand as well. Skiles stocked asafetida, camphor, spirits, smelling bottles, Glauber salts, and a product called Beatman’s Drops. Luxury items brightened frontier life from time to time. Silk and velvet handkerchiefs, feathered hats, fancy cloth, glass windows, teapots, flatware, china, glassware, rifled guns, pocket knives, hair ribbons, and combs were sold more and more often. Some uncommon or even peculiar items included a hydrometer, spectacles, a lamp, a hair lifter, and an eight-day clock.

A look at Jacob Skiles’ store in 1794 reveals the seasonal nature of its trade. Purchases of a variety of books, slates, pencils, and paper in January point to the possible start of a winter school in the community. It certainly shows a thirst for knowledge and information. With the beginning of the year, people bought almanacs to keep account of the days of the
year, the weather, and astronomical events in order to plan their farm work. Winter also brought an increase of trade in grain, hay, furs and skins as farmers became confident that they had enough for the rest of the winter and could afford to sell some. Skiles sold the grain and hay locally, but he shipped furs and skins to eastern Virginia.

Business decreased slightly when spring came, and customers also began paying with coin and currency more and dealing in barter less. Oddly, Skiles sold no seeds, plows, hoes, or other items associated with spring planting. He did, however, sell an abundance of fishing hooks.

As summer approached, several tell-tale signs pointed toward a June wedding in the community. Polly Price bought a gown pattern. Skiles sold leather to John Brown to make shoes for “Miss Polly,” and Abraham Haptonstall, Jr., placed money on his store account for the use of Polly Price. Summer purchases also reflected the work of the season. Nails, scythes and whetstones, and sheep shears were sold to several people; since the threat from wolves was still serious in Greenbrier County, the presence of sheep runs contrary to common historical thought. Skiles also received a shipment that included two items that proved to be popular that summer—raisins and fiddle strings.

Autumn ushered in a new period of trade. Skiles regularly bought ginseng from area residents and shipped it eastward. People also traded part of their oats harvest to the store. In late fall, butchering provided meat and tallow for barter. Although business generally fell as winter neared, it picked up again in time for Christmas. Items like enamel cups and saucers and white plates, luxuries on the frontier, likely were purchased for Christmas presents. Strange though it may seem, Skiles opened his store on Christmas Day, and it was one of his busiest days.

As the year came to a close, Skiles looked forward to the coming year’s business. He continued to operate his store through 1796. Like those for 1794, the daybook entries provide a window into early American culture and the economy of the frontier. The period spanned by the ledger was an eventful one in the life of the United States. The Whiskey Rebellion flared between France and Great Britain, General Anthony Wayne defeated the Indians at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, Jay’s Treaty brought British promises to evacuate forts in the Great Lakes Region, Pinckney’s Treaty with Spain allowed free American shipping on the Mississippi River, and John Adams was elected president. Each of these national events had major consequences for the western areas of the country, and Greenbrier Countians prepared for a new phase of western development that would move the frontier away from them into the Northwest.

Thornton Tayloe Perry’s interest in the past was nurtured by boyhood visits to Shannondale Springs, a historic resort on the Shenandoah River in Jefferson County. Perry was named for his uncle, who owned the retreat that had been frequented by presidents before the Civil War.

THORNTON TAYLOE PERRY MICROFILM RECEIVED

The West Virginia and Regional History Collection has obtained the microfilm version of the collections of a Charles Town antiquarian. Through the courtesy of the Virginia Historical Society, the West Virginia Collection recently received copies of the microfilm of a portion of the manuscripts in the Thornton Tayloe Perry Collection. The Virginia Historical Society processed the Perry Collection and produced the microfilm with support from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

The Virginia Historical Society acquired Perry’s manuscripts, maps, broadsides, sheet music, newspapers, and ephemera and a portion of his books from his heirs in 1984. The collection reportedly includes the second-largest body of West Virginia historical material in existence, surpassed only by the West Virginia and Regional History Collection. It also includes a large amount of material about western Virginia. Perry amassed the material over a thirty-year period until his death in 1981.

Thornton Tayloe Perry was a native of Charles Town and a member of a well-known family in Jefferson County. He was born on September 19, 1892. He received a private education that included attendance at Woodberry Forrest School in Orange, Virginia. After graduation, Perry worked for Citizens
Fire Insurance Company in Baltimore and Charles Town. Soon, he returned to school at Mercersburg Academy and later worked for Ford Motor Company in Washington, D.C. When the United States became involved in World War I, he joined the Army Signal Corps as an aviator and served in England and France. Upon his return to the United States, Perry held various jobs—with Goodrich Tire Company in New Jersey, Mack Truck Company in Charlotte, North Carolina, and as a reporter for the Baltimore American and Evening Sun. While in Baltimore, Perry earned a law degree at the University of Maryland. He also became active in aviation and was instrumental in the creation of the Air National Guard and the Chesapeake Aircraft Company, an early airline. During World War II, Perry again entered the U.S. Army, where he rose to the rank of major while serving as provost marshal in London. After the war, he returned to Charles Town and became the postmaster. It was during that time that he began collecting historical material and became associated with other historians and antiquarians.

After Perry’s death, a portion of his books went to the Charles Town Public Library, and the Virginia Historical Society received the bulk of his collection, including the material that was microfilmed. The microfilm features 48 of the 56 manuscript collections received by the Virginia Historical Society and includes papers of such noteworthy West Virginians as David Hunter Strother, Gideon D. Camden, Septimus Hall, Thomas Hughes, and William H. Travers. Much of the material deals with regional businesses, the raid on Harpers Ferry, the Civil War, and West Virginia statehood and the 1872 Constitutional Convention. The Virginia Historical Society has furnished a guide to the collection.

This tranquil view of Woodburn Circle in horse and buggy days brings to mind the history of West Virginia University that is stored in its archives.

UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES APPROVED

The computer age has allowed us to record volumes of information on a small disk and conveniently organize it. What a blessing to future historians who will not have to weed through stacks of paper to learn about our generation. Yet, the records of the past are enough to occupy us and our successors for years to come. File after file of old papers cram cabinets and desks. West Virginia University faces the same questions as many organizations that look back at long histories. What do you save? Do you dare throw anything away? What has historic value? Few people have the time or knowledge to address these questions but, if left unanswered, the files will continue to accumulate. Even in the computer age, print-outs and other documents are generated. Soon, a new question will be asked. What’s to be done about space?

Don’t worry! Help is on the way, thanks to approval of a Strategic Initiative proposal that provides for a University archives and records management program at WVU. In implementing the proposal, WVU Libraries will hire a University archivist this summer to begin helping administrators and staff cope with the estimated 60,000 linear feet of records in offices across the various campuses. The archivist will work with records managers in WVU offices to devise a coordinated, University-wide records retention plan. The program also calls for policies on the preservation, microfilming, arrangement, and description of records that are retained.

Coming on the heels of WVU’s 125th anniversary and the Capital Campaign, the proposal will provide for better access to University records that were in high demand by researchers during those events. Only a small fraction of WVU’s records are currently available at the West Virginia Collection, which traditionally has accepted records from administrators who chose to deposit them. The University archives program will better preserve the history of the entire University while bringing order and uniformity to records management efforts and freeing valuable space in offices.

It is hoped that the program will be well under way this fall. In the meantime, office staff, don’t let the paper avalanches bury you, and researchers, don’t go insane over that elusive document somewhere in a box of records. Help is on the way!
WEST VIRGINIA COLLECTION WELCOMES NEW CURATOR

Patrons will see a new face at the West Virginia and Regional History Collection beginning May 16. Nathan E. Bender has been named as curator of the Collection and head of Special Collections at WVU Libraries by Dean Ruth Jackson. Bender was selected from a number of excellent candidates after an extensive nationwide search.

The new curator comes to the West Virginia Collection from Montana State University where he headed the Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections for five years. Before that Bender was librarian for the Western History Collections at the University of Oklahoma from 1986 to 1989. He began his career as principal investigator and director for the Piatt Park Archaeological Project at Woodsfield, Ohio.

Bender received his bachelors degree in anthropology from Ohio State University in 1980. In 1983, he earned a master of arts degree in anthropology from the University of Washington. He rounded out his education with a master of library science degree from Kent State University in 1986.

Bender becomes the seventh person to head WVU Libraries' collections of West Virginia material. Dr. Charles H. Ambler, renowned West Virginia historian and chairman of the Department of History, was the first person in that role. He directed the Division of Documents (as the West Virginia Collection was first known) from 1933 until 1947. After Ambler's retirement, the division became defunct, and its holdings were placed under control of the Library Extension Department, headed by Jenny Boughner. The West Virginia Collection was formally created in 1950, and Charles Shetler became curator, a position which he held for sixteen years. In 1966, Dr. J. William Hess, associate curator and assistant professor of history, replaced Shetler as curator. Hess served for six years and left to become associate director of the Rockefeller Archives. He was succeeded by Dr. George Parkinson, who served from 1972 until he became chief of the Archives-Library Division of the Ohio Historical Society and Ohio's State Archivist in 1990.

Bender's predecessor, Dr. John A. Cuthbert, associate curator since 1985, assumed the curatorship on an interim basis upon Parkinson's departure. Recently appointed to the position of director of the WVU Permanent Art Collection, Dr. Cuthbert will continue to be affiliated with the West Virginia Collection as associate curator for the arts.

WVU REMEMBERS WORLD WAR II ON WEST VIRGINIA DAY

Some of you may remember the pin shown on the back cover. It was worn by West Virginia workers in the Fifth War Loan Campaign in 1944. The state paid a high price in bringing an end to the tyrants who victimized their own countries, conquered other nations, and threatened the rest of the world. Not only did West Virginia sacrifice thousands of dead, wounded, and prisoners of war among its sons and daughters in the armed forces, it gave dearly on the home front as well. The Fifth War Loan Campaign was just one of eight. West Virginians purchased more than their share of war bonds. They also worked diligently in Civilian Defense efforts, scrap drives, blood donations, war plant production, rationing, and support of service men and women through such programs as the USO, Red Cross, and YMCA. In short, the war touched West Virginia in many ways.

This June, as we reflect upon the momentous invasion of Normandy, West Virginia University will remember the state's role in the war and its effect upon the people during its annual West Virginia Day celebration. The traditional speakers' forum, birthday party at Hatfields, and cutting of the West Vir-
ginia birthday cake will again be part of the events. This year's poster will be a colorful and inspiring reminder of home front activities in West Virginia, and the exhibit will feature striking and sentimental pieces from the most dramatic time in West Virginia history since the Civil War. Watch your mailbox for further information and plan to attend.

SELECTED ACCESSIONS LIST


These two volumes enhance the papers of John W.M. Appleton, an officer with the famed 54th Massachusetts Infantry during the Civil War and adjutant general of West Virginia during the Spanish-American War. The first volume is a letterbook kept by Appleton while he served as an agent for the Oriental Powder Works of Boston during his first years in West Virginia and provides a link in Appleton's life between Massachusetts and West Virginia. The other volume is a record book kept by Appleton as administrator of his father's Massachusetts estate. Both items were found among the records of Salt Sulphur Springs resort, which Appleton managed later in his life.


Norville L. Haislip attended WVU both as an undergraduate and as a medical student during the 1920s. His scrapbook depicts student life during the period, especially that of members of local fraternities and sororities. The largely photographic record features scenes of WVU, Monongalia County, and Wheeling, Haislip's native city. He returned to Wheeling as a physician, and his daughter, Sally attended WVU during the 1950s. The scrapbook also includes photographs and items from her student years. Copies of the scrapbook material have been added to the collection of College of Arts and Sciences' Centennial History material, and duplicates of the photographs have been made and added to the West Virginia Collection's photograph files.


This green-tinted map is representative of the many promotional maps that appeared during West Virginia's industrial era. J.H. Dingee of Philadelphia issued the map "to draw attention to the exceptional situation of Kenova, West Virginia, as a point for profitable manufacture and trade." Dingee sold lots in the town through his agent, L.T. Peck. The map emphasized the rail connections, coal trade, free industrial sites, and parks in Kenova.


Consisting of four connecting sheets, this map shows the area projected to be served by the New River, Holston & Western Railway. The greatest portion of the map shows southwestern Virginia, but sections of eastern Tennessee and southern West Virginia are also included. The topographic map features areas of Mercer, Summers, and Monroe counties in West Virginia.

Mineral County Glebe. Photograph, 1898. 8x10 inches. Acquired, 1993. PPP.

The Mineral County Poor Farm at Gerstell is pictured in this June 1898 photograph. The photograph was taken from the Maryland side of the North Branch of the Potomac River by Meese & Crowe of Piedmont. "Glebe" was a term used for poor farm.

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Before the Great Depression and the state government’s assumption of welfare concerns, counties had responsibility for the poor. Most counties maintained poor farms such as this one in Mineral County.


These files document the student nursing program at Monongalia General Hospital in Morgantown. They provide an excellent profile of the county’s public health history through the years in which polio, industrial pollution, mining and other occupational accidents, and infant mortality were major medical concerns. Some restrictions apply to the records, and researchers should consult a curator.


The photograph pictures a P-51B Mustang fighter-bomber piloted by Captain Dayton Casto of Cabell County. Casto was assigned to the 375th Squadron of the 361st Fighter Group in the Eighth Air Force. The photograph shows Casto’s Mustang on an airfield at Bottisham, England. Artwork on the plane features a map of West Virginia.


P-51 fighter pilot Dayton Casto was one of thousands of West Virginians who served both at the front and at home. During this year’s West Virginia Day celebration, WVU will explore how the war affected West Virginia and its people.
West Virginia and Regional History Collection NEWSLETTER
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West Virginia remembers World War II. See inside.