Summer 1993

WVRHC Newsletter, Summer 1993

West Virginia & Regional History Center

Follow this and additional works at: https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/wvrhc-newsletters

Part of the History Commons

Recommended Citation
West Virginia & Regional History Center, "WVRHC Newsletter, Summer 1993" (1993). West Virginia & Regional History Center Newsletters. 43.
https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/wvrhc-newsletters/43

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the West Virginia & Regional History Center at The Research Repository @ WVU. It has been accepted for inclusion in West Virginia & Regional History Center Newsletters by an authorized administrator of The Research Repository @ WVU. For more information, please contact researchrepository@mail.wvu.edu.
WEST VIRGINIA DAY 1993 FOCUSES UPON "LAND OF PLENTY"

According to historian John E. Stealey III, "West Virginia would have made a good South Africa." Contrary to prevailing opinion, Stealey contends, slavery would have persisted well into the twentieth century had the Civil War not intervened. "After all, what’s the difference between slavery and labor exploited in the coal industry? Slavery would have worked very well."

Such intriguing theories and observations abounded during the seventh annual West Virginia Day Forum which took place in the Regional History Collection’s Byrd Reading Room on June 18. Ably moderated by West Virginia Film History Project co-producer and Visiting Committee member Beth Hager, Forum ’93 brought six of West Virginia’s leading historians and scholars together to reflect upon the overwhelming impact of natural resource extraction and development upon Mountain State history.

Judith S. Rodd of the Coopers Rock Foundation board of directors led the way with a discussion of the early iron industry in West Virginia. Focusing upon northern West Virginia, she noted that the industry employed a work force of several thousand in the Cheat River region alone during the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Dr. Stealey, a professor of history at Shepherd College, followed with a provocative editorial on West Virginia’s economic, political and labor history, all presented within the context of the Kanawha salt industry. "West Virginians have made unique and intellectually original contributions in United States history...not in the social arena, not in the political arena, but rather in the legal and economic arena," Stealey stated, referring to early salt industry trade agreements. Of West Virginia politics he noted that in his opinion "what really counts is the making of money." "We’ve never had a liberal governor" and "are not going to."

Dr. Bernie Allen, professor of history and philosophy at WVU-Parkersburg, brought the first half of the program to a close with a discussion of the oil and gas industry. In telling the tale of oil pioneers, the Rathbone family, Allen noted that though they came to West Virginia penniless in 1837, by the outbreak of the Civil War one family member alone was making $10,000 a day. "Multiply that times 365!" he challenged.

WEST VIRGINIA DAY Forum participants join WVU Vice President Edwin F. Flowers in cutting the West Virginia birthday cake.

Following a brief intermission, Dr. Roy B. Clarkson, WVU professor emeritus and well-known author of Tumult on the Mountains, presented an inspired overview of the history of logging and lumbering in West Virginia. Once again amazing statistics were proffered: "During the 50 years from 1870 to 1920 35 billion board feet of lumber was cut out of West Virginia...enough to build a boardwalk 13 feet wide and 2 inches thick the average distance of the earth to the moon."

The forum was rounded out by doctors Ken Sullivan and James Kotcon. Sullivan, who edits Goldenseal magazine, discussed the history of the state’s most important industry — coal mining — focusing primarily upon its impact on the economy. Despite West Virginia’s coal riches, he noted, “Coal hasn’t made us rich,” a fact he attributed to a “basic failure of our 130-year economic history...a political failure, a failure to manage our own resources for our benefit.”

Dr. Kotcon, WVU assistant professor of plant sciences and chairman of the West Virginia Sierra Club, delivered an animated discussion of tourism and recreational resources in West Virginia. Advocating the need for better control of both public and private land use, he paused for some time on recurrent controversy concerning the logging industry practice of clear-cutting. Quoting a friend, he quipped, “There are certain things you just shouldn’t oughta do to a mountain, and that’s one of them!”
Ray Hicks and the bluegrass band Friends and Neighbors livened the West Virginia Day lunch hour in the Mountainlair.

At the forum’s conclusion, the scene of West Virginia Day activities shifted to the Mountainlair. By noontime a sizeable crowd had assembled outside the Grandview Gallery for the opening of the West Virginia Day exhibit which featured an array of manuscripts, maps, photographs and artifacts from the Regional History Collection and the WVU College of Mineral and Energy Resources Museum. And in conformance with tradition, complimentary copies of the 1993 West Virginia Day poster were presented to the exhibit’s first 130 visitors in recognition of the state’s 130th birthday.

The celebration continued throughout the noon hour in the Mountainlair’s Hatfields cafeteria, where a country buffet was offered amidst an environment of historical photographs and bluegrass music. At 12:30 WVU’s Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Dr. Edwin Flowers, was on hand to lead the forum speakers in cutting the traditional West Virginia Day birthday cake in the Lair’s Commons area. The formal cake-cutting ceremony ended none too soon for the crowd of children (and adults) who waited eagerly for a piece of cake and a dish of ice cream.

West Virginia Day 1993 concluded later in the afternoon with a special ceremony organized by the WVU Alumni Association. Officers and guests met in Martin Hall at four o’clock to commemorate the founding of the Alumni Association on the same spot 120 years earlier!

At the end of a full day, visitors to WVU left with a variety of West Virginia Day memories, knowing a little more about West Virginia and looking forward to next year’s celebration.

**VISITING COMMITTEE**

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John E. Stealey III</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Shepherdstown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Adler</td>
<td>Weston</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruel E. Foster</td>
<td>Morgantown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Gooding</td>
<td>Morgantown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Greer</td>
<td>Bridgeport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth Hager</td>
<td>Morgantown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph C. Jeffersds</td>
<td>Charleston</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughn Kiger</td>
<td>Morgantown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald Lewis</td>
<td>Morgantown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Little</td>
<td>Morgantown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Maxwell</td>
<td>Clarksburg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooks McCabe</td>
<td>Charleston</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merle Moore</td>
<td>Webster Springs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Newbraugh</td>
<td>Berkeley Springs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Judith S. Rodd: Iron was a necessity to early settlers coming west of the Alleghenies, and it was used for many things — cooking pots, tools, horseshoes, and nails. The importance of nails to these early pioneers can be seen from the fact that they would burn down their own houses before moving west, to get the nails out for future building.... The first furnace in this general region was the Alliance Furnace, built in 1790 in Fayette County, Pennsylvania.

About 1800 an enterprising Quaker with a fiery temper, one Samuel Jackson from Brownsville, Fayette County, PA, came to the banks of the Cheat, near where the present-day Interstate 68 bridge crosses Cheat Lake. There he built a mill dam from the eastern shore of the Cheat River to an island in the river, which is now underwater, and he built a water wheel to power a grist mill and a forge. He bought pig iron from the Pleasant Furnace up the mountain, and also from the Spring Hill Furnace in Pennsylvania to the north and he made bar iron and nails.... He bought a small rolling mill and a splitting machine, and he cut nail rods, cut some into nail lengths, and put the heads on the nails by hand.
About 1806 he bought 600 acres on the Cheat and built a barrel works, for cooperage, and a boatyard. He then floated kegs of nails down the Cheat to the Mon [Monongahela] and on down the Ohio. Some of the nails and other products went to Brownsville and were used in his other enterprises. Other products went to Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and even as far as New Orleans, and his iron may have been used in the War of 1812, although I'm sure he would have considered that un-Quakerly.

Jackson and his family soon leased and managed the Pleasant Furnace up on the mountain. In 1818, Samuel's son Josiah inherited this ironworks. He bought a nail-making machine, and legend has it that this machine was pulled through the streets of neighboring hamlets like Morgantown, spewing hot nails as souvenirs. He bought pig iron from the Pleasant Furnace, the Spring Hill Furnace, and the new Greenville Furnace which was on top of Chestnut Ridge, built by one Watt Carlisle about 1818 and supposedly bought with the proceeds of a counterfeit 50 dollar bill. Josiah also built his own furnace, the Wood Grove Furnace.... This furnace was built to the west of the Fairchance Road, about 1820, near Morgans Run, and the rubble of this furnace remains today in the backwaters of Cheat Lake.

Now these furnaces were kept going year round, maybe shut down for a month to repair the lining, but it was a 24-hour-a-day operation, and took a lot of people working. You have the woodcutters, you have the teamsters hauling wood, you have colliers making charcoal, you have miners mining the iron ore, you have fillers loading all these ingredients here, you have gutter men who are working the sand floors, you have somebody watching the temperature at all times and then you have the ironmaster and the clerk who are trying to keep this all moving continually, get the ingredients there, and get the product to market. And in the process of this about 250 acres of timber were cut every year to feed such a furnace. So you can see how Cheat mountains were pretty quickly denuded.

Josiah did well until the 1830s when tariffs were lowered on English iron and there was a drop in the prices, and he also had 22 children to support. So he sold the ironworks in 1836 for $25,000. The next owners were businessmen John Casey, Daniel Church, Klee Morrison, and John Bethel from Pittsburgh, and Leonard Lamb from New England, and they had previously financed the building of the Henry Clay Furnace, which still stands in the [Coopers Rock State] forest today. This was built in 1834. These businessmen...sold [out]...to the Ellicott brothers of Baltimore, Maryland, for $92,000. And the Ellicotts brought more new technology to the Cheat. The Ellicotts built a third furnace down here on the river called the Anna Furnace.... They enlarged the mills, and they built a lot of company housing.... This was the golden era in iron production on the Cheat, and by 1848 the Ellicotts were bankrupt....due to tariff problems which depressed the iron prices and the flooding of the market with British iron. The iron industry on the Cheat continued until 1858, but it was always on a smaller scale.

Dr. John E. Stealey III
Professor of History, Shepherd College
Author of The Antebellum Kanawha Salt Business and Western Markets

John Stealey: I want to make a couple of points about the salt industry. The first thing that I would say is it's the first commercially viable extracting industry of regional, national, and, one might say, even international significance in western Virginia and Virginia. It provides linkage and precedent for all later extracting industries—that would be the coal, it would be the iron to some degree. For example, it first exploited extensively the coal resources of West Virginia beginning in 1817. I don't think I have to tell anybody here the significance of the secession of minerals from surface in West Virginia history.... The first evidence we have of that in Kanawha County is in 1820 when we have the separation of mineral land from the surface land. Salt companies had company towns, they had company stores, they exploited labor on an interstate basis very much like the coal industry did later. The interesting thing about the labor they exploited is it was slave labor for the most part...and also it is the precursor of the modern chemical industry in the Great Kanawha Valley.... Salt is a widely distributed mineral. It's not rare like gold is, let's say, but you have to remember until 1808, there was no extensive domestic salt source in the United States, and it so happened by, shall we say, the accident of history, the Great Kanawha Valley was the first place that was commercially exploited in salt in the United States.

Salt is mined today, it generally is, it's the cheapest way to extract it, but that is not the way it was done in the Kanawha Valley. What you do, there are several stages in the process and they're relatively simple. First, you have the drilling of the well to extract the brine from the ground. This is where you get the early development technology that is transferred to the oil and gas industry, which you hear about first. (I'd say there are no original inventions in that oil and gas industry.) Once the drilling takes place and the pumping of the water to the surface, sometimes it would flow naturally, but it was often pumped, first by horses and later by steam engines. (To give you an example, the Kanawha Valley, just in Kanawha County, had more steam engines than six other states had, in 1830, I mean totally... than what other states had.) Then, after the water was pumped and stored on the surface of the ground in a cistern or vat, evaporation took place in the furnace. And there are numerous technological advances in furnace construction, much like the iron that you heard about.

The first fuel used to evaporate was wood, then coal was used after 1820 extensively, or exclusively, I should say. Even natural gas was used, although it was not exploited to the extent it could have been, but natural gas was used to some degree. So you have a subsidiary industry growing up of wood cutting, and later coal mining, and most of the labor in salt business was the mining industry. But I want to point out — the mining industry was subsidiary to the salt industry until after the 1850s.

And then after that you had the distribution of marketing, over 400 boats a year, flatboats a year, went out of the Kanawha
Valley to western markets, and of course the steamboat penetrated the Kanawha Valley in 1823, and of course steamboats were used extensively, but the bulk of salt was carried in on what we call free-floating barges, rather than steamboats.

One of the positions of Civil War historians is that slavery would have somehow died out in the United States had the Civil War never occurred anyhow. I never agreed with that. What I argued is that West Virginia would have been a good South Africa. After all, what is the difference between slavery and labor exploited in the coal industry later? Slavery could have worked very well.

The area of business combination, organization, legal innovation is where West Virginians have made unique and intellectually original contributions in United States history; not in the social arena, not in the political arena, but rather in the legal and economic arena. I think politics just reflects what really counts and that's the making of money. In other words, all these politicians in West Virginia history, you know we talk about conservative and liberal and all that stuff, we've never had a liberal governor in West Virginia history, and are not going to have one.... They represent dominant economic interests. If you pick up any standard history of trusts, pools, corporations, they will say the first trust was a Standard Oil trust, the first pool was in 1860. The Cortege Trust or with the Michigan Salt Association by coincidence. Where do you think all these Michigan people learned about this stuff? — right in the Kanawha Valley. The Great Kanawha salt makers were able to produce more salt than could be consumed, and they knew it. Well, what do you do about that? Do you go bankrupt?

They come up with their first agreement to restrict production, control prices in 1816. And rather than go through the agreements, I'm just going to tell you they wrote various agreements for four- or five-year durations. There were seven of them, up until the Civil War, and these agreements, what they were trying to do is control their production field.... Before Standard Oil trusts in the 1870s, we had a trust proposed, I want to rush out and say very quickly proposed, never implemented, in the Kanawha Valley in 1829. It was outlined in the newspaper, how to do it, how to put property in trust to control it. Is central trust really innovative?

Dr. Bernard L. Allen
Professor of History and Philosophy
WVU-Parkersburg
Board of Directors
West Virginia Oil and Gas Museum

Bernard Allen: John — my friend, John Stealey — made the point that all of the technology used in the oil industry was developed in the salt industry. I do not disagree with that. In fact, the first well that was drilled at Burning Springs was drilled on the site of a salt well, a salt well that was initially drilled in 1842 or thereabouts and then abandoned. Persons who drilled the initial well in 1842 at Burning Springs were from the Kanawha Valley, and they had been invited to Burning Springs by a remarkable family known as the Rathbone family.... The Rathbone family had been invited to western Virginia by one of the founding fathers of the state of West Virginia, Peter Godwin Van Winkle. Van Winkle was married to a Rathbone — Julia Rathbone. In 1837 you'll recall there was a financial panic in the United States, and the Rathbones lost heavily. The Rathbones at the time were living in New York, New Jersey. William P. Rathbone was Julia Rathbone's father, Peter Godwin Van Winkle's father-in-law. William P. Rathbone became ill when he lost most of his fortune in the 1837 panic. He let his son-in-law know about it and the son-in-law said, "Why don't you come to the Springs for health treatments?" He was referring to Burning Springs.

And so William P. Rathbone came, and he brought along with him his sons, and they went out to the Springs. William P. Rathbone took treatments — see, Burning Springs was a health spa before it became an overnight oil center. And he took the treatment, and he looked around, and he saw something that most other people didn't see. He saw money. And when the Civil War broke out in April of 1861, one of his sons, J.C. Rathbone, "Cats," was making $10,000 a day. His income from the oil industry was $10,000 a day. Multiply that by 365. Now this was the beginning of the Civil War.... He was able to make his $10,000 a day because in 1860 another military man by the name of General S.D. Carnes of Pennsylvania, a veteran of the Mexican War, visited Burning Springs, talked with the Rathbones, and said, "I think that if you re-drill into this old salt well, I think we will find oil." And the Rathbones said go ahead, and he had a nice paying well. No surprise, because where Burning Springs is located, that was the center of one of the major oil fields in the United States — oil field that's called the Oil Break. It's an oil field that extends from Burning Springs basically in Wirt County, West Virginia, north to at least Newport, Ohio, between St. Marys in the north and Burning Springs in the south....

There was oil in the Oil Break region found as early as the 1830s. It was oozing right out of the ground. In fact, very close to Petroleum there was a spring, and from that spring came oil, and the spring flowed, the oil flowed, down the hillside into a stream called Goose Creek at Petroleum, and the oil men called it Goose Creek because they said it was the goose that laid the golden egg.

By 1900, West Virginia was the leading producer of oil. It had surpassed New York and Pennsylvania in 1898. Although oil's still being produced in the area, it's natural gas where West Virginia's a leader nationally. Natural gas in West Virginia goes all the way back to the salt industry, as John pointed out. However, until about 1882, very little effort was made to contain the natural gas, and a tremendous amount of natural gas was wasted. Today West Virginia is the fourth leader, is fourth in the nation, in the production of natural gas.

Dr. Roy B. Clarkson
Emeritus Professor of Biology, WVU
Author of Tumult on the Mountains

Roy Clarkson: The previous speakers have been talking about what might be
called the underground of West Virginia — iron, salt, petroleum, but I'm going to be talking about the surface of West Virginia — timber. Concerning the timberlands of the state, West Virginia certainly was and still is a "Land of Plenty." When the first white men came into the state — explorers and surveyors and so on — they came in on the rich fertile bottomlands and encountered an unbroken forest. Some of these had tremendous trees, and there are some records of some of these trees, and I'd like to mention a few of them: yellow poplar or tulip tree — some trees had dimensions as much as 7, 8, 9, even 10, 11 feet in diameter, and these would grow to 80 feet to the first limb — just huge trees. White oak was another large tree; the Mingos White Oak was a famous tree; it was 9 feet, 10 inches in diameter, and 145 feet tall; black walnut, one of our very valuable trees that we think of as being a rather small tree now, grew to diameters of 3, 6, 9 feet and also was considered a valuable tree then, at least when the lumbering came in; George Washington encountered sycamore trees in the Kanawha Valley that he recorded in his diaries as being 44 feet, 10 inches in circumference, and this works out to something like 13 feet in diameter. So we did have some large trees in West Virginia. Grapevines, things like that grew to be 7 to 10 inches in diameter, and there's one record of a grapevine that was 21 inches in diameter. You have to keep in mind that this forest had been developing for the last 10 to 14,000 years since the glacier period ended and had not been disturbed except by natural causes for all those thousands of years. So it did develop into a very excellent forest.

Well, as settlers came into the region, the forest was more of a nuisance than anything else in many ways, because when they selected homesites they picked some of the trees that were the right size to make log cabins with, but most of the other trees they had to think in terms of getting rid of because they needed the land cleared to produce their crops. So they girdled the trees in areas they wanted to clear or cut them. After they dried out they burned them. And most of the early settlements were on the river bottomlands, and this was where the best hardwood forests grew. So much of our very good hardwood timber was destroyed without any record. The lumber itself at that time in the very early days was pretty useless.

As the towns started to grow and a few more settlers came in, they brought the device called whipsaw to produce some squared timbers. This was a saw that was run by hand. They rolled a log over a pit in the ground or maybe on a scaffold, and one man stood down below the log at the end of the saw and another man above the log, and they saved back and forth all day, and they could cut about 100 linear feet of lumber this way in a day's time. Well, that was pretty slow, but it gave them some lumber for floors and tables and that sort of thing. Well, as towns began to grow a little bit, they soon hooked the saw up to water wheels, and water saws became common. These were usually combined with grist mills and with these they could produce 500 linear feet a day. These employed almost 4,000 men and cut 180 million board feet of lumber a year. Now, a board foot is a piece of lumber a foot square and an inch thick. That's the way lumberers measure. So they cut 180 million board feet a year in 1880 by circular steam saws and some water power. But it remained for the development of two things, two other things, for the main timberlands of the state to be cut. The water mills and the circular steam mills were mostly small operations, and they cut in the hollows and the river valleys where it was easy to get to, but when the railroads came into the state — the B&O, the Western Maryland, the C&O — it connected the state with eastern markets, and people began to realize that there was a great wealth of timber in the mountains of West Virginia. And that was one thing that opened up the mountains to big-time lumbering. The other thing was the development of the band saw. This was invented in England, or in Europe, in 1808 and wasn't introduced to the United States until 1869, down in Fort Wayne, Indiana. These large mills could cut 120,000 board feet of lumber in one eleven-hour day, and many of them ran solidly around two eleven-hour shifts, and one of these mills required seventeen acres of our virgin forest, especially in the spruce areas, to keep it running. So with the advent of the band mill, lumbering in the state really took off.

This reached a high point in 1909, when there were 1,524 saw mills altogether in the state. 1,441 of them were circular steam mills, 83 were band mills, and these band mills especially, along with lumber railroads, reached almost every part of the state. Some of them were large enough that they employed as many as 10,000 men in their total operation, and there was one at Cass that 14 locomotives operated at one time, and had about 150 miles of lumber railroad. So these were big operations, and in 1909 all these mills cut a total of one and a half billion board feet of lumber in the state.

The forests of the state were magnificent, but nothing could withstand this onslaught of cuttings, so before too long, by 1920, the original forest was cut. I'd like to give you a few figures on that. In 1870, there were about 10 million acres of uncut forest. By 1910, that would be 50 years later, there was one and a half million acres, by 1920, 10 years after that, there were two-tenths of a million acres; it was practically all gone.

During the 30 years, 1870 to 1920, thirty-five billion board feet of lumber was cut from West Virginia. Thirty-five billion, that probably doesn't mean much to you, but this would build a boardwalk thirteen feet wide and two inches thick the average distance from the earth to the moon.

Dr. Ken Sullivan
Editor, Goldenseal magazine
Author of Coal Men and Coal Towns

Ken Sullivan: No one will question that coal comprises a part of West Virginia's "plenty." Dr. I. C. White, the great West Virginia geologist, said that West Virginia's natural wealth is unsurpassed by any equal area on this continent, and he was speaking of our mineral wealth in particular. It seems a reasonable statement, but it fails to address the broader question of why our natural wealth has not made us wealthy as a people. I don't know when coal was discovered in West Virginia. I
Central, the Western Maryland, and Virginian, among the major coal-hauling railroads. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, West Virginia had a transportation network possibly unrivalled — certainly unrivalled before — possibly unrivalled since, even by our modern interstate highways. And of course with those rails in place, the development of coal mining proceeded and proceeded quickly. Coal operators were standing by to ship coal when the rails arrived....

The early operators depended on the railroads, the largest commercial corporations of the day, to ship their coal to market. Ironically, then, what we see is that the early coal operators, despised as barons in popular imagery, were the small fry in their industry. They operated in an environment of much larger institutions — railroads, land companies, private banks — and they typically were the only exception to this rule of scale. They represented the literal cutting edge, where their industry bit into the mountains of West Virginia. These were the entrepreneurs and their role was transient.

Throughout West Virginia, coal mines which had begun as independent operations were consolidated into big, centrally-managed coal corporations which ran the mines as subsidiaries. These larger companies themselves had typically been bought and re-bought many times over in the intervening years, and finally they'd consolidated into even bigger energy conglomerates until by today, West Virginia coal is mined by some of the largest corporations in the nation and world.

There's nothing wrong with that — big companies are in many ways preferable to small companies in a messy, dangerous business like coal mining. Deeper pockets make them more accountable...for the industry's huge responsibilities as regards the environment, health and safety, and long-term economic stability.

The problem is that we West Virginians haven't managed a foolproof way to take our cut. Historically, we took our return largely through mine payrolls — a major consideration in earlier times when the industry sometimes employed well over 100,000 miners during boom times. This mechanism of return failed during the periodic busts, however. In any case, the relative return on our mineral wealth, which comes to us via mine wages, has dwindled as our miners have become more productive and mine employment has fallen as a consequence.

In recent years, fewer than 30,000 miners have regularly produced record annual amounts of coal. These miners are also less likely to be union members than a generation ago, with less total return to the community.... Since West Virginians don't own the industry, by-and-large, and since fewer of us work in it all the time — what's left to us?

...I think the obvious answer is taxation, and here I think we need to confront the basic failure of our 130-year economic history. It seems to me it's a failure of the worst kind. It's a failure of sovereignty; it's a political failure, a failure to manage our own resources for our benefit. An active combination of higher property, corporate, and severance taxes would exact fair return upon our mineral wealth. We haven't had that in West Virginia. Coal hasn't made us rich, in short.

In the absence of that, what has it contributed to our "plenty"? Individual livelihoods — hundreds of thousands of people; whole new communities — by the dozens, by the scores, possibly, hundreds; a large and, ethnically, very diverse population in the coal fields with all the cultural enrichment that diversity brings. Coal has contributed a culture of its own, a rich folklore, work lore, community lore, and enough coal miner songs to fill a dandy book by Archie Green. Heaven knows it's contributed a spectacular labor history for us historians to ponder the lessons of and a minor industry in books and movies arising from that.

But "King Coal" has been a rough, demanding master — hard on us. Considering that, though, there's nothing to be ashamed of in the heritage of thousands of hard-working miners laboring to extract coal from the earth and taking pride in doing it. And it is here, I think, in our character and in our culture, that coal has made its true contribution to "West Virginia: Land of Plenty."

Dr. James B. Kotcon
Assistant Professor
Plant and Soil Sciences, WVU
Chair, West Virginia Chapter, Sierra Club

Dr. James Kotcon: The beautiful mountains of West Virginia, our wildlife, our magnificent forests, the clean air and the water — these are resources that are the foundation of our travel, tourism, recreation industry...[which] has become a very major industry in West Virginia. Last year it resulted in almost two billion dollars in economic return to the state and employed almost 40,000 people.... This industry, unlike some of the other industries we've talked about today, is based on a renewable resource — the one-millionth visitor to Seneca Rocks is just as impressed with that rock today as the first person was that saw it, and perhaps the two-millionth visitor will be as well...it is a resource that can be used over and over again. But, it can also be overexploited, and it can be destroyed in the very process of trying to harvest it, and it is one that is subject to the devastation of poor management.

The Mon[Monongahela] National Forest was first established by an act of Congress in 1911, and the first land acquisition was in 1915. Prior to this time, a great deal of the focus of the government was to transfer public lands into private hands...to get it out of the public domain, into the private sector, so it could be developed for the benefit of all of the nation. It wasn't until about the turn of the century that there was suddenly an awareness that these resources, this expanding frontier, was finite, that it was ended, that it was being used up, and that it was likely to go away. In West Virginia this happened to coincide, as Dr. Clarkson pointed out, with the rapid demise of our forests through clear-cutting and the timber industry.... The original purpose of the national forests was for reforestation and flood control, water-
shed management. Recreation did not have a particularly large part in this. The first real recreational developments were during the Great Depression, when the CCC crews came through and began building various campgrounds and trails and roads to better exploit these recreational opportunities that were in existence in the national forests. In 1960, Congress passed the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act, and it included recreation as a designated use for the National Forest. The 1960 act was added to by the 1964 Land and Water Conservation Act, which in part was designed to improve recreation opportunities on public lands. Also in 1964 was the first Wilderness Act. These were, in fact, intended to establish those areas, untrammeled by man, and areas dedicated to the preservation of nature as it existed where man is an occasional visitor, but by no means a resident, and where his influence is largely not felt.... In 1974, and we're getting fairly recent here, was the Renewable Resources Planning Act. This reaffirmed the multiple use and sustained yield aspects of the National Forest, and it furthermore protected the existing quality of the resource. Protecting the existing quality of the resource put an additional constraint on the National Forest, and because the multiple uses included not just timber and watershed protection, but also wildlife and recreational opportunities, and a variety of other resources that could be used in the National Forest, and because these have to be protected, it put increasing constraints on what could be done in national forests. In 1975 was the Eastern Wilderness Act. Prior to that time virtually all the wilderness areas in the United States had been established west of the Mississippi, where the large tracts of Federal lands were still preserved. This Wilderness Act established among others the Dolly Sods and Otter Creek Wilderness Areas, and in 1983, the Cranberry, Laurel Fork North, and the Laurel Fork South Wilderness Areas, completing those areas that we now have today.

There are four issues that I think will determine the outcome of this. One is lands acquisition — not just in the National Forest, but in areas like the Canaan Valley Wildlife Refuge, which is an imminently developing opportunity, Coopers Rock State Forest and the Cheat Lake recreation development that we've been hearing about locally, and some expansion of wilderness areas like the Dolly Sods land acquisition that is currently being considered.

The second issue...is the continuing...struggle to balance multiple uses.... Things like the clear-cutting controversy, things like off-road vehicle use...are clearly incompatible with some of the existing recreational uses and that can actually degrade the existing resource experience....

A third issue is the development of rivers management. There is actually very little in the way of rivers protection in West Virginia right now, but water-based recreation is becoming more and more important, and there are some opportunities for wild and scenic rivers. There are opportunities for other types of canoeing and whitewater rafting and recreation. Many of these can be tied to much of the trails development that is currently going on — the "rail-trail" concept that is currently in use; because many of the railroads tend to follow river corridors, they provide natural opportunities for combining a river/water resource and a trail/hiking/bicycling opportunity for recreation....

The fourth issue is going to be a very tough one. This one is going to cause a lot of problems, and it's the overall issue of air quality.... The fishing recreation industry has been pretty much destroyed by acid deposition, [and] when the average visibility declines to some small fraction of a mile, much of what people are attracted to, no one will come any more....

Those are some of the major issues that I see. I think that it is an exciting time for planning a travel/tourism-based industry, because there are so many opportunities, but I think that it is incumbent on us to remember the experiences of some of the previous industries, and manage the travel/tourism industry in a way that it does not go through the boom and bust cycle we've seen in so many other industries.

SELECTED ACCESSIONS LIST


Maurice Brooks, an Upshur County native and alumnus of West Virginia University, served as a professor of biology from 1932 to 1938 and professor of wildlife management from 1938 to 1969 at WVU. These papers deal with his career and particularly highlight his work with the Wilson Ornithological Club, National Audubon Society, West Virginia Conservation Commission, and Redstart magazine. The papers also afford valuable insight into University politics during the 1940s.


This four-page letter to James Morrow, Jr. features Faulkner's response to Morrow's recommendation of his cousin, James E. Morrow, as "Professor of Mathematics" at West Virginia University. Faulkner, a U.S. Representative from West Virginia and member of WVU's Board of Regents, replied that financial constraints required the combination of the professorships of mathematics and military science and that an army officer was assigned to fill the post.


The correspondence, scrapbooks, articles, and speeches in this collection document the later portion of the life of a Princeton physician and conservationist who was instrumental in the creation of the Southern Soil Conservation District and Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Area.


Reverend Alfred Lee Klaer served as the pastor for the Presbyterian student ministry at West Virginia University during the Great Depression and was advisor of the Presbyterian student group, Westminster Foundation, which participated in numerous relief projects in the Scotts Run area near Morgantown during the Depression. The slides show scenes during the establishment of Chestnut Ridge Park in 1937. Klaer was a leader in building the park, and the slides also picture National Youth Administration work on the park. Other slides show Klaer and teachers and
Photographer and sociologist Lewis Hine documented many New Deal projects, including this Works Progress Administration nursery at Jere, Monongalia County.

students at a black school on Scotts' Run. The negatives depict homes, residents, and communities along the run and focus upon unemployment and strikes in the coal industry there. Seventeen of the negatives are from photographs by renowned photographer Lewis Hine, who called the nation's attention to social problems, including depression-stricken Scotts Run.


A sound recording featuring an appearance by actor Don Knotts on “The Lanny Ross Program,” a fifteen-minute light music radio program on the Mutual Broadcasting System. Knotts, a Morgantown native and West Virginia University graduate, received his show business break from Ross, a radio veteran whom Knotts had met while in Army shows during World War II. Don Knotts went on to play in the Broadway hit No Time for Sergeants and worked with television stars Steve Allen and Garry Moore. He is best known as Barney Fife in “The Andy Griffith Show,” but also starred in several movies and later hosted his own comedy variety show. More recently, he was in the cast of television’s “Three’s Company.”

West Virginia and Regional History Collection NEWSLETTER
Colson Hall
PO Box 6464
Morgantown WV 26506-6464

WVU Libraries Visiting Committee member Beth Hager leads the West Virginia Day Forum. See page 1.