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WVRHC Newsletter, Spring 1990

West Virginia & Regional History Center

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This scenario was all too familiar to families living throughout western Virginia during the early nineteenth century when medical care in the region was in its infancy. Described by no less an authority than James Morton Callahan as an era of "herb aunts" and "country doctors" with few, if any, qualifications, there were perhaps fewer than 100 bona fide physicians in the entire area around 1830.

The folks in Randolph County actually fared better than most. A professional physician, Benjamin Dolbeare, had established a medical practice in Beverly as early as 1810. A native of Connecticut, the doctor was the brother-in-law of the eccentric evangelist Lorenzo Dow, who became a frequent town guest during the period.

According to local histories, Dr. Dolbeare remained in the county for just a few years before moving on to Clarksburg. Yet upon his departure he left behind a student and protegé, Squire Bosworth, who was to provide medical care to Randolph Countians and their neighbors for over half a century.

A daybook which belonged to Dr. Bosworth was recently acquired by the Regional History Collection. Containing over 400 pages of handwritten data, the volume affords a detailed look at ante bellum medicine in western Virginia.

Bosworth was born in Hampshire County, Massachusetts, in 1794. A graduate of Williams College, he joined the military during the War of 1812 and served in Virginia. At the war's end, he settled in Parkersburg, finding employment as a teacher, and obtaining an appointment as deputy county clerk.

About 1815 Bosworth moved to Randolph County. Establishing himself in Beverly, he resumed his teaching career and gained a similar post with the county clerk's office. The following year he married the daughter of a prominent Beverly citizen and the couple moved briefly to Parkersburg and opened an academy. A few years later, they returned to Beverly and Mr. Bosworth embarked in earnest upon the study, and practice, of medicine under Dr. Dolbeare's tutelage.

For many years Dr. Bosworth was the only practicing physician in Randolph County. Accordingly, his daybook provides an extraordinary record of the early medical history of Randolph County and its inhabitants. Ranging in
(Continued)

While Bosworth's entries often fail to note the precise malady that he was called to treat, many illnesses can be determined by studying the meticulously recorded treatments and medications that the doctor prescribed.

Ranking right up there with the "vial of worm medicine" among the most popular weapons within Dr. Bosworth's arsenal of treatments was the centuries-old practice of "bleeding." Also known as "bloodletting" or "depletion," bleeding was designed to relieve the body of accumulations of excess blood, bile or phlegm which were thought to be the roots of most medical ills. If a person fainted or suffered a serious injury, a vein was opened and the patient was bled immediately. (Bleeding was deemed necessary during roughly a third of the doctor's aforementioned visits to the Blackman family.)

The "purging" of all manner of other vile bodily substances was considered equally important. Thus, Dr. Bosworth prescribed liberal quantities of "purgative pills," laxatives, diuretics and emetics in the course of his treatments.

Peruvian bark, which contains quinine, was the drug of choice for reducing fever. The opiate laudanum was the primary pain and stress reliever. Sugar of lead, calomel, cream of tartar, elixir of vitriol, Colombo root, ipecac, "anodine" powders, sultate of zinc, "radise rhei," mercurial pills and Rowan's Tonic are just a few of the other medicines that were at the doctor's disposal. Most of these...
were designed to flush out, or dry out, the body in one way or another.

Unfortunately for his patients, many of the doctor's medicines and treatments had little positive effect. Some were downright harmful.

The vast majority of Bosworth's services cost less than a dollar, the primary exception being child delivery for which the doctor generally received $5.00, $10.00 in "difficult" cases. The cost of having a tooth extracted was 50 cents; the charge for bleeding, a mere quarter. Prescriptions ranged from about a dime to half a dollar. Housecalls which required the doctor to travel a considerable distance, and "visits nocte," as Bosworth put it, carried an extra charge. A nocturnal visit "in deep snow" cost one patient an additional $3.00. A 28-mile journey "to the Cheat River (Nocte)" cost another patient $15.00.

During the year 1835 Bosworth served about 80 households at least once, and in most cases, several times. The average annual cost per family was about $5.70. The total cost for all of the medical services and supplies that he provided in Randolph and neighboring counties in that year was approximately $456.

Few of Dr. Bosworth's patients had the means to pay in cash at the time services were rendered. Most settled their accounts at least partially by offering goods or serv-

(Continued on Page 5)
Fourth Annual West Virginia Day
A Tentative Schedule of Events

The Fourth Annual West Virginia Day is close at hand. Sponsored jointly by the University and its Libraries, this year’s celebration will focus generally upon women and education in West Virginia, and specifically upon the centenary celebration of the admission and graduation of the University’s first women approximately one hundred years ago.

Regional History Association members are urged to begin planning their attendance now as June 20th will be here before we know it!

Tentative Schedule of Events:
Wednesday, June 20, 1990

8:30 - 9:00 a.m. Welcome Reception
Colson Hall

9:00 - 11:30 a.m. Historical Forum. Excellence Through Equity: Women and Education in West Virginia.
Five speakers will represent five generations of West Virginia women
Colson Hall

11:00 - 7:00 p.m. Exhibit: No Turning Back: Women and Education in West Virginia.
An exhibit on women and education in West Virginia, featuring the WVU Women’s Centenary. 127 commemorative posters will be given to the first 127 visitors who arrive to view the exhibit
Mountainlair Gallery

11:00 to 7:00 p.m. WVU Slide Show and Exhibits
Mountainlair Ballroom

11:30 - 1:30 p.m. West Virginia Birthday Picnic
An outdoor cookout with food provided by the Mountainlair at a reasonable cost (or bring your own) and live entertainment
Mountainlair Plaza

1:00 p.m. West Virginia Birthday Cake
Cutting Ceremony
President Bucklew will cut the first piece
Mountainlair Plaza

1:30 - 2:30 p.m. Children’s Hour
An hour of storytelling, puppets and other activities for children.
Mountainlair Plaza

7:00 - 8:00 p.m. Outdoor Concert
Mountainlair Plaza

Members will be receiving invitations and complete programs within the next few weeks. See you soon!
ices in kind. One patient satisfied his account according to the following formula:

By Fish (25) .25; By pair Socks .50; By Venison 7 lbs. .21; By fish 1 doz. .25; By planting corn half a day . . . . .25; [By] Killing hog .25; By three lbs. fresh pork .09; By mending Bridle .12+; By mending Horse collar .25; By 1 day chopping Wood .50; By amount rendered $11.88; By Note $10.00.

With such a complicated system of cash, credit and barter in operation, a fair assessment of the relative cost of health care in Bosworth's day is not easily discerned.

It is, however, not difficult to discern the general significance of the Squire Bosworth Daybook. Considering its age, detail and comprehensive nature, the daybook will surely be of interest to a broad array of researchers!

New Members, West Virginia and Regional History Association

Life
Mrs. Alice Ann Mills, Indianapolis, IN

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Mrs. Helen White, Fairview, WV

Donor
Mrs. Winona Cannon, Morgantown, WV
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Dr. Jean E. Spencer, Greenbelt, MD
Thomas Stafford, Elkins, WV

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James Goggin, Washington, DC
Ms. Mary E. Goodwin, Alexandria, VA
Paul and Judith Hawkins, Glen Burnie, MD
William L. Howison, Grove City, OH

A wood-block print of the WVU campus in 1932, by West Virginia artist Blanche Lazzell, will be the focal point of this year's West Virginia Day poster. In recognition of the state's 127th birthday, 127 posters will be awarded to the first visitors to this year's theme exhibit, No Turning Back: Women and Education in West Virginia.

Ms. Diana Knott, Morgantown, WV
Stan Leach, Flemington, WV
Mrs. Eurilla Mayerle, Lake Jackson, TX
Robert McCoy, Matewan, WV
Ms. Sally Strother Meyer, Cedar Rapids, IA
Joseph and Betty Morgan, Yamhill, OR
Mrs. E. Ethel Nielsen, Irvine, CA
William R. Orton, Fayetteville, AR
Mrs. Karen Pratt, Newburg, WV
Sanford Randolph, Bridgeport, WV
Floyd John Ratz, Del City, OK
Bill Rauscher, Carrollton, TX
Rayman Richardson, Fairmont, WV
Ms. Beverly Robinson, Morgantown, WV
Mrs. Margaret Ann Rosenecker, Morgantown, WV
Thomas R. Ross, Elkins, WV
Mrs. Diana Baker Shew, Nashville, TN
Mrs. Barbara Spencer, Augusta, GA
Mrs. Audrey Stadler, St. Louis, MO
Mrs. Alice Van Norman, Minden, NB
Gary M. Williams, Waverly, VA
Selected Accessions List


A 12x20 facsimile of the petition for the formation of Greenbrier County, handwritten by John Stewart, who is considered the "Father of Greenbrier County." The petition, signed by 75 settlers who were heads of households, requested that the state of Virginia form a new county from parts of Montgomery and Botetourt counties to facilitate the handling of land claims in a court of local jurisdiction. The petition cites the area of land, size of population, frontier conditions, and rugged terrain as a justification for the new county of Greenbrier.

Jarvis, Anna Reeves. Oil Painting, ca.1890. Gift, 1989. PPP.

An oil on canvas portrait believed to depict Anna Reeves Jarvis of Grafton, Taylor County, the mother of Mother's Day founder, Anna Jarvis.

Lynch, Charles Wesley. Photograph album, ca.1874. 49 items. Loaned for duplication, 1990. PPP.

A photograph album of Charles Wesley Lynch of Wheeling, West Virginia, an 1874 graduate of West Virginia University. Included are photos of WVU classmates and faculty, and Lynch family members.

Visitng Committee
West Virginia University Libraries

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Ronald Lewis, Morgantown
Margaret Little, Morgantown
Brooks McCabe, Charleston
Susan Maxwell, Clarksburg
Merle Moore, Webster Springs
Fred Newbraugh, Berkeley Springs
Otis Rice, Montgomery


Two letters concerning Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson written by a pair of Jackson's relatives. A letter from Thomas Neale of Parkersburg (6 June 1833) to Lewis Maxwell of Lewis County inquires about Jackson and his brother. A letter from W.R. Neale of Mossy Creek, Tennessee (23 February 1864) comments upon Jackson and the Civil War.


The minute books of a Randolph County church, recording the meetings of the church's governing body of officers such as elders and deacons. The minutes refer to disciplinary actions, admittance of new members, and the hiring of ministers. Also included are church newsletters which contain information on weddings, funerals and social activities of the church.


An autograph book of Jennie Robinson of Clarksburg, with inscriptions from her friends, and a letter from Martha Perry, of Staunton, Virginia (1 March 1888) congratulating Robinson on her forthcoming wedding.

The muster roll of Captain Jasper A. Smith and Lt. Joseph Ankron of Company G, Second Virginia Volunteer Cavalry, later the Second West Virginia Cavalry. The roll contains records of payment to members of the company, including explanations for back pay or any other discrepancies. There are also remarks about company discipline, and condition of munitions and personal effects, namely uniforms.

Seaman Second Class Glenn L. Vaughan, circa 1923.


Minute book of the Summit Point Grange, of Jefferson County, the first Grange chapter to be established in West Virginia. This record book documents the organization and early years of the chapter whose first initiated member and master was a Confederate Civil War veteran, Col. Robert W. Baylor. The records consist primarily of membership lists, meeting minutes, and resolutions. Most of the resolutions deal with cooperative efforts by members to purchase agricultural necessities such as fertilizer and to designate or hire purchasing agents. A resolution at the end of the book eulogizes Col. Robert Baylor for his work as the chapter's first master. As membership in the Grange was open to both sexes, the list of initial members to the Summit Point Grange includes names of women.


Correspondence, articles, clippings, photographs, pamphlets and scrapbooks of a retired U.S. Navy lieutenant, Glenn L. Vaughan. Included is a manuscript autobiography, telling of Vaughan's boyhood days in Marlinton and his naval career of 30 years (1923-53). There are also two scrapbooks of his career in the Navy which provide interesting accounts of his being stationed in China and of duty tours to Latin America during the inter-war years. During World War II Vaughan was part of the carrier task force at the Battle of Guadalcanal. Later he was reassigned to the Atlantic theater to help install communications equipment on the Normandy Coast. During the Korean War he worked in the radio codes section at Annapolis. He was elected to the city council of Annapolis after being deactivated from the Navy. He also collected genealogy on the Vaughans and a related family, the Poages, both early settlers of Pocahontas County.
The C&O depot at Nuttall, Fayette County, WV, circa 1925.

An instruction and guide book entitled a “style book,” used by the West Virginia Historical Records Survey staff as a reference tool containing a description of legal terms, lists of helpful legal source books and outlines of West Virginia government agencies under the different state constitutions.

The C&O Railroad depot at Talcott, Summers County, WV, circa 1930.

One black and white print and a collection of 100 photographic negatives depicting railroad depots and stations in and between New York and West Virginia.

West Virginia and Regional History Collection Newsletter
Colson Hall, Morgantown, WV 26506

"Campus, WVa. University"
Wood-block print by Blanche Lazzell, 1935. See p. 5.