

Fall 1989

## WVRHC Newsletter, Fall/Winter 1989

West Virginia & Regional History Center

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# West Virginia and Regional History Collection

## NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, No.3

West Virginia University Library

Fall/Winter 1989

### **Pearl Buck Papers Reflect Author's Concern Over International Racial Relations**

"We like to call ourselves a melting pot, and yet we resist the melting with all our strength. Here we are, millions of us, from every country in the world, almost, and certainly all races, united in political principle and yet resisting union in all other ways." (From "What Are We," by Pearl Buck).

Pearl Buck was wholly unimpressed with American ethnic tolerance. Indeed, she viewed it -- or rather the lack of it -- as an obstacle to global freedom. Preoccupation with "origins" was in her view a root of discrimination that was unique to the United States.

A group of seven original typescripts of articles and reviews by Buck recently acquired by the Regional History Collection affords an opportunity to probe the Pulitzer and Nobel prize-winning author's innermost thoughts on discrimination and racism, in America, and around the world.

Born in Hillsboro, Pocahontas County, West Virginia, on June 26, 1892, Pearl Sydenstricker spent most of her youth in China where her parents served as Presbyterian missionaries. She received her early education from Chinese tutors and at mission schools for American children. She returned to the United States in 1910 to attend Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, Virginia. Upon graduating in 1914, she returned to China, married a missionary, John L. Buck, and became a teacher and writer.

Mrs. Buck's stories about the Chinese people and their way of life began to reach American readers during the mid 1920's. She attained broad recognition in 1931 with her novel *The Good Earth* which described the lifelong struggle of a Chinese peasant and his wife for status and security. When the book was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1932 and Metro-Goldwin-Mayer paid \$50,000 for its movie rights, Buck was catapulted to international fame.

Disillusioned with missionary life (and accused of "unmentionable depravity" by the Presbyterian Mission Board for certain passages in *The Good Earth*), in 1934 Mrs. Buck divorced her husband and returned to the United States. She married publisher Richard J. Walsh the following year.

During the early and mid 1930s she completed two se-



Pearl S. Buck.

Photograph by John Glidden, 1949.

quels to *The Good Earth* (*Sons* [1932] and *A House Divided* [1935]), and wrote a pair of highly acclaimed biographies of her missionary parents (*Fighting Angel*, and, *The Exile*, both 1936). This creative outburst was rewarded in 1938 with a Nobel Prize for Literature.

Buck continued to write prolifically -- novels, short stories, fiction, non-fiction -- until her death in 1973. Simultaneously, she assumed an active role in promoting civil rights and cultural understanding around the world. Although she remained in the United States, her thoughts and her work continued to focus upon the Far East and

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*Pearl Buck receives the Nobel Prize from King Gustav V of Sweden.*

its inhabitants. Fascinated by the contrasts and interactions of the east and west, she dedicated herself to improving relations between the two cultures and the living conditions of the Asian peoples.

She was especially drawn to the plight of the "new people," as she called them, the Amerasian children of American servicemen who served in Asia from World War II through the Vietnam War. In the original typescript of an article entitled "Men As Beasts," published in *Playboy Magazine* in 1966, Buck describes her painful discovery of the "New People":

. . . in recent visits to Asia, I found myself in puzzlement . . . as I stared into faces that were certainly not Asian. Beggar children pursued me on Asian streets and I gazed into dirty beautiful faces, faces with blue eyes, grey eyes, hazel eyes, faces surrounded by tangled brown hair, red hair, blonde hair.

"You don't exist," I muttered while their filthy small hands clutched at my skirts. "No, no, you don't exist," I whispered when I saw them in orphanages. And "no," I cried, when I saw a ragged gang of them sheltering under a bridge in a snow storm. "No, you are not there!"

"At last," Buck notes, ". . . I gave up. They are there, and they are there in great numbers."

"I must tell you," the Korean Ambassador remarked to her one day in Washington, "that there are more of these children than anyone knows. I must tell you that they are superior to our children." "Superior to ours, too," was Buck's reply.

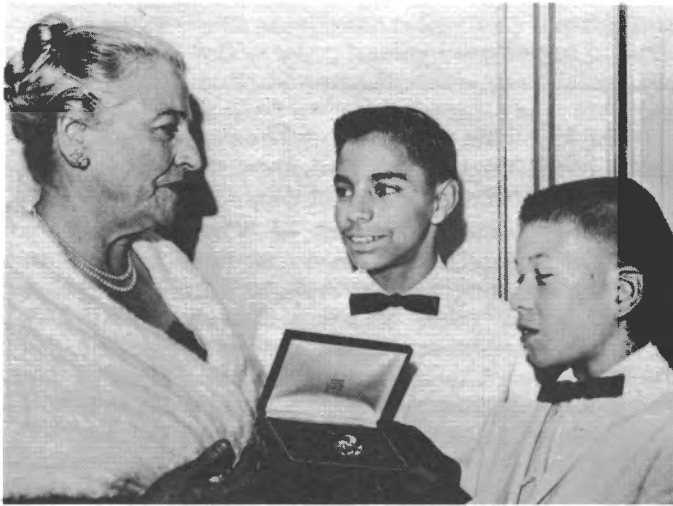
To assist the "new people" Buck established "Welcome House," an adoption agency which placed hundreds of Amerasian children with American parents during the post-war years, and The Pearl S. Buck Foundation which endeavored to help the thousands of children who could not hope to emigrate to America. Mrs. Buck's goal was not just to feed and clothe the children but to create regional Centers of Opportunity where the Amerasians could find assistance in obtaining an education and, ultimately, a career. Buck canvassed veterans organizations and other groups for support and eventually turned over most of her fortune to the Foundation which is still functioning today.



*During World War II, Buck founded the East and West Association which sponsored international broadcasts designed to improve East-West relations. Here Chinese Journalist Jen Ying Yen reads his part of a script by Buck entitled "America Speaks to China".*

Having grown up as a minority child in China, Buck was keenly aware of the pain and the consequences of racial and ethnic discrimination. She looked forward to an age when a more harmonious, and indeed, homogeneous, world community might exist. She considered American prejudices as an obstacle to this end.

Among the materials acquired by the Collection is a typescript of an essay which is addressed "To China," entitled, "What Are We?" Overtly intended to explain American racism to the Chinese, in "What Are We" Buck advances the theory that while regional differences form



David and Leon Yoder, two of the first children taken in by *Welcome House*, present a locket of friendship to Buck.

the foundations of discrimination among the populaces of most of the world's nations, in the United States, regional differences are far outweighed in significance by differences of origin.

Unlike China, Buck contends, where people have shared the land for centuries, America is a land of immigrants where ethnic groups which have inhabited each area the longest cling to the notion that they are the region's "true aristocracy." The result is a hierarchy of resentment between relative "oldcomers" and "newcomers" and an endless struggle to uphold, or tear down, barriers. Ethnic and racial tensions are the by-products of this struggle, not the cause.

The author states that ethnic and racial tensions exert a profound influence on politics, locally and internationally, and points out the importance of "origins" within the political party system. In a scathing attack upon British imperialism she suggests that "origins" have made Americans "the running dogs" of England, while Asian allies have been accepted only out of expedience.

Buck also alleges that "origins" rule America's religious attitudes, as "our religions are mixed with our racial origins" and are inherited "with the blood of our ancestors."

"Each group has clung to its own religion as further security in a strange and disunited land, and although there is fierce disagreement among these religions . . . they are agreed upon one thing, which is that they shall have the freedom to disagree."

Buck admits to her Chinese audience, that despite this agreement, Americans "would not have been so patient" as the Chinese "had a steady stream of Buddhist and Taoist and Confucianist priests come into our shores to build their temples on the choicest spots and live in

houses better than ours and tell us that our God was the wrong one."

Buck concludes her essay by asking for the world's patience:

Human nature is nothing if not illogical and paradox. We came here to be free but freedom terrifies us and so we put up all sorts of fences behind which we may take shelter. . . . As yet we have not developed nearly so quickly mentally as we have physically. Our nation came into being at the beginning of the era of science, and scientific discovery has kept us busy. We have had no time for self-appraisal or self-understanding. . . . Our land has not yet digested us. We have not yet absorbed each other. The blood of our fighting European ancestors is still warring in us and it will war until nature has had her way and has us all stirred up together, so that no man will dare to mention dark blood or light blood in another's veins because he has both in his own. Nor will he ask from what country a man's ancestors came, for all have come from all. In that day too, we will worship the same God.

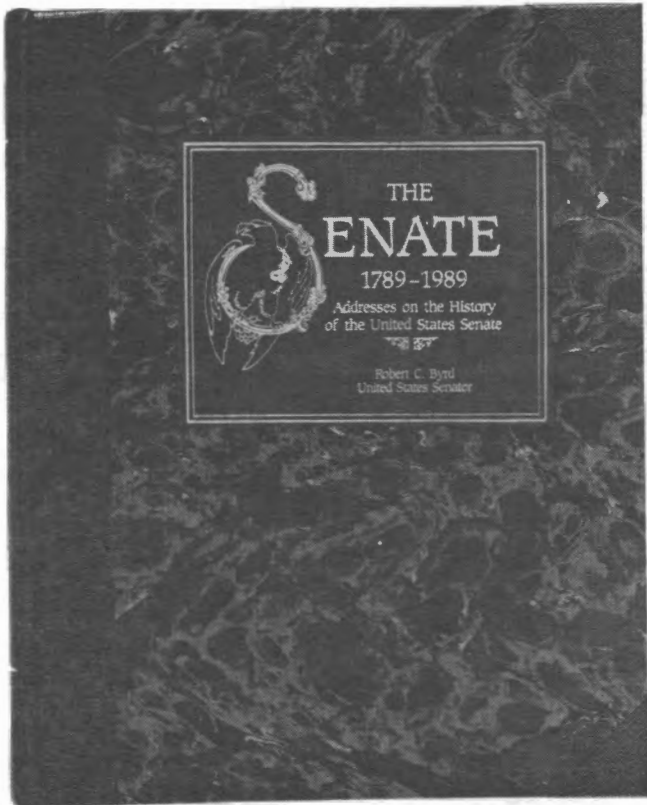
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## New Book on U.S. Senate History Donated by Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Regional History Collection regularly receives many new books written by West Virginians, or about the Mountain State, but, only on rare occasions do we receive a book as important as *The Senate, 1789-1989, Addresses On The History Of The United States Senate* by Senator Robert C. Byrd.

In the forward to this monumental work William E. Leuchtenburg, professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, writes about the background of *The Senate* which he refers to as a "magisterial enterprise — the most ambitious study of the United States Senate in all our history" and "without parallel". Leuchtenburg notes that "... never before has a distinguished member of the United States Senate carried to completion a comprehensive history of the Senate, drawing both upon his own insights and recollections and the most recent work of scholars. This prodigious narrative, a work of some two thousand double-column pages approaching two million words, makes a generous and significant contribution celebrating the bicentennial of what has been called the greatest deliberative body in the world."



*The Senate, 1789-1989, Addresses on the History of the United States Senate* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988) by Sen. Robert C. Byrd.

In the following passage from *The Senate*, Chapter 14, "West Virginia is Born", Byrd deals concisely with a controversial aspect of West Virginia history.

The western counties of Virginia were strongly pro-Union. Union sentiment was also strong throughout the Appalachian counties of several other southern states — North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky, especially. Slavery was not a major economic factor in the Appalachian region, and the mountain folk of those states saw little advantage in fighting to maintain an institution that many mountaineer Virginians, North Carolinians, Tennesseans, and Kentuckians viewed as decadent and repulsive.

But, principles aside, northwestern Virginians had much to lose in a violent conflict. Northwestern Virginia was largely surrounded by Union territory. The Ohio River and its Virginia tributaries offered avenging Union raiders direct access deep into western Virginia's heartland. Many northwestern Virginians calculated no profit in following eastern Virginia into a secession that might finally level cities and towns like Wheeling, Clarksburg, and even Charleston.

According to Leuchtenburg, the book's origins stem from a visit to the Senate Chamber by Senator Byrd's granddaughter, Mary Ann Moore, and her fifth-grade classmates on a Friday morning in March 1980. Few Senators were present and nothing special was going to be discussed. Spotting them in the Senate gallery, Majority Leader Byrd thought that "it might be well if they had something to go back to school and talk about . . ." Accordingly, the senator arose and presented an impromptu lecture on the customs and traditions of the United States Senate. A week later, when more family members showed up in the audience, he gave a second talk and, afterwards, senators and others encouraged him to continue.

Thus, by popular demand, week after week for the next seven years, Senator Byrd lectured regularly on the history of the Senate, touching on subjects ranging from the specific (the Library of Congress) to the general (the Senate in Literature). As the project grew Richard Baker and his colleagues in the Senate Historical Office, founded in 1975, "conducted extensive research and prepared initial drafts for most of the addresses", as Byrd gratefully acknowledges in the book's preface.

Few history books are written collectively like this one was or have its folk origins, having been begun by accident, and continued because students, professors, the press, and friends liked what they heard. There are other equally important virtues. The text is clear and concise. Its scope is encyclopedic in nature. In narrative format, it documents the Senate's history from its beginnings in 1789 to the present in a non-partisan manner. The numerous illustrations -- paintings, contemporary photographs, cartoons, manuscripts, and posters -- are striking in terms of their quality and variety.

Most significantly, however, the book is a pleasure to read. Its straightforward explanations of events which are actually very complex in nature are a boon to all readers who are interested in American history. Indeed, it is this quality that will make the volume broadly useful for historians and laymen alike for many years.

We are most grateful to Senator Byrd for his kind donation.



Louis Watson Chappell, circa 1930.

The field recordings and personal papers of Louis Watson Chappell are among the most treasured materials within the Regional History Collection. Yet, until now, the Collection has not had a good photograph of the important folklorist. The subject of a two-part article appearing in the Summer and Fall, 1988, issues of this newsletter, Chappell is best known for his book, *JOHN HENRY; A FOLKLORE STUDY* (Jena: Frommansche Verlag, 1933) which established the factual basis and West Virginia roots of the John Henry legend. This fine photograph of Chappell in his prime was donated by John Henry scholar Ed Cabbell.

## Regional History Association News

### West Virginia Day 1990 on the Drawing Board

In conjunction with the West Virginia University Women's Centenary, women's education has been selected as the theme of the 1990 West Virginia Day Celebration.

Women were first admitted to the University in 1889. Two years later Harriet Lyons, a Vassar College transfer, became the institution's first female graduate. In recognition of these important anniversaries, West Virginia Day 1990 will examine the history and present state of women's education, at WVU and across the state, and hopefully provide some insight into its future.

This year's activities will follow the format which has been established over the past several years featuring a morning forum and an afternoon exhibit. Hopefully Mother Nature will be more cooperative than she was last year in promoting a noontime Birthday Picnic and an open air evening concert on the newly remodelled Lair Plaza.

Association members are urged to start planning now to be with us on June 20th!

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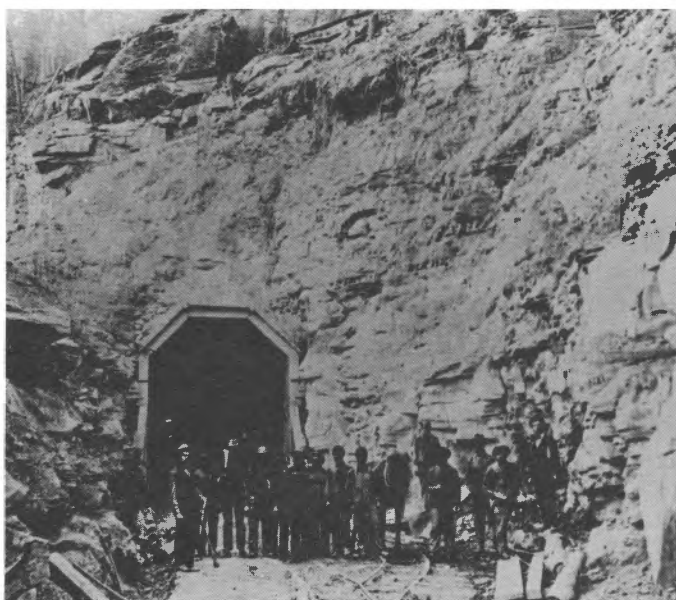
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## Selected Accessions List

**Cabbell, Edward J. Papers, ca. 1886-1987. 2 ft. Gift, 1989. A&M 217.**

Articles, books and photographs of Edward J. Cabbell, an author, editor and historian of Afro-American Appalachia. A founding member of the John Henry Folk Foundation, and organizer of the annual John Henry Folk Festival, Cabbell is recognized as a leading John Henry scholar. Cabbell has collected many articles, plays and photographs relating to John Henry and the creation of the Big Bend Tunnel near Talcott, WV. Especially notable is a series of reproductions of folk art paintings depicting the life of John Henry by artist Palmer Hayden and several photographs of Louis Watson Chappell, the folklorist who established the factual basis and West Virginia roots of the John Henry legend.



*The Big Bend Tunnel, birthplace of the ballad John Henry, circa 1875.*

**Crago, George. Papers, 1947-77. 1 in. Gift, 1989. A&M 3027.**

Papers of George Crago, labor editor of the Morgantown *Dominion News* from 1943-51, then the only commercial daily newspaper in the United States with a daily labor department. Crago subsequently served as editor of the *United Chemical Worker*, Congress of Industrial Organizations (1951-55), which operated in the CIO's national headquarters in Washington, D.C. After the merger in 1955 of the AFL and the CIO, he transferred to the Pennsylvania affiliate where he worked at the Harrisburg headquarters. Included are papers, articles, pamphlets and books authored and edited by Crago throughout the course of his career.

**McWhorter, Walter Fields. Papers, 1865. 1 in. Gift, 1989. A&M 3025.**

A transcription of a diary of a Civil War soldier from West Virginia who was the third man from the state to be

awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. There are extensive notes, including maps, and commentary by the transcriber, that provide a background interpretation to the stark factual entries of the diary. Entries in the diary refer to camp life, Civil War battles, mustering out, and Washington, D.C., at the end of the war. There are entries for the remainder of the year which indicate post-war adjustments and economic conditions of the author. McWhorter, though a man of few words, provides many statistical details as to prices paid, rations received, and wages earned.

A member throughout the entire war of the West Virginia Third Cavalry Regiment, McWhorter was in General George Custer's illustrious Third Cavalry Division which in 1865 was stationed in the Shenandoah Valley and along the line at the siege of Petersburg. Custer's forces pursued, harassed and effectively stymied the movement of Lee's forces from Petersburg to Lynchburg. The Battle of Sailors Creek, a part of the successful Union campaign that stopped Lee at Appomattox, was where this Lewis County native distinguished himself for the Medal of Honor by capturing the battle flag of the Tennessee Sixth Infantry Regiment.

**New England Baptist Church, Records, 1850-1987. 2 ft. Loaned for reproduction, 1989. A&M 3028.**

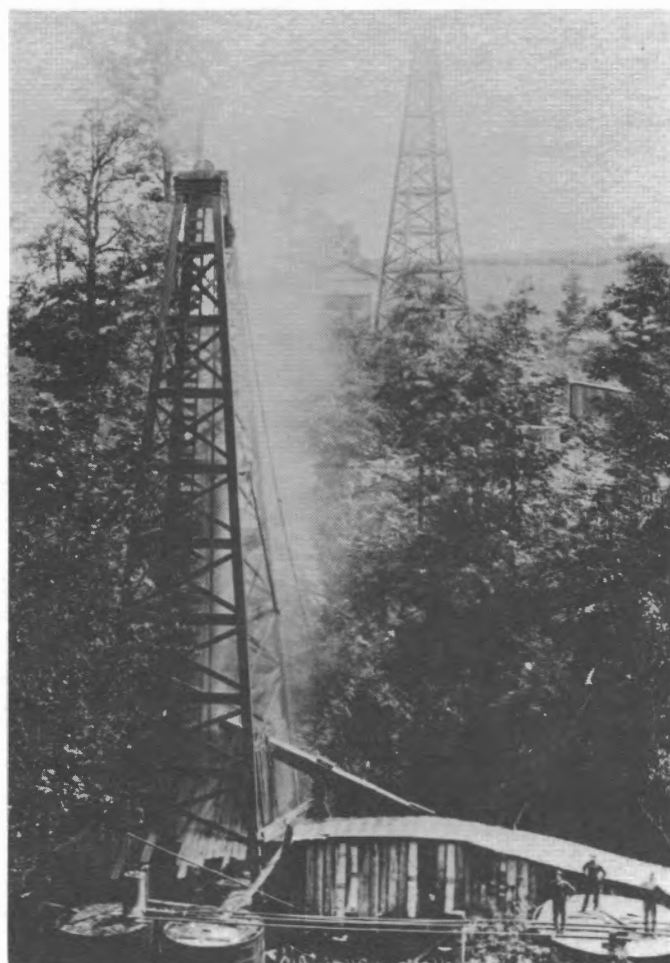
Membership lists and minutes to business meetings of the New England Baptist Church of Washington, Wood County. The church was organized by members of the locality who belonged to the Bethel Baptist Church of Parkersburg and was named after its first meeting place, the New England schoolhouse. The church minutes contain mention of revival services, the ordaining and placement of clergy and the appointment of church lay leaders, such as deacons and moderators. The membership lists consist of information on the status of members, especially noting those who are deceased, dismissed, or transferred to other churches. There is also a church covenant and rules of order.

**Ruble, Aaron. Papers, 1861-62. 1 in. Acquired, 1989. A&M 3034.**

Two letters from Chestnut Run, near Burning Springs, Wirt County, WV, to Robert Caldwell and Edward Wright of Thompsonville, Washington County, Pennsylvania. Ruble inquires as to whether or not Caldwell and Wright wish to continue drilling for oil on his land. He states that it would be safe for them to visit, despite the Civil War, since there are many Pennsylvanians working there who move about freely.

**Shreve, Emily Gray. Papers, 1851-1987. 6 in. Gift, 1989. A&M 3024.**

The papers of a Martinsburg native relating to prominent families in the area. There are genealogical notes and papers concerning the following families: Anderson, Beall, Chenowith, Cowan, Cromwell, Gilbert, Gray, Hoffman, Magruder, McConnell, Newcomer, and Silver. Also included are the letters and papers of Edmond L. Hoffman, who served in the Civil War as a lieutenant in the Stonewall Brigade. He describes in detail the First Battle of Bull Run, and in later letters comments on the



*Bringing in a gusher, Ritchie County, circa 1880.*

Northern generals Pope, Burnside, Hooker, and Meade. He also describes Confederate forces and their officers. Included are a few letters written after the Civil War from Oklahoma, mentioning Kansas City and the Oklahoma Indian Territory.

**Smith-Riffe. Microfilm, 1930-80. 3 ft. Acquired, 1989. A&M 3033.**

A local history and genealogies of the lower New River Valley compiled by Aubrey O. Smith and Judge Winton A. Riffe of Beckley. The collection contains a section on local history covering 29 counties in Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia. The section on local history is comprised of church records, community histories, county court records and cemetery transcriptions. The collection mostly consists of the genealogies of 207 families and their sources such as personal memoirs, interviews, obituaries, correspondence, and family records, sketches and charts. The Smith-Riffe Collection is also commonly known as the New River Genealogy. The originals from which this microfilm was made are contained in the West Virginia Department of Culture and History.

**Stiles, Donley L. Papers, 1910-16. 1 in. Gift, 1989. A&M 3032.**

The boyhood memoirs of an elderly Monongalia County resident, entitled, "Our Daily Bread", relating rural life





Core, Monongalia County, 1900.

in the early years of the twentieth century. There is mention of home remedies, farming, country stores, school, church, holidays, transportation and folkways. He describes in detail seeing the first automobile in the western part of the county. Also contained are genealogical notes on William White, a surveyor, and his family.

**West Virginia Farm Supply Association. Papers, 1958-74. 3½ ft. Gift, 1989. A&M 3029.**

The minutes, reports, correspondence, newsletters, by-laws and membership lists of a trade association composed of dealers in seed, feed, fertilizer, agricultural implements and other farm supplies. The Association is active in lobbying the legislature and advising state agencies in the establishment of rules and regulations concerning commerce in agricultural goods. Its conventions, newsletters and series of publications contains articles and presentations on relevant topics by experts in taxation, management, salesmanship and agri-business technical developments. The papers, thus, reflect efforts by the association to inform, protect and promote the interests of its membership.

**White Day Glades Tannery. Volume, papers, and photographs, 1855-1977. 1 in. Gift, 1989. A&M 3030.**

A ledger of customers, prices, dates and work completed by a Taylor County tannery, mill and store owned and operated by the Corrothers family. The mill turned out a variety of leather products ranging from boots to book bindings. Included are entries on repair work, particularly shoe repairs. Also included are mill receipts, photographs of William A.C. Corrothers and a genealogy of the Corrothers family.

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*Pearl S. Buck (founder) and Oscar Hammerstein II (Board of Directors) plan Gala Benefit for "Welcome House". See story, page 1.*