WVRHC Newsletter, Fall/Winter 2021

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Max Hayslette at Ninety, a Self-Portrait

Max Hayslette at Age Ninety (Self-Portrait), oil on canvas, 40x54 inches.

The West Virginia and Regional History Center recently received the donation of a painting that is remarkable in many respects, not the least of which is the fact that it was painted by a nonagenarian. A self-portrait, successfully blending elements of realism and abstraction, the work was painted by Max Hayslette, a native of Rupert, Greenbrier County, born in 1929. The painting is the latest of more than three dozen works the artist has donated to the History Center over the past decade. Many are now on exhibit in the WVU Downtown Campus Library.

One of the most widely exhibited and commercially successful West Virginia artists in history, the story of Hayslette’s odyssey from small town West Virginian to a globetrotter whose works have graced corporate offices, hotels, banks, galleries and private homes throughout the world is an interesting one. A child prodigy of sorts, he had his first ‘one boy’ show in a local furniture store at the tender age of 15. The show sold out and gained the young artist a patron who offered not only encouragement but financial assistance to foster his future studies.

Graduating as valedictorian of his high school class in 1949, the aspiring painter enrolled at the American Academy of Art in Chicago. Intent on a career in the field of illustration, he studied under Richard Babcock and Haddon Sundblom whose works were then well known to readers of publications including Field and Stream and the Saturday Evening Post. Moving on to further study at the Art Institute of Chicago, Hayslette’s world was turned upside down by modernist teachers including Alexander Archipenko and Egon Weiner. Before long, instead of idolizing the likes of Norman Rockwell, his heroes became Robert Motherwell, Franz Kline and other members of the New York Abstract Expressionist school.

In 1952, Hayslette began his professional life by accepting a position at Kenneth Olson Design, a Chicago firm that specialized in creating large-scale industrial and educational exhibits. Except for a period of military service in 1953-1954, he remained at Olson for nearly a decade working on projects for clients which included the American Medical Association, Schlitz Brewery and Colonial Williamsburg.

After serving briefly as chief designer at Olson rival Triad Design in Chicago, Max joined Martin Berg and Associates Design in Seattle in 1962. Eventually rising to partnership in the company, his assignments during the next eleven years included developing exhibits for Mitsubishi and Georgia Pacific, and designing pavilions for four World’s Fairs. Winning special acclaim for his State of Alaska pavilions at both the 1962 Seattle, and 1964 New York World’s Fairs, Hayslette’s Australia Pavilion at the 1974 Spokane World’s Fair was singled out by the New York Times as the Fair’s “most successful” exhibit in reflecting the event’s environmentally friendly theme.

In 1973, Hayslette decided to strike out on his own and founded Olympus Graphics. The Seattle-based company was among the first in the world to produce affordable, large-scale (up to 8 feet in length) limited-edition serigraphs for corporate and hotel interior decoration. Among his first customers were Bloomingdale’s, IBM, Filene’s of Boston and Hudson’s of New York. Featuring original artwork by Hayslette, Olympus Graphics went on to develop a nationwide clientele before being acquired, and renamed Grand Image, by Larry Winn Enterprises in 1984.
At age 92, he continues to paint, each and every day, with the same enthusiasm, devotion, and remarkable skill that he has had since childhood. Max Hayslette at Ninety is a case in point! The painting is now on view on the 6th floor of the WVU Libraries’ Downtown Campus Library.

While Hayslette continued to create original artwork for Grand Image for many years thereafter, the sale of Olympus Graphics afforded him with the time and financial freedom to focus increasingly on pursuing his own painting interests. And in the ensuing decades, he has traveled to the four corners of the earth in search of subject matter and inspiration. Equally conversant in the artistic languages of realism and abstraction, his work has been featured in dozens of solo shows at galleries in the states of Washington, California, North Carolina and West Virginia, and at institutions including the Bainbridge Island Museum of Art.

In May 1862, United States soldiers of the 44th Ohio Infantry occupied the abandoned offices of the Greenbrier Weekly Era in Lewisburg, western Virginia. Having recently emerged victorious in the Battle of Lewisburg and perhaps faced with the boredom of occupation, the soldiers set about publishing a newspaper. Christened The Yankee, the Federals managed to print only a single issue. Preserved in the West Virginia and Regional History Center, the issue is now available to researchers across the globe on the Library of Congress’s Chronicling America website, thanks to the West Virginia Digital Newspaper Project. A close examination of the four-page Yankee reveals the arrival of “hard war” in 1862 western Virginia.

In the spring of 1862, 1,600 men of the United States Army advanced into the valleys and narrows of southwestern Virginia. Under the command of General George Crook, their task was to drive back scattered Confederate outfits in the region and ultimately strike at the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, a vital east-west Confederate supply line. As part of this advance, Crook and his men—including men from the 36th and 44th Ohio Infantry—occupied Lewisburg on May 15, 1862. As Private John McKee of the 44th Ohio admitted to his brother: “[Lewisburg] is the nicest town for the size I have seen in this state.”

Local Confederate authorities refused to let the occupation of Lewisburg go unchallenged. General Henry Heth commanded 2,300 Virginian troops in the area. Under the command of General George Crook, their task was to drive back scattered Confederate outfits in the region and ultimately strike at the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, a vital east-west Confederate supply line. As part of this advance, Crook and his men—including men from the 36th and 44th Ohio Infantry—occupied Lewisburg on May 15, 1862. As Private John McKee of the 44th Ohio admitted to his brother: “[Lewisburg] is the nicest town for the size I have seen in this state.”

Confederate General Henry Heth (left) and Union General George Crook (right) led the fight at the Battle of Lewisburg.

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Around 5 a.m. on May 23, Heth’s men overran the Union picket line on a hill just east of town. Having seized a piece of high ground, Confederate artillery opened upon the Union camp just west of Lewisburg. As Private George Hechler of the 36th Ohio later wrote to his sister, “They now commenced a furious cannonading, [first] with one and then increased to eight pieces of artillery. They did some wild shooting. Before commencing to bombard us, they had raised a shout, calling: ‘Lewisburg is ours!’”

Although the Confederates had indeed seized the element of surprise, their celebrations proved premature. The Federals reacted calmly and swiftly to the sudden arrival of the enemy. Days later, Private McKee “wondered” at his and his comrades’ coolness: “They commenced throwing bombs at us while we were eating and I set my tin of coffee in my bunk, got my gun and then tied my shoestrings tighter, took a look at my cartridges to see they were all right and was then ready to start.”

Colonel Crook also reacted calmly, arranging his men into a line of battle on the edge of town. Despite being outnumbered, Colonel Crook ordered his men to advance. As the Federals bravely advanced on the Confederate position, the enemy opened a “very severe fire.” “We drove them back,” reported Colonel Crook, “they disputing every inch of ground until we gained the top of the hill, when they fled in great confusion, utterly demoralized.”

As the Federals seized the Confederates’ position and overran their artillery, the Rebel line broke into a rout. Indeed, the suddenness of the Confederates’ retreat seems to have stunned everybody. Private McKee of the 44th wrote, “When the rebels found that we had silenced all their pieces, they commenced to waver and soon they were in full retreat.” Nearly at a loss to explain the disaster, General Henry Heth could only report, “One of those causeless panics for which there is no accounting seized upon my command. Victory was in my grasp, instead of which I have to admit a most disgraceful retreat.”

In the wake of the battle, the Federals carefully probed after the retreating Confederates, but the Rebels crossed the Greenbrier River and burned the bridge behind them. With only a small force on hand and the enemy already retreating, Colonel Crook elected not to pursue the broken foe. Still, the Federal army enjoyed a decisive victory at the Battle of Lewisburg. Union casualties numbered 13 killed, 53 wounded, and seven missing, while Confederate forces suffered 38 killed, 66 wounded, and perhaps 100 prisoners taken. Moreover, the Federals were left to collect the battlefield bounty abandoned by the Confederacy, including 300 small arms and four pieces of artillery. As the soldiers of the 44th Ohio encamped on the battlefield that evening, they discovered “several large [newspaper] type…which had been originally the filling of shells.” It proved a prescient find.

In the days following the battle, the victorious Federals settled back down into their camps about Lewisburg. Though excitement from the recent battle lingered, so too arrived the tedium of occupation and camp life. A handful of soldiers from the 44th Ohio escaped their doldrums by confiscating the press of the former Greenbrier Weekly Era. A firmly secessionist newspaper, the Era’s editor Adam Snyder left the paper to enlist in the 27th Virginia Infantry. In its final issue published in May 1861, Snyder thundered, “The justice of our cause ensures our success...Abe Lincoln, his diabolical advisers and sycophants will enjoy the superlative torments of a special and intense hell.”

A year later, Ohio soldiers reveled in using the Era’s press to publish their own paper on May 29—The Yankee. Although the paper’s unknown editors did not consider themselves to be “yankees” (a term they likely associated with New England), they jovially confessed: “It would be impossible, however to convince the denizens of this delightful valley, that we are not yankees; so we assume the name, and thus avoid controversy.” Submitting their newspaper “as a candidate for newspaperial renown,” they directed their columns to both citizens and soldiers alike. Their printed sentiments made clear the United States Army’s hardening attitude against secessionist sympathizers and slavery.

Federal soldiers were simultaneously struck by the beauty of their surroundings and the horrid secessionist politics that clouded the region. Lewisburg and Greenbrier County were decidedly pro-Confederate. The county voted for secession by a wide margin of 1,016 in favor to 110 against in 1861. Publishing anonymously in The Yankee, an officer in the 36th Ohio opined: “The immediate surroundings of the village are fine...Who could believe,” the officer exclaimed, “that this is ‘the land of the traitor and the slave’? Alas, ‘Satan beguiled them and they did eat,’ and now their paradise is trodden by martial hosts and the gore of their own sons slain on the battlefield.”
Faced with secessionist citizenry, The Yankee attempted to convince the locals of the error of their ways. In an article entitled “Plain Talk,” the editors spoke directly to “the sympathizers with the rebel cause” and the hardening of Union sentiment against the Confederacy and its supporters: “[W]e will have to resort to hard measures… the ‘milk and water’ policy that was pursued last summer was found ineffectual and is to be abandoned. A citizen who refuses to take the oath of allegiance to the United States government is an enemy of it, and we are here to suppress those enemies… It is a military necessity that you shall take sides. We feel sure that we are right, and that we shall prevail… We offer you the olive branch, and invite you to assist us in restoring order out of chaos. If you will not meet us in this, the consequences must rest with you.”

Unwilling to countenance disloyalty any longer, the Ohioans advocated for harsher treatment of Confederate sympathizers. Undoubtedly, when writing these words, the editors were thinking of their fallen comrades, slain and wounded just days before on the outskirts of Lewisburg.

They may also have been thinking about 62-year-old widow Mrs. Phoebe Welsh. In the immediate aftermath of the battle on May 23, Mrs. Welsh received an unexpected visit from her grandson Abraham Strealey. A private in the 22nd Virginia Infantry, Strealey apparently slipped into Lewisburg after the battle in search of clean clothing. While in Mrs. Welsh’s home, Strealey observed a Union soldier—Private George Sherer of the 36th Ohio—walk by the window. Perhaps unaware that Sherer had been wounded in battle, Sherer shot and killed him. Having slain a perceived foe, Strealey hid in the rafters of a shed before making his escape.

Strealey’s actions quickly spawned rumors that Confederate sympathizers were murdering wounded Union soldiers. And indeed, it’s unclear whether Strealey’s attack on George Sherer was the only such attack on Union soldiers in rear areas. Unwilling to countenance such ambushing, General Crook took a hard stance. “I have instituted a search, and shall burn all the houses from which [there] was firing from and shall order a commission on those who are charged with firing, and if found guilty will execute them at once in the main street of this town as examples.” Mrs. Phoebe Welsh’s home was identified, and it was burned to the ground.

The Yankee’s editors, reporting on the sobering affair, approved of Crook’s actions. “Enlightened usages of war require that all who fire on wounded men from houses, should be killed and their property committed to the flame.” Attacks such as the one on George Sherer contributed to Union soldiers’ perception of Confederates as “barbarians” and “savages” and thus deserving of harsh punishment.

The Yankee’s columns also reveal the evolving attitudes of Federal soldiers towards slavery. Early-war United States policy required U.S. soldiers to return runaway slaves to their enslavers. Yet as The Yankee lamented, “The people of the South have been taught by their leaders that the soldiers of the Northern army were a pack of ‘negro thieves and sympathizers.’ They have been told that the Government in Washington was not to maintain the Union, but to give freedom to the slaves.” This belief also extended to enslaved blacks, who viewed the Union army as possible liberators and an avenue to freedom. “The negroes themselves have been convinced, and even here, in this town of Lewisburg, they are continually coming into our camps, and asking to be taken to free States.”

The arrival of runaway slaves forced the editors of The Yankee to reassess their views on the issue: “We are inclined to the opinion that the negroes had better stay where they are, and we despise an Abolitionist; but when a negro has been taught by his master that all he has to do in order to secure his freedom, is to get inside the lines of the Union army, we are in favor of permitting the consequences to be visited upon the head of such master. We will take no special pains to conciliate the people of the South by attempting to convince them that they have slandered us.”

Once again, the views of The Yankee reflect a wider transformation among the Union army during the Civil War.
Seizing an opportunity to gain their freedom, runaway slaves forced the issue of slavery center-stage. As a result, many United States military officers and government officials came to see the wisdom in embracing the abolition of slavery as a powerful war measure. Runaway slaves and their impact on military policy and politics eventually led to the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment. To The Yankee’s editors, making Southern fears of slaves’ liberation a reality seemed prudent.

The Federal occupation of Lewisburg proved relatively brief. Confederate General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson’s successes in the Shenandoah Valley left Crook’s small force at Lewisburg exposed. On May 29, they very day The Yankee was published, United States forces evacuated Lewisburg and retreated westward. Without a press, The Yankee ceased publication after only a single issue. Yet that issue reveals much about the growing hostility of United States’ soldiers towards secessionist Southerners and slavery. The 44th Ohio Infantry’s Yankee and its secessionist predecessor the Greenbrier Weekly Era, along with many other West Virginia newspapers, can be explored freely on Chronicling America (https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/).

**Selected Recent Accessions**

**County Highway Maps for West Virginia. 1937, 33 ft. 11 in., 161 digital files, Acquired in 2020. A&M 4479.**

Highway maps for the 55 counties of West Virginia created in 1937. They are scaled to 1 inch equaling 1 mile. Features indicated on the maps include roads (US, primary state roads, secondary state roads); state, county, district, and corporate lines; railroads; streams; parks and forests; highway bridges; county seats; cities and villages; and much other additional information.

**Delores Fleming, Project Leader, South Park Neighborhood Survey. ca. 1985-1990, 1 1/2 in., Gift 2020. A&M 4495.**

Includes: National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) form of several pages for the South Park neighborhood; slides of buildings in the neighborhood; detailed slide show inventory; “script” of slide show (on yellow paper); photocopies of Sanborn maps with annotated slide numbers that correlate to the slide inventory; color copy of booklet “Morgantown’s Suburbs”; and an original copy of a brochure entitled “South Park” which includes a map of the neighborhood with alpha and numeric annotations coding blocks that correlate to the NRHP form. The narrative of the slide show was based on sources identified in the detailed slide show inventory.

**Dr. William A. Neal Papers. ca. 1880-2016, 3 ft. 10 in., Gift in 2020. A&M 4481.**

Papers of West Virginia University, School of Medicine faculty member Dr. William A. Neal and the Neal family of West Virginia. Includes correspondence, photographs, awards, clippings, military service record, etc. documenting

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**Meet the WVRHC’s Digital Archivist**

Elizabeth James joined the WVRHC staff in September 2021. She previously worked at Marshall University Special Collections as Archivist and Digital Preservation Librarian. Elizabeth enjoys all things digital. Her scholarship focuses on using cultural heritage metadata as data for teaching, discovery, research, and reparative work; non-traditional forms of engagement with digital archival materials; and scalable approaches to digital preservation and repository management. She’s interested in a little bit of everything related to archives, technology, digital humanities, and how technology can facilitate access and innovative use of library and archives resources.

Elizabeth James, Digital Archivist at the West Virginia and Regional History Center since September 2021.

State Road Commission Base Map for Grant County, 1931. Note that North is at left on this map.
his career. Also includes papers regarding Neal’s father and paternal uncles, and mother. There are papers of his grandfather William Elmer Neal (1875-1969) who was a physician, mayor of Huntington, WV (1925-28), and who served in the WV House of Delegates (1949-'51) and U.S. House of Representatives (1952-54; 56-58).


Papers of Franklin Cleckley, lawyer, judge, and professor of law in West Virginia. Appointed to the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals in 1994 by then Governor Caperton Gaston, Cleckley was the first African-American Justice in West Virginia. Known for his prolific writing, he authored more than 100 majority opinions along with a number of concurring and dissenting opinions. Much of the collection consists of scrapbooks of newspaper clippings relating to the career of Cleckley. To a lesser extent the collection also includes personal correspondence in the form of greeting and sympathy cards, correspondence and papers regarding legal cases Cleckley took part in, as well as biographical material such as family photographs, resumes, and various identification cards, among others.

Howard Sutherland, Senator, Correspondence Regarding Appointments. 1916-1923, 1 ft. 3 in., Acquired in 2021. A&M 4504.

Correspondence of U.S. Senator Howard Sutherland (R-W. Va) mainly regarding recommendations for appointments of West Virginian district attorneys, district attorney assistants, district federal judges, and U.S Marshalls. There are both incoming and outgoing letters. One predominant recommendation is for Republican James French Strother for Federal District Judge of the Southern District of West Virginia. Strother went on to serve in the sixty-ninth and seventieth congresses from 1925 to 1929. Many of the correspondents are associated with banks, businesses, industries, insurance companies, and newspapers across West Virginia, many located in Wheeling, WV.


This collection includes 103 issues of “Isaac Asimov’s Science Fiction Magazine” and “Asimov’s Science Fiction”, published from 1977-1994. There are also two issues of Isaac Asimov’s Science Fiction Anthology, published in 1979.


Scans of pages from the hotel register of the Keller Hotel of Romney, West Virginia for the period 1854-1909 (incomplete). The register book pages list the guests’ names and check-in date. The pages may also list the guest’s home residence and/or the guest’s room number. In some cases, financial information is also included, such as how much each guest paid, and calculations of the hotel’s total revenue. The collection also includes scans of black-and-white photos of the hotel and separate scans of headers from hotel register stationery, as well as historical information regarding the Keller Hotel.

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A research manual of 103 pages outlining available primary and secondary source material regarding the early iron business operations of Isaac Meason and J.D. Mathiot in western Pennsylvania (ca. 1790-1860). It includes biographical information, and identification of source materials and their location. There are also extensive photographs in color documenting the sites and facilities of the iron business.

A documentary film by David Bernabo and John W. Miller regarding the history of Moundsville, West Virginia, with an emphasis on the post 1950 era.


Negatives (35 mm) of photographs shot by photographer Phil Primack, who at one time worked for the Mountain Eagle newspaper in Whitesburg, Kentucky. Subjects include the Finley Mine disaster (1970), the Buffalo Creek flood disaster (1972), the Miners for Democracy convention in Wheeling, West Virginia (1972), a UMWA rally on Labor Day (1972), a UMWA rally for pensioners (ca. 1972), and the UMWA convention of 1973, the first under the reform leadership of Arnold Miller (12/1973)


Includes catalogs, product photos, Seneca Center records, and other material.


One Enfield Rifle (47 in. in length) recovered from the site of the Battle of Blair Mountain (1921) in Logan County, West Virginia. There are also shell casings of various calibers recovered from the Blair Mountain site.

West Virginia University, Student Affairs, Historical Files, Administrative Records, and Other Material. ca. 1865-2015, 9 ft. 7 in., Transferred in 2021. A&M 5271.

Administrative files of the Student Affairs Office. Includes historical files, publications, administrative records, ephemera, artifacts, and other material.


Photographs by Finley Taylor, a photographer residing in Richwood, Nicholas County, West Virginia, who was active from 1917-1949. The collection includes images of business and industry, and portraits of residents, created in the region of Clay, Nicholas, and Webster counties.

UMWA leaders Harry Patrick, Arnold Miller, and Mike Trbovich at the Miners for Democracy convention in Wheeling, May 1972. Arnold, a Kanawha County native, was nominated as the MFD candidate for UMWA President at the convention. He was later elected to that position with Trbovich as Vice President and Patrick as Secretary-Treasurer. Photograph by Phil Primack.

Queen City Coal Company Postcard Advertising Island Creek Coal. ca. 1910-1920, 1 item, Gift in 2020. A&M 4492.

Postcard distributed by the Queen City Coal Company advertising Island Creek Coal, which was produced by the coal mining town of Holden in Logan County, West Virginia. The Queen City Coal Company was located in Cincinnati, Ohio and operated from 1905 until 1921. The postcard also contains two packs of needles of varying sizes.


Historical narrative of 29 pages regarding the beginning of the West Virginia National Youth Science Camp authored by Roderick W. Wilson.

Mrs. Eads of Summersville, WV, poses with taxidermy birds and bear-skin rugs. Undated photograph by Finley Taylor.
Commemorating the WV Mine Wars:
West Virginia Day 2021

2021 marked the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Blair Mountain, the culmination of a decade of tensions between miners seeking to unionize and coal companies that fiercely opposed labor organization. The WVRHC recognized the anniversary in its 2021 West Virginia Day program focused on the West Virginia Mine Wars. In June, the Center hosted online presentations by historians Dr. Hal Gorby of West Virginia University and Dr. Chuck Keeney of Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College. Gorby focused on the social, political, and economic context for the labor conflicts. Keeney talked about the Battle at Blair Mountain and efforts to save it as a historic place. A recording of the presentation is available online at wvrhc.lib.wvu.edu/news-events/west-virginia-day.

Center staff also curated an exhibition, The Road to Blair Mountain: Commemorating the West Virginia Mine Wars 1912-1921, featuring documents, photographs, and artifacts from the Center’s collections. Road to Blair Mountain begins with a glimpse into life in company towns, mining tools and methods, and the dangers of the industry, particularly highlighting the Monongah Mine Disaster of 1907, before turning to the major events and key players of the Mine Wars. The exhibit recounts strikes at Paint Creek and Cabin Creek, the Battle of the Tug, the Matewan Massacre, the Miner’s March and ensuing Battle of Blair Mountain. The Road to Blair Mountain will be on display in the WVRHC’s Davis Family Galleries through Spring 2021.

Per the usual custom, the WVRHC commissioned a poster to accompany the 2021 celebration (pictured below). If you would like one mailed to you, please send an email to msalvarez@mail.wvu.edu and include your mailing address.