

*Celebrating 161 years of West
Virginia*

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Preface

I have always wanted to write this book, maybe it's what I'm here for? Maybe it's why I'm alive? I've been thinking and talking about sharing my knowledge of West Virginia for a long time, but writing a book seemed like a daunting task. After taking a few college classes, I thought I was ready. In late 2023 and early 2024, I started to get serious about writing and publishing the book. So, I started researching all the things I knew about West Virginia and its contributions to confirm them and compiling all this history in one place, along with my own commentary. I ended up learning a lot of new things, too. I had a lot of fun writing this book.

I really tried to put myself in the position of an outsider, someone who knew nothing about West Virginia and tried to think of how to best represent the state. You know the part in movies where everything comes together and makes sense? That's how the experience of writing this book has been. Aside from the book entertaining people, I also think it's important to keep the history of our state alive.

Introduction. . .

The whole point of this book is to show the things that West Virginians have accomplished over the years. The book also covers the history of the region. West Virginia has a lot to offer to those who can appreciate it from our city streets to our woods and pastures. West Virginia has never got the recognition we deserve, mainly because of the small size of the state, I think

“The sun doesn’t always shine in West Virginia, but the people do”- JFK

**“This place moves me like very, very few other places and I been everywhere”-
Anthony Bourdain**

Mountaineers are always free

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Pre-historic people in the region

Before this region was the Colony of Virginia, the State of Virginia or the State of West Virginia, there were people here. Archaeologists have found evidence of people being in the region that is now West Virginia as early as 10,500 B.C. The Paleo-Indians were here long before white settlers of European decent were present. The artifacts left behind from thousands of years ago give us a glimpse back in time before any written record.

The ancestors of these people were Asian who probably crossed the Bering Strait to get to North America. The Bering Strait is a strait between Russia and Alaska, it connects the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Paleo-Indians were big game hunters. Evidence suggests that the climate was much colder from about 10,500-9,000 B.C, and the Paleo-Indians hunted animals such as mammoth, mastodon, musk ox and caribou. Remember that B.C. years were a countdown.

As the years went on, there was a shift in the climate to more mild weather and this aided in the extinction of mammoth and mastodon. So, the hunting style of the Paleo-Indians had to change as well. By 3,000 B.C. their main food source was the deer, they also hunted small mammals, as well as gathered nuts, berries and other food plants.

Much of the things the Paleo- Indians used didn't survive all the years but what did were stone tools. Looking at these stone tools and comparing them to tools from other places in America helps archeologists to answer the questions they have had. Many of the stone tools and weapons from this period were found near the Ohio and Kanawha rivers. Sites included Blennerhassett Island, St. Albans, Glassgow and Hansford.

Another significant tribe of the prehistoric era was the Adena tribe. The Adena tribe built burial mounds. If you're from West Virginia or even visited West Virginia, you know what I'm talking about. Hundreds of mounds were built but the most notable were the Grave Creek mound in Moundsville and the Criel Mound in South Charleston, both of which are still standing.

The Grave creek mound is the largest mound in North America, at 62 feet tall and 240 feet in diameter at the base. Estimated to be built between 250-150 B.C., the Grave Creek mound was excavated in 1975 by the West Virginia geological and Economic Survey, which revealed a moat was dug around the mound. The earliest description of the mound was written in 1775 by Nicholas Cresswell. The earliest excavation was in 1883 when two men, Abelard Tomlinson and his brother-in-law, Thomas Biggs, found that there were three bodies in the mound in two burial vaults. The upper burial vault contained the remains of one individual and the lower vault contained two individuals, who were believed to be a male and a female. All three were surrounded by beads made of bone and shell, along with other pieces of jewelry. The individual at the bottom who is believed to be male was buried with an Atlatl, a spear thrower, perhaps this was for him to protect himself and the others in the afterlife.



A picture of the Grave Creek mound taken by my friend Casey.

The Criel Mound AKA the South Charleston Mound is the second largest, at least in the state, but maybe the continent (seeing as how the Grave Creek Mound is the largest in the continent). It is also estimated to have been built between 250-150 B.C. It gets its name from the Criel family, who owned the land at one time. I'm sure when the Criel family owned the land, it was much different than today. Today, the Mound sits right in the center of South Charleston with MacCorkle avenue on one side and 7th avenue on the other. In 1883, the Mound was

excavated by the Smithsonian Institute, this excavation revealed the remains of thirteen individuals. Two near the top of the mound and eleven near the base. Ten of the eleven individuals were surrounding the eleventh one in a spoke pattern, indicating that the one in the center was of importance. I had always heard the rumor that the one in the center was seven feet tall. Well, there is *some* truth to that, according to A. R. Sines, who assisted in the excavation, the skeleton was “six feet, eight $\frac{3}{4}$ inches from head to heel” but the Smithsonian nomination form added “the extreme height indicated may have been an exaggeration created by earth pressing down on the burial”. The Criel Mound has survived a lot, including reports of the top of the mound being leveled off to make room for a judges stand for a racetrack of some kind that went around the Mound and the area being used as a pasture and for agricultural purposes.

The Grave creek Mound and the Criel Mound are the two most notable mounds, but they aren't the only two. The Dunbar mound AKA the poorhouse Mound isn't far from the Criel mound and was also excavated by the Smithsonian Institute in the 1880's. Archeologists believe this one was built by the Hopewell culture between 1 and 500 A.D. making it quite a bit newer than the Grave creek and Criel Mounds. This Mound had a crematory basin at the base and at least four skeletons towards the top. At one time, the Kanawha valley had the most burial mounds of anywhere in the country but now the Dunbar and the Criel Mounds are all that remain.

There were other tribes in the area after the mound builders including the Cherokee, Delaware and Shawnee but this was only *after* the arrival of European settlers. It seems to be the official last word in West Virginia that the early settlers of what is now West Virginia found no one when they arrived here. Of course, later that all changed and there were constant attacks by the natives. So much so that the white settlers eventually started building forts to protect themselves.

They say that most of the people in modern West Virginia who claim to have native American blood, have Cherokee blood. Given that the Cherokee tribe played a small role in West Virginia, this is puzzling. The reasons for this are debated. It could be that the settlers just admired the Cherokees more than other tribes. Personally, one of my great, great grandmothers was a 100% full blooded Cherokee Indian.

There is evidence of a pale people that inhabited the land long before European settlers or even the native Americans, the Shawnee called them Azgen or “the moon eyed people” and they claimed to have killed them all and that's why they didn't have any permanent settlements in this area when the Europeans arrived. They felt the ghosts of the murdered Azgen people owned the land. Not a lot is known of the moon eyed people. The Cherokee also had stories of moon eyed people. But who were these moon eyed people and where did they come from? There are a lot of theories ranging from aliens to descendants of the people of Atlantis. I guess we'll never know who the Azgen people were.

First white settlers

The historic period in North America began with the arrival of white settlers. The historic period is when written records started to be taken. The first white settlement was Jamestown at present day Williamsburg, VA in 1607.

It is commonly said that Morgan Morgan was the first white settler in what is now West Virginia, I mean that's what I heard most of my life. It was probably German settlers in the town of Mecklenburg, now Shepherdstown, though, according to the West Virginia archive. The main street in Shepherdstown is called German street to this day. I dove further into this to build onto what I had learned, and I found a record of a house in Shepherdstown that was built between 1727 and 1732, according to the best information available. It is believed to be the oldest house in what is now West Virginia. Morgan Morgan came to the area around 1731, which makes him at least one of the earliest European settlers. Morgan Morgan's home still stands in Berkley County and is said to have been built 1731-1734.

The Germans had called the new town Mecklenburg or New Mecklenburg, after Mecklenburg, Germany. These Germans had already been settled in Pennsylvania and were referred to as the "Pennsylvania Dutch"- although they are not Dutch. Dutch people are from the Netherlands. This is from people mispronouncing "deutsch" which is what the Germans referred to themselves as. Pennsylvania Dutch also became the name of their speaking language which is a mixture of German and English and is still spoken in some Amish communities today. The Pennsylvania Dutch are in states such as Ohio and Indiana today... and of course Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Dutch are mainly Germans but also come from German speaking countries like Switzerland. Sugar Creek, OH- an Amish settlement is called "the little Switzerland of Ohio" because of how much the Swiss have added to their culture.

They came to the Colony of Virginia on a road that became known as “the great wagon road”. The wagon road started in Philadelphia and went west through Pennsylvania before dropping down south and going through Virginia and even further south after that. The great wagon road connected the north to the south in those days. Most Pennsylvania Dutch religions are Lutherans or German reformed, but some are anabaptists, including Amish or Mennonite.

The Germans have contributed a lot to American culture in general. For example, the hamburgers and hotdogs we eat are German. They have had more of an impact on Appalachian culture than you might realize, though. My favorite contribution they’ve made is apple butter. I love apple butter on a biscuit, on toast, a bagel or even just on a spoon. Making apple butter is a big tradition here in the hills and hollers of West Virginia. Every fall, people will get out their big copper kettle and long wood spoon for stirring and make a family day of it. Of course, an easier way is the crock pot, or an even more convenient method is to just buy it or maybe somebody will just give you a jar that their family made. In any event, historians can trace the roots of this delicious treat back to Germany, Belgium and parts of the Netherlands in the Middle Ages. When the Colonists got here, there were no apple trees but lucky for us and the deer, they brought the trees and seeds from Europe. Apple butter can best be described as similar to apple sauce, its usually a little thicker than apple sauce, though. With spices such as cinnamon, pumpkin spice, cloves and all spice. Other foods related to this are pumpkin butter and pear butter.

Another food that is a favorite in West Virginia (but not mine) that Germans brought is sour kraut. While sour kraut has roots in Germany, and it’s a German word, sour kraut originated in China thousands of years ago, most historians agree. However, Germans are responsible for bringing it to America and are ultimately responsible for the people who enjoy it here in West

Virginia today. People eat it with sausage (kielbasa), and it typically goes with fried potatoes, pinto beans, a slice of an onion and a piece of cornbread. That is considered to be a classic West Virginia meal.

The Germans/ Pennsylvania Dutch also influenced Appalachian music with instruments like the dulcimer, of course, they had a different word for it- the Scheitholtz. Also, the fiddle. I'm a rocker, but I can appreciate the history of the music of the region. West Virginia's modern folk art also reflects Pennsylvania Dutch folk art, or Fraktur

The Germans are noted for their architecture. As I said earlier, the oldest house/cabin in West Virginia was German built. German cabins and barns from 2-300 years ago can still be seen scattered across West Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania. A common characteristic of a German built cabin is "chinking". Chinking goes between the logs to act as a type of insulator, back in those days, German settlers would use a mixture of clay and horsehair, nowadays they make a mortar type of chinking that you can buy by the bucket.

One modern American tradition that came from the Pennsylvania Dutch is Ground Hogs Day. On a holiday called Candlemas (February 2nd- midway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox) Christians believed that if it was sunny, then there would be another 40 days of cold, Germans took it a step farther by defining exactly what constitutes sunny weather, they said it was sunny if a badger or other small rodent could see their shadow. They brought the tradition to America and decided

the groundhog would work. The first official groundhogs' day was Feb 2nd, 1887, in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.

Another group that played a significant role in settling what would become the Eastern panhandle of West Virginia were the Scots- Irish or Scotch- Irish. This group originated in Scotland and migrated to Ireland to settle a town in Northern Ireland called Ulster, which they settled as a protestant province. This group are sometimes called the Ulster-Scots. After 100 years, they knew they were no longer Scottish, but they also knew they weren't Irish! They damn sure weren't Irish, that was their Catholic enemy. When anti- presbyterian laws were passed, they came to America. The Scots- Irish typically went to Pennsylvania because of their religious freedom but also because of the accessible ports, usually Philadelphia. As land became harder to find, they moved south into Virginia, their sons and daughters moved farther south.

The Scots- Irish were tough, they were resilient and just all-around bad ass. They were the ones who went across the Allegheny mountains to settle the rest of what would become West Virginia after the British victory of the French and Indian war.

During the war (in 1761), two brothers, John and Samuel Pringle, who were stationed at Fort Pitt, near present day Pittsburgh deserted their posts. The brothers and a couple of other guys headed south but the other two were caught and probably killed. The brothers kept moving and eventually met and worked for a man named John Simpson, they lived with him until 1764 and were on the run again and eventually took refuge in a hollow sycamore tree, where they stayed from about 1764 to 1767. The sycamore was near present day Buckhannon. The brothers had eventually decided they were no longer in danger of being caught and went home, which was on the Potomac River in the current Eastern panhandle of West Virginia. They returned to the old tree with a small group to start a permanent settlement. This was the first permanent

settlement west of the Alleghenies. There is currently a park to commemorate this and there's even a hollow sycamore, but of course it's not the same tree the Pringle brothers lived in, but it is a descendant of that tree, the historical marker says it's the third-generation descendant. The park also has picnic tables and a boat launch into the river.



Historical

Marker for the Pringle tree. A pic taken while visiting the tree/ park with my family.

The Scots-Irish are credited with bringing the potato to America and planting it in their settlement in New Hampshire. This is significant, even if it wasn't West Virginia related. One way they added to the Appalachian culture is by bringing their tradition of home brewing alcohol, this wasn't just for recreational use, but also for medicine, cleaning and treating wounds. They often had a bad reputation for having a short temper and fighting with the Indians

So, what about Morgan Morgan? I'll bet you thought I forgot about him. Mr. Morgan was from Wales. He was born November 1st, 1688, and came to Delaware around 1712 a single man but met and married Catherine Garretson. And they had five children. In 1729 the family moved to VA and in 1735 Morgan received a land patent for 1,000 acres that he had settled four years earlier in 1731. By 1740, there were enough people in the area for him to help est. a church-Christ Episcopal Church. The original log church isn't there anymore but there stands a newer building (1851) and it has the oldest "modern" cemetery in the state, with graves dating back almost as far back as the original building. Morgan Morgan himself is buried there. His log house remains, it was restored in 1976 by the Berkley County historical society. One of his sons, Zachquill, went on to settle Morgantown in 1771.

Zachquill claimed land on the Monongaila River in 1771 by "tomahawk right", the land was surveyed and deeded to him on April 29th, 1781. The town was officially chartered by the Virginia assembly in 1785. It's unclear who the very first lot was sold to, but it can be narrowed down to twelve men: James Daugherty, John Evans, Michael Kerns, Thomas Laidley, Richard Merrifield, Zachquill Morgan (namesake), Jacob Nuze, John Pierpont, Jacob Pindall, David Scott, William Stewart, and James Thompson. Michael Kern's Cabin is still standing in Morgantown, known as Kern's Fort, because at one time, it had a stockade around it. The cabin was built in 1772- which could lead you to think maybe Zachquill wasn't the first settler in the

area? (But he at least is credited for it). The Kerns cabin or “Fort” is the oldest extant structure in Morgantown.

The early settlers had an impact on our dialect today. People don’t pronounce the “oh” sound at the end of words but rather replace it with an “R”. For example, “Hollow” becomes “Holler”, “Yellow” becomes “Yeller”, “fellow” becomes “Feller” and so on.

One theory I read says that's because of the remoteness of the area, early settlers didn’t do a lot of conversating with the rest of the country, so our dialect is related to the Elizabethan English that they used to speak. To outsiders, it may sound ignorant or just not make sense, like “why do they say they live in a holler?”. My own theory, based on that theory, is that soon there won’t be any kind of West Virginia dialect. Modern West Virginians are connected with the rest of the country and the world.

The early settlers had it rough to say the least, with Indian attacks, long, harsh winters, not to mention being in such a remote location. They had to build, grow or hunt everything they needed. They were self-reliant, which I think is a trait that has lived on . We still grow our own gardens and can what we grow, hunt deer, squirrel and turkey and forage for wild mushrooms and onions. Nothing like they did, though. They mastered blacksmithing, milling, hunting, farming and food preservation, like canning and smoking meats. All just to survive. Also, you must imagine- what if you got hurt? There was no going to the doctor, they had to figure it out and deal with it.

As I read about the early settlers, I'm reminded of the West Virginian people of today. Tough, determined, strong-willed, resilient, resourceful and peaceful... though *not* the people you'd want to cross. West Virginia's culture has been shaped by immigrants from a lot of different places and also by the native Americans but the early settlers that I've mentioned here probably had the most impact.

Towns farther West in current West Virginia were settled later. For example, settlers headed west from Greenbrier County in 1788 to build a fort at the mouth of the Elk River on the Kanawha River, which led to the city of Charleston. Though, the town wasn't chartered until 1794. The first lot sold in the city of Charleston was sold to Lewis Tackett, sr.

Creation of West Virginia

It is well-known that West Virginia seceded from Virginia during the American Civil War. It started in 1861 when Virginia had made the decision to secede from the Union and join the Confederacy. This didn't set right with the people in the Western part of the state. In those days, the wealthy aristocrats in the East pretty much Governed for themselves without considering the folks in the Western parts of the state. In the Western parts, they considered this decision to be treason, and they wanted no part of it. Not many of the farmers in the Western part of the state could afford slaves, anyway, so they weren't about to fight a war over slavery. Now at the time, the goal wasn't to secede, but rather to repeal the referendum to secede from the Union, which was passed in April of 1861 in Richmond, VA.

An assembly of delegates from the northwestern parts of VA, led by John Carlise of Clarksburg met in Wheeling on May 13th of 1861 and met again the 14th and 15th. The Ordinance of secession was ratified, so the delegates held another meeting in June of 1861. The meetings became known as the Wheeling Conventions.

We come here to carry out and execute, and it may be, to institute a government for ourselves. We are determined to live under a State Government in the United States of America and under the Constitution of the United States. It requires stout hearts to execute this purpose; it requires men of courage - of unfaltering determination; and I believe, in the gentlemen who compose this Convention, we have the stout hearts and the men who are

determined in this purpose.

Arthur Boreman, First Session of the Second Wheeling Convention, June 12, 1861

They knew they couldn't start a whole new state on their own, so they decided to take Virginia back, calling themselves "The Restored government of Virginia". They elected a governor, Francis Pierpont. Since then, Francis is often referred to as "the father of West Virginia", born January 25th, 1814, in Morgantown, VA (now WV), he would die years later in 1899 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The restored government of VA also elected two Senators to go to Washington, Carlise and Waitman Willey. What's interesting is Waitman Willey was also present at the Virginia convention in Richmond, where they voted to secede from the Union, though Willey opposed secession.

Willey was also from Morgantown, although he was born in and grew up in Farmington and was also a lawyer. He was mostly self-taught, until he started at Madison college in Pennsylvania, where he graduated in 1831.

It was there in Washington that President Abraham Lincoln saw the senators and recognized them as the *true* Government of Virginia.

In 1862, Willey submitted a bill to congress for the admission of the new state into the Union. The first name that they considered was Kanawha, but there were concerns about there

already being a Kanawha County. So, obviously, they went the less creative and generic route. Waitman also submitted the Willey Amendment, which would gradually free slaves in the state.

Kanawha is the name of a river in the region, the origin of the name is unclear, but there are several theories that people swear by. Some sources say that Kanawha is an old Indian word and there are different opinions of what it means. Probably the most accurate explanation says that it was named for a tribe called Canoy that once lived along the riverbanks and over the years, the spelling was changed. What we know for sure is that there is a county that was named for the river which flows through it, the county was created November 14th, 1788.

A quote from the Willey Amendment

“The children of slaves born within the limits of this State after the fourth day of July, eighteen hundred and sixty-three, shall be free; and all slaves within the said State who shall, at the time aforesaid, be under the age of ten years, shall be free when they arrive at the age of twenty-one years; and all slaves over ten and under twenty-one years, shall be free when they arrive at the age of twenty-five years; and no slave shall be permitted to come into the State for permanent residence therein.”

On July 14th, the senate approved the bill, with statehood conditioned on the approval of the Willey amendment. The house approved the bill in December, Lincoln signed the bill on December 31st. On March 26th, 1863, West Virginia ratified their revised constitution. On June 20th, 1863, President Lincoln proclaimed that West Virginia would be recognized as a state. A date that will be remembered for hundreds of years as “west Virginia day”.

The funny thing is that it wasn't the first time Western Virginians tried to separate from Virginia. After the revolutionary war, Western Virginians signed a petition to get the continental congress to create a 14th colony called "Westsylvania, which I think is a way more creative name than "West Virginia". The proposed colony would have included all modern-day West Virginia, as well as parts of Maryland, Kentucky, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The Continental Congress ignored the petition.

Five of West Virginia's 55 counties were created after the creation of the state. Lincoln, Grant, Mineral, Summers and Mingo. All these 5 counties were formed out of differences of opinion about the war, so basically, they're small-scale versions of what happened with Virginia.

Lincoln and Grant were both of course named for heroes of the war- Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses Grant. Lincoln county was formed from Putnam, Kanawha, Cabell and Boone counties on February 23rd, 1867. Grant county was formed out of Hardy County on February 14th, 1866. Valentines Day County, how sweet. I would also like to add a sidenote about Abraham Lincoln, it is often believed that he was an abolitionist because he signed the Emancipation Proclamation. I read from a reliable source that said while he opposed slavery morally, he was still racist and didn't believe in equality.

Mineral county was also formed in 1866, from Hampshire County. Its name, as you can probably guess, is because of all the minerals found in the county, mainly coal. Although, coal isn't technically a mineral, because it is made from biologic materials.

Summers County was named for a guy named George W. Summers. (Summers street in Charleston is named for him too) George was a prominent attorney, politician and judge. The new county was established on February 27th, 1871, and was made from parts of Fayette, Greenbrier, Mercer and Monroe counties.

Lastly, the newest county, Mingo was made in 1895 from parts of Logan County. The new county got it's name from Chief Logan's people- the Mingo tribe. It is often called "bloody Mingo" because of the events of the Matewan Massacre (the Coal Wars).

West virginia has been a state since 1863, but somehow out of staters still ask us if we live near Richmond, if you tell them you're from West Virginia, which wouldn't even be right if Virginia were still one state. I think it's funny because these same out of state people say that we're the ignorant ones. Now, it is true that West Virginia always ranks near last in education, but I don't think it's fair to say we're ignorant. West Virginia is full of intelligent, hardworking people. Of course, there are exceptions...

The war from which West Virginia was born. The civil

war. . .

A lot of people would like to erase the American civil war from the pages of our history books, but I think the past is worth remembering. The civil war was fought over slavery, don't

kid yourself. We've all heard the argument that it was fought over the state's rights but by now I think we all know the truth, whether we admit it or not. Slavery is a part of history that we regret nowadays, though none of us were even alive at that time. However, the war was a huge part of our nation's history and necessary for the creation of West Virginia.

The American Civil war (1861-1865) known as the war between the states, but in some cases was the war between the brothers. The war pitted brother against brother and son against father in some cases. West Virginia had thousands of soldiers fighting on both sides, the Union *and* the Confederacy, though West Virginia was a Union state.

West Virginia was of course formed from the Civil War, but the state also played a big role in the war. West Virginians fought in well-known battles, such as Antietam and Gettysburg.

The first land battle of the American Civil War was fought in West Virginia, or what was to become West Virginia. On June 3rd, 1861, three years prior to West Virginia becoming the 35th state in the Union, there was the battle of Philippi. The battle, which was often referred to as a skirmish, only lasted about 20 minutes and resulted in no casualties but was still a Union victory. The Confederates retreated in such a hurry, that the battle is often jokingly referred to as the "Philippi races". This battle would mark the beginning of the Western Virginia campaign where the Union and Confederate armies fought for control of the mountainous region until December of 1861. Some would argue that the first battle of the American Civil War was the battle of Fort Sumter, and in a way, they would be right, it is considered by many to be the first

battle of the Civil War, but remember the key word here is "land". By the way, the Battle of Fort Sumter was only a couple of months earlier.

As I mentioned earlier, West Virginians, or Virginians at the time, fought in well-known battles, like Antietam. In 1862, the Kanawha Division, a division of the Union army, left the Charleston area of Virginia to go to Maryland to help in the battle of Antietam AKA the Battle of Sharpsburg. I'm sure you've heard about this famous battle; it is said to be the bloodiest single day battle in American history. A union victory that day.

While the Kanawha division was gone, Colonel Joseph Andrew Jackson Lightburn was left in charge of the Union troops that remained in the Kanawha Valley. The Confederates, under command of General William W. Loring thought they would slip on in and take Charleston in General Cox's absence. Long story, short, this doesn't end well for the confederates.

On September 6th, 1862, the Confederates left Narrows, VA to head north to Charleston. On September 10th, they ran into Union forces around Fayetteville, the two fought several

skirmishes over the next few days. On the morning of September 13th, the Confederates set up on the hills east of Charleston and began firing on Union troops, who were around the present-day Capitol, the Union troops fired back, and this engagement went on all morning, until about 11:30 when the Federals gave up their positions and headed to the center of town. Colonel Lightburn told civilians to evacuate, and he started burning down buildings to keep them out of Confederate hands. The townspeople watched the battle from what is now Spring Hill Cemetery, where a lot of prominent people from Charleston's history are buried. By about 3pm, the Confederates had the Union flag, Lightburn's men crossed the Elk River and burned the bridges to slow down the Confederates. The Union Garrison kept going to try to protect their 700-wagon supply train while skirmishing with the Confederates. On September 16th, the Union troops crossed the Ohio river at Ravenswood, Va. (now WV) and Loring called off the chase. So far this seems like a big W for the confederates, but Loring was soon replaced, and Cox and the Kanawha division returned from Maryland. By November, the Union army had regained control of Charleston. This became known as the Battle of Charleston. This is not to be confused with other Battles of the same name. This was William W. Loring's Kanawha valley campaign, where he attempted to gain control of Charleston and the Kanawha valley.

The Western Virginia campaign of 1861 resulted in Union control of the area, despite the Confederates' attempts at "liberating" the state. See, they thought they were liberating a Union occupied state because they didn't take the new government seriously. The fact that the Union kept control of the area was pivotal in the creation of West Virginia. The campaign lasted from May- December of 1861 and included battles such as The Battle of Philippi (previously

mentioned), The Battle of Rich Mountain, The Battle of Corrick's Ford, the Battle of Scary creek, the Battle of Kessler's Cross Lanes and the Battle of Carnifex ferry.

Rich Mountain in Randolph County, Virginia (now West Virginia), July 11th, 1861. This day made General McClellan a Union hero. Confederate forces, led by General Robert Garnett and Colonel John Pegram, blocked two roads through Rich Mountain and Laurel Hill to prevent General McClellan's men from getting any farther east. McClellan had a plan to send part of his men, led by General William Rosecrans around behind the rebels left side, so they could attack from both sides, this is a military maneuver known as "flanking". It was a long walk through a down poor, but Rosecrans' men made it and attacked the left side of the Rebel's formation. McClellan's men opened fire on the rebels from the other side. Both sides lost approximately 70 men. Pegram knew he had to give up his position, but Rosecrans blocked his exit, so two days later, he surrendered his 555 men. Now, like I said, this made McClellan a hero, but most historians will agree that Rosecrans deserved the credit. Either way, this was an important win for the Union.

The next battle we'll talk about is the Battle of Corrick's ford. I thought it was important to mention this battle because this battle immediately followed the events of the Battle of Rich Mountain. As the Confederates fled from Laurel Hill, they were being pursued by the Union army. They headed south to the town of Beverly but feared a trap and turned northeast, throwing out supplies along the way. The Federals finally caught up with them at Corrick's ford of the Cheat River (Tucker County) on July 13th, 1861, in the early morning hours. Shots flew across

the river killing an estimated 600 confederates and 50 federals. During this hail of gunfire, General Garnett turned to give an order and was struck by a ball, killing him. Garnett was the first General to be killed in the civil war.

The Battle of Scary Creek in Putnam County was one of the rare confederate victories. Fought on July 17th, 1861, it was an effort to clear the Kanawha Valley of Confederates, led by General Henry A. Wise of Virginia. General Jacob D. Cox of Ohio in the Union army set out July 11th from Point Pleasant leading a 3-pronged attack (infantry, cavalry and artillery) eastward. The idea was to entrap Wise at Charleston, but they didn't quite make it there. After some insignificant skirmishing at Barboursville, most of Cox's men had consolidated at the mouth of the Pocatalico River, by July 16th. The next day, they crossed the Kanawha River and encountered Confederate Pickets at the mouth of Little Scary Creek. General Cox sent out about 1,300 federal troops, under command of Colonel John W. Lowe to engage the approximate 900 Confederates, which were led by Colonel George S. Patton. George S. Patton was grandfather to the famed George S. Patton of World War II. For almost five hours, an artillery fight ensued, and several unsuccessful attempts to cross the Scary Creek Bridge were made. Patton was seriously wounded, so Captain Albert Gellatin Jenkins took over and Rallied the Confederates to victory. Their victory was short-lived, because Wise had left the Kanawha Valley by August 1st.

Kesler's (sometimes Kessler's) cross lanes in Nicholas County. AKA The Battle of Cross Lanes (not to be confused with the town of Cross Lanes in Kanawha County). Another Confederate victory. The battle was fought on August 26th, 1861. On August 21st Confederate

force, led by John B. Floyd crossed the Gauley River at Carnefex Ferry (sometimes spelled Carnefix or Carnefax) and set up an entrenched camp. On Sunday August 25th, the 7th regiment Ohio volunteer infantry (union force) commanded by Colonel Erastus B. Tyler advanced from near Gauley Bridge to Kesler's Cross Lanes, a few miles from Floyd's camp. Tyler failed to scout the area properly and the next morning, August 26th, the 7th regiment was attacked while eating breakfast. The battle only lasted 30-45 minutes but ended with the union force routed from the position.

The Battle of Carnefex Ferry was a couple weeks later, on September 10th, 1861. General Floyd and his rebels were still camped near Carnefex Ferry, around the Patterson farm, which sat high up on a hill overlooking the river. Remember this is only a few miles from Kesler's Cross Lanes. The Union army attacked; this time led by General William S. Rosecrans, who came southward from Clarksburg, with 3 brigades of infantry to support Tyler's regiment. Floyd retreated down the steep hill and across the river. Union victory This was a very important battle for the creation of West Virginia. Shortly after this battle, votes were held in areas controlled by the Union army. A loss for the Union at Carnefex Ferry would have meant Confederate occupation of these areas and possibly an entirely different vote. That particular campaign lasted until December but of course it wasn't the only campaign. These were the early battles of the war.



The Patterson house still stands, here is a picture I took of it in August of 2022 while visiting the park with my family. It is said the inside still has holes from the battle (the outer clapboard siding has since been added)



The overlook at Carnefex Ferry. 2022

Another well-known battle that occurred in now West Virginia was The Battle of Droop Mountain, November 6th, 1863, just months after West Virginia became a state. This was the

largest battle in the state and one of the last major battles that occurred in the state. Because of the Union victory on this day, Confederate resistance in the state was over.

The town of Gauley Bridge in Fayette County is named for a bridge that once carried the James River and Kanawha Turnpike over the Gauley River near the confluence with the New river. The James River and Kanawha Turnpike is now US route 60 and parts of Interstate 64. This made the area a strategic point for both Union and Confederate forces during the Civil War because this was an access point to the Kanawha Valley. The area was originally sympathetic to the south but was taken and retaken three times between 1861 and 1862. During the fight for control of the area, the Confederates burned the covered bridge. In 1861, Federal troops, under the command of General Jacob D. Cox, started marching from Charleston to Gauley Bridge. This was right after McClellan's victory at Rich Mountain in July. The Confederates in the area, led by General Henry Wise, retreated and burned the bridge behind them. The bridge was rebuilt and burned again. The stone piers remain, and you can still see them to this day from the modern highway bridge.

It would be hard to write about the civil war in western Virginia and not mention the town of Harpers Ferry. What made this place such a strategic point on both army's maps was the

armory and arsenal. Lets skip back a couple years before the war, to 1859, when John Brown raided Harpers Ferry. This is often referred to as the “dress rehearsal for the civil war”. On the night of October 16th, 1859, John Brown, an abolitionist, led 21 or 22 followers to Harpers Ferry, VA (now West Virginia). They captured the US Armory and Arsenal and were able to kidnap slave owners. John’s goal was to start a revolt but that’s not exactly how it happened. It wasn’t long until local militias and Marines, led by at that time Robert E. Lee, this was of course before the confederacy had them surrounded. John Brown and his men were forced into the fire engine house, which later became known as “John Brown’s fort”. This is where Brown and his men stayed for the remainder of the “raid’. On the morning of October 18th, Lee tried to convince Brown to surrender but he refused. Lee ordered the marines to storm the engine house and they took all the abolitionist fighters alive. John Brown was arrested and taken to Charles town to be held until he could be tried. In November, he was tried and convicted of treason. On December 2nd, 1859, John Brown was hanged at the age of 59. John Brown’s fort still stands in Harpers Ferry, although it has been moved. Nothing remains of all the buildings that once made up the armory and arsenal.

Exactly two years later, on October 16th, 1861, was the first battle of Harpers Ferry. It was at a place called Bolivar Heights, which overlooks Harpers Ferry. This would be the first of five engagements there during the civil war. On the 15th of October, Union forces led by colonel John White Geary, were crossing the Potomac River to get wheat that the Confederates had hid. Originally, there were 600 men, but Geary sent 500 back. On the 16th Geary’s men were attacked by a Confederate force, led by colonel Turner Ashby. The force were 300 militia men who were armed with obsolete flintlock muskets, two companies of confederate infantry men and 230

calvary men. All this against the 100 Union soldiers wasn't very fair. The Union held their position and outflanked the Confederates, forcing them to withdraw.

May 30th, 1862, was the second engagement at Bolivar heights. General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson had routed all the Union troops in the Shenandoah Valley, except the ones stationed at Harpers Ferry. Because Jackson had so much success, reinforcements were called in for the Union army, Brig. Gen. Rufus B. Saxton arrived in Harpers Ferry to defend the Union position. Saxton's position on Camp Hill was held, despite an attack by Jackson and his Confederate soldiers, Jackson retired from the battlefield under the cover of darkness.

Four months later saw the largest American surrender in the civil war. This engagement also involved "Stonewall" Jackson. September 12th- 15th, Jackson's army fired on the Union troops from three directions, Maryland heights, Loudon heights and School House Ridge. On the night of the 14th, Jackson sent commander A.P. Hill to flank the Union Soldiers from the southern side of the heights, forcing them to surrender. This was the formal surrender of over 12,000 troops. This became known as the battle of Harpers Ferry.

The fourth time Bolivar Heights saw combat action was while Robert E. Lee was advancing toward Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in June of 1863, the month that West Virginia was declared a state. He sent troops to try to maneuver the Union troops away from Bolivar Heights. The Union soldiers didn't put up much of a fight and withdrew to the protection of the Naval

Battery on Maryland Heights. They shelled the Confederates while also causing problems in the town of Bolivar by damaging houses.

The last time Bolivar Heights was a battlefield was late June and Early July of 1864. Jubal Early- a Confederate Military officer, made an attempt to invade Maryland and take the big guns on Maryland heights. He sent men to Bolivar heights and Harpers Ferry. Like in the year before, the Union troops weren't really interested in a fight and instead retreated to the big guns on Maryland heights. They shelled the Confederates and again caused Havoc in the town.

Harper's Ferry is the oldest town in West Virginia, it was founded in 1762. Many of the buildings in Harpers Ferry date back to the revolutionary war. It is considered by many to be the most haunted place in West Virginia as well, with sightings of John Brown himself as well as soldiers from the civil war and revolutionary war. Perhaps the confluence of the Potomac Shenandoah rivers that stirs up so much paranormal activity?

Mine wars

You know, the Civil War battles weren't the only battles to occur in West Virginia. There were also a series of battles known as the "coal wars" that happened between 1912 and 1921 between coal companies and coal miners.

Paint creek/ Cabin creek 1912. Miners went on strike demanding better pay, the right to trade where they want and recognition of their union, the UMWA. The company responded by hiring the Baldwin-Felts agency to guard the mines. They also hired men from the deep south and from New York to work in the mines and keep operations running.

After the agents arrived, the miners either moved out or were evicted from their company owned homes. They moved into coal camps that were supported by the union. The union supplied the miners and their families with canvas tents. The agents built forts around the mines, outfitted with machine guns. They had a train called the "bull moose special", which consisted of a locomotive, an armored passenger car and an armored baggage car, that they used to escort other trains in and out of the mines that were carrying non-union miners.

Violence was pretty much a part of daily life for a long time. A lot of the violence was around these trains. The strikers would attack these trains by destroying the tracks and/ or firing on the cars, as the police and mine guards fired back. On July 26th the miners attacked the town of Mucklow, which is where the agents were stationed. This left twelve strikers and four guards dead.

On September 1st, 1912, the striking miners made it clear that they intended to kill the mine guards and destroy company operations. When the companies heard of these threats, they brought in even more guards and waited. In response, Governor Glasscock declared Martial Law to be in effect on September 2nd. He sent in around 1,200 state troops into the area. At first the

striking miners thought the troops were there to help them but soon found out they were sent to break the strike. The troops confiscated rifles, machine guns, pistols and 1000's of rounds of ammunition from both sides.

This seemed to help things for a while and Martial Law was lifted on October 15th, 1912. One month later November 15th it was reimposed and lifted again on January 10th, 1913.

On February 7th, the miners attacked Mucklow again, killing at least one person. In retaliation, Coal Operator Quinn Martin, Kanawha County sheriff Bonner Hill and several deputies attacked the tent colony at Holly Grove with the Bull Moose special, drive by style that same evening. They turned off the train lights and fired machine guns at the temporary settlement.

Martial law was back in affect for the third time on February 10th again one month later.

On March 4th Dr. Henry D. Hatfield was sworn in as Governor and he kind of saved the day. He immediately came to the area and released the people who were being held under Martial Law, he transferred 86-year-old "mother" Jones to Charleston to get medical treatment (she was an organizer sent by the UMW) and he moved to impose conditions for a strike settlement. Miners could either accept these terms or be deported from the state.

The paint creek miners signed the "Hatfield contract" on May 1st. The cabin creek miners continued to resist until around July. Despite the strike, little changed.

Then there was the shootout in Matewan on May 19th, 1920. This is often referred to as the BATTLE OF MATEWAN or THE MATEWAN MASACRE. There's a movie about this called MATEWAN that I recommend you watch. There was a lot going on in the world in the 1920's, but in southern WV, it wasn't all bow ties and flapper dresses. The Baldwin-felts agents were coming to town to evict miners from company houses. When sheriff Sid Hatfield heard about this, he rounded up a small posse and they went to have a talk with the agents at the train station, the Mayor of Matewan also went. Their simple argument escalated quickly and turned deadly. Ten people were killed that day, including the Mayor and two brothers of the Baldwin-felts founder.

On September 1st, 1921, Sid Hatfield was assassinated by members of the Baldwin-felts detective agency. This outraged miners as they thought of Sid as a hero because of the shootout in Matewan. Within days, thousands of angry miners were in Marmet led by UMWA organizers. They planned to march to Mingo County and confront the mining companies (that's a long march).

In order to get to Mingo County, they had to go through Logan county and Logan county was ruled by an anti-union sheriff. When the Logan sheriff heard about this march, he assembled a 3,000-man posse to keep the marchers from crossing through, he called this posse "the Logan Defenders". They made machine gun nests and dug trenches around the mountain. This became known as THE BATTLE OF BLAIR MOUNTAIN. This was a long time coming. From the 1800s up until years after this, being a coal miner sucked. They had to lease the tools they used to mine with from the company, they worked in horrible conditions, they got paid very little and

it was only in "scrip" which was coal mine currency that could only be spent in company stores. Basically, the company owned you.

I'm not sure if the marchers even knew anyone was waiting on them in Logan County but they soon found out. On August 28th around 10,000 miners showed up at the Logan County line. The two sides fought for days. The union miners used red bandanas around their necks to distinguish themselves from their opponents and this is where the term "redneck" comes from. This was an all-out guerilla style war. The sheriff of Logan County even chartered airplanes and equipped them with bombs and teargas to drop on the miners. This fighting went on until the first couple of days into September when the West Virginia Army National Guard intervened by order of President Warren G. Harding.

The state charged around 20 union men with treason and some others with murder, but one in particular that I want to talk about is Bill Blizzard. Bill was a union organizer and was charged with treason but was acquitted on May 27th, 1922.

The trial took place at the Charles Town courthouse in Jefferson County. The same courthouse where abolitionist John brown had been found guilty of treason years before.

I have personally visited the former home of Bill Blizzard while on a ghost walk with the Charleston Ghost Tour Company www.charlestonghosttourcompany.com the mansion which sets on Kanawha Boulevard in Charleston is said to be haunted by the ghost of Bill Blizzard. Today, the house serves as a headquarters for the UMWA.



Bill Blizzard's Mansion on Kanawha Boulevard in Charleston, WV

The Hawks Nest Tunnel Disaster

An estimated one thousand people lost their lives from Silicosis, which is a disease caused by inhaling Silica dust. In a lot of cases, it takes years of exposure to Silica dust to

develop Silicosis, but men were showing signs of Silicosis after only a few months of digging on this project. Silicosis is a completely avoidable disease, but the workers were not supplied with the proper face masks, because of the cost to the company. They could've also used water to keep the dust down but again, the cost was too great.

In 1930 construction began on a three-mile tunnel through the solid rock of Gauley Mountain. The purpose of the tunnel was to divert water from the new river to another point down river to turbines for a hydroelectric plant to create electricity for Union Carbide's electro-metallurgical plant. The project took around 5,000 men, some of which were locals who were out of work because of the great depression but most of which were black men from the deep south. The contractor who got the project was Rinehart and Dennis of Charlottesville, VA. Because of the way this project was licensed, they didn't have to take any safety measures and they obviously didn't. As I mentioned before the dry drilling technique filled the tunnel with dust. It wasn't a surprise to find out the rock was rich in Silica dust, as a matter of fact they decided to widen the original plan for the tunnel because Union Carbide could use the Silica in their plant. They knew this because of core samples that were taken before groundbreaking. A lot of the black men who died had to be buried on a farm in Summersville because they couldn't be buried in white cemeteries. Some of them were just buried in unmarked graves near the tunnel. The ones who were buried on the farm in Summersville were later dug up and moved several miles away because of the widening of US Route 19. The remains are now located in Whippoorwill cemetery, Summersville, WV, with a historical marker. The project, although a disaster, was considered an engineering marvel and the tunnel is still in use today. The project is also considered the worst industrial disaster in American history.

Our capitols

Our original Capitol was in Wheeling, WV. It was in the Linsly Institute building. This was viewed as a temporary Capitol. This building served as the state Capitol from June 20th, 1863- April 1st, 1870. The Linsly Institute building was built in 1858 and is still a Wheeling landmark.

Something more permanent was needed, so in 1870, the state Legislature decided Charleston would be the permanent seat. The building was started in 1869 and completed in 1870, located at what is now Capitol Street (Capitol Street was called sixth street prior to the Capitol building being there) and Lee Street. It was built by the state house company, a corporation, which was led by John P. Hale, a prominent Charlestonian. It is said that John ended up paying for much of the project himself. The building was leased to the state by the state house company. John did all this before becoming Mayor of Charleston in 1871.

Hale was a Physician but also dabbled in several other industries, including salt, coal/ timber. He also introduced the first brick making machinery in the Kanawha Valley, he introduced the first steam ferry, he helped organize the “bank of the west” in Charleston, he started the Hale House hotel, which was Charleston’s first luxury hotel, which was intended for the state delegates staying in Charleston but it burned down in 1885, there is currently a restaurant by the same name on Hale Street, he also did a lot to help the Confederate army during the civil war. He was also a historian and author. There's probably a lot of other things that he did, Dr. Hale did a lot for the Kanawha Valley. He died in 1902. Hale Street is of course named for Dr. Hale.

Five years later in 1875, the legislature voted to return the seat of government to Wheeling. This time the city of Wheeling actually built a building specifically for the Capitol, but until it was finished, the Linsly building yet again served as the Capitol.

A statewide vote was held between Martinsburg, Clarksburg and Charleston. In the fall of 1877, Governor John J. Jacob, who was our fourth Governor, announced that Charleston would once again be the Capital of West Virginia. The second capitol building in Charleston would be built on the same site as the first, ownership of the first building had been transferred to the state by the state house company. The new building incorporated the first. It was completed in 1885 and all the state records were moved by boat to Charleston.

On January 3rd, 1921, the building burned down. No one knows for sure how the fire got started, but there have been several speculations and rumors over the years. It was a tall, gothic style building with a 194-foot clock tower. The smoke was roaring from the upper floor. The Charleston Fire Department sent in every available fireman. Guns and ammunition purchased by the state police for use in the WV coal wars, which had been going on since 1912 and would come to a head in the Battle of Blair Mountain later in 1921, were being stored in the attic of the Capitol. The thousands of rounds of ammunition started to discharge. Firefighters and people who were helping to evacuate the building or save records were sent running and taking cover as the bullets flew. Miraculously, no one was hit by a bullet. Unfortunately, one soul was lost that day. Charles Walker, a firefighter, was crushed to death by a fire weakened wall. Several others were injured. Not much was left after the fire completely gutted the interior and destroyed the roof. Today, a memorial is at the corner of Capitol Street and Lee Street.

They say you can still hear the noises of firefighters trying to put the blaze out if you're there around midnight. Legend is, you'll hear the sounds of chains clanking, hoses being

dragged, water being sprayed and voices yelling. You might even smell the distinct smell of charred wood and smoke.



My friend April Morgan at the memorial for the Capitol that burned. I took this pic on the first Charleston ghost walk, ever. September 2021

A couple months after the fire, a temporary building was completed at the future site of the Daniel Boone Hotel, which was also on Capitol Street. That building became known as the “pasteboard Capitol”. The Pasteboard Capitol ultimately suffered the same fate as its predecessor. March 2nd, 1927, a fire broke out and burned through the building in only half an hour. Again, the fire was of unknown origin.

A State Capitol Commission was created after the burning of the Capitol building in 1921, in an extraordinary session of the state legislature. The purpose of the Capitol Commission was to find a location for a complex to serve the needs of the government. A spot was chosen on Charleston’s East End and architect Cass Gilbert was chosen to design the Capitol. Gilbert was a famous architect who designed the Woolworth building in New York (not to be confused with the Woolworth building in Charleston that burned down in 1949) and he designed the Supreme Court building in Washington DC. Constuction started in 1924 and was completed in 1932. The west wing was started January 7th, 1924, and completed in March of 1925, the east wing was built between July of 1926 and December of 1927 and the main building, with the dome, was started March of 1930 and was completed in February of 1932, it was officially dedicated on West Virginia day, June 20th, 1932. The building has a distinct gold dome. The dome resembles the Dome of our Nation's Capital, but the WV dome is about 5 feet taller at 293 feet tall. The complex is 18 acres and includes not only the three-part Capitol building and Governor's mansion but also the Holly grove mansion, which was built by Daniel Ruffner in 1815. It also includes the state cultural center.



Here is a picture of the current Capitol building taken by my cousin Jessica

It is also worth mentioning that the Governor's mansion that's in the Capitol complex isn't the original Governor's mansion. The current governor's mansion or executive mansion was built in 1924- 1925 by Charleston architect Walter F. Martens. It was built during the term of E. F. Morgan. In my opinion it is a beautiful place.

The original mansion was on Capitol Street, it was built in 1887 by a clothing merchant named Gustave Jelenko. He sold it to the state in 1893. Before this the Governors were expected to house themselves. Eight Governors lived in this mansion, the first of which was William MacCorkle, for which MacCorkle avenue is named. Governor MacCorkle died in 1930 but is

still said to be seen in his mansion that he built in 1905 on a hill facing Charleston, some know the MacCorkle mansion as sunrise.

First brick paved street in America

Some sources tell us that this was the first brick paved street in the world, and if you want to get technical about the definition of a brick, then yes but the Romans built stone streets much, much earlier (as early as 312 B.C). As nice as it would be to claim we had the first paved street in the world, the first paved street in America is still nice.

In 1870 Mordecai Levi, a Charlestonian, had an idea of how to pave the streets of his city. At the time, the streets were just hard packed with dirt. The dirt streets turned to mud when it rained. In a time of horse and buggy, you can imagine this made things rough. Mordecai started with a test on a part of Summer's street, by 1873, he had done the whole block between Virginia street and Kanawha Street (now Kanawha boulevard). on summers Street. The project was funded by John P. Hale (another prominent Charlestonian). Mr. Hale had applied to the city council for permission to do this at his own expense. Mordecai went on to receive a patent for his paving method- in 1889. He also went on to do work on the first Capitol building in Charleston, which was built by John P. Hale's company, State house company and he built the Hale house, John P. Hale's luxury hotel, which he was able to finish months before other contractors said they could get it done. This was one of the many "firsts" WV has under it's belt.

What I admire about guys like Mordecai Levi and John P. Hale is they took matters into their own hands. They didn't just sit around and complain about the muddy streets and say, "I

wish somebody would do something about this". These days people are always complaining about potholes in the roads. But I haven't heard once that somebody has a solution to the infrastructure problem, and I *know* no one would finance something like that out of their own pockets. These men not only helped themselves and their city but cities all around the country. This was very significant in both West Virginia and America's history.

Another interesting thing about the Levi family is the town of Rand, right outside Charleston, is named for them. Some accounts say this is because Mordecai Levi, Jr and his brother, Plus Levi had sold all of the land in present day Rand. Other accounts say it is because Plus had bought a large piece of land in present day Rand. I tend to believe the latter of the two, myself. Both accounts, however, say that the town was originally named Plus (1907-1909) but later had to be re-named because of another town being named Plus, the new name became Levi, and it was called Levi until sometime in the 1930's or 1940's, turns out there's another town called Levi also. The new name became Rand, which was the middle name of Plus's adopted son, Noies Rand, and *his* middle name, Plus Rand Levi.

Mother's Day

Now, first, I will acknowledge the fact that Mother's Day celebrations have been going on for thousands of years around the world. With that being said, Mother's Day as we know it here in America, started in West Virginia. I read about this somewhere awhile back and now, every year I'm excited to tell anybody who will listen about how Mother's Day originated here in West Virginia.

It started in Grafton, WV by a woman named Anna Jarvis. Anna wanted a day to commemorate everything her mother (also named Anna) had done. Her mother was a community activist and led groups to combat childhood disease.

In 1908, which was 3 years after her mother passed (1905), Anna held a church service at St. Andrew's Methodist Episcopal church,

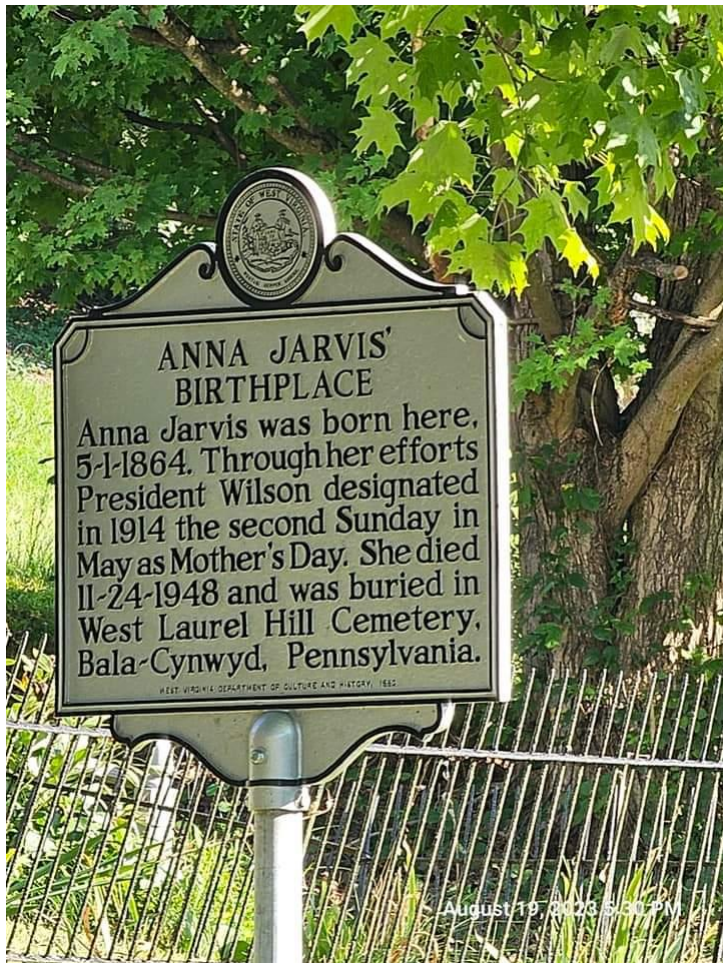
after getting financial assistance from a Philadelphia department store owner named John Wanamaker. That same Sunday, a Mother's Day service was held in Philadelphia at one of Wanamaker's stores.

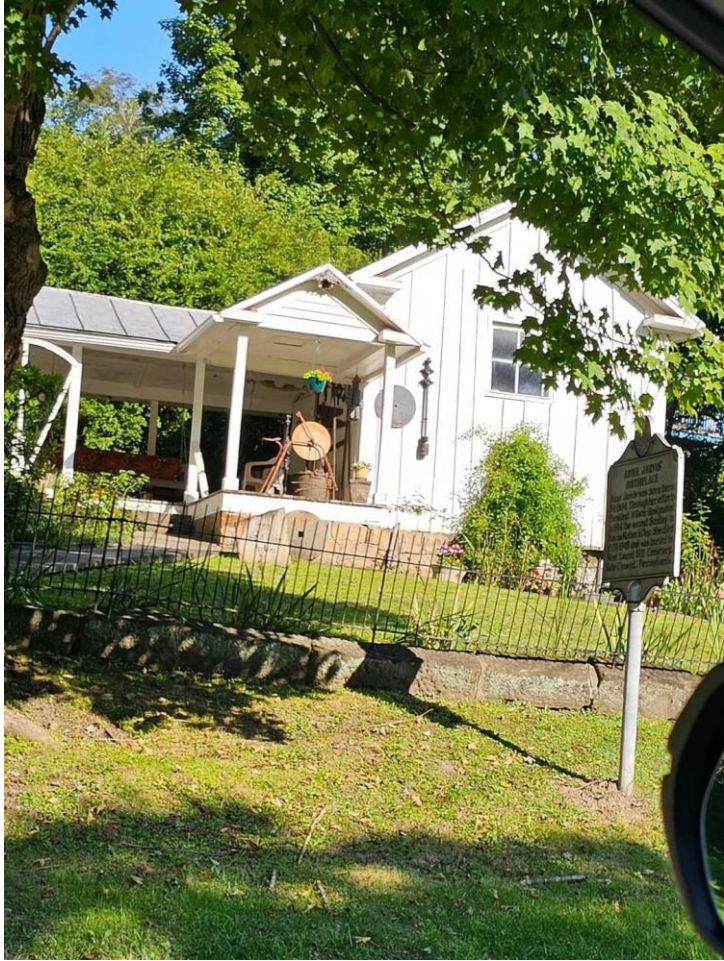
After this, she began her campaign of letter writing to politicians and newspapers to try to make Mother's Day a national holiday.

In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson finally signed a measure to establish Mother's Day as the second Sunday in May

Jarvis grew to hate the day she created because of commercialism. She even tried to get Mother's Day taken off the calendar.

I have visited the birthplace of Anna Jarvis, it is also the birthplace of her mother, also named Anna Jarvis (a bitt confusing). Here are a few pictures I took...







Father's Day

To me, what really makes the Mother's Day thing interesting is the fact that Father's Day also originated in West Virginia. Again, I will take time to acknowledge the fact that there have probably been celebrations around the world to honor fathers for years and years and that's great, but I'm talking about that day in June when we usually fire up the grill or take our dads or grandpas out to eat.

In a church in Fairmont, Wv on July 5th, 1908, people gathered for a church service in honor of the fathers who had died in the mine explosions in Monongah on December 6th, 1907. This church service was only two months after the first Mother's Day service in Grafton.

The following year, a woman from Washington state got involved, inspired by West Virginia Mother's Day creator Anna Jarvis. It wasn't until 1966 that it became a nationally recognized holiday.

Father of Black History Month

I'm writing this on February first, 2024, the first day of Black History Month for the year and I find out that the man accredited with being the "father of Black History Month is from right here in West Virginia. Dr. Carter G. Woodson, born December 19th, 1875, was the son of two former slaves who were freed by the emancipation proclamation. Originally from New Canton, Virginia, Woodson moved to Huntington, West Virginia when his father heard they were building an all-black high school there. He ended up going to work in the mines of Fayette County but came back to Huntington, West Virginia, at the age of 20 where he graduated from Douglass High School in just two years. He then went back to Fayette County to work as a teacher for the kids of the coal camps. He went back to Huntington yet again in 1900 when he was selected as the principal of his old high school. While he was there, he was also attending college in Kentucky. He received a Bachelor of Literature in 1903, at which point, he moved to Chicago where he got his Bachelor's and his Master of Arts and would eventually be the second African American to get a PH. D from Harvard.

He felt that African American achievements were often overshadowed by European achievements and devoted his life to promoting African American achievements. He made his message heard in 1926 in Washington D.C. at the first black history week. He wanted the week to be in February because Abraham Lincoln's birthday is that month and so is Frederick Douglass's. His black history week would continue to be celebrated every year but was extended to black history month and formally recognized by President Gerald Ford in 1976- 50 years later.

In addition to everything else Dr. Woodson did, he also wrote and published several books. A very impressive man who anyone, black or white can be inspired by.

Now, some sources I've read tell me that Dr. Woodson was from Washington D.C and completely ignore the time he spent in West Virginia. That kind of thing happens a lot and West

Virginia doesn't get the recognition we deserve. Perhaps we should take a page from Dr. Woodson's book and do West Virginia week where the contributions of the Mountain State are recognized. Dr. Woodson was most definitely a Huntingtonian whether we get credit for it or not, and there is a statue of him on Hal Greer Blvd.,

The Steamboat

Robert Fulton from New York is credited for the invention of the steam boat, but did he really invent it? A West Virginian named James Rumsey had a steamboat 20 years before Fulton. Rumsey showed the world what he could do on December 3rd, 1787 on the Potomac River near Shepardtown, West Virginia.

Rumsey was born in Cecil County, Maryland. He was a successful miller, blacksmith and architect. He had an Inn in Berkley Springs, West Virginia and he designed and built bath houses for people seeking the healing waters. There, he met George Washington and built a house and other buildings for him. When he showed Washington his steamboat, Washington gave him a certification that he saw it operate. After he demonstrated it for the public, the guy who had built the boat that had Rumsey's steam engine on it yelled "My god, she moves!". Before that day, everybody called him "crazy Rumsey" but I'm sure nobody said that after that day! A bunch of people, including George Washington urged Rumsey to get more support for his invention, so he went to Philadelphia and worked with Benjamin Franklin. Supporters of the idea, including Franklin, started the Rumseian Society to advance Rumsey's inventions. Unfortunately, he died in England while seeking a patent for his steamboat

It would appear that Fulton built on Rumsey's idea, but it's safe to say there wouldn't have been a steamboat without James Rumsey.

There is a James Rumsey Museum in Shepherdstown and a monument and park. There's an exhibit on him at the state museum in Charleston.

Nation's first public spa

After reading the last section, you might be wondering about Berkley Springs. Berkley springs, as the town is commonly called, the name that the Virginia legislature actually gave the town in 1776 is Bath, as in Bath, England. Berkley Springs is the name of the post office in the town.

Bath is a town in the eastern panhandle of the state (of course in 1776, there wasn't a West Virginia) with natural, warm springs that people have been visiting for hundreds of years.

The first person recorded to ever visit these springs was George Washington who was surveying for Lord Fairfax in 1748. George frequently returned, sometimes with his family.

Nowadays, Berkley springs attracts people from all over the world that want to come and experience the history and bathe in the hot mineral waters.

West Virginia embalming fluid

This one may sound a little morbid, but it's pretty cool. Now, embalming has been going on for thousands of years, since the ancient Egyptians, who believed that the body needed to look good enough to attract the soul back in the afterlife. Lots of advancements have been made since the ancient Egyptians were mummifying their dead though.

The one I want to focus on was made by a farmer out of Barbour County, West Virginia. Graham H. Hamrick invented a type of embalming fluid that was said to make the practice safer and more cost effective. He patented, marketed and sold the fluid. He also made advances in food preservation, but you'd probably rather read about his embalming fluid.

Hamrick was able to buy two corpses (creepy, huh?) from the West Virginia Hospital for the insane, which later became the Trans Allegheny Lunatic asylum. He bought the corpses of two anonymous females in 1888. It's kind of creepy how you could just buy dead people in the 1800's.

After successfully embalming the two bodies, he got a patent in 1892. They say he also embalmed a human head and a baby, but they have disappeared. The two women became known as the "Phillipi mummies". The Smithsonian institute wanted to display the mummies but only if Hamrick would reveal his embalming fluid- he refused. They traveled the world with the circus before making a return to Phillipi, only to be lost for a few decades, and resurfaced in a barn. Later they were purchased by a man named Frank Beyer from a Hamrick family estate sale, were badly damaged in the flood of 1985 and were restored by a local funeral home.

Of course, we can't be 100% sure that these mummies are the same women from the hospital for the insane. Hamrick reportedly always had new projects going on but were pretty sure. You can check them out at the Barbour County Museum.

Rural Free Delivery

Among the “firsts” in West Virginia is rural free delivery (RFD). Prior to the first RFD service people in rural (that's a hard and funny word to pronounce) areas had to go to the nearest post office and get the mail themselves. People in most cities were getting mail delivered by 1863.

A bill was introduced to extend this service to the country in 1892 but the bill failed. In 1895, postmaster General William Wilson got the funds to try this experimental rural mail delivery service. He chose West Virginia where he was from to test the service. On October 1st, 1896, five carriers left Charles Town, Halltown and Uvilla. The test went great, so great that other states followed suit. In the early days of RFD, carriers were leaving mail wherever they could but it 1901 mail receptacles were made standard by the postal service.

Getting mail delivered to our house is something we take for granted these days. Most rural mail carriers these days use their personal vehicles, while the larger towns have special vehicles for delivering mail provided by the postal service. It's hard to imagine a time before mail delivery or mailboxes.

Golden delicious apple, West Virginia state fruit

The Golden Delicious apple can trace its origins to a family farm in Clay County in 1905, the Mullins farm to be exact. Despite the way it has been marketed, it is not closely related to the Red Delicious apple. It is a cultivar, which means it was grown by human manipulation, and is one of fifteen of the most popular apple cultivars in the United States.

The Golden Delicious came from a chance seedling (unintentional breeding).

Possibly between the Grimes Golden and the Golden Reinette. At first the Golden Delicious was locally known as Mullins Yellow Seedling. The Grimes Golden also originated in West Virginia.

Anderson Mullins sold the tree and propagation rights to Stark Brothers Nurseries for \$5,000.

The Golden Delicious was designated the state fruit in 1995. Clay County has hosted a festival in the apples honor every year since 1972.

This is one of the lesser-known state things. For example, most people know the state bird is the cardinal or the state flower is the rhododendron. I first learned about the state fruit a while back but I enjoyed them even before that. Personally, they remind me of fall.

Pepperoni Rolls and other Italian-American classics

There's a lot of Italian influence in West Virginia, especially in the northern half of the state, mainly because of the coal mines and railroads that attracted Italian immigrants in the early 20th century and because of that, West Virginia's favorite food exists today.

An immigrant named Giuseppe "Joseph" Argiro had the idea for a pepperoni roll. After coming to America to work in a West Virginia coal mine, he decided to switch paths and opened a bakery in Fairmont, West Virginia- the Country Club Bakery. He remembered how the miners would have bread in one hand and pepperoni in the other, so he thought, why not combine the two? And viola, a West Virginia staple was born. He sold the first pepperoni roll in 1927. Now, there is a theory that some of the miner's wives had the idea first, but regardless, Giuseppe capitalized on the idea. The Country Club Bakery is still open.



The country club bakery in Fairmont, WV in August, 2022



These days they are ubiquitous in West Virginia. They're found in stores and restaurants; I even remember them being served for lunch at my elementary school. Even as I write this, there is a bag of pepperoni rolls in my kitchen. I'm sure Giuseppe never expected his pepperoni rolls to be this big.

The pepperoni roll was almost our official state food. A bill was introduced into the West Virginia house of delegates in April of 2001 to make the pepperoni roll our official state food. It passed there but no word from the state senate yet. I guess for now it's still the *UN*-official food of WV

An interesting fact about the pepperoni roll is, in 1987, senator Jay Rockefeller saved the pepperoni roll and the small family run bakeries that make them from nonsense regulations by the USDA. Pepperoni rolls are illegal in some states because of how they're made and stored.

These days, we enjoy pepperoni rolls with cheese and peppers, but the original ones were just sticks of pepperoni baked in a roll (nowadays, we see slices of pepperoni more than sticks)

Pepperoni rolls are a West Virginia treat and you aren't likely to find anybody who even knows what they are in other states, the only other state I've heard of having them is Pennsylvania. Apparently, they're big in Pittsburgh.

Ya know, pepperoni rolls aren't the only foods we enjoy nowadays thanks to our Italian friends. Italian sausage is enjoyed throughout the state. The Giovanni burger is another Italian-American treat that originated in the Fairmont or Clarksburg area.

Italian sausage is a spicy pork sausage and it's made with a blend of spices like fennel, anise and garlic. I, personally, like to eat links of Italian sausage on sub buns with provolone cheese or mozzarella cheese and Italian peppers as a hoagie. I also like it ground in spaghetti sauce or in

meatballs. The links are good cut into smaller pieces and fried in potatoes or about anything really. They're also really good just to eat in peppers or even just by themselves.

Italian peppers are another Italian- American food that originated in Fairmont, West Virginia. You can even buy them in the grocery stores, the only other state I've seen them in grocery stores is our neighbor to the north, Pennsylvania. One of my favorite brands of peppers are now produced in Pennsylvania but originated in West Virginia. A blend of sweet and hot peppers in a delicious tomato sauce, a West Virginia classic that is great on sandwiches, in pasta or just by themselves. Personally, I like them on the side of a grilled cheese sandwich so I can dip the sandwich in the pepper sauce, or a plain piece of bread makes a great utensil to extract the sauce from the jar with, mmm.

The Giavonni is another West Virginia classic. There's some debate on exactly who created this masterpiece, I have heard it was a place called the Canteen but there are other opinions. We can all agree it was in the Clarksburg or Fairmont, West Virginia area. The Giavonni burger is a grilled burger (Italian bread, or I've been to some restaurants who used Texas toast), with cheese and no Giavonni burger would be complete without the aforementioned Italian peppers. I can't tell you how many times people thought I was talking about the pizza place, Giovanni's when I would talk about eating a Giovanni.

Hot dogs

While we're on the subject of food, I have to talk about the hotdog. Hotdogs are kind of a big deal around here. A “West Virginia hot dog” has chilli, onion, mustard and slaw. Or so they say but slaw is a central – southern West Virginia thing. Now, hot dog chilli (or sauce, as some say) might not be exactly what you think about when you hear the name. It’s a bean less chilli.(although bean chilli is a West Virginia favorite) Some people make it thicker (meatier) and some make it downright watery and that's what *I* would call “sauce” but to some the terms are interchangeable. I grew up always having chilli on a hot dog, so I assumed it automatically came on a hot dog. I remember going to a restaurant one time with some friends as a teenager and I ordered a foot long hot dog with onions, the woman taking my order said “just onions? That's all?” and I nodded and waited on my hotdog. I wasn’t too happy with what she brought out, a bun, weenier and a bunch of onions, I quickly realized what had happened. - I failed to specify that I wanted chilli.

I’m sure you know what cole slaw is, but I'll try to describe it just in case, Slaw is thinly sliced cabbage and sometimes has carrots, in a milky sauce. (I always joked that some people's slaw tastes too “cabbagey”). The funny thing about slaw is that they don’t eat it in the whole state. I’m sure there are exceptions, but generally speaking they don’t put slaw on hot dogs in the Northern half of the state. As a matter of fact, people say there is a “slaw line” where if you live south of a certain point on I79 then a hot dog with everything includes slaw, however if you live north of this point, it does not. It’s a regional thing, I guess. So, I guess they don’t do the “West Virginia” style hot dog north of that point. My dad told me when he first moved down this way, he couldn’t believe people were putting slaw on a hot dog, he’s originally from the Fairmont

area, where they think you lost your mind if you do that. By the way, the hotdog was invented in the German town of Frankfurt and is known as a Frankfurter in Germany.

Buzz buttered steaks

Buzz buttered steaks are a West Virginia favorite (along with a few surrounding states). The steaks are a product of Buzz foods inc. Which distributes foods mainly to restaurants/ chefs, but you can buy the Buzz buttered steaks in the grocery store, too. The Buzz foods company has been around since 1938 and has always been known for quality but it wasn't until 1958 that the first Buzz Buttered steaks rolled out of production. That day a favorite was born. These frozen, ground “steaks” with a square of butter in the center were great for sandwiches or just to eat by themselves.

Although you could get the steaks in a few other states, they were made in Charleston, West Virginia. Now, most sources say that the steaks have been discontinued but I could swear I had some not long ago when my family had Giovanni burgers, plus I see them sometimes, so they're out there.

Something I was today years old when I found out, is Buzz products supplied all the local Wendy's restaurants back in the 1970's when the restaurants first came to the region before all purchasing was centralized.

Mr. Bee potato chips

Probably not everybody has had a Mr. Bee's brand bag of potato chips, but if you live in or around West Virginia, I'm betting you have. West Virginia's own Mr. Bee brand of potato chips is made right here in West Virginia, in Parkersburg and they are proud of it. A bag of Mr. Bee chips proudly states "the only potato chip made in West Virginia!" beside an outline of the state.

The company was started in 1951 by the Kleins, Leo and Sara. The first offices of the company were on Mary Street in Parkersburg but have since been moved to West Virginia Avenue in the same city. Unfortunately, Mr. Klein passed away in 1979, but the Mr. Bee company stayed with the Klein family for several years. I'm sure they held on as long as they could but eventually had to sell in 2010. The company now operates as the West Virginia potato chip company.

Mr. Bee offers several different flavors of chips, including original, barbeque, sour cream and onion, Jalapeño and pork skins. The company just released their biscuits and gravy flavor recently, which was a collaboration with Tudor's biscuit world. Other exciting new flavors are the pepperoni roll and the 304, which can best be described as similar to salt and vinegar in my opinion.

Heiner's bread

It's funny how when you're young, you think the food your family eats is what everybody in the country or world eats, the brands you and your family buy are in your mind, all there is. When I was a little kid, I thought that way about Heiner's bread. It seemed to be the bread everybody in my little bubble had. Little did I know the Heiner's bakery only distributes to around 200 miles of Huntington, West Virginia, which is not only West Virginia but also Ohio, parts of Virginia and parts of Kentucky.

The Heiner's company was started in a hotel room in Cental City (Central City is the name given to a part of Huntington, WV) in 1905 when Charles and Kate Heiner began baking bread in said hotel room. By their fourth year, they were able to get a small building on the corner of Washington Avenue in Huntington. The brand's popularity grew in the region and by 1985, they were distributing 75 different kinds of breads, rolls and buns. Ownership of the company switched hands a few times, at one time the giant bread company Sara Lee owned the company. Today Grupo Bimbo owns it, Grupo Bimbo is a huge multinational company, but the great grandson of the founders is still plant manager. Not bad for a company that got its start in a hotel room.

Greenbrier Ghost

The best ghost stories consist of just a little bit of fact, in my opinion. West Virginia is full of those but perhaps the most well-known is the story of the Greenbrier ghost.

The story concerns the murder of Zona Heaster Shue in 1897. Her husband, Edward Shue, was accused. Initially, her death was judged as death by natural causes but then Zona's mother

started having visions of her daughter speaking to her, she swore that these weren't dreams but visions she had while awake. Zona's mother was several miles away on the night her daughter died. Now some might argue that this was probably just a case of a mother-in-law getting even with her son-in-law, which would make sense because Zona's mother, Mary Jane Robinson Heaster, was said to not like Mr. Shue and opposed the marriage but you need to read on to form your own opinion.

Zona visited her mother for four nights and described her murder in detail to her mother. She said that her husband had attacked her in a fit of rage because she hadn't cooked any meat for dinner, he grabbed her head and broke her neck, even after she pleaded with him and explained what else they were having.

Mary Jane went to the prosecutor, John Alfred Preston, and demanded an investigation. Her story, plus the fact that Dr. Knapp, who determined the cause of death, admitted that he might have made an error, made him order for Zona's body to be exhumed. Of course, Mr. Shue opposed it; he publicly said that he knew he would be arrested but also stated "they will not be able to prove I did it!" Sounds guilty to me.

Zona's body was exhumed on February 22nd, 1897, and an autopsy revealed that she had a broken neck and crushed windpipe from strangulation. Shue still said they couldn't prove he did it, but he was arrested and charged with first degree murder, he pleaded not guilty.

After the trial, the verdict came back guilty. Two of the jurors would not agree to the death penalty, so Shue got life in prison. He only served a few years because he died on March 13th,

1900, in the West Virginia state penitentiary in Moundsville. There are no records of what happened to his remains.

I doubt this would've even made it to trial nowadays because all the evidence was circumstantial. This was the only case in the US where the ghost of the victim helped to convict their murderer.

Heres my friend Theresa with Zona's headstone



The Mothman

The Mothman has become almost synonymous with the mountain state, although he has been spotted in other places in the world. The “Mothman” as he became known, plagued the small town of Point Pleasant in the months between November 1966 and December 1967.

The very first sighting was on November 15th, 1966, in what's known as the “tnt area” just outside of point pleasant. Two young married couples were just out cruising around midnight, when their headlights landed on what they thought were reflectors of some kind, but they quickly realized these were no reflectors- they were eyes! They could see that this creature was large,

gray and had the body of a man. They passed the creature, but he chased them, he had no problem keeping up, even when the driver accelerated to 100 MPH. Eventually, the bird like man fell behind and they were able to make it back to town and make a police report.

The Tnt area is an area that was formally used as a munitions storage area back during WWII. The area is now a wildlife management area owned by the state DNR. It's full of old bunkers that you can go in. It's a cool place to go explore. It's about five miles outside of Point Pleasant, WV. It's a must visit place if you're ever in the area. I also recommend checking out the mothman museum.

That was the most famous sighting that everybody in West Virginia knows, but there was also a sighting in Clendenin, WV a few nights before. Clendenin, WV is about 76 miles away from Point Pleasant, according to bing.com. A group of gravediggers say they saw the large, winged creature on November 12th, 1966.

There were several other sightings over the next year or so in Point Pleasant, a total of 26. I have read that all of these claims have been from respected members of the town who weren't likely to make up some crazy story but of course, there are still skeptics as there usually are when it comes to things of the paranormal. As these sightings continued, other things started to happen

around the town that some people associated with the Mothman. There were disruptions of electronic devices and cars, sightings of UFO'S and then there was Indrid Cold.

Indrid Cold as he called himself was a "man" who a couple of people claimed to see. The most infamous story is that of Woodrow Darenberger- a sewing machine salesman. Darenberger was on his way home to Mineral Wells, WV from Marietta, OH on November 2nd, 1966 (ten days before the infamous mothman sighting), at around 7:25PM, he was stopped at the intersection of I77 and route 47 by a craft that was hovering about ten inches above the ground and was around 35 feet long. A door slid open, and a man exited that Darenberger described as "a normal human male"- he looked to be around 40 years of age and had dark, slick backed hair. He had very tan skin, which was unusual for the time of year. He wore a blue, zippered overcoat, that was made of a reflective material, with a blue shirt underneath and navy-colored pants. He walked to Darenberger's right window and told him to roll the window down, he did, and the man's craft lifted in the air. The man asked Darenberger questions such as who he was and where he was going. Darenberger was afraid, but the man told him not to be frightened. He said his name was Cold and he wanted to know more about the human race. He later revealed he was from the planet Lanulos. He also told Darenberger they would have more visits over the years, before his craft landed and he walked back to it. The most interesting thing about their conversation is not one word was spoken. Darenberger claims it was all said telepathically. Cold kept his word, he visited Darenberger several more times over the years, he later revealed his full name was Indrid Cold. Woodrow even wrote a book about it, *Visitors from Lanulos*. His daughter wrote a book also, her book is called *beyond lanulos*. It is important to point out that Parkersburg (near where Woodrow Darenberger's initial contact was) is approximately 50 miles from Point Pleasant

Some people think the strange happenings in Point Pleasant were because of a curse put on the area by Chief Cornstalk of the Shawnee native American tribe in 1777.

Braxton County Monster AKA Braxie

Britannica.com defines “paranormal” as *very strange. Not able to be explained by what scientists know about nature and the world..*

We have had several things in the mountain state that would fall under that category. Usually, when people hear “paranormal”, they think of ghosts, but you can’t forget the cryptids. “Cryptid” is usually defined as an animal that is said to exist but isn’t proven to.

We have had at least a couple of those over the years, but one is unique to West Virginia. I’m of course talking about the Flatwoods monster AKA the Braxton County monster AKA Braxie.

Back in 1952, in the small West Virginia Village of Flatwoods, something terrified six kids, a mother and a dog. The story goes two young brothers had been playing in their school yard on

September 12th, 1952, the boys were 12 and 13 years old. They were playing there with their friend, who was ten years old. The three boys saw a red-light streak across the sky and it appeared to land on a nearby farm, so the three boys ran to get the brother's mother and go check it out. They were joined by four other boys, one of which had a dog with him. They quickly ran back down the hill in terror. The dog ran with his tail between his legs. They saw a man like creature with a red face and green clothes. His head was shaped like an ace of spades, he had a sickening metallic odor emanating from his body and they estimated that he was twelve feet tall and four feet wide.

"Seven Braxton County residents on Saturday reported seeing a 10-foot Frankenstein-like monster in the hills above Flatwoods" a local

newspaper reports

The boy that was leading the others up the hill that night was seventeen-year-old national guard member Gene Lemon.

The newspaper went on to say the Lemon fell backwards "when he saw a ten-foot monster with a blood-red body and green face that seemed to glow" but it wasn't just local newspapers that covered the story. The story got picked up by national radio and national newspapers. The two young brothers' mother and Lemon went to New York to do an interview with CBS. It even prompted the US. Air Force to get involved, inquiring as part of project blue book- a project that sent investigators around the country to investigate claims such as this.

For a story from the 1950's, it gets a lot of attention. People are obsessed with it, the story gets told and retold, there's a Flatwoods monster museum, and hell, here I am writing about it seven decades later. It's just *that* interesting, not just for West Virginia, but for anywhere, I think

Whether or not you believe this is up to you. I, myself, do. Especially with the Air Force recently confirming what we already knew. Besides, lets look at this from a skeptic's point of view for a second- why do you think people would make something like this up? It seems like there's not a lot to gain other than people thinking you're crazy. Just remember, we (humans) don't know everything- there's a lot that happens that can't be explained. So, try and keep an open mind.

There were a few other reports of strange goings on at the approximate time of the crash and another about a week before the Flatwoods sighting where a girl was so freaked out and disturbed, she had to spend time in a hospital. Most notably, though, was the next night (September 13th, 1952) A couple, George and Edith Snitowsky and their baby were on a leisurely drive through the mountains of Frametown (still in Braxton County) when their car stalled and wouldn't start. George got out to check the engine when he smelled a smell he described as sulfurous, and the baby began to cry. A light lit up the dark road and revealed a tall creature in front of their car. The description was similar to the sighting in Flatwoods but this time he didn't have the spade shaped head, maybe that was just a hood? They described it as reptilian. It is believed to be the same creature, but if not, it must be very closely related. The creature hovered off into the woods and the second it was out of sight their car started. I'm sure they high tailed it out of there then! These sightings aren't as well known as the Flatwoods

sighting. I guess Braxton County monster is a more accurate name than Flatwoods monster since it showed up in Heaters, Frametown and Flatwoods.

Grafton Monster

Probably one of the lesser-known cryptids of West Virginia is the Grafton monster. The first and most credible sighting of the Grafton Monster occurred on June 16th, 1964. A lot went on in the 1960's paranormal wise in West Virginia. A journalist who wrote for the *Grafton Sentinel* named Robert Cockrell spotted the creature, which he later described in the newspaper as between 7 and 9 feet tall, with "seal-like" skin and appeared to be headless, on the side of route 119, along the Tygart Valley River. Since then, there have been numerous other sightings but none as credible as Cockrell's. Cockrell eventually further investigated his sighting and worked with paranormal expert Gray Barker on an article they never finished for *UFO magazine*.

Batboy

Batboy deserves a mention. If you don't know about batboy, it's kind of a joke. A tabloid ran a story back in 1992 about a half bat, half human boy found in an uncharted cave near Seneca rocks. They have said a lot about batboy since then, including who he supports for president and how he's met every living president and several celebrities, including Elvis, who died years before 1992. Batboy even ran for president himself once. Apparently, he's very political. He also stole a car once and led police on a long chase.

IRL, Batboy has made appearances on the Simpsons and even inspired an off-Broadway musical.

Gravelly Tractors

Something I was surprised to learn about West Virginia back in 2019 is that Gravelly Tractors, a well-known brand of tractors and other farm equipment, was started here. There's a couple of old Gravelly Tractors in my family and I remember my dad telling me that he read that that brand originated in West Virginia. I was really excited to learn about that, so I researched it and sure enough, dad was right, as if I doubted him anyway.

Turns out, Benjamin Franklin Graveley started the company in Dunbar, West Virginia, although some sources say he was actually a resident of south Charleston, West Virginia. Dunbar isn't far from where I grew up and as a matter of fact I had heard that when I was very young (less than a year old) we lived there for a short time. Benjamin's story was long before mine though, he created the first single wheel, walk behind plow in 1916 or at least that's when it was finished. This plow was driven by an Indian motorcycle engine. I think this represents the ingenuity of West Virginians. For him to think "I have the motor off an old motorcycle. If I could build a frame to put it on, it would really make plowing my garden easier" just seems very West Virginian to me. This wasn't his first plow; the first one was powered by a Maytag washer motor on a hand push cultivator.

After he built what would be the prototype for the later model D (with the Indian motorcycle motor) he spent years trying to get it right, until he received a patent on December 5th, 1916, for the Gravelly motor plow. After this, a guy named McClellan provided Gravelly with a machine shop to build his motor plows. Gravelly eventually got investors from Charleston and sold \$200,000 worth of stock. The Gravelly plant was built in Dunbar, West Virginia in 1922 and until 1927 the tractors were all built by hand, an assembly line was introduced in 1927.

In 1937 they started producing the model L which was a two wheeled tractor with improved horsepower and had a PTO in the front for different attachments, including a plow and a mower. Mr. Gravelly was constantly innovating his machines. That same year Mr. Gravelly handed over control of his company to a business partner, Roy D. Hall. Hall sold the company to the Studebaker Packard corp. In 1960 and in 1968, production was moved to North Carolina. Fast forward to today, Gravelly is based out of Wisconsin and is owned by Ariens co. According to Wikipedia, Gravelly produced it's last two wheeled tractor in 2004. Today, they produce a lot of four wheel mowers and tractors.

It would appear that the Gravelly tractors I mentioned earlier were probably in the 424 series and were produced after 1966. The 424 was a four-wheel garden tractor. I knew someone who had an older two wheel Gravelly plow/ tiller.

Chef Boyardee

Everybody knows the cans of pasta, but did you know the guy on the can was real? Unlike many other brands who have made up faces for their labels for marketing purposes, Chef Boyardee is legit. Hector Boyardee wasn't his name though; it is an anglicized version of his name. Ettore Boiardi was born in Italy in 1897 and came to America in 1914 and worked in the famed Plaza hotel. Where this story really ties into West Virginia is supposedly Chef Boiardi worked at the Greenbrier, which is a historic luxury resort in West Virginia. I've always heard this rumor and decided to investigate it for myself. The Chef Boyardee website says it's true, but the Greenbrier does not list it under "our history" on their site. Although the two contradict each other, I would think that he did work there because why would the Chef Boyardee website lie about him working in West Virginia?

This is a two-part rumor, I've also heard that while working at the Greenbrier, Chef Boyardee AKA Boiardi oversaw Catering President Woodrow Wilson's second wedding reception. So, let's dive on in, shall we? Now, several sources say this wedding took place in Washington DC at the private residence of his soon to be wife- approximately six hours from the Greenbrier. So, it's unlikely that they packed up and traveled to Greenbrier County, West

Virginia after the wedding. Another theory is that the Greenbrier staff traveled to Washington DC to cater for the reception. The second theory is possible. I can't find any information about the reception of this wedding but chefboyardee.com says this part of the rumor is true (along with a bunch of other sites) but this is another thing that the Greenbrier fails to mention on their "our history" page of their site. They do mention however when President and Mrs. Wilson visited the Greenbrier for Easter in 1914 (that must've been his first wife because he married the second wife in 1915)

Wv.gov confirms that he did work at the Greenbrier, the website goes on to say that at the time, the Greenbrier and the Plaza were run by the same company and they sent some of the employees from the Plaza to the Greenbrier. It does not say anything about President Wilson's wedding reception, leading me to believe that part of the rumor is false. However, it does say that the chef over saw the preparation for a homecoming meal the President served to 2,001 returning WWI soldiers.

In conclusion, I see proof that Chef Boyardee did work at the Greenbrier resort in West Virginia. However, I find it hard to believe that the President had his wedding reception at the Greenbrier from the information I was able to find. I think it's really cool that this world-famous chef worked here in West Virginia. I also conclude that the Greenbrier needs to update their site.

The Greenbrier resort

Now, I can't write about how Chef Boyardee worked at the Greenbrier and not explain what the Greenbrier is, can I? The Greenbrier resort is a very historic place here in West Virginia. Dating back to 1778 when people would come here to "take on the waters" for medicinal purposes (see nation's first spa)

In 1858, a hotel was built, known as Old White, and it was a popular destination for Presidents. Five US Presidents had already stayed at the Old White. Soon to be The Greenbrier by the time the Civil War started, and several have visited since. During the Civil War the hotel was for Government use only and housed both the north and the south.

In 1910, the C&O railroad bought the hotel and planned to expand by building a golf course and changing the name to the Greenbrier and by going year-round, instead of just in the summer. During WWII the Greenbrier was back to government duty, to house ambassadors from Japan, Germany and Italy. Then, as a hospital for wounded soldiers. Between 1946 and 1948, Dorothy Draper redid the hotel's interior decorating to get ready to re-open to the public.

Project Greek Island was the codename given to a project where they built a secret underground bunker during the cold war for members of US Congress in case of a nuclear attack. After the cold war was over in 1991, the Washington Post revealed this secret. Luckily, the bunker never had to be used.

More recently, in 2009 CSX (Formally C&O railway) sold to Jim Justice who would later become Governor of West Virginia. Jim Justice, who is the current Governor of West Virginia on his second consecutive term, is said to be the wealthiest West Virginian- with an estimated net worth of \$1.5 billion. Justice built another golf course with plans of putting the Greenbrier classic on the PGA tour, which it was from 2010-2019. Jim also built a casino.

The Black Knight Country club

Another historic golf course and country club in WV is the Black Knight country club. This place has been around since the 1920's when the vice president of Raleigh Coal and Coke offered 60 acres for a golf course and clubhouse. Raleigh Coal and Coke was a coal company that operated in Beckley (Raleigh County) until the 1950's. The company marketed their coal under the name Black Knight coal, which is how the country club got it's name. At that time, membership was limited to people either in the coal industry or related industries.

The building is three stories tall, and it has a nine-hole golf course, designed by Fred Findlay, a noted golf architect.

In 1950 the Raleigh Coal and Coke Company closed. Members bought the club in 1951 and over the years added several things like tennis courts, a pool and a bath house. In 2011 the club was bought by Jim Justice (the same guy that owns the Greenbrier) who was a member for years and wanted to see it stay open. Jim owns coal companies and that's how he had membership. In 2017 Jim closed the club because of costs and declining membership. In 2018 the city of Beckley bought the club and opened it to the public.

Last year (2023) my friend April Morgan appeared on the show Kindred Spirits, along with David Worley to discuss the history and haunted history of the club. After seeing the paranormal investigation, its pretty clear that a couple of members who were killed there, never left.

Blennerhassett Island

West Virginia is a landlocked state, so we're usually not known for our islands, but we do have a couple. One well known island in West Virginia I can think of is in the Kanawha River, near the town of Gauley Bridge that a guy somehow or another got a bus out to that you can see from Route 60. Another is Blennerhassett Island. If you're from here in West Virginia (or Ohio) you're probably familiar with it, or you've at least heard of it.

The island sits in the Ohio river, between Parkersburg, WV and Belpre, OH.

Parkersburg's most famous residents were Harmon and Margaret Blennerhassett. They were immigrants from Ireland. Many came to America from Ireland in search of work and opportunity but not the Blennerhassetts. Harmon and Margaret were wealthy aristocrats and had other reasons for sailing to America. See, Harmon was Margaret's uncle and obviously everyone in their families disapproved of their marriage. They planned to start over somewhere new where no one knew about their situation. Apparently, they decided on America.

They landed in New York in the late 1700's and bounced around a bit. First to Philadelphia and then Pittsburgh, before finally landing in the Ohio river Valley and settling near Marietta, OH. They bought an island called Backus Island in 1798. The island was named for its former owner- Elijah Backus. They made a nice life on the island and had a mansion built; the mansion was completed in 1800. They had a couple of children, a boy they named Harmon,jr and a girl they named Margaret, young Margaret died at age two and was buried on the island, but the

grave and body was washed away by a flood. They also had an adopted son, his name was Dominic, but I couldn't find out his age.

Shortly after the Mansion was built, the couple started to have financial troubles, probably because of their lavish lifestyle. I remember the last time I visited the island (I've been twice) the tour guide said the Blennerhassetts loved to show off their wealth, he said the bright paint that was on the original mansion walls was very expensive for the time, and the oil lamps were also very high class for the day (I believe they used whale oil). So, Harmon gets desperate to regain his fortune. A desperate man is a dangerous man. Another desperate man had heard about Harmon's wealth and sought him out, this man's name was Aaron Burr. Aaron Burr was former VP of the United States but had basically ended his political career by killing Alexander Hamilton in a duel. Mr. Burr had treason on his mind and wanted to start a new country but to do that he needed help from someone with money and power (maybe he didn't know about Harmon's financial troubles)

The interesting thing is Harmon had already done this kind of thing. Back in Ireland, he joined a group called The Secret Society of united Irishmen, which plotted the overthrow of English rule in Ireland

Well, long story short, Burr got Harmon on board with him. President Thomas Jefferson heard about their plans and sent the Virginia Militia, they were both eventually arrested. Aaron Burr was tried for treason but was acquitted, Harmon was released without a trial.

When Harmon returned to the island, he found it in ruins and was beyond repair. The Militia had ransacked the place. So, he went to meet up with his family, who was waiting on him in Mississippi where they settled for a while. They moved around a bit before finally returning to

Europe. Their mansion on the island burned down in 1811, but I doubt they ever found out about it. Apparently, some slaves were still on the island, and they accidentally burned it down- that's what I remember the tour guide saying.

Harmon died in England in 1824. After his death, Margaret came back to the US to New York where she petitioned congress for restitution for the Militia destroying their mansion- but to no avail. Margaret died in a poor house in New York City June 16th, 1842.

In the 1980's, the State of West Virginia rebuilt the mansion and in the mid 90's, Margaret and Harmon, Jr 's bodies were returned to the island from NYC. Margaret is said to be West Virginia's first poet. (Though she lived before WV became a state- I guess they meant the first poet in the region)

The island is now a state park.

The big book of West Virginia ghost stories says that in life Margaret said she'd never leave her island paradise and apparently, she never did. There have been several accounts over the years of people seeing her ghost (but never Harmon).

My personal belief is that's because Margaret was way more attached to the island than Harmon was.

I asked a woman who works at the museum about this, and she told me once a visitor fell asleep reading by the river and when they awoke, all of their books had been moved as if somebody was playing a joke, but no one else was around.

Margaret is often seen waiting along the shoreline for her husband, as she often did in life. Some people have seen her wandering around, perhaps she's looking for her daughter's grave?

People have also claimed to see native American spirits on the island. Not long before Harmon and Margaret came along

(As late as 1767) there was a Delaware Nation village close to where the Blennerhassetts had built their home,

Archaeological evidence suggests.

One claim was about a really tall native American. When archaeologists excavated the island; they found the body of an abnormally tall native American. The book also says that claims of slave spirits have slowed down since the return of Margaret's body... Its like they don't want to be seen by Margaret?

There's a claim in the book that says horses don't like the island, even back in Harmon and Margaret's day. There was even a report of a horse going crazy and running until it hit a tree and breaking its neck. Now, I'm not saying I don't believe this, but they use horses on the island to pull wagons of visitors around nowadays. Like I said, I'm not saying I don't believe it, I mean maybe the horses still hate it? It's not like they can say "no, its ok here now" or something, or maybe there was a presence on the island years ago that has since left?



A pic taken by me of the The Blennerhassett Mansion on a visit there with a friend

I would like to point out that the Blennerhassett hotel in Parkersburg has nothing to do with Harmon and Margaret, it is simply named in their honor. I would like to stay a night in the historic and supposedly haunted hotel.

USS West Virginia

Everybody knows about the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. If you don't, you need to read up on that. Did you know one of the ships on "battleship row" was named for West Virginia? She was actually the second battleship to be named for the state.

Built in Newport News, Virginia, the West Virginia was commissioned in December 1923. She spent much of her life in the pacific.

West Virginia's base was moved to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii in 1940. She was still there in 1941 when the Japanese attacked. The West Virginia was hit by at least seven torpedoes, maybe nine, which blew huge holes in one side and she quickly sank. Over one hundred of the West Virginia's crew were lost.

Things were looking up for the USS West Virginia when she was raised from the shallow harbor and was repaired temporarily at the Pearl Harbor Navy yard. In 1943, she went to the Puget Navy yard for final repairs and modernization. She came out of the shipyard and participated in several battles in the last year or so of World War II. She fought in such battles as Midoro, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The West Virginia was struck by a Kamikaze plane in Okinawa but was able to stay in action.

What's interesting is the USS West Virginia was in Tokyo Bay on September 2nd, 1945 when Japan surrendered. One of two ships present at both the attack of Pearl Harbor and Japan's surrender, but West Virginia was the only one to be damaged at Pearl Harbor- that speaks volumes about West Virginia's resilience in my opinion. The USS West Virginia was decommissioned on January 9th, 1947, and was eventually sold for scrap.

Coal

I would be remiss if I didn't mention coal in this book.

Coal has always been a big part of West Virginia's economy and our heritage. The very first commercial coal mine was near Wheeling back when it was still a part of Virginia in 1810. Sometimes when you're roaming the hollers, you'll see a private coal mine where people used to crawl into just to get their own personal coal to heat their houses. I've heard stories from my family about how people used to burn coal in their houses and how nasty it was. They say it left a layer of soot all over everything in the house and you would blow it out of your nose in the mornings.

Coal mining these days pays pretty well , \$78, 956/ year according to indeed.com, but that wasn't always the case. Refer back to the mine wars section to read about mining before the union. They say West Virginia coal has built America. West Virginia coal made it possible for the Steel industry to grow in Pittsburgh, PA. Coal has unfortunately been on it's way out the door for years, as much as families want to hold onto the heritage. Some still believe coal is coming back because politicians lie to us. Now, that's not to say coal is dead, it's very much alive, just look for the coal trains going down the track loaded down with coal headed towards its destination at a power plant or somewhere, or a barge loaded down with hundreds or even thousands of pounds of coal. The thing is, there have been a lot of layoffs and mine closures over the past several years, so it's nothing like it used to be and I don't think coal can hold on forever, but do I see it going anywhere anytime soon? No, my personal opinion is people are holding on too tightly to let it go, despite changes in technology but that's just my opinion. The Bureau of labor statistics predicts little or no change in the job outlook for miners in the next ten years. A lot of people don't know how to do anything but mine, so it's sad that the industry is trying to slip away.

In recent years, coal mining has become an environmental issue, especially with strip mining. Strip mining or surface mining is a process where the earth is dug away to expose the coal beneath, rather than through underground tunnels. This can cause a loss of habitat for animals. Both methods of mining contaminate water and cause health hazards for those who mine or even live close to a mine. I used to think that exposing naturally occurring things couldn't be a bad thing, but the problem is these naturally occurring chemicals belong deep underground, not in our water or in our air. These are part of the reason I said coal has been on its way out for years (not to mention the CO₂ emissions from coal fired power plants). Our current president, Joe Biden, is working to transition away from fossil fuels.

Let's all take a minute to remember all the souls lost in the mining disasters over the years. Some of the more well-known disasters were Monongah, Farmington and the more recent Upper Big Branch in Whitesville (Boone County)

Chemical Industry

Coal isn't the only big industry in the mountain state. Another is chemicals and though it hasn't been around as long as Coal, we've been producing chemicals since WWI. The Kanawha Valley's nickname is the Chemical Valley. I've noticed a lot of websites are worded as if it's all

past tense, using words like “was” or “back then”, but I promise you, the Chemical Valley is still thriving. Plants were first attracted to the area because of our other industries like salt brine, coal, oil and natural gas, also because of transportation by rail and water, not to mention skilled workers.

It all started around 1915, which was the year after WWI started. The first chemical plants were starting production in what would become “the chemical valley of the world” making chemicals like chlorine, caustic soda, hydrogen, sulfur dyes, tear gas and anthraquinone and that started the chemical boom, which hasn’t slowed down, despite claims that the West Virginia chemical industry hit its prime after WWII.

West Virginia plants made a lot of things for both WWI and WWII. In 1917, the US government hired Dupont to build a nitrocellulose plant in what would become known as Nitro. The plant only operated for one week before the war ended in 1918. In WWII, West Virginia plants produced synthetic rubber, barium nitrate for incendiaries and hexachloroethane for smoke screens. There was also an ammunition plant in Point Pleasant, which is near the Ohio River. After WWII, the Kanawha Valley became known as “the chemical capitol of the world” and South Charleston was dubbed “chemical city”

West Virginia plants have been the world leader in the production of certain chemicals. Most recently the Clearon (now Solenis) plant in South Charleston was the world leader in the production of Chlorine, after the pandemic of 2020 left the world in a Chlorine shortage. If you buy chlorine, there's a good chance it came from this plant. I'm proud to say that my dad is a supervisor at this plant, and he says they're happy to pick up the slack.

There have been negative externalities for residents of the chemical valley and surrounding areas, such as bad smells in the air. People have wondered if the chemicals are having effects on their health. I remember watching a documentary where a West Virginia farmer made claims of one of DuPont's plants that made a chemical for nonstick cookware, contaminated the creek on his property, miles away and killed his cows. This kind of thing makes people wonder what it's doing to us. A recent (2014) chemical spill into the Elk River left thousands of people without clean drinking water for days. Freedom industries had a leak from a storage tank of MCHM, a chemical used in the production of coal. So far, there is no evidence of long-term effects.

Salt industry

West Virginia's first industry. The salt industry is actually the reason for the growth of the last two I mentioned. The coal industry started to grow in the 1800's when salt furnace owners started experimenting with coal to heat their furnaces, rather than wood. David Ruffner was said to be the first owner to do this and soon all the furnace owners were using coal. Salt brine is a critical ingredient in chemicals like chlorine, which made the Kanawha valley perfect for chemical production.

The salt in the Kanawha valley was being enjoyed long before the arrival of white men, deer and buffalo would travel to a salt spring near current Malden. The native Americans followed the animals there to get their salt. This area became known as “the great buffalo lick”. These salt deposits are the result of West Virginia being on top of an ancient ocean. The Lapetus ocean existed over 600 million years ago but disappeared around 420 million years ago as the continents began to shift

Elisha Brooks built the first salt furnace at the mouth of what is now Campbell’s creek in 1797. In the first decade of the 1800’s, Joseph Ruffer, Jr and his brother, David, devised ways to drill down into the bedrock of the Kanawha valley, over the next couple of years, they and other entrepreneurs built 16 furnaces. There were other salt furnaces around the state, but none that could produce as good brine as in the Kanawha valley. For example, in 1809, John Haymond and Benjamin Wilson built a furnace at Bulltown in Braxton County.

Demand for salt increased with the war of 1812 and by 1815, there were 52 furnaces in the Kanawha valley. Kanawha salt became known as “the red salt from Kanawha” because of iron impurities that turned the salt brine red when heated. The Kanawha salt industry hit it’s prime in the 1850’s and declined in the 1860’s because of the civil war and because of the flood of 1861. This wasn’t the end of West Virginia salt, though, because a new salt brine field had been discovered in Mason county- on the Ohio river.

The only salt furnace that wasn’t affected by the flood in 1861 was the Dickinson furnace. Descendants of the Dickinson family have revived the family business and are currently producing salt on the family farm near Malden, Wv. They’re using environmentally friendly methods, like solar power to heat the brine, rather than coal or wood fires.

A side note, David Ruffner laid out the town of Malden on his land. Before the Ruffner family, the Dickinson family owned that land.

So, what about the Ohio River salt? Factors like advancement in meat packing and salt being found in other parts of the country made West Virginia salt irrelevant.

The Coal House

There are a lot of old coal houses left in West Virginia where people used to store the coal they burned to heat their homes. You might have even grown up near one, I did. I grew up near my great, great grandfather's coal house, as a matter of fact, I could see it from my bedroom window (not to mention the remnants of a coal pile directly outside my window). It eventually had to be torn down because it was full of snakes, though.

I guarantee none of those coal houses are anything like the Coal House in Williamson, WV. This building is literally made of coal! This unique building isn't just to be a novelty or an attraction. The building actually serves as the Chamber of Commerce for the Tug Valley. It was built by a local architect- or somewhat local anyway, from Welch, WV. His name was H. T. Hicks. It was the brainchild of O. W. Evans, fuels dept. Manager for the Norfolk and Western regional railyard in Williamson to be a symbol for coal country. The building is constructed from

locally mined coal, 65 tons of it to be exact. The Coal House was completed in 1933. There is a second coal house in White Sulphur Springs, WV but it wasn't completed until 1959. The one in Williamson, WV was the only coal structure in the state at the time it was completed. As of 2020, the coal house in Williamson had been visited by people from 49 of the 50 states, as well as 30 other countries. If you ever find yourself in Williamson, stop in and check out the Coal House.

West Virginia University

What is now a center for higher learning in Morgantown, WV was started as an agriculture school, founded on Feb. 7th, 1867. The original name being Agricultural college of West Virginia. The Agricultural college was created by an act of the West Virginia legislature on a land grant from the federal government. In 1862 President Abe Lincoln signed the Morrill act, which would grant Federal land to states to teach agriculture and engineering. Despite the name, they taught more than agriculture. There were three instructional departments when the school first opened, collegiate, scientific and agricultural. The first president of the college didn't like that it sounded like a "farm college", so he pushed for the Governor to drop the 'Agricultural' from the name. The name was officially changed to West Virginia University in 1868. The name hints at a graduate program, but there is no record of one in 1868. Today, however, WVU offers a wide range of Graduate programs. By the way, back in 1867 and 1868, tuition was \$8 for a 13-week term, I think we'd all jump on that nowadays!

WVU football is a pretty big deal in West Virginia nowadays. People go crazy for the blue and gold, that's their colors and their mascot is the mountaineer. The mountaineers have a rivalry with the Marshal Herd (Huntington) Marshal and WVU are our major universities, while we have several other smaller colleges and universities in the state, like West Virginia state university, Bluefield State University, Fairmont State University and the list goes on.

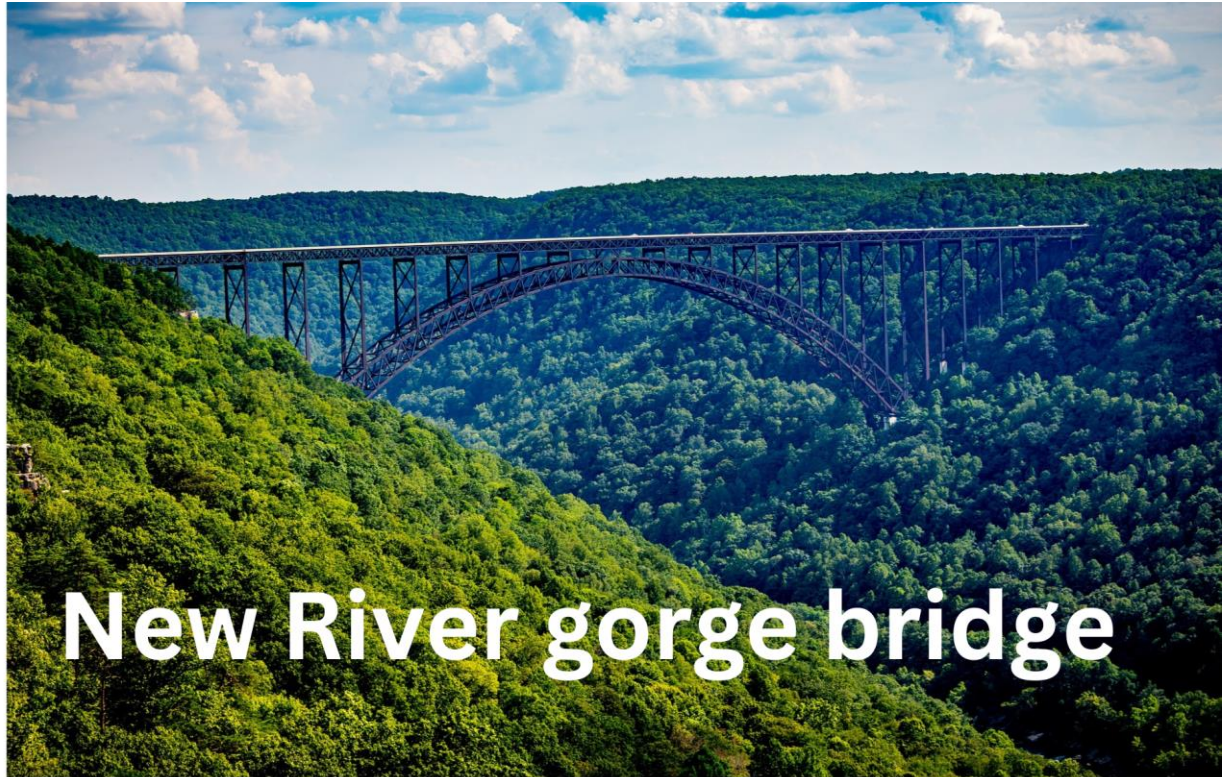
The New River

Of all the rivers in West Virginia (46 according to Wikipedia) there's just something particularly special about the New River. The river originates in North Carolina and flows north through Virginia before getting to West Virginia where it meets with the Gauley River to form the Kanawha River at the town of Gauley Bridge in Fayette County. There's an old rumor going around that the New River is the only river in the world that flows north, but a simple Google search will tell you that's incredibly false. It does flow north but so do several other rivers. It may not be the only river that flows north but it is one of the oldest rivers in the world. It's unclear how it got the name 'new' river, perhaps that was the name of an early settler or something? Or maybe someone was trying to be ironic? I don't know, but I can tell you it used to be called Wood's River in the 17th century for Abraham Wood, an explorer. Some of the best white water rafting is in West Virginia on the New River and nearby Gauley River

You can't talk about the New River without mentioning the gorge. The New River gorge is a canyon that the ancient river has carved through the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia. The Gorge as most West Virginians know it, or the new river gorge, goes on for miles through Fayette, Summers and Raleigh Counties. Our newest National Park is based around the

gorge, the New River Gorge Park and Preserve is 70,000 acres and is along 53 miles of the New River. Established as a national park in 2020 . The Gorge itself has several overlooks where you can take in the beauty of the river and Gorge below. Some of these overlooks include Hawk's nest, Grandview park and also views of the **New River Gorge Bridge** at the Canyon Rim visitors center

The New River Gorge Bridge was completed October 22nd, 1977, and is the longest bridge in the western hemisphere, it is also the 3rd highest bridge in America. There are papers to read there that show how the Washington monument, the Statue of liberty and several other things we think of as tall could fit under the bridge. The bridge is impressive at 876 feet tall. There is another bridge of average height below the main bridge, and it really helps put into perspective how tall the New River Gorge bridge really is. Aside from just being big, the bridge serves a huge purpose. It carries Corridor L (US route 19) across the deep gorge, which used to take drivers a long time because they had to go down one side of the gorge and back up the other. Not far from the Gorge Bridge is the tallest bridge in the US interstate system! The Phil G. McDonald bridge (I64) has a height of 700 feet above Glade Creek.



Every October, an event is held to commemorate the completion of the New River Gorge bridge. It's the one day out of the year when it's not only legal, but encouraged to jump off the bridge, with safety equipment of course. The day is called **Bridge Day**. Thousands of people flock to the bridge for bridge day. Bridge day is a big deal in West Virginia and huge in the extreme sports world. There are vendors and of course base jumping! Bridge day is the only day of the year when traffic is stopped on the busy four lane corridor so that you can walk on the bridge.

While bridge day is the only day you can walk *on top* of the bridge, you can walk *under* it all year. There's a catwalk under the bridge that people walk across. A company called bridge

walk gives three-hour tours. You're tethered to the bridge when you do it, plus there are handrails but I still don't think I'd personally do it. I've known several people who have done it and it looks fun, judging from their pictures, but heights freak me out too much.



Heres a pic my cousin Jessica took on her bridge walk. To quote Randy Jackson “that's gonna be a no from me, dawg”. Note the average size bridge I mentioned below

Glade Creek Grist Mill

Ya know, I just can't stop myself. As I wrote about the Glade Creek bridge, all I could think about was the Grist Mill. The Grist Mill at Glade Creek is instantly recognizable as it's

probably the most photographed mill in America. I've seen pictures of it on screensavers on tv's and computers and people probably don't even realize where it is. It's located in Babcock State Park. I didn't realize this until the last time I visited back in 2016, but it's actually a replica of the original mill that once stood in its place, made up of parts from several other mills from around the state. I'm one of those history nerds who always reads the historical marker wherever I go. As old as the iconic mill looks, I was surprised to learn it was completed in 1976, although the basic structure came from a mill that dates back to the 1890's. It's not just for looks though, its fully functional and you can actually buy cornmeal and buckwheat flour that was made in the Mill.

Lord Dunmore's war

Something I feel like is often overlooked in history is Lord Dunmore's war. This was a war, or just a battle, that occurred in colonial Virginia, right before the revolution. The last "Indian war". So, first, we must ask who was Lord Dunmore? Lord Dunmore was John Murray,

4th Earl of Dunmore. Earl of Dunmore was a title of nobility. Murry was the appointed British Royal governor of the colony of Virginia. Because we are so close to the revolutionary war at this point (1774) he was the last royal governor of Virginia. He was also appointed to be the governor of New York the previous year.

The main event and the end of Lord Dunmore's war occurred at the confluence of the Kanawha River and the Ohio River, at what would later become Point Pleasant, West Virginia on October 10th, 1774. Nowadays, we refer to this as the battle of Point Pleasant. It's unclear exactly how many Militia men that the Governor had rallied up for this war in retaliation against the native Americans for their violence against the settlers, but most sources say around 1,000, which was one half of his men. These 1,000 men were led by Andrew Lewis. The other half was at present day Pittsburgh at Fort Pitt, which they had renamed Fort Dunmore, in honor of their Governor. The two were supposed to meet up at the mouth of the Hocking River to attack the Indian towns. Before they could meet, the Shawnee, who had been watching and knew what was going on, attempted to attack the southern half of the army (Point Pleasant) to prevent the two from meeting. The Shawnee led by Chief Cornstalk thought they would attack the Virginia Militia's camp late at night/ early in the morning, but little did they know two of them were going hunting that morning and ruined their element of surprise. James Robinson and Valentine Sevier wandered into Shawnee forces and let it be known that they were trying to attack. Andrew Lewis sent out 150 men led by his brother Col. Charles Lewis and another 150 under William Fleming. The Shawnee retreated by late afternoon. Cornstalk had made it back into the Ohio country, but he was followed and a couple days later he signed a treaty with Lord Dunmore. The treaty of Camp Charlotte stated that the Shawnee would give up their lands south of the Ohio River and East of the river. If this Battle had gone differently, things would be a lot different today. The

treaty reset the Appalachian boundary that was set after the French and Indian war defined by a Royal Proclamation. The Proclamation of 1763 stated that colonists could not settle west of the Appalachian Mountains, they could only settle between the Atlantic coast and the Appalachian Mountains.

A few years after the battle of Point Pleasant, on November 10th, 1777, Chief Cornstalk once again found himself in the place that would become Point Pleasant. This time, as a prisoner in the newly constructed Fort Randolph (built in 1776). On this day, he was murdered while in captivity. Before He died, he put a curse on the place. A lot of people blame this curse for disasters like the collapse of the Silver bridge years later in 1967 and the mothman being in Point Pleasant.

A side note of Lord Dunmore's war is that the first husband of historical figure and frontierswoman, Ann Bailey, was killed in the Battle of Point Pleasant. It's said that that's where she got her hatred for Indians and what drove her to take up dressing as a man and becoming "mad" Ann Bailey. Ann Bailey is buried in Point Pleasant. Another thing about the battle of Point Pleasant that I should note is some people like to say that it was the first battle of the revolutionary war. Most historians disagree with that and I have to say, I side with the latter of the two. It would be cool if it was the first battle of the Revolutionary war, seeing as how WV has the first land battle of the Civil War. It would be nice to be able to claim both.

Summersville lake

West Virginia's biggest lake and a popular destination. Summersville lake was created by damming up the Gauley River in Nicholas County. The dam is the second largest rock- fill dam in the eastern united states! When it was completed in 1966, President Lyndon B, Johnson came to dedicate it. In 2001, a hydroelectric project was completed to make use the outflow water to generate electricity. The lake itself has nearly 3,000 surface acres and 60 miles of shoreline. Recreational activities include camping, fishing, boating, rock climbing scuba diving and bicycling.

Most people probably don't know there's a town under the lake. The town of Gad, West Virginia. Usually the Corps of Engineers, which is who built the dam, will use the name of the nearest town as the name for the dam but "gad dam" just didn't have a ring to it, I guess. Summersville was the next closest town. The town of Gad existed from the 1800's to 1960 when the whole town was sold to build the dam and residents were forced to move. The dam was necessary to control flooding in the area.

In 2023, Governor Justice announced that West Virginia will have its 36th state park and first new one in 30 years, on the northern shores of the Summersville Lake. The state park is 177 acres.

The lake also has a lighthouse. You read that right, a light house in West Virginia, hundreds of miles from an ocean. It's the only functional light house in the state and can cast light up to 30 miles. Why, you ask? It started out as a joke by the owners of the lake, Steve and Donna Keblesh when they met a guy who worked installing wind turbines, Rick Butler. They joked that if he had an extra turbine tower, they could use it for a light house. Well, long story short, he did. It was damaged and couldn't be used by the wind farm. So, the Kebleshs purchased it and arranged to have it delivered and set up. It was all done by June 20th, 2013, the state's 150th birthday when there was a huge ceremony to dedicate light the light house. Large numbers still attend the light house tours of the ten-story building.

Big Mac

A friend of mine recently reminded me about something. The creator of something very big, not only in America, but around the world, graduated from a West Virginia high school. The creator of the Big Mac hamburger, Jim Delligatti, graduated from Fairmont high. I can't say he was born in WV or that he introduced the Big Mac in WV, but he was an interesting man and did a lot of things, so to say WV was part of his journey is saying a lot. Jim was a graduate of Michigan state, he fought in WWII and owned 48 Mcdonald's franchises in the Pittsburgh area. He said that he didn't "invent" the big mac, he was just copied big boy. Sounds like he was

modest like most West Virginians. He died at the age of 98 back in 2016. I read somewhere that his family still runs his McDonald's locations around Pittsburgh.

Pearl Buck

You may or may not know of this woman. If not, allow me to introduce Pearl Buck, award winning author. You might be thinking “And? There's a lot of authors from WV”, well, Pearl is special in that among her awards is a Nobel Prize for literature, which she was the first American Woman to receive! Pearl was born in Pocahontas County, in the town of Hillsborough, in 1892 as Pearl Sydenstricker. Though, when she was only a few months old, her family returned to China. She spent a lot of her life in China, though she did go to college in Virginia at Randolph. She also later came back to the United States to get her master's at Cornell. She died at the age of 80 at her home in Vermont in 1973

Moonshine in West Virginia

The term “moonshine” is older than you probably think. The term was first used to describe alcohol smuggled into England back 1785, which was a common practice at the time. The term came from the idea that people who distill and transport the liquor, do so by the moonlight to avoid trouble. In America, the term moonshine usually refers to illegally made, untaxed, and unaged corn whiskey

Shortly after the American Revolution was won, the newly formed federal government put a tax on liquor and American moonshine was born, although I’ve read that people were

distilling their own alcohol even in Colonial Virginia. The first state where moonshine was made was Pennsylvania. Usually when you hear about alcohol prohibition, you usually just hear about the national prohibition, which started in 1920. Something less commonly known or talked about was several individual states were “dry states” even before national prohibition. West Virginia became a dry state in the summer of 1914. What the government failed to realize is they weren't getting rid of alcohol; they were just making it more profitable for people who were willing to assume the risk of ending up in cuffs to distill it and those willing to transport it. Other terms for moonshine in America were white lightning and mountain dew. Side note, Mountain Dew soda was created as a mixer for moonshine. Moonshine was probably first made in West Virginia by the Scots-Irish settlers who brought the art of pot distilling to America. Their recipes were modified to use what was available in this region, which was usually corn but I have heard you can use about anything as far as fruits or vegetables go. The process begins by fermenting the corn to make what's known as “mash”. Other than corn, mash will also need yeast and sugar. Then they heat the mash to bring out the alcohol in the form of a vapor, then the vapor condenses into a liquid. It's a complicated process and if done wrong, can be deadly. If you've ever heard of someone going temporarily blind from drinking moonshine, it's because methanol alcohol was accidentally produced, when ethanol alcohol was the goal. The first few ounces of moonshine made in a run should be discarded to avoid methanol alcohol being consumed but isn't always done. I've heard some moonshiners will even leave it as a way to add strength to their product. That isn't an ethical thing to do and isn't good for business. Methanol alcohol can also cause permanent blindness or even kill you, depending on how much you consume.

West Virginia and other Appalachian states are perfect for making moonshine. For one, because of the cold water running off the hills needed for production and two, because of the

remoteness of the area. Moonshine was made in the hills of West Virginia and sold in cities like Huntington, Clarksburg, Parkersburg and Charleston. People who transported the moonshine were known as “bootleggers”- an old term dating back to the 1800’s when people transporting moonshine would keep a flask in their boot. In prohibition era WV, cars and trucks were used and they would get creative with how they hid it in the cars. In jars and jugs and maybe even in a secret compartment custom made in the car's interior or body. I’ve also read from the cities, it would be put on a train to go to NYC, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, or Chicago or somewhere.

In 1933, prohibition was over, and liquor could be legally made again after 19 years. A bill was recently passed that allows West Virginians to produce up to five gallons of moonshine. Some liquor that you can legally buy in the stores is labeled as “moonshine” but that's just marketing. Now, you know what real moonshine is.

Charleston's spirit board

West Virginia has a deep history of paranormal things, Charleston specifically. A guy from Maryland helped put Charleston in the history of the “spirit board” forever. Spirit boards are controversial, even among people in the paranormal world. Some people say the results are just your subconscious mind making you move to certain letters. This is called the ideomotor effect. Now, me personally, I have seen and heard things that make me believe this is something that shouldn't be toyed with.

For thousands of years, people have been using different types of “spirit boards” or “talking boards” but a man in West Virginia's biggest city, Charleston, is credited with being the father of the modern Ouija board.

Elijah Bond might not have been a native of West Virginia but at one point he did live on Court Street in Charleston. As a resident of the Charleston area for my entire life, I think this is really cool. This adds to the spooky history of the town and our state.

Elijah was born in Maryland on January 23rd, 1847. He served in the confederate army, before attending law school at the University of Maryland. He had a wife, who was also a Maryland native and the two had a son. In early 1890, Bond had an idea to improve the planchette, which is a small piece of wood usually in the shape of a heart and on coasters, by selling it with a board with the alphabet on it. People have been using the Planchette for "planchette writing" since around 1100 AD in China. Planchette writing is similar to the Ouija board. Bond applied for the patent of his idea in May of that year, and it was granted in February of 1891. Some sources say he was a part of Kennard Novelty company at that time. It wasn't just the fact that he took the patent out that made him "the father of the modern Ouija board", he also gave it its name. Elijah's sister-in-law was a medium and in one of her sessions, she asked what the board wanted to be called, and it spelled out 'Ouija'. She asked what that word meant and it spelled out "good luck" which some interpret as the spirits wishing them good luck.

Now, here's the part we all want to read, in the early 1900's, Bond moved to Charleston, WV. It was here that he decided to revisit the "spirit board" thing. He had an idea for a new board that would be called "the nirvana board". June 18th, 1907, he was granted a patent for the nirvana board. The board had a giant swastika on it, but you must keep in mind that this is before the Nazis gave this symbol a bad name. It is an ancient symbol and at the time, it was just kind of mystical. We're still not too sure about the Kennard Novelty Co. But regardless Bond started his own company in Charleston, The Swastika Novelty company, which was headquartered at his home on Court Street. The Nirvana board was only made for a few years, which makes it rare,

sought after and collectible. Maybe Mr. Bond intended his boards to be a novelty but that is irrelevant because this put Charleston in the history of the spirit boards.

As for Mr. Bond, he moved back to Baltimore, Maryland. in 1919. He had a “stroke of paralysis” and his health declined until his death on April 14th, 1921. He was buried in an unmarked grave in Green Mount cemetery in Baltimore. His grave remained unmarked until 2007 when Robert Murch rediscovered it. Murch worked with the surviving family and cemetery officials to give Mr. Bond a fitting stone for his contribution to history and to the spirit board. Thanks to a bunch of donations and Tegeler Monuments, he now has an “Ouija board” stone.

Katherine Johnson

This woman from White Sulpher Springs, WV, was a mathematician and was essential for the first two manned spaceflights by NASA. You may have seen the 2016 movie *Hidden figures* or read the book by the same name, which were both about her.

Born August 26th, 1918, as Katherine Coleman, because of her intelligence, she got through high school quickly. At age 18, she applied to West Virginia State college (Now WV state university) where she got bachelor's degrees in mathematics and in French and graduated with highest honors. Later, she was picked as one of only three African- American students to

attend WVU in a graduate program. She studied math at WVU but soon after married her first husband James Goble and left the University to start a family. Unfortunately, James passed away in 1956. A few years later, Katherine married her second husband, James Johnson. Katherine worked at NASA before it was NASA, she started in 1953 at the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA). She worked in a unit called the West Area Computing Unit at Langley research center in Va. (this is the part from the movie) with a couple other African American ladies who did complex mathematical calculations for the engineers. These women became known as the “west computers” and performed calculations essential to the early space program. NACA was segregated so these ladies had to use the colored restrooms and things like that but that changed when NACA became NASA in 1958. NASA banned segregation. She was now a member of the space task force. At NASA, Katherine became the first woman in her division to receive credit for coauthoring a paper she and one of the engineers wrote and published. She went on to author or coauthor 25 more papers/ research reports in her career. She calculated the path for the Freedom 7, the first craft to take a US Astronaut in space. She also calculated where and when to launch the rocket for the Apollo 11 mission in 1969, which put men on the moon for the first time. She retired from NASA in 1986. Katherine had received several awards for her contributions to the space program. NASA even named a building after her in 2016. I mentioned the book *Hidden figures* earlier, it was released in 2016, written by Margot Lee Shetterly. I had also mentioned a movie by the same name, it was released that same year. 2016 was a big year for her. She has a memoir *My remarkable journey* (2021) which was published after her death. Unfortunately, she passed away in 2020 at the ripe old age of 101 years old, in Newport News, Va.

Other women worthy of note are Mary Jackson and Dorothy Vaughan.

Celebrities from West Virginia

I'll leave you with this, so you know what kind of talent the Mountain State has produced. Probably the most well-known are Brad Paisley and Jennifer Garner. Brad is from Glen Dale, WV and Jennifer is from Charleston. Your man Steve Harvey never passes up an opportunity to tell people he's from West Virginia, he's from Welch. Don Knotts, who played Barney on the *Andy Griffith show* is from Morgantown. Joyce Dewitt, who played Janet on the show *Threes Company* is from Wheeling. Conchata Ferrell, who played everybody's favorite housekeeper, Berta, on *Two and a Half men* is from the little community of Loundendale, right outside Charleston. Retired football player in the NFL, Randy Moss, is from Rand. Country singer Kathy Mattea is from South Charleston. College football coach, Nick Saban, is from Fairmont. If you remember from earlier in the book, Captain Chuck Yeager was from Hamlin. The guys from the show *Barnwood Builders* are from Greenbrier County.

My personal favorite thing to mention is that J.T. Woodruff of Hawthorne Heights is originally from St. Marys, WV. Hawthorne Heights has been described as everything from alternative rock to punk, pop punk, emo, screamo and post hardcore.

Earlier this year (2024) well known director Morgan Spurlock passed away at the young age of 53. Spurlock made documentaries such as *Super Size Me*, where he ate nothing but

Mcdonalds for a month. Morgan Spurlock was born in Parkersburg, West Virginia, he died in New York.

On a better note, Chef Paul Smith won a prestigious award, naming him best Chef in the southeast by the James Beard foundation. Chef Paul competed against chefs from Georgia, North Carolina, Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee and other chefs in West Virginia. Way to go, Chef Paul! Chef Paul owns and/ or operates a few restaurants in Charleston.

West Virginia is small but West Virginians can do big things and these people have proved that. Thank you all for giving our state a good name.

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