McCreight Lecturer Eric Foner on

# THUM AND THE STATE OF THE STATE Reconstruction and the Politics of History

ven if we don't know much about Reconstruction, it is part of our lives today. Issues on our agenda are Reconstruction issues. The definition of American citizenship, who is entitled to American citizenship, is a Reconstruction issue. It was redefined during the Reconstruction period. The relationship between the federal government and the individual states within the federal system was reworked during Reconstruction. Terrorism was a phenomenon of Reconstruction, as it is today. We had our own homegrown terrorist organization, the Ku Klux Klan, during Reconstruction, and indeed it is a melancholy fact that the Klan killed more Americans than Osama Bin Laden did on September 11, 2001. Affirmative action to help uplift those who have been the victims of past injustice – that's a Reconstruction issue which is still on the agenda today. So is the relationship between political democracy and economic democracy, an old, old question but debated very vigorously

the period after the Civil War.

Reconstruction also offers a prime example of what we sometimes call the "politics of history." And I'm not talking about whether the historian is a Republican or Democrat. By the politics of history, I mean the way in which historical interpretation both reflects and helps to shape the politics of the present, of the actual time when the historian is writing.

For many years, most of the 20th century actually, what we call the Dunning view of Reconstruction - named for a Columbia professor who, with his students, produced the first scholarly studies of the era - dominated historical writing and textbooks and popular thinking. In that view, in a nutshell, Reconstruction was the lowest point in the saga of American democracy. In that view, President Abraham Lincoln at the end of the Civil War wanted to bring the defeated South back into the Union in a guick, lenient, forgiving manner. After his assassination

during Reconstruction. his policy was continued by his succes-My point is that sor, Andrew Johnson. But Johnson was you can't underthwarted, according to this interpretation, stand American by the villains of the piece, the Congreshistory without sional faction known as the Radical Republicans. Deknowing something pending on which historian about the you choose, they Reconwere motistruction vated either by era, Continued on page 3 Richmond 1865. The South faced literal as well as political reconstruction after the Civil Wal

Fall 2015

**McCreight** Lecture

Undertaking



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Next Board Meeting October 23, 2015, Charleston. Open to the public.

# Back to the books

The West Virginia Book Festival returns this fall after a two-year hiatus. Our friends and festival co-founders at the Kanawha County Public Library put that time to good use in working through some serious financial issues, and I'm pleased that things came out well for them. That means that West Virginia's biggest book party is on again, and that the Humanities Council will again join the Library, the *Charleston Gazette-Mail* newspaper, West Virginia Public Broadcasting and others in sponsoring this wonderful event.

This year's festival will feature the usual line-up of top authors, including Neil Gaiman, Jodi Picoult, Jeff Shaara and others. Our own Homer Hickam was a last-minute addition and is sure to attract a crowd in his Saturday morning slot.

I enjoy the big-name speakers as much as anyone, but for me the real attraction is the people who come to hear them. The point of any festival is to gather a critical mass of enthusiasts around the subject of interest, I've always thought, and the Book Festival does a remarkable job of drawing in book lovers from throughout West Virginia and big chunks of Ohio and Kentucky.

That makes the Marketplace the heart of the Book Festival, as far as I'm concerned. The Marketplace is where the book sellers and book publishers do business — and the place everyone ends up, sooner or later. As with any good conference, this exhibit area is where the real life of the festival resides. The big hall buzzes with book talk throughout the two-day event, lively conversation that is very often on a par with whatever may be going on officially in the nearby meeting rooms. And yes, you'll find me playing hooky there more than I ought to admit.

The West Virginia Book Festival takes place October 23-24 at the Charleston Civic Center, with the Humanities Council's annual McCreight Lecture serving as the kickoff event the previous evening at the University of Charleston. You'll find the details on all of this on pages 3 and 4.

So come on out, hear the celebrity speakers we don't often get to see in our small state, buy a few volumes and be sure to get them signed.

And then join us loafers in the Marketplace if you want to talk books.

-Ken Sullivan

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A state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the West Virginia Humanities Council serves West Virginia through grants and direct programs in the humanities

We welcome letters, comments, and financial contributions. Please address correspondence to West Virginia Humanities Council, 1310 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Charleston, WV 25301 or sonis@wvhumanities.org.

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We welcome nominations to the Humanities Council board of directors. Nominees should be West Virginia residents with an interest in the humanities and willing to serve without monetary compensation. Please send the name, contact information and brief biographical details to wvhuman@wvhumanities.org.

Continued from page 1

a vindictive hatred towards the South, the desire to fasten the grip of northern capitalism on the South, or simply the aim of keeping the Republican Party in power.

The Radical Republicans overthrew Johnson's lenient plan and imposed suffrage for black men, the former slaves, on the defeated South.

"You can't understand American history without knowing something about the Reconstruction era."

And according to these early 20th-century scholars, blacks were incapable of exercising the rights of political democracy. They were innately inferior. Therefore what happened was an orgy of corruption and misgovernment, presided over by a trio of political types: the inept African-Americans themselves; the carpetbaggers (a term which still survives in our politics — carpetbaggers being northerners who packed their carpetbags and came down to the South to reap the spoils of office); and the so-called scalawags, white Southerners who turned their backs on their race and cooperated in the misgovernment of the South. Eventually, according to this old view, patriotic groups like the Ku Klux Klan overthrew these new governments and restored what was politely called "home rule," or what we today would call white supremacy, in the southern states.

Now to the politics of history.

This view of Reconstruction had an amazing longevity. We historians make our living revising what previous historians have written, and for something to remain the standard view for 50 to 60 years is unprecedented. What explains the longevity of this old view of Reconstruction?

It survived because it was congruent with the racial system of the United States from 1900 until the civil rights era of the 1960s.

The political lessons of that old view were very clear. First, it was a mistake to give black people the right to vote during Reconstruction. Therefore the white South was right to take the vote away from blacks, as they did around the turn of the 20th century, and any effort to give African-Americans back their political rights would lead to another orgy of misgovernment. Second, Reconstruction was imposed upon the South by northern outsiders. Maybe some of them were motivated by humanitarian ideals, but nonetheless Reconstruction proved that northerners do not understand the South. The only ones who really understood southern race relations were southern whites. Therefore the white South should resist any outside calls for change in their racial system. The third lesson, which seems rather arcane today, was that Reconstruction was created by the Republican Party and therefore the white South should remain Democratic. Today the South

is solidly Republican, of course, but until 1970 or so it was solidly Democratic, and one pillar of the old Solid South was the memory of Reconstruction.

When the civil rights revolution took place all the

pillars of that old interpretation fell to the ground. The post-Civil War era was completely reinterpreted. Today most historians see Reconstruction as a noble if

failed effort to establish for the first time in American history an inter-racial democracy. The tragedy of Reconstruction, we now think, was not that it was attempted, but that it failed — leaving to subsequent generations this difficult problem of racial justice in American society.

-Eric Foner

#### The McCreight Lecture

The 2015 McCreight Lecture in the Humanities will be presented by Pulitzer Prize-winning author and historian Eric Foner. The lecture is a flagship event of the Humanities Council, presented each year so that West Virginia audiences may experience top national humanities scholars and public intellectuals from a variety of fields. This year, the McCreight Lecture also serves as a kickoff event for the West Virginia Book Festival.

Foner will present his lecture on "Civil War to Civil Rights" at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 22, in Riggleman Auditorium at the University of Charleston. The program is free and the public is invited to attend. A reception and book signing will follow.

Eric Foner is the Dewitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University. He is one of the country's most prominent historians and a leading authority on the Civil War and Reconstruction periods. His writings have concentrated on the intersections of intellectual, political and social history, and the history of American race relations. His book, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, received the Bancroft Prize, Parkman Prize,



Eric Foner

and Los Angeles Times Book Award. The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery received the Pulitzer Prize for history, the Bancroft Prize, and the Lincoln Prize. His latest book, Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad, was published in early 2015.

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### **Book Festival Returns**

Following a two-year hiatus, the West Virginia Book Festival is back. The event takes place at the Charleston Civic Center October 23-24.

Festival headliners are bestselling authors Neil Gaiman (left) and Jodi Picoult, West Virginia's own Homer Hickam, Jacqueline Woodson, and Jeff Shaara. All events are free to the public.

The festival includes the Marketplace with over 60 vendors, activities for children, workshops on writing and self-publishing, a huge used-book sale, and book signings. The Book Festival is presented by Kanawha County Public Library, the West Virginia Humanities Council, the *Charleston Gazette-Mail*, and the Library Foundation of Kanawha County. Sponsors include West Virginia Public Broadcasting, the Friends of the Library Foundation, the West Virginia Library Commission, the West Virginia Center for the Book, and the Martha Gaines and Russell Wehrle Foundation. Visit www.wvbookfestival.org for the complete schedule.

Country entertainer Minnie Pearl (aka Denise Giardina) paused to say How-DEE! to executive director Ken Sullivan during her 2014 *History Alive* audition at the Humanities Council. **Now we are again seeking new characters** for our living history roster. Proposals are due February 1, 2016. We are looking for figures from any period who have made important contributions to state, national or international history and who would interest general audiences. Contact Mark Payne at payne@wvhumanities.org or call (304)346-8500 to receive application information.



# Hatfields Invade Kentucky

Since its January premiere at West Virginia University, our traveling exhibit *The Hatfields & McCoys: American Blood Feud* has visited Matewan, Bramwell, Athens, Logan, Huntington, and Williamson. This month it crossed the Tug River to McCoy country where it is on display at the Pike County Museum in Pikeville, Kentucky, until October 3, and the Highlands Museum in Ashland, Kentucky, October 14-November 6. The exhibit returns to West Virginia December 4-25 at New Martinsville's Wetzel County Museum. Groups interested in booking the *Hatfields & McCoys* may visit www.wvhumanities.org, or contact Mark Payne at (304)346-8500 or payne@wvhumanities.org. The exhibit is funded in part by ZMM Architects & Engineers of Charleston.



Music in the Parlor: This past June, the Humanities Council participated in the new FestivALL Recital Series with a house concert at our historic headquarters in Charleston. West Virginia Symphony Orchestra flutist Pam Murchison joined her husband Matthew on tuba for an enlightening and entertaining program. Evening concerts were also held at Sunrise Mansion, the Woman's Club, Glenwood Estate, and the Craik-Patton House.

Our new website is up! Redesigned by Mesh Design and Development of Charleston and New York, the Humanities Council site may be viewed on your computer, tablet or smart phone. Visit www.wvhumanities.org.



# **Houston Coal Company Store**

The Houston Coal Company Store at Kimball in McDowell County is one of the best examples of a company store still standing in West Virginia. The 8,000-square-foot brick structure, built in 1923 and listed on the National Register of Historic places, is currently undergoing a \$1.5 million renovation. The McArts Fine Arts organization is leading the restoration with plans to transform the building into a museum. A recent Humanities Council grant will help.

In July, The National Endowment for the Humanities announced \$36.6 million in grant awards for 212 humanities projects across the country, including two grants to West Virginia institutions. West Virginia University was awarded \$155,000 for its Digital Newspaper Project, and \$118,868 went to Shepherd University for a three-week teachers' seminar on Appalachia's literary and cultural heritage. Our congratulations to WVU and Shepherd!

#### Still More Little Libraries

The Humanities Council continues its initiative to spread Little Libraries across the Mountain State. Little Libraries,

weatherproof book boxes mounted on a post,
allow users to swap reading materials on
the honor system — take a book and leave a
book. Most recently, the Richwood Public Library
received a Council grant for a Little Library at the
Cranberry River Campground. The Wayne County
Extension office has also received Council support
for four Little Libraries to be installed this fall at
Prichard and Genoa elementary schools, on Route
75 near Kenova, and at the Dunrovin subdivision

near Wayne. For more details on grants for Little Libraries contact Amy Postalwait at postalwait@wvhumanities. org or (304)346-8500.

# We get mail!

Richard Kerns of the Mineral Daily News-Tribune of Keyser writes:

"'This Week in West Virginia History' is a popular feature that runs every Saturday — one of my favorite sections in the paper. It's a great read, and I appreciate how you keep it fresh with new items. And we always run the Humanities info at the beginning and end, so folks know where the material comes from."

"This Week in West Virginia History," drawn from e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia, provides Mountain State history items for every day of the year. The News-Tribune is one of many newspapers to run the feature, which you may also hear on West Virginia Public Radio at 6:30 a.m. and 4:48 p.m. weekdays. Visit e-WV at wvencyclopedia.org.

#### **Briefs**

The Humanities Council continues to support the work of **Preservation Alliance of West Virginia**, most recently funding an educational video to demonstrate the process of mothballing historic properties. Mothballing is a multi-step process that secures vacant structures for future restoration or re-use. The video will be available by the end of the year. Contact Danielle LaPresta at dlapresta@pawv.org.

The Kanawha Valley Civil War Roundtable's annual lecture takes place October 13 at 7:00 p.m. at the LaBelle Theater in South Charleston with the support of a Humanities Council grant. Thomas Clemens, a leading authority on the Battle of Antietam, will discuss the Union victory at Antietam and its effect on President Lincoln issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. Contact Beth White at bethwhitetrefoil@gmail.com.

The Vandalia Award, West Virginia's highest folklife honor, was presented to Ken Sullivan on May 22 at the 39th annual Vandalia Gathering in Charleston. Executive director of the Humanities Council since 1997, Sullivan was recognized for the publication of the West Virginia Encyclopedia and the creation of its companion website, for his work as editor of Goldenseal magazine and folklife director for the state Division of Culture and History, and for founding the popular West Virginia State Liars Contest.

The year 2016 marks the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act, which was signed into law by President Johnson on October 15, 1966. The Act created the National Register of Historic Places and established state historic preservation offices. Nearly 1,100 West Virginia properties have been approved for listing on the National Register since 1966. The West Virginia Historic Preservation Office will celebrate with open houses, block parties, ribbon cuttings and other activities. Contact them for information on how your community may take part at www.wvculture.org or (304)558-0240.

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# **Grant Categories**

The Humanities Council welcomes applications in the following grant categories.

**Major Grants** (\$20,000 maximum) support major humanities projects, symposiums, conferences, exhibits. lectures. Due: Sept. 1, Feb. 1

Minigrants (\$1,500 maximum) support small projects, single events, or planning and consultation. Due: \*Oct. 1, Feb. 1, April 1, June 1

Fellowships (\$2,500) support research and writing projects by humanities faculty and independent scholars. Due: Feb. 1

Media Grants (\$20,000 maximum) support projects intended to produce audio or video products, websites, or a newspaper series. Due: Sept. 1

**Publication Grants** (\$20,000 maximum) are available to nonprofit presses and academic presses, and support the production phase of a completed manuscript.

Due: Sept. 1

**Teacher Institute Grants** (\$25,000 maximum) are available to colleges and universities, RESAs, and the state Department of Education, and support summer seminars for secondary and elementary teachers. Due: Sept. 1

#### \*Approaching Deadline!

Visit www.wvhumanities. org for applications and guidelines, or call (304)346-8500.

Happy Birthday, NEH! On September 29, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed legislation creating the National Endowment for the Humanities

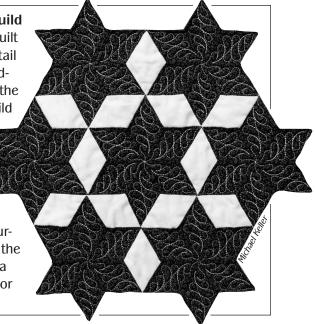
and the National Endowment for the Arts. Both celebrate their 50th anniversary this year. Here former Congressman Ken Hechler shakes hands with the president at the Rose Garden signing ceremony as other bill sponsors look on.



# **Giving Tuesday**

The West Virginia Humanities Council joins the national Giving Tuesday movement on Tuesday, December 1. Following the Thanksgiving holiday and the kickoff of the holiday shopping season, Giving Tuesday is meant to inspire people to give back to their communities and to the charities and causes they support. You may donate to the Humanities Council at www.wvhumanities.org, by phone at (304)346-8500, and by mail at 1310 Kanawha Boulevard, E., Charleston WV 25301 — or stop by the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House in person. Your tax-deductible gift helps us to bring the best of the humanities to West Virginia.

The Kanawha Valley Quilters Guild recently presented a handmade quilt in the "Seven Sisters" pattern (detail at right) to the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House, headquarters of the Humanities Council. We thank guild members Elizabeth Clarke. Carol Cutlip, Clara Poe, Juanita Reed, Carrie Swing, and Cathy Taylor for their excellent work. The MacFarland-**Hubbard House welcomes** gifts of art, antiques or suitable furnishings — and of course cash to the stewardship fund! Contact Victoria Paul at v.paul@wvhumanities.org or (304)346-8500.



The Humanities Council Holiday Open House is Friday, December 4, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the MacFarland-Hubbard House, 1310 Kanawha Boulevard, E., Charleston. Join us for historic decorations and holiday cheer!

#### **Donations** April 1 — July 31, 2015

We thank the following generous donors and invite you to join them. You may donate online at www.wvhumanities.org, send a check in the reply envelope included in this issue of People & Mountains, or contact Victoria Paul at v.paul@wvhumanities.org. All gifts are tax-deductible.

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The West Virginia Humanities Council gratefully acknowledges support from the National Endowment for the Humanities; the Office of the West Virginia Secretary of Education and the Arts; and foundations, corporations, and individuals throughout the Mountain State and beyond.

# A model undertaking

Among the rewards of looking after one of Charleston's oldest houses is the opportunity to work

with the keepers of other old houses. For Humanities Council staff here at the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House that primarily means our good friends at the Craik-Patton House, a couple miles east of us, and at Glenwood Estate, a couple miles west. Our houses date within 20 years of each other, 1834-1852, and all three are publicly owned. We have a lot in common and keep closely in touch.

So when Paul Zuros turned up with a nifty scale model of Craik-Patton House, we didn't hesitate to ask for details. Paul is the director at Craik-Patton. His model looked like custom work, but he assured us that it came from a paper kit that he himself had cut out and glued together. The supplier was Historic Models of Hampden Sydney, Virginia.

Richard McClintock is the man in charge, and one gets the impression that Historic Models is mainly a labor of love. Certainly it's hard to imagine him turning a profit by what he did for us, spending a day photographing and measuring this place

> before heading back across the mountains. Soon we had our kit in hand, printed on a half-dozen sheets of light card stock plus an extra sheet of "grass" to go under it.

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We join distinguished company at Historic Models. The series includes the McLean House at Appomattox, where Lee surrendered to Grant, and Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, among other structures. The HOscale kits are sold as fundraisers, and ves, we'll be glad to send you one for \$16 postpaid.

Be warned, however, that assembly requires patience

and a steady hand. Paul Zuros volunteered to put our model together and estimates he has ten hours in the job. Here you see Paul at work, with a photo of the real house from the same angle.

