

A Publication of the West Virginia Humanities Council

A Pocahontas County Gateway to America

Pearl Buck's Mother's House



Pearl Buck's birthplace.

Courtesy Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Foundation.

Born in West Virginia but raised in China by missionary parents, Pearl Sydenstricker Buck grew up among Chinese friends and servants, speaking Mandarin almost as early as she spoke English. Under those circumstances it was many years before she reclaimed a sense of herself as an American. Her Pocahontas County birthplace was critical to that process, providing what she later called a gateway to her native country and indeed its "living heart." Although she claimed to remember her actual birth at her mother's family home in Hillsboro, her first detailed recollections of the place came from a return visit as an alert nine-year-old. This excerpt from her 1965 essay, "My Mother's House," tells of that visit and others that followed.

I remember clearly the day of our arrival at my mother's house. The journey had taken a full month, first the travel down the Yangtse river to Shanghai by English steamboat, then the voyage across the Pacific Ocean and finally the train trip across the continent. My uncle met us at the station in a carriage drawn by two horses and we drove in state to the house. I saw it at the far end of the wide green lawn and under the maple trees, for the carriage paused while the gate in the white fence was opened. It was exactly as my mother had said, a white house with vine-covered pillars supporting a portico. It looked what it was, a comfortable, dignified family home, a home in which I had a part because it was my birthplace.

The carriage rolled to the front door, and there we were met by a white-haired gentleman whom I took to be my grandfather, and so hailed him, but he told me he was only my uncle Cornelius, and in a moment there was a still

older white-haired gentleman, very straight and stately, and he proved to be my grandfather. We dismounted, and I, separating myself, stopped again and again to look, to drink in the scene, to verify all that had been in my mind and then to realize that it was even more beautiful, more wonderful, than my mother had said. True, there were the inevitable changes inside the house, the different use of rooms that each generation must make in order to settle its claim upon a house, but my mother's room was the same. It is this room that I still remember best. There is something awesome about the return to the spot where one's life began. It seemed to me that I had seen it all before, as indeed I had, and again I saw myself as a newborn child here, where I had first opened my eyes. Bit by bit I remembered it all, and now I set down those memories as I remember them.

We spent the summer in my mother's

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Next Board Meeting
July 22, 2016,
Shepherdstown.
Open to the public.

Big Tree

Every spring of this young century I've had the pleasure of watching a stately pin oak in front of the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House come into its foliage. It's an unhurried process, beginning in late March and not done before Memorial Day. There's a flowering that goes on simultaneously, but that happens in the branches high above, scarcely noticeable except for the skinny brown fuzzies that sift downward like dried-up caterpillar carcasses. The leaves are the real show, growing and multiplying day by day and gaining color from palest chartreuse to a deep forest green.

It's a big tree, with limbs overhanging one of Charleston's busiest streets. The crown exceeds 80 feet across, as best I can tell from stepping it off on the ground, and I'd estimate the tree's height at that much or more. We recently measured the trunk circumference at an impressive 12 feet, ten inches. That puts the diameter at 49 inches, if I've applied my high school geometry correctly. And that's at the recommended breast height, as foresters call it, four and a half feet above the ground; where the tree enters the earth it's a good deal thicker than that.

A common formula for calculating the age of trees assigns pin oaks a multiplier of 3.0 for every inch of diameter, making this one 147 years old. That's another estimate, of course, but we have photographic evidence taking our tree back most of that long period. A picture hanging in the downstairs hallway shows it standing in the front yard in 1925, already a good-sized tree of maybe a foot and a half in diameter. We've placed the photo so that the real tree may be seen through a nearby window, a juxtaposition that always tickles visitors. There's a satisfaction in knowing that living things can thrive for a very long time in strength and good health.

Mighty oaks from tiny acorns grow, as we've all heard. Accepting the above age calculation means this particular acorn must have sprouted soon after the Civil War. Our old house goes back even earlier, and the tree's placement suggests it was planted by a long-ago occupant. The Humanities Council has owned the place only since 1999. That's as far as my direct acquaintance of house and tree goes, but thinking of them standing here together through the long intervening years puts things in perspective, as we in the humanities ever strive to do.

— Ken Sullivan

People & Mountains is published three times a year by the West Virginia Humanities Council.

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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The Board of Directors welcomes four new members elected at the Council's recent meeting in Beckley: Jon E. Cawthorne, Dean of Libraries at West Virginia University; attorney Leslie Dillon of Chapmanville; Marsha V. Krotseng, president of Bluefield State College; and Donald "D. F." Mock, senior vice president for United Bank in Charleston. We thank departing board members Stan Cavendish of Charleston, Sarah Denman of Huntington, Eleanor Heishman of Moorefield, and Karen Stakem of Wheeling for their years of service.

Continued from page 1

house, arriving there in June and staying until September when school began. Since my brother was at college at Washington and Lee University, we took a house nearby and I spent a year in an American school – my first, and my only until I returned for college. I was in the third grade and I do not remember learning anything, my mother having carried me far enough in our Chinese home so that study was unnecessary. I was placed according to my age and not according to what I already knew. None of it seemed important to me then nor does it seem important now. The only memorable event was that the following summer, after a series of visits to aunts and uncles and cousins, we ended with the month of August at my mother's house, a time of pure delight in which I learned to ride horseback, ate quantities of grapes and other fruits, and took part in every activity about the place, from moving the dasher of the churn up and down in the buttery and watching great lumps of butter washed and shaped and put away, to riding in hay wagons. Life was one day of joy after the other....

Eight years passed before I was to see my mother's house again. I returned to it then, a young girl fresh from a French school in Switzerland, whither I had stayed for a few weeks to improve my French. My skirts were lengthening in the fashion of the day, and my long honey-colored hair was in a thick braid and turned up with a bow at my neck. Again we went straight to my mother's house. My grandfather had died in the years between, and his room had been made into another room. I missed his presence, for he was a man who made himself felt, a quiet positive dignified man who lived apart and yet who influenced the atmosphere of the entire house. The family no longer used the old dining room on the ground floor. It had become part of the storehouse and buttery, and a large new dining room had been added on the floor above. There the family gathered about a long table, my uncle at the head and my aunt at the foot, and on either side my grown cousins, one the son and the other three daughters either finished with their education or finishing. Each was accomplished and, it seemed to me, beautiful and they made me shy—I with my unnecessary store of knowledge of faraway places and lacking essential knowledge of my own country and its people! By now I knew that I was American, however, and that sooner or later the day would come, so far the revolution had proceeded, when I would not be able to return to China. It was another twenty years before that day of no return arrived but it did arrive.

— Pearl S. Buck

Fellowships Awarded

Humanities Council Fellowships are awarded annually to college faculty and independent scholars for research and writing projects in the humanities. The \$2,500 grants are unique in the Mountain State. The 2016 Humanities Fellows and their subjects are:

Melissa Bingmann, *Morgantown*, Preserving Families and Youth for the Future of the Nation: New Deal Homesteads

Robin Conley, *Huntington*, Narratives and Experiences of Trauma: A Study of Veterans' Stories of Combat

Slav N. Gratchev, *Huntington*, Don Quixote: The Re-accentuation of the World's Greatest Literary Hero

Montserrat Miller, *Huntington*, The Political Plate: Food and Catalan Nationalism

Catherine Moore, *Fayetteville*, Appalachian Essay Collection

Jacob L. Stump, *Shepherdstown*, Appalachia and the Politics of Cultural Intervention

David Trowbridge, *Huntington*, Civil War, Race, and Reconstruction in West Virginia: History and Memory

The next Fellowships application deadline is February 1, 2017.



Pearl Buck Conference

The Pearl S. Buck Living Gateway Conference will be held September 11-13 at the Erickson Alumni Center at West Virginia University in Morgantown. The conference is sponsored by the West Virginia Humanities Council, West Virginia University, West Virginia Wesleyan College, and the Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Foundation with special funding from the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the Pulitzer Prize Board to commemorate the centennial of the Pulitzer Prizes. The Living Gateway conference is one of many Pulitzer Prize "Centennial Campfires" events taking place around the country in 2016 and will focus on the literary and social legacy of West Virginia's best-known Pulitzer Prize winner. Visit pearlsbuckconference.wvu.edu for more information.

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: *June 1, Oct. 1, Feb. 1, April 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!

Grants are going digital! Grant applications may soon be submitted online at wvhumanities.org. Contact grants administrator Erin Riebe with any questions during our transition at (304) 346-8500 or riebe@wvhumanities.org.



Emily Hilliard

The West Virginia Folklife Program has been active throughout the state, digging into the ways of West Virginians from the Northern Panhandle to

the southern coalfields. On March 3, state folklorist Emily Hilliard kicked off the statewide folklife fieldwork survey with a public interest meeting at Taylor Books in Charleston, and has since held similar meetings at the Williamson Public Library and the Ohio County Public Library in Wheeling.

In recent fieldwork, Hilliard has interviewed West Virginia songwriters and musicians such as Shirley Campbell, whose song "Castles in the Air" was recorded by country musician Grandpa Jones in 1969. Hilliard also conducted oral histories with Charleston broommaker Jim Shaffer (*above*), Indian home cook Ruby Abdullah, the Gospel Singaleers of Beckley, "Friendly Neighbors" radio show directors Jeff and Victoria Bosley of Logan, and more. In addition, she is recording a series of oral histories related to traditional foodways of Helvetia as part of a project supported by the Southern Foodways Alliance.

In the coming months, Hilliard will continue to hold public interest meetings and conduct interviews. If you know of traditional artists or tradition bearers who should be included in this survey, please call the toll-free folklife hotline at 1(844)618-3747 or email Emily Hilliard at hilliard@wvhumanities.org.

Shepherd Writer in Residence

Author Charles Frazier will serve as the 2016 Appalachian Heritage Writer in Residence at Shepherd University from September 23 to October 1. The program, which began in 1998, honors the work of contemporary Appalachian writers and is supported again this year by a Humanities Council grant. Frazier's residency includes a screening of the film *Cold Mountain*, which is based on his bestselling novel of the same name; local readings; a discussion of his work and writing habits; and a book signing. For more information visit www.shepherd.edu/ahwir.

Stories of Appalachia

In 2016, Huntington's Heritage Farm Museum and Village (*right*) celebrates the 20th year since founders Mike and Henriella Perry opened their place to the public. Since then, the Farm has grown to include more than 25,000 square feet of historic artifacts and 30 buildings representing everyday life in Appalachia from the 19th century to the present. As part of the anniversary celebration, the Farm's Way Back Weekends series will present Stories of Appalachia, supported by a Humanities Council grant, on August 6. The featured performers are West Virginia's award-winning storyteller Bil Lepp and Colonial Williamsburg's Darci Tucker. For more information visit heritagefarmmuseum.com.



Visit e-WV: *The West Virginia Encyclopedia* at wvencyclopedia.org.

Briefs

We welcome recently elected citizen members to the **Humanities Council Program Committee**, which oversees Council program activities and recommends grants for approval by the board of directors. Glenville State College archivist Jason Gum and Elizabeth Spangler of Greenbrier County will join the committee in June. We thank departing members Sally Haynes and Larry Springer for their service.

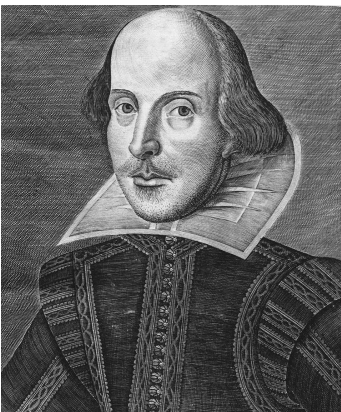
The national meeting of the Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation takes place July 24-27 at Harpers Ferry. During the four-day conference, a number of lectures and activities **supported by the Humanities Council** will be free and open to the public. For more information visit www.lewisandclark.org.

The Humanities Council is again supporting the **West Virginia Wesleyan MFA Visiting Writers Series**. Wesleyan will host writers Nikky Finney, Sara Einstein, and Greenbrier County native Pinckney Benedict for a 10-day residency in early July with free reading and discussion programs open to the public. For more information contact Jessie van Eerden at vaneerden@wwwc.edu.

A Humanities Council grant is supporting the planning, development, fabrication, and installation of a new interactive exhibit, *The First Campaign*, at the **Beverly Heritage Center** in Randolph County. Built around the Civil War Battle of Rich Mountain, the exhibit will be completed in 2017. For more information email info@beverlyheritagecenter.org or call (304) 637-7424.

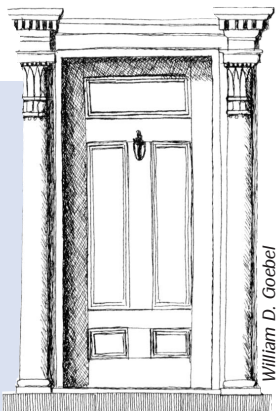
The Book That Gave Us the Bard

The year 2016 marks the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death. In recognition, the Folger Shakespeare Library is touring an exhibit, *First Folio! The Book That Gave Us Shakespeare*, to all 50 states, D.C., the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Published just seven years after his death, *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies*, now known as the "First Folio," saved for posterity 18 of his 38 plays, including *The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*.



The West Virginia venue for *First Folio!* is Oglebay Institute Mansion Museum in Wheeling, May 9-June 12. Nearly 40 programs are scheduled in conjunction with the exhibit including family programs, lectures, a Madrigal dinner, and a film festival. The Humanities Council is sponsoring performances of the Folger Theatre's interactive one-man play *Gravedigger's Tale* in which the character of the Gravedigger from *Hamlet* engages the audience in the story from his unique perspective. Two performances will be presented on Saturday, June 11, at 2:00 p.m. at the Mansion Museum and at 7:30 p.m. in Greenwood Cemetery. For information visit oionline.com/firstfolio or call (304)242-7272.

Celebrate West Virginia Day with the Humanities Council at our headquarters in Charleston's 1836 MacFarland-Hubbard House. We are again joining the Craik-Patton House and Historic Glenwood Foundation to host coordinated open houses as part of June 20 observances. The MacFarland-Hubbard House will be open from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., Glenwood from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and Craik-Patton from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.



Little Lectures Conclude

The Little Lectures wrap up for the year on June 12 with Judy Byers (*left*) talking about "Folklore and Folklorists." Byers is the founding director of the Frank and Jane Gabor West Virginia Folklife Center at Fairmont State University where she is professor emeritus of English and Folklore Studies. Admission is \$10 and includes a reception after the 2:00 p.m. program. Please call (304)346-8500 to confirm your seat.



Got Folk? Are you a traditional musician? Gospel singer? Bluegrass picker? Maybe your neighbor up the road makes traditional stuffed grape leaves, or beans and cornbread, or roti, just as their grandparents did. If you are or know about a great traditional artist or craftsperson, musician, cook, or elder in your community, call the brand new West Virginia Folklife Hotline toll free at 1(844)618-3747 and share your song, story, or tip with the West Virginia Folklife Program.





The historic MacFarland-Hubbard House.

the exterior needs to be repainted. The cost of all necessary work is expected to exceed \$160,000. The Council has initiated a fundraising campaign and will seek support from foundations, corporations and individuals who share our interest in preserving West Virginia's historic and cultural places. Contact Victoria Paul at v.paul@wvhumanities.org or call (304)346-8500 to help.

The West Virginia Humanities Council purchased the MacFarland-Hubbard House for its headquarters 17 years ago. At that time and with generous community support we renovated the place to historic standards, but like a lot of other homeowners we are once again at the point where maintenance has become a serious consideration. We will begin an important project this fall to rehabilitate the historic landmark with repairs to the gutters, the roof, and eight original wooden casement windows. Four HVAC units must also be replaced, and

Donations November 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016

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Speak up for the humanities! State budget-making is running behind schedule this year, and it's impossible to know whether the new budget will have been finalized by the time you see this. If not, we'll appreciate it if you ask your senators and delegates – and any friends in the executive branch – to please make sure that state funding for the Humanities Council remains intact. You may email any legislator via www.legis.state.wv.us.

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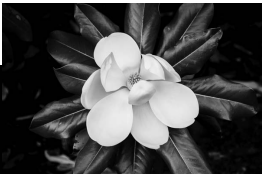
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Bill Yahner
Linda Yoder
Dolores and Bill Yoke
Thomas and Karen Yokum

With Memorial Day upon us, we gratefully acknowledge those who make memorial gifts to the West Virginia Humanities Council. There are a variety of funding options available for memorial gifts, and even a brief mention at the end of a loved one's obituary often results in significant contributions. Commemorative gifts for an anniversary, birthday, graduation, wedding or other event are also appreciated. Contact Victoria Paul at v.paul@wvhumanities.org or call (304)346-8500.



Come visit the grounds of the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House, Humanities Council headquarters, during the East End Garden Showcase from June 26 through July 10.

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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.



Byrd Exhibit to Tour

A new traveling exhibit on the life and career of Senator Robert C. Byrd will tour West Virginia and the nation’s capital to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Byrd’s birth. The exhibit features digital representations of more than 100 documents and photographs from the extensive Robert C. Byrd Congressional Papers Collection.

The Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History & Education, located on the campus of Shepherd University, unveiled the major exhibit titled “Robert C. Byrd: Senator, Statesman, West Virginian” earlier this month. The exhibit, supported in part by the West Virginia Humanities Council, will travel this year and next. The tour will culminate in Charleston in November 2017, the centennial of Senator Byrd’s birth.

“This exhibit shares the story of the longest serving United States Senator – his early life and entrance into politics; his devotion to family and to the people of West Virginia; his public service and rise to leadership in the U.S. Senate; and his role as defender of the Constitution,” said Ray Smock, director of the Byrd Center.

Among other locations, the exhibit will visit the Parkersburg Art Center, the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, Tamarack in Beckley, and the Greenbrier County Convention & Visitors Bureau. West Virginia institutions interested in hosting the exhibit should contact Jay Wyatt at jwyatt@shepherd.edu or (304)876-5701. For more information visit byrdcenter.org.

Robert Byrd with the Moonlight Mountain Moonshiners, from the exhibit.

You can look it up. Visit *e-WV*, the online *West Virginia Encyclopedia*, for more information on the long career of Robert C. Byrd. You will find an authoritative short biography, with additional references to the late Senator’s work in almost 50 other articles. Our online encyclopedia also has biographies of nearly 700 other West Virginians, past and present. Find it all at wvencyclopedia.org.