

The Little Lectures keep coming...

75 and counting

Mark Payne figures that the Humanities Council Little Lectures, which began in the spring of 2001, are the longest-running lecture series in West Virginia. Mark has managed the series since its second year, when he hired on as Humanities Council program officer, and he counts the recent May lecture as Number 75.

It's a simple concept: Recruit great speakers for Sunday afternoon parlor talks with 35-45 guests, on an advance reservation basis with however many extras will fit, followed by wine and hors d'oeuvres



Michael Keller

Documentarian Elaine McMillion Sheldon delivers the May Little Lecture.

in the pleasant environs of one of Charleston's most historic houses. We charge \$10 to cover refreshments, and usually can find a series sponsor (APCO this year, acknowledged on page 6) to defray the speaker fees. Bottom line, the Little Lectures are among the most economical programs we run and definitely among the most popular.

Venue is very much part of the equation. When we acquired our 1836 house on Charleston's riverfront boulevard, President Henry Battle of the local historical society told us that the best way to preserve historic property is to keep it in productive use.

As Henry put it, old houses must work for their living, same as people, and Little Lectures are one way we put this house to work. We begin each talk by welcoming our audience to "the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House." Folks are encouraged to explore the place, including our upstairs offices for those who want to venture behind the scenes. Every lecture brings at least a few new visitors who otherwise might never have found us, and that's part of the plan.

Flexibility is everything in managing a multi-purpose property. Council employees are adept at throwing together a pop-up auditorium on the

Friday afternoons preceding Sunday lectures. We keep wooden folding chairs – wedding chairs, I call them, with the comfortably padded seats – in the back shed, along with a special cart to wheel them out. The lectern is a repurposed music stand, sturdy enough for a speaker's notes but easily set aside and out of the way. Electronics come and go as needed, as does a pull-down projection screen normally residing in the hall closet. A digital recorder is lashed into the chandelier just before show time.

For years, Jennifer Soule catered the Little Lectures at no cost to us, her generous way of staying involved after leaving the Humanities Council board of directors. Jennifer volunteered her time and culinary talent, even buying all the fixings. She was warmly received whenever we managed to lure her to the front of the house, and we always figured that probably as many people came for the "Soule Food" as for intellectual nourishment from the podium.

Jennifer's husband, the late Glade Little, liked to joke that the lectures were named for him. We let him get away with it so long as Jennifer was working the kitchen, but actually the Little Lectures name comes from the fact that we can

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Open to the public.

Spreading it around

Our Humanities Council is the West Virginia affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, gratefully receiving about half our annual budget from that direction. Such funds are equitably distributed by long-standing formula to humanities councils nationwide.

In addition to apportioning federal dollars to state humanities councils, the NEH also awards grants on a competitive basis to colleges, museums and similar institutions. These competitive funds have traditionally been less evenly distributed, going disproportionately to the more populous urban states.

Such states have the elite institutions, more of them anyway, and it's not surprising that they produce more great grant proposals than do less advantaged places. Everything else aside, these are the proposals most likely to be funded, in a problem common to grant makers public and private and by no means limited to the NEH.

It's a certain recipe for the rich to get richer but hard to correct within a meritocracy. And compounding matters is the fact that funding decision-makers themselves come disproportionately from privileged places and institutions.

Against this background, it is refreshing to hear incoming NEH Chairman Jon Peede's take on grant making. Peede comes from Mississippi. He is acquainted with out-of-the-way parts of the country and wants to make sure that such places are represented in grants decisions at his agency. Toward that end, he has pledged to routinely include people from all states on NEH grant-review panels.

Peede discussed his policy on a February visit to West Virginia. Soon afterwards I was pleased to be asked to take part on a grants panel and gratified to find myself serving with colleagues from Arkansas and South Dakota. We reviewed proposals from big cities and also from communities that would be quite small even in our own rural states. None of these places was beyond our experience, and I'm satisfied they all got full and fair consideration.

Panel recommendations are advisory, and we haven't yet heard how it all came out. But it is reassuring to know that the National Endowment for the Humanities is committed to spreading its resources throughout the great country it serves.

– 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 zuros@wvhumanities.org.

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The Board of Directors welcomes three new members elected at the recent board meeting in Lewisburg: Patrick Cassidy of Wheeling, president of Cassidy, Cogan, Shapell & Vogelin; Margaret Mary Layne of Huntington, CEO of Layne Consulting; and Patricia Proctor of Huntington, director of the Simon Perry Center for Constitutional Democracy at Marshall University. We thank departing board members Kay Goodwin of Charleston and Dolores Yoke of Clarksburg.

Continued from page 1

accommodate only a “little” crowd here. Three dozen people is pushing it without overflowing into the adjacent room, as usually happens.

As much as we love the alliteration, these truly are *little* lectures. That’s as regards audience size, anyway. The ideas themselves are sometimes pretty huge.

Number 75 turned out to be a great one, featuring Netflix documentarian and Oscar nominee Elaine McMillion Sheldon. A real coal miner’s daughter with Richwood roots, growing up partly in Logan, graduating from South Charleston High School and now living in Charleston: Elaine understands us pretty well. She’s one of a number of young West Virginians (Catherine Venable Moore also comes to mind) demonstrating that it’s possible to do world-class work from right here at home.

Sheldon is best known for her *Heroin(e)* documentary, about Huntington Fire Chief Jan Rader and other women fighting the deadly opioid crisis. She talked mostly about *Heroin(e)* and more recent work, including *Recovery Boys*, which is set for Netflix release in late June. An early breakthrough project of hers was *Hollow*, a 2013 interactive documentary funded by a Humanities Council media grant.

I believe Elaine was our first Academy Awards nominee, but we’ve had Emmy winners in the series before and a host of other awards and credentials represented among our lecturers. There was a Ken Burns producer a while back (who also lives and works in West Virginia), a retired NBC/CBS foreign correspondent, and Hoppy Kercheval, the ever-popular king of West Virginia media commentators. There have been lectures on Shakespeare performance and why Shakespeare matters, and on American literature as represented by Poe, Thoreau and others. We’ve heard about Islam from an imam and from an Eastern Orthodox priest about his faith tradition, and all about John Henry, John Brown, and other characters and topics of West Virginia’s eventful past.

Eclectic is the word, and at this point we can fill the house for just about any topic. Next up is a history of the WVU Mountaineer mascot, and I recommend you put your name in early if you want a seat in our decidedly little Little Lecture hall.

– Ken Sullivan

Ken Sullivan, Humanities Council executive director since 1997, has introduced almost all the Little Lectures. He recalls lectures on frontier archeology, West Virginia wildflowers, country music, and bookbinding as among the most memorable.

We use this “little lecturer” as our Little Lectures logo. It is the silhouette of historian Ron Lewis, who delivered lecture Number 60 in May 2014.



Some Favorite Lectures

While it’s not possible to list 75 Little Lectures in this space, Mark Payne offers some favorites from over the years:

Allen Chambers on West Virginia architecture, September 2002

Irene McKinney on poetry, May 2003

Bob Beanblossom on state parks history, March 2005

Ed Rabel on journalism, February 2006

Anne Hobson Freeman on novelist Mary Lee Settle, June 2008

Mark Sohn on Appalachian food, June 2009

Billy Edd Wheeler on Appalachian writing, March 2010

Grant Cooper on classical music, May 2011

Peter Hatch on Thomas Jefferson’s gardens, March 2012

Denise Giardina on her Mine Wars fiction, June 2012

Don Page on the crafts movement, May 2013

John Alexander Williams on the West Virginia sesquicentennial, June 2013

Carter Taylor Seaton on hippie homesteaders, April 2014

Ken Ward, Jr. on the Blankenship trial, April 2016

And Jean Edward Smith, various dates, on Eisenhower, FDR, and Ulysses S. Grant.

Of course, the one that matters now is the one coming up next: Folklorist Rosemary Hathaway will close the 2018 Little Lecture series with “Hillbilly or Frontiersman: A Brief Cultural History of the WVU Mountaineer Mascot” at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, June 24, at the MacFarland-Hubbard House in Charleston. Contact Mark Payne at (304) 346-8500 or payne@wvhumanities.org.

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, and the state Department of Education, and support summer seminars for secondary and elementary teachers.

Due: Sept. 1

Fellowship and grant applications may be submitted online at www.wvhumanities.org. Contact Erin Riebe with any questions at (304)346-8500 or riebe@wvhumanities.org.



Buck Revival Continues: The first Pearl S. Buck "Living Gateway" conference took place with international participation at West Virginia University in October 2016. Now a second such conference is planned for September 13-15 at West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon. The Humanities Council is a major supporter of both conferences.

The current revival of interest in the Buck legacy in West Virginia stems from a 2014 agreement by West Virginia University, West Virginia Wesleyan, and the Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Foundation to place a major Buck manuscript collection at WVU Libraries. All three institutions will participate in the upcoming conference, along with Davis & Elkins College.

Meanwhile, a special group of West Virginia high school and middle school students will take part in a Pearl Buck teacher institute this month, organized by WVU and funded by the Humanities Council.

Pearl Buck was born in West Virginia and raised by missionary parents in China. She received both the Nobel and Pulitzer prizes for literature, and is remembered also as a human rights activist.

For more information, visit <https://pearlsbuckconference.wvu.edu/>.

A Real Outlier

When astronaut John Glenn circled the earth in 1962, an African-American woman from West Virginia calculated the orbital equations. A year earlier Katherine Johnson (right) had conducted the trajectory analysis for the country's first human spaceflight.

Born in White Sulphur Springs and educated at what is now West Virginia State University, Johnson broke race and gender barriers when she began working for the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (later NASA) in 1953, manually computing the mathematical calculations so vital to the space program.

Johnson's career at NASA was documented in the book *Hidden Figures* and dramatized in the 2016 movie of the same name. Now, a new documentary produced by Motion Masters of Charleston and funded in part by the Humanities Council chronicles Johnson's life. *Outlier: The Story of Katherine Johnson* premiered April 23 on West Virginia Public Broadcasting. Visit wvpublic.org for upcoming air dates.



Courtesy NASA

Augusta at 45: The 45th season of the Augusta Heritage Arts Workshops gets under way this summer on the campus of Davis & Elkins College in Elkins. Dedicated to traditional music, dance, crafts and folklore, the workshops are operated by the college's Augusta Heritage Center.

Augusta is best known for its special theme weeks, running this year from late July into mid-August, and including old-time music as well as blues, bluegrass, Cajun/Creole and other genres of American music. Daily hour-long cultural sessions, supported by a Humanities Council grant, explore the history and heritage behind these music traditions. Visit augustaheritagecenter.org.

Junious Brickhouse dances at Augusta 2017.



Paul Zuros is our new operations manager. A Weirton native, Paul earned his B.A. in history from West Virginia University and his master's in public history from Duquesne. In addition to everything to do with our historic house and property, Paul also takes charge of communications at the Humanities Council.



Michael Keller

Labor History Symposium. The Wheeling Academy of Law and Science Foundation, in partnership with Wheeling Heritage and the Ohio County Public Library, will offer the second Reuther-Pollack Labor History Symposium on September 1 at the First State Capitol in Wheeling. It is named for Wheeling native Walter P. Reuther, one of the most influential and charismatic labor leaders of the 20th century, and Augustus Pollack, a Wheeling business owner whose progressive policies toward employees led organized labor to erect a monument in his honor.

Supported by a Humanities Council grant, the symposium will feature presentations from labor historians and from Gavin Strassel of the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University. Contact the WALSL Foundation at spd@walslaw.com.

Folklife Fieldwork Continues

The Humanities Council folklife program continues to document, present, and preserve West Virginia's vibrant cultural heritage. In recent months, state folklorist Emily Hilliard has conducted 15 oral history interviews representing eight counties.

In Monongalia County, Hilliard interviewed gospel singer Sarah Boyd Little, of Scotts Run. Little, who is now in her 90's, sang with her high school choir at Franklin Roosevelt's White House, and her sister was photographed by New Deal photographer Walker Evans.

Eastern Panhandle interviews include Benny Snyder (above), a woodcarver and poultry farmer who makes miniature models of the tools and equipment in his Shepherdstown workshop. Snyder makes the models completely himself, casting the metal, carving the wood, and riveting the pieces together. For more about West Virginia Folklife visit wvhumanities.org.



Emily Hilliard

Briefs

Happy 155th, West Virginia!

Again this year we celebrate West Virginia Day with an open house at our historic headquarters property in Charleston. Built in 1836, the MacFarland-Hubbard House was standing when the Mountain State was born in June 1863. Explore the house and grounds, have a glass of lemonade, and help us honor the occasion on June 20 from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Bil Lepp will be the featured storyteller at Huntington's Heritage Farm Museum and Village on June 23 as part of their Way Back Weekends series. Lepp will entertain guests with stories woven with themes of Appalachian life, supported by the Humanities Council. Visit heritagefarmmuseum.com.

Capon Bridge Founders Day takes place with Humanities Council support on September 29-30, with lectures and demonstrations on Hampshire County's long and rich history. Presentations on frontier music, life in native communities, and life of the frontier settlers during the French & Indian War are included. Visit cbfoundersdayfestival.net.

And More Frankie: Celebration of the 200th anniversary of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* continues with Humanities Council support at the Kanawha County Public Library. Thomas Kiddie, associate professor of English at West Virginia State University, will provide a free lecture on the horror classic July 23 at 6:00 p.m. Call (304) 343-4646.

Program Committee Changes: We welcome Civil War historian Jason Phillips of WVU and Shakespeare scholar Gabriel Rieger of Concord University to the Program Committee, elected by public ballot in the last issue of *People & Mountains*. Three incumbent members were reelected – Leslie Baker of Raleigh County, Bob Bonar of Calhoun County, and Charles Keeney of Kanawha County – and we thank departing members Amy Nicholas and Dolores Yoke. The Program Committee oversees Humanities Council programs and recommends grants for approval by the board of directors.



**APPALACHIAN
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APCO Sponsors Little Lectures

We gratefully acknowledge Appalachian Power Company/AEP as the 2018 sponsor of our popular Little Lecture series. APCO financial support has made possible full-house lectures by Marshall University Professor Burnis Morris, West Virginia and Regional History Center Director John Cuthbert, and Oscar-nominated documentary filmmaker Elaine McMillion Sheldon. On June 24, WVU folklorist Rosemary Hathaway will close the series with "Hillbilly or Frontiersman: A Brief Cultural History of the WVU Mountaineer Mascot."

We welcome corporate support for Humanities Council programming, with other recent sponsors including Bailey and Glasser law firm, ZMM Architects and Engineers, and United Bank. Contact Victoria Paul at (304) 346-8500 or v.paul@wvhumanities.org to join this distinguished circle.

Donations November 1, 2017 - March 31, 2018

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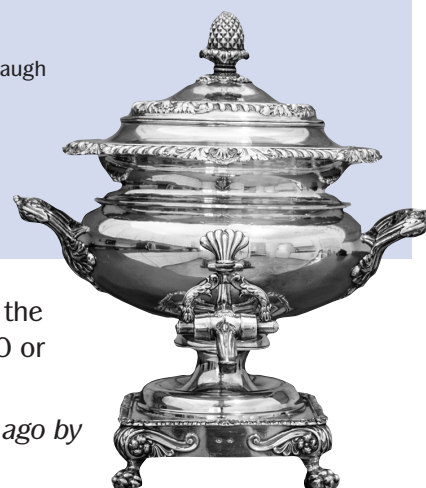
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We welcome suitable gifts of art and furnishings (and of course, cash!) for the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House. Contact Victoria Paul at (304)346-8500 or email v.paul@wvhumanities.org.

This handsome Sheffield plate tea urn, c. 1805-1810, was given some years ago by Alex Franklin in memory of Caroline Chilton Nelson Franklin.

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

The 2018 Humanities Fellowships

If you like sausage you shouldn't ever watch it being made, according to the old adage, but don't tell that to Mike Costello (below). The Lost Creek farmer and farm-to-table chef frequently uses sausage in his professional cooking and on his own table. Definitely he likes it, and he's not afraid of learning more about how it's made. His recently awarded Humanities Council fellowship will look not only at how sausage is made but at West Virginia women who make sausage and the diverse ethnic traditions they represent.



Mike Costello's fellowship (aptly titled "Common Links") is among 11 approved by the Humanities Council board of directors at their spring meeting in Greenbrier County. The other 2018 fellows are:

Cari Carpenter, Morgantown, *Selected Writings of Ora Eddlemann Reed*

Tania de Miguel Magro, Morgantown, *Salas Barbadillo's Fiestas de la boda de la incasable mal casada*

Cynthia Gorman, Morgantown, *After the Raid: Immigration, Border Control and Community Life in Moorefield*

Joseph Hodge, Morgantown, *In the Aftermath of Empire: Colonial Experts, Post-Colonial Careerism and the Decolonization of Development, 1950-1990*

Adam Komisaruk, Morgantown, *A Public of One: Sexual Privatization in British Romantic Writing*

Elisabeth Orr, Morgantown, *Finding the Forgotten: Cemeteries in Coal Company Towns of the New River Gorge, 1880-1930*

Elizabeth Perego, Shepherdstown, *Laughing in the Face of Death: Humor from Algeria's "Dark Decade," 1991-2002*

Darla Spencer, Charleston, *Woodland Mounds in West Virginia: The Adena Culture*

Mark Tauger, Morgantown, *Environmental and Agricultural History of the 1931-1933 Soviet Famine*

Brian Wright, Fairmont, *Rock 'n' Roll Comes to Small Town West Virginia: Teenage Dance Bands of the 1960s*

Getting Yours: We encourage applications for Humanities Council fellowships. These special grants are unique in West Virginia in their support of research and writing in any field of the humanities.

The \$2,500 grants are awarded annually on a competitive basis to college faculty and independent scholars. The next deadline is February 1, 2019. You may visit www.wvhumanities.org to apply, or contact Erin Riebe at (304) 346-8500 or riebe@wvhumanities.org for further information.