



McCreight Lecture in the Humanities 2019

Denise Kiernan, *The Girls Of Atomic City*

Raw wooden planks where the sidewalks ought to be. Prefab houses set in winding rows, following the contours of Tennessee's Black Oak Ridge. Deep, sticky mud, everywhere you looked. The site was so unfinished, Celia Szapka would later recall, that it resembled nothing so much as a massive construction zone.

In truth, this unofficial, unincorporated, newly-repurposed section of East Tennessee was largely just that. Throughout 1942 the U.S. War Department had taken possession of roughly 52,000 acres along the Clinch River, 18 miles west of Knoxville. By the fall of 1943, when Celia Szapka arrived from the Army Corps of Engineers offices in New York, an entire town had been designed and built from scratch. The settlement had been under construction for just under a year, and was already so far along it was about to undergo its first expansion. But to Celia, and to the thousands of workers who came in from the industrial Northeast corridor and the Midwest to work on "the project," the place looked so unfinished it seemed hardly begun.

Under tight security and constant observation, the rank-and-file employees of the Clinton Engineer Works labored on a top-secret assignment whose true nature was unknown to most of them. They'd been sworn to silence, subjected to a battery of clearance tests even before they were allowed to pass into the work area. All around the site (eventually dubbed "Oak

Ridge" by popular vote among its employees), billboards and posters reinforced that culture of secrecy: *What You See Here, What You Do Here, What You Hear Here, When You Leave Here, Let It Stay Here.*

And they did. Whatever the project was they were embarked on, it was clearly crucial to the war effort, or why the stern admonitions to stay silent? So they worked their shifts, focused on the parts of the task directly assigned to them, and kept mum.

Two years later, on a drizzly August morning in 1945, President Harry Truman addressed the nation. Only then, as radio and newspapers reported on the almost unthinkable news occurring on the other side of the world, would most of the Oak Ridge workers learn just how far along in the process their contributions had come, and exactly what they'd been building all this time.

The drive to remember, to preserve stories, is at the heart of the humanities in all its forms. Through literature and the arts, we transform our experiences into aesthetic creations. In the study of law and jurisprudence we consider the interplay between rights and responsibilities in public life. Philosophical and religious studies attune our thoughts to questions of ethics and values. Each field trains our attention on particular content areas; yet they run

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Shift change at the Oak Ridge plant.

Photo by James Edward Wescott, courtesy of The National Archives.



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WV Folklife



The West Virginia Humanities Council

is a nonprofit organization governed by its Board of Directors. The next Board meeting is October 25, 2019, in Charleston, and is open to the public.

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Remembering Phyllis Marks



Ballad singer **Phyllis (Frashure) Marks**, a native of Gilmer County, passed away June 22, 2019, at the age of 92. According to folklorist Gerry Milnes, she was the last active ballad singer in the state who “learned by heart,” as she said, via oral transmission, mainly from her mother and grandmother.

Marks performed annually at the West Virginia State Folk Festival in Glenville, missing only one of 65 festivals due to illness. In

September 2016 she performed a special concert at the Humanities Council, presented by the West Virginia Folklife Program and supported by the Henry Reed Fund Award from the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. The concert recordings are now part of the Center’s archival holdings.

Phyllis Marks was revered in her community for her songs and stories, and sang regularly at local funerals, nursing homes, and for her family and visitors. She was a master in her field whose unique and vast repertoire, vocal skill, and lifetime commitment to sharing and sustaining traditional balladry in West Virginia made her artistry exemplary.

The deadline for the second round of grant applications for the **Legends and Lore Marker Program** is October 1. The program recognizes the traditional folklore and cultural heritage of local communities by providing an attractive, well-crafted metal road sign, similar to a historic marker. The Humanities Council is partnering with the Pomeroy Foundation to help promote cultural tourism throughout the state. For more information, visit www.wvhumanities.org or email hilliard@wvhumanities.org



Join us on Friday, December 13, for the Humanities Council Holiday Open House from 4 to 6 p.m. at the MacFarland-Hubbard House in Charleston.

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

The West Virginia Humanities Council, an independent nonpartisan nonprofit, is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

We welcome letters, comments, and financial contributions. Please address correspondence to West Virginia Humanities Council, 1310 Kanawha Blvd E, Charleston WV 25301 or email wvhuman@wvhumanities.org.

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The West Virginia Humanities Council welcomes nominations for Program Committee citizen members, who are elected from the general public. The Committee recommends funding and program decisions to the Council’s Board of Directors.

We also welcome nominees for the Board of Directors. Board members are chosen from all parts of West Virginia and serve without compensation although expenses may be reimbursed.

Please email recommendations with brief biographical information to riebe@wvhumanities.org. The deadline for nominations is December 15, 2019.

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along parallel tracks, helping us to place our own experiences, in our own times, into a longer and fuller historical context.

The annual McCreight Lecture in the Humanities, the West Virginia Humanities Council's signature speaker series, was instituted in 1981 with the goal of hosting internationally-known humanities scholars for an evening of lecture and public conversation. Over the years we've brought such guests as Ken Burns, Joyce Carol Oates, Eric Foner, Azir Nafisi, and many other outstanding speakers to the stage. We are glad, as always, to partner with the West Virginia Book Festival in presenting this event, which is a featured program at the 2019 festival.

This year's McCreight Lecturer in the Humanities is Denise Kiernan, *New York Times* bestselling author, who will speak from her book *The Girls Of Atomic City: The Untold Story of the Women Who Helped Win World War II* on Friday, October 4, at 7 p.m. in the Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center. Kiernan's book draws from new research, as well as from direct interviews with several of the women who worked at the area long referred to as "Site X," producing the enriched uranium used in "Little Boy," the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

Kiernan's book, an on-the-ground record of ordinary

people in remarkable circumstances, is a reminder that history doesn't consist only, or perhaps even firstly, of the stories of major events and public figures. The actions of each of us resonate in the world, sometimes throughout the world, in ways we often can't foresee.

The workers at Oak Ridge labored on a project whose effects would, by every metric, quite literally change the world. Politics, science, ethics, warfare, even the writing of history itself—all would be fundamentally altered by the deployment of the first nuclear bombs. Millions of words would be written about this moment; the stories of the "girls of Atomic City," who worked largely without knowledge of what they were racing to bring into the world, add needed voices to that history.

Without deliberate acts of recollection, even the stories of our own experiences would be lost to us. And most of our experiences only come to make sense with the distance of time. The loss of those stories, the loss of meaning itself, is what the humanities, in all its forms, guards against. Each of us may be here, considered on the cosmic scale, for only a brief time. But what we do in that time matters. The humanities tell us how, and why.

—Eric Waggoner

Making Connections

"Portals" are shipping containers outfitted with immersive audiovisual technology. Now positioned at Moorefield High School, the gold-painted Hardy County Portal offers visitors the chance to interact with other portal visitors in countries around the world. Visitors meet face-to-face, live and full-body, as though they are in the same room. Life-sized video-conference conversations take place between real people in real time.

Grants Administrator Erin Riebe and her son Nick visited Hardy County on August 2 and spoke to portal visitors in Berlin, Germany, about many topics. Said Nick, "I thought it would be like school, but it was fun! We were sitting in the same room, but they were in Germany and we were in West Virginia." He added, "I learned about other countries from the people who live there. Not from a book. We talked about soccer and school, but most interesting was learning about refugees."

As part of the Hardy County Community Foundation, Humanities Council Board member Amy Pancake had an opportunity to experience the Hardy County Portal and enjoyed a wonderful and enlightening conversation with people living in Gaza. Development Director Victoria Paul visited the portal in mid-June and spoke to Project Director Wendy Zolla, who said, "These portals are a chance for rural communities to engage with people around the world, and vice versa. Just as Dr. Waggoner, Executive Director of the West Virginia Humanities Council, said about the mission of the Council—we are working to bring the world to West Virginia, and West Virginia to the world!"

For more information about the project, visit www.sharedstudios.com.



Visitors in the Hardy County Portal.

Digging Ashby's Fort

Alarmed by prospects of French and Indian attacks in the mid-eighteenth century, Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie gave orders to fortify the frontier. His Commander-in-Chief Colonel George Washington ordered the construction of Fort Ashby in what is now Mineral County, West Virginia. Under the command of Captain John Ashby, 33 men erected the military installation in the fall of 1755.

Beginning in the 1990s, archaeologists unearthed sections of the stockade trench and much of the fort's outline. Now, with assistance from a Humanities Council grant, Dr. Stephen McBride (right) is continuing archaeological investigations to provide insights into mid-eighteenth century fort construction techniques and daily life and activities at Fort Ashby. Dr. McBride will report his findings during a public presentation at the site on October 18 at 5:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.fortashby.org.



Council in the Classroom: Cabell County Schools invited e-WV staff to give West Virginia Studies teachers an overview of *The West Virginia Encyclopedia* website. Over a dozen teachers learned how to use the online resource in their classrooms, accessing the articles, interactive maps and lesson plans to teach West Virginia history to eighth-grade students. Find e-WV at www.wvencyclopedia.org.

Passing It On

With the support of a grant from the West Virginia Humanities Council, in October elementary students will visit Fairmont's Frank and Jane Gabor WV Folklife Center to learn about



Appalachia's culture and history. Various hands-on activities will teach students about traditional Appalachian games, toys, and songs.

Students will also hear former educator and UMWA coal

miner Fred Powers (above) perform a first-person narrative depicting the life of a West Virginia coal miner. Through storytelling, Powers will address coal mining in American and West Virginia history, highlighting coal culture, superstitions, tools, and customs. Powers will repeat his performance for the public on October 9 at 7 p.m. at the Folklife Center. For more information, call (304) 367-4403.

Keeping Peace



Since President John F. Kennedy's executive order and ultimate passing of the Peace Corps Act in 1961, over 230,000

Americans have served in 141 countries to

"promote world peace and friendship." Following the 35th anniversary of the Peace Corps, the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV) began collecting interviews from returned volunteers and former staff. The interviews are stored, cataloged, and available to the public at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston.

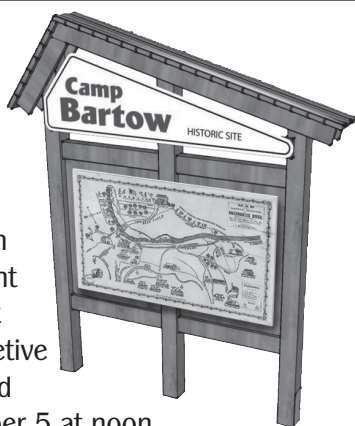
Though more than 700 West Virginians have served as Peace Corps volunteers, very few have been included in this effort. Now, with help from a Humanities Council grant, West Virginia's RPCV will begin documenting the experiences of these individuals through oral history interviews. The completed interviews will be available at the JFK Library, and also in the State Archives of the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History.

For more information, or if you know a RPCV interested in being interviewed, email westvirginiarpvc@gmail.com.

Ribbon Cutting

Camp Bartow in Pocahontas County is the site of a major Confederate encampment and the Battle of Greenbrier River, an artillery engagement during the First Campaign of the Civil War. With the help of a grant from the Humanities Council, the West Virginia Land Trust is installing interpretive signage at the site. The public is invited to a ribbon cutting ceremony on October 5 at noon.

Reservations are requested before September 27 by calling (304) 346-7788. For more information, visit www.wvlandtrust.org.



Amicus Curiae Lecture Series

Stephanie Mitchell/Harvard University



The Humanities Council continues to support Marshall University's popular Amicus Curiae Lecture Series on Constitutional Democracy. The series explores the influence of the American Constitutional tradition on the history and culture of the United States. The 2019-20 season includes The Honorable David J. Barron, U.S. Court of Appeals, First Circuit, presenting

"Waging War: When Congress and the Commander in Chief Clash." This lecture takes place November 12.

All lectures begin at 7 p.m. in Marshall's Brad D. Smith Foundation Hall. For a full schedule, visit www.marshall.edu/spc.

The **3rd Annual BB&T Malden Salt Fest** takes place Saturday, September 28, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. This event is free to the public and hosts artisans, entertainers, and food vendors from throughout Appalachia to celebrate the history of the salt industry that once thrived in the Kanawha Valley. Events include musical performances, historical talks, children's activities, and tours of the revitalized J.Q. Dickinson Salt Works, including train rides to the old farm.

The WV Quilt Documentation Project will be on hand, so bring your quilt dating before 1970 to have it documented by quilting expert Fran Kordek. Email ashton@jqdsalt.com to reserve a time.

The celebration continues into the evening with live music and dinner at Kanawha Salines Presbyterian Church to mark the 200th anniversary of the church's establishment in the valley. For more information, visit www.jqdsalt.com.



Music Maker Foundation founder Tim Duffy joins West Virginia State Folklorist Emily Hilliard and Clay County fiddler John Morris on October 3 at 5:30 p.m. at the Clay Center in Charleston. The panel will discuss how the Music Maker Foundation and the WV Folklife Program have assisted many artists and practitioners with opportunities and funding to preserve artistic and cultural history. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.theclaycenter.org.

Briefs

The Humanities Council supported the **Appalachian authors' roundtable** at Taylor Books during FestivALL, Charleston's yearly premiere arts event. This year's panel, hosted by poet laureate Marc Harshman, highlighted LGBTQ authors Mesha Maren, Charles Lloyd, and Julia Watts.

The Charleston Ballet continues to collect awards! The documentary *Andre Van Damme and the Story of the Charleston Ballet*, which was supported by a Humanities Council media grant, received an Emmy for Arts Programming at the 55th Annual Ohio Valley Regional Emmy Awards. To purchase a copy, visit www.thecharlestonballet.com.

The *History Alive!* program will hold auditions for new characters in the spring of 2020. Details will be available in December at www.wvhumanities.org.

The Folklife Program contributed to the **Appalachian Futures Exhibit** at WVU Libraries, which opened on September 3. The year-long exhibit offers responses and correctives to current dominant narratives about Appalachia, by focusing on how Appalachians themselves have worked (and continue to work) to tell their own stories. For more information visit https://exhibits.lib.wvu.edu/gallery_futures.

West Virginia State Parks have presented over 25 *History Alive!* performances throughout the state this year. The programs are free to attend and open to all park visitors, overnight guests, and the general public. For more information, visit www.wvstateparks.com or www.wvhumanities.org.

Grant Categories

The Humanities Council welcomes applications in the following grant categories.

Major Grants support humanities events: symposiums, conferences, exhibits and lectures. Maximum award: \$20,000
Due: Sept. 1, Feb. 1

Minigrants have a budget of \$1,500 or less and support small projects, single events, or planning and consultation.
Due: June 1, Oct. 1, Feb. 1, April 1

Fellowships of \$3,000 support research and writing projects for humanities faculty and independent scholars.
Due: Feb. 1

Media Grants support the production of electronic or film materials, or a newspaper series. Maximum award: \$20,000
Due: Sept. 1

Publication Grants are available to recognized nonprofit and academic presses and support only the production phase of a completed manuscript. Maximum award: \$20,000
Due: Sept. 1

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

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

Sharing your support

Support the West Virginia Humanities Council online! Be sure to check our website, www.wvhumanities.org, for our latest news and events calendar. You'll find donation tabs on our website and our Facebook page; online donations provide a convenient and easy way to contribute. You can choose to give a one-time gift, or become a Council GEM by signing up for monthly automatic contributions.

You can also support our work by engaging with us across social media. The Council regularly shares information about upcoming events and grant-supported activities throughout the state, regular deadlines for grants and fellowships, and Council-related items that appear in the news. It's also a great way to keep up with our "This Date in West Virginia History" series.



Follow the West Virginia Humanities Council and the West Virginia Folklife Program on Facebook: Like our posts, share our events, and invite your friends to follow our page!



Follow us on Twitter: @wvhumanities and @wvfolklife. Come chat with us and join the statewide humanities conversation!



Follow us on Instagram: @wvhumanities and @westvirginiafolklife. See and share photos from our travels all around the Mountain State to visit Council-supported programs and projects!



YouTube Subscribe to our YouTube channels: West Virginia Humanities Council and West Virginia Folklife both maintain dedicated YouTube archives. Watch musical performances and interviews with humanities scholars and practitioners, and enjoy highlights from our documentary projects and public events!

Or use the original social media tool: Word of mouth! Invite friends to Council-supported events, and share information about Council projects they'd be interested in. Tell them you're a member, and agree with us that West Virginia—its people, its history, its future—is worth investing in.

Notes from the Field

We love to hear from our partners, patrons, and audiences around the state, whenever they take part in Council-supported work. This year the Humanities Council helped fund the Carter G. Woodson Lyceum's Summer Institute "Integrating the Study of Black History in School Curricula" at Marshall University. West Virginia elementary schoolteacher and Institute participant Sarah Hann wrote to Professor Burnis Morris, Lyceum co-founder and director, that the series "challenged the scope of my teaching, and made me realize I could do more" to incorporate Black history into "many of the units I already teach." In response, Hann has "expanded (her) 'Star-Spangled Banner' unit (to include) insight gleaned from the C.G. Woodson lectures," in order to share, among other historical content, the history of slaves who fled colonial service to join the British in hopes of gaining freedom.

Through regular and predictable donations, our GEM (give-every-month) donors are providing a steady and cost-effective source of income to the Humanities Council, allowing our team to spend more time promoting quality humanities programming statewide. A monthly gift in any amount will qualify you as a Council GEM. Contact Victoria Paul at v.paul@wvhumanities.org for more information.

Donations April 1 - July 31, 2019

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The Year-End is Near

Marketable securities such as stocks and bonds may be donated to the West Virginia Humanities Council. If your securities have appreciated in value over their original cost, this may be an advantageous way for you to make a contribution. Transfer ownership of the securities to the Humanities Council and avoid paying capital gains taxes while getting a tax deduction for the full market value on the date of the gift. Please remember the Humanities Council in your year-end giving!



Speaking of giving: The two-DVD set *West Virginia: A Film History* (\$29.95) makes a great holiday gift for any West Virginian, wherever they are. Call (304) 346-8500 or visit our website to purchase a copy. Gift wrapping and direct shipping available.

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Appalachian Tables and Tales

The Food We Eat, the Stories We Tell: Contemporary Appalachian Tables, edited by Elizabeth S.D. Engelhardt with Lora Smith and featuring an afterword by Ronni Lundy, is a new anthology from Ohio University Press, out this November. The reader—the second in the Press's New Approaches to Appalachian Studies series—explores the diverse foodways traditions of modern-day Appalachia, considering issues of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. *The Food We Eat, the Stories We Tell* features contributions by writers, poets, and scholars from across the region, including Robert Gipe, Rebecca Gayle Howell, Crystal Wilkinson, George Ella Lyon, Suronda Gonzalez, and Courtney Balestier. State folklorist Emily Hilliard's chapter, "The Reason We Make These Deep Fat-Fried Treats': In Conversation with the Rosettes of Helvetia West Virginia," draws from her folklife fieldwork in Helvetia, conducted as part of the Council's Folklife Program.

More about *The Food We Eat, the Stories We Tell* from Ohio University Press:

"Blue ridge tacos, kimchi with soup beans and cornbread, family stories hiding in cookbook marginalia, African American mountain gardens—this wide-ranging anthology considers all these and more. Diverse contributors show us that contemporary Appalachian

tables and the stories they hold offer new ways into understanding past, present, and future American food practices. The poets, scholars, fiction writers, journalists, and food professionals in these pages show us that what we eat gives a beautifully full picture of Appalachia, where it's been, and where it's going."

Emily Hilliard will give a reading of her chapter at Shepherd University on November 6 at 7 p.m.

at the Byrd Center. Book events will also be held in Charleston at the MacFarland-Hubbard House and Taylor Books, dates TBD.

The Food We Eat, the Stories We Tell

Contemporary Appalachian Tables

Edited by Elizabeth S.D. Engelhardt with Lora E. Smith
Afterword by Ronni Lundy



"This book is a creative and challenging anthology about food and Appalachia. I don't know anything else like it. It both pokes fun at nostalgia but also absorbs it. It doesn't bow to so-called foodies but is most definitely focused on the power of food to mediate memory, place, social stratification, pleasure, and resistance."

—Katherine J. Black, author of *Row by Row: Talking with Kentucky Gardeners*