



From the Executive Director

The Road Forward

Greetings at the beginning of a new year, traditionally a time of new ambitions and exciting plans for the future. Here at the Humanities Council, we've spent the start of the year as we normally do, taking advantage of the slightly less hectic season to prepare for another full cycle of programs, grantmaking, and collaborations with humanities initiatives statewide.

The Council has always been fortunate to count among its friends a diverse array of organizations, state and federal partners, and West Virginians near and far who support our work. Our goal is to present or support at least one event, exhibit, or program somewhere in West Virginia on every day of the calendar year. The challenges of 2020 caused us to pursue that mission creatively. We extended legacy programs into virtual spaces and developed entirely new digital programs, and helped many of our partner organizations to do the same. Again and again, we saw West Virginians turning to the humanities—to literature, to films, to history, to storytelling in all its forms—not only to improve their daily lives, but to maintain the human connections that are so vital to our personal and our civic health.

That human connection is perhaps the element of "ordinary" life we've been missing most. In a standard year we try to get on the road as often as possible, the better to see the good work being done by cultural and educational organizations all around the state—and there is much indeed. As soon as possible, we hope to return to that practice. It's been far too long since we've been able to see our friends and partners gathered in one space.

Yet more good work is soon to come. In 2021 the Council will launch several new programs, projects, and initiatives, many of which you'll read about in this issue. Our first institutional

internship program will provide West Virginia undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to gain supervised professional experience in nonprofit, cultural, and accounting skill sets. This season we premiere our very first in-house podcast, designed to share the "West Virginia of the imagination" with listeners worldwide. There's more in the works. We'll still be offering all the programs our members have



Steve Shaluta, WV Division of Tourism

Route 50, outside of Grafton, Taylor County, WV

come to know and enjoy; but we'll be bringing more of West Virginia's history and culture to the public than ever before, in new and innovative ways.

As usual, this issue of *People & Mountains* also brings our annual report. We're happy to say that we've once again ended the year in good health, having worked diligently and responsibly to bring the very best in humanities programming not only to West Virginians, but increasingly to global audiences.

We're looking forward to building on these successes in the new year, as always with the help of members like you. Creating the capacity for West Virginians to tell our own stories, in our own voices, is at the core of our mission. In 2021 and beyond, we're committed to increasing that capacity in every way we can.

—Eric Waggoner

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Cottrell Banjo



Grant Categories

The Humanities Council welcomes applications in the following grant categories.

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

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

Podcast Debut

This winter marks the launch of the Council's new podcast *Mysterious Mountains*. Available online and through mainstream platforms such as the Apple podcast app and Google Play, *Mysterious Mountains* explores the imaginary landscape of West Virginia through the lens of genre fiction and folklore. The first season features readings from famed mystery writer Melville Davisson Post's *Uncle Abner* detective stories, which take place in pre-Civil War Harrison County.

Each full story is followed by a "deep dive" interview with experts and scholars peeling more layers of the text. These include world-renowned Romani scholar Dr. Ian Hancock exploring "Gypsy" stereotypes in the mystery "An Act of God"; Dr. Lynn Linder of West Virginia Wesleyan College discussing the origin of the detective genre through "The Riddle"; Dr. Suzanne Bray of France's Université Catholique de Lille unpacking the religious aspects of "The Angel of the Lord"; and Stan Bumgardner, editor of *Goldenseal* magazine, tracking Scots-Irish immigration into West Virginia from "The Concealed Path."

For more information and a full episode list, visit the *Mysterious Mountains* page on our website at www.wvhumanities.org.



Melville Davisson Post
(1869-1930)

West Virginia & Regional History Collection

Council Launches Internship Program

The Council welcomes Stone Schaldenbrand, a student in the WVU English Department's Professional Writing and Editing program, as our first institution-level intern. Throughout the spring 2021 semester, Stone will assist Council staff with in-house programs, grants review, *e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia*, and public relations writing. "We're very happy to launch this initiative," says Executive Director Eric Waggoner. "West Virginia's youth deserve our investment and mentoring. This internship program will provide career experience and professional advancement to the Mountain State's up and coming generation."



Courtesy photo

Little Lectures

The 2021 Little Lecture series kicks off Sunday, March 28, at 2 p.m. with historian and author Charles B. "Chuck" Keeney speaking on his newest book *The Road to Blair Mountain: Saving a Mine Wars Battlefield from King Coal*. If COVID-19 conditions allow, lectures will be held at the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House in Charleston with videos of each lecture to be released the following week on YouTube, Facebook, and the Council's website. If health mandates prevent in-person events, virtual premieres will be held on each lecture date, just as they were throughout 2020. This year's four lectures will be presented once each month from March through June. For the full schedule and updates regarding in-person attendance, please visit our website at www.wvhumanities.org.

Resources For Learning

History Alive! continues its living history performances, providing a passport through time to schools, libraries, and local organizations. This popular program is appropriate and entertaining for all ages. The Humanities Council is pleased to now offer virtual presentations from all of its characters. Scheduling instructions, guidelines, and the full roster of available performers may be found on the Council's website. For more information email warmack@wvhumanities.org.

e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia is another valuable Council resource for learners of all ages. In addition to quizzes and online exhibits, the website offers a selection of lesson plans designed by West Virginia teachers on a variety of topics. Recently added articles may also be found under the *e-WV* "Features" section titled "Find Out What's New!" These include Helen Holt (above), the first woman to hold statewide office in West Virginia; Charleston's Triangle District; and The Great Richwood Panther Hoax of 1957.

Visit www.wvencyclopedia.org to view more than 2,300 articles, history exhibits, and interactive maps and to use our free "WVClassroom" resource.



Courtesy photo

Explore West Virginia culture and living traditions: Catch up with the **2020 Folklife Apprenticeship Program** participants in action. State Folklorist Emily Hilliard is reporting on their progress on the West Virginia Folklife blog at www.wvfolklife.org.



Folklife pin by Liz Pavlovic

West Virginia Humanities Council members are supporters from around the state and beyond, who believe with us that West Virginia's stories, its people, and its future are worth investing in. Throughout a difficult year our members remained steadfast in their support of our work. We're committed to honoring that support by developing expanded and new programming, and innovative ways of bringing the world to West Virginia, and West Virginia to the world, in 2021.

All regular Council donors receive membership perks, from exclusive merchandise to a more personalized connection with the Council's work including projects in development. The generous annual support of our 1863 Club members allows us to increase our capacity and bring our work to more West Virginians every year. Through regular and predictable donations, our GEM (give-every-month) donors provide steady and cost-effective support. Currently new GEM donors who contribute a minimum of \$5 per month will receive an exclusive Folklife pin (above). Secure, easy monthly or one-time donations can be made to the Council through its website via PayPal. You'll also find a contribution envelope within this issue of *People & Mountains*. Visit www.wvhumanities.org for details!

Program Committee Election

Please help choose citizen members for the Humanities Council Program Committee. Your vote gives the public a voice in our grants and program decisions. Vote for no more than four:

___ **James J. Broomall**, Jefferson County, is an associate professor of history at Shepherd University, and the director of the George Tyler Moore Center for the Study of the Civil War.

___ **Amanda Chapman**, Gilmer County, is an assistant professor in the Department of Language and Literature at Glenville State College and has a background in Critical and Cultural Studies.

___ **Patrick Corcoran**, Raleigh County, is a board member of the Raleigh County Historical Society and has a background in library and information science.

___ **Rachael Meads**, Jefferson County, teaches Appalachian culture, music, and ethnomusicology at Shepherd University and is a board member for the Center for Appalachian Studies and Communities.

___ **Sam Petsonk**, Fayette County, is a Beckley-based lawyer focusing on labor and employment law, public education, and matters of community concern. Petsonk is a lifelong bluegrass and old-time musician.

___ **Jason Phillips**, Monongalia County, is the Eberly Professor of Civil War Studies at WVU. Phillips is an incumbent and eligible for re-election.

___ **Gabriel Rieger**, Mercer County, teaches Medieval and Renaissance English literature at Concord University, and directs the Appalachian Shakespeare Project. Rieger is an incumbent and eligible for re-election.

Return your ballot by mail to the West Virginia Humanities Council or access online at www.wvhumanities.org by

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

Jenes Cottrell banjo finds a home at the MacFarland-Hubbard House

If you're a fan of old-time music, you likely know the name Jenes Cottrell (1901-1980). A musician and craftsman descended from the earliest settlers of Clay County, Cottrell created toys, furniture, and household items using traditional woodworking skills. But he remains most widely known today for his handmade banjos, featuring resonating rims crafted from aluminum torque converter rings taken from 1956 Buick transmissions.

This year the Humanities Council received an early holiday present: an original handmade Cottrell banjo, a gift from Council friend and Clay County native Jim Douglas. Douglas received the instrument in 1973, but, as he recalls, acquiring it took a little finagling.

Jim and his father Wilson, himself a musician and relation to the famous Morris musical family, were frequent visitors to the Cottrell home. A few years prior, Jim, a history major at Morris Harvey College (now the University of Charleston), had salvaged a dozen pre-WWII *National Geographic* magazines in near-mint condition from the abandoned Widen High School. Jenes' sister Sylvia O'Brien, an ardent collector of the magazine, perked up when Jim's stash came up in conversation. "She

was usually somewhat taciturn, with me at least," Jim laughs. "But when she heard that, she became totally conversant."

Wilson Douglas was attempting to secure a handmade Cottrell banjo as a graduation present for his son. "But they were in high demand," Jim recalls.



Jenes Cottrell with his Buick banjo

Photo courtesy of Goldenseal

"So I said to Sylvia, 'It looks like I might be a ways back in line.' She said, 'Well, what are you going to do with those old *National Geographics*?' I told her I hadn't really thought about it, but I'd be glad to pass them along to her. And she looked at me closely, and grinned, and said, 'You'll get your banjo.'"

Over the years this 1973 Cottrell banjo has been played by several West Virginia traditional musicians—most recently Kim Johnson, Council friend and frequent performer at our annual Open House events. The banjo

will have a permanent home at the Council, and will be available for viewing at all our public events; but it will remain a working instrument, going onstage with Kim wherever she decides to play it. We thank Jim Douglas for allowing us to share this genuine piece of Mountain State musical history with all West Virginians.