



2022 McCreight Lecture in the Humanities

James and Deborah Fallows, *Our Towns*

Among the West Virginia Humanities Council's many legacy programs, our McCreight Lecture in the Humanities is unique and distinctive. Named in honor of Betsy Keadle McCreight, a founding board member who served the Council through the years as treasurer, vice president, and president, this annual event brings nationally respected scholars and humanists to West Virginia for an intimate talk and conversation with a live audience. Betsy McCreight believed that the humanities were at the heart of a healthy democratic society. Each year, the McCreight Lecture seeks to honor her faith in the humanities as a source of wisdom, vision, and community.

After two years of postponements, the Council is delighted to welcome award-winning journalists and authors James and Deborah Fallows

as our featured speakers at the 2022 McCreight Lecture. We are delighted to welcome them back, in fact, to Charleston.

Between 2013 and 2017, the Fallowses traveled America in a single-engine prop airplane. They visited dozens of towns, often multiple times, speaking with community leaders and local residents during the day and writing up their notes and observations each night. Their national bestseller *Our Towns: A 100,000-Mile Journey into the Heart of America* is the result of this deep dive into contemporary American life. In the book, the Fallowses—seasoned journalists both—tell a far-ranging story of a nation deeply

aware of the problems it faces, while also devising and attempting solutions to those problems on the local and community levels.

Charleston, West Virginia, is one of the smaller cities featured in *Our Towns*—both the book, and the 2021 HBO documentary of the same name developed from its pages. We won't give anything away, but we will say that readers and viewers will see in Charleston much that is emblematic of what the Fallowses saw as they traveled the country: Americans who have a clear, unsentimental view of contemporary



problems, but who are determined not to let divisiveness define their characters, their homes, or their home communities.

Is that depiction, that vision of America, naïve? *Our Towns* hit bookstores in 2018. Obviously, much has happened in the U.S. and the wider world in the four years since, and much of it has felt terribly destabilizing. *Our Towns'* vision of Americans addressing problems cooperatively and collaboratively is at odds with the fractious vision of American life often depicted in contemporary mass and social media.

Yet that cooperation, that collaboration, is

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The West Virginia Humanities Council

is a nonprofit institution governed by its Board of Directors. The next Board meeting is October 21, 2022, and is open to the public.

Megan Tarbett, President
Hurricane

Leslie Baker
Beckley

George "Gib" Brown
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Patrick Cassidy
Wheeling

Bob Conte
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Rosemary Hathaway
Morgantown

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Kelli Johnson
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Charleston

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Charleston

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Huntington

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Ravenswood

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Lisa Rose
Independence

Jane Sargent
Barboursville

Tom Sopher
Beckley

John Unger
Martinsburg

Bryson VanNostrand
Buckhannon

From the Executive Director

Happily, this edition of *People & Mountains* brings a very short letter from the Executive Director, because our fall issue is filled to the margins with event announcements, reports on programs from around the state, and updates on new Council activities. In other words, this *People & Mountains* looks more like a normal issue than it has for the past two years, and most of the available space is taken up with celebrating a burst of programming and grants activity.

This is good news, from every angle. We emerge from the pandemic a more mobile and flexible institution. We're reaching more West Virginians in more locations than we ever have, and even wider audiences across the nation and around the world. The second season of the Council's original podcast *Mysterious Mountains* is currently in pre-production. Our expanding work has led us to our first-ever program funded through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, several new connections with state and regional historical museums, the third round of West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program pairs, and many other new and promising associations.



Michael Keller

2022 West Virginia Day

mission never wavered through the severe challenges of the last two years. Even in the midst of volatile times—maybe especially then—your support of the humanities in West Virginia demonstrates your commitment to the healing of our social and civic bodies. We are humbled and proud to stand beside you, our partners, and our fellow West Virginians in that work.

—Eric Waggoner

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 wwhuman@wwhumanities.org.

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The West Virginia Humanities Council welcomes nominations for its **Board of Directors**. Board members are chosen from all parts of West Virginia and serve without compensation, although expenses are reimbursed. We also welcome nominations for **Program Committee** citizen members, who are elected from the general public. The **Program Committee** recommends funding and program decisions to the Council's **Board of Directors**.

Please send recommendations with brief biographical information to riebe@wwhumanities.org. The deadline for nominations is December 16, 2022.

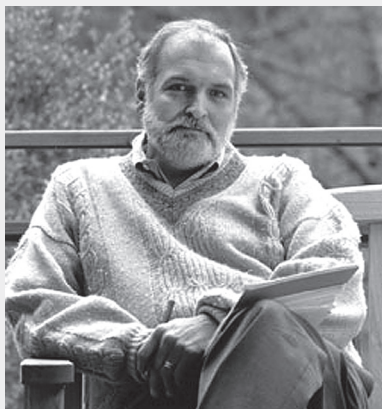
Continued from page 1

happening—here, and around the nation. The 2021 documentary was released precisely at the height of the pandemic, during a period of extended social unrest. And the spirit of unity and collaboration seen in the book can be seen in the film, just as clearly. Recognition of our common humanity, our shared humanity, is a prerequisite for a healthy society. Destruction is easy; it is creation that demands the best part of us. To define ourselves by what we

oppose, reject, or deny is to say nothing about what we love, what we want to help build, or what sort of people we want to be.

On Thursday, October 20, the public is invited to hear James and Deborah Fallows discuss an America oriented towards the future—if not a perfect future, then a more perfect one. The free lecture begins at 7:30 p.m. at the University of Charleston's Rigglesman Hall.

—Eric Waggoner



The West Virginia Humanities Council is a charter presenter of the **2022 West Virginia Book Festival** scheduled for **October 21 and 22** at the Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center. The festival returns as an in-person event and features presentations from bestselling national, local, and regional authors; writing workshops; family activities; a literary marketplace; and an enormous used book sale. All events and programs are free and open to the public.

This year's headlining authors are *New York Times* bestselling fantasy author V. E. Schwab; mystery novelist C. J. Box; popular children's author and illustrator Marc Brown; and novelist Elin Hilderbrand. Sessions with West Virginia writers include discussions with Charlie Ryan and Mitch Evans, authors of *Murder on Staunton Road: The Violent Death of*

Charleston Daily Mail Owner *Juliet Staunton Clark*, and a multimedia presentation by John Billheimer (left) featuring his book *Hitchcock and the Censors*.

Additional information and the Book Festival schedule can be found at www.wvbookfestival.org.

Grafton Students Recognized for WV National Cemeteries Project

In 2021, the Council secured its first contract award with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in support of the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project. The program afforded students at Grafton High School the opportunity to research and write biographies for veterans interred at Taylor County's two (and West Virginia's only) National Cemeteries, with the support of Grafton High School teachers Rebecca Bartlett and Richard Zukowski, as well as the West Virginia State Archives and WVU's Public History program. On May 23, 2022, the students shared their work with the public and representatives from West Virginia's U.S. Congressional offices at the Taylor County Historical Society Museum headquarters in Grafton.

We are pleased to say that the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project will continue in 2023, with the support of a \$137,385 grant from the VA. There are thousands more life stories to tell from West Virginia's National Cemeteries. We are honored to support the Mountain State's young people in researching and sharing the stories of West Virginia's servicemen and women.



Michael Keller

Holiday Open House

Please join us Friday, December 2, for the West Virginia Humanities Council Holiday Open House from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House in Charleston. Our headquarters will be decorated inside and out for the holidays. Come celebrate the season with us!





Seneca man in traditional headdress.

Indigenous Appalachia

With support from the Humanities Council, WVU Art in the Libraries, in partnership with WVU Native American Studies, will launch the exhibit **Indigenous Appalachia** at WVU's Downtown Campus Library on Monday, November 14, at 7 p.m. The opening event will feature Joe Stahlman, Director of the Seneca-Iroquois National Museum and Assistant Research Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University at Buffalo, and Maryam Marne Zafar, Visual Strategist and Graphic Designer.

Indigenous Appalachia explores the complexities of Native North America as represented in exhibitions and collections; highlights place names and Native trails; features contemporary Native Nations in Appalachia; and includes contemporary art by 15 Indigenous artists.

The goal of the exhibit is to increase awareness of the contributions of Indigenous Appalachians to the region's shared history and present, while also recognizing continuing injustices faced by Indigenous people. Through visual and educational content, the exhibit explores themes of people, lands and waters. It provides significant opportunity for campus and community involvement via coursework and programming, and encourages informed, enhanced perspectives. The exhibit is intentionally curated in collaboration with Indigenous advisors and scholars of Native American studies.

Indigenous Appalachia will be available for public viewing at the library until May 2023, when it will travel to WVU's Beckley Campus, Appalachian State University Library, and Marshall University Library. For information visit www.wvu.edu/exhibits/indigenous-appalachia.

The **West Virginia Folklife Program** at the **West Virginia Humanities Council**, in partnership with the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, continues to expand the Legends & Lore Roadside Marker Grant Program in the Mountain State. The program, a national initiative of the Pomeroy Foundation, recognizes traditional customs and practices, tales and stories (whether based in historical fact or fiction), sayings, foodways, music, dance, and art or craft forms shared and passed on by a community. The next application deadline for the markers is October 17. Contact State Folklorist Jennie Williams at 304-346-8500 or williams@wvhumanities.org for more information.



With support from a Council minigrant, the **Kump Education Center** in Elkins held a special summertime open house on June 25 and 26. The two-day event's theme was "Something

Old, Something New" with vintage family wedding gowns and memorabilia exhibited.

The Amicus Curiae Lecture Series on Constitutional Democracy

sponsored by the Simon Perry Center and supported in part by a grant from the West Virginia Humanities Council, brings scholars from throughout the United States to Marshall University for lectures on various historical and contemporary issues related to the U.S. Constitution and to United States politics and government. This season includes **Nadine Strossen** (above), professor emerita, New York Law School, discussing her latest book *HATE: Why We Should Resist It with Free Speech, Not Censorship* on Tuesday, November 1. Lectures begin at 7 p.m. in Marshall's Brad D. Smith Foundation Hall and are live-streamed at the university website. **All lectures are free and open to the public.**

For information and to view previous lectures visit www.marshall.edu/spc.





Eric Waggoner interviews William Brewer.

The West Virginia Humanities

Council hosted a free in-person reading and audience discussion with Monongalia County-born author William Brewer at Taylor Books in Charleston on Wednesday, August 10. Brewer's appearance, his first reading in West Virginia, coincided with the release of his novel

The Red Arrow (Knopf/Penguin Random House, 2022). *The New York Times* praised the novel as full of "eccentricity and vigor, executed with remarkable style." Brewer's previous book, the poetry collection *I Know Your Kind*, was a winner of the National Poetry Series. *The Red Arrow* is his first novel.

Brewer's writing has appeared in *A Public Space*, *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, *The Sewanee Review*, and other magazines. He currently lectures at Stanford University and lives in Oakland, California.



The Council celebrated **West Virginia Day** at its headquarters, the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House, on June 20. Guests enjoyed the day with tours of the house, a walk around the grounds, a *History Alive!* performance by Doris "Lady D" Fields (left) portraying blues legend Bessie Smith, and music from West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program musicians Kim Johnson and Cody Jordan.

With support from the **West Virginia Humanities Council**, the **West Virginia Mine Wars Museum** launched **Courage in the Hollers: Mapping the Miners' Struggle for a Union**, a new public history project in the southern West Virginia coalfields. The project's first phase took place in Marmet (Kanawha County) and Clothier (Logan County) over Labor Day weekend. After nearly one year in the making, the museum and its local community partners unveiled and dedicated two permanent monuments.

The monuments commemorate the history of labor organizing by memorializing the Battle of Blair Mountain, and celebrate the collective efforts of a multiethnic, multiracial working class who stood up against oppression 100 years ago in the rural landscape where the battle took place.

For more information visit www.wvminewars.org/courage.

Courage in the Hollers
Solidarity monument,
Marmet.



Chuck Keeney

Briefs

The Council recently awarded nearly \$25,000 for its special grant initiative "**A More Perfect Union: Democracy and Civic Engagement**" to several West Virginia organizations statewide. With support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, these grants will fund projects that discuss, promote, and educate the public on the necessity of informed civic engagement.

The **National American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Museum and Research Center** continues its programming (1 p.m. on October 15 and 22) at the Brooke County Library that includes readings from Bataan Death March POW diaries and other works. The museum is devoted to the history of the Bataan Death March and the imprisonment of over 66,000 men and women by the Japanese during World War II. For more information visit www.brookecountylibs.org or www.adbcmuseum.com.

The **West Virginia Humanities Council** will join other state councils and humanities-related organizations at the National Humanities Conference in Los Angeles in November. The conference allows the opportunity to explore our collective work and deepen the public's engagement with the humanities worldwide.

Grant Categories

The Humanities Council welcomes applications in the following grant categories.

Major Grants support humanities events such as symposiums, conferences, exhibits, and 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: \$20,000
Due: Sept. 1

For more information, applications, and guidelines visit www.wvhumanities.org, email riebe@wvhumanities.org, or call 304-346-8500.

Humanities Council Traveling Exhibits



Michael Keller

The West Virginia Humanities Council traveling exhibit **The Hatfields & McCoys: American Blood Feud** examines the history of the Tug Valley and the origin and events of the feud, as well as its historical and cultural significance. The public may view the exhibit at the following locations:

October 5 to October 13

Gilbert, Mingo County

Larry Joe Harless Community Center

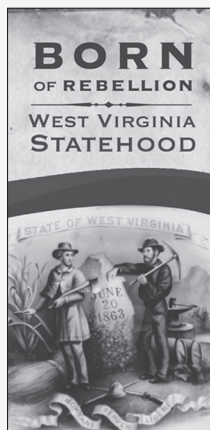
October 24 to November 28

Charleston, Kanawha County

Craik-Patton House

Our award-winning exhibits have appeared in venues around the state. They are available at no charge to suitable organizations for display and often serve as a catalyst for additional programming. Organizations must arrange for transport from the previous display site or from the Humanities Council office in Charleston. If your organization is interested in hosting an exhibit, see details and guidelines on the Council website or email Kyle Warmack at warmack@wvhumanities.org.


Over the past year, the Council has been updating and redesigning its award-winning traveling exhibit **Born of**



Rebellion, which chronicles West Virginia's tumultuous road to statehood during the Civil War. While the original was written in the early 2000s and focused primarily on the legal questions of statehood, the revitalized version will reflect on the past 20 years of Civil War scholarship. An explosion of new research prompted by the war's sesquicentennial from 2011 to 2015 provides fresh perspectives on the roles of women, African Americans, and the sociopolitical complexities of the age.


Born of Rebellion: West Virginia Statehood and the Civil War will debut with

a statewide tour in summer 2023, timed to coincide with the state's 160th birthday.


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. A monthly gift in any amount will qualify you as a Council GEM. For more information on this and other donation options available, please contact Victoria Paul at v.paul@wvhumanities.org or call 304-346-8500.

Donations April 1 – July 31, 2022



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
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As the Council approaches the final days of 2022, we're looking back on this year in awe. While there are always moments where we wish we could have done more, we are incredibly proud of all we have been able to accomplish this year with the help of our members. Every gift to the Council, in any amount, makes a tremendous impact by increasing our capacity to serve West Virginians wherever they live. Every dollar of your contribution extends our ability to share the Mountain State's rich history and diverse culture with the world.

As you can see in this newsletter, the Council puts its members' contributions to good and responsible use. With your help, we will continue strengthening and celebrating the humanities through an array of original programming and grants to West Virginia cultural institutions of every size.

The Council pledges to keep pace with West Virginia's cultural needs by delivering traditional and innovative programs everywhere we can. **If it has been a while since you last joined us in this work, won't you renew your membership today?**

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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.

Meeting the Mountain State

Since joining the West Virginia Humanities Council as State Folklorist in January 2022, I have committed much of my time to learning from folks who have a connection to the state or who have participated in the West Virginia Folklife Program and wish to see it grow. In the spring, I traveled to visit many of the previous West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program participants at their homes. We discussed their experiences so that I might carry forward their ideas for the next round of apprenticeships, which is soon to begin. One of my aims as the State Folklorist is to build long-term relationships with folk and traditional artists and

practitioners so that we may support collaborative and meaningful future programs.

I have presented about the West Virginia Folklife Program at the Arts in Our Communities conference held at the Culture Center in Charleston, on the Art Works program broadcast on the West Virginia Library Commission's Library Television Network, as a guest speaker at the Woodlands Retirement Community in Huntington, and in classrooms. My approach has been to invite those in attendance to share their community folklore and traditional knowledge, to help explain that those I interview are the experts in their lived experiences.

I have also conducted fieldwork at various events and festivals including the Vandalia Gathering, the West Virginia State Folk Festival in Glenville, the Appalachian String Band Music Festival in Clifftop, and the Pomeroy Foundation-sponsored Legends &



Jennie Williams interviews Tanners Mollett.

Lore Roadside Marker unveiling to recognize the salt-rising bread food tradition in Ronceverte.

Another exciting event took place on Memorial Day with the Mollett family in Raleigh County. The Molletts have visited their community cemetery in Edwight every year since 1959. They come from states away to clean the graves, lay flowers, and share family stories for their children and grandchildren so that they may continue the tradition of honoring their ancestors. In 1996, the family had been interviewed by folklorist Mary Hufford; photos and interviews from that visit from nearly 30 years ago can be found in the Coal River Folklife Collection housed at the

American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. This year, the family invited West Virginia Humanities Council photographer Michael Keller and me to attend and document their stories for a new generation. The documented photos and recordings will be deposited in the West Virginia Folklife Collection at West Virginia University Libraries.

I am looking forward to continuing my fieldwork, beginning the third round of folklife apprenticeships, and building on our partnerships, including our latest partnership with the Mid Atlantic Arts Central Appalachia Living Traditions Program to collaborate on folklife-related programming across the state. Follow @wvfolklife on social media and read posts on our blog wvfolklife.org to learn more about these events.

—Jennie Williams, State Folklorist
West Virginia Humanities Council