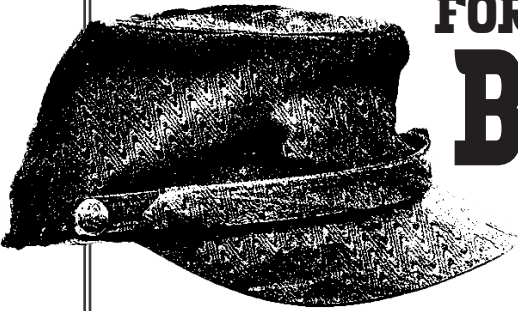


THE BROAD SIDE

BLOOD FOR BOOKS

by Kyle Warmack
Program Officer



Driving southeast on I-64 toward Lewisburg, you won't see a sign for the battlefield of White Sulphur Springs. At the unassuming intersection of Route 60 and Pocahontas Trail, where for two scorching days in 1863 cavalry thundered and cannons roared, you won't find a monument or a museum, only a faded white roadside historical marker near the crackle of a Hardee's drive-thru. The shopping center with a Food Lion and a carwash is called "Battleground Crossing," but it hardly does justice to one of West Virginia's bloodiest and most eclectic Civil War clashes—one whose origins point straight back to West Virginia statehood itself.

In early August 1863, West Virginia had been a state for less than two months. Its authority was fragile. State government was still under construction in the ad hoc capital at Wheeling. So too were the courts: American law largely depends on precedent, and all of the legal records young West Virginia needed were back in Virginia—in Richmond, the beating heart of the Confederacy.

However, a full set of duplicate records, as Union leaders knew, was housed at the county courthouse in Lewisburg, where the Virginia Court of Appeals occasionally held sessions. A raid by mounted forces might, they speculated, cut swiftly southward into Rebel-held Greenbrier County, nab the law books, and deliver them to the new seat of Mountain State government.

"The law library at Lewisburg [...] rightfully belongs to the new State of West Virginia."

In August 1863, therefore, Brigadier General William Woods Averell rode out for Lewisburg with a mixed force of men from West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio—the Fourth Separate Brigade. The brigade was mostly mounted infantry, the better to cross wooded, mountainous territory teeming with bushwhackers. A dashing but disciplined West Point cavalryman with experience fighting Kiowa and Navajo on the western frontier, Averell was respected by his new troops, whom he'd whipped into fighting shape in a mere four months during the summer of 1863.

The Fourth was just returning to Moorefield, having briefly joined the pursuit of General Robert E. Lee's retreating forces after Gettysburg, when Averell was ordered to descend upon Lewisburg. "Great care will be exercised by the officer placed in charge that the books are not lost or injured," warned Averell's superior. "The law library at Lewisburg was purchased for the western part of the State, and of course rightfully belongs to the new State of West Virginia. Our judges need it very much."*

But the secret was out. Learning of 1,300 mounted Union troops massing in the Potomac Highlands, Lee sent word that they could not be allowed to reach their objective. He was concerned Averell would cut the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, the Confederacy's vital link to the western theater of war. Thus, when Averell's men emerged from the mountains of Greenbrier County on August 26, 1863, after over two weeks of skirmishing and riding, they were greeted by 2,000 hastily assembled Confederates. Colonel George S. Patton (grandfather of the famed World War II general) had been rushed to block the Union advance. Patton's troops arrived just barely ahead of the blue-coated Federals spilling from "Rocky Gap" and down the gently sloping valley toward White Sulphur Springs.

The roar of musket and cannon fire soon filled the morning air. "[Musket balls], shells, grape and shot [were] flying with fearful havoc in all directions, doing the work of death," recalled one Union soldier of the 3rd West Virginia Regiment. Attack and counterattack swirled across the field as Averell frantically deployed his men from the narrow pass.

The battle, which raged until nightfall and picked up again the next day, was largely between (West) Virginians. Four of Averell's six units were raised from counties of the new state. Colonel Patton himself called Charleston home, and the nucleus of his brigade, the 22nd Virginia Infantry, was composed primarily of men from nine southern West Virginia counties who had fought in almost every major engagement in West Virginia since the war began.

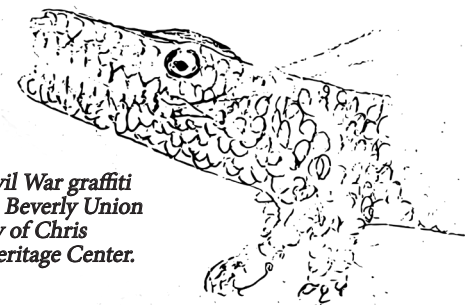
After nine hours of combat and several dramatic mounted charges, the fighting petered out as both sides ran low on ammunition. Averell had been unable to budge his numerically superior foe. The troops slept that night in their lines of battle, and commanders on both sides held councils of war to decide whether to retreat, or resume fighting the next day. Averell and Patton both decided to fight it out.

But Averell's choice was part bluff. Either Patton would retreat, he believed, or promised Union reinforcements and ammunition would arrive from the Kanawha Valley. When neither hope materialized, the experienced cavalryman knew the game was up. Averell's men pulled a fighting withdrawal back into Rocky Gap, chopping down trees to slow Patton's pursuing rebels. The brigade returned to Beverly on August 31, exhausted, after twenty-seven days in the saddle.

The Battle of White Sulphur Springs saw roughly 350 killed and wounded. While that number pales in comparison to slaughters like Antietam and Gettysburg, it still represents about ten percent of total combatants; many of the veterans later contended it was their most ferocious combat experience. Wounded of both sides were taken to the Greenbrier Resort (not the current structure), and many dead were buried on its grounds, where they fell on the battlefield, or in Lewisburg.

Averell launched two more raids some months later, with more success. The Battle of Droop Mountain on November 6 drove the last major Confederate forces from West Virginia, most of them troops that had prevailed against him on August 26-27.

But by the time Averell cut the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, the vaunted law books were no longer an objective—the Confederates had evacuated the duplicates to Richmond to prevent another raid. Today, the hallowed field of Droop Mountain is a state park, but few signs remain of the preceding bitter struggle that took place less than two miles from the present-day Greenbrier Resort. At a time when both the law and the legacy of the Civil War are under close reexamination, perhaps the Battle of White Sulphur Springs, too, is worth another look.



A rendering of Civil War graffiti on the walls of the Beverly Union Hospital. Courtesy of Chris Mielke, Beverly Heritage Center.

Wise Retreating

WRITING ON THE WALLS

Due to the town of Beverly's strategic position along the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike, Averell's Fourth Separate Brigade and other Union units spent a lot of time garrisoning, training, and resupplying in the Randolph County burg. And the signs of their passing are still literally on the walls.

Chris Mielke, director of the Beverly Heritage Center, took the opportunity to document Beverly's Civil War graffiti during the COVID-19 shutdown. With help from Spencer Kuchle of the Randolph County Museum, they documented over 450 pieces of graffiti in 9 buildings in Beverly.

One of Chris' favorites depicts a Confederate general on the back of a crocodile. "This particular illustration was drawn in a building used as a hospital for Union troops. It's about chest-height and was probably drawn by a soldier on his bunk laughing at Henry Wise's 1861 retreat from the Kanawha Valley."

The Beverly Heritage Center is housed in a complex of four of Beverly's most historic buildings, including one which served as the headquarters of Union General George B. McClellan, who later famously commanded the Army of the Potomac. The Heritage Center also hosts an annual Civil War Symposium, and partners with the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation on a variety of programming.

For more information, visit beverlyheritagecenter.org or facebook.com/beverlyheritagecenter

Brig. Gen. William W. Averell commanded Union forces in the most significant West Virginia battles of late 1863. Though an able commander well-loved by his troops, his career was cut short when he was relieved of command in 1864 by the notoriously hot-headed General Philip Sheridan. Library of Congress.



*Quotations in this article are from Eric J. Wittenberg's *The Battle of White Sulphur Springs* (The History Press, 2011).

An annual reenactment is held in Greenbrier State Forest each August. For more information, visit battleofdrycreek.org.

A LITERARY BOONE?

In the annals of West Virginia pulp curiosities, it may be difficult to come across anything stranger than *The Wolf Demon, or, The Queen of the Kanawha*, written in 1878 by Albert W. Aiken. Taking place in and around the Point Pleasant of the colonial frontier, Aiken's dime novel romp is chock full of stereotypical noble savages, hardy frontiersmen, and damsels in distress—far more likely drawn from stock characters than any real inhabitants of the area.

Shawnee characters are especially thinly drawn, and modern readers will quickly lose count of the racist archetypes. The novel's primary villain, however, is the titular Wolf Demon, who may or may not have supernatural origins, and from whom the Shawnee themselves need saving. And the man for the job—just one in a dizzyingly large cast of characters—is none other than the stoic frontier hero Daniel Boone. Boone did, of course, reside along West Virginia's Kanawha River for a time, but his iron-jawed depiction in *The Wolf Demon* doesn't seem particularly grounded in research, and his struggle to track this lupine bogeyman appears purely fictional.

Aiken's text reflects little actual history of West Virginia in the 1700s and 1800s, but the journey can be embarked upon for free online at Northern Illinois University's *Nickels and Dimes* database, at <https://dimenovels.lib.niu.edu>.



Cover of the *The Wolf Demon*, 1878. Courtesy of the *Nickels and Dimes* online database, Johanssen Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections, Northern Illinois University.



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON'S MALDEN MEMORIES

by Eric Waggoner, Executive Director

Born into slavery in Hale's Ford, Virginia in 1856, Booker T. Washington was six years old when the Emancipation Proclamation was issued on January 1, 1863. His stepfather escaped to the Kanawha Valley during the Civil War; Washington, his mother and brother followed him in 1865, settling in Malden, West Virginia, five miles outside of Charleston. Washington's 1901 memoir, *Up From Slavery*, offers a brief but vivid portrait of a once-prominent industry town in the earliest years of statehood.

Washington discusses his life in Malden most extensively in chapters 2-4. The Kanawha Valley salt industry, which at its height had used the labor of nearly 3,000 enslaved people, had been in decline since the war years. Washington and his brother John, like their stepfather, were both employed for a time at the Malden salt furnaces, and the family lived in a multi-racial community of laborers: "Our new home was in the midst of a cluster of cabins crowded closely together, and as there were no sanitary regulations, the filth about the cabins was often intolerable. [...] Drinking, gambling, quarrels, fights, and shockingly immoral practices were frequent." In 1869, Washington was eyewitness to the infamous race riot in which founding State Representative General Lewis Ruffner was permanently wounded.

Yet it was also in Malden that Washington reports learning his earliest lessons in the lifelong value of education and literacy, and his mother Jane's staunch support of his desire to attend formal school. Much of Chapter 2, "Boyhood Days," recounts Washington's intense pursuit of education in the Kanawha Valley, while Chapter 3, "The Struggle for an Education," tells the story of his journey from local schools to the Hampton Institute in Virginia at the age of 16.

Opinions on Washington's public life and ideas, as recounted in *Up From Slavery*, were sharply divided in his lifetime, as they are today. A rather famous public dispute with sociologist W.E.B. DuBois lasted even into DuBois' final interview, given to *The Atlantic* in 1963, the year of DuBois' death. Though on the grand scale Washington remains one of the more controversial figures of American civil rights history, for residents in and around Malden his boyhood is considered part of local history and lore.

A reproduction of Booker T. Washington's boyhood cabin stands today in Malden, just behind the African Zion Baptist Church—the first African American church in present-day West Virginia—at which the young Washington was once a congregant.

Up From Slavery is available in several editions, including a free digital version via Project Gutenberg at www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2376.

EVENTS JUNE - JULY 2021

Always check with the venue or hosting organization of an event before attending, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, as schedules may change without the knowledge of the Council. For more information, you can also visit the calendar on our website, www.wvhumanities.org.

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| <p>Jun 1 "If These Walls Could Talk" - Exhibit opening. Randolph County Museum, Beverly.</p> <p>Jun 5 Delbert Bailey - Opening of the Coal Exhibit. Sterling Spencer Sculpture Garden and Richwood Heritage Center, Richwood. 1pm</p> <p>Jun 5 Black History in Summers County - Exhibit open thru Sept 5. Campbell Flannagan Murrell House Museum, Hinton. 1-4pm</p> <p>Jun 9 Virtual Folklife Apprenticeship Showcase - Traditional Appalachian Herbalism & Indoor Wild Herb Walk with Leenie Hobbie & Jon Falcone. Info at wvfolklife.org. 12-1pm</p> <p>Jun 11-20 WV Shakespeare Festival - Two weeks in June. Village of Barboursville Park Amphitheatre, Barboursville.</p> <p>Jun 17 Virtual Folklife Apprenticeship Showcase - "Sheep-to- Shawl": Sheep Husbandry & Textile Arts with Kathy Evans and Margaret Bruning. Info at wvfolklife.org. 12-1pm</p> <p>Jun 19 Ostenaco - History Alive! Hosted by Tygart Lake State Park. 7pm</p> | <p>Jun 19 Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin Archive Presentation - Weirton Area Museum & Cultural Center, Weirton. In-person and virtual (Facebook), 1-3pm</p> <p>Jun 19 Bronson McClung - hosted by the WV Hillbilly and the Richwood NewsLeader. Sterling Spencer Sculpture Garden and Richwood Heritage Center. 1pm</p> <p>Jun 19 Francis Pierpont - History Alive! Hosted by Beech Fork State Park. 7pm</p> <p>Jun 20 Appalachian Authors Roundtable - Taylor Books, Charleston. Limited in-person seating. 3-5pm</p> <p>Jun 20 Mark Twain - History Alive! Hosted by Blennerhassett Island Historical State Park. 1:30pm</p> <p>Jun 27 History and the Humanities in Game Design - Little Lecture by Ivone Alexandre. Virtual, 2pm</p> <p>Jun 27 Legends & Lore - Ferguson Rock marker unveiling. Wildwood House Museum, Beckley. 2-3pm</p> | <p>Jul 1 Abigail Adams - History Alive! Hosted by Blackwater Falls State Park. 2pm</p> <p>Jul 10 Ostenaco - History Alive! Hosted by Beech Fork State Park. 7pm</p> <p>Jul 16-18 Maria Freed - Presentations by potter and watercolorist. Pricketts Fort State Park, Fairmont. 10a-4p</p> <p>Jul 17 Author's Corner - presentations by local authors. Sterling Spencer Sculpture Garden, Richwood Heritage Center, Richwood. 1pm</p> <p>Jul 17 Col. Ruby Bradley - History Alive! Hosted by Beech Fork State Park. 7pm</p> <p>Jul 24 Gabriel Arthur - History Alive! Hosted by Beech Fork State Park. 7pm</p> <p>Jul 31 Timber Industry Exhibit - Grand opening week thru Sept 7. Richwood Heritage Center, Richwood. 11a-4p</p> |
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The West Virginia Humanities Council, an independent nonpartisan nonprofit, is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Council is supported by the NEH, the State of West Virginia, and contributions from the private sector. The purposes of the West Virginia Humanities Council are educational, and its mission is to support a vigorous program in the humanities statewide in West Virginia. The Broad Side is ©2021 by the West Virginia Humanities Council. All rights reserved.

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WEST VIRGINIA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

