

A Publication of the West Virginia Humanities Council

*The Sesquicentennial of the Civil War begins this year, as Americans observe the 150th anniversary of the opening round of the bloody conflict. As it happens, some of the earliest battles were fought in the mountains of Western Virginia, now West Virginia. Hunter Lesser has made nearly a lifelong study of that little known First Campaign. The following draws from his lecture on the subject for the Sesquicentennial Speakers Bureau of the West Virginia Humanities Council.*

# The Forgotten First Campaign

My involvement with this story began as a youth, fired by the discovery

of a dirt-encrusted Civil War bullet on the Rich Mountain battlefield south of Elkins. A decades-long treasure hunt ensued, as musty manuscripts, diaries and chronicles were uncovered. The faded words of soldiers and civilians revealed an important but overlooked chapter of America's past—the First Campaign of the Civil War.

The year was 1861, and rugged Western Virginia was the setting for unparalleled drama as our mountains became a proving ground for armies and leaders who shaped history: George McClellan, Robert E. Lee, and a host of others. It would be a campaign of historic firsts.

Thirty-four-year-old Major General George B. McClellan, commanding the Department of the Ohio, launched an invasion on May 27 to protect the vital Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and “secure Western Virginia to the Union.” McClellan's forces promptly won the first Union victories of the war.

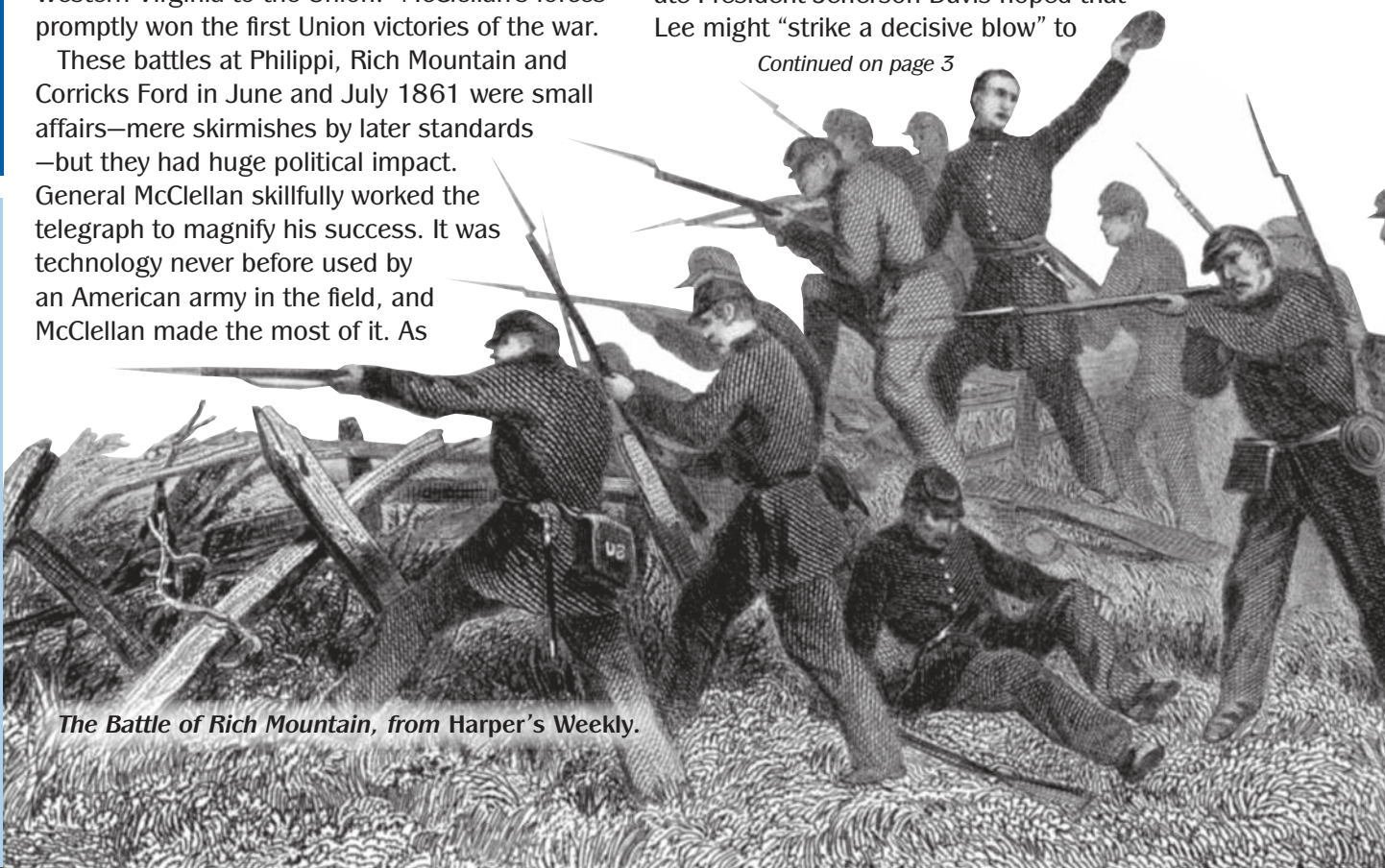
These battles at Philippi, Rich Mountain and Corricks Ford in June and July 1861 were small affairs—mere skirmishes by later standards—but they had huge political impact. General McClellan skillfully worked the telegraph to magnify his success. It was technology never before used by an American army in the field, and McClellan made the most of it. As

a result, he became an overnight sensation—the North's first battlefield hero. The timing was impeccable. On July 21, just ten days after McClellan's landmark victory at Rich Mountain, Union forces under another commander suffered a shocking defeat at Manassas, near Washington. George McClellan, now the “Young Napoleon,” was quickly summoned to save the capital.

McClellan left behind in Western Virginia a Federal army that protected loyal delegates gathered in conventions at Wheeling. By June 20, 1861, the “Restored Government of Virginia” was born. Now Virginia had two state governments, one in Wheeling and one in Richmond, respectively loyal to the Union and to the Confederacy.

As McClellan headed east for Washington, General Robert E. Lee rode west from Richmond. Confederate President Jefferson Davis hoped that Lee might “strike a decisive blow” to

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*The Battle of Rich Mountain, from Harper's Weekly.*

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2011

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# Southern Magic

When I was asked to speak at a writers forum at Chief Logan State Park in early May, it took me about two seconds to accept. Apart from the joy of being back in the southern mountains in the springtime, it seemed a great opportunity to let go about my favorite literary theories.

So I lost no time in telling my audience that I've always thought that southern West Virginia is a remarkably rich field for writers. There is no shortage of material. Apart from great personal tales – ask Homer Hickam – our southern counties have two of the biggest stories in the world in John Henry and the Hatfield-McCoy Feud. These sagas, lavishly compounded of history and folklore, are known every place the English language is spoken.

Bill Dillon of Summers County makes the point more vividly than I can, when he tells of his experience as a young man serving far from home in the U. S. Marines. The other boys had never heard of Hinton or Summers County, and certainly not Talcott or Alderson. Many of them scarcely knew where West Virginia was.

But when Bill told them he was from John Henry's home town, they all knew what he was talking about.

There is a magic in strong, simple stories, rooted in local culture and universal human experience. Witness the many books, movies, recordings and plays about the Feud and the John Henry story, literally hundreds by the last count I saw. My hope in reminding local writers of the riches around them was that other interpretations might arise from these great themes, from the people closest to the material.

After all, who is better qualified to tell our stories?

— Ken Sullivan

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

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 all correspondence to West Virginia Humanities Council, 1310 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Charleston, WV 25301 or [sonis@wvhumanities.org](mailto:sonis@wvhumanities.org).

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The Board of Directors welcomes three new members elected at the Council's recent meeting in Parkersburg: Jean Dressler Beasley of Athens is a graduate of Marshall University and the West Virginia University College of Law. She has taught Business Law, Latin, and English, and worked as a volunteer for numerous organizations. John J. K. "Jay" Cole, a graduate of WVU and the WVU Honors College, serves as chief of staff for WVU President Jim Clements. Cole's career in public policy and education has spanned nearly two decades and several states. Larry Grimes, Director of Church Relations at Bethany College, is a graduate of Bethany, Yale Divinity School, and Emory University. We thank departing board members Hannah Geffert of Martinsburg, Kay Goodwin of Charleston, Dee Kapourales of Williamson, and Albert Walker of Bluefield for their years of service.



Continued from page 1

drive the Union invaders from the mountains. It was Lee's first campaign of the war.

Lee eyed a Union fortress blocking the turnpike over Cheat Mountain, near the Randolph-Pocahontas county boundary at an elevation exceeding 4,000 feet. As he prepared an assault, the fates intervened. First came the weather—weeks of rain, and even snow in August. Next came epidemics of measles and typhoid fever. His army was reduced to half-strength. Hundreds of Confederate soldiers were buried in shallow, unmarked graves, and remain there to this day.

Despite the hardships, Lee's Confederates penetrated the wilderness to surround Cheat Summit Fort on September 12, 1861, but inexperienced officers failed to carry out his elaborate plan. The assault broke down, and the Confederates were driven back.

Moving south to the New River Valley in late September, Lee hoped to use the independent Confederate commands of Generals Henry Wise and John

Union volunteers from the Midwest and Confederates from the Deep South. As brothers clashed, a brutal guerrilla war erupted in these mountains, led by fearsome bushwhackers who picked off soldiers from the laurel thickets. A few of the worst were women, including the legendary Nancy Hart, "deadly as a copperhead snake."

Civilians suffered terribly. Armies robbed and pillaged farms and carted "disloyal" residents off to military prisons. Laura Jackson Arnold, a noted nurse, claimed she could heal the wounded Federals as fast as her brother "Stonewall" Jackson could wound them.

African-Americans served both armies. Confederate officers brought slaves or "body servants" to cook and perform camp chores, while Union officers hired free blacks for the same tasks. At least one black man attempted to grab a musket in the battle at Rich Mountain, but it would be more than a year before others like him could join the Union army to fight for their freedom.

## *Robert E. Lee left Western Virginia in defeat. Southern newspapers christened him "Granny Lee."*

Floyd to defeat Union forces based at Gauley Bridge. Wise and Floyd were former Virginia governors, ancient political rivals who bickered and fought like schoolboys. In the end, it was all a forlorn hope for General Lee.

By the end of October, Lee left Western Virginia in defeat. Southern newspapers claimed he had been outgeneraled and christened him "Granny Lee." Adding injury to insult, on October 24 the citizens of Western Virginia voted to approve the formation of a new state, loyal to the United States—our own West Virginia, which would enter the Union less than two years later.

The armies of the First Campaign were made up of volunteers from many walks of life. Many would go on to become famous: Generals William Rosecrans, John Pegram and Edward "Allegheny" Johnson, map-maker and future industrialist Jed Hotchkiss, future Presidents Rutherford B. Hayes and William McKinley, writer Ambrose Bierce, and others.

Virginia troops fought on both sides, joined by

The First Campaign was truly a proving ground. Veterans, many of whom spent the terrible winter of 1861-62 on the crest of the Alleghenies, later called it the "severest campaign" of the war. A surprising number went on to serve in legendary combat units North and South.

Abetted by Union victories, daring delegates had organized the loyal Virginia state government in Wheeling and used it to forge the new state of West Virginia. President Lincoln signed the statehood bill as an "expedient" act of wartime. There is no other like it.

Finally, the campaign shaped the careers of two generals who ultimately led their respective armies—George McClellan and Robert E. Lee. McClellan's victories here rocketed him to Union General-in-Chief, while a mud-spattered Lee left the mountains in defeat. It was a great irony of the war, and a year later their fortunes had reversed. Lee, unlike McClellan, had learned valuable lessons in leadership from the forgotten First Campaign.

— Hunter Lesser

Hunter Lesser speaks on "The Forgotten First Campaign" on September 17, 7 p.m., at the Hillsboro Public Library. Other Sesquicentennial speakers and topics include: • Concord University's David Bard, New River Valley Civil War battle sites, May 26, 6 p.m., Tamarack, Beckley. • State Archives Director Joe Geiger, West Virginia statehood, June 2, 7 p.m., Mineral County's Frankfort High School; and August 20, 10 a.m., Lost River Museum in Hardy County. • Mark Snell of Shepherd University, causes of the Civil War, July 6, 7 p.m., Historic Presbyterian Church, Huntersville; and September 20, 7 p.m., O'Hurley's General Store, Shepherdstown. • WVU's Connie Park Rice, slavery, abolition, and the Underground Railroad, September 23, 7 p.m., Hampshire County Public Library, Romney.





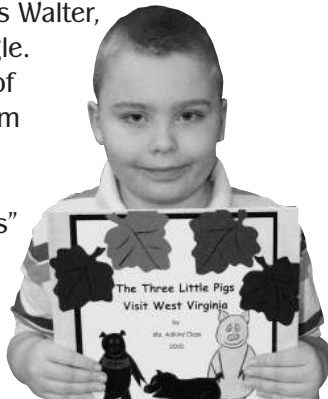
Michael Keller

John Marshall Scholar Jean Edward Smith (left) of Marshall University greets National Endowment for the Humanities Chairman James Leach. Chairman Leach spoke in Huntington and Charleston during his recent visit to West Virginia.

## Walter, Wilbur and Wilson

The West Virginia Humanities Council, the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra, and other partners recently supported the publication of a unique book by students at Flinn Elementary School in Kanawha County. *The Three Little Pigs Visit West Virginia* is a hard-cover children's book by the "writers and illustrators in Ms. (Sharon) Adkins' Second Grade Class." It describes a West Virginia vacation enjoyed by pigs Walter, Wilbur and Wilson Wiggle.

The project was part of a larger grant award from the Humanities Council to the symphony for its "Appalachian Reflections" initiative that involved more than 2,800 students in nine counties.



Laura Barry, WSO

Jordan Phillips is among the student authors.

**Humanities Council Fellowships** are awarded annually to college faculty and independent scholars for research and writing projects within the humanities. The awards, which provide scholars a \$2,500 stipend, are unique in West Virginia.

The 2011 Humanities Fellows and their subjects are Tyler Boulware, Morgantown, Native Americans and Friendship in Early America; Boyd Creasman, Buckhannon, A Study of the Fiction of Jayne Anne Phillips; Burnis Morris, Huntington, *The Mis-Education of the Negro – Revisited*; Robert G. Parkinson, Shepherdstown, *The Common Cause*; Erik Root, West Liberty, John Locke and the Political Philosophy of Alexander Campbell; Robert Whetsell, Elkins, *The Land No One Wanted: The Monongahela National Forest*; John Whitehead, Wheeling, *The Films of Mike Nichols*; and David Woodward, Huntington, *The U.S. Army in World War I*.

The next Fellowships deadline is February 1, 2012. Applications are available at [wvhumanities.org](http://wvhumanities.org); from [saunders@wvhumanities.org](mailto:saunders@wvhumanities.org); or by calling (304)346-8500.

## Steamboat Bicentennial

This year marks the bicentennial of the use of steamboats on America's inland waterways. The steamboat *New Orleans*, built by Robert Fulton and others, made a successful trip down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans in 1811. The *New Orleans* was soon followed by many other steamboats, including the *Washington*, built in Wheeling in 1816 and depicted on a U.S. postage stamp in 1989.

The Humanities Council recently awarded grants to Oglebay Institute in Wheeling and the Huntington Museum of Art to mount major exhibits celebrating the bicentennial event. The Oglebay Mansion Museum exhibit, *In Their Wake: Wheeling and the Steamboat Revolution*, illustrates changes that took place in Wheeling during the era of steamboats through photographs and artifacts and is on view through October 16. Call (304)242-7272 or visit [www.oionline.com](http://www.oionline.com).

The Huntington Museum of Art's *On Inland Waters* commemorates the history of the steamboat and includes photographs and steamboat memorabilia, as well as china, glassware, and maps from the museum's permanent collection. The exhibit opens September 12 and runs through November 6. For more information visit [www.hmoa.org](http://www.hmoa.org).



The steamboat *Washington*.



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## Graveyard Exploration

The West Virginia Humanities Council board of directors recently approved a grant for a cemetery history project at Franklin in Pendleton County. In 1809, town founder Francis Evick deeded 2½ acres of land to Franklin. The plot included the Mount Hiser Cemetery as well as a church. Over the years the cemetery has fallen into disrepair. The restoration of the historic cemetery has been the focus of recent community efforts to preserve the town's history and heritage. Council funds will help establish the cemetery boundaries, reclaim the land, and locate the burial site of Francis Evick and other gravesites through the use of ground penetrating radar.



A Mount Hiser tombstone.

The Contemporary American Theater Festival at Shepherd University invites its audiences to "Think Theater." The innovative festival, which celebrates its 21st season this year, focuses on new works by American playwrights. In addition to its repertory of plays, the Shepherdstown group presents free tent lectures, post-show discussions, and staged readings each season. The West Virginia Humanities Council funds these popular programming elements.

## thinktheater

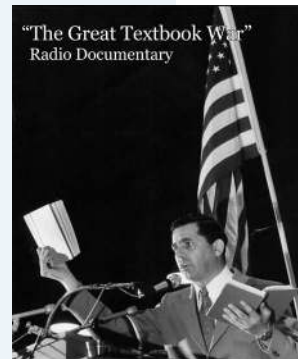
The Talk Theater Lecture Series takes place on Saturdays – July 9, 16, 23, and 30 – at 4:30 p.m. Following weekday performances, audience members may also participate in "Post-Show Discussions" with artists and experts, and stage readings of new plays are presented at 7:00 p.m. at the Shepherdstown Opera House on Tuesdays – July 12, 19, and 26. For a complete schedule visit [www.CATF.org](http://www.CATF.org).

All West Virginia Humanities Council grant recipients must submit a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number to receive payment. This is used by the federal government to track how federal money is disbursed. For more information contact [saunders@wvhumanities.org](mailto:saunders@wvhumanities.org).

## Briefs

The **Little Lecture** series continues with West Virginia Symphony Orchestra conductor Grant Cooper's program on May 22. The final lecture in the series takes place on June 26 when WVU College of Law professor and state constitution scholar Bob Bastress addresses recent questions about gubernatorial succession. Both programs begin at 2:00 p.m. at the MacFarland-Hubbard House in Charleston. Call 304-346-8500 for information.

**The Great Textbook War**, a radio documentary produced with support from the Humanities Council, was named a 2011 Alfred I. Dupont-Columbia University Award winner for excellence in broadcast journalism. The documentary also received the Peabody Award and regional and national Edward R. Murrow awards for its coverage of the 1974 battle over Kanawha County textbooks that some believed undermined Christian values.



The **National Trust for Historic Preservation** offers a Diversity Scholarship Program for 60 participants to attend its National Preservation Conference, October 19-22, in Buffalo, New York. The program provides financial assistance for community leaders from diverse social, economic, racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Attendees will learn how to preserve historic sites and revitalize communities. Applications, due by June 1, should be submitted electronically. Contact [scholarship@nthp.org](mailto:scholarship@nthp.org) for more information.

The **West Virginia Humanities Council grants program** serves West Virginians at home and abroad. A recent Council-funded teacher institute took place in Elkins and India, and this June Christina E. Franzen of Marshall University will travel to Israel via a Council travel assistance grant to assist in directing the Tel Dor archeological excavation. To learn more about Humanities Council grant opportunities contact [saunders@wvhumanities.org](mailto:saunders@wvhumanities.org), visit [www.wvhumanities.org](http://www.wvhumanities.org), or call (304)346-8500.

**The election returns are in**, and we welcome the following new and returning members to the Humanities Council program committee: Robert Enoch, president of the Wood County Historical and Preservation Society; A. Waller Hastings, who chairs the Humanities Department at West Liberty University; Myra Ziegler, director of the Summers County Public Library; and returning member Kevin Barksdale, who teaches American history at Marshall University. The Council's program committee oversees the review of grant applications and program activities. We thank departing members Robert Bridges, Sallye Clark, and Pauline Sturgill.



**With Memorial Day upon us**, we gratefully acknowledge those who encourage memorial gifts to the West Virginia Humanities Council. A brief mention at the end of a loved one's obituary often results in significant and much-appreciated contributions. We are honored that you consider our work a fitting tribute to the memory of a special person. Thank you.



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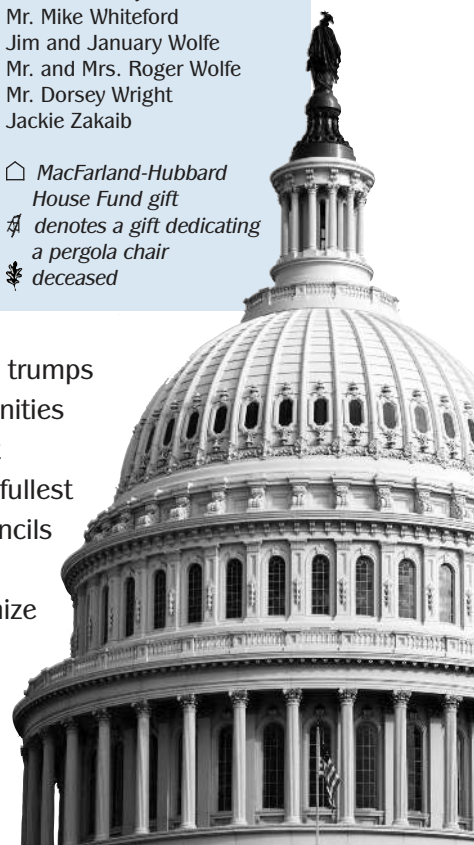
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✧ MacFarland-Hubbard  
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**Speak your piece:** As our representatives in Washington work to serve us, nothing trumps personal contact from their constituents. Cuts to the National Endowment for the Humanities would seriously impact the ability of the West Virginia Humanities Council to serve West Virginians statewide. Let Washington know that you support funding for the NEH at the fullest possible level. To send an e-mail message, visit the Federation of State Humanities Councils at [www.statehumanities.org](http://www.statehumanities.org). Click first on "Contact Your Representatives" and then on "Write Your Legislators." You will be directed to a draft message, which you may customize as you wish. Please do it today.



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Michael Patton, Billy Dean and Kevin Lemon at work on the MacFarland-Hubbard House drive.

## Groundbreaking Improvements

In honor of the 175th anniversary of the 1836 MacFarland-Hubbard House, the Humanities Council has undertaken restoration of the grounds of its historic headquarters property.

“In recent years we have put the house and adjoining carriage house in good shape, with the support of hundreds of donors,” said Executive Director Ken Sullivan. “What remains now are the environs. We have maintained the lawn and its many specimen trees, kept the place up to decent standards, but we haven’t really attempted to recapture the historic beauty of the grounds. Our big anniversary is a great time for that.”

Landscape architect Joe Young has divided the project into two phases. The first phase is the “hardscape,” including the driveway, public sidewalk, the historic brick walk leading to the house, and associated drainage improvements. The second phase is the landscape, including the restoration of garden

beds, extensive plantings, re-sodding the lawn, and the installation of a water-conserving irrigation system.

“Hardscape is a new word we learned from Joe,” Sullivan said. “Lots of grading, concrete, bricks and mortar. That’s all finished. The key to getting that work started was a much-appreciated Cultural Facilities grant from the Commission on the Arts at the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. With their example before us, the matching funds came pretty quickly.” He noted that additional supporters included BrickStreet Insurance, the Blanche E. Jacobson Foundation, the H. B. Wehrle Foundation, and other contributors including a generous anonymous donor.

The landscape phase will begin this fall, funding permitting. “We are calling it seed money, considering the nature of the project,” Sullivan said. “The hardscape is done and paid for now, and from here on donors may be assured that their contributions will go into green, growing things.”

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