

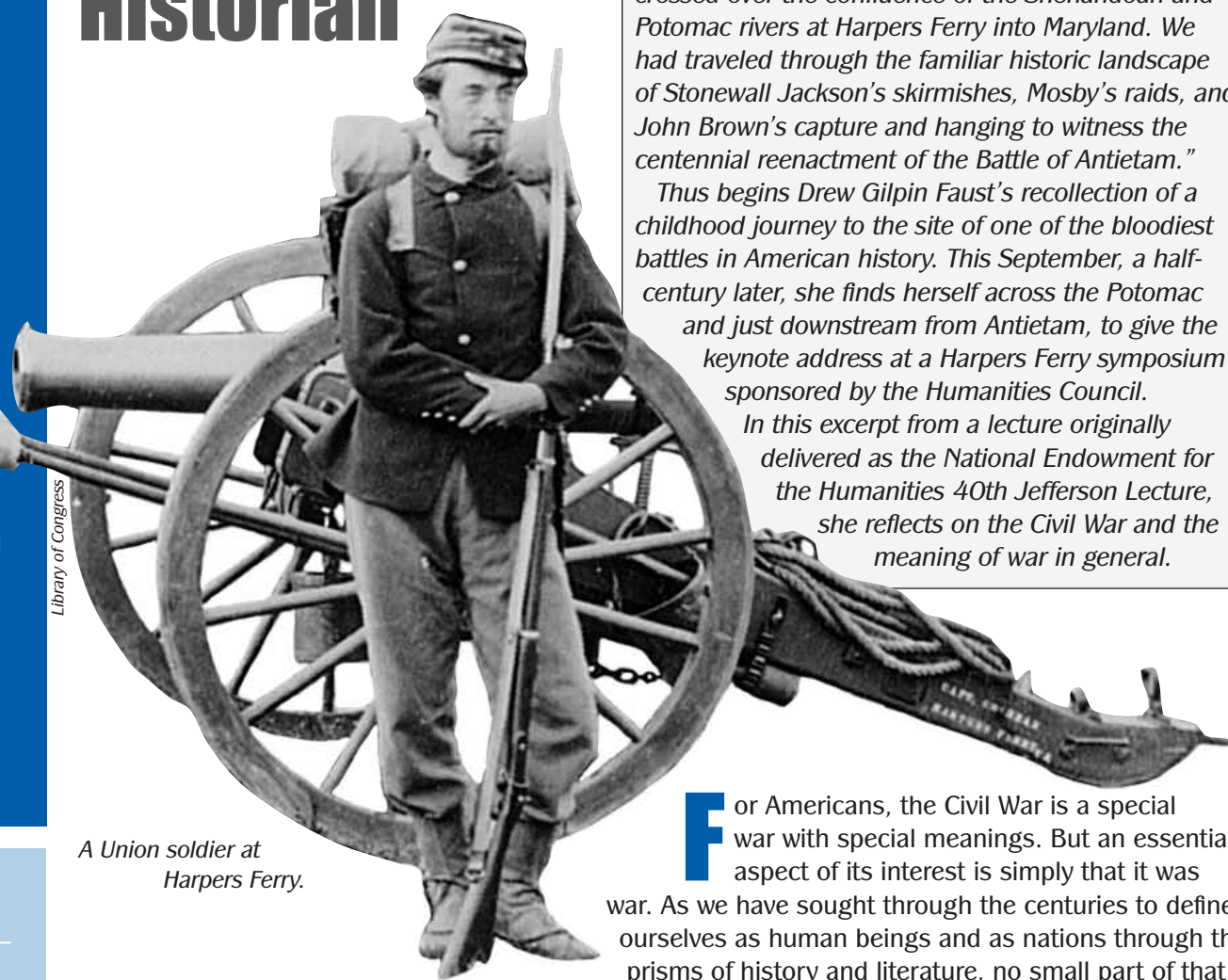
# Telling War Stories:

## Reflections of a Civil War Historian

*"On a hot Saturday in September 1962, I crowded with my brothers and cousins into my aunt and uncle's station wagon and drove off to war. Passing through our county in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, we headed towards Charles Town, West Virginia, then crossed over the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers at Harpers Ferry into Maryland. We had traveled through the familiar historic landscape of Stonewall Jackson's skirmishes, Mosby's raids, and John Brown's capture and hanging to witness the centennial reenactment of the Battle of Antietam."*

*Thus begins Drew Gilpin Faust's recollection of a childhood journey to the site of one of the bloodiest battles in American history. This September, a half-century later, she finds herself across the Potomac and just downstream from Antietam, to give the keynote address at a Harpers Ferry symposium sponsored by the Humanities Council.*

*In this excerpt from a lecture originally delivered as the National Endowment for the Humanities 40th Jefferson Lecture, she reflects on the Civil War and the meaning of war in general.*



Library of Congress

A Union soldier at Harpers Ferry.

**F**or Americans, the Civil War is a special war with special meanings. But an essential aspect of its interest is simply that it was war. As we have sought through the centuries to define ourselves as human beings and as nations through the prisms of history and literature, no small part of that

effort has drawn us to war. We might even say that the humanities began with war and from war and have remained entwined with it ever since. The first masterwork of Western literature was the *Iliad*, a Trojan War tale that exerts a wrenching power almost two millennia after its origin.

How is it that humanity's highest creative aspirations of literature and imagination have been all but inseparable from its most terrible invention: the scourge of war?

Some might see the connection of war with human creativity as the inevitable outcome of the prevalence of war in human experience. But if we think of our own Civil War, its four-year duration — less than two percent of our national history — is certainly disproportionate to the volume of both literary and historical writing it has generated. We don't just write about wars because, like Mount Everest, they are there.

Human beings are in fact powerfully attracted to war. Throughout history, we can find representations of war's powerful allure in the discourse that precedes and pervades almost every conflict.

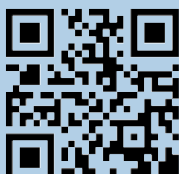
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Open to the public

# Feud Fallout

The History Channel's "Hatfields & McCoys" mini-series was the TV event of the summer.

We could have told you that without ever turning on the television set by the big increase in visitation to *e-WV*, the online version of *The West Virginia Encyclopedia*.

*e-WV* traffic jumped to more than 30 times its normal rate at the peak of the broadcast period. On a single day, May 30, the number of visits exceeded what we usually see in an entire month.

Interestingly, feudist Jim Vance garnered more interest on *e-WV* than did Devil Anse Hatfield, and our Vance article still leads Google search results. Vance was Devil Anse's uncle, ruthless and vindictive, a natural for television. Like Hatfield, Vance was a major leader in the feud, but I don't think the traffic we saw had much to do with the relative importance of the two men. Probably it simply reflected the fact that there were many other sources of information on Devil Anse while *e-WV* was one of the few websites with coverage of his less famous uncle.

That testifies to the depth of our encyclopedia. We knew Jim Vance before Jim Vance was cool, and we had an authoritative article ready and waiting when national attention turned his way. And that's not exceptional: *e-WV* has more than 20 other articles pertaining to the feud and individuals involved in it, as well as a photo exhibit and other items relating to the bloody fracas. It was an obvious place for series viewers to seek further information.

Our state has other world-class stories — John Henry and John Brown come readily to mind — and they too will occasionally find mass audiences in the popular media. When they do, *e-WV* will be there for those who want to check the facts and further educate themselves.

You may check out our treatment of Jim Vance — and more than 2,200 other West Virginia topics — at [www.wvencyclopedia.org](http://www.wvencyclopedia.org).

— 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 West Virginia Humanities Council welcomes nominations for program committee citizen members, who are elected from the general public. The deadline for nominations is November 1. The program committee recommends funding and program decisions to the Council's board of directors. Contact Amy Saunders, grants administrator, at (304)346-8500 or [saunders@wvhumanities.org](mailto:saunders@wvhumanities.org) for details.

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Such expressions appeared widely at the Civil War's outset. The Attorney General of the new Confederacy anticipated that war would "stimulate . . . the nobler impulses." Francis Parkman of Boston believed that war would renew and purify the nation, liberating it from its growing preoccupation with "material success."

War offers the attraction of the extraordinary — the escape from the grey everyday, from the humdrum into higher things. It is indeed striking how often the language of altitude is used by those describing the allure of war: it will lift, elevate,

raise us towards the transcendent, and link us to the "sublime," a word often repeated in 19th-century paeans to war. It reminds us that the

human attraction to war is about

the struggle to surpass the boundaries of the human as well as the limits of human understanding.

The seductiveness of war derives in part from its location on this boundary of the human, the inhuman and the superhuman. Its fascination lies in its ability at once to allure and repel, in the paradox that thrives at its heart. For the Civil War, it was perhaps Robert E. Lee who captured this contradiction most memorably in his remark to James Longstreet as they watched the slaughter at Fredericksburg in 1862, a dramatic victory for the Confederates. "It is well that war is so terrible," Lee observed, "else we should grow too fond of it." It is terrible and yet we love it; we need to witness the worst of its destruction in order not to love it even more.

This paradox also forms the core of war's attraction to writers and artists. War engages and thrives on contrasts. "War is nasty; war is fun," Vietnam veteran Tim O'Brien has written. "War is thrilling; war is drudgery. War makes you a man; war makes you dead."

War's participants have often noted the failure of words to convey either its reality or its meaning. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., wounded three times in the Civil War, called his experience "incommunicable." A Wisconsin nurse, aiding the wounded in Civil War Tennessee, wrote home of the suffering around her: "There are times when the meaning of words seem to fade away; so entirely does our language fail to express the reality."

Yet even as they described the impossibility of their task and the ineffability of war, these witnesses to war set about to write, to employ words to decry those words' very inadequacy. The more formal literature of war reflects a similar dynamic. "How can I

picture it all?" Homer demanded in the *Iliad*. "It would take a god to tell the tale." More than 26 centuries later, contemplating America's Civil War, Herman Melville concurred, "None can narrate that strife." Yet both chose nonetheless to write, to find words to convey war's meaning. The search for understanding compels language even as it rejects it.

Still we try. We seek the order that narrative promises to impose on the incoherence of conflict. We have been telling and hearing and reading war stories for millennia. Their endurance may lie in their impossibility; they can never be complete, for the tensions

and contradictions within them

will never be eliminated or resolved. That challenge is essential to their power and attraction. War stories matter.

These are tales of life and death, of the quintessential moment of truth when the ultimate is at stake. But it is more than the magnitude, the weightiness of war that has lodged war at the heart of our history and our literature since the time of Homer. War and narrative in some sense create one another. War is not random, shapeless violence. Fighting is reconceived as war because of how humans write and speak about it; it is framed as a story, with a plot that imbues its actors with both individual and shared purpose and is intended to move toward victory for one or another side. This is why it can provide the satisfaction of meaning to its participants; this too is why it offers such a natural attraction to writers and historians. Like any good story, it offers the promise and gratification that accompany a resolution of the plot.

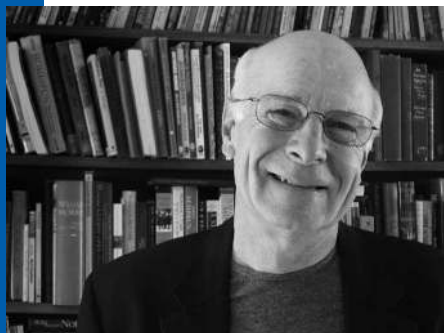
But the stories we tell in creating narratives of war rarely deliver the order and control they promise. Part of the interdependence of war and literature rests in this tension of their ultimate incompatibility, the irreducible reality that despite all human striving to impose order and meaning, war remains terrible and incomprehensible. "Every war is ironic," Paul Fussell wrote in his brilliant study of the First World War, "because every war is worse than expected."

Drew Gilpin Faust is president of Harvard University and author of *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War among other books*.



To read the lecture in its entirety, visit [www.neh.gov/about/awards/jefferson-lecture/drew-gilpin-faust-lecture](http://www.neh.gov/about/awards/jefferson-lecture/drew-gilpin-faust-lecture).





## New Poet Laureate

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin has appointed Marc Harshman of Wheeling as West Virginia poet laureate, a position first established by the legislature in 1927. Harshman is the ninth writer to serve the state in that capacity. He fills the vacancy left by the late Irene McKinney, who died in February.

Harshman says he is humbled and honored, and that he will work to “support all the other writers in the state.” An accomplished poet, writer, and storyteller, he has published three volumes of poetry and 11 children’s books including *The Storm*, a Smithsonian Notable Book and Parents’ Choice award winner.

Harshman will give his initial reading as poet laureate at the West Virginia Book Festival in Charleston, October 14. He holds a B.A. from Bethany College, and master’s degrees from Yale Divinity School and the University of Pittsburgh. He previously taught fifth and sixth grades at the Sand Hill School in Marshall County, one of the last of the three-room country schools.

**New Deal Newly Documented:** In October West Virginia University Press will release *New Deal Photographs of West Virginia, 1934-1943*. Supported by a Humanities Council grant, the work by author Betty Rivard gathers together for the first time an outstanding collection of West Virginia images from the Great Depression made by U.S. Farm Security Administration photographers.

West Virginia was one of the states hardest hit by the Depression, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal programs sought to help. FSA photographers called attention to rural poverty and to the changes brought by the New Deal. Walker Evans, John Collier, Arthur Rothstein, Marion Post Wolcott, and Ben Shahn were among those active in West Virginia.

*New Deal Photographs* presents the works of ten FSA photographers with images of the state’s northern and southern coalfields, the subsistence homestead projects at Arthurdale, Eleanor, and Tygart Valley, and various communities from Charleston to Clarksburg and Parkersburg to Elkins. Rivard’s book includes 158 black-and-white photographs, a foreword by folklorist Carl Fleischhauer and an introduction by historian Jerry Bruce Thomas. It will sell for \$29.99 in bookstores or at [www.wvupressonline.com](http://www.wvupressonline.com).



*Richwood in 1942, by John Collier.*

**History Hits Webster County:** Earlier this month “History Hitting the Road,” an educational outreach program from the Historic Area at WVU Jackson’s Mill, traveled to the Webster County Fair with the support of a Humanities Council grant. The program demonstrates West Virginia life during the 1800s. To schedule “History Hitting the Road” at your event contact Dean Hardman at (304)269-5100 or [Dean.Hardman@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Dean.Hardman@mail.wvu.edu).



## Huntington Fifth-Grader Wins National Competition

“I was just looking for a good story about a dog like mine,” wrote Darius Atefat-Peckham in his award-winning entry in the national Letters About Literature competition. The Huntington fifth-grader was one of two winners in the elementary category for his letter to Mark Doty, author of the book *Dog Years*. National winners name a library of their choice to receive a \$10,000 reading promotion grant. Darius chose his school library at Meadows Elementary School to receive the funding.



Each year the Humanities Council partners with the West Virginia Library Commission to sponsor Letters About Literature in West Virginia. Coordinated by the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, the competition encourages students, grades 4-12, to submit an essay in the form of a letter to an author about how that writer’s book changed their view of the world or themselves. Our congratulations to Darius, who was one of six winners out of 59,000 entrants. He reminds us that a special book, like a good dog, is a wonderful companion.



The birthplace of West Virginia, Independence Hall in Wheeling.

## Statehood Exhibit

West Virginia turns 150 years old in 2013. To celebrate, the Humanities Council will tour a new version of the award-winning traveling exhibit *Born of Rebellion: West Virginia Statehood*. The exhibit

examines the issues that led to the statehood movement and the constitutional questions involved in becoming a state at the height of the Civil War.

While content remains unchanged from the earlier version of the popular exhibit, *Born of Rebellion* is being resized for easier transport and will incorporate all new display materials including a lightweight panel system.

The exhibit is supported in part by the West Virginia Sesquicentennial Commission. It is available at no cost to organizations interested in displaying it in their community. *Born of Rebellion* may be reserved for display dates beginning November 2012 on a first-come, first-served basis. Contact program officer Mark Payne at [payne@wvhumanities.org](mailto:payne@wvhumanities.org) or (304)346-8500.

**Council Project Goes to Venice Film Fest:** The film *Miracle Boy* — based on a short story of the same title by West Virginia writer Pinckney Benedict — had its world premiere this month at Italy's 69th Venice International Film Festival. The film, shot in Greenbrier County, is one of only 14 international short films selected to show, and the only U.S. film in the short film category.

A Humanities Council grant to the West Virginia Filmmakers Guild supported the film's post-production and distribution to film festivals.

## Book Festival

The West Virginia Book Festival will be October 13 and 14 at the Charleston Civic Center. The free event offers a chance for West Virginians to rub elbows with best-selling authors from around the country, as well as regional favorites, while exploring the offerings of publishers and book sellers from the Mountain State and beyond.

Featured authors include urban fantasy novelist Charlaine Harris, on whose books the HBO television series "True Blood" is based; mystery bestseller Craig Johnson, a Huntington native whose western lawman Walt Longmire is the basis of a new A&E television series; teen book author Tamora Pierce; historian David Corbin; and children's pop-up book designer Robert Sabuda.

The festival is sponsored by Kanawha County Public Library, Charleston Newspapers, and the Humanities Council.



Craig Johnson.

## Briefs

**The Humanities Council** presents New River Gorge park ranger Frank Sellers at the Summers County Courthouse at 7:00 p.m., September 28. Sellers will discuss the bicentennial of the 1812 John Marshall Expedition, which traveled the James, Greenbrier and New rivers in an attempt to establish a water route between Richmond and the Ohio Valley.

**Hampshire County history** is the focus of the Capon Bridge Founders Day Festival on September 29-30. A Humanities Council grant to the Ruritan Club will support a lecture series at the Capon Bridge Volunteer Fire Company. Call (304)856-1118 for more information.

**Pierpont Community and Technical College** in Fairmont and **Kanawha Valley Community and Technical College** in South Charleston are among 18 colleges nationwide selected to receive curriculum and faculty support for teaching the humanities. The National Endowment for the Humanities awarded a grant to the Community College Humanities Association to promote the nationwide initiative. West Virginia's community colleges were alerted to the opportunity by the West Virginia Humanities Council, and two will now have the opportunity to enhance humanities offerings on their campuses.

**West Virginia Classics**, a collaborative venture of WVU Press and the Humanities Council, republishes historic books that deal with the culture and diversity of the Mountain State. The next volume, the West Virginia edition of *The History of the American Negro* (1923), will be released this fall in time for the West Virginia Book Festival. Visit [www.wvupressonline.com](http://www.wvupressonline.com).



The Humanities Council Holiday Open House is Friday, December 7, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the MacFarland-Hubbard House in Charleston. Join us for historic decorations and plenty of holiday cheer. Refreshments will be served.



## Grant Categories

The Humanities Council welcomes applications in the following grant categories:

**Major Grants** (\$20,000 maximum) support humanities events: symposiums, conferences, exhibits, lectures.

**Due:** Sept. 1, Feb. 1

**Minigrants** (\$1,500 maximum) support small projects, single events, or planning/consultation.

**Due:** \*Oct. 1, \*Dec. 1, Feb. 1, April 1, June 1, Aug. 1

**Fellowships** (\$2,500) support research and writing projects for humanities faculty and independent scholars.

**Due:** Feb. 1

**Media Grants** (\$20,000 maximum) support the production of electronic or film materials, or a newspaper series.

**Due:** Sept. 1

**Publication Grants** (\$20,000 maximum) support the production phase of a completed manuscript by recognized nonprofit and academic presses.

**Due:** Sept. 1

**Teacher Institute Grants** (\$25,000 maximum) are available to colleges and universities and support summer seminars for secondary and elementary teachers.

**Due:** Sept. 1

**\* Approaching Deadlines!**

Visit [www.wvhumanities.org](http://www.wvhumanities.org) for applications and guidelines, or call (304)346-8500.

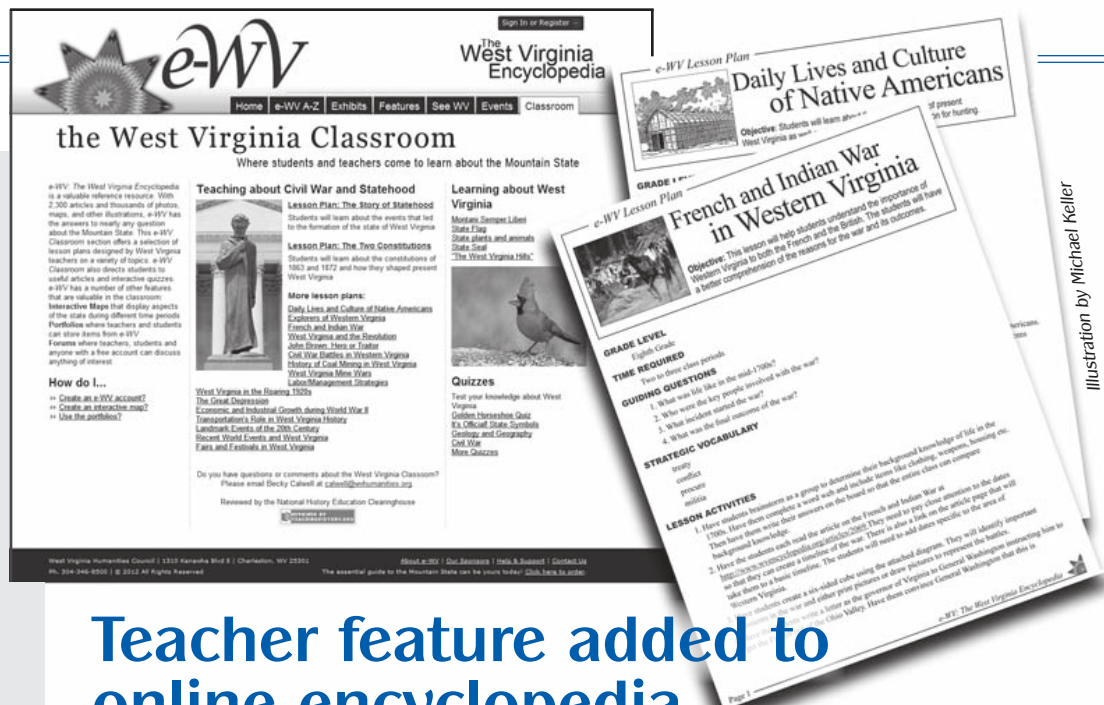


Illustration by Michael Keller

## Teacher feature added to online encyclopedia

A new feature of e-WV: *The West Virginia Encyclopedia* provides teachers with innovative ways to use the powerful online resource. "West Virginia Classroom" was introduced to educators at the Science, Arts and Social Studies Institute at Lakeview Resort in July. At the conference, e-WV staff demonstrated the online encyclopedia to more than 120 elementary and middle schoolteachers from throughout the state.

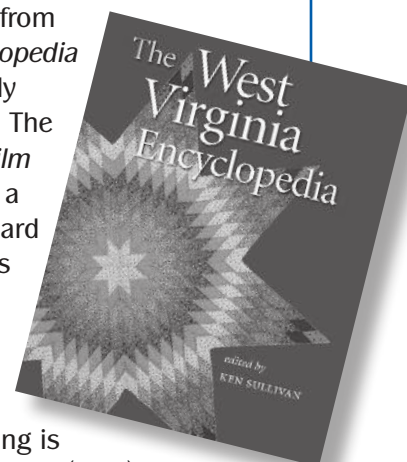
The e-WV Classroom includes 18 lesson plans for eighth grade that were developed by teachers from several counties, working under the direction of a curriculum specialist. The lesson plans address a variety of topics and include guiding questions, vocabulary, and lesson activities. All meet the state standards for social studies and literacy.

The Classroom section will also be helpful to students who want to learn more about West Virginia. Students will find links to e-WV articles and easy access to the e-WV quizzes, especially helpful in preparation for the annual Golden Horseshoe test.

Visitors to the Classroom section will find directions for using e-WV's special features, including interactive maps and the portfolio function. You may visit the Classroom at [www.wvencyclopedia.org/classroom](http://www.wvencyclopedia.org/classroom). Contact Becky Calwell at (304)346-8500 or [calwell@wvhumanities.org](mailto:calwell@wvhumanities.org) if you would like a demonstration of how e-WV can be used in the classroom.

The print version of *The West Virginia Encyclopedia* remains popular with readers. Now in its second printing, the big book is sold in bookstores, at Tamarack in Beckley, and directly from the West Virginia Humanities Council. The *Encyclopedia* is packed with more than 2,200 articles by nearly 600 expert writers and hundreds of illustrations. The Humanities Council also offers *West Virginia: A Film History*, the acclaimed public television series, in a two-DVD set. The 6½-hour film, narrated by Richard Thomas, tells the unforgettable story of America's Mountain State.

Both are perfect holiday gifts for West Virginians. The 927-page hardbound encyclopedia sells for \$44.95 and the film history for \$29.95, plus 6% sales tax. Shipping and handling is \$6 per book and \$3 per DVD set. Place your order at (304)346-8500 or at [www.wvhumanities.org](http://www.wvhumanities.org) today!



**Thanks, Governor!** Council Operations Manager Cheryl Marsh received a big check from Governor Earl Ray Tomblin during a state development grant award ceremony at the Culture Center in July. The Council applied for the Historic Preservation Development Grant funds earlier this year to restore 51 windows to working order at the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House. The work to be done includes removing, repairing, and reinstalling window facings and sashes; restoring counterweights in each window back to working condition; and replacing damaged hardware. The restoration will take place in both the main house and carriage house under the supervision of architect David Marshall, who has overseen restoration work at the MacFarland-Hubbard House since the Humanities Council purchased the place in 1999.



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## — Roosevelt Biographer to Speak —



Teddy whips the 1904 GOP Convention into shape.

America has produced few careers like that of Theodore Roosevelt. When William McKinley was assassinated in 1901 Roosevelt became, at age 42, the youngest president in the nation's history. And beyond the political arena he was a multi-faceted man whose keen interests fueled a lifelong pursuit of adventure and strenuous endeavor.

Pulitzer Prize-winning Roosevelt biographer Edmund Morris will speak about TR at the annual McCreight Lecture in the Humanities on Thursday, October 25. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. at the Culture Center in Charleston. The event is free and the public is cordially invited to attend.

Teddy Roosevelt overcame poor health in childhood to lead an incredibly diverse life. In addition to being president of the United States he served as governor of New York, police commissioner of New York City, assistant secretary of the Navy, colonel of the Rough Riders, a deputy sheriff in the Dakota Territory, rancher in the Badlands, a founder of the NCAA, big game hunter, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, author of more than 35 books, an original member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, president of the American Historical Association, an expedition leader, international lecturer, and a leading conservationist who established many of our most beloved national parks. His likeness is immortalized with those of Washington, Lincoln and Jefferson on Mount Rushmore. The teddy bear is his other great monument.

Edmund Morris's book, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award in 1980. In 2001 he published the bestseller *Theodore Rex*. With the release of *Colonel Roosevelt* in 2010, Morris's Roosevelt trilogy was complete.

Morris appears extensively on national television and has written for *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *The New York Times* and other periodicals. His lecture is titled "The Nine Lives of Theodore Roosevelt."

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