

West Virginia Humanities Council's Official Publication

People & Mountains

Winter 2025-26



West Virginia Folklife
Apprenticeship Showcases



From the Executive Director

I write this just before Bill of Rights Day—a lesser-known date on America’s civics calendar—which arrives each year on the 15th of December.

This year, it comes just two weeks before the start of the Declaration of Independence’s 250th anniversary year, which you’ll see reflected in this issue of the magazine. Although just 10 of James Madison’s original 17 proposed amendments were ratified—and even these were not formally adopted until Virginia’s approval on December 15, 1791—the spirit behind them undergirds the most unique aspect of America’s origin: the idea that *individual rights pre-existed our government and properly lie beyond its reach* since government, like any human institution, is imperfect and fallible.

Thomas Jefferson put it plainly in a 1789 letter to Madison: “Tho [a Bill of Rights] is not absolutely efficacious under all circumstances, it is of great potency always, and rarely inefficacious. A brace the more will often keep up the building which would have fallen with that brace the less.” Hear, hear.

For several years, the West Virginia Humanities Council has devoted significant time, resources, and energy to developing programs in civics education and civic engagement, including a K-8 civics curriculum in *e-WV*. That focus is anything but academic. If history and literature record our shared human experience, civics is the realm through which we shape the society we want to share together—nationally and locally.

The very notion of a common good is central to this effort, and the stories we tell about our values matter in that context. When we disengage from the narratives of our shared experience, we leave ourselves open to overly simplistic explanations and divisive rhetoric. But when we commit to understanding the complexities required to live together in a representative democracy, we cultivate a sense of social stewardship that extends beyond individual concerns and strengthens the body politic.

“In moments
of turmoil,
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have long served
as an antidote”



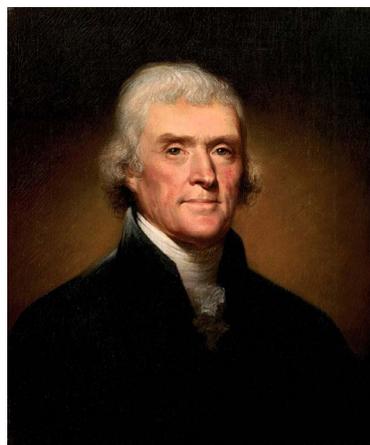
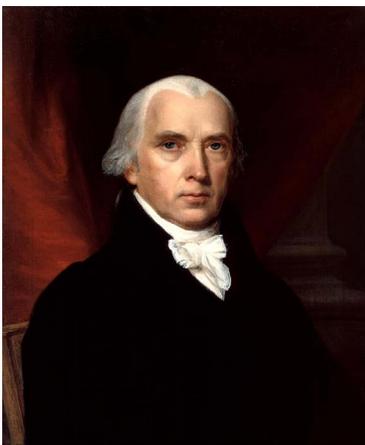
*The West Virginia Humanities Council's
Historic Headquarters*

Recognizing that progress is neither linear nor guaranteed, the humanities rest on the belief that moral reasoning thrives on dialogue rather than dogma. As Jefferson, Madison, and their contemporaries foresaw, civics education is civilization's most resilient defense against the polarizing tendencies that surface in uncertain times.

Informed, vigilant civic engagement is vital to our democratic health. In moments of turmoil, the humanities have long served as an antidote—sometimes slow-acting, but always steady. They foster critical inquiry, ethical imagination, and cross-cultural empathy, all qualities that inoculate our society from the corrosive forces of fear and mistrust.

By empowering citizens with the knowledge and sensibilities needed to confront these complexities, civics and the humanities can guide us toward a future grounded in reason, cooperation, and enduring peace—an outcome that, as Jefferson's letter reminds us, is far better than the alternative. May it be so for our nation, now and ever.

—Dr. Eric Waggoner



Founding Fathers of the United States
(left-right) James Madison
and Thomas Jefferson

Board of Directors

The West Virginia Humanities Council is a nonprofit institution governed by its Board of Directors. The next Board meeting is April 17 in Fairmont and is open to the public.

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Council-Funded Project Wins National Award

The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) has selected the Morgantown-based Community Coalition for Social Justice as a 2025 Award of Excellence winner for its graphic novel *West Virginians’ Experiences in Civil Rights: How We Have Been Connected All Along*.

The AASLH Leadership in History Awards program is the nation’s most prestigious competition for recognizing achievement in state and local history. The West Virginia Humanities Council provided grant money to support this project. On behalf of the Council, congratulations!



Drs. Eve Faulkes and Barbara Howe receive their AASLH 2025 Award of Excellence on behalf of the Community Coalition for Social Justice

Program Committee Election

The Program Committee oversees the Council’s direct programs and grants by reviewing grant applications and making funding recommendations to the Council’s Board. Your vote gives the public a voice in our grants and program decisions. You can view the ballot and vote online at wvhumanities.org. Vote for up to three by **March 6**.



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Above: Showcase attendees celebrate with a square dance
Photos by Michael Keller

Archaeology team at the Limerick Plantation in Huger, South Carolina, in the 1970s; in the front row, Stephen is third from the left with the white hat, and Kim is on the end petting an Irish setter
All photos courtesy of the McBrides



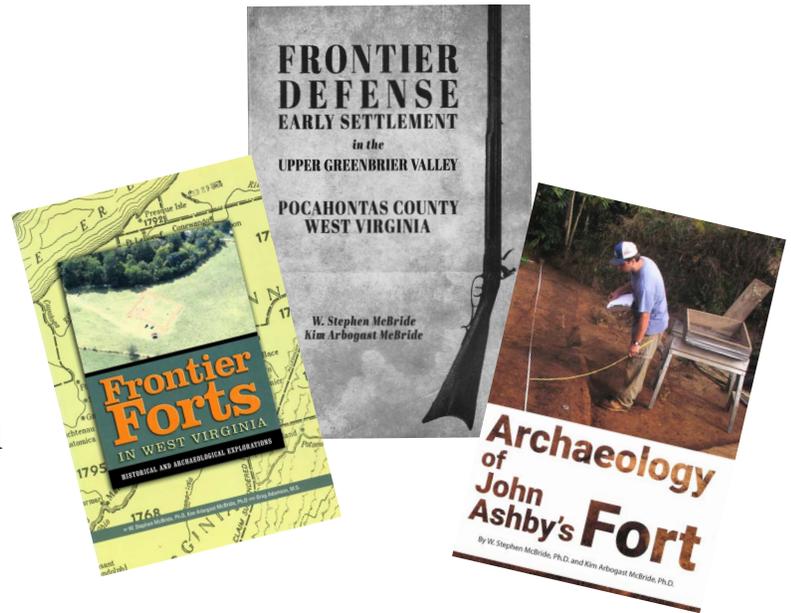
Foundational Humanities: Examining Frontier Forts with Kim and Stephen McBride

By Erin Riebe

As we celebrate our nation's 250th anniversary, Americans are reflecting on the stories that shaped our earliest years as a country. Drs. Kim and Stephen McBride have spent decades studying the colonial frontier landscape in what is now West Virginia. Their partnership, both professional and personal, has produced new insights into early settlements, military defense, and daily life in the 18th century.

The McBrides, who recently celebrated their golden wedding anniversary, were high school classmates at Greenbrier East in Lewisburg. They married shortly after graduation and pursued complementary academic interests—Kim in classical archaeology and Stephen in physical anthropology. Beloit College’s strong anthropology program drew them to Wisconsin, where they gained early field experience working as technicians on archaeological digs during off-semester. A field school at a historic trading-post site in Wisconsin’s Apostle Islands cemented their interest in historical archaeology when they saw how excavated evidence and documentary sources together create a fuller, more accurate picture of the past. Both later earned M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in anthropology from Michigan State University before spending most of their careers working out of Kentucky.

Their work on West Virginia’s frontier forts began in 1989, when the Summers County Historic Landmark Commission hired them to study well-known fort sites along the Greenbrier and Middle New rivers. Although some sites had been lost to modern construction, enough remained intact for the McBrides to continue their work. From that initial project forward, the McBrides have become the leading figures in discovering,

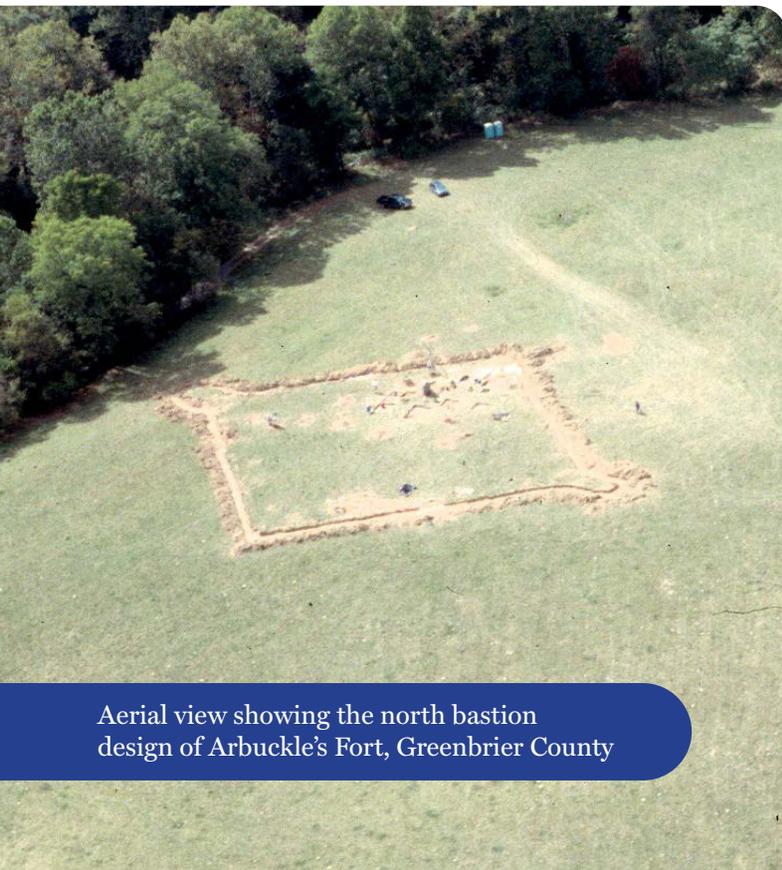


documenting, and interpreting western Virginia’s frontier defense.

Much of this work has been made possible by grants from the West Virginia Humanities Council, which has funded the McBrides’ archival research, archaeological field investigations, and artifact analysis that otherwise would not have happened. The McBrides’ efforts have reshaped our understanding of frontier life, clarifying the location and design of defensive structures, identifying the people who relied on them, and deepening the state’s record of the colonial and Revolutionary eras.

In many cases, Council-supported projects enabled first-ever excavations at sites long known through oral history but never examined archaeologically. The McBrides’ work pinpointed exact fort locations, refined building footprints, and distinguished frontier-period materials from later farmstead features, all crucial steps in accurately interpreting these types of historic sites.

The importance of the McBrides’ expert work becomes more significant when considering the limitations of traditional sources, which provide incomplete and sometimes misleading pictures. Written records typically emphasize militia activity, or isolated attacks, and often embellish details. Oral histories, while valuable, often locate forts only in general terms and focus on the heroics rather than the facts. Archaeology fills in these



Aerial view showing the north bastion design of Arbuckle’s Fort, Greenbrier County



Amulet believed to have belonged to an enslaved woman

Photo by the McBrides

gaps. Excavations confirm structural locations; artifacts reveal the tools, clothing, and household items European-American settlers used; and physical evidence helps date sites, identify the functions of specific buildings, and reconstruct daily activities within the fortifications.

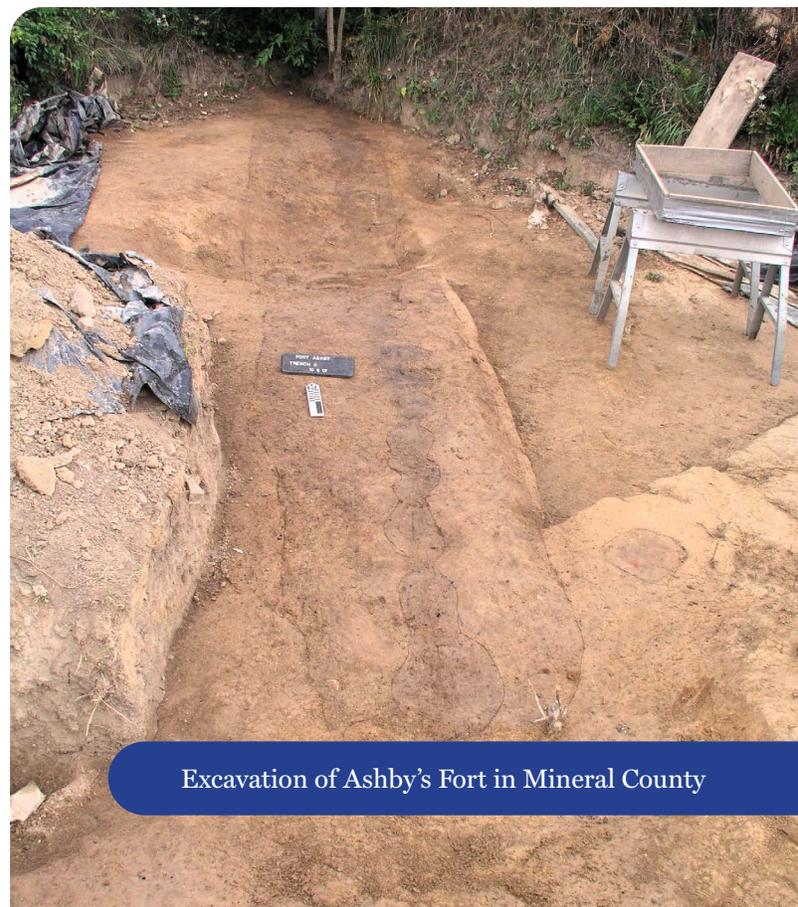
This research has brought clarity to some of West Virginia's best-known frontier landmarks and significantly revised long-held assumptions about others. In several cases, the McBrides have confirmed the precise locations of forts believed lost. In others, their work has shown that long-accepted interpretations were incorrect. Their archaeological work has demonstrated, for example, that defensive features were laid out differently than previously thought and that certain structures were more (or less) elaborate than local tradition had described.

At Ashby's Fort in Mineral County, for instance, a log building long associated with George Washington and the French and Indian War was believed to be part of a 1755 fort. Archaeology revealed, however, that the original fort lay elsewhere on the property. A second fortification, a Revolutionary-era stockade, which extended beneath the log structure, indicated that the existing building was constructed even later. Dendrochronology (log-dating) has confirmed a construction date of 1783 for the log building, revising the property's historical narrative.

Similarly, archaeological excavations at Donnally's Fort in Greenbrier County clarified its appearance. War pension files helped date the fort's occupation but offered no details about its form. Archaeology revealed a rectangular stockade that intersected and enclosed a large, two-story double log house. It was likely fortified during Lord Dunmore's War (1774) and later used for militia defense throughout the Revolutionary period.

Warwick's Fort in Pocahontas County, the principal militia-built stronghold for the Upper Greenbrier River Valley, has also benefited from Humanities Council support. Archaeological work has refined its layout, construction, and strategic role as a place of refuge for widely dispersed homesteads during the 1770s, embedding it more firmly in the region's frontier narrative.

Continued support from the Humanities Council and other sources has enabled the McBrides to revisit related sites over multiple years, allowing patterns to emerge across the frontier landscape. These comparisons have revealed consistencies in fort construction, variations and similarities in defensive strategy, and evidence of trade and domestic life that illustrate the complexities



Excavation of Ashby's Fort in Mineral County



Kim and Stephen McBride at Ashby's Fort
 Photo by Martin Townsend

of frontier communities. The resulting understanding connects sites such as Ashby's Fort in the Potomac Highlands with more southern sites like Donnally's Fort or Arbuckle's Fort in Greenbrier County, broadening our view of frontier defense across western Virginia.

Humanities Council grants have also supported programs that bring this research to communities through museum exhibits, interpretive booklets, public lectures, and community archaeology days. Additionally, the McBrides' work has fed *e-WV's* entries and resulted in the online encyclopedia's

eighth-grade lesson plan based solely on their study of how forts were designed and defended, and how they provided shelter for militia and pioneers.

Ultimately, the McBrides' work on West Virginia's frontier forts has done more than fill gaps in the historical record. It has restored missing chapters of West Virginia's early history and reconnected residents with the places where their communities began. ~

Erin Riebe is the grants administrator for the West Virginia Humanities Council.



Old-time clawhammer banjo apprentice Edwin McCoy (Monroe County) performs with mentor Tim Bing (Cabell County)

West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Showcases

By Dr. Jennie S. Williams

We celebrated another successful year of our West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship program in November with two spectacular showcases! In 2024-25, the program supported 10 folklife apprenticeship pairs, the most of any single round. We're incredibly proud of this program's growth and impressed at the multitude of traditional creative practices it has platformed.

Please enjoy these photos from our showcases hosted at the West Virginia Humanities Council's historic MacFarland-Hubbard House in

Charleston and at Arthurdale Heritage, Inc., in Preston County. All photos were taken by former WVHC staffer Michael Keller.

We also invited Appalachian filmmakers Rebecca Branson-Jones of North Carolina and Clara Haizlett of West Virginia to document our showcases, which included short interviews with the apprenticeship pairs. Keep an eye on our social media and wvfolklife.org for the finished videos in the coming weeks.

Dr. Jennie S. Williams is the state folklorist with the West Virginia Humanities Council.



This program is made possible with funding support from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, Mid Atlantic Arts' Central Appalachia Living Traditions program, and private donations. Please consider donating to the West Virginia Humanities Council to support the West Virginia Folklife Program. Learn more at wvfolklife.org.



Appalachian storyteller Bill Hairston (Kanawha County) shares stories alongside his apprentice Aristotle Jones (Monongalia County)



State Folklorist Dr. Jennie S. Williams welcomes attendees to the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship showcase at the West Virginia Humanities Council in Charleston



Nancy Nelson with her nephew and candy-making apprentice KD Jones



Apprentice Annick Odom (right) talks about her square dance calling apprenticeship with mentor Taylor Runner (both of Monongalia County)



Singer Ginny Hawker of Randolph County with her Primitive Baptist hymn singing apprentice Mary Linscheid (Monongalia County)



Apprentice Katie McCoy performs “Halfway Pond” on a fiddle she repaired using skills she learned from her late mentor Richard Eddy; the showcase at Arthurdale was dedicated to Richard’s memory

Judy Van Gundy (left) and her apprentice Andrea Brandon-Hennig (both of Randolph County) demonstrate how to make white oak baskets





State Folklorist Dr. Jennie Williams and Arthurdale Heritage's Appalachian Programs Coordinator Mary Linscheid (with microphone) welcome attendees to the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Showcase at Arthurdale



Urban farmer and gardener Dural Miller (left), who mentored apprentice Linesha Frith (both of Kanawha County), discusses his experiences with Appalachian storytellers Bill Hairston (center) and Aristotle Jones (right)



Old-time clawhammer banjo player Tim Bing (center) performs alongside apprentice Edwin McCoy (right); they are joined on guitar by Edwin's dad, Chance McCoy



Taylor Runner calls the square dance at Arthurdale Heritage



Fiber arts apprentice Nevada Tribble (Randolph County) demonstrates weaving for attendees

A live band of mostly folklife apprenticeship participants performs for the square dance; left to right: Ben Townsend (banjo), Bodhi Gibbons-Guinn (fiddle), Mason Atha (bass), Mary Linscheid (guitar), and Katie McCoy (fiddle)



Fiddle repair apprentice Katie McCoy (Monongalia County) demonstrates techniques she learned during her apprenticeship with Richard Eddy before his passing in July 2025



West Virginia Humanities Council Programs

Stay tuned for *America 250* announcements as we approach the warmer months. In the meantime, two of our current *History Alive!* characters offer great windows into the nation's founding.



Abigail Adams was more than just the wife of second U.S. President John Adams—a man deeply involved in American legal and governing principles from the 1770 Boston Massacre onward. She was his consultant and confidant, an advocate for women's rights, an opponent of slavery, and the first First Lady to reside in the White House. Veteran *History Alive!* performer JoAnn Peterson brings her vividly to life.



Though less famous than his mother, Mary Draper Ingles (the subject of James Alexander Thom's bestselling novel *Follow the River*), Thomas Ingles was captured by the Shawnee alongside her in the same 1755 raid. He was not exchanged back to his family until age 17, and upon his return was educated in the same circles as Thomas Jefferson. As a frontiersman, veteran of the 1774 Point Pleasant campaign, and Virginia militia officer during the Revolution, Ingles offers fascinating perspectives into the period—especially as portrayed by longtime performer Doug Wood.

As always, check our online [events calendar](#) for upcoming *History Alive!* presentations, or contact Program Officer Kyle Warmack if your organization is interested in hosting a living history program.

Visit wvhumanities.org/programs, email warmack@wvhumanities.org, or call 304-346-8500 for booking information.

Kyle Warmack is the program officer for the West Virginia Humanities Council.

Program Note

Save the dates for the 2026 Little Lectures series! Our popular Sunday afternoon events will be held at the MacFarland-Hubbard House on March 29, April 26, May 24, and June 21. Watch for speaker announcements for these upcoming programs soon!

THE BROAD SIDE

Three Generals WALK INTO A TAVERN

By Stan Bumgardner

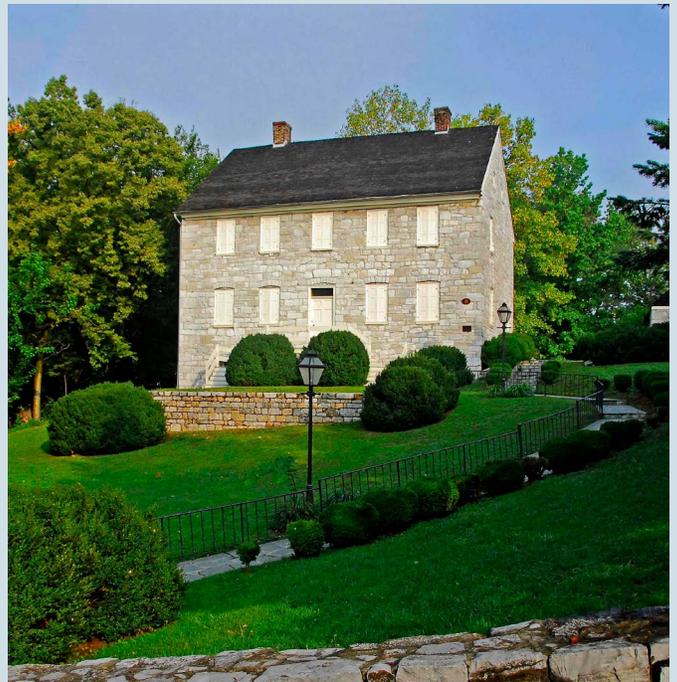
Untold numbers of brave American patriots from present-day West Virginia served in the Continental Army. The Bee Line March sent some of the first troops from outside New England to fight for freedom.

The stories that follow here, however, are not about celebrated volunteers. Instead, they concern three western Virginians who lived only about 20 miles apart in what's now West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle. Their names rarely appear in West Virginia Studies textbooks because they left the army in disgrace.

Adam Stephen (1721-1791)

The first to fall was Scottish-born Adam Stephen. In October 1777, during the Battle of Germantown outside Philadelphia, some of Stephen's troops mistakenly opened fire on their fellow Americans rather than on the British. At the time, Stephen was alleged to have been—as the Brits would say—*in his cups*. At his court martial, the physician-turned-soldier was dismissed from the army for “inattention, or want of judgement; and that he has been frequently intoxicated since in the service.”

Germantown wasn't Stephen's first battle, nor was it his first encounter with George Washington. In fact, they stood side by side at Fort Necessity in 1754, when Washington—acting on behalf of the crown—helped England stumble into the French and Indian War. During that war, Washington trusted Stephen with important frontier assignments, but all was not positive between the two. Both had speculated in



The Adam Stephen House in Martinsburg
Photo by Steve Shaluta

Ohio Valley lands—sometimes the same lands, which naturally bred tension. They also disagreed over local politics. Still, Washington knew that, in wartime, a good commander was harder to find than good acreage or a seat in the House of Burgesses.

During the Revolutionary War, Stephen's 4th Virginia Regiment reached the field just in time for Washington's crucial victory at Trenton and then again at Princeton in the days after Christmas 1776. Germantown, however, proved decisive for the wrong reasons. In the fog of war and whiskey, Major General Stephen showed himself to be neither model nor modern nor gentlemanly. His behavior there ended what might otherwise have been the crowning moment of an impressive military career.

On a brighter note, after his departure from the army, Stephen returned home and laid out lots on 130 acres that became the town of Martinsburg. His house still stands today as a museum at 309 East John Street.

Charles Lee (1732-1782)

Next to go was Charles Lee, a career British soldier who had been wounded at Fort Ticonderoga (1758), fought under British General John Burgoyne in Portugal (1762), and even held a high-ranking position in the Polish army during the Russo-Turkish War (1769-70). When that conflict ended, he returned to America, settled in what's now Jefferson County, built his estate Prato Rio, and became an ardent patriot.

Early in the Revolution, Lee was considered second only to Washington in command—he, indeed, was more professionally trained. His biggest flaw was that he desperately yearned for his boss' job, and some colleagues and politicians believed he deserved it. The early years of the war had not gone well for Washington; he was commanding undisciplined, poorly supplied troops against the world's strongest army. Aside from Trenton and Princeton, he had little to show. Rumors of replacing him were constant, and Lee was often named as his potential successor.

Lee even started making his own case for the post in surreptitious letters to congressmen. Many of his peers, some of them politically powerful, believed Lee should lead the army. But then, their once-and-future king of America was captured by the British in a tavern.

During his 15 months as a prisoner, Lee drafted a "plan of operations" for his captors to defeat the Americans—a document not discovered until 1857. After a prisoner exchange, Lee returned to the Continental Army only to cause more damage in the field than he had on paper. At the crucial Battle of Monmouth (1778), Lee led a chaotic retreat that nearly cost Washington the day. Washington, already wary of Lee, had kept him on out of respect for his experience, but Monmouth was a disastrous miscalculation. Lee was court-martialed for insubordination and suspended from the army.

He spent time at Prato Rio (privately owned today) but also drifted from boarding house to boarding house in Philadelphia, firing off crabby letters to Congress until he was finally booted from the army for good. Of the three dismissed generals who fell from grace, Lee's story is perhaps the best known today, not from textbooks but thanks to fictionalized portrayals of him in everything from the musical *Hamilton* to the video game *Assassin's Creed III*.



Charles Lee

Horatio Gates (about 1728-1806)

The last to go was British-born Horatio Gates, who had begun building his handsome Traveller's Rest (also privately owned today) in what was then Berkeley County, now Jefferson, in 1773. After his widely celebrated victory at Saratoga in 1777—actually two hard-fought battles in upstate New York meant to sever New England from the rest of the colonies—Gates was a rising star. Saratoga brought France into the war on the U.S. side, a turning point that ultimately led to Britain's defeat.

Lost in the tidy version of that battle's history are the heroics of Benedict Arnold, who, at Bemis Heights, charged forward on a broken leg and turned the battle. Arnold would soon go down in history as the Great American Traitor, while Gates seemed destined to become the young nation's brightest military hero—perhaps even Washington's successor.

Then came the British invasion of the South.

In 1780, as British forces under Lord Cornwallis swept through the Carolinas, Congress rewarded Gates for Saratoga by naming him commander of all southern Continental forces. At Camden, South Carolina, he attempted to halt the British advance. The result was a rout. Gates fled the field and rode with remarkable speed, reaching Charlotte, North Carolina—some 60-odd miles away—well ahead of what remained of his army. Congress swiftly replaced him with the far



Portrait of Horatio Gates by Gilbert Stuart

more capable Nathanael Greene. Fortunately for American independence, Cornwallis was eventually stopped at Yorktown in 1781 by Washington, with indispensable help from the French. The following year, Gates was reinstated in the army but played no meaningful role. His reputation—already damaged by the Camden retreat and also for conspiring to usurp Washington's role—never recovered.

All of this leads to an irresistible question: When these three old soldiers returned to the Eastern Panhandle, did they ever meet up and talk? Stephen was said to complain constantly about Washington's treatment of him. Gates and Lee—who didn't have long to live—had reasons of their own to be bitter. A local legend claims that on at least one occasion, the three gathered in a tavern and raised their glasses in a sarcastic toast to Washington for sacking them all.

Did it really happen? Or is it just a fantastic story this author heard in, where else, a tavern in the Eastern Panhandle? Like so much of history, there's a lot more we don't know about than we do. ~

Stan Bumgardner is the e-WV editor for the West Virginia Humanities Council.



Battle of Camden
Engraving from a painting by Alonzo Chappel

Become a GEM—Give Every Month

By Katie Morris

Join our monthly giving circle and help sustain the humanities across West Virginia. As a thank you, you'll receive a limited-edition West Virginia Cryptid pin, designed exclusively for Council supporters by artist Liz Pavlovic. By giving every month, you provide steady support for programs that connect, educate, and inspire West Virginians statewide.

"I give monthly to the West Virginia Humanities Council because I believe you should pay into things that you care about, and there is nothing more important to me than West Virginia's culture and traditions."

—Ireland Butler, Charleston



Ireland has been a GEM since 2020. She's pictured here with her original creations that combine two loves: quilting and cryptids.

Katie Morris is the development director for the West Virginia Humanities Council.

Leave a Legacy

Legacy gifts reflect your values and carry forward the work of the Humanities Council. If you believe in the power of the humanities, consider talking with your attorney or financial advisor to see how a planned gift can make a difference.

Your support today strengthens the humanities for future generations. Here are just a few programs Council donors supported in 2025:

- Grafton County high school students researching, writing biographies, and honoring the lives of military heroes through the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project
- A series of Little Lectures by Appalachian scholars
- Viet Thanh Nguyen and his "Voices of American 'Others'" at the annual McCreight Lecture in the Humanities
- Ten Folklife Apprenticeship pairs carrying living traditions forward
- Hundreds of thousands exploring West Virginia through *e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia* online

Contribute online at bit.ly/donatewvhc
or by mail at 1310 Kanawha Blvd E
Charleston, WV 25301



View our full Donor List at
wvhumanities.org/donate/donor-list

Best of Luck to Vanessa Peña!

We congratulate AmeriCorps member Vanessa Peña for concluding three years with the West Virginia Humanities Council. Vanessa joined the Council in December 2022, and has worked closely with State Folklorist Jennie Williams and the West Virginia Folklife Program. Her primary role focused on archival preparation, including transcribing and organizing interviews Jennie conducted with traditional artists from across the Mountain State.

Vanessa’s creative skills were put to good use, too. She designed event programs and zines promoting our Folklife Apprenticeship Program, and helped with apprenticeship showcases.

Beyond her folklife work, Vanessa supported Council staff in many ways—from leading historic house tours to decorating for open house events. She provided administrative support and assistance with the Council’s 50th anniversary activities in 2024. Reflecting on her experience, Vanessa says, “Serving as an AmeriCorps Member at the West Virginia Humanities Council has been a rewarding and transformative experience. I really couldn’t ask to be surrounded by better people doing meaningful work for the state I’ve grown up in.”



“Serving as an AmeriCorps Member at the West Virginia Humanities Council has been a rewarding and transformative experience. I really couldn’t ask to be surrounded by better people doing meaningful work for the state I’ve grown up in.”

We will truly miss Vanessa! We are deeply grateful for her good work and extend our thanks to Preservation Alliance of West Virginia for pairing her with the Humanities Council.

Photo courtesy of Vanessa Peña

*View our 2025 Annual Report:
wvhumanities.org/about/2025-annual-report/*

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The West Virginia Humanities Council is sustained by you—people who believe the work we do is important. Your generosity keeps our work alive and protects the traditions, voices, and memories that define who we are as West Virginians.

As the official state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, we support and deliver public humanities programs statewide through grants and original programs. **Recent reductions in federal funding make your support more essential than ever.** As we work to restore federal funds, your generosity ensures humanities programs continue to reach all 55 West Virginia counties.

Your support sustains the Humanities Council and helps us share West Virginia's stories, traditions, and culture through programs such as West Virginia Folklife, Little Lectures, our annual McCreight Lecture, *History Alive!*, and *e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia* online.

Thank you for standing with us and supporting the humanities in West Virginia.

Together, we can keep our stories and traditions alive.

If our work resonates with you, contribute online at bit.ly/donatewvhc or by mail at 1310 Kanawha Blvd E, Charleston, WV 25301.



For questions or to learn about more ways to give, contact Katie Morris, Director of Development, at morris@wvhumanities.org or 304-346-8500.