



WEST VIRGINIA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

June 9, 2026

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HUMANITIES COUNCIL RELEASES SUMMER ISSUE OF *PEOPLE & MOUNTAINS*

Charleston—The West Virginia Humanities Council has released the summer 2026 edition of its digital magazine, *People & Mountains*. This issue profiles folklorist Gerald Milnes, the Robert Higgins House in Moorefield and history-related board games. The magazine can be accessed from the Council's website: wvhumanities.org.

Gerald “Gerry” Milnes is a folklorist, musician, filmmaker, author and teacher from Elkins. In April, the National Endowment for the Arts named him as a 2026 National Heritage Fellow and this year's sole recipient of the prestigious Bess Lomax Hawes National Heritage Fellowship. This national honor recognizes his lifetime dedication to preserving and promoting Appalachian and West Virginia folk traditions. He is one of only seven West Virginians ever to receive the honor.

An article in *People & Mountains* examines Milnes' 50 years as West Virginia's preeminent folklorist through his work documenting traditional music, dance, folk medicine, farming practices, log construction and other customs. Before retiring as Folk Art Coordinator at the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins, Milnes created a vast multimedia archive while also producing influential books, documentaries and record albums. His work has inspired generations of artists, musicians and folklorists.

The city of Moorefield is restoring the historic Robert Higgins House as a visitor center and local history museum. An article in the new *People & Mountains* highlights the house's architectural history and Higgins' role in America's founding. Higgins experienced frontier conflict from a young age and later served in the Revolutionary War, eventually leading a company selected by George Washington. Captured by the British in 1777, he endured more than three years as a

prisoner of war before returning to the South Branch Valley. In 1786, he built the modest log house in Moorefield that now bears his name.

The summer issue of *People & Mountains* also takes a look at the increasing popularity of historical board games. A growing but still limited number involve references to West Virginia. Some games currently in the works will focus on Mountain State-specific topics, such as a pending game about the Mine Wars.

People & Mountains is published by the West Virginia Humanities Council three times a year. It profiles the Council's work and developments in the humanities statewide. It is available for free on the Council's website: wvhumanities.org.

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The West Virginia Humanities Council, an independent nonpartisan nonprofit institution, is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). With the support of the NEH, the State of West Virginia, the West Virginia Department of Tourism and contributions from the private sector, the Council supports a vigorous program in the humanities statewide in West Virginia. This year, the Council is celebrating 25 years of its [Little Lectures](#) program, the 20th anniversary of its [West Virginia Encyclopedia](#) and the 10th anniversary of its [West Virginia Folklife Program](#).