Goldenseal

West Virginia Traditional Life

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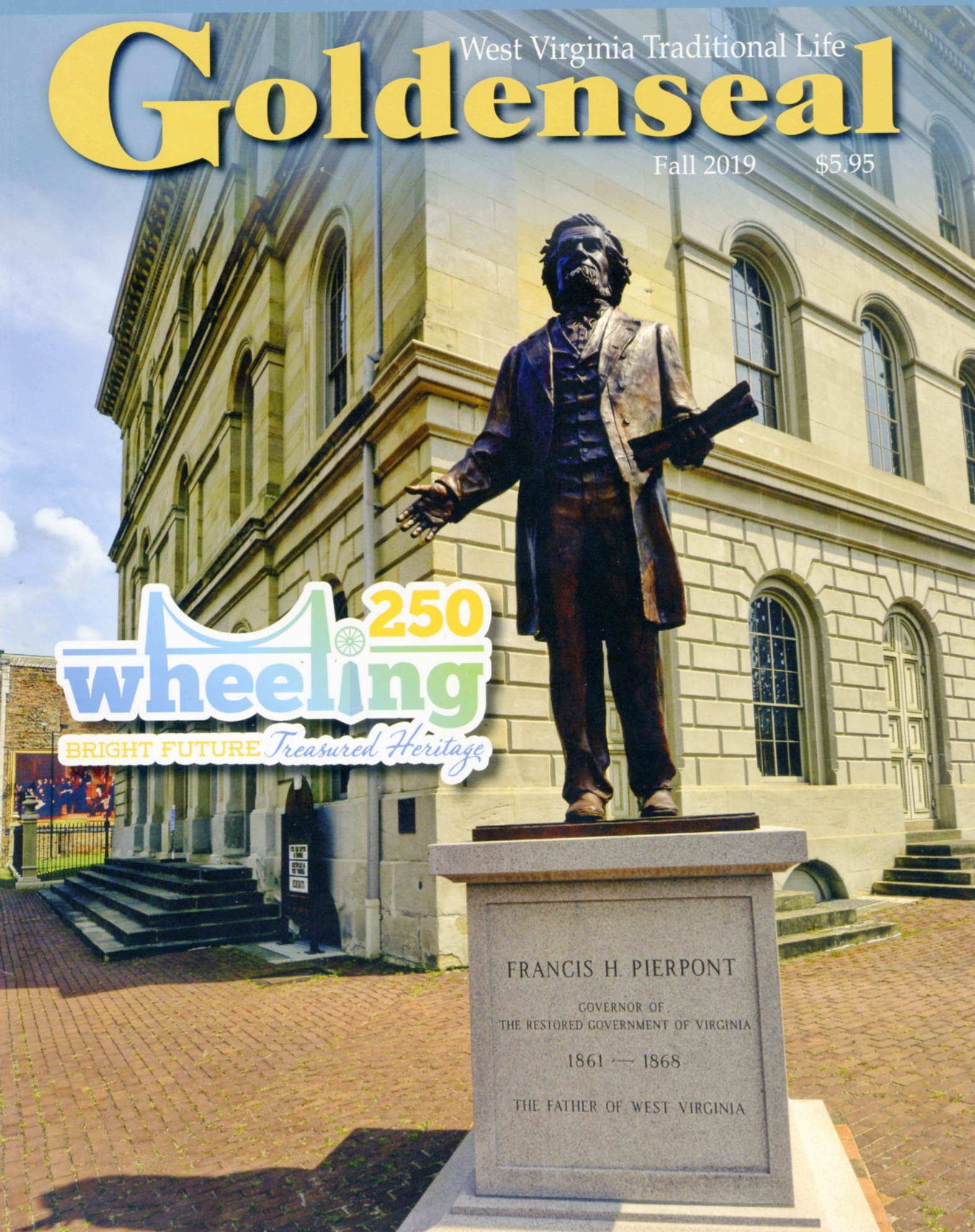

The 170-year-old Wheeling Suspension Bridge, closed temporarily due to a tour bus accident during the summer, stands as a testament to engineering and historic preservation. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

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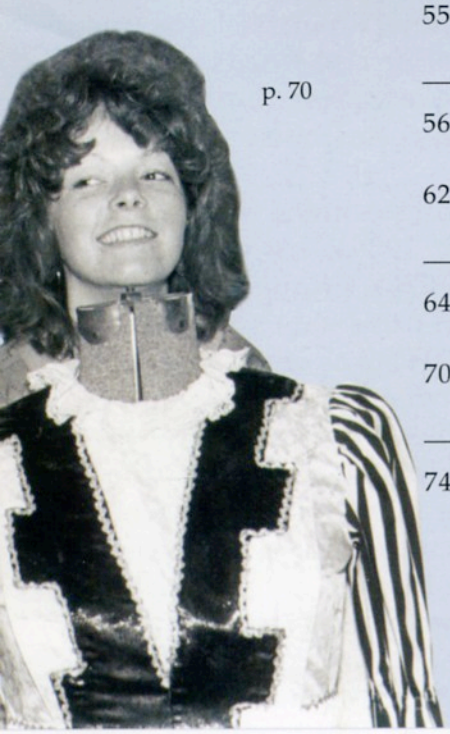
Correction

Page 71 of our Summer issue mentioned a Civil War symposium at the West Virginia State Archives. Note that event will be held September 28, not 29, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. For more info, call 304-558-0220 or e-mail Charles.C.Ocheltree@wv.gov.



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On the cover: A statue of Francis Pierpont, often called the "Father of West Virginia," stands watch at West Virginia Independence Hall in Wheeling. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

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From the Editor

GOLDENSEAL is about the history, places, things, and character (especially the characters) that make West Virginia unique. There are few places in our state where these elements merge so perfectly as they do in Wheeling. When West Virginia entered the Union in 1863, Wheeling was arguably our only real city, making it a natural hub for the statehood movement.

On the eve of the Civil War, Wheeling, Virginia, was the 63rd largest city in the country—with more residents than Pennsylvania's capital of Harrisburg and 50% more than Atlanta. Driven by a thriving manufacturing sector, Wheeling was the fourth-largest city in the nation's seventh-largest state (behind only Richmond, Petersburg, and Norfolk). By the end of the war, Wheeling would become the first capital of our new state. And it's safe to say that without leaders from Wheeling and other northwestern parts of the state, West Virginia wouldn't have come into existence; much of the rest of the state was decidedly pro-southern.

In 1860, Wheeling was nearly 10 times larger than our next capital, Charleston, and Huntington hadn't even been founded yet. Wheeling was a precursor for things to come in West Virginia, which was mostly of German and Scots-Irish stock until the arrival of railroads and King Coal after the war. By the 1850s, Wheeling was already a terminus on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad—our nation's first common carrier—and had ready access to the Ohio River and National Road, basically our nation's first interstate. As a transportation crossroads, the city attracted immigrants from around the world, blending together nationalities, languages, religions, and customs. Wheeling seemed destined for greatness.

However, as with other manufacturing centers, Wheeling's economy was devastated in the late 1900s. Its population dropped to levels not seen since the 1870s. Former mills and elegant houses were left in shambles. Even our state's birthplace, West Virginia Independence Hall (WVIH), was crumbling into extinction. And then something spectacular happened. A group of tenacious women—led at first by Beverly Fluty—saw the beauty and economic potential of what looked like 19th-century ruins. By saving and restoring these architectural marvels, they helped keep Wheeling's distinct culture alive. Businesses are moving into once-ramshackle factories and shops. Various ethnic groups are hosting dazzling festivals, featuring their native foods, costumes, music, and dances. Thanks to this spirit of heritage and culture, Wheeling is experiencing a revival.

This issue of GOLDENSEAL is dedicated to Wheeling's 250th birthday. Upfront, I want to apologize to the many people and places we've omitted from these 80 pages. As with other

Kate Quinn

I owe a big note of apology regarding one of our loyal authors and readers—and one of those folks who worked so hard to preserve Wheeling's memories. In our Winter 2018 issue, we published a GOLDENSEAL Good-Bye to Kate Quinn, who passed away last year. With much embarrassment, I later learned I'd run the wrong photo. So, with all apologies to Kate, her family, and friends, here are a couple photos of Kate provided by Seán Duffy of the Ohio County Public Library. —ed.

special editions, we've tried to tell the story through what we like to call *everyday people*. While some Wheelingites—such as Dr. Simon Hullihen, the "Father of Oral Surgery"—helped change the world, others dedicatedly went to work every day and raised families. It seems like I write these words a lot, but they're at the core of what makes us all—including those who've moved away and those who've moved here—West Virginians.

I want to thank everyone who helped with this issue. First, Jay Frey, who's led the 250th celebration, has been very supportive. Second, many people have helped us track down photos. There are too many to name, but I would specifically like to thank Linda Comins, Seán Duffy, Jon-Erik Gilot, Deborah Jones, and Aaron Parsons. Third, I'm so appreciative of all our authors and their subjects. You'll be reading their stories soon enough, so I won't list them here; however, no issue of GOLDENSEAL ever comes together without a lot of hard work from others.

Margaret Brennan and our editor, History Day at the state capitol, 2019. Photo by Joseph Aluise.

Finally, I want to send a special "thank you" to a once-in-a-lifetime person I've had the pleasure of knowing for nearly three decades. I've worked on various projects in Wheeling over the years, and every time, my first call goes to Margaret Brennan for advice.

A Wheeling history expert and a complete delight, Margaret is also very scrappy. She clearly sees the connection between who we are today and where we've come from. To her, every historic site is a like a treasured shrine that documents one more piece of our collective history, like the rings in a tree. Once (and only once), I had the misfortune of being on the wrong side of something about which she cared deeply. She was entirely professional (and entirely right) and quickly changed my opinion. In that moment, she showed me by example how you can lock horns with someone over something you care deeply about while still paying them total respect. Through that incident and my many years of friendship with her, I've learned that all history is worth fighting for. Margaret is my Don Quixote of historic preservation. She often loses more battles than she wins but always exerts that same dynamic energy and hope as the first day I met her in 1991. Over nearly 30 years, friends and colleagues come and go, but Margaret has always been there—and always will be. Thank you, Margaret!

Stan Bumgardner

Carol Dougherty of Our Lady of Lebanon

Text and photos by Emily Hilliard

I meet Carol Dougherty at the Wheeling Centre Market, in front of an informational panel about the history of this section of the city. She's dressed smartly, with a silk scarf draped over her shoulders, and sporting a brown bouffant hairdo; she seems much younger than her 78 years. She wanted to meet at the market to give me a walking tour of the surrounding neighborhood, which was home to Lebanese and other immigrant communities when she was growing up. She points out the former locations of Minehm Kalil's store, Sunshine Grocery, Mr. Ghaphery's grocery store, Maroon's Clothing Store, Swan Café, and her grandfather's Turkish coffee house and confectionery. "Wheeling at that time was the perfect model for an enclave city. . . . You could almost tell by the person's address what nationality they were. Centre Wheeling was mainly German, Lebanese, Syrian, and Greek," she says.

Carol points to a little girl in a black-and-white photo on the informational panel—it's her, with the rest of her second-grade class at Our Lady of Lebanon school in 1946. The school is no longer in operation, but Carol remains an active member of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church. She leads me up the hill to the church, which remains a focal point of Wheeling's Lebanese community. The church building, built in 1922, was destroyed by fire in 1932. A painting of Our Lady of Lebanon, which hung over a side altar, emerged from the fire unmarred; it's now viewed as a miraculous painting by the community.

"The flames did not reach it, even the water hoses couldn't reach it. The water turned sideways when they aimed the hose at it," she says. "Now I checked with the fireman who was on duty that night—he says it's true. She fell from up there, all the way down—not a scratch on her." A year later, the parish rebuilt the church at the same location, with the painting now given a revered position over the main altar.

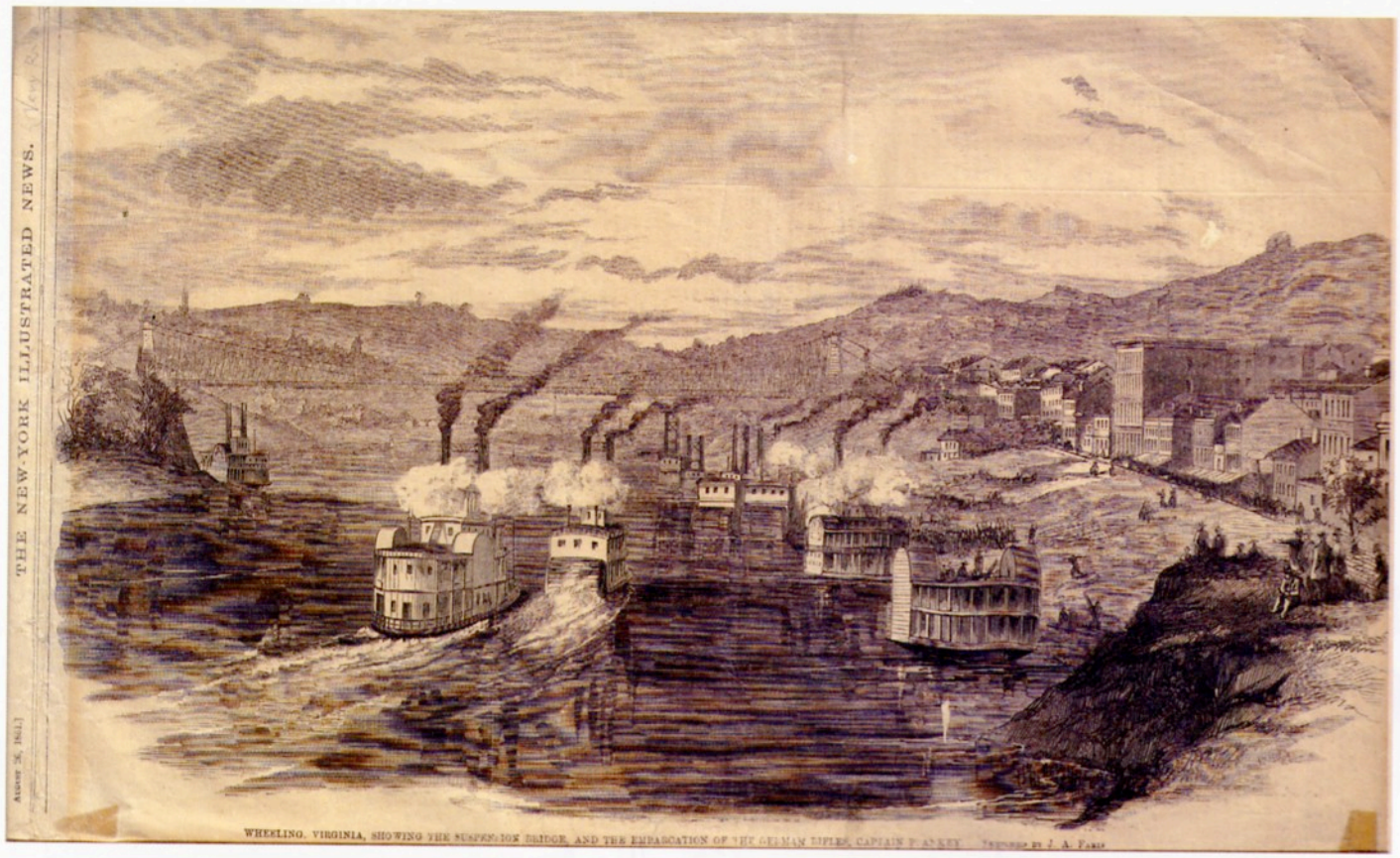
Carol herself is half German and English, and half Lebanese, but was raised by her Lebanese grandmother. "So I have a lot of the Lebanese traits. And the cooking skills," she says. This is clear. Carol describes Lebanese food in great detail, giving step by step instructions for *kibbe*—a meatloaf of bulgur, lamb, onion, and spices, and Lebanon's national dish; *labneh*—a strained yogurt; *acini de pepe*—a chicken soup with dumplings; and *khibaz mahrooh*—a mountain bread. "Lebanese food is labor intensive. I'll tell you that right now. Everything is fresh, everything takes a lot of time to make," she says, remembering her grandmother making khibaz with 25 pounds of flour at a time. Today, the women of the church share the labor by gathering together to make cookies; meat and spinach pies; *saj* bread with *za'atar*, a blend of savory herbs and spices; and *man'oushe*, a sweet bread for bake sales, holidays, and other events.

One such event is the annual Mahrajan Festival, a celebration of Lebanese music, dance, and culture, held in Oglebay Park for the last 86 years. Our Lady of Lebanon parishioners founded the festival in August 1933 as a fundraiser to rebuild the church after the fire, and the tradition stuck. At the festivals, Carol's grandmother played the *darbakke*, a type of hand drum, and her great uncle played the *mixwiz*, a reed instrument, to accompany the *dubke*, a traditional Lebanese dance.

"My Aunt Mamie, she was the supreme dancer. At the festivals, people used to scream for her to get up and dance." Though it's not quite the raucous event it once was, the festival still serves as a homecoming for members of the Wheeling Lebanese community who have moved away. Parishioners from the Lebanese church in Pittsburgh come to help bake bread and play music. Carole herself teaches a dubke class for younger children and rallies others to join in too. "I'll get out there dancing the dubke!" she promises, laughing. Though the parish population has declined in recent years, as the older generation has passed on and others have moved away for work, there's still an active population of about 100 people. Carol is hopeful that the church and festival will continue to thrive, "We're working feverishly to keep it going. I'd hate to lose this. . . . I always did love the culture."

The church's elaborate altar, featuring the Our Lady of Lebanon painting, which miraculously survived the 1932 fire.

EMILY HILLIARD is West Virginia's first official state folklorist with the West Virginia Folklife Program at the West Virginia Humanities Council. She writes a regular column for GOLDENSEAL. Learn more about the West Virginia Folklife Program at wvfolklife.org.



The Wheeling wharf was always busy but never more so than during the Civil War. Here, Captain Edward Plankey loads his company of Virginia state troops, known as the German Rifles, onto steamboats near the beginning of the war. The German Rifles later became part of the 6th West Virginia Cavalry. Sketch by Wheeling artist Joseph Faris, from *The New York Illustrated News*, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives (WVSA).

That Wheeling Feeling!

By Rebekah Karelis

This year marks Wheeling's 250th anniversary since its founding—this means 250 years of rich history as one of the most remarkable places in West Virginia. How can you not be curious about a place known as "Nail City" or what it might mean for a visitor to get that "Wheeling Feeling?" Though the Wheeling of today is a smaller version of the much larger city it once was, it's now a wellspring of history for those who linger a moment and scratch the surface. While the city is enjoying a renaissance—with new construction downtown for the first time in decades and an increasingly active population ensuring that the city thrives as a growing urban center—it's indeed worth considering Wheeling's role in our state's history.

Wheeling, as a city, began when it was claimed in 1769 by the Zane brothers: Ebenezer, Silas, and Jonathan. Prior to their arrival, the area was visited by the likes of explorer Céloron de Blainville, who claimed the land along the Ohio River for France by burying a lead plate at the mouth of Wheeling Creek; surveyors such as Christopher Gist and half-brothers George and Lawrence Washington, who mapped the Ohio Valley; and Indian tribes, which still lived nearby.

When the Zanes arrived, the area at the mouth of Wheeling Creek already had a name: *weelunk*, which meant "place of the skull." From that name of dubious origin, it morphed into "Wheeling." The Zanes built a crude log cabin and marked their claim by notching trees along their property boundary. Ebenezer and Jonathan left Silas to winter alone along the Ohio while they returned home to present Hardy County and moved their families and friends to Wheeling.

The new settlement wasn't easy due to conflicts with Indians hunting in the area. Fort Henry was quickly constructed on a bluff high above the Ohio River, not far from where the Capitol Theatre now stands on Main Street. It was here that settlers withstood attacks, most notably in 1777 and 1782 by combined Indian and British forces during the Revolutionary War. The 1782 fight made a hero of another Zane. With Fort Henry surrounded in a siege, the Zanes' sister Betty made a mad dash from the family cabin to the fort, carrying much-needed gunpowder in her apron and shouting, according to her son, "You need all the men you have to defend the fort. If I am to go and am killed . . . there is nobody to cry for me. I'll go if you will let me." This act of bravery ensured her place in history books as the embodiment of the courageous female spirit on the frontier.

In 1796, after all threat of Indian hostilities was gone and Fort Henry had fallen into disrepair, Frenchman Victor Collot reported on the scene he found: "The little town of Wheeling . . . contains from twelve to fifteen habitations, all of which are wood. . . . The town has two small stores, but scantily furnished; travelers, nevertheless, may obtain some refreshments there; but they are excessively dear, since there is neither plenty nor concurrence."

A Transportation Hub

Wheeling was strategically located. In the early days before dams deepened the Ohio's waters, the city had the northernmost navigable section of river south of Pittsburgh. Because of this and the influence of Moses and Lydia Shepherd, close friends of U.S. Speaker of the House Henry Clay, the National Road was completed to Wheeling in 1818. It crossed the great river via a ferry business that was robust until the Wheeling Suspension Bridge was built in 1849. Just after that, in 1853, the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad arrived in Wheeling. With this combination of river, road, and rail, the city quickly burgeoned with life, industry, and commerce.

Author Rebecca Harding Davis described 1830s Wheeling in her semi-autobiographical work *Bits of Gossip*, written near the end of her life:

> "The village in Virginia which was our home consisted of two sleepy streets lined with Lombardy poplars, creeping between a slow-moving river and silent, brooding hills. . . . Our village was built on the Ohio River, and was a halting place on this great national road, then the only avenue of traffic between the South and the North. Every morning two stage-coaches with prancing horses and shrill horns dashed down the sleeping streets to the wharf, full of passengers from the East, who hurried on board the steamboats bound for St. Louis or New Orleans. Huge vans often passed, laden with merchandise for the plantations or with bales of cotton for the Northern mills."

Like many other cities that were springboards to the western frontier, Wheeling was a "Gateway to the West" for much of the 1800s. The steamboats Davis mentioned were an important early industry. North Wheeling and the area along Wheeling Creek were home to many boatyards, lumber mills, and machine companies that spurred production of steamboats, which carried people and cargo to the rest of the country. The most notable steamboat constructed in Wheeling was the *Washington*, built by Captain Henry Shreve on

In 1882, Joseph Faris painted this depiction of Betty Zane's heroic dash from the family cabin to Fort Henry in 1782. This painting is now on display in the West Virginia State Museum.

Wheeling Creek in 1815. The next year, it was launched on its inaugural voyage. Shreve's revolutionary design became a prototype for future steamboats.

Wheeling Hits the National Spotlight

Many other Wheeling innovators distinguished themselves during this time. One such man was Marsh Mifflin, who, in 1831, started rolling stogie cigars in his Wheeling Island home and selling them from a basket on the river wharf. His Marsh Wheeling stogies were very inexpensive compared to others at the time and filled jars at local saloons [see Winter 1989]. Even more revolutionary was the Bloch Brothers Tobacco's advertising campaign during the 20th century. By painting the name and slogan of its product, Mail Pouch, on barns from coast to coast, the brand became a household name and easily the country's most recognized chewing tobacco product [see Winter 1994].

Wheeling was also well-known for its medical community. The city had some notable female doctors like Dr. Eliza Hughes, who, in the mid-1800s, became one of the first women from present West Virginia to receive an M.D. Also, Wheeling's Harriet Jones became the first licensed woman doctor in West Virginia history. She treated gynecological issues and opened a women's hospital in East Wheeling.

Then there was Dr. Simon Hullihen, known as the "Father of Oral Surgery." Dr. Hullihen was one of the first doctors to specialize in dentistry and surgery of the neck, head, and oral cavity. This was unheard of in the mid-1800s as dentistry was considered an unprofessional line of work and certainly not practiced by anyone with a medical degree! Between 1820 and 1845, Dr. Hullihen

The Stone Arch Bridge, which crosses Little Wheeling Creek in the Elm Grove area, was a key leg of the National Road leading into downtown Wheeling. Built in 1817, it's the oldest bridge in West Virginia. Photo by our editor.

performed more than 1,100 operations, treating cataracts, fixing harelips, and operating on cleft palates. He even rebuilt noses, lips, and jaws due to defects and accidents. He invented his own instruments, six of which are still used today in orthognathic surgery. When he died of typhoid fever in 1857 at the young age of 47, the city's residents came together to erect a tall, beautiful monument at his burial place in Mount Wood Cemetery, declaring him to be "so loved among them that they mourned his death as a public calamity" [see Winter 2017].

In 1850, Dr. Hullihen had partnered with the regional leader of the Catholic Church, Bishop Richard Whelan, to found Wheeling Hospital. Located on the B&O Railroad line, it became an important hospital during the Civil War, treating hundreds of wounded soldiers. The bishop brought in nuns—such as the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of the Visitation—who were instrumental in forming a girls' boarding school, Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy, which educated young women from 1848 until its closing in 2008 [see p. 40].

The Suspension Bridge

At the time of its construction, the Wheeling Suspension Bridge was the longest single-span bridge in the world (1,010 feet). It was authorized by the Virginia legislature in 1847 to be built between downtown Wheeling and Wheeling Island with the clause that it be high enough not to impede river navigation. The bridge, designed by Charles Ellet Jr., was completed on October 20, 1849. A local newspaper reported, "The day was beautiful, a brighter one never shone, and certainly never smiled on a scene more triumphant for American genius, skill and enterprise. The longest span ever projected for a bridge has thus proven successful and, we repeat, it is a triumph of which the people of Wheeling, and indeed of which those in all parts of the United States, may justly feel proud."

Not everyone was happy about the bridge. Pittsburgh city leaders complained that when the river was high, boats had to lower their stacks to clear the deck, making the journey north of Wheeling more difficult. Pittsburghers were so disjointed about it they sued all the

The Wheeling Suspension Bridge is shown here during a flood in 1852, two years before it was badly damaged in a storm. This is one of the oldest-known photos from present West Virginia. Courtesy of the Ohio County Public Library Archives, W. C. Brown Collection.

way to the U.S. Supreme Court—with 1,200 pages of testimony and 100 witnesses attesting to the bridge's shortcomings. The high court decided in Pittsburgh's favor and decreed that the bridge would need to be heightened or removed. Thankfully, Congress interceded and declared that the bridge was a lawfully constructed postal route and that there was no need to remove or alter it.

While Pittsburgh and the Supreme Court failed to bring down the bridge, Mother Nature nearly did. In 1854, a violent storm destroyed the deck and dislodged the bridge's wire cables. It was quickly put back into limited use and then substantially rebuilt by 1860. Other major renovations occurred in the late 1900s, and the 170-year-old bridge remains in use today.

The Birthplace of West Virginia

The bridge case and rebuild received great attention from the city's newest newspaper, the *Intelligencer*. Still in print today, the *Intelligencer* first hit the presses in 1852. Archibald Campbell and John McDermott acquired it in 1856, establishing it as the leading, and likely only, pro-Republican paper in Virginia. Campbell believed strongly in abolishing slavery and preserving the Union. He enthusiastically endorsed Abraham Lincoln in the 1860 election. In that election, the state of Virginia offered barely any support for Lincoln; significantly, nearly all his votes in the state came from the Northern Panhandle area, especially Wheeling.

When the Civil War began, with the help of the *Intelligencer,* Wheeling led the

Coupons for Bloch Brothers Mail Pouch Tobacco. Courtesy of the WVSA.

conversation about seceding from Virginia and forming a new state. In 1860, Wheeling was an urban center with 14,000 people, making it the fourth largest city in Virginia (after Richmond, Petersburg, and Norfolk) and 63rd largest in the nation. With robust industry and commercial trade, it was an official "inland port of entry" and relatively accessible thanks to river, road, and rail. So it was a natural meeting place for dissatisfied delegates from western Virginia to converge and debate the question of statehood.

The First Wheeling Convention, as it's known, met in May 1861 at Washington Hall at the corner of 12th and Market streets. Since the people of Virginia hadn't yet weighed in on secession, the convention adjourned. After Virginia voters officially approved secession, 56 delegates gathered again at Washington Hall on June 11 for the Second Wheeling Convention; two days later, they relocated to the U.S. Custom House (now known as West Virginia Independence Hall) and created the pro-Union Restored (or Reorganized) Government of Virginia, with Francis Pierpont as governor. This new state government, authorized by Congress and President Lincoln, approved the formation of West Virginia from the western part of Virginia [see p. 30].

Our first state capitol was established a few blocks away in the Linsly Institute building. In 1870, the capital was moved to Charleston but then returned to Wheeling in 1875. An 1877 referendum of state voters determined that Charleston should be the permanent capital, so Wheeling relinquished its title of "capital city" for the last time in 1885.

An Industrial Force

It was during the tumultuous time of the Civil War that Wheeling's Rebecca Harding Davis wrote her groundbreaking first work "Life in the Iron Mills." Published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Davis documented the conditions of working-class laborers in Wheeling. Her pioneering work in literary realism ensured her place in history alongside other greats of the time such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Louisa May Alcott. She began a correspondence romance with a fan of her work, L. Clarke Davis. She married him a few years later, relocating to his home in Philadelphia, but never forgot Wheeling. She continued to visit the town that was her muse throughout her life.

For the next 100 years, Wheeling continued to innovate, produce, and export many of the country's most sought-after goods. From tobacco to tile; steel pipe to calico; stogies to glass and pottery; and cut nails to canning jars, Wheeling produced an exceptional amount of goods that were shipped the world over. You can find Wheeling tiles in the subways of New

York City, Flaccus canning jars in the Midwest [see April-June 1981], Wheeling Corrugating steel in Canada, and LaBelle cut nails in the Caribbean.

Wheeling was well ahead of West Virginia in ushering in the Industrial Revolution—defined by the large machine-driven production of goods, moving away from small family-owned businesses that were more common prior to this. The industry sector put a high demand on its workforce. To produce these goods, Wheeling relied heavily on immigrant labor. The Scots-Irish, Irish, and English came in the first wave during the early 1800s; after that, Poles, Germans, Hungarians, Slovaks, Lebanese, Chinese, Ukrainians, Greeks, and Russians moved in to fill the work demand. Davis described the arrival of these immigrants:

> "Now and then a white-topped Conestoga wagon drawn by eight horses, each carrying a chime of bells, came through the streets, bearing an emigrant family to the West. The mother and children peeped out of the high front, and the father, carrying a gun, walked with his dog. These emigrants often were from Norway or Poland or Germany, and wore their national costumes, as European peasants still did then. They put on their velvet jackets and high caps when they came near the town, and went about begging, in order to save the little hoard of money which they had brought with them until they reached 'the Ohio,' as the whole West was then vaguely called."

As an early industrial city, Wheeling was also one of the first to unionize its labor force. Leading the way were typographers in 1857; the nailers, so important to the cut-nail industry, in 1860; and stogie makers in 1862. Wheeling also was home to Valentine Reuther, who helped organize brewery workers, and his son Walter, who'd become one of the best-known labor leaders in the world, serving as national president of the United Auto Workers from 1946 to 1970. Walter described learning about labor issues from his dad, "At my father's knee we learned the philosophy of trade unionism. We got the struggles, the hopes and the aspirations of working people every day."

The Bessemer process allowed companies like LaBelle Iron Works to convert pig iron into steel less expensively than with other methods. The new process, which required fewer skilled laborers, prompted nailers at LaBelle to go on strike in 1885-1886 in what's known as the "Great Nail Strike." From *Mine to Market* (1926), courtesy of the WVSA.

Decline and Revival

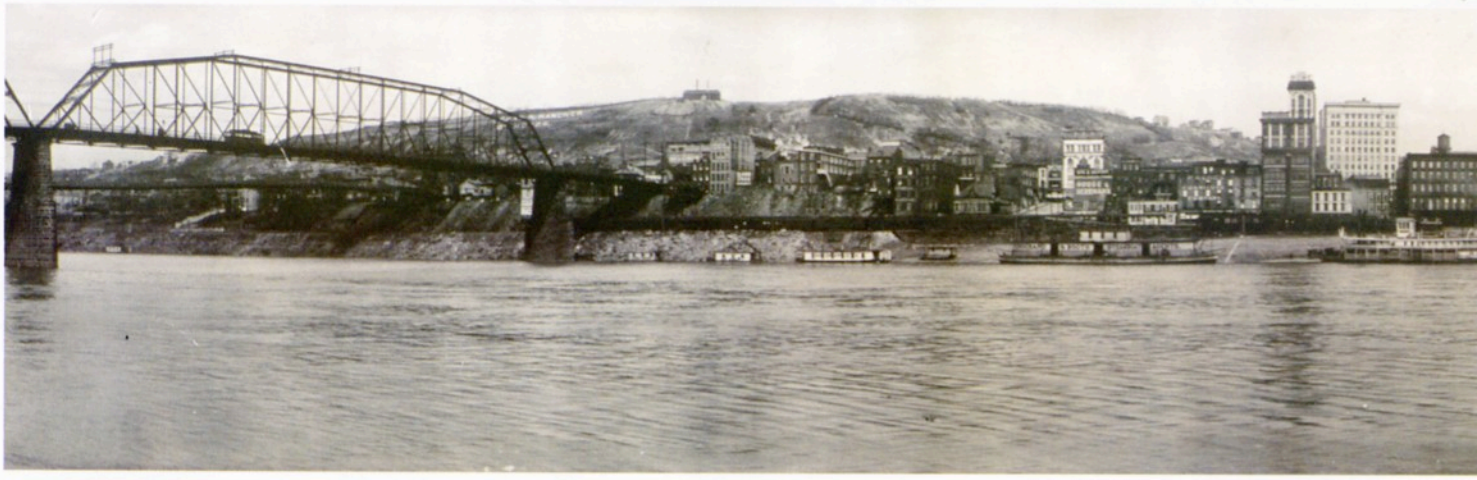
By the turn of the 20th century, Wheeling was reinventing itself. Prior to this, old and dusty Greek Revival and Italianate buildings lined Main and Market streets. Its municipal buildings and many churches were small temple versions with gray columns and shaded porticos reminiscent of the earlier era. As the city's wealth grew in the later 1800s, these buildings were torn down, added to, or replaced with newer, more modern Victorian and Art Deco structures. West Virginia's first

(Top) Wheeling celebrates the new pro-Union Restored Government of Virginia at what's now known as West Virginia Independence Hall. From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 1861. (Right) West Virginia's first capitol (1863-1870) and our current one in Charleston are the only two of our state's six capitol buildings still standing. Courtesy of the WVSA.

skyscraper was built in 1907 by brewer and businessman Henry Schmulbach on Market Street. After Schmulbach retired from business due to West Virginia's adoption of Prohibition in 1914, the building was sold and became the headquarters for the Wheeling Steel Company. That 12-story building is still the tallest in Wheeling.

Wheeling's population topped out and started to decline in the 1930s. At its height in 1930, the city was home to 61,000 people, having experienced its greatest increase between 1910 and 1920. At that time, much of Wheeling's industry was based on steel production. When those factories started to fold due to foreign competition, the population never recovered. Many families left Wheeling to find work elsewhere, and many buildings, both commercial and residential, were left empty.

The 1950s and 1960s saw the introduction of urban renewal, which involved the whole-scale demolition of blighted and dilapidated areas. I-70 and its tunnels, Route 2, and I-470 took away thousands of structures in some of the city's most densely populated areas. After the Ohio Valley Mall opened in St.



Clairsville, Ohio, some 10 miles west, most of the remaining stores closed or moved out of downtown Wheeling, leaving it nearly a ghost town.

Historic preservation was still a developing concept during this time, but Wheeling quickly caught on to the new social movement. In 1970, the Friends of Wheeling—now the oldest historic preservation organization in our state—was formed. The Friends fought to save our remaining historic structures, including the suspension bridge and West Virginia Independence Hall [see p. 74].

And lastly, let's not forget Wheeling's gem, the historic Capitol Theatre, home to the Wheeling Symphony, the former *Jamboree USA*, and radio station WWVA. It is perhaps the most notable historic preservation success story of the past 10 years. Once home to the second-oldest-running radio show in the country, *Jamboree USA* (previously the *Wheeling Jamboree*), the Capitol Theatre hosted country music entertainers, rivaling the *Grand Ole Opry*. After a national conglomerate purchased the theatre and decided to sell it rather than complete necessary upgrades to bring it up to code, the building fell dark and sat on the real estate market for several years. The Wheeling-Ohio County Convention and Visitors Bureau, in partnership with Wheeling Heritage and the Greater Wheeling Sports and Entertainment Authority, came together to purchase, restore, and operate the theatre. Millions of dollars of public and private investment have been funneled into it. The project is considered a major success and the Capitol, once again, shines as one of Wheeling's architectural gems and culture centers—a place where visitors can still go to get that "Wheeling Feeling."

(L-R): Victor, Anna, Walter, Valentine, and Roy Reuther. Victor, Walter, and Roy were longtime leaders of the United Auto Workers (UAW), and Valentine was an early organizer of Wheeling's brewery workers. Walter was the UAW's fourth president and third president of the Congress of Industrial Workers (CIO). He was also one of the relatively few white speakers to appear with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the 1963 March on Washington. He died in a plane crash in 1970. Courtesy of the WVSA.

REBEKAH KARELIS is a native West Virginian who currently calls Wheeling home. When she's not writing, this historian collects books, old buildings, and furniture that she never seems to find the time to restore. She works with her partner, Sarel Venter, in restoring West Virginia's old places through their contracting company, Adventures In Elegance, LLC. This is Rebekah's first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

This 1909 panoramic shows the Wheeling wharf and downtown in its heyday. Photo by Haines, courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Local preservationists saved Wheeling's "gem," the Capitol Theatre—once home to the popular *Wheeling Jamboree*—and restored it to all its glory. Photo by Mark Campbell.

This carte de visite image of a woman, who was most likely a slave nurse, is stamped on the back "BROWN & LOSE Photographers, Wheeling, W.Va." "Aunt Susan" is handwritten in pencil, about 1864. Courtesy Bob Arrington.

Wheeling's 20th Man

Race Relations in the Northernmost Southern City

By Seán P. Duffy (for Ann Thomas)

"About one out of every twenty persons living in Wheeling is of African descent. This twentieth man is not a new comer nor an alien, for his ancestors were settled by force in Virginia one year before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. . . . Justice and candor require attention to the handicaps suffered by Wheeling's twentieth man. . . . The group, as a whole, has been barred from employment in our local factories, mills, shops, and stores. The group generally has been restricted to personal and domestic service and coal mining. . . . A reading of the 'job want' columns or our local papers will verify this complaint of discrimination. Apparently, the test is COLOR of the worker; not his or her training, experience and character."

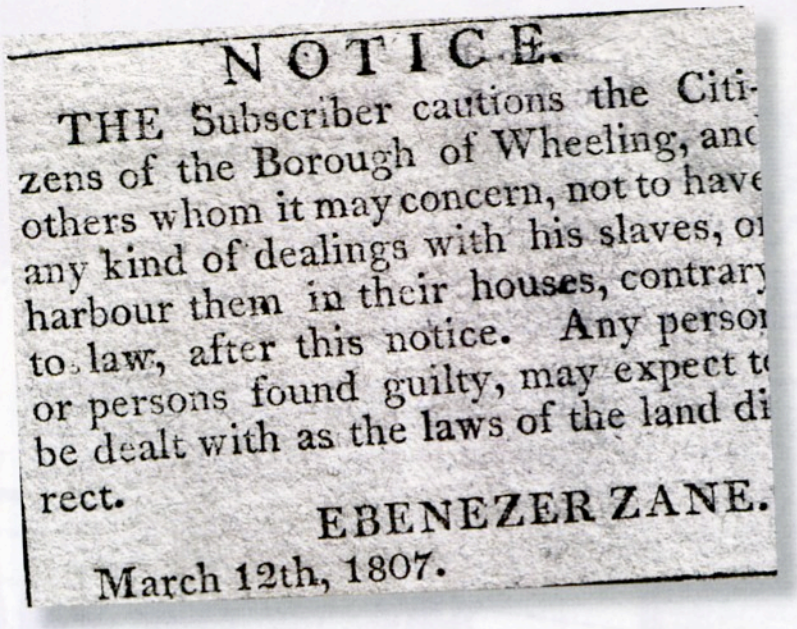
—Harry H. Jones, Wheeling's only practicing black lawyer at the time, February 9, 1936

In his talk, broadcast on WWVA radio, Harry Jones went on to describe an entirely distinct black community—one with its own doctors, dentists, restaurateurs, shopkeepers, hairdressers, and even funeral directors. Wheeling in 1936 was actually two cities, side by side but completely separate. And black people weren't welcome in white Wheeling. This was Wheeling under Jim Crow: separate, but decidedly *not* equal.

Later that year, Wheeling celebrated its 100th birthday as an incorporated city with a grand pageant meant to reenact its entire history. Within that pageant and the 112-page program describing it, the only indication that Wheeling's "20th man" had been a part of that history was an A&P Food Store ad featuring caricatures of what appear to be black slaves carrying apples, potatoes, and other food while well-dressed, smiling, white men look on. Black people were otherwise ignored, as if they never existed.

A few months later, in December 1936, William Burrus was born on 12th Street. He grew up in this alternate universe, graduated from Lincoln High (Wheeling's black public school), and then, like so many other young African-Americans, left Wheeling for Cleveland, where he worked for the U.S. Postal Service and was elected president of the American Postal Workers Union—the first black person to be elected president of any national union by its members.

While visiting his hometown many years later, Burrus reflected, "I've traveled around the world. I've met four presidents. . . . I've met Nelson Mandela. I've met kings and queens of other countries, and no matter where I went . . . I was proud to represent that my home was Wheeling, West Virginia. That's where I was born, that's where I was raised. That's the foundation of who I am. I was disappointed that . . . I don't think that Wheeling was proud of me."



NOTICE.

THE Subscriber cautions the Citi-
zens of the Borough of Wheeling, and
others whom it may concern, not to have
any kind of dealings with his slaves, or
harbour them in their houses, contrary
to law, after this notice. Any person
or persons found guilty, may expect to
be dealt with as the laws of the land di-
rect.

EBENEZER ZANE.

March 12th, 1807.

Virginia North-Western Gazette.

NEW SERIES — PUBLISHED BY R. I. CURTIS.

Vol. I. — WHEELING, VA. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1820. — No. 11.

NOTICE.

THERE will be offered for sale, on the 25th inst. at the house of Issac E. Hoskinson, near the mouth of Fishing Creek, V. the following property, viz.

One Negro Boy,

A QUANTITY OF

Whiskey,
Flour,
Bacon, and
One Saddle and Martingal,

Together with many other articles too tedious to mention.

ISAAC E. HOSKINSON,
SAMUEL THISTLE,
Administrators of the estate of Patrick Wilson, deceased.

Nov. 13.

Old newspaper notices remind us in stark terms that enslaved human beings shared the same status as property. The 1807 notice warns citizens not to "have any kind of dealings" with or harbor runaway slaves owned by city founder Ebenezer Zane. The 1820 ad (right) notes the sale of "One Negro Boy" along with whiskey, flour, bacon, a saddle, and martingal (reins). Courtesy of the Ohio County Public Library Archives (OCPLA).

So how did this happen? Given Burrus' disappointment and Jones' neglected "20th man," how did Wheeling, a city where western Virginia delegates broke free from the Confederacy to form West Virginia, become so starkly racially divided, just like a city of the Old South?

To answer these questions, it's necessary to go back to Wheeling's founding in 1769, when Ebenezer Zane, a white Virginian, claimed a narrow strip of land by carving his initials into a tree, invoking "tomahawk rights." We now call that land Wheeling, from the Lenape *weelunk*, translated as "place of the skull." The skull belonged to another white man who'd arrived prior to Zane, and the Lenape were just one of the indigenous tribes with whom the Zanes and their neighbors would engage in protracted bloody combat to claim *their* land.

As Wheeling marks the 250th anniversary of Zane's claim, it's important to acknowledge that people *already* lived here, just as we remember that other people were brought here against their will. While discussing plans for our 250th, Mayor Glenn Elliott reminded us "to be honest about" our history, noting that "Wheeling was a slave city in a slave state." Furthermore, when slavery was abolished after the Civil War, Wheeling became a segregated city in a segregated state. But due to its unique position historically and geographically, Wheeling's experience with race relations was neither completely northern nor southern. It was both, and neither.

A Slave City

The truth is that some of the first families who joined the Zanes brought with them enslaved human beings who held the legal status of property. Wheeling was part of Virginia, the first slave colony, due to the arrival of shackled Africans at Jamestown 400 years ago in 1619. By 1788, the Old Dominion had become the Commonwealth of Virginia, a slave state.

Enslaved people were often marched along National Road, chained together, toward the old Second Ward market house on 10th Street—the site of Wheeling's slave auction block. Many slaves sold here ended up in southern markets from the Kanawha Valley to Louisville and New Orleans. Courtesy of the OCPLA.

Most of the rest of Virginia's enslaved population worked on plantations, but Wheeling was different due to its economy and landscape—a narrow river valley—that didn't support large plantations. Here, a much smaller number of slaves were kept as domestic servants, or house slaves, working as carriage drivers, butlers, maids, cooks, or nurses who helped raise children.

The Zanes owned slaves. One, known as "Daddy Sam," helped defend Fort Henry against sieges by Indian and British forces in 1777 and 1782. Many of the city's most prominent families—the Caldwells, Jacobs, Mitchells, Paulls, Paxtons, and Yarnalls—owned slaves. In fact, many streets and even whole neighborhoods are named after slaveholders, such as Archibald Woods (Woodsdale), the Edgingtons (Edgington Lane), and the Chaplines (Chapline Street). Society hostess Lydia Boggs Shepherd of Shepherd Hall fame owned as many as 15 slaves.

While the number of slaves owned by Wheeling residents remained comparatively small, the Ohio River, National Road, and B&O Railroad (built in part by slave labor) converged to give the city a prominent role in the sale of slaves to southern markets, supporting the Kanawha salt industry as well as major southern slave markets, such as those in Louisville and New Orleans.

In the 1907 book *Bonnie Belmont: A historical romance of the days of slavery and the Civil War*, John Salisbury Cochran, an Ohio Civil War veteran, judge, and eyewitness to Wheeling slave auctions, described the setting this way: "The auction block was on the west side of

the upper end of the market about where the city scales are now located. It was a wooden movable platform about two and a half feet high and six feet square approached by some three or four steps."

In Cochran's story, a Quaker, Joshua Cope, purchased a slave, Aunt Tilda Taylor, and set her free. The Quakers were abolitionists who helped operate the Underground Railroad just across the Ohio River from Wheeling.

Benjamin Lundy, another Quaker from Mt. Pleasant, Ohio, became a staunch abolitionist after witnessing a slave auction in Wheeling. He wrote about seeing "droves of a dozen or twenty ragged men, chained together and driven through the streets, bare-headed and bare-footed, in mud and snow, by the remorseless 'SOUL SELLERS,' with horsewhips and bludgeons in their hands!"

By 1860, when Wheeling's population totaled some 14,000, there were 100 enslaved people (42 men and 58 women) in Ohio County. One of those, Sara "Lucy" Bagby, escaped from Wheeling and, with help from the Underground Railroad, fled to Cleveland. Her owner, William Goshorn, found Lucy and had her returned to Wheeling under the federal 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. During the Civil War, Lucy was freed by a Union officer as Goshorn was being arrested as a traitor.

Statehood, Emancipation, & Reconstruction

Even the prospect of West Virginia statehood nearly collapsed due to slavery. The original statehood bill left slavery intact in what would become the 35th state. President Lincoln pressured statehood delegates to do something about it. Gordon Battelle, a Wheeling minister, introduced a resolution to abolish slavery in the state's new constitution. It failed but did inspire U.S. Senator Waitman T. Willey's gradual emancipation amendment, which said that slaves under age 21 on July 4, 1863, would be free upon reaching that age. His compromise allowed West Virginia to come into existence—but with 18,000 human beings still enslaved within its borders.

The slave auction bell from the old market house is on display at Wheeling's Oglebay Mansion Museum. Courtesy of our author.

Meanwhile, on January 1, 1863 (just after approving West Virginia's statehood bill), Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which applied only to states in rebellion, meaning it didn't apply to West Virginia and other pro-Union slave states. Nevertheless, Wheeling's African-Americans celebrated the Emancipation Proclamation for decades after the war ended; thousands of mostly African-Americans would throng into town for parades, gatherings at the State Fair Grounds on Wheeling Island, music, banquets, and speeches.

The defeated Confederate states faced "bayonet rule" during Reconstruction, but federal troops weren't sent to West Virginia (a loyal Union state) to enforce black civil rights. The Reconstruction Amendments—13th, which ended slavery; 14th, which made ex-slaves U.S. citizens; and 15th, which extended suffrage to black men—were all ratified by West Virginia in our first state capitol, here in Wheeling.

After the 1870 ratification of the 15th Amendment, hopes for black suffrage ran high in Wheeling as the mayor joined the city's African-Americans in a parade. A banner with the words "Freedom—it is an honor to be freemen"—was carried through the streets.

But West Virginia's conservative Democrats, who seized power in the state in 1871, leveraged the issue of black suffrage to re-enfranchise former Confederates. If former black slaves could vote, the reasoning went, how could white former Confederates be prevented from doing the same?

That same year, Taylor Strauder, a Wheeling carpenter and former slave, murdered his wife with a hatchet. Strauder was convicted by an all-white jury and sentenced to hang. His attorneys said the state law limiting jury service to white males violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. In 1880, the U.S. Supreme Court concurred, holding in *Strauder* v. *West Virginia* that the law was "a brand upon [African-Americans] . . . an assertion of their inferiority, and a stimulant to that race prejudice which is an impediment to securing to individuals of the race that equal justice which the law aims to secure to all others."

Despite some progress, northerners' interest in enforcing civil rights laws waned just as southern whites became more relentless in re-establishing white supremacy and terrorizing blacks into submission through Jim Crow segregation, Black Codes, the convict-lease labor system, KKK violence, and lynchings. The KKK was active in West Virginia, and even in Wheeling. But while 3,446 lynchings of African-Americans occurred nationwide between 1882 and 1968, only 28 are documented to have occurred in West Virginia during that period, with none in Wheeling.

Lincoln School

When West Virginia became a state, its founders called for a free but segregated school system. The state's revised 1872 Constitution put it more bluntly, "White and colored persons shall not be taught in the same school." Although invalidated by the 1954 *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision, this language would remain in our state constitution until 1994—and even then, 42% of the people voted to keep it in.

Lincoln, Wheeling's school for African-Americans, was founded in 1866 in a two-room house on 12th Street. In 1875, it moved to the black neighborhood at 10th and Chapline. Lincoln's most celebrated principal, James McHenry Jones, arrived in 1882. He left in 1900 to serve as president of the West Virginia Colored Institute (now West Virginia State University). The school Jones helped build became a source of pride in the black community, but as a public facility, it remained underfunded and inadequate.

William Burrus graduated from Lincoln in 1954 in the last class before schools began desegregating. He'd transferred from Blessed Martin, Wheeling's segregated Catholic high school, so he could play football for Lincoln.

"Once a year, our coach, Mr. Kinney, would take us to Wheeling High after hours, after all the kids were gone," William recalled during a 2015 interview. "It was in the dark. And they would permit us to go through their used equipment, and we would take that back to Lincoln. . . . They would bring us in there after the school was closed so [others] wouldn't see us. And that was so very, very demeaning. I mean, you can imagine, a 15-, 16-year-old kid sneaking in, with his coach, into the bowels of the high school . . . and we all remembered that. That's where we got our football equipment from."

Ann Thomas (who would become Wheeling's first black nurse) was still attending Lincoln when the *Brown* decision was announced. She said Lincoln Principal Phillip Reed held an assembly to inform students. "My life changed," she recalled. "My parents felt like this was a dream come true. . . . So I took that

This undated photo shows the second Lincoln School building (erected in 1893 after the original burned in 1892) on Chapline Street. It was replaced by the final structure in 1943. Courtesy of the OCPLA, Ann Thomas Collection.

opportunity—hesitantly—but I ended up graduating from Wheeling High. And I was one of the first blacks to attend Wheeling High."

The *Brown* case was the beginning of the end for segregated schools, but it was by no means the end of Jim Crow.

Jim Crow

The term "Jim Crow" emerged from a minstrel song. Minstrel shows were musical comedy plays in which white performers wore blackface and mocked African-Americans. They were quite popular in Wheeling, where fraternal organizations, churches, and high schools organized minstrel shows well into the 1960s.

Jim Crow was a systematic way to segregate black and white people in virtually every phase of society. For African-Americans in Wheeling, Jim Crow meant separate everything—from restaurants and movie theaters to beauty parlors and hotels. Even when celebrities, such as boxing champ Joe Louis, visited town, they couldn't stay in white-only hotels. There was a separate branch of the YWCA, the "Blue Triangle," and a separate library on 12th Street. Many Wheeling businesses were included in *The Negro Motorist Green-Book*, a travel guide for African-Americans, listing hotels, restaurants, and other public facilities where they could be served and not experience the embarrassment of being told they weren't welcome.

William Burrus recalled working with his uncle, who shined shoes at the McLure

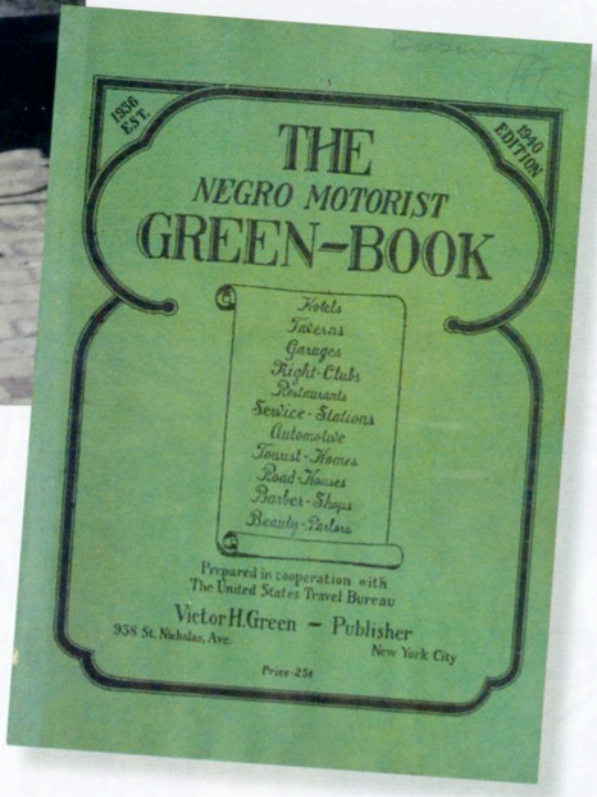
Ann Thomas (in 2011) stands on the crumbling steps of Lincoln School (built in 1943). She left Lincoln for Wheeling High School after the *Brown* desegregation decision in 1954. Courtesy of the OCPLA, Ann Thomas Collection.

Hotel. "They had colored restrooms. And I was about 12-years-old, I guess, and it was so demeaning to me that here I was forced in the hotel to assist my uncle in shining shoes, and I couldn't even use the restroom." He also remembered "Colored Only" signs on the water fountains. "And we were close enough to Ohio and Pennsylvania where they did not have those Jim Crow laws. I could see and feel the differences that were imposed upon me because of the color of my skin."

Ann Thomas met her future husband, Clyde, at the skating rink at the Market Auditorium, the building that replaced the old Market House, where slaves had once been bought and sold. African-American kids could skate only on Monday nights. Clyde, who grew up without Jim Crow across the river in Bellaire, Ohio, became a football star for the semi-pro Wheeling Ironmen as well as the first (and still only) African-American elected to Wheeling's City Council.

Wheeling's black population grew significantly after the Civil War. During the Great Migration of the early 1900s (when some six million African-Americans moved north for greater opportunities and freedom), our state's black population also increased, primarily due to the lure of jobs in the southern coalfields and northern factories. Though still relatively small in number, Wheeling's black population doubled between 1900 and 1930.

Two women stand in the heart of Wheeling's primary black neighborhood on Chapline Street, about 1940. Doc White's pharmacy is on the left, and the bell tower of the old Lincoln School is in the distance on the right. Courtesy of the OCPLA, YWCA Collection.



This 1940 edition of *The Negro Motorist Green-Book* was an essential guide for African-Americans traveling in segregated areas of the country. A later edition was featured in the 2018 movie *Green Book*. Courtesy of the New York Public Library.

When he was sworn in on July 1, 1971, Clyde Thomas (front row, second from left) became the first and, to date, only African-American elected to Wheeling's City Council. Courtesy of the OCPLA, Ann Thomas Collection.

Despite the outmigration fueled by Jim Crow, the Great Migration brought diversity, and Wheeling's African-American community thrived, producing many entrepreneurs, professionals, and cultural leaders. Examples include Leon "Chu" Berry (1908 -1941), a legendary saxophonist who performed with the likes of Billie Holliday, "Count" Basie, and Cab Calloway; Everett Lee (1916 -), who learned to play violin on Wheeling Island and became the first African-American to conduct a major symphony orchestra in the South; Billy Cox (1939 -), bassist for Jimi Hendrix's Band of Gypsys; and beloved community leader James S. "Doc" White (1901 - 1988), whose North Side Pharmacy was a safe gathering place for generations of African-American youth.

Civil Rights and Urban Renewal

As Jim Crow was on its way out in Wheeling and elsewhere, the modern Civil Rights struggle was heating up in the 1960s and 1970s. Diana Bell, an Ohioan who moved to Wheeling when she was 12, offered a different perspective. "Ohio was a totally different climate," she explains. "And it's still different to this day. . . . I never had the racial tension that I had here. . . . That little line made a big difference."

Black and white coal miners often worked side by side under ground while living in segregated parts of the city. This is the night shift at Valley Camp #3 Coal Mine in Triadelphia, near Wheeling, 1939. Courtesy of the OCPLA.

Young Diana experienced Wheeling as a hub of Civil Rights activities. She remembers demonstrating with groups at city hall and also recalls the rioting and vandalism when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. "We had to write 'Soul Sisters' on our house," she recalls, "'Soul Brothers' . . . so that people would know that someone black lived there so they wouldn't do anything to our house."

The 1970s also brought urban renewal to Wheeling. This effort to redevelop "blighted" areas of town had its greatest impact on traditionally African-American neighborhoods. During Clyde Thomas' tenure as a councilman in the mid-1970s, the city council considered urban renewal for the primary African-American neighborhood: the 1100 block of Chapline Street. An earlier version had suggested pushing African-American communities out of South and Centre Wheeling too.

When a young man questioned Clyde's presence on Wheeling's urban renewal committee, he responded, "Somebody needs to be there that looks like me, who can hear, who can read, who can comprehend and find out what it is they want to do with our community because our community is going to be impacted by this urban renewal."

Recognizing the Black Community

William Burrus died in May 2018. Though he didn't live to enjoy the accolades, Burrus, along with Everett Lee, was inducted into the Wheeling Hall of Fame in 2018. Ann Thomas, who chose to stay in Wheeling, passed in February 2019 with her dream for her husband, Clyde, to be enshrined in the city's Hall of Fame still unfulfilled. Also inducted this year was the Rev. Willie Stinson, Clyde's teammate on the Wheeling Ironmen, the city's minor league football team in the 1960s.

On June 18, 2019, the city council adopted and Mayor Elliott issued a resolution acknowledging and denouncing "Wheeling's role in fostering the institution of slavery and perpetuating racial segregation" and "committing to the pursuit of initiatives that promote racial diversity and end discrimination, prejudice, and injustice." As state NAACP president Owens Brown noted, "Small deeds go a long way in healing a lot of wounds from the past." The next day, Wheeling celebrated its first official "Juneteenth Independence Day."

The late William Burrus' wife, Ethelda Burrus, of Upper Marlboro, Maryland, accepts his Wheeling Hall of Fame plaque on his behalf. Photo by Linda S. Comins.

Family members accept a Hall of Fame plaque on behalf of the late Rev. Willie Stinson. In addition to being a minister, Stinson was an exceptional chef, once earning the prestigious Chef of the Year award from the American Culinary Federation. Photo by Linda S. Comins.

A group of young African-American women learn American Sign Language at Wheeling's segregated Blue Triangle branch of the YWCA, about 1947. Courtesy of the OCPLA, YWCA Collection.

This research was adapted into a multimedia program for the Ohio County Public Library's Lunch With Books Series. YWCA Diversity and Outreach Director Ron Scott, Jr., presented the program for Black History Month. The resulting presentation weaved photos, videos, and primary source material into a 250-year story of African-American life in Wheeling. Taken on the road to local high schools and middle schools, the program was experienced by more than 500 students.

And the community was impacted, heavily. The black-owned businesses and residences on Chapline Street between Lincoln School and 12th Street were taken through eminent domain and razed.

"The whole African-American social fabric was there on Chapline Street," Ann Thomas recalled. "When urban renewal did happen, people got displaced. Some people went to Ohio. It pretty much decimated the black community. The black community from that point has never been the same and will never be the same."

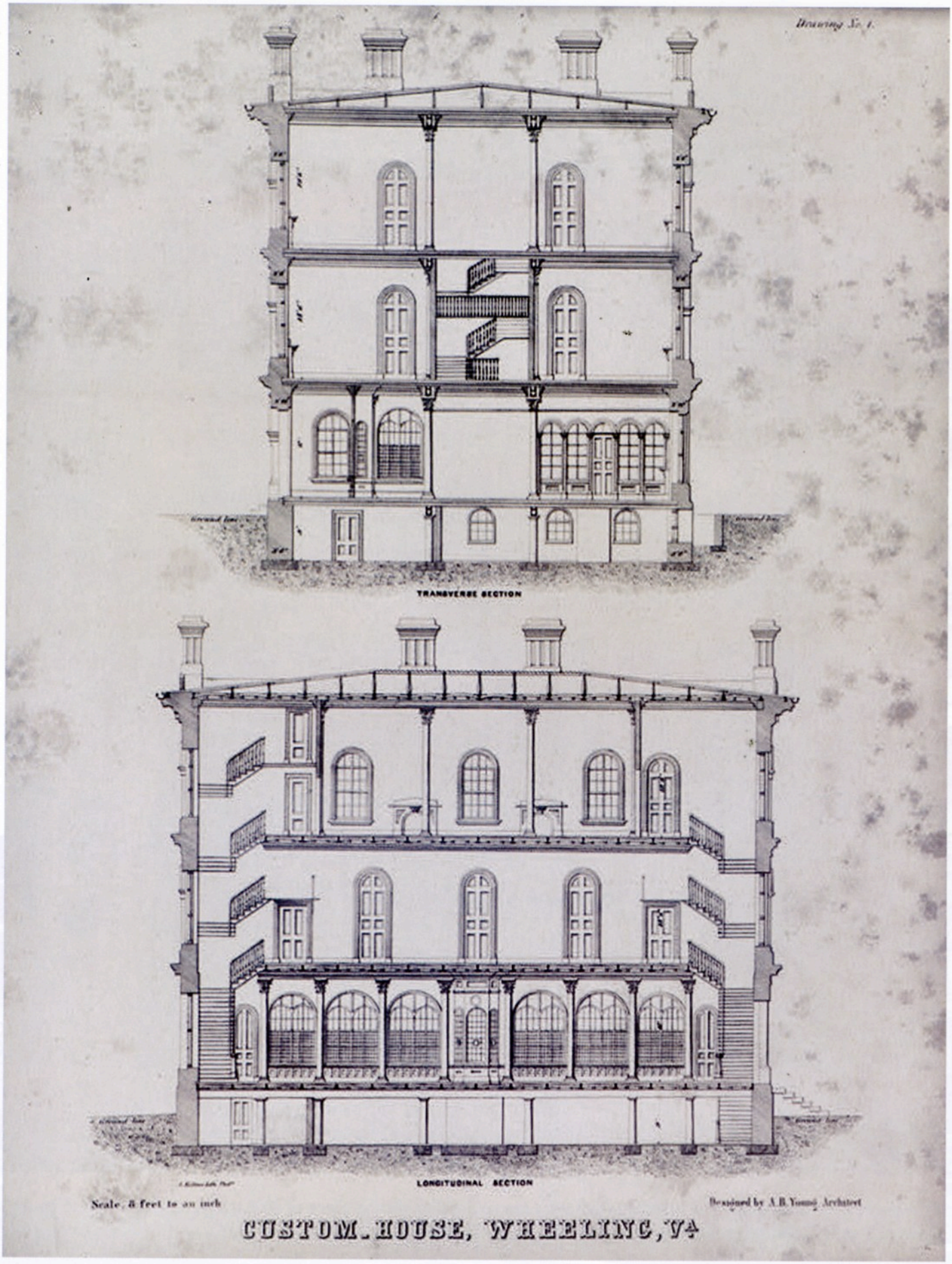
Epilogue

From major slave market to segregated city, Wheeling maintained a southern attitude toward African-Americans for most of its 250-year history. Though it served as Virginia's pro-Union capital in the Civil War, and though, after the war, its treatment of freedmen didn't approach the level of cruelty in the Old South, it considered blacks to be second-class citizens, separating them from whites, creating a hidden subculture—not unlike other northern cities that took an out-of-sight, out-of-mind approach to race relations. Shunned and ignored, African-Americans created their own separate Wheeling with its own vibrant culture.

This neglectful past has heavily affected the present. Wheeling continues to struggle to create an integrated, diverse community. Part of that struggle has to include remembering and honoring those who persevered and achieved despite being neglected.

SEÁN P. DUFFY is adult programming director at the Ohio County Public Library and executive director of the Wheeling Academy of Law and Science Foundation. He has a law degree from American University and has written books and articles about Wheeling's history, particularly focusing on immigration. He's editor of the *Upper Ohio Valley Historical Review*. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

This gravestone in Wheeling's Peninsula Cemetery marks the final resting place of Richard Moxley, believed to be a slave of Daniel Steenrod, a major landowner in the area. Courtesy of the OCPLA.


Drawing No. 1.
TRANSVERSE SECTION
LONGITUDINAL SECTION
Scale, 8 feet to an inch
Designed by A.B. Young Architect
CUSTOM. HOUSE, WHEELING, VA

Sunset at West Virginia Independence Hall.
Photo by Steve Brightwell.

Our State's Birthplace

West Virginia Independence Hall

By Sue-Beth Warren

Opened in 1859 in Wheeling, Virginia, to serve as a federal custom house, post office, and district courtroom, this building would soon become West Virginia Independence Hall.

Wheeling was already a major transportation hub by the mid-1800s. In 1831, Congress had designated Wheeling an "inland port of entry" but failed to provide space for a custom house—where government employees could process imports and exports. As the "Gateway to the West," Wheeling, Virginia, was a natural fit for one of 10 new custom houses to be constructed in the 1850s.

Secretary of the Treasury James Guthrie appointed Capt. Alexander Hamilton Bowman as engineer in charge and Ammi B. Young as supervising architect of the Wheeling project. Guthrie emphasized the use of iron, which was incorporated into the front doors, interior stairs, window shutters, roof, and four hollow columns that run the height of the building. Far ahead of its time, the custom house was one of the world's first structures to use iron I-beams in its framing. The building was also supposedly fireproof, but it would be more accurate to call it "fire resistant."

The site selected was the northeast corner of Market and 16th streets, purchased from John Gill in 1855 for $20,500. There were flooding concerns from the beginning, but Bowman believed that setting the building a short distance back from the Ohio River would resolve these issues. However, a

1936 flood mark on a first-floor shutter [see Spring 1997] and other floods over the years demonstrate that Bowman was being overly optimistic.

The custom house was one of seven federal buildings designed identically by Ammi Young, the first supervising architect of the U.S. Treasury Department. It marked a change in Young's style from formal Greek Revival to the Italianate design known as Italian Palace.

The first bids were rejected for being too high. In the second round, Stewarts, Scheele & Company's low bid of $80,159.97 got it the project. These craftsmen had organized their firm expressly to complete the custom house by June 1, 1858. The cornerstone was laid with a parade and ceremony on September 17, 1856. That morning's *Intelligencer* requested that "proprietors of any dwellings having water hoses attached to use them freely this morning, as the dust will be conquered thereby, thus aiding materially the procession."

James Luke, project supervisor, detailed the construction progress in monthly reports. On May 28, 1857, however, Luke sent the Treasury secretary a letter complaining about the *lack* of progress, specifically the use of inferior stone, an insufficient number of workers, and the contractors' lack of responsiveness to his concerns. Later problems with deteriorating stone suggest that this issue was never fully resolved.

The custom house, opened in April 1859, was the first public building in Wheeling to use indoor gas lighting. Other modern features included water closets on the third floor and an innovative central heating method—fueled in the basement by a coal-burning furnace, which heated the entire building through three of the four cast-iron columns. The fourth column was a cold air return, intended to bring the indoor temperature up to 50 degrees; the central heating system was supplemented by coal-burning fireplaces. Based on 20th-century renovation work, it appears the central furnace continued to function until about 1960.

When the nation headed into the Civil War in 1861, the building took on new functions that would lead to West Virginia statehood. The First Wheeling Convention met in Washington Hall, May 13-15, 1861. Since Virginians hadn't formally voted to secede from the Union yet, the convention adjourned, concluding that no action should be taken until the public had voted. Following the May 23 vote in favor of secession, a Second Wheeling Convention was called at Washington Hall on June 11; it was moved to the custom house two days later.

Harrison County delegate John Carlile presented "A Declaration of the People of Virginia," which ruled the Virginia Secession Convention null and void. The declaration was adopted and signed, and Francis Pierpont was elected governor of the new Restored (or Reorganized) Government of Virginia. The custom house became the state capitol of pro-Union Virginia. As a result, Virginia had two state capitals: one in Wheeling loyal to the Union and one in Richmond loyal to the Confederacy.

Governor Pierpont's office was on the second floor, and the General Assembly convened in the third-floor courtroom. The Restored Government was recognized by the federal government's executive and legislative branches when President Lincoln granted Pierpont's request for additional troops and when the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate seated legislators from the pro-Union government.

The Restored Government of Virginia was crucial in the creation of West Virginia. Article 4, Section 3, of the U.S. Constitution reads, "No new States shall be formed or erected within the Jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the Junction of two or more States, or Parts of States, without the Consent of the Legislature of the States concerned as well as of the Congress." As the federally recognized state of Virginia, the Restored Government

Delegates meet in the custom house courtroom to form the pro-Union Restored Government of Virginia, June 1861. Sketch by Jasper Green, *Harper's Weekly*, courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives (WVSA).

could grant permission to form a new state within its own boundaries. In August 1861, a General Assembly committee proposed a 39-county state called Kanawha. The name was changed to West Virginia following a lengthy debate and a vote by delegates to the state Constitutional Convention, which was meeting in the custom house courtroom. The 39 counties were expanded to 50, primarily to ensure that the militarily and economically important B&O Railroad would run primarily through our new state; five new counties were created after statehood, bringing us to our current total of 55.

Congress approved the statehood bill, and Lincoln, facing a divided cabinet, signed it on December 31, 1862, with a provision that West Virginia's Constitution eventually emancipate slaves currently living within the new state's boundaries. Waitman Willey, one of our U.S. Senators, pieced together this compromise: "The children of slaves born within the limits of this State after the fourth day of July, eighteen-hundred and sixty-three, shall be free; and all slaves within the said State who shall, at the time aforesaid, be under the age of ten years, shall be free when they arrive at the age of twenty-one years; and all slaves over ten and under twenty-one years, shall be free when they arrive at the age of twenty-five years; and no slave shall be permitted to come into the State for permanent residence therein." The West Virginia Constitutional Convention adopted the Willey Amendment on February 17, 1863. On April 20, President Lincoln issued a proclamation that in 60 days—June 20, 1863—West Virginia would become the 35th state; it would be the last slave state ever admitted to the United States.

After West Virginia came into existence, the new legislature moved from the custom house to the nearby Linsly Institute building at 14th and Eoff streets, though newly elected Governor Arthur Boreman moved into Pierpont's old office in the custom house. After June 20, Pierpont and other officers of the Restored Government moved to the new pro-Union capital of Virginia in Alexandria. At the end of the war, Pierpont and the Restored Government relocated to Richmond and became the one, and only, government of Virginia.

The next several decades of the custom house's history include significant renovations and repairs. In 1867, the deteriorating iron roof was replaced with slate. Furnace problems were a frequent complaint; lack of proper heating led to water pipes bursting. Renovations of 1874-1876 included a switch to steam heat and the re-allocation of office space.

The custom house saw many changes over the years, but none was more obvious than the semicircular tower addition to the south end in 1888. Constructed to enclose a planned elevator and spiral staircase, the tower was so annoying in appearance that it became known

These photos show the building with its "wart," added in 1888, and in its rundown state during the 1960s. Courtesy of (left) the WVSA, Kirk's Photo Art Center Collection, and (right) the WVIH Foundation.

as the building's "wart." The elevator wasn't installed after all, and the custom house was left with this "unsightly carbuncle," as the *Intelligencer* called it. The article amusingly recommended installing a fire pole so one could avoid the new "ugly stairs."

In 1907, a new federal building opened in Wheeling. In February 1908, Wheeling School Commissioners received permission to use the old custom house temporarily for the Union School, which had been destroyed by fire. The building was sold at auction in July 1908 to the Old Post Office Improvement Company, which sold it to Conservative Life Insurance, which retained ownership until 1951.

There is little documentation on the changes made to the building when it was in private hands. In 1915, a two-bay addition was made on the building's south end. The last major renovation was the addition of a fourth story with a façade that differed from the rest of the building. Architect Paul D. Marshall, who wrote a historic structure report on the building, thinks the elevator was installed around the time the fourth story was added. Vast interior changes were made during the 20th century to accommodate a wide variety of businesses,

Beverly Fluty (1931 – 2009)

By Stan Bumgardner

I first met Beverly Fluty in 2001. I was the acting director of our agency's museums, which included West Virginia Independence Hall (WVIH). Beverly, who headed the nonprofit WVIH Foundation for 17 years, had led the charge to restore the Birthplace of Our State, a landmark that still gives me chills whenever I go there. Beverly raised funds, helped coordinate the restoration work, and, at the drop of a hat, would give tours of WVIH to school groups and the general public. If Francis Pierpont is considered the Father of our state, Beverly *is* the Mother of WVIH.

Sadly, the foundation couldn't support WVIH on a day-to-day basis. So, in 1979, Governor Jay Rockefeller and the legislature transferred it to the Division of Culture & History, with continued assistance from the foundation. It seemed like a good deal all around. Beverly, who'd put more sweat equity into the work than anyone, realized the financial realities and helped negotiate the deal. Most foundation members felt like the state would continue the never-ending restoration work and install modern exhibits. But this didn't occur regularly for many years.

The ugly truth about historic sites is there's never enough money to run and maintain them properly. At WVIH, the state's funding was inadequate, particularly for a historic building in need of daily upkeep. To say the least, Beverly wasn't pleased with how the state was running WVIH. She doggedly wrote to the governor and other state officials and usually came away frustrated.

Before traveling to WVIH for the first time as acting museums director, I'd heard many stories about Beverly's clashes with state government. To say the least, I was more than a little bit intimidated. When I met her face to face, I kept waiting for a rebuke about what could be done better. Well, my reprimand never came. What I experienced was a highly spirited 70-something who knew and cared more about a single town's history than anyone I'd ever met. I soon relaxed and began looking forward to my visits to see what new things she'd turned up—and she always had something.

Beverly Fluty is flanked by Congressman Robert Mollohan (left) and Vernon Acree, the U.S. commissioner of customs, at WVIH, about 1976. Photo by Dave Matthewson, courtesy of the WVIH Foundation.

In the relatively early days of the Internet, Beverly was a walking, talking Wikipedia entry about Wheeling—except much more accurate. I've rarely met anyone who cared so deeply and personally about anything related to history. For those of us who believe that history is one of our defining elements, few could reach a higher calling than Beverly Fluty did. Please read more about her and those who've carried on her legacy in Carl E. Feather's story on page 74.

In 1975, the National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded Beverly's "unflagging efforts to restore and preserve West Virginia Independence Hall, the birthplace of West Virginia, and the inspired leadership she has given to the preservation movement in her community. . . . [She] has awakened among her fellow citizens a keen appreciation of their architectural heritage."

Before and after photos taken during restoration of the WVIH courtroom. Photos by Frasier Smith, courtesy of the WVIH Foundation.

including an insurance company, a bank, a barbershop, the Hazel-Atlas Glass Company, a liquor store, and a nightclub.

In 1951, Conservative Life Insurance sold the building to American National Insurance, which sold it to the Pythian Building Corporation in 1963. The state of West Virginia purchased it in 1964—with funding from the Centennial Commission—to recognize its status as the "Birthplace of West Virginia." The state leased the building to the newly established WVIH Foundation, which spearheaded the building's restoration to its original appearance.

Architect Tracy R. Stephens offered his services over the next two decades. Following years of planning, fundraising, and a legislative appropriation, restoration work began on October 1, 1969. Phase I focused on removing the fourth story and the south-end addition, which exposed significant damage.

Phase II was intended to further address the south side but had to be delayed due to excessive bids. Phase III focused on the west side: removing the Greek portico, conducting significant interior work on Pierpont's office, installing a modern elevator, and restoring the gas lighting fixtures and frescoes in the courtroom and post office vestibule. A Fresco Committee, chaired by Beverly Fluty, oversaw the work of a local artist, who uncovered the original frescoes in August 1971 under multiple layers of paint.

Phase IV consisted of interior demolition, restoration of iron doors, and removal of the current flooring. In 1973, Universal Restoration worked on the southern façade, but Stephens found this effort unsatisfactory. Universal Restoration was dismissed, and Preservation Technology Group received the contract. Phase V involved mechanical and electrical system work, restoration of the courtroom and vestibule, and replacement of the Minton floor tiles. Fifth-generation grainer Malcolm Robson of the United Kingdom was contracted to reproduce the wood graining and granitizing.

Phase VI, which consisted of restoring sidewalks and curbs, was completed in June 1978. This allowed for the filming of *For Liberty and Union* by noted Wheeling filmmaker Ellis Dungan about the formation of West Virginia [see Fall 1996]. It's still shown to visitors today.

Phase VII centered on the north stair tower, where flaws from the original construction

During the restoration, workers found this graffiti of animals above the courtroom door entrance. The graffiti dates back to the original construction in the 1850s. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

became apparent. Some of the original iron floor beams had been cut to accommodate heating system air ducts, affecting the load-bearing capacity in these areas. Steel flitch plates were bolted to the iron beams to strengthen them. Phase VIII was intended to restore the roof, chimneys, and the roof's snow-support structure, but, due to high bids, the chimney and snow-support work couldn't be done. The eight chimneys became Phase VIII-a, and the supports became Phase VIII-b.

West Virginia Independence Hall opened as the Birthplace of West Virginia and Civil War museum in 1979 under the Division of Culture & History (now Department of Arts, Culture and History), which still operates the facility and continues to restore sections of the building.

As with most successful preservation efforts, WVIH was a group effort. Beverly Fluty, who led the restoration campaign, compiled a list of more than 2,000 individuals, companies, and groups that had contributed in some way. These 2,000 benefactors included the National Park Service, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Centre Wheeling Foundry, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Bicentennial Commission, and the Benedum Foundation. In addition, several experts contributed their immense skills to the project: architectural historian Tony Wrenn, lighting expert Dennis Peter Myers, decorative arts consultant Roger Moss, Clarksburg architect Ralph Pederson, and Morgantown civil engineer/historian Emory Kemp [see Spring 2017], to name just a few.

Placed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 and recognized as a National Historic Landmark in 1988, West Virginia Independence Hall—with its architectural, technological, and historical significance—is truly the crown jewel of our state.

You can tour West Virginia Independence Hall, the "Birthplace of West Virginia," at 1528 Market Street for free, Tuesday - Saturday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. For more information, call 304-238-1300.

SUE-BETH WARREN has worked as Information and Security Officer at WVIH since 2013 but started there as a part-time tour guide in 1994. She's given countless first-person living history tours as Wheeling Union supporter Elizabeth Busbey and, from a script she researched and wrote, as Wheeling Confederate sympathizer Mary Hughes. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

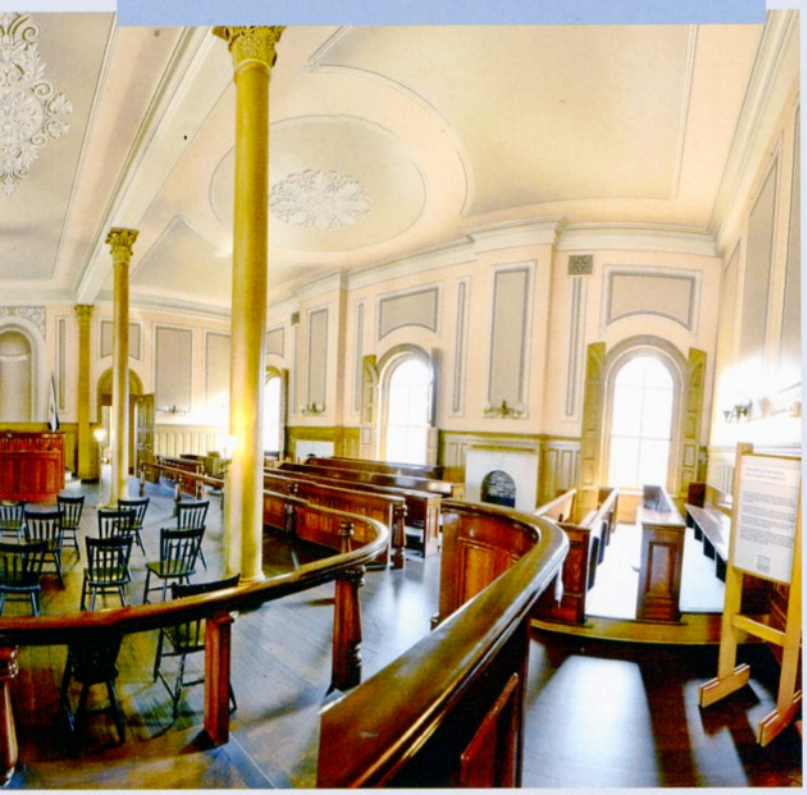
West Virginia Independence Hall Today

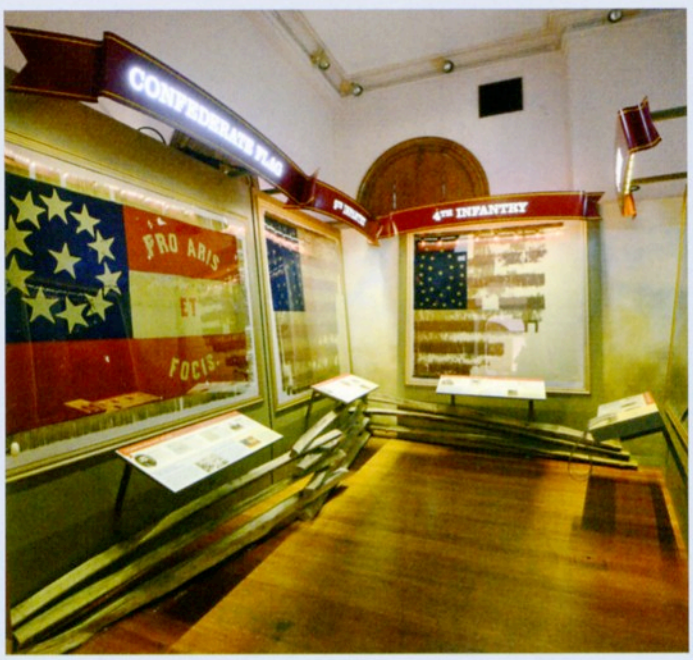
This vault, located in the second-floor office of Thomas Hornbrook, collector of customs, was the scene of one of WVIH's more bizarre incidents. On September 5, 1862, would-be burglars attempted to break into the vault. As the *Intelligencer* reported, the robbers "could not open the heavy iron door of the vault so they set to work with crow-bar and chisel to dig a hole through the only exposed side. They succeeded in digging out the bricks and making a large aperture in the wall, but the iron still remained and could not be removed. . . . They could see and feel the money, but could not get at it."

One exhibit is dedicated to WVIH's restoration, including architectural artifacts.

The restored entryway to WVIH is accentuated by the Minton tile floor, gaslights, and re-created post office boxes.

This circuit-style photo shows most of the third-floor courtroom, where our state was established. It was also the district federal courtroom for the Western District of Virginia (1859-1863) and West Virginia (1863-1907). Note the intricate ceiling work re-created based on Jasper Green's 1861 sketch (see p. 33). All photos by Steve Brightwell.





WVIH is home to the largest display of West Virginia Civil War battle flags anywhere.

The Soldiers and Sailors Monument was dedicated in 1883 to honor Civil War Union personnel. It was erected originally on the grounds of West Virginia's third state capitol (see the inside back cover). For many years, it overlooked Wheeling Park. On Memorial Day 2019, it was re-dedicated on the lawn of WVIH.

Aerial photo of the former Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy. Photo by Newbrough, courtesy of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy

By Stan Bumgardner

By the mid-1800s, Wheeling's population was growing by leaps and bounds, driven by the city's thriving industrial scene and the throngs of immigrant labor who built roads and the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad and worked in factories. The Revolutions of 1848 throughout Europe and the Irish famine also forced tens of thousands from their homelands. As a bustling commercial center, Wheeling was a natural landing spot for these new Americans.

By mid-century, Wheeling's population was topping 11,000; more than 10% were estimated to be Catholics. At the time, the Diocese of Richmond oversaw all Catholic activities across Virginia, including the region

Bishop Richard Whelan

Courtesy of the Ohio County Public Library Archives (OCPLA).

In 1849, Bishop Richard Whelan started the process of splitting the Diocese of Richmond into two parts, which came to fruition the next year as the Diocese of Wheeling. Interestingly, the western section fairly closely approximated the boundaries of what would become the new state of West Virginia. In a bit more foreshadowing, the two dioceses were headquartered in Richmond and Wheeling—which, in 1861, would become the capitals of the two Virginias. By the time of Whelan's death in 1874, the diocese had quadrupled in size to some 18,000 members while building 42 churches, nine schools, Wheeling Hospital, and an orphanage under his leadership. His last words reportedly were "my work is done." Unfortunately for the diocese, his building spree had left behind a debt of $200,000 (nearly $4.5 million in today's money).

Four Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary pump water from the well at Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy, about 1900. All photos courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives (WVSA), Mount de Chantal Collection, unless noted otherwise.

destined to become West Virginia. The diocesan bishop, Richard Whelan, who'd just relocated to Wheeling himself, believed the western part of the state needed more of a Catholic presence, including new churches and schools. He envisioned Wheeling as a focal point for these types of services. He personally designed and supervised construction of the church, which would be designated as Saint James Cathedral in 1850.

Whelan also coaxed the Archbishop of Baltimore to send nuns to Wheeling to establish a private academy for young women. After a rather harrowing two-day trip via railroad and stagecoach, the first group of Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary—a Roman Catholic order for women founded in 1610—arrived in Wheeling on April 4, 1848. Six days later, they opened the Wheeling Female Academy with 30 students. Shortly afterward, the Visitation nuns also started St. Joseph's Benevolent School in the basement of the cathedral.

Incidentally, the Wheeling Female Academy wasn't the city's first Catholic school. In 1843, lay teachers had established the German Free School for German Catholic children. It was succeeded in 1856 by the St. Alphonsus Catholic School.

The Wheeling Female Academy and the sisters' residence was originally located downtown at

Four students pose on the lawn at Mount de Chantal, about 1900. One young woman is holding the book *John Boyle O'Reilly: His Life, Poems and Speeches*.

the corner of 14th and Eoff streets. The two-story building included a dormitory for students, chapel, and classrooms, with the complex enclosed by a wall that allowed the nuns to access the cathedral in private. In 1863, Mother Placida signed the deed—using her "name in the world," Grace Fitzgerald—to purchase 100 acres of the old Steenrod farm three miles from town. In 1865, she deeded the property to the Wheeling Female Academy in trust. Sister Borgia Tubman worked with Bishop Whelan to plan and supervise the construction of a magnificent new school in what would be referred to architecturally as *eclecticism* with elements of the Mission style. The move came in time for the first Midnight Mass in West Virginia history. Also with the move came a new name: Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy, in honor of Saint Jane de Chantal, the Visitation Order's cofounder.

The education was typical for a Catholic school at the time, but music received a special emphasis, with lessons in piano, harp, guitar, voice, and dance. Much of the early credit for this belongs to Sister Mary Agnes Gubert, who taught at the Wheeling Female Academy and the Mount from the early 1850s until her death in 1882. In 1908, a music building was added, containing 36 practice rooms, an art studio, and a gym. Throughout its history, music and fine arts would be consistent hallmarks of Mount

(Top) Students in art class at Mount de Chantal, 1950. Standing: (L-R) Patricia McCann, Sally Haislip, Jacqueline Hegner, and Mary Ellen Burkle. Seated: (L-R) Mary Ann Lynch, Margot Hegner, Jean Burkett, Mary Lou Mills, and Patricia Kreiter. (Right) Mount de Chantal students Demain Donley and Patricia Hannon play ping-pong, about 1951.

de Chantal. In addition, men were hired to work the old Steenrod farm, supplying the school with an abundance of livestock, milk, vegetables, grapes, and flowers for the chapel.

By the 1870s, the Mount had developed a national reputation for excellence, attracting students from all over the country. Bishop (later Cardinal) James Gibbons paid a visit and raved about the school, "To be in Wheeling without coming out to Mount de Chantal would be like visiting Rome without going to St. Peters, or like sight-seeing in America without going to Niagara."

During the 20th century, attendance at Mount de Chantal fell, paralleling the decline in Wheeling's population and young women's increased access to private, formal educations—particularly after the city's Linsly School went co-ed in 1988. Mount de Chantal couldn't fight the winds of change forever. Declining enrollment in a historic school building led to economic woes. After 160 years, on May 31, 2008, Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy graduated its last class. The five remaining sisters transferred to the Georgetown Visitation Monastery, and the building and property were sold to Wheeling Hospital, which demolished it in 2011. Its name lives on, however, through the Mount de Chantal Conservatory of Music at Wheeling University, which has helped perpetuate an active alumnae network.

STAN BUMGARDNER is editor of GOLDENSEAL.

Anti-Catholic Riot

As Wheeling's Catholic population increased in number in the mid-1800s, so did resentment against them by white Protestants. In the 1850s, the Know-Nothing Party was on the rise nationally and in Wheeling. The Know-Nothings were decidedly anti-immigrant, which included many Catholics. This backdrop led to one of the more bizarre scenes in Wheeling history.

In 1853, Pope Pius IX asked Archbishop Gaetano Bedini to tour the United States as his official representative. Bishop Whelan invited Bedini to visit Wheeling and see the new cathedral and female academy he'd just established. Word of Bedini's visit spread, and anti-Catholic posters began popping up across town. At an anti-Catholic rally, protesters gave fiery speeches and burned Bedini in effigy. Then, the crowd headed to Whelan's house.

Whelan, though, had picked up on the hostilities and called upon his parishioners to defend Bedini. Historian Joseph Mannard states that the mob "turned its wrath on Wheeling's two most visible Catholic institutions—St. James Cathedral and its next-door neighbor, the Visitation Monastery and Academy." By the time the rioters reached Whelan's house, the cathedral, and the monastery, a large group of armed Irish men had surrounded the entire complex in a defensive position. Whelan stepped outside ostensibly to negotiate with the angry mob. In reality, he was just buying time for Bedini to slip out the back door, get into an awaiting wagon, and escape without notice. Whelan had successfully bluffed a vigilante mob and saved the cathedral, monastery, and academy from damage, but the incident points out our nation's profound level of distrust toward Catholics in the years leading up to the Civil War.

The old St. James Cathedral in Wheeling, site of the 1853 riot. Courtesy of the OCPLA.

Sister Joanne Gonter, VHM
A Life in Three Centuries

By Barb Howe

Sister Joanne Gonter, VHM (Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary), personifies the changes in the lives of women in religious orders after the convulsions that engulfed the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960s. Born in 1934 in Wheeling, Joanne took private piano lessons before entering St. Michael Parish School. She continued her lessons there under the guidance of "a very, very dear Sister of Divine Providence," Sister Victoria, and began her career as an accompanist, playing the piano while other children sang at school events.

As an eighth grader, Joanne scored the highest on an exam open to students in the tristate area to win a scholarship to Wheeling's Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy under the tutelage of the Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary (also known as the Visitandines), who lived in the adjoining monastery. She boarded at the Mount in fall 1948 and, in 1952, entered the community and made it her home for six decades. As a student, her music lessons continued, and she graduated in 1952 with a diploma in piano plus a regular diploma. While there, she also worked with Diocesan Priest Father Harold Moore in groups like the Blessed Virgin Mary Sodality, a centuries-old society.

She recalls, "I'd maybe been considering all along" being drawn to enter that community of around 40 Visitandines because of her teachers. "They loved each other. It was very neat." But when she entered the cloistered community in August 1955, "it was still 1610," the year the order was formed in France. She was given the religious name of Sister Gertrude. In addition to her religious preparation, she helped Sister Mary Martha Thompson in the dairy, as the Mount still had cows on its farm.

Sister Joanne Gonter plays the organ for mass in Georgetown. Photo by Cindy Hurley.

In September 1955, Wheeling College (now University) opened on property that had been purchased from the sisters. Sister Gertrude became one of the first students. Still cloistered in the monastery, she wasn't "allowed to eat in public, so Judy Stone, who was a lab assistant, had a little office, and that's where I would go to have my lunch. I was a chemistry major because Sister Aquin, the chemistry teacher, was dying. Nobody asked me what I wanted to take. They just said, 'We need a chemistry teacher,' so I took chemistry."

In May 1959, when the college graduated its first class, "I couldn't go to my own graduation

because we were still cloistered, so my parents went, and my mom got my diploma." She handed it to her daughter through the wooden grille at the Mount that separated the cloistered nuns from the public. "Right after graduation, I wanted to go back for some special course, and Archbishop [John Joseph] Swint said 'no,' so that was it."

Initially, she taught chemistry, philosophy, and logic. "It was kind of a good time to be teaching science because that's when Sputnik happened (1957), and we were in this race against Russia; the National Science Foundation had a new thing called Chem Study" [started in 1959 to develop an original curriculum in high school chemistry].

Wheeling College had no education courses, so Sister Gertrude went to West Liberty State College (now University) to get those credits and also stayed with Visitandines in St. Louis to attend St. Louis University. She spent a semester at Marshall University in 1968 to complete her education courses and earned a master's degree in physical science education. By the early 1970s, she gave up teaching chemistry, took theology courses at Wheeling College, and began to teach religion in addition to logic and philosophy.

Life for the Visitandines, as for women religious around the world, changed after Vatican II, the Roman Catholic convocation that met in Rome from 1962 to 1965. Communities that had embraced the cloister for centuries might begin to enter the 20th century. Sister Joanne "did a paper in 1966, just for my own satisfaction, about the whole question of cloister, and I just still feel that that has been the defining thing that had been sanctified as if it were something wonderful that you were cloistered. No, it was sociological." There had been cloisters earlier, but in 1298, Pope Boniface VIII had mandated enclosure for all women religious so they could focus on serving God and protecting their chastity. To Sister Joanne, the idea of "cloister doesn't make a Visitandine, but to me, the two values are prayer and community. [As] a value, 'cloister' is not."

In addition to abandoning the cloistered life, sisters changed their names and appearances. In 1966, Sister Gertrude reclaimed her name in the world as Sister Joanne. "When we changed the habit, it was kind of fun. We had a style show, people wearing crazy stuff. . . . I haven't worn a veil since 1989 when I was being treated for cancer, and it was too much of a hassle."

The changes included a precipitous decline in the number of women entering orders. While novice director in the 1960s, Sister Gertrude / Sister Joanne supervised women training to become women religious. But, "Every single one of them left. . . . It was the times."

At the diocesan level, Sister Joanne joined the Sisters' Council that Bishop Joseph H. Hodges established with representatives of all orders in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to provide mutual support, publish a newsletter, and collect statistics. She also served variously as the council's secretary and president and on the Diocesan Seminary Board, including a stint as the board's president. In addition, she worked with Teens Encounter Christ and served on the Planning Commission for Wheeling's Catholic Heritage Center.

Sister Joanne's deep commitment to peace and justice prompted her to join Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC), which had been formed in 1965 to protest the Vietnam War. When Sister Joanne became involved, CALC was working to bring moral, ethical, and religious values to address injustice. She attended the national convention in Atlanta, and the Wheeling committee brought CALC speakers to Wheeling.

"Sometimes we protested," Sister Joanne says, "especially in the '80s, when our government was doing awful stuff in Latin America. We protested at the federal building in Wheeling. One time, we came . . . to D.C.; it had to be before '89 because I remember wearing a veil when we protested there at the capitol."

Sister Joanne teaches students from Mount de Chantal and the Linsly School, 1970s. Courtesy of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

In 1975, Sister Joanne and other sisters worked with lay supporters to organize a board of directors for Mount de Chantal. She served on the board until the school closed, including during her first tenure as the community's superior from 1980 to 1983. But the academy's enrollment declined, and, in January 2008, the eight remaining sisters voted to close the school after the commencement ceremonies on May 31. At the time, she was in her second term as superior (2006-2009), and Sister Joanne chaired a meeting to inform students, parents, and staff of the closing and became the Visitandines' spokesperson.

The next question concerned the future of the sisters and the Mount property. The bishop "supported our request, which was to stay together, and please, may we stay in Wheeling and be affiliated with the [Georgetown Visitation Monastery in Washington, D.C.]?" As Sister Joanne recalls, "The letter came back, 'Go to Georgetown.' We hadn't really thought too much about that, but it's been the most wonderful thing. It's been like a new life."

The five Sisters then at the Mount went to Georgetown for the 400th anniversary of their

The last five sisters from the Mount depart for Georgetown, 2010: (L-R) Sisters Eleanor May Klabe, Martha Thompson, Joanne Gonter, Josephine DiBiase, and Alicia Sours. Photo by Margaret Brennan.

order in January 2010. Two stayed. Sister Joanne and two others returned to Wheeling to arrange for the sale of the property to Wheeling Hospital and supervise the disposition of 160 years of accumulated treasures to new owners around the country. They had to deal with all the problems of an "old, huge building [such as break-ins and potential fires]. It was a godsend

For her long career of teaching and service, Sister Joanne (far right)has received numerous accolades: the Distinguished Alumna Award from WU (1989); the Rev. Clifford Lewis, SJ, Award from the Alumni Association (1995); and an honorary degree and an honorable mention for the St. Francis Xavier Award (both in 2009). Most significantly, she received WU's highest honor, the Ignatian Medal at Gaudiosa in 2016. And just this year, she was named to the Wheeling Hall of Fame in the education and religion category (above). As the guardian and promoter of the Mount's history, it's appropriate that Sister Joanne was named a West Virginia History Hero (2006). Photo by Linda S. Comins.

we got out of Wheeling. We were lucky nothing serious happened."

Since moving to Georgetown in April 2010, Sister Joanne has kept her links to Wheeling. She had been a member of the Wheeling Hall of Fame board, continues serving as director of Alumnae Relations for the Mount network (since 1975), and worked with Wheeling University (WU) staff to develop the Mount de Chantal Conservatory of Music there. She was appointed to the Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School's board of trustees and served briefly as the school's archivist. She plays the organ for Mass daily, as she did in Wheeling, and, in 2011, was elected to the council of Georgetown Visitation, then named assistant superior.

Hers has been a life of service to God and others, and I've been privileged to count her as a friend.

The author thanks Margaret Brennan, whose interviews with Sister Joanne in 2011 and 2016 provided invaluable material for this article. She also thanks Sister Joanne for her contributions.

BARB HOWE published "Pioneers on a Mission for God: The Order of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wheeling, 1848-1860" (*West Virginia History* [New Series, vol. 4: Spring 2010]) and "Expansion Despite 'National Difficulties': The Order of the Visitation of Blessed Virgin Mary in Wheeling, 1861-1870" (*West Virginia History* [New Series, vol. 5: Fall 2011]). This is Barb's third contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Out and About in Wheeling

Photos by Steve Brightwell

Our photographer, Steve Brightwell, and I don't get a chance to go on the road together very often. When we do, though, we make a habit of doing a little sightseeing—and there are plenty of sites to see in Wheeling. —ed.

Interstate roads had mile markers, even two centuries ago. Some of these markers in the Wheeling area still exist. In 1806, Congress authorized extending National Road west from Cumberland, Md. The first mail coach arrived August 1, 1818, marking the westward expansion of our nation and propelling Wheeling into an industrial dynamo. This marker on Route 40 is a lasting reminder of our first interstate road.

Wheeling has done a tremendous job interpreting its own history. Sometimes, cities sweep their negative sides under a rug, but Wheeling's leaders have worked to tell their complete story. Here, at the corner of 10th and Market streets, is the site of the old slave auction block discussed in Seán Duffy's article [see p. 16].

The Kruger Street Toy & Train Museum in the Elm Grove section has nearly every toy you might have grown up with—at least if you were a child in the 1900s. Many of the artifacts are from the old Marx Toy Company in Glen Dale [see "Marx Toy Company" by Cheryl Harshman, Winter 2007].

Artisan Center

The Wheeling Artisan Center, located downtown in a renovated industrial building from the 1860s [see Carl E. Feather's article on p. 74], is home to River City Restaurant, a regional artisan shop, "Made in Wheeling" exhibits, an event space, and the Wheeling Heritage headquarters.

Madonna of the Trail

One of the most stunning monuments in our state is *Madonna of the Trail*. It's one of 12 identical statues designed by sculptor August Leimbach and dedicated to the spirit of pioneer women. The others stretch from Bethesda, Md., to Upland, Calif. The Wheeling *Madonna* was the second one dedicated—on July 7, 1928—following the unveiling of one in Springfield, Ill., three days earlier. Wheeling's statue stands on the edge of Wheeling Park, facing National Road. The committee overseeing the national project was led by Judge (later President) Harry Truman.

Two of Wheeling's unusual food / drink establishments are Good Mansion Wines (top) and Ye Olde Alpha (bottom). Good Mansion Wines is a nice historical pun with an eclectic selection of wines, cheeses, pastries, candies, and other tempting morsels. It's housed in the elegant East Wheeling mansion (built in 1905) of former department store magnate L. S. Good. Ye Olde Alpha is a family-owned neighborhood restaurant and bar established in 1932. This must-see experience has the ambience of a café / bar from the 1950s.

Food Heritage in Wheeling

Text and photo by Stan Bumgardner

In 2013, I led a project—funded in part by the West Virginia Humanities Council—to document our state's food heritage. Before visiting Wheeling, I checked in with Margaret Brennan for advice (see p. 3). She guided me to two churches with wonderful food traditions.

First, I went to St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church on Chapline Street, where women were prepping for the annual Grecian Fest (last week of July) by making the delightful, twisted pastry *koulourakia*, or Greek Easter cookie, based on Old World recipes. "No two recipes are the same," one woman noted. As good as the pastry was, it was 10 times better when I dipped it in my coffee.

The women's company surpassed even the food. Most were second- or third-generation Americans; their ancestors came from the areas in and around Greece and Turkey in the early 1900s, especially during the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922). Many of these immigrants mined coal when they first came; others opened groceries and restaurants, even though none had operated food businesses back home. And their eateries didn't serve Greek food because, as one woman said, "People in this country weren't ready for that taste." They ran hot dog-hamburger diners and spoke English in public. Meanwhile, their kids spoke Greek and ate Greek food at home and attended Greek school daily after their regular school.

That afternoon, I headed to South Wheeling (with a care package of *koulourakia*) and visited Our Lady of Perpetual Help, our state's last Ukrainian church. Most early Ukrainian immigrants came in the 1890s from Europe's Galicia region, which has been divvied up among countries for centuries. More than most denominations, this church understands the importance of preserving its heritage, which has been threatened for so long. Some congregants I met were born in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s.

Women from St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church prep food for the annual Grecian Fest, 2013.

In addition to the Grecian Fest in late July, Wheeling also hosts festivals celebrating Celtic, Indian, Italian, and Lebanese food and culture. Dates and contact information can vary from year to year. To keep informed, please check the Wheeling CVB events page: https://wheelingcvb.com/events/.

Two key foods of their Byzantine heritage are *varenyky* (pierogi) and cabbage rolls. These folks gather weekly to make their original recipes. I quickly learned one trick to crafting pierogies. On my first try, I put *way* too much filling (potatoes and cheese) in my dough, so I couldn't fold it properly. I asked my teacher how to fix it. In a very sweet tone, she replied, "Here's how you fix it." She wadded up my pitiful attempt, tossed it in the trash, and advised, "You fix it by starting over." Along with Billy Edd Wheeler's "you can't unburn the beans" [see Summer 2016], this is now one of my favorite food-life lessons. When I asked the group whether the dough or filling is more important, I got yet another lesson: "It's the tender loving care."

Our Lady of Perpetual Help sells its homemade *varenyky* and cabbage rolls to keep the church going. You can pick up these tasty treats at the church: http://stmarysolph.com/varenyky.html.

Dr. Roy and Mary Ellen Harmon Jr.
"A very rewarding life"

By Carl E. Feather

Dr. Roy Campbell Harmon Jr. could have practiced podiatry just about any place in the country after graduating from the Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine in 1948. But he wanted to practice in his hometown of Wheeling, so he launched a career back home that would span more than six decades.

"Roy never wanted to live any place other than Wheeling," says Mary Ellen Harmon, his widow. "Roy was born there and went to Triadelphia High School, where I also went."

Roy was born in Wheeling on September 26, 1926, and died February 7, 2018, in Zelienople, Penn. He and Mary Ellen moved there in 2013; as Roy's health declined, they needed to be closer to their children and their spouses: David and Susan Harmon, John and Anne Harmon, and Dr. Forozan and June Navid.

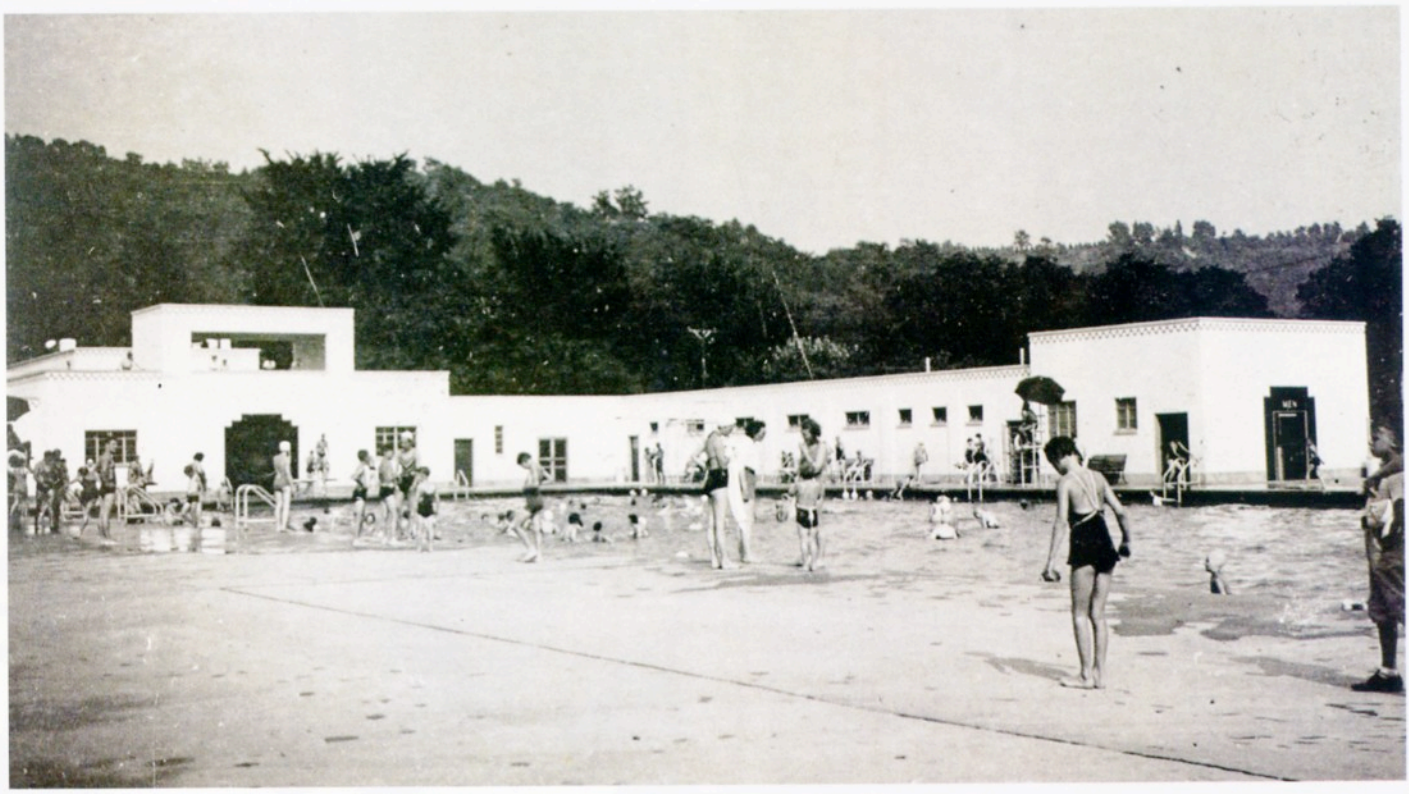
Mary Ellen continues to live in Zelienople, but her heart lies 81 miles to the southwest, in the Elm Grove section of Wheeling. Located along National Road, about five miles east of downtown, Elm Grove was one of several outlying bedroom communities eventually incorporated into the city. The community was an enclave of middle-class families.

"It was a clean, well-kept neighborhood," Mary Ellen says. "We never felt separate from Wheeling, and we did all of our shopping downtown. We'd go there at least once a week. We loved [Elm Grove]. The schools were good, and it was not a metropolis, not overly big. It was a little like growing up in a big city, but even though things were scattered around, people knew each other."

Mary Ellen Brown was born in Johnstown, Penn., September 12, 1928. Her family moved to Wheeling in 1931. Her father worked for the Sunshine Biscuit Company as a district manager and territory salesman.

Mary Ellen Harmon holds a photo of her and her late husband, Roy. Photo by Carl E. Feather.

Dave Harmon, Roy and Mary Ellen's son, says his grandfather favored Elm Grove for several reasons. For one, it was on the outskirts of Wheeling's traffic congestion, so it was easier to get to his retail customers from Elm Grove. Another reason was the heavy industrialization in Wheeling proper. Air pollution from the factories was largely mitigated by the hills between Wheeling and Elm Grove. Further, both Oglebay Park and Wheeling Park were



The Wheeling Park pool, shown here in the 1930s, was a popular summer hangout for young folks like Mary Ellen and Roy. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives, Mary DeFillipo Collection.

only a short distance away, providing plenty of greenspace and recreation.

"It cost a nickel to ride the bus to [Wheeling] Park, but I would walk and save the nickel," recalls Mary Ellen, who spent many carefree summer days at the park.

Her father enjoyed relatively stable employment in Wheeling, which was still going strong in the 1930s and 1940s. "For him," Dave says, "Wheeling was a great opportunity at the time. He met his sales-objective numbers through the Depression years, and, for him, Wheeling was a big financial step up."

The war years were a bit more challenging due to material shortages. Mary Ellen says her father always supplied the family with cookies and crackers, and they weren't the damaged packages from the warehouse, either. Dave says his grandfather was a consummate salesman who always had an assortment of products in his car trunk. He offered samples to whoever would bite for his spiel. Dave says

Mary Ellen Brown (left) and her mother, Marjorie Jenny Walter Brown, 1940s. All remaining photos courtesy of Dave Harmon.

Mary Ellen's father, John David Brown, stands on their porch in Elm Grove and shows off his trunk full of cookie treasures.

all his friends thought it was pretty cool when his grandfather showed up with his trunk full of cookies.

Mary Ellen's father found time to volunteer with Elm Grove Civics, which raised money for the community and its baseball team. For some reason unknown to the family, the Civics also owned a racehorse, which apparently did quite well at Wheeling Downs.

The family rented several homes in Elm Grove, but it was the one on Kruger Street that Mary Ellen remembers best. Her mother didn't work outside the home; as the only daughter, Mary Ellen was her mother's apprentice in domestic duties. The rhythm of the household duties was as routine as her father's sales route.

Monday was laundry day; Mary Ellen's mother used a wringer washer and, when weather permitted, hung the laundry outside to dry. When it was too cold outdoors, they used a clothesline in the basement, where heat from the coal-fired furnace accomplished the task. Tuesdays were for ironing; they had an ironing board for Mary Ellen and one for her mother. Because ironing was so time consuming, dinner had to be simple on Tuesdays, usually baked beans and pork chops. When the children got old enough to clean the house, they shared in the Wednesday duties. Mary Ellen's area was the bathroom; her brother Shannon did the porch. On the remaining days, the kids shared additional duties.

Mary Ellen's jobs outside the home included babysitting, working in a grocery, and eventually graduating to the Sears in downtown Wheeling. Dave notes that many youngsters also found work at the parks, including one of his uncles, who was a lifeguard. "It was a great place to work," says Mary Ellen. "The parks were so wonderful. You took your children to the parks all summer long."

Mary Ellen Brown, shortly after graduating high school, and Roy Harmon Jr., when he was in the Army Air Corps.

Mary Ellen's teen years paralleled those of World War II, so her experiences were skewed by rationing and the ever-present fear of distressing news. "When you walked into [high] school in the morning, you'd always hold your breath," she recalls. "You knew there was the possibility of really bad news."

The students even saw their teachers drafted out of the classroom and into the war effort. And when senior boys talked about their post-graduation plans, they focused on which branch of the service they would enlist in rather than universities and majors.

Mary Ellen recalls one neighbor, in particular, who served on the USS *Indianapolis*, which delivered the Little Boy atomic bomb to Tinian Island. On the return trip to the Philippines, the ship was torpedoed and quickly sank. The crew was dumped into shark-infested waters, where they spent five harrowing days. Only 317 of the 1,196 sailors on the *Indianapolis* survived. In the film *Jaws*, Robert Shaw's character recounts this dreadful experience.

Back on Kruger Street, the sacrifices were much less severe. Mary Ellen recalls her mother recutting her father's old suit into clothing for the boys. Blackouts brought most activities to a halt, but if teenagers knew about them in advance, opportunity knocked. Mary Ellen says, "Somehow, the boys would find out in advance . . . and they would quickly go to a girl's home so when the lights went out, they could have some time alone with the girl!"

Mary Ellen was in eighth grade when she first saw her future husband, who was two grades ahead. "I said to myself, 'That man is not safe. I am going to chase him until I get him.' He was the handsomest man I'd ever seen," she says.

Two years later, Mary Ellen made it clear to Roy she thought he was "pretty good looking."

In the first-floor hall of Triadelphia High, Roy asked her for a date. She says their "first very romantic movie" was Laurel and Hardy in *The Flying Deuces*. Mary Ellen and Roy also dated others during their high school years. "In those days, it wasn't competitive. You would date one fella for a while, then see someone else for a while," she explains.

Roy entered the Army Air Corps after graduation, but the war ended before he was sent into duty. He completed his studies in Cleveland, and, at the start of the last semester of his six-year podiatry program, Roy and Mary Ellen were married in St. Mark's Lutheran Church in her neighborhood. The simple ceremony, held after the morning church service, took about 15 minutes.

Dave says his father always wanted to be in solo practice in Wheeling. But his best friend's father, who was a Wheeling podiatrist, told Roy that it would be difficult because there were already several podiatrists in town. He suggested that Roy start his practice elsewhere. Roy found an opportunity in Waynesburg, Penn., an hour's drive from Wheeling. "It was a poor coal mining area, and they didn't have a podiatrist," Mary Ellen says. "He started out real humble and built his practice, worked his way up."

Roy's Waynesburg practice thrived, and, after a couple of years, he rented an office in Wheeling at the corner of 12th and Market streets. At first, he divided his time between Wheeling and Waynesburg. As the Wheeling office got busier, though, Roy scaled back his work in Waynesburg, largely because the young couple greatly missed Wheeling and wanted to return home. He gradually went from three days a week to one in Waynesburg, where he continued to practice until the late 1990s out of gratitude to his longtime patients there.

Meanwhile, his Wheeling practice was outgrowing its office, so he moved to a larger one at 55 15th Street. Their family was growing, as well. Mary Ellen stayed home with their three children until the youngest was a teen and then went to work in her husband's medical office. Mary Ellen had planned to be a teacher, but she says she ended up with a small class—her three children—who she taught about life. When she finally entered the workforce in her 30s, she had a great boss. "I got taught by the master," she says. "I loved working for him."

"I arrived at 10 a.m. every day," she says. "I was responsible for all the paper in the office, anything that was on paper. I got along well with the boss. In the office, he was the boss. And as long as I made pie every other day, he was OK with me being the boss at home." Apple was his favorite, but any kind would do.

Roy was a dedicated physician who earned the respect of patients and colleagues alike. He amazed other surgeons because he was ambidextrous and could suture with either hand. "When his left hand got tired from stitching, he'd switch over to the right one. He favored the left hand," says Mary Ellen, who assisted with many surgical procedures.

Roy was active in both the community and his profession, serving as president of the West Virginia Podiatric Association. He was a councilman, call committee member, and longtime usher at his church, Edgewood (now Grace) Lutheran; he was also active in Wheeling's Rotary Club, Assembly, and Fort Henry Club.

Mary Ellen recalls a time when Roy was in podiatry school and they were enjoying the view of Meadow Estates from Wheeling Park. While discussing their future, Roy told her right then they were going to get married and someday live in one of those nice houses. That prophecy came true in 1973, when they purchased their home on Meadow Lane.

Roy practiced podiatry from April 1, 1948, until November 1, 2011. During that time, he rarely took more than a week's vacation a year. Dave says his father would block out two weeks, but by the end of the first, he'd start calling to schedule appointments. "He would cut his vacation short a couple of days because he missed his work and patients," Dave says.

While on leave from the Army Air Corps, Roy enjoys an afternoon with Mary Ellen in Wheeling.

"He just wouldn't quit the practice," Mary Ellen says. "I kept saying, 'I'm getting tired!'"

Even after he retired due to illness, Roy instructed his family to leave the office exactly as it was the day he walked out. He hoped his health would improve so he could return and pick up where he'd left off: seeing patients, easing their pain, giving them hope, and always offering a smile and his deep sense of humor.

"He finally gave us the go-ahead to shut it down after several years, and that broke his heart," Dave says.

Mary Ellen cherishes every memory of his patients, his staff, and her husband—memories of two lives well lived in Wheeling. "It was a very rewarding life," Mary Ellen says. "It was great."

CARL E. FEATHER is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Ashtabula County, Ohio. He has family roots in Tucker and Preston counties and is the author of the book *Mountain People in a Flat Land*. You can follow Carl's blog at thefeathercottage.com, where he often writes about West Virginia. Carl has been a longtime GOLDENSEAL contributor, dating back to his first article in our Summer 1987 issue.

"Wheeling to Wheeling"

By Dave Harmon

As Carl notes in his article, my dad's podiatry career started in Waynesburg, Penn. We still visited Wheeling most weekends, but money was tight. So, he'd put Mom and me on a Greyhound bus (her ticket was $4; I rode for free), which lumbered north along Route 19 to Washington and then on old Route 40 to Wheeling. We called that the "front way."

Dad would then hitchhike the "back way" over Routes 21, 250, and 88—and beat us every time. It was much hillier but shorter by about 10 miles. I thought it was magic how he could put us on a bus in Waynesburg and still be there to pick us up in Wheeling!

My parents rightfully thought that hitchhiking was no way for a young doctor to build his career and image, so, in the early '50s, they scraped together enough to buy a car. An old high school friend of my dad's, Sidney Wiseman, owned a used-car lot and auto salvage yard in South Wheeling. Dad naturally went to him for our first car. I think Dad had only about $500, so his options were limited. Sidney had a 1946 or '47 Studebaker black business coupe that had been a company car for Bloch Brothers Tobacco. Its biggest plus was brand new oversized truck tires, a selling point since tires were somewhat scarce due to the war. Its biggest minus was that the engine burned prodigious amounts of oil because its piston rings were shot. The *real* downside was that we always had a lingering smell of burnt oil on our clothes since there was no air conditioning, forcing us to leave the windows down most of the time. I can still vividly remember that smell more than 65 years later.

Dad would drive it until we could hear the idling engine knocking from low oil. This usually occurred at red lights or when we were finishing up a trip. Except for changing tires, Dad was as fast as any pit crew at the Indy 500. When the oil got low, he'd put the car in neutral, pull the emergency brake, hop out, get his gallon can of used oil out of the trunk, run around the passenger's side, open the split hood, pour in the oil (the oil cap and dipstick were long gone) without a funnel and with little spillage, slam down and latch the hood, hastily throw the can back in the trunk, and return to the driver's seat—always in under 30 seconds. Mom and I used to time him. I think his best-ever was 22 seconds. Occasionally, we even got a round of applause from bystanders.

He wasn't perfect, though. I remember several occasions when he didn't engage the emergency brake enough, and the car would roll slowly away from him into the intersection or toward the next car. I thought it was funny, but clearly, Mom wasn't amused.

Since it was a business coupe, it had no back seat. Dad built a little bench for me out of used 2x4s. When I sat down, I couldn't see anything, so I spent most of my time standing on it. I'd look out the split back window and watch the world go by backwards—and a lot of gray-blue smoke chugging out of the exhaust. I'd pretend I was playing a game (almost like an early video game) where I was bombing the car behind us with smoke.

We loved those trips! Dad would say, "We're wheeling to Wheeling in style. Sometimes, Dad or Mom would say instead, "We're wheeling to Wheeling under a camouflage of smoke." It was a great source of amusement.

The front way to Wheeling was fairly flat, but the back way was very hilly, which caused the car to smoke more. The longest hill was on Route 88 from Bethlehem into Elm Grove, past what

A young Dave Harmon looks like he's ready to take the car out for a spin—if he could only reach the pedals.

used to be the Esquire Supper Club. I remember once telling Dad to "hit it" at the bottom of that hill. He punched it, generating a dense cloud of smoke that engulfed my target: the car behind. When the trailing car finally emerged from the smog, I could see smoke rolling out of its windows, and the driver shaking his fist at me.

After about four or five years of modest prosperity and many oil injections, the car's clutch finally gave out. My parents went back to Sidney's and traded up to a '49 Ford flathead V8. It'd been a company car for, I believe, Wheeling Steel. It was in much better shape and had an actual back seat. On the other hand, it was all dented up and looked like it'd been driven over large bumps—with the rocker panels to prove it.

I guess driving those early cars proved a bit traumatic for Dad. He always said that one day, he'd drive a nice Cadillac instead. Thanks to his ever-growing practice, he eventually owned a total of 10 Caddies and 6 upper-end Buicks, including two Gran Sport convertibles.

Several years later, when Peter, Paul, and Mary became famous, we posthumously renamed our old black business coupe "Puff, the Magic Studebaker."

Dave Harmon graduated from WVU in 1972 with a bachelor's in civil engineering. His wife, Susan Kelly, also from Wheeling, graduated from WVU with a master's in education in 1974. They lived in Wheeling and Vienna (Wood County) for the next two decades before moving to Pittsburgh in the early '90s. Dave notes, "I didn't want to leave West Virginia, but we had to follow our best job opportunities. I'm proud to say, 'I'm still a West Virginia Hillbilly!'" This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

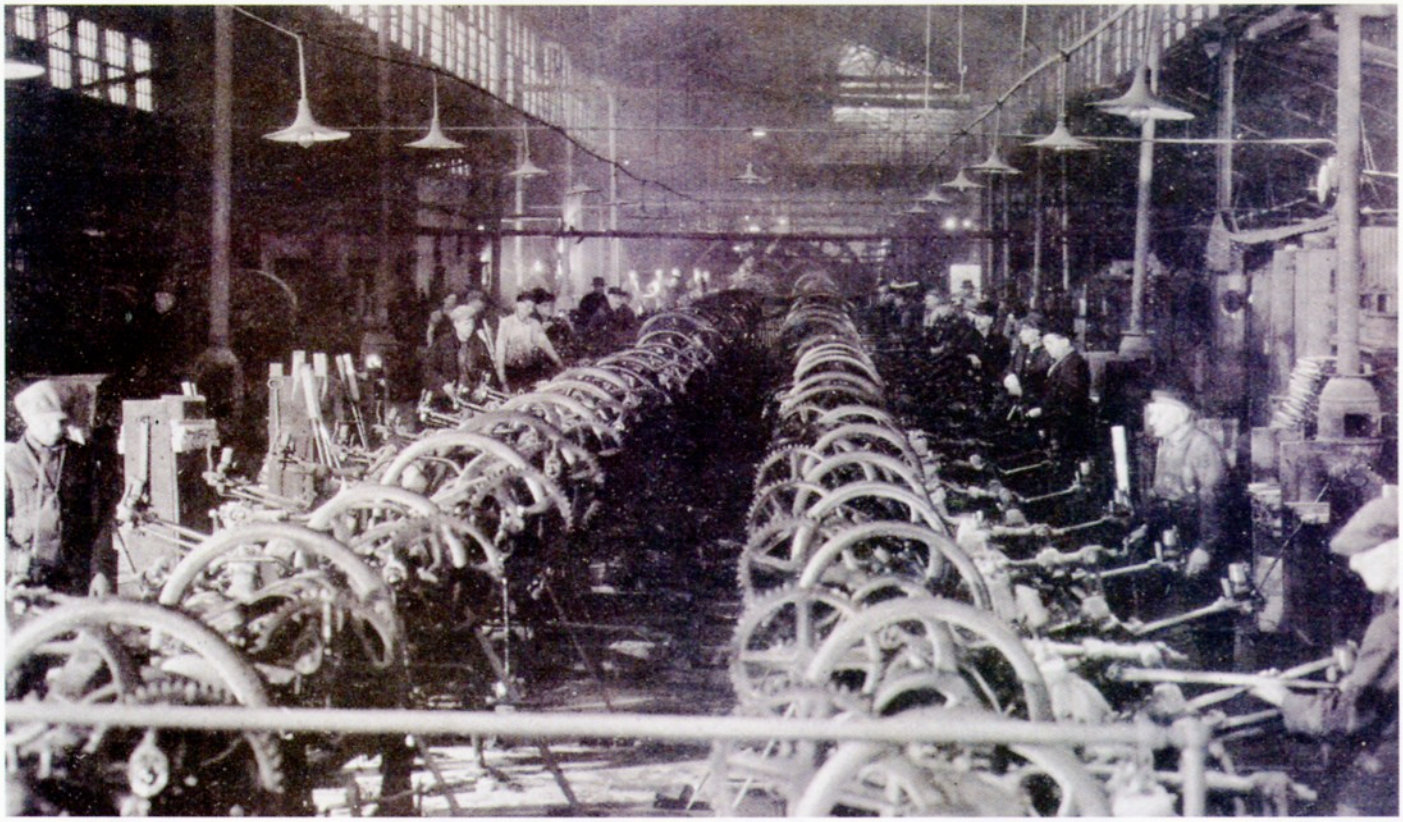
Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives (WVSA).

Living the American Dream at Wheeling-Pitt

By Mark Swiger

When Mike Fahey joined Wheeling Steel in 1963 at its Beech Bottom corrugating plant, the steel industry was going strong. The company had just launched a massive capital improvement and modernization strategy, forced by increased competition and emerging global markets. Having grown up in the Upper Ohio Valley, Mike was in the right place at the right time in our history.

His career mirrored other work of the Industrial Era. He started in the lathe accessories area before moving up the company ladder. From 1963 to 1968, he was a skilled apprentice in the pipefitters' union; from 1972 to 1975, he was an electrician apprentice; and eventually, he became superintendent of Maintenance Services at Beech Bottom until his retirement from Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel (as it was known after a 1968 merger) in September 1989. He also worked for a short time as a foreman at the company's LaBelle cut nail plant in Wheeling. Over his career, there were layoffs during slow periods—mainly in winter, when the construction industry wasn't as active. During those times, Mike found work elsewhere, including three stints at Triangle Conduit in Glen Dale. All three



In 1852, 22 ironworkers and nailers opened the LaBelle Iron Works in South Wheeling, marking the beginning of Wheeling Steel. By the time Mike Fahey became a foreman at LaBelle in the late 20th century, the technology had changed relatively little. From *Mine to Market* (1926), courtesy of the WVSA.

times, he returned to his old job when the layoffs ended.

Wheeling Steel/Wheeling-Pitt (as it was known locally) was a key employer in the region, but it was much more than that. Its roots date back to 1852, when the LaBelle Iron Works was established in South Wheeling. LaBelle was a leading producer of cut nails; eventually, it would become the only domestic manufacturer of the product (finally closing in 2010). This long-lasting tradition gave Wheeling one of its nicknames: Nail City. Even today, the city's pro hockey team is called the Wheeling Nailers. Cut nails were more expensive but stronger than wire nails, which would dominate the industry by 1900. LaBelle expanded by purchasing another factory in Steubenville, Ohio, and began producing other steel products as the cut nail market increasingly gave way to wire nails.

On June 21, 1920, a merger brought together the LaBelle Iron Works, Whitaker-Glessner, and Wheeling Steel and Iron, making the Wheeling Steel Corporation a major force nationally and internationally. Our region's steel industry drew immigrants from around the world and boosted the Northern Panhandle's economy. After the merger, Wheeling Steel started operating nine steel mills, stretching from Benwood in Marshall County to Steubenville, some 30 miles away. Riding on the high demand for steel following World War I, Wheeling Steel had to deal with labor disputes, the Great Depression, and other problems faced by industries throughout West Virginia and the nation.

As a massive conglomeration, Wheeling Steel withstood the Depression better than many other companies because its network of nine mills worked interdependently. Each one produced a variety of steel products using innovative processes; often, a boom in one product led to a boom in another one. During the Depression, the company even launched its

A young Karen and Mike Fahey, dressed to the nines, about 1960. Courtesy of Mike Fahey.

own radio variety show, starring its workers [see Winter 1992].

Wheeling-Pitt finally came into existence in 1968, when Wheeling Steel merged with the smaller, struggling Pittsburgh Steel. While the domestic steel industry was faltering in the late 1900s, Wheeling-Pitt's interdependence kept its factories in production longer than many others could.

It's no exaggeration to say that Wheeling Steel / Wheeling-Pitt helped build Modern America. It also transformed communities into vibrant places where the fruits of a nation's labor were realized. Wheeling became both a manufacturing and social hub.

Mike Fahey was born in 1942 and graduated from Moundsville High School in 1960. He calls the 1950s "rough times for our [local] economy. It wasn't until the 1960s that the economy picked up."

That's when he found his role in the steel industry. A year before Mike joined Wheeling Steel, the company began modernizing its plants; it was still quite profitable, but its factories required updating. Between 1962 and 1966, Wheeling Steel invested $200 million to upgrade its facilities and add personnel—workers like Mike. Although the updates were needed, the cost challenged the company. By 1966, despite record sales, Wheeling Steel was carrying more than $15 million in operating losses. This helped force its merger two years later with Pittsburgh Steel.

Mike says that although steel manufacturing has always faced hurdles, Wheeling-Pitt continually bounced back. In fact, the 1968 merger possibly saved both Wheeling Steel and Pittsburgh Steel by bolstering production at a critical time. Mike mentions, for instance, during his time as plant foreman at LaBelle,

Workers at Wheeling Corrugating's Beech Bottom plant, 1970s. Courtesy of the WVSA, Wheeling-Pitt Collection.

that the factory was still "using 19th-century methods for making its world-famous nails. It innovated with transistor and radio-controlled cranes and magnetic stackers." These were forerunners of programmable controllers used to mechanize work. Mike calls them "transistor-controlled modules—Westinghouse technology, like that of building circuits."

During the span from 1968 to 1974, Wheeling-Pitt doubled its sales from $500 million to $1 billion, mainly due to the modernization wave and the addition of newer Monongahela Valley factories that had belonged to Pittsburgh Steel. Modernization, however, can be a two-edged sword. During Mike's career, the industry's shift from labor-intensive manufacturing to high technology had some devastating effects on the workforce. Industry saw increased cycles of layoffs and recalls. Between 1960 and 1990, Wheeling's population dropped nearly in half to about 35,000.

During the final two decades of the 20th century, Wheeling-Pitt faced its most monumental struggles. The need for modernization, the struggle to compete globally against more modern competitors, and the balance between business and labor all reached their pinnacles during this period. Following the record sales of the mid-1970s, a recession adversely affected Wheeling-Pitt, which wasn't alone among Rust Belt companies. The same problems confronted many other steelmakers and the U.S. manufacturing sector in general; in the 1980s alone, more than 400 steel mills closed nationally, and up to 200,000 steelworkers lost their jobs.

Mike says, with a bit of pride in his voice, that Beech Bottom and Wheeling-Pitt's other

The floor of the Beech Bottom plant, with rolls of corrugated steel, as it looked when Mike worked there in the 1970s. Courtesy of the WVSA, Wheeling-Pitt Collection.

corrugating plants kept the company above water. Wheeling-Pitt's strategy, according to Mike, was to begin "selling their corrugating products at cost in order to drive demand for produced steel. By driving production demand, the company could keep most of its operations going during hard times and maintain profitability in the production of steel."

As a result, Wheeling-Pitt's manufacturing expanded at a time when foreign steel could be purchased in the United States at a lower rate than domestic steel. Mike notes that more than 120 corrugating plants were running across the country and keeping steelmakers like Wheeling-Pitt afloat. He adds, though, that selling corrugated steel at cost was unsustainable. He saw Wheeling-Pitt's decline begin in the early 1980s. That's when, under new management, the company again expanded its capital improvements and experienced multiple financial crises and labor strikes from which the company would never fully recover.

In spring 1985, Wheeling-Pitt went through Chapter 11 bankruptcy, followed a couple of months later by a strike of some 8,500 employees that ended with union concessions on wages, a federal agency assuming pension responsibilities for workers, and the removal of controversial CEO Dennis Carney. Launched around the same time was a joint venture between Wheeling-Pitt and Japan's Nisshin Steel, which became a 10% owner. Meanwhile, Wheeling-Pitt invested $10 million in a new rust-resistant galvanized steelmaking process at one of its former plants in Follansbee; the innovative and successful Wheeling-Nisshin factory still operates today on that site.

After Mike left in September 1989 to take a job in the chemical industry in Marshall County, Wheeling-Pitt exited Chapter 11 bankruptcy (1991) and experienced resurging profits in the 1990s. After restructuring its operations and adjusting to demands of the global marketplace, Wheeling-Pitt emerged yet again as a leading domestic steel producer, some 20 years after the golden

Now retired, Mike Fahey (left) enjoys an evening with his family. Courtesy of Mike Fahey.

age of American steelmaking had begun to wane. However, more labor issues led to a second bankruptcy in November 2000. The company began selling off its facilities and shut down for good in 2013.

There's a lot of local nostalgia attached to the periods when steelmaking was at its zenith. Mike and many of his cohorts got to experience the American Dream—where laborers could work themselves up into administrative positions. This created a vibrant middle class, which encouraged a positive work ethic in future generations.

What lessons should we learn from this? West Virginians, when given the opportunity, have a pioneering spirit that helps them forge new ventures while still respecting past traditions. Our hope is that Wheeling—with its natural and manmade transportation advantages, and its spirit of hard work—will foster new opportunities for the region while learning the lessons of Wheeling-Pitt and other past titans of industry.

Mike Fahey got to live the American Dream and hopes many others will get the same chance. Looking back on his career, he takes great pride in his work, his community, and his nation. But he also watched as his industry transitioned from a large to a smaller workforce due largely to mechanization. And Mike has a unique perspective on the decline in labor. As a former member of numerous unions and a company administrator, he sees both sides of the labor-management debate. Still, he doesn't differentiate himself as a laborer versus an administrator. Rather, he sees himself as a steelworker who's lived through the ebbs and flows of life and work while raising a family.

MARK SWIGER retired after teaching social studies for 33 years in Marshall County. The Elkins native is the former cross-country track head coach at Wheeling University. He's been an adjunct professor at West Liberty University and Bethany College. For the last two decades, he's served as an expert consultant on sustainability and green buildings, particularly with schools. This is his first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

Wheeling and Music and Me

By Mollie O'Brien

People always ask me if I grew up singing around the kitchen table with my family. That couldn't be farther from the truth, and that's not an unfortunate thing, really. I was blessed with a happy childhood, parents who let me listen to as much music as I liked, and siblings who loved music as much as I did. So even though we weren't the stereotypical West Virginia mountain family playing banjos and the like, we heard lots of music, took music lessons, and were exposed to as much music as possible. The fact of the matter is that I was lucky to have been born in Wheeling at a time when music on the radio wasn't shoehorned into boxes of styles.

When I was very little, there was no television yet in our house—the radio and newspapers were pretty much where you got your news and heard about music. My mother called my younger brother, Tim, the "TV baby" because by the time he was born, there was a TV firmly in place in the den, and he loved to sit there and look at it. But for me, I don't remember much about TV as a very young child except for listening to Lawrence Welk on Saturday nights; we occasionally had a baby-sitter who loved that show and put it on whenever she babysat. (I loved it too and will admit that, if pressured, I still do today.)

I heard about new music only from the radio back then. There were no programmers or music directors who dictated what the DJs played. And because there really was only one pre-FM pop music station in Wheeling, you could turn on the radio, hear all kinds of things, and be blissfully unaware that they didn't fit together musically because, to my ear, they *did* fit nicely.

When I was about seven or eight, I got the measles. My mother told me I had the worst case of them among my siblings, and so I was confined to my room for what seemed like weeks. The blinds were kept drawn, and I had to wear sunglasses, for some reason, and so I couldn't read or do coloring books or anything else to amuse myself. Because of that, my mother took the kitchen radio and placed it on a TV tray next to my bed. Now, not only did I have something to help occupy me between my many bouts of fever but having a radio for my own personal use really opened up my mind and my world. That kitchen transistor radio was mine for that short period of time, and I kept it solidly dialed in to Wheeling's WKWK. From dawn until dusk, I heard all kinds of music: Frank Sinatra, Bill Haley, Elvis Presley, Ray Charles, and more. Radio in those days played anything and everything. There was no need for categorizing what we wanted to hear—from

Our author, Mollie O'Brien, at Wheeling's Towngate Theater, 1979. All photos courtesy of our author.

Ernie K-Doe to Rosemary Clooney—it was all good, and WKWK played it.

If the radio was my musical launching pad, the Washington Avenue bus was the rocket ship that took me downtown to G. C. Murphy to look over the latest 45s in stock. It seemed like I rode the bus downtown almost every Saturday to see what was new in the bins. While I can't remember now what a single cost in those days, I always seemed to have enough allowance saved up each week to buy at least one new release to bring home and play on our family's small stereo. We were allowed to play *our* music on that stereo only occasionally. Otherwise, we had my parents' gate-folded sets of 78s that were kept on a shelf—Guy Lombardo and other mainstream big bands that really held no interest for me. These must have been the records my parents played when they had people over for dinner, but for the life of me, I don't ever remember them playing that music other times, which was fine by me because I didn't really like it anyway. I wanted to hear what I wanted to hear, and so I saved up money via the usual avenues kids had in those days—babysitting and running a few lemonade stands in the summer—and eventually, I had enough money to purchase my very own record player at, of all places, the Singer Sewing Machine store on Market Street, right across the street from the upper level of G. C. Murphy. It ran on four C batteries and played 45s—pretty much the only way to hear the hits at the time. I was free to listen to the music I loved, when I wanted to, and, best of all, in my room by myself.

The 45s gave way to albums, and in 1963, all hell broke loose when I first heard The Beatles on WKWK. The sound was unlike anything any of us had ever heard, and from then on, I was a solid fan and could barely think of anything *but* The Beatles. Every day after school, I'd head home to listen to them, read the latest about them in music magazines, and, basically, just dream about them constantly. I became an official fan club

Mollie and her younger brother, Tim, skating in Wheeling, 1962.

member, and when WKWK announced that the fan club would be selling tickets to a Beatles concert in Pittsburgh for September 14, 1964, Tim and I immediately sent away for four tickets at the cost of around $7 each. The tickets were for me, Tim, our cousin Karen, and our mother, who amazingly agreed to take us all the way to the 'Burgh for a rock 'n' roll concert—on a *school* night. I don't remember much of what I heard that night in Pittsburgh because as soon as The Beatles hit the stage, it was pandemonium, and there was no way anyone could hear a thing. But the point is, I was *there*.

I didn't think there was any way to top that feat. But sure enough, I came to realize there was no need to go much farther than Route 88 or National Road to hear great music. From grade school on into high school, I learned how many musical opportunities my little town had to offer; it still astounds me now how much I had available to me. Little did I realize then that there would be many more chances to hear incredible music right in my backyard.

Tim and Mollie O'Brien play at the 1969 Oglebay Institute Folk Festival.

It wasn't just what I heard on the radio that I loved so much. I loved the grade school dances at St. Mike's with Wahoo and the Buccaneers. (All the girls had major crushes on Wahoo.) I loved the folk Masses there, too. I loved going to Wheeling College (now University) to hear the Dave Brubeck Quartet in the gym. I loved taking lessons from the piano teacher up the street, Mrs. Dorothy Zoeckler. I loved Mrs. Rose Chiazza's folk-dancing class above the Spic & Span Cleaners in Leatherwood. I loved performing with Tim in the Oglebay Institute Folk Festivals. When I went to high school at Mount de Chantal —which was, unbelievably, demolished several years ago (big shame on you, Wheeling Hospital)—I loved being one of the lucky young women who got to take voice lessons from Mrs. Mollie Picchi. I loved that Mimi Smith, one of my best friends, hired me and my brother to perform at what she called "Wheeling Woodstock," which took place on the lawn at the Mount in 1969—capitalizing on the real Woodstock that same year. And finally, I loved so very much performing in the Towngate Theater productions, many of which were directed by the wonderful Hal O'Leary. I made friends for a lifetime there.

We often go back to places from our youth and find they're not quite what we remembered. The house you grew up in is, in reality, so much smaller. The trip downtown takes just about 10 minutes, not the huge outing it seemed like as a kid. The swimming pool is just like any other city pool. But there are two places from my Wheeling life that didn't disappoint me then and never disappoint me now. Between the Capitol Theatre shows and the concerts produced by Oglebay Institute at its amphitheater, I heard Count Basie, Victor Borge, the great violinists Kyung Wha Chung and Itzhak Perlman with the Wheeling Symphony, Buddy Rich, Ray Charles, Sérgio Mendes & Brasil '66, and the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Getting the cheap seats for the Wheeling Symphony or working as an usher for Oglebay's summertime shows at the amphitheater gave me the world, musically, at my feet. I was one of so many lucky Wheelingites who got to hear all of those incredible musicians.

(L-R) Sam Billante, Mollie O'Brien, and Katie Crosbie perform in Thornton Wilder's "The Skin of Our Teeth" at Wheeling's Towngate Theater, 1979.

So, I'd like to say, "Thank you, Oglebay Park, for rehabbing the amphitheater where I used to sing in summer musicals. Thank you, Oglebay Institute, for turning the Towngate Theater, where I trod the boards as a young actress, into a welcoming hub for theater, music, and cinema. And thank you, Wheeling City Mothers and Fathers, for your vision and hard work that made the gorgeous Capitol Theatre, where I sang as a high schooler, once again the crown jewel on Wheeling's riverfront."

When you become old enough, and I mean *really* old enough, to finally start looking back on your life, you try to figure out if the road taken was the true and correct one. After all, everything before and after that one road are what made you who you are. There's no going back to redo everything. When I moved away from my hometown Wheeling for the last time in 1980, it was because I'd tried to be happy there. I *was* actually happy in some ways, but the lure of new things and the spark of creativity I needed just weren't there for me. And, because I left, I hopefully made my good mark in life elsewhere. I have Wheeling and the many musical opportunities there to thank for getting me to the place where I could leave.

Wheeling (and West Virginia) get more than their fair share of being the butt of bad jokes, and Wheeling's often been my straight man when I talk onstage about my life when I was growing up. But it's not backward as portrayed. It's got an amazing amount of cultural opportunities for everyone; it's beautiful and all too often unsung. I can only hope more and more people realize there's still a lot of life left in old Wheeling. I will continue to sing her praises as long as I live. Happy 250th, Wheeling!

For more about Mollie and the O'Brien family, see "Wheeling's Irish Thread" by Margaret Brennan (Spring 1999).

Professional singer MOLLIE O'BRIEN is a member of the Wheeling Hall of Fame and swears she heard Little Stevie Wonder at West Liberty State College (now University) in the 1960s. She now lives in Denver, Colorado. This is her first contribution to GOLDENSEAL.

"It's all about partnerships"

Preserving Historic Wheeling

Text and photos by Carl E. Feather

On a sunny late September morning, Margaret Brennan, Hydie Friend, Jeanne Finstein, and I depart from the Friends of Wheeling headquarters on Main Street and head toward the city's iconic Victorian neighborhood: "Old Town," aka North Wheeling Historic District. The walk's a test run for a fundraising tour two weeks later. Friends of Wheeling, Victorian Old Town Association, and Wheeling Young Preservationists have partnered with homeowners to raise more than $10,000 in tour receipts that will go for historic preservation.

"We don't have territories in this town," says Hydie, a former city employee and previous executive director of the Wheeling Heritage Area Corporation (WHAC), yet another group that's preserving the city's history. "It's all about partnerships."

And passion. Margaret, Hydie, Jeanne, and other Wheeling preservationists, past and present, bring a passion born of knowledge. They aren't just saving handsome old structures or perpetuating nostalgia; they're demonstrating how Wheeling's past plays into the American story.

"Margaret Brennan's passion for Wheeling history is an inspiration to us all," Jeanne says. "She and others stand on the shoulders of other preservation-minded women, such as Snookie Nutting and the late Beverly Fluty. Their often behind-the-scenes work has made a huge impact on the recognition of the value of Wheeling's history and historic resources."

As a transportation crossroads, Wheeling brought together the raw materials to produce steel, tobacco, cut nails, glassware, and pottery. Immigrants contributed their talents and craftsmanship, which, to this day, remain evident in the buildings they raised. The city, well suited for greatness, gave birth to West Virginia and became the infant state's first capital. Its commercial buildings reflect this river town's prominence and prosperity.

"We had some really important architects . . . so our buildings are important," says Margaret, the city's foremost living historian. "We have been blessed that we had these men who really knew how to build these buildings. That has given our building environment another layer of importance. . . . We have to be very careful about what we tear down."

The geography and industry that made Wheeling great gave it a seat in the Rust Belt; like other cities in that region, it also experienced economic decline in the late 1900s. But city leaders recognized that the town's future was largely tied to its past. Wheeling has scores of sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places: 11 National Historic Districts, more than 30 individual sites, and two National Historic Landmarks.

Simply recognizing the historic importance of its assets isn't enough for city officials. Wheeling actively preserves sites and, at times, purchases and invests in historic structures, which are then adapted for reuse.

Hydie, born and raised in Wheeling, left town as a young adult and worked in Atlantic City, N.J. She returned home in the 1980s to work for the city's Department of Development. Several Friends of Wheeling members quickly drew her into their preservation efforts.

This block of Chapline Street, south of Centre Market, has been the focus of preservation efforts by homeowners and investors.

"I had no background in historic preservation, so they wanted to make sure I was introduced to it," Hydie says. "I became a convert. My first task with the city was the rehabilitation of the Centre Market houses. That's when I really became immersed in historic preservation. I worked with Jeanne getting the Centre Market Historic District established. Margaret was always telling me about the history and the people and what was important."

Jeanne is president of Friends of Wheeling, a nonprofit formed in 1970. As the state's oldest preservation organization, it's been essential in recognizing, saving, and restoring two National Historic Landmarks: the Wheeling Suspension Bridge and West Virginia Independence Hall. Women have been at the forefront of the Friends group since it was founded by Betty Woods "Snookie" Nutting, Beverly Fluty, Mary Ann Hess, Hester Byrum, and others.

"Beverly Fluty came in . . . and just opened everybody's eyes and said, 'You don't know what you have here,'" Hydie notes.

Originally from Massachusetts, Beverly was involved in preservation work in Denver. When her husband, Bill, was transferred to Aetna Insurance in Wheeling, Beverly recognized the city's historical and architectural treasures, particularly the bridge and Independence Hall. Beverly secured a historic preservation grant that ultimately led to the rehabilitation of houses in the Centre Market District.

Snookie's husband and family own Ogden Newspapers, the Pittsburgh Pirates, and other ventures. But Snookie didn't rest on her family's prominence when it came to preservation. "She was hands-on," Margaret says. "She'd be in here stripping old wallpaper."

In its early years, Friends of Wheeling preserved history by purchasing run-down properties, doing the rehab work with volunteer labor, and then selling the buildings to a private investor, often the owner-occupant. The group's first project was the Thoner House at 2240 Market Street near Centre Market. The Friends purchased, rehabbed, and resold six houses and at least two buildings in that area.

Hydie was in charge of restoring two of the houses. According to Jeanne, this "was an impetus for that whole neighborhood, [which] has become a magnet for lots of little shops. I think that was an important turning point."

But before Centre Market, there was the suspension bridge, which received major work in the mid-1970s. "I think that that drew attention to the bridge," Jeanne says. "And in my opinion, I think the suspension bridge is the most important structure in Wheeling."

A third major turning point was the former Wheeling Stamping Building's rebirth as a global operations center for Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe. The center opened in 2002, with rehabilitation help from WHAC, the Regional Economic Development Corporation, and others. "It was considered to be an abandoned warehouse, and it was turned into functional, modern office space," Jeanne says.

As Friends of Wheeling and its passionate core of volunteers matured, so did the group's focus. Gone are the days when members purchased a distressed property, rehabbed it with volunteer labor, and then flipped it to fund its next project. With 350 members who pay annual dues, the group's focus has shifted to education, historic-preservation loan guarantees, and protection of what Margaret feels is the link between the intangible people

The cast iron pilasters of this old building on Main Street provide a history lesson. The section on the left was started before 1863, when Wheeling was still part of Virginia; the righthand part was built after the war, when Wheeling was the capital of West Virginia. The building has a new use as the Wheeling Artisan Center, a project of the Wheeling National Heritage Area.

of the past and the buildings and achievements they left behind: cemeteries.

"I think preservation is more and more gravitating to old cemeteries, the spirit places. They have a definite place in our preservation landscape. We need to preserve our old cemeteries, and we're doing that in Wheeling," says Margaret, who taught Wheeling history at the city's Central Catholic High School.

Greenwood Cemetery tours are periodically led by Friends members, some of whom dress in period costumes and re-enact the characters laid to rest there. And Mount Wood Cemetery, one of the city's oldest, has been the focus of much restoration work by volunteers. The Facebook page "Restore Wheeling's Mt. Wood Cemetery" has more than 850 followers. WHAC took the lead in Mount Wood's

Our intrepid preservationists, outside the Friends of Wheeling headquarters at 921 Main Street: (L-R) Jeanne Finstein, Hydie Friend, and Margaret Brennan.

restoration in 2012, partnering with Friends of Wheeling and the Community Foundation for the Ohio Valley. That same year, Mount Wood was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Congress has designated 55 National Heritage Areas throughout the country. The plan for Wheeling's area was completed and adopted by a board of directors in 1992, but eight years passed before Congress created the Wheeling National Heritage Area. During that time, the organization waited productively by rehabbing the former H. K. List Building into the Wheeling Artisan Center, developing a Heritage Port master plan, launching a challenge grant, hosting historical exhibits, and conducting an oral history project. The Robert C. Byrd Intermodal Transportation Center was dedicated by its namesake in June 1998, replacing a 900-space parking garage on prime riverfront land.

The grassroots nature of Friends of Wheeling provided a model for Wheeling Young Preservationists, a largely Millennial group with a penchant for supporting special projects and political candidates who recognize the economic potential of historic preservation.

"The Wharf Garage was a really ugly parking garage," Jeanne says. Wheeling Heritage, working with Senator Byrd, got the garage demolished and then constructed Wheeling Heritage Port, an expansive outdoor amphitheater, connecting the historic downtown to the Ohio River. This venue was dedicated by the senator in August 2001.

In 2006, the city's preservationists directed their attention to saving the historic Capitol Theatre, a beloved downtown Wheeling landmark. The theatre was designed by Charles Bates and built by prolific Wheeling contractor Ralph Kitchen. Located at 1015 Main Street, the Beaux-Arts building opened in 1928 and, five years later, hosted the first *Wheeling Jamboree* to a crowd of 3,266. In its day, the *Jamboree* rivaled the *Grand Ole Opry* as the nation's most popular country music variety show. West Virginia's largest theatre also hosted the Wheeling Symphony, Broadway shows, and many other productions. Time and wear took a toll on the Capitol, whose owners were unable to bring it up to modern fire codes. It closed in May 2007.

Two years later, informal discussions about the theatre advanced to an action phase. Some 30 representatives of various organizations wanted to see the Capitol thrive. The building was restored and brought up to code, paid for largely by "bed tax money" from local hotels. Then, in April 2009, the Wheeling Convention and Visitors Bureau purchased it.

"Wheeling Heritage was the driving force of pulling all these people together," Hydie says of the meetings. She adds, "The end result was that the Wheeling Convention and Visitors

Wheeling's former Stone & Thomas building has been transformed into the Stone Center, home to Williams Lea and Wheeling University programs. The former department store at 1030 Main Street was constructed in 1891 and later added to. The business, founded in Wheeling in 1847 by Elijah Stone and Jacob Thomas, eventually expanded to 19 stores in West Virginia, including ones in Charleston, Clarksburg, and Huntington.

Bureau understood that the city needed to have a venue to bring people into Wheeling. They were able to dedicate the bed tax to finance it. The community bought into it. The local bank was willing to finance it. They believed in the people who were behind it."

On September 23, 2009, the Capitol Theatre reopened to a packed house. More recently, the theatre's façade has undergone a facelift, thanks to a $400,000 grant.

"Wheeling Heritage, through Senator Byrd, connected economic development and historic preservation and the revitalization of downtown Wheeling," Hydie says. "There is nothing more fun than having a preservation project that has money behind it."

And success spawns more successes. The Wheeling Stamping project led to an architectural feasibility study of five large buildings. As a result, several were purchased, rehabilitated, and used as job magnets for the city:

- The former Stone & Thomas Department Store is now home to Williams Lea and Wheeling University programs, following an $8 million renovation in 2006.

- The former Wheeling Wholesale Grocery is an education center for West Virginia Northern Community College.

- The old Zarnit's Grocery is corporate headquarters for Staley Communications.

There have been a few disappointments along the way. For instance, an entire block of buildings on Main Street gave way to construction of a new Health Plan Building. "Here's the conundrum of the Health Plan Building," Hydie says. "Businesses today require open floor plans, high technology, a digital infrastructure, and it is difficult to find these types of buildings that have the square footage and infrastructure that are

Later Alligator, a hip restaurant near Centre Market, is housed in a former saloon. Owner Susan Haddad started with a vision of just saving the building but soon opened a restaurant that caters in part to vegetarians.

needed. Not one of the buildings that were demolished could have accommodated the (space) and technology they needed. . . . [We asked], 'How can we connect this building to that building—cobble these buildings together?' Then the decision was made by the city that it just wasn't going to work. I have this core value of historic preservation, but I also have this reality of the economic. . . . And they come into conflict sometimes."

Margaret still laments losing those buildings. She notes, "That may be good for the town in the future, but it broke my heart to see the beautiful, elegant commercial buildings demolished."

After spending decades in historic preservation, of winning some and losing a few, the women recognize that partnerships, balance, and compromise are all necessary; otherwise, nothing will be saved. They also know the importance of partnering with private investors who'll put their own money into a distressed property, as opposed to a historical group purchasing and doing the rehab work. In that role, the preservationists serve as facilitators.

"We can't do it all," Jeanne says. "We felt it was better use of our money to assist the private owner."

To that end, Friends of Wheeling offers a Preservation Loan Guarantee Fund. The group's cash is put up as collateral for market-rate home-equity loans from commercial lenders. For example, if a building needs a new roof or heating system but the owner doesn't have the equity to borrow enough, the Friends of Wheeling's cash can cover the shortfall. As the building owner repays the loan, the collateral is freed up for more lending.

"To date, there has not been a default," Jeanne says. "It is not our money that's going into the properties. Rather, we just provide collateral so the owners' loans are more economical. This system seems to make more sense to us."

Owner-occupants also are more likely to keep true to the original architecture. Marty and Barbara Pirhalla own the Irwin-Mattheson

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House in the Victorian District. Previously divided into two apartments, the house is being returned to a single-family residence. The Pirhallas were drawn to the neighborhood by all the renovation occurring there.

"This area is having a renaissance," Marty says, as he spreads paint on the wall above the entrance door.

Across the street, three antebellum residences are icons of this renaissance. One, privately owned, is in good condition. The other two need more work, and Wheeling Heritage has acquired both. With financial help from the city and the recent North Wheeling House Tour, the buildings will be rehabilitated and placed on the market.

Finding owner-occupants can be a challenge, Jeanne admits, because large old houses can lead to hefty utility and maintenance bills. "A lot of these end up being rentals because they are just too big for a single family," she says.

At Centre Market later that afternoon, the preservationists and I dine at Coleman's Fish Market [see Summer 2011] while an Oktoberfest celebration fills the streets with vendors, young families, and live music. Long gone are the days when the market was used to sell and slaughter livestock on the spot. An art gallery, the fish market, and other restaurants now fill the market buildings. The restored shops across the way, which once harbored brothels and saloons, now cater to an upscale retail market.

While customers are drawn to Centre Market for the area's vibe, other Wheeling visitors want to see the beautiful Victorian homes along Chapline Street or the industrial-themed apartments at Boury Lofts, which incorporate elements of a former warehouse into the apartments' environment.

The big concern for these preservationists, as they prepare to hand over the mantle to the next generation, isn't so much about people's passion for historic preservation but the presence of financial incentives to do so. The federal historic preservation tax credit is continually endangered. Without that, and the state's 25% credit, investment in Wheeling's past would be less attractive. Wheeling Heritage Executive Director Jake Dougherty attributes at least $40 million worth of this private-sector investment to the tax credits.

Thus, preservation is as much about intangibles, like tax credits and loan guarantee programs, as it is about removing years of modernization from an old building to reveal its long-forgotten tin ceilings, fireplaces, and prism-glass windows. And as Hydie, Margaret, and Jeanne have proven, history can't be preserved without knowledge, passion, and partnerships.

This building served as our capitol shortly after Wheeling became our capital city for the second time (1875). When the capital moved back to Charleston in 1885, this became the City-County Building for Wheeling-Ohio County. Note the Soldiers and Sailors Monument [see p. 39]. Sadly, this ornate building was torn down in 1956 and replaced with a modern-looking structure. Courtesy of the West Virginia State Archives.

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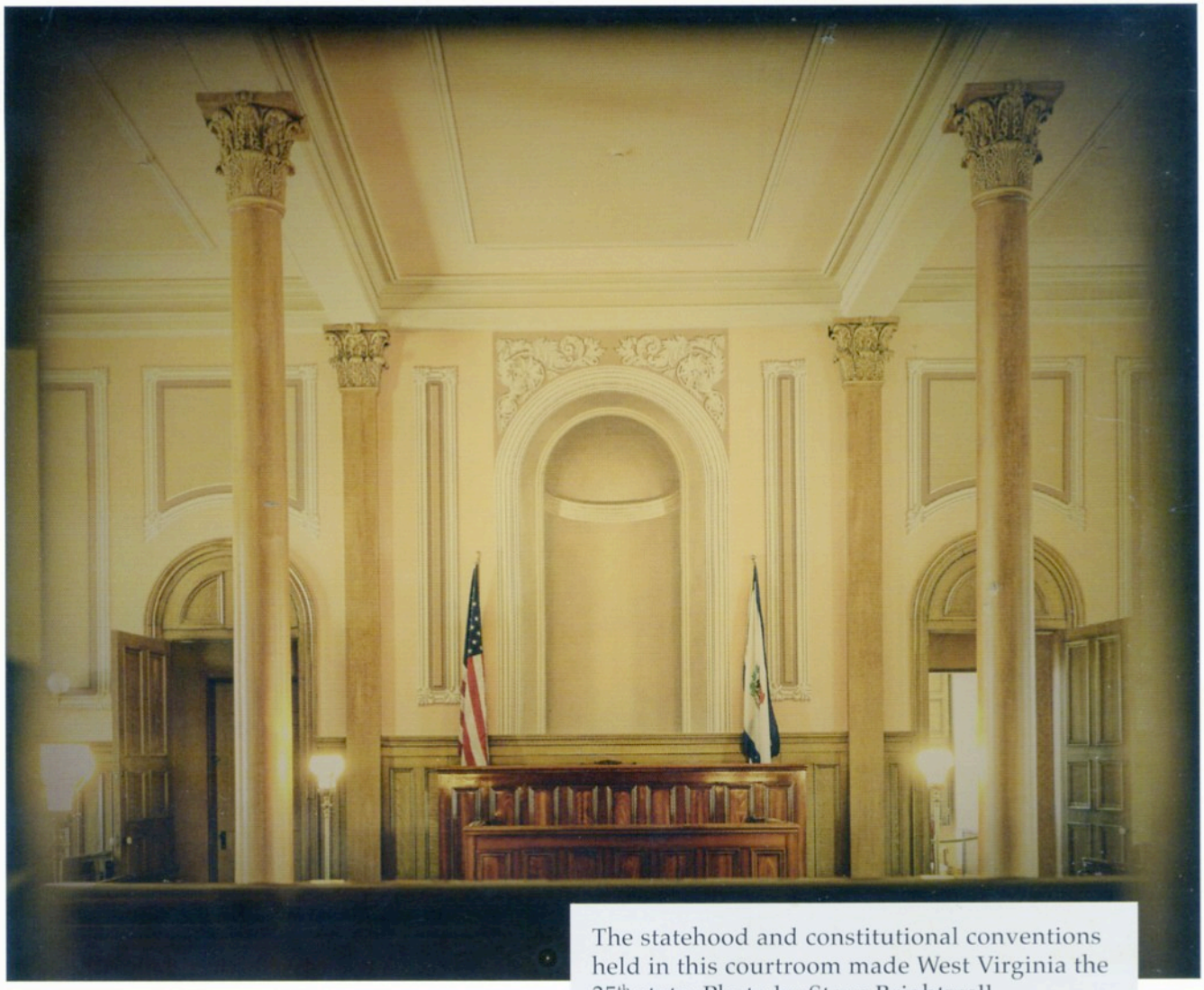

The statehood and constitutional conventions held in this courtroom made West Virginia the 35th state. Photo by Steve Brightwell.

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