

WEST VIRGINIA BLUE BOOK 2015 - 2016

CLARK S. BARNES, SENATE CLERK
CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

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FOREWORD

WEST VIRGINIA BLUE BOOK
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The November 2014 election delivered a political surprise. In January the following year, for the first time in over 80 years, the Republicans controlled both Chambers of the State Legislature. New names, new faces dominated the political landscape. William P. Cole, III, a Senator for only two years, bypassed the usual leadership hierarchy and assumed the position of Senate President and Lieutenant Governor. Tim Armstead, often a voice of protest as Minority Leader of the House of Delegates, was chosen to lead the newly empowered Republican forces.

The Senate, traditionally the curator of information provided by West Virginia's "Blue Book," had not provided the general and statistical information to the public for the two previous years. Following the 2015 Legislative session, the entire clerical staff of the Senate was enlisted to begin gathering this information. I would like to say a special thanks to those who tirelessly worked for months with agencies, cities, counties, organizations, schools and many more. I must also thank all of those who have contributed to this edition especially our Joint Committee staff who have corrected errors, formatted and prepared this Blue Book for printing.

There are some who contend that such a publication is unnecessary in this information age of electronics. Much, if not all, could potentially be available through exhaustive Internet searches. However, electronic files can disappear, and who knows what form of retrieval would be needed in the future to access such files? I was then drawn to the conclusion that accounts of history must still remain in hard copy, printed formats. This is what our West Virginia Blue Book is. A snapshot of history during these two vitally important years.

In these pages you will find information that could potentially take days of research. I have included a brief history of West Virginia written by a historical novelist. His style you may find refreshing. Also, you will find a political summary provided by another West Virginia novelist which may provide insight to you and future generations into the historical political changes of these two years. My hope is that you will not only find this a valuable tool of reference but also find pages of interest. Thank you for this opportunity.

SENATOR CLARK S. BARNES
Clerk of the West Virginia Senate

The Pioneer Spirit of West Virginians: 1776 to Statehood

ROBERT WALKER

Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country. Before it became a practice line of type to learn the keyboard, it was a battle cry for independence from King George III of England. Even then, at the opening of a war that broke out in 1775 Colonial America, Virginia and the mountainous area called Western Virginia were separated by natural boundaries and the natural proclivities of the pioneers living there.

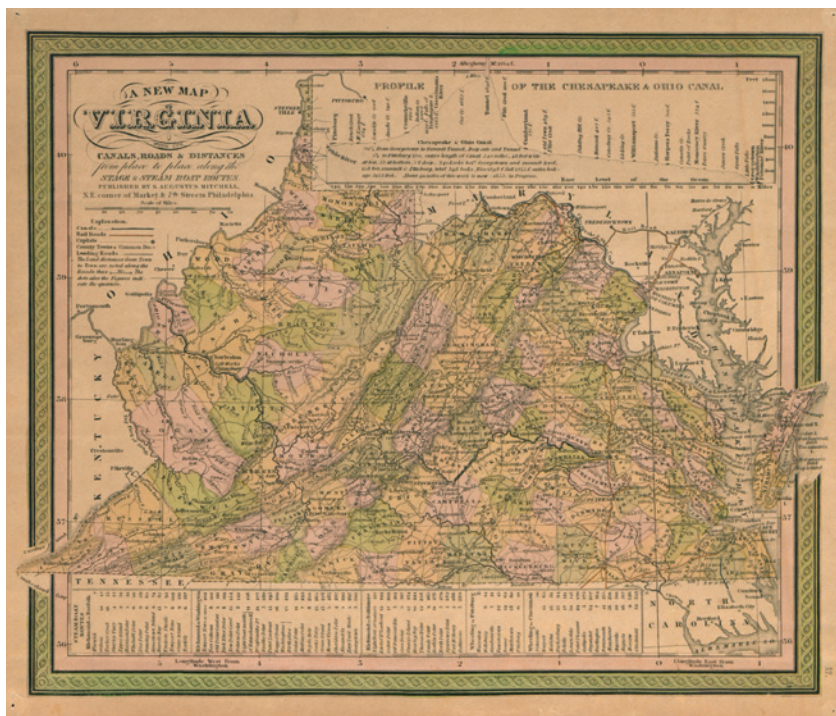
The natural boundaries were formed by valleys, hollows (hollers), creeks, rivers, flatlands, lowlands and, most notably, mountains. In short, the land itself, along with the rising new generations, truly did characterize and distinguish West(ern) Virginia from early settlement. It seemed from the outset that people in Western Virginia designated it as distinctly different from the “mother” colony, that self-governing place called Virginia.

While each land mass was distinctively different, so too were the people of Western Virginia from their brethren Virginians. This article is about those characteristics of the hardest of pioneers, our West Virginia ancestors and West Virginians today.

In Virginia, as with every American colony, people felt fierce loyalty to their adopted land. As early as May 30, 1765, the Virginia Assembly announced the Virginian Resolution, which said that Virginia refused to comply with the King’s Stamp Act. Soon the Continental Congress followed suit. The Stamp Act preceded the tax on tea and the Boston Tea Party. So the fire for independence didn’t come about overnight, but rather the fire was stoked in the earliest days of the colonies.

Virginians were settled and happy to be settled, while the spirit of the Western Virginians had moved them, as with Daniel Boone, further and further westward. Despite laws prohibiting such expansion, despite Indian treaties, and despite all the natural dangers of an unsure life amid the mountainous terrain of then Western Virginia, the pioneers flooded in. Before Daniel Boone was a Kentuckian, he was a West Virginian.

We look back on American History so often in astonishment at the vastness and the sweep of it all, the color alone blinding us at times until the sheer pageantry of events becomes a kaleidoscope of



A new map of Virginia, with its canals, roads & distances from place to place, along the stage & steam boat routes published by Samuel Augustus Mitchell, ca. 1833 West Virginia State Archives Collection

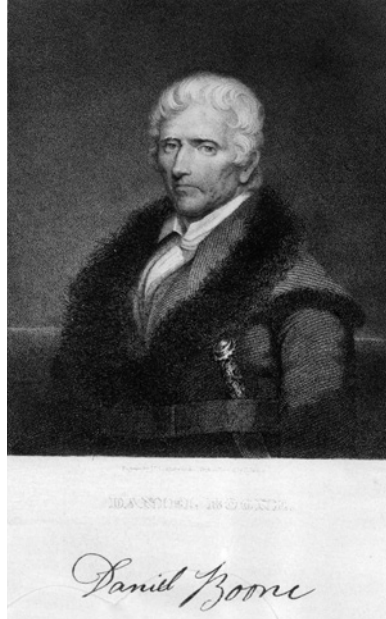
infinite possibilities. What might have been had not honest, courageous, bold leaders and pioneers acquiesced to an attitude of settlement alone in the beautiful valleys and lowlands of Virginia? However, history shows us that the spirit of westward movement burned bright in our ancestors. Native Indian paths and the river ways of America became the pathways to westward expansion and the establishment of not just 13 colonies hugging the Atlantic Coast, but eventually 50 states in the Union. Indeed, history is a river upon which floats an amazing opera filled with players on an incredible gilded stage. So today we look back and see what actually happened and what our forefathers actually accomplished. What they did is firmly set in the stone of time. We can read of it, view video of it, research it, but there's no changing it. Today, while that river of the past can be imagined, it is also too often viewed like a single painting too large to take in. Some find it easiest to discard the past for the here and now, and the future. However, the dynamic river of the past is worthy of our time and a river upon which to set sail! There is no better teacher than our past. The past teaches us why we are West Virginians, and why we should be proud West Virginians.

We relish and admire what our ancestors accomplished with their hearts, heads, and hands. Their inherent resourcefulness still today teaches us that necessity is the mother of invention, and that hard work is its own reward. That building something we can call our own is gratification enough. Imagine carving out a farmstead from a wilderness, building a homestead on it, and working the land at a time when doing so meant more than back-breaking work; at a time when it meant taking your life in your hands; at a time of being cut off from the rest of the known universe as a Daniel Boone or a follower of Boone and men like Boone. Why do it? Why brave the mountains, the cougars, the bears, the weather? A Daniel Boone answer was simple: You dare to go west to carve out your place under the stars.

At the time of the famous Thirteen Colonies, all western areas beyond the Allegheny Mountains of Virginia was the West, and it was off limits by decree and by Indian Treaty. Kentucky was decades away from exploration by Boone and others who had carved out and staked out land in Western Virginia.

Imagine how astonished France, Spain, and the rest of the world were when they learned that American colonists did the impossible in ending a world entirely ruled by kings and despots. The promise of America changed the world, and West Virginia was a part of that longing for freedom and independence before Virginians thought of it as little more than a useless wilderness area called Western Virginia.

Yet even then there were West “b’God” Virginians squatting on the soil in that most profound year of 1776, and in that year of declared independence for a new nation, indivisible, a nation of equality for all, Western Virginia wanted to become the 14th colony/state as it petitioned the Continental Congress for Separate Government from Virginia. Imagine: in the year of American Independence, even as battles raged in the Revolutionary War (1775 - 1783), Western Virginians sought their own independence from Virginia.



*Portrait of Daniel Boone, undated.
West Virginia State Archives Collection*

What is found most surprising in that famous year of 1776 is the simple fact that West Virginians had, from the outset of early colonial settlement in the mountainous western regions of Virginia, wanted their own governing bodies separate from the governing body in Richmond, Virginia.



*Sketch by Joseph H. Diss Debar showing the first coach that ever travelled from Winchester to the Ohio River. In 1846, it belonged to Major Hildebrand, mail contractor at Marietta, Ohio and temporarily stored with General Carder in Clarksburg, ca. 1846.
West Virginia State Archives. Joseph H. Diss Debar Collection*

Western Virginians wanted their own legislature and senate to mirror the Virginia Assembly, the legislative body of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Established on July 30, 1619, it is the oldest continuous law-making body in the New World. How is that for early concern for self-governance?

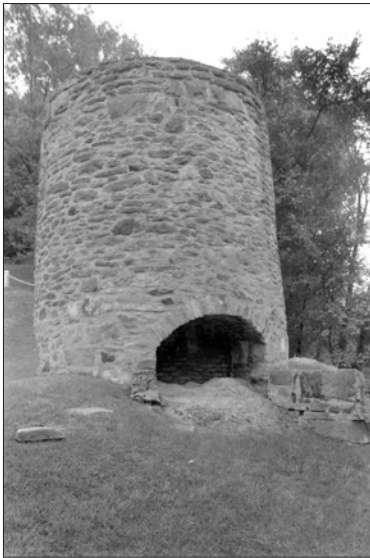
Seventeen years after the Virginia Assembly refused to pay mind to the Stamp Act, and the American Revolution won. 1783 rolled around. That year, settlers west of the Allegheny Mountains attempted to create Westsylvania, a new state government. This was a movement the famous Daniel Boone sank his teeth into, clearly demonstrating the desire in the ‘mountain man spirit’ to exercise independence further. Further westward, one might say. The long-held desire for the mountain people to have a

separate state and self-governance was a blow for representation by the people of Western Virginia to have full say in their government.

While the settlers of what might well have become Westsylvania saw the first church, the first ferry, and the first commerce flourish, a young Daniel Boone earned a commission as lieutenant colonel of the Kanawha Militia, and by 1838 the road from Winchester was completed, reaching all the way to Clarksburg. Things were definitely looking like West Something.

Daniel Boone represented in so many ways the spirit of those pioneers who kept pushing westward. When American soil was under British rule, due to treaties between the British and Native Indians, British law prohibited American colonists from pressing beyond the Allegheny Mountains, hemming in 'high-spirited' men and their families. Such men born to wanderlust and curiosity were undeterred by laws made by a tyrannical king across the Atlantic. They pushed westward regardless of any and all obstacles. The pioneer children were born in the mountains now. They came with the tilling of the soil and the digging of the well.

By now, the mountain terrain was in their blood and in their genes, and the more the sons of the pioneers pressed even further westward, the clearer it became that there were two Virginias, and two separate Virginian peoples. Despite the fact that they shared some characteristics they parted along other character lines. Character lines that reflected the natural boundaries between Virginia and West Virginia. There were those who chose the intriguing and beautiful mountain life of West Virginia over the more secure and prescribed life of the flatlands of lush and verdant Virginia. More and more, Virginia was beginning to look like a New Scotland in the New World as the highlanders thrived in the Appalachians, and the lowlanders thrived best in the coastal peaceful green valleys of the Shenandoah, Virginia proper one might say.



View of remains of Peter Tarr's iron furnace near Weirton, built between 1790 and 1794. Photograph by Michael Keller. West Virginia State Archives Collection



Masthead of Potomak Guardian, August 8, 1798. West Virginia State Archives Collection

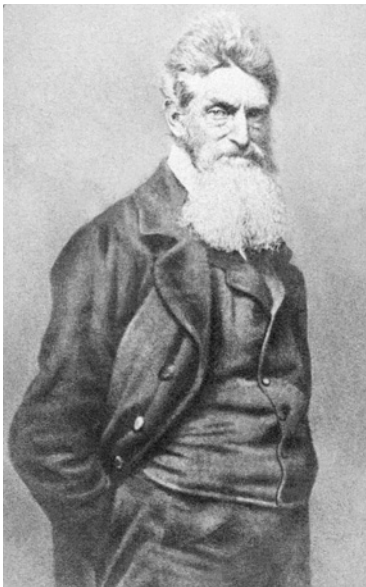
As early as 1790, ten years before the turn of the 18th Century, the first newspaper was published in Shepherdstown. Called the Potomak Guardian & Berkeley Advertiser, it owed its existence to pioneer journalist Nathaniel Willis. At this time the U.S. Census had the population of Western Virginia at 55,873 souls. A year later, Daniel Boone was elected to be the Delegate to the Virginia Assembly, primarily to work toward independence for West(ern) Virginia.

Growth and commerce sped on and by 1792 the first U.S. post office was established in Martinsburg. Commerce continued at a breakneck pace now in the western parts of Virginia. Two years later, in 1794, the first iron furnace west of the Allegheny Mountains appeared at King's Creek near present day Wheeling. The furnace, built by a man named Grant was later purchased by Peter Tarr. Here lies the foundation of what would later become West Virginia's booming steel manufacturing center.

In the same year, “Mad” Anthony Wayne’s victory at Fallen Timbers, Ohio finally put an end to Indian attacks. During this same year, December 19th saw the hub-city of Charles Town (now Charleston) established by the Virginia Assembly. Commerce, business, and river traffic had the western regions of Virginia abuzz with movement and growth.

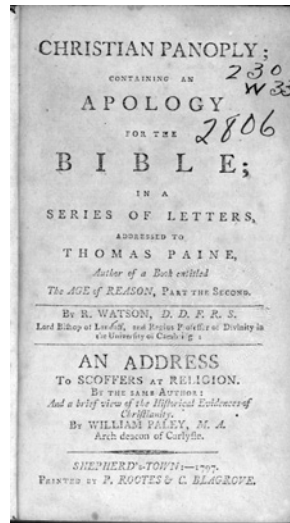
The following year, Daniel Boone left Western Virginia and the Kanawha Valley Militia to investigate lands still further westward, and to lead the way in opening Kentucky to settlers. By 1797, the second West Virginia newspaper, the *Imperial Observer* was established at Shepherdstown, and the first book printed in West Virginia, *The Christian Panoply*, was printed by the *Imperial Observer*.

The early 1800s saw more and more settlers moving westward. The census reported 78,000 inhabitants in West Virginia, with 35,000 west of the Alleghenies. By now 13 counties had been established along with 19 incorporated towns, as well as eight post offices. Growth was the order of the day at the outset of the 19th Century, and by 1810 once more West(ern) Virginians were heavily protesting unfair and unequal representation in Richmond at the Virginia Assembly. Still, such protests went largely ignored.



Portrait of John Brown, undated. West Virginia State Archives, Boyd B. Stutler Collection

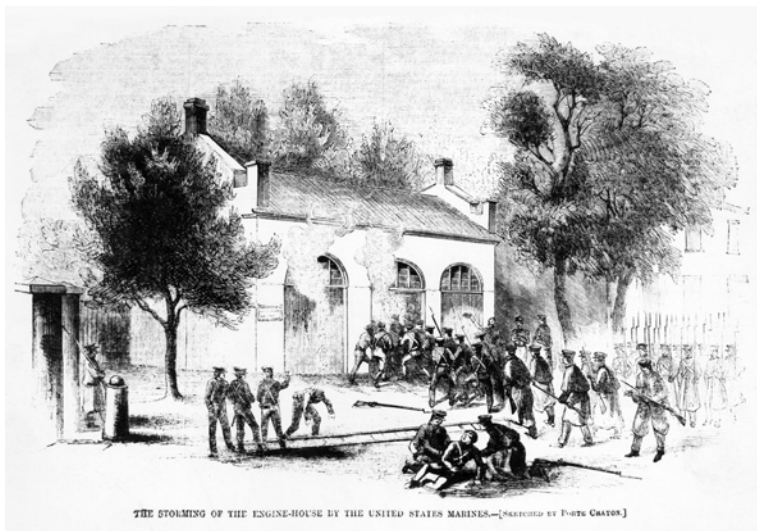
ignored for years, The *Wheeling Gazette* in 1830 called for the separation of West(ern) Virginia from East(ern) Virginia. It was the first newspaper to make the issue a cause. The following year of



Title page of Christian Panoply, 1797. West Virginia State Archives Collection

In 1818, Charles Town was officially renamed Charleston, and the first commercial coal mine opened at Fairmont. Charleston’s first newspaper, *The Kanawha Spectator* was published. The spirit of the people of Western Virginia was reflected in its pages. While Virginia was rightfully and routinely called “The Cradle of Slavery” in America, as early as 1829 Virginia counties west of the Allegheny Mountains loudly protested the Virginia Constitution that favored slave-holding counties over nonslave-holding counties. The writing, as they say, was on the wall. Thirty years later the infamous John Brown and his small band of men would take over the U.S. Arsenal at Harpers Ferry to fire what many still call the first shots in the American Civil War. The century was 59 years old as was John Brown himself who’d come to purge Virginia first as well as a plan to purge the entire land of slavery before he was done. Some say he managed to do just that in the long run despite his being wounded, captured, tried and hanged in Charles Town, Virginia.

The 19th Century had its tumultuous moments before 1859, however. As a reminder, in 1810, West Virginia protested unfair and unequal representation in the Virginia Assembly. When this outcry was



Sketch by Porte Crayon (David Hunter Strother) of the storming of the engine house during John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry, October 18, 1859. West Virginia State Archives, Boyd B. Stutler Collection

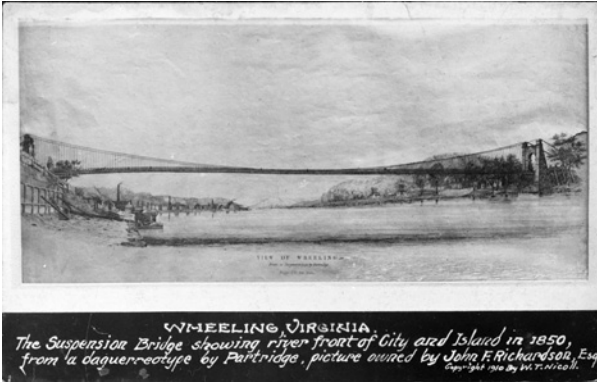
1831 saw Virginia's political divisions widen, enhanced by slavery debates both in Congress and around the general store. The cracker-barrel philosophers argued on both sides, but the mountain folk had no need of or desire for slavery in their regions.

By 1835, October 14th saw Virginians John Templeton, John Moore, Stanley Culbert and Ellen Richie charged with teaching slaves to read, a crime punishable by fine, jail time or both. Since teachers were paid so poorly even then, they were given the option of being marched to the border and banished from the commonwealth. Such had happened to John Kagi, a mulatto and teacher as well as John Brown's second-in-command during the attack on the U.S. Arsenal in 1859.

In 1837, Marshall University was established as Marshall Academy in Guyandotte (now Huntington). Earlier that year, on April 14th the town of Beckley was established by the General Assembly. Both education and commerce seemed at growing odds between the east and west within all of Virginia. In 1840, Bethany College, founded by Alexander Campbell, was established. It is the oldest degree-granting college in West Virginia. A year later, the Staunton-to-Parkersburg Turnpike was completed.



Team of horses and wagon on road alongside Bethany College, Cochran Hall and Carnegie Library in the background, 1800s. West Virginia State Archives, Mort Gamble Collection



*View of the Wheeling Suspension Bridge, supposedly from an 1850 daguerrotype.
West Virginia State Archives, Mary DeFillipo Collection*

Progress was the order of the day for all of Virginia when in 1847 the first telegraph line finally reached Wheeling, West Virginia. Two years later, on Oct. 30, 1849, the Wheeling Bridge was completed as the longest in the world. Unfortunately, five years later in 1854, the bridge was destroyed by high winds. There were high winds, however, in the political realm as well since the 1850 Reform Convention held at Richmond, Virginia.

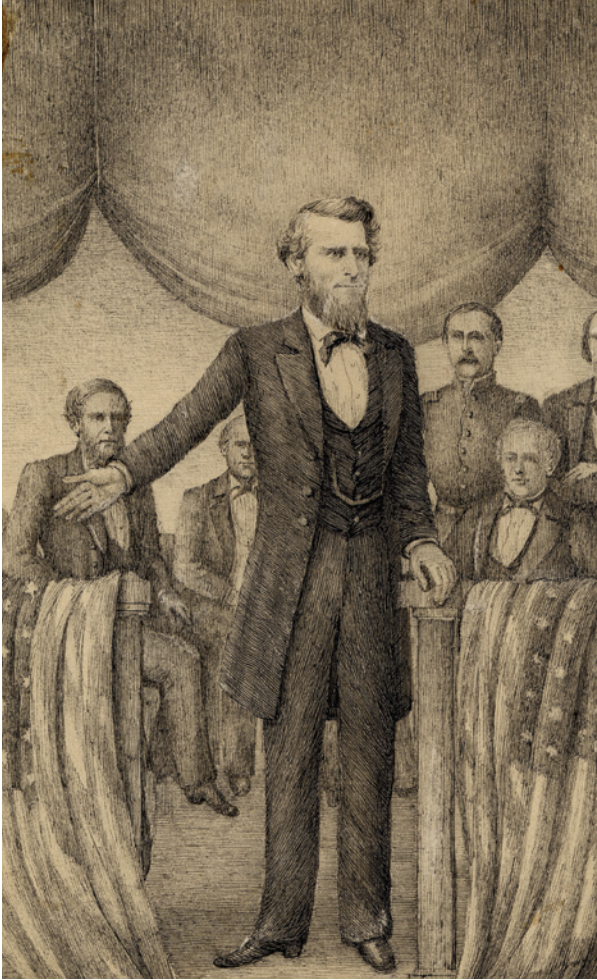
It had become more clear to the Virginia Assembly that their western relatives and neighbors were extremely serious about “seceding” from Virginia, due in great part to all the wrangling and talk both in Congress and at the State Assembly about seceding from the Union.

In 1851 Joseph Johnson of Bridgeport became the first and only governor of Virginia elected by popular vote to have come from the Western Virginia mountains. It did not come as a complete surprise when the newly drawn up state constitution granted concessions to Western Virginia. Statehood for West Virginia was not quite in the opting yet, but it would not take much of a catalyst to kick-start it into being. Eight years after Johnson took office, John Brown, abolitionist extremist did come along. Less than two years later, Confederate forces would fire on Union occupied Fort Sumter, the opening volley in the Civil War.

The American Civil War asked all states to choose sides, and those who had to make the hardest decision were the states which had a foot in both the North and the South. Border states included Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky, to a certain extent Southern Illinois and Southern Indiana, and of course, Virginia’s western regions.

For Western Virginia, the war became an opportunity for its independence from Eastern Virginia. The mountain men of the west, the always cantankerous, independent minded and self-sufficient people, who, had since revolutionary days called for separation had it now by default. They seized on the opportunity to make a clean break with Virginia. Calling their region West Virginia, their leaders began putting together the West Virginia Assembly. The move has been called treason, heroism, legal fiction, and righteous depending upon with whom one sided. The history of how the new government of West Virginia came into being during the turbulence of the Civil War is well-documented today in both texts and film.

From the Semi-Centennial History of West Virginia by James Morton Callahan comes this: “The new inducements to settlement, increasing after the Battle of Point Pleasant in 1774, and receiving a new stimulus at the close of the Revolution (1783), produced a rapid expansion movement which resulted by 1790 in a total trans-Allegheny population of over 50,000 people widely separated into many detached, isolated local groups, intensely individualistic in spirit and with frontier conditions which, in the absence of transportation facilities to develop the vast resources, were little fitted to develop unity of action or cooperation.”



Sketch by Joseph H. Diss Debar showing Governor Arthur I. Boreman delivering his inaugural address, June 20, 1863. West Virginia State Archives, Joseph H. Diss Debar Collection

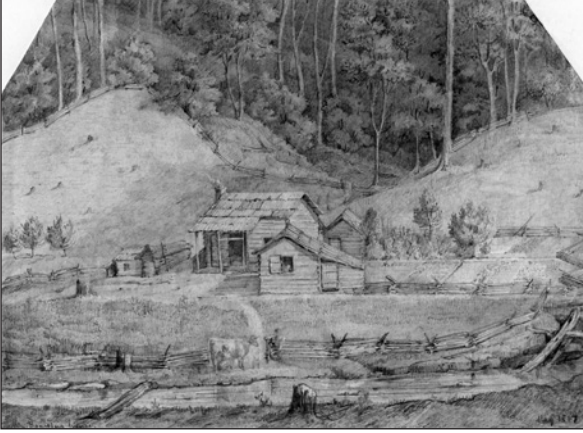
One must admire the oratory on paper here and the serpentine nature of Mr. Callahan's paragraph-long sentence, but whatever may be said of his style, the quote supports the main thread of this introduction, that our ancestors flooding into the region known as Western Virginia were indeed "individualistic" and intensely so. Not unlike the highlanders of the "old sod" they had left behind in Europe.

Callahan goes on to point out that they resented the "political dominating" of Tidewater Virginia. Here is more from Callahan's report on the character of the West Virginian:

"Considering the different elements of population, different features of territory, and different interests, the formation of the new state by separation from the mother state (suggested even in the revolutionary period under conditions that gave birth to Kentucky), was the legal and inevitable result of the half century of sectional controversy between East and West in regard to inequities under the constitution of

1776...only partially remedied by the constitutional conventions of 1829-30 and 1850-51 - although the later made large democratic departures from the earlier dominating influences of the tidewater aristocracy in the government, illustrated by the change from appointment to the election of state and country officers. The secession of Virginia from the Union only furnished the occasion and the opportunity to accomplish by legal fiction and revolutionary process an act toward which nature and experience had already indicated and prepared the way."

And so it came to pass that out of the crucible of the American Civil War, a new state was born. West Virginia! But... it had been a separate 'state of mind' since before the American Revolution. Its birth had been a long and painful process indeed, involving generations of westward expansion by our ancestors.



*Sketch by Joseph H. Diss Debar showing Jacob Rupert's home near Cove Creek, St. Clara Colony, Doddridge County, 1847.
West Virginia State Archives, Joseph H. Diss Debar Collection*

The rest, as they say, is history. June 20, 1863, West Virginia is admitted to the Union as the 35th state. Arthur I. Boreman of Parkersburg is inaugurated at Wheeling as the first governor. The following year, the first West Virginia popular vote for president of the United States reflects the division over North and South: Lincoln, 23,152; McClellan, 10,438.

By 1864, the first free public school in West Virginia opened in Charleston. The governor approved an act abolishing slavery, providing for the immediate emancipation of

all slaves as early as February. The Civil War ends in April 1865.

However, history is far more than dates on a page, for it is the telling of a story about a people who passed this way before us and who laid the foundations for democracy and freedom in the Mountain State.

For a further timeline of the most important events and issues in West Virginia history from the end of the Civil War to present day, a reader need only open a computer and google West Virginia timeline for an overview of when, where, and how the state has progressed since statehood was bestowed - or rather fought for tooth and nail. Researchers agree on one important aspect of West Virginia history: The pioneer spirit is the primary catalyst for opening up the mountainous regions of Virginia for habitation by the colonists, and their children, and grandchildren. This same spirit of adventure, curiosity, and intellect continues to flow in the blood of West Virginia's modern generations as well. It is a spirit worthy of celebration.

A final word: When West Virginia delegates voted for secession or Union, nine voted to go with the South and Virginia, while 29 voted to stand with the Union. Thereafter, there was firm ground for what was being called New Virginia. In a popular vote, 35,000 West Virginians voted for Union, 19,000 for secession. At the time, there were 18,000 slaves in West Virginia, making up five to 10 percent of the population depending upon the county. On June 20, 1863, with war still raging, the official day of statehood was celebrated, and what was Western Virginia finally became what its inhabitants had always known, its own state, the 35th state in the Union.

About the Author: Robert W. Walker, a graduate of Northwestern University, is the author of 36 novels, including the acclaimed PSI Blue featuring FBI Psychic Rae Hiyakawa, the Instinct Series with FBI Medical Examiner Dr. Jessica Coran, and the Edge Series featuring Texas Cherokee Detective Lucas Stonecoat and psychiatrist Meredyth Sanger. Robert was born in Corinth, Mississippi; grew up in Chicago, Illinois; and currently resides in Charleston, West Virginia.

2014: A New Political Era Begins

A.V. GALLAGHER

The turn of the 21st Century saw a seismic shift in West Virginia politics. While its immediate effects went largely unnoticed, much like the epicenter of an earthquake, ripples began to fissure the political landscape over ensuing election cycles until the aftershock created a massive upheaval.

Fourteen years later in 2014, the West Virginia Republican Party, having been out of power for more than eight decades, managed the seemingly impossible of securing control of both chambers of the Legislature for the first time in 81 years.

This revolution, which shattered the rock-hard image of West Virginia as the last Solid South Democratic state, resulted from national political tensions, changing economics and the determination of a handful of unknown, but visionary political figures.

Democratic control of the Legislature had never been seriously challenged since the state Senate fell to Andrew Jackson's party in 1933. The change then was abrupt and shocking. The 63-16 Republican control of the House in 1930 gave way to a 68-26 Democratic majority the following year. The Senate changed two years later from 17-13 Republican to a 24-6 Democratic majority. The Republicans never challenged again until 2014.

In many House and Senate races, thereafter, Democrats ran without opposition in the general election. People registered as Democrats to ensure they would have at least a primary election choice. Loyalty to the pro-union creed of FDR's New Deal gave the Democrats a 2-1 voter registration advantage and runaway control of the Legislature.

In the second half of the 20th Century, the state Republican Party was dominated by two successful governors, which divided the diminutive party into partisan camps and exacerbated problems in recruiting candidates for lower offices, such as the Legislature. Twice in those years, for example, Republicans held only nine of 100 House seats. For one two-year period, Sen. Donna Boley, R-Wood, was the sole Republican in the Senate. Because it clearly could not win the Legislature, minority party efforts focused on the governor's office, which was attainable.

Nationally, traditionally, the state always voted for the Democrat candidate in an open presidential election year. However, in the second half of the century, it was possible for an incumbent Republican seeking re-election to occasionally win West Virginia.

Things changed with the new century. The year 2000 brought a young Morgantown businessman whose family had a long GOP pedigree to head the state party. Kris Warner had new ideas for a fresh century. Warner aggressively recruited candidates for all ballot positions, not only president and governor. And this was the year that West Virginia voted Republican for an open presidential seat. Voters abandoned Vice President Al Gore and gave George W. Bush a 41,000-vote majority that fall. It was the first time the state had voted Republican nationally since 1984. But the exact effects were masked by the lack of any pattern as the electorate went down the ballot.

When they got to the next line on the ballot, more than 193,000 of those people who didn't vote for Gore pulled the lever for ever-popular Democratic U.S. Sen. Robert C. Byrd and propelled him back into the Senate. Next-down, they ousted the incumbent Republican Governor and gave his seat at the Statehouse to longtime Democratic Congressman Bob Wise. The Congressional seat previously held by Wise was then awarded to Republican Shelley Moore Capito, daughter of a disgraced governor but a man so popular that he was the only governor ever elected to three, four-year terms. Nevertheless, Democrats retained three-fourths of the 100 seats in the House of Delegates and 28 of 34 state Senate seats.

Voters in a state with a one-item, coal-based economy had been made uneasy about Gore's talks and writing on the environment and his strong push for the Kyoto Protocol, which called for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions that resulted largely from fossil fuels, West Virginia's bread and butter. The next powerful shudder occurred in only two years. Warner remained as party chief. The aging stalwarts that had divided the party leadership faded and under Warner tutelage a new band of young, idealist candidates focused on controlling the Legislature emerged. In the 2002 election, Republicans, with little outside financial help or assistance, increased their Senate seats by four to ten. In the process, they ejected two of the three most powerful officers in the Senate. Unknown Russ Weeks of Beckley eased out by 642 votes the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman, a three-term incumbent and former House member; and two-term House member Lisa D. Smith substantially shellacked the Senate Finance Committee chairman, who had served for 20 years. Furthermore, Delegate Steve Harrison, R-Kanawha, easily defeated another incumbent senator and popular Charleston lawyer. These gains came despite the fact the Democrats were unchallenged in five Senate races. The Republicans also gained six House seats.

Two years later, another unknown, Republican Clark Barnes of Elkins, winning by only 331 of nearly 44,000 votes cast defeated a 12-year Senate veteran whose impeccable business credentials had earned him the 1990 Oil and Gas Man of the Year and who had been the chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee. Again, with little in finances, Barnes won five of nine counties in the district, but lost his own by 759 votes. He was the first Republican senator elected from Randolph County since 1930. Reversing previous elections, this time Republican Senator Donna Boley's was the only unchallenged Senate seat. House member Don Caruth, R-Mercer, defeated another one-term senator as the Republicans improved to 13 in the Senate and picked up one House seat. That election year, President Bush won re-election by a 12.9 percent majority in the state.

Warner left the chairman's seat that year, but his legacy lived on. A new day had dawned. Men and women who had been Republicans but never considered running for office due to the past political climate began to take interest in local and statewide politics.

The state again went Republican nationally in 2008. Barack Obama represented the Democrats and John McCain was the Republican presidential candidate. Critics blamed racism for the vote against Obama since Democrat Jay Rockefeller picked up 140,000 more votes than Obama in that same election and was returned to the Senate. Democratic majorities in the Legislature slid slightly.

Two years later, a soft-spoken, religious, one-time state high school coach of the year was elected as one of five members to his first term in the House as a Republican from Raleigh County. John D. O'Neal IV joined two other Republicans representing the staunchly Democratic southern coal county. This was in its own way a startling event. Using his coaching techniques, O'Neal began implementing a recruiting and education plan to fill out the ballot with qualified Republicans.

As natural gas enjoyed a boom in the early part of the 21st Century and the production of coal suffered as a result of severe competition from cheaper fuels, slumping sales both domestically and internationally, and a move by power plants to fuels considered more environmentally friendly, the coal industry and the thousands adversely affected turned their venom on President Obama, accusing him and his Environmental Protection Agency of "waging war on coal." The EPA feverishly promoted the theory of global warming, an idea widely downplayed by West Virginia's politicians, who continued to cling to the state's only economic engine: coal. Voter revulsion against Obama and his alleged war was made manifest when a jailed Texas convict somehow got on the West Virginia presidential primary ballot in 2012 and garnered 41 percent of the primary vote against Obama. Mitt Romney easily won the state in the fall.

The Democratic majority in the House of Delegates, which had fallen to 65-35 in 2010, slid to 53-47 in 2012. Republicans gained four seats in the Senate, leaving the Democrats with a 24-10 edge. That election also brought Mercer County businessman and auto dealer William P. Cole III to the Senate. Several House members, particularly O'Neal, House Minority Leader Tim Armstead, and Delegates Eric Nelson and Daryl Cowles, believed the party could win the House in the next election, and when Cole arrived, he also believed the same about the Senate.

O'Neal and Cole, and others promoting change, blanketed the state with a demand for recruits and offers of assistance for the resurgent party. Cole made sure all Senate seats had a challenger, however hopeless some races seemed. National and activist groups began to take a fresh look at the potential of the Mountain State and long-frozen money began to leak into drought-cracked Republican coffers. The overwhelming Democratic registration majorities across the state had made recruiting difficult, if not impossible in the past. Now, recruiters sought to fill every ballot position. Candidates were trained on how to run a professional campaign. Republican enthusiasm grew as Democrat morale sapped. GOP strategists were aware that Democratic Party registration had fallen precipitously. The number of voters who claimed to be Democrats fell below 50 percent in 2014 for the first time since 1932. Those defecting voters might not be joining Lincoln's party, but they were no longer holding true to FDR's either.

"We knew there was a lot of discontent among the electorate and we believed they wanted to see some change," said House Clerk Steve Harrison, a former legislator. "One of our messages was: It's been over eight decades, now give us a chance. It was a trend; it wasn't an overnight thing."

The Democrats had gone through some major top-level party changes, too. West Virginia's beloved Senator Byrd had died in 2010. The well respected and successful Joe Manchin left the governor's mansion in mid-term to take Byrd's seat. Into the empty governor's seat was thrust Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, a quiet and introverted man, leaving a power vacuum in the Senate. Tomblin then won a four-year term as governor in 2012. Republican David McKinley, R-W.Va., won the congressional seat which had been held by a Democrat from 1983 to 2011.

Nearly one-fourth of the House, most of them Democrats, decided not to seek re-election in 2014. Many of those remaining were embarrassed to a great extent by the environmental stance of their own president. Democrats in the Legislature, going into the 2014 election, increasingly felt isolated as they were barraged by the artillery of the war on coal. Legislators complained that party money and action focused on the top of the ticket positions and House and Senate members were left to beg resources and had to fight their own battles. They could have had a good argument about the adoption of a federal health care program which greatly aided the desperately poor in West Virginia, but its Obamacare

nickname made it toxic to mention. It would only strengthen their ties with what was now clearly an enemy White House. Democratic lawmakers felt they were left without support and without a cohesive script to tout their own achievements and counteract GOP attacks. They were left without any battle strategy against the resurgent Republicans, who were well-financed, organized and led. The Republicans needed only one message and that was anti-Obama and anyone who consorted with him.

Adding to the agonies of West Virginia's Democratic lawmakers, Obama had taken to the broadcast waves to challenge voters to support his measures, saying while he was not on any state ballot, his legislative initiatives were and the voters could tally their support or disaffection accordingly. Organized labor, long the backbone of Democratic control of the Legislature, had drastically lost membership as environmentalist pressure and economic conditions closed or measurably curbed chemical, steel and energy producing sectors of the economy. Organized union membership fell to 11 percent of the state's work force. Those who were left in the ranks had no love for the White House, and the Republicans felt certain that those who did vote would not cast a ballot for the people they believed deprived them of work in the first place; and this was particularly true for coal miners, long the backbone of organized labor in the state. They, more than anyone else, despised Obama and his industry-killing EPA. Despite the pleadings of their leaders, those that did vote cast their ballots with their pocketbooks not their political allegiance. Those who might have helped the Democrats stayed at home.

O'Neal believed another key element in the Republican win was the demise of mainline journalism and the rise of social media. Instead of having their message filtered by newsmen covering the Statehouse, Republicans could broadcast generally or specifically their own favorable news. They could clearly show the electorate how their Democratic opponents were voting on visceral issues that they believed the left-leaning mainline press had manipulated or suppressed to protect Democrats.

O'Neal further credited the fact that West Virginia had been shown repeatedly to be the most conservative state in the nation while national Democratic policies were increasingly leaning to the left and were repelling West Virginia's voters, whatever their political label.

Republicans were aided by a voter turnout of only 37.3 percent, which was the lowest since at least 1950. Exchanging traditional roles with the Democrats, the Republicans cast 70,922 straight-party ballots, while the Democrats had only 53,243.

As it happened, the 2014 election was a tsunami disaster for the Democrats at all levels. The Republicans, trailing in the House of Delegates 53-47 in 2012, captured that chamber with a majority of 64 to 36. Republicans won seven seats in the Senate, including Mark R. Maynard's improbable ousting of the longest-serving senator, a 32-year member of that body, who was ensconced in a staunch Democratic stronghold. The result was a 17-17 tie, amazing in itself, until Sen. Daniel J. Hall agreed to become a Republican and gave the chamber an 18-16 GOP majority for the first time since 1933.

Shelley Moore Capito had announced early that she was running for the Senate seat occupied by Jay Rockefeller which he had defended from her father several years earlier. The senator abruptly announced he would not seek re-election and the Democratic Party fumbled to field a candidate for a seat that had been a Democratic bastion since 1948. Capito went on to face only token resistance from Secretary of State Natalie Tennant, whom she defeated 62 to 35 percent. It was the largest statewide victory for a Republican in state history and in it Capito carried all 55 counties.

The Eastern Panhandle had become the fastest growing geographical section of the state for a decade. New Eastern Panhandle muscle was flexed when Alex Mooney, a former state senator from Maryland and a virtual unknown in West Virginia, swept into the House seat vacated by Capito and defeated former Democratic Party Chairman and popular Charleston lawyer Nick Casey. The greatest surprise may have come in the 3rd Congressional District, however, where Rep. Nick Joe Rahall, D-W.Va., the dean of the state's delegation and first elected in 1976, was easily defeated by Democrat-turned-Republican state Sen. Evan Jenkins.

Amazingly, a state which had been a bastion of Democratic strength since the coal wars nearly a century ago, had seen coal play a huge part in changing the political balance of power once again. After keeping the lights on in much of the United States for decades, West Virginia's future will be held in the hands of its people. If visionaries remain, a new day will dawn regardless of which political party is leading the charge.

About the Author: A. V. Gallagher, a native of Ireland who grew up in West Virginia, has been a journalist, film producer, and campaign advisor. He is the author of "The Ghost Army" in which he tackles one of the most brutal battles in human history - the Battle of Stalingrad. He focuses on the fates of Rifleman Helmuth Eichmann and reconnaissance ranger Erick Speer, brothers of famous Nazi leaders.

