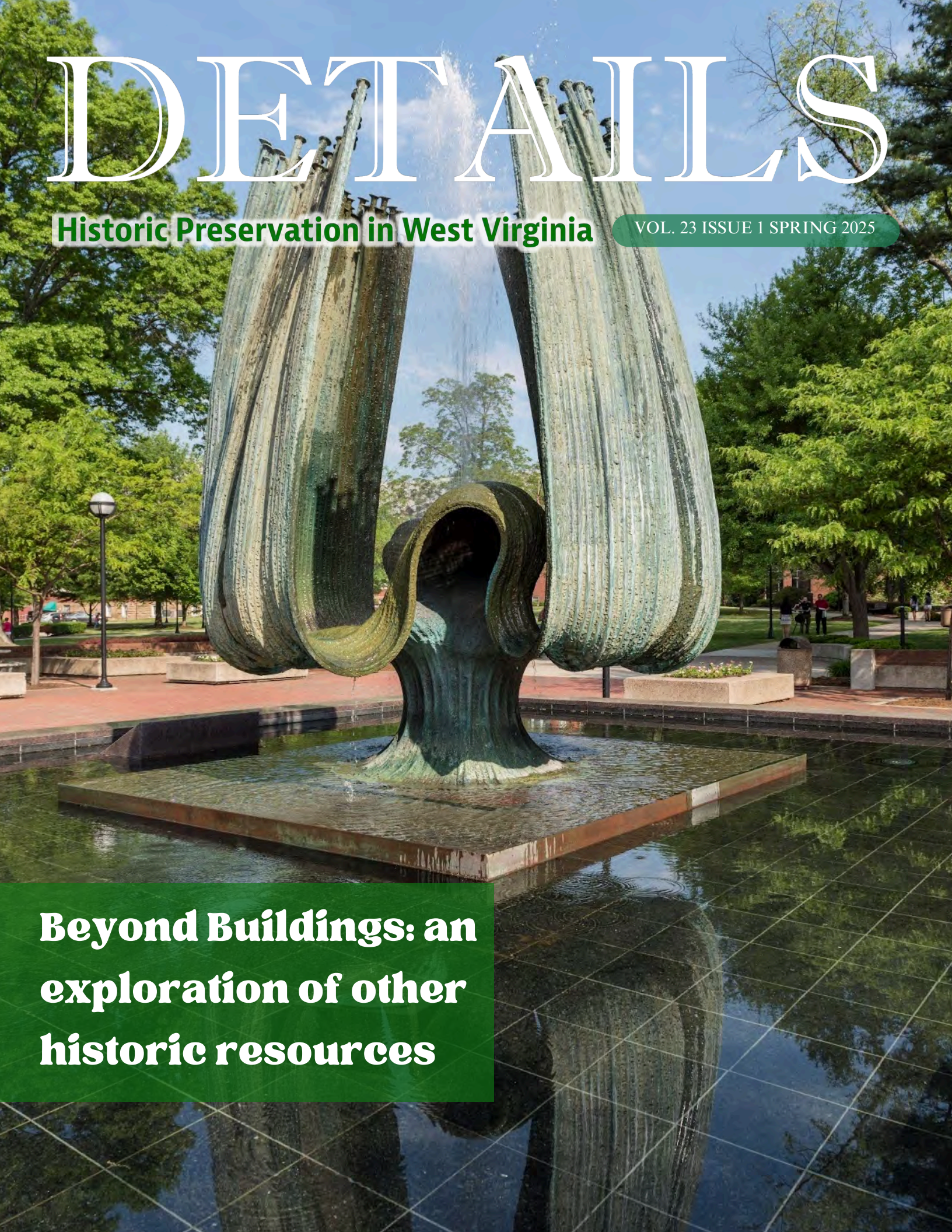


# DETAILS

Historic Preservation in West Virginia

VOL. 23 ISSUE 1 SPRING 2025

## Beyond Buildings: an exploration of other historic resources

# SPRING 2025
# WHAT'S INSIDE

In this edition of Details, we'll be examining historic resources that are not buildings. Typically, when people think of historic resources they're imagining houses, or schools, or storefronts. A resource though can be any structure, object, site, feature, or landscape that has historical significance. As you'll read, West Virginia has a variety of historic resources. For example:



**Front Cover** *Memorial Fountain on the campus of Marshall University in Huntington, WV, (2007). Photo by Carol Highsmith, Library of Congress.* *Read more on page 4.*

**Patrick Morrisey**
Governor

**Ennis Smith**
Acting Cabinet Secretary/State Historic Preservation Officer

**Susan M. Pierce**
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

**Claire Tryon**
Editor, Layout, & Design

**THE CULTURE CENTER**
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305

West Virginia Department of
ARTS, CULTURE AND HISTORY

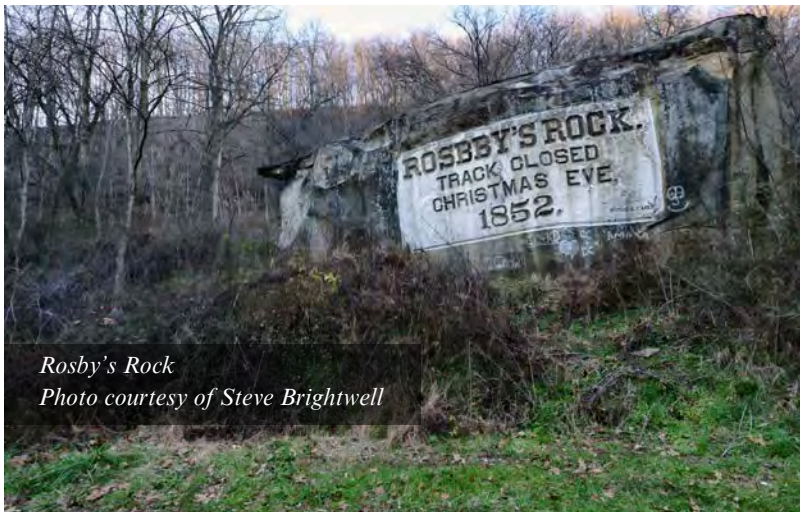
**Phone: 304-558-0220**
**TDD: 304-558-3562**
**FAX: 304-558-2779**
**www.wvculture.org**

# Note From DSHPO

A few years ago after a meeting in Moundsville, several staff members were packing up our materials and getting ready to go home when someone (not me!) suggested we take a side trip to Rosby's Rock. I had read about the Rock and seen photos, but had never been there. This large boulder is associated with the early Baltimore & Ohio Railroad that ran through Marshall County. Located off the beaten path, you need to decide to go out of your way to visit the Rock. We decided to venture forth; so we drove from Moundsville to County Road 54, then followed signs up a hollow along Big Grave Creek. It was our intention to climb to the top and despite our professional clothes worn for the meeting, we were able to find toeholds and clamber up the side of the boulder. Our ascent wasn't pretty, but we made it. (C*heck Rosby's Rock off the bucket list.*)

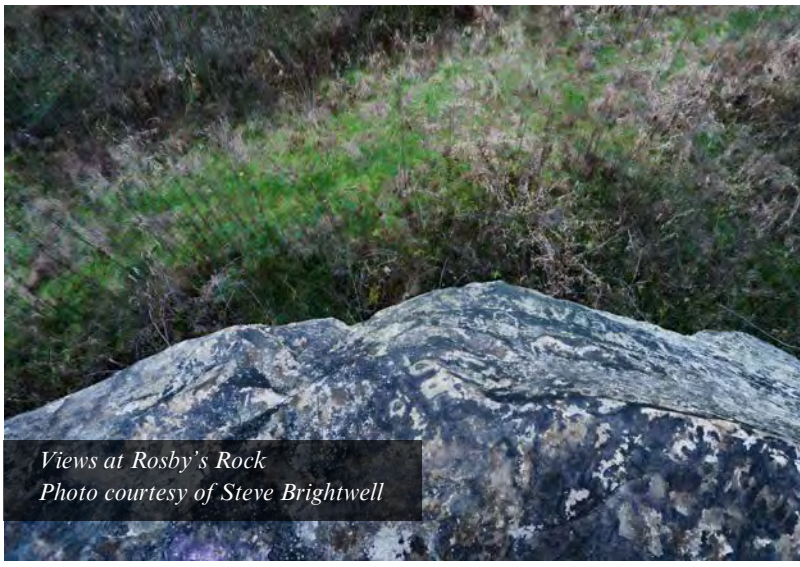
Rosby's Rock connects us to a time when we relied on the railroad for commerce and local development. We don't just look at buildings to preserve our history. History can be associated with a boulder, a hilltop cemetery, bridges, fountains, and tow boats. Our office hasn't managed to list every type of historic resource, but the Criteria for Evaluation acknowledges that history is associated with sites, structures, objects, districts, as well as buildings. This issue of *Details* highlights these resources and includes articles written by our partners in historic preservation. We are grateful for their efforts to identify, preserve, and protect historic places. I hope that this issue gives you a new perspective on historic resources and a desire to visit some of these unusual places.

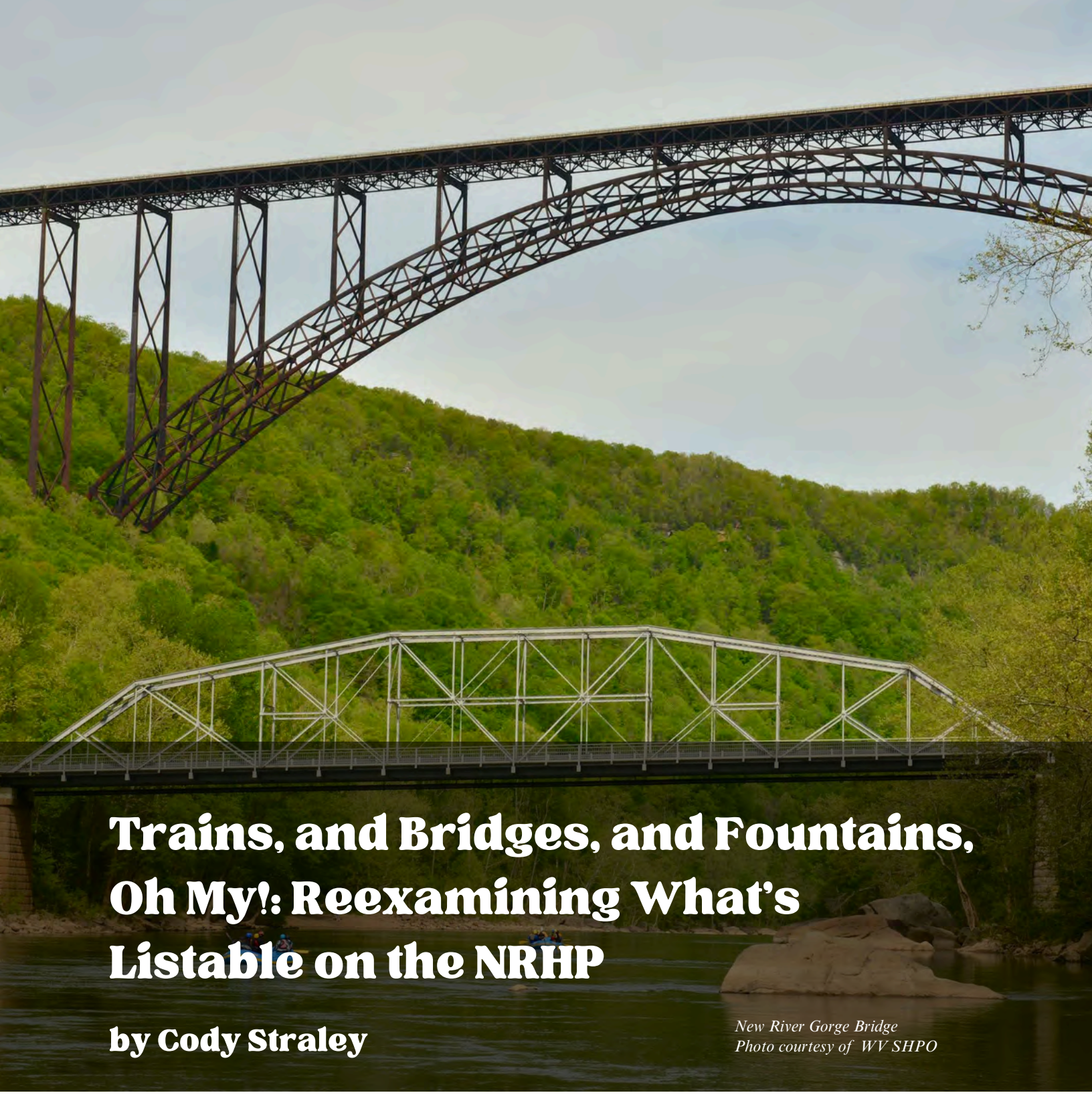
Susan M. Pierce
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer



*Rosby's Rock*
*Photo courtesy of Steve Brightwell*


*Susan M. Pierce at Rosby's Rock*
*Photo courtesy of Steve Brightwell*


*Views at Rosby's Rock*
*Photo courtesy of Steve Brightwell*



# Trains, and Bridges, and Fountains, Oh My!: Reexamining What's Listable on the NRHP

## by Cody Straley

*New River Gorge Bridge*
*Photo courtesy of WV SHPO*

When most people think of a historical resource, the first thing that usually comes to mind is an old house, an important building, or a historic downtown. This is the case for many historical resources, but not all of them. The National Register of Historic Places is actually very flexible when it comes to what can be listed. Across the United States, unusual things added to the National Register have included a roller coaster, a phone booth, a submarine, railroads, train engines, plane crash sites, outhouses, and even a pump organ. Essentially, anything capable of retaining and conveying an association to a significant historical theme, event, or trend has the potential to be listed on the National Register.

Things listed in the National Register fall under one of five descriptive categories:

**Building**- Something constructed to provide shelter for any kind of human activity. Houses, churches, schools, barns, hotels, restaurants, stores, and other such resources are considered buildings.

**Site**- The location of an important historic event or activity which has importance even without the presence of any buildings or structures. Sites can include battlefields, gardens, ruins, landscapes, hunting grounds, and places with archaeological remains.

**Structure**- A structure is a constructed resource intended to serve a purpose other than sheltering a human activity. These are places people may use or travel through but generally are not expected to stay at or perform activities in for long periods of time. Structures include bridges, roads, tunnels, ships, planes, trains, mounds, roller coasters, gazebos, power plants, and windmills.

**Object**- The National Park Service defines objects as resources "that are primarily artistic in nature or are relatively small in scale and simply constructed." They may or may not be movable, but generally stay in one place and have strong associations with that place. Objects are used to identify or mark something; commemorate an event; or express an ideal. They include signs, fountains, statues, public art sculptures, and boundary markers.

**District**- A district is an area of land containing multiple sites, buildings, structures, or objects that possess an important shared history. Districts can include residential neighborhoods, downtown business districts, small towns, farms, cemeteries, and parks.

The vast majority of National Register listings in West Virginia are buildings, sites, and historic districts. However, there are also many historic structures and objects that are just as important to our communities. The stories they tell are vital to preserving and sharing a broader, more meaningful history of the Mountain State.

Many historic structures in West Virginia are significant for their contributions to the state's development. Paramount among these are bridges. Over 30 have been added to the National Register, including styles spanning from covered bridges, to concrete arches, to steel trusses. Most of them are listed for their association with the history of transportation. Bridges traditionally have been a critical part of the infrastructure for many communities by facilitating quick and easy movement of people and goods. The Winfield Toll Bridge, for example, was nominated for its significance in providing a crossing over the Kanawha River, connecting the communities of Winfield and Red House.

*Winfield Toll Bridge*
*Photo courtesy of WV SHPO*

Some bridges are also eligible for their association with the history of engineering. Structures can be listed if they feature pioneering or otherwise exceptional construction techniques that are deemed historically significant. Such was the case with the New River Gorge Bridge. Constructed over the New River near Fayetteville in 1977, it was the longest steel arch bridge in the world at the time. Engineers also utilized new state-of-the-art building techniques, such as computer-generated calculations, thicker steel plates, and a more efficient method of inserting the bolts. The historic engineering milestone the bridge achieved was so significant that the bridge was able to be nominated to the National Register in 2013, well before the standard 50-year minimum required for most nominations. Very few resources under fifty years old are successfully nominated to the National Register. The fact that the New River Gorge Bridge was listed at just 36-years-old underscores how quick observers were to recognize its monumental, long-term historical significance.

*Chesapeake and Ohio Steam Locomotive*
*Photo courtesy of WV SHPO*

Other structures that contributed to the state's development, particularly on the industrial side of things, are train cars and locomotives. Strange as it might seem given their mobile nature, trains are considered structures under National Register guidelines. Trains, along with boats and aircraft, are a rare exception to the rule that National Register-listed resources not be removed from their original location. To be eligible, they must remain in a setting that conveys their original function. For trains, this means they must be located on or near a railroad.

Trains and railroads form a critical part of West Virginia's history. They enabled the transportation of raw materials, namely coal and timber, out of the hills and to markets all over the world. This fueled unprecedented economic, demographic, and environmental change in the state. The Cass Scenic Railroad in Pocahontas County, both the train tracks and several of the locomotives operating on them are listed together on the National Register. One locomotive, Shay No. 5, originial to the railroad, has run on the line since 1905. Three steam locomotives are listed on the National Register in West Virginia, two in Huntington and one at Chief Logan State Park. Huntington's Chesapeake and Ohio 1308 Steam Locomotive, for example, was nominated both for its role in transporting coal of out West Virginia and for representing the tail end of steam power in the railroad industry. Constructed in 1949, the locomotive operated until 1956, when it was replaced by diesel engine trains. 1308 today sits on a grassy lot adjacent to CSX railroad tracks in Huntington's 14th Street West.

While structures have generally served functional purposes, the role of objects has often been more symbolic. Objects are frequently created to send a message, whether it be an abstract emotion or practical information. These include signs, art pieces, and monuments. In some limited situations, however, historic objects do have practical functions. The Pin Oak Fountain in Hampshire County, for example, is significant to the history of transportation for its role as part of a series of public drinking fountains constructed along state roads in the early 1930s.


*Pin Oak Fountain*
*Photo courtesy of WV SHPO*

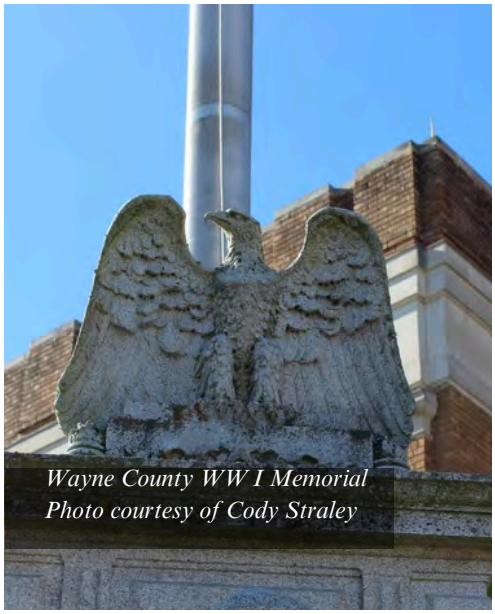
Only ten National Register listings in West Virginia are classified as objects. Of these, six are cast iron mile markers along the National Road in Wheeling. Installed back in the 1830s, these objects are significant for their role in delineating the first true federal highway. West Virginia's other National Register objects include three fountains and one war monument. Each of them (with the exception of the Pin Oak Fountain) are significant for their artistic value and social messages they were intended to convey.

## Reflections on Nominating Historic Objects


*Wayne County WW I Memorial*
*Photo courtesy of Cody Straley*

For the past year, I have focused on writing nominations for "non-buildings" to demonstrate the versatility of the National Register program. I recently succeeded in listing two of these objects on the National Register in 2024. They are the Wayne County World War I Memorial and the Marshall University Memorial Fountain. Typically, monuments are not eligible for the National Register because they are used to interpret or commemorate a historic event, and are not directly associated with the event itself. However, they can be successfully nominated if they are found to have their own historical significance apart from the event they are intended to commemorate. Making such an argument may require some creativity and expanded research on the part of the person writing the National Register nomination.

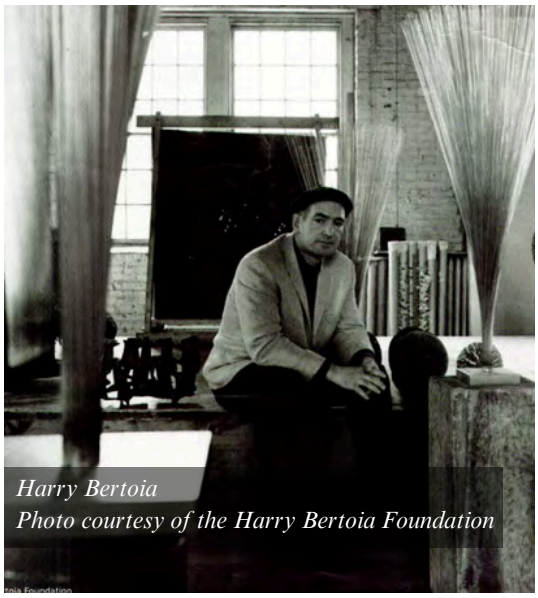
Take the Wayne County World War I Memorial, for instance. This granite statue of a 1910s-era Army soldier was erected on the grounds of the Wayne County Courthouse in 1923 to honor the 42 soldiers in the county who died during World War I. The monument is not eligible for its association with the history of World War I because it was not directly involved in the conflict, as opposed to more appropriate places such as a battlefield, training camp, or munitions factory. However, the monument is eligible through its association with social history, specifically the early twentieth century monument-building movement.


*Wayne County WW I Memorial*
*Photo courtesy of Cody Straley*

Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, the United States experienced a wave of demand for public monuments, especially those honoring Civil War or World War I soldiers. Communities large and small erected statues, plaques, memorial halls, and parks dedicated to their war heroes. Efforts to organize, fund, and celebrate these monuments prompted more civic engagement among the general population. The Wayne County World War I Memorial is historically significant because of its association with this movement. The county court issued a special levy to pay for the monument, and a local newspaper solicited the names of soldiers to inscribe on it. The dedication ceremony witnessed the largest crowd ever assembled in the Town of Wayne, with speeches from prominent local citizens. The memorial embodies the values of patriotism, sacrifice, and military valor expressed by Wayne County residents during the 1920s.

Part of my reasoning for nominating the Wayne County World War I Memorial was to highlight the role of historical memory. How we choose to remember an event naturally determines how the historical narrative is told. Community members have traditionally used the erection of public monuments to exert their own influence on historical memory. In Wayne County's case, this World War I statue was created to propagate a valorous, patriotic interpretation of the county's participation in the war. Memory and memorialization were key topics I studied during my time in college; my undergraduate capstone was a paper on the history of World War I monuments in West Virginia, for instance. This prior research easily provided the background context for my nomination.

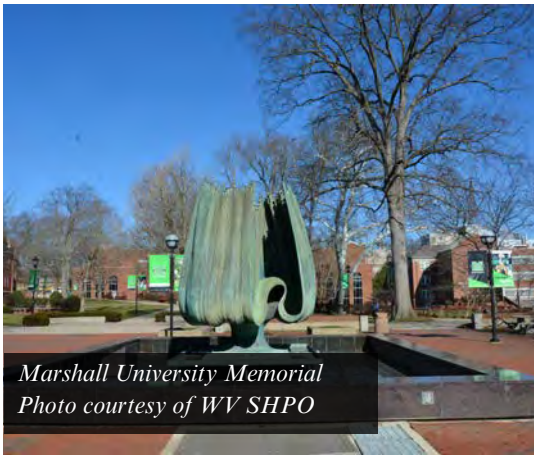
Like Wayne County's memorial, the Marshall University Memorial Fountain in Huntington was also created in response to loss. Unlike the early twentieth century war monuments, the fountain's development was an isolated event unconnected to any larger historic trend. On November 14, 1970, a plane carrying most of the Marshall University football team and many prominent Huntington residents crashed, killing all 75 on board. The university commissioned this memorial fountain in 1972 to honor the victims of the worst sports-related air disaster in American history.



*Harry Bertoia*
*Photo courtesy of the Harry Bertoia Foundation*

The Memorial Fountain is a distinct object, composed of welded, green copper tubes formed into the shape of a flower or chalice. The fountain is eligible for the National Register through its association with art history, specifically twentieth century abstract art. It was sculpted by the famous abstract artist Harry Bertoia. Bertoia created many organic-looking metal sculptures over the course of his career, as well as designing metal furniture and jewelry. He designed the Marshall University Memorial Fountain to symbolize renewal, rebirth, and growth, in contrast to the mournful, static appearances of more traditional memorials. The fountain's running water, the plantlike tubes, and its general shape reaching upward, all give it a lifelike quality. The fountain is one of Bertoia's most unique and well-known public sculptures, as well as his only one in Huntington and all of West Virginia. As such, the fountain is significant for its historic artistic merit.

Writing the National Register nomination for the memorial fountain has been one of the highlights of my tenure at the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office. As a graduate of Marshall University, I saw the project as my way of giving back to my alma mater. I was also compelled by the fountain's unique design and its powerful meaning. Generations of Marshall students have experienced the fountain as a backdrop to numerous activities, as an artwork to be admired, or as a personal source of contemplation. The National Register nomination recognizes and honors the special role that this landmark holds in the hearts and minds of the Marshall community.



*Marshall University Memorial*
*Photo courtesy of WV SHPO*

Historic preservation goes beyond just buildings and districts. Trains, bridges, sculptures, monuments, and many more things contribute to West Virginia's history. By broadening our notions of what can and should be preserved, we can better appreciate the rich cultural heritage that surrounds us.

# Unseen Infrastructure: Nominating New Deal Stone Walls to the National Register of Historic Places

**by Jamie Billman, Preservation Manager for the Preservation Alliance of WV**

*Carriage Trails, Kanawha County. Photo courtesy of David Sibray*

The Preservation Alliance of West Virginia (PAWV) publishes an annual West Virginia Endangered Properties (EP) list to highlight structures across the state that are at risk of demolition by neglect, environmental hazards, or a host of other factors. In early 2024 one came across our desk that was unanimously agreed upon to be added to our list of EPs by the review committee: historic stone walls in the state.

The addition of historic stone walls to the EP list was catalyzed by the demolition of a historic Works Progress Administration (WPA) wall in Mount Hope. When the town's residents voiced objections about the replacement of the stone retaining walls, WV SHPO reached out to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) who initiated the review process. HUD worked with the town and the housing authority to remediate this troubling situation. This oversight raised concerns for all of us in the preservation field and so it was an easy decision to list these historic walls, from across the state, to the EP list as many are at risk of being lost due to age, poor documentation, and lack of awareness of ownership.

Since the listing, PAWV has witnessed an overwhelming show of support for preserving these walls with calls coming from all corners of the state telling us about walls in their area and asking about resources for their preservation. To address these requests, we decided the best course forward would be to identify more of the walls officially and create a style guide.

One board member, and member of the EP committee, Mike Gioulis, was extensively familiar with this resource, having previously worked on a National Register (NR) nomination for historic New Deal Era Stone Walls in Morgantown. Mr. Gioulis started working on this project in 2016 in conjunction with members of the Morgantown Historic Landmarks Commission with funding from WV SHPO. The intent was to survey, document, and ultimately list these stone resources. This nomination process was put on hold, but when PAWV received the nomination of historic stone walls to the EP list, the committee proposed to finish the nomination, and then use it as a launching point to create an identification resource and style guide. Now, nearly a year later, the NR nomination will again be under review at the first Archives and History meeting of 2025, and an identification and resource guide is in the works in partnership with National Coal Heritage Area Authority, the original nominators of these resources to the EP list.

*Stone Wall in Lewisburg*
*Photo courtesy of Skip Deegans*

The NR nomination focuses mostly on the work of the Pietro brothers, James and Thoney, prolific and impressive stone masons in the Morgantown area during the New Deal Era. Their work can be seen across north-central West Virginia since

they were contracted to work across the region, and as far north as Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. While Thoney ran their family company, The Pietro Paving and Construction Company, James worked as a WPA foreman training men to work on the state's stone infrastructure. James coordinated with the Marion County WPA office often, and would contact the Pittsburgh Army Corps of Engineers for project approvals. In fact the WPA and Corps approved his designs for the Deckers Creek wall. His work preceded him so much that he was at one point contacted by the Army Corps of Engineers on behalf of Jennings Randolph, West Virginia Congressman at that time, to be sure James Pietro would attend a hearing regarding another project in the area.

*Photo courtesy of WVRHC*

While James was highly regarded for his work as a WPA foreman, Thoney was also greatly influential during this period. As a business owner, he was not eligible to join the WPA or other similar projects that were open to people out of employment due to the Great Depression. His business survived during this period, in part due to contracting from the City of Morgantown, which was going through a massive infrastructure improvement process at that time and needed companies like Thoney Pietro's to supplement the work being done by the WPA and other New Deal agencies. On one such occasion as James was working to build the Richwood Avenue wall with his crew of WPA workers, Thoney was at work paving that very same road, and they are photographed working side by side. Therefore, we can see the importance of preserving these stone resources, as they highlight not only municipal histories, but the histories of the individual men that worked on them.

Working on the nomination has been a study in the importance of infrastructure. When one walks around a town, they may not acknowledge the infrastructure that is helping them along. The sidewalks, bridges, roads, retaining walls, go unnoticed. However, these structures really shape the fabric of a town, as well as the ingress and egress points to places like town centers. They are integral, but we don't notice them unless there is something wrong, like tripping on a piece of cracked concrete sidewalk. It is perhaps for this very reason that the Mount Hope wall was initially overlooked, people do not associate these structures with the National Register, at least not yet.

Thinking about the future, community members can take action by rallying around these walls and documenting them with state historic property inventory forms (HPI form). When your town is nominating multiple properties to be considered a National Register Historic District, or updating an older one, consider adding these walls to the District nomination to give them that distinction. With that designation they will be eligible for historic preservation grant funding that is specifically for properties and structures listed individually or as a contributing structure on the National Register of Historic Places.

*Stone carved cartouche-plaque near south end of 309 8th Street property line*
*Photo courtesy of PAWV*


# Hallowed Hills: A Brief Look at 150 Years in West Virginia's National Cemeteries

**by Kyle Warmack**

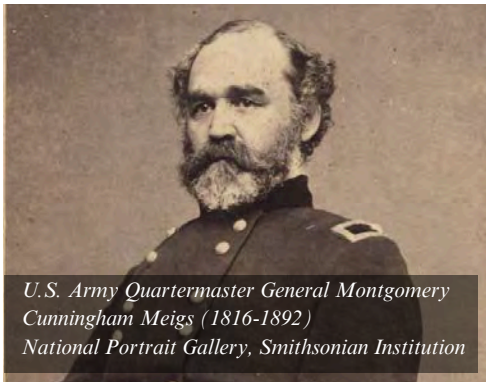
*Rows of markers stretch into the distance at West Virginia National Cemetery, November 2024. Photo by Kyle Warmack, courtesy of the West Virginia Humanities Council.*

## Origins of the National Cemeteries

Even before the Civil War came to a close, the nation was grappling with a tragic logistical problem: how to respectfully manage hundreds of thousands of war dead.

Four years of bloody war had caused, in the final devastating enumeration, well over half a million American fatalities. Bones remained unburied on dozens of battlefields, sometimes years after the combatants had moved on. As the nation mourned its losses in April 1865, it also needed to learn how to honor and care for the remains of an unprecedented number of veterans.

Among the lost was the son of the U.S. Army Quartermaster General, Montgomery Meigs, killed late in the war after campaigning in West Virginia and fighting with Union forces at Droop Mountain in Pocahontas County. General Meigs buried the young man alongside 16,000 of his comrades on Confederate General Robert E. Lee's former plantation estate in Arlington, Virginia—the confiscation of which Meigs had ordered for the benefit of Union war dead. Meigs's sense of poetic justice created Arlington National Cemetery, the nation's first of many "national cemeteries."



*U.S. Army Quartermaster General Montgomery Cunningham Meigs (1816-1892) National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution*

The first thirty national cemeteries evolved during the war around sites not dissimilar to Arlington: areas of intense troop concentration, such as forts or large camps, or near military hospitals. They were organic outgrowths born of sheer necessity, shepherded along by an 1861 military order requiring army unit commanders to provide burials for their troops, as well as an 1862 law empowering President Lincoln to purchase burial land for men fighting on behalf of the Union. An extensive postwar survey of Southern locales carried out by Lt. Colonel Edmund Burke Whitman—including mortuary statistics and hundreds of land plats for prospective cemetery sites—further prompted Congress to pass the National Cemetery Act in 1867.

Through the decades and wars that followed, this system of national cemeteries grew to encompass nearly 200 locations. 14 of them—original Civil War battlefield cemeteries like Gettysburg, as well as the Little Bighorn Battlefield of 1876—are administered by the National Park Service as part of active National Parks. Arlington National Cemetery is still run by the Department of the Army, as the rest of the cemeteries were until the 1970s.

These are notable exceptions, however. The vast bulk of this hallowed endeavor is carried out by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), founded in 1973 as a division of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The NCA's approximately 2,500 federal employees administer 156 national cemeteries and 35 soldiers' lots in 42 states and Puerto Rico. A monumental task, to be sure, and one which had never before been undertaken by any country in the world.

## Eternal Repose in the Mountain State

West Virginia is home to two national cemeteries, though one could liken our pair—Grafton National Cemetery and West Virginia National Cemetery—to two halves of the same whole. Both are located in Taylor County in and near the county seat of Grafton; and the caretakers of both sites comprise a single NCA staff now headquartered in the latter cemetery.

Grafton National Cemetery, a terraced hillside running down to the tracks of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (B&O, now CSX), lies within walking distance of the high school and public library. It is one of the first wave of 73 national cemeteries, having been built in 1867 in the wake of the National Cemetery Act's passage. 1,215 of Grafton's 2,119 plots are dedicated to Civil War dead (a handful of Confederate casualties were buried alongside their Union opponents during the cemetery's early interments).

*Main entrance to the WV National Cemetery*
*Photo by Mike Keller, courtesy of the West Virginia Humanities Council*

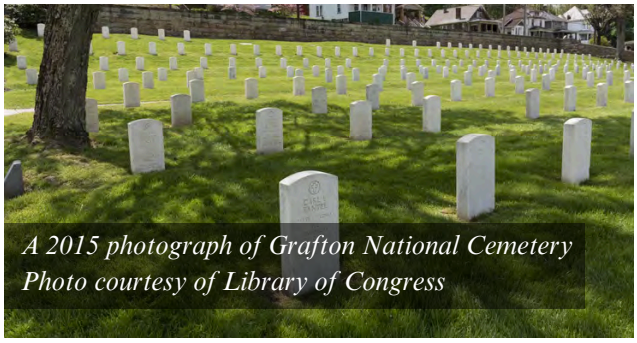
664 of those remain unidentified, slightly above the national average of 42 percent who remain unknown. The famous writer Ambrose Bierce, himself a Civil War veteran, remarked upon this while visiting his old West Virginia battlefields later in life, in his short but well-known reflection, "A Bivouac of the Dead." With his typical dark wit, "Bitter Bierce" noted that, "More than a half of the green graves in the Grafton cemetery are marked 'Unknown,' and sometimes it occurs that one thinks of the contradiction involved in 'honoring the memory' of him of whom no memory remains to honor..."

Bierce did also note the natural beauty of Grafton's setting, but this was not the primary reason for its selection as a cemetery site. While Grafton has never been one of West Virginia's larger urban centers (it peaked at just over 8,000 residents in 1920), the town fit two of the three criteria for early cemeteries: "Battle sites, railway hubs, and hospital centers determined where the bodies were buried," according to an official NCA publication. Grafton had indeed housed a Union hospital during wartime, but just as importantly, it was the primary hub for the B&O Railroad in the area. This simplified the logistics of bringing remains to their final resting place.

As West Virginia's industrial prospects expanded in the late 19th century, Grafton grew around the cemetery and curtailed the possibility of enlargement. The number of available plots dwindled as the Spanish-American War, two World Wars, and the Korean War added more silent ranks of stones. Most sources state that the cemetery was closed to new burials in 1961, and in 1970, the *Morgantown Dominion-Post* reported only 65 remaining spaces, all of them reserved. As a result, fewer than a dozen Vietnam War veterans killed-in-action are interred in Grafton. As late as 1975, a Charleston Gazette article claimed only three Vietnam veterans were interred there. Despite the fighting that had raged in Vietnam for years, no provisions were made for an expansion of Grafton, or for a new cemetery.

By the time American forces withdrew completely from Vietnam in 1975, veterans were running out of patience with the government's inaction. At a conference in Elkins that September, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) state commander John F. Payne said that West Virginia's veterans, whose living ranks numbered 250,000, "should have the right to a burial in their native state." The conference delegates called for reopening and expanding Grafton, or building a new cemetery in "some other suitable area in West Virginia." State Delegate Samuel Morasco of Taylor County and the citizens of Grafton itself soon began agitating for action alongside the VFW.

In June 1976, cemetery director Leonard R. White disclosed to the Charleston Daily Mail that negotiations for more land were under way, but could not give details because, "It's a very sensitive thing." Perhaps the Department of Veterans Affairs (and its newly-minted NCA), which had assumed responsibility for the cemeteries in 1973, could succeed where the Army had failed.



*A 2015 photograph of Grafton National Cemetery*
*Photo courtesy of Library of Congress*

## Final Victories

Despite the shift in responsibility to another federal branch, however, inactivity remained the status quo. In 1980, the VA finally proposed a plan to move the graves of the 664 unidentified Civil War soldiers to make room for new burials. The idea was roundly criticized, but the VA forged ahead anyway—only to be halted by federal historic preservation requirements. The VA complained in early 1984 that reopening Grafton was altogether too expensive. But pressure from West Virginia's Congressional delegation kept mounting, and by the end of May, definite plans for an extension of Grafton were at last announced.

The new West Virginia National Cemetery tract was developed on former state land in nearby Pruntytown (four miles from Grafton National Cemetery), where budget cuts under Governor Jay Rockefeller had closed the West Virginia Industrial School for Boys. Originally slated for 73 acres—compared to Grafton National Cemetery's measly 3.21 acre lot—the new site opened with much fanfare in 1987 at a pared-down 58 acres. It had been a long, hard fight by state veterans groups, legislators, public officials, and ordinary citizens. West Virginia's 26 years without an active national cemetery were finally at an end.

*Cemetery Director Richard Colosky speaks to University High School (Morgantown) students*
*Photo by Kyle Warmack, courtesy of the West Virginia Humanities Council*

The Pruntytown site has already more than quadrupled the number of interments of Grafton, containing over 8,000 veterans spanning World War I (though fewer than 20 from that war) to Iraq, Afghanistan, and beyond. World War II and the Vietnam War are the most heavily represented, with (very approximately) 3,000 veterans from each of those conflicts. Current Director Richard Colosky leads a small staff of National Cemetery Administration employees in the care of both cemeteries, since the two sites are so close together and one is closed to new burials. These men and women—many of whom are veterans themselves—maintain the grounds, arrange interments, and conduct relations with the general public.

Since 2021, that general public has included high schoolers from Grafton High School and University High School participating in the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project, a program of the West Virginia Humanities Council funded by the VA's Veterans Legacy Grant Program. As of this writing, these students have researched and written (or are writing now!) nearly 100 biographies of veterans interred in the state's national cemeteries. The Council and graduate students from West Virginia University's history department have worked with teachers Rebecca Bartlett and Richard Zukowksi (Grafton) and Meghan Dunn (Morgantown) across four years to develop this program as a tool for instruction in research methods, historical thinking, and honoring veterans by diving deep into the context of their service.

For nearly six months of the school year, these students toil through unfamiliar documents, long chains of military acronyms, and sift relationships between historical events to discover the untold stories behind the stones of both national cemeteries. The task is no less arduous with each new year, but just as the history of the cemeteries themselves is complex and unique, so too is the story of each veteran who resides within them.

*Grafton High students search for their veterans' names at State Capitol memorial Photo by Mike Keller, courtesy of WVHC*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**Kyle Warmack has administered the West Virginia Virginia National Cemeteries Project since its inception in 2021. He is the Program Officer at the West Virginia Humanities Council, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information, visit www.wvhumanities.org.**

The Grafton National Cemetery is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, https://wvculture.org/agencies

## Preserving the Past, Protecting the Future: The Battle for the James Osbourn Farm

**by Elizabeth Nicholson**

*James Osbourn Farm, Jefferson County. Photo courtesy of WV SHPO*

The past three decades have seen rapid residential and commercial development in Jefferson County. This development is largely driven by the expansion of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, as commuters seek more affordable housing and a quieter lifestyle further from the city. While development brings the possibility for economic growth and other benefits to the county, it also poses an existential threat to Jefferson County's historic landscapes.

Jefferson County is largely rural and has a rich history of agricultural production. Many of the farms in the area are historically significant hundred-acre (or larger) tracts of land anchored by 18th and 19th century farmhouses. As developers look for areas to build, farms are one of the more appealing options as they offer large parcels of land, little need to clear timber or for structural demolition. Unfortunately, this appeal means that historic farmland, and resultantly the agricultural history of Jefferson County is at great risk of loss.

One such property threatened by proposed development was the James Osbourn Farm. Located outside of Shepherdstown, WV the farm's period of historical significance dates from 1848, when James Osbourn and his wife Margaret built their Georgian-style brick farmhouse and began agricultural cultivation on the land, to 1876, six years after James Osbourn's death. While living there, the Osbourn Family cultivated fruit trees, corn, wheat, Irish potatoes, clover, and hay and raised sheep and other livestock.

The sweeping fields are anchored by a two-and-a-half-story, three-bay Georgian brick farmhouse with a side-gable roof, set upon an uncoursed limestone foundation. While the architecture and agricultural history of the property are remarkable, its most striking feature, a cannonball embedded in the second story of the north facade, points to a secondary historical significance: the farm's role as one of the sites of the Battle at Shepherdstown.

The Battle of Shepherdstown took place from September 19 to 20, 1862, during the Civil War, shortly after the Battle of Antietam. As Union forces pursued the retreating Confederate Army, they clashed near the town of Shepherdstown, along the Potomac River. The battle was characterized by intense fighting, with Confederate forces holding defensive positions along the riverbank while Union troops attempted to push them back. Despite initial successes, the Union forces were unable to decisively defeat the Confederates, who ultimately withdrew across the river. While not as large or decisive as other battles, Shepherdstown marked the end of the Maryland Campaign and solidified General Robert E. Lee's retreat after the Confederate defeat at Antietam.

*Cannonball embedded in house*
*Photo courtesy of WV SHPO*

"The historic appearance of the 120.63-acre property was one of cleared fields and vistas, a farmhouse, bank barn, and haystacks." Although the farm is approximately 25-acres smaller than the 145-acre tract originally owned by James Osbourn, the remaining 120-acres appear much as they may have when cultivated by the Osbourn Family or in 1862 when soldiers fought in the area. The fields are still cultivated by a local farmer who leases them, soybeans and corn grow over the gently rolling land.

This continuity in appearance and use is thanks to the efforts of local and national organizations who worked together to prevent the development of this historically significant land: the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association, the American Battlefield Protection Program (a program of the National Park Service), the American Battlefield Trust (previously known as the Civil War Trust), the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle, and the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission.

In 2004, Faraway Farm LLC, a Maryland-based developer, purchased the 120-acre James Osbourn Farm with plans to construct a 152-house residential subdivision. In response to this threat, the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association was formed. Members worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the farm's historic value and to oppose the proposed development. Their efforts led to a temporary legal victory in 2006 when the Jefferson County Circuit Court ruled to deny a conditional use permit for Faraway Farm LLC's project. However, the ruling was appealed, resulting in a six-year-long legal battle that moved from the Circuit Court of Jefferson County to the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals, and ultimately back to the Circuit Court, where the judge ruled in favor of the developer.

Meanwhile, the American Battlefield Trust (formerly the Civil War Trust), working in collaboration with the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association, met with representatives of Faraway Farm LLC to discuss purchasing the James Osbourn Farm. Unfortunately, at that time, according to then Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association president Edward Dunleavy "the appraised value was lower than the developer would have liked, so they pulled out of the talk."

In an effort to formally establish the historic significance of the James Osbourn Farm and the surrounding area, a National Park Service team, in collaboration with two local historians, conducted the Shepherdstown Battlefield Special Resource Study. Published in 2014, their report determined that the core of the Shepherdstown Battlefield consisted of a 510-acre area, which wholly encompassed the James Osbourn Farm.

In 2022, the James Osbourn Farm was successfully acquired by the American Battlefield Trust for $2,000,000, thanks to the collaborative efforts of the American Battlefield Trust and the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association. This achievement was made possible in part by a Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant awarded to the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission by the American Battlefield Protection Program. The purchase marked a significant milestone in preserving Jefferson County's rich agricultural heritage and its important connection to Civil War history.

On April 4, 2023, the James Osbourn Farm was recognized for its agricultural and architectural significance, as well as its role in the history of the Civil War, through its listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

One of the most effective strategies for curbing encroaching development in Jefferson County has been the use of conservation easements. A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a government agency or organization that restricts development on a property to safeguard its natural features, historic value, and wildlife habitat. While some conservation easements are donated, many are purchased to ensure long-term protection.

In Jefferson County, two primary land trusts work to preserve the region's distinctive landscapes. The Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle primarily acquires easements through donations, while the Farmland Protection Board purchases easements using funds generated by a real estate transfer tax established under the WV Voluntary Farmland Protection Act of 2000.

*James Osbourn Farm, Jefferson County.*
*Photo courtesy of Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association*

In 2023, the American Battlefield Trust granted a conservation easement on the James Osbourn Farm to the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle, ensuring the property's perpetual protection. Following this, ownership of the farm was transferred to the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission to oversee its stewardship.

A key measure for safeguarding land under easement is the practice of annual easement checks. The Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle, in partnership with the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission, conducts these inspections to ensure the terms of the easement agreement are upheld. During these visits, representatives document the property's condition through photographs and detailed reports, verifying that no unauthorized construction, development, or other prohibited activities have occurred. These routine assessments play a vital role in identifying and addressing potential violations early. By providing consistent oversight, annual easement checks help protect the property's natural, historic, and agricultural features.

On August 26, 2023, supporters gathered outside of Shepherdstown to celebrate a victory nearly two decades in the making: the preservation of the James Osbourn Farm. This milestone was the result of 19 years of tireless effort, marked by strategic coordination and funding from a coalition of dedicated partners, including the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association, the American Battlefield Trust, the Land Trust of the Eastern Panhandle, the American Battlefield Protection Program, and the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission.

Preservation of the James Osbourn Farm, however, is only the beginning of the story. Looking ahead, the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association and the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission are working toward congressional approval to incorporate the James Osbourn Farm, as part of the Shepherdstown Battlefield, into the nearby Antietam National Battlefield Park. This integration would secure further protection for the site, provide access to consistent federal funding, and increase public awareness and visitation, ensuring the battlefield's legacy endures for generations to come.

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**Elizabeth Nicholson is a AmeriCorps member serving with the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission. For more information about the James Osbourn Farm, read the full nomination on WV SHPO's website at https://wvculture.org/agencies**

# Office Updates

## Collegiate Partnership

Through the Fall 2024 semester, our office worked with students at Marshall University. Students enrolled in History 210, a course founded on exploring the history of Huntington, conducted an architectural survey. Jessica Eichlin, our Historian for the National Register and Architectural Survey, and Cody Straley, our National Register Coordinator, visited the class to discuss how to properly document historic structures. They then led students on a field trip to Ritter Park to demonstrate the documentation process. The neighborhood surrounding Ritter Park served as the focus of the students' survey. By the end of the semester students successfully completed 22 historic property inventory forms and submitted a final report on their findings. We're looking forward to continuing partnering with the state's universities in the future!

*Marshall University Hist. 210*
*Photo courtesy of Dr. Molly Mersmann*

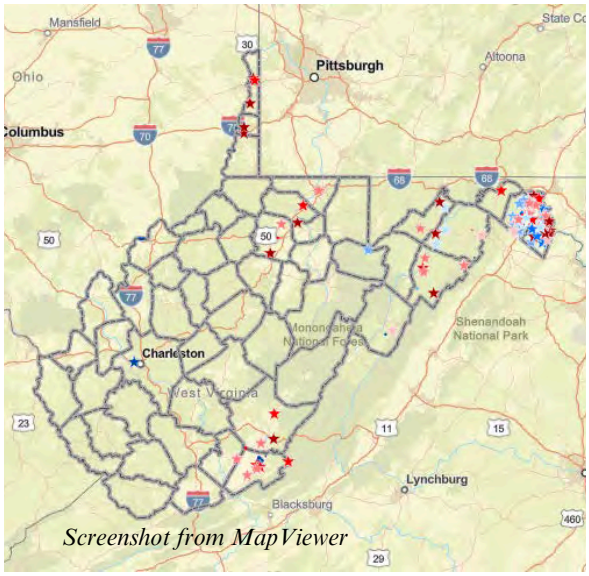
*Ananias Pitsenbarger Farm*
*Photo courtesy of WV SHPO*

## Planning for Preservation

Check out *Reaching Across Mountains* West Virginia's 2025-2030 historic preservation plan. This long range plan reviews the state's historic resources, discusses threats to preserving these resources, and goals for the next five years. It also highlights recent accomplishments in West Virginia's historic preservation field. *Reaching Across Mountains* is available on our website or you can request a physical copy by contacting our office.

## Celebrating America's 250th

At WV SHPO we're already celebrating the 250th anniversary of the United States in a recent update to our Map Viewer. Now on our interactive map there are stars in shades of red and blue. These stars denote historic resources in the state that pre-date 1800, one such resource is Shepherd's Mill. The mill helped to establish one of the state's earliest communities as well as contributed to the agricultural and economic development of Jefferson County. In total, there are 140 historic sites and resources that tell the story of indigenous cultures, colonization, and the Revolutionary War with the state. Resources include forts, houses and manors, farms, churches, and more. Check it out at https://mapwv.gov/shpo/viewer/index.html




*Screenshot from MapViewer*

## Recent Additions to the NRHP

In 2024, a total of twenty historic resources and districts were added to the National Register of Historic Places. Across the state, these listings document the state's economic history, educational heritage, and community organization. These farms, schools, churches, and more represent the state's history throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries:

- Rees-Daniel Farm, Jefferson County
- Amos Farmstead, Marion County
- Wright-Hunter Cemetery, Raleigh County
- Maplewood Cemetery, Randolph County
- "Cap" Hatfield Gravesite, Logan County
- Paw Paw Black School, Morgan County
- 14th St. West Historic District, Cabell County
- St. Charles Catholic Mission Church, Morgan County
- Wayne County WWI Memorial, Wayne County
- Frederick Rosenberger Farm, Jefferson County
- Woodbyrne, Jefferson County
- Kelly Miller School, Harrison County
- Beni Kedem Shrine Temple, Kanawha County
- Morgantown Green Book Historic District
- Senator P.E Nixon House, Morgan County
- Arbuckle's Fort, Greenbrier County
- Warwick's Fort, Pocahontas County
- Marshall University Memorial Fountain, Cabell County
- Bluefield Green Book Historic District, Mercer County
- Kanawha & Michigan Railway Depot Warehouse, Kanawha County

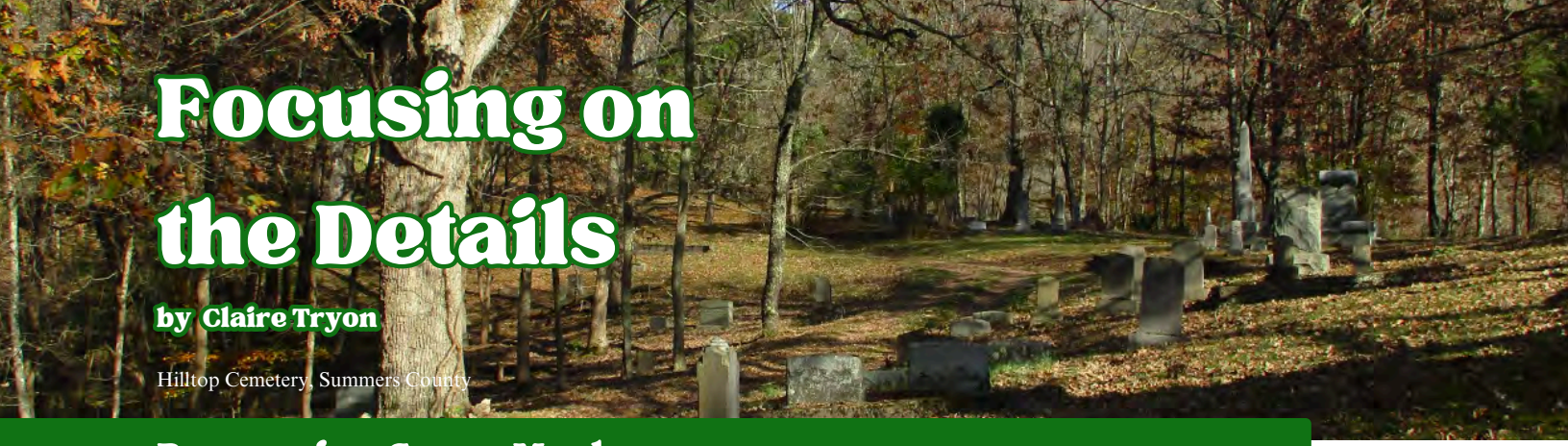
You can learn more about these sites by visiting the SHPO page on the department's website! Just scroll to the link for National Register nominations, and then search by county. Visit https://wvculture.org/ and see what historic sites are near you.

*Frederick Rosenberger Farm*
*Photo courtesy of WV SHPO*

*Paw Paw Black School*
*Photo courtesy of WV SHPO*


*Wright-Hunter Cemetery*
*Photo courtesy of WV SHPO*

*Amos Farmstead*
*Photo courtesy of WV SHPO*



# Focusing on the Details

by Claire Tryon

Hilltop Cemetery, Summers County

## Preserving Grave Markers

Cemeteries are invaluable historic resources. They are a means for communities to honor the dead, but they also demonstrate the ways in which those communities have changed over time. Caring for these historic resources, especially for those family and local cemeteries, can be a challenge. That challenge can be addressed by identifying both the risk factors and the ways to maintain grave markers.

There are two categories of risk factors to grave markers: naturally occurring and human activities. Of the various types of naturally occurring risks, grave markers suffer primarily from weathering and water. Weathering comes from sunlight, wind, rain, ice, high & low temperatures, and atmospheric pollutants. Markers have different rates of weathering based on chemical composition and physical structure. Similarly, water, in any form, is critical to the deterioration process. Water can easily enter into the grave maker materials through cracks, porous materials, or the joints where two different materials meet. The damage caused by weathering can be aggravated by human activity. For example, on a large scale acid rain, which is caused by pollution, leads to surface loss. In many cases surface loss results in grave marker inscriptions becoming indiscernible. Most risks caused by human activity are unintentional. Usually these damages are caused by insufficient training and funding, misuse of tools, and poor planning. The use of harsh cleaning products and techniques can dissolve minerals in the masonry or leave residues. Lack of proper maintenance often accelerates the deterioration process.

Maintenance is essential to long-term preservation of cemeteries. Therefore, it is important to conduct regular inspections, prioritize maintenance work, and budget for maintenance. There are four types of treatments to masonry which is the most common material used for grave markers: cleaning, repointing, resetting, and patching. Cleaning improves the visual appearance of grave markers and can reveal other existing problems. However, any cleaning must be done with appropriate materials and, as noted in federal preservation standards, done using the gentlest means possible. Cleaning tools like soft bristle brushes, historic masonry-compatible cleaning solutions, and even water are the safest and most effective items to have on hand for cleaning.

Another common issue is deteriorated mortar in older grave makers. This mortar should be replaced to prevent further damage from water intrusion. Mortar must be softer and more porous than the masonry to migrate out water and ensure that the new mortar will not damage the historic masonry surrounding it. Similarly, if a crack appears in the masonry, it is essential to repair those cracks in order to eliminate and reduce moisture. In more extreme circumstances, grave markers may require resetting. Resetting is recommended for grave markers that have unstable foundations or are out of plumb. Some of these treatments, like cleaning and patching, can be done by trained volunteers, but others, like repointing and resetting, are best completed by specialists.

Deterioration is inevitable as every material has a problem that will lead to its decay, but the severity can be mitigated. Regular maintenance should be a priority when it comes to caring for cemeteries.

# Preservation in Action: Examples in WV

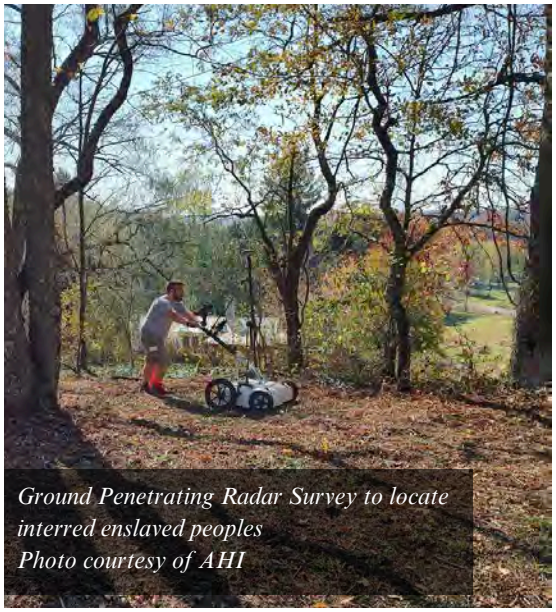
Maintaining cemeteries is an ongoing challenge for many West Virginians. Often cemeteries are overgrown with toppled over gravestones, or have been vandalized. The care of cemeteries depends on if people have the time and means to invest in these resources. For example, with many family cemeteries descendants move away leaving no one in the area to maintain them. In other circumstances, there may not be clear ownership of local cemeteries meaning there isn't any funding going towards care.

Oftentimes maintenance and care of cemeteries fall to volunteers or individuals if there is not an established perpetual care structure. Outside of perpetual care, the preservation of cemeteries tends to be a grassroots effort. There are a few organizations across the state aiding in those efforts.

## 1. The West Virginia Cemetery Preservation Project

The West Virginia Cemetery Preservation Project is a workshop series from the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia (PAWV). This project aimed to engage the public in cemetery preservation and share the proper preservation methods. PAWV sponsored 14 free one-day workshops across the state. Each workshop was divided into a half day classroom presentation and a half day of fieldwork at a local historic cemetery. Participants gained experience in documenting gravestones and cemeteries as well as cleaning, repairing, and resetting gravestones. A total of 243 people attended these workshops.

*Workshop in Mooresville*
*Photo courtesy of PAWV*



*Ground Penetrating Radar Survey to locate interred enslaved peoples*
*Photo courtesy of AHI*

## 2. Sept. 11 Day of Service & Remembrance Grants

WVSHPO is assisting with the recognition and preservation, or stabilization of local and family cemeteries throughout the state. Using state funding our office awarded grants to support a variety of activities such as workshops on stone stabilization, volunteer clean-up days, and grave marker repairs and resetting. We awarded a total of thirteen grants, including a grant to Arthurdale Heritage to install interpretative signage about their historic cemetery, as well as discuss the enslaved people interred there. Projects are currently ongoing, and are due to be completed in the summer of 2025.

# In Our Sights






1. Prince Train Station, Fayette County, Cody Straley
2. Keith Albee, Cabell County, Meredith Dreistadt
3. Union Building, Kanawha County, Meredith Dreistadt
4. Prince Store, Fayette County, Cody Straley
5. Kump House, Randolph County, Meredith Dreistadt

Check out these great shots captured by WV SHPO staff! We'd love to see your photos of preservation projects in the Mountain State. If you have a preservation project, activity, or event that you'd like to share with our readers, please send 2-3 high resolution photographs, along with a brief description, to Claire Tryon at claire.e.tryon@wv.gov for consideration and inclusion.

**The Culture Center**
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Charleston, WV 25303-0300

Nonprofit Organization
U.S Postage
PAID
Permit No. 2868
Charleston, WV 25301

## State Historic Preservation Office

**Susan M. Pierce**
Director/Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Susan.M.Pierce@wv.gov
Ext. 158

**Abigail Ayers**
Structural Historian/ Section 106 Review
Abigail.M.Ayers@wv.gov
Ext. 726

**Meredith Dreistadt**
Tax Credit & Certified Local Government Coordinator
Meredith.C.Dreistadt@wv.gov
Ext. 138

**Jessica Eichlin**
Historian/National Register & Architectural Survey
Jessica.A.Eichlin@wv.gov
Ext. 121

**Randall Hill**
Grants Coordinator
Randall.Hill@wv.gov
Ext. 720

**Carolyn Kender**
Archaeologist/Cemetery Survey
Carolyn.M.Kender@wv.gov
Ext. 719

**Lora Lamarre-DeMott**
Senior Archaeologist/State Archaeological Permits
Lora.A.Lamarre@wv.gov
Ext. 711

**Yvette Montanez**
Review & Compliance Assistant
Yvette.Montanez@wv.gov
Ext. 722

**Cody Straley**
National Register & Architectural Survey Coordinator
Cody.Straley@wv.gov
Ext. 712

**Claire Tryon**
Planning & Education Coordinator
Claire.E.Tryon@wv.gov
Ext. 158

**Susan Wood**
IT Coordinator-Computer/GIS
Susan.K.Wood@wv.gov
Ext. 140

**Vacanies**
Archaeologist-Section 106 Review
Structural Historian-Section 106 Review
Structural Historian-Section 106 Review