

West Virginia and Regional History Collection

NEWSLETTER

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West Virginia University Library

Fall/Winter 1986



John W. Davis, presidential nominee, poses with crowd in front of the Clarksburg Elks Hall, Aug. 11, 1924.

John W. Davis Papers Donated to Collection

When John W. Davis first hung up his shingle in Clarksburg about 1895, he aspired to be no more than "a pretty good lawyer." A man of his extraordinary charm, intelligence and integrity, however, was destined for greatness. In addition to enjoying a legal career during which he "argued more cases before the United States Supreme Court than any other lawyer in the nation's history, except possibly Daniel Webster," Davis nearly found himself President of the United States.

A collection of personal papers that document Davis's fascinating career as a statesman and lawyer were recently donated to the West Virginia and Regional History Collection by his daughter, Julia Davis Adams. The collection is comprised of an array of manuscripts, letters, journals, and photographs.

Born in Clarksburg in 1873, the son of John James Davis, an accomplished lawyer and politician in his own right, Davis received his early education in a variety of private schools. Earning both undergraduate and law degrees from Washington and Lee University, he joined his father's legal practice in Clarksburg in the mid 1890s.

With his election to the West Virginia House of Delegates in 1899, Davis embarked upon a political career that eventually earned him a seat in the United States House of Representatives, the post of Solicitor General of the United States, and from 1918-1921, the Ambassadorship to Great Britain.

A typescript copy of a diary chronicling Davis's experiences in the latter post reveals his perceptiveness, his sense of humor and his diplomacy as he met world dignitaries and involved himself in the reconstruction of Europe after World War I. A guest register containing the signatures of visitors to the ambassador's house forms a virtual Who's Who among British royalty and high society.

On 17 December 1918, the night before he met England's King George V, Davis dined at the home of Lord Reading, where he met Prime Minister David Lloyd-George. Of Lloyd-George, he commented: "I have never seen a man who seemed to radiate more vitality than he."

The next day Davis met the King in a brief and pleasant ceremony that was followed by an informal luncheon with the King and Queen, Princes Albert and George, and Princess Mary. Davis described the affair as differing "not at all from any similar function at the table of a private gentleman and where the conversation was chiefly small talk of the usual kind. I found the Queen not at all difficult in conversation and charming in manner, as well as far handsomer than the photographers permit her to appear."

Four days later Davis wrote of receiving a call from a C. W. Watson, who encouraged him to consider running for the United States presidency. Davis wrote, "Told him I had no ambition in that direction, but was still looking forward as hopefully as ever to the day when I might get back to private life and practice law." While avoiding the issue on this occasion, Davis's Democratic colleagues eventually got their way. On 9 July 1924, he was nominated on the 103rd ballot of the New York convention to be the Democratic candidate for Presi-

continued next page

West Virginia and Regional History Collection NEWSLETTER.
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Collection at the West Virginia University Library, Colson Hall,
Morgantown, West Virginia 26506. (304) 293-3536.

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continued

dent. Davis traveled to Clarksburg to deliver his acceptance speech in early August in a drenching rain. Among the collection's photographs is one of Davis tipping his hat to the Clarksburg crowd.

His campaign ended in defeat at the hands of incumbent Calvin Coolidge, and Davis returned to law. Considered one of the most eminent lawyers of the day, he continued to practice with the Wall Street firm of Davis, Polk, Wardwell, Gardner and Reed well into advanced age. He died in 1955, less than a month before his 83rd birthday.

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John W. Davis tips his hat to a Clarksburg crowd, August 1924.

9
 Washington D.C. Dec 31/56
 My dear Uncle
 I am glad to hear
 on my way home from Nelson
 I left the negroes at Brewers they
 had been treated most brutally
 youngest had been furnished with
 no clothing and the infant a fine boy born after the
 purchase had died from sheer neglect. Mrs Stowe
 could find among the "first families of the Old Dominion"
 material for a Dozen such volumes as "Dred"
 or "Uncle Toms Cabin". I believe I will try to make
 them pay for their dishonest inhumanity.
 Jim King exhibited great grief at parting with his
 wife & child & I swapped him for a boy 18 years old,
 made a first rate trade. Jims family is a valuable one
 He looks twenty years younger than when we saw him
 I gave for Margaret 13 & her brother 11 years old
 \$1075.00 payable in 90 days. More probably than
 they are worth but both will make good pickers next
 year & the overseer says Tom was the best hand on
 the place when all were together. If I do not see you or
 hear from you before the middle of next week I shall
 start all the negroes out. We will loose [sic] a crop if
 we delay much longer. I dont care about the [one
 word illegible] from what you say of him
 Yours Truly
 A Rust

13
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 when we saw him
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 what you say of him
 Yours Truly
 A Rust
 Enclosed is mortgage I executed to you

Slave Trade Letter Required

Washington, D.C.
 Dec 31/56

Historians often suggest that Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* changed the course of history. Indeed Abraham Lincoln himself once referred to Stowe as "the little lady who made this big war."

Initially issued serially in the Abolitionist sounding board *National Era* between 1851–52, the book publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life Among the Lowly* proved to be one of publishing history's bestsellers. Within a year of its release on 20 March 1852 over two and a half million copies were sold worldwide.

While the book was tacitly banned in the South (as late as the early 20th century one South Carolina teacher required that his pupils raise their right hands and swear never to read it), a recently acquired letter reveals that at least one slave trader was familiar not only with *Uncle Tom* but with Stowe's second abolitionist effort, *Dred: A Tale of the Dismal Swamp*, as well. Written by a member of an Eastern Panhandle family (perhaps Alfred Rust to his uncle George Rust), the letter affords keen insight into the odd mixture of compassion and cruelty that enabled the institution to persist in a supposedly enlightened society.

My Dear Uncle

I wrote you yesterday on my way home from Nelson. I left the negroes at Brewers. They had been treated most brutally. The youngest had been furnished with no clothing and the infant a fine boy born after the purchase had died from sheer neglect. Mrs Stowe could find among the "first families of the Old Dominion" material for a Dozen such volumes as "Dred" or "Uncle Toms Cabin". I believe I will try to make them pay for their dishonest inhumanity.

Jim King exhibited great grief at parting with his wife & child & I swapped him for a boy 18 years old, made a first rate trade. Jims family is a valuable one He looks twenty years younger than when we saw him
 I gave for Margaret 13 & her brother 11 years old \$1075.00 payable in 90 days. More probably than they are worth but both will make good pickers next year & the overseer says Tom was the best hand on the place when all were together. If I do not see you or hear from you before the middle of next week I shall start all the negroes out. We will loose [sic] a crop if we delay much longer. I dont care about the [one word illegible] from what you say of him

Yrs. Truly
 A Rust

Enclosed is mortgage I executed to you

Paintings Enhance D. H. Strother Collections

The Regional History Collection's holdings of the works of David Hunter Strother were augmented this summer by the donation of a pair of oil paintings. Dating from the time of Strother's youthful studies in Europe, during the 1840s, the paintings were given to the Collection by the artist's grandson, Porter Strother, of Grosse Point Park, Michigan.

Readers may recall that an article in the Spring, 1986, *Newsletter* announced the deposit of an extensive collection of sketches and journals by the Eastern Panhandle native. In addition to serving *Harpers Magazine* as antebellum America's premier artist reporter, Strother achieved distinction during his lifetime as a novelist, a military strategist, the first Adjutant General of West Virginia, and as United States Ambassador to Mexico from 1879-1885.

Determined to pursue a career as a painter early in life, Strother studied painting at the National Academy of Design under Samuel F. B. Morse during the late 1830s. Subsequently embarking on the customary pilgrimage of aspiring young artists of the day, he set sail for Europe in the fall of 1840. Nearly three years of Bohemian wanderings throughout Europe followed.

Strother's journals reveal that both of the newly acquired paintings stem from this period. The first, entitled "The Lighting of the Shrine," is enumerated among a group of works listed under the heading, Florence 27 March 1842. Measuring 36" x 31½", the painting depicts the nocturnal lighting of a shrine to the Madonna.



"The Lighting of the Shrine" by David Hunter Strother.

The second painting, entitled "Justice Guarding the Sleeping World" (52" x 72"), is listed under the heading, Paris, 14 May 1843. According to the artist's journal, this work was copied from a painting in a Luxembourg gallery.

The Collection is delighted to have the paintings, as they shed considerable light upon the foundations of Strother's multifaceted career.



"Justice Guarding the Sleeping World" by David Hunter Strother.

Selected Accessions List

Davis, John W. (1873-1955). Papers, 1915-1983. 4 ms. boxes, 1 Paige box, 1 document case. Gift, 1985. A&M 2963.

Papers, clippings, and correspondence of lawyer and statesman John W. Davis and his immediate family, including writer Julia Davis Adams. Most items concern Davis's presidential campaign (1924) and ambassadorship to Great Britain (1918-1921). Included are visiting lists and guest register for the ambassador's house, which contain autographs of many American and British notables, photographs of British and American judges and politicians and items relating to Davis's many honors, awards, and commemorative celebrations.

Maryland-West Virginia Border Dispute. Photographs, 1911. 55 items. Acquired, 1986.

Copies of fifty-five photographs taken by Julius Monroe, surveyor on the 1911 project to settle the West Virginia-Maryland boundary dispute. The photographs depict line markers, the men working, their tools and campsite.

Middleville Baptist Church. Records, 1825-1984.
6 volumes. Loan, 1986. A&M 1442 micro.

Record books containing lists of pastors, deacons, church clerks, and members of a Taylor County congregation. Also on record are minutes of church business meetings and dates of church building renovations. There is a list of the church's founding members with an accompanying covenant marking its establishment.

Monongalia County Unrecorded Wills. Papers, 1726-1781. 5 items. Gift, 1986. A&M 918.

This collection is comprised of a pair of articles regarding West Virginia genealogy drawn from the publication *Keyhole*, and copies of four unrecorded eighteenth-century Monongalia County wills: Moses Cooper of Roxburg, Morris County, New Jersey, 1777 April 1; Benjah Dunn of Monongalia County, 1781 February 19; Stephen Ulery of Ten Mile Creek, Monongalia County, 1778 March 10; and David Wright of Monongalia County, 1778 August 26.

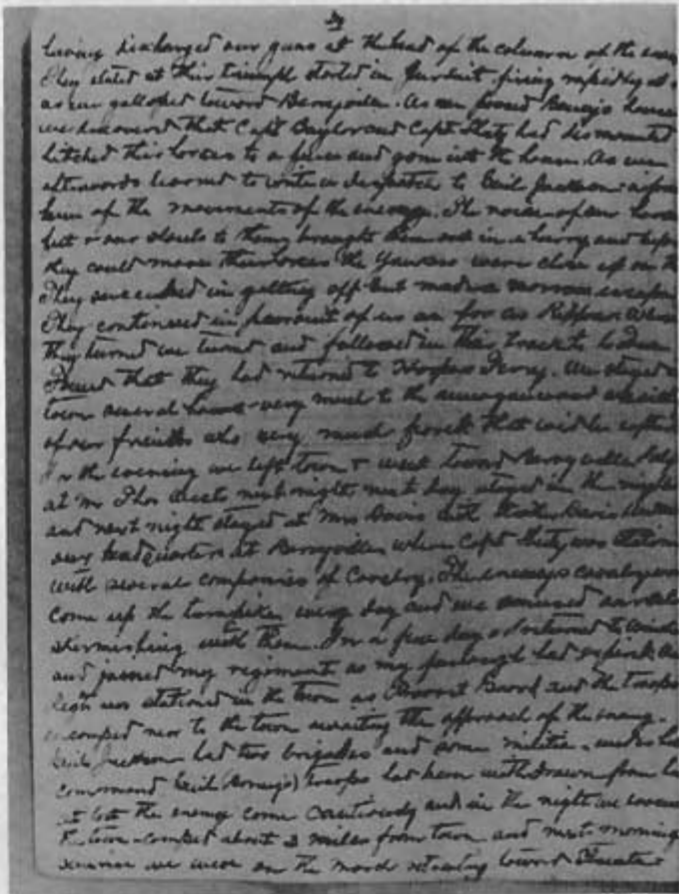
Osborne, Logan. Papers, 1761-1982. 2 ms. boxes. Loan, 1984. A&M 2941 micro.

A ledger and financial records of Logan Osborne (1836-39), also containing the will of Balam Osborne. The ledger contains accounts on an assortment of general store goods from perishables such as food and candles to durable goods such as tools and carriages. There are Osborne family deeds, land contracts and letters about family matters and debt (1808-89). There are early nineteenth-century state bank script from Louisiana, Virginia, and North Carolina. There are land indentures and legal papers from eighteenth-century Virginia, mainly of Matthew Rankin and Thomas Rutherford who contended for property in Ohio County.

There is also a thirty-eight page diary of Cleon Moore, a Confederate soldier from Charles Town. As a volunteer regiment member he was an eyewitness and participant in the siege and capture of John Brown at Harpers Ferry. His unit was again called out prior to Virginia's secession resolution. He recounts their early maneuvering, stationing and being consolidated in the Virginia Second Cavalry which served at the First Battle of Bull Run. The account ends with the early 1862 campaigns in the Shenandoah Valley of General "Stonewall" Jackson.

Civil War related material of Logan Osborne includes records of loans to the Confederate government, letters to family and friends recounting and justifying the events and cause of the Confederacy and an 1861 January 28 broadside, entitled: "To The People of Jefferson County . . .", of Logan Osborne as a Unionist candidate to the Virginia Secession Convention. Also included are early West Virginia political papers pertaining to Jeffer-

son County, such as an attempt to move the county seat to Shepherdstown; George Shutt business letters and certificates as a geologist; certificates from the United Daughters of the Confederacy to Mary M. Shutt; and Osborne family history, genealogy and obituaries of descendants.



A page from the diary of Cleon Moore, a Confederate soldier from Charleston. Logan Osborne Collection.

Stonewall Jackson Medal. Papers and medal, 1904-1986. 8 pages. Gift, 1986. A&M 1012.

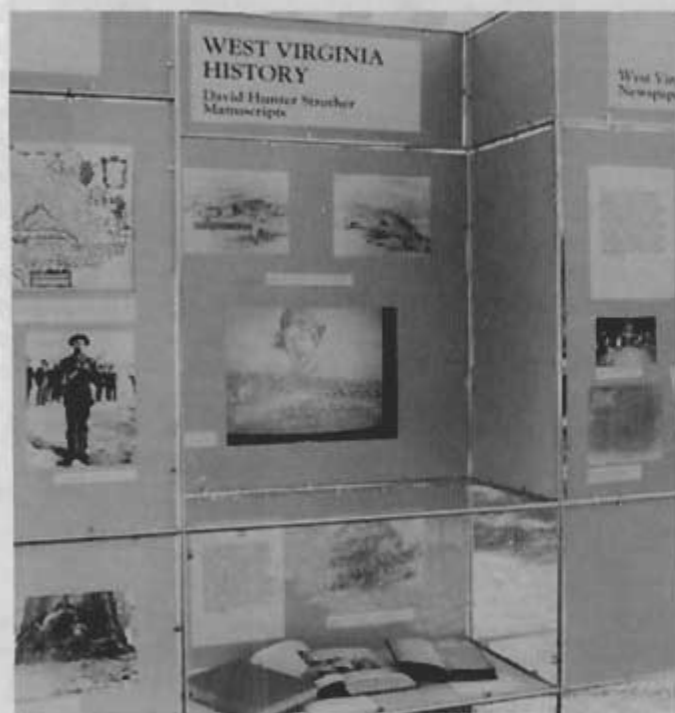
News clippings, correspondence and papers which pertain to the Stonewall Jackson Brigade Medal. The bronze medal bears a picture of General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson on the front and lists the twenty-three battles in which he participated on the reverse. The medal was designed by French medallist Armand Auguste Caque and was authorized by the Confederate army after General Jackson's death.

Strother, David Hunter. Paintings, 1842/43. 2 items. Gift, 1986.

A pair of oil paintings on canvas by artist-writer David Hunter Strother: "Justice Guarding the Sleeping World" (52"×72") and "The Lighting of the Shrine" (36"×31½"). The paintings were done during the early 1840s while Strother was studying painting in Europe.

West Virginia Independence Hall. Papers and photographs, 1855-1910. 28 items. Loan, 1986. A&M 931 micro.

A collection of broadsides, certificates, documents, photographs and correspondence which concern the birth of West Virginia, its predecessor, the Restored Government of Virginia and the Civil War, with the impact of the latter upon Wheeling in particular. Partial contents include certificates and letters signed by governors Francis H. Pierpont and A. I. Boreman; forty-one letters to Dr. Alfred Hughes, a Civil War prisoner of war interned at Camp Chase, Ohio; a proclamation appointing Francis H. Pierpont to the office of Adjutant General of West Virginia; four letters to J. B. Ford of the B. & O. Railroad regarding military use of the railroad; a certified copy of the "Constitution of the State of West Virginia" proposed by 26 November 1861 Wheeling Convention and ratified by popular vote.



"West Virginia and Regional History Collection: Guardian of a Proud Tradition" was the title of an ambitious exhibit which the Regional History Collection assembled for the Homecoming luncheon which was held at the President's home on October 11. The exhibit brought together photographs, artifacts, and video footage in a three-section display featuring the themes of West Virginia history, regional folk culture and West Virginia University archives. As part of the afternoon's festivities, Curator George Parkinson delivered an address entitled "The West Virginia and Regional History Collection, Three and a Half Centuries of West Virginia History."

Regional History Association Gains 180 Members in First Year

We are pleased to note that since the announcement of the creation of the West Virginia and Regional History Association last fall, the Association has garnered one hundred and eighty members from around the state and indeed across the nation. We find it most encouraging that so many people value the work of preserving and disseminating historical information enough to part with hard-earned dollars. It is especially heartening to note the number of members that have demonstrated their support by joining the Association at the donor and patron levels.

As Association membership is based on the calendar year, we will soon be mailing out renewal notices to those who joined the Association prior to September 1. Dues received after that date shall be applied to next year.

Members will again have the option of designating that all or part of their dues be incorporated into the Patrick W. Gainer Endowment. Gainer Endowment funds are dedicated to supporting work in the area of regional folk culture.

West Virginia and Regional History Association Membership

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John W. Davis. See story, page one.