

*Harrison County*  
WEST VIRGINIA  
**HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Post Office Box 2074  
CLARKSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA 26301

**NEWSLETTER**

SPRING 1987

MARCH MEETING

Amy Hayden Sorrells, director of Clarksburg Main Street Project, will speak during the March meeting of the Society at 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 18, in the Stealey-Goff-Vance House, 123 West Main Street, in Clarksburg.

The Clarksburg Main Street Project is an outgrowth of the Clarksburg Development Corporation, a non-profit organization, incorporated in February 1986 for the purpose of rejuvenating the City of Clarksburg. At a kick-off luncheon sponsored by the corporation on November 7, 1986, 150 persons attended. Kenneth Yost was elected president of the organization. Those named to the board of directors included representatives of Steptoe & Johnson law firm, Lowndes Bank, Stone & Thomas Department Store, the Clarksburg City manager and a Harrison County commissioner. The group decided to affiliate with the National Trust Main Street Project which is geared to help cities with a population under 50,000 in organization, design, economic restructuring, and promotion.

The Clarksburg Development Corporation hired Amy Haden Sorrells as their director. She is the daughter of Judge Haden; she completed her law degree at West Virginia University Law School in December 1986 and is working toward a masters degree in history in the Public History Program at West Virginia University. Miss Haden spent the fall 1986 semester at the National Trust in Washington, D.C. on internship.

Clarksburg is the second U.S. city and the first West Virginia city to be an individual Main Street City without a state program to help support it. Efforts last year to make West Virginia a Main Street state failed because all money and work went to reconstruction following the disastrous flood in November 1985.

ANNUAL DINNER

The annual dinner meeting of the Society will be held at 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 22, 1987, at the Sheraton Inn. Speaker of the evening will be Dr. Judy Byers.

Dr. Byers will speak on the history of folktales and ballads in the state. Harrison County has a rich heritage of folk literature as shown by the number of folktunes found in Harrison County and published in Folksongs of the South in the early 1920's.

Dr. Byers is an assistant professor of English and English education at Fairmont State College. She received her Ph. D. from West Virginia University and the International Folklore Institute at Bloomington, Ind., with major areas of concentration in English, folklore, and curriculum instruction.

At Fairmont State College she teaches classes in composition and British and American literature, and works with students who are studying to become English teachers in middle school through high school. In 1977 she was chosen West Virginia Teacher of the Year.

Dr. Byers is a strong advocate of storytelling as a means of bringing an area's literature and culture to life. She is a member of NAPPS, the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of storytelling and teaches graduate level West Virginia folk literature classes at Salem College. She is also a professor at the West Virginia Folk Life Academy at Fort New Salem.

Members and friends of members of the Society can make reservations for the dinner by using the form included in this newsletter. The menu for the dinner will be baked steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, glazed carrots and pineapple, garden salad, and sherbet.

MEMORIAL FUND

Elizabeth A. Sloan

Elizabeth Anne Sloan, who died November 9, 1986, in Pass Christian, Mississippi, gave as much to the Harrison County Historical Society as anyone in the history of the Society.

Having retired as an administrator in the New York City Library System, Miss Sloan in 1959 returned to live in the home of her parents in Clarksburg. She joined the Harrison County Historical Society when the organization was formed in 1963.

Members of the Society purchased the Stealey-Goff-Vance House in 1968 because the structure was one of the oldest in the state and because it was for sale. They had little notion as to what they would do with the property.

Elizabeth Sloan could visualize a museum in the house. She had the time, the skill, the energy, the interest to give her vision form. She recommended to the board of directors of the Society that accessions be chosen discriminately and that they be limited to artifacts that deal with Harrison County history. She chose showcases and fashioned displays. She set up the record system for the collection. With her own funds, she purchased draperies for windows and furniture for the office. Running the museum turned into a full-time job for her. Still she managed to be secretary of the Society from February 20, 1973, until June 18, 1980, when she went to Pass Christian to live with a sister, Mary Virginia McCloskey.

Immediately after her death, the brothers and sisters of Elizabeth Sloan and their children contributed \$1,215 to the Society as a memorial to Elizabeth. The Society received \$3,307.62 as one of the beneficiaries of an insurance policy held by Miss Sloan. Friends of Elizabeth have contributed and continue to contribute to the fund which now totals \$4,779.62. The board of directors estimate that the Elizabeth Anne Sloan Memorial Fund will reach \$5,000, a sum which will be invested to earn funds for maintenance of the Harrison County Historical Society Museum.

Melissa L. Brahm Curry

Melissa L. Curry died November 24, 1985, in the United Hospital Center in Clarksburg. She was born April 2, 1921 in Fairmont, the daughter of Frank Roy and Frances A. Moore Brahm. On December 19, 1942, she married David C. Curry who survives in Lost Creek. She also is survived by two daughters and two grandsons.

Mrs. Curry was graduated from Fairmont State College. She retired as a church and community counselor in South Harrison Parish. She was a member of the Lost Creek United Methodist Church, where she served on the administrative board and Council of Ministries. She worked under the jurisdiction of the Board of Global Ministries of the General Church Conference. She held the title of diaconal minister and was a consecrated lay worker in the West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Mrs. Curry was a licensed lay speaker and filled many pulpits in the southern area of Harrison County. Trained as a member of the Disaster Corps, she had worked during many disasters, both in and out of the state. Mrs. Curry was awarded a certificate of recognition by the West Virginia Department of Human Services.

Her husband David Curry contributed \$100 to the Memorial Fund in memory of his wife.

NEWS OF HISTORIC INTEREST

Julia Davis Adams to Return to West Virginia

In March 1987 repair and renovation at Medea, a country home near Charlestown, West Virginia, is scheduled to be completed. Then Julia Davis Adams will move from Princeton, New Jersey, where she has resided for many years to Medea, the homeplace of Mrs. Adams' mother Julia McDonald Davis.

A description of life at Medea, where Julia Davis Adams spent summers when she was a child, can be found in Legacy of Love, a book written by Mrs. Adams and published in 1961.

Julia Davis Adams has donated to the West Virginia and Regional Collection, West Virginia University Library, papers, clippings, and correspondence of lawyer and statesman John W. Davis and his immediate family including Julia Davis Adams. Most items concern Davis's presidential campaign (1924) and ambassadorship to Great Britain (1918-1921).

A typescript copy of a diary chronicling Davis's experiences as ambassador to the Court of St. James reveals his perceptiveness, his sense of humor, and his diplomacy as he met world dignitaries and involved himself in the reconstruction 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. Also in the collection are photographs of British and American judges and politicians and items relating to Davis's many honors, awards, and commemorative celebrations.

Bridgeport Centennial

The 100th anniversary of the signing of the charter of the City of Bridgeport, West Virginia, will be observed on Saturday, March 21, 1987. Ceremonies on that day will initiate a year-long celebration.

Bridgeport Mayor Edgar A. Hess and members of the Centennial Committee invite members of the Harrison County Historical Society to join in the March 21 celebration and the many other events which will follow during 1987.

County Bicentennial Books

Copies of Harrison County, a Bicentennial Album and Clarksburg, a Bicentennial Album, official publications during the celebration of the bicentennial of Harrison County in 1984 and the celebration of the bicentennial of Clarksburg in 1985, can now be purchased for a total of \$39.95 for the two books.

To order send a check for the books to Lloyd Leggett, Waldomore, Clarksburg, WV 26301

THE SOCIETY

Legacy of Love

Julia Davis Adams has given the Society permission to republish Legacy of Love, the autobiographical account of her early years spent in the Davis Mansion on Lee Street in Clarksburg.

The Society is investigating the feasibility of publishing five hundred copies of the book first issued in 1961. A decision by the board of directors to publish the book will depend on estimates of cost of publication received from printers.

Membership

Membership for 1986 was 342. Please use the form in this newsletter to send dues for 1987 as soon as possible. (The membership year is the calendar year.) If you have paid dues for 1987, please give the membership form to a friend who may be interested in Society membership.

The Museum

The Stealey-Goff-Vance House will open for visitors beginning May 1, 1987, from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. on Friday afternoon. Volunteers are needed to escort visitors through the museum. A form on which volunteers can select days for service is enclosed in this newsletter.