

An Appalachian Story:

Generational History of the West Virginia Arnett, Wells, Fisher, and Furbee Families

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Where I'm From

I am from the Dutch cupboard,
From soft scrub and elbow grease.
I am from the clay in the backyard- slick, red,
still stained on the side of the house.

I am from the honeysuckle vine,
The purple lilac bush in the front yard
Whose fragrance still returns every spring.

I am from Thanksgiving dinner and terrible eye sight,
From Arnett and Wells and Fisher and Furbee.

I am from the worriers and the worshipers.
I am from “pick yourself up by the bootstraps” and “it’s too far from your heart to kill
you”. I am the Great-Granddaughter of an Ordained Methodist Minister,

Yet have long since abandoned the covenant

I'm from the first West Virginian to sing in the Metropolitan Opera and from my
Grandmother's passion for teaching

From swearing not to become my mother but proudly ending up the very same.

I'm from an Air Force Base in the dry air of Arizona and from long forgotten
gravestones of Sutton, Buckhannon, Arnettsville, and Sistersville.
From Brian's broken hand I crushed in the wood splitter when I was ten, and my
brothers big head stuck between the balusters on the front porch, afraid we were
going to cut his head off to get it out.

I am from the family bassinet, 40 Meade Street, and two generations of Arnett sisters
(with a generation of Wells in between.)

I am from my grandmother's 1958 Singer sewing machine, the yellow Gulbransen
piano, and the cedar chest in Mom's bedroom, where maybe one day a little bit of me
will be preserved too.

INTRODUCTION

West Virginia has a multifaceted history that contributes to the narrative of the Appalachian region as it fits into the history of the United States of America.

Overarching historical themes such as subsistence farming, industrial Appalachia, and the effects of war on the region can be explored as microcosms of the larger macro-story of West Virginia. This paper examines four traditional West Virginian families that have settled and lived in the region for over three hundred years to portray the different historical stages of the state's history.

The Arnett, Wells, Fisher, and Furbee families through which I have descended have inhabited West Virginia for three centuries. Each family experienced a typical journey into the heart of Appalachia, but as Western Virginia became their home, the families' history became intertwined into the evolution of the state. Their stories serve as case studies through which we can understand central themes in Appalachian history, including industrial change and changes wrought by war. By presenting these powerful individual stories as a lens through time, the history of West Virginia and Appalachia can be better understood.

Scholars such as John Williams and Ronald Eller have gracefully expressed Appalachia's narrative through the power of place, but just as important to the

narrative of the region is the power of people. While place is the tie that binds, the region is the substance that sustains. My family presents a unique opportunity to expand on the larger history of West Virginia and Appalachia through their stories. Major historically relevant themes such as early settlement in the frontier period, the effects of war throughout Appalachia and the creation of West Virginia, subsistence agriculture and antebellum pre-industrialism, religion, education, and the rise of industry in the state can be explored through the Arnett, Wells, Fisher, and Furbee families as they journeyed through time, claiming their place in the state and region.

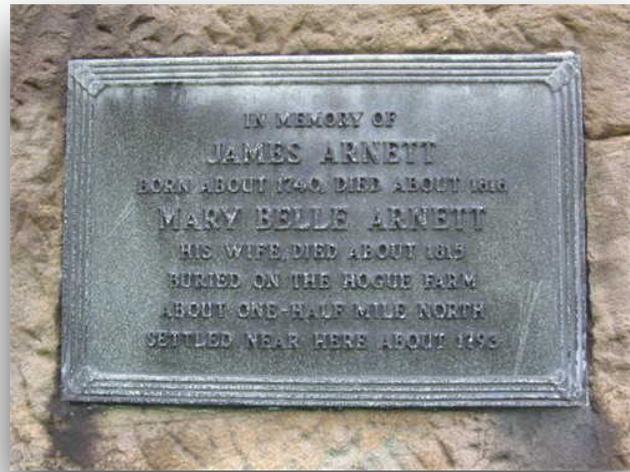
I

THE ARNETTS

According to the Online Surname Database, the surname Arnett can be traced back to the Scottish name Arnot, which can further be traced to a Gaelic term for barley, “ornacht.” Although I cannot directly trace our descendants back to Scotland, since they came before immigrant records were standard practice, our Arnett ancestors most likely lived in the Arnot region of Scotland near present day Perth. Remnants of the Arnot Tower stand there today. Additionally, a recent Ancestry DNA study indicates that up to 48% of my mother’s direct ethnicity and 39% of my direct ethnicity is Scottish. Our branch of the Arnot clan seemingly emigrated to the New World from Britain, although because records of the family before 1743 are unconfirmed, I will begin my narrative after their emigration. The Arnetts serve as a generational case study of the pre-industrial, antebellum economy of West Virginia that relied heavily on agriculture, and this chapter will explore those themes as it illustrates their settlement into the Appalachian region.

James Arnett was born in Virginia in 1743 and his wife, Mary Belle Michael Arnett was born in Pennsylvania in 1736. James was a Revolutionary War soldier and farmer. Of their nine children, Andrew Arnett is our direct descendant. They were the

first Arnetts to settle and purchase land in Arnettsville, Monongalia County, Virginia, around 1793. One family document suggests that the Arnetts purchased land in the Monongahela Valley as a result of a land grant for service in the American Revolution and the French and Indian War. Though documented to be buried in the Fetty-Hogue cemetery on what was the Hogue Farm, the pair are memorialized at the Arnettsville Cemetery in Arnettsville. A monument was erected at the Arnettsville Cemetery in 1927 by the Arnett Family Association with a marker that reads “In Memory of James Arnett, born about 1748, died about 1818, Mary Belle Arnett, his wife, died about 1813, buried on the Hogue Farm about one-half mile north, settled here about 1793” (*Ancestry*).



James Arnett plaque at Arnettsville Cemetery (*Ancestry*)

Little information is available on the history of Arnettsville; however it is a small unincorporated town located in Monongalia County, West Virginia. Arnettsville sits on Route 19 near the Little Indian Creek Wildlife Management Area, just south of Georgetown and north of Rivesville. Though Arnettsville holds significant relevance to this family’s history, the Civil War and industrialism contributed to its decline in population and eventual near demise.

Ronald Eller explains that this was a common occurrence in many towns throughout Appalachia, stating that many cities in the mountains “failed to develop an independent business community, and the rural nature of Appalachian industrialization slowed the growth of business in older incorporated towns” (Eller 229).

Monongalia County’s vastly documented history begins much like the rest of the state, first with the Moundbuilders inhabiting the region and later Native Americans. According to Dr. Benjamin Bankhurst, “mounds constitute the single most important artifacts from West Virginia and Appalachia’s pre-history” (Bankhurst, “Native American History in West Virginia and Appalachia”). Phil Conley references Moundbuilders during the Archaic and Woodland periods in his book *West Virginia History* that “perhaps as early as eleven thousand years ago, Indians entered the West Virginia Valleys to hunt small game, to fish, and to gather nuts, roots, and berries. It is believed that these people first entered the state from the south, coming down the New River” (Conley 47). The last of the Moundbuilders left the region at the beginning of the 18th century, and the land was then used as hunting ground for many Native American tribes.

Settlers can be traced to Monongalia County as early as 1694, and the county was officially established the same year as the birth of the United States of America, in 1776, when it was carved from the county of West Augusta in Virginia. As many as twenty counties were later formed from Monongalia County. The county seat is Morgantown, also home to West Virginia University, founded in 1867.

When Andrew Arnett married Elizabeth Leggett Arnett, he was a farmer and soldier, born in 1772 in Dorchester County, Maryland, and Elizabeth was born in



Andrew Arnett House, built 1810 (*Ancestry*)

Monongalia County, Virginia in 1776. They settled in Arnettsville after they married. They had eight children together, Solomon Arnett being our direct descendant. A photograph of the Arnett house exists, built in 1810, the same year that Solomon was born. Elizabeth

remarried after Andrew passed away in 1824, and lived to be 99. Elizabeth and Andrew are both buried at Fetty-Hogue Cemetery, Arnettsville, Monongalia County, West Virginia.

Solomon Arnett, born in 1810 in Arnettsville, and his wife Mary Cordray Arnett, born in 1809 in Stewart Run, Monongalia County, had thirteen children. Our

descendant is William Edgar Arnett. One of their sons, Thomas Calvin, was a confederate soldier in the Civil War. Solomon was a farmer and never learned to read or write. Solomon passed away at the age of 42 and Mary lived to be 79. They are both believed to be buried in the Arnettsville Cemetery, Arnettsville, Monongalia County, West Virginia; however, their gravestones have not yet been found and there are some records that point to a separate “Solomon Arnett Cemetery,” particular whereabouts unknown.

Although the prospect of utilizing the state’s natural resources was beginning to be realized, most West Virginians, like the Arnetts, survived as subsistence farmers. According to Otis Rice, generations of families worked to develop effective agricultural methods: “Their aspirations required greater attention to horticulture and stock raising and to the production of marketable products. German farmers set a worthy example for improvement of agricultural practices. Unlike others, who depleted the soil through wasteful methods, they strove to preserve its fertility and made successive plantings on tracts for fifteen years or longer” (Rice 80). Though Scots-Irish farmers typically utilized less efficient farming methods, the Arnett’s longstanding farming success proves they must have learned from their German neighbors.

William Edgar Arnett and his wife Caroline Pritchard Arnett were born in Arnettsville and Marion county, respectively. They had five children: Della, Hugh, Besse, Minnie, and Frank, Frank being our direct descendant. William was a farmer and carpenter as they built a life in Arnettsville before moving to Buckhannon in 1901,



F: William Edgar Arnett, Caroline Pritchard Arnett, Frank Ellsworth Arnett
B: Della May Arnett, Minnie Mildred Arnett, Hugh Glenn Arnett, Besse Dey Arnett circa 1899

purchasing a home at 40 Meade Street for \$100. Two of my great-great aunts, Besse and Minnie, lived there until they passed away, each well into their 100's. Their sister, Della, also lived in the house and was the only sister to marry and move away. I

grew up hearing stories about 40 Meade Street and the Arnett sisters as my grandparents used to drive the winding Route 50 from Inwood with all four of their children in the back seat to visit. Though the house by then was torn down, my mom would take us every time we were in Buckhannon. One mystery that none in our family could solve, however, is where the sisters and their parents were buried. One

day in 2017, I set out to find more information and found myself at the house across the street from the 40 Meade Street lot. The couple had lived there for 50 years and remembered the Arnett sisters. I sat with them for hours as they recalled memories of their neighbors always being dressed to the nines and every single car they purchased being a Buick Riviera. They also pointed me in the direction of the Old Heavner Cemetery, now located inside of the expanded Buckhannon Memorial Cemetery. After some searching, I finally found their resting place next to their parents. The four are buried in the Old Heavner Cemetery, Buckhannon, Upshur County, West Virginia. Della is buried in the Odd Fellows Cemetery, Farmington, Marion County, West Virginia.

Nestled in the mountains of central West Virginia is Buckhannon, created in 1816 by the Virginia General Assembly. Buckhannon is the county seat of Upshur County and is renowned for its annual Strawberry Festival, hosted every May. First inhabited by Moundbuilders and later used as Native American hunting ground, its first white settlers came to the region around 1762. The region was heavily affected by Dunmore's War and other Native American conflicts, with many families struggling to survive throughout these clashes. The Civil War was also very influential on Buckhannon, as the town was instrumental in staging for the Battle of Phillippi, twenty

miles north. The town was captured by Confederate armies twice during the war, each time destroying many parts of the town. Buckhannon is also home to West Virginia Wesleyan College, an institution recurring in the history of many branches of our family.

Frank Ellsworth Arnett and Margaret Fisher Arnett, are originally from Arnettville, Monongalia County, and Sutton, Braxton County, respectively. Frank was born December 24, 1887 in Arnettville, West Virginia and Margaret was born January 2, 1891 in Sutton, West Virginia. Frank had known Margaret for some time before they were married in Chicago, Illinois, on August 15th, 1917, about a week after Frank enlisted in the United States Army. They had three children: Rachel, David, and Sarah. David is our direct descendant. Frank was an



Frank Ellsworth Arnett
1943



Margaret Fisher Arnett
circa 1965

athlete, high school teacher, coach, and principal before World War I. He studied at West Virginia Wesleyan College and was a member of the Chrestomathean Literary Society, starter for the baseball team, right end for the football team, and a member of the first basketball team at Wesleyan.

As a 1st Lieutenant, Frank wore several hats throughout World

War I, from range officer to Commissary officer, and he wrote about his experience overseas extensively in his soldiers diary and later in his autobiography. Among others, his battle record denotes that Frank participated in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. The National Archives Military Records states: “The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was the largest operation of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in World War I, with over a million American soldiers participating. It was also the deadliest campaign in American history, resulting in over 26,000 soldiers being killed in action (KIA) and over 120,000 total casualties” (The Meuse-Argonne Offensive).

When he returned from the war, Frank took a position as Principal of White Sulphur Springs High School, where during his tenure, his son David was born. Frank and Margaret continued to travel extensively across the state before finally purchasing “Fair Acres” farm, an 80 acre dairy and agriculture farm, in Inwood, Berkeley County, West Virginia. Frank rebuilt the old farmhouse for his family and his sister, Minnie, who helped him start a dairy operation. Over the years, both the farmhouse and the dairy barn burned and had to be rebuilt. At one point the whole family lived in the barn during reconstruction. Frank mentioned that he slept in a tent while the rest of the family slept in the loft, reasoning “when tired I often sleep on my back and my mouth opens at times there were too many birds overhead” (Arnett 11). Frank

continued to teach while he and his son David maintained the farm together. Margaret was a teacher and taught well into her eighties, as well as raising her children and helping on the farm. Frank and Margaret Arnett passed away after running a successful dairy farm in Inwood for many years and are buried at Rosedale Cemetery, Martinsburg, Berkeley County, West Virginia.

Created in 1772, Berkeley County is the second oldest county in West Virginia. It is home to the first permanent settlement record in Western Virginia, located in Bunker Hill and settled by Colonel Morgan Morgan (Comstock 391). The county held significant presence in both the American Revolution, with the Berkeley Riflemen being the first troops to join General George Washington at Boston in 1775, and the Civil War, where “the county became a virtual “no man’s land” as first one army and then the other swept across it and left evidence of its destruction” (Comstock 393). Presently, the county serves as a bedroom community to commuters who work in the Washington D.C. area, and is a center of industry and commerce. The Arnett Farm in Inwood has been sold and is currently being developed into retail spaces.

My maternal grandparents, David William Arnett I (Pepaw) and Anne Virginia Wells Arnett (Memaw), raised their family on the Arnett Farm in Inwood, West Virginia. David Arnett was born on June 25, 1921 in White Sulphur Springs, West

Virginia. His family moved throughout his childhood, living in different places throughout West Virginia. My Great Aunt Harriet Wells Tucker tells the story that when she and David were about nine years old and Anne Wells about 6, they all lived in Elkins and remember playing together. The story is also recounted by David's father Frank in his memoir. Frank Arnett also recounts that after David graduated high school, he helped out on the family farm in Inwood until one day while working, David told his father, "I've got to get in. I've got to fly" (Arnett 5). He



David Arnett I - 1944



F: David William Arnett I, Anne Wells Arnett, David William Arnett II
 B: Miriam Anne Arnett, Mark Wells Arnett, Jane Ellen Arnett, 1965

wanted to make his dream of becoming a pilot come true. After passing his exams, he was called up in 1942 to attend flight school. Pepaw eventually found himself in Huntington, where his childhood friends, Anne and Harriet Wells, attended Beverly Hills United Methodist Church, pastored by their father. After David and

Anne were married, Anne came to live on the farm in Inwood and David enlisted as a pilot in the Air Force, serving in the Korean War, World War II, and Vietnam. They had four children, David II, Mark, Miriam, and Jane, Jane being our direct descendant.

When she wasn't accompanying David throughout his Air Guard adventures to Arkansas, North Dakota, and Arizona, Anne was a beloved first grade teacher at Gerrardstown Elementary. After he retired

as a Colonel in the United States Air Force, David and Anne traveled to all 48

contiguous states via a fifth-wheel camper.

Home was always West Virginia, however; as they both returned to live with their



Anne and David Arnett, circa 1970's

daughters in the final years of their lives. They are buried at Rosedale Cemetery, Martinsburg, West Virginia.

My mother, Jane Ellen Arnett, was born to David William Arnett I and Anne Wells Arnett, on August 19th, 1955, the youngest of four siblings. She loved growing up on the farm in Inwood and tells stories about being baby-sat by her Grandfather Arnett, whom she followed everywhere. When she was 14, her father accepted a transfer to an Air Force base in Arizona, and the family made the tough decision to sell



Jane Arnett, 1989

Fair Acres farm and relocate. Mom was the only sibling to make the move, as both brothers had joined the Air Force and her sister stayed to attend college. After high school, she travelled back and forth between Arizona and West Virginia, purchasing land in Middleway in Jefferson County with her sister Miriam and later attending Arizona State University, graduating with a degree in Accounting and achieving her CPA licensure.

Though exploration and settlement of the region began in the late 1600's, Jefferson County, West Virginia was actually created in 1801. Charles Washington, George Washington's brother and founder of Charles Town, requested that the county be carved from the larger Berkeley County. According to *A History of Jefferson County, West Virginia*, "Charles Washington had promised to give the four corners of the public square in Charles Town for public buildings of the town and a new county, on condition that another county be formed. His death in 1799 prevented him from fulfilling his wishes in the matter, but they were carried out by his son, Captain Samuel Washington of Spotsylvania County, in a deed dated August 31, 1801"

(Bushong 64). The Virginia General assembly granted the request, creating the new county on October 26, 1801, naming it after then Vice-President Thomas Jefferson.

Although then a part of Berkeley County, Jefferson County has a rich Revolutionary War history, including the company of riflemen from Shepherdstown who completed The Bee Line March. Under command of Captain Hugh Stephenson, members of the company responded to a request from the Continental Congress and marched six hundred miles in just twenty-four days to join General George Washington at Cambridge, Massachusetts.

More influential, perhaps, is Jefferson County's involvement in the Civil War and events leading up to it. The county was host to the infamous John Brown raid at Harpers Ferry in 1859, a major military failure, but a political torch for the abolitionist movement. Later tried and sentenced at Charles Town, "Brown's hanging galvanized support for abolition in the North and intensified secessionist sentiment in the South" signifying then the inevitability of the Civil War (Bankhurst, "The Legacy of John Brown").

Just before the war in 1860, Jefferson County had the largest enslaved population in West Virginia. Between 20-30% of the county's population were enslaved, and most Jefferson County citizens were overwhelmingly supportive of the

Confederacy. Bushong explains in his *History of Jefferson County West Virginia*: “In all, the county contributed ten companies of infantry, calvary, and artillery, aggregating approximately 1,600 men” (Bushong 142). Jefferson County, especially Harpers Ferry, was laid to waste during the Civil War as it was constantly contested between the Union and Confederacy. The county seat was moved from Charles Town to Shepherdstown so as to offer better protection, and was not returned until 1871. It took decades to repair and restore the county, and much of what had been lost during the war was unable to be recovered.

Just after the county seat was returned to Charles Town, the old courthouse building was rented and Shepherd College was founded as a state normal school, later called Shepherd State Teachers College. Now Shepherd University, the college has contributed endlessly to the betterment of Jefferson County and to the State of West Virginia for the past 150 years. Jefferson County was also home to the famed Storer College. Founded in 1867 in combination with John Storer, a philanthropist from Maine and the Freewill Baptists that had made the newly devastated region their mission. In *To Emancipate the Mind and Soul*, David Gilbert estimated at the time around 700 newly emancipated slaves lived in Harpers Ferry, most unable to “read, write, or do arithmetic; their verbal skills were rudimentary at best; hygienic practices

were new to many; infant mortality was extremely high, and they were vulnerable to disease” (Gilbert 18). This phenomenon was occurring throughout the state, yet “Storer was the only institution in West Virginia offering higher education to African Americans until nearly the end of the nineteenth century” (Gilbert 18). The goal of the college was to teach and train African Americans and then send them out into the field to educate others. Their mission was widely realized, and Storer College remains a legacy to the education of African Americans, now preserved by the National Park Service.

Today Jefferson County, including Shepherdstown, Harpers Ferry, and Charles Town, is home to over 57,000 residents and like Berkeley County, is considered a part of the Washington D.C. Metropolitan area. It hosts many historic landmarks and is a popular destination for historians and tourists alike. Jefferson County remains home to Jane Arnett and her family, all still living on their land in Middleway.

Jane Arnett had two children, Renee and Jacob Ritenour. Although she began her career at Motorola, she dedicated twenty-six years of her life to the City of Charles Town, serving as City Manager and Utility Manager. She balanced her life as a career woman with raising two children, teaching her children that they never had to sacrifice one dream to make another come true. As I got older, I spent time with my

mom while she worked. Many a night in below freezing temperatures she managed her crew fixing water main breaks, watching water spew out of the ground 20 feet into the air. I learned the value of hard work sitting in the cab of a snow plow truck, mom driving and my operating the plow (because she was left handed and couldn't do both) during the blizzard of 2010. I watched her hold her head high in council meetings after men in her field treated her reprehensibly simply because she was a woman. I inherited my extensive vocabulary and fierce feminism from her, learning and dealing with the word "chauvinist" at the age of nine. I also watched my mom support every endeavor her children dreamed of. Not only did we never miss out on an experience, but she was always there, cheering us on.

As the daughter of the City Manager of the City of Charles Town, I was never immune to learning about the city's history. Charles Town residents always proudly defend their city being founded by Charles Washington, George Washington's brother. I realized the significance of walking on the same ground as the two brothers much later in life, and now understand that pride. Established in 1787, the town was laid out by Charles Washington who, according to Doug Perks, "memorialized the Washington family by the naming of the town's streets. The main street, running east to west is named Washington Street. Cross streets are named for family members with the Town

Square named in honor of brother George, the streets to the east named for his brother Samuel and wife Mildred, and the streets to the west named for himself and his brother Lawrence” (Perks). Though Charles Washington did not live to see the four corners become central to the new city, a courthouse, post office, city hall, and a market space and auditorium were erected soon after his death and establishment of the new Jefferson County. Two hundred twenty years later, though destroyed and rebuilt numerous times, the same buildings inhabit the four corners of Charles Town’s public square. Most recently, Charles Washington Hall was renovated to become a market and auditorium space once again (Perks).

A part of this legacy, I am Renee Violet Ritenour, an eighth generation West Virginian, born on November 26, 1991. Strong, smart, and fiercely independent, I grew up in Middleway, West Virginia, on the land that my mother purchased with her sister in 1978. I spent my childhood playing in the dirt with my brother, Jacob, hating to practice piano, and watching birds with my Memaw. I learned at a young age that my mom was my best friend, and life was easier that way. I attended Middleway United Methodist Church until I left for college. I started taking voice lessons when I was eleven, and quickly decided that I wanted to be a musician. I participated in several National Honor Choirs through the American Choral Directors Association, as well as

every state conference and choir I was eligible to attend. Mom paid for every single trip. If I wasn't singing, I was with my mom at work. I watched her "girl-boss" her way through a male dominated field with grace and tenacity and knew that I wanted to be just like her.

I attended Marshall University for one year as a Music Education major, and loved spending all of my free time with my Great Aunt Harriet's family, who still lived in the same house Memaw's father had built when they moved there to serve at Beverly Hills United Methodist Church. Marshall was not the best fit, however, and I transferred to Glenville State College, where I graduated in 2015 with a Bachelors in Music Education and a Bachelors in Music Performance.

I began my teaching career as a mid year hire for Boone County Schools, working at Van Jr./Sr. High School in the mornings and traveling to Wharton Elementary School in the afternoons. I taught general music as the school did not have any established band or choir programs. One month after I started, over seventy teachers were informed that they would not have jobs the following year due to massive reductions in force. Boone County had long been on the receiving end of generous coal subsidies, and teacher's salaries throughout the county were heavily supplemented as a result. When the coal industry began to collapse, subsidies stopped

and education in the county suffered greatly. I was of course one of the teachers that was affected by the downfall of coal in Boone County, so I added elementary teaching certifications to my teaching license and moved on to teach first and second grade at Sutton, where my Great-Grandfather Frank Arnett taught high school in 1911. When that year was finished, I decided to move back to be close to my mom and purchased a home in Inwood, less than a mile from her childhood farm home. I began teaching Kindergarten and taught through two West Virginia teacher strikes, a pandemic, and massive attacks on education through the West Virginia legislature before I decided to resign and focus on my studies at Shepherd University and University of the West of Scotland (UWS), where I will study in 2022. I sold the house in Inwood and moved back into my childhood home with my three cats, Dizzy, Louie, and Ella. I will soon have a Masters of Arts in Appalachian Studies from Shepherd University and will go on to pursue a Masters of Arts in Creative Media Practice in 2022 at UWS.

Life has never happened the way I expected it to, but my path to discovering my identity as an Appalachian has always been inevitable. From diaries to Daughters of the American Revolution records, my ancestors laid the bricks of our legacy piece by piece and left me the tools I needed to share our story. In many respects, the Arnett family represents a case study in pre-industrial subsistence farming and post-

industrial commercial farming. The family represents the history of West Virginia throughout the state, from the Monongahela Valley to the Eastern Panhandle.

II

THE WELLS

The Wells family can be traced to the region beginning over 250 years ago when John Wells II and his wife Mary Ann Sudler settled near Paw Paw Creek in the Bassnetville region of Marion County, Virginia, as the result of a land grant for his service in the American Revolution. According to John Williams, veterans of the Revolutionary war received between 50 to 5,000 acres of land depending on their rank. Many soldiers sold their warrants, preferring cash over land, but this was not the case for the Wells' family, as they remained in the same region of Marion County for hundreds of years.

John Wells is referenced by Ross B. Johnson in his book *West Virginians In the American Revolution* as follows: "Born in Queen Annes County, Maryland, in 1757, and there enlisted in August, 1776, under Captains Dean and Roberts as a private in the Flying Camp force under Colonel B. Richardson" (Johnson 298). Richardson's troops participated in the Battle of Harlem Heights in New York, with General George Washington sending the following remarks to Congress shortly after: "These troops charged the enemy with great intrepidity, and drove them from the wood into the plain, and were pushing them from thence, having silenced their fire in a great

measure, when I judged it prudent to order a retreat, fearing the enemy, as I have since found was really the case, were sent in a large body to support their part”

(“Richardson's Regiment at the Battle of Harlem Heights”). One of Washington’s staff members also remarked: “The general [Washington] finding they wanted support, ordered over part of Colonel Griffith's and Colonel Richardson's Maryland regiments. The troops, though young, charged with as much bravery as I can conceive; they gave to fires and then rushed right forward which drove the enemy from the wood into a buckwheat field, from when they retreated” (Richardson's Regiment at the Battle of Harlem Heights).

According to Johnson, In 1807, “Wells removed to Monongalia County, Virginia, where he received pension in 1833” (Johnson 298). Of their seven children, Richard is our direct descendant. Mary passed away on October 27, 1810 and John on February 24, 1835. The pair are buried in St. John’s Cemetery, Basnettville, Marion County, West Virginia.

Basnettville is located in the Paw Paw Creek region of what is now Marion County, West Virginia. The first settlement was made approximately 30-35 years before the first of the Wells family began to settle there; however, the family stayed in Basnettville and prospered as subsistence farmers for several generations. It is clear

that the Wells family had strong ties to their church, all active within St. John's Methodist Episcopal church in Basnettville. According to historian Jim Comstock, the Wells family was one of the establishing members of St. John's in 1823, claiming, "The first regular organization was that of St. Johns [Methodist Episcopal] Church, at Basnettville, in 1823; the first minister was Rev. Thomas Jemison, followed by Rev. Elias Bruen; Richard Wells was first class-leader; present membership, 130. Among its first members were Henry and Catharine Boggess, Richard, Nancy, Thomas and Phebe Wells, Rolla and Maria Evans and Polly Conway" (Comstock 77). More apparent are the connections the Wells family made within the community, as several prominent figures throughout Marion County history have made their way into the family tree via the Wells line.

Richard Wells, son of John and Mary Wells, was born in Maryland in 1784. He married Nancy Evans Wells, born in 1788 in Morgantown, Virginia on October 6, 1808. Of their eight children, Dudley Wells is our direct descendent. Richard began the Wells family tradition of subsistence farming. Nancy Died in 1857, followed by Richard in 1863. They are buried in St. John's Cemetery, Basnettville, Marion County, West Virginia.

Subsistence farming played an extensive role in the pre-industrial era of West Virginia, as it was the main method of survival before the Civil War. Ronald Ellen states: “The backbone of the preindustrial Appalachian economy was the family farm. Each mountain homestead functioned as a nearly self-contained economic unit, depending upon the land and the energy of a single family to provide food, clothing, shelter, and the other necessities of life. Unlike agrarian sections of the Midwest and non mountain South that had moved steadily toward dependence on a single cash crop, mountain family farms remained essentially diversified and independent, producing primarily for their own use” (Eller 16). The development of the railroad, the Civil War, and Industrialization in the region essentially destroyed the family farm economy, forcing West Virginia and Appalachia into the extractive industrial economy still taking place today.

Dudley Wells was born in 1811 in Monongalia County, West Virginia, and his wife, Rachel Brown, was born in 1815, in Marion County, Virginia. Dudley followed in his fathers footsteps as a subsistence farmer. He and Rachel had fourteen children, of which Richard Daniel Wells is our direct descendent. Dudley died in 1859 and Rachel in 1870. Both are buried in St. John’s Cemetery, Basnetville, Marion County, West Virginia.

Richard Daniel Wells and Mary Jane Atha were both born 1843 in Marion County, West Virginia. As documented by his son, J.E. Wells in his unpublished autobiography, Richard “enlisted in the 12th Regiment Volunteer Infantry [Union Army in the Civil War of 1861-1865] in Company F, Captain Amos Prichard’s Company” (Wells 2). Although the unit started in Buckhannon, much of Richard’s service during the war was located near the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley Region. According to J.E. Wells’ unpublished autobiography, his father Richard Wells’ battle record was distinguished:

1. Winchester, June 13th and 14th, 1863
2. New Market, May 15th, 1864
3. Piedmont, June 5, 1864
4. Lynchburg, June 18, 19, 1864
5. Snicker’s Ferry, July 18, 1864
6. Kearntown, July 24, 1864
7. Opequan, September 19, 1864
8. Fisher’s Hill, September 23, 1864
9. Cedar Creek, October 19, 1864
10. Hatcher’s Run, April 2, 1865
11. Fort Gregg, April 2, 1865
12. Appomattox Court House, April 9, 1865

J.E. Wells tells this story about his father’s service: “Thru all these battles, the subject of this sketch was neither wounded nor captured. He reported that once when he was lying down restin behind the lines of battle, a spent ball struck him on the neck merely marking the skin. At another time a ball struck his haversack but did not

touch his body” (Wells 3). The 12th Regiment was mustered out of service on June 16, 1865. After his service, Richard returned to continue the family farm and also worked in a sawmill. He and Mary had five children. Mary died in 1899 and Richard in 1912. The two are buried in St. John’s Cemetery, Basnettville, Marion County, West Virginia.

Though Richard Wells was the last generation to experience pre-industrial, antebellum West Virginia, he was also witness to its devastation during the Civil War as West Virginia was the center of the chasm between the North and South. Guerrilla warfare, constant battle over land, and family conflict over the war destroyed West Virginia’s once serene landscape. The addition of new industrial methods to extract coal and other natural resources from the region further enticed families to abandon their farms and move closer to local industry. According to Eller, “In 1880, the mountain population was overwhelmingly engaged in agricultural pursuits, making a small but adequate living from full time farming. By 1930, according to the Gray report, three-fifths of the mountain population was employed off the farm, and many of those who were listed as farmers were also engaged in part-time industrial work” (Eller 229-230). When Richard Wells returned from his service in the Civil War, he was unable to make a living simply by farming as he did before. It is also during this era of new industry that a rise of absentee land ownership can be observed.

Although not directly descended, our family is in possession of a Civil War diary belonging to William Wells, brother of Richard Wells. William D. Wells was born on June 9, 1840 in Marion County, Virginia. He enlisted in the Union army at Fairmont, Virginia, on August 13, 1861. He served in Company A of the 6th Regiment of the West Virginia Infantry, working as a railroad guard for the Baltimore and Ohio railroad. The B&O Railroad was an integral part of commerce and highly contested for both Union and Confederate Armies during the Civil War. The Union control of the railroad can be credited to much of their success, especially at the battle of Droop Mountain.

William Wells served for over two years before his death on November 7, 1863. His diary has been preserved and transcribed by family members and provides a personal account of the Civil War in West Virginia through the point of view of a common soldier. This diary serves as an accurate case study about the lives of Civil War soldiers specifically in West Virginia, and though Wells fought for the Union, life for a Confederate soldier stationed in West Virginia may have been remarkably similar.

Compared to his brother, William Wells was only alive during the very first battle that his brother Richard fought, the Battle of Winchester. While his brother was fighting on June 13th and 14th, 1863, William wrote: "I went a hunting with B.A

Cougal and F.M. Hill and staid all day. We got a fine lot of game and had a fine melys.”

William continues on June 14th, “Staid in camp all day and rested from my tramp the day before for I tირerd and sore all over.”

William Wells saw mostly skirmishes and remained in West Virginia for most of his service. For reference, Wells roughly documented the movements of his Company

A experience in the Union army:

1. April 29, 1863 - Fairmont (Rowelsburg)
2. July 5, 1863 - Mannington
3. July 10, 1863 - Fairmont
4. July 19, 1863 - Parkersburg
5. July 24, 1863 - West Union
6. July 27, 1863 - Fairmont
7. September 8, 1863 - Mannington
8. September 12, 1863 - Clarksburg
9. October 13, 1863 - Bulltown
10. October 19, 1863 - Weston
11. October 21, 1863 - Bulltown

His first diary entry recorded a skirmish in Fairmont on April 29, 1863: “We had a fite with the Rebbels at Fairmont and they was to hard for us and took some of the boys prisoner and perrarde [paroled] them.” According to the Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, the ordeal began on April 26 in Rowelsburg when Union forces were “attacked by a large force of Rebel calvary under General [William Edmonson] Jones” (Hewett 279). Over the course of the next few days, fifty men from William Wells’ Company A marched from Fairmont to Rowelsburg

for reinforcement. Based on his Prisoner of War records, Wells was paroled, or captured by confederates and then conditionally released, during this skirmish, but in his diary he does not admit to this, only noting that “some of the boys” were taken prisoner.

The only other skirmish William Wells may have participated in was the Battle of Bulltown in Braxton County, West Virginia, on October 13, 1863, about which he wrote: “Well thear is a big excitement in camp this morning thear was a big fight out at Bulltown yesterday our boys was to mutch for the Rebs all write hear tho today.” The conflict involved an attack on Union forces by Confederate troops at 4:30 A.M., led by Stonewall Jackson’s cousin, William Jackson. Union Captain William Mattingly countered the attack. Jackson demanded surrender from Mattingly, and according to Paige Cruz in an article about the Bulltown Historic Area, “The union reply through Captain Simpson was to the effect that he would fight until hell froze over, and if he had to retreat, he would retreat on the ice” (Cruz). Mattingly himself suffered a bullet wound during the battle. However, William was right, and the Union did prevail at Bulltown. William wrote again on October 16: “Thear is bin some big fiting out at Bulltown today and yesterday,” perhaps referring to a skirmish near Bulltown at Salt

Lick Bridge, where Confederates had retreated after the battle on the 13th (William Wells).

Though no other comparisons can be made between the two brothers, William journaled on many significant dates during the war. On June 9th, 1863, his birthday, he writes: "I was 23 years of age and had some fun that day with some of the boys in camp all day." While he celebrated, the largest Cavalry battle of the Civil War occurred at Brandy Station, Virginia (Battle Unit Details). On June 20th, the first day of West Virginia's statehood, Wells seemed more appropriately concerned with Confederate troops: "Rebels reported close but not certain. I went to town in the afternoon and went over to Palatine to see the malt meet and had some fun with the guard." On July 1st, the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg, William caught a Confederate soldier while scouting, writing about the adventure: "I went out on a scout with two of the boys to old John Wellsons and caught a rebel horse thief that night and then to make daysville that night." The day after, he had a celebration: "Still at Wilsons yet till noon but went home that afternoon and went over to toothmans that night with some of the girls and had a shin dig over there." Three days later, on July 5th, he spent the entire night guarding bridges in Mannington: "Come up to Mannington to guard the

bridges up thear and went on gard that knight and dident sleep enney that night”

(William Wells).

Understanding the significance of the B&O railroad to West Virginia’s statehood is vital to realizing the importance of Wells’ and other Union soldiers’ roles during the Civil War. Without the railroad, Western Virginia would not have had the geographic and economic ability to survive as a state independent from Eastern Virginia. John Alexander Williams writes:

The B & O Railroad had a decisive impact on the future of western Virginia. The railroad’s completion gave definitive form to the Potomac-Monongahela corridor that Washington had scouted in 1784. It also gave definite, if somewhat irregular, form to the West Virginia border drawn in 1863. The two panhandles – the existing northern one and the eastern one created when the Potomac counties were included in West Virginia - give the state the most unusual borders to be found in the Union.

(Williams 52)

As a railroad guard, Wells and his regiment were responsible for securing and maintaining the Union stronghold on railroads in what would become West Virginia. Wells detailed several of his shifts, most of which were mundane and uneventful,

writing on June 19: "Was on gard at Fairmont all day and till nine oclok at night when I returned to camp and went to bed and slept all the remainder of the nigt." He writes on June 30: "I went down to town and staid all day and went on gard that night." On July 18, his regiment was given orders to travel to Parkersburg: "We got marchen orders to go to Parkersburg VA and I was on gard that day and traveld all knight without sleeping." He spent as much time guarding the railroad as he did using it for personal travel. Wells met up with his brother on August 7th, writing: "In camp till noon and went to town this evening with R Wells and Thomas and Will Hibbs and staid till late and rode up on the train to camp." The next day he wrote: "In camp till late in the evening and then went out with some of the boys down the rail roade to have some fun." On September 20, he wrote: "I went down the rail road today and had some fun down thear with some of the boys we come back and went over on dres parad and then I went on gard at night." Wells' diary documented a fairly reasonable share of work and leisure, with a fair amount of down time for the 6th West Virginia Regiment. This scenario was typical for soldiers during the war — much mordacity interspersed with a few intense actions (William Wells).

The bulk of William's journal documented the day-to-day life of a soldier.

William was able to visit home on several occasions, writing on August 20, 1863: "Went

home and staid a while and then went to Uncle Toms and took dinner and supper at Uncle Dick Wells.” He spent much of his time helping friends and relatives: hauling logs, sawing timber, helping at a general store, and attending funerals and weddings. A significant sense of camaraderie is exhibited throughout the diary. He mentions many friends and fellow soldiers, sometimes by name and sometimes referred to as “the boys,” especially when cooking for them. He writes on June 26: “I staid in camp till after noon and then went out in the County till supper time and then come back and got supper for the boys.” He cooked often, but occasionally seemed to resent the chore, writing on June 28: “Not varry well today and have to cook and it is just as mutch as I can do to get a long but am a little better this evening.” The next month, on July 22, he was “still a cooking at Parkersburg. Morgan and Moffit is a helping me. All quiet and I wen to town in the after noon,” but after about a week he “give up cooking to E.H. Holt and we staid in camp all day.” He also spent a significant amount of time hunting, fishing, and foraging throughout the vast West Virginia forests he was surrounded by. Directly after the Civil War, industrialization would change the landscape of the region, more so than the war had itself, so quickly and drastically that the lifestyle Wells experienced became a thing of the past. His generation was the last to experience the pre-industrial lifestyle in West Virginia (William Wells).

What Wells seemed to enjoy the most was foraging for fruit! If he had not written dates in his diary, you would have been able to tell the season just by the fruit he found and ate. On July 9, he wrote: "Staid in town all day that is the town of Mannington with Clarry and eat raspberys and my pie and other good things." Just a few days later, he "went to berrying and got 9 galluns and sold them for \$1.00." While wild raspberries were even more plentiful than they are today, his favorite fruit may have been apples, for he noted them on multiple occasions. On July 20, he wrote, "In camp till evening when R.P. Brown and me went out and got some appels." On August 14, he wrote, "Went out and got some appels to make some dumplens for mess no. 3." Two days later, "Went out in the cuntry after appels with B.S. Peters. We got a few then came to camp." On the 24th, "Went out and got some appels to make a mess of dumplens and helpt make them and eat them to and staid in camp all the evening." On September 2, he wrote, "Went out after some appels and staid with the girls." A few days later, "Come off gard this morning went to town and back had a fine mess of apple dumplines for supper all quiet today." It may not have been a coincidence that William wrote so often about apples. According to the Civil War Digital Digest, apples were important for a multitude of reasons. Families during the Civil War "invested in and accumulated a range of apples to make sure that they had them 12 months a year"

(“Why Apples”). Late harvested apples could also be preserved throughout the winter, making them an important asset to troops when produce was not readily available.

William’s appetite for apples was also a nod to the generations of subsistence farming his family had sustained in Marion County. He knew how to harvest, prepare, and store them and seemingly knew their importance in his and fellow soldier’s diets.

There is little mention of personal illness within William Well’s diary, which may have been because disease was so commonplace within Civil War encampments that it was not worth documenting. In his book *Battle Cry Of Freedom*, James McPherson notes: “Indeed, twice as many Civil War soldiers died of disease as were killed and mortally wounded in combat” (McPherson 485). Even in his last journal entry at Bulltown on October 31, Wells did not write of being ill, but he does write about the food: “I went on picket this morning over by the grave yeard and thear was two of our company and five of company F and we staid thear all day and thear was som wiman come in with pies for sale and we bout some of them and they was so tuff that we couldnt eat them and late in the evening I come back to camp to get the maile.” Seven days later, Wells died of dysentery at the age of 23, as did 167 others in the 6th Regiment.

Poor sanitation, hygiene, and insufficient diet led to diseases which caused over 413,000 of the 620,000 deaths recorded in the Civil War. According to Stanley Burns, MD, disease, specifically dysentery, was the number one cause of death during the Civil War. “The total recorded Union cases was 1,528,098... [and] 57,000 deaths were directly recorded to these most disabling maladies” (Burns). Men often went into battle while suffering from symptoms of disease, and “if wounded, they often died due to their poor constitutional state, but were not counted as a death from disease” (Burns), which in turn exacerbated both sanitary and battle conditions. Thankfully, according to Alfred Jay Bollet, “there was an unwritten code of honor among Civil War soldiers, “that forbade the shooting of men while attending to imperative calls of nature”” (Bollet 49). Soldiers from rural areas, like those from West Virginia, may have been more susceptible to diseases because their communities were so small and isolated. Residents of agricultural regions, therefore, would not have immunity against many of the diseases that were common in the Civil War. Although Richard and William Wells had vastly different experiences during the war, each account is an important narrative for the history of West Virginia, especially during the Civil War. William Wells’ diary as a case study helps us distinguish the larger themes of West Virginia’s involvement in the Civil War. His experience as a Union soldier and West Virginian can be used as a

personal lens to more easily contextualize arching themes of the history of West Virginia.

Jacob Elbert Wells was born to Richard and Mary Wells on November 27, 1873 in Bassnetville, Marion County. Jacob married Daisie Furbee Wells in her hometown of Middlebourne, Tyler County, in 1910. Jacob had a keen interest in the history of the family and wrote his daughters several letters describing the family lineage. Those letters constitute most of the information on the Wells family from this point in



J.E. Wells, circa 1950

time. According to his autobiography, after his own schooling, Jacob passed the examination to become a teacher and attended the Teacher's Institute at Fairmont in June of 1891. He taught at various country schools until 1900, when he attended the West Virginia Conference Seminary at Buckhannon until 1903. He preached for one year before returning to the Seminary, which had since become West Virginia Wesleyan College. Jacob met his wife Daisie Wells while both attended West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon, West Virginia. Jacob Wells was a member of the Excelsior Literary Society (a rival to Frank Arnett's Chrestomathean Literary Society).

After graduating from Wesleyan, he entered Boston University School of Theology where he received his Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree in 1910. He went on to receive an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity from West Virginia Wesleyan College in 1922 (Jacob Elbert Wells).

West Virginia Wesleyan College was established as the West Virginia Conference Seminary in 1890, changing to its current name in 1904. Jacob Wells served on the West Virginia Wesleyan College Board of Trustees from 1916 to 1946. According to the *West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, West Virginia Wesleyan College was “one of West Virginia’s most important educational institutions” (Comstock 5033).



Daisie Furbee Wells, circa 1950

Jacob and Daisie Wells travelled extensively throughout the state before settling in Huntington, West Virginia, where Jacob was Reverend at Beverly Hills United Methodist Church. Daisie was a devout Methodist and dedicated her life to serving the church. They had two children, Anna Virginia Wells Arnett, my grandmother, and Harriet Jane Wells Tucker, who married and remained in the house that Frank and Margaret Wells purchased in Huntington. She played the organ at Beverly Hills United Methodist Church for 62 and a half years, until she

retired at the age of 92. She still resides in Huntington, and her family still lives in Grandmother and Grandfather Wells' house. Jacob and Daisie Wells are buried in Beechwood Cemetery, Centreville, Tyler County, West Virginia.

According to the *West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, Huntington was founded over 150 years ago by Collis P. Huntington, who brought the western terminus of the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad to the region. Huntington chose the location for its ideal situation on the Ohio and Guyandotte Rivers, where the states of West Virginia, Ohio, and Kentucky meet. Though the panic of 1873 halted its success, the now familiar town with wide streets and alleys planned by engineer Rufus Cook grew quickly. Soon the Cabell county seat was moved from Barboursville to Huntington, where industry had begun to boom. Both the railroad and river were perfectly located to receive and send coal from the southern West Virginia coal fields to larger markets, and goods produced during Huntington's height of industrialism benefited from the transportation hub as well (Comstock 2414-2416).



Daisie Furbee Wells with Anna Virginia, J.E. Wells with Harriet Jane, 1924

Huntington is also the home of Marshall University, established in 1837 as Marshall Academy, named for Chief Justice John Marshall. Our family has long established roots with the University, as several members received all or part of their education there, and Anne Arnett's sister, Harriet Wells Tucker, taught piano and organ at Marshall for several years. My uncle, David Arnett II, met his wife, Sharon while attending Marshall through an event at Beverly Hills United Methodist Church. They often took me with them to visit Huntington during Marshall's homecoming and I fondly remember visits with family as well as football games.



Harriet Wells Tucker, 1992

Beverly Hills United Methodist Church is a pillar of family history, as Jacob Wells ministered there for many years. My grandparents, Anne and Dave, great aunt and uncle, Harriet and Charles, as well as my uncle and aunt, David and Sharon all met there. Harriet played piano and organ at the church for almost 80 years, and I sang in the choir during my freshman year as I attended Marshall University. The church was established in 1907, as a one room church where services of all denominations were held. According to their church history, several influential Methodist families in the community organized a Sunday school through which “formed the nucleus of the

charter members of Walnut Hills Methodist Episcopal Church, known today as Beverly Hills United Methodist Church” (Beverly Hills UMC). The new church was opened in 1912, but the congregation soon outgrew the building and plans to construct a larger building began in the early 1920’s. The old building was sold in 1929, and construction began on the present day church on Washington Boulevard. The great depression quickly halted the construction of the church and did not resume until 1931, when some members of the church offered to pay the contractor five dollars a month each toward the amount of the loan that was owed. A.F. Tucker, Harriet Tucker’s father-in-law and a church member, served as architect, and several unpaid volunteers built the church piece by piece. The first service in the beautiful new sanctuary was on Easter Sunday 1936. Over the years, several more additions and improvements were made. Most significant to this story is the pipe organ that was consecrated during the Christmas services in 1960 by Harriet Tucker. Beverly Hills notes their well deserved reputation of a “choir church” with an outstanding history of musical talent:

In 1939, Louisa Rogers, a talented school music teacher, became our choir director and established a very sound music program for the church. Since then, two musically gifted women in particular, Janice Chandler Gold (former choir director for 51 years) and Harriet Wells

Tucker (former organist for 62 1/2 years), made significant contributions to our church's ministry of music. They served in their respective roles for more than half the life of our church. During their tenure as leaders of our music program, our church enjoyed the best of sacred music by master composers, adding spiritual enrichment to our worship services.

(Beverly Hills UMC)

Beverly Hills United Methodist Church was central to our family connection for generations and its legacy will remain a part of our family always.

Anna Virginia Wells Arnett, later Anne because she thought the name Anna was too childish, was born to Jacob Elbert and Daisie Wells on December 15, 1923, in Wheeling, West Virginia. As a child she lived in many cities throughout West Virginia, including Parkersburg, Buckhannon, Elkins, and finally Huntington. According to her obituary, "Anne [Arnett, nee Wells] attended West Virginia Wesleyan College from 1941 to 1944 and graduated from Marshall College in 1946. Anne earned her teaching certificate and taught first grade at Gerrardstown Elementary School for nine years. She worked as a Teacher's Assistant in the Mesa, Arizona, school



Anne Wells Arnett, 1944

system for 17 years before retiring in 1996” (Anne Arnett). Anne, my grandmother, married David Arnett I on August 13, 1944, in Huntington and went on to live with his family on their farm in Inwood while David was serving in the Air Force. They had four children, David, Mark, Miriam and Jane. After their relocation to Arizona in 1969, Anne and David spent many years traveling the United States in their fifth wheel camper, as well as traveling internationally.

Anne loved her children and grandchildren fiercely, and I cherish the memories I have of her deeply. When we were children, my mother would fly my brother, Jacob, and I out to Arizona to visit, but many of my memories are from after she and my



David and Anne Arnett 50th Wedding Anniversary, 1994

grandfather moved back to West Virginia in 1999. She loved birds, and we would often sit at the kitchen window together and identify all of the birds at the feeders. Anne was a wonderful musician, although she did not care much for playing the piano, which she must have passed on to me, but we did both enjoy singing together in our church choir. She also passed on her passion for classical music, the arts, and her fair skin. She was an avid reader and writer, writing in her diary faithfully as well as letters to

her many friends she made from her travels around the world. She passed away on July 26, 2004, and is buried next to her husband at Rosedale Cemetery, Martinsburg, Berkeley County, West Virginia.

The Wells branch represents a classic antebellum Appalachian farming family forced into the age of industrialism in West Virginia at the end of the Civil War. Like many others, the family settled in the region after the American Revolution as reward for their service, only to engage in another battle to protect their land and new state less than one hundred years later. The Wells family serves as an accurate case study of the Civil War experience in West Virginia. Unlike many other northern states, much of the war experience in West Virginia was spent guarding railroads, with some soldiers engaging in little to no fighting. The family also illustrates longstanding ties with their community, an ancient Appalachian tradition that is still celebrated today.

III

THE FISHERS

The Fisher line has an extensively documented genealogical history. While teaching first and second grade in Sutton, West Virginia, I met a couple named Susan and J.B Schiefer, who both also taught at Sutton Elementary. We surprisingly realized that we share common ancestors, the Fishers. The Schiefer's were able to show me the Fisher Family Cemetery and provided me with a copy of the Fisher Genealogical History compiled by Gertrude Fisher Harding. These genealogical documents were enhanced by our own family records.

The Fisher ancestral line can be traced back to 1646, near Rheinland, Germany, to Peter and Anna Lucia Fisher. Their son, Johannes Sebastian Fisher was born in 1685, the same year as baroque composer and musician, Johann Sebastian Bach. Unlike Bach, however, after Johannes married, he and his wife Susannah and their children travelled from Germany to Pennsylvania, settling there in 1709. Susannah passed away in 1724 and Johannes in 1745. Their burial whereabouts are unknown.

According to The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, many German citizens from the Rheinland region were invited by William Penn, an English Quaker and founder of Pennsylvania, to settle in his new colony for many reasons: "Although much

has been said about religious persecution, dissenters compromised a minority of German immigrants to Pennsylvania. Most were affiliated with Lutheran and Reformed churches, conservative religious groups. They left [Germany] primarily because of the devastation of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and the subsequent wars between the German principalities and France” (“Exploring Diversity in Pennsylvania History”). While that may have been a factor in the Fisher’s emigration to the colonies, their story goes a bit deeper. Gertrude Fisher Harding, a descendent who compiled *The Fisher Genealogical History* in 1942, notes the following:

The case of Sebastian Fisher was different from the majority of these emigrants, although some were similar. He was a refugee, according to tradition that seems to have some foundation in fact, who was obliged to leave Germany, losing his title and estate, because he had become involved in the poaching laws. However, there was more to it all than a mere infringement of poaching laws. He was heir to a vast estate on which the more modern part of Hannover has since been built. His family was important enough in political affairs for him to incur the displeasure of those in power with whom he had disagreed politically.

Hence, the necessity for leaving his home-land with only what means he could carry with him. (Harding 5)

Although it is unclear how many children Johannes and Susannah had, six lived to adulthood and their youngest son, Adam Fisher is our direct descendant. Born in 1724 in Tulpehocken, Pennsylvania, Adam married Christina Burkstoler, born 1730 in Somerset, Pennsylvania, in 1745. The pair left Pennsylvania as the Tulpehocken Valley was subject to a number of Native American raids, choosing to move closer to the boundary claimed by the colonies, near present day Hardy County. Gertrude Fisher Harding denotes Adam Fisher as the “Founder of the West Virginia [family] branch,” as he settled on part of the Lord Fairfax Manor surveyed by George Washington (Harding 11). According to Dr. Benjamin Bankhurst, Fairfax Manor was granted to Thomas Fairfax, Sixth Lord Fairfax of Cameron and included over five million acres in northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley, encompassing the modern day Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia (Bankhurst, “Early English Exploration and Settlement West of the Blue Ridge”).

The issue, however, was that the Fisher’s chose to move to what is now West Virginia during a time of Native American contest over the land. Many prominent Native American tribal groups claimed what is now West Virginia as their hunting

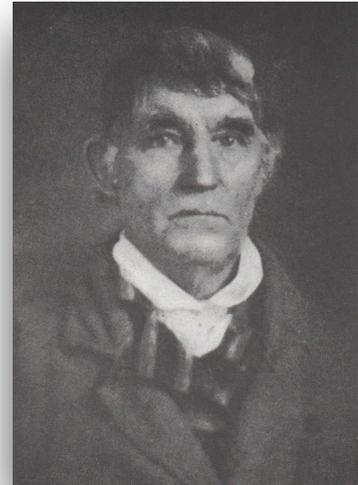
grounds, but due to ongoing persecution by Europeans, the Iroquois Nation became the dominant Native American tribe in the region. The struggle for control of the Ohio Valley led to the Seven Years War, that resulted in Native Americans continuing to be pushed out of the region. To try and keep some semblance of peace with the Native Americans, King George III issued a proclamation to form a boundary prohibiting new settlement beyond the Allegheny Mountains. The Proclamation of 1763 was widely ignored, rightfully angering Native American tribes, prompting attacks and raids near and into the boundary, where the Fishers had newly settled. In fact, Gertrude Fisher Harding states: “It is believed by some of the family that Catherine Fisher, youngest daughter of Adam and Christina, met her death in an Indian raid, but it was a subject which her brother Dr. Jacob Fisher would never talk about” (Harding 12).

Although originally Hampshire County, the land track was later separated and Hardy County was created, remaining so even after the creation of West Virginia. The family endured Native American attacks, as the region was subject to several raids and also suffered damages as a result of Pontiac’s War. Of their eight children, their son Adam Fisher II is our direct descendant. Adam Fisher I died in 1783 and Christina

Fisher died in 1804. The two are presumably buried on Fisher land in Hardy County, West Virginia.

Adam Fisher II, born in 1750 in Pennsylvania, married Jemimah Mace Fisher, born in 1754 in Hampshire County, Virginia. They settled on Fisher land that became Hardy County, Virginia, and had ten children, their first born William being our direct descendant. Adam Fisher served in the American Revolution as a private under Colonel Francis Johnston of the 5th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment, originally organized as the 4th Pennsylvania Battalion and reorganized in 1777 as the 5th Pennsylvania Regiment: “The regiment would see action during the Battle of Valcour Island, Battle of Brandywine, Battle of Germantown, Battle of Monmouth and the Battle of Springfield. The regiment was furloughed January 17, 1781 at Trenton, New Jersey and disbanded on January 1, 1783” (americanwars.us). Members of the regiment were reassigned to other units, but Adam Fisher’s reassignment is unknown. Gertrude Fisher Harding references that after the war “he also served two sessions in the General Assembly. Nov. 10. 1795 to Dec. 29, 1795 and Nov. 8. 1796 to Dec. 27, 1796” (Harding 18), most likely participating in the debate over Jay’s Treaty as well as the aftermath of George Washington’s farewell address. The Fishers died in Hardy County and are buried in the Fisher Family burying ground in Hardy County, West Virginia.

William Fisher, born in Hardy County, Virginia, in 1786, and Elizabeth Fisher, born in Hardy County, Virginia in 1792, married in 1806. They later settled in Braxton County, West Virginia, after William purchased 3,000 acres there. William and his wife were farmers, specifically dedicated to livestock and horses. The family were also slave owners. They had six children, of whom Benjamin Franklin Fisher is our descendant. William died in 1858 and Elizabeth in 1861. They are buried in the Fisher Family Cemetery, Sutton, Braxton County, West Virginia. Also buried in the Fisher Family Cemetery are several slaves in graves marked by iron crosses.



William Fisher (1786-1858)
(Ancestry)

Named for Carter Braxton, Braxton County, West Virginia, was created in 1836. The county seat is Sutton and is home to Sutton Lake and its stately dam. Braxton County is known for being the geographical center of the state, and is also home to the legendary Flatwoods Monster. Braxton also has a significant Civil War History, with battles such as Bulltown, Salt Lick Bridge, and Sutton all taking place within the county's borders (Comstock 606-609). The Fisher Family Cemetery is located in Flatwoods, Braxton County, West Virginia, just off of Interstate 79.

Benjamin Franklin Fisher was born in Hardy County, Virginia, in 1831 and his wife, Margaret Sutton Fisher, was born in Braxton County, Virginia in 1834. Benjamin continued his father's vocation of farming after settling near Sutton, Braxton County,



Benjamin Franklin Fisher and Family, 1874 (*Ancestry*)

West Virginia. According to the Fisher Genealogical History, Benjamin served as a member of the state legislature in 1877, when Charleston was selected as the permanent state capitol of West Virginia, in 1881 when the battle of prohibition began in the state, and in

1885, the year that the permanent capitol building was completed (Harding 44).

Benjamin and Margaret had eight children, John Luther Fisher being our direct descendant. Margaret died at age 50 in 1885. Benjamin remarried and died in 1902. He is buried in the Fisher Family Cemetery, Sutton, Braxton County, West Virginia, beside Margaret.

Sutton, founded in 1826 and named for John D. Sutton is the Braxton County Seat. It sits on the Elk River and is central to much of our family's history the Fishers settled there, Arnett's taught there, and William Wells died at Bulltown, just a

few miles away. The town benefited from a successful timber industry during the antebellum period, but was burned down almost entirely by Rebels during the Civil War. Thankfully, the town was rebuilt and significantly expanded, allowing more family history to be made.

Benjamin and Margaret's son, John Luther Fisher was born in 1860 in Braxton County, West Virginia. On May 20, 1886, he married Sarah Squires, born 1865. They had four children. Our direct descendant was their oldest child, Margaret Fisher, who married Frank Arnett. Their youngest child, Susan was the first West Virginian to sing



Susan Fisher as Mimi in La Boheme,
circa 1936

with the Metropolitan Opera. A soprano, she began her career at the Berlin State Opera in 1931, singing for Hitler before World War II. She debuted at the Metropolitan Opera as Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly* on December 26, 1935. According to our records and the Metropolitan Opera Archives, she went on to star in multiple performances of *Faust*, *Carmen*, *La Bohème*,

Manon, *Pagliacci*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Parsifal*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Das Rheingold*, and *Götterdämerrung*. She also performed in several Gala Programs, ending her career at the Met on March 16, 1940 (Met Opera Database).

John Luther Fisher was a farmer, lumberer, and a coal company supervisor before he died in 1932. The Fisher Genealogical History quotes John Luther to have been “a most esteemed Christian gentleman” (Harding 55), and the bassinet mentioned in the poem at the beginning of this family history was built by him. Sarah



John Luther Fisher, George, Ruth, Margaret, and Sarah Squires Fisher, holding Susan Fisher, circa 1904

passed away in 1939 and the pair are buried in the Fisher Family Cemetery, Sutton, Braxton County, West Virginia. John Luther Fisher’s brother, George Bailey Fisher is the link to our relation with the Schiefers.

The Fisher family represents an accurate case study of early German migration into the West Virginia region of Appalachia. German settlers dealt not only with Native American conflicts, but many also saw the effects of the American Revolution soon after their settlement in the region. The development of sustainable subsistence farming methods can also be contributed to German settlers, as was demonstrated by the farm kept by the Fisher family for several generations.

IV

THE FURBEES, HARDMANS, AND WELLS

The Furbee line is not as straightforward as the other family branches, and therefore requires a bit of context. My Great Grandmother, Daisie Wells Furbee Wells, was not raised by her parents, as her mother died when Daisie was very young. Her father, Waitman Furbee, sent Daisie and her sister Hazel to live with their aunt, Florence Hardman Smith. Waitman then remarried and was no longer involved in the lives of his daughters. For this reason, we know very little about the details of the Furbee family. In this chapter I will trace the Furbee line, but I will focus mainly on the Hardman and Wells genealogy as they are more relevant to our history.

A common thread for all three families in this chapter is that they all at one point settled in Tyler County, West Virginia. Created in 1814 along the Ohio River, Tyler County sits on the northwestern portion of the state. According to the *West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, “Tyler County was named in honor and memory of John Tyler, eighth governor of Virginia, and father of John Tyler, tenth president of the United States” (Comstock 4746). Sistersville is the oldest town in Tyler County and served as county seat until it was moved to Middlebourne in 1815.

The end of the Civil War and the industrialization of the early 19th Century brought West Virginia out of the largely agricultural society we saw in the case study of William Wells and into the industrial one that can be observed in this Wells family. Tyler County has a rich history of oil and gas production and although the decline of oil and natural gas in the early 20th century was certainly felt in the region, the industry continues to be successful in this part of the state. The controversial practice of absentee land ownership that began just after the Civil War had already exploited most of the timber resources throughout the state. Now the same absentee corporations sought to extract resources underneath the earth, such as coal and natural gas. Tyler County is a hot-bed for natural gas and is home to the world's biggest gas well, drilled in 1894 and known as "Big Moses," capable of producing one hundred million cubic feet of gas per day. Most Tyler County land owners had at least one gas or oil well on their property.

The Furbee family is believed to be of Scots-Irish descent and can be traced back to England before sailing for the continent sometime between 1665-1689. Furby, Farabee, Farby, and other spellings have also been used to reference this family; however it seems as though Furbee was used when they began to settle in America. The family lived in Delaware for several generations before Waitman Furbee moved to

present day Tyler County, West Virginia about 1805. Born in 1750, Waitman was a Revolutionary War soldier and although there is no documentation, a land grant would have been a reasonable explanation for his settlement in Virginia. He married Margaret Craig; however, there is no record of her death and burial location. Waitman died in 1835 and is buried in Beechwood Cemetery, Centreville, Tyler County, West Virginia and shares a headstone with his daughter-in-law, Willimina Campbell, who's headstone bears the name Wilmina Cammel.

Our direct descendent from Waitman Furbee is Bowers Furbee, born September 5, 1782, in Delaware, relocating with his parents to Tyler County. Bowers was a widower to Willimina Campbell when in 1824 he married Nancy Bond, born December 26 1802. They had nine children, of which Andrew Jackson Furbee is our direct descendant. Bowers and Nancy are buried in Beechwood Cemetery, Centreville, Tyler County, West Virginia, having died on March 24, 1875 and August 22, 1880 respectively.

Andrew Jackson Furbee was born on May 23, 1835 and on March 23, 1858 married Rachel Ellen Hughey, born December 20, 1836. Of their eight children, Waitman Henry Furbee is our direct descendant. Andrew died on February 19, 1892

and Rachel on November 1, 1891, and they are buried in Beechwood Cemetery, Centreville, Tyler County, West Virginia.

Waitman Henry Furbee was born on January 12, 1859. His late wife, Harriet Hardman was born on September 16, 1862, and they married on May 27, 1886. They



Waitman Furbee (rear center) in Shoe Store, circa early 1900's

had two children before Harriet passed away at the age of thirty. She is buried in Beechwood Cemetery, Centreville, Tyler County, West Virginia near her parents. Their two daughters, Daisie and Hazel, were sent to live with their aunt, Florence Hardman

Smith. Daisie Furbee is our direct descendant and went on to marry J.E. Wells. Little is known about Waitman except that he went on to remarry and have more children.

He was a shoe salesman, and we have a picture of who we believe to be him in a store he owned in Pennsboro, West Virginia. He died on April 22, 1940, and is buried in Mount Harmony Masonic Cemetery, Pennsboro, Ritchie County, West Virginia.

Exploring now the more historically relevant Hardman and Wells lines, Daisie Wells Furbee Wells' maternal line. Though



Florence Hardman Smith, 1914

her grandfather was a Hardman, her grandmother, Amanda Wells, descended from a Wells line of no relation to the Wells family Daisie married into. These Wells have a significant history in the Mid-Ohio Valley region of West Virginia. The line can be traced back to England but is most likely of Welsh descent. The Wells family journeyed to Baltimore, Maryland, from England and lived there for several generations before our direct descendant, Benjamin Wells moved with his two brothers, Charles Wells and Thomas Wells, to the Mid-Ohio Valley. The story told by our family is that Charles Wells settled along the Ohio River in Tyler County, Virginia, founding the towns of Wellsville, Ohio, Wellsburg, Virginia, and Sistersville, Virginia along his way. Thomas Wells settled in Pennsylvania, and Benjamin Wells settled near Centreville, Tyler County, Virginia, about 30 miles south of Sistersville.

The West Virginia

Heritage Encyclopedia

explains that what is now Sistersville was established in 1815 and was “named in honor of Sarah and Delilah Wells and located on land



Wells Family Reunion, Sistersville, West Virginia, 1998

bequeathed to them by their father, Charles Wells,” (Comstock 4747). In 1895 an Inn was opened by Charles Wells' grandson, Ephraim Wells, and just over 100 years later, our family held a reunion there to celebrate our Tyler County heritage.

Benjamin Wells was born in Baltimore, Maryland on May 7, 1723. He married in May 1734 Temperance Butler, born June 17, 1726. The pair had thirteen children, their son William Wells our direct descendant.

William Wells was born in Baltimore, Maryland on July 25, 1765, and moved with his parents and late wife to settle near Centreville, West Virginia, where he later built Stonehurst in 1804, the homestead that stayed in the Wells Family for over 100 years. William Wells had such long established claim to the land on which Stonehurst was built that he was effectively able to avoid all corporate attempts to seize his land for mineral rights. Wells owned his land and mineral rights outright, and the family is still benefiting from his ownership today. Stonehurst was sold by my great grandmother, Daisy Furbee Wells, in the 1940's, but only 50% of the mineral rights were conveyed with the property; Daisy retained 50% ownership of the mineral rights which have since been divided between her heirs.

According to the National Archives and Records Administration, “The William Wells House, also called “Stonehurst.” was built c.1801-04 for a prominent pioneer,

William Wells, who took part in the organization and settlement of Tyler County, West Virginia. The Wells House is significant also as an example of settlement period construction which survives in an excellent state of preservation. The building's importance as the oldest house in Tyler County is widely recognized in the region”

(“West Virginia SP Wells, William, House”). Stonehurst is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was the center of social life in the county and was not spared of drama, as it is the site where a slave confessed to murdering one of William Wells’ nieces



Daisie and Hazel Furbee at Stonehurst, 1890.

and consequently was the only person in Tyler County to ever be hanged. Daisie Wells grew up at Stonehurst with her aunt, uncle, and sister.

William Wells was a widower, and later remarried Margaret Ankrom, born February 22, 1786. In addition to three children from William’s first marriage, he and Margaret had three children together. Their daughter Amanda Wells is our direct descendent. Amanda was born on October 8, 1822. She married Samuel Morey at the age of 18 and was widowed by 26. She remarried two years later to Harrison Hardman,

born February 7, 1814. Of Amanda and Harrison's eleven children, Harriet Hardman is our direct descendant.

Harriet Hardman was born September 16, 1862, in Tyler County, West Virginia. Her father died when she was just two years old. She married Waitman Furbee on May 27, 1886, and the pair had two children, Daisie and Hazel. Harriet passed away at the age of thirty, when her youngest was two years old.

The Furbee, Hardman, and Wells family branch serves as an accurate case study for the early settlement and foundation in the Mid-Ohio Valley region of West Virginia. The history of this branch also depicts the beginnings of industrialism in Appalachia through its vast exploitation of gas and mineral resources. Although not the typical West Virginian narrative, the Wells family is an example of how some Appalachians were able to prosper from the oil and gas industry in the state based on longstanding claims to the land.

Bringing West Virginia to life through research of four multi-generational Appalachian families blends history with heritage, capturing the spirit of what it means to be Appalachian. When incorporated into the region's macro-history, personal Appalachian stories provide context and contribute to the overall understanding of the culture of the region. The legacy that has been carried out over

the course of three hundred years by these four families will not long be forgotten, as their contribution to the state of West Virginia is indispensable.

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