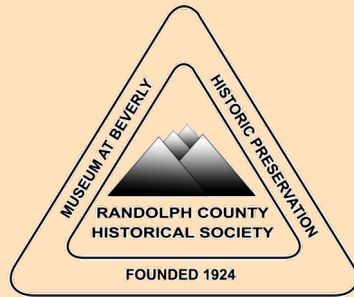


Newsletter

Randolph County Historical Society



SUMMER 2022

UPCOMING

June 27, 7:00pm

**IIOF Community
Room, Beverly**

***French Hardings's Civil
War Adventures in the
Tygart Valley***

Sylvester Fretwell

RANDY ALLAN MEMORIAL ISSUE

Tom Rice — “Even though I have been away from Randolph County for many years, I feel I know Randy quite well due to the interaction he and my dad, Don Rice, had related to Beverly history matters and the Randolph County Historical Society Museum. I had immense respect for Randy and all his hard work in promoting Randolph County history and Beverly. Thank you, Randy, for taking over the duties of president of the historical society after my dad decided he had done it for enough decades. You are one of the great hard workers that I wish others could/would emulate. The Lord has now received a good man.”

RCHS Program on French Harding Monday June 27

“French Hardings's Civil War Adventures in the Tygart Valley” will be the topic of a presentation by Sylvester Fretwell next Monday evening. The program for the Randolph County Historical Society will be held at 7 pm, June 27 at the Beverly IOOF Community Room, next door to the Randolph County Museum, Main Street, Beverly.

French Harding, a young man living in Leadsville (later Elkins) Virginia when the Civil War started, joined the newly formed Confederate Army Company F of the 31st Virginia Infantry along with his brother and numerous friends. He quickly became a leader with several battlefield promotions, and fought fiercely throughout the war both near his home in the Tygart Valley area as well as on campaign in other states. His brother Marion was killed in action at Elkwater in October 1862. His time in what was often enemy territory was frequently intertwined with Randolph County Sheriff J. F. Phares, an active Union supporter.

The French Harding program will share the stories of the Hardings, with emphasis on their adventures in the Tygart Valley area during the war. The program is free and open to the public. For more information contact randolph-countymuseum@gmail.com

Sylvester Fretwell is a Randolph County native, born in Kerens, living in Elkins, and with a farm in Mingo. He is President of the Mingo District Historical Society, focusing on the history of southern Randolph County and northern Pocahontas County. He has recently edited two books – [History of the Mingo Indians](#) (3rd edition of a 1921 book inspired by speeches and articles about the 1920 erection of a Mingo Indian statue on his farm at Mingo), and [Windows to the Soul](#) (a collection of messages by Pastor Brian Seders based on the historical stained glass windows of First United Methodist Church in Elkins), and has written numerous articles on local history.

In Memory of Randy Allan

By Don Teter

With the passing of Randy Allan, December 20, 2021, the Randolph County Historical Society has lost another long-time leader and the Beverly and Randolph County communities have lost a champion of local history. Randy served as president of the Randolph County Historical Society for over twenty years.

Beverly resident Randolph Scott Allan was born July 23, 1941, to Randolph Douglas Allan and Lila Scott Allan, and passed away December 20, 2021. Survivors include his wife Donna Ruth Allan, daughters Jamie Suzann Lovejoy and Angela Louise Lall; his grandchildren, Levi Jordan Lall, Christiana Grace Lall-Alvarez and Mary Anna Elizabeth Lall; as well as his cousins.

Randy graduated from Beverly High School in 1960. During his senior year, he was captain of the basketball team, a member of the Hi-Y Christian Club, president of the Student Council, a member of the National Honor Society and co-editor of the *Wildcat Yearbook*.

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In Memory of Randy Allan

Continued from p 1

Randy graduated from West Virginia University in 1965 with a degree in Forest Management. After graduation, he went to work as a forester for George Myles at Myles Lumber Company in Beverly before going into business as a consulting forester. Randy also served in the National Guard in Elkins.

He married Donna Ruth Arbogast on July 30, 1966, and shortly thereafter started Allan's Christmas Tree Land, growing and selling Christmas trees along the Beverly 4-Lane for over 30 years. Randy later started a mail-in auction stamp business called RSA Stamps. He graduated from Summit Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana with a diploma in Biblical Studies. He served as a substitute preacher for several churches in West Virginia and started and preached at Preaching in the Hills at Field of Fire park. Randy was also the founder of Mission Truth Ministry and wrote paid articles for the Inter-Mountain newspaper weekly. He attended and served at First Church of Christ and First Christian Church, in Elkins.

Randy helped establish Rich Mountain Battlefield Civil War site, and created Field of Fire Park adjacent to Camp Garnett west of Rich Mountain, before passing ownership to Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation. He restored historic homes in Beverly, including the David Goff house, which had been a Civil War U.S. Army Hospital, where he uncovered and showcased graffiti on the walls from hospitalized soldiers. He restored the Lemuel Chenoweth House in 1997 and converted the home into an antique store and museum where he presented local history, ran tours, and highlighted Lemuel Chenoweth's legacy. He also wrote the book *Bridging the Gap*, highlighting the work of well-known covered bridge builder Lemuel Chenoweth. I was pleased to be able to point Randy to the existence in the Archives of the Virginia State Library of a letter from Lemuel Chenoweth to the Virginia Board of Public Works in which Chenoweth said he had built a model of his bridge design and would bring it to Richmond. Randy and I agreed that letter went a long way to confirm the story of Lemuel's use of a model to obtain bridge building contracts.

Randy compiled and edited *Civil War Legends* by Genevieve Ward, which highlighted tales of Rich Mountain and Beverly during the Civil War. He was instrumental in arranging the initial purchase of Rich Mountain Battlefield and worked as the battlefield caretaker for Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation. He was awarded the Dr. Emory Kemp Lifetime Achievement Award in Historic Preservation from the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia.

The importance of Randy Allan in the preservation of Randolph County history is attested to by the remarks of renowned West Virginia historian Hunter Lesser, and by Don Rice's son Tom Rice, whose comments are noted in sidebars .

Randy died peacefully in the middle of a prayer surrounded by his wife, Donna, and daughter, Jamie, at the Mountain Living Community in Belington in December 2021, after a decade long battle with Alzheimer's. Despite the difficulties of the disease, many of us can remember the clarity of Randy's remarks at our Museum Founder's Day a few years ago. I also recall seeing Randy on his back porch while I was working on a survey, and the pleasant conversation he and I had talking about foresters and surveyors we had both worked with. I do not know how much of that encounter he may have remembered later, but his memory of those professional relationships was sharp in the moment.

We can never replace a worker like Randy, who in addition to sharing responsibility for the Historical Society, for many years quietly did work for the Society like mowing the yard and painting windows. We will always be richer for his contributions. A fund in Randy's memory has been established by the Randolph County Historical Society, with donations to be used for improvements to the Museum building.



Historian Hunter Lesser writes:

"Randy Allan lived life in service to his Lord, his family, and his fellow citizens, and we are all the better for it. An industrious fellow, he seemed always in motion: up before dawn to mark timber, back to restore an historic building in the afternoon, and selling Christmas trees by night. Randy had many talents, and was a treasure trove of local history. Rich Mountain Battlefield would not have been rescued for posterity without his wisdom and hard work. He single-handedly saved and restored the historic Goff and Chenoweth homes in Beverly, Field of Fire park and more. Randy's curiosity and enthusiasm were contagious. I was privileged to work with him on some preservation projects and share a few of his discoveries: Civil War graffiti hidden under wallpaper at the Goff house, soldier bullets and buttons unearthed beneath the porch, a 1740 Spanish coin at Field of Fire, and ancient Native American artifacts in the yard of the Chenoweth house. Randy was the proud owner of the home Lemuel Chenoweth built in Beverly. He restored it to its 19th century splendor--a one of a kind museum filled with antiques (all hand-picked by Randy). Anyone who took Randy's tours will vouch that he was the reincarnation of Chenoweth, a brilliant architect and bridge builder. Randy truly brought history to life! His passing is an irreplaceable loss to the community, but the legacy of this good and honest man lives on."



AmeriCorps Member sought for RCHS. Paid service position helping with museum, exhibits and collections. See www.afnha.org for details.

Museum Updates

The focus for the museum this season is on caring for collections. With such a large collection to manage, keeping up with accessioning, documenting, and caring for collection items is a neverending task. We will also be developing more digitization capability, so that documents and even artifacts can be documented and shared more widely. All of this work forms that basis for interpretation and museum improvements in the future.

The Randolph County Museum is open this summer on Saturdays, and by appointment. Volunteers to serve visitors in the museum are encouraged!

Artifact Corner

Charles M. Stieff – Square Grand Piano

Carolyn Corley Channell

A Charles M. Stieff Square Grand Piano, donated to the Randolph County Historical Society/ Randolph County Museum by the Bosworth family to be returned to the Bosworth building, and sits in pride in the side room of the Museum. The Bosworth family members enjoyed the piano playing during a wedding held at their home in Beverly, WV.

The history of the high quality Stieff square grand piano started with Charles M. Stieff who immigrated from his native Germany to the United States in 1841, settling in Baltimore, Maryland. He quickly established himself as a prominent member of the Baltimore's music community. In 1843, he opened warerooms on Liberty Street where he represented several lines of well-respected piano names and began by building very high-quality square pianos. In Europe, he studied the art of piano design and manufacturing. In 1856, he took his sons Frederick P, Stieff and Charles Stieff Jr. into partnership along with his brother-in-law, Jacob Gross, an old school master piano builder and began manufacturing the "Stieff" Piano. Charles M. Stieff became a manufacturer of upright, grand, and square pianos.

Charles M. Stieff began his business by building very high-quality square grand pianos. By the later part of the 19th Century, upright piano and grand pianos had been added to the Stieff Product line. Square pianos were discontinued by the last decade of the 19th Century and player pianos were added during the first decade of the 20th Century.

Charles M. Stieff died in 1862 and the firm was successfully succeeded by his sons Frederick and Charles Jr, while Jacob Gross continued to manage manufacturing and design.

The Charles M. Stieff is one of the few American piano manufacturers to survive the Great Depression and World War II. The firm ultimately ceased operations and in 1951.

Pianos manufactured by Charles M. Stieff are considered to be high-grade, well-made instrument which are generally well worth restoration and preservation today.

From the 1830's right up to the First World War, concert pianists on both sides of the Atlantic were the pop idols of their day and of their even more numerous pupils. Most pupils themselves become teachers.

It was the piano that Mozart used to write his 27 piano concertos; that Beethoven wrote his epoch-making sonatas; that Schubert wrote his beautiful waltzes and impromptus; that Chopin and Liszt wrote music which opened up a new world of sound and raised virtuosity to heights never before imagined. More than any other instrument, the piano has relied for its extraordinary success not only on its musical merits and uses but also on its acceptability as an item of furniture in homes.



President's Letter

"It Has to be True" By Don Teter

Some folks used to say "It has to be true or they couldn't print it in the paper." Then it became "It has to be true or they couldn't put it on TV", and now too many say "I know its true because I saw it on the internet."

Several years ago while doing research in microfilmed newspapers, I discovered this story relating a purported adventure of my great-grandfather D.K. Teter and a couple of his friends. Looking back from the vantage point of over a century later it is difficult to judge just how much of the tale was or was not rooted in some sort of reality, but it causes me to ponder the questions of truth and sources.

Sometimes the story itself becomes "history" or folklore just on the basis of having been told. A conscientious historian always needs to be skeptical about some information, but things can sometimes be partially confirmed by corroborating sources. I haven't found any for this story.

From the *Randolph Enterprise*, February 22, 1905:

Horton "Perhaps the most daring party of hunters that ever crossed the Alleghany Mountains left Whitmer on the morning of the thirtieth day of January, 1905, namely: A.J. Spangler, S.H. Mallow, and D.K. Teter.

The above gentlemen are lovers of excitement, and therefore in order to encounter something of an exciting nature they took the wildest and most remote road, which led through dense thickets of under brush and deep snow, a distance from Osceola, West Virginia, of forty miles to the nearest settlement and residence of that hospitable gentleman, Benjamin Mallow.

While traveling these forty miles the first thing that occurred of any note when about half the distance had been traversed was the appearance, not ten yards ahead, of a large black bear, standing on his hind feet, showing his red lips and gnashing his teeth. Captain Spangler at once gave orders to his men to make ready to fire, and thereupon a tremendous volley was fired direct at the large front presented. The animal fell and lay as if dead, but soon regained his feet and came running toward the men, who saw it would be a hand-to-hand fight for life. Hastily dropping their guns they drew hunting knives, and separated from each other a distance of eight feet and stood ready for battle.

In this way the bear could only attack one man at a time, leaving the other two men free to jump upon his back and cut and lacerate him until he was compelled to desist without seriously hurting the man he had down. In this way they soon wore the bear out and succeeded in striking a vital spot which ended the fight.

The men had received very slight injuries for a fight of that kind. As soon as they were able to reach the farm houses again they ended the hunt, all well satisfied with the luck and adventure. ELI."

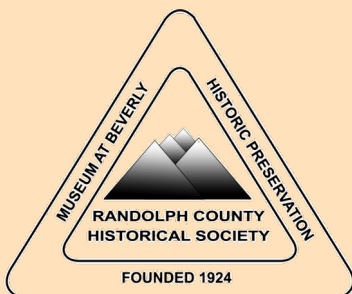
A good story, but is it history?

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Membership 2022 Pay your dues now for 2022!

Annual Dues:

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___ Don Rice Memorial Fund for Museum Improvements

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