

THE PENDLETON TIMES

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Volume 113, Number 30

Franklin, Pendleton County, West Virginia 26807

Thursday
July 30, 2026

Tornados Twist Through Pendleton County



West Virginia Department of Highways' crews work to clear Troublesome Valley Road.

Tornado — ‘There Was No Rain. There Was No Wind’

By Stephen Smoot

On the afternoon and early evening of July 21, the Raines family had most of Pendleton County between them. Yet both experienced two of the only tornadoes known to have touched down in the county’s recorded history.

Brett Raines, a Pendleton County Sheriff’s deputy, received a call to respond to a tornado touching down near Seneca Rocks after 7 p.m. on the day of the storms. As his wife, Danielle, recalled, “Brett had called. He was over in Seneca. He was like ‘it’s bad over here.’”

The warning from her husband to stay alert had come about 20 minutes after she saw an alert on the Weather Channel. Danielle Raines stated that “I’d gotten warnings on my phone apps all day.”

Like many who grew up in the Mountain State, she did not worry much about tornadoes prior to last week. They only struck rarely, even during tornado warnings. “When I was younger,” she shared “you’d get tornado warnings, go out in the garage and watch the storm go past” with no drama or destruction.

Tornadoes also generally come with tell-tale signs. The Ready Illinois website lists “a dark, often greenish sky” a wall cloud, especially one rotating, large hail, and “a loud roar, similar to the sound of a freight train.”

Other sites share that sometimes wind dies down to almost nothing as a tornado approaches, and that served as the ominous calm before the storm as it moved through eastern

Pendleton County.

“There was no rain. There was no wind,” remembered Danielle Raines. “Then all of a sudden, it whipped through.” Deputy Raines said that “what alerted her was that a wind took everything on the front porch and threw it to the far end. That’s when she realized it was bad.”

Danielle added that “the storm blew the kitchen door open.” She took her family to the basement for safety and remembered “I was telling my kids to hold onto the pole.”

She also explained how “little things” added up to important choices that kept all safe from injury. She noted that her mother-in-law, Lori Raines, was going into the field to help with the animals but paused to feed a cat, something she rarely did. That little choice kept her from walking out into the path of the 100-mile an hour winds of the EF-1 tornado, winds that elsewhere snapped one-to-two foot wide trees in half.

The official release from the Pendleton County Office of Emergency Management underscored the random luck of the Raines family. “A heavy chicken coop and dog kennel enclosure . . . was lifted and blown over another storage structure, with debris strewn all around the yard, while the nearby house was left intact, with fallen trees all around it.”

Brett Raines shared how much “time and effort is in that house” but both he and his wife shared that even more important, no one got hurt as the storms raged through the property.



The residence of Brett and Danielle Raines and children is pictured. It shows the debris from their chicken coop structure strung through the yard. Note the storage container in the lower right corner of the photo. The chicken coop was lifted up over that structure as it was strung through the yard. The large tree visible fell in a different azimuth than the trees over along the Troublesome Valley Road.

Tornadoes Touch Down Throughout Potomac Highlands, Bring Damage To Parts of Pendleton County

By Stephen Smoot

For the third and fourth time in recorded history, and the first time in 28 years, Pendleton County experienced a tornado touching down.

Last week, storms raged across West Virginia, prompting a statewide disaster declaration for all 55 counties by Governor Patrick Morrissey.

Some of these, particularly those that drove through North Central West Virginia and through the Potomac Highlands before entering Virginia, were of the “supercell” variety.

Supercell storms pose more danger than even the destructive “derecho” types of storms. Those are multiple “ordinary cell” storms that move in tandem as a line extending for hundreds of miles. Normally derecho damage comes from “straight line” winds rather than tornadoes.

According to the National Weather Service, supercells “are highly organized storms characterized by updrafts that can attain

speeds of over 100 mph and are able to produce giant hail with strong, or even violent, tornadoes.” Downdrafts, or winds forcefully pushing downward from the storm “can produce downbursts/outflow winds in excess of 100 mph.”

Atmospheric instability and, in this case a hard cold front, helped to form “ideal” conditions for supercells. Wind dynamics can cause the entire storm to rotate. Precipitation can fall so heavily that it obscures tornadoes hidden within. Heavy precipitation will also bring the likelihood of flash flooding or worse.

The first of the Potomac Highlands tornadoes touched down at about 6:20 p.m. An EF1 tornado landed at High View near the Hampshire County and Virginia line and crossed into Frederick County, Virginia. It traveled 3.5 miles and had winds that topped out near 110 miles per hour. The tornado warning zone, indicating the potential danger, started about five miles east of Purgitsville and extended across southern Hampshire County.

Continued on Page 3

Pendleton County FFA Members Attend State Convention Members Qualify for National Competitions



Pendleton County FFA members attending the week-long state convention were, from left, first row, Alex Adams, Callie Dunn, Katie Keyser, Kaylee Teter, Lani Fertig and Jax Bennett; and second row, Zach Tennant (FFA advisor), Katie Heavner, McKenzie Vandevander, Sam Eason, Ty Heavner and Wyatt Hinkle. Emily Schell, not pictured, attended the convention to receive her State FFA Degree.

Pendleton County FFA members returned home with numerous awards and accomplishments after a successful week at the West Virginia FFA State Convention July 8-11 in Ripley. This year’s convention, themed “Built in the Hills,” brought together

FFA members from across the state to compete, develop leadership skills, and celebrate agricultural education.

Ty Heavner captured first place in the large tractor driving competition, earning the opportunity to represent West Virginia at

The Big E in Springfield, Massachusetts.

The chapter posted an impressive performance in soil evaluation events. Pendleton County placed third overall in the homesite evaluation contest and fifth in the land judging contest, earning a combined third-place overall finish. The team’s performance qualified them to compete at the National Land and Range Judging Contest in El Reno, Oklahoma, for the first time in chapter history.

Team members included Heavner, who placed 10th individually in homesite evaluation, Katie Heavner, who earned sixth place in land judging and fifth place

in homesite evaluation, Alex Adams, who finished fifth individually in land judging, and Katie Keyser.

The chapter received second place in the chapter scrapbook competition.

Several members were recognized for individual achievements during the convention.

Sam Eason served on the State Courtesy Corps, while Wyatt Hinkle earned fourth place in zero turn tractor driving.

Four Pendleton County members were awarded the prestigious State FFA Degree, recognizing their accomplishments and commitment to Supervised Agriculture Experienc-

es. Those recipients were Adams, Cole Harper, Ty Heavner and Emily Schell.

Additional participants representing Pendleton County included McKenzie Vandevander in the freshman creed competition, Jax Bennett, Callie Dunn, Eason, Lani Fertig, Keyser and Kaylee Teter in parliamentary procedure, and Ty Heavner in extemporaneous speaking.

Pendleton County FFA members represented their school and community with distinction throughout the week, showcasing their hard work and passion, proving they are of the state’s best agricultural education students.



Qualifying to compete at the National Land and Range Judging contest in Oklahoma are members of Pendleton’s land judging team, from left, Katie Heavner, Katie Keyser, Alex Adams and Ty Heavner.



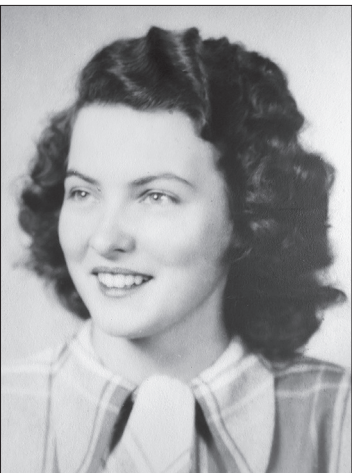
Ty Heavner will represent West Virginia in the large tractor driving competition at The Big E in Massachusetts.

Community CALENDAR Library Friends To Meet Tuesday

The Friends of the Library will gather at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday in the community room of the Pendleton County Library in Franklin. All are welcome to attend.

Senior Sponsored Meal Scheduled

Aumann’s Custom Auto will be sponsoring a congregated meal for seniors aged 60+ on Aug. 7 at the Franklin Senior Center. Lunch will be served from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. If one would like a lunch, call the senior center at 304-358-2421 by 2 p.m. Aug. 4 to reserve a meal.



Janis Nadeen Propst

Janis Nadeen Propst, 95, of Brandywine passed away July 25, 2026, at her home. She was born Sept. 26, 1930, in Brandywine, and was the daughter of the late Irvin Upton Propst and Millie Marie (Eye) Propst. Mrs. Propst was a 1949 graduate of Franklin High School and a housewife. Her husband, John Clinton Propst, preceded her death on April 26, 1993. Surviving are a daughter, Gwen Sampson-Jones (Ray Showden) of Greenbelt, Maryland; a son, Randy Propst (Holly) of Flint Hill, Virginia; a brother, Delbert "Bud" Propst of Brandywine; and two grandchildren, Matthew Sampson and Gunnar Propst. She was also preceded in death by a brother, Jolene Propst; a sister, Arvella Rexrode; and a grandson, Andrew Propst.

A graveside service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday at Pine Hill Cemetery, 181 Pine Hill Lane, in Brandywine. A celebration of life service will begin at noon Saturday at Calvary Lutheran Church with Pastors Angela Lambert and Paul Schafer officiating. A luncheon will follow in the fellowship hall.

Memorials may be made to South Fork Vol. Fire Department, PO Box 297, Brandywine, WV 26802 or Calvary Lutheran Church, c/o Cary Hevener, 405 Old Sugar Grove Rd., Brandywine, WV 28602.

Online condolences and memories may be shared at www.kimblefuneralhome.com.

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Anna B. "Ann" (Warner) Wimer

Anna B. "Ann" (Warner) Wimer, 87, of Franklin left her earthly home on July 23, 2026, at the Pendleton Manor in Franklin.

She was born on Jan. 25, 1939, in Circleville, the daughter of the late Charles Adam and Martha Ann (Hinkle) Warner.

Mrs. Wimer was a 1957 graduate of Circleville High School where she was the former FFA "Sweetheart Queen." She was honorably chosen as princess to the 1957 Mountain State Forest Festival.

She was a member of Franklin United Methodist Church where she was active in the Methodist Women's Club.

She worked as a hairdresser in Hagerstown, Maryland, and also assisted Leslie Dodrill at Franklin Florist. Her caring heart led her to help with Meals on Wheels and work at the library.

She found joy in spending time at the Korner Shop with her husband and circle of friends.

She was the matriarch of her family, taking great pride in caring for those she loved. Whether gathered around her table for a home-

cooked meal (especially her spaghetti sauce, lasagna, vegetable soup, and chocolate chip cookies) or simply enjoying time together, she expressed her love through her kindness, generosity, and unwavering devotion. Above all, she cherished being a mother and grandmother, roles that brought her immense joy and defined the legacy of love she leaves behind. Her spirit resonated in every embrace, every encouraging word, and every act of love. She had a quiet strength and boundless generosity.

On May 30, 1959, she married the love of her life and her husband of 67 years, Thomas Edwin Wimer, Jr., who survives.

In addition to her husband, she leaves behind to cherish her memory two daughters, Lori Ann DeMoss (Lee) of Sykesville, Maryland, and Elizabeth Wimer Armstrong (Craig) of Harrisonburg, Virginia; a son, Charles Thomas "Tom" Wimer (Mary Ellen) of Brandywine; three grandchildren, Thomas, Phillip, and Nicole; and four great-grandchildren, Forest, Henry, Genevieve, and Cora.

She was also preceded in death by four brothers, Harold, Jack, Charles and Eddie Warner; and a sister, Genevieve Roby.

Funeral services were held Monday in the Basagic Funeral Home chapel in Franklin with Pastor Mike Loudermilk officiating.

In honoring her wishes, her body was cremated and burial of ashes will be at Cedar Hill Cemetery in Franklin.

Memorials may be made to the Pendleton Manor, Franklin United Methodist Church, or any Pendleton County Rescue Squad.

Memories and words of comfort may be left at www.basagic.com.



I would like to thank everyone for the many acts of kindness done for me since I began my cancer journey two years ago. Your time, cards, money, food, and rides for treatments are deeply appreciated. Please continue to pray for me as I continue my journey. Thank you! *May God bless you,*
Mary Lou Wagoner



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John Harvey Igo

John Harvey Igo, 87, of Franklin passed away July 15, 2026, at J.W. Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown.

Born on April 4, 1939, in Charleston, he was the beloved son of the late Delmer Hector Igo, Sr. and Ermile Given Igo.

Mr. Igo was a proud 1957 high school graduate of Dupont High School.

He answered the call to serve his country with honor in the United States Air Force. Following his military service, he built a successful career in the automotive industry, where he worked faithfully for many years until his retirement.

A proud Freemason and longstanding member of St. Peter's Lodge No.54 in Manning, South Carolina, he also found joy in watching NASCAR races and had a passion for experimental gardening, always eager to try something new.

Full of energy and quick with a joke, he possessed a wonderful sense of humor

that could brighten any room. His warm, approachable nature made it easy for others to strike up a conversation, and he never met a stranger, cherishing every opportunity to visit, laugh, and connect with those around him.

He made his home for his last six years with his son, Delmer, in Omaha, Nebraska, Harrisonburg, Virginia, and Franklin.

Though he will be deeply missed, his love and memory will forever remain in the hearts of those who were blessed to know him.

Surviving are four children, John Legg, Debra Legg, Delmer A. Igo and Tammy Masoud; four grandchildren; a sister, Marilyn Thompson (Art); and a sister-in-law, Dreama Igo.

He was also preceded in death by a brother, Delmer H. Igo, Jr., and his infant twin brother, Jack Hunter Igo.

Per his wishes he was cremated.

Those wishing to honor his life are invited to share condolences and memories at www.davisfuneralhomewv.com.

Davis Funeral Home and Onsite Crematory in Clarksburg is honored to serve the Igo family during this difficult time.

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Betty Lambert Mongold, 82

Betty Lambert Mongold, 82, of Staunton, Virginia, and formerly of Franklin passed away July 27, 2026, at Augusta Medical Center in Fishersville, Virginia.

All services were private per her wishes.

Funeral arrangements are entrusted to Kimble Funeral Home in Franklin.



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Perinatal Mental Health Conditions

Resources to access for perinatal mental health conditions include the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline (1-833-TLC-MAMA) or call/text "Help" to the Postpartum Support International helpline at 1-800-944- 4773.

If you're struggling with perinatal mental health conditions, reach out to your healthcare professional for help. Therapy, medication, support groups, self-care, and social support are ways you can begin healing.



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Tornados Twist Through

Continued From Page 1



Firemen and volunteers work to remove a large tree that fell on a vehicle on Troublesome Valley Road, across from the Raines residence. Occupants of the vehicle were not injured.



About 1.6 miles on Troublesome Valley Road, the tornado hit with a tree landing on the hood of a motorist's car.

It affected some structures on private property, but the National Weather Service stated that "thousands of trees were downed (80 to 90 percent at one point)." The NWS affirmed the potential danger from that small tornado, noting that "many of which were hardwoods 1-2 feet thick snapped at the trunk."

A little more than 30 minutes after the Hampshire County tornado dissipated, an EF-0 "tornado briefly touched down near Seneca Rocks just after 7 p.m." Most of the damage occurred with trees along Thunder Road "with trees uprooted in a convergent pattern." Only two minutes elapsed between touch down and dissipation.

A much more significant EF-1 tornado touched ground at about 7:25 p.m. at Kiser Gap Road "about a half mile north of the intersection with US Route 33." It moved east-northeast through Troublesome Valley through the Fort Seybert area before crossing into Virginia and lifting near Cridders, Virginia.

At Troublesome Valley,

as Rick Gillespie, Pendleton County Emergency Services coordinator, explained "during the onset of the storm, a female citizen was jogging along Troublesome Valley Road. Hearing the alerts, her husband packed their baby into the car and went to go pick her up."

"As he arrived at her location about 1.6 miles out . . . the tornado hit with a tree landing on the hood of their car and one behind it."

Gillespie added, "A few feet were the difference between life and death. All three escaped injury."

The tornado's movement extended for a little more than 10 miles. "Thousands of trees were downed along this rural 10.5 mile path," shared the NWS.

In an office of emergency management release, Gillespie noted that the storm "flattened to the ground" a 120-year old barn near Fame. A mobile home was also destroyed on Redbud Hill Lane off of Sweedlin Valley Road.

Gillespie stated, "This event proves that tornadoes

do occur in these mountains, and we suggest residents take all NWS warnings seriously. We thank the fine folks with the NWS and area meteorologists for their professional services and for providing us with the alerts. Thanks to our VFDs, 911 personnel, WV DOH, law enforcement officers and citizens for working together to make recovery a speedy process. We are thankful that no one was injured."

Hardy County saw two separate tornado warnings.

Heavner Attends Virginia Tech's Judging Camp



Tori Heavner captured the high junior individual award at the Eastern Regional Livestock Judging and Stockman's Challenge May 29 in Lewisburg. She won a scholarship to Virginia Tech's livestock judging camp.



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Tuesday night, uprooted trees, along with downed trees, called for the closing of Troublesome Valley Road.



A mobile home/cabin structure off of Sweedlin Valley Road received heavy damage from the winds.



Downed trees were visible along the east side of Troublesome Valley Road.

Storm rotations that indicated the likelihood of a tornado sparked warnings in two areas, from near Purgitsville and extending to Wardens-

ville and also from an area south of Petersburg reaching into southern Hardy County.

In North Central West Virginia, the storm brought heavy rains that caused significant destruction and also the loss of two lives.

Several inches of rain falling in a short duration created deadly and destructive flooding in Upshur and Lewis counties. Water running through town streets appeared almost as creeks or rivers. Flooding also blocked both Corridor H at Weston and Interstate 79 nearby. Weston received just under five inches of rain while

Buckhannon got 5.3. Some communities directly south of the Corridor H highway connecting those cities saw almost 6.5 inches.

The NWS did include a prediction of supercell storms in its special alert for the Mid-Atlantic region on July 21.

Earlier in the day, three tornadoes touched down almost simultaneously in Washington County, Ohio and crossed the Ohio River into Pleasants County. One of those traveled into Tyler County.

Photos courtesy of Pendleton County Office of Emergency Services.

Pendleton Youth Place in OSU Cattleman's Contest



Oklahoma State University Cattleman's Choice contest is a year-long contest. The contest, hosted by OSU extension, runs from September to May and is completed virtually. Each month teams used Expected Progeny Differences, videos, and a production scenario to select the top four bulls from the sale. This was a national contest with FFA and 4-H teams competing together. Pendleton's team placed 10th overall and was reserve team for November and January. Members of the team were, from left, Bella Hoover, Branson Smith and Tori Heavner.

Fifth annual

AMISH SCHOOL Benefit Supper and Bake Sale

at The Vanderpool Greenhouse
3935 Jackson River Rd, Monterey, VA

Friday, July 31 from 5-8 p.m.

SERVING
Grilled chicken, homemade cheese noodles, baked beans, potato salad, homemade ice cream, pies, coffee and drinks

Freewill donations. Everyone welcome!

We will be raffling off a 92x110" blue quilt with hearts and stars, quilted by the Amish ladies, and a Henry 17 Golden Boy gun. Drawing will be on July 31 at 8 p.m. Ticket holders need not be present to win. Tickets are \$10 each or 5 for \$40, also available at Jackson River Bakery.

Dice, Mallow, Harper, Phares and Descendants Reunion

Sunday, August 2

Clinton Hedrick Community Building
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THANK + YOU

First of all, I want to THANK our PRECIOUS LORD for AGAIN getting me through some difficult heart issues! Many of you know what I've experienced when my heart journey began and seriousness of more recent issues.

I want to take this opportunity to THANK EVERYONE (SPECIAL THANKS goes to my family and neighbors) for reaching out to me with such kindness, caring and concerns!! I CANNOT express ALL words needed for my GRATITUDE! Please know I am TRULY APPRECIATIVE for PRAYERS, FAITH, phone calls, in-person talks, help at home while I was at Ruby Memorial, offers to fix food, and more I may have missed!!! Your deeds will not be forgotten!!

I started this note giving GOD THE GLORY and I'm ending no differently! GOD IS GREAT, and may our SAVIOUR BLESS ALL OF YOU!!!

Blessings and sincere thanks,
Anita Hartman

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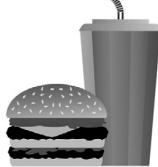
Dr. Sites returned home from the service in October 1945, and married Mary Lou Aulde on December 31 of that year. Following a month in Florida, the couple returned to West Virginia,

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If you have any questions or wish to review or receive records, please contact Janice Heavner or Stephanie Latif at 304-358-2573 or by email at janice.heavner@k12.wv.us or stephanie.latif@k12.wv.us.

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— John Dahmer

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‘Country Roads’ Leads to Many Discoveries

Sugar Grove

By Paula Mitchell

“Country Roads,” a song that is near and dear to one’s heart, has become an international song, sung by those who can’t speak English but who love the lyrics and tune.

“Country Roads” harkens to the most irregular shaped of all the 50 states, and varied reasons for West Virginia’s pride: the people, events, sights, and places. West Virginia is known for the Ramp Festival, Bridge Day, Hatfield-McCoy Feud, coal mining, state forests and parks, Cass Railroad, Canaan Valley, Spruce Knob, Harper’s Ferry, Greenbrier, Bramwell, Helvetia, Robert C. Byrd, Don Knotts, Lou Holtz, Jerry West, Mary Lou Retton, Pearl Buck, Stonewall Jackson, Little Jimmy Dickens, Chuck Yeager, golf first played in White Sulphur Springs, Oglebay Park, West-Whitehall Winery, Bavarian Inn, Harper’s Old Country Store, Fenton and Blenko Glass, Mail Pouch tobacco, Old Rehoboth Church, Blennerhassett Mansion, gray bat, Philippi’s covered bridge, New River Gorge Bridge, Seneca Rocks, Organ Cave, National Radio Astronomy Observatory, Mother’s Day and Moundsville...all talking points in a nutshell. This makes one want to come and enjoy the “Country Roads” that “snake” through mountains, valleys and nearby streams.

Not to be outdone by all of the above mentioned, its culinary delicacies are hard to beat.

The late Joy Harper had this recipe of Fried Pies:

2 cups flour
2 eggs
1 tsp. salt
Stewed fruit
1/2 cup shortening

Sift the flour and salt together. Cut in the shortening and mix with hands, add water. Roll out about 1/8 inch thick on a floured board. Cut with a large cookie cutter about 4 inches

in diameter. On each round, place 1-1/2 tablespoons sweetened mashed fruit (dried apricots, peaches, prunes or thick applesauce). Moisten edges with cold water, fold to make semi-circles and press tighter with a fork. Fry in deep fat.

This recipe was passed down from generation to generation to retain the usage of fruits.

Life’s little instructions include the following:

1. Watch a sunrise at least once a year.
2. Compliment even small improvements.
3. Don’t expect life to be fair.
4. Carry a chain saw in one’s trunk.
5. Never leave the toilet seat in the up position.

The cooler temperatures have been greatly enjoyed. Amidst all the storms around the area, the community received only minimal damage and rainfall.

Quotes for the week are as follows:

“Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re going to get.” — Forrest Gump

“Believe you can and you’re halfway there.” — Theodore Roosevelt

“The above-average intelligence of a squirrel is now required on most professional exams.” — Don Knotts

“They say marriages are made in heaven. But so is thunder and lightning.” — Clint Eastwood

“If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way.” — Napoleon Hill

Sitting on the front porch is the best place to hear the “Talk of the Grove.”

On Saturday, Jake and Donna Anderson of Staunton, Virginia, along with Jake’s brother, Joe, and Anthony Anderson of Washington, D.C., visited Pidge and Charles Anderson.

Judy and Doyle Moats came Sunday to and help pick beans.

The Martin Smith and Harry Grogg reunion was held Saturday. Family came as far away as Illinois and New York to attend. Smokey Wilson from Concord, Virginia, shared his

music with everyone. Everyone enjoyed the time together.

On Sunday, Judy Rader and Lorena Hoover enjoyed visiting in the home of Benny and Linda Custer at Verona, Virginia. Their visit included a delicious lunch.

Clickety-clacks for the chin waggars are as follows:

- Penguins have a special gland to filter salt from seawater.
- A newborn kangaroo (joey) is about 1 inch long.
- The average human sneeze travels at a speed of about 100 miles per hour.

• The credit card was introduced in the 1950s.

• One of the most important inventions in human history is the wheel, invented around 3500 B.C. in Mesopotamia.

August birthdays include Justin Via, David Puffenbarger, Loni Conley and Eddie Armentrout, first; Tracy Armentrout, second; Junior Bolton and Skyler Frame, fourth; Charlotte Hoover, Doris Hoops, Paula Price, Steve Stump and Carter and Colby Hott, fifth; Pastor Jerry Smith and Johnny Rerode, sixth; Amy Berg, seventh; Amanda Rexrode, Karen Peer, Gary Smith and Carl Hevener, eighth; Dolly Rexrode, ninth; Carrigan and Corrina Hedrick, Sherman Bennett, Margaret Kiser, Darren Olka and Sarah Loka, 10th; Brandon Mitchell and Becky Rightsell, 11th; Doug Simmons, Pat Godfrey, Sam Harper and C.J. Eckard, 12th; Moni Harman and Katie George, 14th; and Denise Neil and Bobby Shanholtz, 15th.

Concerns are for Charles Anderson, Roger and Joan Ashley, Mercedes Aumann, Dave Basagic, “Bo” Boggs, Jeff Craig, Stanley Dahmer, Isaac Eye, Carl Gant, Sue Hall, Clyde Hamilton, Albert Hammer, Armanda Heavner, Starr Hedrick, Keith Hoover, Mickey Huffman, Cynthia Hurry, Gary Jamison, Mike and Lisa Jamison, Tara Kelley, Stanley Kile, Keith Kimble, Lori Ann Lambert, Melissa Lambert, Skip and Roger Mallow, Yvonne Marsh, Dottie Mitchell, Rhonda Nash, Willa Nelson, Ronald Pitsenbarger, Alda Propst, family and friends of Janis Propst, Sheldon Propst, Jimmy Rexrode, Bernie and Margaret Sasser, Robbie Sites, family and friends of Ann Wimer and Edwin Wimer.

Data Centers Will Generate Massive Revenues for Host Counties, But All Will Get Some

By Stephen Smoot

Coverage of the development of data centers in West Virginia has generated a great deal of discussion over their role and impact, but little has been reported as of yet about their expected revenue benefits to local government.

One of the fears that some share about their development in West Virginia comes from the history of industrialization between the Civil War and World War I. Industrial Revolution development in West Virginia focused mainly on “upstream” development, including the extraction of timber and coal resources, mostly for use elsewhere.

Coal went to Pittsburgh and Baltimore for steel. Timber was often shipped to paper mills situated a few miles on the wrong side of the West Virginia state line. While mills did produce boards, much of the product went out of state for further refining.

The natural gas industry, among many others, uses a river metaphor to describe points of production. Upstream refers to the extraction phase, midstream to transportation and storage, and downstream as the phase of refinement and distribution.

Constructing data centers as a market for West Virginia

power plants, who themselves serve as markets for West Virginia coal, natural gas, solar, and wind power production, encompasses the entire “river.” Unlike in the Industrial Revolution where the state extracted and shipped out, the Mountain State now encompasses the entirety of the economic benefit.

One of the most understated factors, however, lies in the expected revenues to come from these centers.

Delegate Daniel Linville (R-Cabell) posted on his site an automatic calculator to show the tax revenue benefits that could accrue to local schools and county governments if they hosted a data center in their county. State law requires that these centers also pay county levies as well. They also, according to HB 2014 (2025) cannot enter into any payment in lieu of taxes arrangements

Additionally, if the new data center is located in another county, 10 percent of revenues from that get distributed amongst the 54 other counties in the state. Those go to county governments.

The calculator estimates revenues based on centers up to eight gigawatts in power. Most in West Virginia will be smaller than that due to land limitations.

If a one gigawatt data center located in Pendleton County, \$16,063,200 would go directly to the Pendleton County

Schools. The Pendleton County Commission would receive \$11,020,680 to put into the cost of county services and any other needs.

If Pendleton County had a levy of any sort, the data center would have to pay its full share. For example, if a one gigawatt center opened in Mineral County, it would also receive a base revenue for its schools of just over \$16 million, just like Pendleton County. It would also receive an additional \$63.3 million for beneficiaries of its levy.

If a one gigawatt center was constructed in any other county in West Virginia, the Pendleton County Commission would receive just over \$32,000. The center proposed for Tucker County will likely open with two GW capacity that will increase over time. That alone would provide Pendleton County initially with just over \$64,000 a year.

As more data centers are constructed, each county will continue to see its shares in that revenue add up annually.

The revenues expected from data centers only represent one section of the larger picture that involves the natural resource extraction and also power generation industries within the state. Counties that host natural gas wells and coal mining operations will see benefits from expanded production, as well as those seeing development in power generation.

Training Event Lays Groundwork for New Peters Mountain Trail System

Nearly 30 volunteers gathered on a humid day at Peters Mountain, about 10 minutes west of downtown Franklin, to learn trail-building skills and begin work on the new Peters Mountain Trail System in the Monongahela National Forest.

Peters Mountain sits beneath the impressive North Fork Mountain in the dry, rocky shale barrens of West Virginia’s Valley and Ridge Province, terrain that offers a unique outdoor experience from the rest of the Monongahela’s high-elevation spruce forests. The weather, however, did not cooperate with the setting. Volunteers worked through fog and steady rain, spread across more than a hundred feet of corridor with assembly-line precision, shoveling, raking, tamping, and lopping their way through the wet ground.

The training was led by the Mon Forest Towns Partnership’s local representatives, West Virginia University’s Outdoor Economic Development Collaborative and the Monongahela National Forest. Rich Edwards and Logan Chapman of the OEDC guided volunteers of all ages alongside forest service staff, covering work safety and the techniques for building trails that last.

Volunteers learned to use a suite of tools from the OEDC’s mobile tool lab, from familiar loppers and rakes to trail-specific implements like the McLeod and the Pulaski. Instruction also covered techniques for managing water on the trail, including how to implement grade dips and the angle of backslopes, the details that determine where water flows and ultimately, whether a trail holds up for days or for decades.

“Twenty years from now, you’ll be able to hike this trail and see moss growing on the stones you put down,” Chapman said.

That long view shaped the day. “We want the trail to look like it just dropped out of the sky,” Edwards remarked. He pointed to the lineage of American trail work to explain the standard. “Many of the trails you see today across America are almost 100 years old and were built by the CCC and WPA, people who knew what they were doing. Now we’re in the third great trail-building renaissance; we want these trails to last a hundred years as well.”

The work is part of a nearly three-mile looped shared-use

trail system currently in development, one piece of the Mon Forest Towns Partnership’s broader effort to connect downtowns to nearby forest assets and enhance West Virginia’s growing outdoor recreation economy. The trails offer young people a place to gain hands-on experience at a time of rising demand for trail builders across the region.

“Visitors to Franklin and Pendleton County fall in love with the natural beauty here every day,” added Annie Humes, director of the Pendleton County Convention and Visitors Bureau. “This project is already connecting our residents to those natural spaces, giving local folks the chance to be hands-on with the work of responsible development of public access at the Peters Mountain trail. This trail will make our public forest land more accessible for both visitors and locals for years to come.”

The training followed a Franklin community meeting held the day before, where residents discussed outdoor recreation, business, and community development opportunities for the area. Both events are part of the Partnership’s ARC POWER grant and downtown connectivity work.

For Michelle Connor, Franklin’s Mon Forest Town representative, the site carries particular meaning. “The location

of this trail is important to our community,” Connor said. “The Welcome to the Monongahela National Forest sign is highly visible along US-33 and stands right next to an iconic piece of our local history, a one-room schoolhouse constructed through a partnership between our local school system and the US Forest Service in 1940. This school served our community for decades and is a reminder of the continued interdependence between our community and the national forest.”

For Connor, who brought her 10- and 16-year-old sons to the training, and other parents in the audience, the focus was on the next generation. “Over 85 years later, this same piece of property is being used to foster local learning opportunities and empower youth,” she commented.

The Peters Mountain Trail System is not yet open to the public. Organizers plan to keep the momentum going with continued community events through the summer. Those interested in future workdays or being part of the community conversation can connect with the Mon Forest Towns Partnership or Pendleton County Convention and Visitors Bureau for more information.



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Without Washington's Highlands Forts

By Stephen Smoot

As the nation and some parts of the world celebrated America 250, the anniversary of the 1776 independence of the United States, few think much about the war only 20 years prior.

In 1754, George Washington, a major in the Virginia militia, marched a small force towards the Forks of the Ohio, modern Pittsburgh. Virginia hoped that he could secure their claim to that strategic point before France, whose explorers extended their claims south from Canada. The young Washington ended up in his first combat, where he lost control of his Indian allies and had to sign a humiliating surrender.

Not long after, he accompanied General Sir Edward Braddock on his march with the 44th and 48th Regiment of Foot into the disastrous 1755 battle that killed the general and scattered a professional British force.

After the defeat, Washington wrote to Governor Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia that “I Tremble at the consequences that this defeat may have upon our back settlers, who I suppose will all leave their habitation’s unless their are proper measures taken for their security.”

The very next year, 270 years ago, Washington received the order to establish a chain of forts through the western frontier. Some of those sites have defined the human geography and even the early culture of the region as they run through modern Mineral, Hampshire, Hardy, Grant, and Pendleton counties in West Virginia.

Washington's skirmish in 1754 touched off a conflict properly described as the actual first world war, called the French and Indian War in America and the Seven Years' War everywhere else. The British Empire stood on one side with its colonies in multiple hemispheres. Fighting alongside her was King Frederick the Great of Prussia, whose heroic leadership inspired a number of places named for him east of the Appalachians. The small German state of Hanover, home of the dynasty ruling Britain in that time, technically sided with Britain but contributed little.

The Five Nations of the Iroquois League served as the most effective of British allies in the conflict, but their rivals joined the French in driving eastward against the frontier settlements of Virginia.

The northern anchor of the planned forts for 1756 was Fort Cumberland, already a busy military and economic outpost. It was constructed in 1754 and served as the base for Braddock's expedition.

The future Continental Army commander and first president knew the area well. At the age of 16, he assisted Lord Fairfax on his survey of property along the Potomac, as well as its South Branch and South Fork tributaries. Washington had responsibility not only for arranging the construction of new forts, and improvement of established positions, he also had to recruit militia for them.

A lifelong aversion to militia may have been born in his mind, expressing to Dinwiddie a that "there is very few Officers repaid hither yet, which has occasioned a very fatiguing time to me, to manage a number of selfwill'd, ungovernable People."

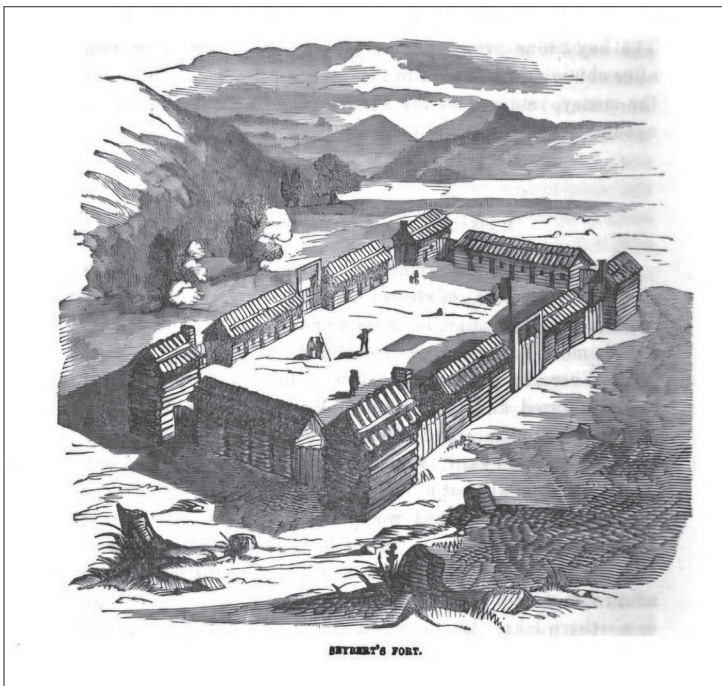
From there south to the Virginia-North Carolina line, about 25 forts emerged as frontier sentinels. Roy Bird Cook, an early 20th century historian in West Virginia, stated in an article published in West Virginia history that they defended “A long region reaching out from the head of the Ohio River, swinging east to Wills Creek (Cumberland), and thence roughly following the Allegheny Mountains to North Carolina, received attention.”

Cook added, "A chain of forts about twenty miles apart, designed to afford some protection for the settlers, was constructed during the next year. Many were the scenes of tragic episodes in which numerous lives were lost, especially in the region now along the South Branch of the Potomac."

Though most frontier defenses took the moniker of "fort," Cook described three general types. Most powerful were those whose size and potential strength merited the name of "fort." Fort Cumberland fit this description, covering 200 yards according to a British officer's notation. Surrounding the fort and barracks was a 12-foot wall constructed by vertically sinking the massive virgin timbers of the day into the ground.

Next in diminishing size and strength was the stockade, which generally featured a single large building surrounded by a wall. Approximately 20 miles south of Fort Cumberland, the first of the 1756 forts, Fort Ashby took on more of a stockade design. It was named for John Ashby, who Washington had met while surveying with Lord Fairfax. The first fortification on the South Branch River emerged at Fort Pearsall, modern Romney.

Cook also describes blockhouses, which were generally homes or other buildings fortified with thick walls and narrow gunsight windows. Private families, or a group of families, could certainly construct their own fortifications



An artist's rendition of Fort Seybert as it likely appeared prior to its destruction. Image is from History of the Early Settlement and Indian Wars of West Virginia by Willis de Hass.

and man them as well as they could.

As modern residents know and Washington knew, much of the South Branch River runs through a very narrow canyon called “the Trough.” From the southern end, one emerges into the broad valley at Old Fields that extends upstream to Petersburg Gap. There, at what was then called “Indian Old Fields,” Captain Thomas Waggoner constructed Fort Pleasant.

Not large like Fort Cumberland, Fort Pleasant was, as Cook described, “a large stockade comprising cabins, palisades, and blockhouses. It was constructed by Captain Thomas Waggoner, an officer in Washington’s command.

Washington informed the governor of the start of construction, stating that "I have already built two Forts on Patterson's Creek (which has engag'd the chief of the Inhabitants to return to their Plantns) and have now order'd Captn Waggoner with 60 Men to build and Garrison two other's (on places I have pointed out high up) on the South Branch."

Washington expected this fort to serve as a key defense in the network, calling it “a means of securing near 100 Miles of our Frontier exclusive of the Command at Fort Dinwiddie on Jackson’s River.”

As settlers rushed into the rich soils of the valley downstream from Petersburg Gap, both Waggoner and Washington saw the need to extend defenses. Three miles south of Moorefield was built Fort Buttermilk. Both this and Fort Pleasant saw attacks by Indians during the French and Indian War.

Potomac State College historian William Ansell once wrote of its peculiar name that “one story would have us believe that at the time the fort was being constructed, a party of Indians ventured into the area and so harassed the cows about that place that at milking time, they gave buttermilk instead of the standard variety.”

On the other side of the Gap, about two miles downstream of where the North Fork joins the South Branch near Smoke Hole, Fort Peterson emerged near modern Petersburg. Both were named after early settler Jacob Peterson.

What would become Pendleton County hosted three of Washington's forts. History links by their fates Fort Upper Tract and Fort Seybert. Trout Rock Fort, on the South Branch River, was a stockade designed to serve 50 militia soldiers. That position, strategically situated in a narrow section of the valley, served as part of the defensive line moving upstream in the valley from Fort Upper Tract to Matthew Harper's Fort in modern Highland County, Virginia.

The fates of Fort Upper Tract and Fort Seybert will always resonate in Pendleton County with so many families in the region today able to point back to ancestors who fought and died at both locations.

"The enclosed letter from Capt. Waggener, will inform your Honor of a very unfortunate affair. From the best accounts I have yet been able to get, there are about 60 persons killed and missing." George Washington wrote this to a future Virginia Supreme Court justice in a report of the disastrous attacks on both positions.

Chief Killbuck, one of three Delaware Indians to carry that name, led an expedition from near modern Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania eastward. The nearby French in Fort Duquesne, now Pittsburgh, certainly encouraged any disruption that their allies among the Indians could create.

Raiders from the Delaware and the Shawnee prized not mere disruption, but had their own purpose. Unable to forge and use metals, such as iron, they saw in tools, cooking implements, and other useful items more of a treasure than Europeans found gold.



A line of forts was constructed during the French and Indian War by Virginia militia officer George Washington 270 years ago to protect the families who braved life on the frontier.

In August of 1756, Washington directed the indefatigable, and seemingly everywhere, Waggoner to arrange “that I would have a Subaltern and twenty or twenty-five men sent to the upper Tract, to assist the Settlers in erecting a Fort[.] In this I presume they will give all imaginable assistance; as it is solely intended to promote their safety.”

The good captain already had his hands full contending with Indian attacks on Fort Pleasant, which he called "the Town fort." After a council of war, Waggoner could tell Washington that "Capt. Feild with 30 of his Men are willing to Remain at the Upper Fort till Decr," but "Since I wrote you last their has been a Man killed and Scalp'd within half a Mile of the Town Fort, And Two of his Sons taken Prisoners."

Not long after, he assured Washington that a Lieutenant Lomax would take 20 more to Upper Tract. Nine months later, Washington reported to Dinwiddie that Fort Upper Tract might be indefensible, saying "it is more in the Indian pass of the mountains" and "is too high up."

Also, while Washington desired to have 100 militia at Upper Tract, pressure on the area south of Moorefield forced him to keep more troops at Fort Buttermilk.

April 27th and 28th, 1756, still loom over the history of Pendleton County. Killbuck's Delaware and Shawnee Indians, as well as perhaps a few Frenchmen, swarmed Upper Tract first. Their attack erased the garrison and annihilated the fort, which was never rebuilt.

No warning crossed from the South Branch to the South Fork Valley as the expedition converged on Fort Seybert. Cook's description of this post was nearly identical to that of Fort Pleasant.

Willis de Hass of the New York Historical Society wrote of the massacre at Fort Seybert in 1851. He described it as “a rude enclosure cut out of the heart of the forest” that “served as a place of resort for the people of all the adjoining settlements.”

As is recounted every year in "The Burning of Fort Seybert" presentation during the Treasure Mountain Festival, a siege of the fort wore down the defenders trapped inside. "The promise of safety," wrote De Hass, "lured the unfortunate victims . . . and they yielded quiet possession of the fort."

It was not so quiet as that. One settler tried to take a shot at Killbuck, his aim spoiled by another who believed in the promises made. The chief welcomed those who surrendered by mashing the butt of his tomahawk into Captain Jacob Seybert, the fort commander's jaw. Residents fled for their lives, but 41 were recaptured and 17 of them killed.

Eastern Indians generally had a custom of seizing women and children to incorporate into their own ranks, but had terrible contempt for men who surrendered to their arms, regardless of whether they were of Indian or European origin. Of the 24 women and children seized from the fort, most eventually returned home.

Until 1763 when British arms triumphed worldwide, the Allegheny frontier remained protected by the thin line of forts and the resilient men (and sometimes women) who manned them.

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