

## *In this issue - World War I Remembered*

### **Protecting Our Metal Outdoor Sculptures and Monuments**

**by Bekah Karelis**

This year marks the commemoration of the United States and West Virginia's, participation in WWI. This fact has many a head turning in Wheeling, West Virginia, toward our two beloved WWI monuments found in our city: the Aviator and the Doughboy.

The bronze "Aviator" sits outside Linsly School — erected by a mother who wanted to honor her pilot son after he was shot down over France and killed. Louis Bennett, Jr. was West Virginia's only flying ace during the war and his mother never got over the loss, leaving traces of his memory not only at his school in Wheeling, but in Westminster Abbey and the National Cathedral as well.

The Doughboy sits in one of Wheeling's municipal parks, not far from Route 40. He was a statue that could be considered "mass produced" in the 1920s, with many of its kind found in West Virginia and surrounding states. He is made of copper alloy, basically a sheet of metal stretched very thin through a molding process.

Both statues are now almost 100 years old and beginning to show wear. The Aviator has evidence of advanced corrosion. The Doughboy is starting to have holes appear around his upper torso and is missing the gun he used to carry in his left hand. The preservation community has been spurred to action and is seeking estimates from a regional sculptor who does restoration work. It is easy to think that an exterior bronze statue is safe in its environment. In fact, without proper maintenance, a bronze statue will begin to corrode over time. In many areas, West Virginia is known for its air pollutants and acid rain - the effects of exposure to both in our environment can wreak havoc on bronze and other metal statues without precautions. The green patina you see on bronze sculpture is, in fact, a patina that contains corrosive elements. That same green patina was once thought to be a "protective coating" and many people are against its removal because they think the color is pretty. If the patina is allowed to remain unchecked it will harm the statue's future condition and will make repairs more costly down the road.

If you have a metal monument in your community, you should always hire a professional instead of attempting to clean it yourself. There are many cases where well-intentioned community members or contractors who think they are employing the best methods end up doing more harm than good. It is important to avoid aggressive cleaning methods like sandblasting, glass-bead peening, and some chemical applications. With these methods, you are removing the patina, but also the top layer of metal that will lead to lost detail, altered surface texture, and the chance that corrosion will occur more rapidly in the future. One acceptable method for cleaning, is by using walnut shells. Similar to sand blasting, it interchanges the sand for crushed walnut shells, which are softer than sand, but abrasive enough to remove the corrosion from the metal's surface.

After cleaning, a wax is applied to the sculpture to provide a barrier coat between the metal and atmospheric chemicals. Once applied, this wax should be re-applied every 3-5 years to keep any corrosion in check. The application of wax is critical to both the appearance and preservation of the statue.

If you would like more information about the preservation of our sculptures in the outdoors, you can find the Preservation Tech Note "Metals Number 1: Conserving Outdoor Bronze Sculpture" by Dennis Montagna online through the National Park Services website.



## Charles Marile Chaffin and his West Virginia Distinguished Service Medal

By Jim Mitchell

In 2003, Robert A. Duke in Michigan wrote a letter to Governor Bob Wise offering him, his uncle Charles Marile Chaffin's frame of World War I military medals. After travelling through state bureaucracy, the letter finally ended up in my hands. I called Mr. Duke and asked him if he had his uncle's service record. He said no. I suggested that he contact the U. S. Army Records Center in St Louis, Missouri. He contacted them and learned that his uncle's records were in that part of the Center, where there had been a disastrous fire and the records were lost. He called me and asked if I still wanted the medals. I said yes.

When the package arrived and I unwrapped it, he had sent me a large glass covered wooden frame in which were eight medals. There are two rows of four medals each. There are six World War I medals and two World War II medals. The upper row has four medals. From left to right is the German Occupation Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, and the World War I Victory Medal with five clasps. The lower row also has four medals. From left to right is the Distinguished Service Cross, the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster, the West Virginia Distinguished Service Medal (which I did not recognize) and the French Croix de Guerre.

As I said, I did not recognize the second medal from the right on the lower row. It is a heavy armed cross suspended on a tan watered silk ribbon. In the middle is a tiny coat of arms. I took out my magnifying glass and read: "MONTANI SEMPER LIBERI" and thought, "Well, what do you know about that?" Well, I did not know. So, I began asking questions. Does anyone know anyone who knows anything about military medals? I was told to call the late Larry Sybolt at West Virginia University. I called him and told him my story. He asked me whose medals did I have and when I told him, he said that he knew everything about Charles Marile Chaffin.

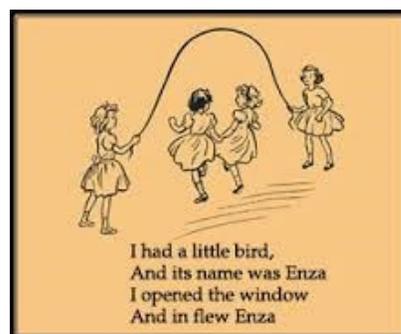
In 1917 and 1918, Pvt. Chaffin was in the trenches in France. His captain gave him a message to carry to headquarters and wait for a reply. On his way, a German shell exploded nearby, wounding him in two places. He delivered the message, staunching his bleeding and waited for a reply which he carried back to his captain. Then he went to the hospital for medical attention.

For his action, he received the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster signifying two wounds. He also was given the Distinguished Service Cross. (According to Larry Sybolt, in those days, there was no lesser decoration.) Everyone who received a DSC in France automatically received the Croix de Guerre.

In 1939, the West Virginia Legislature instituted the W. Va. Distinguished Service Medal. In the General Orders of 1940, Pvt. Chaffin was thirteenth on the list of sixty-five. Larry Sybolt said that this medal is the rarest military decoration in the world. Only 250 have been made and only 128 have been given out.

Chaffin fought in World War II in the U. S. Navy, which accounts for the American Campaign Medal and the World War II Victory Medal which are in the frame. The frame is exhibited in Discovery Room 20, in the World War I case in The West Virginia State Museum in Charleston.

The late Larry Sybolt was a distinguished teacher at WVU. He was also a member of the Board of the West Virginia Association of Museums, on which he actively participated. Once he gave a workshop on Military Decorations. I was there. It was wonderful. He died too young of diabetes and heart failure. We miss him greatly. Sob...



**Also happening on the WW I timeline:** Women were still fighting for the right to vote; the great Flu Pandemic swept the globe killing more people than the war; the preventable tragedy of the Radium Girls gradually unfolded; and for the very first time recorded music could be played in the home—and it didn't require electricity!

**From "The Yanks Are Coming"- an exhibit at North House Museum in Lewisburg, WV**

## West Virginia Division of Culture and History to Participate in Blue Star Museums



CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The West Virginia Division of Culture and History (WVDCH) announces the launch of Blue Star Museums, a collaboration among the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and more than 2,000 museums across America to offer free admission to the nation’s active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The program provides families an opportunity to enjoy the nation's cultural heritage and learn more about their community, especially after a military move. A list of participating museums is available at [www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums](http://www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums).

“We are proud to participate in the Blue Star Museums program,” said WVDCH Commissioner Randall Reid-Smith. “It is wonderful to be a part of a program that gives back to our service members who do so much and make sacrifices for us every day.”

"The Blue Star Museums program is a great opportunity for the NEA to team up with local museums in every state in the nation to support our service members and their families," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. “It means a lot to offer these families access to high-quality, budget-friendly opportunities to spend time together.”

This year’s Blue Star Museums represent not just fine arts museums, but also science museums, history museums, nature centers and dozens of children’s museums. WVDCH’s four museums, the West Virginia State Museum in Charleston, Museum in the Park in Logan, Grave Creek Mound Archaeological Complex in Moundsville and West Virginia Independence Hall in Wheeling, along with other museums across the state, including Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences in Charleston; Marion County Historical Society, Inc. and Museum and Northern Appalachian Coal Mining Heritage Association in Fairmont; Huntington Museum of Art in Huntington; Art Museum of West Virginia University, Royce J. and Caroline B. Watts Museum, Spark! Imagination and Science Center and West Virginia Botanic Garden, Inc. in Morgantown; National American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor Museum, Education and Research Center in Wellsburg; and Museums of Oglebay Institute in Wheeling, will offer free admission to service members throughout the summer.

Museums that wish to participate in Blue Star Museums may contact [bluestarmuseums@arts.gov](mailto:bluestarmuseums@arts.gov), or Wendy Clark, NEA director of museums, at [clarkw@arts.gov](mailto:clarkw@arts.gov).

Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies and the philanthropic sector.

Blue Star Families is a national, nonprofit network of military spouses, children, parents and friends, as well as service members, veterans and civilians, dedicated to supporting, connecting, and empowering military families.

The West Virginia Division of Culture and History is an agency within the Office of Secretary of Education and the Arts with Gayle Manchin, cabinet secretary. The division, led by Commissioner Randall Reid-Smith, brings together the past, present and future through programs and services focusing on archives and history, arts, historic preservation and museums. For more information about the division’s programs, events and sites, visit [www.wvculture.org](http://www.wvculture.org). The Division of Culture and History is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

**BLACK VALLEY: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF FANNIE SELLINS**

**Richard Gazarik. Publications of the Saint Vincent College Center For Northern Appalachian Studies. ISBN 978-1-885851-**

**86-4**

Most of us have heard of Mother Jones and her crusades; but have you heard of Fannie Sellins? Sellins was a contemporary of Mother Jones and involved with labor unions and labor conflicts, but her story is not well known.

Fannie Mooney Sellins was born in New Orleans, 1872, in an area known as the “Irish Channel”. Sellins moved to St. Lewis, Missouri where she would become widowed with four children to raise. She worked in a garment factory under terrible conditions, earning \$9 for a fifty hour work week. She became involved with the International Women’s Garment Workers Union and became president in 1910. Her efforts were attacked by the factories owners and police through lockouts. She went on to become a well known activist for the Labor Unions and began traveling to factories with poor working conditions. Pinkerton detectives were hired to incite violence and intimidate protestors. Sellins would travel across the country to appeal to other unions for support of worker’s rights. She became known for her successes; but the large corporations began to impose “dirty tricks” in the work places. The book includes many quotations from original union proceedings, and the reader will enjoy the accounts of the struggles and successes recorded at that time.

Fannie Sellins would meet miner Paul Scoric during a union business trip to Pittsburgh. Scoric convinced Sellins to help miners on strike against the West Virginia-Pittsburgh Coal Company in Colliers, West Virginia. Upon witnessing the deplorable conditions the miner’s families lived in, Fannie decided to stay in West Virginia and joined the United Mine Workers. Her efforts quickly caught the attention of the local District 5 leader. At that time unions were considered illegal organizations. The coal boom continued to grow in In West Virginia and Pennsylvania. The influx of immigrants coming into the area also fueled the companies to trap them for their profit. The needs for unionization were imperative. In effect, miners and their families were financially enslaved by the companies.

The mine worker’s issues were taken up by Sellins around 1914. Her efforts would continue to grow until she became a target of the companies and, in particular, the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency hired-guns. Fannie was eventually tried, convicted and imprisoned in the Marion County Jail in Fairmont for six months, while men were jailed for sixty days to three months. Fannie Sellins was told that she was a “disgrace to the womanhood of America.”

Imprisonment wasn’t an end to Sellins’ fight, which would continue through the next five years until her death in 1919. Readers of “**Black Valley: The Life and Death of Fannie Sellins**” will become captivated by her story and her shockingly deliberate murder. The book is only 120 pages long, but the story of this woman opens up a complex picture that includes politics, the judiciary, money and lies. This small book would make a great movie. The book is available through the Marion County Historical Society, Fairmont, West Virginia, and Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, PA.

**Your Museum Network—Give and get good stuff.**

Is your site in need of a timber frame loom? Call 1-304-660-5544. Ask for James.

I have assorted chandelier and lamp prisms. Call Toni at 304-661-0417.

(to participate send info to [museum@greenbrierhistorical.org](mailto:museum@greenbrierhistorical.org))

**SAVE THE  
DATE!**

## **Museums and Communities - A Capitol Idea!**

**The annual WVAM conference will be held in Charleston, WV  
March 22nd through March 24th 2018**

Featured WVAM member museum: Veterans Museum of Mid-Ohio Valley By Toni Ogden

Garry Farris has been the volunteer director of Veterans Museum of Mid-Ohio Valley for 14 years. The museum started innocently enough with a couple of uniforms in his basement. The scope of collection covers WW I to the present. The mission statement is “to preserve, promote and protect the legacy and dignity of our West Virginia veterans through public displays.” I like how specific that is and how it is realized in the museum itself and its relationship with the community.

Upon entering this unassuming brick building on 7<sup>th</sup> Street in Parkersburg, you will find a well-lit and uniquely organized space with manikins in uniform ranged around the room. Gary explains that every displayed uniform is accompanied by the story of the soldier who wore it; this museum is all about the stories. “People always want to donate uniforms,” he said, “but we only take the ones that have a real person and the story that goes with him or her. We have a section for female service personnel and one for Chaplains.”

Not surprising are Gary’s answers to the question of the toughest problems he faces; they are the same as for the rest of us – lack of space, storage, funding and the need for more staff/volunteers. “We’ve hired our first paid employee – a fund raising specialist.” He states that since West Virginia discontinued support for veterans’ museums many years ago, finding money for maintaining the museum and programming has been a challenge. “We get a small amount of money from the motel tax, but 90% of our financial support comes from the public.” On a positive note he says, “Every time I do a publicity campaign or engage with the public through an event or put something in the paper, we get donations – sometimes large, sometimes small, but making the public aware of what we do leads to support.”

This volunteer run museum is open 6 days a week and offers an archives and library as well as collections. They are working on their oral history archive, and take an active role in the national Medal Replacement Program. Recently he is helping to organize a West Virginia chapter of the Blue Star Mothers. Veterans of Mid-Ohio Valley also partners with Parkersburg through an outdoor exhibit, Stepping Stones of Honor, in the city’s park.

Of interest to all museums is Mid-Ohio Valley’s thoughtfully structured docent education program. It is rigorous with tests to pass before a volunteer has the honor of leading a tour. Students learn skills such as public speaking and communication. The reward for the students is increased confidence as they gain extensive knowledge of military history generally and the impact locally on individuals and community. This is a training course with a certificate of completion and through community support, this Veterans’ museum has been able to give \$500.00 education scholarships to young people who complete the program.

Garry gave a big shout out to WVAM’s Jim Mitchell for helping him as he got the museum going and the WVAM annual conference for offering workshops on topics that support all aspects of museum business and activities.

Does your site have an exciting event coming up? Any recent successes or research that you would like to share? We want to know about it! Email WVAM at [museumsofww@gmail.com](mailto:museumsofww@gmail.com) with your institutions news and have it featured in the newsletter, on our website and our Facebook page

Please let us know if you would like to receive this newsletter electronically and in color!

## WVAM Membership—Join today!

Membership in WVAM provides a unique opportunity to be involved with other professionals at sites and museums across the state. Dues are for the calendar year from January to December. Mail completed form to **WVAM, P.O. Box 4589, Morgantown, WV 26504** or do it on-line (see below)

**Individual Members: \$15.00**

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**[www.museumsofww.org](http://www.museumsofww.org)**

**Please visit the newly designed and easy to navigate WVAM web page. You'll find a colorful newsletter with upcoming events and workshops. Learn how to become a member, pay dues and register for the annual spring conference on-line. Like us on Facebook!**



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