

GROWTH RINGS

Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area News



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Management Planning Update

In June 2020, AFNHA hosted a series of virtual meetings to get the gears working in the Management Planning process. Due to SARS-CoV-2, AFNHA's planning working group has had to adjust our expectations for what this process looks like. Our initial Public Input Meeting took place on June 16th, on Zoom. A recorded version of this meeting is available on our website, along with the presentation for the meeting. We encourage anyone who wants to know more about our Management Planning process and how to get involved to review these materials! You can even watch the meeting video at 1.5 speed to cut down on time.

Hosting the meeting virtually, rather than in person, may have allowed for some additional participation because travel was not needed. We are all adjusting to life during a pandemic, but we feel it is important to continue to chug ahead in the MP process while the coals are still hot.

We consider this initial meeting a success because we met our goals in communicating the parts of the management plan, what the process will look like, and fleshed out how partners and stakeholders can help us shape our future as a NHA.

Two of our Task Groups met in late June/early July as well: the Interpretation and Visitor Experience Task Group, and the Organization and Management Structure Task Group. These initial meetings helped explain the specific aspects of the section of the MP they are working on, what we can improve on, and how we can better reach between partners to tell the dynamic story of our NHA.

What's next?

The Resource Stewardship and Conservation Task Group will have their initial meeting in the upcoming months. The other Task Groups will be assigned some homework; reviewing our interpretive themes, giving input via survey, evaluating our strengths and weaknesses, looking at regional tourism efforts, etc..

Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area promotes and supports a network of partnerships based around our unique Forest Heritage. We work in 16 West Virginia counties and 2 counties in Western Maryland.

To learn more about us and the work we do, including our AmeriCorps program, visit afnha.org.

Visit our website to watch recording of public meeting, or sign up for a Task Group!

A Brief History of Blackness in AFNHA

Moira Gasior

Note: The author is using the term 'black' in lieu of African American because though the term can be an accurate descriptor, it also can exclude groups within the African diaspora.

Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area has a complex and rich history. People across differing classes, races, and religions have called this region home. These people shaped the cultural landscape (and literal landscape) as we recognize it today. In this newsletter, we are concentrating on black history. Black communities have had a major impact on the larger Appalachian region, and still continue to do so today. We seek to represent marginalized communities through their history, heritage, and culture.

Early Settlement and Civil War



Before European settlers came to this region, bringing African slaves with them, this land was significant for the Native American populations. As early as 16,000 years ago, American's Indigenous peoples moved through and settled this region. You can learn more about the Monongahela culture in the resources below.

Most black people brought to this region of Virginia were brought as slaves. Much of our 18 county region was too mountainous for major scale plantation operations, instead, most slaves did technical duties. They helped with chores, subsistence farming, and their owner's jobs.

For example, David Blackman's slaves made the bricks for the Bosworth Store (pictured above) in Beverly, WV. Today, that building is the Randolph County Historical Society. One place in our region that had a high number of slaves is the Greenbrier Resort in Greenbrier County. About 100 slaves were utilized to keep the operations running, not including the slaves brought along by wealthy families visiting the resort.

In Beverly, May 1813, an enslaved man named Morris was found guilty of grand larceny. He was punished by receiving 39 lashes to his back and burned on his hand in the presence of the court. Fears of uprisings and racist attitudes meant that punishment for enslaved blacks were very harsh and severe, even if there were occasional glimpses of freedom.

In 1863, West Virginia became a state. The first section of the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution ensured the citizenship and rights of all black Americans. Many newly freed slaves left the region to move North, in hopes of being more fairly treated. Other freed slaves from more southern regions moved here, often finding work with the coal mines and railroads. At this time, the Ku Klux Klan was present in every AFNHA county, and Jim Crow-era segregation was in effect.



Two women selling ice cream, Scott's Run, WV. Photo from Library of Congress.

Industrial Era

Industry in this region brought an influx of immigrants and supplied jobs for freed slaves. It brought an influx of new populations to support industrial efforts to build railroads, work in mines, and do the back-breaking labor involved during the logging boom. Specifically, black and Italian workers were given the more labor intensive tasks (such as laying railroad tracks and digging tunnels), because of stereotypes about each group. Immigrant groups lived separately partially because of the tendency to flock towards others sharing the same customs and traditions. The companies also encouraged separate living because they hoped to create a divide between the groups and prevent unions from forming (this plan did not always work; unions formed anyway, but with varying levels of success).

In Cass, WV, black workers were excluded from living in the company town and lived across the Greenbrier River in East Cass (known as Brooklyn until about 1906). The Davis Coal and Coke Company in Tucker County were melting pots of various newly-arrived European nationalities and African-Americans who travelled from other portions of the region for work.

Ongoing Segregation

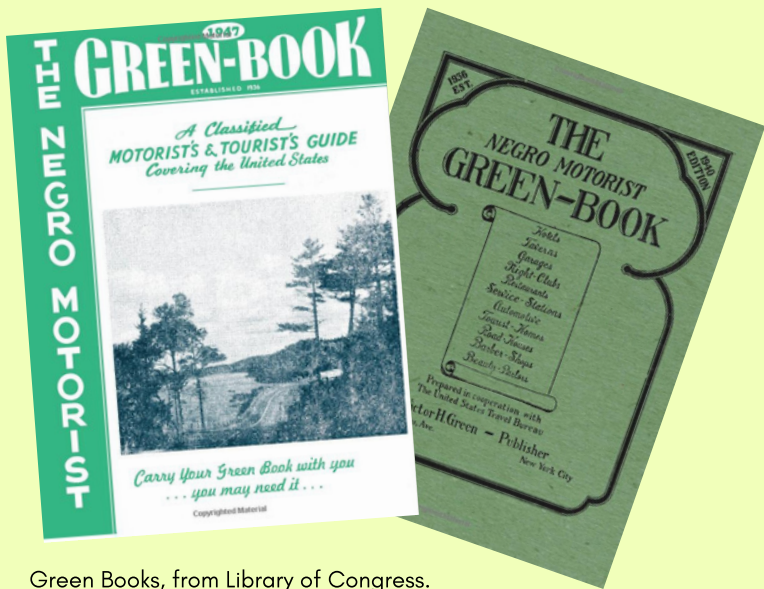
During the New Deal era, the US Government started creating Homestead Communities to provide housing, community, and resources for out-of-work coal miners (like Arthurdale in Preston County), but black families were not invited or allowed to apply to become part of the community (to Eleanor Roosevelt's dismay). CCC camps were typically segregated as well, though there were some non-segregated camps in West Virginia.

Many black families put an emphasis on education. In the Riverside School Oral History, Eunice B. Young remembers being told, "you will learn, you will learn." Another student remembers having to take an IQ test and if it was average to high, students were expected to receive at least a 95% in their classes. When the Riverside School integrated with Elkins High School, white locals worried that the black students would be behind in their studies, when in reality they were actually ahead of the white students in some subjects.

Some schools in West Virginia were segregated until the late 1960s, despite *Brown vs. Board of Education* setting legal precedent of integration in 1954. Some counties immediately complied, and some integration efforts were responded to with protests.



Riverside School basketball team.



Green Books, from Library of Congress.

Green Books were one way for black Americans to navigate travel and vacation during the Jim Crow era. Green Books listed restaurants, tourist homes, bars, theaters, and other public spaces and facilities safe for black folks to visit and enjoy. Sites included were either black-owned, or non-discriminatory. Before integration, federal public lands followed the lead of local segregation laws, so public lands in our region would have had segregated facilities and areas. In our own WV counties, there were two sites listed safe for black folks (see link in resources). One tourist home was listed in Cumberland, Maryland between our Maryland counties.

Legacy Today

In general, black culture has an extremely strong influence on Appalachian culture. Our region's folklife has been shaped by the different groups who have populated our area. The instrument known as the banjo was derived from the African “banju” which was often made from gourds and had no frets. In West Virginia, banjos were traditionally made with what was available, including animal products, forest products, and found objects.



J. R. CLIFFORD.

Throughout this history, black communities have been resilient and continue to fight for equality. One of the first Civil Rights cases in America happened in Tucker County. In 1889, the Tucker County Board of Education said white schools would run for 8 months, but black schools only 5 months. School teacher, Carrie Williams, sought help from black lawyer J.R. Clifford. He fought on Williams’ behalf before the West Virginia Supreme Court and won. The court ruled that Williams would receive \$120 in back pay after she worked the full 8 months. Tucker County was one of the first counties to fully integrate in WV.

It is crucial that we consider the historic narratives of slavery and structural racism when acknowledging the lived experiences of black peoples in Appalachia. Though most people living today did not literally take those actions and do those harms, until we unpack the meaning and long term effects of those harms we are all implicit. Examining the past can change the way we engage with the present, by hopefully moving forward with more empathy, understanding, and self awareness.

Current Resources

We want to share some resources that speak more to the history of black Americans, not only in AFNHA but in the Appalachian region as a whole. These resources in no way speak to any political leanings, and they do not advocate for any political organization. They are simply listed to promote learning and growth about our heritage, history, and culture in the Appalachian region, of which AFNHA is a part of.

- [Coal Black Voices](#)
- [100 Days, 100 Voices](#)
- [Black in Appalachia](#)
- [Gone Home by Karida L. Brown](#)
- [Curriculum for teaching about racism and public lands](#)
- [Coketon Colored School \(Friends of Blackwater\)](#)
- [Appalachian African-American](#)
- [Green Book sites in WV](#)
- [The Affrilachian Poets](#)
- [Monongahela Culture](#)



Recruiting for 2020-2021 AmeriCorps Cohort!



Photo of USDA FS AmeriCorps member in classroom

AFNHA is currently in the recruitment process of placing AmeriCorps members at partner sites. AFNHA places qualified candidates at partner sites to assist with ongoing and new projects, goals, and initiatives.

Are you interested in applying for an AmeriCorps position? Check out the link below!



Upcoming Events

7/18
SATURDAY
10 AM

Tour of Rich Mountain Battlefield, Beverly, WV

Receive a tour of Rich Mountain Battlefield from your friends at the Rich Mountain Battlefield Foundation, and the Beverly Heritage Center. Reservations must be made in advance, call the BHC at (304) 637-7424

7/18
SATURDAY
9 AM

Edible Plants Hike, Canaan Valley, WV

Join Canaan Valley Resort in their edible plant hike! The hike will take about 2 hours. Learn about what you can eat by stepping outside your front door!

7/18
SATURDAY
2 PM

Civil War Doctor Presentation by Sam Winkler, Beverly, WV

Presented by the Beverly Heritage Center, learn about the technology, triumphs, and struggles associated with Civil War era doctoring! This presentation is also available July 19th, at 1PM! Co-sponsored by the Randolph County Historical Society.

7/22
WEDNESDAY
1 PM

PAWV Webinar: Tools for Building a Strong Coalition

During this webinar, you will learn about advocacy for historic preservation projects and how to engage community members, local leaders and elected officials, as well as how to tell your story effectively in the media (social and otherwise). Click the link to pre-register for the webinar today!

7/25
SATURDAY
1 PM

Don Teter Presents: Porte Crayon and the Sinks of Gandy, Beverly, WV

Don Teter with the Randolph County Historical Society will be giving a presentation as Porte Crayon and talking about the Sinks of Gandy in Randolph County. The event will be on the BHC patio or available to watch online via our livestream!