

Mineral County West Virginia

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Steeped in History & Tradition



Mineral County, West Virginia's early history is closely associated with American Indians who lived along the Potomac River Valley for centuries prior to the arrival of Europeans. Recorded history in the county began when traders and pioneers moved into the region in the late 1600's and when land grant programs accelerated settlements in the Frankfort area during the 1730's. As pioneers made their way inland from the eastern seaboard, the Potomac River Valley proved to be a convenient and profitable route to follow westward, and outposts were built to accommodate the increasing trade and traffic. Fort Ohio built near the confluence of Will's Creek and the Potomac River and Fort Ashby, namesake to the present day town, both established a permanent presence for local settlers and provided service during the French and Indian War. Fort Ashby is the last intact fort in a series of forts built under the command of George Washington during that time. Other similar buildings were constructed at New Creek and Headsville.

The state of West Virginia and Mineral County is also closely linked to events of the Civil War, a conflict that raged within its borders during the entire span of military action from 1861-1865. The state of Virginia's secession from the federal union sparked controversy among residents and western counties subsequently decided to form a new unionist state. The eastern boundary of the new state was to be established along the Blue Ridge Mountain Range. In 1862, President Lincoln signed a bill into law approving the creation of West Virginia. The citizens of West Virginia approved the measure by popular vote in 1863, thereby officially completing the statehood process.

Mineral County was not part of the original county structure of West Virginia. It was not until 1866 that Mineral County came into existence, having been formed from existing Hampshire County. The name was chosen because of the rich mineral deposits found within its borders, primarily abundant coal resources along the upper Potomac River Valley. Today, Mineral County is home to more than 27,000 residents who reside in a 328 square mile area that borders Maryland.

Many Mineral County historical sites are preserved including the Claysville Church, which was constructed in 1850 and is the oldest wood frame church in the state. It has the distinction of serving both Confederate and Union worshippers during the conflict because the area changed hands many times. Fort Ashby, restored in 1939 by the Works Progress Administration and owned by the Daughters of the American Revolution, may be viewed anytime and is open to the public on special occasions. An important work in progress may be surveyed near Burlington at the Old Stone House, also known as Traveler's Rest. The original two story stone structure was believed to be built around 1827 as a stagecoach stop to serve travelers on the Northwest Turnpike, a road that connected the central and western sections of the state. The Mineral County Historical Foundation is currently undertaking restoration projects at the site that will serve as a visitor's center, museum, and meeting room.

The county seat of Keyser is known for its Civil War engagements; the town changed hands 14 times during the conflict. A fort built on the site of Potomac State College commanded roads leading to the Shenandoah Valley and the South Branch of the Potomac River. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad concentrated rail lines in the town, then known as New Creek, making it an important transportation hub during the war. Keyser was subsequently named in honor of William Keyser, a vice-president of the B&O Railroad. Keyser is also home to the 105 year-old tradition of Potomac State College, a two year educational facility that is fully integrated into the West Virginia University System.

Upcoming Mineral County events include the Seventh Annual, Great U.S. 50 Yard Sale, a coast-to-coast event "that is limited only by imagination and law," according to coordinators. The event will occur May 19-21, 2006, and will not only provide bargain hunters with shopping opportunities but also civic organizations with a forum to promote tourism and raise awareness of local needs along historic U.S. Route 50.

For a listing of more Historic Sites and events in Mineral County visit us at
www.mineralcountywv.com/

