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### The *Library of Appalachian Preaching*: A Digital-Humanities Project at Marshall University

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# Appalachian Curator

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# The *Library of Appalachian Preaching*: A Digital-Humanities Project at Marshall University

Robert H. Ellison and Larry Sheret

The [Special Collections Department](#) at Marshall University has a small but significant collection of sermons preached in Appalachia, or delivered elsewhere in the United States by preachers with ties to the Appalachian region. On the shelves are about 30 books published between 1865 and 1980. Some, like William Cutter Condit's *What Is My Life?*, are pamphlets containing just one sermon. Others, like John R. Gilpin's *Sparks from a Busy Anvil*, are books of several sermons by a single preacher; still others, such as *The West Virginia Pulpit of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, are books containing several sermons by many different preachers. Most are available elsewhere, in other libraries and/or online, but the Gilpin book and some others appear to be one of a kind.

Other one-of-a-kind items are stored in the archives. The [Doris C. Miller Papers](#), for example, have baccalaureate sermons delivered in Huntington and Milton in 1957, and the [Bokair Family Papers](#) contain two sermons preached at Trinity Episcopal Church, Huntington in 1962. There are also two collections fully devoted to preachers. We have the manuscripts of two books of sermons by [Julius Fischbach](#), a Huntington native, Marshall alumnus, and pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lansing, Michigan. The “crown jewel” of the sermon archives, however, is the [M. Homer Cummings Papers](#), donated to the university by Cummings’ family in 2014. The collection is fitting for a minister who pastored Methodist churches in West Virginia for over fifty years: along with materials Cummings wrote—approximately 150 sermons, 100 newspaper columns, 40 poems, and 300 hymns—we have newspaper articles about him and his family, hymnals he compiled and published, and some 400 other hymnals from his library. Some of these materials have been processed, but much more remains to be done; a complete reorganization will take place in the spring of 2021, while Robert Ellison is on sabbatical.

These sermons are Phase One of the *Library of Appalachian Preaching*, a digital project curated by Robert Ellison, Assistant/Associate Professor of English, and Larry Sheret, Scholarly Communication & Open Education Resources Librarian. We are using [Marshall Digital Scholar](#), our institutional repository, to make these materials to make these materials universally discoverable and accessible online (see Figure 1).

[caption id="attachment\_683" align="aligncenter" width="960"]

The screenshot shows the Marshall Digital Scholar website. At the top left is a portrait of John Marshall, Chief Justice of the United States (1801-35). The main header reads "Marshall Digital Scholar" in a large green font, with "Scholarship, Publishing, and Preservation" below it. A dark green navigation bar contains links for Home, About, FAQ, Contact, and My Account. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: Home > College of Liberal Arts > Center for Sermon Studies > Library of Appalachian Preaching. The main content area features a large title "Library of Appalachian Preaching: A Digital Repository of Sermons" overlaid on a map of the Appalachian region. To the left is a dark green sidebar with search and navigation options. Below the title, there are two paragraphs of text describing the library's collaborative effort and online access. A "Follow" button is visible in the bottom right corner of the content area.

The home page of the Library of Appalachian Preaching

The first step, of course, is the sermons themselves. If something is already online, as is the case with several of the books, we will simply link out to it. If not, and it is in the public domain, we will create a high-quality, searchable PDF of our own. If it's still under copyright, we will upload only a thumbnail image of the cover or title page. This will enable us to make the *Library* as complete as possible while maintaining compliance with copyright law.

But the sermon scans are *only* the first step. We are adding some features that we believe will help to make the *Library* as robust and user-friendly as possible. There will be a brief biography of each preacher, with links to additional information; the sketch for the first preacher in the *Library* reads as follows:

[Henry] Altmeyer was born in Wheeling, West Virginia; was ordained to the priesthood in 1897; and was the pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Huntington, West Virginia, from 1899 to 1930. For additional information, see a history of St. Joseph Parish and a biographical sketch drawn from *Cabell County Annals and Families* (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, 1935).

We are also building a [User Guide](#), a Google sheet which users can search, sort, and download (See Figure 2). There is a master list of names, listing the preachers' faith traditions, the Appalachian states with which they are most

closely associated, and the centuries in which they worked. The official [Library of Congress Authorities](#) are used throughout the Guide.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	<a href="#">Page in the Library</a>	<a href="#">Page in this Guide</a>	<a href="#">Faith Tradition</a>	<a href="#">State</a>	<a href="#">Time Period</a>
2	<a href="https://mds.ma...u/bain_johnw/">https://mds.ma...u/bain_johnw/</a>	<a href="#">Altmeyer, Henry B.</a>	Catholic Church	West Virginia	Twentieth century
3	<a href="#">Bain, John Wallace, 1833-1910</a>	<a href="#">Bain, John Wallace</a>	Presbyterian Church	Pennsylvania	Nineteenth century
4	<a href="#">Ball, Franklin, 1822-1886</a>	<a href="#">Ball, Franklin</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
5	<a href="#">Clark, James Lawrence, 1814-1903</a>	<a href="#">Clark, James Lawrence</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
6	<a href="#">Condit, William Cutter, 1841-1926</a>	<a href="#">Condit, William Cutter</a>	Presbyterian Church	Kentucky	Twentieth century
7	<a href="#">Dix, Daniel H. K., 1828-1911</a>	<a href="#">Dix, Daniel H. K.</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
8	<a href="#">Feather, Joseph B., 1833-?</a>	<a href="#">Feather, Joseph B.</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
9	<a href="#">Fischbach, Julius, 1894-?</a>	<a href="#">Fischbach, Julius</a>	Baptists	West Virginia	Twentieth century
10	<a href="#">Fitzpatrick, James B.</a>	<a href="#">Fitzpatrick, James B.</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
11	<a href="#">Fullerton, James Archer, 1850-?</a>	<a href="#">Fullerton, James Archer</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
12	<a href="#">Gilpin, John R., 1905-1974</a>	<a href="#">Gilpin, John R.</a>	Baptists	Kentucky	Twentieth century
13	<a href="#">Hall, Ashford, 1826-?</a>	<a href="#">Hall, Ashford</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
14	<a href="#">Hite, George Edgar, 1851-?</a>	<a href="#">Hite, George Edgar</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
15	<a href="#">Hughes, Thomas Bayless, 1836-1917</a>	<a href="#">Hughes, Thomas Bayless</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
16	<a href="#">Ison, Benjamin, 1824-1901</a>	<a href="#">Ison, Benjamin</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
17	<a href="#">Jones, Samuel Ernest, 1846-?</a>	<a href="#">Jones, Samuel Ernest</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
18	<a href="#">King, F. H. J., 1834-1916</a>	<a href="#">King, F. H. J.</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
19	<a href="#">Lacy, Matthew Lyle, 1833-1912</a>	<a href="#">Lacy, Matthew Lyle</a>	Presbyterian Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
20	<a href="#">Lee, Joseph</a>	<a href="#">Lee, Joseph</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
21	<a href="#">Lyda, Andrew J., 1821-1900</a>	<a href="#">Lyda, Andrew J.</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
22	<a href="#">Martin, Gideon, 1815-1902</a>	<a href="#">Martin, Gideon</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
23	<a href="#">Masden, Charles P., 1843-1930</a>	<a href="#">Masden, Charles P.</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
24	<a href="#">Mauzé, Joseph Layton, 1873-1937</a>	<a href="#">Mauze, Joseph Layton</a>	Presbyterian Church	West Virginia	Twentieth century
25	<a href="#">McElhenney, John, 1781-1871</a>	<a href="#">McElhenney, John</a>	Presbyterian Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
26	<a href="#">Perry, Alfred Tyler, 1858-1912</a>	<a href="#">Perry, Alfred Tyler</a>	Congregationalists	Ohio	Twentieth century
27	<a href="#">Prickitt, Samuel B. D., 1840-1908</a>	<a href="#">Prickitt, Samuel B. D.</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
28	<a href="#">Recollections of the Rev. John McElhenney, D.D.</a>	<a href="#">Recollections of the Rev. John McElhenney</a>	Presbyterian Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
29	<a href="#">Ryan, Edward W.</a>	<a href="#">Ryan, Edward W.</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
30	<a href="#">Smith, Joseph Edmund, 1830-1910</a>	<a href="#">Smith, Joseph Edmund</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
31	<a href="#">Snodgrass, Winfield Columbus, 1849-?</a>	<a href="#">Snodgrass, Winfield Columbus</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
32	<a href="#">Steele, Samuel E., 1832-1913</a>	<a href="#">Steele, Samuel E.</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
33	<a href="#">Steele, Samuel, ?-1886</a>	<a href="#">Steele, Samuel</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
34	<a href="#">Stewart, L. L., 1845-1893</a>	<a href="#">Stewart, L. L.</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century
35	<a href="#">Thompson, John Rhey, 1852-1904</a>	<a href="#">Thompson, John Rhey</a>	Methodist Episcopal Church	West Virginia	Nineteenth century

The master list of names in the User Guide

There is also a Guide to each preacher’s sermons, with the sermon title, scripture text, the date and place preached (if known), the subject of the sermon, and a link to the digitized text. Finally, these individual guides are combined into a single master list, so the entire *Library* can be searched at once (see Figure 3).

User Guide for the Library of Appalachian Preaching

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Preacher

1	Preacher	Sermon Title	Link	Scripture Text	Date Preached	Place Preached	Subject	Preacher's Faith Tradition	Preacher's State	Preacher's Time Period	Notes
2	<a href="#">Altmeyer, Henry B. 1870-1930</a>	Advent	<a href="#">Sermons and Discourses, pp. 64-68</a>	Not specified	Not specified	Huntington, West Virginia (St. Joseph's Catholic Church)	Advent	Catholic Church	West Virginia	Twentieth century	Preached on the first Sunday in Advent (p. 64).
3	<a href="#">Altmeyer, Henry B. 1870-1930</a>	Apostolicity of the Church	<a href="#">Sermons Delivered Before Mixed Congregations, pp. 136-42</a>	Not specified	Not specified	Huntington, West Virginia (St. Joseph's Catholic Church)	Catholic Church	Catholic Church	West Virginia	Twentieth century	
4	<a href="#">Altmeyer, Henry B. 1870-1930</a>	Baptism	<a href="#">Sermons Delivered Before Mixed Congregations, pp. 143-49</a>	Not specified	Not specified	Huntington, West Virginia (St. Joseph's Catholic Church)	Baptism	Catholic Church	West Virginia	Twentieth century	
5	<a href="#">Altmeyer, Henry B. 1870-1930</a>	Blessed Eucharist	<a href="#">Sermons Delivered Before Mixed Congregations, pp. 265-72</a>	Not specified	Not specified	Ashland, Kentucky (Holy Redeemer Church)	Transubstantiation	Catholic Church	West Virginia	Twentieth century	
6	<a href="#">Altmeyer, Henry B. 1870-1930</a>	Catholic Church and Bible	<a href="#">Sermons Delivered Before Mixed Congregations, pp. 97-106</a>	Not specified	Not specified	Charleston, West Virginia (Sacred Heart Church)	Bible	Catholic Church	West Virginia	Twentieth century	This is a "lecture delivered during mission to non-Catholics" (p. 97).
7	<a href="#">Altmeyer, Henry B. 1870-1930</a>	Catholic Church is Divine	<a href="#">Sermons and Discourses, pp. 112-21</a>	Not specified	Not specified	Huntington, West Virginia (St. Joseph's Catholic Church)	Catholic Church	Catholic Church	West Virginia	Twentieth century	The sermon was preached on Easter Sunday. The year is not specified.
8	<a href="#">Altmeyer, Henry B. 1870-1930</a>	Catholic Education	<a href="#">Sermons Delivered Before Mixed Congregations, pp. 122-32</a>	Not specified	Not specified	Ironton, Ohio (St. Lawrence Parochial School)	Catholic schools	Catholic Church	West Virginia	Twentieth century	The sermon was "delivered at the laying of the corner stone" for the school (p. 112).
9	<a href="#">Altmeyer, Henry B. 1870-1930</a>	Catholic Faith	<a href="#">Sermons Delivered Before Mixed Congregations, pp. 43-47</a>	John 10:11-16	Not specified	Huntington, West Virginia (St. Joseph's Catholic Church)	Catholic Church	Catholic Church	West Virginia	Twentieth century	The passage discussed in the sermon appears to come from John 10:11-16. According to <a href="https://catholic-resources.org/Lectioary/Roman_Missal.htm">https://catholic-resources.org/Lectioary/Roman_Missal.htm</a> , that was the Gospel reading for

All Preachers and Books All Sermons Altmeyer, Henry B. Bain, John Wallace Ball, Franklin Clark, James Lawrence Explore

The master list of sermons in the User Guide

A more extensive discussion of the *Library* is available at [https://mds.marshall.edu/digital\\_humanities/2020/accepted\\_proposals/2/](https://mds.marshall.edu/digital_humanities/2020/accepted_proposals/2/). Once Phase One is complete, the *Library* will expand to include Appalachian sermons in other libraries, the Internet Archive and other online sources, church records and private collections, and so on. Readers who are aware of materials that could be added to the project are invited to contact the authors at [ellisonr@marshall.edu](mailto:ellisonr@marshall.edu) or [sheret@marshall.edu](mailto:sheret@marshall.edu).