



GREENBRIER COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Greenbrier County is home to agricultural tradition, economic growth and the “Coolest Small Town in America.”

You don't have to spend very long in the seat of Greenbrier County to discern why Lewisburg was voted the “Coolest Small Town in America” by *Budget Travel* magazine this past year. A simple stroll through its charming and active downtown scene will introduce you to first-class restaurants, boutique shopping and some of the finest historical architecture in the state.

Lewisburg also serves a burgeoning legal community, centered around the historic Greenbrier County Courthouse on Court Street. Featuring large white columns and located uncharacteristically close to the street, the Greenbrier County Courthouse was built in 1837 and exemplifies the classic Georgian architecture of the early 1800s. The courthouse was constructed of bricks fired on premise by the well-known brick mason John W. Dunn, while a cupola belfry perches atop the roof of the building and contains the courthouse bell, which was once used to announce when court was in session.

“The courthouse gives Lewisburg that feeling of a classic small Virginia town that it still maintains, even though it has been in West Virginia for 150 years,” said Dr. Robert Conte, historian at the nearby Greenbrier resort.

Before spatial inadequacies had prompted officials to build the current structure, earlier incarnations of the county courthouse mostly comprised various log structures in different locations and saw the likes of William Cabell, Henry St. George Tucker and even Patrick Henry himself, defending a client for murder in a trial moved from Pittsylvania County to Greenbrier due to the public's strong opinions concerning the defendant.

While the present-day courthouse dates back to 1837, the property itself has been in use for much longer. Lewis Spring, which is located just behind the courthouse behind a large stone wall built to support the steep bank, was first discovered in the early 1750s by Andrew Lewis and his father. The Lewis Spring gave birth to a village, which eventually became incorporated as Lewisburg by an act of the Virginia General Assembly in 1782, named in honor of General Andrew Lewis. Soon after, the town was surveyed and platted, with its 40 square acres subdivided into half-acre lots. Lewis Spring was located on Lot 8 and, because of its importance to the city, was set aside for county use, along with the adjacent Lot 7.

Article and Photography By Joshua C. Baldwin



The Battle of Lewisburg Heritage Committee and New River Community & Technical College host a reenactment of the Battle of Lewisburg each May. This year marks the 150th anniversary of the famous battle, which took place May 23, 1862.

When the log structures were eventually outgrown by the increasing judicial activity prompted by the naming of Lewisburg as the annual seat of Virginia's Supreme Court of Appeals for those living west of the mountains, it was decided to build the new courthouse on Lot 7. The county had already built a stone jail, two clerks' offices and a market house for grading and weighing cattle on the premises. (This is why present-day Court Street was originally referred to as Market Street.)

In 1763, a young Shawnee chief by the name of Cornstalk led a band of 60 tribesmen into present-day Greenbrier County. Gaining the confidence of settlers on Muddy Creek, the town now known as Alderson, Cornstalk then raided the town, killing many of the settlers. The very next day, Chief Cornstalk took his violent campaign to the Clendenin settlement, near current-day Lewisburg, and killed more than 50 more settlers.

Governor Dunmore of Virginia, upon hearing the news, commanded Colonel Andrew Lewis Jr. to gather men and track the raiding party. That order led Lewis to Point Pleasant, where the colonel defeated the Shawnee chief in the infamous Battle of Point Pleasant, an event many attribute to one of the origins of the Revolutionary War.

Greenbrier County's name, derived from the river of the same name that stretches 173 miles from Durbin to its confluence with the New River in Hinton, is of some dispute. Some claim that early sur-

vivors encountered thickets of daunting briars of a green hue, while others contend that French explorers left behind a map of the area showing the river named "Ronceverte," or "green river." However the name was decided, the Virginia General Assembly created the county in 1777 under "Green Brier," and the words were conjoined sometime later.

The Civil War brought a number of battles to Greenbrier County, including the battles of Lewisburg, Dry Creek and Handley Hill. Old Stone Presbyterian Church acted as a hospital during the Battle of Lewisburg and stands today as the oldest unrestored church in continual use west of the Alleghenies. In fact, the church displays a first edition of the King James Bible in its sanctuary today.

Thankfully for Greenbrier County, local buildings and architecture remained primarily intact and unscathed. However, the Civil War prompted legislators to ratify West Virginia as the newest state, and Greenbrier County joined the new state as its fifth oldest county and Lewisburg as its seventh oldest city.

Brandon Johnson, attorney with Stroebel & Johnson, said he chose this historic city as his home for the quality of life the community enjoys.

"The unique makeup of Lewisburg and the great people really make it a special place to live," he said. "A big drawing card for me was also the fact that Greenbrier County had excellent judges, which fosters a positive work environment for attorneys."

Today, Lewisburg celebrates a small yet diverse population that is highly active in arts, culture and heritage. More than 40 boutique shops, restaurants and entertainment venues welcome thousands of visitors every year to this hip little town of approximately 3,800 people. Home to such celebrated festivals as T.O.O.T., The Lewisburg Chocolate Festival and The State Fair of West Virginia, Lewisburg is a perennial list-topper when in-state and regional tourists are looking for a weekend of arts, culture, good food and abundant outdoor pursuits.

"Lewisburg offers a blend of urban amenities like great restaurants, unique shops and top-quality performing arts venues like Carnegie Hall, one of only four in the world, and Greenbrier Valley Theatre, the official state theater of West Virginia, all within a very walkable, well-maintained historic district," noted Mayor John Manchester. "Just beyond city limits lie Greenbrier County's beautiful, rolling pastureland, the free-flowing Greenbrier River with a 77-mile hike and bike trail on its edge and easy access to the 900,000-acre Monongahela National Forest."



More than 40 boutique shops, local restaurants and entertainment venues welcome thousands of visitors each year to Lewisburg, a town of approximately 3,800 people that was recently named the “Coolest Small Town in America” by *Budget Travel* magazine.

Greenbrier County is also home to the luxurious Greenbrier resort, purchased by local businessman Jim Justice in 2009. The resort has undergone a renaissance under Justice’s watch, building a 103,000-square-foot gaming and entertainment complex and bringing The Greenbrier Classic to The Old White Golf Course, an annual PGA TOUR FedEx Cup event that is under contract through 2015. The Greenbrier Sporting Club, the resort’s residential community made up of 500 home sites across the property’s 6,750 acres, continues to see growth, with more than \$34 million in real estate purchases in 2011.

The rural areas of this large county give way to luscious rolling hills and beautiful farms. Agriculture has always been a crucial element of the local economy and continues to be so today. The State Fair of West Virginia, held annually in Fairlea during August, is still rooted in the area’s agricultural traditions and draws tens of thousands of visitors.

Greenbrier County has enjoyed a nice amount of economic growth over the past 15 years and is poised for a promising future. With the announcement of the new Greenbrier Medical Institute at The Greenbrier, even more jobs will soon be added to the area. **WVU**

Joshua C. Baldwin is the publisher and editor of the *Greenbrier Valley Quarterly* and *The Greenbrier Magazine* and a marketer for The Greenbrier Sporting Club. He lives in Lewisburg with his wife Mary and their two daughters.



Although the Battle of Lewisburg occurred just yards away from Old Stone Presbyterian Church, the church remained unharmed throughout the Civil War. It is the oldest unrestored church still in use west of the Allegheny Mountains.