

# New book presents photographic history

By DAVE LAVENDER  
The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON - While James E. Casto's name might be on the Local History Room at the Cabell County Public Library, the retired editor is far from resting on his laurels.

Casto, who has written more than a dozen books about local history, is back with his seventh title, "Wayne County," in Arcadia Publishing's "Images of America" series.

Packed with more than 200 historical photographs, the 127-page book hopes to shed new light and dispense quick and useful introduction to West Virginia's most western county, one which Casto says "has a history that's as colorful and proud as the famed general who was its namesake."

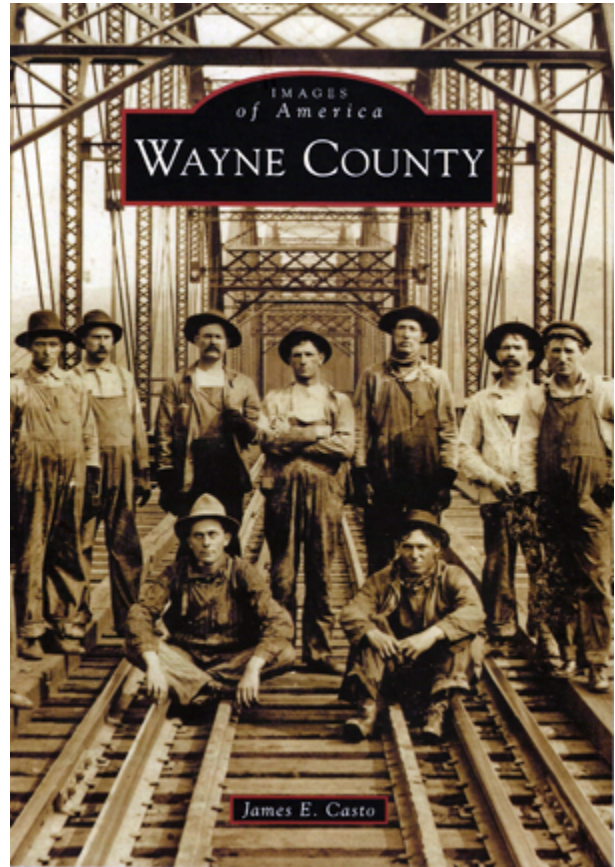
A reporter, editor and columnist at The Herald-Dispatch in Huntington for more than 40 years before retiring, Casto will share some of that colorful history at a bunch of upcoming book signings which start this week.

From 4 to 6 p.m. Monday, Nov. 16, Casto will sign at The Red Caboose gift shop at the Cabell-Huntington Convention and Visitors Bureau, 210 11th Street, and at 1 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 19, Casto will be at his alma mater, Marshall University signing at The Marshall University Book Store, 1 John Marshall Drive.

Casto, who has in recent years chronicled other important local history such as "Marshall," "Cabell County," "The 1937 Flood," and "Legendary Locals of Huntington," said this adventure was one again conducted in the "morgue," The Herald-Dispatch's extensive black-and-white photo archives, as well as the photo archives at Huntington Quarterly and Marshall University's Special Collections where Nat Debruin and Jack Dickinson helped him find many photos that fit into the book's 10 chapters.

Thanks to an open invitation from H-D editor and publisher Ed Dawson to burrow into the archives, and one from HQ's publisher Jack Houveras to do the same, Casto said he found himself on a delightful journey back in time highlighting some of the major moments, businesses, churches and people who have made Wayne County what it is today.

"Like all the other books I have done it always starts out that I feel terribly ill-prepared, because I didn't know that much about Wayne County. I have enjoyed learning about the county and now sharing with readers



what I have learned," Casto said. "I don't pretend that these are comprehensive histories of a particular place - they are merely an introduction. I tend to think of them as scrapbooks."

The scrapbook feel gets a boost from Casto's collection of historical postcards. For the book, he was able to pull out some incredible images of Camden Park from the early 1900s from his own collection. Just a few of those postcards include a "Bird's Eye View of Camden Park," picturing the original 1912 built wooden roller coaster, a 1915 image of flower and electric-light-lined entrance, a 1910 pic of a marathon dance contest, and a postcard of the original Camden Park pool from 1911. That pool pre-dated the still-in-business Dreamland Pool which opened in 1925 in Kenova.

For the book, Casto sliced the spacious county's history into 10 chapters: "Beginnings, "Wayne," "Ceredo and Kenova," "Recreation Mecca," "Getting From Here to There," "Around the County," "School Days," "Houses of Prayer," "Business and Industry" and "Familiar Faces."

In "Around the County," Casto marks a moment in national history when NBC anchorman David Brinkley came to Wayne County for the 1960 presidential campaign. Reporting from an old bridge, Brinkley held the mic down so viewers could hear the bridge's pops and groans. The state repaired the bridge, and when area residents began calling it the Brinkley Bridge, the county made it official and he came back for a June ceremony in 1961 to dedicate his namesake.

Casto's book also includes Wayne County's most famous bridge - the T-shaped bridge connecting Fort Gay, West Virginia, and Inez, Kentucky, said to be "the only "U.S. bridge connecting two states, two counties and two cities that runs over three rivers and connects three landmasses and that has a turn in the middle." Casto also gives a nod to so many of Wayne County's unique businesses from Evaroni's and Austin's Ice Cream to Ballard's (taken out by a 2014 fire) Rocco's, Chandler Plywood, and the now defunct Pilgrim Glass to new businesses such as Sogefi, Aplicare, and others breathing new life into Wayne County.

He said he struck gold in the H-D archive by finding a photo of the late New York-based businessman Alfred Knobler who started Pilgrim Glass in 1949 with "\$5,000 and a lot of chutzpah." Pilgrim would run until 2001, and for the last decades of its existence became a world leader in layers of carved Cameo Glass.

Casto also pays homage to a bunch of Wayne County's famous folks, business leaders, politicians, coaches and folks who made their marks both in Wayne County and around the world.

One of the people profiled, who younger generations may not be familiar with, is Bill Stewart, a 1979 Vinson High School graduate who was covering the Nicaraguan revolution for ABC News when he was murdered by the Nicaraguan National Guard forces. As Casto points out, footage of his killing was smuggled out of the country by his crew and sent to New York where it aired on all three American TV networks on the evening news.

The act was condemned by President Jimmy Carter and changed the U.S. involvement in that conflict. "I am afraid people have forgotten about Bill Stewart," Casto said. "... That showed over and over again, and that pretty much ended U.S. support of the Nicaraguan government and National Guard."

Here's a look at James Casto's upcoming book signings:

- From 4 to 6 p.m. Monday, Nov. 16 at The Red Caboose gift shop at the Cabell-Huntington Convention and Visitors Bureau, 210 11th St.
- At 1 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 19, at The Marshall University Book Store, 1 John Marshall Dr.
- At 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 24 at the Huntington Museum of Art gift shop, 2033 McCoy Rd.
- From 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5 at Heritage Farm Museum and Village, 3300 Harvey Rd.
- At 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 8 at The Woodlands retirement community, 1 Bradley Foster Dr.
- From 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12, at Books-A-Million, Huntington Mall, 500 Mall Rd, Barboursville.

ON THE WEB: You can go online at <http://www.amazon.com/Wayne-County-Images-America-James/dp/1467134236> to buy the book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Born in Ceredo, Casto grew up in Huntington and was educated in the city's public schools. He attended Bethany College at Bethany, West Virginia, and is a graduate of Marshall University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in English. He spent 40 years as an editor with The Herald-Dispatch.

In addition to his newspaper work, he's written hundreds of freelance articles for magazines and newspapers and more than a dozen books of regional history, including six titles issued by Arcadia Publishing. On his retirement from The Herald-Dispatch in 2004, Marshall presented him with its John Marshall Medal of Civic Responsibility in recognition of his services to the university and the community. In 2005, the City of Huntington Foundation inducted him as a member of its Greater Huntington Wall of Fame. And in 2006, the Cabell County Public Library named its James E. Casto Local History Room in his honor.