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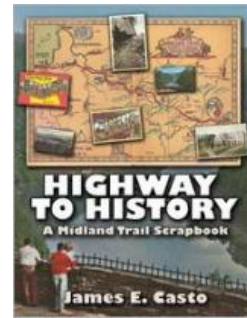
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BOOK REVIEW: 'Highway to History: A Midland Trail Scrapbook' Showcases West Virginia's Scenic and Historic Road

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REVIEWED BY DAVID M. KINCHEN

If you want to travel across the Mountain State in a hurry, take Interstate 64, advises James E. Casto, author of "Highway to History: A Midland Trail Scrapbook" (Quarrier Press, Charleston, WV, 112 pages, \$17.95, distributed by West Virginia Book Co., Charleston, www.wvbookco.com, and statewide bookstores). If you want to travel what author William Least Heat Moon calls "Blue Highways" (the title of his acclaimed 1982 philosophical travel book), take Route 60, West Virginia's beloved Midland Trail.



The Midland Trail winds from the VA-WV state line and White Sulphur Springs 180 miles to Ceredo-Kenova on the Kentucky line and its scenic and built attractions are displayed to great advantage in vintage postcards from Casto's own collection and supplementary photographs in a book every West Virginian will want to own. Casto is a retired Herald-Dispatch reporter and the author of many books on West Virginia history -- and several contributions to the invaluable West Virginia online encyclopedia.

Actually, I-64 is wonderfully scenic in many ways, but it's dangerous to sight-see on an Interstate highway, so if you want to trace Casto's steps, take U.S. 60.

The Midland Trail lives up to its title as a "a highway to history." In the country's earliest years, it carried the tide of settlement westward. During the Civil War, both Union and Confederate troops marched along it. In the years before World War I, it became a link in a great transcontinental roadway. When numbered highways were introduced, it was designated U.S. 60. Speaking as a former motorcyclist, I can attest to its charms as a road for people who love two-wheeled travel.

In just over 100 pages in this large-format paperback book, Casto manages to include just about everything on the Midland Trail, including many scenes of White Sulphur Springs, Lewisburg and Rainelle in Greenbrier County, the winding stretch of the road in Fayette County, Montgomery, Charleston, South Charleston, Milton, Barboursville, Guyandotte, and of course Huntington and the towns beyond. I was enthralled with the book and it made me more than a little homesick for a state where i lived (in Hinton, Summers County) from 1992 to 2008.



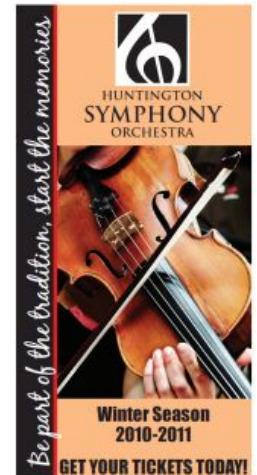
James E. Casto
Photo: Herald-Dispatch

I've read a number of Jim Casto's books and they're all good reading by a master writer; "Highway to History" is no exception I can't think of a more scenic state than West Virginia and Casto's book captures the often subtle beauty of the Mountain State -- as well as its historic wonders like The Greenbrier resort, the State Capitol building, designed by Cass Gilbert, who was also the architect a few years later of the U.S. Supreme Court Building. (Gilbert also designed New York City's Woolworth building and the state capitol buildings of Minnesota and Arkansas). Of course, Casto describes and includes several

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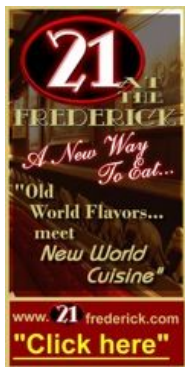
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photographs of the Keith-Albee Theater, as well as describing its history and preservation as a performing arts venue.

About the Author

James E. Casto, a Huntington native and Marshall University graduate -- with a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in English -- is the author of a number of books on local and regional history. He was a reporter and editor at the Huntington Herald-Dispatch for more than 40 years before he retired in 2004. He makes frequent first-person presentations as railroad tycoon Collis P. Huntington. Jim retired in 2004 from The Herald-Dispatch, where he was a reporter and editor for more than 40 years. He is now senior public information specialist at the Robert C. Byrd Institute for Advanced Flexible Manufacturing. Also, recently the Cabell County Public Library's genealogy research center was renamed "the James E. Casto Local History Room" to honor Casto for his many years of service to the library and his years of serving as president of the Friends of the Library. In addition, it was also in recognition of his many books and publications about the local area.



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