Archives and History, Thursday Lecture: "West Virginia Lobotomy Project" on March 19

General Interest

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On Thursday, March 19, 2015, Dr. James L. Spencer will present "The West Virginia Lobotomy Project, 1948-1955" in the Archives and History Library of the Culture Center in Charleston. The program will begin at 6:00 p.m. and is free and open to the public.

An estimated 900 West Virginians received transorbital lobotomies during from 1948 to 1955. Conducted at Lakin, Weston, **Spencer**, and Huntington state hospitals, the large majority of these operations were performed by Walter Freeman, the American neurologist who pioneered the original procedure in the United States in the mid-1930s. The West Virginia Lobotomy Project (WVLP) was authorized by the State Board of Control primarily as a means of reducing overcrowding at state mental facilities, while saving the state money during economically difficult times. Spencer will discuss the project and the human consequence to the individuals who underwent this procedure.

A native of western New York, James Spencer received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Canisius College in Buffalo, New York, and his master's and doctorate degrees in comparative psychology from The Ohio State University. He taught at West Virginia State University from 1983 until his retirement in 2013, serving as chair of the psychology department from 1993 to 2002. He founded the university's chapter of Psi Chi in 1984 and served as chapter advisor. Spencer twice won the southeastern region's Advisor of the Year award. He is the author of Recollections and Reflections: A History of the West Virginia State College Psychology Department, 1892-1992 (1994). This spring Spencer will make a presentation on Herman Canady, chair of the department from 1928 to 1969, at the Second Annual Conference on International Human Rights.

For additional information, contact the Archives and History Library at (304) 558-0230.

If you have been unable to attend some of our recent evening programs, please check the Archives and History's YouTube page: (http://www.youtube.com/user/wvarchivesandhistory).

The West Virginia Archives and History Library is located in the Culture Center at the State Capitol Complex in Charleston. If traveling on the Interstate, take Exit 99 (the Greenbrier Street, State Capitol exit) on I-77/64, one mile east of the I-64 and 77 junction. The Culture Center is located along Greenbrier Street, just beyond the intersection of Greenbrier and Washington streets.