



# *A Living Gateway*

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## Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Museum

*Explore the charming birthplace of one of West Virginia's, and America's, most renowned authors and social justice activists.*



# Tour the Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Museum

Hillsboro, Pocahontas County, West Virginia

Located in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains, the Pearl S. Buck Birthplace showcases the home in which the Nobel Prize-winning author was born in 1892.

## Enjoy

the beauty of 19th century fine Dutch furniture, handcrafted by the Stulting family.



## Examine

the family's fine craftsmanship, like these Holland flower carvings on the central staircase.



*From that home has come so much life – that it ought never to die or fall into ruin. For my ancestors, it provided shelter and home in a new land, a house where they lived their new lives with traditional dignity... For my mother, it provided a home, living forever in her thought and memory, though she made dwelling places in a far country. For me it is a living heart in the country I knew was my own but which was strange to me until I returned to the house where I was born. For me that house was a gateway to America. May it live again, my Mother's house, and may it prove for others, too, a gateway to new thoughts and dreams and ways of life.*

– Pearl S. Buck

Although Buck spent a great deal of her life in China, the museum celebrates the influence that the home and the West Virginia lifestyle had on Pearl and how it shaped some of her major work throughout her life. The modest two-story, hand-built home, located in the town of Hillsboro, is on the National Historical Register. The property is also now home to the 1834 Sydenstricker Cabin, birthplace of Buck's father Absalom.



## *Imagine*

baking bread in a wood-fired brick oven or churning fresh butter in the busy kitchen.



## *Appreciate*

the family's extraordinary craftsmanship after seeing the simple hand tools used during that era.



## *Listen*

to the unique sound of Caroline Stulting's Mason & Hamlin organ in the family music room.

The Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Museum is part of the Quilt Trail of Pocahontas County ([wvquilttrail.com](http://wvquilttrail.com)), the West Virginia Civil War Trails ([civilwartrails.org](http://civilwartrails.org)), Traveling219 ([traveling219.com](http://traveling219.com)) and an affiliate of the American Writers Museum ([americanwritersmuseum.org](http://americanwritersmuseum.org)).



# The *birthplace* Museum

Pearl S. Buck's birthplace home construction began in the mid-to-late 1800s after her maternal family, the Stultings, emigrated from Holland to the Appalachian Mountains. To ensure the longevity of the home against strong winds and fire, a unique architectural style – called “brick nogging” – was used. This concept incorporates timber frame construction along with brick-lined walls that were covered with clapboard siding on the outside. The home site also includes 13 acres of scenic farmland, a period-era carpentry shop and barn with over 100 historic farm and woodworking tools.

Representative of the self-reliance and self-sufficiency that characterized early American life, the home features hand-made brick, hand-tooled woodwork, and building supplies that were sourced from the property. Inside the home, visitors will find beautiful handcrafted furniture, quilts and dresses, as well as intricate clocks all made by the family. The family's legacy of craftsmanship and excellence in all things would go on to shape Buck's own thoughts and the characters in her books.

*“The secret of joy in work is contained in one word – excellence. To know how to do something well is to enjoy it.”* – Pearl S. Buck

## Highlights of Pearl S. Buck's Life

Attends Randolph College in Lynchburg (Philosophy). Returns to graduation to care

### 1892

June 26, 1892 – Pearl Comfort Sydenstricker is born in Hillsboro, WV to Southern Presbyterian missionaries. At three months old, Pearl moves with her family to Chinkiang, China.

### 1901-02

The family returns to the United States where Pearl attends third grade in Virginia. She spends the summers at her birthplace and family home in Hillsboro, cementing her life-long love affair with West Virginia.

### 1910-14



# A Blend of East & West

*“If you want to understand today,  
you have to search yesterday.”*

**Pearl S. Buck**



Pearl Buck’s mother, Caroline Stulting, was raised in the birthplace home until she married Absalom Sydenstricker. Shortly after their marriage, Carie and Absalom left America for China as missionaries, but visited the home often. During one of these visits, Pearl Comfort Sydenstricker was born on June 26, 1892. At the tender age of three months, Pearl’s parents returned to China, taking Buck and her older brother Edgar with them.

By the time she was four, Buck spoke and wrote in both Chinese and English. Although most of her formative years were spent in China, Buck attended third grade in Virginia, bookended by two summers at her beloved birthplace home. These visits to the home and her family would remain dear to Buck over the years, and were later captured in her 1965 book *My Mother’s House*.



n-Macon Women's burg, VA, (B.A., urns to China upon for her ailing mother.					Pearl's second book, <i>The Good Earth</i> , is published and remains a bestseller for nearly two years.					Divorces Lossing Buck to marry Richard W. publisher and editor				
1917					1931					1932				
Marries Lossing Buck, a Cornell graduate working in China. The couple live in Nanhsuchou, a rural northern Chinese village that eventually provides the primary setting for her first stories of China.										Wins the Pulitzer Prize for <i>The Good Earth</i>				
					1935					1938				
										Becomes the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize for her part in the Good Earth				



Buck wrote prolifically during her time in both China and the U.S., but her life in America was also marked by her fearless activism for civil rights and equal rights, as well as her continual efforts on behalf of the Chinese people and of interracial children. Before her death in 1973, Buck saw that her birthplace home – a constant in her transient life – was preserved so that the rich stories and delightful artifacts may “serve as a gateway to new thoughts and dreams and ways of life.” Similar to Buck’s life, so too her birthplace home is a fascinating blend of cultures.



### Who should visit the Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Museum?

The museum is filled with rich anecdotes and fascinating objects from Buck’s life and in both America and China, as well as from the lives of her immediate family and ancestors. Visitors will find stories and objects that appeal to a wide range of interests, like:

- architecture
- woodworking
- furniture
- music & art
- clock- and watch-making
- quilts
- fashion, hats and dressmaking
- antique toys
- authors, writing, and books
- homesteading/self-sufficiency
- historical tools/implements
- Chinese culture
- Dutch culture
- missionary work

Buck in order  
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r.

Founds Welcome House, the first international, interracial adoption agency, to help find homes for thousands of mixed-race children who had been fathered by American servicemen in Asia.

1949

1964

es the first American woman to  
e Nobel Prize for literature for *The Earth* and for her biographies of  
rents. She also became the first  
an woman to win *both* the Nobel  
n Literature and the Pulitzer Prize.



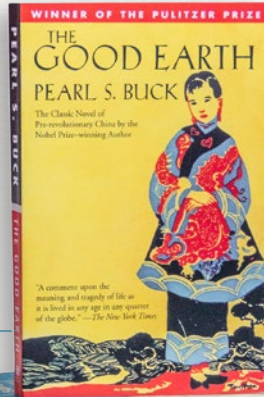
Establishes the Pearl S. Buck International Foundation to provide foster care for Ameri-Asian children who could not be adopted by American families.

# Buck's *books*

West Virginia native Pearl S. Buck is the author of more than 85 books. In addition to a paperback version of *The Good Earth* and other reprints, the Gift Shop has available rare signed/numbered collector editions of many of her most beloved titles. While many of her works have earned acclaim, below are five of her most notable.

## **The Good Earth (House of Earth, #1), Sons (House of Earth, #2), A House Divided (House of Earth, #3)**

Published in 1931, 1932, and 1935 respectively, the trilogy follows one Chinese family's struggle to survive during a century of rapid and radical change.



## **The Exile: Portrait of an American Mother**

Buck's biography of her mother, Caroline Stulting Sydenstricker, describes Caroline's upbringing in West Virginia and depicts life as the wife of a Presbyterian missionary in China.

## **Fighting Angel: Portrait of a Soul**

A memoir of her father Absalom Sydenstricker, this book paints a portrait of Sydenstricker's missionary work in interior China in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and its impact on his family.



*Historical Photos: WVU Libraries, West Virginia and Regional History Center*

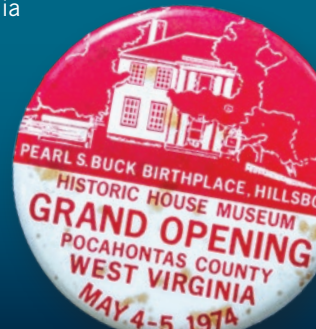


**1973**

March 6, 1973 – Dies in Danby, Vermont at the age of 80.

## **Today**

Buck's birthplace home is on the National Register of Historic Places and operates as a museum and cultural center. Her prolific written manuscripts are housed at the West Virginia and Regional History Center ([pearlsbuck.lib.wvu.edu](http://pearlsbuck.lib.wvu.edu)) on the campus of West Virginia University. Her personal foundation, Pearl S. Buck International in Perkasié, Pennsylvania, continues Buck's charitable work for children and cultural understanding.





# Walk Through *history*

The Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Museum is located in the heart of the Monongahela National Forest on beautiful Route 219 in Hillsboro, West Virginia. Approximate travel time from nearby cities:

Lewisburg, WV	< 1 hour
Charleston, WV	2.5 hours
Morgantown, WV	3 hours
Lynchburg, VA	3 hours
Washington, D.C.	4.5 hours

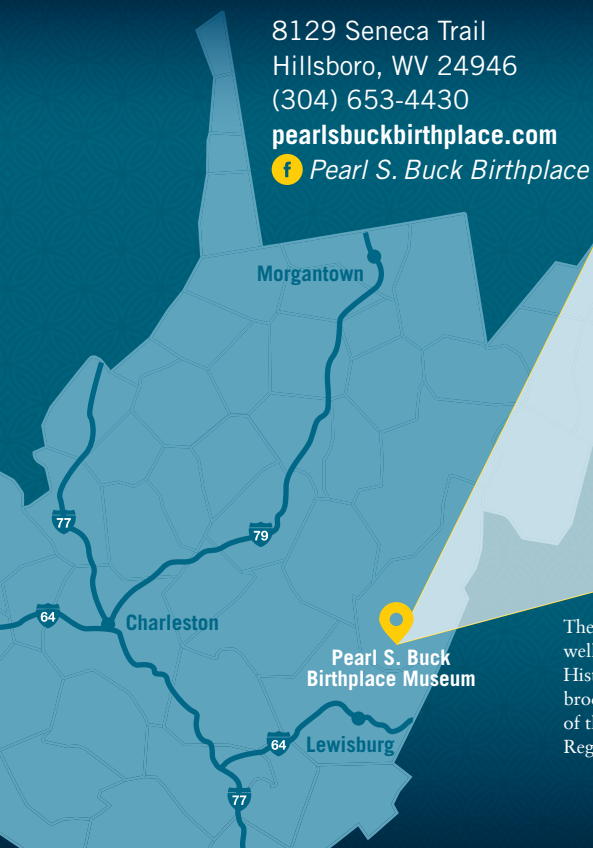
The Birthplace Museum is open seasonally (Memorial Day through October), Friday through Monday. For detailed information concerning hours and rates, call or visit [www.pearlsbuckbirthplace.com](http://www.pearlsbuckbirthplace.com).

## Nearby Attractions

Enjoy a day filled with rich history and West Virginia's natural beauty when you pair your Birthplace Museum visit with these other great attractions:

- Beartown State Park
- Cass Scenic Railroad State Park
- Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park
- Greenbrier River Trail
- Watoga State Park
- Cranberry Glades Botanical Area
- Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad
- Falls of Hills Creek
- Highland Scenic Highway
- Monongahela National Forest
- National Radio Astronomy Observatory
- Pocahontas County Opera House
- Snowshoe Mountain Resort

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f Pearl S. Buck Birthplace



The Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Foundation and Museum, as well as West Virginia University's West Virginia and Regional History Center provided information presented in this brochure. Historical photographs were provided courtesy of the Pearl S. Buck Collection at WVU's West Virginia and Regional History Center. *Map inset credit: Google Maps.*