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MORGANTOWN HISTORY MUSEUM



useum News

Spring 2009

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Mountainview Daisy Girl Scouts at the Morgantown History Museum

Every year on February 22, Girl Scouts all over the world celebrate World Thinking Day, an event designed to expose them to the world outside their immediate environment. As part of this year's activities surrounding the festivities, Morgantown's Mountainview Daisy Girl Scouts and their parents took a guided tour of the city's history museum on February 21.

"The Girl Scouts' visit is an excellent example of what the Morgantown History Museum is all about," says Pamela Ball, chairperson of the Morgantown Museum Commission. "It reflects our mission to promote and preserve local and regional history and to serve as a venue for public education."

During their tour the troop explored the history of transportation, printing, and glassmaking in Morgantown and learned about



other cultures. The tour focused on glassmaking and on the European origins of many of the people formerly working and living in Morgantown's Seneca area. The Girl Scouts heard about the beginnings of the local glass industry and the making and decorating of glassware.

The story of the immigrants working in the local glass industry

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**Morgantown Museum
Commission**

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Pamela A. Ball

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Representative

Darryl DeGripp, Exhibit Coordinator

Scott Mathews

Richard McEwuen, Secretary and
Treasurer

Jim Snyder

Jack Thompson

Christy Venham, Co-chair

**Assistant Coordinator/
Museum News Editor**

Michael Mackert

The Morgantown History Museum is the first city-sponsored museum in the Greater Morgantown area. Its mission is to preserve the history of the region for the public by collecting and displaying local cultural artifacts.

Morgantown History Museum
111 High Street
Morgantown, WV 26505
(304) 319-1800

morgantownmuseum@yahoo.com

Tuesday – Saturday
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Greetings from the Chair

The Morgantown Museum Commission (MMC) and the Morgantown History Museum (MHM) have come a long way since the commission's first meeting in the summer of 2005. When we had that meeting at the City of Morgantown Public Safety Building, the newly elected commission members had one common goal: to develop a city-sponsored museum that would tell the story of Morgantown and the surrounding area of Monongalia County.

The commission started by developing a mission statement, by-laws, an acquisition policy, and deed of gift procedures. These operational documents would be the foundation guiding our efforts into the future.

The next step was to find a suitable start-up facility or what we call an "incubator museum." By December of 2005, we had found the site: a space in the nonprofit Tanner Office Complex, located at 111 High Street next door to the Hotel Morgan. A local businessman, Bruce Summers, donated six show cases, and with some hard work, we were on our way!

Our first mini-exhibit was on display in June of 2006 during the week of West Virginia Day. We displayed items that are now part of the museum's permanent collection, such as a printing press and artifacts from Summers Printing, Seneca Glass and Morgan Shirt Factory artifacts, and memorabilia from the 1963 West Virginia Centennial.

Over the next year and a half, we continued to produce exhibits of local interest, for example, *Music and the Metropolitan Theater*, *Home and Hearth*, and *Holidays*. In the spring of 2007, MMC-MHM branched out by taking exhibits off-site. We wrote, coordinated, and produced an exhibit about Morgantown native Don Knotts. This exhibit, *Memories of Don Knotts*, was displayed at the Greater Morgantown Convention and Visitors Bureau's former location on High Street for three weeks. The exhibit was viewed by folks from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, and it captured the interest of the press all the way to Pittsburgh.

In the same year, additional off-site exhibits were produced for numerous events, among them the Mon River Summit, the Arts on the River Festival, Kids' Day, Mountainfest, the Mason-Dixon Historical Park Celebration, the Mason-Dixon Festival, and Deckers Creek Adventure Day.

In 2008 the MMC-MHM produced a much larger Don Knotts exhibit

entitled *Memories: Don Knotts II*, which was one of the main events for the Don Knotts Hometown Celebration. The exhibit was viewed by folks from California, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. We also continued to participate in local festivals and events, including the Main Street events Chocolate Lovers' Day, Kids' Day, and Arts Walk.

In addition, the MMC-MHM expanded further by creating a nonprofit fundraising arm, the Friends of Morgantown History Museum. This allowed the MMC-MHM to be part of the ten-member nonprofit art collaborative effort known as the Arts Fund.

In the fall of 2008, the MMC-MHM was able to hire a 30-hour-per-week assistant museum coordinator, Dr. Michael Mackert, who has been instrumental in helping to bring the museum effort to the next level. His work has focused on developing increased technical capabilities for the museum. With the help of computer software, he has been accessioning and cataloging the MMC-MHM's growing collection of artifacts, photographs, and ephemera.

As we are moving into the spring of 2009, we see the following developments for the MMC-MHM:

- Increased artifact donations
- Increased public service radio announcements
- Support from the City of Morgantown, the Monongalia County Commission, and the Greater Morgantown Community Trust's Art Fund
- Continued participation in Main Street events and community festivals
- Chosen demonstration site for the WVU Geography Department affiliated Virtual History Project, which will be implemented in late summer of 2009
- Start of the second phase of MMC-MHM's Grass Roots Program: presentations in the community
- A new internet presence
- A move to much larger quarters: a new MMC-MHM home on Clay Street in Morgantown's Wharf District

Given these important advances, I look forward to another exciting stage in the museum's growth and to its increasing role as an educational venue serving the community. Keep up the good work, and be thinking about ways to move the museum project ahead in a positive way!

Pamela A. Ball

Chairperson, Morgantown Museum Commission
Coordinator, Morgantown History Museum

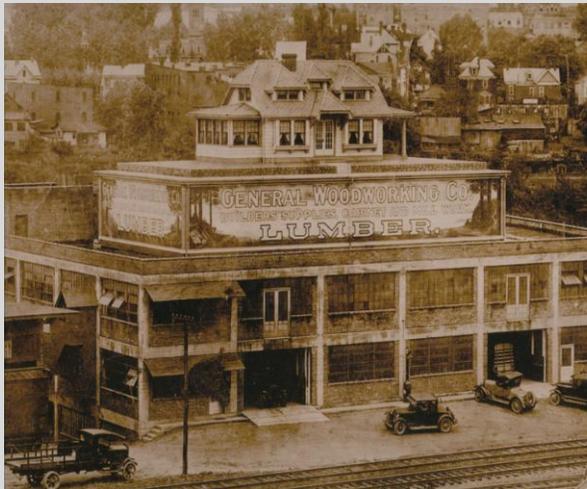
MMC Meetings

The Morgantown Museum Commission meets every third Thursday of each month in the conference room of the Tanner Cultural Complex at 111 High Street. Meetings start at 6 p.m. and are open to the public.

Featured Permanent Exhibit: The General Woodworking Model House

One of our museum visitors' favorite exhibits is a scaled-down replica of a full-sized house that served as a showcase for the General Woodworking Company. The original house was built and installed on top of the General Woodworking building in Westover sometime during the 1920s. In addition to displaying the company's craftsmanship, it is also said to have been used for special events, company picnics, and contractor parties.

The house could be seen from afar, and it soon became a familiar landmark in the Morgantown area. Many photos showing the structure on top of the woodworking plant were taken from a distance, and postcards were produced from them.



The full-sized showcase house on top of the General Woodworking building. (By courtesy of Ron Rittenhouse.)

Sometime before 1950, the full-sized house on top of the building was disassembled, and the material was used to build a different house in the area behind the woodworking plant. During the removal of the house, company workers created the scaled-down Model House for the company's owners.

In October 2006, the Thorn family, who had owned the General Woodworking Company for many years, generously donated the Model House to the Morgantown Museum Commission. Due



Darryl DeGripp and Rick McEwuen inspecting the Model House

to its condition, the Model House required extensive cleanup. Thanks to museum volunteers Darryl DeGripp and Rick McEwuen, who put in ten hours of work, the replica is now restored.

To find out more about the Model House and the history of the General Woodworking Company, stop by at the museum and enjoy the exhibit.



The General Woodworking Model House on display at the Morgantown History Museum

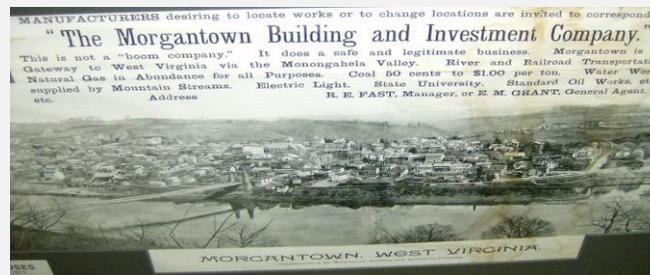
New Acquisitions

This section highlights notable artifacts recently acquired by the Morgantown History Museum. The artifacts focused on in this issue are a nineteenth century framed poster that markets Morgantown as a business location, eighty-four volumes of Morgantown and Sabraton police and court records, and a collection of photographs from the Sterling Faucet Company. All of these acquisitions were received from the City of Morgantown in 2008.

1890s Location Marketing Advertisement

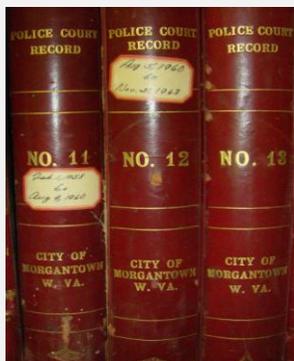
In the early 1890s, the Morgantown Building and Investment Company distributed a poster that was part of an effort to attract businesses to the Morgantown location. The advantages of the Morgantown location were pointed out succinctly in the following words:

“Morgantown is the Gateway to West Virginia via the Monongahela Valley. River and Railroad Transportation. Natural Gas in Abundance for all Purposes. Coal 50 cents to \$1.00 per ton. Water Works supplied by Mountain Streams. Electric Light. State University. Standard Oil Works, etc., etc.”



The poster also contains a panoramic black-and-white photograph of Morgantown taken from the Westover side of the Monongahela River. Among the prominent landmarks in the photograph are the old suspension bridge across the river, the train station, and a covered bridge spanning Deckers Creek.

Police Records



This group of folios consists of eighteen volumes of the Morgantown Police Court records (1902–1909; 1913–1982), fifty-nine volumes of the Morgantown Police blotter (1925–1985), four volumes of Morgantown call-in books (1946–1953), one volume of Morgantown burglary and robbery records (1945–1947; 1948–1949), and two volumes of the Sabraton Mayor’s Court records (1923–1949). The earliest entry in the Morgantown Police Court records dates back to February 15, 1902. A defendant, who was charged with drunkenness, lost his \$7.00 forfeit when he failed to appear for trial. Out of this sum, \$1.60 defrayed the cost of the fine and arrest, and \$1.00 was allotted to the jailer and mayor each.

The Sterling Faucet Photograph Collection

The over 1,700 images contained in this collection depict various aspects of social life and work at the Sterling Faucet Company’s Morgantown plant. In addition to portraits of executives and employees, the photographs show the inside and outside of the production site with people at work. The collection also includes photographs taken at events, such as plant tours, sales and employee meetings, award ceremonies, birthday parties, dinners, beauty pageants, and picnics.



Girl Scouts cont.

was exemplified by a video documentary featuring Swedish-born glasscutter and five-time West Virginia horseshoe pitching champion Arner Lindquist, who had been working at Seneca Glass Company. The Girl Scouts watched Mr. Lindquist throw horseshoes, cut glass, and show glassware that he had decorated.

As part of the event, they also listened to a presentation by Barbara McLennan, a lecturer in WVU's Intensive English Program, introducing them to some aspects of other cultures. McLennan informed the Girl Scouts about games and toys from Mexico, Japan, and Korea and let them sample some dishes and beverages from these countries.

Sherri Leyden, the Girl Scouts' troop leader, was impressed with the educational opportunities offered by the museum. "The Morgantown History Museum is an excellent resource for Morgantown residents of all ages," she says. "The Girl Scouts learned about their town and community and its people and history. The information and objects in the glass exhibit gave the troop and their parents a feel for Morgantown's immigrant population and for the artistry and industry in the area."

Groups and organizations interested in visiting the Morgantown History Museum are welcome to schedule a tour by calling the museum office at (304) 319-1800 or by sending an e-mail to morgantownmuseum@yahoo.com. Scheduled tours will include a film documentary on glassmaking and activities if requested. Tours should be scheduled at least one week before the intended visit.

WANTED: Sterling Faucet Artifacts

We are currently looking for artifacts from the Sterling Faucet Company. If you own any photographs, objects, or memorabilia, please consider donating them to the Morgantown History Museum.

New Internet Presence

As part of the museum's continuing effort to make Morgantown's history more visible and accessible, a new museum website has recently been launched. The site currently consists of the homepage and other pages providing information about the museum's mission. Eventually, the site will feature online exhibits and give visitors a glimpse of the institution's collections, permanent and special exhibits, programs, and projects. The online exhibits will include locally handcrafted glassware and other artifacts from businesses and industries formerly existing in the Morgantown area.

The new site was designed and implemented by volunteer Scott Mathews, who so far has dedicated twenty hours of his time to the project. "Having a substantial presence on the internet is very important to a young institution like ours," says Matthews. "It will allow the museum to reach more people and to draw attention to the history and culture of our city and the region. The new site will inform people about the museum's purpose and goals and bring even more visitors to our doors."

Visitors to the site will also be able to make online donations to the Friends of Morgantown History Museum. A click on the donation button on the homepage will redirect potential donors to the website of Just Give, a service that manages donations for nonprofit organizations. To get to the museum's homepage, enter www.morgantownhistorymuseum.org into your browser and start your museum visit.

Thank You for Your Support!

We would like to thank the following individuals, families, organizations, and local government bodies for their volunteer work and/or their generous contributions to the Morgantown History Museum:

Jon Scott Anderson
Pamela Ball
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Charlotte L. Nethken
Genevieve Paugh
Robert and Vinnie Pinkney
Anna Rockman
Helen Schamberger
Frederick Schaupp
Harold Shaver
Joan Sims
James and Mary Alice Snyder
Frank Stabene
Taylor Stallings
Zelda Stein Weiss
Herbert Summers, Jr.
Tanner Family
WCLG
Patrick Weber
Thomasene Weber
Greer Williams
Mary F. Williams
Catherine Wilson
Cara Winfield

Membership Application

The Morgantown Museum Commission invites you to join the Friends of Morgantown History Museum to help promote and preserve the rich history of Morgantown and the surrounding area.

\$25.00 Individual _____

\$30.00 Family _____

\$50.00 Corporate _____

Additional Contributions:
\$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone (h) _____

(w) _____

Mail to:

Friends of the Morgantown History Museum
111 High Street
Morgantown, WV 26505-5412

To donate objects or to volunteer some time, please contact the Morgantown Museum Commission at (304) 319-1800 or at morgantownmuseum@yahoo.com.

What is it?



Do you know what this object was used for? It is believed to have come from the Seneca Glass factory. Please contact us if you know what it was used for.

Preserving Morgantown's Cultural Heritage