

M

MORGANTOWN HISTORY MUSEUM



useum News

Fall 2009

Volume 1 / Number 2

Morgantown Museum Commission Prepares for New Venue

During the past three months, members of the Morgantown Museum Commission and BOPARC Director Mark Wise have made several excursions to some of West Virginia's smaller and larger museums. Among the places visited were Pricketts Fort, the Beverly Heritage Center, and the recently reopened West Virginia State Museum.

The visits are part of the commission's ongoing preparations for designing the interior of the museum's new location on Clay Street. Touring different museums allowed commission members to study different museum layouts and displays. They also had the opportunity to meet with museum curators and administrators to discuss various topics, such as preservation, fundraising, grants, gift shops, and technology.

INSIDE . . .

- ❖ Greetings from the Chair
- ❖ Miscellaneous
- ❖ Featured Permanent Exhibit
- ❖ New Acquisitions
- ❖ Museum Receives Bookshelf Award
- ❖ Thank You



MMC members Pamela Ball, Darryl DeGripp, Richard McEwuen, and James Snyder at the Beverly Heritage Center

"These trips have been very helpful to us," says Richard McEwuen, the MMC's secretary, who is also in charge of the interior layout of the museum's new venue. "Seeing how other museums in our state have utilized their widely differing spaces and what kind of display techniques they have employed in their exhibits has given us a lot of ideas for our new place."

Cont. p. 3

**Morgantown Museum
Commission**

Chair

Pamela A. Ball

Members

Charlie Byrer, City Council
Representative

Darryl DeGripp, Exhibit Coordinator

Scott Mathews

Pamela McClung Casto

Richard McEwuen, Secretary

James Snyder

Jack Thompson

Kenneth Vance

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

Dear Friends,

The Morgantown Museum Commission just received the long-awaited word that all negotiations about our new venue between Morgantown city officials, developers, and construction managers have been completed. It brings us great joy to know that our hard work for the last four years has finally paid off and that a larger museum facility will soon be a reality.

MMC members have been doing a great deal of thinking about what this new 2,500-square-foot facility should offer to the community and have arrived at a shared vision of the museum. What do we *envision* for the short-term future of the Morgantown History Museum? Here is a partial list of objectives and possibilities:

- Continue to develop the “Virtual Morgantown - ca. 1900” media presentation and use the latest technology in exhibits
- Cover the history of the Greater Morgantown area from prehistoric times to the present
- Document the rise of local industries and commerce, the development of West Virginia University, and the influx of immigrant workers
- Develop an operating printing exhibit featuring a printing press (ca. 1900)
- Offer a history lecture series, tours for school students, and exhibits at off-site events
- Design presentations about the museum that can be given to local organizations
- Implement a MHM docent program and establish internships for graduate students in WVU’s Department of History
- Increase interactions with WVU’s History and Geology & Geography departments and continue our working relationships with the city of Morgantown, Monongalia County, the Greater Morgantown Community Trust, and the Morgantown Arts Fund
- Create statewide recognition via increased participation in West Virginia history-oriented organizations, such as the West Virginia Museum Association

Sounds like a big job! But things can be achieved when you have a group of hard-working folks with a common passion, mission, and *vision*. Thanks for all of your support – we at MMC/MHM really appreciate it!

Pamela Ball
Chairperson, Morgantown Museum Commission
Coordinator, Morgantown History Museum

MMC Prepares cont.

Current plans for the museum's new quarters include a timeline documenting the populations and events shaping the history of the greater Morgantown area from prehistory to the present. The museum will also have an area dedicated to lectures, multimedia shows, printing demonstrations, and guided tour activities, all of which will facilitate the museum's educational mission.

Pamela Ball, the MMC's chairperson, is very excited about these planned changes. "These additions will take us to the next stage in our long-range journey to establish a state-of-the-art history museum right here in Morgantown. Also, new display cases, improved signage, and the use of the latest technology will enable us to present the history of our city and the surrounding area in a very attractive format to our visitors."

The new site will have several audio and video installations and a virtual tour of Morgantown's early-twentieth-century downtown. The tour will allow visitors to navigate their way on a large screen through the computer-generated old cityscape by means of a game controller.

Miscellaneous

MHM and WAJR Online History Quiz

Beginning on November 1, the Morgantown History Museum and WAJR will be running a monthly historic photograph contest. Simply go to the "Highlights" section on WAJR's website (<http://www.wajrfm.com>), look at a historic photograph, and correctly answer a question about the photograph. The first contestant to provide the correct answer will receive a copy of the photograph.

Chili Lunch

The Friends of the Morgantown History Museum will hold their first annual fundraising event at the Wiles Hill Senior Recreation Center on Saturday, December 5, 2009, 12 noon – 3 p.m. Bring your family, friends, and neighbors to enjoy home-cooked chili or vegetarian vegetable soup with cornbread! Coffee, tea, and soda will also be available. Event tickets are \$7.00 per person.

Virtual Tour of Historic Morgantown

A recent computer installation allows visitors to take a self-guided virtual tour of Morgantown in the year 1900. This is a preliminary version of the tour, on which we would like to get your feedback. Please stop by and help us improve the tour through your input!

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: Seneca Glass Company Artifacts

The Morgantown History Museum houses a rather large collection of glassware handcrafted by the artisans of Seneca Glass Company, Morgantown's first glass manufacturer. The company was organized in Fostoria, Ohio in 1891 by immigrants from Germany's Black Forest. Five years later, it relocated to Morgantown taking advantage of the area's infrastructure and abundance in the natural resources essential to making glass. The plant quickly expanded, and by 1921 it already had 250 employees and a monthly payroll of \$10,000.

Throughout its many years of operation the company was well known for the fine



Seneca Glass Company plant, 1913

lead crystal made by its skilled artisans. The products created at the plant were sold in many countries all over the world. Among the many buyers were public figures, such as Eleanor Roosevelt, a former Liberian president, and Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson.

The company conducted business under the name Seneca Glass Company until 1982, when it was sold and its name changed to Seneca Crystal Inc. Before its closure in August 1983, the Seneca factory, one of the country's oldest and most outstanding glassmaking facilities, had been a Morgantown fixture for nearly ninety years.

The museum's current exhibit of Seneca artifacts features commemorative glass bells, platinum-trimmed stemware, and hand-cut and hand-etched glassware. On display are also colorful artichoke pattern and driftwood casual roly-polies, optic pattern stemware, tools, and molds.



Seneca commemorative bells

Additional information about the company and the art of creating glass objects by hand is available during guided tours of the museum. On request, these will include a 22-minute video produced in 1973 by a team from the Historic American Engineering Records.



Seneca mold and finished product

This documentary film shows the individual steps that were involved in hand-crafting glassware at the Seneca factory. Tours should be scheduled at least one week in advance of the intended museum visit.

New Acquisitions

Six Vintage Photographs of the Intersection of High Street and Pleasant Street

These sepia photographs were taken by an unknown photographer in the 1920s. Three of these photos show rows of spectators lining High Street on both sides and watching a parade announcing the arrival of the Golden Brothers Circus in Morgantown. Participating in the parade are circus personnel, a bandwagon, elephants, and camels. The animals carry advertisements for local businesses on their backs. The other photos show pedestrians, parked automobiles, a street car, and a City Bus Line vehicle on High Street. Reproductions of these images are currently on display at the museum.



Project 63 Documents



In 1963, the year of the West Virginia Centennial, Morgantown's Downtown Action Committee initiated Project 63, which was aimed at beautifying Morgantown's business district. The makeover was to be completed within sixty-three days between March 30 and June 1. The completion of the project was celebrated with various festivities, including dedication ceremonies, Don Knotts' Day, and a parade on High Street on June 1. This collection of newspaper clippings, correspondence, flyers, before-and-after shots of downtown store fronts, and photographs of the festivities nicely documents the whole project. The documents are part of a larger donation received from the Morgantown Area Chamber of Commerce.

Printing Equipment

The over 400 items in this collection were donated to the museum by retired printer Harold "Swifty" Shaver. They were previously owned by Westover Printing and Shaver's Printing and were used in hot-metal and wood-block printing. The reversed images on the blocks show advertisements and announcements for Morgantown area businesses and organizations, such as D and D Shoes, the Farmers' and Merchants' Bank, and the I.O.O.F. Some of the blocks also include representations of churches, downtown buildings, and prominent persons.



To stay informed about the latest events and exhibits at the Morgantown History Museum, visit our website at MorgantownHistoryMuseum@yahoo.com or our page on www.facebook.com.

Morgantown History Museum Receives Conservation Bookshelf

Treasured objects and artifacts held by the Morgantown History Museum will be preserved for future generations with help from the *IMLS Connecting to Collections Bookshelf*, a core set of conservation books and online resources donated by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). IMLS has now awarded almost 3,000 free sets of the IMLS Bookshelf in cooperation with the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH).

“We are honored to have been awarded the IMLS Conservation Bookshelf,” says Pamela Ball, chairperson of the Morgantown Museum Commission and coordinator at the Morgantown History Museum. “The materials included in the bookshelf will help us in our effort to conserve local artifacts, to create a digital record of all objects in our collections, and to develop an appropriate emergency response plan to disasters for our new venue in the Wharf District.” Among the items that need care are the 5,000 pieces of glassware in the museum’s Seneca Glass Collection and the over 1,700 images in its collection of Sterling Faucet Company photographs.

“When IMLS launched this initiative to improve the dire state of our nation’s collections, we understood that the materials gathered for the Bookshelf would serve as important tools for museums, libraries, and archives nationwide,” says Anne-Imelda Radice, director of IMLS. “We were both pleased and encouraged by the overwhelming interest of institutions prepared to answer the call to action, and we know that with their dedication artifacts from our shared history will be preserved for future generations.”

The Morgantown History Museum received this essential set of resources based on an application describing the needs and plans for the care of its collections. The IMLS Bookshelf focuses on collections typically found in art or history museums and in libraries’ special collections with an added selection of texts for zoos, aquaria, public gardens, and nature centers. It addresses such topics as the philosophy and ethics of collecting, collections management and planning, emergency preparedness, and culturally specific conservation issues.

The IMLS Bookshelf is a crucial component of *Connecting to Collections: A Call to Action*, a conservation initiative that the Institute launched in 2006. IMLS began the initiative in response to a 2005 study it released in partnership with Heritage Preservation, *A Public Trust at Risk: The Heritage Health Index Report on the State of America’s Collections*. The multi-faceted, multi-year initiative shines a nationwide spotlight on the needs of America’s collections, especially those held by smaller institutions, which often lack the human and financial resources necessary to care for their collections adequately.

About the Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute’s mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. To learn more about the Institute, please visit www.ims.gov.

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:

American Association for State and Local History	Paula Martinelli
Appalachian Education Initiative	Joseph E. Mascioli
BOPARC	Richard McEwuen
Susan Braidi	Carolyn McVicker
Julie Bryan	Monongalia County Commission
Charlie Byrer	Morgantown Area Chamber of Commerce
City of Morgantown	Richard A. and Margaret M. Peterman Estates
Comcast	Mary Lou Russ
Helen Davies	Evelyn Ryan
Neva Feck	Heidi Saffel
Friends of the Morgantown History Museum	Harold Shaver
Dr. William L. Graham	George A. Smyth
Greater Morgantown Community Trust	Virginia Squires
Institute of Museum and Library Services	Tim Terman
Carol and Martin Janowitz	Deanie Van Camp
William Kelly	WAJR
John P. Kuehn	WCLG
John Marple	Betty Wiley

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.

WANTED: Sterling Faucet Artifacts

We are still 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.

Preserving Morgantown's Cultural Heritage