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## MORGANTOWN HISTORY MUSEUM



# useum News

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### History Museum to Reopen with Smithsonian Exhibit in New Venue in December

*The Way We Worked*, an exhibition focusing on the history of work in America, will visit in December as part of the grand reopening of the new Morgantown History Museum at 175 Kirk Street.

The exhibition offers a lens for viewing the enormous transformation of work and workplaces through artifacts and photography from 1857 to 1987. The museum will reopen on Dec. 17 with the exhibition, which will continue through Jan. 28, 2012.



Operators work a local telephone switchboard (ca. 1960s)

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Local workers are being sought to help focus the exhibit on Monongalia County history. The Morgantown History Museum will augment the exhibit with artifacts and photographs from the history of local workers, including oral histories from workers at the Sterling Faucet Plant.

The museum is also planning a youth photo contest of today's workers and will be taking oral histories of work from Monongalia County residents during the exhibition. A lecture series and musical presentation is also planned. Local educators are encouraged to use the exhibit as a learning experience for their students. For more information visit the museum's website at [www.morgantownhistorymuseum.org](http://www.morgantownhistorymuseum.org).

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**Morgantown Museum  
Commission**

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Pamela A. Ball

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**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.

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Morgantown, WV 26505  
(304) 319-1800

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Tuesday – Saturday  
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

## Greetings from the Chair

Dear Friends,

I have exciting news to tell all of you: at long last, after six years, our Morgantown History Museum's new and expanded site is almost ready! It is hard to believe. Why? I have worked many years (with a short break in between) to get funding for a museum site to tell the story of the Greater Morgantown history. I started this process in 1995 with the previous effort known as RMI, Inc. That effort did not have the backing of the City of Morgantown. A museum commission was formed six years ago, and we have been working very hard to obtain a museum site of adequate size to tell the Morgantown/Monongalia County story. The City of Morgantown, the Monongalia County Commission, the Greater Morgantown Community Trust, private individuals, and one corporation have provided funds and artifacts to make this dream of mine and of others a reality. I am glad to report that the new museum facility will open to the public on December 17, 2011. We will have the Smithsonian Traveling Exhibit *The Way We Worked* on display and also our collaborative exhibit *Greater Morgantown: The Way We Worked*. Additionally, we will have live music by the popular Morgantown band Soup Camel and holiday refreshments. This is certainly going to be an important day in my life after having this dream for so many years. It will also be an important day in the lives of the Morgantown Museum Commission members. We have worked hard, and it has paid off. Way to go commission! Way to go City of Morgantown! Way to go BOPARC!

Thanks for all you have done to get us to this important landmark point in the history of Morgantown — we could not have done this without YOU.

Also, please join us for the big opening celebration on December 17th or at a later time for one of the programs (see box below). We would love to have you at our new site, 175 Kirk Street, Morgantown, during the Smithsonian exhibition, December 17th through January 28, 2012.

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

*The Way We Worked* will be complemented by a companion program developed by the Morgantown Museum Commission. The program will include a lecture series, a photo contest for kids, and oral histories. The complete companion program is available at [www.morgantownhistorymuseum.org](http://www.morgantownhistorymuseum.org).

## Sterling Faucet Oral Histories Recorded

In July, the Morgantown Museum Commission made video recordings of several people who worked at the Sterling Faucet plant in Sabraton during the 1960s until the plant closed in 1995.

Pam Ball, commission chairperson, and commission member Tim Terman interviewed five former employees during a picnic held annually for workers at Marilla Park. The interviews were part of an oral history project that the commission hopes will include many local people familiar with the area's past.



Harold Whistler

In 1940, the Sterling Faucet Company relocated from Newcomerstown, Ohio, to Morgantown and moved into the former facilities of the American Sheet and Tin Plate Mill in the city's Sabraton section. It was eventually owned by Kohler Co., which closed the plant in 1995.

Included is an interview with Harold Whistler, who started with Sterling in 1954 and worked primarily in the shipping department. He was president of the Steel Workers Local 6214 when the plant closed. He recalls workers who experienced "brass chills" from exposure to fumes and says that he lost one of his own eyes while operating a "flopover machine" while buffing metal. "I can't complain," he said in the interview. "It paid my bills, and I met my wife there."



Charles Pifer

Charles Pifer began work at Sterling in 1962. In his interview he recalls that nearly 800 people worked at five Sterling plants in 1962. There were only about seven people when he quit just before the plant closed. He recalls a strike in 1964, when the workers refused to take the annual holiday turkeys owner J. W. Ruby offered. "He was stuck with about a couple hundred turkeys," Pifer said.

These videos will be available for viewing at the grand opening of the Morgantown History Museum and will be part of *The Way We Worked* Smithsonian photo exhibit.

### Museum reopening cont.

The exhibition was created by the National Archives and is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and the West Virginia Humanities Council.

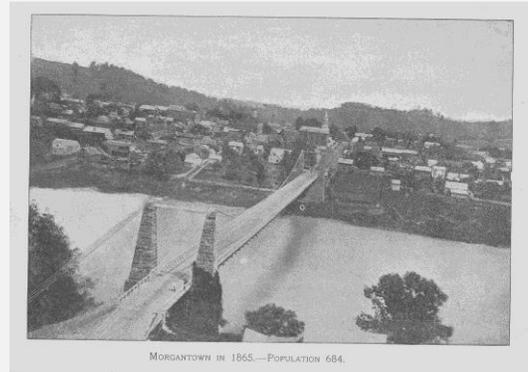
The photographs are drawn from the National Archives collection documenting work clothing, locales, conditions, and conflict. They also depict a workforce whose distinctiveness was shaped by immigration and ethnicity, slavery and racial segregation, wage labor and technology, gender roles, and the American ideals of freedom and equality. The images honor those who built this country — the working men and women of America.

*The Way We Worked* includes 86 black-and-white and color photographs. Also from the National Archives holdings are large photomurals, a video showing a variety of workplaces, and audio segments in which workers talk about their experiences on the job.

## New Acquisitions

### 50 Vintage Photographs

The images are contained in a booklet entitled “Greater Morgantown and its Environments.” The booklet was published in 1902 by H. L. Grant, a photographer from Oakland, Maryland and was printed by the Grafton Printing Company. Included are views of downtown businesses, churches, West Virginia University, residences, and landscapes. One of the oldest structures shown housed an early post office and the first print shop west of the Allegheny Mountains in Virginia, which was established in 1803.



### National Airmail Envelopes



On March 26, 1937, the first trial non-stop airplane pickup took place at the Morgantown airport. Using a hook, airplanes could pick up a mailbag without having to land. Evidence of this historic flight can be seen on stamped airmail envelopes that are now in the museum’s collection. One of the envelopes was used on the first day of service, while others feature a commemorative stamp honoring the day of the first flight.

### “Here to Stay” Collection

During Monongalia County’s bicentennial celebrations in 1976, the play “Here to Stay: A Historical Drama with Music” was performed by local actors. The three-act play, written by Saralouise Weiss and directed by Joe E. Ford, ran from June 16 through June 19. The play is based on local historic events, and its creators hoped to “spur audiences’ interest in our rich heritage.” The materials donated to the museum include handwritten and printed musical scores, posters, programs, and applications from people hoping to be part of the cast.



To stay informed about the latest events and exhibits at the Morgantown History Museum, visit our website at [www.MorgantownHistoryMuseum.org](http://www.MorgantownHistoryMuseum.org) or our page on [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).

## 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:

Appalachian Education Initiative

George B. Armistead

Gene and Sara Jane Ball

Pamela A. Ball

BOPARC

Susan Braidi

Margaret Brennan

Carol Brock

Julie Bryan

City of Morgantown

Jane Corder Moore

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Harold Shaver

George A. Smyth

David Spencer

Robert and Tina Tallaksen

Deannie van Camp

WAJR

Saralouise Weiss

Your Community Foundation

### WANTED: Sterling Faucet Artifacts

We are still looking for artifacts from the Sterling Faucet Company. If you own any products or memorabilia from this company, please consider donating them to the Morgantown History Museum.

### 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

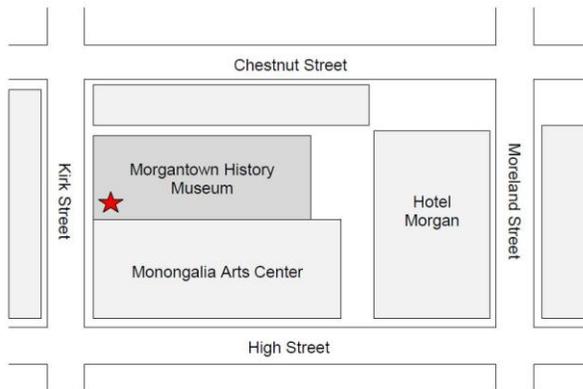
111 High Street

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](mailto:morgantownmuseum@yahoo.com).

## Local Workers Sought

The Morgantown area certainly has a strong history of work — from glass factories, to coal mining, pharmaceuticals, education and health care, and all the businesses and professions that have supported the area’s economy. The Morgantown History Museum would like to include photos, interviews, artifacts, and oral histories of the workers of the Morgantown area with *The Way We Worked* exhibit. If you have photos, tools, documents, etc., or a story to tell about your work, please call (304) 319-1800 or send an e-mail to [morgantownmuseum@yahoo.com](mailto:morgantownmuseum@yahoo.com).



Preserving Morgantown's Cultural Heritage