**WV Mine Wars Museum**

MATEWAN, W.VA. – The WV Mine Wars Museum, now under construction, invites the public to its grand opening on May 16, where they can get their first glimpse of the museum’s interactive exhibits, hear from mine war reenactors and historians, and enjoy live music, food, and fellowship. The opening coincides with the town’s renowned Matewan Heritage Day festivities.

The mission of the WV Mine Wars Museum is to preserve and interpret artifacts and historical records of the local communities affected by the mine wars, exploring historical events from multiple perspectives through the lives of ordinary people. It also aims to educate youth, promote heritage tourism, and foster local economic development.

“A lot has been written and said about the mine wars, but it has usually been somebody else’s interpretation of the story,” said museum board member and retired school teacher Wilma Steele of Meador. “This is the first time that our people are in charge of the narrative, our own history.”

The mine wars were a series of violent episodes in southern West Virginia during the early 20th century, when coal miners and their families took a stand as their civil and constitutional rights were threatened by an oppressive mine guard system. These events led eventually to the unionization of the southern coalfields.

“On behalf of the United Mine Workers, we want to invite everybody to come to our grand opening,” said Charles Dixon, museum board member and treasurer of the United Mine Workers Local 1440 in Matewan.

“We think this museum will be beneficial for the town of Matewan and be a great experience for all the individuals who come and view the history that will be on display.”

The museum is located at 336 Mate Street in Matewan, in a building that still bears the scars of bullet holes from the Matewan Massacre shootout. Its offerings include exhibits about coal camp life, the Paint Creek-Cabin Creek Strike of 1912-1913, the Matewan Massacre, the Miners’ March, and the Battle of Blair Mountain.

Using audio, video, artifacts, maps, and historic photos, the museum simulates the journey that many mining families took as they began to organize to gain rights.

The museum is the result of a collaboration between community leaders, citizen archaeologists, historians, labor leaders, and other volunteers who care about the preservation of West Virginia’s labor history. Support has been provided by the WV Humanities Council, the National Coal Heritage Area Authority, Turn This Town Around, the United Mine Workers Local 1440, Paint Creek Scenic Trail, and dozens of small private donations.

The event is free and open to the public. At 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., the Matewan Drama Group will be offering performances of the Matewan Massacre Drama, with an all-day assortment of street vendors, music, and much more.

The grand opening runs from 10 am to 4 pm on May 16 at the museum, located at 336 Mate Street in downtown Matewan. A more formal program will take place from 1 pm to 3 pm.

The museum is always seeking additional artifacts. For more information, or to talk about contributing an artifact, contact museum board member Catherine Moore at 304-663-2202 or wvminewarsmuseum@gmail.com.
Marion County Historical Society, Inc. and Museum is growing and expanding its exhibit space

By Raven Thomas
PreserveWV
AmeriCorps Member

The Marion County Historical Society, Inc. and Museum, founded in 1908, has recently been working to expand the museum space and better its archival storage and conservation. The Historical Society Museum consists of the Former Sheriff’s residence and the second floor of the attached Marion County Jail. Progress is continuously being made to restore the remaining cells of the second floor of the jail in order to make the space safe for tours to the public and usable for exhibits. This past October, the Historical Society hosted “Candle Light Ghost Tales of Marion County” in a section of the jail that hadn’t been open to the public since 2001. Patrons could experience the Marion County Jail behind the bars of the cells or in the empty halls of the lock down. The shows featured local ghost lore and even terrifying tales of the Former Sheriff’s Residence and jail. The event was well attended all three nights with Dr. Judy Byers as the guest story teller the first night and our AmeriCorps Member, Raven Thomas, storytelling for the remaining shows.

In addition, the Marion County Historical Society, Inc. has also been given an annex in the adjacent building for archival storage and conservation. The museum collection has outgrown the current storage space on the third floor of the sheriff’s residence and preparations have been made to move the collection to the new annex space. This will allow for the current storage area to be used for additional museum exhibits and interpretative displays. The annex has ample room for collections storage and care as well as additional offices for museum personnel. All those involved with the Historical Society are excited about these additions and are eagerly looking forward to the future of the Marion County Historical Society, Inc. and Museum.


I have not seen the movie, The Monuments Men, but I am so glad that I read the book. I can’t imagine seeing the movie would have moved me more to understand the importance of preserving cultural icons to show us the history of past societies; and, indeed, our future human existence.

Recently I saw on TV the destruction of some of society’s earliest art forms. That became more chilling to me having read the account of the thievery of Europe’s most treasured arts by the Nazi invaders, 1933-1945. The author details the planned and precise documentation and handling of priceless statuary, master works of great painters, books, tapestries, furniture, jewelry by the Germans. Their ruthless grabbing of people’s possessions and museum’s treasures was relentless. The dedicated avarice of German officers, including Hitler, Goring, Himmler, and others of the Nazi party, was both personnel and political. Hitler planned a grand museum to hold Europe’s treasures. Goring, Himmler and others wanted to possess these objects for themselves. The ordinary German soldier, on the other hand, was so unaware of the value of an object as to use aged paper documents for toilet paper.

The real monuments men were culled from museum offices and quiet archival rooms. Those men and women joined a military that was neither prepared for them nor they for the military. Each had a common bond, a willingness to leave their quiet sanctuaries, go to war-ravaged places and recover the world’s cultural treasures.

The author’s well-researched and documented dedication to relating the effects of war on people and cultural treasures was so well done I read the book almost as a textbook. I truly found myself thanking the dedication of those Monuments Men. The recovery of works of art is still on going.

Some of the most notable museums in the world are sending experts into battle zones even today to help save world treasures. The question is: should these treasures be removed from countries of origin for future repatriation? Or, just how can they be preserved in their countries at a time of war? Remember The Elgin Marbles, taken during a time of war and still in a London Museum? Remember your art history!
The West Virginia Association of Museums 2015 conference and annual meeting was held at the South Branch Hotel and conference center on in Romney, West Virginia. Fifty-six museum professionals, AmeriCorps members, and volunteers from around the state attended the conference, the theme of which was “The Museum Business.”

We enjoyed a special treat at this year’s conference—enjoying a 3 hour train ride on Hampshire County’s Potomac Eagle! Though the weather was a bit unpredictable, having snowed Thursday night into Friday morning, the train was ready to go regardless of the weather conditions. We are also happy to report that we did sight several eagles along the route! The trough through which the train travels is beautiful no matter what time of the year it is!

We also enjoyed a reception “on the town” Thursday evening with the main site being Taggart Hall Civil War Museum and Visitor Center. The oldest office building in Hampshire county stands just behind Taggart Hall and the owners were kind enough to open their complex of buildings for us to walk through. A charming store just down the street called Anderson’s Corner welcomed us with a discount, wine tastings, and a free gem stone with purchase! Seldom are we so welcomed in a town as we were in Romney!

We had so many great presenters and members who wanted to share their knowledge.

Conference participants had the opportunity to visit the local heritage site and member, Ft. Edwards at Capon Bridge on Thursday morning to kick off the event.

A special thanks goes out to Dan Hileman, mayor of the city of Romney; Cindy Karelis, local planning contact; and all the folks at the South Branch Inn, Potomac Eagle, and the Loy Foundation who all helped make our visit so special! We had a great and educational time!!

Our annual meeting and dinner was held at the Coca-Cola Bottling Works building in Romney. Our auction raised over $2000—which will go toward next year’s scholarships!

Jim Mitchell received a piece of commissioned Ron Hinkle glass in honor of his 25th year of service to WVAM.

Not all was fun and games, though, workshops at the conference covered a variety of topics such oral history, conservation topics, emergency preparedness, historic preservation, museum business matters, and a hands-on book and photograph encapsulation workshop!
In the twenty-first century, it is easy for many people to escape the trials and tribulations of their daily lives. Exclusive spa resorts, walk-in day spas, massage parlors, yoga studios, acupuncture clinics: the treatment possibilities are almost limitless for stress management and healthy lifestyle options. Today’s sea-side resorts and aquatic mineral spas are synonymous with society’s ideals of relaxation, wealth, and top-rate services; however, during the early-to-mid nineteenth century, ocean air and bubbling sulphur waters had a significantly different purpose to fulfill.

Throughout the nineteenth century, infectious diseases, such as yellow fever and cholera devastated areas of the south. New Orleans, the Mississippi Valley, Memphis, and Norfolk had tens of thousands of deaths occurring during epidemic years. The north was not spared from the ruin of disease outbreaks either, and major cities such as Philadelphia and New York were also seriously overwhelmed by the spread of infectious diseases, including yellow fever, small pox, and cholera during the summer months. Entire cities and towns were shattered due to continual outbreaks and deaths. Individuals, as well as families, looked for ways to escape the recurring cycle of sickness and death, and many looked towards seasonally migrating to areas that promoted health and well-being (particularly during the summer months), hence the founding of what we know today as, “resort towns.”

The Virginia Springs, many of which are today located in present-day West Virginia, and the seaside paradise of Newport, Rhode Island are two such communities that embody the regimes assigned to healing and health in resort towns during the nineteenth century. Throughout the 1800s, several “health resort towns” across America were developed as areas of refuge from the infectious diseases plaguing the population. Cities that were surrounded by healing water, especially hot springs and sulphur waters, as well as sea-side towns that boasted salty ocean air, and nature paths, were particularly sought after as havens during the varied and numerous epidemic outbreaks of the 1800s.

Over the past two-hundred years, the heritage of these well-known resorting communities has surpassed the changing landscape of hospitality and tourism. These two particular resorting areas have been able to sustain and reinvent their legacies of being sanctuaries for those seeking relaxation, rejuvenation, and most importantly, physical health. The healing mineral waters are still bathed in, and the ocean air is still a recognized remedy for life’s ailments. The namesake and recognition of these resorting communities has enabled them to endure for hundreds of years, and by all appearances, they will continue to remain relevant throughout time.

This article was written by Arabeth Balasko, the 2014-2015 Research Fellow for the Preservation Society of Newport County, in Newport, Rhode Island. Ms. Balasko, a West Virginia native, was selected as a year-long research fellow, and is currently researching the making of resort towns in Virginia (focus on Greenbrier and Monroe Counties in present-day West Virginia) and Newport County, Rhode Island.

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Way back in the 1950s, I had a cousin named Josephine Quick, who lived in Montfort, Wisconsin. She must have liked me because she married another Jim, Jim Campbell, who was a cheese maker in Castle Rock, Wisconsin. I visited them often. I rode in the milk truck picking up cans of milk and hauling them back to the cheese factory at Castle Rock. Yes, there was a huge rock which looked somewhat like a castle. They made cheddared American Cheese. Please note, I did not misspell “cheddared.” Common American usage has subtracted the “-ed” and shortened the word to “Cheddar” which is really incorrect. Cheddaring is a process and now I will explain it to you, O gentle reader.

When we were back in the cheese factory Jim’s father had filled the stainless steel vat with yesterday’s milk. The vat was 30 inches deep, five or six feet wide and about twenty feet long. I do not know how much milk it held. There were heaters (probably gas) underneath and Mr. Campbell was slowly heating up the milk. When it reached the proper temperature, he introduced the enzyme rennin, made from rennet, part of the lining of a cow’s stomach, which curdles milk. Boy, does it curdle milk! The entire tank went from being liquid to being one BIG solid curd in the blink of an eye, with the liquid whey inside the curd.

Then the two of them used thirty inch tall curd cutters to cut this monster curd into half-inch or centimeter cubes. One cutter had vertical wires, while the other one had horizontal wires. They walked the length of the vat pulling these cutters through the curd as well as reaching halfway across to cut the curd the other way. The had already placed a tall, pierced cylindrical pipe in the vat’s drain to which was attached a pump and a pipe to transfer the whey to the cream separator to reclaim the butterfat, cream, from the waste whey. As soon as they had cut the curd, the whey began to bleed out of the curd. As the whey left, the curd settled in the vat. When most of the whey was gone, the Campbells pulled the curd into two long banks along the sides of the vat. Then they cut the banks into four inch wide blocks. Then they placed the second block on the first, the fourth one on the third one, the sixth one on the fifth, all along both sides of the vat. Then they went back and turned all the doubles over. All the while, the weight of the curd was squeezing more whey out of itself. Then they went back and put the second double on the first double, the fourth double on the third et cetera. Then they turned them over again. Finally they stopped and brought an electric powered cheese cutter in and placed it on a bridge over the vat. They took lengths of curd and fed them into the chopper cutting all the bigger pieces into tiny pieces again. Then they salted it and shoveled it into round forms like wheels of cheese and put it into a manual press where they squeezed the last little drop of whey out of the curd.

The process of squeezing whey out of curd using its own weight was called cheddaring in England and the product was known as Cheddared Cheese. Made in Castle Rock, Grant County, Wisconsin in the United States of America, it was called American Cheddar Cheese. If one squeezes out the whey by a mechanical press, it is American cheese because the rennin determines the taste, but it is not Cheddared American Cheese.
Behind the Scenes at the Watts Museum: A Five-Year Inventory Project

By Eliza Newland

Three years ago, staff members of the Royce J. and Caroline B. Watts Museum launched a daunting project—cataloguing and inventorying the Museum’s collection of more than 30,000 artifacts, books, photographs, and archival documents. Behind storage room doors, all museums face a bevy of mysteries and challenges concerning the documentation, ownership, and identification of their objects, and the Watts Museum is no different. The fact that the Watts Museum was unstaffed for more than a decade, from the late 1990s to 2009, complicates things even further for this small museum in the Statler College of Engineering and Mineral Resources at West Virginia University. Graduate students from WVU’s Public History program have assisted Curator Danielle Petrak with bringing the care and documentation of the Museum’s collections up to par with best practices and professional standards for museums. Safeguarding artifacts for future generations forms the basis of most museums’ existence, and therefore the Watts Museums, like all museums, has an ethical and legal duty to maintain accurate information on the location and ownership of the objects in its collection.

Begun in 2011 by Ashley Shimer, who graduated with an M.A. in Public History in 2012, the Watts Museum’s collections inventory project started off with its library. Shimer researched and drafted a plan for cataloguing the Museum’s roughly 3,000 books and prepared a library development policy for the Museum. She then carefully entered each book into a database for the Mineral Resources Historical Library, as it is known. The following year, the project was handed off to an English Ph.D. student, Sharon Kelly. Kelly developed a method for creating library call number classifications that is based on the Library of Congress classification system but specific to the Watts Museum’s collection. The next steps for Kelly were to categorize each book into one of the nearly one hundred call number classifications, physically sub-divide the collection of books by classification, and then alphabetize the books within each section. From there, current Public History master’s student Malori Stevenson took to the task of labelling each book with both its classification category and a “cutter number,” an alphanumeric code for alphabetization designed to use the fewest characters possible. Lastly, Stevenson entered each book’s call number into its corresponding library database record.

Currently underway is the most difficult and time consuming portion of the Watts Museum collections project—an inventory of the Museum’s artifacts. The artifact inventory was started by Stevenson, and Eliza Newland, who graduated from WVU’s master’s program in Public History and currently works at the Watts Museum, is now managing this phase of the project. In keeping with the American Alliance of Museum’s guidelines, each object in the Watts Museum’s collection must be assigned and labelled with a catalogue, or “accession,” number to identify the object, link it to its digital and hard-copy records, and document its ownership by the Museum. The purpose of the artifact inventory is not only to track the location of every object in the collection, but also to ensure that all objects are labelled, accessioned, and identified correctly. Throughout the process, however, numerous roadblocks are encountered: objects with no labels, objects with no match to a database record, objects with no accession number, and objects with duplicate or inconsistent numbering systems. Alternatively, there may be records in the Museum’s database for which no physical object can be found or records that identify an object incorrectly, among other problems. When this long process is finally complete, the end goal is either to connect all objects found in the Museum’s collection to object records in the database or to formally add them to the Museum’s collection through the accessioning process. Newland hopes to complete this portion of the inventory project by the start of 2015 and then move on to the next two phases – tackling the Museum’s photograph collection and its archives.

Petrak and Newland estimate that it will take another two years to complete the remaining phases of the collections inventory project. But even once all Museum items are labelled, documented, and in their recorded location, the collection project will not end. The Museum’s staff must continually work to ensure that its objects are stored in archival quality materials, housed within proper humidity and temperature levels, and that documentation of its artifacts is kept up-to-date and exhaustive. It is a demanding, methodical, and unending process. But each time Newland resolves a collections conundrum, by matching an unlabeled object with its database record or reconciling a discrepancy in a numbering system, the Museum is one step closer to its goal.

This behind-the-scenes work goes largely unnoticed by the Museum’s public audience. Beyond a museum’s exhibits, programs, and daily operation, most visitors are unaware of the responsibilities and challenges of running a museum. A myriad of unseen projects like the collections inventory take place at the Watts Museum, as in all museums. And over time, the completion of these individual projects will help the Museum create better exhibits and programs that are visible and accessible for the public to attend and enjoy.
President’s Message

Wow, it seems like we may have just made through yet another winter here in West Virginia, although it did snow just a couple of weeks ago when we were scheduled to have our battlefield cleanup day. But now I see green buds on trees, and I have already mowed the lawn twice and have been weeding the flower beds here at the Beverly Heritage Center in preparation of the upcoming tourist season. It takes a lot of work to keep a museum complex in shape, and most of that work comes from volunteers—so remember to thank those folks for all the help they give.

With that in mind, I would like to thank all of the WVAM board members and individuals who were so instrumental in the execution of this year’s annual conference. While I was not able to attend this year’s conference, I have heard nothing but praise for the workshop content and networking events that were provided this year. This yearly conference takes a lot of planning, and without the help of committee members, as well as individuals who live in the town chosen to host the event, we could not provide the quality event we strive to have each year. We have already begun work on the joint WVAM / ALFAM conference for 2016 and are very excited about the preliminary workshop and networking events we have in mind. As we draw closer to next year’s event, we will make announcements to our members and may even ask for assistance to help make next year’s conference one that will be talked about for years to come.

Again, I just wanted to thank everyone who put forth the extra effort to make this year’s conference such a success, and to remind everyone that it takes a lot of likeminded individuals to create a space or event that we are all proud to share with the public. Don’t forget to thank those folks every chance you get.

Darryl
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