

Fort Recovery State Museum News April, 2010

Wait Until You See!

Whoah, wait till you see the changes being made in the museum! Three years ago, the legislature of Ohio provided special funds for the renewing and updating of the exhibits in our state museum. No significant changes or updates had occurred within the museum for decades. Over the last two years, museum trustees, FR Historical Society members, and volunteers and focus groups have been meeting with key employees of the Ohio Historical Society (Connie Bodner and Bill Mahon) to make plans for the changes to take place. Well NOW those plans are coming to life! And how exciting it is!

On March 6, nineteen volunteers showed up to help empty/dismantle the entire main floor of the museum. Not only were all of the exhibits taken out, but so too all the glasses and artifacts from the cases, even the cases themselves, plus the many paintings that surrounded the room, etc. Even the ground that stood beneath the feet of the soldiers was dug out and wheeled outside. What a massive job! (But one that was accomplished in a couple of hours. What would we do without our hardworking volunteers!)

Right now our museum, devoid of exhibits and displays, is a blank slate. But not for long! By May 1, we will have new cases, new carpeting, new wiring, walls repainted AND new displays and exhibits. In addition to the new *things*, there will be new information on display! In the past our museum focused mostly on Anthony Wayne and the 1794 battle, but now equal attention and space will be devoted to the St. Clair Defeat of 1791. You need to know however, that the OHS partners listened to the requests of our focus groups and are KEEPING those things from the "old exhibits" that really grabbed the attention of visitors – namely the real-looking soldiers, cannon, guns, etc. We just can't wait until it all comes together!

And More Changes

Downstairs:

If you've ever redecorated a room in your home, you know how one room leads to another! Well, we needed a way to display the artifacts that we didn't have room for in the main part of the museum, so those interesting objects will soon be on display in the basement "meeting room." This room, which is our community room, will also be updated and will really be an extension of the main part of the museum. In addition to the artifacts (including the flag pole and the Greenville Treaty Line stake), there will be interesting and important information and pictures on the bulletin boards, portraits and paintings on the walls, AND the dragoon and the horse shall be spotlighted in the corner of the room! (perfect for picture-taking opportunities!) This room is used as the presentation room when we have speakers, so we needed to keep the room as clear as possible, but we wanted it to be more interesting and informative for visitors and those attending presentations there. Blinds will be purchased to darken the room for electronic presentations.

Walk-By Museum:

These changes (above) led to the need to change the emphasis of the Walk-By museum across the street. On permanent display there will be the series of Bob VanTrees paintings that tell the Fort Recovery Story (from the 1991 bicentennial calendar). In addition, a corner of that museum will be dedicated to Bob, who has singularly done more to spread the significance of Fort Recovery History than any other individual! Other artifacts on display in that museum will be those connected to FR history but not necessarily pertinent to the military history of the 1700's. One advantage of the walk-by museum is that it is on "display" at all times and as such is not dependent on "open museum" hours.

Blockhouse:

The panels that were on display in the main room of the museum will be mounted inside the blockhouse, so that information will still be available to visitors. To the blockhouse has also been moved the large and very heavy showcase. It can be used for special displays – like those showcased on the October Archaeology Day.

Tool Shop – Smithy:

Two of the showcases were moved to the log cabin that houses the collection of old tools. The smaller tools will be displayed in those showcases there now. This will improve the visibility and the security.

Gift Shop and Entrance:

Matching new carpeting will be installed, and the bulletin boards will be redone with more permanent and professional displays.

Other:

In each of the above locations, new labels will eventually identify the artifacts, bulletin board headings, book shop labels and prices, etc.

Any expenses incurred for any of the locations other than the main part of the museum **must be funded from local accounts**, so we are fortunate to have a museum account – which includes the portion of YOUR patron membership money which we have been able to save above and beyond that needed for running the museum - and the Fort Recovery Historical Society account which includes the money made from the auctions over the past couple of years!

Any materials purchased and contractors hired have stayed local! We're glad if the work at the museum can help local business people. In a small community, we all depend on the success of each other!

Change Observations/Reflections

1. It's been wonderful working with OHS representatives. (Bill Mahon's car can now drive itself from Columbus to Fort Recovery! ☺)
2. Our Committees, Reflections/Focus Groups (including Native Americans), and Volunteer Workers have been so important, helpful, vital in this process.
3. Helen LeFevre, trustee president, has been keeping this project going and on track and communicating with others about the progress!
4. Chris Keller has been nothing short of amazing in her work in identifying and cataloguing ALL of the artifacts that have been/are on display in the cases and charts around the museum, communicating that all to OHS, researching quotes for the "main players" connected to the 1790's history here, helping design the big picture as well as organize the minutia, etc. In addition, she and her family (husband, Kevin and son, JD) have done a lot of the grunt work, removing materials, carrying glass, moving artifacts/furniture, etc. (The only "pay" she, (or anyone else from FR) receives is our undying gratitude! ☺)
5. Thanks to Jill Walter and Helen for also helping Chris with the cataloguing of artifacts.
6. This year patron donations are more important than ever, as we change and improve to attract more people to our community and to spread the importance of our history.

Congratulations to –

Tess Kaup for being named Fort Recovery Citizen of the Year 2010! In addition to all of the other things Tess has done for the community, she and husband Tom have been active Fort Recovery Museum patrons. For example, for many years, she and Tom have coordinated the decorating of the museum for the annual Christmas Open House.

Cy LeFevre and Tom Lennartz for being named to the Fort Recovery Hall of Fame. An original "Ambassador," Cy has been involved in so many community endeavors that there is no doubt our town would not be the successful community it is had it not been for his involvement over the past many years. Cy has been a long time supporter of our museum, through his personal physical help and volunteer involvement as well as a key financial supporter personally and through his businesses (Fort Recovery Equipment and JR Industries). Tom Lennartz was deservedly admitted to the Hall of Fame for his hard work and leadership with the Fort Recovery Ambassadors and for his dedicated work as a volunteer fireman.

Congratulations and "Thank You" to all three winners! Our community and museum are the real winners!

Patrons for 2010

We were thrilled to have the greatest number of patrons ever in 2009. What a difference that financial support makes in the upkeep of our museum and in the educational programs we can offer to the public. We look forward to **your** support and involvement again in 2010. We hope you think it is a good investment, and that you, your family and this museum receive a good return on your investment.

Note!

If you have been to one of our presentations in the Community Room downstairs in the museum, you will have noticed the large, magnificent antique **grand piano** located there. Because of the need for that space for our dragoon and horse, the historical society has decided the piano must go. The proceeds received from that sale will help to finance the needed changes. Call me, 419-375-4384 if you are interested.

P.S. A public thank you to recently deceased patron, Georgiana Meiring (mother of patrons: Helen LeFevre, Sharon Zehringer, Jack Meiring, Nancy Knapke) who remembered the museum in her will.

It's going to be a great Museum Season 2010! Be part of it!

Nancy Knapke, Manager