

HISTORY

Weston Historic Landmark Commissions news and announcements

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Volunteering with the Weston HLC

By Samuel Peters

Over the summer I've been volunteering in Weston to help them update their Historic Inventory buildings. Not being native to the state, I concluded I could probably learn some more about West Virginia in detail that would help me become a better future teacher in the state, while also helping a community. In the few weeks since starting I've really enjoyed my time in Weston. Each of the buildings has its own unique structure, significance, and history that is absolutely fascinating. Though the list of buildings does seem overwhelming at first, even in the couple dozen I've completed so far, I've learned a lot about Weston.

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Weston Cultural Center Update

By Jamie Billman

Quarter one kicked-off of many projects at the Weston Cultural Center. We started with several abatements and environmental survey projects. With the results and clean-up efforts complete, we were able to move forward with the start of the needed demolition, starting with the front façade. Many took note of this and enjoyed seeing the process that exposed the original stained glass windows of the building. In the near future, the utmost care will be taken to preserve those windows to ensure their historic integrity.

Currently, drainage efforts are underway. The city is also currently seeking roofing bids so that the roof can be corrected in this quarter. If you have any interest in learning more about this project or contributing to the funds to restore this integral building to our downtown please visit the Facebook page @ <https://www.facebook.com/westonculturalcenter>



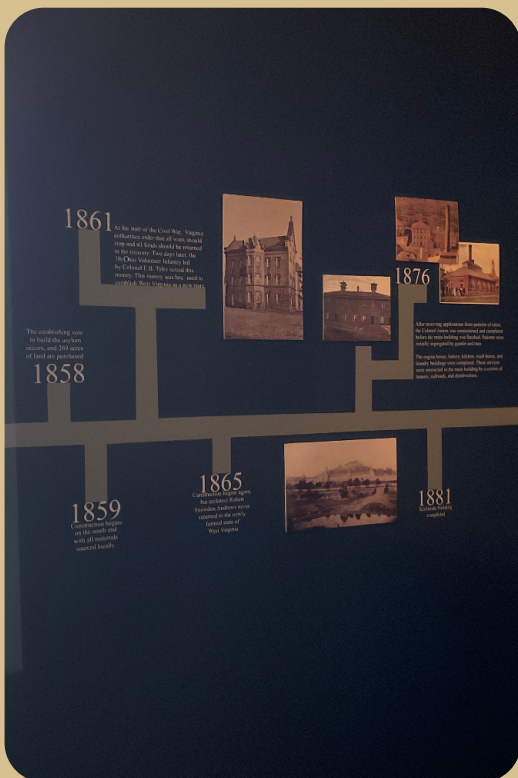
Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum Museum Update

By Kurtis Dennison

This year marks the fifteenth tour season of the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum. Each year, the owners of the asylum brave the unheated halls over the winter to renovate portions of the building. This is part of the ongoing effort to preserve one of the few remaining Thomas Story Kirkbride asylums standing in its entirety anywhere in America. This season, the renovation focused on the public museums along the first floor.

The asylum has been an integral part of the city of Weston. Influential Westonians lobbied the then Virginia government to establish the asylum in the town, and within one year of the commencement of construction, the population of Weston doubled. The new museum rooms aim to tell that story and contextualize the asylum in the history of the town.

Known as Ward A, the museum exists in what was to become the admissions ward when the hospital was in operation. After opening as a museum in 2009, the area was used to display patient art and artifacts. Curating a museum in such an unconventional space was a challenge.



The fifteen rooms along Ward A were designed originally to house patients. The creative team saw this challenge as an opportunity for each room to tell its own story. The halls of the museum act as a timeline itself starting with the commencement of construction in 1858 until the hospital's closure in 1994.

Led by Rebecca Jordan-Gleason, Breonna Childress, Kurtis Dennison, and Ben Sanford, the renovation included research, construction, curation, and a touch of creativity. New exhibits were added or expanded ranging in topics from the evolution of mental health care to notable stories of the many doctors and patients who comprise the asylum's rich history. There was also an added effort to preserve artifacts found in this asylum. Entry to the museum is included in the cost of a tour and aims to enrich the experience of visiting this National Historic Landmark.

Asylum photos on this page and next courtesy of Brad Cook

Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum Fountain Restoration Project

By Breonna Childress

Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum's 20-acre front lawn has long been a therapeutic space. During the hospital's operation, residents with ground passes enjoyed its many gardens, water features, and leisure areas. Dr. Thomas Kirkbride's theories concerning the organization of these state hospitals illuminate nature's great importance in mental health rehabilitation.

This year, T.A.L.A.'s maintenance team has begun restoring the Asylum's fountain, using reference photos and postcards dating to the 1920s. Brick steps, added in 1982, have been removed to return the fountain to its original character. In their place now exists a charming flower garden. Cinder blocks that formed the base of the fountain have been replaced using materials native to the hospital. The existing fountain head has been preserved and restored to working order. With the help of local metalworker Jay Hayes, a metal railing similar to that of the early 20th century will soon complete the project.



"Historic Focus" Photo Contest

The winner of the current "Historic Focus" Photo Contest is Karen Wilfong with her photo of historic St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Karen is a very talented local photographer who always takes magical photos of our historic resources around Lewis County!

Submissions can be made to jbillman@cityofwestonwv.com with the email subject line "Historic Focus Photo Contest".



Historic Masonry Workshop

By Anna Cardelli

If you have ever strolled down Main Ave in downtown Weston you may have noticed a cute little brick building tucked away right before you get to the old Traction building, the Weston HLC, and the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia had the opportunity to repaint this little treasure. A grant from The West Virginia State Preservation Office enabled us to host a repointing workshop. Lewis County First worked with the HLC to clean and prep the building. With the generous use of a dump trailer by Enzo Cardelli and a full day of clean up the building was ready to start its journey on its new lease on life and stabilization.

Thank you to the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia, Lewis County First, and Central Supply Company of West Virginia for making this possible. We would also like to thank Bob Yapp from The Belvedere School for Hands-On Preservation, for being an amazing teacher!



HLC Summer Projects

The HLC was awarded a grant by the West Virginia Humanities Council to conduct an oral history project on the Weston Colored School.

The HLC has partnered with the City to bring you the first Weston Carp Festival in 21 years. This was once an annual tradition and we were excited to help bring this event back to Weston.

Old Hill Cemetery will be having a ground-penetrating radar project in June 2022.

History Alive! & Summer Concert Series in downtown Weston check our Facebook for dates.



This project is presented with financial assistance from the West Virginia Humanities Council, a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations do not necessarily represent those of the West Virginia Humanities Council or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Memorial Day and the Importance of Cemetery Restoration

By Kristen Bailey

In the most recent issue of *History: Weston Historic Landmark Commission News and Announcements*, the “Archeology Feature” section highlighted exciting news of planned restoration projects at Old Hill Cemetery on Arnold Hill. This project is part of the Weston Historic Landmark Commission’s long-range commitment to work with family members and the community to preserve the immense historic value of this cemetery. As we approach the Memorial Day holiday, it is perhaps worthwhile to consider what this type of work means to a small community.

West Virginians are a people who honor their history and their ancestors. The practice of maintaining family gravesites, displaying flags to honor veterans who have passed on, and preserving family and community cemeteries are proud traditions in the Mountain State. Lewis County and the City of Weston are home to numerous cemeteries - small and large, and we are fortunate to have several active organizations who participate in efforts to maintain those cemeteries. The Weston Historic Landmark Commission has made the thoughtful decision to undertake work in one central cemetery, with the hope that future projects will build upon this current opportunity.

Memorial Day as an official holiday was instituted in the United States in 1968. Women on both sides of the Civil War conflict took great pride in honoring their fallen fathers, brothers, and sons in commemoration. Both the Daughters of the Confederacy and the Grand Army of the Republic have laid claim to initiating the practice, and certainly, both northern and southern communities mourned their dead equally. Throughout the 19th and 20th century, spring represented a time to combine practical housekeeping tasks in the cemetery with small and large commemorations. Gathering in respect of family and community members by cleaning gravestones, decorating graves with flowers, and sharing stories represent one of the most organic forms of history-making.

