

Progress on the Carriage House Museum

The lot on Middle Street, downhill from the Kalico Kitchen, has been leveled and the concrete platform has been poured. This proved to be more difficult than anticipated because the ground slopes considerably, and a large limestone outcrop had to be removed. The platform is 42 feet long by 24 feet wide with an 11 by 12 foot porch. The view of the Knobs to the west is great, and Wes and Susan Sheridan, our neighbors have promised a right-of-way so that there will be easy access to the new Carriage House from the Museum and Log Houses.

The construction of the timber-frame is proceeding at the shop of Chip Sills south of Greenville. The building will be supported by four cross-sectional elements, or “bents” and three of the four have already been completed. This has involved the help of several volunteers to shape the mortise-and-tenon joints, to chamfer the edges, and to sand and finish the surfaces of the beams. Each bent has been assembled to assure suitably tight joints, and then disassembled ready for transport to the site in Union.

As far as the carriages are concerned, the Nancy White vehicles have been identified as a “Mountain Wagon” and a “Summer Rockaway”. These are intermediate in size and each has two rows of seats. The sleigh can be termed a “Cutter”. In addition we have had the donation of a one-seater “Doctors Buggy” from local couple David Dillon and Ann Meadows.



Finally, the “Omnibus”, the flagship of our fleet, has been on display at Cooks Old Mill in Greenville and most visitors have been amazed by its size and elegance.

Monroe County Historical Society “Toward a 400 Year Climate History of Monroe”

Our October Quarterly Meeting will feature an ongoing study by West Virginia University students on “dendrochronology”, or tree-ring analysis, of various samples from our county. The presenters will be Shawn Cockrell, an undergraduate, and Kristen deGrauw, a PhD. Candidate, from the Montane Forest Dynamics Lab of Professor Amy Hessler. The talk will be at 2:00 pm on Sunday the 13th of October in Ames Claire Hall on Route 3 in Union.

This study started out with a sampling of some beams in Cooks Old Mill in Greenville. Over the years there has been a debate as to whether the mill was burned in the Civil War. An old Cook family letter turned up recently that states that the mill was burned, first by the North and then by the South, so to test this claim, a team was brought in from WVU and determined that the beams were cut in the autumn of 1867. This was done by carefully measuring the successive widths of the annual growth lines from over forty narrow core samples extracted from the beams. The idea behind this study is that the growth increments reflect fluctuations in the suitability of the climate for tree growth—stated simply, good years with lots of moisture have wide rings and vice versa. The mill samples were matched with a similar chronology developed in the Blacksburg area.

Remarkably, the team found that the mill beams contained a record going back from 1867 to 1633, so 234 years of climate record occur in a 12-inch log. This number of rings indicates that the trees were harvested from an old-growth forest. The team even found the signature of an 1815 volcanic event, reflected by a narrow ring due to dust in the world-wide atmosphere and a reduction in sunlight for the growing season! Subsequently, some logs were exhumed from the new bridge construction near the mill and these also gave a post-Civil War date. These can be tied to the construction of an earlier bridge on the site.

Now, the team is ready to measure the growth rings on huge logs currently being cut from the slopes above the mill. These three-foot in diameter logs will fill in the climate history from the Civil War to the present, so we should have a complete record for most of the last four centuries. Shawn and Amy will present the rationale behind dendrochronology as well as the scientific results. Also, they will be looking for other buildings to sample with the potential to extend the record back even further. Since there are a number of buildings in Monroe and Greenbrier Counties that are known to be much older than the mill, this should not be a problem.

Nominations for 2014-2015 Officers

President	Mark Taylor	Ex-President	Fred Ziegler
Vice President	Toni Ogden	Member at Large	Mary Pearl Compton
Co-Treasurer	Helen Graves	Member at Large	Charles Hancock
Co-Treasurer	Barbara Ziegler	Member at Large	Dixie Lee Hoke-Webb
Secretary	Rebecca Allen	Member at Large	Patricia Margolin
Corresponding Secretary	Ana Lusk	Member at Large	Judy Wagner

Fundraising for the Carriage House

This summer we have had a very successful fundraising campaign in The Watchman which has brought in a total of \$8,048.00. Put together with endowments and donations from last year’s fundraiser, we now have a total of \$47,277.00 to devote to the Carriage House. Our goal is \$65,000.00 to cover building costs, restoration work on the carriages and future upkeep. So, we are seeking more and we will have a Wine and Cheese Reception at the historic Salt Sulphur Springs Hotel on Sunday afternoon, November 10th. A separate mailing will be prepared for this event and for our annual end-of-year appeal for funds.