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MORGANTOWN HISTORY MUSEUM

useumNews

FALL 2017



West Virginia & Regional History Center

Thoney Pietro



Stewart St. was paved all the way to the city limits in 1909. Thoney Pietro at far right.



Italian-American Friendship Poster



Exhibit: Thoney Pietro: A Morgantown Visionary

Chris McGuffin, our former Assistant Coordinator and a 2017 graduate of West Virginia University, designed and mounted our popular current exhibition. In the process of group research on Works Project Administration built structures and infrastructure in Morgantown for Professor Jenny Bouleware's public history class, Chris discovered Thoney Pietro. He realized that Pietro had played a significant and extensive role in building, infrastructure and community, in Morgantown. His other legacy is a collection of high quality photographs of his work sites and crews, given by the Pietro family to the West Virginia and Regional History Collection at WVU.

THONEY PIETRO was a prominent member of Morgantown's community. An Italian immigrant, Pietro initially settled in Pittsburgh, but by 1898 called Morgantown his home. Thoney was one of nearly 5,000 Italian Immigrants who came to Morgantown in the early 20th century. He was proud of his heritage and became a leading voice for the Italian-American community in Morgantown. In the 1930s he successfully fought for the Italian language to be taught in public schools. Shortly after moving to Morgantown, Pietro founded the Thoney Pietro Construction Company. By the mid 1920s his business extended beyond the boundaries of Morgantown to include offices in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Montgomery County Pennsylvania. His men graded, paved and constructed roads, laid sewage lines, and installed drainage systems. The Pietro legacy was more than just Thoney. In fact, family was something that was close to the hearts of all the Pietros. Thoney's brothers, for example, were also highly regarded for their work and contributions to the community.

By the early 1930s Pietro had become a wealthy man in Morgantown. To show off his wealth and prosperity in the community, he decided to build a substantial stone dwelling. Built of West Virginia sandstone by Italian master masons, "Pietro's Castle" was completed in 1933 and cost \$200,000. Thoney and his family lived here for the next ten years. Today his homes along Kingwood Street and his "castle" on Tyrone Road serve as a reminder of how one man envisioned the American Dream.

One of the largest projects undertaken by the WPA in Morgantown was the building and construction of new road surfaces along Richwood Avenue. Before the Great Depression many residents of Morgantown and West Virginia urged the government to improve roads. The WPA answered these calls when they contracted with Thoney Pietro Brothers to begin construction of new road surfaces on Richwood Ave. and build substantial retaining walls in 1936. These walls still stand today and serve as a reminder for residents about the work done By the WPA during the Great Depression to improve the quality of life for Morgantown residents.

The Morgantown community recognized Richwood's completion by holding a parade followed by a dedication ceremony. The September 8th, 1937 edition of the Morgantown Post reported, "Richwood Avenue, \$350,000 City sponsored W.P.A. paving and sewer project, will don fancy dress tonight and make its formal bow to Morgantown." Following floats sponsored by local businesses, the parade concluded at Whitmore Park where Frank Conner the chairman of the event introduced speakers including: Mayor Harry Largent, Rep. Jennings Randolph, James Moreland of the program committee.



**Morgantown Museum
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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.

Morgantown History Museum

175 Kirk Street

Morgantown, WV 26505

(304) 319-1800

info@morgantownhistorymuseum.org

Hours:

Monday, Wednesday,

Friday, Saturday

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Tuesday-Thursday

11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Greetings from the Chair

Dear Friends,

That old adage 'The older you are- the faster time flies' sure seems to be true. It seems like it was only a short while ago that I was writing a message to you for the Spring 2017 MHM newsletter. They also say, 'Time flies while you are having fun!' We have had great fun in the last months at the Morgantown History Museum.

The MHM has participated in the annual downtown Main Street Chocolate Lovers' Day; Kids' Day and Arts Walk. Once again, we attended the annual Mountaineer History Expo '17 at the Marion County Courthouse, where we launched our Phase III of our continuing Flatboat Project. The Thoney Pietro: A Morgantown Visionary exhibit opening and reception opened on July 22nd to a large and appreciative crowd, due to the fact that many still living in Morgantown remember Mr. Pietro and his famous castle. We recently participated in the first annual Mason-Dixon Survey Festival in October. This event was great fun, and provided a venue within Monongalia County, that afforded visitors from not only Mon County, but three counties in Western PA, information and knowledge about our museum to others in the region.

Other than planning, coordinating and installing exhibits and displays, both on-site, and off-site, we have been involved in many additional projects. Some have made us partners with other organizations, especially WVU programs. Recently, we have been involved in collaborative projects with the local WVU History Department to provide a semester learning lab for Public History grad students, centered around producing a final graduate exhibit. Additionally, we have worked collaboratively with WVU Media students to produce a well functioning MHM web site. At the beginning of the current Fall '17 semester, we started working with the WVU Architectural Design Program students to develop possible interior museum spaces that would be suitable for our current and future collections. We are starting up a project with the WVU B&E Entrepreneurial program, to work on a statistical analysis of the MHM operation and produce a business plan which will allow us to grow and mature over the next years and into the future.

If you get a chance, please come to the Morgantown History Museum during our Christmas/Holiday: Traditions exhibit on December 2nd, from Noon-4pm - we will have refreshments and music.

Thanks for all you do- we appreciate your support.

Pamela Ball,
Chair,
MMC/MHM

Morgantown History Museum Helps Celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the Mason-Dixon Line



Mason Dixon WV-PA Marker by Cephas H. Sinclair, 1883
Erected at the site of Mason & Dixon's final earth & stone mound.
Brown's Hill, Mason Dixon Historical Park, Core, WV



250 years ago the Mason-Dixon land survey party set their final marker on Brown's Hill, now within the Mason-Dixon Historical Park at Core, West Virginia. Pete Zapadka has organized celebrations for years but this year's was exceptional.

The Morgantown History Museum participated in this interesting and educational event on both Saturday and Sunday. We had a display table with a map of the original survey route; a photo that was taken by former MHM staff member Carmen Fullmer showing the Mason-Dixon Survey stone marker, c. 2008; a copy of the original Mason-Dixon Survey Party Camp, painted by S. McLain, c.1990's and a copy of the painting, as it appeared in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article about the upcoming 250 Mason-Dixon Line festival.

The MHM used the event as a wonderful opportunity to provide some educational materials to the visitors of the festival and to provide information about the Morgantown History Museum. We had quite a few visitors to our table. The crowd seemed to be a mix between Monongalia County, WV and Greene, Washington and Allegheny County, PA visitors. It was a great learning opportunity for both the visitors and the workers on that beautiful and sunny day in the beautiful and historic Mason-Dixon Park.

The three day schedule included daily historical talks on the Mason-Dixon Survey and on land surveying techniques and equipment. Star gazing events were held at night, since Mason-Dixon's success in the difficult terrain relied on the stars. Also featured: a Native American encampment, a quilt and craft show and rides on a mule driven wagon.



Harold Shaver's display of Volkswagen memorabilia partially represents 30 years of collecting from antique stores, yard sales and the internet, as well as family gifts. The Volkswagen that he and his son own, is used to promote the history museum in parades in downtown Morgantown. It will be in the 2017 Christmas parade weather permitting.



Coming soon! The opening for Morgantown History Museum's Christmas/Holiday: Traditions exhibit Saturday December 2, 12-4 PM.

Thank You for Your Support!

We would like to thank the following individuals, families, and organizations for their volunteer work and/or their generous contributions to the Morgantown History Museum:

Dr. and Mrs. Gene Ball
 Ron Rittenhouse
 Joetta Shaver
 Melissa Arnett Carl
 J.R. Rothstein
 Appalacian Gallery
 Robert Yagle
 Holly & Michael Williams
 Lisa Fitzgerald
 Algot Stephenson
 R. Karelis
 Fannie Hinebaugh
 Linda Humphrey
 Michael Meszaros
 Professor Jeffrey Moser
 WVU Reed College of Media
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Bourbon Prime • Chef Jeremy Bosley
Flying Fish
 Chef Aaron Bennet, Cameron Proffitt
Hill and Hollow • Chef Marion Ohlinger
Iron Horse Tavern • Chef William Prunty,
 Chef Tom Douglass
The Lakehouse • Chef Travis Fortney
Lakeview Resort
 Executive Chef Jessie Teasdale
Morgantown Flour and Feed
 Executive Chef Seth Bradley French
Table 9 Chef Mark Tasker
Terra Cafe Chef Lauren Hartman
 The Jenny Wilson Trio
Donors, silent auction, Best Chef Contest

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.

Annual Memberships

\$25.00 Individual _____
 \$30.00 Family _____
 \$50.00 Corporate _____

Additional Contributions:

\$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone (h) _____

(w) _____

E-mail: _____

Mail to:

Friends of the Morgantown History Museum

175 Kirk Street

Morgantown, WV 26505

To donate objects or to volunteer some time, please contact the Morgantown History Museum at (304) 319-1800 or at info@morgantownhistorymuseum.org

To make a monetary donation, go to <https://npo.justgive.org/nonprofits/donate.jsp?ein=26-0859732>. or send donation directly to MHM, 175 Kirk St, Morgantown, WV 26505.

Some of Our New Acquisitions at the Museum

- Paper: Charles C. Howell's "History of Ridgedale School District"
- Photo: of Morgantown & Kingwood management & employees.
- Photo: of Morgantown Suspension Bridge.
- Book: "The Sinking of the Titanic and Great Sea Disasters." Logan Marshall Ed.
- Book: "One Room Schools in Monongalia County," Monongalia Historical Society 1977.
- Bowl: white milk glass, hand painted with pink roses, Davis Lynch Glass Company.
- Badge: Morgantown Police Department.
- Program: "Deckers Creek Valley Days", 12th, 13th and 14th annual. 1979-1981.
- Photo: Glenna Williams, left and Alice McEwuen in costume at Deckers Creek Valley Days. 1980
- Program: Rock Forge United Presbyterian Church 1977 Deckers Creek Valley Days.
- Program: Bicentennial for Morgantown Chamber with Virginia Chittum School of Dance.
- Chinaware: Richard Restaurant, Morgantown China Large platter, small platter, 2 cups.
- Charts: from U.S. Army Engineers Pittsburgh District 1970 Monongahela River Navigation Charts
- Photos: 33 B&W photos of C&P Telephone Co. employees and work 1978.
- Two bottles: Manufactured in Morgantown, WV by Victors Drug Company.
- Article: about a trip by Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, John Burroughs & Henry Firestone to WV.
- Article: "Edison, Ford Slept Here." Interview with Bill Ammons in 1988.
- Papers: The Life and Works of Reverend John Bernard Gibbs sent to MHM by J.R. Rothstein, Civil Rights.
- Papers, The Life and Ancestry of Mabel Isabel Dove sent by J.R. Rothstein of NY, NY.
- Yearbooks: MHS 1936 thru 1939; Red & Blue Journal newspapers '36-'40.
- Recorder: Wire Voice Recorder.
- Programs: Beau Monde Club 1961-1991: Programs from Womens Music Club
- Photo: Signed by Don Knotts, Photo Signed by David Selby.
- Pottery: handmade from Susan Elkins; (8); Louise Fuller (1); Mildred Atkins (9) pieces.
- Photos: of WVU Coliseum, Sterling Chicken farm, and Dellslow fire hose pumper.
- Photo: of Metropolitan theatre and one poster entitled "Ballet De Russe de Monte"
- Letters: from Ralph Hutchinson family.
- Map of Morgantown 1939.

Preserving Morgantown's Cultural Heritage