



Morgan County Historic Preservation Society
P. O. Box 1377
Martinsville, IN 46151
<http://www.mchps.org>

Fall 2008

PRESERVATION NEWS

IT IS TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

All memberships will expire on December 31, 2008. Please print and fill out the membership form on the last page of this newsletter and promptly send it with appropriate payment to:

MCHPS
P. O. Box 1377
Martinsville, IN 46151

Failure to renew will result in the termination of your membership and the loss of significant benefits, including your affiliate membership in Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana.

Message from the President

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The past few months have brought a lot of activity and excitement.

Board members Del and Tina Chafey spent the month of October campaigning door-to-door across the county for support in Del's race for county commissioner. Election day brought a huge voter turnout, and the day after brought the same old county commissioner. Morgan County residents listened to Del's platform but sided with no change.

On November 2, Tina and Judy Krick, her partner in Hummingbird heaven, held an auction at the Old Jail to liquidate their stock. Many of the antiques dealers that occupied the second floor kindly donated goods to MCHPS that brought in about \$400.

With the Old Jail empty, Brad and Ellen Nicholson, owners of Water to Wine Catering, prepared to move in. In the meantime, we have a very interested potential buyer for the building. They are gathering estimates for the work that will be required and formulating a plan.

The big news is our success in reaching a purchase agreement for the Grassyfork building with Larry Cleveland of Ozark Fisheries. We hope to close on the property by the end of the year.

Another success is the new Martinsville Main Street program, tentatively named Rediscover Historic Martinsville. At a ceremony at the state house on December 18, we will officially receive our state designation.

Read more about the Old Jail, Grassyfork, and Rediscover Historic Martinsville below.

The past year has been a positive one for preservation in Morgan County. Our successes have brought a considerable amount of anxiety and stress, however. Please take note that all of your board members are contributing many volunteer hours to further the cause. I hope you will thank them when you see them at the post office or elsewhere about town. It is not an easy unpaid job.

I am looking forward with optimism to 2009, and I wish you all a blessed holiday season filled with faith, joy, peace, and love.

Grassyfork Heritage

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Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana has approved our loan application to purchase the historic Grassyfork sales and display building located at 2902 East Morgan Street, just north of Martinsville. We requested the maximum loan amount of \$60,000. However, due to the stagnant real estate market that has slowed the

repayment of loans used by other organizations around the state, HLF1 has awarded us a smaller amount of \$25,000. It is understood that we will receive the balance when it is available; this will be used to remove the asbestos from the building.

After months of negotiating, in late September MCHPS and Larry Cleveland of Ozark Fisheries reached an agreement on the sale of the historic Grassyfork Fisheries building located at 2902 East Morgan Street. The agreement is for the building and four acres plus an additional 1.4 acres comprising the former rock garden site.

Built in 1936, the rustic brick building served as the public display room for products sold by Grassyfork, once the largest goldfish hatchery in the world. The building and the surrounding fish ponds were visited by hundreds of thousands of visitors every year.

The building has been vacant and in a state of deterioration for many years. It has been on the Society's list of Morgan County's ten most endangered historic properties each year since the list was initiated and is annually identified by attendees of the Morgan County Fair as one of the most significant local historic properties that should be saved.

The Society has been monitoring the situation with this building for many years. Earlier this year, a group of concerned Morgan County residents calling themselves Grassyfork Heritage came to us for help. They became a special committee of the Society, which used its experience, connections, and not-for-profit status to facilitate the deal.



It is not the Society's intent to develop this property. Instead, the Society's role is one of safe keeping until a new owner can be found. Many people in the community have expressed an interest in seeing Grassyfork become a community center. A number of individuals have also expressed interests of their own. Once the building is cleaned up, stabilized, and secure, the Society will issue a

request for proposals from groups and individuals who are interested in acquiring and developing it.

A community clean-up day was held Saturday, October 18. More than 40 volunteers showed up to cut away and remove the brush, vines, and other plant growth that choked the building. Because this work went quickly, we moved inside and began hauling out trash, tearing up carpet and removing carpet strips and tacks, dismantling and removing appliances, and other general clean-up work.

The next weekend, we held an open house for people to come and view the building, and then proceeded to board up the windows. A temporary wall with a steel entrance door was installed in the opening at the rear of the building. This will keep people from entering the building while protecting the original wood frame entrance doors. By the end of October, the building was completely secured and wrapped up for winter. Fortunately, the standing water in the basement that was noted in early summer had seeped away, and the basement is now dry. To guarantee against future pooling, we have installed black drain pipe to stubs of the original downspouts. The building resembles a very large spider.

The next phase of the project is to prepare for closing. This includes completing a survey of the property and title work. Since we are dividing the large Grassyfork parcel into three individual parcels, a minor re-plat will also have to be done. We expect this proposal to appear before the Martinsville plan commission in January or February.

Remediation of the asbestos will follow, pending the availability of funds from HLF1.

We have applied for a grant to develop a rehabilitation plan and hire a professional to guide us through the process of finding a new owner. It is our current plan to issue a request for proposals from parties interested in adapting the building to new use. These proposals will be reviewed by a committee comprised of various community members and professionals.

We are also in the process of applying for a second grant from the Efroymsen Fund to begin restoration work on the rock garden site, which is now an overgrown tangle of trees, brush and vines. We envision a cleared site replanted with appropriate flowers and plants, a public heritage trail, and other park-like amenities.

We wish to thank the following individuals and businesses for the donation of materials, equipment, and supplies. We also thank our many committed volunteers from the community.

Bob Miller, Ray's Trash – dumpster
Jim Parker, NuGenesis – pick up of appliances and scrap metal

Owen's Septic – port-a-pot
Larry Cleveland, Ozark Fisheries – front end loader
Bender Lumber – discount on plywood and other materials
Roger Pearson, Hand Prints Ink – discount on banner
made on very short notice
Stan Matilla, Ace Hardware – donation of carriage bolts
Kroger – bottled water and other supplies
David Rosenbaum – assistance with Bender Lumber
Marie Dake – homemade cookies for the open house
David Johnson and the community corrections crew

Water to Wine Catering is New Tenant at Old Jail

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The past month has brought a whirlwind of activity and change at the Old Jail as Brad and Ellen Nicholson and the Water to Wine Catering team have prepared to move in. They will operate a catering kitchen and conference center on the first floor. The second floor will remain vacant for the time being.

In order to claim the space as their own, Water to Wine has repainted the walls and woodwork and refinished the wood floor in what will be the main dining room. Work has continued almost non-stop so that a December 1 completion date could be met. The first event is scheduled for December 4.

MCHPS has invested in several necessary repairs, including the basement furnace that was discovered to have stopped working. The building has three furnaces, one on each floor. The lock on the east door has also been replaced. We have also cleaned out the basement, which was still filled with many items left by the county when it abandoned the building in the early 1990s.

In answering the Nicholsons' many question about the building, we found ourselves recalling and describing what the building was like when we acquired it in 1994. The realization of just how far we have come since then surprised us. It's easy to forget how much work, money, and time have been invested in the building over the years.

When we got title to the building, the first floor was broken up into many rooms. A huge mound of discarded items ranging from household goods to paper trash filled the largest room. All of this, and the building itself, was destined for a landfill before we stepped in. We had a huge yard sale and sold what we could. The rest went into a dumpster with the help of students from East Middle school. Then, using a loan from Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, we had the 1976 additions on the west and north removed, did necessary stabilization and

repair work, and put the building up for sale. Although we had several interested parties and even one purchase agreement, no sale was ever completed.

In 2002, after the first floor space was opened up and finished off, Hummingbird Heaven moved in. This business closed in July.

The building is again for sale. A very interested party has been discussing necessary repairs and alterations with various contractors in order to determine just how much the building's complete rehabilitation might cost. There are others, too, with a keen interest in the building.

Rediscover Historic Martinsville

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In the planning and early implementation stages for several months, the new Main Street program in Martinsville will receive its official designation on December 18 at the Indiana state house. According to Shae Young, director of Indiana Main Street, this is the largest group of inductees in a single year

Established almost 30 years ago by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Main Street program is a community-driven, preservation-based economic development initiative for historic downtowns in more than 1200 communities nationwide. National statistics show that a ten-year Main Street program reinvests an average of \$12 million in the downtown area, launches 70 new businesses, and creates 250 new jobs

A name for the new organization—Rediscover Historic Martinsville—was tentatively selected at the October meeting. It will require the approval of the interim board when one is formed pursuant to filing papers of incorporation. In the meantime, interested people have formed working committees based on the Main Street Four-Point approach. The organization committee is developing a strategy for developing the organization from an idea to a fully functioning group. The promotions committee is already at work on special events, including Country Christmas on the Square to be held December 13. This committee also sponsored a dance at West Middle School on November 21 that raised \$1200. The design committee, with help from members of the promotions committee, is working on decorating the downtown lamp posts for Christmas. The economic restructuring committee will be participating in securing a planning grant for downtown revitalization.

All of this is a very good beginning, and much more is planned for 2009. The challenge of making downtown an economically viable, culturally engaging, and socially desirable place is an exciting prospect indeed.

News Briefs

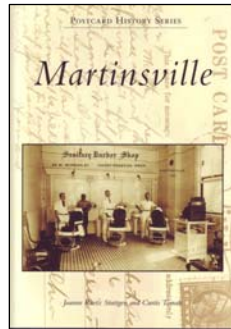
Board of Directors

Downtown Rezoning Ordinance (Joanne Stuttgen) •

The ordinance to make downtown Martinsville a protected district was approved by the Martinsville Plan Commission on December 2 and sent to the City Council for action. It will be considered at the January 5, 2009, meeting.

Hopes that the new ordinance would be passed by the end of 2008 were quashed in October when the ordinance was sent back to committee for some late fine-tuning. Approximately 15 people attended the hearing, down significantly from the January meeting when the ordinance was first introduced to the public. Most were concerned that the ordinance would dictate what property owners could or could not do to the interior of the building. However, the ordinance applies only to a building's exterior. Others were concerned that the city would require them to "take back" their building to an earlier period, which would require the replacement of security doors with antique doors. This also is not the case. The new ordinance will require approval for all exterior changes of a structural nature. It will also require that replacement windows match the originals and fill the original openings. In addition, among other things, storefronts must be a minimum of 75% glass.

Fundraising (Tina Chafey) • The new **Martinsville history book** based on vintage postcards by Joanne Stuttgen and Curtis Tomak is available at the Martinsville Candy Kitchen. Cost is \$20.00 no tax/\$16 members. The book is also available at most downtown retailers. Proceeds will be shared with the new Martinsville Main Street organization. MCHPS must buy the book at the Candy Kitchen if they are using their 20% discount.



The 2008 Special Edition Cat's Meow piece is the **Homelawn Sanitarium**. We hope to have it available at the Martinsville Candy Kitchen for Christmas, but delays in getting the design just right may mean that it will come a bit too late. Please call the Candy Kitchen at 342-6390 after December 18 to check on its availability. Cost will be \$21.95/\$17.56 members plus tax.



This is a scan of a scan of the new Homelawn piece. The colors shown here are not true to actual colors.

Wear your town with pride! We have a supply of gold-finish oval **lapel pins** promoting Martinsville as the city of Mineral Water now for sale at the Candy Kitchen. These are metal with a gold finish. Cost is \$5.00/\$4.00 members including tax.

We have a number of **Christmas ornaments featuring the Grassyfork building** available for \$5 apiece. There is no MCHPS discount. These were produced in 2002 as part of the limited edition series of ornaments sold by the Greater Martinsville Chamber of Commerce. They have been donated by the Chamber, with proceeds going to the preservation of the Grassyfork building. These ornaments are available at the Martinsville Candy Kitchen. There are still quite a few of the ornaments produced in other years as well, so add to your collection or start a new one today.

Hall Civic Association • Good and encouraging news comes from former board member Randy Marsh, president of the Hall Civic Association (HCA), whose mission is preservation and reuse of the 1911 Hall School building. For several years now, HCA has struggled to secure the building from the Monroe-Gregg school corporation. The previous superintendent refused to sign a lease without a short-term release clause, which was unacceptable to HCA. When he left to take the position of superintendent of the Beech Grove schools, Dr. Jerry Wolfe was named interim superintendent. Dr. Wolfe has agreed to a 99-year lease of the old building to HCA.

HCA held its fourth annual dinner theater on November 22, entertaining more than 100 guests with "Hall's Hilarious Hillbillies" based on the old Heehaw TV show. Rehearsals began in August and continued through the week leading up to the Saturday evening performance. Members of the cast came from the local community and included Morgan County plan director Kenny Hale and Volitta Fritsche of the sheriff's department, and Volitta's son and daughter-in-law.

Money raised will go towards restoration of the building. HCA members have been busy with minor repairs such as painting the windows and eaves. Tuck pointing and replacement of deteriorated bricks are among the major repairs that must be tackled very soon. Other repair work will be identified in a feasibility study now being carried out by Tom Meredith, a local preservation architect. This study is funded in partly a grant from Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana.

"We're moving ahead and looking to get the building done and planning the next fundraiser," Randy reports. Re-use plans include a local library with a medical section funded by the Kendrick Foundation and with a museum with pictures and historical books of the school and the Hall community. Currently, one basement room is being rented by the Healthy Family program of Head Start.

2008-09 Board of Directors

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vacant

RENEW NOW.

Your continued support is appreciated.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM • MORGAN COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION SOCIETY			
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