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SPECIAL EDITION | JULY 5, 2026

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The Dominion Post

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Introduction

This year marks a special milestone for the United States of America. We celebrate 250 years as a nation in 2026, a quarter of a century from the signing of the Declaration of Independence from British rule and the admitting of the first 13 states to the union.

What began as organized resistance to taxation without representation, unlawful searches and distant rule has become a nation that stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific, a country shaped by many voices and backgrounds, a place where ideas and cultures converge into a great societal melting pot.

As a culmination to our 13-week series leading up to Independence Day, this special edition explores how north-central West Virginia helped define the American experience.

We're happy to have you along for the ride as we look back at the highlights of our region's contributions to the growth of a nation.



*Happy Independence Day
to America and to you!*



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YEARS OF FREEDOM



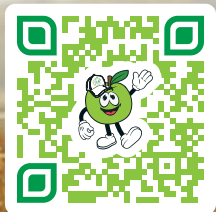
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Take me to the river: It was the Mon, not coal, that made Morgantown

By JIM BISSETT | JBissett@DominionPost.com

MORGANTOWN – This is a story about possibly the oldest rental property in Morgantown.

Which begins with the discovery of an empty whiskey bottle from another house – not quite as old – but still perfect for the aquatic plot device still running through town.

And the University City's original entrepreneur who rowed the retail, as it were.

Here goes: The present-day owner of the second house was in the midst of a remodeling project a few years back when he spied the aforementioned bottle.

It had been tucked between two walls all this time, and when the glint caught his eye, he laughed, what with Morgantown being a college town that likes its bars and imbibing, and all.

After he laughed, he gifted it to the Morgantown History Museum, just because of its glassmaking filigree.

It was old, it was cool and it spoke to Morgantown's Colonial acquaintance with the Monongahela River, the aforementioned liquid thread that bisects the place.

The label and raised lettering of the bottle said it came from the Monongahela Rye Whiskey Co., a Pittsburgh distillery dating back to



the early 1800s.

Which meant it could have only gotten here by way of one of Michael Kern's flatboats – Kern being the aforementioned entrepreneur who capitalized on the commerce and potential only the aforementioned Mon could carry.

ORGANIZED OARS

Kern was a Dutch immigrant who took an axe to a towering stand of chestnut trees 254 years ago in 1772, and went to work.

Work, it was. What would eventually become Morgantown was some 600 acres of old-growth forest, as said.

Lots of resharpening of that axe's edge.

He built a house, which we'll get to. Then, he founded a grist mill at present-day Deckers Creek.

Then, he started constructing flatboats. He launched his line when river traffic – was the only traffic.

TAKE ME TO THE RIVER

From its beginning point in neighboring Fairmont, Marion County, the Monongahela River does something most aquatic arteries don't.

The river flows south to north. Most go the other way.

It bisects Morgantown and Westover on its 128-mile burble into western Pennsylvania, where it eventually meets up with the mighty Ohio River in Pittsburgh,



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where the whiskey flowed, also.

Whatever direction of its current, in the region back then, the Mon meant business.

As Mon River historian John Kent Folmar notes – he’s “J.K.,” to his family, friends and teaching colleagues at California University of Pennsylvania, where he taught history for decades – retail was a literal journey.

If you wanted something and you couldn’t salvage it or construct it, you had to order it.

If you had a thirst for, say, your favorite beverage from the Monongahela Rye Co., you had to order it.

Just like the Mon, J.K. Folmar flowed South to North

(capitalized) to get to the region.

– Academia brought the Birmingham, Ala. native to California, Pa. – the borough in Washington County that’s home to him now (even if the 80-something is still more apt to say “y’all” over “yinz”).

While he always lived near the Mon, his research interests were initially on the Civil War and Reconstruction – not the river.

Its eddies and currents caught his fancy. He would create whole courses around the river. He would edit a newsletter related to its history – and its waters would become his life’s blood in many ways.

Just because.

“My sons threw rocks in the Mon and splashed in the Mon,” he said, “and now my grandsons are throwing rocks in the Mon and splashing in the Mon.”

‘CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT?’

In Morgantown, talk of constructing a permanently anchored, and Colonial-correct flatbed to honor the memory of Kerns hasn’t been able to fully set sail – not yet.

Meanwhile, Adelheid Schaupp has historical devices on a certain dwelling at 305 Dewey Street, in Morgantown’s Greenmont neighborhood.

Amazingly, the house, after generations of fixer-up work, was still occupied as recently as 2022.





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Schaupp, a Morgantown native and former doctoral student in history at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University, left school to follow her contractor's house-flipping muse.

Her first property was acquired when she was 21. Now, she's the owner of Kerns' house.

She wants a revisioning, to celebrate the massive, rough-hewn chestnut logs the flat-boat businessman cut down in 1772 with that axe of his.

A museum with a sit-down cafe, perhaps, she said.

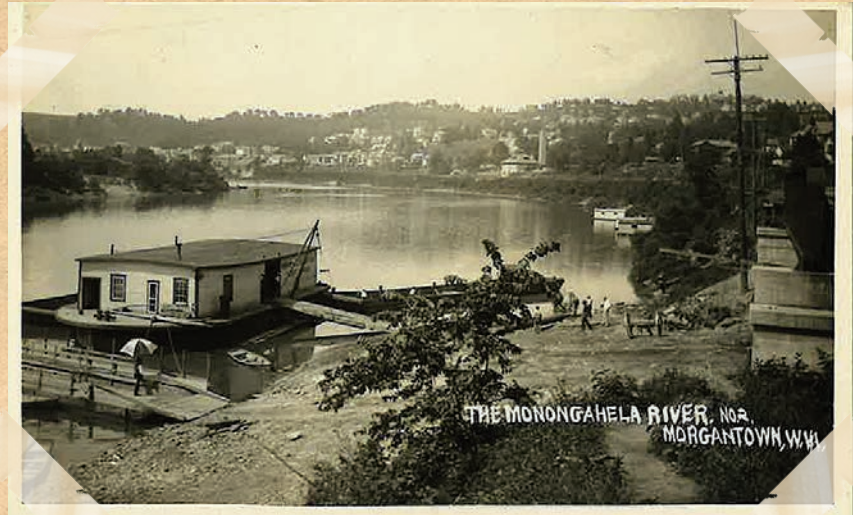
"I want people to know what we have," Schaupp said. "There's just so much history here."

History that flows south to north, Folmar said.

"Before the railroads, the Mon River was the cheapest way to go," he said. "In the 1750s and 1760s, it was like an interstate highway."

And never mind Mark Twain and that other river, he said.

"The Mon between 1890 and 1900 moved more tonnage than the Panama Canal. Can you believe that?"



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Modern Infrastructure	Energy & Environment
Labor	Public Health
Human Rights	Immigration
Public Education & Families	Global Leadership

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The end of a war: Morgantown Ordnance Works and the atomic bomb

By DAVID BEARD | For the Dominion Post

MORGANTOWN – Four concrete smokestacks overlooking the Monongahela River stand as a reminder of Morgantown’s role in developing the atomic bombs that brought an end to World War II.

They are what remains of the Morgantown Ordnance Works, which occupied 826 acres at what is now Morgantown Industrial Park. At its peak, it employed about 1,400 people.

“It was big, probably the largest public-facing defense plant we had in the area,” said Andrew Linderman, reference supervisor for WVU West Virginia and Regional History Center.

There were a few factories in Sabraton that retooled to make such things as uniforms and bullet casings, he said. But “this was the largest wartime

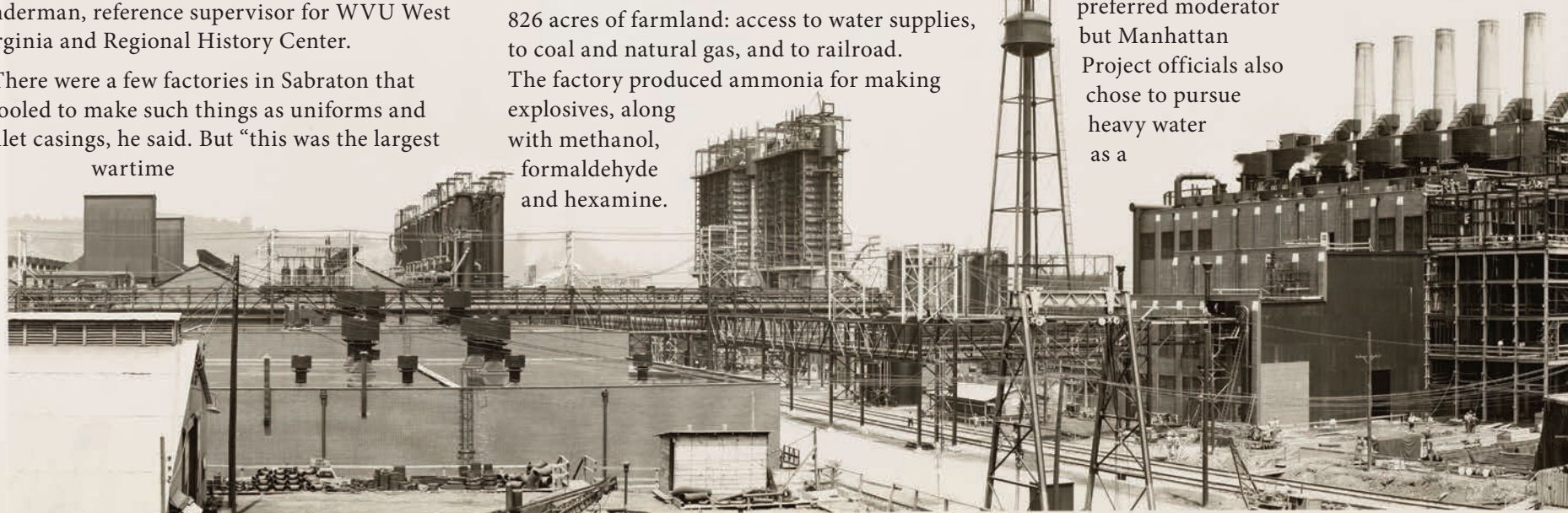
employer for the city, and it took a lot of pride having it here.”

Morgantown Ordnance Works from its beginnings was tied to munitions and the war effort, but its role in the atomic bomb came later. E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Company began building it in 1940 under the supervision of the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps. It cost more than \$37 million in 1940 dollars and went into service in November 1941.

Several factors led to selection of what was 826 acres of farmland: access to water supplies, to coal and natural gas, and to railroad. The factory produced ammonia for making explosives, along with methanol, formaldehyde and hexamine.

But Morgantown Ordnance Works soon took on an additional task: contributing to the Manhattan Project – the massive effort to build an atomic bomb before Nazi Germany. Several place names come handily to mind associated with that project: Oak Ridge, Tennessee; the University of Chicago; Los Alamos and White Sands, New Mexico. Morgantown – not so much.

Production of plutonium for the bomb requires a “moderator” to slow and control the fission process. Graphite is the preferred moderator but Manhattan Project officials also chose to pursue heavy water as a





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backup option.

We know regular water as H₂O – two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen. Heavy water is D₂O – two atoms of deuterium and one oxygen. Deuterium is an isotope of hydrogen and contains a neutron

An isotope has the same atomic number but more neutrons. D₂O is denser and heavier than H₂O.

The Manhattan Project called the heavy water project P-9 and chose three sites: Morgantown Ordnance Works, Wabash River Ordnance Works in Indiana and the Alabama Ordnance Works. Construction on the Morgantown facility's expansion

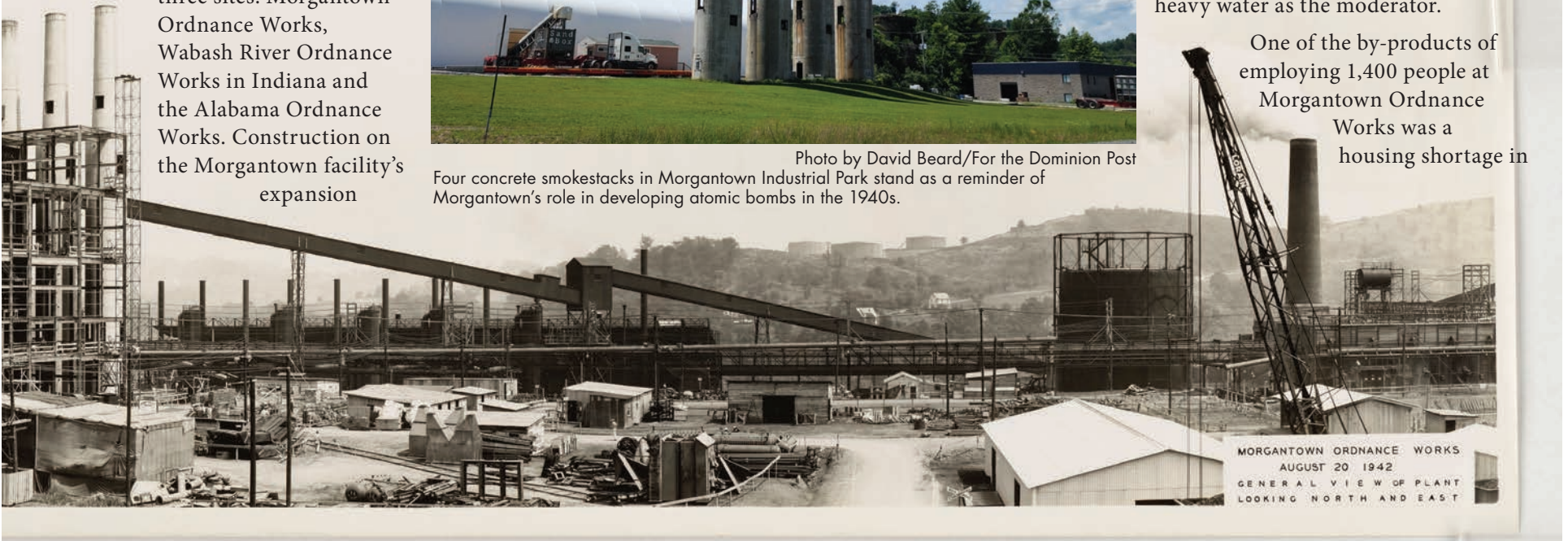


Photo by David Beard/For the Dominion Post
Four concrete smokestacks in Morgantown Industrial Park stand as a reminder of Morgantown's role in developing atomic bombs in the 1940s.

project began in January 1943 and was completed by September. It cost an additional \$3.5 million.

The expansion included an Electrolytic Finishing Plant that purified the heavy water to 99.75%. The other two P-9 plants shipped their water by rail to Morgantown Ordnance Works, which then shipped the purified heavy water by rail to the University of Chicago for their reactor research. As it turned out, graphite was chosen over heavy water as the moderator.

One of the by-products of employing 1,400 people at Morgantown Ordnance Works was a housing shortage in





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Morgantown. Linderman said this led to such things as three workers sharing a room in a house by shifts, taking turns to sleep in the same bed. The Defense Department developed some housing for the workers in the area behind Krepps Park, and some of those 1940s homes still stand.

After two atomic bombs brought about Japan's surrender and the end of World War II, DuPont closed down production at Morgantown Ordnance Works. The U.S. government leased the facility to various chemical companies into the early 1950s.

Then the site stood vacant until 1962, when the U.S. General Services Administration sold it for \$1.25 million to the Morgantown Community Association, which then sold it to the newly created Morgantown Ordnance Works Inc., which began converting the site into what is now Morgantown Industrial Park.

Linderman noted that at war's end, with the

plant's mothballing, there were fears of massive unemployment. And while there was a rise in unemployment, most workers found other jobs and returning military personnel used the G.I. Bill to go to school.

However, the chemical production operations at the Morgantown Ordnance Works site and disposal of hazardous wastes polluted the soil and groundwater. So in 1984, the EPA proposed MOW/MIP as a Superfund site, and it was added to the National Priorities List in 1986.

Cleanup and remediation began, and in September 2017, the EPA signed its Final Close-Out Report. The site was removed from the priorities list in 2018. Monitoring of groundwater and surface water continues.

And a sign stands at the foot of the four smokestacks: "The Smokestacks Property, at 1000 Dupont Road, Morgantown, West Virginia 26501,

is being remediated with funds from an EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant."

The sign directs anyone wanting information to contact the West Virginia Land Stewardship Corp. at wvslc.org.

Commenting on Morgantown Ordnance Works' meaning to the community now, Linderman noted the site's evolution from farmland to industrial to commercial. "It's one of the enduring aspects of the town."

Story sources: Andrew Linderman, reference supervisor, WVU West Virginia and Regional History Center; National Archives; National Park Service; Atomic Heritage Foundation; "Abandoned" historical collection website; "Morgantown Ordnance Works" article by Zachery Cowser published in Clio; Legal Clarity.



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50 Fast Facts

1. The United States declared independence from Great Britain on July 4, 1776.
2. George Washington was the nation's first president.
3. The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the country.
4. The American Civil War remains the deadliest war in U.S. history.
5. Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.
6. The Transcontinental Railroad linked the East and West coasts.
7. The Wright brothers' first flight launched the aviation age.
8. Henry Ford popularized the assembly line.
9. The Great Depression was the worst economic downturn in U.S. history.
10. Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected to four terms.
11. The Attack on Pearl Harbor brought the U.S. into World War II.
12. The United States helped lead the Allied victory in World War II.
13. The Apollo 11 Moon Landing put Americans on the Moon.
14. Neil Armstrong took the first lunar step.
15. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered the "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963.
16. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed segregation in public accommodations.
17. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 strengthened ballot access.
18. Jonas Salk created the first effective polio vaccine.
19. Thomas Edison held more than 1,000 patents.
20. Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.
21. Walt Disney built one of the world's most influential entertainment companies.
22. Jackie Robinson broke Major League Baseball's color barrier.
23. Babe Ruth became America's first great sports superstar.
24. Muhammad Ali became a global symbol of courage and conviction.
25. Michael Jordan helped globalize basketball.
26. The Gold Rush accelerated westward migration.
27. Sacagawea aided the Lewis and Clark Expedition.
28. Susan B. Anthony fought for women's voting rights.
29. The Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution granted women the right to vote.
30. Thurgood Marshall helped end school segregation.
31. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg advanced gender equality.
32. Benjamin Franklin was an inventor, diplomat and writer.
33. Alexander Hamilton built the nation's financial system.
34. John Marshall established judicial review.
35. The Monroe Doctrine warned Europe against colonizing the Americas.
36. Theodore Roosevelt created a lasting conservation legacy.
37. Yellowstone National Park was the world's first national park.
38. The Interstate Highway System transformed travel and commerce.
39. Grace Hopper helped pioneer computer programming.
40. Bill Gates helped bring personal computers to millions.
41. Steve Jobs reshaped consumer electronics.
42. Oprah Winfrey became one of the most influential figures in modern media.
43. The Marshall Plan helped rebuild Europe and strengthened America's global leadership.
44. Clara Barton established one of the nation's most important humanitarian organizations.
45. Mark Twain helped define American literature.
46. Elvis Presley popularized rock and roll worldwide.
47. Jonas Salk created a vaccine that virtually eliminated one of the most feared diseases of the 20th century.
48. The Manhattan Project brought together American scientists and engineers to create the first atomic weapons.
49. Katherine Johnson performed calculations that helped send American astronauts into orbit and to the Moon.
50. In 2026, the United States celebrates its 250th birthday—its semiquincentennial.



AMERICA 250

‘Mountaineers Are Always Free’: New exhibit highlights West Virginia’s evolving story

Story and photos by BENJAMIN POWELL | BPowell@DominionPost.com

MORGANTOWN — After a recent afternoon discussion tracing West Virginia’s place across generations of American history, visitors to West Virginia University’s Downtown Library moved upstairs to experience that history firsthand.

Located on the sixth floor, the West Virginia & Regional History Center’s newest exhibit, “Mountaineers Are Always Free: West Virginia at 250,” invites guests to step through the stories, people and movements that have shaped the Mountain State over the last two and a half centuries.

Opened in conjunction with WVU’s West Virginia Day celebration and America’s semiquincentennial, the exhibit serves as a retrospective look at the state’s identity while drawing from archival collections preserved inside the university’s historical holdings.

For Lori Hostuttler, director of the West Virginia & Regional History Center, the exhibit was designed to do more than revisit dates and milestones.

“This truly is a retrospective exhibit of West Virginia at 250,” Hostuttler said. “We’re looking back at sort of three different themes in West Virginia history.”

Those themes guide visitors through the gallery space.

The first explores the power of place — examining how West Virginia’s landscape shaped its development across generations.

“Our land has served us as a frontier, as an economic driver, as a place of extreme scenic beauty and a place for tourism,” Hostuttler said.

Through photographs, historical objects and archival materials, the exhibit presents West Virginia not simply as a location, but as a force that influenced settlement, industry and identity.

The second section shifts to the people of West Virginia, broadening the traditional narrative often associated with the state’s origins.

Hostuttler said the exhibit intentionally highlights stories that are not always centered in historical conversations.

“We talk a little traditionally about the first settlers that came here, but we also talk about the Native American populations that were here before,” she said.

Visitors also encounter stories tied to immigration and industrialization, documenting the communities that helped build the state.

“We look at some of the immigrant populations that came during the industrialization period — Italians, Greek, Spanish, Belgian and many more ethnicities,” Hostuttler said. “There’s so much ethnic diversity that people don’t realize is here.”

Additional displays spotlight the experiences and contributions of Black West Virginians and women, creating space for perspectives that have often received less historical attention.

The exhibit’s final section — and the one lending its name to the





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overall experience — focuses on freedom, democracy and unfinished revolutions.

Titled “Mountaineers Are Always Free,” the section examines moments throughout state history where residents pushed for social, political and economic change.

“This is where we’re looking at struggles for freedom and democracy, and for rights,” Hostuttler said.

Featured topics include the West Virginia statehood movement, labor activism and the Mine Wars, women’s suffrage, the civil rights movement and environmental advocacy.

One display even connects historical activism to contemporary history through a case examining the 2018 teachers’ strike.

By placing these moments together, the exhibit emphasizes that history is not a single narrative but an ongoing conversation.

That message echoed themes introduced earlier in the day during the history panel discussion, where researchers reflected on statehood, labor, civil rights and the people whose stories continue shaping West Virginia.

Hostuttler said the exhibit also serves as a way to showcase the collections housed within the History Center and remind residents that those materials belong to the public.

“Our collection exists for the people of West Virginia,” she said. “You don’t have to be part of WVU. You don’t have to be an academic. It’s here for everyone.”

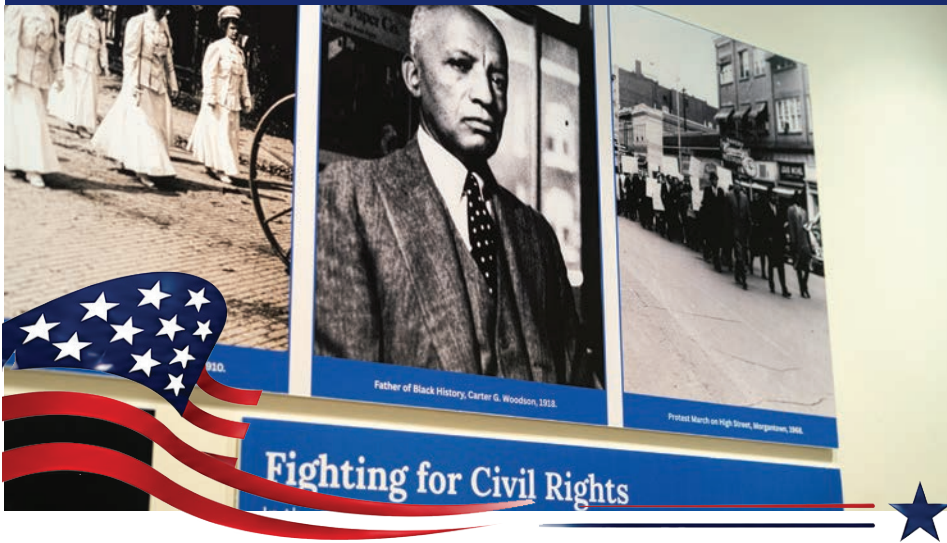
The exhibit will remain open through April 2027 and is available to visitors during regular operating hours at the West Virginia & Regional History Center inside WVU’s Downtown Library.

As America celebrates its 250th anniversary, the exhibit offers visitors a chance not only to look backward, but to consider how West Virginia’s story continues to evolve.





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AMERICA 250



Stepping ahead in time: Mon County to fill America 250 capsule

By BEN CONLEY | BConley@DominionPost.com

MORGANTOWN – If you had to select a handful of items that would give future generations a glimpse back to Monongalia County in 2026, what would they be?

A WVU baseball ticket? A flier from the Ruby Concert Series or the Metropolitan Theatre? A picture of Coopers Rock?

If you have ideas, Monongalia County Commission President Tom Bloom wouldn't mind hearing them.

The county commission has a time capsule to fill.

It came from the state as part of an America 250 party kit of sorts.

Also included in the box were balloons, stickers, window clings, a scroll of the Declaration of Independence, and a flag that's currently flying over High Street in front of the Monongalia County Courthouse.

As for what's going to be tucked away inside the capsule ...

"What I'm going to request, with the support of the commission, is that I could write an email to Granville, Westover, Morgantown, Star City and Blacksville and ask them to contribute something," Bloom said. "Then we will put it in the time capsule and place it somewhere. But I think it would be really neat to have something from each city – something that represents them. I think it's a nice idea."

Bloom said he also welcomes suggestions for what items could be included at tbloom@monongaliacounty.gov.

The one caveat, "it's got to be pretty small," he said.

The metallic tube is only slightly larger than the plastic pods that zip around in the pneumatic tubes at the bank drive-through.

It's decidedly smaller than "America's Time Capsule" – a 900-pound steel cylinder to be buried in Philadelphia on July 4.

But Morgantown and Monongalia County will be represented in both.

In addition to handcrafted glass from Milton's Blenko Glass Company, West Virginia's contribution includes a copy of "Remembering our Foundation," the winning submission in a statewide essay contest penned by Morgantown High School's Alyssa Dalton.



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Morgantown Mural



Photos by Ron Rittenhouse/
The Dominion Post
The America 250 Mural Trail runs through Morgantown on Wall Street between High and Chestnut streets. The artwork, created by West Virginia artist Blake Wheeler, honors the culture, history, industrial roots, entertainment, and the people and moments that shaped the community. The nearly 900-square-foot mural adorns the historic Morgan Theater building downtown.



AMERICA 250

Breaking ground in Arthurdale: Preston County's New Deal community was first of its kind

By JENIFFER GRAHAM | For the Dominion Post

Arthurdale was a first-of-its-kind project promoted by first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Between 1933 and 1937, 165 houses and numerous community structures were erected on approximately 1,200 acres that were purchased in Preston County by the federal government.

The community consisted of a school, a blacksmith's forge, a gas station,

cooperative store, craft shop, barbershop and a doctor's clinic in addition to manufacturing and agricultural structures, according to Kenneth Kidd, Director of Arthurdale Heritage.

He said most of the community buildings still stand and most are part of the New Deal Homestead Museum. In 1984, the community celebrated its 50th anniversary, a celebration that resulted in the establishment of Arthurdale Heritage Inc., with a mission to preserve the historic community of Arthurdale.

The unadorned frame houses and masonry buildings of Arthurdale were the hammer-and-nails, brick-and-mortar embodiment of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal pledge to pull the country — Appalachia, in particular — out of the crushing poverty of the Great Depression.

Kidd said Arthurdale was the nation's first New Deal Community and has often been called "Eleanor's Little Village." He said she visited the project about 33 times and was intimately involved with the community.



Photo by Jeniffer Graham/For the Dominion Post
An orange cat sleeps on a bench at House E15 in Arthurdale



AMERICA 250



Courtesy of West Virginia & Regional History Center
Children play volleyball on a dirt court in Arthurdale around 1940.

“Eleanor worried about the families and children. She was here for many of the holidays. At Christmas, she brought gifts for the children,” Kidd said. “She would drive down Route 50 and stop and visit the artists in the Aurora artist colonies.”

On May 27, 1938, FDR also visited Arthurdale. Kidd said the president was the commencement speaker at the high school graduation.

Kidd said residents of the first houses were given basic furniture free of charge according to their need. The government attempted to maintain an inventory of the furnishings and equipment it had provided, expecting that the homesteaders would eventually pay for them.

Each homestead included farm plots of 2 to 5 acres, depending on the topography of the land. An average plot might include an acre of wheat, several types of fruit trees (apples, pears, peaches, cherries, etc.) and a grape arbor. Any remaining acreage would have been planted in forage crops for the livestock being raised.

“Following [World War II], all of the homesteads were sold to the homesteaders, and the government was no longer involved in the project,” Kidd said. “The government created more than 100 New Deal homestead communities nationwide. Three of them were located in West Virginia. Arthurdale was the first.”

Staff writer Jim Bissett contributed to this report.

“Eleanor had a hand in every bit of development,” he said. “This was a test, the guinea pig at the time. If the government was going to give people a hand up, she made sure each home had indoor plumbing, electric, a refrigerator and a stove.”

In August 1933, she visited the impoverished coal camps of Scott’s Run—a mining town just outside of Morgantown, and was deeply moved by the families and their stories of hardship. Bringing these stories of Scott’s Run back to Washington with her inspired the U.S. government to purchase farmland in nearby Preston County from Richard Arthur and began constructing the first experimental community. The Subsistence Homesteads Division received more than 1,000 applications from families in north-central West Virginia (many from Scott’s Run) to be the first Arthurdale homesteaders, according to its website.

Photo by Jeniffer Graham/For the Dominion Post
Arthurdale Heritage Director Kenneth Kidd stands by a sign about Arthurdale Heritage.



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July 4th Calendar

Fairview Fourth of July Celebration

7:30 a.m.- 11:45 p.m.

Fireworks over Cheat Lake

10 p.m.

City of Morgantown Fourth of July Celebration

Parade on High Street

4 p.m.

Hazel Ruby McQuain Park

7-10 p.m.

Celebrate the 4th with the community with live performances, food trucks, face painting and, of course, a spectacular fireworks show!

Palatine Park Fourth of July Celebration

Palatine Park

Everest Drive, Fairmont

6 p.m.

Celebrate the Fourth of July at Palatine Park with an evening of free live music and fireworks. The celebration kicks off at 6 p.m. with local favorite Byron "Six-Six" Cooper, followed by Motorcycle Drive-By at 7 p.m. The night wraps with Nightrain, a Guns N' Roses tribute band, taking the stage at 8 p.m.

Big Bear Lake Camplands Fourth of July Fireworks

Big Bear Lake Camplands Bruceton Mills

Celebrate the Fourth of July at Big Bear Lake Camplands with a laid-back evening and a fireworks display to end the night. Enjoy time with friends and family and take in the holiday atmosphere by the lake.

Independence Day Celebration

Prickett's Fort

Fairmont

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

After listening to a full reading of The Declaration of Independence, take in the historical significance of the fort.

Ride to the Grafton National Cemetery

Triple S Harley-Davidson

Willie G Avenue

Westover

noon

Honor Independence Day with a patriotic group ride starting at Triple S Harley-Davidson. Riders will gather for registration before heading out on a scenic 70-mile ride through Grafton National Cemetery and ending at Dairy Creme Corner. Celebrate freedom, friendship and the open road.

Independence Day Concert

Chestnut Ridge Park & Campground

346 Chestnut Ridge Camp Road, Bruceton Mills

Mills

The Halftime String Band

6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Bring a blanket or camp chairs, let the kids run, and enjoy the music! Kids of all ages can pop bubbles, wave streamers and dance with hula hoops to add to the dancing fun! The park will have concessions available, however, coolers are welcome. Tickets are \$5/person - Cash only. Children 6 and under get in free. Well-behaved pets are welcomed and must remain on a leash. Food trucks will be on hand.

Masontown (PA) 150th Anniversary Festival Hot Dog Eating Contest

Masontown-German Park

3 p.m.

\$5 entry fee

Ages 18+ to participate

Winner gets bragging rights, glory and festival fame

Register at

masontownmatters@yahoo.com.

Waynesburg (PA) Fourth of July Celebration

Pancake Breakfast at Greene County

Fairgrounds

7-11 a.m.

20th Annual Car Show at Waynesburg Lions Club Park

Club Park

Noon-3 p.m.

Opening Ceremonies at Waynesburg Lions Club Park

Club Park

6 p.m.

Little Miss Firecracker Pageant at

Waynesburg Lions Club Park

6:30 p.m.

Open to girls ages 5-8

Part Time Cowboys concert at Waynesburg Lions Club Amphitheater

Lions Club Amphitheater

7-9:30 p.m.

Fireworks Show

After the concert



AMERICA 250



West Virginia and the mountaineer spirit: War and division give birth to the nation's 35th state

By DAVID BEARD | For The Dominion Post

MORGANTOWN – On June 20, 1863, West Virginia became the nation's 35th state. It was born in the midst of the Civil War, carved (illegally, some contend to this day) from its parent state Virginia, which had seceded (illegally, it was agreed) from the Union.

Slavery was an issue in the division, but not the primary issue. The divide ran deeper, or higher, you could say: as high as the Allegheny Mountains that separated eastern Virginia from western. Cultural differences existed. Political disenfranchisement fueled resentment and power struggles. War and the question of alignment with the North or South provided the impetus for secession from the seceded parent state.

"I always jokingly like to say we have the best state creation story in the country," said Hal Gorby, teaching associate professor in WVU's Department of History. The mid-war split. The questionable legality.

"In a way, it kind of reflects the mountaineer spirit of rugged independence, fortitude, carving out a way for ourselves. It kind of fits the sort of character that we often associate with the state."

Eastern Virginians were largely of English background. They lived on large plantations and employed slaves. Western Virginians were German, Scots-Irish, Dutch, Welsh and English. The mountainous western terrain made for smaller farms and slaves were far fewer.

The first constitution of the Commonwealth of Virginia, signed June 12, 1776, disenfranchised western Virginians by giving voting rights to those who owned 25 acres of improved or 50 acres of unimproved land, giving the easterners with larger plots more voting power. It was a division of planters and mountaineers.

Transportation infrastructure also played a role. The west had only one railroad: the Baltimore & Ohio. The east had canals and more rail connections.

Author Bob O'Connor quotes an 1803 letter written by Harrison County Dele-

gate John G. Jackson: "The disenfranchisement of all the freemen of Virginia, except those possessing lands, is so impolite a measure, and so subversive of natural right, that of the constitution were perfect in every other part, it would demand a prompt interference, and decisive change."

An 1829 constitutional convention led to a new constitution ratified in 1830, which provided no change. Newspapers in Wheeling and Charleston called for secession from Virginia. The problem grew as western Virginia's white population grew faster than that of the east, but without growth of legislative representation.

A new constitution ratified in 1851 offered some relief. It gave voting rights to all white males age 21 and up with two years of residency in the state. But it created a new problem: property taxes. Slaves were taxed at a lower value than other property, shifting the tax burden westward.

Abraham Lincoln won the presidency in 1860 by a plurality. In Virginia, he tallied only 1,887 of 166,891 votes cast, with 1,402 from western counties.

Talk of Virginia's secession from the Union began, but the idea failed in a convention held February-April 1861.

But just two weeks after the April 4 vote, Lincoln on April 15 called on Virginia to furnish troops to the Union Army. Gov. John Letcher refused, telling Lincoln, "Your object is to subjugate the Southern States, and a requisition made upon me for such an object ... will not be complied with. You have chosen to inaugurate civil war"

Virginia voted to secede on April 15 and the citizens voted to ratify the measure in May. That sparked talk in the west of separating from Virginia and rejoining the Union. The First Wheeling Convention held May 13-15 laid the groundwork for the Second Wheeling Convention, held June 11-25, chaired by Arthur Boreman of Parkersburg.





AMERICA 250



A Restored or Reorganized Government of Virginia was created, with Francis H. Pierpont, of Marion County, elected governor. But creating a new state was problematic and initially opposed.

Article IV of the U.S. Constitution says, “No new State shall be formed or erected within the Jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the Junction of two or more States, or Parts of States, without the Consent of the Legislature of the States concerned as well as of the Congress.”

This created various conundrums for the new government and the federal government. One was that Virginia’s secession and joining to the Confederacy was held to be illegal, giving rise to the question of which government could be constitutionally recognized.

Author Jeremy Farley explains that the Wheeling Intelligencer posed the idea of declaring the Virginia General Assembly vacant and Reorganized Government as true. The Reorganized Government could

then constitutionally recognize a new state.

Much arguing about this took place in Virginia, western Virginia and Washington, D.C. But in August 1861, the Third Wheeling Convention created West Virginia – a name chosen over Kanawha – and in October 1861, voters approved the question in a low-turnout vote: 18,408 to 781.

Farley, who holds that West Virginia was created illegally, says in his book that the low numbers for Lincoln, the Virginia Secession Ordinance of 1861 (overwhelmingly supported in southern West Virginia) and the number of Confederate soldiers in the state suggest the election was unfair and inaccurate.

“In reality,” he says, “one can only conclude that the election was riddled with fraud, poorly advertised (by design), or a combination of the two.”

Nonetheless, a constitutional convention convened that November and a new Constitution was approved in February 1862.

Slavery remained a divisive issue inside West Virginia and in Congress. Some in Congress wanted West Virginia to join the Union as a free state. U.S. Sen. Waitman Willey successfully offered a compromise, freeing slaves born in the state after July 4, 1863; those under age 10 at that date to be freed at age 21; and all slaves ages 10-21 freed at age 25. The U.S. Senate approved the amended statehood bill in July 1862, while the House haggled over it for months, finally approving it in December. In February 1863, the West Virginia Constitutional Convention approved the Willey Amendment and incorporated it into the state Constitution and West Virginia voters ratified it.

Now, Lincoln needed to sign the bill. His cabinet was divided in its advice. Lincoln sided with approving statehood.

Farley quotes his reasoning. “The consent of the legislature of Virginia is constitutionally necessary to the bill for the admission of West Virginia becoming a law. A body claiming to be such legislature has given its consent.”

While the overwhelming majority of Virginia voters did not participate in the election to approve separation, he said, they chose to remain silent. “Hence it is not the qualified voters, but the qualified voters who choose to vote, that constitute the political power of the state.”

He then ponders West Virginia’s potential contribution to the Union in the midst of war – soldiers, transportation corridors and such. “I think we could not save as much in this quarter by rejecting the new state, as we should lose by it in West Virginia. We can scarcely dispense with the aid of West Virginia in this trouble; much less can we afford to have her against us, in Congress and in the field. ... I believe the admission of West Virginia into the Union is expedient.”

Lincoln issued a proclamation on April 20, 1863, making statehood official on June 20, 1863. Boreman served as first West Virginia governor, 1863-1869.

This year, West Virginia turned 163.

Sources: Hal Gorby, teaching associate professor, WVU Department of History; Bob O’Connor, “Countdown to West Virginia Statehood”; Otis K. Rice, “West Virginia: The State and its People”; Jeremy Farley, “West Virginia: The Illegal State.”

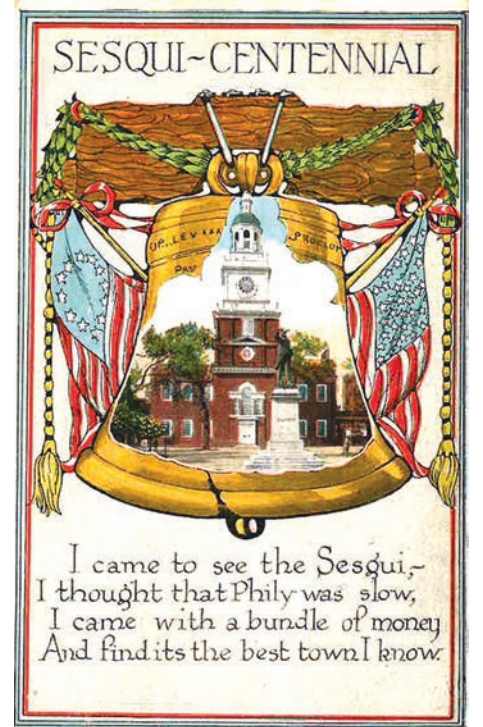


West Virginia & Regional History Center

AMERICA 250

Vintage Postcards

From the collection of Dominion Post photographer Ron Rittenhouse, these postcards depict Independence Day messages from the early 1900s.





AMERICA 250



An A-to-Z of American History

A — Apollo 11

In 1969, Apollo 11 carried Americans to the Moon, fulfilling President John F. Kennedy's challenge and marking one of humanity's greatest achievements.

B — Bald Eagle

Adopted as the national emblem in 1782, the bald eagle symbolizes strength, freedom and the independence of the United States.

C — Constitution

The United States Constitution established the frame-

work of American government and remains the oldest written national constitution still in use.

D — Declaration of Independence

Adopted on July 4, 1776, the Declaration announced America's separation from Britain and proclaimed that all men are created equal.

E — Ellis Island

More than 12 million immigrants entered the United States through Ellis Island between 1892 and 1954.



In this July 1969 file photo, Astronaut Edwin Aldrin walks by the footpad of the Apollo 11 Lunar Module. (AP/Photo, NASA, file)

F — Ford's Assembly Line

In 1913, Henry Ford revolutionized manufacturing with the moving assembly line, making automobiles affordable for millions.

G — Gettysburg

The Battle of Gettysburg in 1863 marked a turning point in the Civil War and inspired the Gettysburg Address.

H — Homestead Act

Signed in 1862, the Homestead Act encouraged westward expansion by granting settlers land in the American frontier.

I — Interstate Highway System

Authorized in 1956, the Interstate Highway System became the largest public works project in American history.

J — Jazz

Born in New Orleans, jazz became America's original art form and influenced music around the world.

K — Kitty Hawk

At Kitty Hawk in 1903, Orville Wright and Wilbur Wright achieved the first powered flight.



AMERICA 250



L — Liberty Bell

The Liberty Bell became an enduring symbol of American independence and freedom.

M — Mount Rushmore

This iconic monument honors Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln.

N — National Parks

America created the world's first national park, Yellowstone National Park, in 1872.

O — Oregon Trail

Hundreds of thousands of pioneers traveled the Oregon Trail during the 19th century in search of opportunity in the West.

P — Plymouth Colony

Established in 1620, Plymouth Colony became one of the earliest permanent English settlements in New England.

Q — Quakers

Members of the Religious Society of Friends helped shape the American character through their commitment to religious freedom, equality, abolition of slavery and social justice. Their influence can be seen from colonial Pennsylvania to the reform movements that helped define the nation.

X-15 pilot Neil A. Armstrong is pictured in front of his experimental high-speed rocket-powered research aircraft at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., July 1962. (AP Photo)



R — Revolutionary War

The American Revolution secured independence from Great Britain and created the United States.

S — Statue of Liberty

Gifted by France in 1886, the Statue of Liberty welcomed

generations of immigrants to America.

T — Transcontinental Railroad

Completed in 1869, the railroad connected the East and West coasts and transformed commerce and travel.

U — Uncle Sam

Uncle Sam emerged during the War of 1812 and became the personification of the United States.

V — Valley Forge

At Valley Forge, George Washington and the Continental Army endured a difficult winter that strengthened the Revolutionary cause.

W — Washington, D.C.

The nation's capital serves as the seat of the federal government and a symbol of American democracy.

X — X-15

The North American X-15 helped pave the way for the American space program by setting speed and altitude records.

Y — Yosemite

Yosemite National Park showcases some of the most spectacular landscapes in the United States and helped inspire the conservation movement.

Z — Zimmermann Telegram

The Zimmermann Telegram helped draw the United States into World War I after Germany sought an alliance with Mexico against America.



AMERICA 250



Progress in Preston County: Industries change, grow through the year

By JENIFFER GRAHAM | For the Dominion Post

While coal, timber and agriculture remain important, modern Preston County benefits from health care, education, technology, tourism, outdoor recreation, correctional facilities and small business entrepreneurship.

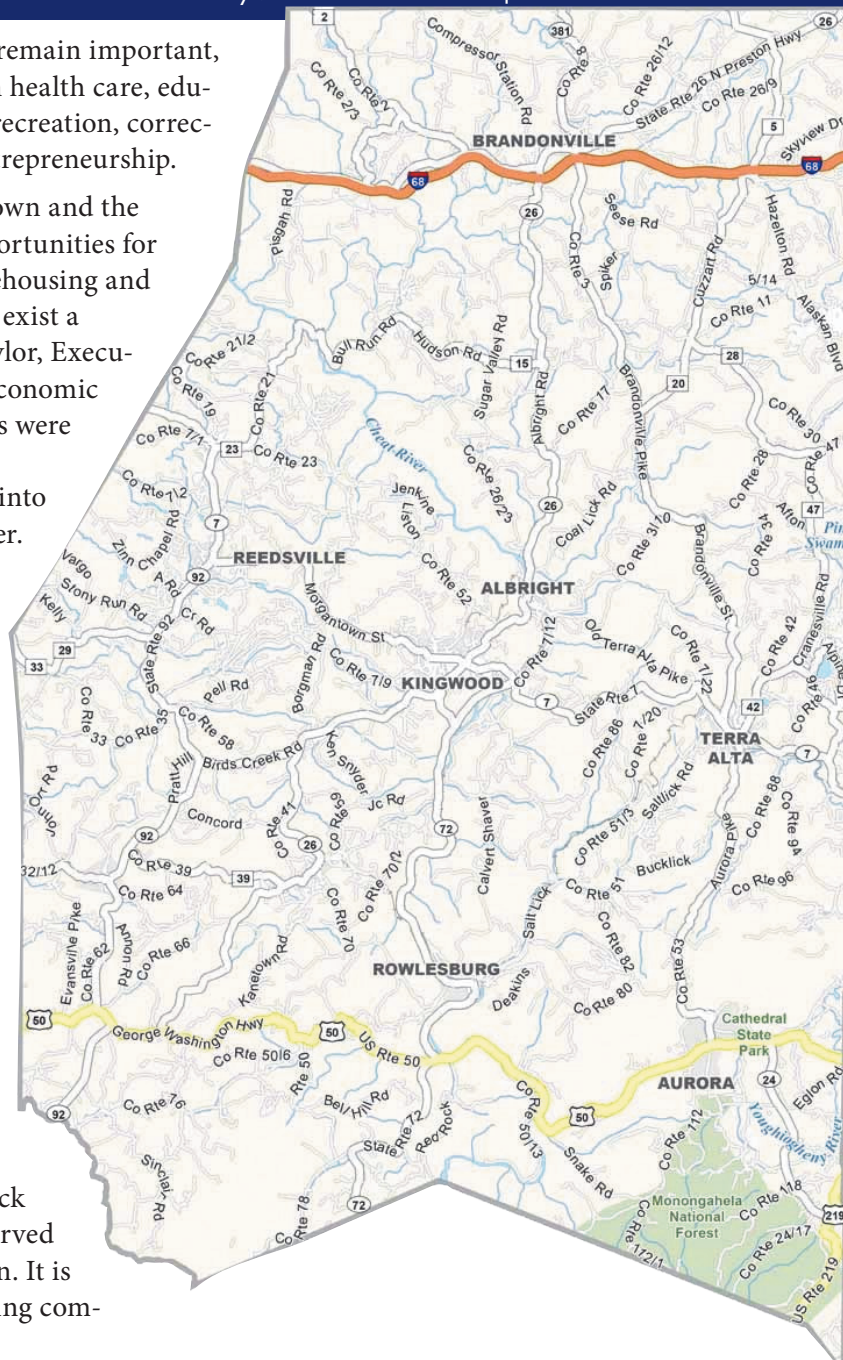
The county's proximity to Morgantown and the Interstate 68 corridor has created opportunities for commuting, business expansion, warehousing and advanced manufacturing that did not exist a century ago, according to Roberta Baylor, Executive Director of the Preston County Economic Development Authority. She said mills were among the first businesses established because settlers needed grain ground into flour and timber processed into lumber.

Red Creek Mill – Owned by early settler Jacob Snyder and located near present-day Red Creek. Historical accounts identify it as one of the earliest mills in the county.

Muddy Creek Mill – One of the county's early grist and saw mills serving pioneer settlements along Muddy Creek.

Reckart Mill – Established in the nineteenth century and still recognized today as a historic mill site in Preston County.

Baylor said travel along frontier roads created demand for lodging and food services. She said Red Horse Tavern, located near Aurora, dated back to the early nineteenth century and served travelers crossing the Allegheny region. It is one of Preston County's oldest surviving commercial structures.



Baylor said many of Preston County's earliest craftsmen operated independent businesses.

Abraham Guseman's Gunsmith Shop – Guseman, one of Preston County's pioneer settlers, worked as a gunsmith and silversmith. His trade supported local farmers, hunters, and settlers during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

She said the abundance of hemlock and oak forests supported a thriving leather industry.

Early tanneries operated throughout the county by the mid-1800s, particularly near water sources where bark and hides could be processed. Historical references place a tannery near the Red Creek area during the 19th century.

Baylor said, as the settlements grew, general stores became essential businesses.

Kingwood's earliest merchants established stores shortly after the county seat was created in 1818.

By the late 1800s, commercial blocks such as the Bishop Block housed multiple retail businesses and offices in downtown Kingwood.

By the mid-to-late 19th century, Baylor said Preston County began moving beyond frontier commerce. She said the arrival of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in the 1850s transformed the county's economy, creating jobs and opening markets for timber, coal and agricultural products. The construction of the Kingwood Tunnel was one of the largest infrastructure projects in the region at the time.



AMERICA 250



Numerous sawmills and lumber companies emerged throughout Preston County's vast forests during the late 1800s, and timber became one of the county's largest industries alongside agriculture.

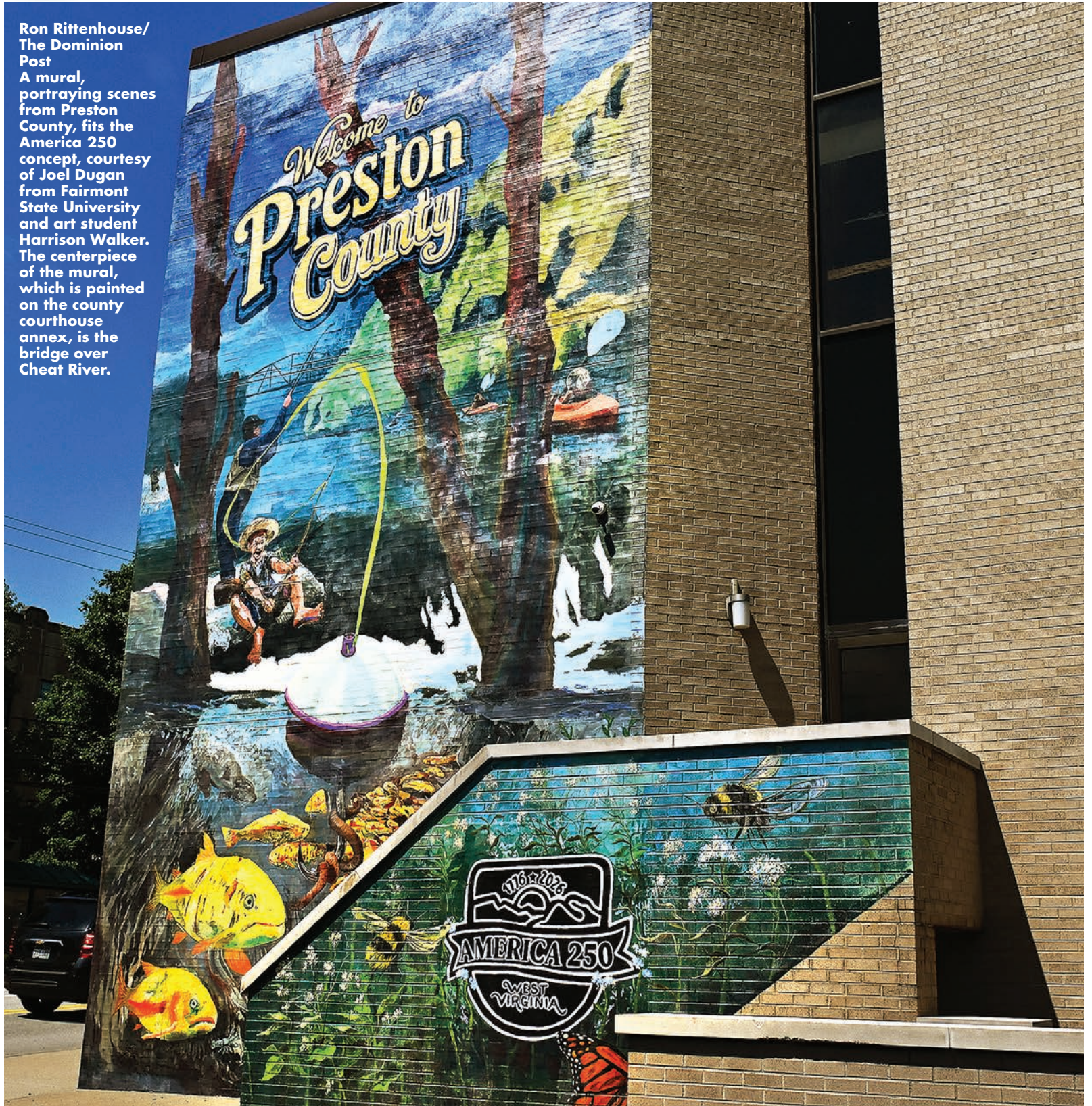
Baylor said among the county's earliest formal financial institutions were the Bank of Kingwood (established by 1900) and the Terra Alta Bank (chartered in 1891), the second bank established in Preston County.

She said if you were walking through Preston County shortly after its formation in 1818, you would most likely find: grist mills, sawmills, blacksmith shops, gunsmith shops, wagon makers, general stores, taverns and inns, tanneries, distilleries and livestock trading operations. These businesses formed the foundation of Preston County's economy before railroads, coal mining and industrial manufacturing emerged later in the 19th century.

Baylor said both World War I and World War II significantly influenced Preston County's economy.

She said World War I

**Ron Rittenhouse/
The Dominion
Post**
A mural,
portraying scenes
from Preston
County, fits the
America 250
concept, courtesy
of Joel Dugan
from Fairmont
State University
and art student
Harrison Walker.
The centerpiece
of the mural,
which is painted
on the county
courthouse
annex, is the
bridge over
Cheat River.





AMERICA 250



(1914–1918) increased demand for coal, timber, railroad transportation and agricultural products. Preston County's mines, forests and farms supplied materials needed for the war effort. Many local men entered military service, creating labor shortages that increased opportunities for women and older workers on farms and in businesses. Coal production throughout West Virginia expanded dramatically during this period.

Baylor said World War II (1939–1945) had an even greater impact. Coal and timber production remained critical to the national war effort, and manufacturing throughout the region expanded to support military needs. Many Preston County residents served in the armed forces, while others worked in industries supporting wartime production. Following the war, returning veterans helped fuel housing construction and infrastructure improvements and increased consumer spending. Rural electrification, improved roads and modernization accelerated during the post-war years.

She said during the late 1920s and early 1930s, Preston County's economy was struggling. Much of the region depended on coal mining, timber and small-scale farming. When the Great Depression began in 1929, coal demand declined sharply, mines reduced production or closed, and unemployment rose dramatically. Many families living in nearby mining communities such as Scotts Run in neighboring Monongalia County faced extreme poverty, inadequate housing, poor sanitation and limited opportunities for stable employment.

The Scotts Run area became nationally known as one of the most impoverished communities in America. Thousands of mining families were unemployed after mechanization, mine closures and declining coal markets reduced labor needs. Many families lived in overcrowded company housing or makeshift dwellings and struggled to obtain adequate food, health care and education.

Baylor said Arthurdale remains one of the most significant economic development experiments in American history. It represented an early federal effort to: diversify a rural economy, reduce poverty, encourage entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency, improve housing and quality of life and create sustainable economic opportunities outside

of extractive industries.

She said many of the economic challenges that led to Arthurdale's creation—dependence on a limited number of industries, workforce transitions and the need for economic diversification—are issues that rural communities throughout Appalachia continue to address today.

“In many ways, Arthurdale can be viewed as one of the earliest large-scale economic development projects in Preston County, created specifically as a response to economic distress caused by the collapse of coal employment and the broader impacts of the Great Depression,” Baylor said.

She said Preston County's business climate has undergone several major transitions.

“Not every location is suited for every type of growth and I would like to see growth and development in areas that make sense for Preston County. This is the type of growth that our residents and existing businesses can support and benefit from,” she said.

Baylor said Preston County is unlikely to compete as an urban tech hub or large-scale corporate headquarters location. Its best opportunities are in practical, land-based, infrastructure-supported economic development.

“The strongest strategy is not chasing every industry, but building around what Preston County already has: natural resources, highway access, available land, lower operating costs, rural character, and proximity to Morgantown and larger regional markets. ... As each region of the county grows in ways that complement its natural assets and existing resources, the result is stronger communities, increased job opportunities, and a higher quality of life for all Preston county residents,” Baylor said.

The Preston County EDA is located at 157 Plaza Court, Suite 8, Kingwood.





Celebrate America 250 in Greene County!

July 3 | 4th-A-Palooza

Downtown Waynesburg

Celebrate Independence Day and America's 250th Birthday at 4th-A-Palooza in Downtown Waynesburg with Battle & Thrive on July 3 from 5-9 PM, featuring live music by the reunited Frog Lodge, family-friendly activities, a pie-eating contest, food vendors, and a spectacular fireworks display.

July 3 | 250th America Celebration

The Denny House, Waynesburg

Celebrate America's 250th Birthday at The Denny House on July 3 from 4-9 PM with live music by Devon Cowell featuring Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash favorites, festive specialty drinks, classic American desserts, giveaways, and an evening of patriotic fun.

July 3-4 | America's 250th Celebration

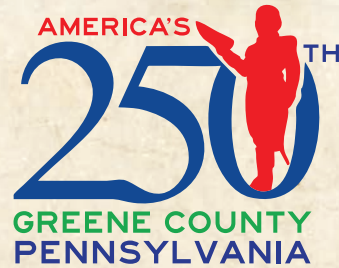
Carmichaels Town Square & Wana B Park

Celebrate America's 250th Birthday in Carmichaels on July 3-4 with two days of patriotic fun, including live music, fireworks, the Stars & Strides 5K, a community opening ceremony, food trucks, family activities, a car cruise-in, and a moving Field of Flags tribute honoring those who served our nation.

July 4 | 4th of July Celebration

Waynesburg Lions Club Community Park

Spend Independence Day with the Waynesburg Lions Club on July 4 at Lions Club Community Park, featuring a pancake breakfast, classic car show, opening ceremonies, the Little Miss Firecracker Pageant, live music by Part Time Cowboys, and a spectacular fireworks display to cap off the evening.



July 4 | 4th of July Memorial Service & Picnic

Greene County Veterans Memorial Park & Waynesburg VFW

Honor America's 250th anniversary with Waynesburg VFW Post 4793 on July 4, beginning with a Memorial Service at Greene County Veterans Memorial Park at 11 AM, followed by an old-fashioned community picnic at the Waynesburg VFW celebrating freedom, fellowship, and the service of our nation's veterans.

July 4 | 4th of July Cast Iron Cookout

Ryerson Station State Park, Wind Ridge

Step back in time at Ryerson Station State Park's 4th of July Cast Iron Cookout on July 4 from 11 AM to 2 PM, where visitors can experience colonial-inspired cooking demonstrations and historic flavors as part of America's 250th birthday commemoration.

July 5 | 1776 Church Service: Praise & Thanksgiving

Roberts Chapel, Waynesburg University

Join the community on July 5 at 7 PM in Roberts Chapel at Waynesburg University for an America 250 Worship Service of Praise and Thanksgiving, featuring historic hymns, Scripture readings, prayers, and special music honoring the nation's 250th birthday and Greene County's faith heritage.

Celebrate All Year Long

- ★ July 6, 13, 20 & 27 | **America Mondays**
Flenniken Public Library
- ★ July 8 | **Sharing the Spirit of America**
Greene County Veterans Memorial Park
- ★ July 11 | **Old Glory in Greene**
Bootsie's Bed and Breakfast
- ★ July 11 | **Freedom Car Show**
Waynesburg VFW Post 4793
- ★ July 12 | **Flashlight Drags**
Greene County Airport
- ★ July 14-18 | **Jacktown Fair**
Jacktown Fairgrounds
- ★ July 25 | **America 250 Open House**
Cornerstone Genealogical Society
- ★ August 9-15 | **Greene County Fair**
Greene County Fairgrounds
- ★ August 15 | **Greene County Airport Wings & Wheels**
Greene County Airport
- ★ August 23 | **Flashlight Drags**
Greene County Airport
- ★ September 13 | **Flashlight Drags**
Greene County Airport
- ★ October 10-11 | **Harvest Festival**
Greene County Historical Society Museum

Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness

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www.VisitGreene.org





★ ★ ★ ★ ★

AMERICA

250

★ ★ ★

HONORING

250 YEARS

OF

AMERICAN FREEDOM,
DEMOCRACY & SERVICE

★

As we celebrate America's 250th anniversary, let us honor our past, strengthen our communities, and build a brighter future together—faithful to the ideals our nation was founded on.



★ ★ ★

PATRICIA A. BUNNER

★ *Candidate for House of Delegates District 77* ★
Current Member Monongalia County Democratic Executive Committee

Paid for by the Candidate, Patricia A. Bunner