

## **Historical Society of Western Virginia Organizational Profile**

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Founded in 1957, the Historical Society of Western Virginia is a private, not-for-profit corporation. The Historical Society of Western Virginia exists to promote an interest in the broad spectrum of history with emphasis on that of western Virginia; to collect, preserve, interpret, and make available materials relating to that history; to sponsor research and publication in the field of regional history; and to provide educational services to people and institutions throughout western Virginia.

Society operations are implemented by a paid staff, supported by many working volunteers, and guided by a board of directors. The Historical Society of Western Virginia offers programming and public awareness through its operating divisions. Administrative offices are housed in the Center in the Square (CITS) facility, now celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. CITS provides rent free space for two of the Society's operating divisions and covers all security, custodial and environmental costs.

Society-wide functions also include a large scale digital project and Virtual Collections. Digitizing the collections held by the organization and making it available to researchers online and in house is a high priority to the Society.

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### **Operating Divisions**

#### **History Museum of Western Virginia**

The History Museum's purpose is the collection and preservation of material pertaining to the history of the area, and the dissemination of knowledge and information relating to that history. Facilities include approximately 16,850 square feet in Center in the Square, and include permanent and temporary exhibition galleries, a library, a climate-controlled collections room and vault, classrooms, a fabrications room, a staff and volunteer lounge, administrative offices, and a gift shop. Permanent exhibitions include human life and early settlement in the western part of the state as well as development of the region. In addition, a full schedule of rotating exhibits allows the Museum to focus on a variety of people, industries and events that have influenced the development of western Virginia.

Last year the History Museum welcomed approximately 21,500 visitors to its galleries, and provided programming for more than 860 students in-house and over 6500 students through outreach services. More than 120 dynamic volunteers aid the History Museum in a variety of areas, ranging from library administration to collections management.

Currently the History Museum is undergoing a 1.3 million dollar renovation to all areas of the facility with an expected completion date of 2009.

## **O. Winston Link Museum**

Opened to the public in January of 2004, the O. Winston Link Museum is housed in the CITS-owned N&W Passenger Station. The Link Museum focuses on the striking photographic and auditory works developed by artist O. Winston Link between 1955 and 1960. A successful commercial photographer from New York, Link brought his studio outdoors in creating carefully arranged images designed to convey the then steam propelled Norfolk & Western Railway and the communities and countryside along the right of way. Covering much of Western Virginia and bordering portions of North Carolina, West Virginia and Maryland, Link took advantage of the region's then unique combination of mountainous terrain, sparsely arranged populations, and steam rail infrastructure to capture the end of America's once thriving industrial age.

Housing over 300 images on exhibition, with live storage for images off gallery walls, the Museum provides continuous access to the bulk of Link's work. Also the repository for the negatives from the N&W project, scholarly research into the N&W project is a vital component of the Museum. To establish a cultural center for general photography and rail related art and to encourage repeat visitation, the Link Museum creates and holds several temporary exhibitions throughout the year in two areas within the Museum.

Last year the Link Museum saw approximately 35,000 visitors. Four area school districts visited and outreach programs were conducted for children and adults, serving 5,000 people. Partnerships have been created with several after-school programs, including the federally funded 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning program, and digital and film photography workshops are continual running for school children. With an active corps of 40 volunteers, the Link Museum is open seven days a week.

## **Crystal Spring Pump Station**

Our other off-site venture is the Crystal Spring Pump Station. The site is listed on both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Located at the foot of Mill Mountain, the Pump Station houses the magnificent steam-driven water pump that once served as the primary source of the city's water for over 50 years. Manufactured in 1905 by the Snow Steam Pump Company of Buffalo, N.Y., the pump was shipped to Roanoke by rail, put together on site, and the building built around it. Replaced by electric pumps in the late 1970s, the old Snow pump fell into disrepair until 1976, when the Roanoke Valley Bicentennial Commission and the then-Roanoke Valley Historical Society refurbished the pump and opened the site to visitors. By the 1980s the Station had to be closed.

In cooperation with the Western Virginia Water Authority and the Society, the Crystal Spring Pumping Station is once again to open to visitors. Work to upgrade the facility and improve the exhibits was completed in 2004, and the Crystal Spring Pump Station is open free to the public from May through September.

**Kegley Publication Fund**

The Kegley publication fund serves as the publishing arm of the Society. It produces an annual periodical entitled the Journal and a variety of books focusing on national and regional historical topics. Recent publications include; O. Winston Link, the Man and the Museum, Notable Women West of the Blue Ridge, 1850-1950, Street Railways of Roanoke, and WDBJ, Roanoke's Premier Station, 1924-1969.