

The Morgantown History Museum can trace its roots back to 1995 when a small group of local historians were asked to gather and discuss the possibility of starting a history museum for Monongalia County. Initiatives of the time from the Chamber of Commerce included Morgantown Action Together and Vision 2020 brought together the individuals who would create an organization known as Riverfront Museums, Incorporated. This effort was led by Jane Labys and Pamela Ball Redmond.

An early version of what today is known as the Morgantown History Museum, was first established in a small space at the Seneca Center, which was provided free by a local businessperson in 2000. The “museum” had very humble beginnings with almost no artifacts until another local businessman donated 5,000 pieces of Seneca Glass. A number of these pieces are on display at the museum even today. The Riverfront Museum closed at the Seneca Center in 2005.

In August 2005, the City of Morgantown created the Morgantown Museum Commission. The commission, led by Pam Ball, Darryl DeGripp, Pamela Casto, and Rick McEwen began the work of establishing a formal Morgantown History Museum with the help of Matt Held, Swifty Shaver, and many others who donated time and expertise over the years to develop the museum we have today.

By December of 2005, a small operating space was procured in the Historic Post Office, and the Museum Commission and volunteers turned a 400 square foot entryway into an eye-catching small museum display space. The museum was put under the administrative wing of the Board of Parks and Recreation and provided some funding through the city’s Hotel/ Motel Tax.

The incubator museum site, known as Morgantown History Museum, opened on West Virginia Day weekend 2006, and featured glass displays, 2,000 lb. iron printing press given to us by Hastings Funeral Home, glassmaking tools, coal mining artifacts. One commission member had a small collection of West Virginia Centennial artifacts that were displayed in honor of the occasion. Local musicians played Civil War era fiddle tunes - and they served a birthday cake in the shape of West Virginia, cookies, coffee, and water. It was a first event that was well-attended.

In 2011 and 2014, the Museum was successful in receiving the Smithsonian’s Main Street designations for ‘The Way We Worked’ & ‘Hometown Teams’. These exhibits and associated programs and activities brought increased attention, donation of artifacts to the museum, and new members to the Friends of Morgantown History Museum, a 501-c3 nonprofit organization that raises money on behalf of the museum.

Over the years, the museum has presented a number of exhibitions both in-house and off-site in collaboration with other organizations, such as: Friends of Decker’s Creek, Old Hemlock Foundation, Historical Railroad Model Club, West Virginia University Public History Department, Daughters of the American Revolution, West Virginia State Native American Museum, and many others. In addition, the museum has partnered with the WVU to train students in the process of exhibit production and development of oral histories and other projects.

In 2020, the Morgantown History museum was transferred to the Arts & Cultural Development Department, to align all aspect of the arts under one centralized City of Morgantown department.