

Thanks to all AFHA stakeholders and supporters!



# Appalachian Forest Heritage Area

## April 2013 E-Newsletter

### Greetings,

First of all, *thank you* to all who showed up at this month's AFHA Spring Stakeholders meeting. We appreciate your feedback and suggestions! If you couldn't make it to Richwood for the meeting, check below a brief review from the stakeholders meeting. Or, continue to show your support for AFHA and our communities by [volunteering!](#)

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### Review: AFHA Stakeholders Meeting



Experience the heritage of your area! *Sites of the Month* spotlights events and locations within the region, based on AFHA's four themes: forestry, history, culture, and nature.

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*AFHA supporters received a tour of Collins Hardwood in Richwood, WV as part of the Stakeholders Meeting.*

The Appalachian Forest Heritage Area's Spring Stakeholders meeting took place on Friday, April 12th. Board members, AmeriCorps volunteers, and representatives from forest industry, the U.S. Forest Service, as well as other interested individuals, were present at the meeting.

Following a lumber mill tour at Collins Hardwood, AFHA AmeriCorps members presented on many of their projects, which range from conservation efforts, to hands-on historic preservation work, to heritage development. Even though projects vary, all are aimed at increasing heritage tourism as a means of economic development for the region.

There was also a presentation on Richwood's Blueprint Communities initiative, as well as discussion regarding AFHA's Management Plan. This was the first in a series of public meetings aimed at educating communities about [AFHA's goals](#) and collecting feedback from our audience members and stakeholders. We hope to see you at our next meeting, so please stay tuned for upcoming dates!

*Special thanks to:*

- The City of Richwood and Mayor Bob Johnson
- [Collins Hardwood](#) - Richwood
- Mumsey's Iron Skillet
- Richwood [Blueprint Communities](#)
- [AFHA AmeriCorps Volunteers](#)



### [Holly River State Park](#)

Holly River State Park protects more than 8,000 acres of forest in the northeast corner of Webster County. In 1935 the USDA relocated 13 families to the land that today makes up the park. Deforestation had led to extensive erosion and disappearance of wildlife in the area. The state park was created in 1938, and features beautiful New Deal era cabins for rent.



### [Adaland Mansion](#)

Built by Irish immigrant Augustus Modisett in 1868, this 23-room, four-story Greek-revival home reflects the lives of well-to-do pioneers that arrived over 200 years ago. Guided tours offer a look into post-Civil War Barbour County, and include the restored house and basement, and landscaped gardens. The barn hosts regular demonstrations of 19th-century crafts such as spinning, carding, weaving, and candle-making.



## The Rediscovered North House Well

By Kyle D. Mills

AFHA Heritage AmeriCorps Volunteer

A cold and cloudy October day found a small group of historians standing in a semi-circle, peering into a dark abyss. A combination of mystery, suspense, and uncertainty danced in the air with the falling autumn leaves. “I wonder what will be down there,” one person said, “you *have* done this before?” said another. Curious for the unknown, all stood in anticipation. “On rope!” one man said, then, descended into darkness.

This adventure started in September when I was looking at the old saltpeter trough we have stored in the Wagon House at the Greenbrier Historical Society and North House Museum. I stepped off the porch of the Wagon House and walked over the grate in the yard of the North House. It appeared to be a typical storm drain, but being a cave explorer, I am compelled to look into any hole in the ground I might come across. I looked into the drain and saw that there was moss growing on stacked stone walls, and I couldn’t see the bottom. I ran to my car, grabbed my caving lights, and shined them down the hole. I could see the bottom and realized what I was looking at was a well.

I came back into the archives and asked Mr. Jim Talbert what the history of the well out in the yard was. He looked at me strange and I could tell he was wondering what-in-the-world I was talking about. We out in the yard and shinned my light down the hole, we must have looked a little crazy to the NRCTC students who were standing around outside. Mr. Talbert became excited and informed me that no one knew that a well lied under the storm grate. Surely at one time someone with the Greenbrier Historical Society had to know that this was a well, but time passed and the well was forgotten about. Curiosity had gotten to us and plans were made to explore the

### [Lost River Artisans Cooperative](#)

Nestled in the scenic Lost River Valley of West Virginia's Potomac Highlands, the Lost River Artisans Cooperative was founded in 1988. The Cooperative aims to engage the community in the artistic process, foster appreciation for the production and value of handmade objects through instruction, demonstration and display, and provide a marketing center for regional artists and craftspeople.



### [Otter Creek Wilderness](#)

Otter Creek Wilderness spans 20,698 acres, and lies in a bowl formed by Shavers Mountain and McGowan Mountain. The wilderness area is full of streams, most of which flow north into Otter Creek. The dense vegetation consists of second-growth timber, rhododendron, and a variety of mosses and lichens, with elevations ranging from 1,800 feet to 3,900 feet.

Do you have a suggestion for *Sites of the Month*?

caving equipment, I rappelled into the well and discovered that the well is very well made. The bottom of the well is a six-foot-wide, six-foot-long, and five-foot-tall cistern blasted into the limestone bedrock. Evidence of the drilling and blasting process can be seen on the bedrock at the bottom of the well. Hand-hewn timbers have been constructed (similar to a log cabin) to form a platform to stack the wall rocks on. The walls are perfectly stacked flat rock in a circular pattern that seems to repeat itself after 5<sup>th</sup> layer, no mortar was used. The bottom of the well is dry and filled in with dirt and a small amount of surface debris. Also an old iron pipe extends about half way up from the bottom of the well. A shovel probe down about a foot showed that the soil continued deeper. In the bottom of the well I found two pieces of antique broken glass, chips of red brick, and a cave salamander (*Eurycea lucifuga*). The total depth of the well is 19 feet.



*Bedrock, timbers, and stacked rock at the bottom of the well.  
Taken by Kyle Mills.*

Research into the age of the well has not turned up any definitive time it was constructed. The most logical assumption would be that the well was built in the early 1820s along with the construction of the North House, but this has not been proven. Another question is was the well constructed to be an open well, with a bucket lowered into a pool of water then drawn up? The circumference of the well and the size of the bedrock cistern at the bottom seemingly fit the dimensions for this style of well, but the absence of water in the bottom and iron pipe suggests that possibly a hand pump was at one time used. Two panoramic photographs of

and let us know your favorite sites throughout AFHA!

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1890-1900, a small shed appears to be over the well. In a later photo, circa 1902-1920, what appears to be a concrete platform with a hand pump is at the location of the well site. Possibly, the well was dug to be an open well and at a later time the hand pump was installed.

Now the question is what to do with the well? The well is important to the North House's history and should be preserved better than having a metal grate hiding it. Continuing research could provide more evidence of what the housing over the well looked like when the North House was a private residence. This housing could be reconstructed to be period correct and add to the aesthetics of the North House lawn.

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