

September 2014 - AFHA AmeriCorps is Growing!!

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The AFHA slogan of "Where History is Growing" applies to more than our heritage and our forests. Following a successful re-compete grant round, AFHA AmeriCorps now has 27 slots in our competitive Enhancing Assets to Benefit Communities program, with 16 conservation members, 6 community development sites, and 5 on our hands-on team. We also have 11 members serving with museums, heritage and cultural sites in our state-granted formula program - Growing Communities through Heritage Development. The members range in age from 22 to 40, with new members from 20 states joining 7 returning members to commit to a year of service in West Virginia. Watch these monthly newsletters, and AFHA Facebook, for stories and pictures of the awesome projects these members help accomplish.

We do have two positions still open - we are looking for people interested in service to help with community development projects in Parsons and Ronceverte.

See www.appalachianforest.us/ameriCorps.htm if you know of someone who might be interested.



SITES



~ OF THE ~ MONTH

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.

FORESTRY SITE

The [Laurel Fork Wilderness Area](#) of the [Monongahela National Forest](#) is located in a remote part of the Greenbrier Ranger

Photo: Alyssa Hanna

Spreading Cultural Heritage



Currence and Mintie Hammonds in Huttonsville, WV, 1980. Photo: Gerry Milnes

By Scott Prouty

AFHA AmeriCorps Heritage Team Member

My name is Scott Prouty and I'm the AmeriCorps member serving with AFHA at the Darden Mill for 2014-2015. I previously worked as a photo archivist in the Washington, DC area and I enjoy playing fiddle for square dances. Earlier this year, I interviewed Gerry

and 3,700 feet. After being logged by the Laurel Creek Lumber Company, the area was acquired by the federal government in 1921 and designated a wilderness Area in 1983. There are 18.5 miles of trails spread out over northern and southern sections, which lie along the Laurel Fork of the Cheat River with Rich Mountain to the east and Middle Mountain to the west.



[Fidler's Mill](#) in Upshur County, constructed in 1821, was purchased and enlarged in 1849 by new owner William Fidler, who used slave labor to construct and operate the new mill. In addition to carding wool and grinding grain for flour or meal, local farmers socialized at the mill, which also hosted an annual Halloween dance on its wooden floors. The mill's power came

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Heritage Center in Elkins and has lived in West Virginia for 40 years. In that time, he has built an impressive body of fieldwork documenting the state's cultural traditions. Beyond documentation, Milnes produced countless workshops, concerts, articles, films and recordings made from his fieldwork which has helped to increase appreciation for the depth of West Virginia's music and folklife. However, at times resources were tight and he wasn't able to do everything he would've liked. The following exchange from the interview highlights the importance of not just documenting tradition, but also encouraging tradition bearers to continue practicing and sharing with the community. AFHA can help play a role by providing a platform for these exchanges throughout the AFHA region as part of its mission of heritage development.

SP: *Were there any musicians that you felt didn't get the attention or appreciation they may have deserved, for whatever reason? Anyone you were involved with?*

GM: Well, when I first came to Tygart's Valley in 1975 there was some great old-time banjo players. And they'd never, ever played out in public.

SP: *People like Cletus Johnson?*

GM: Cletus Johnson and his brother Arthur D. Johnson and their sister, Jesse. They were great banjo players but the public never really got to hear them and they never got that appreciation back, either. And had that occurred I think they would've also gotten more enthused about it and played a lot more if there had been an audience to appreciate what they did. But that never happened with them.

SP: *Was it because they didn't live long enough or ?*

GM: Yeah, nobody was around to pay attention to them. You know, I'd made some field recordings when I lived there and then I moved down to the next county

River until 1942 when it flooded. Later, the mill was machine operated and was eventually sold in 1978. It is now the last fully operational historic gristmill in Upshur County.



The [Mountain State Forest Festival](#) in Elkins was begun in 1930 and has run continuously since 1949. The festival celebrates the state's forest and agricultural industries and serves as a kind of homecoming for many of the 150,000 attendees each year. Events are held throughout the city including parades, craft shows, musical performances, sporting events, a lumberjack contest and a carnival. The festival culminates in the coronation ceremony of Maid Silvia who plants a seedling tree later to be planted in the forest. This year the festival takes place from

gone.

Lessons in Historic Preservation

By Dustin Smith

AFHA AmeriCorps Community Development
Member



The Delmonte Hotel in Elkins, WV.

Photo: Dustin Smith

September is here once again, and that means that another AmeriCorps term has started for AFHA. As a returning member, I'm extremely excited to be back in Elkins and back to work after my break between terms. I think that the most exciting thing about doing a second year is the prospect of seeing projects I started last year continue to develop. This year, I will be returning to my site with the Woodlands Development Group, and will also be working with the Elkins Historic Landmarks Commission.

After studying history in college, I found that I was uninterested in teaching, museums, or archives. But then, I discovered this thing called historic preservation. Saving historic buildings sounded like an



[Blackwater Falls State Park](#) is a popular destination in Tucker County renowned for its stunning beauty. The centerpiece of the park is the 62 foot high Blackwater Falls, located where the Blackwater River (named for its water darkened by tannic acid) enters the Blackwater Canyon. There are 20 miles of hiking trails as well as 10 miles of cross-country skiing trails and a sled run, with equipment available for renting. A nature center is open during the summer, and park naturalists offer programs on natural and cultural history. A campground is open six months of the year as well as year round cabins and a lodge including a conference center.

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

Email us at:

info@appalachianforest.us

and let us know your

When I started, my knowledge of historic preservation was pretty limited. However, over the last year I've learned a lot about the realities of preservation. With the Delmonte Hotel, I learned that turning a dilapidated building into a success story may entail 15 years of working from grant to grant. Even then, you may still need to obtain a loan to meet the most basic requirements to make the building usable: a floor, wiring, lighting, plumbing, and heating to name a few. You'll also need a business plan that's designed to support the building's development. If you work hard and get a little lucky, you'll find a tenant who can help reestablish the building as an asset for the local economy. And if you get really lucky, your next grant will be awarded and you'll be able to finish the building's rehabilitation (in the case of the Delmonte, this has yet to be determined).



Vendors are now up and running in the Delmonte Market. Photo: Dustin Smith

This process is only one means to the end of saving a historic building, but no matter the process, it's rarely an easy one. However, nothing worth doing is easy, and nothing has been more rewarding for me than witnessing the rebirth of a building that so easily could have been demolished if it hadn't been for a

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