

SMETHPORT - FIRST PA ROUTE 6 HERITAGE COMMUNITY

REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PLAN

July 27, 2009

BACKGROUND

In December 2004, the Borough of Smethport learned that it was chosen as the first Heritage Community by the PA Route 6 Heritage Corporation. A Stakeholders Committee, under the auspices of the Smethport Chamber of Commerce was set up consisting of about 30 persons who represented each significant organization as well as interested citizens in the Borough and surrounding area. By the end of 2006 the Master Plan was finalized and published by the PA Route 6 Heritage Corporation. The Master Plan, consisting of a one inch thick book, contained the background data, and plans for projects that the Borough could implement to entice tourists and the attendant economic activity that would result.

In early 2007, the Chamber turned the Master Plan over to the Borough Council for implementation. In turn, the Borough Council set up the Smethport Heritage Council developed a set of By-Laws and began to staff the organization. The first meeting of the full Heritage Council was held in July of 2007. Meetings are held quarterly to monitor the progress and strategize planning.

The key members of the Heritage Council consist of two members of the Borough Council, the Mayor of Smethport, a person who represents each key organization and several citizens at large. The Heritage Council then set about setting up sub-committees and/or including representatives of existing organizations, to implement the programs stemming from the Master Plan.

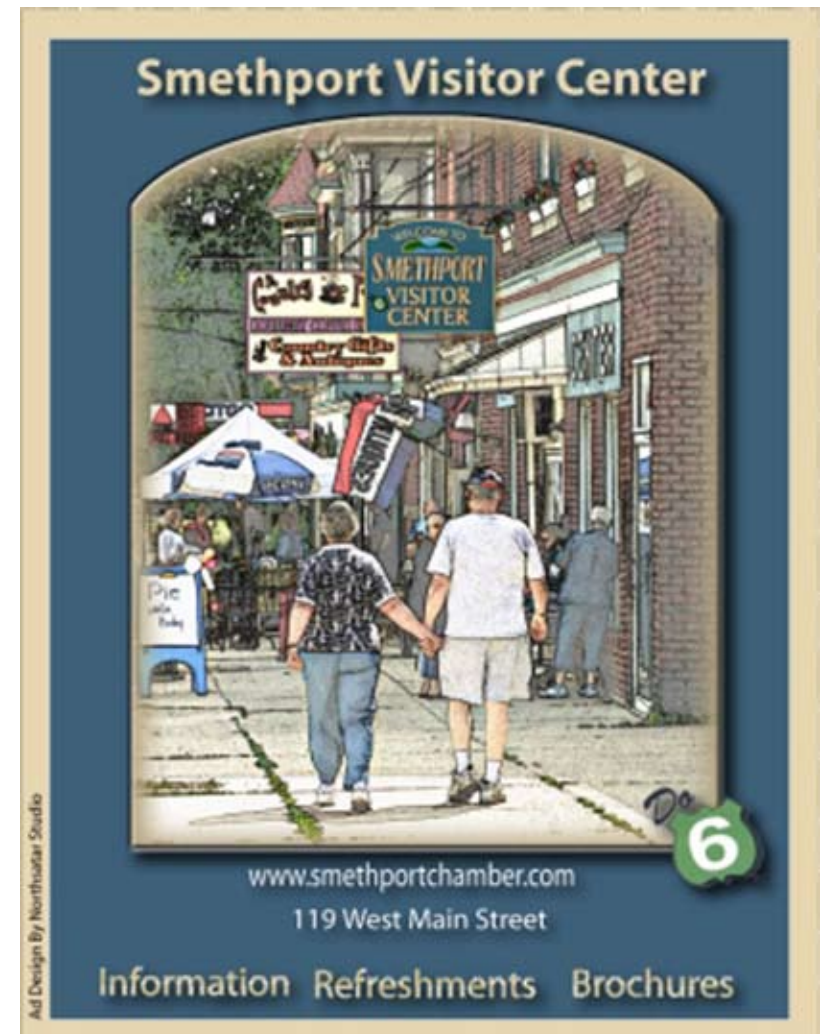
PROJECTS, COMMITTEES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Smethport Visitor Center:

OPERATING: The Stakeholder Committee made arrangements with the Senior Center to use their facility as a temporary Visitor Center which opened in June of 2005. Many tourists who come though the town stop by to pick up literature from the kiosk, and to get information from the seniors who are present. The guest book attests to the type of visitor and from where they come, which is all over the world.

Smethport Sweet Shop:

OPERATING (but at risk): Located in the Smethport Visitor Center/ Senior Center, the "Elderberries" recently opened their restored, historic soda shop ice cream



The Smethport Visitor Center opened in June 2005 in its temporary home at the Smethport Senior Center. This graphic the work of the Heritage Council Publicity Committee/ Les Jordan, Jr.

fountain featuring Perry's Ice Cream products. The ice cream fountain is the only one on the 400 mile PA Route 6 corridor. This facility is open many hours during the tourist season and is a significant attraction for tourists. YouTube video of opening ceremony for the Smethport Sweet Shop: < <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UH4rRPhognw>>

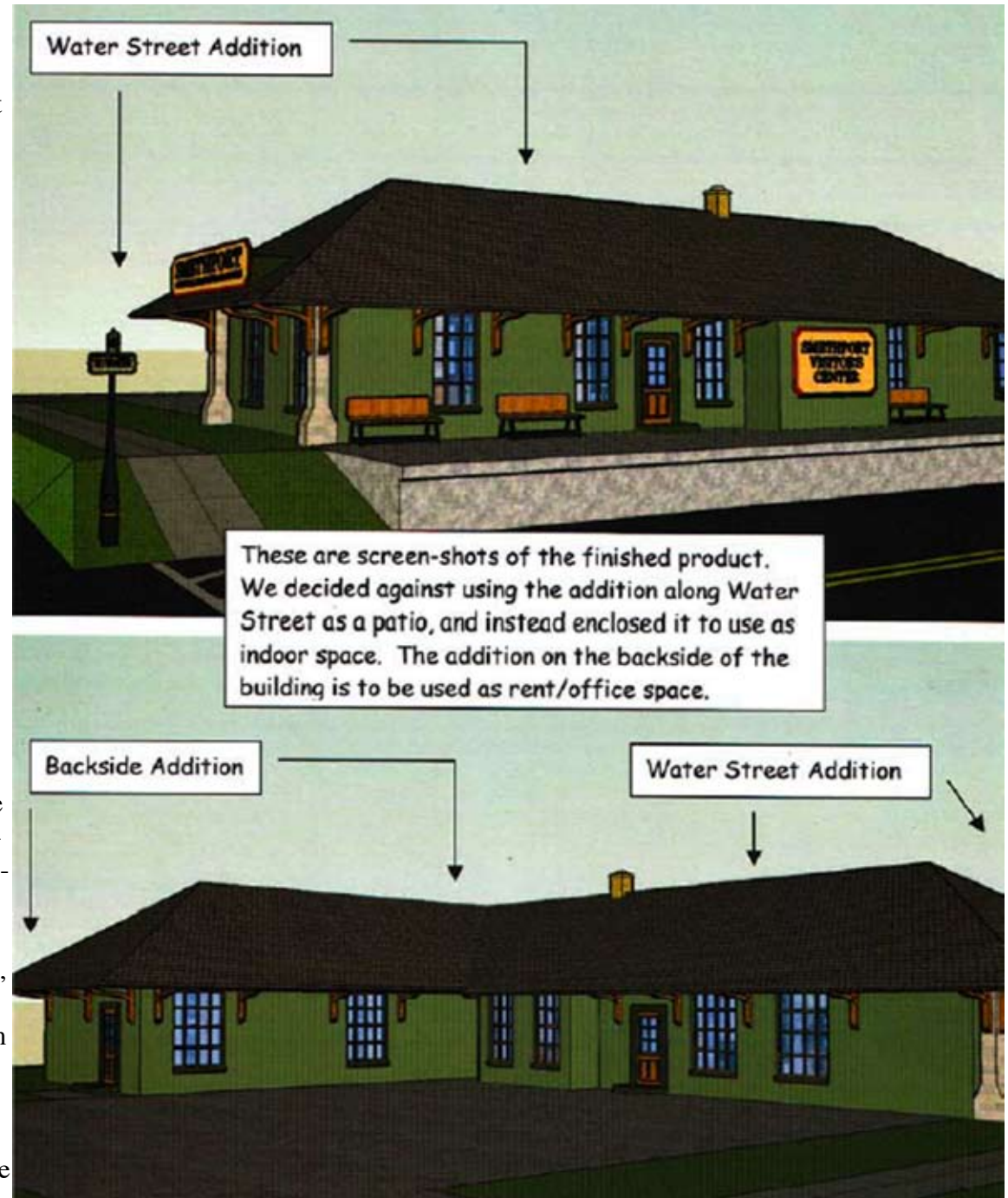
Impact McKean Projects:

Beginning in 2007 (4) four Route 6 communities: Kane, Mount Jewett, Port Allegany & Smethport) began working together under the guidance of the McKean County Office of Development with the goal of furthering tourist interest along the route 6 corridor. Communities were asked to identify tourist related projects to funded through this County endeavor. Initially about \$500,000 was available but gradually the funds were reduced to \$125,000 per community. Early projects were cut and sacrificed. Primary project to be cut was the restoration of the Smethport Shawmut Railroad Depot for usage as a multi-use tourism Visitor Center.

Smethport Shawmut Depot Project:

UNFUNDED: In accordance with the Heritage Master Plan, plans have been drawn up by the Smethport Heritage Council for the restoration of the historic Shawmut Depot - for Smethport Discovery Center/ Artisan Guild Gallery/ Potato Creek Trail head/ tourism parking & tourist restrooms would be located in the Water Street addition and rentable office space to support expenses for the rest of the building, are to be located in the "Backside Addition" (see diagram above)- estimated project cost \$365,000. Initial application for funds was included in the Impact McKean application but was cut as funds were reduced.

Initial application for the Shawmut Depot Project was made through Impact McKean but the project was removed from that funding request for now due to limitation of funding



The restoration of the Pittsburg(h) & Shawmut Depot into a multi-use Visitor's Center/ Artisan Gallery and Potato Creek Trailhead is an unfunded project from the Route 6 Master Plan. Graphic by Joel Kohler

Funding is currently pending for three primary Heritage Community Master Plan projects, each identified in Smethport's in either the Heritage Community Master Plan or the Hamlin Lake Park Master Plan, a sister master plan created to compliment and further the goals of our Heritage Community Master Plan:

Performing Arts Stage/ Band Shell on Hamlin Island:

FUNDING PENDING: A major portion of the Impact McKean/Impact Smethport project is the funds for construction of an impressive Performing Arts Stage/ Band Shell on the Northeast end of Hamlin Lake Island in Hamlin Park. The island has been identified in our Hamlin Lake Park Master Plan as an ideal venue for music and stage events. Not only is are the views spectacular but crowd control for fee events is easily achieved as there are only two (2) methods to transverse the island for the event. Construction will be by Borough employees with help from inmates from the McKean County Jail.



A performing arts shell on the Hamlin Lake Island will allow for a variety of events. funding is pending in the Impact McKean Grant application



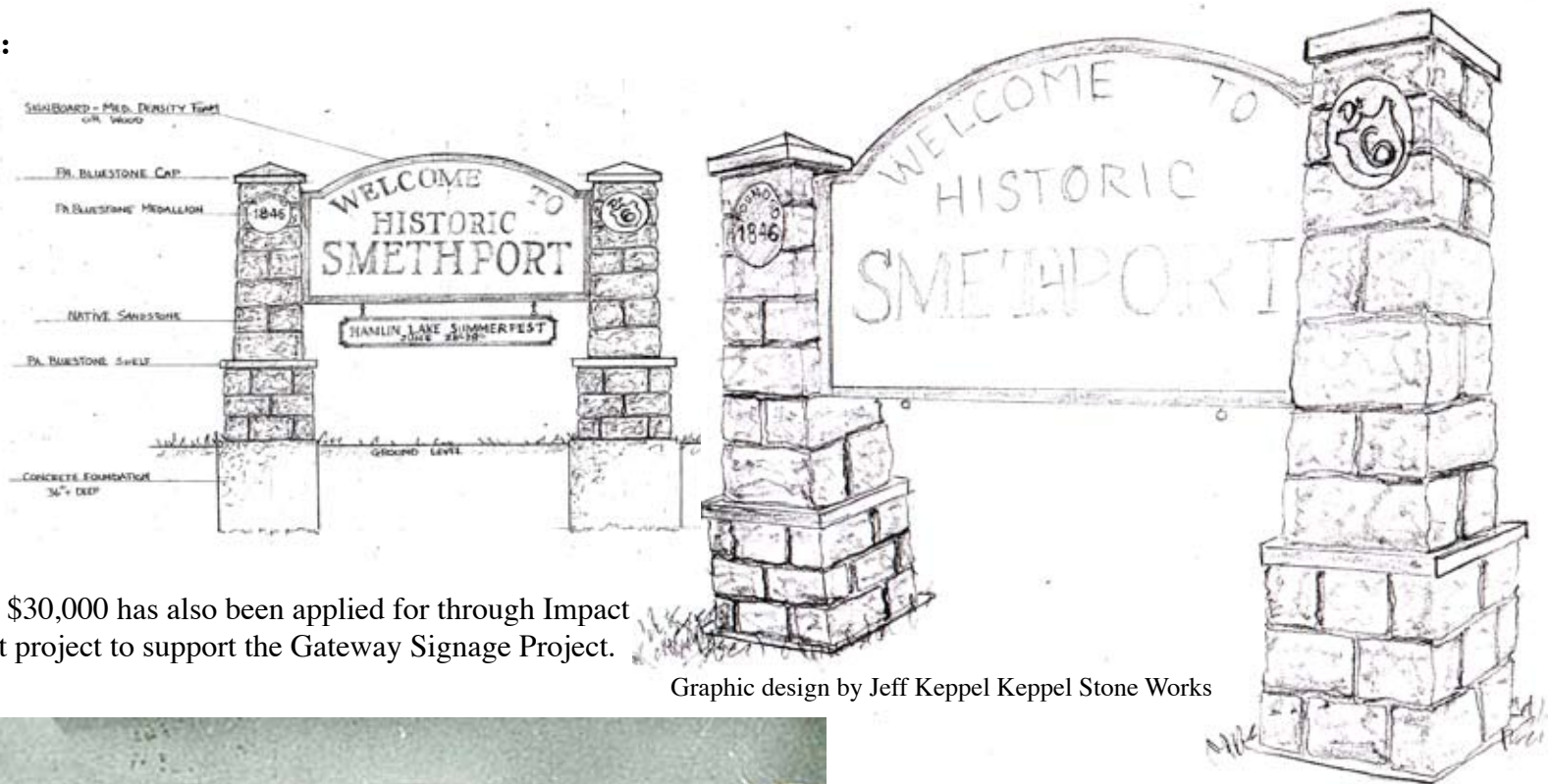
Hamlin Lake Restroom revitalization:

FUNDING PENDING: Directly tied to the Performing Arts Stage on the island is the renewal/reconstruction of the two primary restrooms on the south side of the park. Its critical to have acceptable washrooms for public use when events are taking place on the island. \$28,000 has also been applied for through Impact McKean/Impact Smethport project to support the rejuvenation of the washrooms.

Restroom revitalization is critical so that major events can be held on the Hamlin Lake Island. Funding is pending through the Impact McKean Grant application.

Gateway Signage Project:**FUNDING PEND-**

ING: Also tied directly to the Performing Arts Stage is our Gateway Signage project. Stately stone columned wooden carved signage will be installed at the three, primary entry ports to thee Borough: Route 6 East; Route 6 West and Route 59. Each Gate-way Sign will have an announcement section to promote coming events. \$30,000 has also been applied for through Impact McKean/Impact Smethport project to support the Gateway Signage Project.

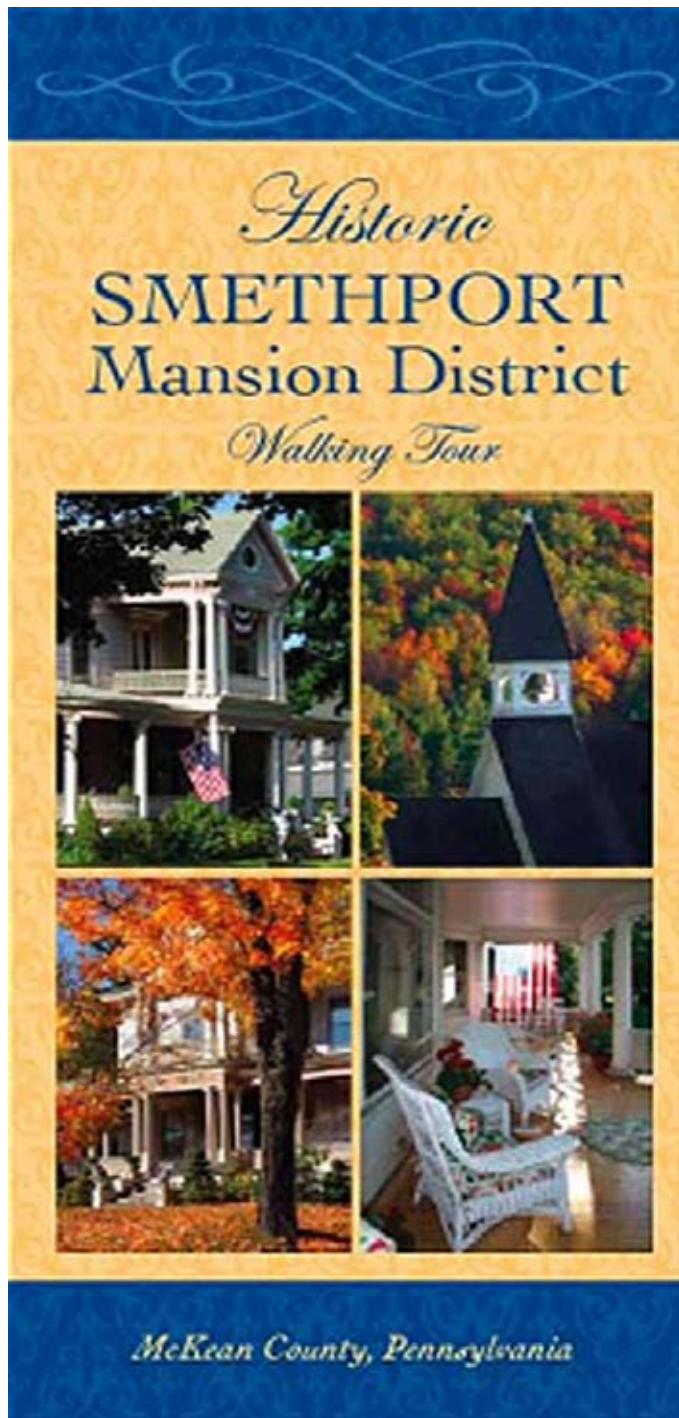


Graphic design by Jeff Keppel Keppel Stone Works

**Smethport Façade Improvements Grant Program:**

UNFUNDED/ REAPPLYING: A committee has been set up to implement the upgrading of the appearance of the buildings on the Main Street. The committee worked closely with the Ridgway Heritage Council for the guidelines and documents. Funds are being sought, which when found, will provide monies that can match what the individual building owners will provide to cover the costs of the upgrading. Documents for the façade for owners including application

The Smethport Heritage Council grant writers are working in conjunction with the Route 6 Heritage Corporation to find a new funding source for the Historic Façade Improvement Project.



**Mansion District Walking Tour Phase I:
COMPLETED/ OPERATING:**

With funds from DCNR matched by the Smethport Chamber and the Allegheny National Forest Vacation Bureau, totaling \$14,000, a brochure was created that list 37 mansions and historic properties that visitor's can experience on a walking tour. The brochure contains a photo of the mansion, a brief description of its history, and a map that locates the properties.

The final portion of Phase I took place during July, 2009 with the installation of the Victorian era style kiosk on Route 6 in front of the McKean County Courthouse. The kiosk was constructed by Quebec based Folio, Inc. Folio creates Lucite encased signage and kiosks for national and state parks. Mansion District Kiosk has creates a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week, information center for tourists.

Phase I of the Smethport Mansion District Walking Tour included a full color brochure and a Main Street kiosk & was funded in part by PA Lumber Heritage, Allegheny National Forest Vacation Bureau and the Smethport Chamber of Commerce.



The Mansion District Walking Tour Kiosk was installed in July, 2009 in front of the McKean County Courthouse. Les Jordan, Jr. photo.

Mansion District Walking Tour Phase II:


FUNDED: Phase II of the Mansion District Walking Tour has been funded. Phase II is another 24 hour a day 7 days a week available feature for tourists. Under Phase II (11) 18"x24" pedestal mounted interpretive Folio, Inc signs will be created and installed throughout the Mansion District and the historic commercial/industrial areas in the Borough. The signage will complement the Phase I Walking Tour booklets and add information about structures throughout the Mansion District for those individuals taking the Walking Tour.

The Phase II signage has been funded by the PA Lumber Heritage \$5000 grant. Research and camera ready design is being donated to hold down costs of the project. (Ridgway purchased 12 similar signs from Folio for \$30,000 which also included historical research and design services.)




Phase II of the Smethport Mansion District Walking Tour will place eleven (11) pedestal interpretive signs throughout the tour.

FAMED CIVIL WAR SURGEON FROM SMETHPORT – U.S. SURGEON FOR U.S. GRANT




Bucktail Surgeon, S. D. Freeman, was promoted to General Grant's United States Volunteers Regiment

Dr. S.D. Freeman: Dr. Freeman was born in Potter County, Pennsylvania in 1829 and moved to McKean County with his parents in 1832. He graduated from the University of Buffalo in 1856 and began practicing medicine in Smethport. In May 1861, he was appointed medical surgeon for the Pennsylvania Bucktail Regiment. During October 1862, he was promoted to surgeon of the United States Volunteers and retained that post until the end of the war. Following the war, in addition to various military assignments, he built and operated a medical sanitarium located on East King Street. His




Following completion of his military duty Dr. Freeman developed a distinguished practice in Smethport operating a medical sanitarium on King Street.
McKean County Democrat John Petrazzi Collection

mansion is located at 17 Rosehill Avenue, and is owned by Anthony and Michele Alfieri.



S. D. Freeman Mansion, 17 Rosehill Avenue, currently owned by Anthony and Michele Alfieri.
insert R. C. Gleason Collection photo © Les Jordan Jr.



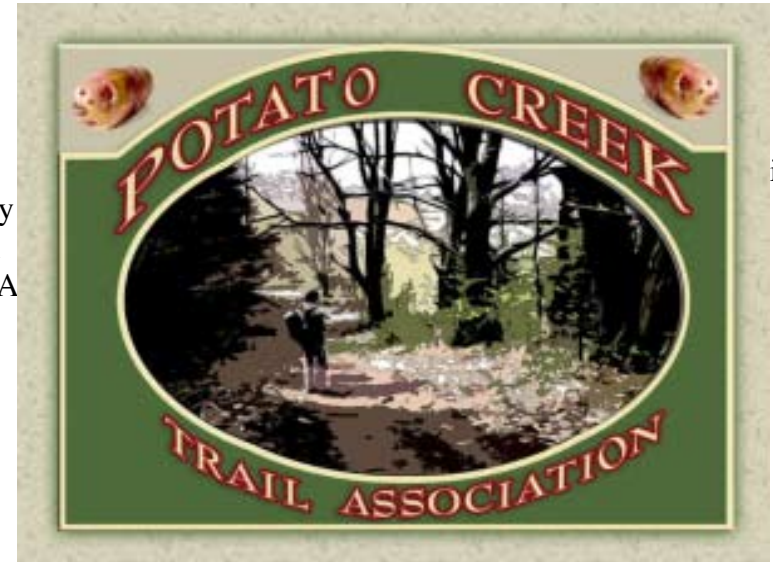
S. D. Freeman Sanitarium 110 E. King Street is owned by Bert and Ray Kleisath.
McKean County Democrat John Petrazzi Collection

Potato Creek Trail Association

ESTABLISHED/BEING DEVELOPED: Originally formed under the auspices of the Smethport Heritage Council the Potato Creek Trail Association developed its own by-laws as a separate Borough of Smethport group. The PCTA boasts a huge network of trails which connect with the Allegheny National Forest and other trail networks the region. Because of its association with the Borough PCTA network of trails are fully insured under the Borough liability insurance. A master plan for the PCTA Trail System is being prepared in conjunction with the McKean County land usage master plan. PCTA works closely with the Seneca Highlands Snowmobile Association.

PCTA features hiking trails, mountain biking trails, equestrian trails and water (kayaking) trails. Because of liability insurance PCTA is officially non-motorized however motorized usage is allowed according to landowners own policy.

Wolfinger Trail System is a section of PCTA trails located on 600 acres above Smeth-



Wolfinger Trail System is a major componet of the Potato Creek Trail Association and features hiking trails, equestrian trails and water trails.

port on "Town Hill". The Wolfinger system has recently been "signed" and is open to the public. Wolfinger Trail system are for foot, bicycling and equestrian trails as well as a portion of water trails.

Other trails are in development including the "Goose Chaser Trail" which focuses on Hamlin Lake and its immediate surrounding area, the "Shawmut RR Trail", "Bradford, Bordell, & Kinzua RR Trail", "Devil's Den Trail", and "Pennsylvania Trail".

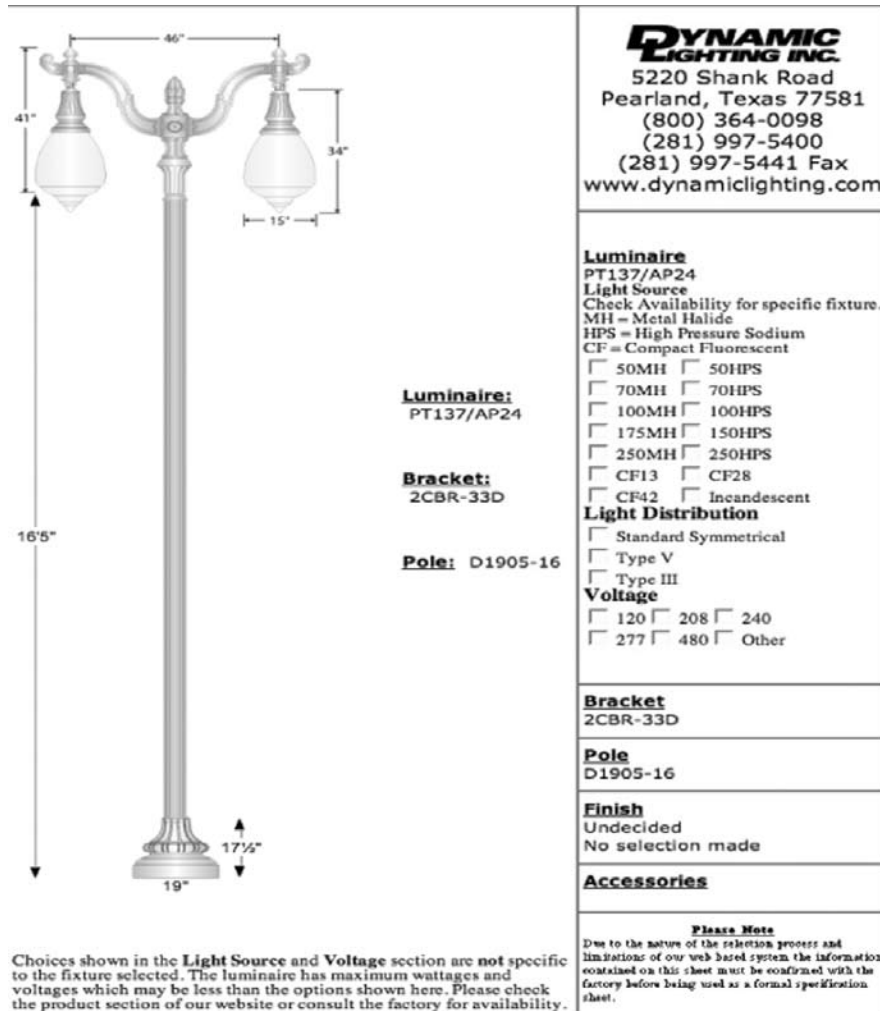
Streetscape & Shade Trees: Smethport Shade Tree Commission:
FUNDED/ IN PROGRESS:

Although the Smethport Shade Tree Commission dated back to prior to the Heritage Community designation the Shade Tree Commission began to plan for a major community reforestation project in 2007. This project was undertaken to improve the streetscape of primarily the residential neighborhoods in the Borough. Smethport was faced with a community forest that was filled with dead and dying sugar maples planted for the most part during the 1890s. The Shade Tree Commission first commenced to GPS the entire borough tree canopy of trees located on Borough property. Community Development Block Grants were written and funded during 2007 and 2008 that provided for the removal of dead and dying trees. Over 100 new trees of a variety of carefully selected species were planted to replace the removed trees.

Beyond treescape the Streetscape Committee has been inactive waiting for other projects to clear the way for a streetscape makeover. The Borough of Smethport is in need of a complete overhaul of its water infrastructure. This is a huge project with a current pricetag of \$20,000,000. To off-set these expenses the Borough is pursuing a state/federal and privately funded district heating system CHP (combined heat and power) project which will generate green electricity and heat the borough using the waste heat. If that project comes to fruition the way will be cleared for a downtown streetscape makeover.



The Smethport Shade Tree Commission has planted over 100 new trees in Smethport and removed an equal number of dead and dying trees to improve the Smethport streetscape and forest canopy. Sometimes trees are planted as memorials as shown here in memory of Smethport's John G. Coleman.



Under the grant proposal 37 new, historic style street lamps would be placed in the downtown shopping area and the current lamps used to replace the present, low quality residential lamps.

with the date of construction of the building that could be attached to the structure. Along with this is a brief history of the building that can be attached to an interior wall. This has become a very popular program. Over 35 properties are currently on the Smethport Historic Registry. The self-supporting program encourages historic restoration and uses no tax dollars or grants.

A streetlight grant was written into the Impact McKean Grant project but withdrawn.

UNFUNDED:

1. Street lamps:

Streetscape Committee has worked on obtaining historic street lamps for the downtown business district through the Impact McKean/ Impact Smethport grant project sponsored by the county.

Currently Smethport has two different kinds of street lamps. Newer, higher quality, historic reproduction lamps are in the merchant area of downtown and an older, lower quality street lamp is located both east and west of 100-500 W. Main. In this plan, new, historic lamps would be placed in the merchant area and the former merchant area (100-500 W. Main) would be relocated to other Main Street locations as an upgrade to the earlier. Older, inferior lamps.

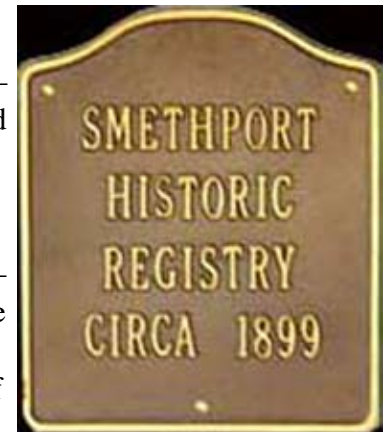
UNFUNDED:

2. Street lamps on entry bridges:

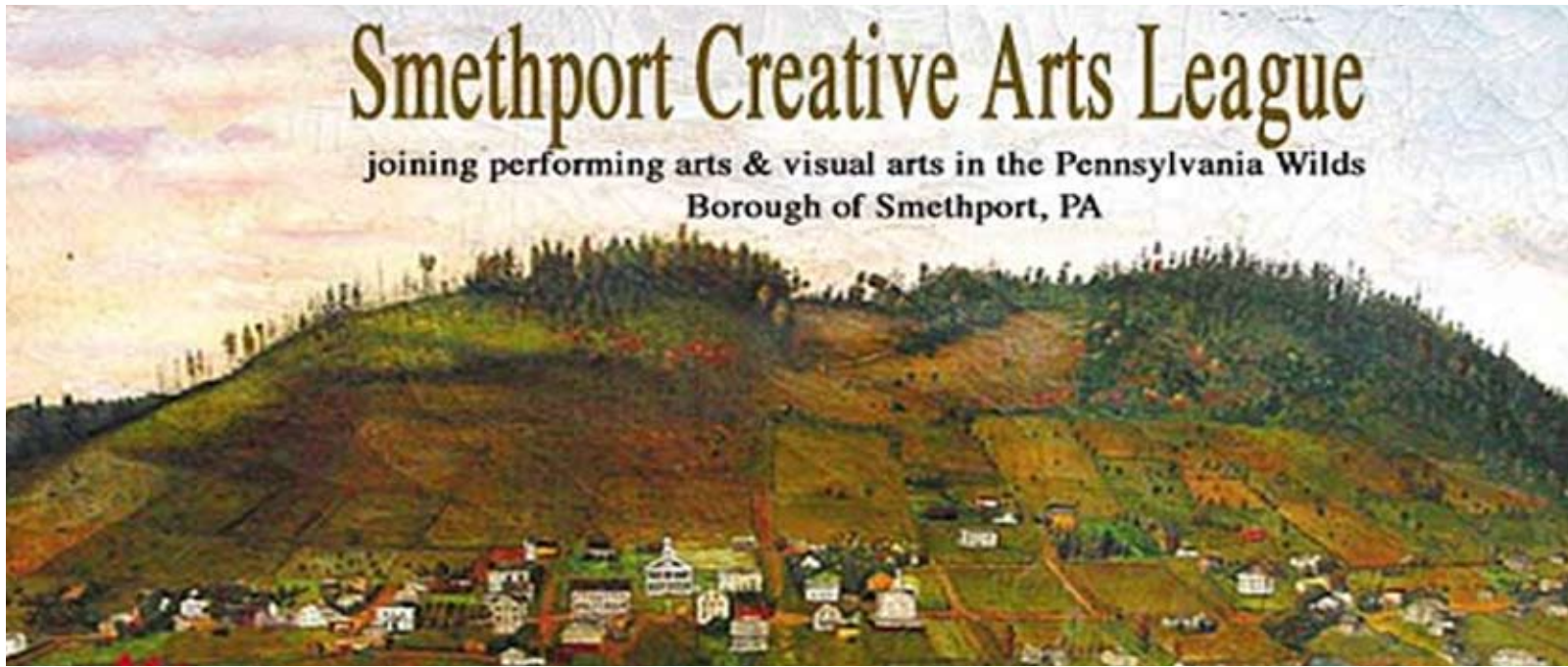
Smethport has bridges on Route 6 both east (Potato Creek Route 6 Bridge) and west (Marvin Creek Route 6 Bridge). When the Potato Creek Bridge was reconstructed during 2007 wiring was installed so that street lighting similar to the new, proposed lighting in the downtown area, can be mounted on all four corners of the bridge.

Smethport Historical Registry:

ESTABLISHED: The Borough had established this program, and owners who were interested could obtain a bronze plaque



The Smethport Historic Registry encourages preservation of important Borough architecture while using no tax dollars.



Smethport Creative Arts League:
ESTABLISHED:
The purpose of this organization is to organize local artists and related programs to provide a focus for their activities. Special events will be promoted that will encourage tourism. SCAL has been active organizing artist workshops, shows, events.

Smethport PA Borough Website:

ESTABLISHED: The Borough authorized a website [smethportpa.org](http://www.smethportpa.org) in 2008. This contains pertinent information about the town. It also contains a community calendar. It is an unusual site in that it contains interesting local news items. As tourists become aware of this site, they will learn of activities that they may wish to attend. Smethport businesses are given free advertising on the site as well as free ad design. Smethport residents volunteers Linda and Nathan Muller maintain the remarkable site as a community service. Website address: <<http://www.smethportpa.org/>>





The Smethport Heritage Council Tourist Promotion Committee has had a major impact on public perception of Smethport.

Tourism Promotion:

ESTABLISHED: Tourism Promotion has been a very proactive committee on the Smethport Heritage Council. The committee was established to promote events and happenings to both tourists and residents. In addition, events other than the routinely scheduled ones are being planned that will draw tourist type crowds. The committee has been very active in issuing press releases, photographs and brochures to promote Smethport's deep heritage under the guidance of Chair Lester Jordan, Jr.

Additional and Improved Accommodations:

Another recommendation of the Smethport Heritage Community Master Plan was the development of additional tourist accommodations. While we still have much room for growth Smethport now has two new Bed & Breakfasts: The D.R. Hamlin House <<http://www.thedrhmlinhouse.com/>> located at 1100 W. Main (814 331-5674) and the Mansion District Inn <<http://www.mansiondistrictinn.com/>> located at 905 W. Main (814 598-5811). The Smethport Motel <<http://www.smethportmotel.info/>> located 105 W. Marvin US Route 6 West (814) 887~5550) has recently renovated and expanded.

The historic Bouton House Special Event Center 707 W. Main <<http://www.boutonhouse.com>> also recently opened for weddings, meetings and conferences. 814 887-4134





Woolly Willy Wonderdaze

ESTABLISHED: The first magnetic toys in the country were invented in Smethport in 1908. From out of those early roots would eventually come the famous 1955 hit toy “Woolly Willy.” This famous 20th century toy was created by Jim Herzog in Smethport in 1955, when he worked for the family-owned business Smethport Specialty Co. (www.smethporttoy.com/woollywilly). With more than 50 million being sold, the child’s toy is one of the largest promoters of Smethport, which features the town’s name on every toy. The Smethport Chamber in a partnership with Patch Products, the toy company that owns the toy Willy Wooly, held a four day program during the third week in June with the name “Willy Wooly Wonderdaze”. Top executives of the Patch Company were present for the opening ceremony. Patch advertises the toy Willy Wooly both nationally and internationally. This new program will highlight Smethport as a tourist destination, which in turn will add a focus to the Pennsylvania’s Northern Tier.

Wheel Around the Hub Cycling Race:

ESTABLISHED: Smethport was a center of bicycle hysteria during the 1890s. The “Wheel Around the Hub” Gold Watch Cycling Race based on the 1890s bicycle races in Smethport is a 53 mile circuit heritage event re-launched in 2005 by the Smethport Lions Club. The “Wheel Around the Hub” has evolved into a major community event with broad race support staff involvement including 65 corner marshal volunteers, as well as the Smethport Fire Police, the Smethport Borough Police and the McKean

HAMLIN BANK & TRUST COMPANY - NORTHWEST SAVINGS BANK - WORTH W. SMITH HARDWARE

COME TO SMETHPORT, PA!

 1890's HISTORIC 1890'S GOLD WATCH & CASH PRIZES
A Wheel Around the Hub
CYCLING RACES
Sat. SEPT. 19, 2009
 & 53 Mile 7 Circuit GOLD WATCH Race
 & 15 Mile 2 Circuit Fun Race



held in famous
 Smethport, PA
 (McKean Co)

register on-line at
www.bikereg.com

Race Start: 12 Noon

details & forms
 on the web:
www.smethportpa.org
 call: 814-887-5553

CASH LAP
 PREMIUMS &
 GOLD WATCHES
 FOR WINNERS

email: wheelrace@smethportpa.org

ORGANIZED BY
 SMETHPORT LIONS CLUB

Spectators May View the Race Anywhere Along the Scenic, Historic 7.5 mile Looped Route !



While Smethport has along way to go to fulfill our Heritage Community Master Plan with many hurdles blocking our way we remain an engaged, creative community actively seeking methods of building and developing the Borough to invent an atmosphere exciting and interesting for both tourists and citizens.



Hamlin Lake Park is an intregal part of the Smethport lifestyle.