

SHEEPSKIN TRAIL SIGN A COOPERATIVE EFFORT

Thanks to a cooperative effort between the Fayette County Cultural Trust and the Dunbar Historical Society, a heritage sign has now been installed by Michael Bell, Pat Trimbath and George Myers from the society's Sheepskin Trail Committee. The sign is located at the junction of the Sheepskin Trail and the Great Allegheny Passage and was funded through the Fayette County Tourism Grant Program and the Laurel Highlands Visitor's Bureau.

Through the help of Michael Edwards, President of the Fayette County Cultural Trust, and Dunbar Historical Society members, the colorful sign gives a short history of Dunbar along with photos of buildings and the beehive coke oven. "Mr. Edwards put in so much time to help see this project to fruition and the members of the Dunbar Historical Society are extremely grateful to him," said Donna Myers, Society Secretary.

Edwards said, "The Fayette County Cultural Trust was proud to be able to partner with the Dunbar Historical Society on this project. We believe that collaborative efforts such as this help to build the connectedness of the county. We hope that other organizations will also see the benefit of such cooperation and seek out help from one another."

The new heritage sign closely matches the heritage signs in Connellsville. While the city signage reads, "A River Runs Through It," the Sheepskin Trail signage reads, "A Trail Runs To It." The "it" referred to is Dunbar Borough where trail users can visit the Dunbar Historical Society, the beehive coke oven, view an original B&O Fairbanks-Morse Speeder car recently donated to the society by Don Harbaugh of Oberlin, Ohio. Visitors can also have a picnic at the new picnic tables recently installed at the Coke Oven Park and learn about the historic buildings in Dunbar using the "View from the Park" map. A new "Historic Sites Along the Sheepskin Trail" brochure is now available at both ends of the Sheepskin Trail. It will permit trail users an opportunity to see photos of the sites once located along the trail, such as the Bowest yards, Bowest junction, coke ovens and West Penn Trolley line to name a few. Maps and brochures are self-serve and can be picked up at the new message center located at the Coke Oven Park or at the Sheepskin/Great Allegheny Passage end of the trail. Both the brochure and the message center were funded through last year's Tourism Grant program. This program provides non-profit groups the chance to expand programs and acquire items that they would not have been able to afford without this funding source.

Family researchers are invited to visit the society which now has a genealogical database with over 511,000 names. It was recently donated to the society by Marilyn Martin Tolentino Foster of Florida. It is the largest and most up-to-date database in Fayette County. The society is open on Saturdays and will open during the week for visitors who cannot make a Saturday visit.

Call Donna Myers at 724-277-8448 schedule an appointment or visit the website at www.dunbarhistoricalsociety.com.

Myers praises those responsible for instituting the grant program. "I see the program as a win-win for Fayette County. In our case, this funding helps us upgrade our park, help maintain the Sheepskin Trail and provide expanded tourism opportunities for visitors while providing a place close to home for local folks to visit. We are also able to infuse money back into the county's economy because we use local businesses to complete projects as defined in our grant requests. I think the partnerships forged between Fayette County, the Laurel Highlands Visitor's Bureau and non-profit groups like ours, show how working together can advance progress in our county. It is a wonderful program and has helped us tremendously!" said Myers.

