

The Town of Moorefield and Hardy County Convention & Visitors Bureau have worked in partnership for the past two years to reimagine a use for the Higgins House. As part of its commitment to the revitalization of the Town, HCCVB proposed joining the Town in restoring the House and creating the Hardy County Visitors Center. But, to protect and preserve the historic structure, to be responsible stewards, a plan had to be developed that considered how best the House would serve the community.

The Robert Higgins House is the oldest extant residential building in the Town and among one of the few 18th century buildings in the County. After the founding of Moorefield, a year following the printing of the Declaration of Independence, town lots were surveyed and sold on the condition that a house be built on the site. Robert Higgins, having returned from his service as a Captain in the 8th Virginia Regiment and three years as a prisoner of war, purchased the 10th lot, #33 on Winchester Avenue.

Standing as a link between today and the mid-18th century, the House has many stories to tell, not the least of which is its witnessing of our nation's earliest days. Built, possibly rebuilt, renovated, subsumed, revealed, and restored, the House holds clues from all these stages of its life. Using these clues left from the architectural alterations, information from documented history and the historical/scientific data found through deliberate research, the expertise shared by consultants of several disciplines, and the generosity of the House's 'families', we have been slowly piecing together the narrative.

To protect the historic structure, the Town and HCCVB have begun the restoration process and, as we do so, we are putting the nearly two and a quarter centuries of history - local, national, and global - into context. Utilizing the narrative, we are shaping a small museum to be contained within the historic structure and building an addition to house the visitors center.

Tightly focused on the architecture of the House and the life of Robert Higgins, a farmer, soldier, settler, and founder of a frontier town, the museum will be informed by Higgins' legacy to Hardy County, his life as it was woven into the fabric of our country. Telling the Stories of an 18th Century House will include a look at frontier architecture, and a view of the many adaptations of the Higgins House. Interpreted by a historian and a dendroarchaeologist, documented with source material, and informed by local history, the House stands as the primary artifact of the museum.

The Higgins House did not exist in isolation as evidenced by Robert Higgins' story. The American Revolution, changes in world leadership, shifts in populations, and the emergence of a unique American culture were swirling around and through the House. Of course, we are talking about less than

Stories from an 18th Century House



Top: Higgins House getting a new roof (2020). Bottom L: Higgins House can be seen on far right built into larger home (1988). Bottom R: One year before Moorfield was founded, Declaration of Independence was signed (J. Trumbull painting)

900 square feet of exhibition space within the House so how are we going to fit in a museum and offer a world view as seen through a local lens? First, we are committed to protecting the integrity of the historic structure. Electricity for lighting and HVAC will be added, as inconspicuously as possible. Interpretive panels will tell the story and displays will present related historical objects.

Locating the visitors center and the 21st century necessities (and some historic displays) in an addition to be built to the west of the House, will assure that the Higgins House does not undergo yet another challenge to his structure. We are hoping the addition will be built this fall.

While we are continuing with the grant writing and fundraising for the museum's development, we are also seeking additional funds for the continued restoration of the House. This spring a new roof was added, and the foundation was rebuilt and insulated. Other work remains including repair, preparation, and painting of the siding and windows, re-pointing and recapping the chimney, installation of the electrical service, HVAC, interior storm windows and sunshades, and other interior repairs.

With the help of the community sharing their stories and helping us source material, we will acquire and/or photograph original documents and artifacts and develop museum literature to expand on the Higgins House narrative. Through our column in the Examiner, we will keep you informed of our progress. Upon completion, a volunteer base will be trained as docents and be on site to greet the public during weekly scheduled hours - the first time the House has been opened regularly to the public.

We wish to first thank the Moorefield Town Council for agreeing to take this ride with us and share our vision, and especially Rick Freeman and Lucas Gagnon who have made enormous effort to see the Higgins

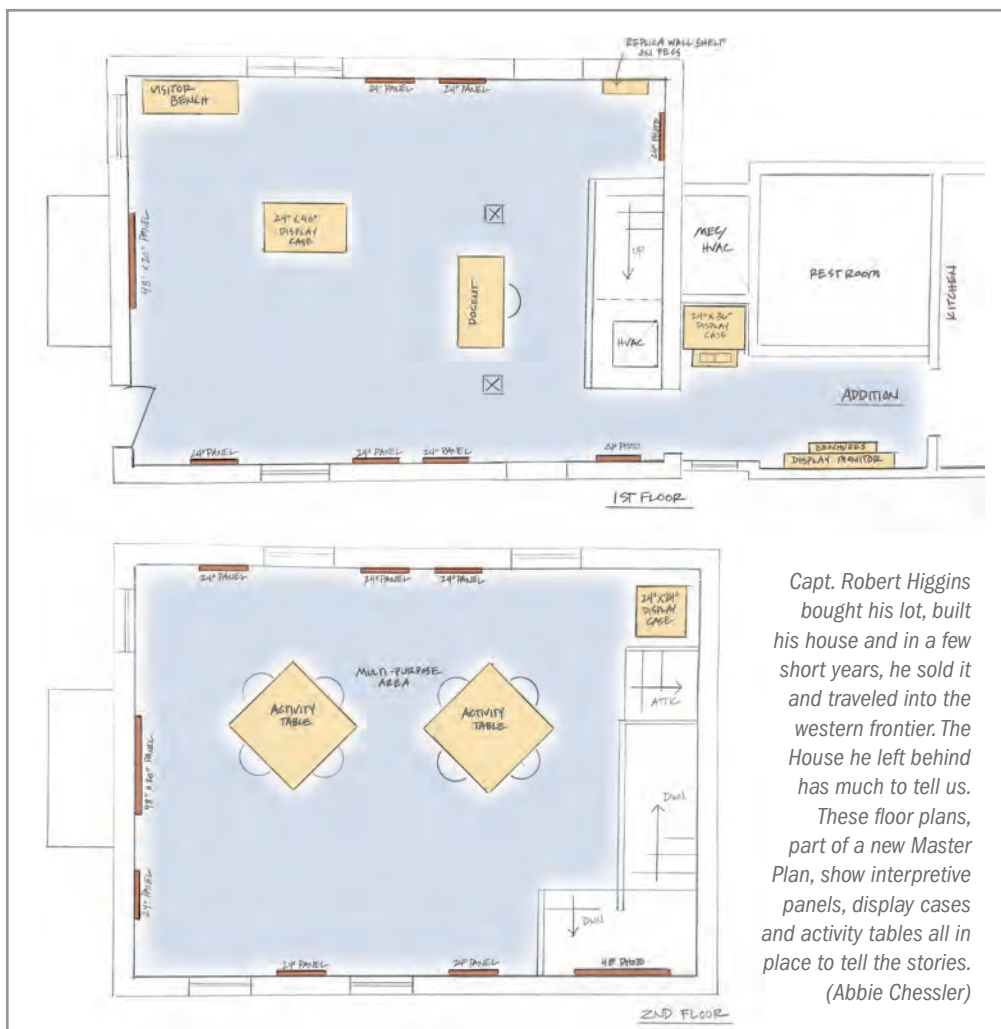
House project come to fruition. It is important that we likewise thank the WVHUB's Cultivate WV Program, the WV Humanities Council, WV State Historic Preservation Office and the Hardy County Community Foundation for their on-going support and partial funding which has made this project - everything from a new roof to research assistance - possible.

It is also imperative that we acknowledge and thank the generosity of many but especially Gerald Milnes, historian, author, folklorist and mystery solver; Kristen deGraauw, dendroarchaeologist and mystery creator; Gabe Neville, American Revolution and 8th Virginia Regiment specialist; Mike Crites, a man of infinite

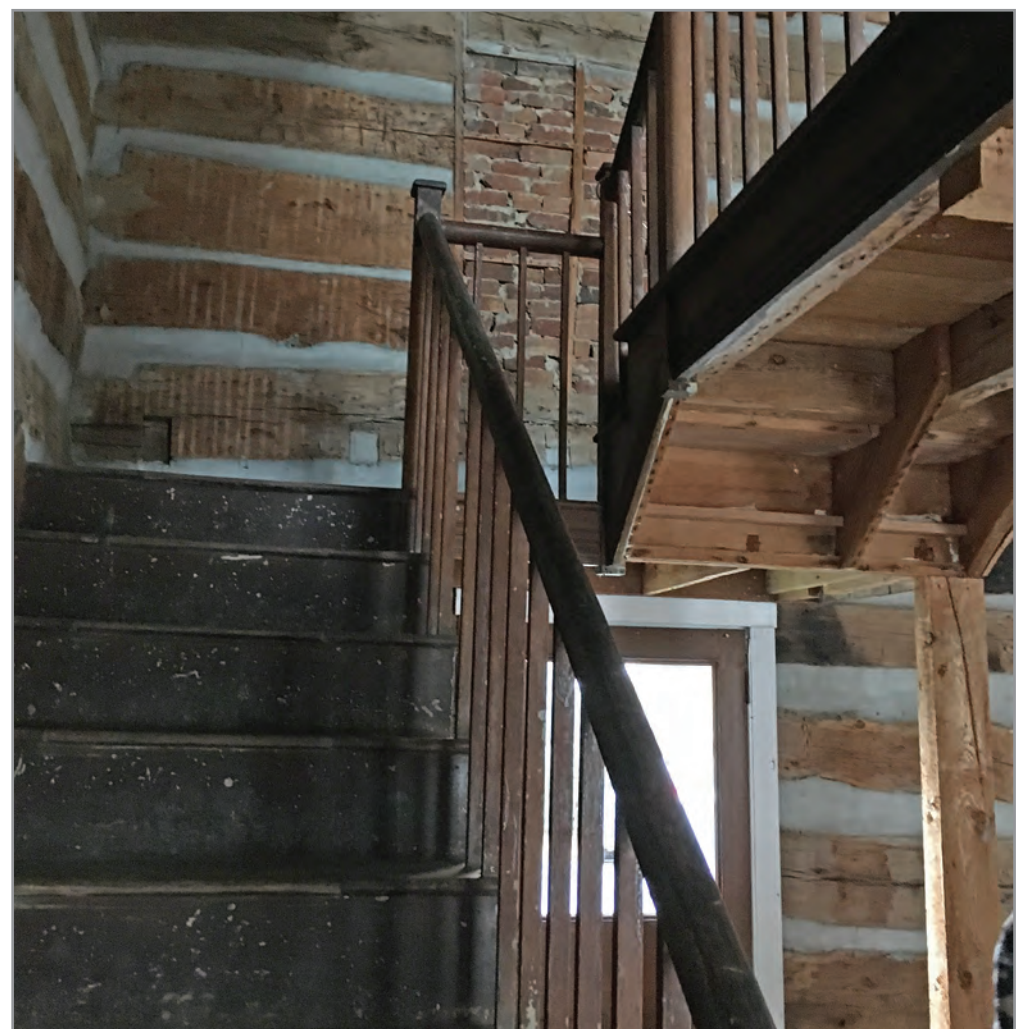
knowledge of and the willingness to share our community's history; Joshua Miller, builder, artist and creator of the elevations and floor plans; Alejandra Herron, designer, who ties together the words and images; and Abbie Chessler, exhibition designer, whose work on the Master Plan is uniting all the thoughts and dreams. We greatly appreciate the assistance of the Moorefield Examiner in publishing this presentation.

We are pleased to present to you elements of our Master Plan concept for the adaptive reuse of the Robert Higgins House.

Michele Moure-Reeves
Executive Director
HCCVB



Capt. Robert Higgins bought his lot, built his house and in a few short years, he sold it and traveled into the western frontier. The House he left behind has much to tell us. These floor plans, part of a new Master Plan, show interpretive panels, display cases and activity tables all in place to tell the stories. (Abbie Chessler)



We strongly support the historic preservation effort for the Higgins House. It has been a quiet historic presence in Moorefield for decades and the restoration will honor the past in the present.

Mary & Tom Burgess
South Fork General Store

The new visitors center will be strategically located in the town's historic district and would be an asset for the community and the visitors exploring Moorefield, Hardy County, and the region.

Tracy Sherman
President
Hardy County Chamber of Commerce

As part of Eastern's efforts to encourage the arts and tourism in the Potomac Highlands, we support the restoration of the Higgins House in Moorefield which will develop a stronger town-center to leverage local and regional destinations and display the history of the valley.

Charles Terrell
President
Eastern WV Community & Technical College

Plan. The leadership of the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Town of Moorefield to preserve this historic structure and to make it a place for educational information about the community and Hardy County is of great benefit to our citizens and future generations.

Hardy County Commission
Harold Michael
Jay Fansler
David Workman

I support the restoration of the Higgins House. The educational opportunities, historic preservation and the value to the tourism industry adds to and supports the community for years to come.

Greg Greenwalt
Board Chair
EWWVTC Foundation

I am so excited to see the continued work on the Higgins House project! It is important to continue to share the history and the story of Moorefield and Hardy County with our community members, families, and visitors as we continue to plan for the future. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this beautiful adventure!

Amanda Workman-Scott
Director of Community Engagement
WV Community Development Hub

preserve the current structure of this building and support any effort to continue to do so.

Gary Stalnaker
Mayor
Town of Moorefield

I am thrilled our community is creating more accessible historic sites in the area to promote Heritage Tourism. When you combine the Civil War Trails Program with sites like the historic Higgin's House, you are building a foundation that can help boost our local economy as visitors come to our community to learn about West Virginia History.

Kelly Williams
South Branch Inn

When people feel connected to their community, they are more likely to help it thrive. I value the potential impact that restoring the Higgins House to vibrant public use can have on inspiring residents and leading to increased engagement. Whether by learning more about the history of the place they call home or by becoming actively involved in the preservation and celebration of that history, emphasizing a community's uniqueness contributes to community pride.

Amy Pancake
Hardy County Community Foundation



Photo courtesy Albert Mach

ervation and interpretation of the county's history, heritage, and cultural traditions are an essential part of understanding and making sense of our place in that history, as well as our role and responsibilities in its contemporary life.

Eric Waggoner
Executive Director
WV Humanities Council

Efforts to restore the Higgins House, one of the oldest buildings in Moorefield, have been ongoing for years. It

is exciting to know that the Town of Moorefield and the Hardy County Convention and Visitors Bureau are combining resources to make the structure not only sound, but accessible for the public. I look forward to the planned museum aspect of the Higgins House and fully support the effort to preserve and make it an enticing place for learning and enjoyment for both visitors and residents.

Phoebe Fisher Heishman
Publisher Emeritus
Moorefield Examiner

"...[Log] structures are our ultimate examples of material culture. They are the spaces where history was determined, culture was maintained, food was prepared, clothing was made, families were born, music was played and danced to, stories were told, faith was practiced and regional traditions were established."

- Gerald Milnes, 2020

This is such an exciting project on several levels! The renovation and repurposing of the Higgins House is an excellent example of what can be done to reuse and readapt an old structure for modern use. As a visitors center, tourists will not only be introduced to our county, but also to its history, its early architecture and how we are working to preserve that history.

Mike Crites
Moorefield Historic Landmark Commission

The Higgins House addition will be a huge asset in supporting the importance of preserving history for future generations. It will be a great visitor attraction, set precedents for other such projects and give another opportunity for students to study local history. This is an exciting venture.

Beth See
President
Hardy County Historical Society

The Hardy County Commission is pleased to lend its support and encouragement to the effort to preserve and make use of the Higgins House in Moorefield as outlined in the Master

The Hardy County Convention & Visitors Bureau is eager to see the Higgins House fully restored and providing a home for the Hardy County Visitors Center. The importance of preserving the House, to reveal its many stories and to open it to the public is paramount and we look forward to sharing it with you.

Michael O'Neill
President and HCCVB Board of Directors

I see the Higgins House, as Hardy County's Visitors Center, being inspirational, spotlighting a piece of Hardy County history while serving a critical need in downtown Moorefield. The House will serve as a draw for county residents and tourists. And it will be a useful starting point particularly for those wanting to investigate area history. Restoration of the Higgins House breathes life into an exceptional county asset.

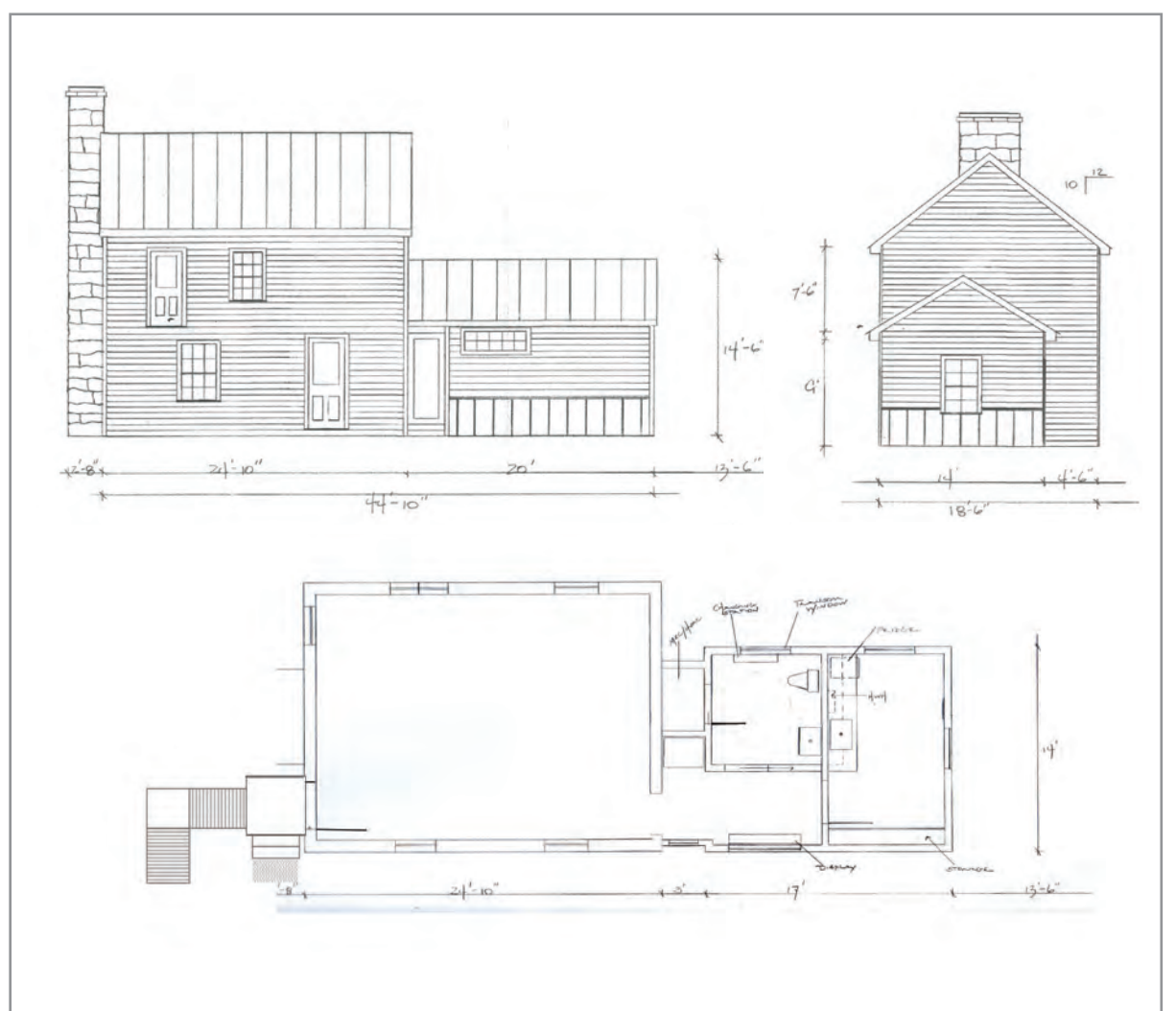
Claudia Tidwell
Hardy County Barn Quilt Trail

The Higgins House is an important structure within our historic district. The Town is excited to have the Hardy County CVB use this building as a centerpiece to showcase its history. We have taken steps to restore and

The West Virginia Humanities Council is honored to support the Hardy County Convention and Visitors Bureau in their efforts to restore the Robert Higgins House for use as a visitor's center and museum. Pres-



Colonial settlers followed the frontier road south and into the west building log cabins along the way.



Elevations and floor plan show addition to be added to the Higgins House for visitors center and additional displays. (Joshua Miller)

To the left:
C.1840 windows were bricked in during later renovation. Note charred logs at the top of the wall.
Photograph of the House during demolition reveals log structure
Stairs were restructured when House became part of the mid-19th century addition



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