

National Road Museum reopens

200 years of history now available in 5 miles

BY LORI LAW • Correspondent • May 3, 2010

ZANESVILLE --One museum telling one story from three perspectives is the focus for the newly renovated National Road/Zane Grey Museum which celebrated its reopening Sunday with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house.

"Yesterday was our opening day and our Friends group is sponsoring the open house today," director Debbie Allender said. "We've been really excited and looking forward to this. It has been quite a winter with the construction going on. We have such good support, such a good Friends group that it has all come together and it is a wonderful day, today."

Allender said the museum had been in danger of closing as an Ohio Historical Society site because of cuts in funding, but the involvement of local groups teaming up to manage sites throughout the state is working.

"Operating the John and Annie Glenn Historic Site just 5 miles away and this makes a good package. Now with the two sites, we cover 200 years of American history," she said.

The museum is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday through Sept. 30 with two-for admissions available for the John and Annie Glenn Historic Site, as well. There are volunteer opportunities available and memberships as Friends of the Museum with more information available by calling 872-3143.

Ted Prasse, president of the board of trustees for the Ohio Historical Society, attended the ribbon-cutting.

"Our budget has been cut by 42 percent," Prasse said. "From an operating standpoint, we had to come up with a way to do things better. What we've done is found local communities and it is you that have met the challenge to recognize this as a community asset as well as a state asset. We need to have our children acknowledge and understand the

history. This museum tells three inextricably linked stories of transportation, the Industrial Revolution and one of the first American travel writers. This is what made Ohio great and we have great stories to tell, he said."

Now partnered with the John and Annie Glenn Foundation, the Ohio Historical Society is seeking innovations in locally managing the museum and making the site more accessible.

"The Ohio Historical Society approached us at the John and Annie Glenn Foundation because they were very pleased with what we were doing with the historic site," Dr. Lorle Porter said. "We want to be able to offer guided tours here now, too, and we are going to be able to do that with our corps of volunteers. We think with increased visibility, new signage, we'll increase traffic through this museum and the story it has to tell. We want to offer a personal experience to all that come to the museum.

"The goal of the renovation was two-fold. One was to make the site more accessible and the other was to make it more visible, lightening the entrance. Expanding the pottery collection and redesigning the art pottery into a narrative and chronological fashion ties it into the story the museum tells," Porter said.

Area pottery expert Betty Ward looked over the new lighting and expanded pottery at the museum.

"At one time, we were down on quantities of area pottery to exhibit," Ward said. "Now that the John

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and Annie Glenn Foundation is working to manage this museum, it is wonderful. They have done such a wonderful job getting the pottery seen."

A loan of pottery from a private collector has made for a more comprehensive exhibit, Ward said.

Porter said the museum is unique in the perspectives showcased.

"This museum used to be talked about as three separate exhibits," Ward said. "I don't see it that way. When you are talking about the National Road, which fundamentally changed American history in 20 years, you have to know how difficult it was to enter America's heartland," she said.

"The Appalachians were as much an obstacle as the Great Wall of China. Once the National Road was begun, there was a huge influx, taking what was once a frontier state to the third largest population state because of the National Road. This brought [automobiles](#) and the Industrial Revolution, transforming America and our Ohio art pottery is a part of it," Porter said.

"Zane Grey's books are written in reaction against that. His first three novels were set in the Ohio Valley and romanticized what he saw as the American frontier. He spent the rest of his life, half of the year, traveling and exploring like Ebenezer Zane had done. This is a mosaic that fits together and is the identification of this museum. We have a new theme for this year which is Five Times Forty. Forty is U.S. 40 and 200 years of history is available on 5 miles of U.S. 40. It is all tied together," she said.



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Dr. Lorle Porter points to a location on a museum map of the National Road at Sunday's open house at the National Road/Zane Grey Museum. (Lori Law, for the Times Recorder)

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