

April 2, 2008
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**HISTORICAL SOCIETY PURCHASES SIGNIFICANT BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN
YOUNGSTOWN TO CREATE A NEW VISITOR DESTINATION**

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio — The Mahoning Valley Historical Society has purchased the historic Harry Burt/Ross Radio Building at 325 West Federal Street in downtown Youngstown and is planning to transform the structure into a new Mahoning Valley History Center.

Harry Burt, a famous local confectioner, purchased the building in 1921 and completely remodeled it to operate a candy and ice cream factory, retail store and public dining and assembly rooms. It was at this location that Burt first produced his patented invention: the “Good Humor” ice cream bar on a stick.

After Harry Burt’s death in 1926, his family continued to make and sell candy in the building until 1935, when they sold it to James Ross, founder of the Ross Radio Company. Ross Radio has continuously operated at this location ever since. In 2006 the building was recognized by *Parade* Magazine and the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of eleven most historic places in America.

For more than 40 years, the Mahoning Valley Historical Society has been most readily identifiable as the owner of the Arms Family Museum of Local History, located at 648 Wick Avenue in Youngstown in the former residence of Olive F.A. and Wilford P. Arms. The 1905 Arts and Crafts-style mansion and garage buildings function as a historic house, regional history museum and archives facility.

“The Arms residence is the most significant artifact in our collection and it is our responsibility to care for it,” says Historical Society Executive Director H. William (Bill) Lawson. “But, it is also our responsibility to present the entire history of the Valley. The residence buildings were designed to be a private home, not a museum, and we are challenged every time we develop a new exhibit. Because of space limitations, we are unable to display the vast majority of our collections; we have little space for educational programs; and our ability to care for the collections is compromised because we have to store most of our artifacts away from the museum in spaces with inadequate climate control.”

To better meet the needs of the community, Historical Society’s Board and staff members carefully studied several locations in Youngstown’s central area before deciding in 2007 that the Burt Building was the ideal location in which to create the new Mahoning Valley History Center. “This site offers so much,” states Lawson. “First, it is a historic structure. And, with over 22,000 square feet of available interior space, it is a great facility to enhance the level of service we provide to the residents of the Valley.” He adds, “Its location downtown is also important and will hopefully stimulate further redevelopment of the city’s core.”

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The Historical Society is currently in a quiet fundraising phase to secure the dollars needed to rehabilitate and adapt the structure. When complete, the new History Center will:

- Feature interactive, inclusive exhibits that relate to all people who live in the Mahoning Valley, dedicated education space and research facilities in a state-of-the-art visitor destination
- Improve collections management by consolidating the artifacts into on-site, climate-controlled storage and conservation facilities
- Broaden the Historical Society's appeal by hosting major traveling exhibitions, expanded on-site education programs, and off-site outreach for all interest levels
- Offer an exciting new downtown venue for cultural and community activities, and public and private gatherings for groups of all sizes
- Relieve the pressures currently being placed on the Arms Family Museum, and focus on interpreting this historic house and landscape and exhibiting the Historical Society's exceptional decorative arts collection.

A national fundraising firm completed a Leadership Planning Study and recommended moving forward with a capital and endowment campaign to finance the project. An initial 10-month campaign process will include cultivating and enlisting campaign leaders and volunteers and the solicitation of gifts from area businesses, corporations, foundations, and individuals.

“Combined with the Historical Society's valuable collections, this campaign will create a first-class history center for residents of the Mahoning Valley and beyond,” said Board President C. Reid Schmutz in announcing the plans. “In a sense, the new facility will become a ‘family learning center’ where generations of the past will meet generations of the future to learn about the Valley's heritage.”

“This project represents a substantial investment of private funds in downtown Youngstown, and will result in an additional arts and entertainment anchor for our revitalized central business district” said Youngstown Mayor Jay Williams. He further states “I applaud and support the Mahoning Valley Historical Society's commitment to address current operational challenges and to reach out to the broader community by developing a new regional History Center.”

Founded in 1875 and incorporated in 1909, The Mahoning Valley Historical Society educates and promotes an interest in the history of the Mahoning Valley by collecting, preserving, and developing material representative of the people who have inhabited the region. For more information about the Historical Society, details about the plans for the Burt Building, or to schedule a tour, call 330-743-2589.
