

Fayette County Historical Society

Andy Verhoff, Ohio History Fund Grant Coordinator, Local History Services, Ohio History Connection

Members of the Ohio Local History Alliance are very successful at winning grants from the Ohio History Fund, the Ohio History Connection's competitive matching grant program for history projects.

As of August 2017, 26 Alliance members have netted more than \$250,000 in History Fund grants, almost half of those made since the program began in 2012. To showcase the good that Alliance members do with History Fund grants, The Local Historian presents a new semi-regular feature, "Funding Brighter Futures: Local History + the History Fund." The content is excerpted from History Fund grantees' final project reports and follow-up interviews.

We hope these stories inspire with ideas to tackle your own projects; or possibly to apply for a History Fund grant. For more information about the History Fund, including an application, eligibility requirements, and deadlines, visit www.ohiohistory.org/historyfund or contact program coordinator, Andy Verhoff, 614-297-2341, averhoff@ohiohistory.org

We also hope these stories inspire you to give. As The Local Historian will proclaim next tax season, 100% of the money for History Fund grants is voluntarily given. It comes from donations of state income tax refunds, the sales of Ohio History "mastodon" license plates, and direct contributions to the Ohio History Connection for the History Fund. The more the History Fund receives in donations, the more it grants back to organizations like yours – maybe yours, if you apply!

HISTORY FUND GRANT RECIPIENT:

Fayette County Historical Society



The Morris Sharp House / Fayette County Museum. Photo courtesy the Fayette County Historical Society

Project title: _____

2015 Climate Control Project
(repairs to museum's windows)

Category: _____

Bricks & Mortar

Award: _____

\$14,000

Amount requested: _____

\$14,400

(partial grant made to accommodate funding for other projects)

Grant year: _____

2014-2015

Alliance member since: _____

1995

Year added to National Register of Historic Places: _____

(requirement for Bricks & Mortar project only):

1974

What did the project accomplish?

The mission of the Fayette County Historical Society in Washington Courthouse is to collect, preserve and interpret the history of the county. The "2015 Climate Control Project" enabled the society to better protect the artifacts in its care by repairing windows in its c. 1875 Morris Sharp House - aka, the Fayette County Museum. Repair to the windows enables the organization to better control the building's inside climate and secure it against the weather.

The project was the last phase of a three-year effort to repair the museum's 43 windows. The society's board undertook the project in response to a Local History Service's Needs Assessment in July 2013. The assessment's primary recommendation was

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Before



After

Before and after shots of History Fund-supported window repairs to the Morris Sharp House / Fayette County Museum. Photos courtesy the Fayette County Historical Society

to improve the interior climate of the house, to better preserve the society's collections and make the house more comfortable to work in and visit.

Who benefits from the project?

The Fayette County Museum serves the citizens of Fayette County, but also preserves local aspects of state and national history - including Morris Sharp House itself and the collections inside. As of 2015, the Fayette County Museum welcome more than two thousand Fayette Countians and in excess of one hundred out-of-county, and approximately thirty out-of-state visitors.

In addition to the citizens of this large rural county, area contractor Legacy Restoration and Construction benefited from the project when it won the bid to repair the windows. The project, albeit in a small way, benefited the local economy.

The board benefited, too. The window repair project has created excitement within the community about the museum. The project was also a launching point for more projects. After the FCHS finished the windows, funding from local supporters enabled the organization to repair the house's four doors, included two that were non-functional "for years," according to society treasurer, Bob Russell. The door project concluded the spring of 2017. With airtight windows, made possible in part by a grant from the History Fund, and airtight doors, thanks to local donors, the museum's heating bill have dropped.

The success of window project propelled the society to apply for a state capital budget appropriation in 2016 to install central air conditioning. The society received an appropriation of \$25,000 - a smaller amount compared to others in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, but one that made a huge difference to the museum! Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) administered the appropriation. Because the house is on the National Register, the OFCC required Ohio State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to approve the work to insure it would maintain the historic appearance of the house. (The



Big checks lead to bigger projects! At Statehood Day 2015, shown L to R: Mark Sundlov and Stacia Kuceyeski of the Outreach Division of the Ohio History Connection, Fayette County Historical Society Treasurer Bob Russell, and Ohio History Connection board president Glenda S. Greenwood

SHPO also reviews projects that receive Bricks & Mortar grants from the History Fund). The A/C project concluded in July 2017. The society is now able to maintain steady temperature and relative humidity levels in the museum year 'round to ensure the preservation of the collections entrusted to the society, and the comfort volunteers and visitors.

As necessary as building upkeep is, the Fayette County Historical Society sees a more significant benefit from these efforts: the community sees that the historical society is a moving ahead and that it's worthy of support. Treasurer Russell noted that "the A/C project just ended in July [2017], so it's too early to see an increase in visitation yet." He continued by noting that what the society has seen is increase in volunteer hours because the house "is more comfortable to work in."

Local History Services' Needs Assessments don't always result in History Fund grants, and History Fund grant don't always lead to state capital appropriations for museum building construction projects. But in the case of the all-volunteer Fayette County Historical Society, it did. The society's next big goal is to repaint the museum. If you're in Washington Court House, stop by the Fayette County Museum to see their repaired windows and feel the cool air inside - as well as it collections of the county's history: www.fayette-co-oh.com/museum.html. "Like" them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Fayettecountymuseum/ ■