

January 27, 2013

HELLO THERE, BIG BOY



KENNY KEMP / Sunday Gazette-Mail

Roy Dolin (left) and David Husband set a double cheeseburger on the hand of "Big Boy," who will welcome guests to the Culture Center's exhibit celebrating West Virginia's 150 years of statehood.

New sesquicentennial exhibit features the flavor of W.Va.

By Paul J. Nyden
Staff writer

BIG Boy got to hold up his big double cheeseburger at the state Culture Center on Friday.

The 4-foot cheeseburger is so heavy, it took both Roy Dolin and David Husband to lift onto Big Boy's hand.

With his smiling face, Big Boy will greet visitors arriving

at the West Virginia State Museum on Thursday for the opening of a special exhibition commemorating the Mountain State's 150th anniversary.

Betty Schoenbaum signed her name on one of Big Boy's feet. Her late husband, Alex Schoenbaum, opened the first of his restaurants on Charleston's West Side in 1951, which became a Big Boy franchise that later was named Shoney's.

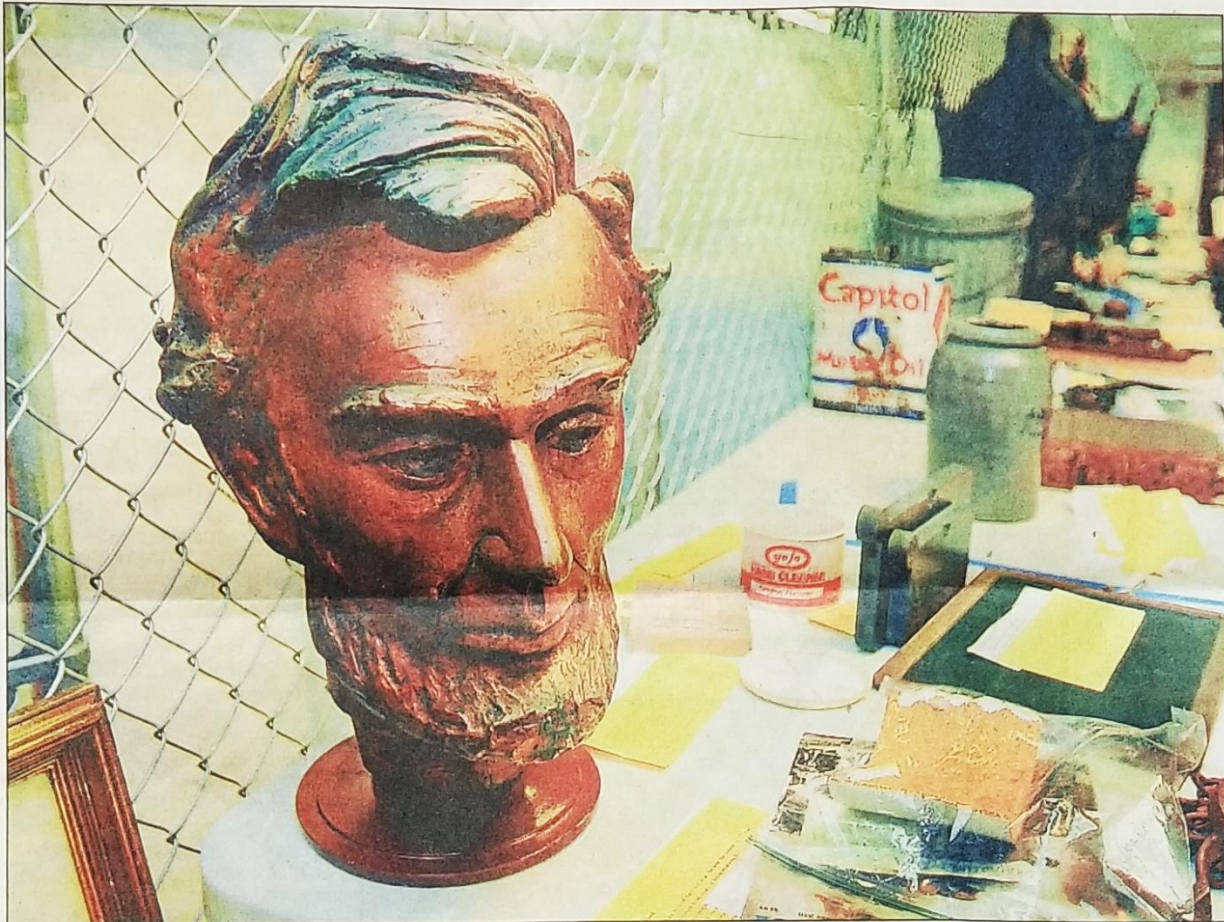
The exhibit, which will remain at the Culture Center through the rest of the year, features 150 displays featuring individuals, places, artifacts and historical events — one for each year of the state's history.

Exhibits range from beautiful pieces of glassware to books written by West Virginia authors, from a miner's lunch pail to an ad for chew-

ing tobacco. They also include a little piece of wood from a historic Wheeling bridge, an original oil pipeline used in the 1880s and sculptures of the heads of President Abraham Lincoln, who signed West Virginia into statehood, and Booker T. Washington, who grew up in nearby Malden.

SEE EXHIBIT, 8A

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ABOVE: Giuseppe "Joseph" Argiro of Fairmont invented the pepperoni roll, which coal miners began putting in their lunch pails because it did not require refrigeration.

LEFT: President Abraham Lincoln signed the "statehood proclamation" for West Virginia on April 20, 1863. Two months later, on June 20, West Virginia became the 35th state.

KENNY KEMP | Sunday Gazette-Mail photos

EXHIBIT

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Exhibits also feature early pottery, old railroad equipment, artistic glass creations, oilcans and a Gravelly tractor, first made in 1916. Benjamin Franklin Gravelly made his tractors, called "motor machines," in Dunbar.

The only state created during the Civil War, West Virginia seceded from Virginia to become the nation's 35th state on June 20, 1863. President Lincoln had signed the "statehood proclamation" two months earlier.

An old wooden box that looks like a book contains 21 butterflies preserved by William Henry Edwards, a naturalist and explorer who published his three-volume "The Butterflies of North America" in 1879, providing detailed descriptions of 165 species of butterflies. Edwards lived in Coalburg, Kanawha County.

Culture and History Commissioner Randall Reid-Smith said his office welcomed opinions from the public, online and otherwise, about what they'd like to see in the exhibit.

Charles W. Morris III, the state's director of museums, said, "We wanted to touch on the important events in West Virginia history, but we also wanted to feature some of the curiosities and some of the celebrities known around the world."

Those celebrities from the Mountain State include:

- Don Knotts, the Emmy-winning actor from Morgantown who played Barney Fife on "The Andy Griffith Show."
- Jerry West, the star basketball player from Cabin Creek who played for the Los Angeles Lakers his entire career. His silhouette has served as the NBA's logo since 1971.
- Kathy Mattea, the singer from Cross Lanes who has produced more than 30 hit singles on country music charts.
- John C. Norman Jr., a black cardiovascular surgeon from Charleston who developed path-breaking techniques to help patients with heart problems.
- Mother Jones, a charismatic speaker, author and leader of strikes and marches to unionize coal mines in West Virginia, especially on Paint Creek and Cabin Creek.

■ Pearl Buck, the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, for her book, "The Good Earth." She was born in Hillsboro in 1892.

■ Charles "Chuck" Yeager, a U.S. Air Force major general from Lincoln County and the first person to break the sound barrier flying an airplane.

■ Lew Burdette, the longtime Major League pitcher from Nitro, who won three World Series games pitching for the Milwaukee Braves against the New York Yankees in 1957.

■ Mary Lou Retton, a Fairmont native who won the all-around gold medal for women's gymnastics at the 1984 Olympics.

■ Robert C. Byrd, the longest-serving member of Congress in U.S. history.

■ David Selby, the actor born in Morgantown who starred in television series including "Dark Shadows" and "Falcon Crest."

An impressive wooden airplane propeller in the exhibit honors former West Virginia State College students who became some of the first black Americans to fly military aircraft during World War II.

West Virginia State created the first Civilian Pilot Training



ABOVE: Betty Gay (left) and Darren Husband enclose a display for the Culture Center's exhibition, which opens Thursday.

RIGHT: When he was young, Coalwood native Homer Hickam launched rockets like this one. He wrote about his childhood exploits in his 1998 book, "Rocket Boys," which was made into the 1999 motion picture, "October Sky."

BELOW: A Ron Hinkle bowl highlights the beautiful West Virginia glassware featured in the new exhibit.



The State Museum is open every Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; every Sunday from noon to 5 p.m.; and on the first Monday of each month from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Program at a black college in the United States. Many students from the program joined the Tuskegee Airmen after getting further training at the Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama.

A little circular piece of wood comes from the Bridge Crossing into Ohio on the National Highway that was built in 1833.

A rusty coal miner's lunch pail honors Giuseppe "Joseph" Argiro, who invented the pepperoni roll in Fairmont. After the Country Club Bakery served the first pepperoni rolls to miners in 1927, they quickly became popular because they required no refrigeration.

A copy of the documentary film "Super-Size Me" honors Morgan Spurlock, from Parkersburg. Based on Spurlock's venture of eating only food from

McDonald's for a month, Spurlock raised questions about the health problems created by American dietary habits.

Mother's Day, first celebrated at the Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church in Grafton on May 10, 1908, also is featured, for creating a national holiday.

Historic sites featured in the new exhibit include: the South Charleston Mound, built by Adena Indians between 250 and 150 B.C.; the Oakhurst Links Golf Club, the first organized golf club in the country, which opened in White Sulphur Springs in 1884; the Battle of Blair Mountain in Logan County in 1921; and the secret 112,544-square-foot bunker constructed under the Greenbrier resort, beginning in 1958, to protect members of Congress in the event of nuclear attack by

the Soviet Union. Historic relics and artistic items throughout the exhibit feature the state's major industries, including steel, aluminum, glass, coal, logging, chemicals and river traffic through locks and dams.

Mister Bee Potato Chips, the Marble King, the Wheeling Jamboree and "Mountain Stage" also are featured.

The West Virginia State Museum's special sesquicentennial exhibit opens Thursday at the Culture Center. The public is welcome to view the new exhibit during an opening reception at 6 p.m.

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Sen. Robert C. Byrd's "Mountain Fiddle" album is among the recordings and books featured in the new exhibit.

