

# Discovery Room Videos Narratives:

## **Discovery Room 1:**

For such a small room this first discovery room covers a lot of time – the geologic history of West Virginia. Here, you'll see the world's oldest seed – the tropical *Elkinsia Polymorpha*. And what's it doing in West Virginia? The land that forms our state was once south of the equator – as it moved north, so did the seed. Try to see if you can count all 580 rings on the Mingo oak! Check out some interesting fossils, including a mastodon jaw and core samples that let you see how soil and natural resources are layered in the earth.

West Virginia's natural scenic beauty and wealth of resources like coal, natural gas, oil and salt were formed hundreds of millions of years ago. The core samples, fossils and timelines give perspective to the time it took for West Virginia to become what we know today.

## **Discovery Room 2:**

History is full of mystery. You'll realize that in this room full of prehistoric tools and weapons from early settlers in our state. What does the petroglyph from Salt Rock say? Is it a message or directions? Is this statue, called the Kanawha Madonna, from prehistoric times or the first white settlers? And what about the Braxton Stone? Is it real or a hoax? We may never know the answers to these questions, but it's fun to imagine how they relate to the earliest tribes and Indians who hunted and lived here.

Generally, West Virginia history focuses on the past 300 years. But people have lived here for about 12,000 years. By studying prehistoric tools and weapons, the mounds of the mound builders and the remains in archaeological digs, we can know some things about their cultures and lives.

## **Discovery Room 3:**

Imagine making a 60-yard dash -- for ammunition! Legend tells us sixteen-year-old Betty Zane did just that when soldiers at Fort Henry needed ammunition stored at a cabin outside the fort. Conflicts were frequent in the days of settlement among Native Americans, early settlers, the British and the French as they each claimed the land. Eventually, European immigrants settled here, bringing their customs and industries. Even Daniel Boone settled for a time in the Kanawha Valley.

Early settlers in the region that became West Virginia faced continuous conflict, struggle and violence. The French and Indian War, the Battle of Point Pleasant and the Revolutionary War, all changed settlements and communities of the Mountain State. Even so, towns and counties were mapped out. Immigrants settled with their religious and cultural traditions. The salt industry grew. Slavery played a role in this era as well.

#### **Discovery Room 4:**

Visitors don't just imagine what a log cabin was like in this discovery room, they enter a real one. This log structure from Monaville served as a home and, at one time, a school, in Logan County. It's a perfect setting for frontier furniture and stories about the challenges of families living on the frontier. You'll see exceptional craftsmanship in the furniture in the room. You'll find out what natural resource brought the first tourists to the land that became West Virginia. Here's a hint: They were the earliest spas in America!

Engage your imagination as you consider the busy day-to-day schedules of frontier women. Women carried water, worked by candlelight, cooked, cleaned and provided for the necessities of their families. They mastered the domestic skills of sewing, cooking, gardening and nursing. Men and women expressed their creativity in fine handiwork and craftsmanship they developed for needlecraft and woodworking.

#### **Discovery Room 5:**

Some say John Brown was a hero. Some say he was a lunatic. No one denies that his raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry caught the world's attention. In this famous painting by H. Webb Keaty, which was painted for the 1904 World's Fair, visitors see doctors attending to an ailing Brown – making sure he was well enough to stand trial and hang. You can see a noose that was allegedly used to hang him and the lock and key from his cell.

Literary authors and historians have added to John Brown's legacy with books, poems, songs and historic accounts of the raid at Harpers Ferry. This discovery room offers just a few samples of the wealth of historic materials in the West Virginia collection.

#### **Discovery Room 6:**

For Virginians, the war between the states was also a war within the state. Brothers like the Craigos fought for the Confederacy and the Union. Many battles were fought on West Virginia soil and the life of soldiers on the battlefield was hard. In addition to weapons and military stories, this discovery room showcases the personal effects that soldiers carried into battle. Examine the medicine chest to see what supplies were available to battlefield doctors.

With early regional maps and a timeline of the Civil War, this discovery room offers some personal, first-hand accounts of Civil War participants and everyday citizens. There are descriptions of some of the battles that occurred on West Virginia soil as well as artifacts from the battlefields like weapons and supplies.

### **Discovery Room 7:**

Welcome to a replica of West Virginia Independence Hall in Wheeling. While some of our early statesmen “light up” to defend the territory’s reasons for requesting statehood and separation from Virginia, you’ll learn that slavery wasn’t the only issue for these leaders. Roads were neglected in the western region yet taxes were exorbitant. Wanting more say in the direction of their future was a major reason to enter the union.

The audio presentations that showcase the views of several statehood leaders are a popular feature in this discovery room. But you’ll want to be sure to check out the timeline of the statehood movement dating from the adoption of the Virginia State Constitution in 1776 to when West Virginia enters the union in 1863.

### **Discovery Room 8:**

It’s perfectly okay to step on the map! In the 1800s, Wheeling was one of the largest cities in Virginia and a hub of activity. The National Road passed through Wheeling and the Suspension Bridge, a forerunner of the famed Brooklyn Bridge, opened the way to frontier territories. Many immigrants settled in this industrial town and brought their cherished customs, including devotional altars such as one on display handcrafted by a German immigrant.

This exhibit is dedicated to Wheeling, where industrialization and growth were in stark contrast to the rest of western Virginia at the time. Learn more about this “big city” and the impact that the National Road, Wheeling Suspension Bridge and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad had on its development. You’ll also learn about architecture in West Virginia and the life of immigrants.

### **Discovery Room 9:**

In contrast to the bustling atmosphere of Wheeling, this discovery room focuses on rural West Virginia and life on a family farm. In the rugged Appalachian Mountains, many immigrants found homes that reminded them of the countries they left. One such town, Helvetia, was settled by Swiss and German immigrants. To this day, the townspeople maintain many of the town’s early customs.

Some of the highlights of this discovery room are the farm tools used in West Virginia’s agricultural industry. Check out the kettle for making apple butter, the corn sheller and the butter churn. You’ll also learn more about the state’s agricultural heritage and about the early 4-H and Home Demonstration clubs.

### **Discovery Room 10:**

This is the perfect discovery room for a game of “I SPY”! Can you find the ice cream mix? The Pluto toy? The scrip? The kitchen sink? Well, perhaps THIS store doesn’t include a kitchen sink but it could. Check out the ice box -- No shopping for a month of groceries if this is your cold storage! You’ll learn the fascinating history, the positives and negatives, of the company stores that sprung up in mining towns around the state, how they were operated, and what they sold tell another chapter in the history of the lives of miners in the early boom days of coal mining.

And while it’s fun to be nostalgic about the merchandise on sale in the stores, you’ll come to realize that foods, household goods and other items that we take for granted today were not always easy to come by just a few decades ago.

### **Discovery Room 11:**

Your eyes will naturally go first to this Charleston telephone switchboard when you walk into this discovery room. Complete with switches, plugs and even old phone directories, it’s hard to miss. Working at the telephone switchboard was one of the first jobs available to women who were just entering the workforce. This room highlights the changing roles of women at home and at work. You can examine the evolving domestic roles of women in this room. Can you remember your grandmother – or perhaps your mother – using these kitchen tools? Can you imagine sitting under a hairdryer like this one?

During this era, everyday activities like making jams and jellies became businesses for women who wanted to make extra money. See the story of Callie Tsapsis of Weirton. She was West Virginia’s first female trial judge. This is also the time when cottage industries begin to take hold in West Virginia.

### **Discovery Room 12:**

Check out the large hand tools in this exhibit. Can you imagine a time when building the railroad through the Mountain State was work that was done by hand? It was hard labor, and a big challenge for the railroad companies and their employees. West Virginia served as an important hub for several of the major railroads. Towns like Hinton, Fayetteville, Wheeling, and Huntington all have fascinating railroad histories.

No history of the railroad would be complete without John Henry. Was the steel-drivin’ man a real man or a myth? We may never know, but his legendary race against the machine is a fascinating part of railroad history and West Virginia’s history, as well.

### **Discovery Room 13:**

Did you know that while Robert Fulton is credited with inventing the steam engine boat, a West Virginian tested a steam-powered engine boat in Shepherdstown twenty years earlier? You can see a model of James Rumsey's engine boat in this room. The model is more than 100 years old.

Like the railroads, river transportation meant a great deal to West Virginia's industries. Even today our major rivers are important for transportation. If you've never been on a steam boat, check out the pilot wheel on the wall. How hard do you think it might be to steer with this wheel?

Throughout our history we've faced tragedies when the rivers have left their banks. Devastating floods are part of our state's river history, too. You'll see pictures of a few of them in this room.

### **Discovery Room 14:**

Can you name some of the industries, besides coal, that have been significant in our state? If you need some help, this is the room to visit. You'll see artifacts and photos for glass, and pottery, chemicals, oil, gas, timber, and steel. You will probably recognize some companies that are still around today, like Homer Laughlin, which still makes Fiestaware. Meadow River Lumber is gone now, but at one time this Rainelle company ran the largest hardwood sawmill in the world. Check out the nail machine. They used machines like this at the LaBelle plant in Wheeling until 2010.

### **Discovery Room 15:**

Today coal mining is an automated industry, but in its early days it was a very labor-intensive job. Miners worked long hours underground and had to hand load the coal into cars after picking it out of coal seams. Look at the tools that these miners used and the equipment they wore for protection. In this Discovery Room you'll find out what canaries had to do with mine safety. Discover who worked the mine as mule drivers. You'll also learn that mining was not a discriminatory industry. Once underground, men were miners, regardless of color, creed, or heritage. For that reason ethnic communities grew up around the mine.

### **Discovery Room 16:**

Should the Capitol be in Wheeling? Should the Capitol be in Charleston? Or should it be someplace else, altogether? For several years, that was the question in West Virginia. Finally, voters selected Charleston. And the Capitol, which moved three times between Wheeling and Charleston, finally settled down. Discover why the Capitol Building in downtown Charleston burned down in 1921. Check out photos of the six buildings that we've called our Capitol, and learn which ones are still around today.

As for our present-day Capitol, you can learn who designed it, and how it was built in phases. Listen closely to the audio-visual presentation and learn how many crystals are in the chandelier in the Capitol dome.

### **Discovery Room 17:**

When it came time to relax, many West Virginians in the early 1900's did so with friends and families who lived nearby. Quilting bees were popular choices for women, who would get together to enjoy friendly conversation, and perhaps a little local gossip, while they sewed fine stitches. Men might gravitate toward a game of baseball, or football. Evenings might be spent gathered around making their own music, or listening to music, news, or shows on that new invention, the radio.

While leisure time might have been spent the same way, not all towns were the same. Coal towns, especially, could be well-kept and modern, or run down with poor sanitary conditions. This Discovery Room offers a glimpse at that disparity.

### **Discovery Room 18:**

The Great Depression hit West Virginia as hard as it did the rest of the country. Extreme poverty devastated families and towns. Yet look around this Discovery Room and you will see the resolution of West Virginians who were ready to work, and the positive effects of some of that spirit. The hard work and fine craftsmanship of some of that work can still be seen today.

For instance, did you know that Arthurdale, in Preston County, is one of the finest examples still today of the resettlement communities of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal Program. Or that many of our wonderful state parks were built during this time. Look at the cabins and stonework in the pictures here, and you will see they are still standing, and sturdy, today. Electricity reached rural communities during this time. Iceboxes, electric mixers, and yes, even irons made housework easier for women in the country and the city.

### **Discovery Room 19:**

The days of the Mine Wars in West Virginia were as dark as the coal over which men struggled. Violence raged at the mines, and in the towns, as labor unrest brought a focus on troubling working conditions, poor living conditions, and the need for better communication. You'll learn more about some of the people involved in the conflict in this Discovery Room. You'll also see an early West Virginia State Policeman's uniform. This law enforcement agency was formed during this time.

Get a glimpse of the issues by watching early newsreels in the 1920's style theater that's beside the Discovery Room. The theater is designed like the lavish theaters at the time, when Vaudeville shows and moving pictures were popular entertainment choices.

### **Discovery Room 20:**

Here we salute the brave men and women who have served our country across the world and on the Homefront during conflicts, from the Spanish-American War, to the present day. Take your time as you go through this special Discovery Room. See how uniforms and equipment changed through the years. Listen to the stories of West Virginians. Open the drawers to see the medals, weaponry, and letters in this special collection. A special tribute to our Medal of Honor winners gives you an interactive look at each of these people. Not only will you learn about what they got their medals for, you can also see where they fought.

### **Discovery Room 21:**

West Virginians' resilient spirit shines through here in a room that reminds us of how many challenges we faced in the 1950's through the 1970's. Tragedies like the Silver Bridge collapse, the Farmington mine disaster, the Marshall University football team plane crash, and the Willow Island scaffold collapse receive a special dedication here. Learn about Miners for Democracy, a revolt by rank-and-file miners within the United Mine Workers of America, and about antipoverty programs of the 1960's.

### **Discovery Room 22:**

Did you know that the National Basketball Association symbol is modeled from West Virginia basketball great, Jerry West? That's just one interesting discovery you'll make in a room that celebrates our stars and our state. You'll see souvenirs from the state Centennial and a selection of art from the 1960's and 70's when the state's art revival took place. The biggest little surprise in the room is the West Virginia Tartan. Our state's official Tartan is a medley of colors that represent our state. Learn what each color stands for in this colorful fabric.

### **Discovery Room 23:**

It wasn't so very long ago that our scenic West Virginia back roads were our main transportation routes. That's all changed, now. Watch interviews and learn about the challenges of building Interstates and the Turnpike in West Virginia. The new highways and improved air travel had important impact on our state's economy. They also brought population shifts in the state. Check out the license plate collection. They changed a great deal over the years. Find the ones that celebrate our State Centennial.

### **Discovery Room 24:**

This art gallery is small but it offers a glimpse into the many styles of West Virginia artists, from historical portraits to contemporary work. The paintings and sculptures show how artists interpret their world. One thing is certain. West Virginians love their families, homes, and hills. Look at how many paintings here show our mountains and valleys. The sculpture in this room is a celebration of creativity, with different materials and different views. Don't miss the clown. He's a good reminder that children's art is important, too.

### **Discovery Room 25:**

The bright colors of a hand-made quilt capture your eye. A look around reminds you that West Virginians have a way of celebrating everyday life with fine craftsmanship. Consider the Moon pot. It is different from the china pitchers and Fiestaware, yet they all begin with clay. Then, imagination takes over. West Virginia is well-known for hand-crafted glass. Some is etched, some hand painted, and some boldly colored. The most colorful of all – West Virginia marbles that are used around the world. Look for the baseball game. It is certainly different from the smooth bowl. and musical instruments.

### **Discovery Room 26:**

West Virginia has a musical personality that includes traditional, Appalachian, country, classical, and jazz notes. You'll find examples of each in this room. You'll also see a wonderful collection of string instruments – fiddles, banjos, and dulcimers, played at family picnics, festivals, and on stage. Check out the intricate stitching and designs of the outfits of country music singers Doc and Chickie Williams. Look for the Mountain Fiddler album of Senator Robert C. Byrd. He is the only United States Senator to ever record an album.