

## **How your contribution will benefit The Coin Harvey House in Huntington, WV**

In order to explain how The Coin Harvey House will benefit the community, a brief history of Huntington is necessary. Huntington, WV was selected by Collis P. Huntington for the C&O Railroad terminus. The site was transformed from a farming community into a metropolitan city. The new city became the commercial hub of the Southern West Virginia Coal Fields. Wholesale houses developed to serve their needs, as well as hardware shops, furniture stores, clothing, department stores, lumber and brick supply yards, etc. Commercial development grew, according to the high demand. Service businesses also came

, including banks, law offices, publishing companies, car dealerships, etc. Of course, along with the commercial development, came residential development. During this booming period, many fine homes were constructed near the city center. Huntington soon became the center for county and city government. Education was considered an early priority; primary, secondary, and advanced. Medical needs were met by local doctors, working out of their homes and small hospitals. These matured into major institutions. For example, Marshall College became a University with a medical school. Cabell Huntington Hospital was built and now has a children's hospital, a cancer research center, etc. Huntington continued to grow and prosper into a major metropolitan area of close to 90,000 people.

Everything was financially booming until the recent decline of the coal industry. The very resource that made our city, was contributing to its demise. As the coal fields began to diminish, so did the city of Huntington. Soon, the population, that was once about 86,000, descended to less than 50,000 people, which is approximately what our population is today. The C&O Railroad offices relocated to Jacksonville, FL. Major wholesale houses are gone and downtown retail business is merely a fraction of its former self. The once prosperous city is now strewn with abandoned homes and businesses. Commercial development decline and a lack of income from the coal properties, have contributed to our community's instability. Huntington's glass and clothing industries have moved off shore. Rail car manufacturing has moved to Mexico. Big business like Ashland Oil and Ashland Coal have left our area. Our lumber and brick yards have also relocated. Many of the once successful hotels, restaurants, and department stores have been torn down or remain empty. It is not unusual to see many abandoned businesses and residences scattered throughout the city.

Some of Huntington's residents, once full of pride, are now pessimistic. As a result of our shrinking economy, many have turned to drugs and alcohol as a source of income and solace. Lack of community pride and jobs has contributed to an opiate epidemic. When speaking of drug abuse, Huntington is considered one of the worst cities in the nation. Drug dealers move to the area to make their fortune. Thus, there are drug treatment facilities and recovery centers scattered throughout the city. The current heroin epidemic in Huntington, is portrayed in the Oscar nominated movie, "Heroine", starring Huntington's Fire Chief, Jan Radar.

However, when the successful future of the city can be grasped by its citizens, progress can be made.

Today, Huntington has not been revitalized by major projects. Small projects have been most successful, such as revitalization of older, abandoned buildings, for adaptive use. In 2017, we placed 1<sup>st</sup> among cities of similar size in a nationwide Community Betterment Contest. This exemplifies our strong determination to better our community. The Coin Harvey House remains as an example of the prior success of its citizens. This structure was the dream of one of the early renaissance men who came to Huntington. Its unique construction is an example of the creativity of one of our locals.

The original building is undergoing a complete restoration, and a portion of the structure needs to be entirely reconstructed. Additional restoration includes an interior stairway and a large covered brick patio, enclosed with windows, for year round usage, restrooms, a commercial rated kitchen, etc. A grant would provide many job opportunities, while the house is being completed.

The restoration process of The Coin Harvey House will also aim to help those in recovery for drug and alcohol addiction. Jobs are extremely hard to find for these struggling individuals. Currently, there are several interested, diligent, recovering addicts working at The Coin Harvey House. They all have difficult struggles and need to stay busy. Some of the men are former coal miners, whose lives were shattered when the coal mines closed. One current employee supports a family of seven children. A general contractor and several volunteers have been training them in carpentry, painting, refinishing, and etc.

When The Coin Harvey House is complete, jobs will be given to caterers for special events, including weddings and parties. A secretary will be employed to work on mailing lists, answer phones, take board meeting minutes, and etc. A gardener will definitely be required to take care of the yard and surrounding landscape. A plan is also being developed to hire people to provide guided tours of The Coin Harvey House and other historically valuable buildings in the Downtown Huntington area, which are on The National Registry of Historic Places.

Projects are being planned by, our local college, Mountwest Community & Technical College. Ted Triplett, chairman of the engineering program at Mountwest, is very interested in The Coin Harvey House. Triplett is a brilliant man with a Master's Degree from VPI. He is eager to help our cause and has become a valuable asset, as a board member. Not only does the project profit from his expertise, but his talented engineering students are learning construction and design, including all phases of building the new addition, including 3-d design. They are very excited and pleased to be learning from an active, live project. Ted has arranged for the hospitality class at Mountwest to conduct a feasibility study of the project, to aid in our decisions, and to ensure the viability and permanence of The Coin Harvey House.