



# The Vine

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Newsletter from the Staff of Wistariahurst Museum

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## Wistariahurst Receives Prestigious National Endowment Grant

Wistariahurst Museum is pleased to announce that we have been awarded a National Endowment for Humanities consultation grant. The grant was awarded to Wistariahurst as lead organization along with Holyoke Heritage State Park, The Children's Museum at Holyoke, the Holyoke History Room and Enchanted Circle Theater. The \$10,000 grant will allow these groups to gather leading humanities scholars, community leaders, curators and educators to develop a blueprint for a city-wide historic interpretation project on *Migrants and Immigrants' Search for Opportunity and Security in Holyoke*. This work will build upon Holyoke's existing narratives, documents, photographs, research and programming to tell Holyoke's unique story in a comprehensive and provocative way.

With blueprint in hand, the final project envisions exhibits at several sites throughout the city linked by programming, walking and driving tours, program brochures, guidebooks, maps and promotional material for adult, family and school group visitors. The project is part of a vision held by the Passport Holyoke Partners.

## The Swingin' 1940s Invade Wistariahurst

Wistariahurst will commemorate the 1940s with a Swingin' 1940s Spring Gala on Friday, May 12 from 6-9 p.m. with live Big Band and Swing music by Interplay Jazz and Ted Wirt's New England Jazz Quintet as well as the swingin' moves of the dance troupe Terpischore. Light fare will offered by Chateau Provost, The Black Sheep Deli, Spoleto Catering and the Yankee Pedlar. There will be exhibits on the 1940s throughout the Mansion and the Wisteria will be in bloom to show off the antique autos outdoors. An exhibit of oil paintings by Bryant Stewart will be displayed in the gallery. Cars and parts are the images that make up this unique exhibit of oil paintings featuring 30s & 40s vehicles that reflect the zenith of the era.



Tickets are \$25 and proceeds will support Wistariahurst projects and programming. PeoplesBank and Best Buy are Major Event Sponsors. Holyoke Dental Associates, Holyoke Gas & Electric, Holyoke Community College, and Signature Engraving Systems are Sustaining Sponsors of the event. To make a reservation please call the Museum at 413-322-5660.

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# Snapshot: Holyoke in the 1940s

The events surrounding World War II dominated life in Holyoke in the 1940s. Holyokers in battle made heroic contributions to the war effort. Two men from Holyoke were given Congressional Metals of Honor. They were First Lt. Raymond O. Beaudoin; 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry then transferred to the 30<sup>th</sup>; who was tragically killed after leading a one-man charge on an enemy sniper's nest that was ravaging his platoon; he killed 9 enemy combatants before dying. Sgt. Joseph E. Muller; served in the Pacific Theater early 1944 with the 77<sup>th</sup> Division; killed 35 enemy soldiers single-handedly before throwing himself on a grenade to save the lives of his comrades in Okinawa. John Rosseau miraculously survived the first successful guided missile attack in 1943 when British troopship H.M.T. Rohua was sunk by Germans.

While the men went into military service, women picked up the jobs they left in mills, factories, shops, and as letter and milk carriers. Some women also joined the services. Isabel Downing joined United States Marine Corps Women-Reserve and worked in Washington DC as a messenger at the Marine Corps Headquarters. Local paper and textile mills changed their production for items that were needed for the war effort. National Blank Book re-tooled to manufacture starter pistols and then gun parts. William Skinner and Sons Manufacturing produced parachute silk with only half of their 600 employees, while the other half left for the military. Clinton Mills became the sole supplier of insulation material and silk flare chutes in the country.

Wardens walked the streets to make sure no one was using lights at night. Ration Stamps were issued for gasoline and fresh meat vegetables and dairy products. The City was strewn with Victory Gardens. The Skinner family hired trained gardener Anthony Niedbalski, known as "Tony Bosky", to supervise the Wistariahurst gardens. Tony had received training at Smith College before working for the Skinners. He worked for the Skinners six days a week and maintained both the formal garden and a "Victory" vegetable garden at Wistariahurst.

The restaurants and bars in Holyoke were packed with soldiers on leave at Westover Air force Base in Chicopee. They danced the swing to the big band music of Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman were popular as were the voices of Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, and Dinah Shore. Be-Bop and Rhythm and Blues grew out of Big Band Era with musicians such as Dizzie Gillespie, Billy Holiday, and Ella Fitzgerald.

As you can see, Wistariahurst has many exciting programs and events. Please help us by supporting this living treasure. All donations sent to Wistariahurst Museum are tax deductible and will go directly to pay for the historical restoration and programs you see in this newsletter. Donations can be mailed to: Wistariahurst Museum, 238 Cabot Street, Holyoke, MA 01040 . In addition we have launched a new corporate sponsorship program, please call the museum for details 413-322-5660.



**Great News!** Mayor Michael Sullivan's Carriage House Restoration Project received full support by the Holyoke City Council. This project will restore the exterior to the look of the old Carriage House and renovate the interior for collections storage and exhibit and visitors area. Thank you to all!

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**Planning Underway!** A stellar group of business and civic leaders have been meeting to develop a vision and strategic plan for Wistariahurst. More details to follow!



**Frog Circus!** Holyoke's frog circus, created by Burlingham Schurr in the 1920s will remain on display at Wistariahurst, but needs to undergo preservation. We are currently seeking donations for preserving this odd treasure. If you are interested in supporting this project, please mail your donation to Wistariahurst with attention to Peg McCarthy.