

Western Illinois Museum

201 South Lafayette Street  
Macomb, IL 61455  
309.837.2750

Long Range Plan: Four Possible Paths

July 2017

Materials available at https://github.com/WIMuseum/path

**Moonshine Museum**The Moonshine Museum focuses on the issues and culture of the illegal production of liquor during the Prohibition era. The influences of new social concerns expressed through the Temperance Movement, anti-German sentiment fostered by WW I, invention of the automobile and the support for governmental oversight will play a part in the museum’s programs and exhibits.

The building will recreate a speakeasy creating a place to hear stories of a bragging bootlegger, learn about the chemistry of building and running a still, and the fast cars to transport and out run the feds. Visitors can taste the museum’s private label moonshine and be treated to jug bands on the back porch. Or attend a Temperance meeting at the café.

The ready access to corn and isolated areas to covertly make moonshine are just a few factors that created a bootlegging industry. Kelly Wagle is the area’s most popular bootlegger but many are surprised to learn other families ran liquor. Wagle being shot down illustrates the criminal history of the time, others were jailed or fined for their indiscretion –and not talked about.

The museum will focus on the following topics:

* Social concerns and what is causing the interest in regulating behavior
  + Temperance movement
  + Women’s role in advocating change
  + Children’s well being
  + Regulation of industry (Before and after)
* Racism
* Agriculture
  + Farmers economic concerns
* Automobile and transportation
* Crime
* Music and storytelling

Slang: White liquor, white lightning, hooch, homebrew, bathtub gin, white whiskey, and corn liquor.

**The Garage**

201 South Lafayette Street was built as an automotive garage and was in operation for nearly 60 years. The appearance of the east half of the building retains many features for what many know as Macomb Motors. Visitors will explore different areas or “car bays” where artifacts are stored, discovering the local history stored in the old garage. Areas and boxes will be curated to guide the exploration and address different topics or time of local history. Like a good mechanic, visitors will be prompted to analyze and come up with a solution on how to fix it.

Much like an old garage, areas will be set aside for telling tales and hearing the local gossip of the day.

The design will foster a sense of exploring an old garage, attic, or storage area. Discovering something that has not normally seen or that has been lost is key to the experience. The “old Garage” is the antithesis of a sterile, precious museum where touching is not allowed.

The large garage doors will be retained and replaced by glass panels creating an inviting gather place. Sharing stories and food will be encouraged in this area will be an important part of the experience.

The museum will focus on the following topics:

* How things work
  + Machines, processes, methods
  + Build skills in analyzing and troubleshooting
* Fixing it
  + Asking, “How would you fix this” as a way to learn from history
  + Games, puzzles and team building activities will be incorporated into the “boxes.”
* Investigation of an outcome
  + Looking at an event, artifact, or document and figure out what happened or how the outcome was obtained

These methodologies create a more interactive experience that can be applied to all aspects of history and culture.

**Ten Museums in one: Family History**

Ten distinct areas dedicated to different constituents of the community where their family history is on display. These museums within museums would include photographs, family history such as accomplishments and other artifacts that represent their lives. Areas would be inviting and encourage people to gather or programs to be held.

**Front Porch: come sit a spell**

Rural life is often described as neighborly –everyone knows everyone’s business. The Front Porch is the place where stories are told, opinions debated, history is passed on, knowledge is shared and relationships are made. Guests will be invited to experience our front porch hospitality to be immersed in everyday life –both past and present.

Oral histories play an important role in this museum. Artifacts that are exhibited are accompanied by the story that can be heard. Interpreters are used to convey a first person account but an international, national, and local context will also be provided. Personal electronic devices will play a role in delivery content but creating conversation is the goal.

Exhibits and programs are designed to bring forward issues that are relevant to the community. A strong mix of both humanities and culture will give a well-considered and diverse point of view.

The design of the museum will be unique with small comfortable areas designed to foster conversation. The areas will be what in a traditional museum would be called “exhibits” but at the Front Porch museum will invite guests to come and sit a spell. The areas will have artifacts, but also include related audio files, music, news, movies, books –not mounted on a wall, but available as if in a home or front porch. Food will be available and encouraged to be part of the shared experience. Both indoor and outdoor areas will be available.

The museum will focus on the following topics:

* The region’s work force and employers; conversations about, “how was your day” that cover labor laws, trends, conflicts, and economic concerns
* Food that is typically enjoyed on the front porch
* Music played on in the region, especially before the radio
* Politics and the “Front Porch Speeches” popular in the mid and late 1800s
* The Pace Hotel’s front porch
* Record oral history of what you learned on a front porch from someone

Sources on topic:

* *“Building bridges” has failed to unite us. America needs to embrace the front porch instead,* Daniel Krivens, July 04, 2017
  + <https://qz.com/1012658/building-bridges-has-failed-to-unite-us-america-needs-to-embrace-the-front-porch-instead/>
* *A View from the Porch: Rethinking Home and Community Design*, by Avi Friedman, Véhicule Press, September 1, 2015
* Front Porch Republic, Patrick J. Deenen
  + <http://www.frontporchrepublic.com/2009/03/front-porch-republic/>
* From My Front Porch: Enhance your event at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum with the 12-minute presentation of [From My Front Porch](https://www.illinois.gov/alplm/museum/Event/Documents/front_porch.pdf), featuring Mrs. Rose Allen, a homemaker in 1863 Springfield.
  + <https://www.illinois.gov/alplm/museum/Event/Pages/My-Front-Porch.aspx>
* Porch Party event
  + http://mfastpete.org/event/porch-party-at-the-mfa/2017-06-15/
* On those porches of yesteryear, especially on Sundays after community churchgoing had been followed by each family's special big meal, the mid­afternoon would see a family's gathering on the front porch where those who were the elders would do the talking and those who were younger would listen. And it was thus during these front-porch forums that the generations of accumulated diverse knowledge and information got relayed from those elders' memories and minds and through their mouths into the inherently absorbent ears of their audiences, on down to the littlest of the young'uns, who largely on those porches learned to revere what seemed the endless and bottomless wisdoms of their grandparents.  
    
  But sadly, by today America's front porches have mostly disappeared. Perhaps our richest single cultural institution, they have been victims of technology—for what ultimately did in our front porches was air conditioning. ~ Alex Haley.