

# New project to equip museum with handicap accessibility

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EAST LIVERPOOL - The official ground breaking was held Wednesday morning for a project aimed at making the entire Museum of Ceramics (MOC) handicapped accessible for the first time in its 33-year history.

The Access? All Right! project entails a new entrance at ground level off Fifth Street that will include an elevator, restrooms, a stairway and a work room.

Although constructed of fireproof materials and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the MOC's grand front steps have never been conducive to wheelchair access, and the bottom level and restrooms are also not handicapped accessible, which will be changed with the new addition.

## Article Photos



Pictured, (from left) Ohio Historical Society Regional Site Coordinator Karen Hassel; Museum of Ceramics President and Director Sarah Webster Vodrey; and A&I Studio architect Scott Shepherd. (Submitted photo)

Excavation work actually began Monday with James Santini Builder Inc. serving as general contractor and Tom Keller as construction site supervisor. The project was designed by Scott A. Shepherd of A&I Studios and was privately funded.

Shepherd and museum Foundation Board Vice President Jeffrey Hendrickson had proposed the project in June to the city's Design Review Board, saying that, once completed, the project could spur the Ohio Historical Society (OHS) on to make a substantial budgetary commitment toward installation of a new heating and air conditioning system.

Currently, the MOC has no air conditioning and has had to be closed to the public on extremely hot days. In addition, Hendrickson had told the DR board the heating system is "on its last legs."

At Tuesday's ground breaking, museum Director Sarah Vodrey commended all those who have helped with the project, whether with donations or otherwise, and said OHS archaeologists had been on-site since Monday, watching for anything that might be unearthed during the excavation.

Thus far, they have found an unusual chunk of lead they are examining and also the curve of a well wall, as well as a considerable amount of white ware.

Karen Hassel, OHS regional site coordinator, called Tuesday's ground breaking a "really amazing day," relating that, five years ago, the OHS thought it was going to have to close the MOC due to funding shortages.

Instead, the MOC Foundation Board of Directors was formed and took over fund raising and promotion efforts which Hassel said has drastically increased usage of the site.

"Your passion and dedication has kept this open," she said, noting specially efforts to reach out more to children and pottery collectors with programming "like the OHS has never done before."

Hassel said, "We really appreciate what the foundation has done for ceramics."

City Service-Safety Director Ryan Estell thanked Vodrey for her efforts, saying her hard work benefited not only the museum but the city, relating specifically how last year she opened the museum specially for the owner of the Starbucks firm who was visiting the city as part of a plan to contract to have ware made in a local pottery.

"Those little efforts really help make our city shine," Estell said. "The core of our history is really located right here."

Also speaking was Sam Scafide, head of the city planning commission, who said it was "a great pleasure to see this project develop," and Mayor Jim Swoger, who said, rather than welcoming those present to the city, he wanted to "welcome you to progress."

The museum is housed in what was once the city post office, built in 1909 at a cost of \$100,000. It was closed in 1969 when a new post office was built across town, and in 1970, the state purchased it with the idea of starting a museum.

In 1980, it was designated as the Museum of Ceramics, offering an extensive collection of ware once produced in the city, which at one time was known as the Pottery Capital of the World.

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