

TAKE A STEP BACK IN TIME
ASHLAND COMPANY STORE
5633 CHEROKEE ROAD, ASHLAND, WV 24868 - PHONE 304-862-4800

Travel Beautiful Appalachia, Inc. (TBAI)

Opens Restored Ashland Company Store

"In its heyday the company store was the center of community activity, explained Sharon Walden, Executive Director of Travel Beautiful Appalachia, Inc. (TBAI). "We are glad to have a role in bringing this community center back to life and preserving part of our heritage." Walden was speaking to supporters and community members gathered to celebrate the recent Grand Opening of the Ashland Company Store in Ashland, McDowell County, West Virginia.

Approximately 150 civic leaders, supporters and community leaders gathered on a cold spring morning to celebrate the renovation and reopening of the 7500 square foot building which now houses a retail space providing market access to 56+ craft and food producing businesses; the Coal Camp Café and a commercial kitchen as well as meeting space, offices and a computer lab with WiFi.

The Ashland Company Store restoration is the product of a partnership between TBAI and Ashland Restoration, LLC, a for-profit company committed to economic development of the area. The partnership was created in 2001 after the first devastating flood. During the years of development the work on the Ashland Company Store included obtaining a designation on the Historical Register and total renovation of the store under the guidance of historical architect, David Kemnetzer.

The Ashland Company Store is located at the Indian Ridge Trailhead of the extensive Hatfield McCoy trail system; 75 miles of trails used by hikers, bikers, ATV enthusiasts and motorcyclists to explore West Virginia's forests. Just up the road from the Ashland Company Store and Café is the new Ashland Resort campground. These coordinated developments are attracting more tourists to this southeastern corner of the state. Folks come not just for the recreation but also to learn more about the state's rich history. The Ashland Company Store has collections of memorabilia from the area's coal heritage and documentation of the area when coal was king. TBAI is also collecting oral histories from community residents capturing the stories of the area over the past decades.

Participating in the ribbon cutting ceremony included Paul Gonzalas, representative for Congressman Nick Joe Rahall; Richard Peltz, Appalachian Regional Commission Alternate Federal Co-Chair; Betty Ireland, Secretary of State; Bobby Lewis, WV Development Office Community Development Director; Ken Bazzle from Atlanta, Georgia; Peter Minter from the Charleston HUD Office. Each speaker praised the hard work that led to the restoration of the Ashland Company Store which will once again be a focal point in the community for social and economic development.

Ken Bazzle, developer and owner of the Ashland Company Store, received recognition for his vision and support for economic development in McDowell County. Mr. Bazzle followed with the presentation of a painting of the former Ashland Coal and Coke Company Tipple to TBAI Executive Director Sharon Walden. This painting will have a prominent place inside the Ashland Company Store.

Plaques were presented to individuals and funders that had provided support to the creation of the Ashland Company Store project by TBAI Board of Directors Chairman Mike Mitchem. Jay Chatman, TBAI Center Director, and Debbie Bailey TBAI Business Development Coordinator, presented Sharon Walden the first afghan produced featuring the Ashland area. This afghan was created by Marsha Best of Windmill Gap. After the ceremony concluded the attendee enjoyed a luncheon in the upstairs meeting room of the Ashland Company Store and toured the various areas of the building including the retail space to shop for West Virginia products.

