

The Mount Airy Museum of Regional History is making a few changes for the summer and beyond.

The first is a grant it received to provide an expansion to The Luthier's Craft exhibit. The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership provided the \$6,500 grant to support the development of the traveling exhibit.

The exhibit explores the luthier's craft of making stringed instruments and will include sections on banjo, guitar, and fiddle creation in the southern Appalachia and Blue Ridge Mountain areas, as well as biographical information on the luthiers.

The exhibit includes a number of hands-on activities, audio/visual, and interactive components

The Luthier's Craft exhibit originally opened in 2013 and then in 2014 it traveled to the Earl Scruggs Center in Shelby, as well as to the International Bluegrass Music Association Awards event in Raleigh.

This new component opened the first weekend of June for the Mount Airy Fiddler's Convention. The museum is working on a new traveling component as well that should be finished by the end of the year.

The permanent component of "The Luthier's Craft" was developed as a way to showcase the local craftsmen highlighted in the traveling exhibit as well as other area luthiers on a permanent basis in the museum.

"There is more to the rich musical heritage our area than just musicians. There's a long and vibrant tradition of craftsmen building the instruments that make up the musical soul of this area," said Matt Edwards, executive director of the museum.

This comes at a time when the museum is putting more focus on its displays, Edwards explained.

“After an incredibly active period of public programming in the late winter and early spring of this year, we planned to take a step back and focus our attentions on exhibit upgrades and enhancements rather than programming during the spring and summer months,” Edwards said. “We really want to make sure that we keep things fresh and new for our visitors.”

Since the Smithsonian’s “Hometown Teams” exhibit left the library in mid-April, and will be traveling to five other states, the museum has been focused on updating existing exhibits as well as instilling some new ones.

The Fire engine exhibit changes include repairs to the “hands-on” fire pole activity as well as the addition of a second kids-sized fire engine in the exhibit space.

The Model T exhibit changes included the addition of some graphics and a change to the tool display.

The children’s gallery changes included repairs to costuming and the addition of some new components within the exhibit itself. “We’ll also be adding in another hand-painted backdrop for the stage space in the next few week.” Edwards stated.

The artwork for the backdrop was done by the Women’s League of Mount Airy.

A new exhibit the museum is installing for public display ties in with the region’s old time music history in a new way, showing WPAQ letters. The letters were donated by WPAQ after they were removed during renovations to the station’s building and were too far deteriorated to be put back up.

“We unveiled the restored letters last summer at a screening of the documentary about Ralph

Epperson and WPAQ and we're finally ready to get them installed and on display in our hometown heroes gallery on the second floor," said Edwards

The Donna Fargo exhibit also received some new costuming that is now available to view.

A new changing exhibit for the changing exhibit gallery will be in place by July 4.

The museum is also offering its annual story telling every second Saturday of the month throughout the summer.

