

Blacksmiths work their magic for history buffs

By C.R. Nelson, For the Observer-Reporter, newsroom@observer-reporter.com

RICES LANDING - Every year, this is what they come to see - the hammer coming down on hot metal at W.A. Young Foundry and Machine Shop.



2010 Hammer-in Demonstration

History buffs with a penchant for hot heavy metal gathered Saturday morning to watch blacksmiths fire up the foundry forge and demonstrate their craft. The hooks and hangers they forged were later sold at auction, along with handmade tomahawks, candleholders, bundles of blacksmith magazines and assorted tools of the trade.

A steady flow of visitors signed the guest book and marveled at the machinery, then took in the art show upstairs that featured some fine artisan metal work done by some of the blacksmiths who were demonstrating.

But the highlight of this year's Hammer-In was the dedication ceremony that introduced Rivers of Steel Heritage Area, the nonprofit preservation group that is now the old shop's new caretakers. President and CEO August Carlino was there to meet friends of the foundry and dedicate this latest phase of restoration to the late George Kelly of Waynesburg.

Kelly, who was a master mechanic and owner of Point Auto in Waynesburg, was instrumental in saving the abandoned foundry and its historical machinery in the 1970s. Greene County Historical Society took ownership but the restoration work needed was beyond its budget. In 2008, the society signed a bill of sale to Rivers of Steel.

"This machine shop and foundry is remarkably well preserved and is an example of the kind of shaft driven job shop that maintained the machines that built early industrial America," Carlino said. "This is a time capsule from the turn of the last century. You won't see most of

the work we will be doing because now it's a matter of saving the structure from further deterioration.

"For starters we'll put on a new roof and gutters. The restoration will preserve the integrity of the structure and the equipment it houses. Our meetings for the foundry will be held here in Rices Landing because this is a community project. I hope anyone who is interested will join us."

Local historian George Blystone also was honored as Rivers of Steel Volunteer of the Year for 2009.

For more information, visit www.riversofsteel.com.