

**Topics for Ten Waysides Interpreting the  
History of Star City and its Riverfront along the Monongahela River**

**For WV Humanities Council Grant Application  
By the Upper Monongahela River Association  
September 1, 2019**

The permanently-mounted signs would interpret the following topics:

- 1) the history of the land upon which Star City currently stands prior to the city's founding in the early twentieth century;
- 2) Star City's foundation as a community for local industrial workers, particularly the employees of the Star Glass Company after which the town is named;
- 3) the political history of Star City in the early twentieth century, most notably the period during which the community was governed by the Socialist Party, one of only a handful of such areas nationwide;
- 4) the history of the immigrant population in Star City, which arrived to area from across Europe to work in local factories and coal mines;
- 5) the history of the ferry crossing at Star City, which transported Star City residents to work at local coal mines across the Monongahela River, and Scott's Run residents to Star City to work in the glass factories, and to get to the B&O Train Station for travel;
- 6) the history of the B&O Railroad, which predates Star City, and which transported supplies to, and shipped products out from, the Star City glass factories;
- 7) the history of the nearby Edith B. Barill Bridge (known colloquially and locally as the Star City Bridge) and its predecessors, as well as Monongahela Blvd.;
- 8) the ecological and transportation history of the area before and after construction of the Morgantown and Point Marion Locks-and-Dams that encompass Star City as part of the Monongahela Lock-and-Dam system;
- 9) the history of water quality improvement of the Monongahela River itself, especially the historical impacts of acid mine drainage, and the marked improvement in water quality, benthic life and fish populations since this drainage has been controlled.
- 10) the history of recreational uses of the Star City area, including Edith Barill Park in general, the Mon River Rail-Trail, Tugboat Depot Playground, and the Monongahela River, especially fishing and boating, motorized and non-motorized.

## Major improvements to Star City Riverfront Park made in July and October, 2019

Work done by 31 volunteers from MNR and MAP, working with Town of Star City, a landscape architect, and landscaping company boss and crew

Riverfront kiosk – Before



After



Volunteers and landscaping crew re-vegetate the Star City Riverbank

Star City Riverbank – Before and after





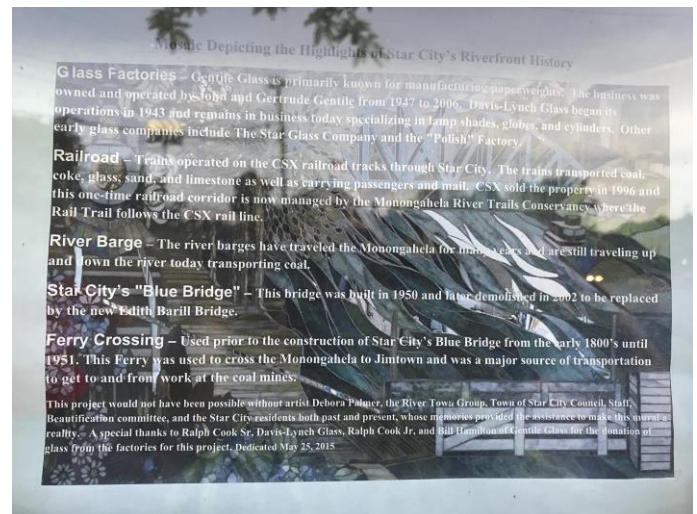


## Ongoing work at Star City Riverfront Park:

- Clearing and terracing back area of park (←, before and after, work in progress)
- Replacing cracked cement boat ramp next to new dock and kayak launch (→, done)
- Relocating Leeway St. access road (→, just paving and signing left to do)



## History Mosaic by local artist Debbie Palmer at Star City Riverfront Park, with descriptive text



### Clean Water Comes to Morgantown

#### Interpreting History

##### Residents Welcome Tibbs Run Water

Tibbs Run did not supply water to the reservoir here until 1912. It did, however, serve as a public water source earlier. In 1889, the new Union Improvement Company (UIC) purchased 210 acres of land south of here within the Tibbs Run watershed—known as the most reliable and clean water supply in the area. In just five weeks, they were sending water from Tibbs Run through gravity-fed pipes running along Tibbs Run and Deckers Creek to town.

When UIC opened its mains, "the sparkling water from the mountain springs" flowed in, reported the *Morgantown Weekly Post*. UIC demonstrated success by attaching a hose to a fire plug on Front Street (now University Avenue) and throwing a stream of water 1 inch in diameter 100 feet into the air.

"Oh, who'd a' thought it?" "Geeminy, don't she spit madly?" and similar expressions were heard from the excited denizens on all sides.... The next day some boys took the hose to the courthouse and "threw a stream of water right into Patrick Henry's face... and several feet over his head." — *Morgantown Weekly Post*

##### How to Supply Enough Clean Water?

In order to ensure an adequate supply of water to all residents, water was also drawn from the Monongahela River and local wells. This water was piped a short distance to the water works on the riverfront south of downtown Morgantown. Each source produced a different quality of water, although the Tibbs Run water was almost always considered better. Most people still thought that, if the water was clean, it was safe, which we now know is not true. The seepage from outcrops in town could leak into the wells, and industrial and farming waste upstream often made the river water brown, putrid and foul tasting. Dry months could negatively affect all the sources, including Tibbs Run.

Improvements to the water works included installing crushed stone and sand water filters (1897) and building a new pumping station (1903). Still, citizens pressed for better quality water drawn from a larger, safer, year-round supply, fearing that the current water supply was in danger of causing a typhoid or cholera outbreak.

##### The Prices Paid for the Privilege

Price UIC paid for a 210-acre tract of land containing Tibbs Run in 1889: \$200

Price UIC charged consumers in 1889: \$6.00 for 1 - 2 pipes, or \$7.50 for 3 - 4 pipes.

Price in the Morgantown City Council Ordinance on water rates in 1902: No family could be charged more than \$21 per year for water service. This was a substantial sum, given that the average annual income for Monongalia County wage-earners in manufacturing was \$400.68.

## WV Botanic Garden History Plaque to be used as a model for Star City History plaque project