



Midland Trail Scenic Highway

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Wayside Exhibits bring Midland Trail to Life *South Charleston Mound exhibit first in series*

South Charleston, WV (July 28, 2010) The Midland Trail Scenic Highway Association today dedicated the first wayside exhibit of its *Illustrated History of the Midland Trail* project. The exhibit, at the South Charleston Mound, celebrates and explains the prehistoric Adena people who built great burial mounds along the Kanawha River. The five-panel exhibit uses original commissioned works of art to tell the fascinating story of the Adena's lives and culture and the artifacts found in the Creel Mound excavation.

The Midland Trail Association plans to place additional exhibits along its 180-mile scenic highway, historic U. S. Route 60. The exhibits offer travelers a better understanding of the people, culture and history of life along the highway that stretches from the state's western border in the Huntington-Kenova area to its eastern border at Greenbrier County.

"The concept is to use outdoor public art to pull people along the Midland Trail and to learn about our attractions and history," said Alice Hypes, executive director of the Midland Trail Scenic Highway Association.

"For the first time, people who visit the Mound will get a fuller understanding of what life was like in 500 B.C. along the Kanawha River," said Hypes. "For instance, they will learn that engineers estimate it took a million baskets of dirt to build this mound, and there were 50 mounds and earthworks just in this area."

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“One panel features the 1883 Smithsonian excavation,” she said. “What we learned from reading the archeologists’ report is that there was a hierarchy within this society. There was a leader who had a copper headdress, surrounded by five bodies on each side with toes pointed to the leader, not touching. One skeleton was buried with tools and shells, five had spears, and the others had nothing buried with them.”

Darla Spencer, a consulting archeologist who worked on the project said people will learn that evidence suggests people have lived along the Kanawha River for 10,000 years.

“It is monumental that people have been drawn to this area for that long,” Spencer said. “The Adena who lived here had extensive trade routes, grew plants, made pottery and built majestic burial mounds at the same time that the Great Wall of China and the Roman Coliseum were built.”

“South Charleston is pleased to be selected as the first site for the wayside exhibits,” said Frank Mullens, South Charleston mayor. “The Mound here has been a signature stopping place for visitors for many years and its prominent place in our city makes it a focal point for many events and activities. This exhibit is a perfect complement to the Midland Trail South Charleston Mound Interpretive Center at 313 D Street.”

“We received funding support for this project from the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation and the Sustainable Kanawha Valley Initiative,” said Hypes. “The U.S. Department of Transportation National Scenic Byways Program, the West Virginia Department of Highways Scenic Byways Program, and West Virginia Humanities Council are providing grant support for the *Illustrated History of the Midland Trail* project.

“Invaluable resources for the exhibit came from two consulting archaeologists, one consulting historian, four artists and organizations including the City of South Charleston and the National Park Service,” she added.

The first illustrations are completed for upcoming exhibits in downtown Charleston, at Gauley Bridge and in Cedar Grove near Virginia’s Chapel. The Association has an active artist call for the next five illustrations.

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“For *The Illustrated History of the Midland Trail*, we are commissioning 30 illustrations to depict more than 25 centuries of history,” Hypes said. “They will be used on the wayside exhibits, in an illustrated history book and as a curated art exhibit that puts the story of the Midland Trail in perspective with world history.”

“Using the commissioned works of original art to tell the story of the Midland Trail gives us a unique opportunity to bring the special perspectives of artists and illustrators into the project,” said Aaron Kenstler, art director for the Midland Trail Scenic Highway Association. “Art adds another dimension to the story that we are telling along with photographs, text, and design.”

“This illustration of the Adena people took some research and imagination,” said Bruce Erikson of Cincinnati, Ohio, whose original illustration is featured on the large exhibit panel at the South Charleston Mound. “There are no photographs, sketches, or art from the Adena to rely upon. I enjoyed the challenge of bringing a scene along the Kanawha River to life.”

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The Midland Trail Scenic Highway Association is a nonprofit organization that focuses on economic and tourism development with more than 40 communities along US Route 60, which stretches 180 miles border-to-border across West Virginia from Greenbrier County to the Huntington/Kenova area. It is the state’s oldest scenic byway. The Association’s mission is to enhance visitor experiences with up-to-date travel information on attractions and special events, improve wayfinding, visitor amenities, and interpretation of the Midland Trail’s rich history, natural resources and scenic beauty.

The annual Midland Trail Destination Guide couples current travel information with the history of the towns and communities along the byway and its gateways.

Editor’s Note: High resolution image files of the five exhibit panels and color photos of the exhibits at the South Charleston Mound are available online at www.midlandtrail.com or by calling 304-343-6001.