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SPECIALTY QUILT SHOP FINDS NEW "HOME"

Plans are underway to transform the C.S. Overholt House, a historic home at West Overton Village, into a new location for *Kate and Becca's Quilt Patch, Etc.*

Kate & Becca's Quilt Patch, Etc. is a specialized retailer preserving the original art of the quilt-making process by offering public quilt-making classes, demonstrations, quilt sales and the sale of quilting supplies. Owners Kathy Hepler and Rebecca Flack decided to relocate the 20 year-old business to the historic village to enhance the visibility of the store, preserve a rare art, and share it with a wider audience. The specialty quilt shop boasts the largest collection of quilt stencils in Western PA with over 450 at the last count.

"We are very excited about the move to our new home and feel that our affiliation with West Overton Village will allow us to benefit from its activities, and tie into the theme of the 1840's period lifestyle it presents," said Mrs. Flack. "We know that the addition of our shop will enhance the visitor experience and complement the current and future programming West Overton plans to offer to the public, and are very grateful for The Progress Fund loan."

“We are delighted to be able to provide financing to this successful business venture because it’s a win-win situation for the Quilt Patch and West Overton Museum,” said The Progress Fund Loan Officer, Diane Wiegman.

The Progress Fund provided \$50,000 in financing for the renovation of the first floor interior to accommodate the Quilt Patch, which will be one of several “theme” shops planning to open in March for the museum’s 2001 season. The Progress Fund is a spin-off of Congressman John Murtha’s Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission. The Progress Fund is an equal opportunity lender whose mission is to create economic opportunity by lending needed capital and providing technical assistance to small travel and tourism-related businesses in a nine-county rural region of southwestern Pennsylvania. The Progress Fund’s loan portfolio includes 59 loans, which have created over 150 jobs.

“I am pleased that The Progress Fund is creating jobs in the heritage tourism industry for our region and wish them good luck,” said Congressman Murtha.

As West Overton’s Executive Director Rodney Sturtz explains, the relationship between the Quilt Patch and West Overton is not a fledgling one. “Without the efforts of the Quilt Patch staff our annual quilt show at West Overton would not be possible. In the past, the show, which lasts over one month, has attracted over 1,600 visitors to West Overton making the event one of the largest quilt shows in Western PA,” Sturtz said. “We are extremely pleased the Quilt Patch has decided to relocate to our village and we couldn’t ask for better retailers as tenants in our first village shop,” he added. Several other restaurants, antique and boutique businesses are currently

in discussions with West Overton with expectations of becoming additional retail establishments in the village.

The new home of the Quilt Patch has a unique history of its own. In the mid 1800's, the first floor of the structure was known as the Christian Overholt Emporium, a general store that supplied everything from plow shares and penny candy to all types of dry goods, food and clothing to local residents. Christian Overholt was industrialist Henry Clay Frick's uncle and the brother of Henry's grandfather, Abraham. Christian provided young Henry with his first job as a clerk at the emporium, with his pay being lunch and the benefit of sleeping on the counter of the shop after it closed. At that time, Henry hadn't achieved the wealth and reputation he later received as the premiere coke producer for Pittsburgh's steel industry.

Sturtz and The Progress Fund believe that Kate and Becca's Quilt Patch will be a catalyst for growth, inspiring visitors and other retailers to join in the unique atmosphere and potential that the attraction offers as the outstanding example of a 19th century rural industrial village. A similar historic attraction grew in leaps and bounds in the same manner years ago. Now, the historic town of Williamsburg, Virginia receives hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

The West Overton Museums are operated by the Westmoreland-Fayette Historical Society. West Overton Village includes The Mill/Distillery Museum, Overholt Homestead and the stone cottage or springhouse on the Overholt Farm that served as the birthplace of Henry Clay Frick.

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