

Press Release

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Seagrove Museum Finally Finds Home: Buys Town's Grocery Store

Seagrove, NC – Rumors have been flying ‘round town lately. What’s all the fuss? After nearly 24 years of looking for a permanent home, the Museum of North Carolina Traditional Pottery will finally have one.

It’s expanding from about 148 to 4,500 square feet.

The Museum, a 501c3 tax exempt organization, has purchased the town’s grocery store. It will be converted to provide space for a large display of pots from the Seagrove area potters, a small coffee shop, a tourist information center and a gift shop with souvenirs and books, but no pottery will be sold there.

Plans include the creation of rotating exhibits, displays of historical artifacts from the region, and information about the history of the Seagrove area. With nearly 100 potters making and selling their wares, the area is regarded as the “pottery capital of the United States.”

With the assistance of Homeland Realty, the buyer’s agent for the Museum, and First Bank of Seagrove, the financing source, the sale was finalized on Friday, February 3, 2006.

An auction will be held soon to clear out retail display racks, freezers, check out counters, a variety of refrigeration units, and a lot more. Then, work will begin on the building to overhaul the electrical system, add some windows, change locations of exit doors and more.

The Museum has already started the process of applying for grants to fund the expansion process and displays. That’s something the group has wanted to do for years, but has not had a location to accommodate their dreams, explained board chairman, Richard Gillson.

“We’re excited about this move,” he said. “Now we’ll be able to better offer the potters and the public what we intended to do in 1982.” That’s when Jane A. King, Gillson and others set out to form what would later become the Museum of North Carolina Traditional Pottery.

Created in 1983, the Museum has had four “homes.” First, it was located in the office next to Seagrove Hardware. From there, it moved to the North Carolina Pottery Center – then to the old white house adjacent to the North Carolina Pottery Center – and then onto the City Hall of Seagrove, where it has occupied part of the front office and two windows.

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There simply hasn't been enough space to accommodate the Museum's needs.

Since 1983, thousands of curious pottery shoppers have stopped there to ask for directions, see samples of the types of work potters create and learn about the area. Volunteers or part-time employees have typically staffed the office.

Membership dues, donations, grants and proceeds from the annual Seagrove Pottery Festival have been the primary income sources for the Museum and its projects. Throughout the years, it has funded the printing and distribution of nearly 100,000 black and white maps, per year, of the area potters and a pictorial pottery shop booklet that featured pen and ink drawings of the exteriors of shops.

Before the North Carolina Pottery Center was built, the Museum purchased the property, along with the old white house, and gave it to the Center. The Museum also originally paid wages for Center employees when the Museum was located there.

The Museum has taken a regional lead in the promotion and marketing of the community, by working with travel writers, state and local tourism offices, attractions and area hotels.

In 2005, the Museum printed 80,000 copies of a colorful map of the area potters with photos of their work and launched a Web site, www.seagrovetpotteryheritage.com. In 2004, the Museum hired a fulltime office manager who oversees three part-time employees.

The Museum sponsors five special events each year to promote and market the area: Winterfest, held the third weekend in February; Summerfest, the third weekend in June; Christmas in July, the third weekend in July; Seagrove Pottery Festival, the weekend before Thanksgiving each November; and, the Christmas Open House, the first weekend in December.

For information about the Museum and the upcoming auction, call the Museum at 336-873-7887 or Gillson at 336-301-3515.

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