NEW EXHIBITS

The exhibit design project is under the direction of architect Mark Meagher and the plans were recently sent to local and state building contractors. The project is scheduled to begin in early 2016. The new exhibit spaces are much needed to preserve the one-of-a-kind items in the collection. There will be significant audio/visual components as well, enabling the sharing of more information than can be formatted displayed. Rotating exhibits are also part of the plans.

A group of fans recently purchased a telephone that was an original prop from "The Andy Griffith Show." This will be incorporated in a new exhibit but is on display during Mayberry Days in one of the existing cases. And Cindi Griffith has generously donated yet another iconic personal item from Andy Griffith's career for the museum. We continue to be grateful to Cindi for her ongoing support of the Andy Griffith Museum and the Surry Arts Council. We look forward to unveiling this latest donation in 2016.

GUIDED TOURS OF THE ANDY GRIFFITH PLAYHOUSE and MUSEUM GARDENS AND GROUNDS

Groups are now enjoying Andy Griffith Playhouse Backstage Tours with Heather Elliott. We continue to add photos and posters to the walls of the backstage area. Groups also have the opportunity to enjoy tours of the facility grounds with Master Gardener Ginny Adams. The gardens were designed with native North Carolina plants for continuous year-round blooms and interest. They were designed by landscape architect Chip Callaway who also did the design for Cindi and Andy Griffith's Manteo home. Chip is from Mount Airy and resides in Greensboro, NC, where he operates Callaway and Associates and specializes in residential, hospitality and historic garden design.

Lower level Andy Griffith Playhouse
Monday-Saturday 9 am-5 pm, Sunday 1:00-5:00 pm

Eng and Chang were born in the village of Samutsongkhram, Siam (now Thailand) on May 11, 1811. Eng and Chang Bunker were connected to the best by a castaneous band of flesh. The twins shared relatively normal boyhoods in Siam, running and playing with other children and helping to support their family by gathering and selling duck eggs in their village. On April 1, 1829, the twins left Siam and began a career traveling with two agents, Robert Hunter, a British merchant, and Abel Coffin, an American sea captain. Eng and Chang earned money by making appearances throughout the United States, Canada, South America, and Europe. In their far-flung travels, Eng and Chang became such popular celebrities during the 1830s that their promotion as "Siamese Twins" were terms that became synonymous with connected or conjoined twins. In 1832, they fulfilled their contracts and declared their independence from their agents. By the late 1830s, Eng and Chang tired of all their traveling and opted to settle in North Carolina. There, the brothers married sisters, Adelaide and Sarah Yates. The sisters were the daughters of Nancy and David Yates, Quakers from Wilkes County. The couple were married on April 13, 1843 and produced 22 children between the two families. They moved to White Plains, just west of Mount Airy, in 1845. They were successful farmers and good citizens. They split their time between the two families with a rigidly followed system of three days in one house followed by three days in the other with each being the master in his home. They observed this without exception until they died on January 17, 1874, at the age of 62.

DID YOU KNOW...

- The Siamese Twins resided with their families only a few miles from the Andy Griffith Playhouse!
- They are buried at White Plains Baptist Church. On the way to the gravesite, you will cross the Eng and Chang Bunker Bridge. That bridge crosses Stewart's Creek - the body of water that divided their land.
- They raised their children here and hundreds of descendants reside in the area. There is an annual Bunker Reunion on the last weekend in July each year.
- The Surry Arts Council hosts guest lecturers each year during the Bunker Reunion.
- The exhibit on the lower level of the Andy Griffith Playhouse features original documents along with photos of the Twins and their families. The wills of Eng and Chang Bunker are displayed along with numerous additional items on loan from descendants. A documentary plays continuously.
- That in 1839, Eng and Chang Bunker were the first Asians to become citizens of this country. They took the name Bunker from their close friends Fred and William Bunker who lived in New York City. They were such close friends that at one time, Chang had bequeathed all his estate to their sister, Catharine Bunker.
- That Eng and Chang were excellent fishermen, expert in the use of firearms, excellent performers on the flute, excellent with tools and construction, and above average in intellect.
- That Eng and Chang were Whigs.
- That Eng and Chang had sons who fought in the Confederate army. Eng and Chang opened their homes to weary and hungry Confederate soldiers.
- That Eng and Chang Bunker were the first Buddhists to enter this country.
- That Eng and Chang Bunker brought the first Siamese Buddhist text into this country.
- That Eng and Chang Bunker remain the only conjoined twins to have children.
- That Chang died first on January 17, 1874 and Eng died several hours later.
- That Sarah died on April 29, 1892 and she is buried in a cemetery with slaves and some of her children on Bunker property near the White Plains Baptist Church.
- That Adelaide died at the age of 94 on May 21, 1917 and is buried beside Chang.
- That their bodies were autopsied at the Mütter Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- That their last living child, Robert E. Bunker (named after Robert E. Lee), died on January 25, 1951.

Recommended reading: "The Two" by Irving and Amy Wallace; "The Lives of Chang and Eng: Siamese Twins in Nineteenth-Century America" by Joseph Oster, and "Duet for a Lifetime" by Kay Hunter. These are available in the Andy Griffith Museum gift shop and/or Amazon.