

## **Restoration Underway at the Victor Lowell Thomas Museum**

Contractors have been hard at work at the Victor Lowell Thomas Museum (Reynolds Block) since March 30, completing a stabilization project that will help save the 1899 building.

Old fire-damaged wood and concrete have been removed and soon foundation work and stabilization of a failing north wall will begin. TEPA of Colorado Springs was chosen as the general contractor for the project, mainly due to their experience with State Historic Fund (SHF) grants and their experience with the restoration of Victor City Hall a few years ago.

TEPA and Source Architechnology Systems staff (museum-hired consultants) have been on site managing the project and working with the museum board to resolve issues as they arise. The work is scheduled to be completed by early summer.

Thanks to the generosity of several foundations, granting agencies and outstanding community support, the first phase of this major stabilization project has begun and work to save the museum will continue through 2009/2010. The Colorado Historical Society's SHF grant has made the work possible with matching funds from private foundations, including an \$80,000 grant received in December 2008 from the Gates Family Foundation.

This first Phase includes foundation work and preparation for support columns and additional stabilization work. A fire-burned area of the museum's first floor that once housed a grocery/butcher store has been shut off for safety reasons since a fire in the building in the late 1950s. In addition, the north wall has been failing as a result of that fire which caused damage to the basement, where large beams and timber framing were destroyed or severely burned, compromising the building's structure.

Phase 2, which includes replacement of timbers that were destroyed in the fire and restoration of the second story windows, is pending the award of a second SHF grant. Once the new framing is installed, the museum will gain back the use of the old grocery/butcher store area as well as the basement. Matching funds of \$61,000 are required for Phase 2, which also includes restoration of the second story windows. Phase 3 will include support columns that will bolster a sagging second floor and further restoration work.

With the support of the Teller County Commissioners April 23, the museum board is applying for a Transportation Enhancement Grant, through the Colorado Department of Transportation, that will replace the roof and restore the large windows and woodwork on the storefront of the building. Matching funds of about \$8,000 will be needed for this grant.

The museum board is moving ahead quickly with grant applications and restoration work due to the dire needs of the 110-year-old building. Without this work, the building will be deemed unsafe and the museum will need to be closed. Given that 2010 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the museum's existence in its current location, the board of directors has made it a mission to preserve this unique and significant heritage site in downtown Victor.

The museum board greatly appreciates the outpouring of support from all to save this 1899 cornerstone building. Fundraising efforts this summer and fall will include an online eBay auction (details will be announced soon), and Saturday, Sept. 12, the Museum will hold a Miners Dinner and Live Auction at the Victor Elks Lodge. Auction items for these events are needed and may be donated by calling Nancy Hanks at 719-689-3522, Jane Mannon at 71-9689-4044 or Ruth Zalewski at 719689-2675 or by email to [museum@victorcolorado.com](mailto:museum@victorcolorado.com).

In 1900, the Thomkins Hardware Supply Company and a confectionery store occupied the Reynolds Block. It was also once home to the Hackley Store and Hotel. At one time the Victor Mining Stock Exchange set up its office there.

Since 1960 the building has housed the Victor/Lowell Thomas Museum, which features displays highlighting the history and mining heritage of Victor and the surrounding gold camp, as well as memorabilia honoring one of Victor's most famous former residents. To the rear of the building, outside, is an exhibit of mining machinery. New this year are also three new window displays that the board hopes will showcase some of the historical highlights of the museum and attract visitor's interest in the museum. The displays were built and designed by Thin Air Theatre Company member and Butte Theater manager Mickey Burdick.

Again this summer the museum will offer gold and gem panning and will have new exhibits. Modern Mine Tours start June 3 and are scheduled Wednesdays and Fridays through the summer. Call 689-4211 to reserve a tour.

The museum opens Memorial Day Weekend, May 23 and will be open 9:30-5 Wednesday through Sunday through Sept. 7 and weekends in September through October 11, weather permitting.

For more information, to become a member, sponsor or volunteer with the museum, please visit [victorcolorado.com/museum.htm](http://victorcolorado.com/museum.htm) or email [museum@victorcolorado.com](mailto:museum@victorcolorado.com).