

A New Home for the

Morris Historical Society

Thanks to the generosity of the American Legion, Post 1135, the Legion Hall at 89 Broad Street is now the home of MHS!

Since its charter in 1975, the Morris Historical Society has sought 1) to educate and stimulate people's interest in Morris's history, 2) to collect, preserve, and promote historical research of Morris, 3) to preserve and protect its buildings and historic sites, and 4) to collect, preserve and display Morris's records and artifacts. Yet, for 47 years, the MHS did not have a space of its own to achieve these purposes. For many years, the Morris Library and the BVACC generously allowed MHS to store its collections in their extra rooms; however, the collections and programs of the MHS had outgrown these spaces.

With the gift of the Legion Hall, the MHS now has a place to serve its purpose.

The Building's Past

The building previously known as the American Legion Hall is the oldest surviving commercial structure in the village of Morris. Built between 1800 and 1820 at the busy intersection of Broad and Main Streets, it was a red painted structure with a yellow sign advertising

the grocery "E.C. William's" located there. Sometime after 1827, it was moved

about 40 yards to its current location on South Broad Street and a larger, more substantial stone building replaced it (now the Bank building). It continued as a commercial structure with additions made between 1860 and 1910 that modernized and enlarged it to two storefronts. In 1954 the building was sold to The American Legion, Post 1135.



A.S. Avery's View of Four Corners, Morris, showing E.C. William's Building, 1827

The Building's Future

Renovations planned for the c. 1869 addition to the building will double both the exhibition and storage spaces. These spaces will be climate-controlled with the most energy-efficient HVAC systems, insulated, weatherized, and illuminated with energy efficient lighting. A new ramp entrance will improve accessibility for visitors and the loading and unloading of collection objects.

Timeline

- **1810-1820** built by Dr. Hadley and Mr. Gobel at Main & Broad Streets
- **1827** in Avery's painting of Main St., occupied by Edward C. Williams as a Dry Goods and Grocery
- **1835-38** moved to 89 South Broad St.
- **1860-1910** false front and three shed-roofed sections added
- **1868-1938** uses included tin, stove, and hardware stores, groceries, restaurants, an oyster and billiard saloon, a hoop skirt manufactory, and a barber shop.
- **1954** American Legion, Post 1135 purchased the property.
- **Oct. 2022.** The American Legion gives its Hall to the MHS.
- **Sept. 2024.** The MHS Museum opens.

The Building's Present

The main block of the Museum has been renovated, but its additions need repair. Previous years of deferred maintenance and a leaking roof in the 1869 addition have led to water damage to the walls, floor, and foundation in that section of the building. Currently, the addition has no functioning mechanical or electrical systems.