

Beaver County Times Column by J.D. Prose February 17, 2011

AMBRIDGE - U.S. Rep. Jason Altmire has nominated Old Economy Village for a national award that could bring the formerly endangered historical site \$10,000 and nationwide recognition.

Altmire, D-4, McCandless Township, has nominated Old Economy for a national medal for museum and library services from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the federal agency tasked with supporting the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums.

"I just can't imagine that there are other places in the country that have a combination of a historical setting, one of the first of its kind, the budget situation and the way the community came together," Altmire said Thursday.

Altmire was referring to the outpouring of support after the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission said in November 2009 that Old Economy was too expensive to operate and would have to close unless the Friends of Old Economy Village, the local group that supported the state's programs, took control.

Besides the community, politicians such as state Sen. Elder Vogel Jr., R-47, New Sewickley Township, and state Rep. Rob Matzie, D-16, Ambridge, who now sits on the historical and museum commission, came to Old Economy's defense.

In October 2010, Vogel announced that the Friends had been awarded a state grant of \$241,000 to help keep the village open.

After its brush with closing, interest in the Harmonist Society settlement grew last year, leading the Friends to expand hours in November and December.

"It's good news," Matzie said of Altmire's nomination. "It's good to see the congressman supports the site any way he can."

Friends President Kevin Flannery did not return a message seeking comment Thursday. Previous recipients of the award include the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh in 2009 and the Carnegie Science Center in 2003.

Altmire said Old Economy Village has a "strong application" and that its "unique circumstances" merit an award that would bring national attention.

"This is an outstanding story," he said.