

PRESS RELEASE

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Author David McCullough to accept Outstanding Achievement Award at Heritage Preservation Awards on April 30, 2011

Nominations sought for additional honorees

(JOHNSTOWN, Pa.) – Author David McCullough, who wrote the 1968 classic *The Johnstown Flood*, will return to Johnstown to accept the Outstanding Achievement Award at the Johnstown Area Heritage Association’s Second Annual Heritage Preservation Awards on April 30, 2011. The awards honor those who have made significant contributions to preserving, celebrating or promoting Johnstown’s heritage.

“There is no one who has done more to share Johnstown’s fascinating history with the world than David McCullough,” said Linda Thomson, chair of the awards committee. “We are honored that he has accepted, and will be at the awards ceremony on April 30.”

“David McCullough once observed that ‘The best way to know where the country is going is to know where we’ve been.’ This event reminds us to appreciate the rich and dramatic history that has shaped this region — and which will inspire its future. That’s why Peoples Natural Gas Co. is honored to be its lead sponsor as part of our own 125th anniversary celebration,” said Morgan K. O’Brien, president and CEO of Peoples.

About the Outstanding Achievement honoree

David McCullough will receive the Outstanding Achievement Award primarily for his role in preserving Johnstown history through his book, *The Johnstown Flood*, which is considered the best popular history of the flood.

Ways McCullough and his book have helped preserve and promote Johnstown history include:

- Research McCullough conducted for *The Johnstown Flood* in the early 1960s included interviews with many elderly flood survivors who have since died. The transcript of his interview with Victor Heiser is in JAHA’s archives, and a portion of

the interview recording is featured at the Johnstown Flood National Memorial visitor center.

- The 1968 publication of *The Johnstown Flood* predates the 1971 founding of JAHA's predecessor, The Johnstown Flood Museum Association, and the 1973 opening of the Johnstown Flood Museum. But according to Richard Burkert, JAHA president, interest generated by the book was vital to the formation of both.
- Since its publication, *The Johnstown Flood* has inspired hundreds of thousands of people to visit here.
- McCullough assisted in the production of Charles Guggenheim's Academy Award-winning documentary on the flood, which was commissioned for the Johnstown Flood Museum in the late 1980s. He later served as host for a longer version of the film when it was featured on the PBS series *American Experience*.
- McCullough returned to Johnstown in 1989 to serve as keynote speaker for the Johnstown Flood Centennial, which was produced by JAHA.
- In 1997, McCullough helped persuade the president of Bethlehem Steel to halt demolition on historically significant buildings, including the Blacksmith Shop, in what is now the Cambria Iron & Steel National Historic Landmark. McCullough wrote, "The age of steel in America can fairly be said to have begun there, and so those buildings aren't just landmarks in the story of Johnstown, but in the history of our country."

The Johnstown Flood launched McCullough's career as an author of popular histories. He went on to publish *The Great Bridge*, *The Path Between the Seas*, *Mornings on Horseback*, *Brave Companions*, *Truman*, *John Adams*, and most recently, *1776*. His books have been translated into 10 languages, and more than nine million are in print.

His numerous awards include two Pulitzer Prizes, two National Book Awards, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

Call for nominations

The Outstanding Achievement winner for 2011 has been named from nominations received for the 2010 awards, but JAHA is asking the Johnstown community for more nominations for Heritage Preservation award recipients.

A volunteer committee will make the final decisions, and no more than three awards will be given.

Criteria for award nominees are as follows:

- Nominees must have contributed to preserving, celebrating or promoting Johnstown's heritage
- May have made their contributions from any field, personally or professionally
- Areas of recognition include but are not limited to ethnic/heritage, publication, education, volunteerism

- May be well-known, or relatively unrecognized
- Do not have to be a native or resident of Johnstown, but must have a clear relationship with its people and its past
- Must be living; no awards will be given posthumously, except in rare exceptions as determined by the committee
- May be individuals, corporations or organizations
- Must be present at the awards ceremony

Nominations should include:

- A justification of why the nominee deserves recognition
- An explanation of the nominator's relationship to the nominee, if any
- The nominator's name and contact information
- If the nominee is an organization, please include any available relevant information such as a website, founding date, mission, etc.
- If available, please give resources where more can be learned about the nominee

Nominees will be considered for awards in 2011 and in succeeding years as well. Nominations should be sent to: JAHA Heritage Awards Committee, PO Box 1889, Johnstown, PA 15907, and must be postmarked by December 17, 2010.

The Heritage Awards Committee members are:

- Committee chair: Linda Thomson, President/CEO, Johnstown Area Regional Industries
- Dr. Walter Asonevich, President, Penn Highlands Community College
- Claudia Jones, professor emeritus of biology at Pitt-Johnstown and 2010 Heritage Preservation Award honoree
- Jeffrey Lavine, Retired Chief Financial Officer, Pitt-Johnstown
- Dr. Paul Douglas Newman, Professor of Early American History, Assistant to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs & Director of Student Academic Services at Pitt-Johnstown

About the Heritage Preservation Awards

Now in its second year, the Heritage Preservation Awards are a program of the Johnstown Area Heritage Association. Recipients are selected by a volunteer committee of community leaders from nominations submitted by area citizens.

The event's major sponsor is Peoples Natural Gas, which was founded in 1885 in Pittsburgh as the first natural gas company recorded in Pennsylvania. Today, Peoples serves more than 359,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers in 16 counties in southwestern Pennsylvania.

The 2011 Heritage Preservation Awards will be presented at a dinner event on April 30, to be held at the Frank J. Pasquerilla Conference Center. A volunteer steering committee is organizing the event, which will be open to the public.

Honorees in 2010 were: Outstanding Achievement, the late Rep. John Murtha and the National Park Service; Susan Kalcik and the Slovak Heritage Association of the Laurel Highlands; and Claudia Jones.

The Johnstown Area Heritage Association is a non-profit, membership-based organization dedicated to preserving and showcasing Johnstown's unique history to the nation through high-quality educational, cultural and recreational experiences. JAHA owns and operates many attractions in the Johnstown Discovery Network, including the Johnstown Flood Museum, the Frank & Sylvia Pasquerilla Heritage Discovery Center, and the Wagner-Ritter House & Garden. The Johnstown Children's Museum opened in June 2009 in the Heritage Discovery Center. June 2009 also marked the premiere of "The Mystery of Steel" film in the Iron & Steel Gallery. JAHA also programs regular workshops and other events for children, cultural presentations for adults, and other special events, including the AmeriServ Flood City Music Festival. For more information on JAHA programs, museums and events, visit www.jaha.org.