Upstairs Redecoration almost Complete

Visitors to Wylie House Museum this fall will see a dramatic change in the appearance of the upstairs! Four of the five upstairs bedrooms have been painted and have received new window treatments. Work is continuing on the remaining one bedroom and hallway so that by the time we open again after our winter break, in March 2008, the interior painting and window treatment project should be completed. We think visitors will be as pleased as we are with the results.

The Old Fashioned Milk Paint Company of Massachusetts donated the paint used on the walls and was so pleased with the photos we sent them that they will feature us on their web site. The colors enliven the rooms and make the whole upstairs feel more homelike and cozy. It really is surprising how color on the walls makes everything else in the room “pop” visually. You suddenly notice things that previously were overlooked or just faded into the background.

New window treatments are hung in each of the four bedrooms as well. They are documented as being 19th century styles. We selected historically documented reproduction prints for these curtains and visitors this summer have remarked on how beautiful they are. For those of you who live out of town and can’t visit us, please check out the new look at our website: www.iub.edu/~libwylie. Follow the links to current projects, interior painting and window treatments.

We will continue to hang appropriate art work and add small artifacts to the rooms in an attempt to make the rooms seem even more like they are still inhabited by the family.

Web Page Receives Award

Each May during National Tourism Week, the Bloomington Convention and Visitors Bureau presents Hospitality Awards to honor their hospitality partners in the area who have excelled over the past year. Wylie House Museum was honored with the Best Attraction Website award this past May. The CVB staff makes the nominations for each award, and the website awards in particular are chosen by the marketing team at the CVB based on the attractiveness of the site, the ease of navigation and the information content. The website awards are given in three categories: Lodging, Attractions, and Restaurants. We are honored and proud to be the 2007 recipient of one of these awards.
**From the Director**

I began a ten-month, half-time (two weeks on, two weeks off) research sabbatical last March to work on reading and transcribing the thousands of Wylie family letters we were bequeathed by Morton Bradley, Jr., great-grandson of Theophilus and Rebecca Wylie. This schedule has allowed me to stay connected with activities at the museum, but gives me large chunks of uninterrupted time to focus on the letters. As of this writing, I have approximately 2000 pages of transcribed material, and I’ve only read a fraction of the whole! The letters contain a wealth of information about the Wylie family’s daily life in the last half of the 19th century. They write about what they grew in the garden, what food they prepared, who was sick and who had died, who had visited or been visited, what entertainments they had enjoyed, college news, fashions, and so on. It’s fascinating reading, and I look forward to sharing the letters with the public through various publications in the future.

We have been very pleased this year to see a marked increase in the number of student volunteers and inquiries from students about volunteer and intern opportunities at the museum. This is an indication that our efforts toward making a stronger connection with campus are succeeding.

And speaking of volunteers, with this issue we begin a new feature: a page focused on some segment of our volunteer corps. Our quilters are featured this Fall. Next spring, we’ll focus on garden volunteers.

—Jo Burgess

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**Outreach**

**From the Curator of Education**

Spring and summer were wonderfully busy with a record number of education-related group tours in the museum and on-site summer camp workshops that took place in the back of our modest annex! With Sherry Wise (our outdoor interpreter) at the helm, we have crafted a multi-hour summer camp workshop for children that nicely merges heirloom gardening with Wylie family letters, diary entries, photographs and drawings. Over the course of two mornings in June, nearly 50 youth from Girls Inc. learned about the types of plants the Wylies grew, identified plant parts, extracted, cleaned and packaged seeds, and learned why kitchen gardens were so important to the Wylies and their contemporaries.

At the time of this writing, we have already surpassed last year’s educational group visits to Wylie House by nearly 20%. This increase does not, of course, include our statistics for October, which promises to be one of our busiest months for repeat and new IU, MCCSC, or private school museum visits.

My work with the joint American Literature and History class taught by Carla Gardner and Pam Gunkel at Bloomington High School South, begun last spring, continues. Based on conversations I had with these teachers in the summer, I used a PowerPoint presentation and “hands on” materials to present three research ideas to their students on August 31. The three ideas were exploring aspects of a) the “New Purchase,” b) the history of the Monroe County Female Seminary, and c) the importance of waterways in early Indiana history with Clear Creek as a case study. The votes are in. The Female Seminary project has it! Our project formally commenced Oct. 1 and will run for six weeks.*

I am deeply indebted to our corps of Wylie House student volunteers, interns and graduate assistants for their contributions to this project. Suzanne Ingalsbe, back with us for the academic year, helped immeasurably by scanning the images I needed for the PowerPoint presentation. She single-handedly created our first educational “blog,” a crucial communications component for this and future outreach special projects (www.wyliehouse.blogspot.com). Andrea Short, a senior in IU’s History Department, has traversed the Monroe County History Center, the Indiana Room at the MCPL, the IU Archives, and the Wells Library on the project’s behalf. She and Suzanne have also searched numerous on-line databases, ordering microfilm and dissertations from afar to build our archive of materials and sources. Sarah Patterson and Miriam Nelson (SLIS graduate interns and volunteers) have worked on and with our family letters databases to pinpoint connections between the Female Seminary and the Wylies. We are very excited about this particular project and feel confident it will be of interest to other local history organizations, too. Stay tuned for an update on this project in our next newsletter!

*I want to extend a very special thanks to Dr. Steven Ball, Cultural Resources Specialist/Archaeologist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA) who made two consecutive presentations to the BHSS class in late September. His goal was to flesh out for the students some of the pre-history and early contact eras of native peoples who had lived in this region long before and immediately following Indiana statehood.
Volunteer Appreciation: Wylie House Quilters

The Wylie House quilters finished their first reproduction project for us in 1993. Called a “nine patch” it now covers a large bed upstairs in the “Boys’ Room.” A prolific bunch, our quilters are working on their eighth piece since then!

Not surprisingly, all have done other kinds of handwork, including sewing, knitting, crocheting and various types of embroidery. “I sewed all my children’s clothes, and I’ve made many things for my grandchildren, too. Last year I made twelve afghans for my family before I came back here to quilt last spring,” said Virginia Miller, who has been working with us for nearly a decade. She brought her good friend and fellow church-goer, Ellen Pittman, into the fold about five years ago.

Virginia and Ellen have been sewing and quilting since childhood, a skill they learned from their respective mothers. “I used to sit underneath the quilting frame when I was a child. My mother gave me scraps of fabric, a needle and some thread and let me go,” Ellen remarked. When asked if her mother had not worried about giving sewing needles to a small child, Ellen replied, “No, it was different back then. You learned to sew as quickly as you could manipulate a needle. I used to thread all my mother’s needles for her. I’d string up to six needles on a spool of thread so she could simply keep sewing with that color of thread. She’d pull out however much thread she needed, cut and knot it off, and when she finished with that string, she’d just come back for the next.”

Virginia was raised on a farm in northeast Monroe Co. and married a farmer later in life. “We’d sew and quilt on cloudy or rainy days because we didn’t have to be out in the fields. To this day, I love a good thunderstorm. You feel free to do whatever you want to do.”

Marjorie Clayton and Diamond Mather knew each other through bridge and a women’s investment club before they came to Wylie House. Our longest serving quilters, they were part of the group that made our first reproduction mentioned above. Marj had done a lot of sewing for her daughter and herself, and had also taken classes in crewel and counted cross-stitch embroidery before she ever tried her hand at quilting. “I started coming to Wylie House in the early 1990s and I just got hooked. My grandmother quilted. She was from Pennsylvania. I loved the colors and patterns but had never done it myself until I came to Wylie House.”

Diamond has always been interested in quilting but, like Marj, got a late start on it in life. Although fascinated with the design and colors of blocks her mother kept in a box, her parents were more protective and didn’t allow her to handle needles, pins, or scissors as a child. “My mother would only let me play with a pile of quilt patches she had. I’d spend hours arranging the colors until I had them just right. My parents took a trip to the big exposition in Chicago in 1934 and an older woman they knew came to care of me. She was a quilter. She set me down with fabric, thread and a needle. Oh, I was thrilled to death to have these things! But I didn’t seriously try to quilt until I made my first baby quilt for my daughter many years later. My mother’s mother quilted but my mother wasn’t interested. She’d say, ‘Why would you want to cut fabric up and then sew it back together again when you can buy a new blanket?’ A good question indeed, but one that few quilters would ponder! If you’re quilting, you’ve already stitched your way through the answer.

—Bridget Edwards
Volunteering

- Do you like history, antiques and a pleasant, tranquil setting? Learn to be a docent at the Wylie House.
- Have limited time? Help with special events at the museum.
- Do you prefer to spend your time in the garden? Lend a hand in our heirloom garden.

If you live in the Bloomington area and would like to become more actively involved with the museum, please call and chat with us about the opportunities.

**DOCENTS, VOLUNTEERS, AND INTERNS:**
Susan Baker, Eric Bartheld, Jane Clay, Mary Emison, Aimee Rose Formo, Jane Harnett, Margaret Jensen, Naomi Lawlis, Mary Anne Miller, Miriam Nelson, Sarah Noggle, Sarah Patterson, Patsy Rahn, Andrea Short, Cindy Smith, Carla Williams, Nicole Wolfersburger

**GARDEN VOLUNTEERS:**
Victoria Neely, Ross Hill, Lee Ridge, Floyd Richards, Barbara Roberts, Eve Schultes-Ridge, Daniel Williams

**QUILTERS:**
Marjorie Clayton, Diamond Mather, Virginia Miller, Ellen Pittman

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**Events and Exhibits**
Sherry Wise and IU student Meg Hathaway have put together a special exhibit in the house for the month of October called “That’s for Remembrance: Herbs in the Nineteenth Century American Home.”

Nov. 30th is our last day of the season this year and it will be marked with a special noon time concert “A Serenade of Classical Wind Chamber Music” directed by Michael McCraw of IU’s Early Music Institute. Performers will be Leighann Dahl (flute), Jennifer Kirby and Lindsay Flowers (oboes), Danre Strydom and Alexandra Heeley (clarinets), Timothy Abbott and Selena Yamanoto (bassoons), and Jared Disbro and Timothy Huizenag (horns). The free concert will last approximately an hour. Seating is limited.

Our traditional holiday open house, Wylie House by Candlelight will be held on Saturday, Dec. 8th from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

**WYLIE HOUSE MUSEUM**
**INDIANA UNIVERSITY**
Libraries
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