From the Director:
A Barn (Re-)Raising!

Little did we dream when we began planning six years ago for a new education center that we might end up with another historic structure on site, but that is precisely what has happened and we are more than thrilled! A barn built here in Monroe County between 1863 and 1869 will be dismantled and reassembled here on site. The interior will be refitted to serve as offices and education/meeting space.

Neidigh Construction and Kirkwood Design Studio, two Bloomington firms, have teamed up to make this happen for us. The beautiful old hand-hewn posts and beams and the poplar siding will be exposed on the interior of the reassembled barn so that visitors will be able to see them and experience what those of us who grew up on farms have known for years...that wooden barns are beautiful and amazing structures!

The original Wylie homestead comprised 20 acres of land, purchased in 1829 and 1830. (An additional 205 acres were purchased before 1850.) It was a working farm on the edge of what was then the village of Bloomington. We know that Andrew and Margaret had a barn, chicken coop, outhouse, smokehouse, ice house and probably other buildings to support their activities. Even in the second half of the century when Theophilus and Rebecca Wylie lived here with their family on just five acres there were several outbuildings, including a barn. So having a barn on-site again is entirely appropriate and should help remind visitors of the origins of the property.

The builder of this barn was Lewis Wickliffe Walden who was born in Monroe County in 1830 and died here in 1885. He and several of his brothers were carpenters. Mr. Walden built the barn in the western part of the county, on a farm that was owned by his father, Lewis Logan Walden. The property went through several ownership transfers over the years, and in 1955, Morris and Maudeline Duckworth bought the land with the barn on it. Mrs. Duckworth, the great-great niece of Lewis W. Walden, and her family took great pride in the barn that was still standing in excellent condition...
100 years after being built. Mr. Duckworth died in 1984 and in 1988, his widow sold the property. In 1993, she put together a history of the farm and barn that has been passed on to us from its current owner, Larry Neidigh.

Once the barn has been moved and reassembled, we will have three stories with an elevator for accessibility. The basement will mostly house our gardening and seed-saving program with room for staff and volunteers to work when cleaning and packaging seed, plus some storage space. The ground floor will house a reception/exhibit space, a meeting room where groups can gather for lectures, workshops, or receptions, a small kitchen/lounge, and two public restrooms. Staff offices will be located on the second floor, and one room on that level will house the Theophilus Wylie family library.

The barn is not a large building, being only about 36 feet on a side, but we believe it will afford us adequate space for our programming needs. And, just as important, it will look right for this site and will not overwhelm the house. Barring any unforeseen hurdles, the barn should be ready to move into by late fall 2009 or early 2010. Once our offices are moved, the current office annex will be demolished and the site will be re-graded, seeded and planted with more heirloom trees, shrubbery and flowers. The alley that currently separates the Museum from the Annex has been vacated by the City of Bloomington, which means that once our project is complete, we will occupy the equivalent of three lots, landscaped as one unit, with no alley bisecting the property. Parking will continue to be on the street and in the east-west alley behind the museum in the designated parking spaces there.

Not everyone would be pleased to learn that they would soon have their office in an old barn, but I am ecstatic! Several times in the past six years we thought we had everything in place and could start on a new structure built to resemble a barn, only to have our hopes dashed. But now, all the setbacks and frustrations seem as nothing when faced with the prospect of having an actual 19th century barn transformed into office and education space! Neidigh Construction and Kirkwood Design Studio have come up with a creative plan, and the building will be an exciting space in which to work. Not only will the old barn materials be used and preserved, but also some material (casework and flooring) will be salvaged from the old annex and given new life in the converted barn. Other materials, like windows, will be salvaged and used elsewhere, on other projects. Energy efficient heating, cooling and electrical systems will be installed in the barn to lessen our impact on the environment. But I am most excited by the fact that this building will add another educational component to our historic site, and by the prospect of working in such an interesting and beautiful space.

Our website will have photos of the barn as it is transformed, so those of you who live outside the area will be able to watch our progress.

This project, coupled with the mural in the entry hall which essentially completes my vision for the interior of the house (see article on page four), have made 2009 a landmark year for me personally. I continue to be grateful to my staff, our generous corps of volunteers, and IU students who contribute so much to our mission and goals. I know that with their help and the new education center, we will be able to take the museum on to the next level of excellence. Many of you have been generous over the years in support of our revitalization efforts and for that I am sincerely grateful. We will continue to need your donations as we work toward building an endowment to support and sustain the museum into the future. Thank you all!

-Jo Burgess
Exhibits......

When Theophilus A. Wylie’s (TAW) grandchildren gifted their grandfather’s library of approximately 1000 volumes to IU in the early 1950s, they probably never imagined that some of the images found inside the book covers and fly leaves would end up in an exhibit. ‘Whimsy and Wylies: Expressions of Kin, Career and the Colloquial’ is the title of the exhibit I curated for 2009. It was installed in the lobby of the Wells Library on April 1 and was up through April 30th.

I first thought about compiling an exhibit of TAW’s sketches over two years ago when I was looking through an oversized box of Wylie family ephemera held by the IU Archives. In it I found a large political cartoon done by T. A. Wylie in 1832 along with miscellaneous sketches drawn on everything from IU commencement programs to ordinary scraps of paper. I was smitten! Over the course of 2007-08 several of our graduate students wrote condition reports for the books in TAW’s library. Their labors resulted in the creation of a database that, when queried, identified nearly 150 books containing sketches and drawings. We believe many of these, like the one above, were done by TAW. More than a dozen of these images were scanned and reproduced for the exhibit and another former student colleague who had also worked in the museum at that time to talk with Jo and me about their experiences working here nearly 35 years ago. We learned that the old 5 x 8 card system of cataloguing museum objects was developed by them. We are at the tail end of integrating that “hard copy” system into our current electronic collections database. We also heard a story about the discovery of a box of family letters found up in the attic eves, some of which addressed the death of Theophilus and Rebecca’s eldest son, Dick Wylie, an early casualty of the Civil War. The conversation was especially instructive to me. It helped fill in my understanding of the sensibilities that guided the labors being undertaken in the museum between 1965 when the restoration concluded and the mid-1980s when Wylie House first acquired permanent staff and established open hours to the public. How interesting when, as the 1980s rocker Patti Smith wrote, “paths that cross cross again.”

— Bridget Edwards
**Scenic Mural**

Nine years ago, all of the walls in the Wylie House were bare plaster and the window treatments were simple muslin roller blinds. We have worked very hard since then to refurbish and decorate the interior and exterior of this lovely old house using appropriate period colors, paint techniques and fabrics. The parlor walls were stenciled in 2001. In 2002 faux marbling was applied to two downstairs fireplace mantels. Faux wood graining was painted on the woodwork in the dining room in 2003. The exterior trim of the house was painted in summer of 2004. Between 2002 and 2007 we painted the walls in all the rooms, and between 2003 and 2007 we had new window treatments made for all the rooms except the kitchen and pantries.

For at least five years we have talked about someday having a scenic mural painted on the walls of the entry hall. This spring, thanks to donations by Wylie House staff, volunteers, and the artist, that dream has become a reality. John Thom, local artist and owner of Florentine Finishes, who has done so much prior work for us including all the decorative painting, was commissioned to paint a mural based on 19th century illustrations and drawings of various Bloomington buildings and surrounding countryside. Work began in late March and will have been completed by the time this newsletter goes to press.

There were itinerant painters in the 19th century who, sometimes in exchange for room and board, would stencil, do faux finishes, and sometimes paint murals for home and inn owners. Rufus Porter was probably the best known of these painters. A museum in Bridgton, Maine ([www.rufusportermuseum.org](http://www.rufusportermuseum.org)) is dedicated to preserving some of his work and educating the public about his life and art. When consulting with John Thom about our mural, we agreed that he would do it in the style of Porter.

I gave John copies of a number of sketches, paintings, and photographs that depicted early Bloomington for him to use as reference and inspiration. Theophilus Wylie and several of his children and grandchildren were talented artists who drew and painted; some even made their living as commercial artists or teachers of art. From them, we have sketches of the early Wylie landscape including their own outbuildings, neighboring farms and the early IU campus. From the Monroe County History Center, we acquired a print that depicts the Monroe County courthouse as it appeared in 1826. Two paintings done in the 1830s, one by Theophilus and one by Cornelius Pering, depicted the town as it looked at that time. Although the Wylies would not have had their own locality depicted on their walls if they indeed ever had such a mural, we felt that doing so would help our visitors step back in time when they enter the house.

It has been a fascinating few weeks watching John and his assistant, Isiah Killion, create a beautiful and vibrant mural on what were blank white walls! First they painted in the sky and the background landscape. Then, using chalk, John drew in a few of the buildings. As those got painted in, he began to add more details with chalk, such as trees, shrubbery, and clouds. We would talk every day and discuss his ideas for what might go on the next section of wall. The final details will be the people, animals, wagons and so forth . . . all in period detail. Comments received by volunteers and visitors go right to the heart of what we hoped to achieve: “This really helps me imagine what it was like here 150 years ago or more!” or “It’s hard to imagine how rural it was around here, but this really makes it clear.”

The fact that we’ve used historic documents as reference has paid off. We have included here a few photos but the mural is best appreciated in person. So please come by and see it when you have the opportunity!
Events and exhibits

Quilt Exhibit & Seed Sale

Our annual March quilt exhibit was well received again this year. Close to 300 visitors attended the three-day open house that coincided with the Indiana Heritage Quilt Show and more people came later in the month expressly to see the quilts we had on display.

Our annual seed sale was a resounding success. We sold over $3000 worth of seed to 335 eager gardeners. Please remember that seed is available for purchase year-round in our museum gift shop.

Talk at Monroe County History Center

Curator of Education, Bridget Edwards, gave a talk at the Monroe County History Center, 202 E. 6th Street, Bloomington on May 21st titled “The History of the Monroe County Female Seminary.” Bridget got interested in the Female Seminary in Fall 2007 when she worked with students at Bloomington High School South who chose the history of that institution as their class project. Using what she and the students had learned from that collaboration, she mounted an exhibit in the School of Education in March 2008. This talk carried that work a bit further. Bridget hopes to publish what she has learned from this research project.

An Apology

We apologize for the lateness of this newsletter. We generally like to announce events and special exhibits in advance of the fact so that our readers can have the opportunity to attend the event or view the exhibit. However, we felt that the news of our barn was too important to ignore and we could not publicize it until all plans were final. Thus, several things have been reported here after the fact, but we tried to make up for that with postings to various online calendars.

Another Quilt Added

Our Wylie House Quilters (see names to the right) have just finished another beautiful quilt for the museum. This one duplicates a nineteenth century quilt from our collection that is in very poor condition and is thus unsuitable for exhibition. A variation on a nine-patch pattern, it will go on a bed in the girls’ room. The quilters’ next undertaking will be a log cabin quilt, a popular old pattern.

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, Nancy Boerner, Jane Clay, Roseann Dodds, Anthony Eller, Mary Emison, Ann Fierst, Jane Harnett, Kristina Lapp, Naomi Lawlis, Erin Mack, Mary Anne Miller, Sarah Noggle, Cindy Smith, Carla Williams

Garden volunteers

Natalie George, Kirsten Hunter, Ross Hill, Rachel Irvine, Luca Peragallo, Lee Ridge, Floyd Richards, Eve Schultes-Ridge, Barbara Seal, Vicky St. Myers, Martha Tarbah, Kathie Wallskog, Daniel Williams

Quilters

Marjorie Clayton, Diamond Mather, Virginia Miller, Ellen Pittman
Student projects

We had four graduate students from the School of Library and Information Science working with us during spring semester. Graduate assistant Jeremy Floyd learned how to work with our digital catalog this semester and has continued to work with our blog and Wikipedia presence.

Two new student interns put in a combined total of 22 hours per week in the office. Erin Mack worked very hard on a complete over-haul of our web site. Over the course of the last seven years, many different students plus staff have worked on the design and maintenance of our site and we felt it was time to bring some consistency back to the way it is coded and designed. Kristina Lapp made an inventory of the historic photographs that still needed protective housing and reorganized them once that housing had been provided. Both young women have also worked each week on our database finding aid for the 19th century letters of the T.A. Wylie family.

Caitlin Bagley returned as our student hourly employee this semester. Most of her time was devoted to the letters database, but as time permitted, she continued to work on translating the Latin found in the T.A. Wylie diaries.

We periodically hear from past interns and student volunteers who have gone on to various professional positions across the country. It is always gratifying to think that they enjoyed their experience at Wylie House enough to want to keep in touch with us. We will continue to encourage student involvement through internships at the museum, confident that we are offering them an experience that will prove useful after they have completed their degrees and entered the workforce.