From the Director: Barn Progress

After the excitement of watching our historic barn being dismantled last fall, it was frustrating to see the winter weather set in and work in town slow down. However, there was plenty of work to be done on those historic barn materials under cover, inside another barn owned by Neidigh Construction while the temperatures were below freezing and snow fell. Each piece was cleaned and treated with a salt solution to kill any insect pests, then inspected for structural soundness. When necessary, beams were patched and strengthened using an epoxy resin consolidant. Work did not stop completely in town either. December 2009 through February 2010 saw work done on the foundation and basement as weather permitted. The steel I-beams were set and welded into place, and the floor joists and sub-floor were laid. With the whole thing covered in plastic to protect it from the elements, and a heater running to keep the men from freezing, the basement walls and stairway were framed in. When the weather finally began to clear in mid-March, the first posts and beams were delivered to the site. On March 19th a large crane backed into place next to the basement and within three hours the first story posts and beams were in place and braced! Watching that work, I couldn't help but think about the men who originally built this barn in the 1860s, who had only hand tools, block and tackle, horse or oxen power, and their own personal strength. What probably took them days to accomplish was now done in a matter of a few hours thanks to modern machinery. Impres-
...and yet, immersed in 19th century history as we are here, I have to admit to wishing I could have seen it done the old way!

The second story posts and beams were set on April 2. Again, despite a few difficulties with getting the parts to go back together right, it took only about three hours to lift everything into position with the crane and get it all in place and braced. Work then shifted to the details that don’t show to the casual observer driving or walking past: driving new pegs through the holes that join mortised and tenoned posts and beams, squaring things up, framing in stairways, and so forth.

I have a wonderful bird’s-eye view of all the work being done out back through our second floor windows in the current office annex. Some days I’m pretty much glued to the back window, camera at the ready, as I watch the barn rise again! I am constantly impressed with the cleverness and ingenuity of the workmen as they figure out ways to wed the old materials with new and am fascinated by the whole process. Those interested in the project can follow it on our photo stream at www.flickr.com/photos/wylie_house.

On April 8th, the first of the structural insulated panels (SIPs) was hoisted into place and attached to the side of the structure. Over the course of the next two weeks, the remaining panels were added. These panels are a sandwich of oriented strand board (OSB) and foam insulation, with conduit for the wiring in place, and windows framed in. The photo above shows the west end panels being positioned.

The current expected finish date is this June. Once we’ve moved in, the current office building will be demolished and the portion of the property cleared by that demolition will be graded and landscaped. We hope to be settled and have the entire property looking presentable enough to have a grand-opening celebration next September or October. Watch for announcements in the paper and on our web site.

All this activity on the barn, plus our own efforts to reach out to the community have resulted in increased attendance at the museum, and we expect that trend to continue. We have begun to work on written policy regarding rentals of the barn for private events such as receptions, birthday parties, lectures, workshops, and weddings. I have gathered policies of this type from other local and IU venues, as well as from a few historic houses in this region so that we can compare what others have come up with in terms of cost, restrictions, and procedures. We hope to have our policy in place by this fall. Any money thus generated would go back into an account to support the...
This year’s push as Curator of Education has been focused on outreach. In early January, I culled the Association of Indiana Museum’s member organization list to find other history sites that we felt would be of interest to people visiting our website. As a result, the former “LINKS” option on our website has been renamed “RESOURCES” and was greatly expanded to include a comprehensive range of state historic sites and agencies dealing with Indiana history. Check it out next time you’re online.

I’ve also been soliciting venues at which to give presentations about Wylie House, the families who lived here, our collections, and/or on the early history of education in Bloomington. I will be visiting more than a half dozen sites between April and November and hope to add more in the upcoming months. I have PowerPoint and will travel! Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you think your group, organization, or friends would be interested in learning more about Wylie House. The presentation can certainly be tailored to specific interests and needs; I welcome the opportunity to discuss (bledward@indiana.edu).

On a broader level, the Monroe County Community School Corporation (MCCSC) secured a Teaching American History (TAH) grant funded through the U.S. Department of Education. IU School of Education Professor Marilynne Boyle-Baise is the grant’s primary investigator. She has teamed up with IU History Professors Jim Madison, Wendy Gamber and Kristen Sword; BHS North’s teacher and education activist, Pam Wilson; and Glenda Murray (Monroe County History Center Board) to execute a three-year teacher professional development model called “The History Educators Project: Teaching American History through the Lens of Indiana.” Wylie House was included in this year’s schedule of teacher workshops. On Saturday, April 3rd, I gave a presentation to about 30 MCCSC teachers on how they could make use of Wylie House, our collections, our new Education Center, and me! My presentation was followed by a tour here at Wylie House. We were very fortunate to be able to reach so many MCCSC history teachers at one time, and I hope to be working with some of these teachers in the future.

Finally, although not an outreach item directly, our Wylie House docents are our best ambassadors to the general public on an ongoing basis. If you’ve been following our newsletters and/or looking at our website, you know that we continue the enormous task of processing the Morton C. Bradley, Jr. bequest received in 2004. As a result of this extraordinary gift, we now know much more about the second Wylie family (the Theophilus and Rebecca Dennis Wylie line), who resided at Wylie House during the last half of the 19th century, than we do about the President Andrew Wylie family. Accordingly, I felt our docent manual needed a significant revision. To this end, three of our docents (Anthony Eller, Mary Anne Miller and Cindy Smith) will be meeting with me over the next several months to help craft this revision. It will be complete by March of 2011, in time for our season opening. Accordingly, when you come for a visit in 2011 and beyond, you may hear more about both families than you perhaps did previously.

–Bridget Edwards

From the Garden (continued from page 2)

plant red geraniums and white alyssum in the beds and limestone pots located in the front yard of the museum. Donations to help cover the cost of these flowers would be greatly appreciated.

-Sherry Wise – Outdoor Interpreter
A Graduate Assistant’s Perspective

When guests come to Wylie House Museum, they step back in time and get a taste of what life was like for the Wylie family living in mid-nineteenth century Bloomington. Visitors learn by way of an interactive guided tour and visual study of artifacts on display, which together cause many individuals to leave the museum with aroused historical curiosity and deeper reverence for lifeways of the past. Few people, however, have the opportunity to explore the substantial collection of artifacts and archival materials that support Wylie House Museum in its mission to document and interpret the rich record of local, family, and general domestic heritage as embodied by the early Wylie home. As the Wylie House Graduate Assistant for the 2009-2010 school year, I had the rare fortune to be immersed in these related historical materials in support of my Indiana University curriculum which I began in the fall.

I am working toward my Master’s Degree in Library and Information Science with a specialization in Archives and Records Management, and I harbor a serious interest in the preservation and public education concerning local histories, material culture, and American documentary heritage. Wylie House provided an ideal experience through which I could explore the realities of professional work within the framework of a small-scale museum environment. For the past eight months, I’ve pursued a variety of small projects, regularly spending my days amongst nineteenth century photographs, handmade textiles, and family letters.

One of my ongoing endeavors included work with the Museum’s vast collection of family correspondence. Upon the future completion of this continuing student initiative, records for all letters will be organized in a searchable database enabling museum staff and researchers to more easily navigate the collection. Through my own work with the materials, not only did I gain technical professional experience, but I learned about the Wylie family from an intimate perspective. Reading about the past from the personal writings of the people who lived it is nothing like reading a history text; rather it is like having a conversation which affirms all of our common threads. Surely the details of life and language expression have changed, but mutual values and experiences—celebrations, struggles, love, and loss—continue to connect us. In the fall, I assisted with the installation of the seasonal coverlet exhibit. As part of this project, I helped select and arrange textiles for display, created label cards for each selected piece, researched coverlet style, patterns, and history, and composed a docent guide to support the exhibit during house tours. Around this time I was also involved in investigating some Wylie family property history regarding plots of land separate from the main Wylie homestead. This research led me on an exciting and fruitful search through local public records. I became much more comfortable navigating these records and can sense a growing urge to pursue my own genealogical research someday soon. Beginning in the fall and ending in the spring, I took up my most substantial project centered upon the sizable Wylie family photograph collection. I arranged the photographs into organized albums, cleaned up and expanded records in the museum’s catalog system, and made indices to better facilitate access to and browsing of related materials. As a personal bonus, I had a wonderful time studying the visual snapshots of nineteenth and early twentieth century culture. Following my completion of the photograph project, I worked with the Wylie ephemera collection—an assortment of cards, clippings, school assignments, short writings, financial materials, and legal documents related to the Wylie Family. I touched up some organizational details of this collection, made additions to the finding aid, and created preservation photocopies of fragile newspaper clippings.

Throughout my term at Wylie House, I also played a role in recording the Museum Education Center’s construction, keeping up the Museum’s Flickr website to let the public visualize its progress, and effectively documenting a new layer of Wylie House Museum history to take its place in the archives from here on out. In the fall, I accompanied museum director Jo Burgess to a beautiful site in nearby rural Monroe County where we took photographs and video recordings documenting the meticulous disassembly of a nineteenth century barn. After spending months glancing earnestly out of my office window to survey and photograph the construction process, the historic barn is

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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 or e-mail us to chat about the opportunities. Our e-mail address is libwylie@indiana.edu

Docents and volunteers
Susan Baker, Molly Biehn, Jane Clay, Roseann Dodds, Anthony Eller, Mary Emison, Ann Fierst, Jane Harnett, Catharine Haralovich, Mary Anne Miller, Kylene Parobek, Cindy Smith, Carla Williams

Garden volunteers
Ross Hill, Barbara Lechner, Lee Ridge, Floyd Richards, Eve Schultes-Ridge, Barbara Seal, Martha Tarbah, Kathie Wallskog

Quilters
Marjorie Clayton, Diamond Mather, Virginia Miller, Ellen Pittman

From a Graduate Assistant’s Perspective (cont. from page 4)

beautiful site in nearby rural Monroe County where we took photographs and video recordings documenting the meticulous disassembly of a nineteenth century barn. After spending months glancing earnestly out of my office window to survey and photograph the construction process, the historic barn is now almost completely reassembled adjacent to Wylie House Museum and will soon debut as the Morton C. Bradley, Jr. Education Center.

Over the course of my year at Wylie House, I also often had the opportunity to discuss realities of small museum management, education, materials preservation, and local and family history research with museum staff. As a student with wide-ranging and budding professional interests, I highly value the personal insights, perspectives, and experiences that my colleagues generously imparted to me. I look forward to applying the wealth of skills and knowledge that I have acquired through experience and conversation here at Wylie House to the opportunities that will come my way in the future. Because I grew rather attached to the Museum during my term as Graduate Assistant, I also look forward to continuing on as a volunteer through the duration of my studies in Bloomington.

—Amy Jankowski

upkeep and operation of our site. Tours of the museum will remain free with donations welcomed, but in these difficult financial times, it behooves us to look for other ways to help support ourselves. Facility rental has proven to be a successful money-maker for other museums and we hope it will be that for us as well.

Jo Burgess--Director

The barn as it looked on April 19, 2010
Student Projects

We continue to be very fortunate in the students who chose to be involved with Wylie House Museum. This summer will see two undergraduate students working with us. Both of these young women came to Wylie House as part of a class tour and were so intrigued that they later contacted us about volunteer opportunities.

Meg Elliott, who is studying Communication and Culture at IU and likes to write, will work with Bridget Edwards on rewriting our docent manual and other projects as they come up.

Mica Harrison is a 5th year BFA student in textiles. She and fellow classmates in a textiles seminar class visited the museum in the early weeks of spring semester and her interest was sparked by the wide variety in our textile collection. She will work on catalog descriptions for the many textiles that were part of the Bradley bequest and others if there is time. The Bradley textiles were all given preliminary descriptions several years ago, but we have not had anyone with the right set of skills and knowledge to complete the catalog records until now.

We welcome this type of student involvement and are pleased that through our efforts to bring more IU classes here, more students are learning of our collections and of opportunities at Wylie House.