This will be my last issue of “Bringing History Home.” After 22 years in the IU Libraries and twelve here at Wylie House, I am retiring from IU as of December 31, 2012. Carey R. Beam has been hired as a visiting librarian and interim director of Wylie House, and I leave knowing that she will bring as much passion and dedication to the museum as I have. Carey is a twenty-year resident of Bloomington, a mother of three boys, and holds degrees from Indiana University in Sociology and Library and Information Science. She concentrated her master’s degree studies in archives and special collections. A previous Wylie House intern and docent, Carey’s background includes experience as a community health educator and most recently as collections manager for the Monroe County History Center.

When I came to Wylie House in 2000, having spent ten years as head of the conservation unit for general collections in the IU Libraries’ Preservation Department, I joked that I went from preserving books and paper to preserving everything ... a historic house and landscape, books, manuscript collections, china, glassware, furniture, paintings, photographs, textiles, and so on ... all the things one would expect to find inside a historic house museum. The museum had been under-staffed and largely ignored by the University and the community since its initial restoration in the early 1960s, and forty years later was, frankly, an embarrassment to the University due to its neglect. I was given the charge to “figure out what to do with it.” Twelve years later, I am proud of what has been accomplished under my leadership. Rather than recap it all verbally, I thought a scrapbook of before and after photos would be more fun for our readers. The following pages will, I hope, prove of interest to you all, and show that Wylie House is now a place we can take pride in.

I want to say a special thanks to Sherry Wise, our Outdoor Interpreter, who has been such a wonderful and hardworking colleague during my tenure. Also, a huge thank you to all of the wonderful people who have given so generously of their time as volunteers during the past 12 years: docents, quilters, garden volunteers, craftsmen, researchers, and others. I have enjoyed working with you all and hope you understand just how important you have been to the success of the museum in recent years. Thank you as well to our many faithful donors. Few of my accomplishments would have been possible without your generous support, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Relatively few people are fortunate enough in life to find a career that brings them joy and fulfillment as well as a living. I am exceedingly grateful to be counted among those few.
In 2000, the yard was so overgrown that you could not see the house, the white trim paint was peeling badly, and the museum signs were in a disreputable condition.
The house is now easily visible from the street and the trim has been painted in more period appropriate colors. New signage now matches other IU signs and makes it more apparent that the museum is owned by the University.
The front entry hall was a rather dismal, unwelcoming space in the 1990s, with no paint on the walls, no floor coverings, and little furniture.

The addition of the painted oil cloth, made by local artist Veda Stanfield in the late 1990s, helped but was only a start to making this space more attractive.
Local artist John Thom got involved in the revitalization around 2001 and has done all specialized painting in the house (this beautiful mural, the stenciling in the parlor and wood graining in the dining room) as well as much of the wall painting.

Brown County weaver Sarah Noggle has made several reproduction carpets and rugs for the museum including the Venetian stripe stair runner and the wool rag rug at the front door.

The painted oil cloth, which is cool and easy to clean in summer months, is covered for the winter months by a reproduction wool ingrain carpet. We know from Wylie family records that Margaret used this dual floor covering system.

The reproduction candle lantern was added in 2004. We know from an 1859 inventory that the Wylie's had some sort of candle lantern that hung here.
These two photos show what the parlor and downstairs bedroom looked like in 1999. Bare plaster walls and ceiling that looked dingy after almost 40 years, white painted mantels, very little furniture, bright yellow window curtains in the parlor. Also note that there were no doors between the two rooms, even though the back room was interpreted as a bedroom.
The parlor has a very different look today! John Thom did the stenciling and marbling (mantel), Vintage Valances of Cincinnati made new window treatments, and the original doors that had been stored in the basement were rehung. Several Wylie family artifacts have also been added to the furnishings.
Downstairs bedroom, 1999 and 2012.
The dining room was a bland space in 1999. Again, we see bare plaster that had become dingy with the passing of many years, no window dressings other than simple muslin roller blinds, and little furniture.
Today the dining room is warm and inviting. The painted wood-grain trim, new window dressings, added furniture, Wylie family portraits, and the Wylie family china and glassware stored in the built-in wall cupboard (which we open to show to guests), makes the room much more interesting.
What is now one of the most interesting rooms in the house, the kitchen, was so stark in 1999 that visitors didn't notice half of the artifacts on display. Once we painted the trim a nice barn red, put fresh white paint on the walls (to mimic whitewash), and added a few pieces of furniture, like the dry sink, and replaced the 20th century crocks with 19th century pieces, the room really came alive. Now visitors notice much more about the room and have many more questions.
Today we call the room over the kitchen the guest room. The addition of two colorful quilts made by the Wylie House quilters, new window dressings, paint on the walls and a few pieces of art work hung in the room make it a pleasant space where a guest might actually enjoy being housed.
The south wall of what we call the girls’ room in 1999 and the same wall today.

All of the window treatments done by Vintage Valances of Cincinnati are documented treatments for the United States prior to 1860 and we chose documented (ie, reproduction) fabrics from that time period as well. Though we don’t know what kind of window dressings Margaret Wylie chose, she might have had fabrics and styles like these.
The small room over the front hall entry is today interpreted as a boarders’ room or sick room. In the first photo, taken in 1999, you can see the dinginess of the bare plaster where the walls meet the ceiling. The trim in that room had been painted, but nothing else.

Today, blue walls, plaid curtains and a colorful scrap quilt make this sunny south-facing room very cozy.

Our antique quilts are only put on display occasionally in order to preserve them. The quilts that usually grace the beds are all handmade by the Wylie House quilters, a group of four women volunteers who come one morning a week and quilt in the Education Center.
The southwest, or boys’ bedroom, is the sunniest and most cheerful in the house. So we painted it a buttery yellow, with masculine brown trim. The window treatment in this room was described in a Godey’s Ladies magazine in the 1850s as being particularly appropriate for a young man’s room. We used another documented, reproduction fabric here.
The northwest upstairs bedroom has for years served as the museum gift shop as well as being interpreted as the women’s workroom. Some folks were sceptical at first about the pink walls, but soon came to love the warmth of the room.

Out of the frame are a nice “walking” spinning wheel, and an 1850s treadle sewing machine.
A bequest from Morton C. Bradley, Jr., a great-grandson of Theophilus A. Wylie, in 2004 made it possible for us to realize a long-held dream of building a new education center for the museum. Here you see a photo of the 1860s barn that was located in western Monroe County, disassembled, moved to town, reassembled and refitted to serve as office and educational meeting and exhibit space. It was a real delight to document the whole project with photographs.

Named the Morton C. Bradley, Jr. Education Center, “The Barn,” as it is affectionately known by staff and friends, opened to the public in November 2010, just 13 months after ground was broken. Since the original Wylie property was a 20 acre working farmstead, we felt it appropriate to have a 19th century barn onsite and have been very pleased with how the building functions to support the work of the museum.
Dismantling
Reassembly
Wylie House had no archival collection to speak of in 2000, but with the Bradley bequest in 2004, we suddenly had hundreds of 19th century photographs, thousands of Wylie family letters dating from 1800 through 1930, old deeds, greeting cards, wedding invitations, funeral announcements, wills, and other items. I've spent the last seven years organizing and cataloging these materials, and transcribing the letters so they will be more accessible to researchers. With the help of IU SLIS student interns, we have created online finding aids available at IU Archives Online for some of our letter collections and are currently working on other finding aids. Someday researchers will be able to read all of the Wylie family letters online and look at all of their photographs as well. I have personally transcribed over 5000 pages of 19th and early 20th century letters and have found them to be fascinating reading giving insights into life as it was lived here in Indiana and at IU, in the Dakota Territory and the American Southwest, in Boston and Philadelphia, as well as other locations where the Wylie extended family members and friends lived and traveled 100 to 160 years ago. Being well-educated people, the Wylies and their correspondents wrote detailed and informative letters that were also often entertaining. I look forward to continuing this work as a private researcher after I retire, my goal being to transcribe all the letters in the collection.
A Word from Carey....

I am so very delighted and grateful to have been appointed Interim Director of the Wylie House. Before I began the Library of Science Master’s program at IU, I visited Jo to learn more about the Wylie House. I knew then that I’d like to be involved in some capacity or another. I chose to intern here and then continued on as a docent and volunteer because I just wasn’t ready to leave when the internship was over! When the position of interim director was made available to me this fall I was thrilled. It is an honor to have the opportunity to be responsible for this historic home, the education center, and all of the related collections. As a result of Jo’s extensive efforts and advancements, there is a fabulous foundation to continue to build upon as we move forward.

Since my first visit to Wylie House many years ago as a community member I was impressed by the home’s history and IU’s dedication to preserving it. In the past few weeks in my capacity as co-director, I have already had the good fortune to experience a few of the truly unique and special things that make the Wylie House what it is. I recently gave one of Andrew’s descendants (his great-great-great grandson) a tour of the home, witnessed the completion of a quilt by our volunteer quilters, and welcomed bright-eyed fourth graders and inquisitive IU students into the home. Each of these was a delight and I know there are many more such experiences to come.

I anticipate a smooth and successful transition. Jo’s vision and direction have led the Wylie House and Education Center to a wonderful place. I am eager to carry on the good work with Sherry, the docents, and all the volunteers who help sustain it. And please, do stop by and say hello. I look forward to meeting you!

Docents Needed

We’ll be needing a few new docents in 2013 since a couple of our faithful volunteers have asked to either curtail or cut back their volunteer hours. If you love history and are comfortable talking with visitors of all ages and nationalities, we would be pleased to discuss with you in detail the requirements for becoming a docent at Wylie House. You would learn to give tours of the house to walk-in visitors and you might eventually also help with group tours. We do ask that you make a one year commitment to come at least twice a month, for two hours at a time, March through November.

If you are interested, please call Carey at 855-6224.