Summer is in full bloom at the Wylie House Museum. We reopened on March 1st and since then have welcomed over 500 visitors. The flowers and trees are blooming and the house has a brand new cedar shake roof. It looks wonderful and is in keeping with our mission to preserve the house and maintain its historical accuracy. We hope you'll stop by to take a look.

Both the annual quilt show and seed sale held in March were a great success. It was a lovely way to open the new year. The quilt show offered us the opportunity once again to display a portion of our extraordinary antique quilt collection. And we found ourselves in the good company of hundreds of local gardeners who were eager for warmer weather and the chance to purchase from our vast array of heirloom seed varieties.

In addition to our community events, several Indiana University classes visited the museum this spring semester. Faculty are mining the museum's potential to educate IU students in everything from historic textile studies to elementary education and the rhetoric of architecture. It's exciting to see the museum meet academic needs while at the same time providing students with a window into the university’s rich history.

We are looking forward to a fabulous summer, and we invite you to stop by to enjoy the museum and grounds with us.
Quilters Win 2013 Be More Authentic Award!

Our volunteer quilters were recently recognized by the City of Bloomington with a 2013 Be More Award for their dedication and commitment to the museum. The Wylie House Museum Quilters—Marjorie Clayton, Ellen Pittman, Diamond Mather, and Linda Kelsey—were honored with a “Be More Authentic Award” at the awards ceremony which took place on Tuesday, April 2nd at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater. These four wonderful and talented women have been dedicating their time and artistic talents to the Wylie House Museum for nearly twenty years.

The quilters spend two hours each week hand sewing period appropriate quilts. These beautiful quilts are displayed on the beds throughout the house, allowing us to accurately depict 19th century life. In addition, it allows us to store and preserve the museum’s antique quilt collection. The quilters’ creations afford the IU community and our many visitors the opportunity to experience the fabrics, designs, and artistry of hand quilting.

We are very fortunate to have such dedicated volunteers sharing their time and talents.

Period Attire

Our volunteer docents recently enjoyed an educational afternoon with Carol Wise, an expert in 19th century clothing. Carol herself is a docent here, as well as a master seamstress. She led a workshop on the intricacies of dress in the 1800s. We invite you to visit the museum on a Saturday when you are likely to experience a tour with someone in historically accurate attire.

Volunteer quilters plying their trade with the fruits of their labor on display

Interim Director Carey Beam with Marjorie Clayton, Ellen Pittman, and Diamond Mather (L-R)

Volunteer quilters in period attire

Volunteer docents Paula Bourne and Jane Clay in period attire
New Wylie Correspondence Collection

We were delighted to usher in 2013 with the acquisition of a new archival collection: correspondence related to Andrew Wylie, Jr. and his wife, Caroline. The letters offer extraordinary insight into 19th century relationships and domestic life. Andrew Jr. was the eldest son of Andrew and Margaret Wylie. After graduating from IU, he attended law school, practiced for many years, and was eventually appointed to the United States District Court for the District of Columbia by Abraham Lincoln in 1863.

These letters add to a previously acquired collection of correspondence between Andrew and Caroline. They are being transcribed by a volunteer, and we have already been able to share both their content and their interesting formats with students and community groups. Caroline Wylie often wrote cross or cross hatched letters. To save letter paper in the 19th century, letters were often composed with two sets of writing, one written over the other at right-angles.

Imagine Magazine Article

The Wylie House was recently featured as an “IU Treasure” in the spring issue of the IU Foundation’s publication Imagine. The foundation captured the spirit of the museum in its photographs and highlighted our new funding priorities.

Gifts to the museum’s education fund will support programming that uses the museum’s unique collections in classes here at IU as well as for public events. The garden fund will help us extend the successful historic interpretation of the museum to the grounds. There is great potential for growth, both academically and literally.

Please find the article here: http://imagine.iuf.indiana.edu/articles/spring13/iu-treasure.html

Workshops

The Morton C. Bradley Education Center, affectionately referred to as “the barn,” has hosted several academic workshops this spring. We have enjoyed having faculty use the barn to engage in professional development experiences and collaborative programming sessions. We partnered with the Office of Sustainability for workshops on campus sustainability efforts, pedagogical issues, and curricular development, and we are looking forward to hosting their upcoming Food Summit here as well.

It’s exciting to see the education center full of educators and experts in their fields. I think we at the Wylie House are getting smarter by osmosis.

Student Assistants, Interns and Volunteers

It’s the end of the academic year and we are experiencing the transition that accompanies it. Several students will be leaving us and moving on to new opportunities. We appreciate all that they do, and we truly rely on their time and energy to accomplish tasks here at the Wylie House. From cataloging materials to creating presentations based upon our historic preservation records, they have made significant contributions. We hope they learned a little too!

Best of luck to Josh Brewer, Susan Bogner, and Melissa Nye in their future endeavors! A special thanks to Allison Haack for dedicating a full year to the museum as our graduate assistant. We don’t have to say goodbye yet because Allison will be staying on to volunteer this summer! 

Graduate assistant Allison Haack hard at work

A crossed hatched letter and other examples from the Andrew J. Wylie correspondence collection

Academics
School Groups

The Wylie House is a destination for local schools and homeschool groups learning about history, especially as they make time for field trips at the end of the school year. We have recently welcomed many enthusiastic young students for whom history comes alive at the museum. It is a joy to witness their curiosity, imagination, and critical thinking skills develop in this environment. We always enjoy their visits, and we learn from them too.

IU Classes

The Wylie House is able to match the academic interests of many disciplines. This spring we welcomed classes from the School of Education and the Departments of Communication and Culture and Apparel Merchandising and Interior Design. Kelly Richardson's Historic Textile Collection Management class visited for a full day focusing on historic textile care and preservation. The students toured the museum, were introduced to our textile collections, and then used the Wylie House barn to learn how to clean these delicate materials properly.

Historic Costume Management professor Kelly Gallett Richardson (R) and student Elyse Werling cleaning a 19th century handkerchief.

School children in Wylie House, learning about women's handwork in the 19th century...

...and 19th century girls' clothing.
The garden has burst into color with flowers in bloom and vegetables and herbs beginning to peek through the soil. Sherry Wise, our talented Outdoor Interpreter, and our team of garden volunteers have been busy weeding, enriching the soil, laying mulch, and building shelves for the shed. The garden is an important part of our historic interpretation of the Wylie House and the Wylie families’ lives here on the property. Come by and enjoy a little bit of this beautiful living history sometime soon.