

THE CEDAR TREE

Newsnotes from

The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon

P. O. Box 13423, Pittsburgh, PA 15243 (412) 561-0455

Vol. 9 No. 2 SUMMER 2006

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

A few weeks back, I received a call from a woman who wanted to find a home for a 1988 Mt. Lebanon High School yearbook that she had. I was happy to accept it, but wondered why anyone would get rid of his or her yearbook with a 20th reunion looming. When I went to collect the donation, I got my answer. The yearbook belonged to the woman's 35-year-old daughter who had recently died. As I drove home, it struck me that most people don't part with their memorabilia, pictures, and treasures unless they are forced to—maybe they are going into a nursing facility or maybe they have lost a spouse or child. It's a sad way to build a collection, but it can turn a negative into a positive—someone's loss provides a lasting legacy to future generations.

When I visited the Dormont Historical Society at 1444 Hillsdale Avenue this Spring, Secretary Thelma Wieland told me that many of the items they have on display were the result of a death or a move. Other items were given simply because the owner didn't need it yet didn't want to throw it away—like a letterman's jacket that no longer fit or a menu from a long-gone restaurant. Dormont Historical Society's wonderful assortment of artifacts include old photographs, a dish from Isaly's, Keystone Oaks cheerleader outfits and megaphones, a picture of Eat 'N' Park when it was still a drive in, a piggy bank from the Red Bull Inn, World War II ration books, postcards, and much more. Whether you've lived here 50 years or five, you should check it out. (Call 412-341-3667 for museum hours.)

While The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon does not yet have a museum, we do have a small, but significant, collection that we would like to see grow. In the past, we have been stymied by lack of storage space. That problem has been solved through renting a storage facility. It is still far from ideal, but it allows us to collect items that might otherwise end up in the trash, at the Goodwill, or moldering away in an attic or basement. I have all the faith that one day the Society will have its own museum where the items we've collected can be displayed for everyone to see, learn from, and enjoy.

So I ask you to think of us when you are spring-cleaning or when you are moving or saying goodbye to a loved one. Instead of throwing your past—or the past of someone you love—out, see it preserved, cared for, and turned into a lasting legacy.

If you want to make a donation, remember the old saying about one man's trash being another man's treasure. While something might not seem historically significant to you, we ask that you let us be the judge. We have a collections committee who can make a final decision (and if you'd like to volunteer for the collections committee, call me at 412-561-0455). The following is a list of what we've collected in just the past few months. The names of the donors are in parenthesis. Maybe it will give you an idea.

- A 1933 flyer promoting Robert K. Boyer for Mt. Lebanon's 4th ward commissioner (John Haller)
- 1988 Mt. Lebanon High School yearbook (Sharon Harrington)
- South Hills College Club 50th anniversary booklet from 1973 (Elizabeth Cutrone)
- A 1934 South Hills Dispatch article about a Beadling Road cabin built by Boy Scout Troop No. 22 (Dormont Historical Society)
- 1st Federal Savings coloring books circa 1970 (Lori Humphreys)
- Framed Mt. Lebanon High School Marching Blue Devils insignia from a 1980s band uniform (M.A. Jackson)
- Genealogical information about Robert Dickson (died 1893), a Mt. Lebanon farmer, and his descendants (Tom Dickson, Molino, Florida)
- Commemorative Biographical Record of Washington County, Pennsylvania: Containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens ...Chicago: J.H. Beers, 1893 (Tom Dickson, Molino, Florida)

M.A. Jackson

THE SOCIETY EXTENDS MANY THANKS:

The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon would like to extend a special thanks to Virginia Nicklas for providing the cookies for the March program and to Dick Price for bringing cookies to the May program.

Thanks to Dick Moore for once again auditing the Society's books. Dick has acted as volunteer auditor every spring since the Society began seven ago. Unfortunately, Dick has informed us that he is ready to retire. We will need someone to take on this task next winter. If you would be willing to donate a few hours of your time to help the Society, please call Lori Humphreys at 412-561-6649.

Thanks also to the Dormont Historical Society for advertising our St. Clair Cemetery tour books in their newsletter. We received several requests, including one from Paul Francis of Palm Springs, California who wrote that as a Boy Scout growing up in Dormont during the 1930s, he often weeded the neglected graves at the cemetery. If you would like a copy of the cemetery booklet, please send a \$10 check made out to "The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon" to P.O. Box 13423, Pittsburgh, PA 15243. Please include your address and a note stating that you want the cemetery booklet.

Many thanks to Ruth Ann Kramer for her valuable contribution of time to the Oral History Project. Ruth Ann transcribed one of the interviews for us on the weekend before she left for Singapore. Thanks so much, Ruth Ann.

ST. CLAIR CEMETERY UPDATE:

Walk through almost any cemetery and you'll see the words: "Gone but Not Forgotten" on at least one headstone. But what happens when time and the elements erase an inscription? That's happened to many of the headstones in Scott Road's St. Clair Cemetery—Mt. Lebanon's oldest burial ground. We will probably never know who these dearly departed were as Mt. Lebanon United Presbyterian Church kept few records, but on April 29, Boy Scout Troop No. 323 (Whitehall) spent a day seeing that seven of the cemetery's inhabitants will be remembered—at least for the foreseeable future. As his Eagle Scout project, Robert Ryan installed new markers on the graves of seven Civil War veterans whose stones had become nearly illegible. The young man put in a lot of time, research, and hard work finding the necessary information to apply for the markers—the U.S. government requires birth and death dates, muster in/out dates and regiment information. Robert dug up some pension records that contained interesting details, for instance veteran Henry House—who died in 1916—stood five foot eight, had gray eyes, blond hair and a vaccine scar on his left arm. More discoveries came during installation—while laying the new marker for Mathew Black, we uncovered the stone of his daughter, Margaret, which had toppled and been covered with grass.

The new markers, which are flush to the ground, were set before the original markers to retain the site's integrity. Robert and his Dad, Tim, received a lot of help from Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall, including a gift of flag holders that was installed at the graves of the nearly 40 known veterans buried in St. Clair cemetery.

Veterans who received new stones are:

Pvt. Henry House (Navy)

Sgt. Thomas Boss (Co. A, 101st PA Infantry)

Pvt. George Millholland (Co. B, 77th PA Infantry)

Joseph Couch (Co. H, 62nd PA Infantry)

Pvt. Daniel McCartney (Co. A, 204th PA Heavy Artillery)

Mathew Black (Co. E, 101st Pa. Infantry and Battery B, 6th PA Heavy Artillery)

Pvt. William Quigg (Battery L, 204th PA Heavy Artillery)

The Dedication Ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, October 7, 11:00 a.m. It is open to the public. If you'd like to help arrange the details, please call 412-561-0455. If you would like to see pictures of the installation or read more about the cemetery, log on to www.stclaircemetery.com.

MT. LEBANON CEMETERY PROJECT:

The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon has registered with USGenWeb Tombstone Transcription Project to collect tombstone inscriptions from Mt. Lebanon Cemetery. The transcriptions will be posted on the USGenWeb site:

www.rootsweb.com/~cemetery/pennsylvania/index_alleggheny.html) for genealogists around the globe to access for free. We anticipate that we will need a lot of volunteers for this project. Mt.

Lebanon Cemetery is large—there are about 22,000 burials—and the collection of the inscriptions will take several months to accomplish. We are not certain of the feasibility to get the project underway this summer, but we are putting out a call for volunteers. Please call 412-561-0455 to register, and we will call you back when we are ready to begin the endeavor.

BOOK AWARD PRESENTED:

It was with great pleasure that The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon presented its fifth annual History Book Prize at the Mt. Lebanon High School Awards Evening, May 18. This year the Society was pleased to welcome Sky Bank on Cochran Road as a co-sponsor.

Every year, the Society asks the high school's social studies teachers to select a junior who has shown a passion for history. This year's winner, Elizabeth Mechael, was selected for her broad perspective, willingness to examine issues with an open mind, impressive writing ability, and desire to find connections by applying classroom learning to real-life situations.

The book for this year was "Team of Rivals: the Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln" by the Pulitzer-Prize-winning author Doris Kearns Goodwin. The book is a multiple biography of Lincoln and the men who contested with him for the 1860 Republican presidential nomination—William H. Seward, Salmon P. Chase, and Edward Bates. In addition to presenting a book to a student, the Society gives a second book to the High School's library. We hope that Lincoln's genius will inspire Elizabeth and other students at the High School.

THEN AND NOW AT SKY BANK

In addition to co-sponsoring the Society's History Book Prize, Sky Bank at 327 Cochran Road has graciously agreed to set up a "Then and Now" display at its coffee bar. All the photos are from the Society's collection and will be changed periodically. Sky Bank Assistant Vice President, John McDonough, has been wonderful to work with, and we thank him for his interest in the Society and his passion for history. We look forward to our association with him for many years to come.

RECOGNITION OF MEMBERS:

LIFE MEMBERS OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MOUNT LEBANON:

We appreciate and thank all our members, but those who have joined as Life Members (donating \$1,000 or more) deserve special recognition. So thank you again to: Maryann Burnett, David Fasulo, Glenn Morrow, Virginia Nicklas, and Bertha Abbott Thomas.

Life Memberships - Friends of the Millenium

Mary Ann Depalma Burnett
Mr. & Mrs. David Fasulo
Mr. Glenn Morrow
Ms. Virginia Nicklas
Bertha Abbott Thomas

Benefactors: - Community Pioneers

Beatrice Finke
William Lewis
Barbara and Robert Logan
Wilma Novogradac
C. Bryson Schreiner
Mr. William J. Simpson
Mr. & Mrs. George C. Smith
Cynthia & Jerome Richey
Mr. & Mrs. James B. Lutz

Order of the Cedar

Ruth G. Foltz

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS:

MARCH, 2006: (N=new; R=renewal)

Welcome to new members... Thanks to renewing members!

Cynthia & Jerome Richey (R) - Benefactor

Mr. & Mrs. James B. Lutz (N) - Benefactor
Dr. JoAnn Bevilacqua (N) - Family
Ralph E. & Ruth Burkhouse, Jr. (R) Senior
David Davis (N) Individual
Mrs. Patrick King (Claire M.) (R)
Sandy and Lee Golomb (N) - Family
Nancy & Richard Laitta (N) - Senior
William & Margaret Christopher (R) - Senior
Elizabeth Ruh (R) - Senior
Rita M. Roegge (R) - Individual
Ruth G. Foltz (R) - Individual
Michael F Lacy (R) - Individual
Paul & Sylvia Garlitz (R) - Senior
William J. Simpson (R) - Benefactor
William Krayner & Helen Aldisert (R) - Family
George C. & Margaret Smith (R) - Benefactor
George & Barbara Schoeppner (R) - Family
Edward M. & Elizabeth M. Reno (R) - Senior
Marianne M Siersdorfer (R) - Individual

APRIL 2006

Barbara Kusick (R) - Individual
Christopher Beck - Individual
Wilma Novogradac (R) - Benefactor

MAY 2006

Chuck & Jill Brodbeck (R) - Family
Elaine Wetheim (R) - Individual
Thomas L. Stevenson (R) - Individual
Pat Grubb (R) - Senior

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TO THE MOUNT LEBANON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BY COMPLETING THE FORM WITHIN THIS NEWSLETTER AND FORWARDING TO THE ADDRESS LISTED.

**The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon -
Board of Trustees - 2006**

President - Margaret Jackson

Vice President - Marty Carney

Secretary - Bill Lewis

Treasurer - Lori Humphreys

Trustees:

Lynn Geyer Banbury
Jeanne Heid Bereznicki
Karen Cahall
Kent Miller
Virginia Nicklas
Dick Price
Bill Simpson
Wally Workmaster

BAYERNHOFF MUSIC MUSEUM TOUR A SUCCESS

In April, The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon hosted two tours to the Bayernhoff Music Museum near Sharpsburg. The mansion, built by Charles B. Brown III in the late 1970's to hold his musical instrument collection, is a hidden Pittsburgh treasure. Resident curator, Tony Marsico, conducted the tours, shared anecdotes, and played many of the mechanical musical instruments that can be found in every room of the mansion. What was billed as a two-hour tour lasted more than three hours! Tour goers explored the entire house—from Observatory to the Cave (complete with stalactites and stalagmites). Lunch for the Friday tour was at Silky's Crows Nest; Saturday's at Jimmy G's. Tour goers have given the trip rave reviews, and the Society hopes to host another trip in the near future.

OUT AND ABOUT

We hope you saw us in the **Memorial Day Parade**. Society President Margaret Jackson and past President Wally Workmaster were totally upstaged by David Redding's mint-condition white, 1960 Chevy Impala. Still, it was a grand time, although a tad hot (the thermometer reached 90 that day).

Look for Society representatives at Mt. Lebanon's **First Fridays** (held the first Friday of every month through October) and **Sidewalk Saturdays** (held Saturdays until the end of August) events. Society Board members will be handing out brochures to attract new members. Both events take place on Washington Road.

If you are a member of a local group or organization and **in need of a speaker**, please call Karen Cahall at 412-344-1272 or Margaret Jackson at 412-561-0455. We have several topics of local interest—from the community's history to its architecture—that we will be happy to present.

WEBSITE

The Society's website debuts August 1. The site offers information about the Society and our upcoming events, as well as historic pictures and photographs of recent events. The site, designed by Jeff Honnold of ClearMind Technology, is available at www.hsmtl.org.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:

We are seeking people who would be interested in transcribing our oral history tapes. We have interviewed several long-time residents and a few former municipal managers, and the tapes need to be transcribed so we can have a hard copy for our records and to donate to the library for public access. Do one tape, or several—it's up to you. So, if you're a good typist and have a few hours to spare, we'd love to have you help us. And you'll learn a lot of interesting things about your community! . If you are interested please call Lori Humphreys 412 561 6649 or Marty Carney 412 531 0616.

MEMORIES

When you join or renew your membership to the Society we will send you a memories form. Please take a few minutes to reminisce about the schools, shops, and special events that you fondly recall from Mount Lebanon's past. The completed forms will be available to the public to peruse and may give us some ideas for future newsletter articles or oral histories. Here's a sampling of the information from the forms that we've received so far:

- Nancy Laitta remembers Algeo's, Norman's Meat Market, Red Star Market and Hubners (in Sunset Hills).
- Elizabeth Ruh singles out former Washington Road shops Horne's and Walker Pontiac.
- William Kraye mentions ZeWe's and Isaly's (he worked in the Beverly Road store).
- Paul and Sylvia Garlitz fondly recall the Larry Dawes League of summer baseball
- Eleanore May McHugh mentions a shoe store by the Denis Theater (does anyone remember the name?), Horne's, and Gardner's Record Shop.

Several people miss the Denis Theater and almost everyone noted Mt. Lebanon's wonderful Fourth of July fireworks displays. Speaking of magnificent displays ... this year's fireworks were breathtaking.

If you can't wait to fill out a form, call 412-561-0455 and we'll mail you one. Or e-mail: info@hsmtl.org.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROGRAM REVIEWS:

During the **March 15th program** regarding "**The Unknown Man of Bower Hill Road: A Mystery from the Past,**" Wally Workmaster, a Trustee of the Society, introduced attendees to a person who almost every resident of Mount Lebanon has completely forgotten.

David Lenox and two brothers arrived in Philadelphia from Scotland during the early 1770's. At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, Lenox became a member of the prestigious First Troop, Philadelphia City Cavalry.

In 1793, he was appointed as a United States marshal and was assigned to the Federal District Court for Pennsylvania. With the approval of President George Washington and Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, Lenox was sent into Western Pennsylvania in the summer of 1794 to serve writs that would compel court appearances in Philadelphia by farmers who had failed to register their stills and pay a federal excise tax on the whiskey they produced.

On July 15, 1794, after conferring with Pittsburgh attorney Hugh Henry Brackenridge the previous evening and accompanied by Inspector of Revenue John Neville, Lenox attempted to

serve a writ on William Miller, a farmer and Justice of the Peace, who lived within today's South Park, thereby igniting a chain of events that led to the burning of the handsome home and outbuildings of Neville's Bower Hill plantation two days later.

President George Washington assembled the "Army of the Constitution" at Carlisle and traveled with this army to Bedford. Major General "Lighthorse Harry" Lee of Virginia led the troops into W. PA. David Lenox accompanied the force in order to arrest the ringleaders of his insurrection. In the 1880's, Lenox served as a special diplomatic agent persuading the British to halt the impressments of sailors from American vessels into the Royal Navy ... one of the issues that eventually led to the War of 1812. Also, Lenox was name President of the First Bank of the United States. He died in 1828.

Wally characterized Lenox as an agent of change, a person in the forefront of a number of important events.

In the late 1960's, three apartment buildings were constructed on Bower Hill Road near St. Clair Hospital ... namely the "Neville," the "Brackenridge," and the Marshal Lenox." Although the first two buildings retain their original names, the building named for Marshal David Lenox at 1170 Bower Hill Road ironically was eventually renamed "Bower Hill III, because no one who lived there knew the prominence Lenox once held. When Wally returned to Mount Lebanon after retirement and found himself living in the apartment building once named for Lenox, he decided that people ought to discover who this man was. Thank you, Wally, for this in-depth introduction to David Lenox.

The History Society's **May 17th program** was a wonderful power-point presentation by John Conti on "**What Makes Mount Lebanon Historically Significant.**" John has served as a member of the Mount Lebanon Historical Preservation Board since it was established. Previously, he was a member of the Ad Hoc Mount Lebanon Preservation Committee appointed by the Mount Lebanon Commissioners in 2000. He authored "Creating Value for the Future: The Historical Preservation Plan for Mount Lebanon." He is also the author of a number of articles about local architecture that have appeared in *Mount Lebanon Magazine* over the last five years, as well as the extremely popular book *Living with Styles: The Houses of Mount Lebanon*.

John's presentation showcased Mount Lebanon's outstanding concentration of architecturally interesting structures. John stated, "It's not that we have wonderfully designed homes in Mount Lebanon, it's that we have SO MANY of them." A number of homes highlighted in the program were in the Mission Hills area, the first planned development in Mount Lebanon using the contour of the land instead of a "grid" system.

John, thank you for ANOTHER informative program about our "hometown."

GEE WHIZ, ETHEL!

How Mt. Lebanon Received Its Name

With no forewarning, Ethel Wonderer turned to her husband and asked, "Is it really true that Mount Lebanon was named after a pair of Cedar of Lebanon trees?"

Fred put down his newspaper and responded, "Not exactly, that's an over-simplification, but why did you ask that question?"

"Everybody says so," Ethel replied.

"Well, the truth is that the name 'Mount Lebanon' was chosen in 1855 when a postmaster was appointed for the first post office in this area by President Franklin Pierce," Fred explained.

"The Rev. Joseph Clokey, the minister of the Associate Reformed Church of Saw Mill Run which now is the Mt. Lebanon United Presbyterian Church, had taken a trip to the Near East about 1850. He bought back two small Cedar of Lebanon trees as souvenirs that he planted near his house off Bower Hill Road.

"When a name was needed for the new post office, it was only logical to use the name 'Mount Lebanon' since Mr. Clokey's church, the only one in the immediate area, was on top of the nearby

hill on the Old Pittsburgh and Washington Road and wood from trees of that kind frequently is mentioned in the Bible," he continued.

"However, the really important and often forgotten thing is that Mr. Clokey's little trees came from a mountainous region called 'Mount Lebanon' within a part of the Ottoman Empire which today is called Lebanon. Today, 'Mount Lebanon' is one of the three major administrative sections of the country of Lebanon.

"It was the only place in the world where that species of tree originally grew," Fred explained. "Our 'Mount Lebanon' really was named for the region from which Mr. Clokey's Cedar of Lebanon trees came, not precisely for the trees themselves, although there was a close connection.

"Actually, the name 'Mount Lebanon' was used in relation to this area before it was taken from Upper St.

Clair Township when Scott Township was formed in 1861 and it simply became the name of the new township created from the eastern part of Scott Township in 1912," he concluded.

"Gee whiz, Ethel! I wish I really knew what makes you ask about such things," Fred muttered as he turned back to his newspaper.

IN THE WORKS:

The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon is working on a project that will hopefully come to fruition by the end of the year. The first is a **notecard project** in which we asked several local artists – both present and former Mt. Lebanon residents – to supply a picture of a Mt. Lebanon building or scene for a set of notecards. As of late May, project chair Jim Lutz had lined up the following:

Kathy Rooney: Nesbit House, 806 Washington Road

Karen Larson: Beverly Road Shopping District

M. A. Sinnhuber: Potomac Bakery/Clearview Common area

Mimi Jong: St. Bernard's Catholic Church

Greg Frommeyer: Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church

Ned Garnhart: Mt. Lebanon United Presbyterian Church

Marilyn Nary has agreed to help, but has yet to choose a subject, and one more artist is still needed.

Cost for the cards will be approximately \$10 to \$12 for a set of eight (card size is 4.25 by 5.5 inches), and the cards will be sold in local stores, which will be chosen this summer. The notecards will make a unique holiday gift – especially for friends who have moved away. Please look for more information in our fall newsletter.