

The Legacy

FALL 2008 | Vol. 32, No. 3

SANDY SPRING MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

Gallery Update

Multimedia Exhibits

From Gaithersburg, Baltimore, and Senior Artists

Opening September 24, the Museum's Fall show displays juried works by fine visual artists from the Gaithersburg Fine Arts Association, including Rulei Bu and Howard Cohen whose award-winning works hang in prestigious private collections.

Also exhibited will be sculptures by Baltimore-based Barry Woods Johnston, especially recognized for larger-than-life sculptures such as at the White River Medical Center, a Baltimore park, DC's Lafayette Center, and Hampton, VA. His often light and lively sculptures seek to breathe life into inert clay, bronze or stone. An architecture graduate from Georgia Institute of Technology, Johnston pursued further training at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the National Academy of Design and in Switzerland and Italy.

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President's Message

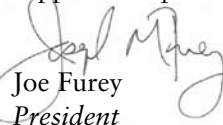
New Goals Prompt Organizational Changes

With the Strawberry Festival now behind us – and, boy, was it hot that day – we are turning our attention to Fall. Our annual membership meeting will be held September 9, 2008. We have much information to share and business to accomplish. We will seek to amend our by-laws to permit the Board to expand from a current maximum of 15 to a new maximum of 25 trustees. We will elect new Trustees and offer heartfelt thanks to two devoted members, Susan Fifer Canby and Clark Kendall, who will rotate off this year.

The Museum is searching for its first full-time Executive Director who will hopefully be on board by the time of the annual meeting. Of course, the entire community owes a great deal of thanks to Hank Lieberman who transitioned from President of the Board of Trustees to serving as the interim Executive Director in the Museum's time of need. Through Hank's leadership and guidance the Museum completed the building of its Archives and Library and is now in a position to transition to another level of program and service.

The Museum continues to deal with new challenges. The Board has reviewed the Museum's mission and operations and has decided to revise its membership structure. Some modest increases for individual and family membership dues are called for and we are creating additional levels of membership that provide additional membership benefits. We will institute an annual appeal to assist us in raising needed operational revenues. I hope I can count on each of you to be as generous as possible when the annual appeal commences later this fall.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees I thank you, our Sandy Spring Museum community, for all your support and participation as we move forward. ■


Joe Furey
President

Our Country Well-Digger

The well-digger's trade, providing water for country settlers, is a lost art. My father, Auston Becraft, took it up in 1928, providing wells for many neighbors including Charles Chickering, former Sandy Spring Museum administrator.

To douse for water, Auston Becraft formed a peach or wild cherry branch into a "V." The branch turned to where a stream ran west to east. Streams ran about 20 feet apart and 30-100 feet deep. Where a stream was indicated, he dug with a pick and short-handled shovel, starting with a 3-foot wide hole and digging on toward the earth's center. As he got deeper, he created casings of stone, bricks, terracotta and concrete pipes to avoid collapse. A tripod hoist with wooden roller and pulley helped him pull dirt up from the well.

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 Nadine MortNRMORT@aol.com
 Kym Rice.....kym@gwu.edu

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Museum Staff

Executive Director Henry Lieberman
 hlieberman@sandyspringmuseum.org

Director of Operations Diane Bush
 dbush@sandyspringmuseum.org

Administrative Manager Ellen Hartge
 ehartge@sandyspringmuseum.org

Director of Exhibits Margaret Wintz
 mwintz@sandyspringmuseum.org

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Legacy Editor Phoebe Lansdale
 phoebe.fifil2@gmail.com

Legacy Graphic Designer Cyndie Widmer
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Masters in Music

Extraordinary Performers for Masters in Music Series

The 2008-9 Sunday afternoon concert series presents world class musicians right here in Sandy Spring! The Sandy Spring Museum will offer six outstanding performances this season with artists also heard at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, and around the globe.

Two nationally known pianists, Brian Ganz and Jeff Chappell, will be joined, by popular request, by QuinTango whose toe-tapping listeners here gave their exciting Argentine tango rhythms a standing ovation last year. Brian Ganz (first prize winner in the Marguerite Long Piano Competition in Paris) and Jeffery Chappell (soloist over forty times with the Baltimore Symphony) will present solo piano recitals.

The other three concerts will offer both top quality professional classical musicians and outstanding jazz, as we have for over a decade. Recording artists Katie Lansdale (violinist) and Sunny Wilkinson (jazz vocalist) will visit the Museum this season. Chamber performances by the most outstanding Washington area performers are in the fall line-up.

Under the artistic guidance of Philip Hosford, internationally known pianist and Director of The Academy of Music in Gaithersburg, this season's schedule will be announced in the early fall, or you will be able to find dates, artists, subscription options, and prices on the Museum's website. The concert series, managed entirely by volunteers, will again showcase our superb grand piano and the wonderfully reverberant acoustics of the Museum's intimate concert hall. ■

Strawberries & Volunteers, Successfully Together

In spite of sweltering heat, the Strawberry Festival volunteers upheld all the wonderful traditions of this annual community event. Over 300 strong, volunteers built strawberry shortcakes, managed children's games, prepared homemade goodies, grew greenery for the plant sale, chocolate-dipped hundreds of strawberries, cared for animals, demonstrated crafts of old, sold raffle and admission tickets, and, of course, set up and cleaned up after all the guests.

Special thanks to the Sandy Spring Lions Club, Our House, Aunt Hattie's Place, Scout Troop 759 and the many participating middle school and high school students. Thanks to everyone for another great Strawberry Festival.

— Cathy Case



Garden Club

GARDEN CLUB NEWS

Our fabulous Garden Club is always busy and has fun in the process. We readied the Museum grounds for the Strawberry Festival and made a great financial contribution to the Museum by selling plants of all kinds at the Festival. We enjoyed our annual "Christmas in July" workshop and had a lovely summer tour of Pennsylvania's Chanticleer Gardens.

We always need assistance and welcome new folks to our Happy Group. When and where? Well, for example:

All are welcome at our General Meetings September 14 and November 9, and at the October 26 "Spooky Christmas Workshop" (you know, with jack o'lanterns all around). Especially lively are our November 24-December 6 workshops preparing for the December Greens Sale. Look up details on our Garden Club web page linked to the Museum's web site, announcing gatherings to pick boxwood, a kissing ball workshop, and workshops for making wreaths, centerpieces, sprays and arrangements. All workshops are FREE, with no materials needed...just bring yourself! ■

— Kathy Lieberman



Acquisitions

Rare, Valuable, and Curious

The Museum is pleased with several recent donations.

Rare books added to our collection are a first edition *Domestic Cookery/Hints to a Young Housekeeper* by Elizabeth Ellicott Lea (1845) and *The Life of Elisba Tyson*, the Philanthropist, prominent Quaker abolitionist and an advocate for the rights of the American Indian (1825) — both from the estate of Mary Lil and Brook Moore.

Ronald Ward donated a 19th century volume, *American Natural History*, inscribed to David Keenes and signed "6th Mo. 27th 1856 Benj'n Hallowell and Sons." Hallowell was a teacher, scientist, and abolitionist.

A World War II air raid warden's helmet which belonged to Mahlon Kirk IV was donated by Caroline Hussman. ■

— Margaret Wintz

How Will You Celebrate the Museum and December Holidays?

If snow is so far only "in the air" and a little sociability becomes urgent before the shopping is all done, you'll want to come to the Museum's annual Holiday Party for members and friends. Bring a neighbor or some children to visit our model trains and antique toy display, enjoy live music before the season's carols totally bombard us, take part in our wonderful auction, maybe see Santa, and try out delightful beverages and hors d'oeuvres offered by Museum volunteers.

The Holiday Party is always a huge success. Mark your calendars. Come for fun on Sunday, December 7! ■

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

The Fall annual meeting will be really important. Please join with your neighbors at 7 p.m. to consider new by-laws to expand the Board of Trustees, and to get to know new Museum leaders. Staff changes, financial challenges, and new membership information will be announced, as will several exciting Fall activities. The speaker will be William Gregory, the Sherwood High School Principal, and of course there will be refreshments after the meeting. ■

PLEASE E-MAIL ELLEN AT THE MUSEUM!

Your Museum is updating its web site and will be sending out more e-mail notifications. Please confirm your e-mail address to ehartge@sandyspringmuseum.org. ■



Sandy Spring Back When...

Sandy Spring Odd Fellows Lodge, Like the Phoenix, Rose from the Ashes of History

Largely because of Quaker philosophy and commitment, Sandy Spring became one of the most enlightened farming communities in pre- and post-civil war Maryland. By 1832-3, it was one of Maryland's oldest free Black communities — no slaves. For African-Americans, this peaceful haven was an entrance to the Underground Railroad heading north. Despite pockets of Quaker abolitionist tolerance, however, slavery had not yet been abolished in Washington or the rest of Maryland. Segregation was the nation's reality.

History relates that children of Black field workers on Quaker family farms attended Mrs. Clark's Quaker-built school. Blacks worshipped at Sharp Street Church, built on land donated by the Society of Friends in 1822. By 1833, Blacks could purchase land, and many ran small farms in nearby Norwood, the Brooke-Chandlee Mill corridor, Cincinnati, Brighton Dam and Ashton off New Hampshire Avenue, Good Hope, Holly Grove, Spencerville, Mount Zion/Brookeville, and Smithville off Randolph Road. Blacks in these communities "hidden" among Quaker farms had few social or educational gathering places.


In came the Odd Fellows, with philosophy similar to Quaker ideas. The Odd Fellows, who had spoken out against power in revolutionary 17th Century England, formed a fraternal organization to sustain the underserved Black community, providing services like homes for orphans and widows, and burying those who could not afford it. Odd Fellows lodges — with members Black and white, male and female — soon addressed similar economic and social inequities across the United States and Europe. By the end of the 19th Century, there were at least 20 African-American lodges in Maryland.

The Odd Fellows Lodge on the Olney-Sandy Spring Road, built in 1910-11 by Odd Fellow carpenters and masons, became the key social gathering place for African-Americans in lower Montgomery County and the District. It has filled important functions. When the Sharp Street Church was lost to flames in 1924, the Lodge next door served as school, church, funeral society, and meeting place.

Its services grew to include health and life insurance and burial agencies for needy African-Americans. As desegregation and new laws largely opened up access irrespective of race, the Odd Fellows' basic services changed but still met social needs.

The Sandy Spring Odd Fellows Lodge is one of Maryland's last historically significant structures representing the accomplishments and struggles of local African-Americans. After 40 years of neglect, it is now in grave disrepair and risks being lost. A committed Odd Fellows Preservation Committee seeks large and small contributions through the Sandy Spring Slave Museum to preserve it for what it represents and to solidify a new strong future. ■

—Dr. Winston Anderson



By 1832-3, (Sandy Spring) was one of Maryland's oldest free Black communities — no slaves. For African Americans, this peaceful haven was an entrance to the Underground Railroad heading north.

Names of Our Postmasters Over Two Centuries are Still Familiar...

1817 was important to the nation: James Monroe was President. The Erie Canal was started. The University of Virginia was chartered. Mississippi became a state. Eleven years later, The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was chartered as the first commercial rail line, with Philip Evan Thomas of Sandy Spring as founder and first president.

The year 1817 was important to our community also. Well-organized for over 75 years, Sandy Spring in 1817 saw its first U.S. Post Office established in the home of Postmaster James Stabler of Harewood. In 1817, mail arrived by horse-drawn mail wagon from the Laurel railhead on Fridays. Outgoing mail was dispatched on Sundays. The small wood cabinet where Mr. Stabler sorted mail in his front hallway is on display at the Sandy Spring Museum.

The longest serving, best known Sandy Spring postmaster was Edward Stabler of Harewood, who replaced his brother James in 1830. Active until his death in 1883, James Stabler's term was considered the longest in the nation's history. He was also an agriculturalist, mechanic, inventor,

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and engraver who engraved many seals, including the first seal of the US Post Office for \$250. That seal portrayed a “post Rider” of colonial times — not, as sometimes mistakenly claimed, a rider for the Pony Express which didn’t start until the 1860s.

Moved in 1883 to the Sandy Spring Store under Postmaster Richard T. Bentley, our Post Office was an integral part of the store until 1939 when mailing operations moved into a new east wing. There it remains.

James Stabler was appointed Postmaster by President Monroe and confirmed by the Senate, as were his successors. The last presidentially appointed local postmaster was our neighbor, William John Thomas IV, named by President Lyndon Johnson in 1967. The new U.S. Postal Service, born in 1970, calls for postmaster appointments by the Postmaster General under a merit system with no partisan political involvement.

Despite many changes in operations, some things have not changed. Ever since the mid-19th Century, records show that Post Office employees have been reminding people that there is no “s” on the end of Sandy Spring....■

— William John Thomas IV

MODEL TRAIN AND TOY SHOW, December 6-14

Wonderful trains in exciting displays and antique Christmas toys will fill the Dr. Bird Hall again this year. Come to “oo-and-ah” over the toys and watch the trains go around the tracks. Santa will come, and the Museum’s annual Holiday Party on December 7 will add an especially festive air. Come admire the work of our train collectors, and remember.... ■



INVITE YOUR GUESTS TO THE MUSEUM!

The Museum has begun to blossom as a lovely alternative to normal venues for receptions, weddings, bar mitzvahs, memorials, conferences, etc. The wooden beams, art gallery, open exhibits and delightful flowered courtyard feed the energy of the soul and those looking to have something unique, special and memorable. Come visit and experience our country atmosphere with modern amenities for your needs. Call Hank Lieberman for a personal tour. Shop. Compare. Book! ■

Serving the Greater Historic Sandy Spring Neighborhood as Follows:

Ashton, Brighton,
Brinklow, Brookeville,
Burtonsville, Cloverly,
Ednor, Holly Grove,
Norbeck, Olney,
Spencerville, Sunshine,
Sandy Spring, Unity,
and neighboring
Howard County. ■



Hands on History is Fun!

The Museum's Hands-on-History Camp was once again a great success. Campers experienced what life was like "back in the day" - learning traditional crafts and hearing stories of the past in our Sandy Spring community. The children learned how to dye, spin, and weave wool, cross stitch, marble paper, and how to create a fraktur - a way of recording birth and baptismal dates long ago. On the last day, they grated corn to make "Sandy Spring Corn Pudding," made dough for "Post Office Bread" which used to be made for the postal carrier who delivered mail to Sandy Spring, and made home-made ice cream the old fashioned way. ■



Children's Christmas Workshop

Make Christmas ornaments to treasure for years to come. Children 12 and under are invited, accompanied by an adult. Check our website to learn which early December afternoon it will be held - then phone to register. There will be a charge of \$2 - \$5 per ornament made. It is always fun for the whole family! ■

- Kathy Polletto

BEST WISHES, RENÉE!

Renée Murphy, the Museum's knowledgeable and helpful Saturday Docent, is retiring after years of invaluable service. Renée has hosted hundreds of guests through the Museum with her special touch of care, humor and good will. We thank her for dedication and contributions throughout the years and wish her well. ■

Eliza's Grave Swallowed by a Tree for Nearly a Century

Eliza G. Downey, 14, who died of diphtheria in 1902, was buried in the Sandy Spring Friends Meeting graveyard. Today, death after so few days of illness would likely have been prevented by immunization. Dr. Roger Brooke VII attended Eliza.

A marble stone marked Eliza's grave. Her parents and siblings would lie in adjacent graves. A Norway maple, planted for shade, soon engulfed her grave. After it was entirely hidden, a brass plaque on "the Eliza Downey tree" mistakenly showed her age as 13. When a huge limb fell off in 2004, over 100 years later, the tree was cut down, and Steve Gilpin, a Friends Meeting member, began a three-year effort to liberate her gravestone. Long protected from the weather, her stone is one of the freshest in the cemetery.

Eliza left two brothers, B. Dorsey Downey and Frank J., Jr., and sister Mary who married Sheffield Pickett. Dorsey moved into Charley Forest, the first house built in northeastern Montgomery County by ancestors of Dr. Brooke. Dorsey Downey and his wife, Clara May, started the Olney Inn. ■ — *Dr. Lorne Garrettson*



Multimedia Exhibits *(continued from page 1)*

Starting January 7, sculptors from the Senior Artists Alliance will exhibit busts in fired clay, alabaster, and wood. Members are retired architects, scientists and engineers who know the properties of paint and working with metal, stone, and clay; dentists who use precision tools; and nationally exhibiting professionals.

In addition, this January-to-March exhibit will display works by Annapolis artists in the Maryland Society of Portrait Painters who have exhibited widely throughout Maryland.

Visitors will be delighted with the variety of "must haves" to add to their collections. ■ — *Natalya Borisovna Parris*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September through January

- Fri. Feb. 1 - Sun. Nov. 20 On-going exhibit: 19th Century Quaker Girls Samplers (free*)
- Wed., June 25 - Mon. Sept. 22 On-going exhibit: Hooked rugs by the Potomac Thrummers and baskets by the High Country Basket Guild (free*)
- Mon. Sept. 8 Free concert: Friedman-Wyson flute-guitar duo, 7:30 p.m. (*)
- Tues. Sept 9 Museum General Membership meeting, 7 p.m. (free*)
- Sun. Sept. 14 Garden Club General Meeting, 2 - 5 p.m. (free*)
- Wed. Sept. 24 - Sat. Nov. 30 New exhibit: Gaithersburg Art League multimedia show and sculpture by Barry Johnston (free*)
- Sat. Sept. 27 Free admission for Smithsonian Magazine friends with a Museum Day Admission Card found in the Magazine or on its website.
- Sat., Sept. 27 Appraisal Day, 11-4 p.m. (\$15 first item appraised, \$5 each additional item) (*)
- Sun., Sept. 28 Artists reception for Gaithersburg Art League and Barry Johnston, sculptor 2 - 4 p.m. (free*)
- Sun. Oct. 26 Garden Club's "Spooky Workshop," 1 - 5 p.m. (free*)
- Sun. Nov. 9 Garden Club General Membership meeting, 2 - 5 p.m. (free*)
- Wed. Nov. 26 - Sat. Dec. 1-6 Garden Club's "Greens Workshops" (fee per order)(*)
- Sat. Dec. 6 - Sun. Dec. 14 Model Train and Christmas Toy Show (Santa will be coming!) (*)
- Sun. Dec. 7 Holiday Party, 5 -7 p.m. (Open House contribution)
- Mon. Dec. 22 - Sat. Jan. 3, 2009 Museum closed
- Mon. Jan. 7 - Tues. Mar. 30 New Exhibit: Busts by Senior Artists Alliance and paintings by MD Society of Portrait Painters (free*)
- Sun. Jan. 11 Artists reception for Senior Artists Alliance and MD Society of Portrait Painters, 2 - 4 p.m. (free*)

Unless otherwise noted, all events take place during Museum hours: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays; 12 noon - 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. To register for courses and for more information, call 301-774-0022 or see www.sandyspringmuseum.org.

** Suggested Museum contribution for non-members is \$5 per visit, \$3 for seniors, free for members and children under 12.*

Our Country Well Digger

(continued from page 1)

Becraft lowered himself into the well with a bucket and hook on a 100-foot rope. Two men were needed to wind the windlass and raise and lower the buckets. My brother Roland and I were the laborers. Auston Becraft sometimes dug down 30 feet before striking a stream and continued 8-10 feet below it to create a basin from



which to pump. He dug one well 116 feet to provide water. Often, he returned to wells he had dug to clean out sediment.

Trying events which Auston Becraft survived included "bad gas" (methane) which could overcome and kill a digger. He was once hoisted out by a rope hooked under his arms, and lay on the ground for an hour before reviving. Another time, a brick hit his head while casing-up a wall, and he almost fell 60 feet to his death. Too often, well walls caved in, trapping well-diggers.

At 90 in the year 2000, Becraft loved telling about providing water wells for Sandy Spring and neighboring communities. He gave up his trade when mechanical equipment bored and drilled much deeper wells. ■

— Leonard Allen Becraft



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Weekends Noon - 4 p.m.