



THE CEDAR TREE

Newsnotes from The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon

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

www.hsmtl.org

Vol. 10 No. 1

SPRING 2007

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

In the past several months, I've read a number of really good history/non-fiction books—"The Great Influenza," "Devil in the White City," "The Professor and the Madman" and "Woody Guthrie: A Life" are just a few titles that come to mind. Those books cover a wide range of subjects, but they have one thing in common: I picked them up at Mt. Lebanon Public Library.

Mt. Lebanon Library is a history lover's bonanza. It contains an excellent selection of history books, magazines, journals, and documentaries on DVD and video. And if you're interested in local history, the Pennsylvania History Area contains a wealth of items relating to the history of Mt. Lebanon, Pittsburgh and southwestern Pennsylvania. They even have old Mt. Lebanon High School yearbooks and bound copies of Mt. Lebanon magazine. Go up there some time and take a few minutes to peruse the shelves; you might be surprised by what you find. In addition, the library hosts a monthly Genealogy Society where you can discuss family history and pick up research tips.

But what I'm most grateful for is how the Library graciously provides space for the Historical Society. We hold our monthly board meetings and bimonthly programs in the meeting rooms and we have a filing cabinet there to store items we need to access quickly, but that we don't want to keep in board members' homes.

There are also many small ways the Historical Society and the Library are connected. I am the editor of the Library's monthly newsletter. Anne Kemerer, the Friends of Mt. Lebanon Library's used book sale co-chair, maintains the Historical Society's membership list and creates the program flyers that are mailed to Society members. In addition, several Historical Society members volunteer at the used book sale, including Wally Workmaster who does an incredible job of organizing the hundreds (if not

thousands) of history books that are donated to the sale.

So when Anne Kemerer and I had lunch one day, our talk naturally turned to the Friends and the Historical Society and what we could do to help each other out. The answer: promote each other in our respective newsletters and ask members to join the other organization. About half of the Historical Society members are also Friends. If you're not, please take a moment to fill out the Friends membership form in this newsletter. You'll receive a monthly Library newsletter filled with program and event details and you'll support the Library.

I think it's a great way to recognize the Library and Historical Society's mutually beneficial relationship. I hope it continues for many years to come.

M. A. Jackson

RECENT DONATIONS

Joe Bullick: "Town of McCandless" history book and "A Sampler of the Old North Hills" book

Dormont Historical Society: Address book issued by Bassett's Flowers, 701 Washington Road and a mending kit from Westbrook South Hills Realty.

Lori Humphreys: 1999 Mt. Lebanon High School yearbook, 1995-96 School District calendar, 1995 Mt. Lebanon School District strategic plan, 1996-97 School District performance report, assorted Mt. Lebanon School District papers and 1942 Mellonaire.

M.A. Jackson: "Heinz: The Story of an American Family" video.

Anonymous Donor: 1938 and 1939 Mt. Lebanon High School Yearbooks. Section I of the Pittsburgh Press from November 23, 24, and 25 reporting the assassination and burial of John F. Kennedy.

DON'T MISS THE LIBRARY'S SPRING BOOK SALE

The Friends of Mt. Lebanon Library's Used Book Sale is the place to pick up history and non-fiction books as well as biographies and autobiographies. The sale runs Saturday, May 5 through Thursday, May 10 during library hours. Please note: The book sale closes a half-hour before the library does.

RESEARCH THE HISTORY OF YOUR MOUNT LEBANON HOME!

Ever wondered who built your home? Ever wondered who designed the original plans? With the value of the architecture and design of Mt. Lebanon homes – most built in the early years of the last century – being rediscovered and recognized, the Historical Society of Mt. Lebanon is joining with the Mt. Lebanon Public Library to assist residents in finding out who built and designed their homes. Because the records are fragile and irreplaceable, Historical Society trustee and Cultural Resource Survey volunteer Lori Humphreys will be at the library twice each month to help you research the information. It is recommended that you call the library for an appointment as the schedule may change each month. Please call the library at 412-531-1912.

SPECIAL THANKS

Society Member John Conti graciously donated to the Society the honorarium he received for a talk he gave to Southminster's Adult Interest Group to the Society. Thanks for thinking of us, John!

After presenting a talk about the Society to a local women's group, past president Karen Cahall donated her honorarium to the Society.

Former Society board members Kent Miller and Clarence Betzler and current Society board member Dick Price did a great job framing and hanging the Society's "Things That Aren't There Anymore" display in Mt. Lebanon Library's main gallery. The exhibit ran through March and we've received many positive comments on it.

THANKS

To Society President M.A. Jackson for supplying refreshments at January's program, and Betty Ruh, who brought refreshments to the March meeting.

MT. LEBANON NOTE CARDS

Looking for a Mother's Day gift? How about a pack of Historical Society note cards? For \$10 you get a box of eight cards featuring an assortment of Mt. Lebanon buildings drawn by local artists. The cards also make great graduation gifts for high school and college students—all of whom will need to send out thank you notes.

Cards are on sale at: Josephine's on Castle Shannon Boulevard and Planet Art Gallery on Washington Road.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Society programs for 2007 are: **May 23, September 12 and November 7.** All programs start at 7:30 p.m., in Mt. Lebanon Library, Meeting Room A.

In July, the Historical Society will mount a display in the library's display cases. Don't miss it! And be sure to look for Society members in the Memorial Day parade on May 28.

RECOGNITION OF MEMBERS:

Life Memberships - The Green & White

Mary Ann Depalma Burnett
Mr. & Mrs. David Fasulo
The Donald D. Mateer Foundation, c/o Charlotte M. Stephenson, Trustee –The Green & the White
Mr. Glenn Morrow – SEE MEMORIUM ARTICLE
Ms. Virginia Nicklas
Bertha Abbott Thomas

Benefactors: - Community Pioneers

Beatrice Finke
William Lewis
Barbara and Robert Logan
Mr. & Mrs. James B. Lutz
Maggie McDermott
Wilma Novogradac
Cynthia & Jerome Richey
C. Bryson Schreiner
William J. & Kathleen Simpson
Mr. & Mrs. George C. Smith
Elaine Wertheim
Wallace F. Workmaster
Ruth G. Foltz

MEMORIAL DAY MEMORIAL

If you've ever strolled through Bird Park, you've certainly seen deer, squirrels, and lots of birds. So many birds, you've probably thought: "They picked the right name for this park!"

But Bird Park was not named after the blue jays, cardinals, and woodpeckers that call it home.

Bird Park was named for Lt. Thomas A. Bird Jr., a young man from Mt. Lebanon who died in Vietnam in 1966.

The Society recently received an email from Thomas' brother, John, who now resides in Ohio. John's email was filled with reminiscences of growing up on Colonial Drive and the shops along Beverly Road. He also wanted to know if we had a picture of the Esso gas station on Cochran Road that was owned by his father, Thomas. We were very happy to tell John that we did indeed have a picture of the Esso station from 1964 (when gas was 27 cents a gallon!!).

John then sent us clipping from the *Pittsburgh Press* that reported the 1966 death of his brother. With Memorial Day approaching, we thought it would be a good time to remind our members of where Bird Park got its name. The park was dedicated Memorial Day 1967.

What follows is an excerpt from the newspaper article by Charles Menning that ran March 24, 1966

"He Fought to Fly, Died a Hero"

Lt. Thomas A. Bird Jr.—a Marine pilot who wanted to spend his life flying—has gone to a hero's death.

He died Tuesday when his helicopter, riddled by small arms fire during bitter fighting for a Viet Cong command post, crashed and burst into flames.

Ten Marines—three crewmen and seven passengers—were killed in the crash in Quand Ngai Province, 13 miles south of Chu Lai.

And Tom Bird, who learned to fly at Allegheny County Airport at 16 and became a senior pilot of his Marine squadron at 23, died a hero.

He didn't have to be in Vietnam.

Until last October he was stationed in Okinawa as an officer in charge of arranging the ferrying of new Marine copter pilots to Vietnam.

But he wanted to fly, so he volunteered.

And during the five months he was in Vietnam, he flew the tough missions: medical evacuation at Da Nang...Communist-overrun districts...vita supply runs to soldiers pinned down by

the Viet Cong.

He saved the life of an Army copter pilot trapped under water with a broken back when the VC shot down an Army "Huey" early this year.

The Army recommended the Distinguished Flying Cross for Lieutenant Bird's heroism.

His parents, Mr. And Mrs. Thomas A. Bird Sr., of 227 Colonial Dr., Mt. Lebanon, said Tom, eldest of 12 children, was a quiet young man.

He wrote home twice a week, his father said. And his bravery shone through his modest account of the gallantry for which he may be posthumously decorated.

"The Army is trying to make me a 'hero.'"

In a Jan. 5 letter he wrote about the emergency supply run to a Korean Marine outpost.

"I was elected to go. My chopper was the only Marine H-34 to be used."

He landed his craft, he wrote, while "two armed Army Hueys flew tight circles to cover me."

Then, as one of the Army escort ships whirled in front of him, VC machinegun bullets smashed into the Huey's control area.

"His aircraft lurched, jumped and hit the rice paddy. The Huey disintegrated in front of my eyes...it was doing 110 miles an hour

"Without thinking, I climbed out of my chopper and ran out to the downed Huey, which was in four feet of water. The pilot had a broken back and was trapped underwater.

"I lifted a big radio box off his back and carried him back to my H-34 and flew him to an ambulance helicopter.

"He lived.

"An Army captain informed me I am to be awarded the 'Distinguished Flying Cross' for, as he put it, 'conspicuous gallantry while under direct enemy fire.'

"What a ham!

"All I know is if I was trapped in that Huey I would have expected anyone else to do the same and I'm sure they would."

The article goes on to talk about John's life and how he became a pilot. He is buried in Queen of Heaven Cemetery in Peters Township. So the next time you're in Bird Park, think of this young man and the sacrifice he made.

DON'T MISS

If you have some time this spring, check out these events:

The Woodville Plantation House, a National Historic Landmark, in Collier Township, Route 50, is southwestern Pennsylvania's principal link to the late 18th century. Once owned John and Presley Neville, the house offers one of the best examples of life circa 1788-1820. May 6 is Opening Day; no admission will be charge. Come see volunteers preparing the gardens, mending fences, repairing tools and preparing for the upcoming season. On May 13 is a Native American Encampment. No admission will be charged to mothers in recognition of Mother's Day. Other events this summer include a duel re-enactment on June 10 and a children's games day on August 6. For more information, visit www.woodvilleplantation.org or call 412-221-0348.

Over in South Park, the Oliver Miller Homestead's old stone farmhouse is a sturdy remnant of frontier days. Sons of Oliver Miller served in the frontier militia during the American Revolution and later were involved in the Whiskey Rebellion. The story of this family reveals a way of life and struggle for survival common to those who first settled Western Pennsylvania. The Homestead is open to the public every Sunday from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m., from April through December. On MAY 20, is WOOL DAY where sheep will be sheared and the fleece teased, carded and spun into yarn. The weaving and dying process will also be explained. A Summer Faire will be held JUNE 24, with frontier games, contests and children's toys. The herbalist will lecture on herbs and their uses at 2:30 p.m. The herb garden is in full bloom and a docent will provide information on herbs.

For more information, call 412-835-1554 or log on to www.15122.com/OLIVERMILLER

HISTORICAL SOCIETY TRUSTEES

M.A. Jackson, president
Marty Carney, vice president
Lori Humphreys, treasurer
Dick Price, secretary
Jeanne Bereznicki
Lynn Geyer Banbury
Maggie McDermott
Wilma Novogradac
Virginia Nicklas
Bill Simpson
Wally Workmaster

MEMORIES

Anyone who renews their Society membership, receives a "Send Us Your Memories" form. We thank everyone who has replied. The forms will be kept in a file and, once the Society has a History Center, they will be available for the public to peruse.

We find all the information helpful and interesting, but we have to give a special pat on the back to Mel Bickel, Gilkeson Road, who sent us seven (!) pages of memories. Mel moved to Mt. Lebanon in 1942 and attended Mellon Junior High and Mt. Lebanon High School. He included a lot of great information about his classes and teachers in his letter.

As a teen, Mel worked at Donahue's (for 25 cents an hour), which was located in the building next to Mt. Lebanon Municipal Building (the one with the beige terra cotta façade). He reminisces about Washington Road shops, including Isaly's, Horne's, Redshaw's Men's Store, and Mandel's Pharmacy (where the high school's "in crowd" hung out at the soda fountain). When Mel left Donahue's he worked as a pinsetter at Hogel's bowling alley, an eight-lane, duckpin only bowling alley on Washington Road.

Mel also played golf at Cool Springs and the Pitch and Putt on Fort Couch Road. "Across Fort Couch Road from the Pitch and Putt course and where South Hills Village is now, was a driving range and outdoor bowling set up," writes Mel. "I really liked to go to the driving range because when the Pirates were at home, we would often see some of them there keeping their golf game sharp. Rip Sewell and Bob Elliott were two that I remember seeing. They lived during the summer in apartments on Cornell Place, just behind the Mellon School Field."

Mel did have a question for us though. He remembers an old exhibit and wonders what happened to it. "Twenty-five years or so ago, two social studies teachers from Mellon Junior High School had a "Then and Now" type program that I hope is hiding somewhere. There were pictures of the Pendale nursery and other buildings and businesses along Washington Road—most likely taken during the 1930s and '40s."

If anyone has information about this display, Society board members are just as curious as Mel is about where they are hiding. Call us at 412-561-0455 if you know if the display still exists.

HISTORY DOESN'T STAY THE SAME

We all visit historic places, but few people stop to consider what sometimes is required to improve the interpretation and understanding of the past which we take for granted.

Rob Windhorst, the president of the Neville House Associates, provided fascinating insight into that process at the Society's meeting on Wednesday, March 21, in his presentation, "Woodlawn Plantation: Managing the Transition from Auxiliary to Historic Site.

It's all too common to think of John Neville in connection with his role in supervising the collection of excise revenue for the federal government before and during the Whiskey Insurrection, but, as Rob pointed out, he was a native of Winchester, Virginia, who came to Fort Pitt (called Fort Dunmore when the Revolutionary War began) as a soldier and he stayed to become a wealthy landowner, businessman, and politician.

Neville's two plantations, "Woodville" and "Bower Hill," used slaves as farm workers and house servants. He also had a house in Pittsburgh and, eventually, one on Neville Island. All were handsomely furnished as befitted a Virginia gentleman of cultivated, refined tastes. We know the house at Woodville Plantation as the Neville House, but it was only one of four.

Nor was the house at Woodville Plantation the most sumptuous of Neville's residences. The house at Bower Hill Plantation probably was more up-to-date in its furnishings and amenities before it was destroyed in 1794. The one at Woodville Plantation had been given to Neville's son and eventually it was sold, but it is the only one that survives today, although it includes later alterations.

Rather uniquely, the property now is owned by Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, furnishings are provided through a chapter of the Colonial Dames, and it is interpreted and operated by the Neville House Association.

Rob detailed recent changes in the mission and structure of the Neville House Association to assist in reinvigorating interpretive and educational services by changing the group from an auxiliary into an organization dedicated to a more modern and accurate site interpretation based upon recent historical and archaeological research.

What's interpretation as a function of historical organizations or agencies? It's the art of developing key themes and presenting the story of the

past through a host of different techniques so visitors may learn more easily and effectively.

IN MEMORIUM

Society Life Member **Glenn E. Morrow** died at his home in South Welfleet, MA, on November 7, 2006.

Born in 1927, Glenn was raised in Mt. Lebanon and graduated from Mt. Lebanon High School and The Pennsylvania State University. He began his career in the steel industry in New York City in 1950 and became the president of his own company, Atlantic Track & Turnout, in Bloomfield, NJ.

For most of his career, he and his wife, Jean, lived in Glen Ridge, NJ, where he was active in town government, Little League, and as the superintendent of the Sunday School at the Glen Ridge Congregational Church.

He played a major role in obtaining a National Register designation for most of the homes and public buildings in Glen Ridge and donated funds currently held by the Society to assist the Mt. Lebanon Cultural Resource Survey now being conducted through the Mt. Lebanon Historic Preservation Board.

Glenn and Jean moved to Cape Cod in 1992 where he became a strong advocate of coastal land preservation and was active in both high school class and university alumni groups. He is survived by his wife, four children, and four grandchildren.

His great interest in Mt. Lebanon's history is badly missed.

The Society would also like to recognize the passing of long-time member **Dr. Edwin Ruh**, who died in January. Our thoughts and sympathies are extended to Dr. Ruh's wife, Betty, and his family.

HEINZ VIDEOS FOR SALE

Friends of Mt. Lebanon Library received a large number of the video "Heinz: The Story of an American Family" about the Heinz family's rise to prominence. They are selling the videos at the library's circulation desk for \$2. If you can't get to the library, mail a request and include additional \$1.50 for shipping. The videos are in their original, sealed boxes and have never been viewed. Made in 1992, the video is a wonderful slice of Pittsburgh history. Make checks payable to "Friends of the Mt. Lebanon Public Library" and mail to the Friends, 16 Castle Shannon Blvd., Pittsburgh, Pa., 15228. Attn: Heinz Video.

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| <p>THANK YOU TO NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS – JANUARY 2007 – MARCH 2007</p> <p>Christopher Beck – Individual (Renewal) Elizabeth M. Ruh – Senior (Renewal) Matthew J. Ragan – Individual (Renewal) Elaine & Alan London – Family (New) Stephen Bullick – Individual (New) Maxine & Mel Bickel – Family (Renewal) Mr. & Mrs. J. B. Lutz – Benefactor (Renewal) Luetta c. Waddell – Senior (Renewal) Richard & Nancy Laitta – Family (Renewal) Karen Kanell & Conrad Koch – Family (Renewal) Barbara Cusick – Individual (Renewal) Barbara & Robert Logan – Family (Renewal) Mr. & Mrs. Edward Reno – Senior (Renewal) Ruth Ann Kramer – Individual (Renewal) Mr. & Mrs. Richard Mehary – Family (Renewal) William & Kathleen Simpson – Benefactor (Renewal) Paul & Sylvia Garlitz – Family (Renewal) Marianne M. Siersdorfer – Individual (Renewal)</p> | <p>Geoffrey R. Hurd – Individual (Renewal) Thomas L. Stevenson – Individual (Renewal) Ed & Bette Ruh – Family (Renewal) Chuck & Jill Brodbeck – Family (Renewal) Margaret Jackson – Individual (Renewal) Lynn Geyer Banbury – Individual (Renewal) G. Bryson Schreiner – Benefactor (Renewal) Bob Humphreys – Senior (Renewal) Emily & Joe McCann – Family (Renewal) William F. Lewis – Senior (Renewal) Dr. JoAnn Bevilacqua – Family (Renewal) Barbara Jucha – Individual (Renewal) Sandy & Lee Golomb – Family (Renewal) Eleanor May McHugh – Individual (Renewal) Helen Aldisert & William Krayner – Family (Renewal) Carolyn & Bill Byham – Family (Renewal) Ruth Foltz – Benefactor (Renewal) Michael F. Lacy – Individual (Renewal) Mary Carney – Individual (Renewal)</p> |
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(detach here)

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

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MOUNT LEBANON
P.O. BOX 13423, Pittsburgh, PA 15243

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone: _____ **E-mail** _____

Please check applicable membership level:

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------|-----|
| Individual | \$20 | ___ |
| Family | \$35 | ___ |
| Benefactor | \$100 | ___ |
| Youth | \$15 | ___ |
| Senior | \$15 | ___ |
| Life | \$1,000 | ___ |

Date of Application _____ **New () Renewal ()**

Membership runs January 1 to December 31.

Life Memberships are recognized upon payment of total amount within any single 12-mo. period.

Names of donors will appear in newsletters and appropriate membership announcements and mailings.

The Society is classified as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, charitable organization.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible check made payable to: The Historical Society of Mount Lebanon
