



FALL 2016

## BEITH HOUSE TRANSFORMED BY FACELIFT

It has been decades since the William Beith House has undergone a thorough facelift, beyond a superficial paint job applied ten years ago. Age crept up on this proud old lady.... Her windows no longer worked easily, some of the decorative wood trim was rotted, and several storm windows were missing. In addition, the neighborhood squirrels found comfortable quarters in this old home, and needed to be ousted to allow for carpentry repairs near the roof life.

To the rescue came some very old friends, Pam and Jack Muirhead who have strong family roots in rural Kane County, specifically in Campton Township. The Muirheads trace their family tree straight back to the stone mason builder William Beith who settled here in 1850. They have expressed keen interest in our mission - offering the Beith House as a “preservation discovery house” which entices visitors to explore the decisions we made about the interior and exterior restoration of the riverstone landmark. Children and adults alike have enjoyed the challenging “games” we utilize to illustrate the restoration process.

Back up a year.... to early 2015 when we received a **Kane County Riverboat Fund** grant to completely renovate 10 of the original wood windows in the house. This significant accomplishment was the prologue to the next steps: carpentry, painting, landscaping and new signage. The Riverboat allocation was a matching grant, but easily within our budget, and Frank Munoz from Historic House and Window Restoration wrought a miracle: 160 year old windows that slide up and down like silk, that fit tight, that are draft proof. (some days we just push those windows up for the fun of it.)



November 2016

After discussing our priorities for both restoration projects and educational initiatives, the Muirhead family approved our proposal and offered a grant of \$12,000 for work done in 2016 and 2017. The gift from their **Renaissance Foundation** will be in memory of Jack’s parents, Kathryn and John Muirhead.



Our first step was to contact a Tri-Cities painter who specializes in the “special challenges” of older structures. **Jamie Dwyer**, who has been often seen on a ladder over the years at Geneva’s beloved Paper Merchant, prepared a comprehensive bid for us, that included minor repairs of window sills and trim. Equally important, he directed us to a skilled finish carpenter who would address the substantial rotting in the elaborate front door surround. Jamie urged us to evict the rodent squatters and seal up those entries. (Jamie at left on ladder)

We have begun the landscape project, focusing on the east façade, with designs provided by **Janice Slowiak** and plant materials from **Thornapple**. Major new

signage at several locations will be installed once we assess the placement of shrubs. The Muirheads agree that signage is a vital part of announcing to the world who we are and how they can connect with us. A proposed sign or banner at the back of the house will give us additional exposure.

We are planning an gala open house (informal, but festive) in the late spring, so that our members and friends can celebrate the site with its dramatic facelift.

The Muirhead family grant allows some funding for interior projects, including replacement of the old rag stair carpet, plus support for three key educational initiatives. Our priorities include reaching out to local schools for potential fieldtrips, and expanding summer open hours. (stay tuned). We are also eager to develop programs at the Beith Museum for seniors with early-stage dementia, (see page 3 of this newsletter for our partnership with the Memory Café.)

*Batavia photographer Brian DeWolf captured our staff on a warm November day, thrilled with the dramatic facelift of the Beith Museum.*

*From left, Margaret Eagan, Hannah Walters, Alice Maupin, Liz Safanda.*



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## SEASONS IN THE GARDEN, WHERE MEMORIES BLOSSOM

We are thrilled to announce a new initiative for a special audience. In late September, we implemented our pilot program *Seasons in the Garden: Discovery Tours for visitors with memory loss*. Our staff partnered with **Memory Café**, a support group based in Batavia which plans monthly outings for people with mild dementia or early stage Alzheimers disease. One of their primary goals is to facilitate social opportunities for this population and equally important, for their family members/caregivers.

Once we overcame the early morning rain clouds, we led our guests on the path to tranquility, from the Torii gate to the Waiting Bench Chamber, then skirted Mount Sumeru to arrive at the venerable Tea House. On the final stretch around the ponds, several intrepid visitors scaled the Moon Bridge, led by Margaret Eagan. Despite the overcast skies, we all could spot the lovely reflection of the “moon” in the water below the bridge.

We accomplished several mutual objectives: providing the visitors and their care givers with a memorable outing, in a tranquil setting that encouraged them to respond directly to the elements they experienced that morning. We also provided a variety of stimuli to awaken other memories, and we gave visitors an opportunity to share their discoveries. According to John McNeely, a founder of Memory Café along with Sam Hill of Geneva, the tour and discussion afterwards “exceeded their wildest dreams”.

A follow up meeting with Mr. McNeely and his partners confirmed that we are following the right path (no pun intended) in our approach to an audience that will only grow as baby boomers age. Over the winter, we hope to create two more “seasons” of tours – spring and summer – and to reach out to senior care facilities in the Fox Valley. A portion of the Muirhead family grant announced on page 1 will underwrite the development phase of this program. We are also consulting with other local agencies that share our mission, including the Beautiful Mind.

From low trails to soaring bridges, the tour energized visitors and guides alike. We came away buzzing with ideas for outreach, and with renewed admiration for the brave individuals and caregivers who seek stimulating companionship in our unique forest preserve.



*Visitors from the Memory Care program scaled the heights with their guide, Margaret Eagan, in late September.*

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## FABYAN VILLA & JAPANESE GARDEN: CELEBRATING VISITATION & RESTORATION

### **Fabyan Chairs Update: All the pieces coming together**

The original Fabyan dining room chairs, donated to the museum in 2015, have now been extensively repaired by local artisan Steven Peterson. The chairs are made of oak, but the exact period or style is hard to pin down, according to Peterson; late Victorian is the best label. One of the many examples of Peterson's amazing craftsmanship was his re-creation of the rosette medallions missing from the chair legs. The final upholstery work will be done in late winter. With the refurbished chairs in place, visitors can imagine the dining room as a set and see the beauty of the period furniture. We plan to have a "reveal" party in spring 2017 to celebrate the beautiful artisanry as well as highlighting our project partners, Friends of Fabyan, who helped give chairs new life.

### **Villa Museum and Japanese Garden: A season of record!**

Wow, what a great way to end the 2016 season. Our sites combined this year saw 8,010 public visitors and 542 visitors on private tours. Total combined Fabyan volunteers donated over 400 hours to our sites. Trip Advisor ratings proclaim the Villa and Gardens as a top attraction in Geneva with many comments like "I love this area in particular because it's very well taken care of. The Japanese garden is exquisite. There is a minimal fee to visit the museums and the garden but totally worth it." Those raves keep staff and volunteers pushing to go above and beyond for our visitors every time!

Hats off to our new volunteer team members Renee Riley, Chip Tieche, Roger Godskesen and Barbara Hornbach. Their amazing contribution helped us deliver the high quality experience people expect at our sites.

### **Estate Tours a wonderful success**

The Fabyan Museum staff offered three estate tours this year, focusing on the remarkable historic elements that survive from the Fabyan era. The staff experimented with various times and had the most success with a Sunday afternoon tour on October 2. Enhancing the tour was the added element of rarely seen historic photos from our archives. The photos, visitors stated, helped give a vivid sense of historical place as they followed the original paths. Keep your eyes out for Historic Fabyan Estate Walks planned in 2017.

### **Lighthouse stands tall once again on the Fox River**

Late this summer the sound of drills and the sight of scaffolding around the lighthouse grabbed the attention of many who passed through Fabyan Forest Preserve. The lighthouse has now been fully restored with a new concrete base and walls along with re-structured housing for the original light cap. Depending on the weather, the cap railing should be installed in November. This new strong foundation ensures that this site will be here, with proper maintenance, for another hundred years!



*These enthusiastic Scouts from Richmond Troop 1288 showed off the code bracelets they made on a recent after-school visit to the Villa Museum.*

## POSTCARDS FROM SUMMER CAMP - A BLAST FROM THE PAST

*Postmarked from LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve, St. Charles, IL*

The 19th century collided with the 21st century, in a most enjoyable way, the second week of August at the LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. Thirteen “prairie” children enrolled in the first summer camp at the 1843 Durant House. Five boys and 8 girls, sporting neon sneakers and sunglasses, donned bonnets and straw hats, as they got their first glimpse - and taste - of life on a real 1840’s farm.

Our prairie participants sampled many different activities. Each of the children adopted a new “old time” name for themselves, which they stitched on their custom name tag. Of course there are many chores to do on the farm, so we got our hands dirty and pulled weeds in the Durant garden. A University of Illinois Extension Program did a walk/talk presentation about prairie plants, and we dyed a handkerchief with purple cabbage leaves. Our participants weren’t excited about the cabbage and vinegar aroma but they loved taking home their unique souvenirs.

One of the favorite activities for many of our group was making a roof shingle, splitting wood with a heavy mallet, then shaving and shaping it on the shingle bench under the expert eye of Frank Wukitsch. They were allowed to pick out a hand drill from Frank’s collection, drill a hole through a piece of wood and work those muscles! Then on our final day it was time to cook and savor authentic recipes from the 19th century. We churned butter, cooked sage sausage and baked corn bread and biscuits on the hearth, then enjoyed our feast in the welcome shade of a black walnut tree.

The surveys from our prairie children indicated the camp was a wonderful success. Time flew by each day, with no division between work and play. We couldn’t have had a great camp like this if it wasn’t for our wonderful volunteers Janet Herreras, Linnea Windel, Debra Corwin and Frank Wukitsch. They made it possible to create special memories for our 1st batch of summer campers!



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***Holiday Cheer will prevail*** at the 1843 Durant House on Saturday, December 10 and Sunday December 11 from 2-6 pm each day. Fragrant evergreens and a roaring fire on the hearth will recreate the heartwarming spirit of Christmas past. Hot cider, cookies & ginger cake made from an 1840 Illinois recipe will refresh our visitors.

Admission: \$3 adults, \$1 children  
LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve,  
37W700 Dean Street, St. Charles



## IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD! HISTORIC DISTRICT!

The guided walking tour “*Changes in the Geneva Historic District*” on Sunday, September 11 attracted a huge turnout of 60 people! Participants were treated to a tour of dramatic renovations of significant older structures and learned how the district has changed with recent development. Each of the houses on the tour is of high integrity, with architectural and historical significance, ranging from Queen Anne to Greek Revival to Traditional Cottage. A highlight of the afternoon was exploring the inside of an 1854 house that is currently going through a top-to-bottom renovation, on the NW corner of Fifth and Campbell.



*Owners Joe and Janet Norris, architect Sean Gallagher, and master carpenter Tom Ritchie were part of a team effort building a major addition to this 1893 Queen Anne/Stick style home (shown with proud dog Poppy)*



At the October 17th Geneva City Council meeting four of the historic houses on the tour received the 2016 Historic Preservation Award from the City of Geneva. The awards are given every two years to homeowners, architects, and builders for excellence in exterior renovation and their commitment to rehabilitation of a historic home. Two of the properties qualified for a tax assessment freeze, certainly a major perk for the owners.

Historic preservation enhances communities and lifts the spirit, but it also rewards those committed to rehabbing historic buildings. PPFV congratulates all of the award winners, with special thanks to Michael Lambert, City of Geneva’s Historic Planner, for providing excellent input to home owners. Many of the award recipients complimented city staff and the Preservation Commission for significant guidance during the review phase.

Next spring our expert guides move on to St. Charles, to explore the recent changes in the east side historic district. Dramatic improvements are visible on the blocks between Second and Third Avenue, from Cedar to Chestnut; we wouldn’t be surprised to see more by the time we set out on foot.



*The Bradley Chamberlain House built in 1854 will be one of the featured houses in our next “Changes” tour in the late spring of 2017.*

## BOARD BONUS - VOLUNTEER GRANT ENRICHES US

Laura Rice joined the board in 2008, after we met her at a **Treasures** party and were amazed by her enthusiasm for all things vintage. Despite a very demanding job, with travel overseas, Laura remains passionately committed to Preservation Partners, to our mission and our programs, to our sites and our parties. Currently she serves as Vice-President, and in that capacity is working on recruiting new members and channeling the talents of older members. She has been very generous in giving her time and annual contributions, including several **"Board Volunteer"** grants from **Ecolab**, where she is a staff scientist specializing in environmental issues in paper production.



*Laura with Liz Safanda at March 4 Star Dinner*

Over the years we have seen remarkable evidence of her commitment to historic preservation. She has been a careful steward of her own 1876 St. Charles home, at the corner of Chestnut and Second Avenue. Laura and husband Pat are currently renovating their "modern" detached garage, adding some design elements to tie it in to their high style Italianate residence. Laura and Pat teamed up with neighbors Tom and Pat Pretz to completely renovate a c. 1900 two-flat on their street, respecting its original features as they converted it back to a handsome single-family home.

**Some fun facts about Laura:** she is a self-proclaimed dumpster-diver and house stalker, all for a good cause --- rescuing old doors and old houses. Bravo!



## 2016 Year-End Contributions

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Preservation Star	\$1,000 & above
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Preservation Patron	\$100 - 249
Donor	\$50 - 99
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*The Beith House Museum  
Dressed for the Season*

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**No peanut butter and jelly or bug juice for these seasoned campers** who were the first batch to enroll in Summer Camp at the Durant House Museum. They polished off the corn bread with honey and sage sausage and asked for seconds. See page 5 for details about their adventures dipping candles, grinding corn, crafting cornhusk dolls, and engaging in some very serious work!

**You Can Find Us At: [WWW.PPFV.ORG](http://WWW.PPFV.ORG)**