Upcoming Events:

March 1, 2007 8:00pm; Thursday Lyceum- Cleveland’s Theatrical Heritage; Northeast Ohio historian, John Vacha presents the interesting history about the rise of Cleveland’s theatre district. The district has offered first class theatrical productions for generations. Learn how it started, who supported it and who designed the grand edifices.

March 3, 2007 Saturday doors open 6:30 Annual Reverse Raffle & Dinner. (Details inside)

April 5, 2007 8:00pm Thursday Lyceum-The Miniature Homes of Paul Roman; Join us as we honor Paul Roman and his exceptional talent. Paul will discuss what inspired him to create his beautiful model homes. For over 30 years, he has re-created many of Ohio’s finest mansions, homes & inns. A champagne reception follows his presentation.

April 11, 2007 7:30pm Wednesday Docent Training- (see article inside).

April 15, 2007 2:00pm – 5:00pm Spring Open House; The Taylor Chair Exhibit opens. The exhibit includes the making of Taylor chairs, demonstrations on caning and chair making, a gallery of 160 years of chairs, children’s activity table and highlights of two prominent Bedford families who owned Taylor’s chairs.

May 3, 2007 Thursday- Annual Dinner; Save the date- more information later.

Society Receives Gift From Eagles

The Bedford Historical Society received a donation from the Eagles, Aerie Lodge No. 2122. The donation of $10,000 was gratefully received in December. The Eagles are an international fraternal organization that has donated thousands of dollars to communities across the world. Their motto is ‘People Helping People’. Did you know that it was the Eagles who helped set aside a day to honor Mothers? They also helped lawmakers realize the importance of a Social Security system and helped legislate against age discrimination in the workplace. Our Eagle Lodge has a long history of philanthropy in Bedford and surrounding areas. We are fortunate indeed, that they recognize the service that we perform for the communities in this area. If you know an Eagles Lodge member, extend your thanks for their support of the society.

Good News- We Ended 06 in the Black!

We scrimped, we saved and you, our members and community supporters, have been generous. An unofficial audit as we closed out the books for the year indicates we have finished in the black. Thank you for your help. An outside auditor will check the math and report to Trustees. Keeping track of the society’s finances is a big job. Member June Martin, as treasurer is responsible for depositing incoming money and writing checks under the yearly budget approved by the Trustees. She spends many volunteer hours in this capacity. An independent bookkeeping service records all transactions. Finally, an independent CPA is contracted with to review all transactions for the year and make a report to Trustees so that we follow good accounting practices.

Your donations enter as either unrestricted or restricted income depending upon your wishes. For example, donations to the Endowment are restricted only to the Endowment Fund.
No Wonder Beards Were Popular

One of our members, Mr. Steven Angyal has loaned a portion of his extensive collection of early shaving and grooming aids. The generations before us made a lather from soap in a mug using a shaving brush. Then a single straight razor was sharpened on a honing stone and a leather strop.

The invention of the safety razor and disposable blade allowed for a much safer shave. It helped eliminate deep cuts from the slip of a straight razor. Many older homes have a medicine cabinet with an opening on the back. Used safety razor blades could be deposited in the slit. Many a home renovation project has found several dozen metal blades inside the wall.

The display will remain through the end of summer.

Military Post Cards

Antique Weekly, a great newspaper for the antique industry and collectors, recently had an article about this genre of humorous post cards. The society’s collection is on display along with the interesting article. While we frequently display portions of our extensive postcard collection, this is the first time that the military cards have been shown.

Elmer Flick at Bat

Member Fred Schulz sent an interesting article from ‘Cooperstown Corner’ column from ReSporting News, a publication from SABR (Society for American Baseball Research). Allen Lee wrote the article. The article about Flick says he reported to training camp for the Phillies with a batting average of .396. He earned that average the previous season with the Interstate League in Dayton. Flick went to training camp with his own hand - turned bat. The historical society has two Flick bats, one is an American Slugger and the other is unmarked. Our veteran woodworker, Pete Dickson, says baseball batters have a saying about ‘boning the bat’. He says this term comes from the old practice of rubbing an animal bone along the length of the bat. It was thought that this would make the bat hit the ball better.

Our thanks to Fred and Pete for passing along the baseball information. The Elmer Flick Statue Committee reports that fund raising is going at a snail’s pace but should pick up in the Spring. The committee contracted with Light Sculpture Works to cast the sculpture. Ron Dewey is the artist. He has sculpted several bronze works in Ohio and North America. A maquette, a small replica, has been cast. Your donations to the cause are tax-deductible. Names of donors will be at the base of the sculpture. Checks should be made out to the Bedford Historical Society marked ‘Flick Statue’.

From the archives…

The National Refining Company produced a small newsletter that was distributed free to customers. This is the May 1929 issue. It contained jokes, humorous stories, contests and product information. J. I. Lamprecht founded the company in 1882. It had offices in downtown Cleveland. The company purchased other refineries including two in Findlay Ohio, Kansas and Canada. Its mainline products included White Rose Gasoline, Black Beauty Axle Grease and En-ar-co Motor Oil. The last of its assets were sold to the Ashland Oil Company in 1950.
Taylor Exhibit to Open

Volunteers have been constructing the Taylor Chair exhibit this winter on the third floor of the Town Hall Museum. The exhibit contains over 56 feet of space. When it is completed, it will tell visitors about this company that is the oldest furniture company in the Western Reserve and, according to the company records, in America.

Portions of the exhibit include a Gallery of Chairs. The museum has over 25 Taylor chairs in its collection, including original Fitch Splint Bottom Chairs from 1820. The chair making process will be a part of the exhibit along with demonstrations on caning and drawing shaving. Artist Roger Fuhrmeyer has created an original work showing the old factory assembly line and Paul Roman has created a model of the famous three-story outhouse. This is just a portion of the exhibit. There will be a children’s hand-on section and a place for current and former Taylor employees to sign-in and comment. We hope you will enjoy the Open House for the Taylor Exhibit on Sunday April 15th 2:00 – 5:00pm. There is even a famous Taylor rocker for you to sit in and enjoy.

Taylor Chair Facts

Benjamin Fitch was one of the first settlers in this portion of the Western Reserve.

He was an exceptional hunter and a skilled chair maker.

Fitch traded his first chair in 1815 for 5 bushels of wheat.

A Fitch Splint Bottom Chair held tightly without the use of nails or glue. Fitch used a combination of green wood and seasoned wood. When the chair was assembled and allowed to dry, the joints locked tightly. This method was used by New England chair makers where Fitch learned the trade.

One of Fitch’s apprentices in the burgeoning industry was Wm. O. Taylor who married Harriet Martha Fitch, the boss’s daughter.

The original Fitch homestead was in the area of Libby Road and Warrensville Center Road, now Maple Heights. The Taylor family were early settlers in Northfield, just over the border in Summit County.

After the factory burned, Taylor moved into the center of Bedford where there was a steady supply of water in Tinker’s Creek. Recent improvements in steam-powered engines allowed water from the creek to be pumped up the bluff to a water tower on the property.

The new plant was also strategically located along the new Cleveland & Pittsburgh Railroad one of the early railroads in the Midwest. The C&P Depot was only yards away on Bedford Public Square.

In 1870 office rockers with two-slats sold for $22 a dozen.

After the Great Chicago fire, Mr. Taylor had salesmen ready with boxcars full of chairs on the next day’s train.

In 1885, average weekly production was 1,618 chairs.

The landmark wooden trestle across Taylor Road connected the factory buildings on both sides of the roadway. By separating the buildings, the chance of severe damage from fire was lessened. It was affectionately known as the Bridal Path by workers.

Vincent A. Taylor was a public servant besides being a successful businessman. He served as Mayor of Bedford, a term in the Ohio Senate and was elected to represent the Ohio people in the 52nd Congress of the U.S. in 1891.

Bedford Historical Society archives 1909 Taylor catalogue
Docent Training

Docent training is scheduled for Wednesday evening, April 11, 2007 at 7:30. There will be a brief review of safety issues but the focus will be on the new Taylor exhibit opening on April 15th. Volunteers will ‘sneak preview’ the exhibit. We will discuss key parts of this history so that it can be interpreted to visitors. If you are unable to attend on this date, let Janet know so that an alternate date can be arranged for you.

Thanks to all our volunteers. We counted the visitor register from 2006- we were just shy of 4,000 signatures (and some do not sign in). That is many volunteers helping many people!

If you have time to serve as a docent, regularly, with school tours or for larger public events, please call the museum. This training session is an opportunity for those who sent in a volunteer form marked ‘docent’. Without volunteers, we could not serve the communities whose history we keep. Light refreshments will be served.

New Public Address System for Lyceum

Thanks to a generous donation from one of our members, we have purchased a new Public Address system for the Lyceum series and other events. Now even the back row will be able to hear. The society extends its gratitude to Mr. Dennis for identifying the problem of poor acoustics and for donating the funds to rectify the situation.

Cemetery Project

Ralph Bell, Jr. has developed the second draft of the book about Bedford Cemetery. The society is sponsoring this project in hopes that citizens and visitors will have a new appreciation for this beautiful reverent place. Ralph has spent hours researching our archives and writing a worthy document. Wayne Rhine and the Bedford Garden Club are helping with portions of the work.

Your help is needed – As part of the cemetery project, we would like to photo document portions of the cemetery. This will be a Saturday project. If you can help, please call the museum, 440 232-0796. Non-photographers are needed also.

Old Ways School in April

Thanks to the generosity of many talented teachers who are willing to share their knowledge, the Old Ways School will again be offered on the first four Mondays in April. New this term is a basic course in Calligraphy and an introductory course on Drawing. The brochure is enclosed with this newsletter. We hope you will continue to support this program as we help preserve the old ways. If we do not keep these skills, who will?

Obituaries

Martha Tiburski; Member Martha Tiburski passed away on August 20, 2006. Martha was a member of the society since 1994. She was active in many community affairs. She leaves her loving family including husband Walter, with whom she was married for 60 years; her children Walter (Marilyn), Judith (Doug) Elliott and Wendy (Dan) Reid and grandchildren.

Mildred McNeil; Word has been received that member Mildred McNeil passed away in Florida on November 26, 2006. She and her husband Paul were long time residents of Bedford. Mildred was a member of the society for over 30 years. Her daughter, Catherine, son John (Lyn) and loving family & friends, survives her.

Myrtle M. Ake; Life member, Myrtle (Morgareidge) Ake passed away on December 2, 2006. Myrtle and her husband Mort were long time residents of Bedford. Myrtle was an active volunteer at the historical Society and helped create the Annual Strawberry Festival. She taught at Ellenwood School for several years. Myrtle and Mort retired to her family farmstead in Caldwell and became involved in preserving history in that area. She was preceded in death by her husband Mort. She is survived by her daughter Melissa (Scott) Gerold and a grandson, Matthew.

Joseph Graceffo; Member Joe Graceffo passed away on January 6, 2006. Joe and his father Larry, owners of LaGra Jewelers helped with several projects including the plaques for new building. Joe leaves a loving family including his wife Connie and son, Joe Jr. and daughter Michele (Kirk) Prozynski. He was a loving grandfather. Joe is survived by his parents, Larry and Josephine.

Harold James Sponseller; Jim Sponseller passed away on January 20, 2006. Jim joined the society in 1963 and helped with many projects. He chaired the fundraising efforts to restore the Town Hall building in 1965. He was a docent in the museum until his health prevented him from participating. He is survived by his wife, Muriel and daughters, Judy (Bob Beiseigel) Taps and Kay and a son David (Joanne). He leaves five grandchildren and a great-grandchild.