



# THE FANLIGHT

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Fall 2013

## *The importance of community outreach*

**By Amy Leiser**  
*Executive Director*

As the executive director of a non-profit organization, one of my most important tasks is to raise money for our organization. Throughout the year, I, in addition to our staff members and legions of volunteers, work to hold various fundraisers that bring revenue into the Monroe County Historical Association. These funds do everything from paying the electric bills to purchasing archival boxes for our museum's collections.

Sometimes we work hard on events that are not money-driven. These events can be a nice "change of pace" for myself and everyone involved. That's not to say that there isn't the same level of preparation, organization and stress, but events that are free and open to the public tend to have a somewhat more relaxed feel to them.

At the end of August we held the 5th Annual Olde Time Fun event in the backyard of the Stroud Mansion. Tables were set up with a variety of activities, crafts, and games for children. Volunteers were stationed at each table to offer assistance with every activity. It was wonderful to see the interaction between the children and adult volunteers.

Our young visitors were amazed that they could make toys (such as dolls, pinwheels, and paper airplanes) that didn't involve batteries! The parents were pleased to watch their children using their creativity to decorate a pinwheel or guess the function of an old kitchen tool.

The most popular activity station for the kids was



Linda Rogers reads to young visitors to the 5th Annual Olde Time Fun event held August 31 in the backyard of the Stroud Mansion.

the corn toss. Many adults chuckled that the younger generation was having so much fun throwing an old corn cob into a copper bucket.

In conjunction with Olde Time Fun, the Stroud Mansion was open for free tours. Visitors were treated to an introduction to the Stroud family by Mrs. Stroud herself. (OK, Mrs. Stroud was really MCHA Board member Connie McCool in costume!)

Hosting an open house along with the Olde Time Fun children's event is a great way to get the public into our beautiful building and to share some Monroe County history with many visitors.

I spoke with one guest who confessed that she did not like history and was forced to come by her husband, but she admitted that she truly enjoyed her tour of the Stroud

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## 2013 Meetings

The MCHA Board of Directors meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Stroud Mansion.

October 22

November 26

December – No meeting

**The mission of the Monroe County Historical Association is to promote, protect and preserve the rich history of Monroe County, Pa.**

# MCHA Calendar

**Saturday, November 16**

## Women Artists of the Middle Delaware

Shawnee Inn & Golf Resort, Shawnee-on-Delaware

Exhibit, dinner, auction fundraiser featuring the art work of May Banta, Violet Clark-Eddy, Edna Palmer Englehardt and Dorothy Strauser.

10 a.m.-2 p.m. — Gallery open to the public. \$5 admission.

5-8 p.m. — Gala reception featuring hors d'oeuvres and cash bar in Pearsall Room, followed by four-course dinner in Kirkwood Room. Tickets \$100.

8 p.m. — Live auction — Open to the public

**Thursday, December 12 and Friday, December 13**

## Holiday Luncheon at the Stroud Mansion

Two seatings each day: 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. or 1-2:30 p.m. Hot buffet luncheon in festive holiday atmosphere featuring Christmas salad, apple cider marinated pork loin, whipped sweet potatoes, butternut squash lasagna, green beans and complimentary glass of wine. Tickets now available.

**December 24-January 13**

**MCHA Offices Closed** — Holiday break

**Sunday, February 23, 2014**

## MCHA Annual Meeting and Awards Luncheon

Noon-4 p.m., Shawnee Inn & Golf Resort, Shawnee-on-Delaware

Speaker: Roger Spotts, Monroe County Conservation District environmental education coordinator: "History of Pocono Natural Resources."

## Garden volunteers needed: No experience necessary

In the Poconos, gardening is a three-season task. In the fall as the days cool, leaves fall, and perennials rest, gardeners are still busy. Leaf raking, cutting back perennials and bulb planting keep the Stroud Mansion garden volunteers busy, and they always welcome additional help.

We gather at the Stroud Mansion garden on Tuesday mornings, weather permitting. No gardening experience is required — we learn from each other. If you would like to help but Tuesday does not fit your schedule, don't worry. Many of our volunteers drop by when their schedules permit. We hope you will join us. Please call 570-421-7703 or e-mail [mcha@ptd.net](mailto:mcha@ptd.net) with your contact information and a MCHA garden volunteer will contact you.

We hope to meet you in the garden!





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## Community outreach

Continued from Page 1

Mansion and wanted to come back to learn more. Even if we only reached this one person and helped her to appreciate local history, the day was a success.

Another benefit to the free open house was that five individuals who are new to our organization signed up to volunteer to work in the award-winning Stroud Mansion gardens. These folks are wonderful additions to our team as volunteers are worth their weight in gold. I am delighted to have five additional people to volunteer to help keep the gardens surrounding the Stroud Mansion looking their best.

Thank you to every one of our volunteers who helped with the Olde Time Fun outreach program. From setting up tables and chairs to working with our young guests, everyone pitched in to make the day a success.

I must give a special “thank you” to Kathy Boyle who served as the volunteer coordinator and overall activity planner for this event.

Each year, more and more people visit the Stroud Mansion during Olde Time Fun, and we just might be calling on you for next year’s event. Please consider helping us reach out to the community to share Monroe County’s rich past.



Volunteer Blanca Cordero shows children how to make rope bracelets at the 5th Annual Olde Time Fun event held August 31 in the backyard of the Stroud Mansion.

## Good bye and thank you from Halle

**By Halle Smith, Administrative Assistant**

By the time you read this article, I will have relocated to northern Colorado. Transitioning into the next adventure in my life has been bitter-sweet, as I already miss every single person involved in this organization. You have all made my past five years a wonderful learning, growing, and positive experience.

I write to thank everyone whom I have met during my employment at MCHA. Thank you to the Board of Directors and to our committed membership for your constant support.

Thank you to the most dedicated volunteers I have ever met. Without you, I would not have been able to accomplish half of what I have done during my time here. I will truly miss each and every one of you.

Thank you to our fabulous collections specialist, Bret Fowler. You are one of the most amazing talents I have had the pleasure of knowing, and the association is beyond lucky to have you.

And lastly, I would like to thank my mentor, the best executive director any institution could hope to have, Amy Leiser. Without your constant training, support, and guidance, I would not have the skills or confidence to start this new chapter of my life. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Starting anew can be very daunting, but I feel that the experiences I have had here at the Monroe County Historical Association have prepared me for this exciting journey. Thank you again, and please wish me luck! I promise I'll come back to visit!





Monroe County  
Historical Association

## Welcome, New Members

As of July 1, 2013

Terri Lynn Cramer  
Maria Danges  
Beryl Hoff  
Mary Lear  
Patricia Munz  
Andrea Pascarello  
Patricia Scully  
Diane Smith  
Garth Woods  
Barbara Wright

## Benefits of Membership

- Pride in preserving the history of Monroe County
- Free admission to all MCHA sites
- 10% discount in our Gift Shop
- *The Fanlight*, our newsletter, issued quarterly
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Genealogy Assistance
- Discounts on MCHA events
- Advanced notice of all MCHA programs, events, workshops
- Discount research assistance

# Top hats: *From beaver to silk*

By Bret Fowler  
*Collections Specialist*

While the exact origin of the top hat is not directly known, most fashion historians agree it may be traced at least as far back as the last quarter of the 18th century.

Variations were worn by both the English “dandies” and the French “Incroyables,” (incredibles), young self-made men from the middle classes who used extreme fashion to establish higher social positions during the post-revolutionary period.

Although an early man’s top hat is often called a “beaver hat,” this is really a general term referring to any hat made from molded beaver fur felt and worn by either sex between 1550 and 1850.

The first variations of the top hat were made from beaver fur felt “hoods,” conical pieces of thick unblocked felt used by hatters to make hat bodies.

Top hats were never made directly from beaver skin or pelts, but from felt made from the fur, with the best quality felt hoods being exported from Tsarist Russia.

A dwindling population of Eurasian beaver (*castor fiber*) by the mid 1600s led the early North American settlers



to explore the continent further, and advanced trade among the indigenous population, the early settlers, and Western Europe.

Early Dutch settlers recorded shipping 15,000 beaver pelts to Europe in 1650, and the North American beaver (*castor canadensis*) soon replaced its Eurasian cousin as the main

source of fur for the production of high quality felt hats.

The number of pelts traded to Europe increased dramatically over the next 90 years, with one Canadian trading company alone shipping more than 55,000 pelts in 1740.

The production of high-quality beaver fur felt hoods was a laborious process long guarded by Russian manufacturers. During the early days of North American trade, beaver pelts were often sent to Russia in exchange for the finished fur felt hoods.

An advancement came in the 1720s with the introduction of a chemical process that became known as “carroting” because of the orange tint imparted to the treated pelts.

The long stiff “guard hairs” were plucked from the pelts, leaving only the soft under fur remaining. The pelts were treated with a chemical solution containing mercuric nitrate





that would strip away the proteins covering the surface of the fur fibers and raise the barbed scales needed to interlock the fibers during felting.

The fur fibers then were removed from the hide and distributed onto a large cone-shaped form about 3 feet tall. Once removed from the cone, a thinly matted hood about three times larger than its finished dimension was made. The hood was then hand pummeled and boiled repeatedly to thicken the felt and reduce it to the desired size.

These beaver fur felt hoods were then sold to hatters, who would make them into the fashionable shapes of the day through a process known as blocking.

Pieces of wood were carefully carved and fitted into interlocking hat forms called blocks, around which the hatter would mold the felt hood. After blocking, a thin coat of powdered shellac was pressed inside the crown and under the brim using hot irons that melted the shellac into the felt, providing the strength and stiffness needed to support the height and weight of a tall top hat.

The exterior was brushed to raise a soft fur nap, a velvet pad was used to smooth the nap, and a fine layer of powdered shellac was pressed into the nap to give the exterior of the top hat its characteristic smooth sheen.

Repeated exposure to the chemicals used in the felt-making process resulted in mercury poisoning for hoodmakers and hatters, who suffered from shakes, irritability, loss of memory, excessive saliva, personality changes and brain damage or “mad hatter disease,” giving rise to the



Three silk hatter's plush top hats, c.1840 – 1860, in the MCHA collection.

phrase “as mad as a hatter.”

Finished beaver fur felt hats were such a lucrative part of the English economy that “The Hat Act of 1732” banned the export of hats made in the American colonies. This ban ensured that beaver pelts trapped in North America would be reserved for trade with England, who recorded the export of 500,000 finished beaver fur felt hats in 1760.

By the last quarter of the 18th century, the North American beaver was showing a marked decrease in population as indicated by low trade numbers recorded by the many trading companies. The North American beaver was on the verge of extinction by the 1820s.

As an alternative, the French developed a silk plush pile fabric, similar to today's panne velvets, that would become known as “hatter's

plush.”

The first silk plush top hats were constructed over shellacked crowns made from lesser quality felt, with brims made by laminating multiple layers of a fine muslin cloth with liquid shellac.

The method of constructing a traditional silk top hat was introduced around 1835, and is still practiced by a small group of English makers today.

The original thick shellacked felt crown eventually was replaced with a lighter weight crown that allowed hats to reach increasingly taller heights during the 1840s and 1850s. The popularity of this extremely tall fashion was so widespread during the 1850s that an assembly of men wearing top hats was said to resemble the tall chimney stacks of the newly industrialized cities and names like

Story continues, Page 6



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### Contributor | \$500 or more

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### In-kind contributors

Hartzell's Auction Gallery  
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*The Monroe County Historical  
Association receives generous  
support from the Cherry Lane  
Foundation and  
the Monroe County  
Commissioners.*

*Thank you!*



### DePUY / BRODHEAD FAMILY REUNION

The Monroe County Historical Association was very pleased to host the DePuy/ Brodhead family reunion at the Stroud Mansion on August 17. Seated, from left: Sandra DePuy, Meg Brodhead, Georgeann Wambold, Eileen Furman, Kevin C. De Puy, Pam DePuy Kolbe, Marilyn Ball Depue Gerlach, Janis Kelly, Barbara Brodhead.

Standing: Walter "Lee" DePuy Jr., Floyd De Puy Jr., Wayne Furman, Nikolai Kolbe, Joe (grandson of Marilyn), Brenda DePuy, Jackie DePuy Banahan, Clarence Brodhead, and James Brodhead.

Also attending were Ken Schoonmaker, John and Carol Ford, Barbara G. DePuy, John and Joyce Harding.

## Top hats: *From beaver to silk*

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"stovepipe," "chimney pot" and "kite high dandy" were used to describe top hats that were seven inches or taller.

Between 1840 and 1920, the silk top hat came to be known as a symbol of wealth and respectability worn mainly by the aristocracy and the upper class, provoking its scorn by caricaturists, and political satirists.

The everyday use of the top hat fell out of favor around World War II and its use since has been reserved strictly for formal wear.

There are relatively few firms still in existence that are capable of producing traditional silk hatter's plush top hats. The last remaining loom capable of producing the specialty fabric was destroyed in 1968 as the result of a bitter family feud between the two French brothers who had been fighting over control of production for the traditional fabric

Today the remaining silk hatter's plush top hat makers focus mainly on refurbishing vintage hats for a very select clientele. The discovery of a vintage bolt of the traditional silk hatter's fabric in the attic of a long-standing client has made possible the production of about 20 new top hats to fill back orders from a long waiting list, at a cost of £4,500 or about \$6,930 per hat.





# Musings from the Mansion

as told to Kathy Boyle

Reporter in Residence, Monroe Mouse



Illustrated by Joan Groff

## Monroe connects with slate

It is funny how an idea, an object, or a person can make unexpected connections for us.

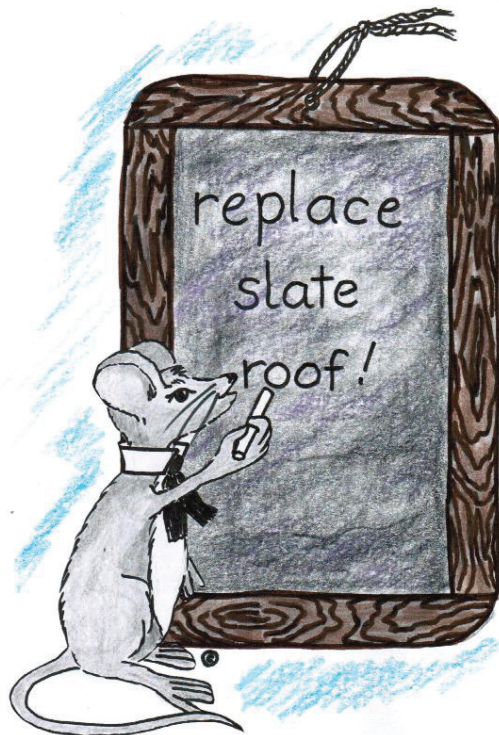
MCHA Executive Director Amy Leiser's article on the urgency to replace the Stroud Mansion roof in the last issue of *The Fanlight* made an immediate connection for me. The connection was not the roof itself, but the material to be used for the new roof.

Slate has been mined in Wales since 1200 and in our immediate area since the 1850s. Early slate workers immigrated here to work hundreds of feet underground in dangerous conditions. The slate quarries of Bangor were so numerous that the area is still known as the Slate Belt.

Most people know that slate is used for both roofing and flooring because of its durability. The natural beauty of slate has opened a whole new area of decorative pieces for the home and office.

However, like me, most MCHA members associate slate with something else. For me slate brings back memories of early schools and chalkboards. Slate chalkboards became widespread in schools by the mid-1800s. Who doesn't remember clapping chalkboard erasers laden with chalk dust or the piercing shrill of chalk on the board?

Slate chalkboards have been



replaced in most school with modern technology. There is still one place where you can recreate these memories and that is here at the Stroud Mansion in the toy room, where a corner is devoted to early one-room schools. There you will find a hand-held wood framed slate that went home each day with the student.

The school room corner, in addition to a variety of games and toys, will appeal to both young and older visitors. It provides a great opportunity to reminisce with families and friends and to introduce children to the past.

### 'RAISE THE ROOF' UPDATE ON SLATE ROOF PROJECT

In the last edition of *The Fanlight*, members were introduced to our plans to replace the slate roof on both the Stroud Mansion and the 1893 addition.

All of our of grant applications have now been filed and we are waiting to hear word on the funding.

Over the past few months, MCHA members and friends have donated to the Preservation Fund to help defray the cost and help cover any unexpected issues that might arise. A very special thank you is in order to the following members who generously gave to the "Raise the Roof" slate roof project.

John Alleger  
Kendrick and Donna Bisset  
Barbara and David Braithwaite  
Crayton Buck  
Eugenia Eden  
Dorothy and Suzanne Fabel  
Shirley Fry  
Jay E. and Barbara Huffman  
Gwynne Lago  
Marie Lohman  
Michele McQuillen  
Esther C. Scott  
Lawrence Squeri  
Anda Staab  
Alberta Weber

*Donations are always appreciated  
and can be made out to the "MCHA  
Preservation Fund"*

**THANK YOU!**



## MONROE COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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Fax 570-421-9199

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### STROUD MANSION

900 Main Street, Stroudsburg

10 am - 4 pm Tuesday-Friday

10 am - 4 pm 1st and 3rd Saturdays

*Tours daily at 11 am and 2 pm*

### DRIEBE FREIGHT STATION

537 Ann Street Stroudsburg

Now serving as the headquarters  
of the Jacob Stroud Corporation

570-424 0325

### THE BELL SCHOOL

6183 Cherry Valley Road, Stormville

Hamilton Township

1-4 pm every Sunday in July and August

Other times by special appointment

## COLORFUL BUTTONS WANTED

for children's craft activity December 8

Buttons with flat backs, 1/2 - 3/4-inch diameter in all colors.

For Education Committee project at

Stroudsmoor Country Inn Christmas Tree Lighting

**PLEASE DROP OFF BUTTONS AT STROUD MANSION**



**Visit the MCHA Web site**

[www.monroehistorical.org](http://www.monroehistorical.org)

Become a fan of the Monroe County Historical Association through our Facebook account today and be sure to suggest it to all of your friends.

## Has your address changed?

If you have a new mailing address due to the Monroe County addressing project, please let us know.

We don't want you to miss any of the exciting events, fundraisers, programs and workshops we offer.

Email [mcha@ptd.net](mailto:mcha@ptd.net) or calling 570-421-7703.

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