

Historical Society of Dauphin County

Founded 1869

John Harris-Simon Cameron Mansion
219 South Front Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania



Annual Report

2013-2014



From the Board of Trustees

John K. Robinson, President

TRUSTEE: *a person or organization that has been given responsibility for managing someone else's property or money.*

As trustees of the Historical Society of Dauphin County, your Board follows in the footsteps of the leading citizens of Harrisburg and Dauphin County who met in 1869 at Market Square Presbyterian Church to organize the society. Since then, men and women on the Board have worked tirelessly to guard the assets of the society – its National Historic Landmark John Harris-Simon Cameron Mansion, its furnishings and decorative arts spanning from the eighteenth through twentieth centuries, and the irreplaceable documents, photographs, and publications found in the Alexander Family research library and archives.

Executive Director Nicole McMullen is busy carrying out, along with the daily operations of the society, the Board's mandate to focus on two primary areas of endeavor: fundraising, and developing membership and volunteer activities. In addition, during the past year we have developed partnerships with other historical organizations, tourism organizations, and attractions.

Among our achievements in 2014 are the restoration of the front porch of the mansion— thanks largely to a grant from the Dauphin County Commissioners— and the next steps in the mansion exterior restoration. Our gardens have been improved, and plans are being made to make them more appropriate for the time periods we interpret.

We recognize the work of our staff, including Nicole McMullen, who loves her job and shows it through her tireless efforts on our behalf; new curator Janet Bowen, who brings new energy and insight; our office manager, Barbara Pollihan, the “glue” who keeps our operations moving forward smoothly; Ken Frew, who serves as our librarian and go-to historian; and Howard Parker, our docent *extraordinaire* and newsletter editor.

Many thanks to retiring board members Kelley Kaufman, Jim Martin, and Edith Walsh for their stewardship of the society's resources through the many positions of leadership they have assumed over their terms in office. Like each director, they have served either as chair of a committee or as member of one. Directors also set the direction for the society each year, support the society with financial commitments, represent the society in contacts with community members, and work actively to develop new members, donors and HSDC visitors among friends, family and business associates. My thanks to them for their leadership.

My sincere thanks go to corporate funders and sponsors, volunteers, and to *each and every member of the society* for your support and participation during the past year. Let's continue to work together so that the Historical Society of Dauphin County can reach the potential envisioned by its founders in 1869.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J. K. Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "K".

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July 1, 2014

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Highlights from Fiscal Year 2014 (July 2013-June 2014)

Nicole McMullen, Executive Director

Mansion Exterior Project and Front Porch Restoration

Thanks to earlier fundraising efforts, real progress was made on the exterior renovations project in 2013. In addition to the complete restoration of the front porch, we were able to replace the roof on the solarium and start work on the windows and shutters.



Fundraising for this capital project continues while we complete the restoration of the roof and cornice of the mansion, replace the west side door with an emergency exit/ handicapped entrance door, and continue work on the windows.

We are grateful beyond words to the individuals and organizations that have contributed funds toward this project, the first of its scope in nearly 25 years.

Growing Programming and Changing Exhibits

This fiscal year we showcased the new second floor exhibit rooms, creating changing exhibits. These rooms were originally bedrooms when the house was occupied, and more recently served as storage areas for pieces of our furniture and art collections.

Our first exhibit in the space was the *Women's Fashion of the 1920s* exhibit, which opened in April 2013 in partnership with Shippensburg University Fashion Archives (SUFAM).

After a display of antique toys during the holiday season, we opened the Reily Family Portraits Exhibit, made possible by a generous donation of portraits, artifacts and documents from Society member Louise Kunkel and members of the Reily family.

The Reily Family Portraits exhibit included paintings, objects, and documents donated by Louise Reily Kunkel.



Victorian teas in the parlor with actresses interpreting Red Cross founder Clara Barton and Simon Cameron's daughter Maggie Cameron were nearly sold-out.

A tour at Hallowe'en featured visits to a candlelit mansion and Harrisburg ghost stories told by docent Howard Parker.

Deck the Halls, our most significant annual fundraising event, offered festive holiday decorations, food and drink, and the presentation of the John Harris Award to the founders of Harrisburg Young Professionals -- Eric M. Morrison, J. Alex Hartzler, W. Greg Rothman, John A. Norton, and Dan Schwab -- for their commitment to the betterment of the community.



Christmas at the Mansion complete with Santa Claus (played by docent Don Schwab, left), offered activities for children, a mansion decorated for the season, and refreshments for all.

In the mansion kitchen, board vice-president and former director of the Pennsylvania German Society Erik Fasick made 60 dozen fastnachts on Shrove Tuesday as a fundraiser for the society.

A genealogy workshop, conducted by Kathy Hale of the Pennsylvania State Library was held in our library research room, where a full house learned of current research methods and resources.

At an *Evening at Mount Hill Tavern with John Harris Jr.*, reenactor David Biser entertained with anecdotes, songs, and games of the Colonial period. The management of Mount Hill Tavern contributed to the success of this fundraiser with a special menu and use of private rooms.

On the Second Sunday of each month we presented informative and entertaining programs for our members and the general public. Among the topics presented were baseball on Harrisburg's City Island, the City Beautiful movement, the National Civil War Museum, and the History Day projects of several local students.

Our third annual *Fourth of July: A Celebration* was a great success. The day opened with remarks from State Senator Rob Teplitz and readings of the Declaration of Independence by John Harris Jr. (David Biser) on the hour. We also offered tours, a used book sale, refreshments and children's activities that day.



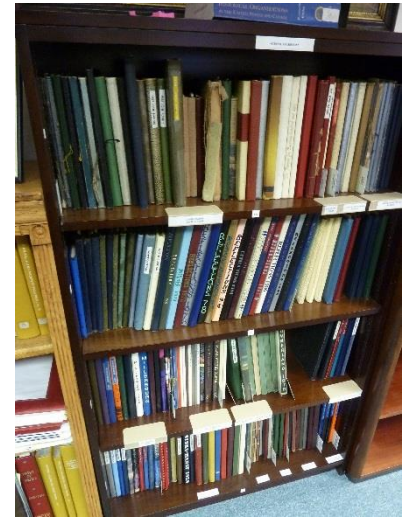
Sen. Rob Teplitz and his son greet re-enactors Richard Fox, channeling Ben Franklin, and David Biser as John Harris, Jr.

Library and Collections

Our Alexander Family research library, housed in the mansion's old stable, makes historical information available to the public. This year, librarian Ken Frew has collected dozens of high school yearbooks from county schools. Subscriptions to new websites provided access to historic newspapers from Harrisburg and the rest of the world!

Among new acquisitions for our collections of artifacts, documents and photographs (now numbering more than one million) are a tablecloth from the Pickwick Tavern of the Hotel Harrisburger, architectural drawings and specifications for the 1927 construction of the former Memorial Evangelical Lutheran Church in Harrisburg, an 1849 tax collector's ledger, and a 1937 wedding dress and coat.

We continuously add to a large collection of school yearbooks, so useful for research and for just the fun of looking up your parents or your old classmates.



Social Media and Digital Communications

The Society took advantage of social media during the past year, using its Facebook page to reach nearly 700 people each week with Society news and a historic photograph from our archives. Our office sent out newsletters and other announcements in electronic form using e-mail, saving the Society thousands in preparation and mailing costs and increasing communication with you, our members. Online photo albums and slideshows touted the society's facilities, activities, and events. We also maintain a comprehensive web site publicizing our events and services and offering information on our holdings, plus much more.

Additions to the HSDC Board and Staff

We said goodbye to several board members, thanking Kelley Kaufman and Jim Martin for their service and a special thank you to long-time board member and Governance Committee chair, Edie Walsh.

In April 2014,

Janet Bowen began her duties as curator. Janet is from the area and brings excellent

skills, as well

as degrees in public history and library

science. In just three

months she has recruited new volunteers and advanced our goals in IT, collections management and education.



Janet wore her best patriotic outfit for the Fourth of July celebration.

Membership Drive and Financial Support

The Historical Society of Dauphin County depends on our members for support, so we held a successful membership drive in April 2014, providing more than \$6,000 in operating funds. This year we were able to offer several new member benefits, depending on the level chosen, including an opportunity to join the Pennsylvania Heritage Society at a dramatically-reduced fee; a complimentary group tour for up to six people; an exclusive Curator's Tour of the Mansion; a discount on rental for a private event; and a signed copy of the book *Building Harrisburg: The Architects and Builders, 1719–1941* by our librarian, Ken Frew.

Membership in the Historical Society of Dauphin County allows *every single member* to tour the Mansion at no cost to themselves. Members are admitted free of charge at Second Sunday programs. You receive discounts on publications and on tickets to special fundraising events. And you have free entry to our research library whenever it is open. Truly, membership has value to each of you.

Thank you to all of our new members and for the continued support of our renewing members. Thanks also to all who attended our Second Sunday public programs, members' tours, fundraisers, and special events.

And to our volunteers, thanks for the countless hours you have given for the good of the Society, often performing professional-level duties. We also appreciate those willing to give tours, work in the gardens, fold letters, and lick envelopes!



Artist and educator Nancy Mendes, left, a member of the Board of Trustees, offered members a free tour of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century oil paintings and other pictures found throughout the mansion.

Donors Help Us to Fulfill Our Mission



We are grateful for annual support, sponsorships, and capital campaign gifts provided to us by the following individuals, foundations, and agencies. We sincerely regret any omissions.

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