

# Regional News

## One On One ... Lebanon County Historical Society Founded 1898

By MARY LOU KELSEY  
Daily News Staff

Carol Light began her job at the Lebanon County Historical Society as a CETA employee, and today she is the organization's full-time coordinator.

**Daily News:** Thanksgiving is approaching. During this holiday we think about our forefathers. When was our area first settled?

**Light:** The city of Lebanon was once Steitztown. It was founded in 1740. When people came to America they settled in ports along the East Coast such as Philadelphia and New York first. They then moved across the country so the eastern portion of the county was settled first. It has been said that there was a Jewish settlement in Schaefferstown as early as 1723.

**Daily News:** Did we have Lebanon Countians fighting in the Revolutionary War?

**Light:** Our men in Lebanon County did serve in that war. The Cedar Fire Co., which used to have its headquarters at Ninth and Cumberland streets, disbanded because its men went off to fight in that war.

**Daily News:** The interest in the Civil War has been peaked because of "The Blue and the Gray." Did we have area men fighting in that war?

**Light:** We almost completed an entire regiment, the 93rd, for the war. The recruitment occurred in what is now Monument Park. There used to be a huge camping field there. The men were issued their uniforms there before they were sent to Washington.

**Daily News:** When was the Lebanon County Historical Society founded?

**Light:** The Society was founded in 1898 by a group of 15 men. These men, mostly doctors and lawyers, felt it was time to preserve Lebanon County history. Other such societies were forming across the state. The group met and housed their records in the old Court House at Eighth and Cumberland streets. Later they moved to the basement of Farmers Trust Co. In the 1930s a man by the name of Hauck donated, through his will, his house at Sixth and Walnut streets. We stayed there until we purchased our current site in 1972. We moved in here in 1976.

**Daily News:** Why was it necessary to move?

**Light:** We needed larger quarters. We ran out of storage and exhibit space in the old building. Now we are able to exhibit almost everything donated. What we can't exhibit we have proper storage for. Now we are able to show off Lebanon County history in a nicer atmosphere.

**Daily News:** Your quarters are the old Moose Lodge. How did you go about raising funds for its purchase?

**Light:** The Moose Lodge was purchased in 1972. The Lebanon Woman's Club donated their profits from their first two Federation Days

projects to the society. We also conducted a large fund-raising drive. All of Lebanon County helped us. Through the money we were able to purchase and make major renovations to the building.

**Daily News:** Does your building have any historical significance?

**Light:** Very much so. The building was constructed in 1773 by Dr. William Henry Stoy. Stoy was prominent in the Revolutionary War. Lebanon County was formed in 1813. It took builders five years to plan and build the courthouse at Eighth and Cumberland. The man who owned this house at the time, a Christian Snavely, rented two upstairs rooms to the county for their courthouse. Lebanon's first court was held in this building. James Buchanan, our 15th president, practiced law here as a young lawyer.

**Daily News:** What is the difference between the Lebanon County Historical Society and the Lebanon County Preservation Trust?

**Light:** The Historic Preservation Trust deals mostly with houses and land where we deal with artifacts. If somebody would call about preserving a log cabin, we would refer them to the trust. If they are interested in donating artifacts, they should come to us.

**Daily News:** What does the Lebanon County Historical Society offer?

**Light:** Our major program is the museum itself. We also have a library. The majority of the people who visit the library come to use our genealogy facilities as we don't have a genealogy society in Lebanon County. We have a lot of family history in our library. We have the county census records.

Some of our volunteers have gone out and copied tombstone records so we have cemetery records for most of the county cemeteries. We have been able to transcribe many of the church records in the county including the churches which are still in existence. Researchers can come here and do their family history. Some of our records do go back to the 1700s.

**Daily News:** How do you preserve such records?

**Light:** We have a lot of copies of documents since most of the churches have kept their original records. We do have old deeds over which we use tissue paper to preserve the acidity balance. We have microfilm of records and newspaper.

**Daily News:** What are some of the oldest things you have displayed?

**Light:** Our two oldest pieces are right in the front entrance hall. There is a small log cabin from the Queen Anne period and a grandfather's clock that was made by Charles Cooper right here in Lebanon in 1745.

**Daily News:** Do you only have objects from Lebanon County history?

**Light:** We do try to stick with things from Lebanon County, but



**INSIDE MANSION** — Carol Light, coordinator of the Lebanon County Historical Society, stands in front of a recently restored portrait of Daniel Buckley, whose

son-in-law built the Mt. Hope Mansion. The marble on the fireplace was added in the Historical Society building during the Victorian era.

that doesn't mean that we will turn away pieces that aren't.

**Daily News:** How do you collect your pieces?

**Light:** We have been very lucky. Ninety-nine percent of our items on display are by donation. At one time the society did go out and purchase a few things. There was a letter that Martin Van Buren had written while in Lebanon that was purchased. Basically we have accumulated your collection through the generosity of the people of Lebanon and people who have moved out of the county who have a Lebanon County piece and donate it to the society because they feel it belongs here.

**Daily News:** If I had something in my house that I thought might be an

antique but I wasn't sure, could the Lebanon County Historical Society help me out?

**Light:** The society is made up of volunteers who are interested in history. We are not professionals in the field. We would refer you to an appraiser.

**Daily News:** How does the society consider historical?

**Light:** We don't have a cutoff date. We have a few displays that could be considered modern. When I say modern I mean around the 1930s. We have a general store display and a beautiful display with an electrical permanent machine. We do cover quite a large area. We do cut off our

clothing display at the 1920s. We have over 30 permanent exhibit displays housed in our second floor and in our basement. It foots a lot of people as far as how small the building looks from the outside.

**Daily News:** What do you think is the most interesting exhibit?

**Light:** It is a personal thing. So many of them are fascinating. The clothing display upstairs has fashions from the 1880s. We also have a colonial kitchen upstairs. Downstairs we have two hose carts and one hand pump.

**Daily News:** How is the society funded?

**Light:** We do receive some funding from the county commissioners that comes in part because we own the

southside of the Union Cannel Tunnel. Some of that money goes to that upkeep. Otherwise we operate through donations and the dues of our more than 1,000 members. We have junior members who are as young as eight and lifetime members who are in their eighties.

**Daily News:** Do you have special fund-raising drives?

**Light:** Our largest is coming up the first Sunday in December. We have a gift shop here which is opened during museum hours. We specialize in Pennsylvania folk art. Our Christmas craft show follows the same theme. We have about 20 craftsmen selling their wares. We decorate the building for Christmas with apple trees, fresh greens and Christmas trees. The one is our Victorian parlor is decorated with appropriate ornaments as is the one in the Colonial kitchen. We also have a large tree in the auditorium. The charge is \$1.50. We will have guides stationed throughout the museum so that people can browse at their leisure.

**Daily News:** Do you have guides at other times?

**Light:** Guides are always on hand during our posted hours.

**Daily News:** What other programs do you have?

**Light:** We have special programs through the year in addition to five regularly scheduled programs. We can schedule special tours for groups. Teachers bring their students in and Boy and Girl Scout groups tour our museum throughout the year. We also have a history fair in the Spring for Lebanon County school students.

**Daily News:** How is the society staffed?

**Light:** The society was formed by volunteers and was completely staffed by volunteers until we got some CETA workers for the office and the library. We are no longer in CETA and a few positions became full time. I began with CETA.

**Daily News:** If you were to fill a time capsule with items from the Historical Society which would best represent Lebanon County, what would you choose?

**Light:** That is a tough question. I think I would include one of the coverlets made by William Ney from Myerstown; the model of the market house that had been at Ninth and Cumberland and because Lebanon County has a rich religious heritage, I would include the chalice and flagon from Union Church in South Lebanon Township that later became Salem Lutheran and Taber United Church of Christ. I would also include a section of wood pipe from the Schaefferstown Waterworks dating from 1763. This was the first public waterworks system in all of the British Colonies. Of course I would include one of our county's history books so that people could sort everything out.

## Civil War Dead Honored ...



More than 100 men and women in Civil War attire participated in patriotic services and a parade in Lebanon Sunday, commemorating the Civil War dead from Lebanon city and county.

At left, President Abraham Lincoln, portrayed by Andy Brunett, speaks during ceremonies in Monument Park, where soldiers were recruited during the Civil War.

The men were issued their uniforms at a huge campsite there before being sent to Washington.

The monument in the park is dedicated to the memory of the men who died in various battles during the Civil War, during which Lebanon County provided nearly the entire contingent of the 93rd Regiment.

At right, a platoon of Confederate and



Union soldiers parade down Lehman Street before the ceremonies at the park.

In addition to Lincoln, participants in the ceremony were Major General Jeb Stuart, portrayed by Robert Trout of Myerstown, and members of the Lancaster Fencibles, 75th New York, 76th Pennsylvania, 103rd Pennsylvania Volunteer, 35th Virginia, and 72nd New York infantries, as well

as Dixie Georgia Artillery, 1st Georgia, 13th Virginia, and the Hanover Township Rifle Battalion.

The parade and commemorative ceremonies, hosted by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, were follow-ups to the National Remembrance Day held on the historic battlefield in Gettysburg Saturday.