Celebrate History Week

The Aspen Historical Society is looking forward once again to hosting Celebrate History Week at the end of March. From Monday, March 27th through Friday, March 31st expect to see your local history come alive with free events, seminars, and a special F.A.C. après-ski program at the Wheeler Opera House.

Everything kicks off at the Wheeler/Stallard House Museum on Monday, March 27th at 2 p.m. with a press conference that should start the week off with some fanfare. We will welcome Mayor Klanderud and “tease” everyone with some information about new exhibits planned for the summer. Perhaps a surprise or two as well.

Tuesday, March 28th is Wheeler/Stallard House Museum day. Admission to the Museum will be free (the perfect time to bring those friends who’ve never been) and refreshments will be provided (there was talk of hardtack and flour biscuits a la 1880, but we decided to offer something more delectable for modern tastebuds). Our Archives will also be open to the public. If you haven’t had a chance to visit this part of the Museum, this would be the day to do it, not only because the Archives are in many ways the heart of the Aspen Historical Society, but also because Sarah Oates, Curator of Collections, and Anna Lookabill-Scott, Archivist and Researcher, will be on hand to explain why it is important to do it properly, and to show off different examples from our collection. Bring your curiosity!

On Wednesday, March 29th the celebration will move out to the Ritz-Carlton Club at the base of Aspen Highlands. We will be holding an informal panel discussion on Willow Creek’s deck about 4:30 (as soon as the Patrol has swept the mountain and can join us) featuring members of the Ski Patrol, past and present, along with longtime local resident, TV commentator, and one-time U.S. Ski Team coach Bob Beattie. The topic of discussion will be “The Ski Patrol: Experiences We’ve Lived to Talk About” as well as perhaps some who didn’t. We will touch on a day in the life and responsibilities of a “troller”, and reminisce from those on the “front line” – the patrollers themselves. It should be fun and a great chance to mingle with these often under-appreciated men and women (and they do know how to have a good time!).

Thursday will be an open house at the wonderful facility that is the Holden/Marolt Mining and Ranching Site. A hands-on living history collection of mining and ranching artifacts, the Holden/Marolt is not only a fascinating history of mining and how it was done in the late 1800’s but is also a testament to the will and effort put forth by the large cadre of volunteers who essentially created it. If you have not had the chance to check out this gem of a site take an hour or two and stop by – you’ll come away with a new appreciation for the work that went into hard rock mining in the “old days”. We know it is spring break and we are planning games for kids and snacks and tours all afternoon.

Celebrate History Week wraps up on Friday with a special F.A.C. (Friday Afternoon Club) après ski party and program at the historic Wheeler Opera House beginning with drinks (cash bar) in the lobby at 4:30. We invite you all to watch great old ski footage which has been put together in partnership with Grassroots Television. We will feature a collection of short film clips spanning from 1948 to the early 1960’s, including Little Susie’s Big Day for the kids and adult children. The program is free and should be a great way to wrap up a day on the slopes as well as a week of celebrating the enthralling history of the Aspen area.

We look forward to seeing everyone at these events – bring friends – and to showing off some of our great assets and resources.
In a nutshell: The Aspen Historical Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit and operates “business as usual” with regard to fulfilling our non-profit mission. The Board of Trustees of the Society governs and is governed by its adopted bylaws. The Trustees will fundraise, plan for the future and support staff efforts to implement these plans using many resources including individual contributions, grant writing, earned income, income from special events and the special district. There are currently fifteen trustees sitting on the non-profit board. Both the trustees and the staff have been energized by the community support demonstrated in the election.

An important resource which will be available to us starting in 2007, is a tax from the Special District. The District will afford the Society a foundation of funding to assure the integrity of our programs and our sites. That was the platform upon which the election campaign triumphed and we are ecstatic that you all believe in our ability to perform for you.

The Special District has a separate board of citizens who were elected by voters in the recent election. There are five District board members. Their responsibility is to oversee the property tax portion of any budget proposed by the Aspen Historical Society. The District will contract with the Society to manage these specific funds after a review and subsequent approval of the AHS annual budget. “We will serve as the ‘firewall’ to assure integrity and transparency of operations for the taxpayer” stated Darryl Grob, President of the Aspen Historical Park and Recreation District.

In this time of increased competition for philanthropic funds and staggering expenses associated with conscientious preservation of archives and artifacts, it is an honor and a privilege for the Aspen Historical Society to be in the precedent setting position of establishing a new paradigm for historical entities. It is humbling for the staff and trustees to have your vote of confidence. You have provided a solution that we hope will result in copycat districts sprouting up all over the country. Our daunting task is to enter this world of the unknown partnership and flourish right from the start.

We’ll let you know how all this works out!

We are extremely pleased to welcome Tom Egan on board as our Director of Communications and Official Raconteur. “Tom’s skill set is sorely needed and we are looking forward to having the new energy and expertise in public relations that Tom brings to us, not to mention an influx of humor,” states Georgia Hanson, Executive Director. As Tom puts it, “I’m as excited about this opportunity as a foot and half of powder on a sunny winter morning!”

Tom is known to many locals as a long-time radio and television personality. He moved to the Roaring Fork Valley in 1976 after attending college at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Originally from New Jersey and growing up both there and in Southern California, Tom’s abiding interest in history was initially piqued by visiting Revolutionary War era sites in the East and Spanish Missions in the West. He has written numerous stories for local publications, including newspapers and most of the local magazines, and has created, written, and produced countless programs for local radio and TV stations. Tom’s lifelong love of history and 30 year love of Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley combined with his demonstrated abilities to communicate effectively with people of all ages and all walks of life make him the ideal person to help the Aspen Historical Society go boldly into its exciting new future … and to make sure everyone knows about it!
When Pitkin County agreed to contribute funds to the Aspen Historical Society to seek a permanent solution to the Society’s financial woes, the grant came with a contract containing a series of performance measures intended to assure that the Society would be held accountable to the intended goals. Most were budget related but not all. Definitely, the most personally rewarding ‘task’ performed by our director was the directive to bring together as many other representatives of historical ventures as possible, in order to share resources when possible and to identify endangered sites or collections that a joint effort might help save.

On November 9th, 17 people representing 12 historical entities from Parachute to Aspen met at the Eagle County Community Center in El Jebel to discuss commonalities and opportunities to share resources. At this meeting, a number of additional groups were identified so our list grows. At our introductory meeting, we identified shared challenges and recognized the power and economies of scale that we can realize as a group working together. We discovered, to no one’s surprise, that our biggest mutual concern is fund-raising and discussed the idea of working together to promote the entire valley.

Our second meeting was held at the Glenwood Railroad Museum, located in the railroad station, which has been lovingly put together by devoted members of the Western Colorado Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. At this meeting we determined that we would submit a joint grant application to the Colorado Tourism Bureau requesting $75,000 to produce a comprehensive and inviting map of all of our historic sites. It has been heartening to watch all of the many different self-interests of Chambers and governments and Societies all melt into one terrific cause. Our curator, Sarah Oates, agreed to spearhead the actual production of the grant and she has been working with a committee from other communities to finalize on a very tight deadline.

The GWHA has agreed to meet quarterly, taking turns to host everyone so that we all will have an opportunity to visit each others sites. Nothing but good can come from this effort as we all work together to preserve the remarkable historic inventory as well as the stories of our home towns.
Scramble for Eggs is On!

Word has recently reached this office that once again some of the finest chickens in the land are gearing up for what promises to be the Greatest Easter Egg Hunt Ever. The event, which takes place at the Aspen Historical Society's Wheeler/Stallard House Museum grounds on Easter Sunday, April 16th, apparently continues to eggcite members of the poultry world – the chickens themselves – according to Farmer McDonald, a hard-boiled old codger.

Old McDonald, as he is known in the trade, is something of an eggspert on hen behavior. “It’s a little strange,” he told us recently, “normally at this time of year the chickens are really fried, what with all the work for the upcoming Easter holiday. Last week, however, once word of the famous Wheeler/Stallard Egg Hunt got into the coop, there’s been a lot of competition to produce the best eggs specifically for that prestigious event. There’s even been some poaching - the smaller chicks who think I’m not looking. Well, that behavior will cease. I’m telling you its over , easy. I’ll be sending along about 1500 of our finest product for the hunt with ‘the girls’ best wishes for an eggcellent day” McDonald continued in our recent interview, “right now, though, we’re all heading out for our daily hike on Sunnyside, up to the top and back down the trail.”

Should be a fun event... for children from 2 to 8! For your calendar: Aspen Historical Society’s Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday, April 16th. Scramble starts at noon, bonnets (with all the frills upon them) encouraged. Bring your own baskets please and we’ll see they are filled up.

2006 PROJECT: A SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The Aspen Historical Society has begun our Strategic Planning process working with the guidance of the Executive Service Corps. We had an exciting and productive retreat at the beginning of March and now have sub-committees working on goals for us to consider.

It is extremely gratifying to be going through this process with the knowledge that we have such strong support from the community. We are considering opportunities we had once thought beyond reach. These opportunities will bring more organized and cared for product. It is difficult to express how exciting that is for the staff and board.

At each milestone we will be holding focus groups, offering all interested a chance to be involved in our process. The first set of focus groups will begin in April. If you have already expressed your interest, we will be calling you shortly to set up times.

If you have not called us and want to attend please call 925-3721 to leave your name and number.

If you want to get our newsletter electronically, send your email address to info@aspenhistory.org