Fall 1990

McKissick Newsletter - Fall 1990

McKissick Museum--University of South Carolina

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It has only been within the past two decades that national critics and scholars have recognized the importance of regional art as a field of study. Whether it be contemporary art, folk art or historical works, there is now much discussion on the existence and significance of regional styles. In particular, the “Southern” ethos and its meaning for the rest of the nation has come into consideration. Everywhere you look, books examine Southern culture and magazines extol local variations of cooking, “homestyle” country decorating, vernacular architecture and a back-to-your-roots “lifestyle.”

The exhibition Work Song, featured at McKissick Museum from August 31 to October 28, is a prime example of this new interest in local art. It takes the works of eight recognized South Carolina artists and examines their portrayal of Southern labor during the first half of this century. Given the strongly agrarian nature of so much of South Carolina life both then and now, it is not surprising that these are scenes of manual labor performed under the bright Carolina sun. The exhibition has three important purposes: it calls attention to the artistic ability and diversity of these artists, records their individual attitudes toward the subject of land and labor and documents the social milieu in which physical labor was performed. The title is taken from the universal tradition of workers to compose and sing songs to ease and speed their labors.

Except for Alfred Hutty, all of the artists in the exhibition are South Carolina natives. Most of them enjoyed recognition and praise for their talents within the state during their lifetime and five of the artists have been the sole subject of extensive museum exhibitions in recent years. William H. Johnson, though not recognized in his home state until a dozen years ago, has gained national prominence for his unique style which blends a calculated naivety of line and form with bold expressive colors.

Like Thomas Hart Benton, whose work was featured in an exhibition at McKissick during the fall of 1989, these eight artists were part of a national arts movement which stressed the depiction of everyday life in an easily understandable artistic style. Though the theoretical underpinnings for this approach differed from artist to artist, most sought in their work to celebrate what they saw as a uniquely American way of life. From the lyrical beauty of Elizabeth O'Neill Verner's work to the affected primitivism of William H. Johnson, each of these painters and printmakers evokes a strongly regional way of life, dependent on the Southern seasons and focused on the bounty of the land.

Although most of these artists shared an idealized view of the Southern landscape, they also shared a concern over the harsh realities of life in the South, particularly during the years of the Great Depression. For the most part, the figures in the works in this exhibition are treated with dignity, not sentimentality. Thomas Styron, director of the Greenville Museum, which organized the exhibition, has said that the rural hardships depicted in these works are no less profound than those found in the creations of the social realist artists such as Ben Shahn, who
worked with the subjects of big city sweat shops and the immigrant poor. "The resourcefulness and entrepreneurship of the people depicted in this exhibition indicate hope and command respect. Despite the contemporary inclination to retrospectively apply nostalgic connotations to earlier art, it is important to recognize that these works are fundamentally documentary."

What these works most vividly document is the dependence of South Carolina on a strongly African-American labor force to work the land. It is estimated that during the Depression a majority of those directly involved in agricultural work were black. This group of art works also documents the sense of knowledge and power which these artists felt lay within this group—the knowledge of the land that came from years of living at a subsistence level and the power of human endurance in the face of long suffering. The "work songs" that sustained black laborers in the fields depicted in these art works were later transformed into songs that helped sustain the black community through the traumatic years of the civil rights movement.

A number of special events have been scheduled during the fall to accompany this exhibition. Join us for both the gala members reception and the outdoor concert by the Moving Star Hall Singers as well as a lecture by Guy Carawan and numerous Sunday afternoon films.
Memories and effects of Hurricane Hugo are the focal points for this year's State Fair exhibition. "Where were you when the lights went out?" is the theme for our exhibition representing the University of South Carolina at the fair. We are located in the back right corner of the Cantey building in the "Discovery Fair" area.

The USC exhibition will observe the anniversary of Hugo's destructive might with scenes of the statewide devastation and our ongoing recovery efforts. Emphasis will be placed on actions, reactions and research into the multiple impact of economic, general health, environmental and other factors on South Carolina and her citizens. From generalized State budget woes to individual losses of home and personal possessions, everyone in South Carolina has been and will continue to be affected for several years to come.

Few events reinforce the human bond more than the shared experience of surviving a catastrophe of nature. Desperate people held their children above their heads in neck-high water in McClellanville. Distressed people throughout the state lived for days to weeks without running water or electricity. Stories of individual bravery or greed rub shoulders with tales of community action to rebuild and start again. Share your own memories with other South Carolinians at this year's fair.

Concrete pilings litter the foreground where a house once stood while remnants of other houses remain on the sand-stripped beach where a tidal surge nearly 20 feet high struck Garden City during Hugo. Courtesy of the South Carolina Geological Survey; by Ralph H. Willoughby.
Profile: The Moving Star Hall Singers

The Moving Star Hall Singers of Johns Island, Charleston County, are nationally recognized for their important contributions to African-American heritage. They are a multi-generational family group who belong to Moving Star Hall, one of the last remaining praise houses of the South Carolina sea islands. During the slavery period, these praise houses were developed to provide a place of informal worship during times when an ordained minister could not be present. The praise houses gave the African-American community a place of worship that was not under the strict control of the white plantation. Here a powerful and distinctive form of worship developed, a shouting style of religious song born from the encounter of African and European religions that moves the heart and lifts the spirit. After emancipation, the praise houses of the sea islands remained an important repository of these spirituals after they disappeared elsewhere.

The Moving Star Hall Singers came to national attention during the early 1960s, when they were "discovered" by outsiders sympathetic to sea island culture. Beginning with an appearance at the Newport Folk Festival, they have performed throughout the United States, from folk festival to city concert hall, bringing the songs, games, stories and occupational skills of sea island culture to a broad and appreciative audience. They have been the subject of numerous record albums, films and books. Their contribution has been recognized on a national level by the award of a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship to Janie Hunter, matriarch of the family, in 1984. In April of this year, the South Carolina General Assembly recognized the Moving Star Hall Singers as ambassadors of South Carolina's heritage by honoring the group with the South Carolina Folk Heritage Award.

The Moving Star Hall Singers will perform at McKissick Museum on September 16th at 4:00 p.m. The film documents the development of this signature song of the civil rights movement. Carawan played a crucial role in disseminating "We Shall Overcome," originally borrowed from the labor movement, among early civil rights workers. Carawan and his wife Candie also played an instrumental role in bringing the Moving Star Hall Singers of Johns Island to national attention. Carawan will present the Moving Star Hall Singers on September 16th at 4:00 p.m. The Museum will conduct a monthly long folklife survey of the two Pee Dee counties. This project will culminate in a public humanities forum to be held in Cheraw as well as the preparation of materials for an exhibit on folklife traditions in the region. A folklorist will document the traditional lifeways of these counties through photography and sound recordings as well as interviews with residents.

Grant to study Pee Dee region awarded

McKissick Museum has received a grant from the South Carolina Humanities Council, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities, to document and present the culture of South Carolina's Pee Dee region. This endeavor is a continuation of work supported by the Council under the Rural Humanities project which began in 1985. With this grant the counties of Marlboro and Chesterfield will be added to the eight already studied by the Museum's State Folk Arts Program.

The Museum will conduct a month-long folklife survey of the two Pee Dee counties. This project will culminate in a public humanities forum to be held in Cheraw as well as the preparation of materials for an exhibit on folklife traditions in the region. A folklorist will document the traditional lifeways of these counties through photography and sound recordings as well as interviews with residents.

Noted Folk Music Collector and Civil Rights Worker to Speak

In conjunction with the Work Song exhibition, noted folk music collector and civil rights worker Guy Carawan will comment on Jim Brown's award-winning film "We Shall Overcome" on September 15th at 4:00 p.m. The film documents the development of this signature song of the civil rights movement. Carawan played a crucial role in disseminating "We Shall Overcome," originally borrowed from the labor movement, among early civil rights workers. Carawan and his wife Candie also played an instrumental role in bringing the Moving Star Hall Singers of Johns Island to national attention. Carawan will present the Moving Star Hall Singers on September 16th at 4:00 p.m.
AUGUST

26  
Crossroads of Clay—Film Series  
"Unbroken Tradition" ____________________3 pm
Pottery Identification Session __________________ 3:30 pm

28  
General Docent Training—Session I ____________10 am

29  
General Docent Training—Session II ____________10 am

30  
Work Song - Members' Preview Reception __________ 7 pm

Exhibits ________________________________

Hillel at USC __________________________through August 12, 1990
David Chamberlain, Retrospective ____________through August 19, 1990
Crossroads of Clay ________________through September 9, 1990
Work Song ____________________________August 31 through October 28, 1990
A Land and Life Remembered: America-Liberian Folk Architecture________ September 30 through December 31, 1990
Welcome To Planet Earth ____________through December 15, 1991

Permanent Exhibits __________________________

The Baruch Silver Collection ________________1st Floor
Movietone News (currently showing "War in the Pacific") __ 1st Floor
The Mineral Library __________________________2nd Floor
The Gem and Fluorescent Mineral Mini-Galleries ________2nd Floor

SEPTEMBER

8  
Teacher Workshop  
"Dinosaurs in the Classroom"

9  
Work Song—Film Series  
"Everything Change Up Now"

11  
Work Song—Docent Training

13  
McKissick Midday—Russell

15  
Work Song—Lecture  
"Work Culture and Work Socialization"
Work Song—Film Series  
"We Shall Overcome"

16  
Work Song—Concert  
Moving Star Hall Singers

20  
McKissick Midday—Russell

23  
Welcome To Planet Earth  
"Dino Stomp"

27  
McKissick Midday—Russell

30  
English Tea at McKissick
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| 7 | *Work Song—Film Series*  
“Nimrod Workman: To Fit My Own Category” | 3 pm |
| 11 | Members Trip to Boston  
 McKissick Midday—Russell House Patio | 12 pm |
| 14 | *Work Song—Film Series*  
“Banjo Man” | 3 pm |
| 21 | *Welcome To Planet Earth—Film Series*  
“Dinosaurs: Puzzles From The Past” | 3 pm |
| 25 | McKissick Midday—Russell House Patio | 12 pm |
| 28 | English Tea at McKissick | 3 & 4 pm |

North end of Folly Island after Hurricane Hugo. Remains of dock in foreground. Part of the exhibit “Where were you when the lights went out?” at the S.C. State Fair. Courtesy of the South Carolina Geological Survey; by Ralph H. Willoughby.
In a report to the American Colonization Society in 1828, five Liberians who were former Americans reported that:

Our houses are constructed of the same materials, and finished in the same style, as in the towns of America. We have an abundance of good building stone, shells for lime, and clay, of an excellent quality, for bricks. Timber is plentiful, of various kinds, and fit for all the different purposes of building and fencing.

While the United States has often been referred to as the melting pot of the world since many international cultures have brought their life and culture in other areas of the world. Such was the case with the out-migration of African-Americans to Liberia in West Africa in the nineteenth century. Between 1822 and 1872 nearly 17,000 Americans left this country to settle in Liberia—the largest single out-migration of Americans ever.

Liberia represented an opportunity for a freer and better life for these African-Americans. But as settlers, they were not African-Americans going back to Africa; they were Americans establishing themselves in a new environment. Settlement began in 1822 and by 1847 Liberia had become the first democratic nation in Africa. Settlements with familiar American names, such as Louisiana, New Georgia and Virginia, grew rapidly and produced coffee, cocoa, palm oil and other agricultural products for European and American markets.

From the beginning of the Liberian colonization effort, the new settlers were concerned with providing themselves with suitable housing. Although Liberian settler architecture included most of the common plan types and construction techniques found in the American South, the style most desired by the Americo-Liberians was a two-story brick or weather-board frame house with a two-story veranda and a centrally placed stair passage. As the Americo-Liberian settlers built homes and other cultural buildings of the types they had known as Americans, they also established similar social structures in their churches, schools and local governments.

Beginning in the late 1970s, photographer Max Belcher, anthropologist Svend E. Holsoe and folklorist Bernard L. Herman, from the University of Delaware, started examining this subject from several aspects. They sought to explore the architecture of the Americo-Liberian settlers and their descendants, to trace its "old world" roots in the rural architecture of the American South, and to examine the adaptation and relevance of those American forms in the "new world" context of West Africa. They selected the Liberian town of Arthington, on the St. Paul River, and traced the American origins of its founders and earliest citizens. Established between 1869 and 1873, Arthington was populated by black Americans from northeast North Carolina, north-central South Carolina, specifically York County, and south-central Georgia.

By examining the antebellum structures in this country, these scholars were able to establish the core cultural memory of the new settlers in Arthington about 1870. While no one building is an exact duplication of those in the Carolinas or Georgia, it is the collective memory of how life and work and society were ordered in the American South that was reproduced in Arthington and other settlements in Liberia.

Three themes became evident as the researchers began looking at the broader patterns of material culture and society—diffusion, acculturation and social organization. All three themes affected the built landscape of Liberia. Through the diffusion theme it is possible to identify the ideas, materials and skills that influenced the design and construction of the Liberian buildings. The issue of acculturation deals with the idea that the settlers' heritage had already adopted the dominant white culture behaviors and standards as their own in many ways. Upon arrival in Africa there is evidence of a "historical confusion" wherein they influence and are influenced by the native African people. Finally, through social organization it can be seen how architecture served as symbols of social and economic passage and position, once again an idea established by the American experience.

Through A Land and Life Remembered: Americo-Liberian Folk Architecture, which was organized by the Brockton Art Museum/Fuller Memorial, it is possible to enjoy the handsome photography of Max Belcher depicting structures found in many familiar American locations as well as similar architecture found in its new Liberian setting. Please also join us for a lecture at the Museum on November 18 at 3 p.m. and a members' trip to York County during that month.

William Henry Tyler Mansion
Arthington, Uiberna

The Bricks, 1843-45
Brattonsville, York County, South Carolina
Basketmakers Receive Recognition

McKissick Museum and its South Carolina Folk Arts Program has enjoyed a decade-long professional relationship with the community of sweetgrass basketmakers in Mt. Pleasant. The Museum’s involvement began with the research conducted by guest curator, Dale Rosengarten, which culminated in the exhibit, Row Upon Row: Sea Grass Baskets of the South Carolina Lowcountry, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. During her research, Ms. Rosengarten became aware of the difficulties sweetgrass basketmakers were facing as the available natural sources of sweetgrass diminished with expanding coastal development.

In response to this problem, the Museum organized the Sweetgrass Conference in March 1988 to evaluate the impact of public policy and development on the basketmakers’ access to sweetgrass resources. The conference, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Ruth Mott Foundation, was co-hosted by the Avery Research Center for Afro-American History, the Charleston Museum, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Seabrook Natural History Group. As a result of the conference, basketmakers, developers and environmental scientists have cooperated to provide better access to sweetgrass and to experiment with developing strains of the plant that can be cultivated. The proceedings of this conference have been recently published and are available from the Museum.

Perhaps most significant was the organization of the Mt. Pleasant Sweetgrass Basketmakers’ Association. For the first time, the basketmakers have an organization that can serve as an official voice for the community and an advocate for its needs. In the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo, the association has played a critical role in organizing relief efforts among the basketmakers.

The important work of all those who have contributed to this effort has been recognized by a number of recent honors, articles and symposia. In April, the Mt. Pleasant Sweetgrass Basketmakers’ Association received a South Carolina Folk Heritage Award from the state legislature. At the first national Cultural Conservation Conference, hosted by the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., a plenary session on the sweetgrass basketmakers recounted the work of the last decade as a model of innovative and cooperative approaches to conserving important cultural traditions. The session was featured in a recent article in the Chronicle of Higher Education. McKissick’s involvement with the basketmaking community will also be highlighted in the annual report of the National Endowment for the Arts as one of the most successful projects funded by the Endowment during the past 25 years.

Anyone wishing to make a contribution to the relief effort may contact the Mt. Pleasant Sweetgrass Basketmakers’ Association, P.O. Box 761, Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina 29464.

This recognition for the work of the past decade is well-deserved, but much remains to be done to assure the healthy continuation of this distinctive South Carolina tradition, particularly in the wake of Hurricane Hugo. Basketmakers have suffered much loss of materials and household damage.
Crossroads of Clay
Film and Pottery Identification

As Crossroads of Clay draws to a close at McKissick, we have planned two special send-off events on August 26th. First, at 3:00 p.m. we will show the film "Unbroken Tradition," the newest Appalachian film about Jerry Brown, an Alabama potter.

This film follows Brown as he digs the clay, prepares it for the wheel and fires it in his own kiln. As the film progresses, Brown tells how he left a career in logging for pottery, discloses tricks of the potter's trade and talks about how pottery has shaped the life of his family.

After the film screening, Crossroads of Clay guest curator Cinda Baldwin and chief curator Catherine Horne will help the general public identify pottery that they bring. Many people have called the Museum with questions about their alkaline-glazed stoneware—this will provide an opportunity for everyone to learn more about how makers' marks, glazes and pottery shapes help us date and identify pottery.

McKissick Midday Returns

The Museum's popular lunchtime concert series will return this fall with another exciting sampler of traditional music from all parts of South Carolina. The series of six concerts will be held on the outdoor stage behind Russell House, the University's student union. Each concert will begin at 12:00 noon on the following dates: September 13, 20, 27, October 4, 11, 25. Past concerts have featured vibrant musical traditions such as blues, gospel, old-time country and western swing. In our next series we'll explore the musical traditions of some of South Carolina's lesser-known ethnic groups. Bring a lunch and come join us!

Calling All Docents, Calling All Docents!

As students throughout Columbia return to school, it's also time for us to take a refresher course on docenting at McKissick, touch base with each other and welcome new volunteers. Please join us on August 28th and 29th from 10:00 a.m. until noon for a general docent training. While you're at it, think of friends who might enjoy helping out at the Museum and bring them along. Some of the most committed volunteers that we have were recruited by McKissick docents. If you're reading this and haven't yet tried your hand at docenting, please give Gail Matthews a call at 777-7251 to chat about our program.
Welcome to those of you who have joined us for the first time. We are delighted to have you as McKissick Members and look forward to meeting you soon. We hope you will enjoy the many activities that are available to you as a McKissick Member.

W. Scott Barnes  
Mrs. Horace Beach  
Leona Blackburn  
Ms. BeBe Higgs  
Mr. and Mrs. Luther C. Call  
Mrs. H. A. Champion  
Kimberly A. Cook  
Dr. Charles and Betsy Cotran  
Deborah Danko  
Louise W. Farley  
Edmund L. and Hazer H. Fountain  
Ruthann Fox-Hines  
Elizabeth B. Gilbert  
Ella L. Krieger  
Jean McCiellan  
Teri T. MacMillen  
Susie McWilliams  
Linda Morphis  
Cathy Perkins  
Frances Perkins  
Fred Perry III  
Kathy L. Pilgrim  
Mr. and Mrs. T. B. Rainstord  
Manuel Rodriguez  
Ronald and Mims Rust  
Elizabeth Severance  
James D. Soury  
Mohitika Shah  
Joe and Wendy Shumoff  
Miss Ebba S. Van  
Patricia A. Williams  
Phil Wingard

And a big thank you to each of you who has renewed your membership for 1990.

Fall Trips

River Cruise

The Island Queen is in operation again and a historic plantation river cruise aboard it is scheduled for McKissick Members on Thursday, September 27. The cruise will take members on a two-hour trip up the dark waters of the Pee Dee River. Privately-owned plantations, abandoned rice fields and a rich variety of plants and wildlife will be seen during this guided tour, which relates the history and legends of this fascinating area of South Carolina. The $30.00 fee includes transportation to Georgetown, the river cruise and a box lunch from the Lands End Restaurant. The deadline for registration is September 6.

This trip was a sell-out last fall when it was offered and then had to be cancelled due to Hugo. Get your reservations in early!

To participate in the day trip aboard the Island Queen on September 27, please send your check made to USC McKissick Museum or your credit card and social security number with the form below to McKissick Museum, USC, Columbia, S. C. 29208.

Please reserve my/our place for the trip aboard the Island Queen on September 27.

NAME _________________________
ADDRESS _______________________
CITY ___________________ STATE_ ZIP ______
PHONE _________________________
CHECK □ MASTERCARD □ VISA □ #
Exp. Date __________ Signature
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _______________________
(With Mastercard and Visa only.)

Boston, Massachusetts

The exciting four-day trip October 11-14 to Boston, Massachusetts, is almost filled. Be sure to get your reservation in before the deadline of August 15. Participants will retrace Paul Revere's famous midnight ride, touring many of the beautifully restored homes and taverns he passed or stopped in from Boston to Arlington, Medford, Lexington and Concord. See the details of this trip arranged especially for McKissick Members in the brochure mailed earlier to members. Call for additional information.

English Teas

Be sure to circle September 30 and October 28 on your calendar and plan to join us for an English tea at either 3:00 or 4:00 p.m. The English teas, which have been most successful, are now being served by McKissick docents. We can promise you a delightful hour while you sit down for a sip of fragrant Royal Blend Indian and Ceylon tea from Fortnum and Mason's, London, served in a delicate china cup and accompanied by delicious homemade sandwiches, scones and tea cakes.

Reservations are necessary and should be made by the Tuesday before each tea. Tickets are $4.00 for members and $5.00 for non-members.

Coming Up

In November there will be a trip to historic Brattonsville in conjunction with the America-Liberian exhibition which opens at McKissick on October 15. Over a 200-year period three groups of people made historic Brattonsville the site you see today. There are two main residences and seven other surviving structures located along a country road near York. This complex began as a single log structure built in the 1770s by Col. William Bratton.

In December an overnight trip to Old Salem, North Carolina, is being repeated by popular demand. This trip will put you in the Christmas spirit with holiday decorations everywhere, delicious food, delightful accommodations, shopping and tours of the Old Salem Moravian Village and the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, which will be decorated for Christmas.

There will also be a special Christmas English tea in December.
In 1988 McKissick Museum was the recipient of $6,000 from the National Endowment of the Arts' Advancement Program. That award was just the beginning of a year-long self-evaluation process to help shape the Museum's future growth and direction.

During 1988-89 the staff worked diligently to formulate an updated mission statement for McKissick as well as do in-depth assessments of our needs as an institution. At times we used the assistance of professional consultants in the areas of facilities planning and electrical engineering and marketing/public relations which were funded from the grant. What we discovered is that there are four areas of most importance to the future successes of the Museum.

A lot of you are aware that the old heating and air conditioning system of the Museum was replaced several years ago. One of our biggest needs now is to have an addition to that system that will allow the staff to control the humidity. Fluctuating humidity and temperature levels can be very damaging to the collections and objects on loan for exhibition at McKissick.

The Museum also has an urgent need for a freight elevator and loading dock. Most of you probably don't realize the difficulty the staff has experienced in moving exhibitions in and out of the building. Because of our location on the Horseshoe, none of the tractor trailer rigs can get close to any of our entrance doors. At times we have had to unload and load exhibits on the corner of Bull and Pendleton and bring the crates in on dollies. We have even had crates off-loaded elsewhere on campus or at the State Museum and have had them brought to the Museum by smaller trucks that can make it into the little Horseshoe in front of the University's administration building. Because some of the objects are packed in crates that won't fit into the existing elevator at McKissick, we have experienced many problems in getting crates up the winding, narrow staircases to the appropriate storage areas for unpacking. We also have trouble getting motorized wheelchairs into the small elevator and would like to be able to improve the handicap access to the galleries on all floors.

Another area that deserves attention is in programs and exhibitions development. A number of you recently participated in a survey to discover what members think about McKissick and its offerings. This survey is just one of the tools that will help the staff determine what our audience participation is, how the public finds out about McKissick and what other special interest groups in our community could benefit from McKissick programs.

Most of you already know that the University's operating budget has not been funded at 100 percent for the past several years. University support for the Museum includes funds for salaries and operating expenses, however, McKissick has to seek support for major programs, exhibitions and conservation efforts. The Museum staff has been very successful over the last number of years in writing grants that have enabled us to do exhibitions like The First Egyptians and Crossroads of Clay. However, the staff has barely begun to develop fundraising talents in the private sector that will help establish an endowment and insure a positive future growth for the Museum. With Phase I of the Advancement Program, McKissick has worked with the University's Development Office and also the private firm of Ferrillo & Gregg to see what our options are in the development area.

This brings us to Phase II of the National Endowment of the Arts' Advancement Program. In June of this year the Museum submitted a strategic plan covering our goals and objectives for the next three years. If we are successful in receiving this grant from the NEA, McKissick stands to receive up to $75,000 to help us attain some of our goals. The award must be matched 3 to 1, with all the funds earmarked to specific accomplishments of our strategic plan. The Museum should find out about the grant awards in November of this year. We will definitely keep you informed of our progress!