

# Yarns



The Newsletter of The National Museum of the American Coverlet

Volume 8, Number 1

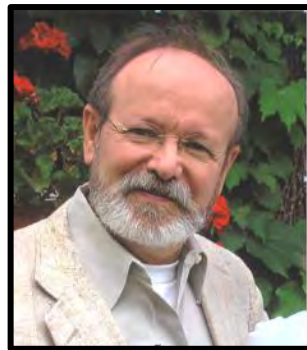
May 2013

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## From the President

By Edward Maeder



### WHY IS THERE A COVERLET MUSEUM?

Having survived our first seven years, The National Museum of the American Coverlet continues to examine our programs and our goals. As is the case in nearly all museums, our mission is to inspire and to educate. We do this by making the museum's holdings accessible to students, scholars, collectors, and the general public. The most "time honored," universal method is though changing exhibitions. Walking through a themed exhibition is like taking a mini-course in history, genealogy, and technology accompanied by explanations from our well-informed and articulate staff. Coverlets come to life as visually attractive and historically fascinating objects from our shared past. This experience is intensified through the offering of symposia, workshops, and fiber retreats. Our most comprehensive look at the world of coverlets is an annual program called Coverlet College, which we inaugurated in September 2012. Two days of intense exposure, illustrated talks, practical "hands-on" examinations, and discussions led by experts give our interested public a rare opportunity to experience these important historical artifacts up

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**President, cont'd:** close and personal. In addition to this, the museum offers courses in weaving and related subjects such as rug-hooking, quilting, and knitting.

The importance of textiles in the daily life of each and every citizen during the early decades of this country cannot be overemphasized. The National Museum of the American Coverlet is forging connections with the past, bringing to the interested public new insights into a bygone America. For rural Americans, being able to own and display a

woven coverlet was an act of pride and accomplishment. If it was a fancy coverlet and included the name of the owner, weaver, place and date of manufacture, it was an even greater status symbol. This form of identification predated our current designer label obsession by nearly a century.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Director/Curator, Melinda Zongor, I want to thank you for your continued support of this endeavor. We look forward to further enriching your lives with future programs, publications, and exhibitions.



## The Director's Corner

By Melinda Zongor

### *NMAC CELEBRATES SEVENTH BIRTHDAY*

The Coverlet Museum was incorporated in February of 2006. It's hard to believe that seven years have passed so quickly! When this Museum was founded, we knew it would be a big, sometimes difficult, responsibility. We anticipated rough spots—and, oh my, there have been a few, with more to come no doubt. But there has been lots of great stuff as well! We tend to be so

busy concentrating on our “to do” list that we need to stop for a minute to enjoy and celebrate all that has been accomplished.

We continue to meet wonderful people. We are always learning—often from our visitors. Our day is “made” when a visitor comes in and marvels at the beauty of the coverlets. It is even better when she drags in her reluctant husband and he admits that he enjoyed them too! And there is so much more. Here are just a few things that come to mind:

- The Museum has grown seven-fold, from a one-room space to six rooms plus office/library.
- The collection has grown from 62 pieces to approximately 500—virtually all donated.
- Programs are underway, with more taking shape: classes, symposia, workshops, special events, and more – all, well attended and growing.
- Visitors have arrived from around the world.
- The Museum now owns the Bedford Common School building.
- Donated funds have financed the replacement of roofs on the two front porches and the entire west side of the main building.

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**Director, cont'd:** This list is not self-congratulatory. It is about you. All of this has been made possible by you, Dear Reader. Your ongoing assistance has taken many forms. It is not only about shop sales and finances (although we certainly encourage and welcome donations of all types). It is so much more than that. With your enthusiasm, your belief in the mission, your moral support during the challenging times, your volunteer help, your return visits, especially when you bring friends, your kind words and wonderful comments on Facebook and TripAdvisor, and JUST BEING THERE... you have truly kept the Museum alive and growing. We cannot adequately express how much you mean to us.

Thank you!

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## I'LL BUY THAT!

New Exhibition

By Melinda Zongor

The newest exhibition I'LL BUY THAT! is now open at The National Museum of the American Coverlet.

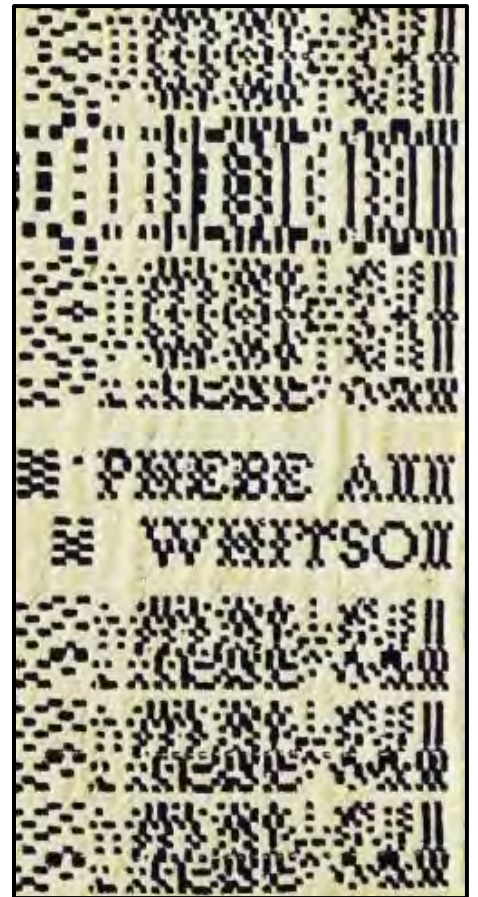
One of the most well-known characteristics of the woven coverlet is the inscription that identifies it. Of course, not all coverlets bear inscriptions; but when they do, they can tell us a lot. Varying in complexity, placement and content, the inscription can be interesting, informative, and sometimes entertaining. It can denote the maker's name, the location of origin, the date, a political slogan, a bible verse, a pattern name, or even a commemoration ...and it can include the client or owner's name—the person for whom (or about whom) it was made.

In general, nowadays much more attention is given to the weaver than the client; but we decided to turn the tables. The new exhibition focuses on coverlet client/owners. Therefore our purpose here is not so much an exploration of professional weavers and their methods of coverlet production, but rather the folks who purchased them.

Who were these buyers?

As you may know, most coverlets that show inscriptions are the figured and fancy type – the ones with realistic, recognizable patterns generally produced by professional weavers on looms equipped with a Jacquard attachment.

However, there are some geometric coverlets in the mix as well. Several weavers on Long Island, New York, including the Mott Mill, produced inscribed coverlets, many showing a client name, but woven without the aid of Jacquard's revolutionary technology.



*Continued on page 4*



One of these Mott Mill coverlets is included in the exhibition. It was made in 1826 for Phebe Anne Whitson. She was born Phebe Ann Carll, the oldest of six children of Lemuel Carll and Jemima Baylis of Huntington, Suffolk County. It appears that Phebe was born on December 29, 1789, and she married Henry Whitson, a farmer of Oyster Bay in Nassau County, on April 1, 1813. After rearing eight children, Henry and Phebe lived to ripe old ages—Phebe dying first on March 5, 1870, followed shortly by Henry on August 4, 1871. (*Another Long Island coverlet by a different maker, made twenty years later in 1846, for Phebe Whitson, is pictured on page 78 of Susan Rabbit Goody's book Woven History, The Technology and Innovation of Long Island Coverlets, 1800-1860. This coverlet was probably made for Phebe Ann's daughter born in 1829.*)

Both men and women ordered and purchased textiles in general and coverlets in particular.

**You probably already know that a woman's name woven into a coverlet is generally that of the owner rather than the maker.** That is because comparatively few known professional weavers were women, and they almost never "signed" a coverlet. So if your great great grandmother's name appears on your heirloom figured and fancy coverlet, it was made **for** her, not **by** her.

**Conversely, however, the male name on the coverlet is not always that of the weaver. It could be the client/owner.** A particularly attractive example of a coverlet with a male client name is the one made in Champaign County, Ohio in 1852 by John Wirick for David Bosswell. It was mentioned in the May 2009 edition of *Yarns* and is now once again on exhibition at NMAC. Farmer David Bosswell was born in about 1808 in Virginia. In 1850, he and his forty-year old wife, Nancy, were living in Champaign County's Jackson Township with their nine children.



Male client/owner names can appear in coverlets from any of the states that produced coverlets. For some reason, this seems especially true in New Jersey coverlets, as we've seen more examples of coverlets with male owners from that location than any other. It remains to be seen if this is just a coincidence, or if there really were more male clients in that area.. For example, a nice all-blue wool New Jersey coverlet made for James Ackerman in 1836 is now on display.

If these disclosures seem to run afoul of everything you thought you knew, hang in there and take heart. One of the most important things you need to know about coverlets is that there is an exception to every rule. In other words, just when you think you have it all figured out, something will jump out of the woodwork and make you question your conclusions. Either way, the many facets of coverlet study continue to be a source of inspiration and enjoyment for the collector, the owner, and the researcher. For the more diligent (or obsessed!) collector/researcher, it can be incredibly rewarding to investigate the client names. See Christine Jeryan's article on the Elizabeth Wintermute coverlet on page 9.



# Roof Repairs

By Melinda Zongor

On December 20, 2012, the latest phase of major repairs was completed on the roof of the Museum building. The shingles on the west side (rear) have now been removed and replaced. This project, along with a rebuilding of the roofs on the two front porches, was made possible by generous donations and the proceeds of the November fundraising auction.

In working on the porches, the contractor found some inadequate structural details and reconstructed those roof sections to current standards. They also installed proper flashing where there had never previously been any! As a result, the porch roofs are now stronger and better than before, while saving and staying true to the building's visible, historic elements.

It is wonderfully pleasing and reassuring to know that there will be no more leaks in the areas below the solid, good-looking new roofing.



We thank George Beckett and Sons, general contractors, for their great work. We look forward to working with them again this year as we start repairs on the east side (front) of the building. NMAC has applied for a \$5,000 grant to assist with the cost of the next section; and if successful, we'll have to raise a match for that amount. Wish us good luck!

In the meantime, you can see more pictures of the section just completed. They are posted on the website, in a link near the top right-hand side of the home page, titled *Great News! Roof Repairs!*



# Membership Renewals

The National Museum of the American Coverlet is your museum. It is here *for you and because of you*. By renewing your Membership, you help this Museum continue in its mission of education, exhibition, and conservation, introducing the public to American woven coverlets. Your membership includes

- a full year of free admission,
- reduced rates for events and programs,
- a 10% discount on your Museum Shop purchases, and
- free access to the reference library.

Take advantage of these “perks” – visit frequently and make the most of your membership. Meet and greet other people who share your (and our) interests in early textiles. Come and enjoy the beautiful town of Bedford, Pennsylvania, with all its myriad attractions.



Your continued support and membership are truly appreciated. We hope to see you often. Let us know what we can do for you.

## The National Museum of the American Coverlet

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## We Need Your Email Address

We want to share the latest Museum news and coming events as well as interesting articles about coverlets with our members. Please send your current email address to the Museum at [info@coverletmuseum.org](mailto:info@coverletmuseum.org) so that we can be in touch. We promise to never give, lend, or sell your information to anyone else.





# Coverlet College

By Ron Walter

The second annual Coverlet College offered by The National Museum of the American Coverlet in Bedford, Pennsylvania, will be held September 21 and 22, 2013. This year, in addition to basic sessions we have added advanced sessions, with presentations by several recognized experts.

On September 21, basic sessions will be offered for those new to coverlet study. This course has been revised based on constructive comments received from previous attendees and experience gained during presentations last year. The basic sessions cover essential topics including:

- Coverlet Documentation
- Fiber Identification
- Weave Structures Used in American Coverlets
- Types of Looms Used in Coverlet Weaving
- Types of Geometric as well as Figured and Fancy Coverlets
- Coverlet Weavers
- Regional Coverlet Styles

On September 22, veteran coverlet aficionados will enjoy sessions covering a variety of advanced topics. We are pleased to announce our staff has been joined by noted experts Harold Mailand, Gay McGeary, and Pat Hilts. The advanced sessions cover the following important topics:

- Sources of Coverlet Motif Designs
- Care for Your Coverlet
- Harry Tyler: Celebrated Weaver of the Year
- Block Design and Fabric Analysis of Early Coverlets
- Star Work Coverlets
- Weaving Manuscripts of John and Christian King
- Examples of NY Geometric Coverlets with Names and Dates
- How Early Long Island Geometric Coverlet Weavers Wove the Names and Dates

September is fast approaching, so sign up now. A full schedule and registration form can be found on NMAC's website: [www.coverletmuseum.org](http://www.coverletmuseum.org).



Melinda Zongor opens the 2012 Coverlet College

Please pass this information along to any of your friends whom you think might be interested, and feel free to call us with any questions you may have (814) 623-1588.

We look forward to seeing you at Coverlet College 2013.

# Upcoming Events

Mark your calendar!!! The year 2013 is shaping up to be a busy one. Here are some of the things we have scheduled so far (with more to come):

## **Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival** – Saturday/Sunday, May 4-5

We will once again have our spot (#A-2) in the main exhibition building at the Howard County Fairgrounds in West Friendship, Maryland. This festival—the largest sheep and wool festival in the U.S.—is well worth seeing. It's fun and free! Check out their website at [www.sheepandwool.org](http://www.sheepandwool.org) for more information and directions.

## **Schoolhouse Quilters Biennial Quilt Show** – Friday/Saturday/Sunday, June 21-22-23

Visit us at the Allegany County Fairgrounds in Cumberland, Maryland, and enjoy a beautiful quilt show. We'll be previewing our new line of quilt fabrics, inspired by coverlets in the Museum collection.

## **Fiber Retreat** – Saturday, September 14

Our second annual Fiber Retreat is for knitters, spinners, weavers, rug hookers, and everyone interested in fiber. This one-day event will again include demonstrations, workshops, informal lessons, vendors and more, plus space for folks to bring their work and a chair and “do their thing.” Retreat admission is free, and all are welcome to participate or watch. As they develop, details will be posted on the NMAC website under “Special Events.”

## **Coverlet College** – Friday/Saturday/Sunday, September 20, 21, 22

See Ron Walter's article in this issue for details. Full schedule and registration form are posted on the NMAC website under “Special Events.” Sign up early to ensure your space.

## **Class: Primitive Rug Hooking** – Wednesday/Thursday/Friday, September 25, 26, 27

Barb Carroll of Woolley Fox (Ligonier, Pennsylvania) will lead this three-day class at the Museum. Barb is a well-known and much-loved specialist whose students travel from as far away as Europe to practice with her. This will be an exciting opportunity to learn from the best! As they develop, details and sign-up information will be posted on the NMAC website under “Special Events.”

## **Rug Hook-In** – Saturday, September 28

Spend the day with Barb Carroll of Ligonier, Pennsylvania's Woolley Fox, the renowned source for all things relating to primitive rug hooking.

## **Fundraising Auction** – Sunday, October 20

Once again, we look forward to offering wonderful items to be auctioned off as a fundraiser for the Museum. Donated items are very welcome.



# Collection Spotlight: Christian Van Nortwic Coverlet

By Christine Jeryan

Coverlets woven in New Jersey—including this one created by Christian Van Nortwic in Asbury—are among the most beautiful produced in nineteenth century America. Often featuring distinctive designs and expert workmanship, they are outstanding examples of the weaver's art.

Christian Van Nortwic (Van Nortwick) was born in about 1802 in New Jersey. Van Nortwic used two different spellings of his last name. When he included the k, it always appeared to be squeezed in, almost as an afterthought. Van Nortwic carried out his weaving business in Asbury, Warren County, New Jersey, and was active from 1837 to 1848 or 1849. An advertisement in the September 19, 1837, issue of the *Somerset Messenger* (N.J.) carried C. Van Nortwic's announcement that he had purchased the "Ark Factory" and would continue weaving ingrain or flowered carpeting and double coverlets of different patterns.

Van Nortwic's known surviving coverlets employ both double weave and tied-Biederwand structures, suggesting that he used at least two looms. (Although it was possible to weave both structures on one loom, it would have been more efficient to use two, one for each structure.) Some of Van Nortwic's corner

blocks proclaim him to be a "fancy weaver" or a "fancy weaver and dyer" and his coverlets are among the most colorful produced in New Jersey. Van Nortwic wove three centerfield and three border patterns, and he never varied his centerfield/border combinations. He paired his "Double Lilies and Diamonds" centerfield with an "Eagle and Tree" border, the "Medallion" centerfield with a "Grapevine" border, and the "Plumage" centerfield with a "Leaf" border, as seen in this coverlet.



The 1840 New Jersey Census, Warren County, Franklin Township, lists "Christopher" Van Nortwic as a 30- to 40-year old head of household engaged in manufactures and trades. The 1850 New Jersey Census, Warren County, Franklin

Township, lists him as a 48-year-old manufacturer. In 1851, he sold his home and moved from Asbury, probably to nearby Hunterdon County. In 1880, Christian Van Nortwic was living with his son Henry in Bloomsbury (Hunterdon County), and he died on July 8 of that year.

A search of historical records reveals two candidates for Elizabeth Wintermute, the owner of this coverlet. Both women married into the extended Wintermute family of northwestern New Jersey.

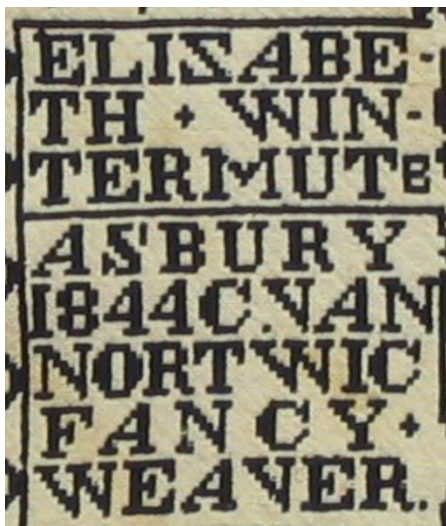
The first Elizabeth Wintermute was born Elizabeth Grover on October 24, 1813 in Stillwater, Sussex County, New Jersey, one of three children of Johannes Swartzwalder Gruber (1785-1815) and Mary Keen. Sometime before 1837, Elizabeth married Jephtha Arason Wintermute (1811-1892), and the couple had ten children—Edwin R. (1837-1897), Andrew Grover (1839-1897), Mary Catherine (1840-1870), Louisa Jane (born in 1842), Nancy Elizabeth (1844-1896), Loretta (1846-1911), Peter Arason (1850-1929), Emma Loving (1852-1895), Maria (born in 1857), and Ophelia Ann (born in 1859). Census records reveal that Jephtha had several occupations during his lifetime from laborer and farmer to iron moulder. Elizabeth and Jephtha lived in Stillwater all their lives and died there—Jephtha on June 17, 1892 and Elizabeth on March 12, 1901. The couple is buried in Old Stillwater Cemetery.



Elizabeth Wintermute's gravestone

George, were living in Oxford, New Jersey, about 20 miles closer to Christian Van Nortwic's weaving shop in Asbury than the first Elizabeth's home in Stillwater. By 1850, Elizabeth and Arason were living in Bridgewater (Somerset County). According to census records, Arason was a lash and blind maker. Elizabeth died on June 3, 1867 and is buried in Buttzville Methodist Episcopal Cemetery Her husband remarried about a year later—the minister officiating at the wedding ceremony was his former father-in law, Rev. George R. Banghart.

So...which Elizabeth Wintermute was the owner of this coverlet? My vote goes to the second Elizabeth, only because her home was closer to Asbury at the time the coverlet was made. After nearly 170 years we'll probably never know the identity of the coverlet's owner with complete certainty, but investigations like this are part of what brings these beautiful textiles to life.



The second Elizabeth Wintermute was born Elizabeth Paul Banghart in 1814 to Reverend George R. Banghart (1782-1870) and Margaret

Park (1783-1845). On October 17, 1835, she married Arason Wintermute (1813-1888), and the couple had three sons—George Banghart (1837-1886) and twins William Hiles (1842-1917) and Charles Shackleton (1842-1862). In 1840, Arason, Elizabeth, and their oldest son,



# COMING SOON!!

## NEW FABRIC LINE



As you probably know, over the last few years NMAC has partnered with Windham Fabrics to produce three unique lines of great cotton print fabrics, all inspired by the motifs seen in the Museum's coverlet collection.

This year, we are pleased to announce a new partnership and a new line. Blue Hill Fabrics is a relatively young company, only about four years old. However, its leadership is in the good hands of Roger Roby, well

respected and seasoned ex-pat from Windham. His many years of experience with reproduction fabrics have given us great confidence in the new selections. As we go to publication with this article, the new line is in the design stage. We expect to have patterns and images within the next few weeks, hopefully by late April. They will be posted on our website as soon as possible, for those early birds who might wish to pre-order. Tentative scheduling calls for delivery in late June or early July.



Stay tuned. Keep an eye on our Facebook page or subscribe to our E-Notes and we'll keep you posted on developments as they happen!



The NMAC booth at the 2012 Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival





## ShopforMuseums.com Help Benefit the Museum through Your Online Shopping

ShopforMuseums.com is a fundraising website where you can shop your favorite online stores and, at **no extra cost to you**, have a portion of your purchase amount donated to the museum, park, zoo, aquarium, or other related organization of your choice.

You simply go the Shop for Museums website (<http://shopformuseums.com>), register, choose a museum partner to support (hopefully, us), then select a store and start shopping.

Two very important details:

- (1) You **MUST** go to shopformuseums.com first and not directly to the store website, or it won't work.
- (2) In the dropdown list of Museum Partners, we are listed under the letter **N** as National Museum of the American Coverlet (The).

An amazing variety of stores is listed—yes, even eBay and Amazon are on there—and it's easy to do. So think about this great resource for all your holiday and year-round online shopping!



## An Unusual Gift of Preservation

What kind of gift can you give your friends and family who already have all the sweaters, kitchen appliances, bath oil, and framed photos that they truly need? In the museum world, one of the most important aspects of preservation is proper *storage*. Because virtually all cardboard box production is based on time and quantity, they are made for temporary use and usually are highly acidic. In the past 40 years or so, the need for acid-free storage boxes has become widespread as museums and private collectors begin to understand the importance of conservation and the safe keeping of these precious artifacts of the past. Acid-free storage boxes protect the hundreds of coverlets in The National Museum of the American Coverlet's collection, but as the collection expands we always need more.

If you wish to mark a unique birthday or anniversary, or acknowledge a special person or event in your life, consider THE GIFT OF PRESERVATION, an acid-free storage box to help house the growing collection of coverlets in our Museum. For only \$25.00, the name of the person you are honoring as well as the event, date, and your name, in the form of a specially designed label, will be permanently attached to a storage box where it can be seen by anyone who is using the collection for research and study. We will also list these contributions in our newsletter.

Consider this “practical” and “feel good” gift today.

# Coverlet Museum Goes Green

By Melinda Zongor

NMAC has received a \$1,000 grant toward an energy-saving lighting project. Funds for the grant were donated by Penelec through the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies.

Museum Director/Curator Melinda Zongor said, “I am pleased and honored to accept this grant. We are very interested in energy efficient systems that can maintain or enhance building operations while saving hard-earned dollars.

The Museum is a non-profit institution that also serves as a landlord to the other tenants in the building. As such, we endeavor to provide good services to our tenants, while keeping our overhead under some semblance of control; and with the rising cost of energy, it is a difficult just to hold steady, let alone save. This can be especially challenging since we are in a large, old place and all systems are on one zone.”

Discovery Time School has long occupied the entire second (top) floor of the Museum-owned building in Bedford, Pennsylvania. The School is open long hours and uses far more electricity than anyone else in the complex. It is important to maintain high quality lighting for the kids, at the lowest possible cost to the Museum. This project will help in accomplishing that goal.

Florescent light fixtures on the second floor were retrofitted with high efficiency bulbs and ballasts by NMAC’s custodian, Frank. They will provide the same or higher quality light for the nearly 100 children and staff using the spaces affected by this project, while using approximately half the energy.

In a larger sense, and as we all know, anything that helps a non-profit these days is a major accomplishment. NMAC is the economic beneficiary of this grant. In a very real way, the total reach of the grant could be construed as national in scope and importance. Coverlets are a national treasure. This Museum serves the entire nation, and visitors come here from around the country. Anything that helps the Museum keep its doors open, benefits all those visitors, as well as helping to secure the coverlets that are housed and preserved here for future generations.

This is the third grant that NMAC has received through the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies. We are truly grateful to Penelec and the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies for their continued support. .



Kay Reynolds (right), Director of Bedford County Endowments, looks on as Penelec’s Beverly Green (center) presents a check to Melinda Zongor, Director/Curator of The National Museum of the American Coverlet.



# Ways to Give to the Museum

By Ellen Campbell Pskowski

First and foremost, give the gift of your presence! Come visit; see the latest exhibit and new merchandise in the Museum Shop. Attend one of the upcoming events!

Another essential way to give to the Museum is to spread the word! For example, Board Member Ellen Pskowski learned of the Museum seven years ago when local business woman Mary Lambert suggested a visit. Now in addition to old fashioned word of mouth, friends and members can use social media such as Facebook (check out and “Like” and “Share” the Museum Facebook page!). The Museum is now one of the leading tourist attractions in Bedford County, as reported by Trip Advisor.

The Museum also welcomes the helping hands of volunteers. The following are just a few examples of generous gifts of time and skill. Jeff Payne scraped and painted the shop windows. Mike Pasquette designed the ingenious, invaluable portable shelving for the Museum’s Sheep and Wool booth. Doug Schmidt provided “shop sitting.” Edward Maeder, President of the NMAC Board, sewed labels onto coverlets as they were photographed and documented by other Board members. Ron Walter built exhibition platforms and swung a sledge hammer to remove a crumbling wall. Friends donated antiques and collectibles to the auction. Thanks to all.

And last, but most decidedly not least, the Museum appreciates the financial generosity of Members and friends. Your gift to the Museum is tax deductible. Gifts in any amount are significant and meaningful to the Museum—what might be lost as a drop in a bigger bucket really makes a big splash and a big difference to a small non-profit like NMAC. And those preferring to give gifts in the form of stocks or bonds, please contact Director Melinda Zongor who will connect you to Brian Jeffries of the local branch of Edward Jones.

**UP A LADDER:** Jeff Payne, a volunteer and good friend with a busy veterinary practice in Somerset, Pennsylvania, took a part of his summer last year to scrape, caulk, and paint several windows of the NMAC building. He admits he worked part of his way through college by painting, and he offered his help. Jeff has precious little free time, and we really appreciate his generous assistance.

There are many more windows that need attention. Volunteers, anyone?

