

This Place Matters

Judy Kay Bard
Former Board Member

The weekend we first visited Lancaster County, for my husband's interview to become head librarian at Elizabethtown College, we drove the countryside and found a sign for the Haldeman Mansion Strawberry Festival. (If I told you the year, you might calculate my age.) We dropped in, loved the strawberries, and gazed at the lovely, ruined rooms with so much history and family love.

Nels got the job; we moved here; and raising teens took time and energy.

Boys grown, and Elaine Jackson now Haldeman Mansion Preservation Society president, she asked me to help with some restoration projects. Of course I accepted—who can turn down Elaine?

Spending time in those stately rooms, savoring the high ceilings, huge windows, and lovingly contrived architectural amenities makes the painting, and growing friendships that go with it, specially pleasant.

Next, word went round that the calendar for Sunday afternoon guides had space. Of course I took a few of those times. Sitting on that gracious lawn, watching the river, hearing birds in that spectacular oak, contemplating those huge lawn terraces lovingly created for Samuel's momma Frances Haldeman, and thinking of generations of children frolicking in creek, woods, and meadows brings serenity that restores whatever frazzled mind one may have brought.

And the delight of sharing history with visitors, tying Native American, Galbreath, and Haldeman history into our national story, and the world's development regularly brings personal delight and the added fun of visitors' stories to enrich the lore.

Sadly, life isn't all roses. Elaine and the Board have all sorts of ideas. Once they commissioned me to make chowder for a banquet. I, the Kansas girl?? Had to make two pots and foist them on my family to ensure that I could truly do it. Then had to get an enormous kettle to the mansion, in colonial garb (flowing skirt that we now lack training to wear for housewifely duties).

Happily, I lived through that fine. Joyously, I read/tell Christmas stories to children during our annual Kristkindle fair. Maybe, I've done other things for Haldeman events. Baked, for sure; made gift baskets; served; sold, picked up brindlesticks... The group is so good, so willing to further preservation of the mansion, that joining their projects means just "doin' what comes naturally."

You come join us. You'll share the fun and savor the successes.