



# McHenry Mansion Docents *Newsletter*

December 2011  
Volume VI  
Editor, Linda Johnson

## December Events:

December 3  
Dickens Christmas  
9:00 am to 4:00 pm

December 5  
Christmas Teas 11:30 & 2:00

December 10  
Foundation Christmas Party  
4:00 to 8:00 pm

December 15 & 17  
Candlelight Christmas Tours  
5:30

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**Domestic Service**  
**In Victorian America**



McHenry Mansion Docent  
Council  
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## Carol's Comments

"It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas everywhere you go..."

The Mansion is decorated.

Susan and Liz are preparing our Holiday Luncheon for November 29. Our docents are planning and preparing their table decorations for the luncheon.

Docents are all signed up and ready for the Dickens Christmas on Saturday, December 3.

The Christmas Tea is being planned and prepared for December 5.

The invitations for the Foundation Christmas Party have arrived. Hopefully we'll have plenty of cookie donations for this event.

Docents in costumes are signed up and looking forward to the two Candlelight Christmas Tours on December 15 and 17 at 5:30-8:00 p.m.

This is a busy time of year in the Mansion. I think we, docents, look forward to these events with excitement and enthusiasm.

As you may know, we do not have a Docent Council meeting in December.

With gratitude for all that you do, I want to wish each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and a joyful Holiday Season.

-- Carol



## December Birthdays

Mary Boucher 23rd  
Holly Calibro 19th  
Hannah Parris 20th  
Jacquie Schaaf

Jan Carozza 14th  
Sharon McCarthy 31st  
Janet Sandoval 16th  
Catherine Szakmary 13th

## Emeritus

Judith Kenshalo 30th  
Lynda Quigley 19th  
Joan Theaker 13th  
Mary Alice Willey 4th

Louise McCoskey 30th  
Sarah Sulak 4th  
Pauline Ward 12th

McHenry Mansion Docent Council  
Meeting of November 22, 2011

President Carol Dunkel called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

It was moved/seconded by B. Roberson/C. Dovichi to accept the October Council minutes as printed.

**Officer Reports:**

**President-** Carol Dunkel- reported that the front door has been left unlocked on several occasions when closing up the house. She has made a sign that should be hung on the door at the last check, to make sure no one then unlocks the door, **Regarding stationing for the holidays: acknowledge the presence of visitors with a greeting and offer some info. about the room they are visiting. It is not appropriate to ignore visitors.** We should be rotating places approximately three times during the afternoon, so that no one is covering the same location for the entire day.

**First Vice-President** – Jan Carozza-.no report

**Second Vice-President** – Les Clements- today's program is Professor Albanetti speaking on Victorian literature. The Holiday luncheon is on the 29<sup>th</sup>. January will be Betty Cole, a Victorian house resident. Richard Wright will do Laundry Day in the Victorian era. April is the trip, May is the library initiative speaker and June is the Spring luncheon and installation.

**Recording Secretary** – Kathy Beck- no report

**Corresponding Secretary** – Freda Motto-. Get well cards were sent to Linda Johnson, Joyce Turner, Nancy Barnes and Joyce Campbell. Resignations of Colette Scott, and Kathy Wesley. The Board has accepted the resignations. Diane Oliver has had knee replacement surgery recently and a card was sent.

**Treasurer** – Diane Oliver- excused- Sept. Balance- \$5,875.68 disbursements \$71.23, October 31, balance \$5804.45. Donation Box for October \$170.63, Oct. 2010- \$367.00.

**Parliamentarian** - Linda Collins- no report.

**Committee Reports:**

**Education** - Barbara Roberson- her next article is on domestic servants.

**Group Tours** –Rita Romney- December is full of tours and we still need docents to conduct the tours for some groups. Call Rita if you can help.

**Handbook** –Charles Lucas- handbooks are in the docent closet upstairs. Pick yours up ASAP. If you have changes that need to be made, please do so by e-mail, phone or in writing to Charles.

**Historian** - Gayle Chamberlain- no report.

**Statistics**- Carole Dovichi- 432 total visitors for September, compared to 634 last year.  
Regular hours 1637, extra hours 1732.5. Total hours 3369.5

**Librarian** - Dee Terry- excused.

**Newsletter** – Linda Johnson- Thanks to Margaret Scheuber for doing the newsletter last month. Deadline is the day after the Council meeting for the next newsletter..

**Publicity** – Raylene Evans- excused- there has been little response in spite of a lot of effort on Raylene's part to get any advertisement for activities at the mansion from the Bee. Numerous attempts have been made to have events advertised, to no avail.

**Scheduling** – Lavonne Meader- We need 17 more docents for December, especially Saturdays.

There are some problems arising from having people who are not scheduled, showing up to work. This has happened on a couple of occasions. If you show up to work and are not on the

schedule, you may be asked to return home. More emeritus docents are calling to be put on the schedule and they are much appreciated for their involvement.

**Social** – Liz Ott- Thanks to Marcia Winegardner for the table centerpiece today. Thanks to Seena Rhine, Barbara Roberson, Gayle Chamberlain and Charles Lucas for the refreshments today. Liz has had over 107 responses to the holiday luncheon on November 29<sup>th</sup>. Goodies are needed for the new docent reception in February. If you have signed up to bring food in February, please bring it in March instead.

**Trip** –Virginia Berry- They are visiting a new location on Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> for the trip destination.

### **Liaison Reports:**

**Gift Store** – Frances Posthumus- store is doing very well. Last month the total sales were approx. \$5600. Last year it was approx. \$4700. Sept. was \$3500 and last year was \$1200. The Gift Store has a new look. Come and see! The gift store was broken into last Sunday evening and the TV and the DVD player were taken. Improvements to security will be made.

**Merry Maids-** Jeanine Clarke –excused- Nine schools are scheduled for presentations. We only have 9 Merry Maids actually working now as several are not able to work because of health issues. We need more docents to be involved. If you can help, call Jeanine.

**City-** Wayne- The Christmas decorations in the front parlor should be turned off at the security closet and **NOT** in the room itself. The shutters should be left as they are. All of the decorations in the individual rooms are connected to the power strips so just turn the switch off as usual. The work is progressing on the two rooms upstairs. A booklet of projects that people can fund, is being made, so if you need an end of the year tax deduction, please consider the mansion and you can specify what the monetary gift is used for.

**Old Business** – Docents are needed to sign up to bring homemade cookies for the Foundation Christmas party. Also, helpers are needed to transfer cookies to trays for the party and to replenish them as needed.

**New Business** – At the holiday luncheon, there is a decorated basket for donations, to purchase items that have been pre-decided on for the house.

The board recommends that the holiday luncheon donation money this year, be used to purchase a wireless doorbell for the kitchen door. If there are funds left over we can have the intercom fixed and then buy a simple to use CD player for playing Christmas music in the house. Motion and second by J. Meily/F. Motto. Passed.

It was stated that in the Docent Training classes, all of the activities that are part of the mansion and foundation, should be explained so that prospective docents know what is available to be involved in if desired, i.e. Dickens Faire, Table Setting, Teas, etc.

Announcements- Margaret Scheuber- we have a new wash stand set that has appeared and we don't know where it came from. It is Staffordshire with five or six pieces. Pam Darr said they were donated by her sister.

Lucille Lotko- the tea is coming up and those that have signed up will be contacted. It is on Monday Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>. The first seating is sold out.

The Dickens Faire is fully staffed for the house. The morning people will meet in the dining room at 8:30am and the afternoon people will meet on the front porch at 12:15pm for assignments. The house will be open until 4pm. with the vendors leaving at 3-3:30pm. The choir will be here again this year and the Farmers Market will be included on the street.

By motion of F. Motto/J. Schaaf, the meeting was adjourned at 10:20a.m.

Kathy Beck

Recording Secretary 2010-12

## Stationing

Stationing is not always necessary even when the Mansion is decked out in Christmas splendor. This is especially true during the regular week days. Giving tours should be the first option. The docents on duty will have the discretion to station if there are too many visitors to give tours.

If you are stationing, please acknowledge the visitors as come into your area. If there is time, try to engage them and tell them about the room they are visiting as if you were giving a brief tour of that room.

It is not appropriate to be visiting with other docents when visitors are in your area, or to otherwise ignore our visitors.

Make sure you rotate about three times during the regular day. There are some rooms that docents may prefer more than others. It can be upsetting to be left all afternoon in one of those less comfortable areas.

I'm very sorry that this article even has to be written, but there have been problems. So please be aware and considerate. Thank you.

--Carol

## Turn off the Christmas tree!

When closing the mansion for the night, please turn off the Christmas tree by using the switch in the **security closet**. Do not shut the shutters, but leave them as they are



**Lock that Door!** It is very alarming (no pun intended) but the front door of the Mansion has on occasions been left UNLOCKED after the alarm is set and docents have left. BE SURE to check, double-check and triple check that the door is secure. It is EVERY docent's responsibility to be sure the house is locked and alarm set for the night. We don't even want to imagine the scenario of one break-in! There will be a sign in the docent's closet to put on the locked door to remind docents that the door is locked for the night.

**Emergency Contact Information:** There is a rolodex in the docent's closet that contains emergency contact information for each docent. Please check that your information is current in the rolodex.

**Note from the Schedulers:** Be sure to adhere to your assigned duties according to the printed schedule. If you are signed up to be the VC docent, that is your job. If you are working in the Mansion, that is your job. The printed schedule is to be adhered to.

**Many thanks** to Professor Michael Albonetti from the Chapman University System for his illuminating lecture on Victorian Literature at our last Council Meeting.

**Happy Holidays to All.** May we all revel in the Mansion's beauty this season

--Editor

# Domestic Service in Victorian America

By Barbara

Roberson

Well-to-do housewives employed cooks, maids, nurses and laundresses to free them from most all of the domestic chores. Housework in nineteenth century America was harsh physical labor. Those employed in domestic service tended to be young, unmarried and foreign-born earning from two to five dollars a week.

**The Cook** had to know how to prepare unprocessed foods for consumption. Poultry was bought or raised and had to be killed and plucked. Fish had to have scales removed. Green coffee had to be roasted and ground. Loaves of sugar had to be pounded, flour sifted, nuts shelled and raisins seeded. Even a simple meal was time and energy consuming.

One had to keep an eye on the wood or coal burning stove all day long. The day began with carrying in the wood and lighting the fires. The dampers constantly needed adjustment for temperature control. Ashes had to be removed throughout the day and finally, when cool, the stove would be rubbed with black wax to keep it from rusting.



**The Maid** cleaned the soot and smoke from coal and wood burning stoves which blackened walls and dirtied drapes and carpets. Gas and kerosene lamps left smelly deposits of black soot on mirrors, furniture and curtains. Each day, the lamp's glass chimneys had to be wiped and wicks trimmed or replaced. Floors had to be scrubbed, rugs beaten and windows washed.

**The Laundress** performed the chore declared by the Victorian housewife without domestic help as "the great domestic dread of the household." Typically laundry was a weekly chore starting Sunday evening with soaking clothing in tubs of warm water. Monday morning, the laundry was scrubbed with soap made of lye (a severe irritant to the hands) on a rough washboard. Next, the articles were placed in big vats of boiling water and stirred with a long pole to prevent the clothes from developing yellow spots. The clothes were lifted out of the vats with a washstick, rinsed twice, once in plain water and once with bluing. Then it was wrung out and hung to dry. When dry, the items were removed from the line and pressed using heavy flatirons heated on a stove.

The last years of the nineteenth century witnessed a revolution in the nature of housework. Yet despite the introduction of electricity, running water and "labor-saving" household appliances, time spent on housework declined little. How can this be? The answer lies in a dramatic rise in the standards of cleanliness and childcare. A 1930s article in the Ladies Home Journal explains:

"Because we housewives of today have the tools to reach it, we dig every day after the dust that grandmother left to spring cataclysm. If few of us have nine children for a weekly bath, we have two or three for a daily immersion. If our consciences don't prick us over vacant pie shelves or empty cookie jars, they do over meals in which a vitamin may be omitted or a calorie lacking."

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Servants were essential to the successful operation of a large nineteenth-century household. Today, our Merry Maids are just as important to our mission of teaching the rich history of our McHenry Mansion. Please consider becoming a Merry Maid. Contact Jeanine Clarke for more information. She promises – no cleaning!