

News&Views

from the

Columbus Chapel & Boal Mansion Museum

Vol. 4, No. 1

And Winter Turns to....

At the Boal Museum, wintertime is almost as busy as our “on” season. Staff and volunteers work to protect the buildings and collections from the ravages of the cold and (this year) very wet months that lead to [opening day, May 1](#).

Heavy rains during the spring of 2018 created two new ponds on the estate where none existed before—and they haven’t yet receded! Our

section of Blue Spring Creek poured over into the low grassy areas near the entrance gates.

One volunteer cheerfully named the ponds “Boal Lake” and “Blue Pond.” The upside was that we welcomed waves of migrating mallards in the larger pond and a few trout in the smaller one!

The downside: mud, mud, and more mud; and fewer places for vendors’ tents and for cars to park during 2018 and future summer events.



**Miniature gondola floats on “Blue Pond”
among the watercress**

Photo by Dave Mengle, 2018

Meanwhile, we carry on with our usual winter occupations—planning the coming season, training new docents and other volunteers, replacing or repairing boilers and other major equipment, sealing leaking roofs. In addition we are fine-tuning the exhibit rooms on the second floor of the Mansion and the Transportation and Early American Life exhibit. All Museum exhibits are “works in progress,” because we keep discovering new items to display: some have been tucked away for decades in a closet, armoire, or out-building on the estate; others turn up during searches through one of many trunks stored in the Mansion attic; still others come to light during volunteers’ research into Boal or Columbus family papers. For

Santa was seen at the Theodore Boal home Christmas Monday. One-hundred and fifty children from the ages of four to twelve were in the march into the ballroom where a large tree was lighted with candles. As they marched the guests sang "America." Miss Claudia Wieland presided at the piano. Each child received a stocking of candy, an orange and a gift from Santa. They chose their gifts and he gave them what they asked for. Sixty guests were present beside the children who were invited by Mr. Boal, among which were Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Sparks, President of Penn. State College, Mr. and Mrs. Agee, Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Thompson. The above named were invited to the turkey dinner at the Boal home. Mr. Boal's son Piena, a student at St. Paul's College, Massachusetts, was home on his Xmas vacation.

Mr. T. Boal and Piena went to Washington to spend New Year with his mother, Mrs. M. A. Boal. Mr. Boal will return and spend the winter at his home in Bealsburg.

example, volunteer Janice Sherer recently spotted the snippet shown at left, from the *Centre Daily Times* c. 1911–14, among the Boal Family papers stored at Penn State's Pattee Library.

Every day is discovery day here, no matter the season!

Columbus Family Papers Soon Available to All!

Speaking of family papers...the much-anticipated digitization of the centuries-old Christopher Columbus family papers nears completion. For almost four weeks during February and early

March, a team of specialists scanned the 160,000-plus pages that have been stored on the Boal estate since they were first moved here by Colonel Boal in 1909.

To explain the presence of these documents at the Boal Museum, you need to know that the fourth generation of the Boal family, Colonel Theodore Davis Boal, married a French aristocrat, Mathilde de Lagarde in 1894. Her aunt, Victoria Montalvo, had married Diego Colón ("Columbus" in English), a direct descendant of Christopher. Victoria and Diego had no children, so the widowed Victoria bequeathed the Columbus family castle and all its contents in Asturias, Spain, to her two nephews and one niece. Mathilde received the entire contents of the Columbus Chapel along with many other items now displayed at the Boal Museum—including the massive collection of handwritten documents.

The company responsible for this monumental project is US Imaging, Inc., which usually



One of dozens of packets of papers and books in the collection, each packet tied with cord

Photo by Mary Szmolko, 2017

digitizes documents such as birth and death records in courthouses across the nation or valuable papers in other museums and estates. The company's extremely generous donation of time and effort will not soon be forgotten!

Two teams from US Imaging worked 12 hours each, around the clock, not even pausing on weekends. David Jaksa and Stephany Pelkey of Saginaw, Michigan, headed the Boal Museum team and took the day shift. Jaksa's son and nephew took the night shift. They were supervised by Museum staff.

In addition to being the oldest documents the team has scanned, Pelkey said, "This is the largest single family collection of documents we've worked on." While Museum staff previously believed the earliest papers dated to 1450, Jaksa found one document dated 1398!

Employees of US Imaging, Inc., worked in 12-hour shifts for over three weeks to complete the work of digitizing the Columbus Family papers for the Museum.

Photo by Art Pentz, 2019



The process of scanning meant spending the days (or nights) standing in front of huge scanners. The team brought two scanners with them, as well as computer equipment to capture the very high-quality scans. They carefully laid out each pair of pages of a book, personal letter, manuscript, shipping manifest, receipt, or other hand-written document on the (frequently cleaned) base of a scanner. After making sure no corners were turned under to obscure the writing, they gently pulled down the large glass cover

and pressed a button to begin the scan. After all pages were scanned, they reviewed each image, matching it with the original, to ensure no pages were missed.

At this point, no one knows what most pages contain, simply because “We don’t read ancient Spanish,” as Board President Cindy Shaler said. One translator has already come forward to volunteer her help in making these books and papers available to others. Museum Director Bob Cameron is organizing both the translators and other scholars to work on the scanned archives—and eventually them online.

“I’ve seen Marco Polo’s signature in here,” Stephany Pelkey said, “and old stamps and receipts.” We expect more exciting discoveries as the pages are translated and studied.

Volunteer Becomes Music Director

Dr. Amy Gustafson is a professional pianist and piano teacher who lives in Boalsburg. She organized this spring’s Music Series in the Boal Mansion ballroom and recently was named Music Director of the Museum. The upcoming concert on April 14 will showcase her talents at the keys. We asked her a few questions about her vision for the museum.

Why did you start volunteering at the Boal Museum?

I had been living in Boalsburg for three years but didn’t know anything about this Museum. Then I saw pictures of the historic 1922 Steinway piano in the ballroom and I thought, “What a lovely venue for a concert series!” So I called Bob Cameron and he gave me a tour. I didn’t realize what a fascinating place this was until I got the tour—it was way more exciting than I could have imagined! I knew right then I wanted to do whatever I could to help.

What are your immediate goals as Music Director?

I want to continue to mount concert series at the Museum. This current spring series has been very successful; the first two concerts totally sold out. I think we should have a series every spring and possibly in the fall, too. A major goal of the series is to raise funds to restore the old Steinway that first caught my eye—it definitely needs some TLC.



Dr. Amy Gustafson

Photo provided

How about long-term plans?

There's a collection of sheet music in the Mansion that needs to be catalogued and preserved. I think there are probably a lot of rare items; for sure a lot that are out of print. It's too big a job for just one person, so I'd like to raise funds and organize that project.

Any parting thoughts?

I'm happy that we're bringing concerts back to the Mansion!

-Karen Simring

First Two Concerts in Music Series Sold Out!

In February and March, the Museum hosted superb professional pianists as part of the Boal Mansion Spring Music Series. The series has been organized by Dr. Amy Gustafson, a concert pianist and director of the Gijon International Piano Festival, who recently became the Boal Museum's Music Director (see interview below), and by Museum Director Bob Cameron. Concerts take place in the elegant Boal Mansion ballroom. During intermission and after each concert, refreshments are available in the front hallway and the parlor.



Alexander Kobrin plays a Yamaha
Concert Grand piano in the Mansion ballroom

Photo by Mary Szmolko, 2019

Review of the First Two Concerts

The Boal Mansion Concert Series has been a resounding success so far. The intimate series opened on February 19 with a powerful performance of Schubert and Brahms by Alexander Kobrin. The ballroom was filled to capacity and the enthusiastic audience gave Mr. Kobrin a standing ovation for his moving performance.

Spanish pianist Francisco Montero played the second sold-out concert on March 10, with a program of all Spanish or Spanish-inspired music. Montero's playing definitely captured his audience, from his delicate and haunting lyricism in Albeniz's *Evocacion* to his bombastic virtuosity in a rendition of Liszt's *Spanish Rhapsody*.

- Dr. Amy Gustafson

The final concert in the series will be on Sunday, April 14, at 3pm, when Amy Gustafson will play works by Cimarosa, Brahms, Liszt, and Chopin. Once again, Yamaha will donate the use of a concert grand piano for the occasion and proceeds will go toward restoration of Museum instruments, starting with the ballroom's 1922 Steinway. In addition, the Museum has other keyboard instruments, a concert harp, and a violin that we would love to restore eventually.

Tickets are available on the Museum website, www.boalmuseum.com, or you can mail a check to the address at the end of this newsletter with "Concert, April 14" in the Memo line. Costs for adults are \$40 in advance or \$45 at the door; for students under 21, \$30. Members receive a 10% savings.

What Can You Do?

Here are some volunteer efforts that may interest you:

- » Become a museum docent (tour guide) to share the history of this Museum with visitors, either on the standard tour or for special-exhibit tours. Most docents start from May 1 through October 31, one or two afternoons a week. It takes some time to learn the tours, working with a current docent, so plan well in advance. You may also get to lead bus tours of school children or adults during the off-season. Docents pitch in for other odd jobs around the Museum, too, depending on their inclinations. It's a great job for former teachers or public speakers, but anyone with a clear speaking voice and good memory will be great.
- » Be a greeter at the Visitor Center one or two afternoons a week during our regular season. Take ticket money, introduce visitors to the Museum, and help sell books, postcards, local jewelry and pottery, and other items in the Gift Shop. Also keep the Visitor Center in "visiting" condition.



Docent Linda Pagani sets up for Christmas high tea in the Mansion ballroom

Photo by Art Pentz, 2017

- » Help out with special events! We always need volunteers for our many annual events: selling food or antiques, selling tickets for tours, parking cars, even things as mundane as putting garbage bags in the bins and replacing them as needed. Every little bit helps.
- » Refurbish antique carriages and buggies. If you like working with old vehicles, this is for you!
- » Maintain structures: carpentry, glazing, plumbing, and other DIY skills are always needed for these aging buildings.
- » Use your gardening skills: a variety of gardens need loving care from early spring through late fall.



Development
of the Spanish
Cross garden

Photos by Art
Pentz, 2017, and
Bob Cameron, 2018

See the Volunteer page of the Museum website, www.boalmuseum.com/volunteer-information.html, for more ideas. Or call Director Bob Cameron at 814-876-0129 and tell him your areas of interest. Whether you want to give a day a week, more, or less, we'd love to have your help! Welcome to the growing group of Boal Museum volunteers!

Tours and Special Events, April Through July

The Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday, 1:30 to 5:00 pm for regular drop-in tours, May 1 through October 31. We also take reservations for individual and group tours, both on- and off-season. Call 814-876-0129.

These are the [Special Events](#) planned for April through July:

Sun, Apr 14* [Final Concert in the Boal Mansion Spring Music Series.](#)
Dr. Amy Gustafson plays music by Cimarosa, Brahms, Liszt, and Chopin. See article on page 6 for details.

Fri, Apr 19

Good Friday Observance at Columbus Chapel, 11am-3pm. Sponsored by L. Savage Art Studio. Please drop in during the open hours.

Sat, May 4

Central Pennsylvania Native Plant Festival and Sale on the Museum grounds. Learn about native plants at free seminars. Peruse the booths of the many vendors who offer a wide selection of native plants for purchase.

Fri-Sun,
May 10-12

Penn-Del Tree Climbing Competition. A multiday tree-climbing competition, sponsored by the International Society of Arboriculture. Winners qualify for the nationals! This was a huge hit last year and we look forward to the event again this year.



Jake Riggs and Maria Tranguich, overall winners of the preliminary events in the 2018 PennDel Competition
Photo provided

Mon, May 27

Memorial Day Village Celebration. The Museum grounds provide the perfect setting for our diverse activities during the Village-wide celebration. Enjoy live music, Civil War re-enactors, living history demos, great food, craft vendors, and special museum tours. Bring the whole family for a “Day in Towne”!

Thursdays,*
June 13 & Aug 8

Meet Me at the Mansion: Plein Air Painting, 5:30pm-dusk. A splendidly creative time on the Museum grounds! Fee of \$40 per person/event includes canvas, use of studio materials, and refreshments. Email lsavageart@yahoo.com for information and to reserve.

Fri–Sun,
July 12–14

Annual Antique Faire & Sale. What better venue than a 200-year-old estate to host the annual antique sale showcasing vendors from near and far. With local berries available now, it's also the best time to try delicious foods like fresh berry milkshakes. Also enter and vote for best berry pie!

* Starred events require reservations. Unless otherwise noted, to reserve or for more information, please call 814-876-0129 or go directly to www.boalmuseum.com, where you can reserve and pay online.

Memberships and Donations

We greatly appreciate everyone's support over the past four years as we have refurbished, repaired, and extended the exhibits and offerings at this extraordinary Museum. If you haven't come in for a tour since 2014, please do! You'll find many new attractions.

Meanwhile, you can support the Museum through your memberships and donations:

Your 1-year membership (Jan. 1 through Dec. 31) comes with these benefits:

- » FREE admission to all tours and exhibits at the Columbus Chapel & Boal Mansion Museum, for you and your immediate family
- » 10% off all purchases at the Museum Gift Shop
- » Reduced fees to select Special Events (ask at the Visitor Center)
- » Opportunities for training, service, and organizational development
- » The chance to take part in the preservation and interpretation of our historic past for future generations
- » Your membership card



Members receive 10% off all purchases at the Museum Gift Shop

Photo by Cindy Shaler

Membership levels are:

- » Individual (\$30) » Student (\$15) » Family (\$50)
- » Patron (\$100) » Sponsor (\$250+) » Benefactor (\$500+)
- » Explorer's Circle (\$1,000+)

We welcome new and returning members, and of course welcome **large or small donations** at any time, for either specific or general purposes.

Send your **membership or donation check** to the address at the end of this newsletter, made out to Columbus Chapel & Boal Mansion Museum, with "2019 Membership" or "Donation for *[purpose]*" in the Memo line. Or fill out the Membership Form you'll find on our website, www.boalmuseum.com.

Join us!

You can participate in the growth and development at the Museum as a volunteer, a member, a donor, a sponsor for a special event, or simply by visiting with your friends and family. Use the walking trails around the Museum grounds at any time, schedule a wedding or reunion, or just admire all the gardens. Please keep in touch: call Director Bob Cameron at 814-876-0129 or leave a message on the Visitor Center phone, 814-466-6210.

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Some of the 60-plus antique fans
in the Museum's collection are
currently displayed in the Mansion
conservatory

Photo by Cindy Shaler, 2017

