



Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission Chronicle

June 2009

Millville Army Air Field Museum wins Encore Award

The Commission's highest honor, the annual Paul Aiken Encore Award, is usually given to a deserving individual who contributes notably to the organization's mission of advancing the county's cultural, artistic and historical heritage. Past recipients, for example, have been John Fuyume of the Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center and Jacqueline Sandro of Cumberland County College's Clay College.

This year, however, the award, presented by members of the South Jersey Cultural Alliance to honor "the pillars of the cultural community in



The Millville Army Airfield base radio tower, shown at left in a 1944 photo, that will be recreated as an original sculpture by a local artist.

our region and state," goes not to an individual but to an entire organization. The recipient, the Millville Army Air Field Museum, has contributed mightily over the years to one of the area's most recognizable historical legacies—the Millville Airport of World War II and its famed P-47 Thunderbolt fighter airplanes.

Commenting on this year's selection, Marianne Lods, Commission chairperson, said, "The museum is important to the cultural tourism of our area because so many people are interested in World War II and because of family members who either fought in the war or gave support in some other way. The museum has done a fantastic job of documenting the period." She added, "What I especially like is that the museum has not stopped at just history but has brought in students to participate in projects so they can learn what it took to defend the nation at war."

The museum was incorporated in 1988 at the site of the nation's first defense

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Photo from the exhibit "Aviation Art—the Beauty of Flight," at the Airfield Museum that is now a permanent display. Note the signature on the case in the bottom right—Bob Goldstine, one of the museum's current volunteers, a World War II veteran and P-47 mechanic. (Photo by Prestige Publications)



MAAFM keeps Thunderbolt legacy alive

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airport during World War II. Its mission then—and now—was to preserve the aviation history of Millville and to memorialize the names of the 14 pilots who died while doing gunnery training at the base during the war.

The museum is housed at the original base headquarters and is replete with World War II memorabilia of all kinds, from photographs, furnishings and posters to representations of the vintage airplanes of the period. The museum is also the proprietor of the historic buildings and other structures dating from the World War II era that still exist at the site.

Lisa Jester, executive director, said she was “excited and thrilled” to receive the award and added, “It shows how we have come together as a group.” She cited the outreach program where veterans like Bill Hogan from Millville, a World War II former prisoner

of war, visits the N.J. Veterans’ Memorial Home and area schools talking about the museum’s mission.

The Outreach Director in charge of arranging group tours is navy veteran



This shows the courtyard area at the Millville Army Airfield Museum where the proposed sculpture of the radio tower will be placed—in the company of a vintage aircraft. (Photo by Prestige Publications)

Ed Lazarcheck, whose wife, Joyce, also serves as part-time grant writer.

Jester goes on to tick off some of the Museum’s recent improvements: a new roof, new paint for the exterior and creation of a courtyard with picnic tables. The Link Building, which houses the “Link Trainer,” a flight simulator used during the war to train pilots, was also restored through a grant from the Delaware River & Bay Authority.

The director is proud that a once-traveling art exhibit, “Aviation Art—the Beauty of Flight,” designed by Mike Cagno of the Noyes Museum in Atlantic County, is now a permanent

exhibit, thanks to a grant from the Cultural & Heritage Commission.

And she is excited that the Commission has awarded the museum another grant to create two pieces of art work commemorating the period: a sculpture of the now-demolished base radio tower, and a mosaic of the airfield, to be created by local students with professional Millville artist Liz Nicklus.

The radio tower, taken down because of safety reasons about 10 years ago, will be memorialized in a sculpture that will find a home in the museum’s courtyard. Russell Davis, museum president, said, “We’re fortunate that many of the original World War II buildings are still standing at the airport; however,

there is one important structure that had to be taken down—the original base radio tower. To help tell this part of the story, we proposed that a sculpture representing it be created.”

While acknowledging that the sculpture will be an artistic creation and not an exact replica, Davis added, “It will afford us the opportunity to describe and explain the function and importance of the radio tower here at the airport during the war.” The artist who will create the sculpture has not yet been selected.

Representatives of the museum were on hand May 18 to receive the award at Bally’s in Atlantic City.

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Gallery 50 June exhibit to feature work of ‘Bay Gals’

The art work of the “Bay Gals,” a group of local women whose inspiration is the area’s natural landscape, will be the featured exhibit for June at Gallery 50, 50 E. Commerce St., Bridgeton.

The 13 members have been meeting every week since 1997 at the Downe Township Senior Center in Newport, often leaving the meeting place with paintbrushes and palettes in hand for places such as Gandy’s Beach, Fortescue

and other spots along the Delaware Bay. Other intriguing places might be found along the Cohansey River, or any meadow or beach that resonates with their artistic muse.

The opening reception is on Friday, June 5, from 6 to 9 p.m. Admission is free and light refreshments will be served. The show will run through June 26. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. For information, call 856-575-0090.