Local History Winter Lecture Series Will Be Returning to Bellaire

The Bellaire Public Library and the Great Stone Viaduct Historical Education Society will partner again this season to sponsor a Local History Winter Lecture Series.

This joint effort began last year as a part of the educational outreach of the society to meet its mission of helping to promote public awareness of the rich history in the Back House area of the Ohio Valley. The Bellaire Public Library, with cooperation from director Laura Cranright, has worked to collaborate with the society using the community room as the setting for the lectures and displays that accompanied the speakers.

The free lecture series, held at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays during February and March, is in its second year and is coordinated by the GSV Society and the Bellaire Public Library to expand the lecture season this year from six weeks to eight weeks, based upon a favorable response from those attending last year.

This expansion will broaden the topics that can be covered and allows a greater opportunity for those wishing to attend one or more lectures. The lectures sponsored last year saw attendance between 30 to 50 persons for each lecture; those numbers will be targeted for this season.

The topics to be covered this year will again bring together lecturers who are knowledgeable about the topics they present, while providing visual aids that will bring those topics to life.

John Mattox, a resident of Flushing and director of the Underground Railroad Museum in Belmont County, will kick off the lecture series Feb. 5 with a presentation on “The Underground Railroad in Ohio.” The museum, created by Mattox, features an extensive collection of publications, books, memorabilia, articles and exhibits that pertain to the Underground Railroad, slavery and the local efforts to assist the flight to freedom through Belmont County and Ohio.

Dr. David Castle, assistant professor of history at Ohio University Eastern, will follow on Feb. 12 to present a lecture on “Belmont County and the Northwest Territory.” Castle is a popular professor at OUE for his engaging presentations.

Fred Ottosen of the Imperial Glass Collectors Society in Bellaire will present “Imperial Glass: Gem of the Glass City” on Feb. 19. Ottosen has a vast knowledge of the Imperial Glass operations since his father was the chemist who held the formulas for the wide array of glass colors that were once manufactured at the “Big I.” His show is now on display in the museum.

On Feb. 26, attorney Daniel Frizzi Jr., will present “The Methodist Episcopal Church in Bellaire and Bellaire’s First Church.” Now known as First United Methodist Church of Bellaire, this congregation is celebrating the 175th year of Methodism in Bellaire in 2014. A small number of sessions were held in the winter of 1838-39 in a storeroom located in Old “Belle Air” to hear the words of a circuit rider, Cornelius D. Bartelle.

John Bowman of Wheeling will appear March 5 for a presentation on “The Ohio River at Wheeling.” Bowman is not only a historian and author on this subject, but also is a builder of model steamboats that fill many personal collections throughout the Ohio Valley.

Cranright will present “Cultural Traditions of Early Coal, Glass and Steel Towns” on March 12. The Ohio Valley’s industrial heritage includes the richness and variety of the cultures of residents who settled here to find employment. Cranright will touch upon the traditions that they brought with them.

On March 19, Paul Cramer of Paul Jay Associates and Digital Solutions will present “Archival Research and Preservation of Historical Photographs and Documents.” Cramer, who has studied photography and graphic design, has a great interest in preservation of objects, photographs and other important documents that bring a visual presentation to historical topics.

The lecture series will conclude March 26 with a presentation by Frizzi titled “Belmont County Common Pleas Court Records: The Shaping History.” The talk will include a PowerPoint presentation of portraits of judges and includes a discussion of some of the important decisions that they made in the area of historical note in Bellaire.

Refreshments will be served immediately prior to and at the conclusion of each lecture. The Great Stone Viaduct Historical Society will have a display table with watercolor prints, maps and other historical collectibles for sale to those attending.