

## THE SOLLEDER ARROWHEAD PROJECT

By Mark Fritz

The Museum Committee has embarked on an effort they are calling the “Revitalize the Solleder Arrowhead Collection” project. And they are soliciting member participation and support.

Not many members know anything about this collection. It is a hidden gem that has languished for far too long in the basement of the library. It was once a key museum display when the Historical Society was based in Edwin Barton’s house on College Hill, but since the Society moved into the Bloomsburg Public Library, the collection has been stored on shelves in the dark, damp, dungeon-like basement. Just sitting there, abandoned, unseen, uncared for, like a pathetic orphan from a Charles Dickens novel.

The collection consists (primarily) of 19 picture frames converted into hanging display cases. Each frame contains about 50 to 100 arrowheads, and also thrown into the mix, a couple of axe heads, scrapers, drills, fishing net weights, pottery shards, etc., all artfully arranged.



The Solleder Collection has value in three distinct ways: (1) it has archeological/anthropological value; (2) it has visual value as an artistic display; and (3) it has historical/antique value. And, being over a century old, this collection/display itself has become an antique. Dating back to the 1890s, it is a collection with a history of its own that interweaves with the history of the Solleder family, and with the history of the town of Bloomsburg, and with the history of the CCH&GS. We are a historical society that knows very little about its own history. And so the Solleder Arrowhead Collection gives us an opportunity to learn about our own history...a revival that may also revive the Society. (Who knows? Can’t hurt.)

The bulk of this Indian artifact display was compiled by Peter Solleder over the years 1880 to 1900, helped in later years by his young nephew Albert L. Solleder. The entire Solleder family was involved in retail leather goods and shoemaking. They owned a shop on East Main Street. The business was later passed on to in-laws with the surname Wolf, the primary shoemaker being Otto Wolf, and later other in-laws with the name Strauser.

The Museum Committee wants to restore the Solleder Arrowhead Collection and return it to museum prominence. This may be problematic given the cramped Society’s current lack of

display space, but perhaps other display arrangements can be made, perhaps on a rotating basis at such places as: the Bloomsburg Fair, the Greenly Center, somewhere up at BU, the Moose art center (if that ever materializes), etc.

The Collection is in less-than-ideal condition and is going to require some rehabilitation. After 100 years, the glue that has held the arrowheads to a cardboard backing is beginning to fail and the arrowheads have begun falling away. The frames are coming apart. They need some maintenance: glued, cleaned, polished, new backing boards, etc. The most difficult task will be to remove the arrowheads from their cardboard backing and somehow transfer them to new cardboard backing while maintaining the original artistic juxtapositioning of the artifacts.

To make it easier for archeologists and anthropologists to study the collection, each item (and there are lots of them) should be numbered, photographed and inventoried. Museum Director Alex Dubil already photographed and inventoried much of the collection, but more work in this realm is needed.

Another big task will be to replace the paper labels/tags on each item and “translate” them. These old labels identify where each item was found, for example: Rupert, Fernville, Espy, etc. But the tags are faded, so much so that many are unreadable. Someone will need to put them under a black-light and read them and then copy that information to a new tag/label.

This project will require both manpower and money, so the Museum Committee is soliciting both volunteer labor and financial underwriting. If you’d like to contribute some time as a volunteer helping to restore the collection and revive the display, or if you’d like to contribute financially, please get in touch with Mark Fritz at 570-784-6545 or email him at [markfritz99@verizon.net](mailto:markfritz99@verizon.net).

