

### ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY — A MOMENT FOR PUBLIC THANKS

by John A. Herbst, Executive Director

**A**S I WRITE this issue's Director's Gallery and winter slowly turns to spring, my thoughts turn back to last spring, when we opened our new History Center. A year ago, we were in the throes of a major push to tie up about three million details — none of them small — in order to open the new facility on time, on the weekend of April 26-28, 1996.

Thinking about that hectic and challenging time, it is the kindness, generosity, and sometimes the sheer strength of people which comes to my mind. While our staff was indomitable, we were aided during this crucial time by many people from outside the organization, and I'd like to note some of them.

Certainly heading my list of such people are Tom Murphy, Fred Fanto, and George Mooney of Jendoco Construction Co., which served as our construction manager. They were pillars of integrity and strength as we tried to hurry along the physical work being done to the building. Our subcontractors such as McKamish and Chesapeake, Bell Atlantic, Ferry Electric, C. W. Associates, Sonatrol, Landis and Gyr, Marshall Elevator, Allegheny Window Cleaners, and many others outperformed themselves.

As the pace stepped up, our architects Bohlin, Cywinski & Jackson, worked diligently to close the remaining gaps of design work on the building. Here Jon Jackson, Charles Cwenar, and Rob Pfaffman pitched in with just the right spirit which a team needs at the end of a project to accomplish something wonderful.

Many people eased our way into the new building. John McClintock, who supplied and installed shelving for our Library and Archives, exhibited eternal good cheer as he worked around a very crazy and much-shortened schedule. Moving 40,000 rare and specialized books happens only once every century or so for an institution like ours. It's a complex operation. Take, for instance, the move of the 1866 city fire bell which stood outside the old Historical Society building in Oakland. In just one letter to Geoff and John Eichleay, I mentioned to them that their family company originally moved the bell to our Oakland building in 1922 as a donation; 74 years later the Eichleay family's company, which has moved ancient Egyptian monuments along the Nile, generously repeated the 1922 gesture by again moving the bell, this time to the History Center.

After the staff moved their various offices into the building, we threw a party to mark the occasion and let loose a little steam. Food was supplied graciously by Mulaney's Harp and Fiddle, USA

Gourmet, Opening Night in the Strip, and Beth and Tom Pastorius donated a keg of their brewery's Penn Pilsner. Traditional musician David Kristy and his band provided music for dancing, and the evening helped our overburdened staff ease their way into the new spaces. Local clergy Rabbi Diamond, Reverend David  
(continued on page 48)



Eichleay Corp., whose workers in 1922 had transported the historic city fire bell to HSWP's headquarters in Oakland, repeated the gesture by donating crew time for moving the bell again...

*(continued from page 3)*

Gleason, and Father Tom Wilson were invited to bless the building in an informal ceremony, which many staff members attended.

The Museum Division staff created and installed over 35,000 square feet of exhibition space and this could not have done this without the help of Rogers Display, Creative Productions, designer Steve Feldman, historical consultants Susan Page Tillet and Dorothy Hartman, curatorial consultant Kate Gordon, installers Erin O'Neill and Joe Heaps Nelson, and sign maker Laura Gottus. Gordon McShane was our talented exhibits construction manager.

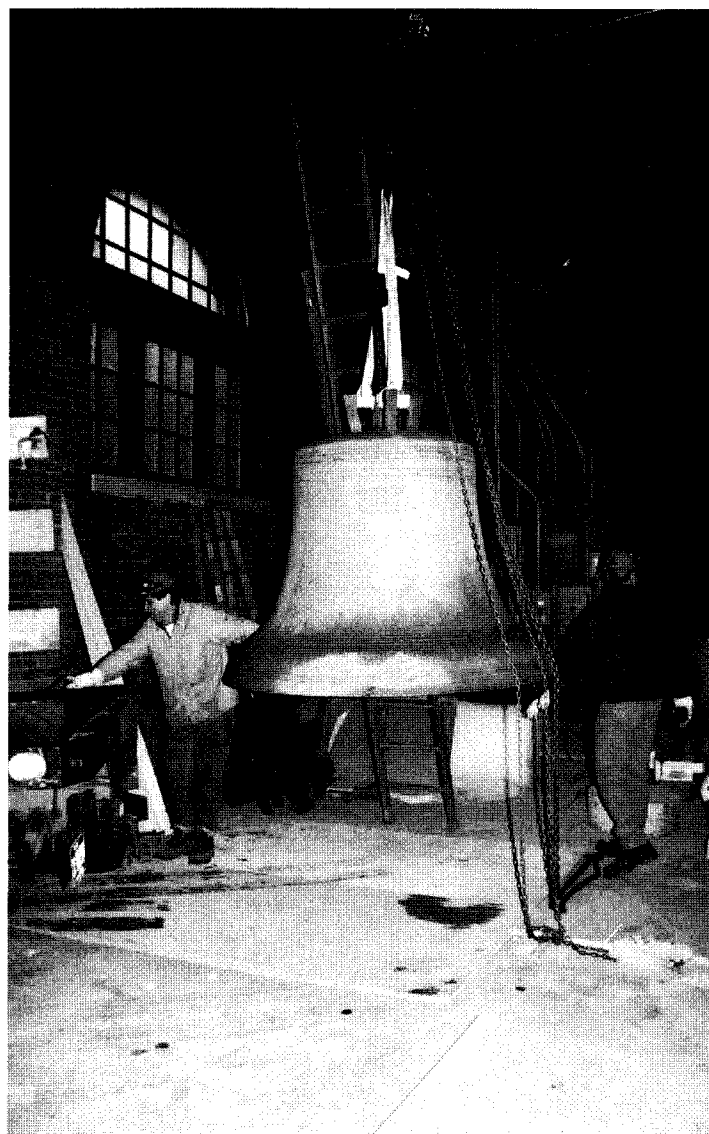
One call to Historical Society member Sally Levin and her son Robert of Levin Furniture brought about a generous donation of furniture for our Library and our staff office reception areas. The Chianelli family reupholstered additional furniture pieces for office areas as a donation and many corporations such as Mellon Bank, Westinghouse, and USX donated additional furniture. Roxanne Simpson, of Roxanne's Dried Flowers in the Strip, donated floral arrangements for the office areas. Pernille Steirs Lopez of IKEA arranged for the donation and assembly of furniture for the Local History Resource Center, as well as for the design of the space.

Pittsburgh artist Mary Mazziotti loaned several of her paintings of Pittsburgh to grace the office areas of the History Center. People comment daily on their style and originality, which capture Pittsburgh's neighborhoods so well.

On the opening weekend, Sabine Aronson, Renee Abrams, and Katie and Michael Jones working with Audrey Brouman of ALBrouman Associates, did a standup job in coordinating four major events in three days. Volunteers from community organizations such as the Polish Falcons, AAAC, Oasis, Boy Scouts of America, and Girl Scouts of America (Shaler), as well as employees of Columbia Gas, helped our own staff and volunteers with the opening weekend festivities. More than 8,000 people came, making volunteering especially challenging.

For the Saturday evening party, Strip District restaurateurs donated their food and services. This group included Crewsers, Papa J's Mercato, Italian Oven, Jarrell & Rea, Kaya, Opening Night caterers, Pennsylvania Brewing, Primanti Brothers, Rosebud, Starbucks Coffee, USA Gourmet, and Robert Wholey's.

"God is in the details," the architect Mies Van der Rohe once remarked, and so it is that our experience has been made up of the actions of many individuals, too numerous to all be named, who through their time, expertise, patience, or generosity helped to make the History Center happen. It was a tremendous outpouring of community support for a place that we hope captures the spirit of that community. A year later, we are still most grateful. ❷



**...to the new History Center in the Strip District.**