

Convention 2019: Flying High in Ohio

By Jeff Siptak

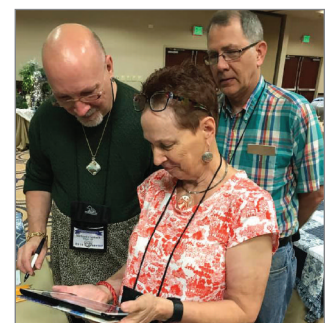
Fairborn, Ohio, just outside Dayton, was home to the 34th annual Willow Collectors Convention, July 11-14, with convention chair Paul Kirves taking the lead. This year's theme was "Willow in Flight," and it was certainly a high-flying weekend of willow fun.

Those arriving early on Wednesday gathered for dinner that night, for a chance to visit with old friends. On Thursday, an optional pre-convention event was planned in Dayton, the birthplace of aviation. A guided tour bus took attendees to Dayton's beautiful Carillon Historical Park. They were given a guided tour of the original 1905 Wright Flyer III, Dayton-made National cash registers, train cars, automobiles and bicycles. There are 30+ historic buildings in the park. After lunch at the Carillon Brewing Company, the group visited America's Packard Museum, which is the only museum dedicated exclusively to the Packard Motor Car Company. The tour rounded up by seeing Dayton's National Park and the home and birthplace of the Wright Brothers.

Back at the hotel guests quickly registered and met old and new friends. That evening, guests were welcomed by Paul to a dinner reception. First-timers were welcomed and introduced. Show & Tell is always a highlight and this year was no exception, with more attendees sharing some of the prized and recent finds. Paul and his team of volunteers made sure each table at all the events carried out the convention theme with aviation and travel inspired centerpieces, and each meal focused on a cuisine from a different country. Throughout the weekend, attendees were quick to compliment both!

The flea market opened Friday morning with everyone shopping for items priced at \$30 or less. There were at least two dozen tables filled with willow and some good bargains were to be had.

Hugh Sykes then gave an adventurous talk titled, "In Search of John Barber - A Willow Pattern Connection." It revolved around a yellow brown ware pitcher from his collection with the name John Barber written on it. John Barber (we don't know for sure if this pitcher belonged to that John Barber) was an Englishman who invented the gas turbine. Hugh then flew us around the world with videos and willow examples of how that invention paved the way for flying as we know it today. (*cont'd*)





After lunch, Mary Jane Lalonde led a craft session where attendees sewed and finished their own tea cozy. There were lots of different willow fabrics and everyone walked away with a nice item to have and use at home.

Then it was time to get ready for the night's auction. The auction committee set the stage by arranging all the lots and registering numbers



for bidding. More than 340 lots were auctioned off, with Nancee Rogers and Jeff Siptak serving as auctioneers. Others on the auction team included Marianne Elsmann, Daisy Eden, Judy Prophet, Joyce LaFont, Al Cronk, Bob Prophet, Alan Nottingham, Ricky Barrett, Hugh Sykes and Scot Rogers. See, it does take a village!



Midway through the auction, attendees put their bidding paddles down and enjoyed a nice buffet dinner.

Saturday was a new willow day and began with fan-favorites, the place setting and art competitions. More than a dozen competed in these events with wonderful, creative ideas featuring our favorite pattern.



Attendees voted on their favorites and prizes (money certificates to spend at the grand sale) were awarded for the top three.

Long-time member and author, Loren Zeller, then took us through "A Galaxy of Willow." His lecture was a special intergalactic journey visiting the Willow Solar System, taking us through the planets of Broseley and Temple, then on to the big planets of Standard Willow and its Flow Blue moon, as well as a stop by Turner Willow, Worcester Willow and ending up with a visit to the Willow Variant mini moons. Loren featured many museum-quality examples of rare and unfamiliar shapes, many featured in a new book he co-authored with Richard Halliday, *Chinoiserie: Printed British Ceramics in the Chinese Style, 1750-1900*.



Lunch was then served and the annual business meeting followed. During the meeting, Robin Hill invited everyone to Oklahoma City, July 9-12, 2020, where the theme will be "Where the Willow Comes Sweeping Down the Way." There was also discussion for the 2021 convention being held in Frankfort, Kentucky. (cont'd)

After lunch, Don LaFont gave an interesting talk, "Medical Ceramics in the Blue Willow Pattern." Don brought his wealth of medical knowledge and showcased many examples of early baby feeders, pap boats, invalid feeders and more, featuring the history of these and their place in hospitals and homes (and even going back to the Egyptians).



Did you know that originally hospitals were where people went to die? Our word "hospice" comes from the word "hospital." He set out a display of more than two dozen items that attendees could pick up and view that illustrated many of the points he shared.



During the afternoon, dealers began setting up for the grand sale and by 3:30 the doors opened to about a dozen dealers selling their wares. Everyone had a chance to shop hundreds of pieces of willow and decide which items needed a new home in their collections. With bags filled and shopping done, it was time to get ready for our last-night's dinner.



The evening was capped off with a wonderful dinner banquet, which included a photo booth at the entrance where everyone could create a few lasting memories with friends. Convention attendance pins were awarded for 5 years to: Reeze Hanson, Robin Siptak, Ricky Barrett, David Gelhausen, Rachel McCain; for 10 years to: Marianne Johnson, Sam Swartz, Aiden Reece; for 15 years to: Al Cronk, Edie Cronk, Brenda Hoffer, Ken Kowen, Carole Parson, Mary Lou Piepergerdes, Loren Zeller; and for 25 years to: Bob Hillard, Metha Hillard, Don LaFont. (cont'd)





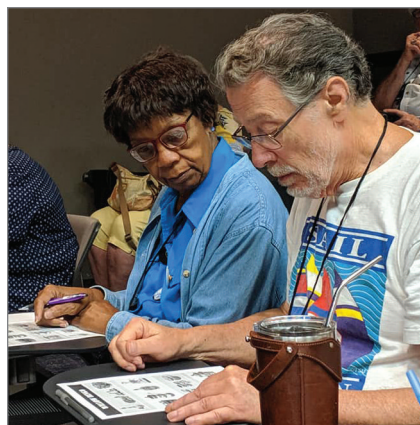
Special this year was recognition to both Evelyn Stephens and Nancee Rogers who were given lifetime memberships marking their attendance at 30 conventions. A pin was also given posthumously to Daisy Eden, marking what would have been husband Tom Eden's 20th convention. Tom passed away earlier this year.

Following the pin recognitions was the evening's entertainment, local comedian, Mike

Larsen, who is an Emmy-nominated TV writer having appeared on HBO, Showtime and The Tonight Show. Paul Kirves closed the convention thanking everyone for coming, as well as for their support and volunteer spirit. Attendees enjoyed the big final event of the weekend and took in any last-minute photos.

On Sunday morning, an optional, non-denominational church service was led by James Cail and Daisy Eden, with our volunteer choir in support. Special remembrances of our "willow pastor," Tom Eden, were shared. Attendees then packed their cars and were ready to head home.

It was a great convention enjoyed by everyone—*hats off to Paul Kirves!*



More convention photos from Dayton!

