

Notes from The Last Green Valley Historical Collaboration!

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What: Historical Collaboration in The Last Green Valley

When: Saturday, February 25, 2017 from 1-3 p.m. (Snow date is Sunday, Feb. 26th)

Where: Optical Heritage Museum, 12 Crane St., Southbridge, MA. (check out a preview of our tour at OHM's website www.opticalheritagemuseum.com).



More!

Who: All historical societies, librarians, or other like-minded organizations & individuals that focus on preserving, enjoying and passing on our history.

Topic: Take a journey through time, discovering the fascinating origins of not just the optical industry, but the history behind the many simple household items we take for granted today. “**FOCUS**” on thousands of items on display including microscopes, Lensometers, multifocal and antique spectacles. Enjoy incredible moments in history and “**SEE**” how our lives would be very different without these scientific discoveries. Host Dick Whitney is a passionate wealth of knowledge that he can't wait to share with all of us!

This tour was a smash hit during the most recent Walktober!

Why: Rich history exists in our National Heritage Corridor. Stories beg to be passed on, and our skills & talents shared!

Schedule:

1:00-1:15 p.m. Arrive & Mingle

1:15-1:30 p.m. Brief Introductions – tell us who you are & where you from

1:30-2:45 p.m. **Presentation & Tour of the many OHM Galleries, filled with antique spectacles, equipment, the AO collection, history of Southbridge and more.**

2:45-3:00 p.m. Q&A, Refreshments, Wrap-up

RSVP: to marcy@tlgv.org or call 860-774-3300. Secure your spot now!

***Join us for the 1st Historical Collaboration in The Last Green Valley in 2017!
...2 years and growing STRONG!***

THE GOAL?

To offer a quarterly event, featuring an exciting & informative historical topic each session, presented by each of you! Show off your specialty.

Instead of working alone & duplicating efforts, let's pitch in to work & learn together!

After all, HISTORY is OUR STORY.

Together we care for it, enjoy it and pass it on.

Join the collaboration to conserve our history in the National Heritage Corridor.

Secure your spot now! RSVP TO marcy@tlgv.org or call 860-774-3300.

NOTES

The 5th Historical Collaboration in [The Last Green Valley](#) took place on Saturday, February 25, 2017 at the [Optical Heritage Museum](#) in Southbridge, Massachusetts.

These events were inspired and driven by requests from local historical societies, such as our friends from [The Thompson Historical Society](#) ([Joe Lindley](#) was specifically inspirational.) They are open to anyone interested in the places and the history. Consider becoming a member of a historical society or museum supporter and/or volunteer if you are not already.

Because The Last Green Valley is a National Heritage Corridor, made up of 35 towns in eastern CT & south-central MA, and one of the unique pieces to our designation as such by Congress in 1994, was our region's history!

So many of our historical societies & museums have been working away over these years, many with the same sorts of struggles, and some solutions, that is just makes sense that we all work together.

Together, we can learn from each other, and we can work to pass on the wonderful places & stories we have in our 35 towns.

The Last Green Valley is a destination, thanks in part to our history & our museums.

We've learned that many of the historical societies/museums struggle with membership, volunteers, resources, a location, funding, and technology. We've learned how some societies/museums have worked to solve these issues.

We've visited now 5 mind-boggling locations in our National Heritage Corridor, many of us for the first time! Imagine that? History lovers not having had the time to enjoy the diverse history we have here!

We've been to [Killingly Historical Society](#), [The Thompson Historical Society](#), [Huntington Homestead Museum](#) and [Friends of Ashbel Woodward Museum](#).

Today we visited in wonder, the [Optical Heritage Museum](#), sponsored by many local businesses, like [Southbridge Savings Bank](#), [Sturbridge Coffee Roasters](#), [OFS FITEL Sturbridge, Massachusetts](#), but the major sponsor is [ZEISS Group](#).

There is no way Ranger Marcy is able to relay neither the presentation that we enjoyed, nor the room after room full of items that we viewed. Like most things in life, you gotta jump in and check it out!

Curator Dick Whitney will offer a presentation to your group, and a tour whenever you want! Email marcy@tlgv.org to learn more.

A bit from the event, with attendees from Franklin, CT (our southwestern-most portion) to Quincy, MA, many with ties to [American Optical](#).

Fun facts:

AO started in 1833 and was the largest manufacturer of lenswear.

AO was also major in frames, safety wear, fiberoptics (ever hear of Will Hicks??), medical devices and even in the movies!

AO was noted for many "firsts", like Dr. Estelle Glancy who got the first progressive lens patent. Talk about progressive!

In 1965, 5500 were employed at AO in Southbridge, and 13,000 were employed globally!

The museum was founded in 1983 as the "AO Museum".

From 1983 - 2000 the museum was housed in the AO's Main Plant, but it was small, and visits were restricted.

In 2000, all the items were put in storage. As anyone who has put things in storage, you know that the situation is not always ideal. This was certainly the case.

[Richard B. Whitney](#) becomes the curator - with no money, no museum. Hmmm.

In May of 2002, Dick organized an AO reunion, with 400+ attendees. He organized and offered some artifacts for the event, hoping to raise money with an auction at the event. Something is happening!

In May of 2004, friends at the [Vienna Restaurant and Historic Inn](#) hosted an appraisal event (kind of like Antique Road Show) as a fundraiser.

In October of 2004, [Morin Jewelers](#) hosted a display and made a donation to the museum.

In May of 2007, the museum "re-start" committee starts work to get this museum moving again.

In May of 2009, the [Southbridge Hotel & Conference Center](#) hosted a display of lensometers from the museum collection. Big and heavy lensometers!

Welcome Diane Matuck of the MA Opticians Group. She became interested, and better yet involved - and still is to this minute.

In October 2012 Zeiss visits Southbridge and has a strong interest in the museum.

In 2013 Zeiss becomes the major sponsor of the museum, and remains so to this day.

Organization of the items, and planning of the museum begins.

In March and April of 2013, the collection is moved from the storage location at a church attic on Main St. (Rte. 131) to 12 Crane Street, the current location of the museum.

You MUST SEE THIS PLACE! You MUST HEAR THE STORIES!

Hope that the things we do today are as important and ground-breaking as those that came before us.

[The Last Green Valley](#), together - together, we can care for, enjoy and pass on our National Heritage Corridor.

Check out the plethora of information online at the [Optical Heritage Museum website](#)

[See this post on The Last Green Valley's facebook page](#)

[View the video of the event on The Last Green Valley's facebook page](#)

[Watch on TLGV's youtube page](#)

[Some great photos](#) from TLGV member and a member of multiple local historical societies, Brian Zoldak.

Save the date of Sunday, April 2, 2017 from 2 – 4 pm for the next historical collaboration at the Leffingwell House Museum, 348 Washington Street, Norwich! Everyone welcome – Free!

Email marcy@tlgv.org to reserve your spot now!

[Historical News in The Last Green Valley](#)