

Lebanon Museum Gets a Makeover

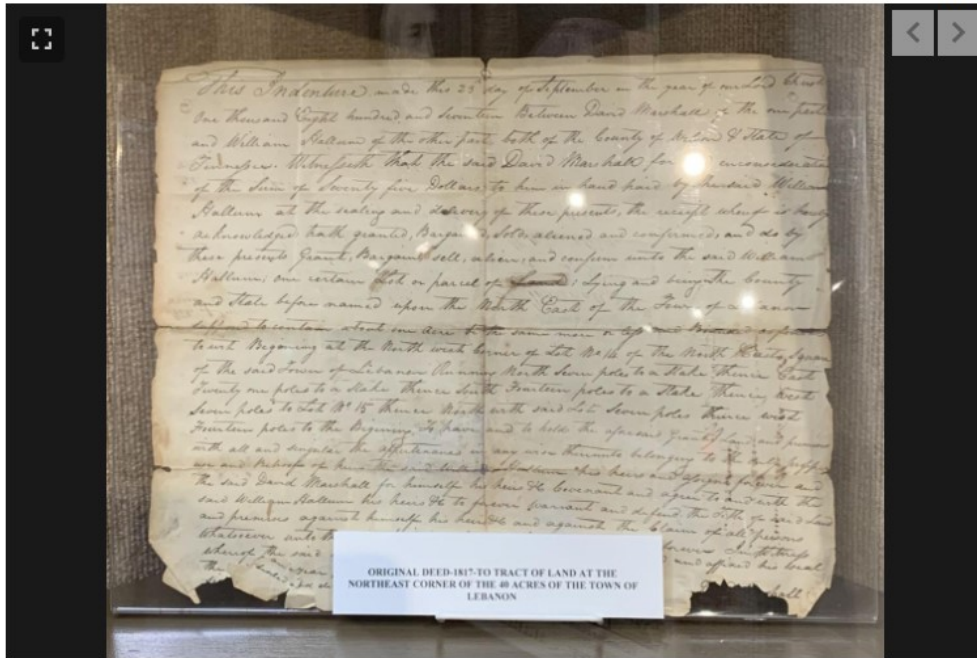


Whether you've lived here all your life or just moved into the City of Cedars, an expedition to the refreshed City of Lebanon Museum with its displays and fascinating collection of vintage objects and historic photographs will guide you down the path to Lebanon's yesteryear.

"I'm hoping visitors will find the history of Lebanon down through the ages of the people and the departments that helped put it together. I wanted to focus on the city departments," said museum curator Kathleen Vail.

As for what's new, she said, "We took a lot of the old pictures and scanned them and put them on monitors. We brought in the benches so people can sit and look at all the monitors and see the displays. We've added QR codes (quick response codes which can be scanned to provide the user access to instant information such as historical details). This helps the museum to be more interactive."

The museum had been shuttered for less than six months. Now there are new exhibits that highlight the Lebanon airport, Lebanon Electric and Middle Tennessee Electric and the gas department.



Close-up of original 1817 deed to 40 acres of land in the northeast corner of Lebanon.

There is also a “Focus On” display that will be changed every two months. First up is a focus on industry in Lebanon which shares items representing Lux Clock, Texas Boot, Perfection Dairy, Cracker Barrel and the Lebanon Ax Handle Company.



This display on industry in Lebanon hold clocks made at the Lux Clock Factory, an original Cracker Barrel Restaurant menu and postcard of the original restaurant site, and a Perfection Dairy milk bottle.

The curator's favorite display is the fire department exhibit.

"It's so cool to see the equipment they used and think how heavy that must have felt while wearing it in a fire. We have an old air mask and old resuscitator, things people threw out because they got equipment that was bigger and better," said Vail.

The exhibit has old photos and lets visitors glean the facts that Lebanon's first fire department was established in 1830 when volunteer firemen were referred to as "fire extinguishers."



Vintage firefighting equipment and photographs help to tell the story of Lebanon's fire department in this City of Lebanon Museum exhibit.

Vail was thrilled to discover the museum possessed an ancient pigeon-hole mailbox that was used by Castle Heights Military Academy many decades back when the school's social director, Mary Fahey, did double duty as postmistress.

"When the mailbox came down, I really thought this could be used to teach children about the city of Lebanon. We have letters with cards so the kids can take the mail and put it in the slots like they are helping Miss Fahey," said Vail.

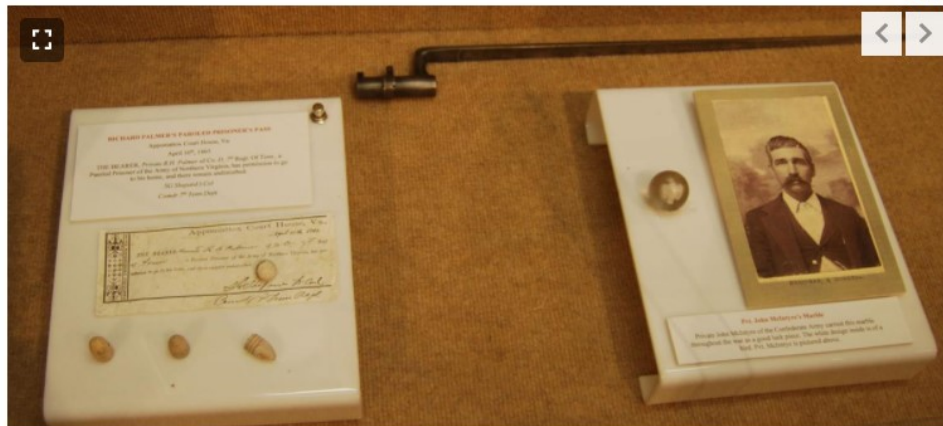
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This pigeon-hole mailbox served Castle Heights Military Academy for decades in the 20th century. The school's postmistress for many years was Mary Fahey.

The curator has no idea of how many items the museum holds but among her favorite artifacts are some Civil War Minié balls, a 1952 Zenith Radio, a key from the West Side Hotel (which burned down in 1982), a Castle Heights School pennant that predates the military academy and a collection of 1887 Lebanon Herald newspapers.

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A few items in the Civil War exhibit include a paroled prisoner's pass signed April 10, 1865, at Appomattox Court House, Virginia; a couple of Minié balls and a large marble that Pvt. John McIntyre carried with him during the war as a good luck piece.

“There’s a lot of stuff here that’s really cool,” she said. “I can’t believe we got this done, but our maintenance department was amazing in helping us put this together.”



This education exhibit honors Lebanon schools. The long Castle Heights pennant predates the school's changeover to a military academy.

She gives kudos to her team that includes Duanne Gann, head of the maintenance department; Beth Ehlert in the legal department; and Dillan Jackson and Mattie Neely in engineering.

“I think big and, somehow or another, these guys have come up with something to finish it. It’s the little details that really make a difference,” said Vail of the museum, which is packed with lots of little facts and a wide variety of artifacts, which added up, tell a grand portion of the history of Lebanon.