



# The Historian

*A Man's Life – A Nation's History*

*A Newsletter for Friends of the Sanderson*

*Spring 2017 Issue 18*

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## NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM –

John Aaron, volunteer guide

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The 2017 season marks the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Christian C. Sanderson Museum. The museum and its unusual collection of historical objects and memorabilia is today the most tangible legacy of the iconic character that was Chris Sanderson. It represents, however, only one facet of his enormously varied life and career. A significant challenge to the volunteers who maintain the collection and manage the museum is to mine the available resources to reveal and illuminate other, less tangible remembrances of Chris's life and legacy.

The museum collection is fundamentally idiosyncratic—it's peculiar to the personhood of Chris Sanderson, and as a person there was no one quite like him. The nature and variety of the material he collected are deeply rooted in his own family's history, his mother's strong influence, and in his uniquely personal, sometimes quirky, perspective of American history. This unique heritage is what makes this little jewel of a museum so very special.

Chris Sanderson passed away in 1966. The number of people who knew him in person or by reputation declines significantly with each passing year.

This inexorable reality has profound and manifold implications for the future health and welfare of the museum. Chiefly, it means that name recognition and first-hand memories alone will be insufficient to attract the numbers of visitors and contributors needed to perpetuate the museum. We must work continuously and creatively to find new ways to bring to life the museum collection and other facets of Chris's legacy.

Highlights of the 2017 season include a new exhibit entitled "Wyeth Unplugged." This exhibit uncovers and explores the private relationship between Chris Sanderson and the Wyeth family, as revealed in Chris's photographs and letters. The 50th anniversary of the museum was celebrated in May by a luncheon at Brandywine Prime featuring notable speakers who shared memories of Chris and of the founding of the museum by five of Chris's friends and neighbors. Moreover, the museum was represented at the 89th Chester County Old Fiddlers Picnic, which Chris Sanderson coordinated for many years and where he also performed frequently.

The Sanderson Museum is open Saturdays and Sundays from 12pm to 4pm and other days and times by appointment. Please feel free to call the museum (610.388.6545) or the curator (610.329.7884) for appointments. Come visit us. Bring your family and friends to marvel at the wonders of this most unusual museum. We look forward to meeting you and sharing our passion to celebrate the life and legacy of Christian Carmack Sanderson.

## ASK TO SEE

Chuck Ulmann, Curator

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### **Chris Sanderson and the Old Fiddlers' Picnics, Part 1**

Summer is slowly arriving although you wouldn't believe it from the weather we have had. That means it is approaching the Old Fiddlers' Picnic at Hibernia Park in northern Chester County. Chris Sanderson never attended it there since the event relocated

Please see *Ask to See* page 2

*Ask to See* from page 1

there in 1980. Chris passed away in 1966.

Chris attended many of the picnics that were held in Chester County. He learned how to play the fiddle while living in the Phoenixville area from John Deisher. What we call The Old Fiddlers' Picnic was started in 1921 by Quarryville resident George W. Hensel. The event was first called the "Fiddlers' Contest" and was hosted by Chrystal Springs Park in Parkesburg. The first Old Fiddlers' Picnic Chris attended was in 1924.

In 1926, Chris received his first formal invitation that was signed by George Hensel and the executive committee. It started out "Esteemed Old Fiddler ... " to a man who was 45 years old! We have a picture of all the "Esteemed Old Fiddler(s)" on the wall in the second floor music room. You will have no trouble picking out Chris as our founding curator Tom Thompson graciously placed a red arrow on the photograph pointing at Chris.

What about Lenape Park? It was built around 1900 to provide weekend traffic for the West Chester Street Railway Company. I remember the Merry-Go-Round and the old wooden roller coaster. I remember the boat swings, well that is what I called them. There was a clipping in the Chester County Historical Society files that said a fiddlers' picnic was held there in 1923 with 18 players. Was Chris one of them? More research is in order to determine that answer.

These were exciting events. The Chester County poet John Russell Hayes wrote poems for the event in 1926 and 1927 and is believed to have presented them in person to the crowd. The poem Hayes presented in 1926 started with "As Christy Sanderson has said -- what happy and friendly folks/ we meet at these old-time, Fiddlers' Days with their pleasant talk and jokes."

In 1927, Chris and his orchestra from the Oak Hill School performed there. According to a clipping from the Lancaster News-Era, "official badge issued for the first time". I still haven't located the one Chris would have received. The events were well attended as people knew about his lectures, "Historic Chester County", "Historic Delaware", and "Battle of Brandywine". Chris was impressed by the 5 cent meal tickets. Multiple newspapers (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Daily Local*, *Oxford Press*, etc.) stated that over 10,000 showed up for the event.



*This photo was taken the first year Chris was formally invited to the Fiddlers' Picnic. The red arrow pointing at Chris was placed on the photo by the museum's original curator, Tom Thompson.*

*Ask to See* the clipping files created by Tom Thompson about the Old Fiddlers' Picnics and read more about the Old Fiddlers' Picnic in the next issue of the Historian.

# SUPPORT THE MUSEUM & BECOME A MEMBER!

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The Sanderson Museum is a private, non-profit 501(c)3 organization founded in 1967. Please consider making a contribution to keep this unique museum open for the enjoyment of future generations. Your membership will help to support the rich heritage of Chris Sanderson's country home filled with artifacts representing over 200 years of American history. Descriptions of membership levels and benefits are below.

To pay by check, complete the form below and mail to Sanderson Museum, P.O. Box 153, Chadds Ford, PA 19317.

To pay by credit card, visit <http://sandersonmuseum.org/support-museum/>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I am enclosing my tax deductible gift of:

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500   | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$200   | <input type="checkbox"/> My gift is: _____ |

I would like to join the Sanderson Museum:

- Individual \$20
- Family \$30
- Patron \$100
- Benefactor \$500

## MEMBERSHIP LEVELS AND BENEFITS

### Individual: \$20/year

Free admission to museum

Free gift

Subscription to our quarterly newsletter

Invitation to special events

### Family: \$30/year

All of the above for a family of 2 adults and their children under 18

### Patron: \$100/year

All of the above plus:

Two Guest Passes to the museum (\$10 value)

\$20 Gift Certificate for use at the Museum Store

### Benefactor: \$500/year

All of the above plus:

Wyeth-Sanderson Historical Map of Chester County (\$95 value)

## WE APPRECIATE YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

Christian C. Sanderson Museum  
P.O. Box 153  
Chadds Ford, PA 19317



*Go Green and receive The Historian via email. Send your email address to [executivedirector@sandersonmuseum.org](mailto:executivedirector@sandersonmuseum.org). Thank you!*



The Christian C. Sanderson Museum - A Man's Life, A Nation's History. An eclectic array of art, military memorabilia, presidential artifacts, local history and collectibles. History like you've never seen it before! Open March through November, Saturday and Sunday, 12pm to 4pm or by appointment.

Sanderson Museum  
1755 Creek Road  
Chadds Ford, PA 19317

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Chadds Ford, PA 19317

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