



Issue Number 7

February, 2009

Editor: S. Kelly



BEST WISHES FOR 2009 --- AND COUNTING

This year promises to be even better for Merrybrook and Friends

Plans are moving ahead for us to become part of the Northern Virginia Community Foundation, a community umbrella group of small and not so small donors concerned about making the best use of their donations among local causes. The group has been working for the past 30 years to raise, invest and donate funds locally to charitable organizations that are making an impact on social or cultural needs.

We are also drafting a business plan for the coming years to focus our activities on the future of Merrybrook. Kirsten Dueck, our consultant, is working on the broad outline, but we welcome your input, both general and specific. Letters to the Editor, or emails to Lratcliffehouse@aol.com are welcome and will be carefully considered in the final draft.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

**We are planning
a Spring Gala
at Frying Pan Park
on Sunday June 7th.
Be sure to save the date.**

New Members and new Board Members have joined our ranks and will be introduced over the next few months. Two who have already been active are Victor and Debbie Balancia. Victor will join the Board of Directors at the January meeting, and Debbie will become part of our valued Advisory Board.

Linda Figg, who helped coordinate the Herndon Homes Tour this year and is active in many of the town's events, is also joining our Board and will provide a closer link with local events.

A Spring Gala Our second annual gala, is being planned for Sunday,

June 7th at 5pm at Frying Pan Park Conference Center in Herndon. We will celebrate the 173rd anniversary of Laura's birth and mark our amazing progress in 2008. **HOLD THE DATE** and join us for a festive and significant evening there. The program will include fabulous food, great music and dancing, re-enactments, a silent auction, prizes, exhibits, a raffle, and a chance to hear Chuck Mauro launch his new book on Laura Ratcliffe. And, in addition to all that, a special treat, Rick Garland, a J.E.B. Stewart re-enactor and multi-talented pianist, story-teller, and singer, will entertain us with songs and stories. Plan to join us for an evening of fun and camaraderie.

Merrybrook Matters

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Words From Win

All best wishes for the New Year to everyone who helped make 2008 such an outstanding year for Friends of Laura Ratcliffe! As you can see from the brief summary of what is underway, we hope 2009 will match it.

Members and associates have given energy and meaning to our goal of preserving Merrybrook. This exciting momentum can continue and grow as you lend your enthusiasm to our efforts. Commit an hour or two a month, and you will find deep satisfaction in the friendships and accomplishments that result.

Thank you for your continuing support. We are making a difference!

Friends of Laura Ratcliffe have some great dates to remember from 2008

--May 28th Our First Annual Preservation Gala

We celebrated the Birthday of Laura and honored Merrybrook's friends and supporters at a festive and beautiful evening on the Potomac. Music, prizes, exhibits, and a witty and informed speaker, John Quarstein, made for a great party and a memorable marker of our progress.

--September 30th Merrybrook's Fall Open House

This event brought new visitors to an afternoon of old-fashioned games and goodies, history, and entertainment by multi-talented pianist/historian Rick Garland (aka J.E.B. Stuart), a Silent Auction of John Paul Strain's remarkable work and a deepened appreciation of the unique relationship between the town of Herndon and this historic house as described by our guest speaker, Steve DeBenedettis, Mayor of Herndon.

--October 8th Fairfax County Park Authority voted to accept Merrybrook as an historic site

in the County park system when it is proffered to them in the future. This has been our goal from the beginning and it is gratifying and thrilling to have achieved it so soon! With that assurance, we have accelerated the necessary work of raising sufficient funds to ensure the physical preservation of the buildings and wonderful grounds remaining in Laura's estate.

--Ongoing Tours throughout the year for numerous groups and individuals introduced hundreds of visitors to Merrybrook and its unique history. The largest, and most detailed, took place as part of the Herndon Homes Tour when over 200 people sampled Merrybrook's charm. Many became new members on the spot, while others offered generous donations to the Merrybrook Preservation Fund, and good advice on achieving our goals. It was a highlight event in every way! As the tour ended, my husband and I were invited to Herndon's Art Space where, with the other hosts of the day, we were presented with a graceful portrait of the house by artist, Pat MacIntyre--a thank you that we will treasure!

A special thanks to all of you who made this possible

---- Win

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This is the last in a series of articles on John Mosby and his Virginia Partisan Rangers. Content was taken largely from the book "Civil War, Fairfax Courthouse" by Edward Coleman Trexler, Jr. with his gracious permission.

THE GRAY GHOST

Mosby disbanded his Rangers on April 21, 1865, five days after President Lincoln's death, saying to them, "I part from you with just pride in the fame of your achievements and grateful recollections of your generous kindness to myself."

The extraordinary exploits of Col. John Mosby have come down to us not only as a portion of the history of the Civil War era but also as folk tales about a local hero, a personality larger than life. It would be hard to live in Virginia and not hear or read something about him and his Rangers. We all love a brave, dashing, romantic character. Less well known are the contributions made by Mosby after the war. Unlike some popular figures, Mosby remained true to character. His memoirs are revealing and good reading.

John Mosby was admired and respected by General Grant, who befriended him repeatedly after the War. President Hayes appointed him the United States Consul in Hong Kong, where he was instrumental in suppressing the practice of "Shanghaiing" by Chinese ship captains. He was employed as an attorney with Southern Pacific Railroad for sixteen years after Grant, virtually on his death bed, sent a note to Governor Stanford asking, as a personal favor, that Mosby be offered a position. John Mosby died in 1916 at the age of 82.

"PLEASE"

As the mother of a young child, the importance of 'please' and 'thank you' has been much on my mind lately. In trying to teach my son about appreciating the small and large gifts around him, I've been reminded that those magic words exist to express our appreciation for what matters most to us. In trying times—and we are certainly living through the times that test both our courage and resourcefulness, not to mention our patience—it's especially important to remember each other for continued acts of generosity. So, on behalf of Merrybrook and the Friends of Laura Ratcliffe, I want to thank each of you who donated your time and work and money to bring the organization so far so quickly.

These are also the moments when we reexamine what is truly important to us and recommit to supporting its success. For the Friends of Laura Ratcliffe, ensuring the preservation of our history and the record it leaves at places such as Merrybrook is one of the most meaningful actions we can take. As you consider how you will donate your time and your money this year, please remember Merrybrook and how much this historic site needs your help and how much your assistance matters.

As tours and educational programs expand we find ourselves in greater need of volunteer help. If you are interested in becoming a tour guide, joining the event committee planning the Spring Gala at Frying Pan Park, or helping with any of the many projects sponsored by the Friends of Laura Ratcliffe, please give us a call.

The long-term survival of Merrybrook also depends on endowed funds to support preservation and restoration of the house, gardens, and historic outbuildings. Thanks to a generous matching grant from an anonymous donor, your donation will go twice as far this year. When you give to the Merrybrook Preservation Fund, your contribution will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$100,000. So please consider a generous pledge to the Merrybrook Preservation Fund in 2009.

And, **THANK YOU!** –Kirsten Dueck, Merrybrook Consultant

You can make a difference!
Help preserve this beautiful historic property.
Join the Friends of Laura Ratcliffe!

Membership Form:

Name _____ **Phone** _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

E-mail _____

Individual __ \$25 **Family** __ \$35 **Sustaining** __ \$50 **Founder** __ \$100

Would you like to volunteer in:

Publicity _____ **Membership** _____ **Fundraising** _____

Other (please specify) _____

Phone: 703-620-3153

Make checks payable to Friends of Laura Ratcliffe

Please send your tax deductible membership and contributions to:

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Herndon, VA 20171-3016

Visit our website at: www.lauraratcliffe.org

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