

DEPRESSION ERA BANK ROBBERY

From Prohibition into the beginning of the 1930s and the Great Depression a growing number of "public enemies," as the gangsters and mob members were called, targeted banks throughout the Midwest. Names like Pretty Boy Floyd, John Dillinger and Baby Face Nelson made the headlines of the daily newspapers. Banks during this time period were often viewed with suspicion, even by the everyday citizen who viewed some gangsters as heroes. During this same time there were lesser-known individuals who dared to copy their well-known counterparts. Such is the case with four men who executed a local daylight heist.

On Monday October 20, 1930, as the Mount Horeb Bank was doing business, a blue Nash sedan with white stripes, a Wisconsin license plate, and four men inside pulled up alongside the bank. They were there to rob the place. One man stayed inside the getaway car while the others headed for the bank's Main Street entrance. Brandishing guns the three bandits entered the building's marble and wood lobby at approximately 2:15 to 2:30 in the afternoon, with the leader of the group dressed in a light hat and blue suit and the others wearing overcoats. Jacob Lingard, the bank's cashier was behind the counter. In a front office were the bank's president, T.G. Lingard and Alfred Erickson, a caretaker of the Mount Horeb Golf Course. In a rear office were Ralph Dahle, assistant cashier, and Miss Marion Braudt bookkeeper.

Customers standing in the bank were John Vilberg, Ole Jelle, Ole Lukken, Miss Hazel Ryan, Miss Johanna Lingard, sister of two of the bank's officers, and Tom Ayen. As the robbery was in progress, another customer, Ben Mavis, entered with a handful of currency to be exchanged for silver he was promptly ordered to the floor and the money removed from his hand.

Mr. Vilberg was one of the first people to realize that the place was being held up. "They came in guns in their hands," he later told a newspaper reporter. "They said lay down; lay down there. The one that was leading was a tough mug, I tell you. That fellow would just as soon shoot a man as not. We laid down. I lifted my head to get a good look at the men, and to see just how they go about this business of robbing a bank, but one of them told me to lie still, and believe me I did."



A strange man leaping over the railing at the cashier's desk apprised the bank president and cashier, who were brothers, that a robbery was in progress. The robber pointed a gun at the Jacob Lingard the cashier and made him lie on the floor in the cage, next he told Tom and Al Erickson from the front office to come out and lie down with the cashier. After this the robber told Jacob to get up and took him to the vault and forced him to unlock the gate. After the robber scooped money from the safe and took bonds from the vault he told the cashier to lie down again.

Miss Braudt and Mr. Dahle who had been working in the back office knew the bank was being robbed when they saw Mr. Lingard come out of his office with his hands in the air. The two ran for a supply room next to their office. One of the bandits saw them and came after them where they were then told to lie on the floor.

Jacob Lingard recalled later that as one of the bandits stooped over to scoop cash from the bank's safe he had the opportunity to attack the robber but desisted, realizing that should he fail to incapacitate the robber at the first blow, shooting would most certainly follow and someone would be hurt.

Before the bandits made their getaway, employees and the unfortunate customers were marched into the vault where they were locked in. As soon as the robbers exited the bank, Jacob took out his key and reached through the fault gate bars to unlock it and put a call in to the vigilantes.

(continued on page 2)

The robbery had taken a mere five minutes and the bandits fled out the door clutching their loot to their chests. They rounded the corner to North Second Street and nearly plowed down Mrs. William Olson who was on her way to her husband's restaurant two doors down from the bank on Main Street. As the robbers went running past, Mrs. Olson glanced into the bank's windows and saw none of the bank's employees at their customary positions. She then realized a robbery had taken place. "When those men came running right at me" she said, "I was scared, I knew as soon as I looked through the window that there had been a hold up." "Everything happened so fast, and I was so scared when the leader of the bandits glared daggers at me that I hardly knew what was going on."

The leader jumped into the driver's seat according to Mrs. Olson, and the other two men followed him into the car. The leader of the group stepped on the starter of the car, and when the motor didn't start right away he began swearing. Finally the motor started and the car jumped back from the curb, it then sped around the corner and headed east on Main Street.

Mrs. Olson turned around and yelled for the assistant marshal and then went screaming to her husband's restaurant. Mr. Olson telephoned to the sheriff's office at Madison and then notified surrounding towns of the robbery and giving a description of the car.

Officials in three states, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa engaged in a manhunt for the four who made off with \$23,760.74 of the bank's assets. The loot consisted of \$6,553.74 in cash and \$17,205 in securities. The escape route of the bandit's was traced to Mineral Point by Leighton Bickel, county traffic officer, and Claire Arneson, Blue Mounds, who pieced together the car's route by inquiring of highway patrolmen and filling station employees. From Mount Horeb the car went west on 18 about three miles to highway F to Hollandale and then west on highway 39 which leads to Mineral Point. Officer Bickel telephoned to authorities at Freeport and Rockford, Illinois, Dubuque, Iowa, and Lancaster to watch for the car, but no further trace of the vehicle was uncovered.

One of the robbers was later killed in Minneapolis, and one, Stanley Ford, was brought to trial on February 27, 1931, in Madison and was sentenced by Judge S.B. Schein to twenty-five years in the State's prison.

In 1932, just two years after the robbery, the Mt. Horeb Bank itself became the victim of the Great Depression when it became insolvent and failed. Stockholders who not only lost their stock were required to liquidate other assets, in the amount of half the value of their

stock, for a fund to protect depositors. The depositors received 75 cents on the dollar. Many who thought they were financially set for life lost their savings. In 1942 the village of Mt. Horeb bought the 1924 bank for use as a municipal building.

Unusual Bank Burglar Protection

Although, to our knowledge, it was not deployed during the October 1930 robbery, the Mount Horeb Bank had an unusual system to handle potential bank robbers. Installed under the teller's windows was a system of pipes that led to small round vents below each window. These pipes contained a gas, reportedly capable of overwhelming any potential bandit. In case of a robbery, a button hidden behind the counter, or on the floor could release the gas. During the last major remodeling of the Mt. Horeb Municipal Building these early burglar protection devices were added to the Historical Society's museum collections.



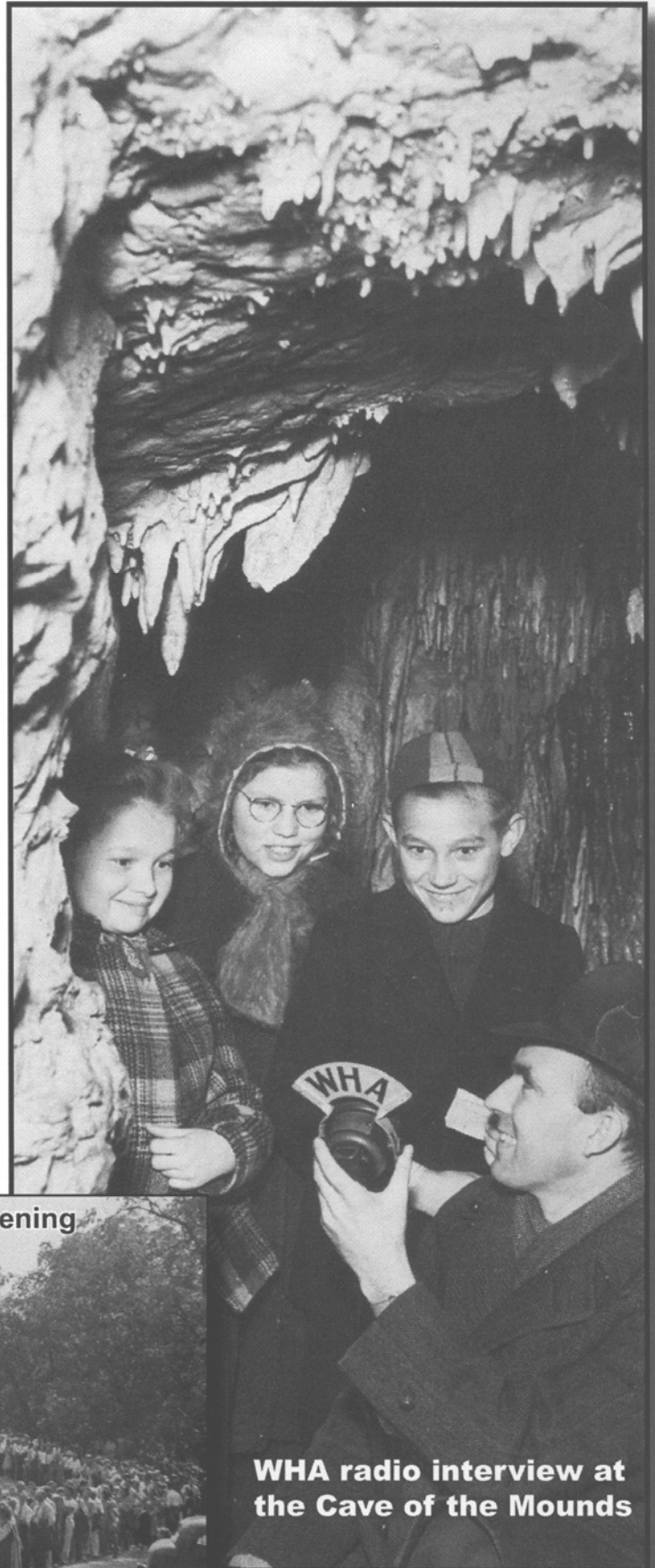
It is believed that this 1924 burglar alarm never sounded the day of the robbery. It is now part of the Mount Horeb Area Museum collections.

Early Tourism & A Cave's Discovery Are Annual Meeting Topic

The annual meeting of the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society will be held on Sunday, October 18, at 2:00 at the Mount Horeb Community Center, 105 North Grove Street. A three-part presentation honoring the discovery of Cave of the Mounds 70 years ago will follow the Historical Society's brief 34th annual meeting. Historical Society President, Brian Bigler will lead off the program with a fascinating review of tourism in the Mt. Horeb Area from pre-settlement to 1950. Brian said, "Program attendees will never view the basis for the economy of the area the same again." Mark Rooney will present the background of his ancestors who settled near the Blue Mounds in 1828 and the discovery of the Cave of the Mounds on family property in 1939. Joe Klimczak and Ann Wescott of the Cave of the Mounds will enlighten program visitors with the day-to-day operations of one of Wisconsin's major tourist attractions.

The Cave of the Mounds was discovered accidentally in 1939 during quarry operations on the Charles Ilsley Brigham farm, the oldest farm in Dane County. The cave's spectacular caverns filled with glimmering colorful stalagmites and stalactites set in motion a firestorm of interest by curiosity seekers, spelunkers and geologists alike. Thousands have visited the now National Natural Landmark since its subsequent opening to the general public.

Please tell your friends about this nostalgic look at the natural and manmade tourism that has made Southwestern Dane County famous. There will also be an exhibit of artifacts, photos and other related material from the Historical Society's archive and museum collections. And, as always, there will be treats following.



**WHA radio interview at
the Cave of the Mounds**



Long lines at cave for its grand opening

The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

Tom Brown Cartoon Art Added to Archive

Timothy and Susan Deneen of Evansville, Wisconsin contacted the Historical Society in July with the intent of offering an unusual gift. For years Susan had cherished a collection of cartoons that were given to her when she was a student in commercial art at MATC in Madison. The cartoons are the creation of Tom Brown a relative of her husband.

Tom Brown grew up at Riley, where by 1917 he was establishing himself as a cartoon artist, sending work to various magazines, newspapers and children's publications. He continued his drawing while living in Mt. Horeb and later Oregon, Wisconsin. His work extended into the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The collection contains hundreds of drawings both original and published, as well as the work of his counterparts of the time. There is also a small tin box filled with paints and related items used for Tom's foray into watercolor painting. There are also numerous correspondence letters with magazines, newspapers, and companies like MASDA Lights, which incorporated his work in their advertisements. The correspondence reveals a great deal about his craft, especially as the Great Depression takes its toll and the rejection letters increase in number.

This gift adds greatly to the Historical Society's diverse holdings of works of art that document the many artists of Southwestern Dane County. We are grateful to the Deneens for offering this rare collection to the Society and for giving a cash gift to aid in the proper storage of these materials.

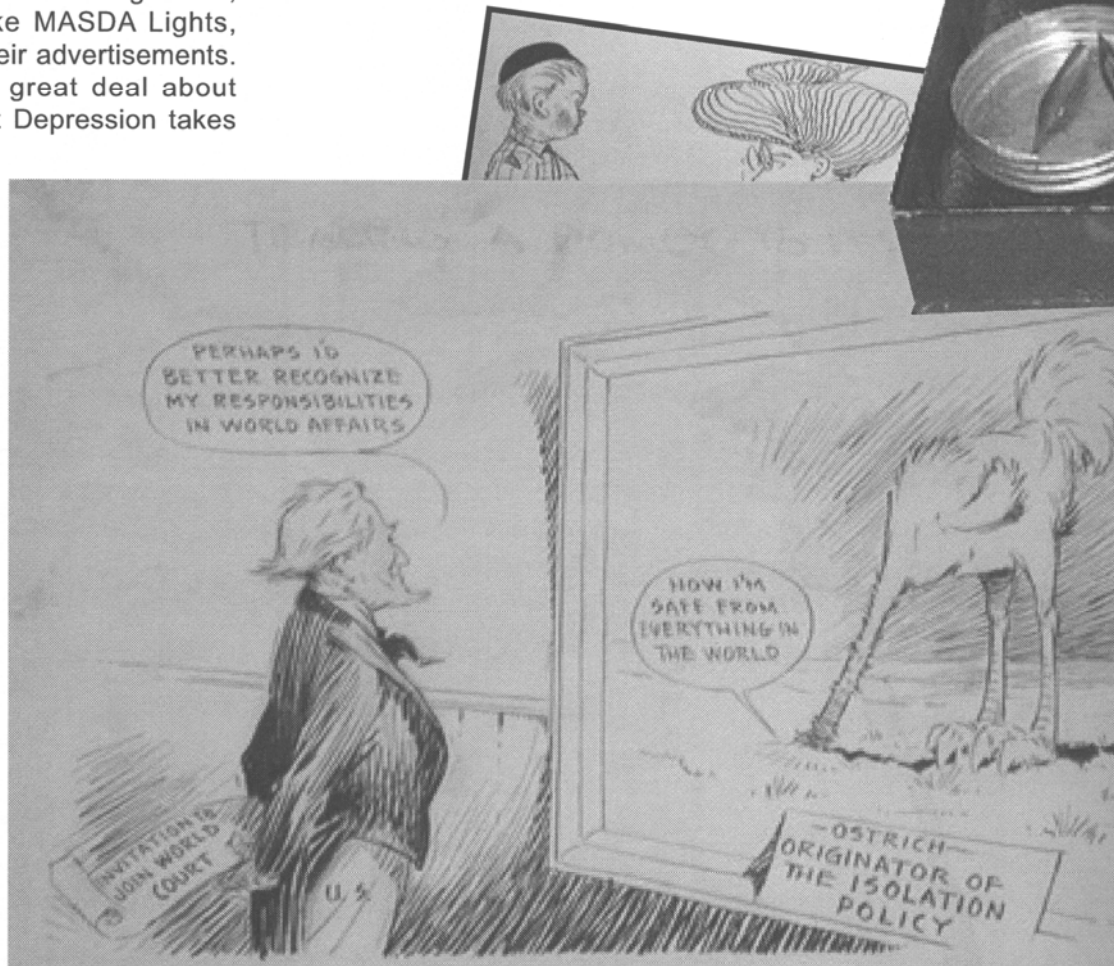
Ink, pen and brush set which Tom Brown used to create his artwork.

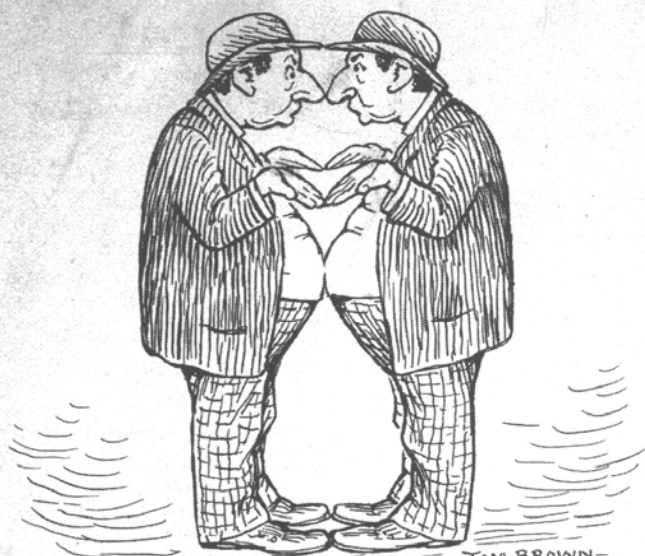
Original political commentaries and cartoon artwork by Tom Brown.

The Brown Family of Riley



Above - back row L- R : Patrick, John, James
Middle Row : Ellie, Mary, Peter, Margaret, Teas
Front Row : Tom (cartoonist), Annie





DURING THEIR DISCOURSE THEY TOUCHED ON A NUMBER OF POINTS WHICH
THEY HAD IN COMMON.

The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

Museum Musings by Laurie Boyden

Rotary Grant Funds Preservation

We are so pleased to report that the Mount Horeb Area Museum and Shop has been a busy place this year with almost 1,600 visitors to date. That is a 25 percent increase over last year. The interest in our small-town beginnings is bringing people in and many are surprised by the professional quality and vast amount of information within our exhibits. This is reflected in the positive comments we receive in our guest book by visitors of all ages including the following written by some of our younger attendees:

"This museume is full of histry"

- Autumn Renee, IL

"It had lots to descuver"

- Jenna, MN

"This the best store ever"

- Holly, WI

Early this season we welcomed the Mt. Horeb Cub Scout Troop 62, the Mt. Horeb Primary Center second grade classes and two buses of visitors from Direction St. Louis Tours. A total of 182 children and 103 adults toured the museum. Each group enjoyed their scheduled visit and we thank them for their support and generous donations.

Another busy place has been the Archives, which has seen an increase in activity as people continue to discover its great wealth of information and collections. This increase is not only from those who visit us to do research on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, but also by e-mail, mail and phone inquiries. Keeping up with all the requests does take some time and we do hope that we get to all of them in a timely manner.

Just a reminder that the MHAHS exhibit "A Friendly Exchange," which followed the development of the "Trollway," "Troll" theme and claim of Mt. Horeb as "The Troll Capital of the World" is currently at the Mt. Horeb Area Chamber of Commerce located at 300 E. Main Street. Chamber hours can be found at www.trollway.com.

Hours for the Mount Horeb Area Museum and Shop at 100 S. Second Street are Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. and Sunday 12:30 - 4 p.m. Hours for the Archives located on the 3rd floor of the Municipal Building are 12:30 - 4 p.m. on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month.

For more information, check our website at www.mounthoreb.org

One of the Historical Society's largest annual expenses is the continual need for materials to house and protect its holdings. Acid free file folders, Mylar envelopes and proper storage boxes continually rise in cost. The Mount Horeb Rotary Club has awarded the Historical Society \$500 that will be used explicitly for this purpose. The Mount Horeb Rotary has been a major supporter of the Society's fundraising efforts and we are grateful for their continued support.

The spark for the local Rotary organization was established in December of 1938 when a group of Stoughton Rotarians brought the idea of Rotary to Mt. Horeb. As today, the original group consisted of local businessmen and women. The group originally met in the Mt. Horeb Bank. In April of 1939 the original interested individuals began making personal calls to local business people and received a great response. Actual organization took place on May 3, 1939.

Rotary is world fellowship of business and professional men and women who accept the ideal of service as the basis for success and happiness in business and community life. One of their main goals is to be of service to the community.



Mt. Horeb Scout Troop 62 learns local history at the Museum.

The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society

A Different Type Of Gift

The overwhelming feeling of dispensing with a loved one's household after death, or during a crucial move, can add undue stress to the survivors or family members. For years, Historical Society volunteers have been offering an estate and moving liquidation program. There are several ways that the public can take advantage of this service while benefiting a worthwhile cause.

Remember the Historical Society in your will:

A donor can leave the entire contents of his/her household to the Historical Society in his/her will, leaving it up to the discretion of the Society as to what will be kept for the organization's educational purposes and what would be sold to benefit the Society financially. The items to be sold would be disposed of either at auction or by tag sale, with volunteers from the Society doing the work of preparing the personal property for sale and liquidation. Since the Mount Horeb Area Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) organization, such a donation would qualify as a charitable contribution for tax purposes. The heirs of the estate would be notified of the amount received from such a sale, to assist them in determining the amount of the charitable deduction.

Gift of a partial estate:

In this case, the heirs have the discretion of gifting the remnants of an estate to the Historical Society. A sale might be held on location in the form of a tag sale, or items may be removed for liquidation at another location. Historical Society volunteers would carry out the responsibilities of a sale. Again, for tax deduction purposes, the heirs would be notified of the amount received from such a sale.

Items added to other estate gifts:

In the case where there are a limited number of items that a donor or heirs wish to gift, Society volunteers would accumulate these items, add them to other gifts, and eventually hold a tag sale or auction.

Limitations:

The Society will need to assess any gifts to determine if a sale is actually feasible. The Society will not do percentage sales and must receive the gift unconditionally or, in exceptional cases, in accordance with the wishes of the heirs.

If you have any questions about this service, please call Brian Bigler at 608-437-7776.

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F. Y. I. Your membership expiration date is printed on the mailing label of this newsletter. Please check to see if you are up to date through Jan. 10 or beyond. If not, your membership is due. We appreciate your renewal and don't want you to miss a single issue of our newsletter or any important information about Historical Society events.

Generations Of Memories

The Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society

☐

New
Membership

☐

Renewal
Membership

E-Mail

Society Membership Levels

☐

Individual
\$15.00

☐

Household
\$25.00

☐

Individual Lifetime
Membership \$250.00

☐

Benefactor
\$500.00

☐

Building Fund
Donation _____

All contributions to the Society are tax deductible.

Mail to:

**Mt. Horeb Area Historical
Society**

138 East Main St.

Mt. Horeb, WI 53572

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Marlyn Grinde
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Marietta Gribb – Costume, Textiles, Dolls

Operations:

Laurie Boyden - Museum Director /Coordinator
Tim White - Newsletter and Website Editor

Archives Hours:

2nd & 4th Wednesday each month 12:30 – 3:00
3rd floor of the Municipal Building
138 E. Main St. Mt. Horeb WI
608-437-6486

✧ Nights At The Museum: ✧ Where History Comes To Life

Prepare to meet history face-to-face when the Mount Horeb Area Museum presents "Nights At The Museum" on October 29 and 30 from 5:00 – 8:00. Children and adults will get a pre-Halloween treat as they are led through the museum's exhibits to encounter residents from Southwestern Dane County's past. Each night there will be a varied collection of characters that will reveal their unique pasts. A Woman's Suffrage participant will tout her strong belief in a woman's right to vote, a farmer will explain why milk and livestock was so important in the local economy, and Ebenezer Brigham will be on hand to revel in his tale of lead riches. Politician Bob Lafollette will make a stump-speech appearance as well as Springdale Township poet, Uncle Joe Henderson. There will be immigrants, farm wives, school children, a storekeeper, boot maker, a 1970s snowmobile racer and many more discoveries along the way.

The event is a fundraiser for the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society with \$4 admission for adults and teens and \$2 for children 8 through 12. Visitors will be escorted through the Museum's exhibits, with groups leaving every 10 to 15 minutes. Attendees may want to show off their Halloween finery for the occasion.