

Consider it something of an encore for the “seegar geetar.”

Because of its success last year, officials at the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History are bringing back a program designed to help preserve the musical heritage of the region — the cigar box guitar workshop.

This year’s second annual event, which will see attendees leave with their very own hand-crafted [musical instrument](#), is set for Saturday, Nov. 15, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Registration is \$100 for the general public and \$75 for museum members, according to museum director Matt Edwards.

“The registration fee includes everything,” he said. “It includes all the materials, instruction, coursework and even lessons in how to play to wrap up the day.”

Last year, the museum hosted the workshop as a way to complement its Luthier’s Craft exhibit, which closed in the spring.

But the workshop’s success led Edwards to try it a second time.

“Last year’s event was fantastic,” he said. “We sold out the number of spaces available. Because it’s such a hands-on activity, we have to limit the class size to 10. It sold out last year and everyone had a fantastic time. I suspect some of the attendees last year will be back this time.”

Edwards said he is trying to create more annual programs at the museum.

“Over the last few years, we’ve been trying to add in more recurring programming,” he said. “This one has been very successful, and the other we’ve continued is the Batik egg workshop we host around Easter.”

The museum director said the current focus on traditional music makes the workshop a must-attend for [music lovers](#) .

“If you’ve been looking for an opportunity to experiment with the traditional music movement going on these days, this is a great first step,” he said, “and it’s a heck of a lot cheaper than going out and buying an instrument, plus, you get the satisfaction of knowing you’ve built your instrument yourself.”

The cigar box guitar came about out of necessity, according to the museum director.

“The cigar box instrument is a fairly old tradition,” he said. “People who couldn’t afford to purchase commercially-made instruments actually went out and made their own, and the cigar box made an easy conduit to build the body of these instruments. It was a ready-made component that many people had around.”

Edwards called the cigar box guitar a “gateway instrument.”

“Many of the luthiers we worked with for last year’s Luthier’s Craft exhibit actually started by building cigar box instruments,” he said. “This is a pretty common gateway craft that leads to the more refined instruments they’re building now as professionals.”

And in today’s breakneck world, many craftsmen are returning to their roots.

“Today, there has been a revival of interest in cigar box instrument making, and there are blues musicians out there who are playing them,” he said. “They’re really fascinating pieces of functional art.

“Cigar box guitars can even be fitted with pick-ups that will allow them to be played both electronic and acoustically,” Edwards said. “And one of the great things about them is they’re made with a minimal number of specialty parts. Other than the tuning keys and corner braces, pretty much everything you need to build one is readily available at the local hardware store.”

The workshop will be conducted by Mike Lowe, whom Edwards describes as a “local folklorist, musician and artist.”

“He’s the perfect person to instruct this workshop,” Edwards said.

Limited space is available, so Edwards said advance registration is encouraged.

For more information call the museum at 336-786-4478.