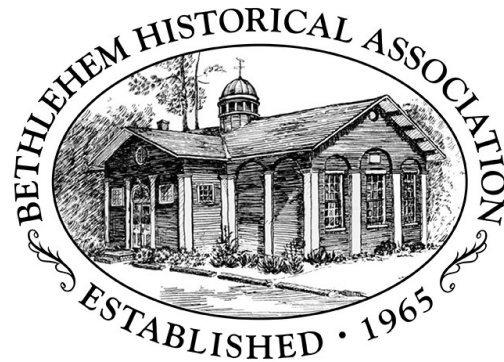


Bethlehem Historical Association

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2016



The Bethlehem Historical Association

Cedar Hill Schoolhouse
1003 River Road
P.O. Box 263
Selkirk, NY 12158
(518) 767-9432
bethhist1965@gmail.com
BethlehemHistorical.org

OFFICERS

President: Karen Beck
Vice President: Wendy Brandow
Recording Secretary:
Sue Gutman
Corresponding Secretary:
Sharon Sestak
Treasurer: Anne Young

TRUSTEES

Tim Beebe
Charles Fuller
Sheila Giordano
Carl Gutman
Norma June
George Lenhardt
Dawn Pratt

Newsletter Editors
Karen Beck & Susan Leath

*Live for Today
Dream for Tomorrow
Learn from Yesterday*

BHA Visits A.W. Becker School



When AW Becker Elementary teacher, Sheila Moutopoulos, contacted BHA about the possibility of working together in order to create local history lessons for second graders, our education team, Deborah Crosscup and Linda Davies, stepped right up to the plate. Both retired teachers, they knew how to engage the students in a well-crafted, information packed presentation.

On February 26, four classes of second grade students learned about the town's various one-room schoolhouses. They also compared roles of the teacher then and now as well as many aspects of life for a typical seven year old. The lesson was enhanced with enlarged, laminated photos and artifacts loaned by the museum and community members.

We are very appreciative of all of the time and effort that Debbie and Linda have given in order to acquaint our young people with their history. The lesson is adaptable. We are hopeful that other teachers in Town will take advantage of this great opportunity.

News and Notes



Our “New” Outhouse is In

We have a new addition of an old building. Mary Ann and Bruce Shubert were concerned for the future of an outhouse on their property on River Road. Thanks to their foresight, the terrific town highway department and Charlie Fuller, who organized the move, it is now resting comfortably in the northwest corner of the Schoolhouse property.

History Hikes

Our Saturday morning History Hikes are taking place again this year in partnership with the Town of Bethlehem’s Parks & Recreation Department. Town historian Susan Leath leads walks through the historic hamlets of Slingerlands, Delmar, Selkirk, South Bethlehem and Cedar Hill. The first one is April 9 and steps off from Henry Hudson Park to explore Cedar Hill. Visit our website, BethlehemHistorical.org or the town’s, TownofBethlehem.org, for the complete schedule and to register.

Inventory of Collection Underway

One thing is becoming clear as we undertake our inventory project, BHA owns a lot of historic clothing! This wonderful collection has been completely inventoried and re-boxed using appropriate archival materials. Many thanks to all those who have been putting in full days of work including hefting boxes, examining each item, repairing and numbering items and making sure each is updated in our records. Now that the clothing collection is complete, we’ll be moving on to the rest of the collection including tools, household items, toys, photographs and ephemera.

Also in collection news, Building and Grounds chair Charlie Fuller is finalizing plans to renovate the carriage house. Preparations are being made to repair and improve the building’s structure which in turn will improve the storage of our larger pieces. These include items like farm equipment, a sleigh, a boat, even a toboggan.



Here Comes the Parade!

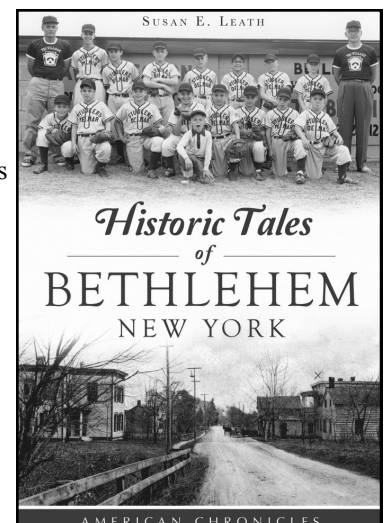
The annual Memorial Day parade is a wonderful event that involves the entire community. As we honor all those who served our country we also celebrate this opportunity to bring the town together. BHA plans to join our other community organizations in the parade this year. We welcome members of all ages to join us!

Participants are encouraged to wear a hat or simple costume that recalls a time in our area’s long history, from the time the Mo-hicans farmed along the Hudson right through the twentieth century. Think farming, railroad, the wars. Think Dutch, suffragette, flapper, bobby soxer, hippie...

Would you like to join us? Are you unable to participate, but have a hat or article of clothing to loan? To sign up or to discuss, please contact us by calling Karen Beck, 439-9260.

Susan Leath’s New Book

Historic Tales of Bethlehem, New York is now available. The illustrated book contains Leath’s updated then and now articles previously published in *Our Town Bethlehem* plus other local history essays. Susan donates all royalties to the Bethlehem Historical Association. It can be found at I Love Books in Delmar, Tattered Pages in Glenmont, Bethlehem Town Hall and other book-sellers, including on-line outlets.



The History of our Desk

By Karen Beck

As we enter the main room of the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse, we pause to sign the visitor book at a handsome desk on the left. We generally do not give the desk itself much thought, but as I was cleaning it recently, I found a small piece of paper tacked inside one of the doors. It reads:

This desk has been pledged as a gift to the Bethlehem House when restored by the Town of Bethlehem Historical Association.

***This desk was transported from Long Island to Albany by Sylvania P. Jermain in 1809 and was used in office on James Street and later used by his son, James B. Jermain.
JB Glenn***

There is another tiny piece of paper that states Maria Cummings Jermain used the desk as well.

Who were the Jermain's? Did BHA arrange to have the desk restored? Was John Glenn the donor of the desk or just the scribe who had the foresight to document the original owners? In either case, we are grateful to Mr. Glenn. I decided to do some research and this is what I learned:

Sylvanus Pierson Jermain, of Scottish descent, was born in Sag Harbor in 1784 where his father, Major James Jermain, a public spirited, progressive citizen, had been commander of the fort. Sylvanus was the second child, and oldest son, of nine children.

It was 1806 when Sylvanus relocated in Albany where he prospered as a very successful commission merchant. He served as the first secretary of the Albany Savings Bank as well as a founder of the Mechanics and Farmers Bank. His office was on James Street where he reportedly used this desk. Sylvanus married Catherine Barclay of Washington County, and in 1809, their son, James Barclay, was born.

James Barclay studied at Middlebury College, law at Yale and later, Amherst. In 1836, he was admitted to practice at the Supreme Court of New York State, but rather than also building a general law practice of his own, he assumed responsibility for management of his aging father's extensive holdings. He married Catherine Rice in 1842.

Upon Sylvanus' death in 1869, James Barclay inherited the large estate and became a very wealthy man. Each day, James traveled from the family home, Hedge Lawn on the Albany Troy Road, to his Albany office, then on Chapel Street. There he presumably handled the business affairs from the desk.

James Barclay Jermain was highly respected for his business acumen and integrity. He is best remembered for

his unassuming nature and generosity toward those less fortunate.

After the death of his father, James fully financed the building of the beautiful Jermain Memorial Presbyterian Church in his memory. It is located just south of the Arsenal in Watervliet.

Perhaps the best-known example of Jermain's philanthropy is the YMCA building at the corner of Steuben and North Pearl Streets in Albany. Designed by noted architect, Albert Fuller in 1886, this handsome Romanesque building housed the first gymnasium in New York State and one of the first indoor pools in the country. It also has the distinction of hosting the first basketball game away from Springfield where the game was invented.

In 1888, James Barclay Jermain funded the building of The Fairview Home for Friendless Children, an orphanage that was also a working farm. The home was open until 1956 when it merged into Vanderheyden Hall. He also was the founder and patron of the Albany County Home for Aged Men.

James Barclay's only son, Barclay, died of consumption at age 29, just one month after marrying Katherine Thayer of Troy in the Jermain Memorial Church. In his short life, Barclay had been instrumental in the organization of the public school system, was one of the commissioners overseeing the building of Albany's new city hall and had been the director of the YMCA. James established a professorship at Williams College, Barclay's alma mater, in his son's memory.

James Barclay died in 1897. He was almost 89 years old. The family is buried in the Jermain family lot at Albany Rural Cemetery.

One of his daughters, Maria, is said to have continued using the desk. She was the treasurer of both Fairview and the Mohawk Hudson Rivers Humane Society. Maria was the last surviving child. She died at Hedge Lawn in 1938.

The Bethlehem House was deeded to the Town of Bethlehem in 1970. By the 1980's the town determined that it was unable to financially support the Bethlehem House and it was sold to a private owner. Apparently, the desk was moved to the Schoolhouse at that time.

A few additional interesting facts on the Jermain family:

Their home, Hedge Lawn, still stands in Menands. It has been divided into 5 apartments and is located next to the Burger King, across the Rte. 32 from the Schuyler Flats.

Col. William Worth, who later became a Brigadier General, built Hedge Lawn in 1841 but quickly sold it. His story is extensive. Suffice to say, that Fort Worth, Texas is named for him and his remains are interred in a 51-foot granite monument in a traffic intersection in Manhattan.

James Barclay's cousin, Olivia Margaret Slocum, the daughter of his father's youngest sister, came to live with James and his family after the death of her first husband left

Continued on page 5.



Proclamation

Whereas, **Wendy Brandow** is a charter member of the Bethlehem Historical Association, and

Whereas, Wendy has always willingly stepped up and assumed every task asked of her without hesitation or complaint, and

Whereas, over the years, Wendy has held every elected office, worked on countless committees and continues to serve dependably and well, and

Whereas, the Bethlehem Historical Association has benefited from the example of Wendy's cooperative, supportive and unassuming manner, and

Whereas, Wendy has prepared and served the punch for more years than anyone can remember, and

Whereas, Wendy celebrates her 80th birthday on December 7

Therefore, I, Karen Beck, as president of the Bethlehem Historical Association, in recognition of her significant contributions, hereby proclaim that this 2015 Silver Tea is in honor of Wendy Brandow.



Wendry Brandow, Sharon Sestak and Art Young enjoy the Silver Tea.

Silver Tea 2015

Cozy Plaids and Sparkling Lights was the theme of this past December's Silver Tea. Many thanks to everyone who made it possible. Decoration of the schoolhouse: Ann Vandervort & Faith Fuller, co-chairs, Jan Brown, Tim Beebe, David Marshall, and Sharon Sestak. Management of the building and grounds: Charles Fuller and Bill Seyler. Hospitality: Kathy Newkirk and Dawn Pratt, co-chairs, Wendy Brandow and Carrie VanApeldoorn.

We also extend a warm thank you to everyone who so kindly provided delicious goodies. The beautiful decorations and the many treats were enjoyed by all who attended.



Top: Rob Halley
Left: Helen Warner
Bottom: Marian Davis



Genealogy Corner

By Art Young

We all have read history books about those 102 adventurers of yesteryears that braved unknown waters in 1620 to establish an English settlement in the wilds of what was then just called America. While much has been said about the new world hardships and living conditions, other than the religious persecutions of the Pilgrims very little is mentioned about life in the old world.

Knowledge was a scarce commodity in 17th century Europe. Most Europeans in that timeframe knew nothing about geography and never traveled more than 5 miles from their place of birth. Most common citizens could not tell the time of day, did not know what year it was or their date of birth. Birthdays went unnoticed by a population that could not read a calendar and most official documents mentioned the person involved as being about an age and few people could read or write. Hygiene as we know it today was just plain unknown, there was no such thing as central heating, members of the nobility lived in cold, drafty stone castles and the peasants lived in cold and drafty huts.

Fortunately the Pilgrims were mostly a cut above the average population that they had left behind as all of the men on the 1620 Mayflower who signed the Mayflower Compact were able to read and write. Most historians credit that document as the basis of our U.S Constitution. Also William

Brewster had brought with him his printing press and a library of some 300 books. He became the Elder of the Colony and his wife Mary became the teacher of the Colony children. William Bradford, the first Governor of the Colony, kept a journal in manuscript form from 1626 to 1650, that reflects the daily lives of our Mayflower ancestors, the original copy of his manuscript survives today in the Boston Library.

There is no known cause for the deaths of the 50 Pilgrims that died that first winter but those deaths surely relate to 102 people being crowded into a very small ship with all of their possessions, for 66 days, in wet and dirty clothes.

Good luck with your research - Art

Art Young's Genealogy Corner reports with info on beginning genealogy are in a booklet at the museum. He is available for consultation if you have a genealogy question or just need a little help in locating those long lost ancestors.

Researching your Mayflower ancestors?

Try these websites:

The General Society of Mayflower Descendants:

<https://www.themayflowersociety.org/>

Caleb Johnson's Mayflower History:

<http://mayflowerhistory.com/>

Pilgrim Hall Museum:

<http://www.pilgrimhallmuseum.org/>

Plimoth Planation: <http://www.plimoth.org/>

The Desk

Continued from page 3.

her in great financial need. She then married Russell Sage, who left her such a large fortune the New York Times once called her, "the richest woman in the United States". Olivia Slocum Sage became one of our most progressive and best-known female philanthropists.

Another Sylvanus Pierson Jermain, a great - nephew of the first owner of the desk, lived Toledo, Ohio where he is best known for his passionate promotion of the game of golf. Among his many contributions to the sport was writing the first rules of the game in 1907 and conceiving the idea of organizing international matches, which became known as the Ryder's Cup.

In 2010 the Presbytery announced its intention to close the Jermain Memorial church due to declining membership. The locks were changed and the doors were padlocked, but the congregation continued to hold services in the street and fought to keep their church. When they researched the deed, they discovered that Mr. Jermain had included a stipulation that if the church should ever close, the property would revert to his heirs. The determined congregation located a Jermain descendant in Maine who then deeded the church to the membership. The court ruled in favor of the congregation and it reopened, now named the Jermain Memorial Ecumenical Church.

John Wemple, Jr. spoke at BHA on March 17.

His fascinating talk about the Wemple family began with the arrival from Holland of Jan Barentse Wemple in the mid 1600s. Jan and wife Marite lived in the Poestenkill area and then Schenectady. John and Nancy Wemple are the first of the family to live in Bethlehem circa 1820. Their grandson, and our speakers great-grandfather, was John Wemple. He was Bethlehem's supervisor (1875-76), Albany County Sheriff and postmaster of the hamlet of Wemple.

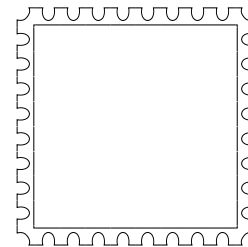


Bethlehem Historical Association

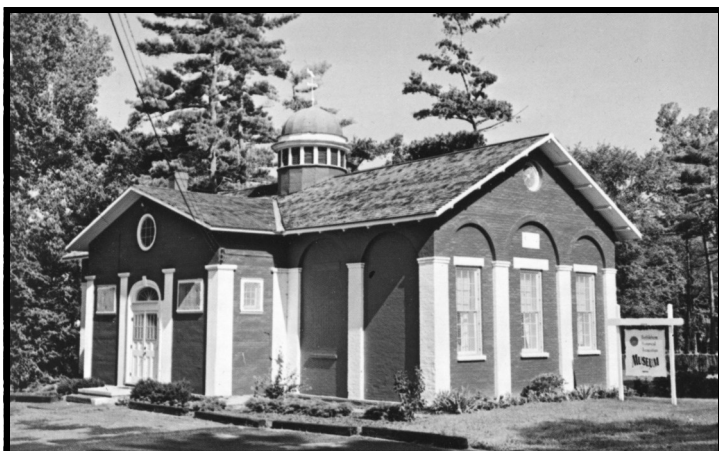
Cedar Hill School House

P.O. Box 263

Selkirk, NY 12158



Follow us on Facebook



COMING EVENTS

*All take place at the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse,
1003 River Road, Selkirk.*

Thursday, April 21, 2016 7:00 PM

Bethlehem Diners

Michael Engle

Engle co-authored *Diners of New York* and wrote *Diners of the Capital District*. His passion is focused on the Capital District and the diners built in western New York between 1921 and 1950. You can visit his website at www.nydiners.com

Thursday, May 19, 2016

Annual Membership Meeting

Business includes the election of officers and trustees, presentation of the president's annual report and approval of the budget for the upcoming year..

Enjoy a special dessert buffet after the meeting.

Sunday, June 12, 2016, 1 to 4 PM

Summer Exhibit Opening Day and Ice Cream Social