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TOWN OF BETHLEHEM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER

Old Cedar Hill School House, Selkirk, New York 12158

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends,

Our Annual Meeting and Dinner was held on May 17 to a full house at the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum. Manning's Menu served up delicious barbecue fare, and we held election of officers and trustees (see elsewhere in newsletter). We were saddened by the absence of Ray Houghton. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Houghton died following a courageous battle with cancer. He will be missed as an active member and our Town Historian. His death is a great loss to our community.

Our summer season got off to a bang with our exhibit opening event on Sunday, June 24. Thanks to the hard work and creative talents of Ann VanDervort and Marian Davis, our Museum Display team, we have a wonderful summer exhibit entitled "Everyday Life in the 1930s and 40s". It features many dresses and accessories from our own collections, but is greatly enhanced by the generous loans of many members, friends and town residents. The exhibit includes radios, toasters and kitchen wares, toys, entertainment memorabilia, World War II uniforms and posters, depression glass and much more. Thanks to Bob Mulligan, Peter McGinty, Susan Leath and Mary DeGroff for their assistance.

The exhibit opening event included an ice cream social with three flavors and all the fixings provided courtesy of Stewart's Shops. We also had World War II re-enactors and military vehicles on the grounds. The sun shone on our event so visitors lingered on the back lawn enjoying the afternoon. Thanks to our greeters, our ice cream scoopers, and all those members who helped with the preparation and takedown. We had well over 100 in attendance from 2:00 to 4:00 PM, a tribute to our loyal, hard-working membership and an inspiration for the recruitment of new members. The exhibit continues through August 26 and is open free to the public on Sundays from 2:00-4:00 PM.

Mark your calendars now for our early fall programs: September 20, "Down Memory Lane through the Magic of the Golden Days of Radio", presenter Jack Keenan; and October 20, "Strange Incidents: A Historical Ghost Tour of the NYS Capitol", presenter Stuart Lehman. Programs are on the third Thursday at 7:30 PM at the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum.

Note, too, that our Annual Fundraising Card Party will be held on Thursday evening, October 25 from 7:00 to 9:00 PM at the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum. Board game players are welcome, too. The museum will be decorated in a Halloween theme. Costumes are optional. Participants will have home-baked apple pie and decaf coffee or tea and some treats – no tricks!

We look forward to your active support of our programs and events, and we'd love to have your help with functions of BHA.

Susan Haswell

ANNUAL MEETING

At our Annual Meeting in May, the following officers were elected for 1 year:

- President – Susan Haswell
- Vice President – Richard Brown
- Recording Secretary – Valerie Tompson
- Corresponding Secretary – Susan Leath
- Treasurer – Parker Mathusa

Trustees elected were:

- Wendy Brandow for 1 year
- Ann VanDervort for 3 years
- Joseph Allgaier for 3 years
- Marion Zrelak for 3 years

**THE SUMMER EXHIBIT "EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE 30'S AND 40'S NOW BEING SHOWN
IN OUR MUSEUM IS SUCH AN INTERESTING AND COLORFUL ONE THAT EVERY MEMBER
SHOULD GO TO SEE IT - AND BRING A FRIEND!
THE FOLLOWING PAGES FOUND AT THE EXHIBIT SHOULD BE OF INTEREST TO YOU.**

The '30's began in October of 1929 with the Stock Market Crash followed by 1/3 of all working Americans unemployed. The Depression was affecting most of the country with its bread lines and unemployment. To make matters worse, a half century of poor farming practices caused a "Dust Bowl" in the nation's heartland. This drove farm families into exile, no longer able to feed themselves.

For four years the US government promised that prosperity was just around the corner. But it was not until 1933 when newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his "New Deal" brought new hope.

In 1930 a new house cost \$7,249; a new car was \$450; movies cost a quarter, gas was 12 cents a gallon, milk 38 cents a quart, eggs 15 cents a dozen, a loaf of bread 9 cents and stamps only 2 cents. Low prices, but the average annual income was only \$2,062.

There were other things to worry about beside losing your job or losing your farm. There were wars in Europe, Asia and Africa. Radical and reactionary solutions were urged as cures for America's social ills.

People wanted an escape from reality. The movies were the best such escape. Some movies of the '30's were "The Wizard of Oz," "Gone With the Wind" and in 1939, John Ford's movie called "Stagecoach" made it's unknown actor a star - John Wayne.

Magazines and comics were also a popular escape. Particularly the new photo magazines such as "Life." Gangsters became heroes in the comics and movies. Particularly Jimmy Cagney, and the jut-jawed detective Dick Tracy. But a quarter for a movie was big money. Even dimes for a comic were scarce. The radio was the most important and affordable entertainment.

The New York World's Fair opened in 1939. Montgomery Ward introduced a new reindeer to Santa's team: "Rudolph." We can still hear cowboy star Gene Autry singing the original recording every December. Bell Labs made the first US public demonstration of color television. The images were -roses and a US flag.

By 1939 the average income had dropped to only \$1729. However some prices also dropped. A house was only \$3,850, but a new car cost \$700 and a postage stamp was 3 cents. By 1939 the rearmament of the world was creating jobs. Prosperity was just around the corner, if we could - only stay out of the war.

In the early '40's the country was prospering but the war in Europe finally caught up to us. With the bombing of Pearl Harbor, America went to war. Women started to wear slacks as they went to work in factories. Materials for clothing was scarce, and some foods, too. Rationing was put into effect. Housewives saved aluminum foil, grease, recycled paper bags and cooked with less sugar, butter and meat.

All worked together to buy war bonds and savings stamps. There was tremendous popular support for the troops fighting in Europe, Asia and in the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean. We worried about being bombed, created air raid shelters, put up blackout curtains and joined the Air Warning Service to spot enemy planes overhead.

It was a sad time, with newspapers printing pictures and lists of names of the fallen servicemen. It was a patriotic time, with all men and women trying to do their part. In early August of 1945 two atomic bombs were dropped in Japan, ending the war abruptly.

Entertainment was important to keep up spirits, and educate the public. Stage Door Canteens, movies, radio, "big bands" and "crooners" did their bit. The Andrews Sisters sang "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree With Anyone Else But Me." Perry Como sang "Some Enchanted Evening." You can still hear Bing Crosby sing the original recording of "White Christmas" each December.

By 1948 Americans were gathering in other people's living rooms to look at their new 8 inch Television. They bought one of their own as soon as possible. Milton Berle became the first great television star.

With soldiers, sailors and airmen returning home, jobs and houses were needed. There were plenty of jobs created, as people tried to spend the wartime wages they had been forced to save during the war. Many of the jobs were in housing construction as "Levittowns" were built seemingly overnight, in former farm fields. Freeways were needed, to allow people to commute from these new Levittowns to their jobs in the city.

By 1948 the average income was \$2,959. The average house was \$7,450, a car \$1,420, movies were 60 cents, gas 17 cents a gallon, milk 84 cents a quart, eggs 24 cents a dozen, and a stamp 3 cents.

(Continued on Back)

BE A BHA VOLUNTEER

I would like to assist by:

- Being a greeter/guide on summer Sunday afternoons
- Helping to maintain buildings and grounds; handyman, gardener
- Assisting with special events; planning & contacts; set-up, clean-up
- Working on membership recruitment
- Assisting with hospitality; purchasing refreshments, paper goods
- Finding photos, post cards, newspaper clippings of town history
- Using my writing skills for publicity, newsletter articles, exhibit labels
- Recording object accessories, descriptions, conditions
- Offering technical support; computer records
- Organizing bus trips
- Doing research on specific town-related themes, people and history
- I'm not sure, but whatever I can do to help.

Volunteer assistance is essential to our organization, supports our mission, and guarantees success of our activities. If you can donate some of your time, we look forward to working with you. Please circle your area(s) of interest above, complete the information below, and send it to: Bethlehem Historical Association, Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum, 1003 River Road, Selkirk, NY 12158, Attention: President. Thank you.



*Annual Meeting - ice cream scooping
Vice President Dick Brown, Carl & Susan Gutman,
President Sue Haswell*

IN MEMORIAM

RAYMOND C. HOUGHTON, JR.

On May 30, 2007, the Bethlehem Historical Association (BHA) lost a friend, after a courageous battle with illness.

Ray Houghton embraced the Association after his appointment in August 2005 as Bethlehem Town Historian. He became an active participant in the activities of BHA and an energetic advocate.

He wrote and published nine books on the Revolutionary War, tracing the War along major routes of travel. Ray presented a program to the Association on this topic. He served as co-Registrar for BHA. As a columnist for Town Talk, a local publication, he provided a story of local history, but also used the opportunity to report on happenings at the Bethlehem Historical Association.

His contributions will be missed.

GENEALOGY CORNER

Good morning all – In 2007-08 is planned to continue the “G” series with a short report and handout at each of our General Meetings. I hope to start in September with the missing 1890 Federal Census and thereafter provide you with examples of what is to be found in the 1900-1930 Federal Census's. The 1930 Census is at present the last Federal Census available to the public until 2011. Once we have finished with the 1930 Federal Census, I then hope to provide you with information and examples of our NYS Census Records and mix in some other research data other than Census information.

It has also been requested that a display be created for the Myers Family based on family records and an 1812 bible in our possession, together with other information that I hope to obtain from the family. Hope you all have a great summer.

Art Young, Genealogy Chairman

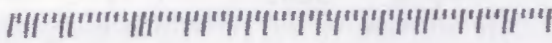


Lt. Colonel Raymond Joyce who was at the Battle of the Bulge & Re-enactors of his unit at the Battle of the Bulge

(The 40's Continued)

The first Polaroid camera was introduced. Hopalong Cassidy was the first Network western. "Dragnet" a police drama, introduced a new, documentary style of programming to television, however it was first heard on radio. Radio - now beginning to fade to its present "top forty" and "talk radio" hum-drumness. Bing Crosby had been joined by a new crooner - Frank Sinatra, who appealed more to a new category of record buying public, the "Teen-ager." The '40's ended when North Korea invaded South Korea in June of 1950.

Newsletter - Lois Dillon & Kathy Newkirk



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