

TOWN OF BETHLEHEM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Old Cedar Hill School House, Selkirk, New York 12158

Summer 2008

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends,

Our Annual Meeting and Dinner was held on May 15 at the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum. The gathering of over 40 enjoyed Manning's Menu barbeque fare, and we held election of officers and trustees (see elsewhere in newsletter). We honored outgoing treasurer Parker Mathusa, for his service in that office for seven years. A short audio-visual program on "Old Country Churches", many in our town, given by Robert Riccardo, concluded the evening.

The summer exhibit opening event was held on Sunday, June 22. With all the rain we've had, we were so grateful for the hours of sunshine from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. that brought out a modest crowd of 55 for "The Potter's Wheel: Area Stoneware". This is a wonderful exhibit of local stoneware and related ceramics assembled by our great museum display team of Ann VanDervort and Marian Davis. The crocks and jugs, so prolific in the 19th and early 20th centuries for food and liquid storage, are organized by place of manufacture and by design. Many stoneware pieces feature a cobalt blue floral or bird depiction by the potter.



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The event included an ice cream social, courtesy of Stewart's Shops. We thank our exhibit team, our ice cream scoopers, Betty VanOostenbrugge and our hostesses, and all who helped with preparation and take-down. The exhibit continues through July and August and is open free to the public on Sundays 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

I would also like to thank member volunteers who cleaned and readied the outbuildings, signage and grounds for our summer season: Kathy Newkirk, John Leath and Susan and Carl Gutman. After the long winter months, it was a dirty job, but we did it! Thanks, too, to Ann VanDervort, who installed and maintains the plantings on the River Road side of the museum. We are also grateful to the Town Highway Department for their weekly mowing and hedge maintenance.

Progress continued in the museum display area with upgrading of the permanent exhibit cases. Three heavy glass panels
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THE BETHLEHEM HERITAGE SERIES

This series was made with Lois Dillon and the Bethlehem Library's Public Access TV channel several years ago. It has been made recently into DVDs by the Library. Many of our members were visited and taped in this series including Bill Tinney, Henry Meyer and Meredith Clapper all now deceased. Even though the first TV equipment given to Public Access stations was used making the pictures far from perfect compared to today's television, the people, surroundings and information, was very good. They are:

1. Steamboat Castle
-Bill Tinney
2. School House of History
-Members with Meredith Clapper
3. The Ice Age
-Henry Meyer
4. Tollgate and Plank Roads
-incl. the moving of our Tollgate building - Allison Bennett
5. The Delmar Bootery
-Gale Sundling
6. The Apple-Man's Favorite Fruit
-Peter Ten Eyck
7. Bethlehem Historic Houses

These DVDs and Videos can be found in the Library or since our Association has been given a set of the DVDs you can borrow them by calling Lois Dillon or our President. They will not be found at the Museum because in the past, left there, our Videos disappeared!

(President's Message, Cont.)

on the back wall case were replaced with lightweight safety glass make for easier and safer case cleaning and installation. We appreciate Ann VanDervort's efforts on this project.

We continue to accept objects of significance to the Town of Bethlehem. In late winter we were very fortunate to receive many objects from the estate of the late John Scharf of Glenmont thanks to the generosity of Fred Dunn, brother of the late Margery Scharf, wife of John. John Scharf and his father were "jacks of all trades" so we accepted examples of local industry such as a beehive, beekeeping equipment and related books, animal traps, and a john boat and nets used for small, commercial fishing on the Hudson River, among many other items. The john boat and beehive can be seen in our carriage house display. Thanks to the efforts of Joe Allgaier, Ann VanDervort and Peter McGinty for the hours of cold investigation that we spent in unheated outbuildings for object selection.

In early spring the Town, who owns the building, paid for the replacement of two deteriorated basement windows. That done, we embarked on a major undertaking and expenditure for the installation of a fire detection and security system in the museum. We are very grateful to Parker Mathusa and Peter McGinty for their time and efforts to bring this from the planning stages to installation. The Town will pay for the monthly monitoring fees.

Members are currently at work putting out this newsletter, finalizing program plans, preparing the annual yearbook for publication, planning for fall events, getting greater coverage for our summer Sundays, monitoring building conditions and re-organizing collections storage. If you've ever thought you'd like to work in a museum, do we have a job for you! Please contact me at the Schoolhouse address or phone number if you'd like to give some volunteer time. We'd love to have your help.



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"Locally Made & NYS Stoneware" is the subject of our first fall program, and it is directly related to our current summer exhibit. Robert Halley is the speaker. Be sure to come on Thursday, September 18 at 7:30 p.m. to get the history of the stoneware manufacturing centers, how it was

made, decorated and use, and hallmarks of different potters.

Mark your calendars too for our annual fundraising Card Party to be held on Thursday, October 30 at the Schoolhouse from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Be among the first to see the Halloween display!

We very much appreciate your financial support through your membership and encourage you to visit the exhibits in our museum and attend our programs and events. Being an active member will help sustain our Historical Association for the future. And it's a local drive!

Susan Haswell

IMAGES OF LOCAL HISTORY – KENWOOD

BY GALEN B. RITCHIE

In 1886, Albany celebrated the bicentennial of receiving its Charter of Municipal Incorporation. To mark, this event, an official bicentennial history of Albany County was issued, edited by George R. Howell and Jonathon Tenney.

To initiate my discussion of features drawn from Howell and Tenney's history, I am focusing on the oldest of the western Albany satellite settlements, "the hamlet of Kenwood". Also known as "lower Hollow", Kenwood reportedly, received its name from the local resident and mill-owner, Joel Rathbone, after a similar locality in Scotland.

A mid-nineteenth century publication on New York State, identified Kenwood, as "...a small village near the mouth of Normans Kil..." In 1886, Howell and Tenney, specifically, located Kenwood just below the falls near where the Normanskill enters the Hudson River.

Occupation of this site dated from the same period as the settlement of Albany. At this location, the Dutch, reportedly established a small fort (1618). Subsequently (1630?), a mill was built by Albert Andriesen Bradt de



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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN IN ALBANY

Next to George Washington, the name of Benjamin Franklin is heard more than any other American historic figure on television programs today, both on Public Television and on many quiz shows. Schuyler Mansion in Albany is very familiar to many of us who have toured the Mansion or attended programs there. The following article appeared in the Friend of Schuyler Mansion newsletter. I think our members will enjoy reading this bit of history.

Lois Dillon, Historic Resources Chairman

In the prize-winning Biography of Benjamin Franklin by Carl VanDorn we have some insight into the kind of host Philip Schuyler was in going out of his way to be a help to others. Much of the book is taken from Franklin's Diary.

Franklin came to Albany in April 1774 with a Commission going to Canada. Others in the Commission were all from Maryland – Samuel Chase, Charles Carroll and a Jesuit priest John Carroll. They were going because it was believed the Canadian noblesse and Clergy had turned the people against the American Colonists and they were going to explain the situation. They came up the Hudson River on a sloop stopping along the way. Arriving early morning in Albany, General Philip Schuyler, commander of the Continental forces in New York met them and took them to his house about a mile from town where they dined. "He behaved with great civility, lives in a pretty style, has two daughters (Betsy and Peggy), lively, agreeable, black-eyed girls". After two days in Albany where they noted that Dutch was still chiefly spoken but that English was gaining ground, they went on the 9th in a wagon, with the whole Schuyler family to the Schuyler seat at Saratoga, where with bad roads and two Ferry crossings they were till sunset in traveling 32 miles.

At Saratoga under 6 inches of April snow, they spent a week, pleased "with the ease and affability with which we were treated, and the lively behavior of the young ladies".

The Commission continued rowing up the Hudson River. Schuyler left ahead of them to his command at Lake George. Stopping at Wing's Tavern at Fort Edward they received a message from Schuyler telling them the Lake was not yet open. Later when they left the Tavern the party again joined Schuyler and with him embarked on Lake George in clumsy open flatboats. Leaving him, they continued on Lake Champlain. In Montreal met by General Arnold, they were given a salute from the cannon of The Citadel to the "Committee of the Honorable Continental Congress".

The Mission was not successful. On their return trip leaving Albany they went by land as arranged by General Schuyler to whom Franklin wrote from New York on the 27th, "We arrived here safely yesterday evening in your post chaise driven by Lewis. I was unwilling to give so much trouble and would have borrowed your sulky and driven myself, but good Mrs. Schuyler insisted on a full compliance with your pleasure, as signified in your letter and I was obliged to submit, which I was afterwards very glad of, part of the road being very stony and much gullied, where I should probably have overset and broken my own bones. Through the influence of your kind recommendations to the Inn-Keepers on the road we found a great readiness to supply us with a change of horses. Accept our thankful acknowledgements; they are all we can at present make".

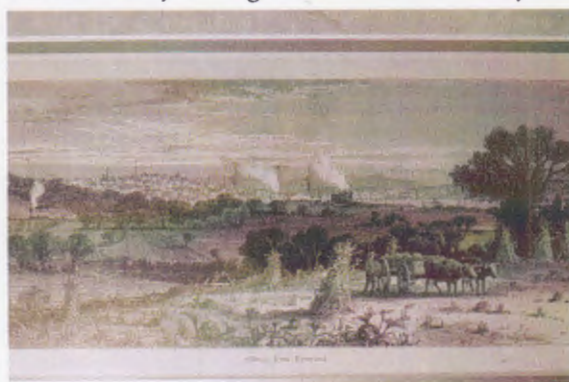


Noorman. His surname, “de Noorman”, was eventually modified to “Normans Kil”, and given to the adjacent stream. This area was ethnologically associated with a place contemporary Mahican Indians called “Tawasentha”. There is additional archaeological evidence of extended early occupation.

It was not until after the American Revolution, that Kenwood received enhanced light industrial development. The VanRensselaer family built several mills which replaced the remains of the Dutch-colonial mill. Subsequently, other entrepreneurs began to establish their businesses in the Normanskill area.

In 1886 Kenwood, residentially, consisted of sixteen homes, serviced by a Baptist chapel, a store, a school and a blacksmith's shop. The population numbered thirty-six (36) families, totaling one hundred fifty (150) persons. Transportation to Albany was provided by the Albany-Bethlehem Turnpike, which passed through Kenwood and a horsecar track, maintained by the Albany Railway Col, extending from South Pearl Street to the Kenwood Bridge.

Throughout the nineteenth (19th) century, Kenwood remained, essentially, an agricultural community, in contrast to the increasingly industrializing city of Albany. This contrast is pictured in a small engraving, entitled “Albany, from Kenwood”. In this print, the view is looking north and east toward the city and the port of Albany with the Hudson River beyond. The foreground shows a farmer, with his produce-filled, four-wheel cart, yoked to two oxen. They are heading southward. Their backs are to the industrial smoke and haze rising from the Albany area. In the background, a railway locomotive (the symbol of mid-nineteenth century technical development) belching steam and smoke, is pulling a train westward, parallel with the Normanskill. This image illustrates the rural-urban relationship described in Howell and Tenney's prose.



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GENEALOGY CORNER

BY ART YOUNG

In My “G-12” genealogy report I have indicated that I would suggest a BHA newsletter genealogy story that would reflect on the 1930 times of our country as it is always nice to know the conditions under which your ancestors lived. So, here are some facts that relate to that time frame, some which came from an article edited by our National Archives in Pittsfield and some that come from the Census report itself.

Herbert Hoover, a Republican was President, his VP was Charles Curtis, of Native American ancestry from Kansas – they had been rivals for the Presidency, never resolved their differences, did not talk much to each other – there were only 48 States – the stock market crash took place in October 1929 – by March 1930 there were 3,250,000 unemployed and that number grew to 5,000,000 by the end of 1930 – 25 percent – it took the average household 91 days to earn enough to pay their yearly food bills – Congress passed the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act which raised custom duties about 20 percent and caused retaliation that further deepened the depression –

The hard times of 1930 caused people to seek low cost entertainment such as parlor games and board games – public library circulation nearly doubled – radio was at a high point with radios in over 12,000,000 households in 1930 – in March William Howard Taft died, the only man to serve as President of the US and also Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court – gangster movies were popular, Fairbanks and Robinson in “Little Caesar” -- this was the age of prohibition and speakeasies – this was also the time of our own gangster, “Legs Diamond”, who was active in Albany and Troy – in April 1930 Charles Lindberg set the transcontinental speed record from Los Angeles to NYC in just under 15 hours – 44 percent of the population lived in rural areas and most families had a Sears Roebuck catalog, from which you could even purchase a home – the zipper was used in clothes because it was less costly than buttons. The early 1930s were the years of our “Great Depression” in the United States.

What a long way we have come since those dark days, but keep in mind that these were the conditions that your 1930 family lived in if you find an ancestor in the 1930 Federal Census.

Best wishes with your research and please keep in mind that all of the “G” series reports are attached to our meeting minutes if you need copies.

OFFICERS ELECTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

For 1 Year:	President	Susan Haswell
	Vice-President	Richard Brown
	Recording Secretary	Valerie Thompson
	Corresponding Secretary	Susan Leath
	Treasurer	Wendy Brandow

Trustees for 3 years Arthur Young and Robert Mulligan



Newsletter - Lois Dillon & Kathy Newkirk



Above
Susan Haswell, President
Ann VanDervort, Chair and Trustee
Susan Leath, Town Historian and
her daughter, Emma

Left
Al Davis, Connie Mulligan, Ken Ford,
Sheila Giordano, Marian Davis

Pictures from the Ice Cream Social

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Permit No. 52

Town of Bethlehem Historical Association
Cedar Hill Schoolhouse
1003 River Road
Selkirk, New York 12158