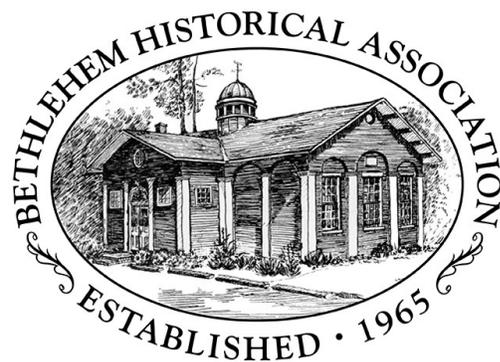


Bethlehem Historical Association

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2018



Early Days of Public Education in Bethlehem

The first school in Town was built of logs in 1720 on the Nicoll farm property. At that time it was the only school house from the Coeymans town line to the city of Albany. There is documentation of the children going to the shore to watch the Clermont sail by on its maiden voyage in 1807.

In 1796 the supervisor of our recently established town appointed commissioners to comply with a new NYS statute supporting free common schools. Eventually, Bethlehem was divided into fifteen districts. The commissioners collected the school tax, negotiated with farmers for plots of land in order to build the schoolhouses, hired the teachers, and arranged for the firewood and other basic needs.

The Albany County Superintendent Report 1844 speaks of public indifference, and even distrust, of education, which was viewed by many as a waste of money and even dangerous, as many held the opinion that “knowledge makes man more skillful in gratifying his desires and less scrupulous of the means”. Skills and morality were still thought by many to be best taught in the home. Mostly though, children were kept home because they were needed to assist with the chores. Frequent epidemics of contagious diseases would also close the school.

In addition to coping with the erratic attendance, the teachers were charged with educating and disciplining a group of students whose ages ranged from 5 to 15. Due to the transportation difficulties of the day, they were obliged to board with a family close to the school. The teacher was also responsible for the custodial duties - and for all that, could not depend on being paid with any regularity.



South Bethlehem's one-room school.



Students at the Cedar Hill School

In 1930 seven of Bethlehem's original districts centralized to form the Bethlehem Central School District. The schools in the southern portion of town combined to form the Union Free District in 1947. Union Free then merged with the Ravena-Coeyman's District in 1956. New modern buildings gradually replaced the original schoolhouses.

BHA's collection includes items that give us a first-hand glimpse into local schoolhouses. In the following pages you will find excerpts from Katherine Herber's diary with its telling details about the challenge of one-room school teaching. You'll also find a look at Martha Haswell's 1867 annual report and a few of Frank Mathusa's memories from when the Cedar Hill Schoolhouse was only one room.

The Bethlehem Historical Association

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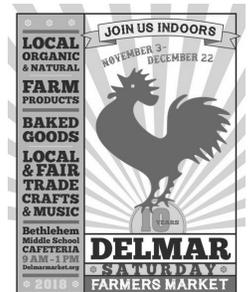


*Live for Today
Dream for Tomorrow
Learn from Yesterday*

News & Notes

Holiday Happenings The year is almost gone and our annual **Silver Tea and Open House** are right around the corner. The hospitality committee is once again seeking baked goods to serve to our guests. Every year our members bake delicious delicacies that are loved by all those attending. Items can be dropped off at the museum on Sunday December 2nd after 11:30AM or call Dawn Pratt at 518 767-2285 to arrange another time.

Help Wanted The Saturday morning **Delmar Farmers Market** has moved indoors to the Middle School cafeteria for the months of November and December. If you enjoy meeting people, won't you consider doing a shift at our table one week? The market is a busy, happy place. It is open from 9 to 1. If interested, call Karen for information. (518 439 9260)



Carl and Sue Gutman at the Delmar Farmer's market this past summer with our new canopy.

Young Historians Our Young Historian teachers have commitments to bring local, **hands-on history** to all of Bethlehem's elementary schools this academic year. They constantly refine their program tailoring it to each school. Many thanks to Linda and Debbie for their teaching expertise!

Out & About

Wednesday, December 12, 11:00 AM

A visit to the **Schenectady County Historical Society** for their Festival of Trees plus a tour of their exhibit galleries.

Wednesday, February 21, 10 AM

A Visit to **Crailo State Historic Site**, a museum of the Colonial Dutch in the Hudson River Valley.

Contact Vicki Folger for more info: Vhf49@yahoo.com or 518-439-1824.



BHA members went Out and About in October and visited Clermont State Historic Site. Clermont was the Hudson River seat of New York's politically and socially prominent Livingston Family.

Katherine Herber

Katherine Herber graduated from the New York State Normal School in 1886. The complete version of this diary begins in 1888 and concludes in 1895. In that short space of time, Katherine taught the Jericho, South Bethlehem, Slingerlands, Selkirk, and Cedar Hill schools, some twice. She eventually moved to Yonkers where she taught at the New York Orphan Asylum until her death in 1925.

When not “boarding around”, “Kittie”, as she was called, happily returned home to live with her family. She was one of eight children born to Christopher and Sophia (Greb) Herber. Her brother, John, became a builder in Elsmere. Herber Avenue is named for him. Kittie was also the aunt of John Heath of Glenmont. This excerpt of her diary is heavily edited due to space constraints.

1891

Aug. 10 Went to Slingerlands and engaged to teach the school there.
 Aug. 12 A lot of gypsies have encamped at the end of Long Lane.
 Sept. 7 Went to school with many misgivings but didn't have much to contend with.
 Sept. 23 Had a small school today on account of the baseball game in Schoharie.
 Oct. 15 A large school again today. I am growing more contented.
 Oct. 17 Went to Jericho for my money. Due since July.

1892

Jan. 12 Taught school today. Had charge of both rooms as Miss Boutelle was obliged to remain at home to care for the sick.
 Jan 20 Swept that dirty schoolhouse tonight.
 Feb. 3 Had charge of both schools as Miss Boutelle's mother is sick. I'm nearly distracted from the amount of noise.
 Feb 4 Received an invitation to a sleigh ride party at Meadowdale tomorrow night.
 Feb. 25 Received my month's pay from a collector. Had a hard time getting it.
 May 6 Held our Arbor Day exercises. Had quite a number of visitors.
 July 1 School closed. Came home bag and baggage. Am tired. The children all hated to say good-bye.

1892

Aug. 8 Went to Selkirk's and secured the school. Also secured board at Mr. Morehouse's.
 Sept. 5 Began school today. Thirty put in their appearance.
 Sept. 17 The GAR men passed through on their way to Washington.
 Sept. 19 had a large school. Felt better today than at any time that I have been teaching.
 Sept. 24 Went to Slingerlands for my money but did not get it.
 Oct. 18 Was just as cross as could be today. Time I took myself in to account.
 Nov. 1 Had 40 pupils today. I am very tired.
 Nov. 5 Went to Slingerlands today to get my money. Did not get it – again.
 Nov. 15 had quite an excitement at school. Delos Carroll shot George Blackenhorn.
 Nov. 16 Mr. Mosher came to the Schoolhouse and talked to Delos.
 Nov. 17 The constable came today to arrest Delos. The doctor came tonight and left me medicine.
 Nov. 18 Delos Carroll's trial came off today.
 Nov. 21 Had a large school. Delos came back to school today.
 Dec. 14 Received my money from Slingerlands this afternoon.
 Dec. 23 Very cold. Finished the examinations today. Closed the school until after the New Year.

1893

Jan. 4 The students have the Scarlet Fever scare and are all leaving. The Dixons have the disease. There is also a case at the store.
 Jan. 14 Knickerbockers ice house burned last night.
 Jan. 18 Went to the Stereopticon lecture tonight. It was very good.
 Jan 19 The Scarlet Fever patients are worse. Roselle Dixon is very bad.
 Jan 23 Roselle Dixon is dead. This is the first case of death in any school where I have taught.
 Feb 22 Another blizzard. Could not get to school. Made a picture frame of birch bark.
 Mar. 28 Delos left school today. I cannot say I am sorry.
 Apr. 24 Bertha Wagoner had a pouting time. I do hope I have done nothing to hurt her feelings.
 May 1 The boys fixed the flag pole today
 May 22 School small on account of the circus.
 May 27 Went to Albany for the shades for the schoolhouse.
 June 1 Had a small school. A number are out for corn planting.
 June 27 Picked berries all morning and then In the afternoon went to the festival at the school house. Had a very pleasant time indeed.
 Aug. 22 Came to Selkirk this afternoon to see about the school. I succeeded in securing the school at Selkirk.
 Aug. 24 Harry and Ella (Morehouse) went to a bubble party at Selkirk.



Katherine Herber about 1900.

Continued on page 4.

Sept. 5 Began teaching today. Mr. Hoffman put in the school pump.
 Sept. 18 Had 42 pupils today.
 Sept. 21 Had a hard day's work. The children were so mean and disagreeable, especially the larger ones.
 Oct. 3 Mr. Hoffman paid me my first month's salary.
 Nov. 3 Went to a husking bee at Wagoner's
 Dec. 11 Went to Albany tonight, got my hat and several things for entertainment. Mr. Mosher's house burned down.

1894

Jan. 6 Went up to the city today. Got my new skates and the school clock.
 Jan. 8 had 46 pupils. Put up the new clock. Went skating tonight.
 Feb. 2 Went to the store to have an order cashed but there was no money for me.
 Feb. 9 Went to the store this evening. Had a ride with Mr. VanWie. Could not get my money.
 Feb. 14 There was a box party at Church but I could not get there.
 Feb. 19 Snow banks have been piling up for two days - roads in very bad condition. Got real wet coming home from school. I broke through the snow and stepped in a ditch
 Feb. 23 Received a part of my money.
 Mar. 30 The Northern Lights were quite beautiful this evening.
 Apr. 25 The doctor came and vaccinated the pupils. Had the largest attendance yet
 May 3 A small school. Many of the children are sick from the vaccinations.
 May 28 A small school on account of the circus
 May 31 Walter Smith and Edith Mosher have scarlet fever. I'm afraid it will become an epidemic soon.
 June 6 Planned to go to Albany after school but once again Mr. Hotaling has failed to pay me. I was more than disappointed.
 June 11 Conrad, Grace, Willie and Milton have gone to the city to try the Regents.
 June 14 Examinations today. The results were quite satisfactory.
 Aug. 8 Went to Ten Eyck's to see about the school (Selkirk) but he would not hire me. Harry Morehouse took me to the Cedar Hill and I have secured that school.
 Sept. 14 Rather a small school on account of the rain. I cleaned the old school house thoroughly tonight.
 Dec. 3 No wood to start the fire so we stayed all day in the cold. (It had been snowing for 2 days.)
 Dec. 4 No fire yet so I cleaned the school and went home. Went to Mr. Selkirk's to collect last month's pay.



Katherine Herber is standing in the center of the door way in the back row with her Cedar Hill Students circa 1902.

1895

Jan. 2 Went to school this morning but found the building locked. Went down to Mr. Baker's but he had gone to Albany and left no word about the school.
 Jan. 3 Extremely cold day. No school again. Went skating in the afternoon. Skated to Castleton and back.
 Jan. 8 Have had a hard day at school. The children were disagreeable. I was obliged to whip one.
 March 11. Had a very pleasant day in the schoolhouse. The children all tried to do their best.
 April 24 A beautiful day, warm and sunny. Went to the woods with the children at noon.
 May 3 Arbor Day The children's exercises went off beautifully.
 June 20 Held examinations today. Not very encouraging at present.
 June 21 Rainy all day. School closed this afternoon The gypsies all drove by the school house this afternoon but they did not encamp.
 June 22 Went to Mr. Baker's this morning to finish up school business.

Frank Mathusa recorded a few memories (undated) from his days as a student in the Cedar Hill School when it was still one room:
 Someone donated a bell from an abandoned church. In the center of the room was a pot -belly stove. The pupils would carry water from neighboring wells.
 We planted the pine trees along the west side of the building and named them after famous men, such as Jefferson and Grant.
 The post office was in the brick house where the Vagele home now stands. The children would go there at night to get the mail.
 During recess and noon time we would ride down the hill across the road in Lyon's woods. During the summer the gypsies would camp in those woods.
 Above the Winne Dock is a high ridge with many cedar trees. It was called Cedar Hill Landing and later the village took the name.



George Lenhardt, left, during the 2012 Holiday Silver Tea.

Remembering George Lenhardt

The community lost a wonderful friend and public servant when George Lenhardt died in June after a long battle with brain cancer. Among his many associations in town, George served BHA in many capacities, including president. Throughout his illness, he maintained his interest in history and our efforts.

We were most appreciative when his wife, Lynne, suggested BHA as one of the recipients of donations given in his memory. Because of the generosity of those who designated BHA as their chosen way to honor George, we are able to significantly improve our community outreach efforts.

George advocated for engagement in the community in order to raise our profile and strengthen the organization. We are now more handsomely equipped for public appearances at tabling events, such as the Farmers Market, with a new canopy and accessories. In addition, our Young Historians program is putting together a teaching kit of artifacts suitable for hands on use by children. These items will be well used during the presentations in the schools and at the museum.

We miss George, his dry wit, and his willingness to help in so many ways, whether it was staying around to help put chairs away or pitching in as membership chair when there was a sudden need. We thank Lynne, who has also served the community so well, having just retired after forty years on the school board. Together they made Bethlehem a better place.

Martha Haswell taught in Westerlo and saved her 1867 annual report. It included attendance records, academic progress, and details pertaining to furnishings and equipment in the schoolhouse. It provides a sense of the sparseness of schoolhouses just a few years after the Civil War.

Of the furnishings listed on the form, Martha indicated that the building was equipped with the following items: one water pail, one drinking cup, one broom, one large dictionary, two "badly worn" outline maps, one blackboard, one bell, a desk and a stove. It did not have a fire shovel, a globe, a "chart of vocal elements" or a chair for the teacher!

The form inquired as to whether the building was comfortable or in need of urgent repair. In response, Martha requested a dust pan, a shovel, a "little plastering" and a pane of glass. The form specifically asked IF there was a privy on the schoolhouse site. (Of one hundred forty-nine schoolhouses in the county, one hundred nineteen did not yet have privies in 1844)

Academic progress was simply noted by the page number each age group had reached in the book being used, indicative of the rote learning practices of the day. That term 's school ranged in age from under five years old to age sixteen. Martha herself was just seventeen years old when she submitted this report.

Miss Haswell left teaching, married, had a child and was widowed, all within a few years of completing the report. She moved to Watervliet with her parents and never returned to teaching.



Teacher Arabella Welch and her students at the Van Wies Point School.

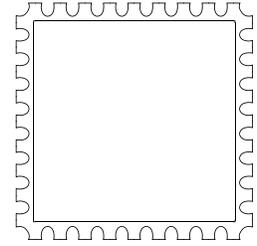


Bethlehem Historical Association

Cedar Hill School House Museum

P.O. Box 263

Selkirk, NY 12158



December Holiday Events at the
Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum

Over the River and Through the Woods

Annual Silver Tea

Sunday, December 2 from 1 to 4 PM



Holiday Open Houses

Monday, December 3 from 3 to 7 PM

Sunday, December 9 from 1 to 4 PM

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

LECTURES

Thursday, November 15 2 PM

Location: Delmar Reformed Church

The Schuyler Women

Presented by Jessie Serfilippi

Thursday, January 17 2 PM

Location: Delmar Reformed Church

The People of Beverwijck

Presented by Charles Gehring

Thursday, February 21 2 PM

Location: Delmar Reformed Church

***An Afternoon with the People of Colonial Albany
and their Neighbors***

Presented by Stefan Bielinski

Thursday, March 21 2 PM

Location: Delmar Reformed Church

A Portrayal of Clara Barton

Presented by Phyllis Chapman

Thursday, April 18 7 PM

Location: Cedar Hill School House Museum

Skeleton Stories from Colonial Albany

Presented by Lisa Anderson



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