

Bethlehem Historical Association

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2018



The Bethlehem Historical Association

Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum
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Recording Secretary:
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Tim Beebe
Debbie Croscup
Charles Fuller
Carl Gutman
Norma June
Dawn Pratt
Bill Seyler

Newsletter Editors

Beth Anderson, Karen Beck,
Faith Fuller & Susan Leath



*Live for Today
Dream for Tomorrow
Learn from Yesterday*

Celebrating 225 Years at Our Annual Ice Cream Social!

During Session 17 of the New York Legislature, in an act passed on March 12, 1793, several towns were created, including Bethlehem. The act reads in part:

And further be it enacted, That from and after the said first Monday in April 1794, all that part of the town of Water Vliet, as is comprehended with the bounds, following, to wit, beginning on the west bank of Hudson's river in the south bounds of the city of Albany...shall be and hereby is erected into a separate town by the name of Bethlehem.

Our first town meeting was held on Tuesday April 1, 1794 at the house of Henry Burhans where officers for the new town were elected including Supervisor Philip Van Rensselaer.

Happy Birthday Bethlehem!



Above: Cutting the cake, from left to right, Town Historian Susan Leath, Town Board Members Maureen Cunningham and Joyce Becker, Town Clerk Nanci Moquin.

Left: Galen Ritchie leans over to scoop ice cream while Carl Gutman gets ready to serve.

2017-2018 Year in Review

Presented by BHA president Karen Beck
at our annual meeting May 17, 2018

As a non-profit NYS chartered museum, we are expected to schedule public events and programs, as well as collecting, preserving and providing access to historic resources. These are laudable goals that we take seriously, yet a very tall order for an organization that is run totally by volunteers. Meeting that challenge can be daunting.

Last summer, in the midst of wondering how we could ever manage to do all that needed to be done, this little energetic group got together and this is what happened. We decided to do even more. There is a method to our madness and that is the knowledge that we cannot attract more engaged members if people do not know we exist. So, what drives us is the constant effort to raise our profile by being an active presence throughout the town.

One way we do that, and something we love doing, is “to table” at the Delmar Farmers Market. We have been a presence every indoor market and now we hope to show up at the outdoor market from time to time as well.

Two new events have been added to our program schedule. The first was “Beer and Pretzels” which was just as it sounds, held in September. Then in April, we had a waiting list to attend a delightful “Afternoon Tea”. We also added an additional Open House to the Silver Tea week schedule.

In an effort to make the museum more accessible, we have extended the season by opening every Sunday afternoon from May through the end of October, an increase of fourteen weeks. Please come and see it.

Meanwhile, we kept up our usual busy schedule. BHA again participated in the Town’s traditional Memorial Day Parade. Although we were disappointed not to be able to wear our vintage hats due to a steady downpour, we were cheered by a surprisingly large crowd as we soldiered on.

We had better luck in June when the Annual Ice Cream Social was held on a warm, sunny day. The new exhibit on World War I in Bethlehem, along with the lure of Stewart’s ice cream sundaes, brought a large crowd.

The speaker series continued with seven presenters providing a variety of topics both informative and entertaining. Five were held in the evening at the Schoolhouse Museum and two in the afternoon at the Delmar Reformed Church. Because our attendance doubles when in the afternoon at the Reformed Church, we are going to schedule November and March there next season as well, just as a trial to see how that goes.

In all, a total of 942 people attended programs or visited the museum in the past year.

Major displays at the museum started with an in depth study of the town in 1917. An industrious group then put a great deal of creative energy into a depiction of “The Night Before Christmas” for the December Silver Tea week. More recently, they turned their efforts to a beautiful exhibit of bridal gowns worn by Bethlehem residents, representing time periods going back to the 1850’s. That exhibit is in place and will remain through the summer.

Meanwhile, inventory continued. In order to comply with criteria as stipulated in our Collection Management Policy, we needed to cull the ephemera collection. This resulted in a large number of deaccessioned items. When appropriate, we donated those to other historic groups. For the rest, a two-day silent auction was held in September and in addition, five

items were sold at Carlsen Auction Galleries. The effort netted over \$1300.

Storage of our records and collections in a 160 year old building that was designed to be a schoolhouse has always been a challenge. The situation was eased this year when the Facilities Committee oversaw the purchase of cabinets and shelving for the northwest wall and the Buildings and Grounds committee arranged for the long needed installation of both a concrete floor and an overhead door on the Carriage House.

The Fundraising Committee organized a cookbook, a big project, completed with the help of contributions of recipes by members. The sale has been very successful, and by the way, is still available, both at the museum and I Love Books. The annual Election Day bake sale has become a popular tradition and earned over 400 dollars.

Out and About continued to schedule terrific outings for members to local sites of historic interest. We have enjoyed four visits so far this year. The group went to both the Martin VanBuren site and the Pruyn House. We saw the Victorian dresses at the History and Art Institute and also visited the Schuyler Mansion. There is one more trip scheduled to Johnson’s Hall in June.

Our Young Historians co-chairs, who just two years ago got their start by visiting one school, are now invited to present their individualized local history lessons in every elementary school in the Bethlehem District as well as Becker School in the RCS district. Three hundred sixty-three second and fourth graders benefited. These two teachers have also put together an exhibit about the town’s one-room school houses which is on display at the museum.

Currently, BHA has 108 individual and 71 family memberships, which translates to 250 members. We welcomed 20 new memberships this year. We become more and more dependent on e-mail to reach our members, but despite rising postage rates, we continue to produce and mail three news-letters a year as well as the yearbook.

For the 53 years of our existence, BHA has been housed in the town owned Cedar Hill Schoolhouse. Recently, at our request, the “Highway Guys” removed unsightly shrubbery and replaced the front steps. New railings are being constructed. With that done, we are eager for new landscaping as soon as we can arrange it.

We have a good partnership with the Town Board, not just our shared interest in the Schoolhouse but in a much broader effort to identify and protect historic interests in the community.

That brings us up to date, I think. I regret that time does not allow me to do justice to these subjects and all those who gave their time and did the heavy lifting. I do want to recognize this great group of people who give so much so willingly. I am going to ask them to stand as I call each name. And then, if all stand again together, we can give them a round of applause.





Bill Seyler, Jessica McMullan And Karen Beck having fun at the annual meeting dinner.



Getting ready to step off at the 2018 Memorial Day Parade



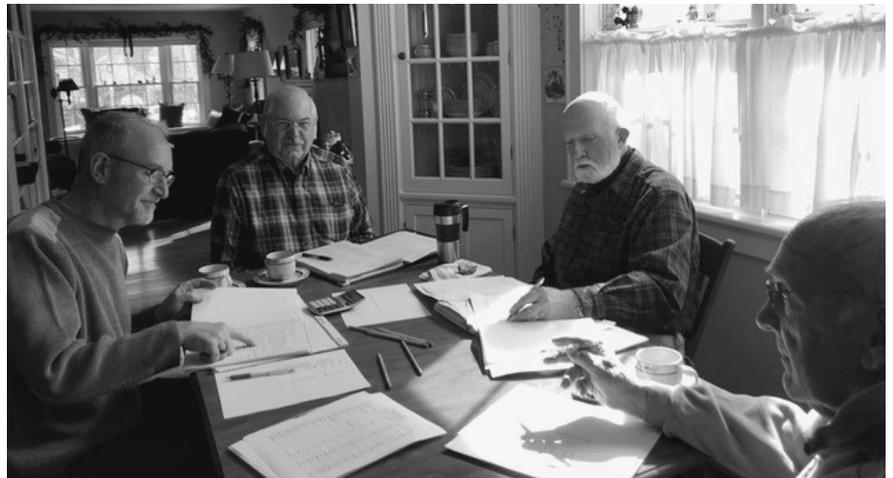
Folks enjoying the goodies at the Afternoon Tea.



Above right: Phyllis Chapman portrays Lucy Larcom at our March meeting. Left: BHA members try their hand at weaving, one of several activities supplied by Chapman to bring to life the work of a 19th century textile mill operator.



Elin and Presley Stromquist stand in front of their great great grandmother's wedding dress, one of many now on display at the schoolhouse museum.



Tim Beebe, Charlie Fuller, Carl Gutman and Bill Seyler prepare the annual budget.



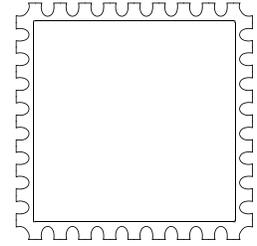


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Young Historians

Debbie Croscup and Linda Davies, co-chairs of the Education Committee, were pleased to be invited into the fourth grades of all the five elementary schools in the Bethlehem Central School District for the 2017-2018 school year. They did a 30 minute large group presentation using pictures of the Town of Bethlehem years ago as well more than 25 artifacts borrowed from our museum and its members. Students learned about the histories of many of the local one-room schoolhouses as well as the lives of school children and their teachers in the 1800s and early 1900s. Following the presentation, the students were divided into small groups that rotated through different stations with hands-on activities. Debbie and Linda appreciated the cooperation of the teachers and staff and the exemplary behavior of the students.



ior of the students.

In addition to going into the schools, they also presented a program at School's Out, a child care center in Delmar. Even the primary students demonstrated an interest in becoming history detectives.

Debbie and Linda are thankful for the support of the BHA and its members which allows them to bring history to our students. They are already planning for their classroom visits starting in the fall.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum is open Sunday afternoons until October 28. Stop by between 2 and 4 PM and take a look at our displays.

Currently, two exhibits are featured. One presents more than a dozen wedding dresses from our collection including examples from the 1860s through the mid-20th century. Wedding related items from the Clapper, Blessing, Myers, Haswell, Babcock and Mosher families are also featured. The other plots all of Bethlehem's 15 one-room schools on an 1866 map and includes photos of students as well as the buildings, several of which are still standing today.

The schoolhouse is located at 1003 River Road, Selkirk. And, as always, it is free!

POP UP History events are happening this summer! Check out our website for more info as they POP UP! BethlehemHistorical.org

Our regular programs and lectures will resume Thursday, September 20.
Stay tuned for details!



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